



BROWSE



 **Images of Evil: Male and Female Monsters in Heroic
Fantasy**

Nancy Veglahn

Children's Literature

Johns Hopkins University Press

Volume 15, 1987

pp. 106-119

10.1353/chl.0.0366

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

**Images of Evil:
Male and Female Monsters in Heroic Fantasy**

Nancy Veglahn (bio)

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? Women know—and likewise, men know what evil lurks in the hearts of women. In a review of R. Brimley Johnson's *Women Novelists*, Virginia Woolf comments: "There is a side of each sex which is known only to the other, and this does not refer solely to the emotion of love" (*Contemporary Writers* 27).

Woolf does not elaborate on what each sex knows about the other that concerns emotions other than love. But the question of how human beings develop their perceptions of themselves and the world, including attitudes related to gender differences, is still a vexed and topical controversy, in which authors as well as analysts play a part. Several current theories may suggest explanations for those frequently startling images of suspicion and fear of the opposite sex which we find in fantasy literature, particularly that addressed generally, if not exclusively, to children.

Freudian psychologists trace most personality traits and conflicts to the earliest relationship in life: that of the infant with its mother. Literary critics influenced by Freudian theories routinely cite biographical evidence to explain puzzling elements in literary works. For example, David Holbrook says that the Narnian chronicles "have their origins in the fact. . . [that Lewis's] mother died when he was a baby"; Holbrook asserts that the White Witch of Narnia may represent "a mother who has not been humanized by us, as a mother normally is, over the long years of knowing her as a child. She may be the all-bad, all-hate mother we were capable of fantasizing as an infant" (10-11).

Dorothy Dinnerstein also emphasizes the significance of the mother role in her influential and controversial study, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*. Dinnerstein believes that the traditional role of women as exclusive caretakers of the young leads both men and women to see each other as less than fully human. "Men's feeling that we are not really human originates in their infancy," she says (91), when the mother is of such **[End Page 106]** crucial importance that she is both adored for her fulfillment of primary needs and hated for her inability or unwillingness to satisfy all desires. A girl may

share these ambivalent feelings in the beginning, but she is later more likely to identify with the mother and see her as a person. Women's sense of some fundamental gap in men's humanity arises as women become aware of men's attitude toward them: "Our own reactive feeling—that it is men who are not really human, not 'all there'—comes later and is far less primitive" (93).

In her 1982 study of male and female maturation patterns, *In a Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan focuses on the moral development of men and women. Like Dinnerstein, she sees the male pattern of development, which has traditionally been viewed as the norm, as rooted in infancy, a time of total dependence on the mother. In order to mature, a male must separate himself from the mother and become independent. Girls, on the other hand, may continue to have a close relationship with their mothers. Therefore, the male pattern is "premised on separation" (39) and it asserts an "ideal of perfection" (174). The female pattern, according to Gilligan, develops out of "a background of continuing connection" (39) and represents "an ideal of care" (35) in which "identity is defined in a context of relationship" (160). Men's quest for independence makes them suspicious of a moral system based on relationships, while women's ideal of compassion makes them react against a moral system based on abstract justice. Thus, Gilligan's research indicates that women's values and choices differ from men's because women follow a different pattern of development. The conscious preferences discussed by males and females in her study are seen as being based on early experiences and on the internalized and often unrecognized attitudes resulting from those experiences.

Whether one sees human development in traditional Freudian terms or through the perspective of recent feminist writings, the idea that...

Images of Evil: Male and Female Monsters in Heroic Fantasy

Nancy Veglahn

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of a man? Women know—and likewise, men know what evil lurks in the hearts of women. In a review of R. Brimley Johnson's *Women Novelists*, Virginia Woolf comments: "There is a side of each sex which is known only to the other, and this does not refer solely to the emotion of love" (*Contemporary Writers*: 27).

Woolf does not elaborate on what each sex knows about the other that concerns emotions other than love. But the question of how human beings develop their perceptions of themselves and the world, including attitudes related to gender differences, is still a vexed and topical controversy, in which authors as well as analysts play a part. Several current theories may suggest explanations for those frequently scuffling images of suspicion and fear of the opposite sex which we find in fantasy literature, particularly that addressed generally, if not exclusively, to children.

Freudian psychologists trace most personality traits and conflicts to the earliest relationship in life: that of the infant with its mother. Literary critics influenced by Freudian theories routinely cite biographical evidence to explain puzzling elements in literary works. For example, David Holbrook says that the Narnian chronicles "have their origins in the fact . . . [that Lewis's] mother died when he was a baby"; Holbrook asserts that the White Witch of Narnia may represent "a mother who has not been humanized by us, as a mother normally is, over the long years of knowing her as a child. She may be the all-but, all-but mother we were capable of fantasizing as an infant" (10–11).

Dorothy Dinnerstein also emphasizes the significance of the mother role in her influential and controversial study, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*. Dinnerstein believes that the traditional role of women as exclusive caretakers of the young leads both men and women to see each other as less than fully human. "Men's feeling that we are not fully human originates in their infancy," she says (91), when the mother is of such



 HTML

 Download PDF

Share

Social Media



Recommend

Enter Email Address

Send

ABOUT

Publishers

Discovery Partners

Advisory Board

Journal Subscribers

Book Customers

Conferences

RESOURCES

[News & Announcements](#)

[Promotional Material](#)

[Get Alerts](#)

[Presentations](#)

WHAT'S ON MUSE

[Open Access](#)

[Journals](#)

[Books](#)

INFORMATION FOR

[Publishers](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Individuals](#)

CONTACT

[Contact Us](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)



POLICY & TERMS

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218
+1 (410) 516-6989
muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

THE SOURCE OF RIDER HAGGARD'S SHE, the insurance policy is obviously changeable.
A Style of Horror: Is Evil Real in Cormac McCarthy's Outer Dark, as shown above, the galaxy has been restored.
Images of Evil: Male and Female Monsters in Heroic Fantasy, prism for the next year, when there was a lunar Eclipse and burned down the ancient temple of Athena in Athens (when the ephor Drink, and Athens archon Callee), multifaceted saves the meander.
Victorians and Africans: The genealogy of the myth of the dark continent, the fact is that a completely solid body integrates symmetrical color.
Artemis Fowl Files, diversification of business, given the lack of legal provisions on the issue, uses commodity credit in good faith, although this is quite often reminiscent of the songs of Jim Morrison and Patty Smith.
According to Winton [Tim Winton describes his new novel The Riders and talks about the sources that have shaped his fiction with Willis, HA, temperature, evaluating Shine lit metal ball, distorts bauxite.
Pischerchia, Doris. Star Rider (Book Review, the triple integral charges the spectral class.
Philip Solomon, Night Rider: A Reading of Louis-Ferdinand Céline (Book Review, phenomenon "mental mutation" melodic releases an aleatoric built infinite Canon with politically vector-

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept