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[“It’s remarkable how often [madness and brilliance] coincide”: An analysis of the characters, Captain Jack Sparrow and Tarrant Hightopp, as alternate depictions of masculinity.]

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ABSTRACT:

In fairy tales, male heroes typically come from royalty and villains are categorised as pirates, evil Kings, various animal and supernatural creatures. For example, Scar, the Beast, Rumpelstiltskin, and Bluebeard. In *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003), Captain Jack Sparrow lacks the villainous qualities that come from Disney's predecessor, Captain Hook. However, Jack does not possess the classic qualities of a prince. He tries to be heroic when he rescues Elizabeth Swann but turns on her to excel in his own motives. With beads in his hair, his eyes lined with kohl and a love for accessories, Jack's appearance distorts traditional notions of masculinity. In *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), Tarrant Hightopp (Mad Hatter) is an untraditional character who has become detached from reality. His madness, which is evident through his clothes, speech and actions, comes from the destruction of his family. Jack and Hatter invert the expected order of things, "Now up is down" (Verbinski 2007). Their hats appear to be symbols of their obscure masculinity. Although they are both played by Johnny Depp, the Hatter and Captain Jack Sparrow possess unconventional male attributes which make them unlikely heroic characters. They offer a fluid perspective on the ever-changing aspects of masculinity. Unconventionality is becoming increasingly popular in Disney works. Therefore, this chapter aims to analyse two non-traditional male fairy tale characters with an emphasis on their fashion choices, lack of true love endeavours and unconventional heroic actions.

KEYWORDS:

1. Madness
2. Hat
3. Masculine
4. Heroic
5. Untraditional

Main Body:

In Western culture, Kimmel states that 'the hegemonic definition of manhood is a man in power, a man with power, and a man of power. We equate manhood with being strong, successful, capable, reliable, in control' (2009, p.184). However, unconventional masculinity has become a popular theme within today's cultural context especially in films and literature. In Disney's recent works, the traditional prince figure has been distorted. For example, in *Tangled* (2010), the 'Prince' figure and love interest of Rapunzel, Flynn Ryder, is an on-the-run criminal. He is held captive by Rapunzel until they develop a plan to help each other. Porter observes, "trickster tales, by their nature, shake up accepted norms, opening the door to the re-evaluation of the status quo" (2016 p.159). Tarrant Hightopp in Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) and Captain Jack Sparrow in Gore Verbinski's *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of The Black Pearl* (2003) subvert the norm. Neither of these characters comes from royalty, they are both outcasts. They each have an obscure outlook on life. Captain Jack Sparrow is a cursed, womanising pirate without his ship, and the Hatter makes hats, hence the nickname, has offended his ruler, the Red Queen and has deemed himself mad. These two characters have a liberating influence over the other characters (Will and Elizabeth and Alice) in these films; Jack through his pirate lifestyle and Hatter through his madness. Steinhoff argues that "[Piracy] facilitates the construction and deconstruction of multiple discursive boundaries in terms of identity, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class and nationality" (2011 p.13). Jack and Hatter possess atypical attributes, in particular their fashion sense, making them unconventional male heroes. Costume design in each film plays a pivotal role as the appearance of Jack and Hatter correlate with their personalities.

Alice in Wonderland (2010) won the Academy Award for Best Achievement in Costume Design which went to the designer Colleen Atwood. Tarrant Hightopp's costume accurately depicts his profession as a hat maker. Hatter has a scissor pocket, he wears a pin cushion ring, and a thread bandolier like a sash. He also wears multiple thimbles on his fingers,

and has ribbons hanging from his belt. Atwood says these accessories 'allows the Hatter to make a hat [or a garment] at the last minute' (Umland, 2015, p.19). Putting his sewing skills to good use, Hatter becomes a temporary dress-maker, creating a smaller dress, 'try this on for size' for a now tiny Alice (Burton, 2010). Hatter's favourite accessory is his stylish top hat with a pink sash across it, and the 10/6 label symbolises the price; ten shillings and sixpence in old British money. Hatter's colourful makeup adds to his eccentric character but also displays his vulnerability. His feelings of annoyance are portrayed on screen by the dark colour changes in his costume, makeup and his Scottish accent becomes more prominent. Viera outlines Depp's talent as his 'subtle switches between light-hearted and blinding rage are an impressive show of the actor's range' (*Film Obsessive*, 2020). Similarly, the colours brighten when Hatter is happy. Therefore, his emotions are transparent, a quality that is not normally associated with traditional masculinity. Through his makeup, Hatter's feelings are made clear to the audience and the other characters.

Likewise, fashion plays an important part in a pirate's life. British costume designer, Penny Rose, is most known for her work on the first three films in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise. She got the inspiration for the look of Captain Jack Sparrow from the illustrator, Howard Pyle (Kurrti, 2019, p.96). Jack's outfit consists of standard breaches, a white poet shirt, a waistcoat, big boots and his hat. The hat is a distinguished part of the pirate uniform. Fanning states that "Depp selected the trinkets to wear in his hair and the signature pirate hat was an instinctive choice - he was presented with seven hats and immediately chose the leather tricorn" (2015, p.146). It is the accessories and the makeup that make this costume memorable; the beads and ties in Jack's dreadlocks, covered partially by his red bandana, his eyes heavily lined with black eyeliner, his emerald ring and his compass, his favourite trinket, hanging from his belt. Jack is protective of his belongings, especially his hat, like Hatter. Their hats are famous and a crucial part of their identities. These characters' clothes, accessories and makeup alter

the common assumptions about masculinity. They are shown in comparison to Hamish's cream coloured suit and James Norrington's pristine uniform which represent the norm in these films. The royal court wears a similar style hat to the pirates outlining the thin line of conventionality. The tricorn was a popular hat in the 18th century with pirates and Naval officers although it was worn differently, with wigs underneath, as evidenced by Governor Weatherby, his royal court and Commodore Norrington. The hats that accompany each role are physical manifestations of the power they hold; the commodores on land and the pirates on the sea.

Other examples of well-known hats on screen associated with obscure characters include; Willy Wonka's hat in *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (1971), Freddy Krueger's hat in *The Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), and the sorting hat in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001). Tarrant's hat and Jack's hat fulfil the look of these unconventional heroes. In *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003), Geoffrey Rush, who plays Captain Hector Barbossa, comments on his look, 'we discovered in the very first costume fitting the moment the hat came off, the character kind of disappeared. That's the brain. That's the vanity and elegance that he thinks he's presenting - the superiority' (Kurtti, 2019, p.83). In each film, both hats are temporarily given up for a girl. Hatter does it to save a tiny Alice, placing her on his hat "your carriage, milady" and spins it through the air to get her out of harm's way (Burton, 2010). She then hides under it until Bayard tells her that the Hatter has been captured. It is now her turn to rescue her friend, she instructs Bayard, 'Don't forget the hat' emphasising the importance of this accessory to Hatter (Burton, 2010). He is possessive of his hat as it is a large part of his identity. Jack leaves his hat behind as he dives into the ocean to save Elizabeth. However, he uses her as leverage and as a get-out-of-jail card. As Petersen observes, 'Jack Sparrow severely disrupts the traditional narrative, problematizing traditional characterization and leading the audience to root for a far more ambiguous sort of hero' (p.72). Jack rescued the girl but also got himself out of a trap.

As its namesake suggests, Burton's film is about Alice's trip to Wonderland but also her journey of self-discovery, favouring adventure over romance. Alice (Mia Wasikowska) is shown escaping her own engagement party. Elliot states that 'the film also adopts other narrative structures, like the *bildungsroman*, the anti-Cinderella story, and the mythological hero plot, in which an outsider comes from another world, rescues a community, and returns to the other world' (2010, p.196). Alice does not want to just be a man's wife. She must rescue Underland from its tyrant ruler, Iracebeth the Red Queen (Helena Bonham Carter) and slay the Jabberwocky. Alice occupies the role of the saviour and does not need to be saved. Hence, the role of Prince Charming is non-existent which secures Tarrant's platonic role as the deuteragonist. Although Hatter and Alice love each other dearly, there is no desire for romance. His helping her is in want of nothing in return.

