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THE MATRIX OF WOMEN

Lorraine Whetten

Joseph Campbell explores the role of women in a man's life through literature's viewpoint in his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. During the hero's journey, man's female tantalizes, inspires, and travels with him, or she despises, rejects, and hinders him on his journey. Each female also has a destiny, but her destiny depends upon the male and his journey, for she must travel with the hero to experience her destiny. Campbell describes four phases in the matrix of a woman's destiny. The matrix is the mold that forms the woman's experiences. The male and female share a fate: the hero has a journey, and the female has a destiny. Her destiny is an evolution through the matrix of experiences: 1) the morning star (or the virgin), 2) the evening star (or the harlot), 3) the consort, and 4) the hag (Campbell 303). In *Young Frankenstein*, the women of Joseph Campbell's matrix exist simultaneously

as each female travels from the position of a bright, young virgin towards a seemingly disappointing end. At the journey's end, the hero is God; his first love is now the hag.

At each complicated phase of the female's destiny, she exhibits other elements of her matrix. Each element of her experience spins in a whirlpool within the matrix circle. Man desires the morning star, the virgin. As he courts and wins the female's sexual favors, she rises as the evening star. She continues her twirl through the matrix as she transforms into the harlot. While the harlot journeys through the darkest hours with her hero, she becomes his consort. At the journey's end, the hero's sunrises overshadow his consort's glow (Campbell 303).

The first phase of the morning star in *Young Frankenstein* appears as little blonde Helga. She materializes after the monster awakens and leaves his home. This virgin is at her youngest stage, but the

matrix of young Helga also includes the seductress and the consort. In her first scene, she appears as the monster's victim; however, her innocence is seductive. Humorously, Helga tames the monster with a young love's innocent version of "He loves me, he loves me not." The little girl sways the monster to join her childish games. Though more innocent than the other women in the movie, Helga tames the monster's bestiality. She subdues him without sex, for which she is too young. As part of the matrix, Helga already shows her darker side, the hag, when she commands the monster to play teeter-totter with her. She tells the monster, "Sit down." He protests and she commands, "I said, 'Sit down!'" The monster sits. Helga is too young for the role of harlot. She is not ready to travel with the hero. By a trick of fate, the monster throws young Helga back to her bed of innocence.

The fiancée of young Dr. Frankenstein, beautiful Elizabeth, represents the

second phase of the morning star. She is a teenage, PMS version of the virgin who resists the matrix's summon to become an evening star. As young Dr. Frankenstein's first love, she is also the darker side of the virgin. She holds her hero at the brink of ecstasy and madness. With her mask of coiffeur, makeup, manicure, and garb, she keeps the hero at bay. This morning star is preened and trussed but not ready to join her mate. Elizabeth is the true virgin in *Young Frankenstein*, but her refusals to join the hero on his journey give her a wicked, hag-like presence. Her Bewitching hesitation frustrates and hinders the hero.

Though beautiful Elizabeth would not submit to young Dr. Frankenstein, she becomes the monster's harlot. He is the seductress's equal match, and he thrusts Elizabeth further into the matrix. Finally, Elizabeth spins into her new role of consort when she accepts the monster's bedding. Now, as the groomed bride of the monster Frankenstein,

Elizabeth is a young version of the hag. Strangely, her true nature in the matrix spin is that of the consort, having moved through the roles of morning star and evening star.

Elizabeth's dark nature contrasts with Inga's apparent virginal qualities. Inga characterizes the last phase of the morning star. She invites the hero into her realm with a sweet smile. While Elizabeth had been, in the beginning, the genuine virgin, Inga's appearance of virginity actually hides the seductress who wears a mask of innocence while playing the role of harlot. Her seduction tempts the young doctor into betraying his fiancée. As young Dr. Frankenstein's assistant, Inga is also his consort, the companion who journeys with her hero. As the morning star, she is the hero's inspiration and joy; as the seductress, she offers him rest and sexual nourishment. In her role as his consort, she sweetly prods the young hero onward. Inga, in her phase

of the morning star, encompasses three stages of the matrix: virgin, harlot, and consort. She is the most desirable female in the movie's matrix of women, never becoming, as Campbell's would view, the hag.

Young Frankenstein shows the old hag's sultry side. Once a young, glowing virgin, she now retains only memories of what she once shared with her hero. Frau Bleucker is the "Hag of Hell" to young men, but a grandmotherly image to Dr. Frankenstein (Campbell 303). The hag smokes cigars – an indication of her now dominant role. In the male role, she is a fearsome creature. The two ancient lovers, Frau Bleucker and Baron Von Frankenstein now share the same physical appearance – a bag of skin and bones. Sadly, Baron Von Frankenstein is dead, while his once young virgin now looks nearly dead. Frau Blucher's sexuality briefly emerges under Baron Von Frankenstein's portrait when we spy on her, and

see her passionately kissing his image. The image of the harlot remains with a beauty mark on the hag's chin, but now the beauty mark looks more like a wart. Young men fear her. Heroes must get closer to the end of their journey before they can appreciate her. The true hero does not fear the "old wart."

The hag's worthiness of man's adulation is gone, but her position in the female matrix is now complete. She has a place in the matrix with an honor different from the virgin, seductress, or consort. Her purpose is to lead the young hero and his harlot to their destiny. Frau Blucher, as the matriarch, glues one generation to the next. Her music leads young

Dr. Frankenstein and his consort to Baron Von Frankenstein's library and laboratory where the young hero can complete his journey. As Campbell suggests, the hag's experiences change her and give her wisdom. When the hero reaches his godlike position and shines as bright as the sun, his brightness hides the female's value. The hero's consort, once the glowing virgin, is now the hag (Campbell 302-7).

The old woman has circled all four aspects of the female: the virgin, the harlot, the consort, and the hag. She is the complete evolution in the matrix. Ironically, now she is also the least desirable to the hero. However, young Dr. Frankenstein, the

grandson, accepts the hag's cosmic value and follows her guidance. Although Frau Blucher is the hag of American culture, the author illustrates that in eastern influence, she is the total embodiment of the cosmic female (Campbell 303). Joseph Campbell's cryptic message shows that each woman possesses a unique value in the matrix. She cannot reach her destiny without the hero, and the young man cannot reach the end of his heroic journey without the matrix of women.

Works Cited

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