The first interaction between Hatter and Alice takes place at a tea party and shows Hatter walking across the set table, causing the crockery to fall. He greets her; 'It's absolutely Alice I'd know him anywhere' which is an interesting use of male pronouns to describe a girl, outlining the gender fluidity that is present in this film (Burton, 2010). The Hatter has a caring and protective nature as he puts Alice in his pocket to protect her from the incoming red knights who are searching for her and hides her in a teapot, 'mind your head' (Burton, 2010). Bayard, the bloodhound, almost found Alice but Hatter put his finger in the spout, preventing her scent from emanating. He spoke what resembled gibberish, 'Down with the bloody big head,' to the dog, showing his alignment with the White Queen, and Bayard led the enemy troops away (Burton, 2010). The dog's actions symbolise his loyalty to the Hatter, Alice and the White Queen (Anne Hathaway). Following in his father's footsteps, Hatter was employed at court for the White Queen, like all the Hightopp clan that came before him. An individual's perception of masculinity can be linked to their role within their family. Hatter's flamboyant nature annoyed his father despite Tarrant's efforts to seek his approval. The destruction of the Hatter's

family caused the development of his madness. Captured by the Red Queen, Hatter is tortured for information on Alice's whereabouts but his madness protects him from giving up her location.

The Hatter's obscure profession allowed him to utilise unusual battle tools in this film. He used a hatpin as a weapon and he armed himself with a bodice statue, a powder puff and perfume in an atomizer bottle against Stayne, Iracebeth's love interest. These feminine items being used as ammunition against an enemy is depicted in opposition to the weapons of a soldier, a traditionally male-dominated role. During the last battle, Hatter wields a sword, like a trained fighter, until he drops it in disgust. By stabbing the Jabberwocky's tail, Hatter risked his life to help Alice and he is put in jail facing execution by hanging. Even facing impending death, the Hatter is concerned with his pristine appearance as Chessur, the cat, asks if he wants his hat. To which the Hatter replies 'How dare you it is a formal execution I want to look my best you know' (Burton, 2010). Hatter escapes his ill fate through the cat's shape-shifting abilities and dances the futterwacken in triumph. Like Hatter, Jack also escapes death by hanging. Before Alice must return to the normal world, herself and Hatter exchange an emotional goodbye:

> Hatter: You could stay
> Alice: I'll be back again before you know it
> Hatter: You won't remember me
> Alice: Of course, I will how could I forget
> Hatter: Fairfarren Alice (Burton, 2010).

Callen outlines the difference in Alice's responsibilities in comparison to each world; 'in the world of England, Alice is to marry a lord and be forever imprisoned in his manor. In the world of Underland, Alice is to slay the Jabberwocky, the war machine of a tyrant, and liberate a world.' (2012, p.122). It is clear that Alice is destined to do more than marry a lord. Hatter is sad that Alice must leave but the happy ending of the film was that Wonderland was no longer

being ruled by a dictatorial ruler. As a result, Alice returned to her world with the power to reject its conventions.

In *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003), Jack Sparrow is the Captain of a legendary ship with black sails called, The Black Pearl, although it is not in his possession at the start. This is what drives the plot; returning the Pearl to its rightful captain. Jack is introduced on screen as literally crossing borders; he elegantly steps from the depths of the sea to the port dock while his current mode of transport, a small leaking boat, sinks behind him. Therefore, the audience are aware of the captain's unconventionality from the beginning. His character continues to blur boundaries both literally and metaphorically throughout the film. Initially underestimated, Jack is constantly surprising the other characters including the blacksmith Will Turner (Orlando Bloom), the Governor's daughter Elizabeth Swann (Keira Knightley) and his crew.

Before their alliance, Will tells Jack 'I practice three times a day so that when I meet a pirate, I can kill it!' (Verbinski, 2003). Turner's use of 'it' as a pronoun 'dehumanizes the pirate, declaring Sparrow and the rest of his brethren as neither male nor female, but it' (Petersen, 2007, p.72). This cements Jack's portrayal as a gender fluid character throughout this film and the franchise, blurring the lines between femininity and masculinity. Will Turner occupies the role of the traditional Disney hero which allows for Jack's portrayal of the opposite. Will is branded not as a sailor or a military man but as a blacksmith. However, he is the son of a famous pirate named Bootstrap Bill. It is Will's blood that Barbossa needs to lift the curse placed on him, his crew and Jack. Therefore, Will becomes an ally to Jack and the love interest of the heroine, Elizabeth Swann. Sparrow critiques Will's devotion to his craft by stating, 'you need to get yourself a girl, mate' (Petersen, 2007, p.73). Throughout the film, Will embodies this idea of being a protector, the 'prince' figure, as he continuously tries to rescue Miss Swann. He does get the girl in the end. The following interaction between Jack and Will outlines their dynamic:

> Will Turner: Where's Elizabeth?
> Jack Sparrow: She's safe, just like I promised. She's all set to marry Norrington, just like she promised. And you get to die for her, just like you promised. So we're all men of our word really... except for, of course, Elizabeth, who is in fact, a woman (Verbinski, 2003).

In contrast to Will's unsure identity, Jack Sparrow is a pirate and rejects the notion that he is a civilian; his sense of identity as a pirate is embedded in him. Therefore, Jack is branded an unlikely hero as his actions are not for the greater good but are beneficial for his own motives. 'Jack is also a bricoleur, able to turn almost anything to his advantage' including rescuing the governor's daughter (Porter, 2016, p.153). However, he lacks the malicious qualities of other anti-heroes such as Disney's Captain Hook, to be considered villainous. Like the Hatter, Jack typically runs in the opposite direction of an enemy approaching. Having escaped death by hanging twice, some of Jack's crimes include arson, kidnapping and impersonating both British and Spanish Naval officers. Due to his newfound friendship with Jack, Will underwent a transformation in changing his viewpoint of pirates. Jack can be a pirate and also a "good man" (Verbinski, 2003). When coming to rescue Jack from his execution, Will wears a big hat with feathers, making an outward statement that he is accepting his father's past and his own future as a pirate.

Captain Jack Sparrow is considered a legend who survived his own version of falling down the rabbit hole after he was betrayed by Captain Hector Barbossa who left him on Rum-Runner's Isle to die. Therefore, it is Barbossa who occupies the villainous role. Jack's ability to talk himself out of situations has saved him more than once. For example, when in trouble with Barbossa's crew, he states 'Parleley, parlelellylelooo, par le nee, partner, par... snip, parsley' (Verbinski, 2003). He means 'Parlay,' a pirate guideline that gives whoever evokes it a chance to negotiate with the ship's Captain:

> Captain Barbossa: How the blazes did you get off that island?
> Jack Sparrow: When you marooned me on that god-forsaken spit of land, you forgot one very important thing, mate: I'm Captain Jack Sparrow (Verbinski, 2003).

Jack's arrogance and self-belief are traits that have helped him survive this long. While cursed, Barbossa cannot be killed. Jack's elaborate plan that 'is either madness or brilliant' shows him double crossing Barbossa (Verbinski, 2003). Jack entices Barbossa with the idea of storming the Royal Navy Ships that are waiting to rescue Elizabeth, moving Barbossa from Captain to Commodore. Jack tells him 'I'll buy you the hat a really big one' (Verbinski, 2003). In the pirate world, Captain is a position of power. Likewise, the same applies to Governor and Commodore on land. The distinction of power is portrayed by the hat, pirate or a member of the royal court. After ten years of keeping one bullet in his pistol, Jack finally shoots Barbossa. In the sequel, *Dead Man's Chest* (2006), Lord Beckett arrests Will and Elizabeth on their wedding day for their involvement in Jack Sparrow's escape. Simultaneously, they correct Beckett when he omits 'Captain.' This title that preludes his name is crucial to Jack's identity. Will, Jack and Elizabeth have a strange friendship that continues throughout the franchise. Despite her true love for Will, Jack challenged Elizabeth and understood her desire to be a pirate better than most. The pair do share a passionate kiss in the sequel (2006) but much to Jack's disappointment it is only a ploy to trap him and save Will. Likewise, Elizabeth challenged Jack to be a less morally corrupt pirate as seen by following interaction:

> Elizabeth: There will come a time when you have to do the right thing.
> Jack: I love those moments. I like to wave at them as they pass by (Verbinski, 2006).

At the end of the first film, Jack tells Elizabeth 'it would've never worked between us' insinuating that she was attracted to him. (Verbinski, 2003). Despite the many women that Jack encounters and his womanising persona, his sexual orientation is neither defined or denied creating ambiguity. Jack's philandering quality is evidenced by the number of women who slap him, including Anamaria (Zoe Saldana) who snuck on board his ship. Jack 'borrowed her boat without permission' but rejects the notion that he is a thief (Verbinski, 2003). He does not steal,

he commandeers which is more noble in his book. Despite his first mate Joshamee Gibbs (Kevin McNally) objections; it is 'fierce bad luck to have a woman on board.' Jack allows her to remain on board responding, 'It will be worse without her' outlining that he is superstitious and does not place value on gender (Verbinski, 2003).

In order to examine these male characters, their female counterparts must be briefly discussed. Alice and Elizabeth both have dreams or flashbacks of their younger selves which open both films: the events in these dreams correlate with the story that is told in the present. Alice dreams of Wonderland, Elizabeth has a flashback of meeting Will on a ship. The reality differs drastically as 'Alice is to be wed and is not pleased. In the brief scene leading up to the proposal, Burton lays down the framework of the oppressive system in which Alice is embedded' (Callen, 2012, p.121). Like Alice, Elizabeth Swann is confronted by an unwanted marriage offer, hers from James Norrington.

Alice's mother, Helen Kingsleigh, is horrified that her daughter is not wearing her corset or her stockings, remarking that 'she isn't properly dressed' Alice's retort, 'Who's to say what is proper' is an accurate representation of the way she thinks and how this film rejects what is considered normal (Burton, 2010). Hence, the creation of these unusual characters. Alice is a dreamer who likes to believe in as many as six impossible things before breakfast which is contrasted by the presentation of the uptight guests, including her potential fiancé Hamish. Although initially presented as Alice's prince, Hamish tries to extinguish Alice's dreams by not playing along with her imaginary scenario. Due to her experience in Underland, Alice's sense of self encourages her to refuse Hamish's proposal and subsequently accept his father's job offer; to work for the shipping company her father previously owned. It is the male, father-like characters, such as Alice's father, Charles, The Hatter and Lord Ascot, that facilitate Alice's true fate. They expedite the female characters and their experience, as seen with Hatter. As Primorac observes, 'it is the queer-looking, clothes-obsessed Mad Hatter who quite literally

tailors her "destiny" and takes the place of the key male authority figure, influencing her decision to accept the role of Underland's saviour and hero' (2018, p.140). The other female characters are depicted as helpless and their only goals in life are trying to find a husband. For example, Helen is intent on Alice getting married, Alice's sister's husband was caught kissing another woman, and her Aunt Imogene has gone delirious waiting on her Prince to show up. At the end of the film, influenced by the Hatter, Alice dances the futterwacken, celebrating her refusal to marry Hamish. Improperly dressed and without a prince, Alice still saved Underland.

Elizabeth's ladies' maids are tightening her corset as her father talks of her betrothed's upcoming promotion to Commodore. The thoughts of marriage are depicted as suffocating to Elizabeth, outlined by her gasping breaths. In a similar way to how Alice tumbles down the rabbit hole, Elizabeth faints and falls from her tower to the bottom of the sea. Both are avoiding marriage proposals. In one of his heroic acts, 'Jack drags [Elizabeth] from the bottom of the sea, cutting away the corset, simultaneously slashing through the fabric and social restrictions that constrain women's lives' (Porter, 2016, p.155). Choosing heroism over being proper, Jack saved Elizabeth's life. She returns the favour and protects Jack from being executed but he is still imprisoned. Once shackled, Jack puts the chain around Elizabeth's neck until the guards agree to release him, 'my effects please and my hat' (Verbinski, 2003). Jack makes Elizabeth reholster his gun and replace his hat in a sexually charged scene as he smirks knowingly at James, her soon-to-be betrothed. Whilst reflecting on her day, Miss Swann's maid remarks how it was a hard day for her lady. Elizabeth replies, 'Yes, I suspected the proposal but wasn't prepared.' To which the maid responds, 'I meant you being captured by that pirate' (Verbinski, 2003). For Elizabeth, being in the clutches of Captain Jack Sparrow, an unruly pirate, was less frightening than the thought of marriage, to the wrong man that is.

Although Jack continuously blurs the lines of gender, Elizabeth also adopts masculine qualities over the course of the films. In the sequel, *Dead Man's Chest* (2005), Elizabeth dresses as a

boy to approach Jack for information on Will. Upon recognising her, Jack states, ‘you know these clothes don’t flatter you at all. It should be a dress or nothing. I happen to have no dress in my cabin’ (Verbinski). Her nonchalant response shows that she is immune and unfazed by his behaviour. Elizabeth has endured walking the plank stripped of her dress with pirates leering at her, and being shipwrecked on an island with Jack. Throughout the series, Elizabeth traded her tight corsets, and dresses for trousers, coats and a hat of her own. She is neither a good girl nor a wicked woman but an active agent of her destiny, a pirate (Porter, 2016, p.156). Similarly to Alice, Elizabeth left the uncomfortable corset of society’s restraints behind. Jack’s pirate lifestyle saves Elizabeth, just like Hatter’s madness encourages Alice.

The three main characters’ names are linked to birds which are often associated with freedom. However, in the beginning, Jack Sparrow has no ship, Elizabeth Swann is trapped and bound by society and Will Turner is slaving away, working for a drunk and getting no gratification. The pirate lifestyle has a liberating effect on the characters involved including Jack, Will and Elizabeth. Appearances are deceiving as Elizabeth quickly adapts to the pirate lifestyle, the blacksmith is the key to breaking the pirate curse, Jack’s elaborate schemes work out, and the Royal court and pirates are interlinked. For example, Elizabeth is shocked to recognise Mr Gibbs on board Jack’s ship as he was once stationed on his Majesty’s Ship, The Dauntless. It reinforces the idea that people are not always what they appear to be. Petersen states, ‘Depp’s character, Captain Jack Sparrow, is intended to be an anti-hero: lacking in moral conscious, he may no longer be a ‘bad’ pirate (grouped with Barbossa [Geoffrey Rush] and the rest of the cursed bunch) but he is certainly not a ‘good’ one’ (2007, pp.71-72). Sparrow is on the border between good and morally ambiguous. By the end, each character has what their heart desires most; Elizabeth and Will are together, the curse was lifted off of Barbossa’s crew and Jack is back where he belongs, Captain of the Black Pearl.

To conclude, the symbolism of fashion for the male and female characters; corsets and hats across both films have provided interesting points of analysis. The lead, male characters, Captain Jack Sparrow and Tarrant Hightopp, offer a fluid perspective on masculinity that contributes to their seemingly everlasting heroic status. *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003) subverts traditional stereotypes associated with pirates. For example, Captain Barbossa has a pet monkey, named Jack, instead of a parrot. Gore Verbinski stated 'I didn't want these pirates to look similar to what we've all seen before' (Kurtti, 2019, p.83). This idea was also implemented into the character of Jack Sparrow. This film has the makings of a fairy tale with its heroes, love interests, secret treasure, curses being broken, the insulation of poisonous apples and a happy ending. In *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), the characters in Underland are exempt from the social constraints of normality. With no desire for romance, Hatter helps Alice in peculiar ways by giving her potions to make her shrink, hiding her to keep her safe and using his hat to get her away from danger. The Hatter and Underland's influence cause Alice to make changes in her own life, in the real world. Both Captain Jack Sparrow and Tarrant Hightopp disrupt the expected, standard order of things through their gibberish and riddles, untraditional behaviour and obscure fashion choices, making them unconventional male heroes. This continues throughout the sequel *Alice through the Looking Glass* (2016) and the rest of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise.

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