

Names

Professor's Names

Course

Date

Film Review: *The Devil Wears Prada*

Based on a 2003 novel by Lauren Weisberger of the same name, the 2006 film—*The Devil Wears Prada*—tracks a young assistant as she learns to make life choices [CITATION Hat06 \l 1033]. Anne Hathaway (playing as Andrea/Andy Sachs) and Meryl Streep (as Miranda Priestly), are the movie's chief protagonists. The plot's narrator, Andy, goes through considerable mistreatment from her boss, Miranda. It is, however, difficult to cast Miranda entirely as a villain. Her success as a powerful executive of Runaway fashion magazine also lends her role a terribly interesting quality. Granted, Andy had no plans of ever working in the cutthroat fashion industry. She is, after all, a recent law graduate from Northwestern University. Still, the pressures of delivering clothes to customers who continually demand what is in vogue leave little room for survival for a down-to-earth woman like Andy. Thus, while the film depicts Miranda as a malicious protagonist, she nonetheless plays an important part in her assistant's professional growth.

POINT OF VIEW

Weisberger tells her tale from Andy's, first-person point of view. The approach affects the plot in several ways. According to the book, *Telling the Tale*, "One the great advantages of the first-person story is that it puts [the audience] inside the narrator's head" [CITATION Bod09 \p 9 \l 1033]. It is thus easy to understand why Andy does what she does. On watching *The Devil*

Wears Prada, for instance, one identifies with the tribulations that Miranda dishes out to her assistants.

Notwithstanding, the movie's dependence on Andy to tell the story is disadvantageous to some extent. Whereas Andy describes what she thinks of the other characters; sometimes in even a judgmental tone; there is no way the viewers can determine with certainty whether she is justified. In one scene, for example, Andy quips, "I don't know what else I can do because if I do something right, it's unacknowledged. [Miranda] doesn't even say thank you. But if I do something wrong, she is vicious" [CITATION Hat06 \l 1033]. Andy actually risks alienating the audience in the scene. She sounds boastful when she concludes that she is right and thus deserves accolades from her boss. It would be more helpful, for instance, if there was another perspective to challenge Andy's claims. The alternative point of view would have injected objectivity into the competing arguments on whether one protagonist is right or wrong.

CHOICE OF PLOT

The Devil Wears Prada exhibits the character plot of transformation. In the text *20 Master Plots*, Ronald Tobias states, "We always try to understand who we are and what is the essence of human nature, and sometimes we make discoveries about ourselves" [CITATION Tob12 \p 184 \n \l 1033]. The description befits the manner Andy went through change because of the "dramatic moments of transition" at Runway magazine [CITATION Tob12 \p 184 \m Hat06 \l 1033].

According to Tobias, a story's plot qualifies to be transformative if a part of the protagonist's life embodies a period of change [CITATION Tob12 \p 189 \n \l 1033]. From the onset, Andy eyed a job as a journalist at Runway magazine. Fresh from Northwestern University, she accepts a stint as a junior assistant in the belief that it would make her

ascendancy into a journalist's role at the magazine even easier. Although she fits poorly among the fashionistas at the company, she eventually transforms after experiencing unending scorn from her colleagues and her boss.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Andy Sachs. She is the major protagonist in the film who signed up as a junior assistant to the chief editor of Runway magazine. Although she wishes to build a career in journalism, her boss keeps her away from actual writing with endless requests for personal errand runs. Thus, Andy faces an external conflict where the antagonist is her boss. She nonetheless strives to prevent her job at Runway from taking over her entire life. Her relationship with her boyfriend, Nate, for instance, gradually takes a back seat to her career challenges. Andy's personality fits poorly with the demands of the fashion industry. Apart from her drab fashion sense, she is also overly modest and awkward. Her redeeming qualities are ambition and persistence. Despite earning a poor pay as a second assistant, she keeps on working for the overbearing editor-in-chief in the hope that she will get a break as a journalist at the magazine in the future [CITATION Hat06 \l 1033].

Miranda Priestly. Acting as the chief editor of Runway magazine, she is without a doubt one of the other major characters in the film. From Andy's point of view, she is the antagonist who is also the cause of the conflicts between them. Her status as a villain is, however, disputable. As a highly experienced fashionista, she may be simply attempting putting too much emphasis on teaching her juniors the ropes of the fashion industry. Because Miranda demands high standards from her staff, her assistants do not last long in their roles. Some of the traits that describe her include being commanding, driven, and precise. Similarly, the moniker "Devil" in the film's title refers to her tendency of being too intense and uncompromising.

Nigel. Although he plays a minor role in the movie, actor Stanley Tucci who plays as Nigel shows that it is possible for the staff to attain a level of competence that Miranda demands. He is an editor at the magazine. His sense of duty is commendable thus earning him a revered status as Miranda confidante. Apart from a keen sense of loyalty, he also has immense experience on how the fashion industry works. Everything seems to be working as expected for Nigel. As the film concludes, however, the viewers realize that he is not immune from the scheming Miranda. His role thus serves as a characterization device for Miranda's personality.

Other Minor Characters. Miranda's senior assistant, Emily—and Lily, Andy's friend, act as the minor female characters. There are also male sub-characters, such as Andy's boyfriend, Andy's father, Miranda's husband, and Miranda's boss (the owner of the magazine) who appear only minimally but are pivotal to the character development of the major actors.

OVERARCHING THEMES

The Devil Wears Prada tackles numerous themes with one sweep. Among the most prominent is Andy's transformation from a down-to-earth graduate into a personal assistant who struggles with conforming to the demands of a career in fashion. The article *High Fashions*, for instance, described Andy's change by arguing, "The heroine of Devil wants to be a serious journalist, gets caught in the glitzy maelstrom, but finally cuts loose" [CITATION Kau06 \p 20 \l 1033].

The film also tackled the theme of women and power. It relied heavily on the character of Miranda, for example, to show women in power. The cinematography, especially, expressed the theme from the opening scenes and throughout the movie. At the start of the movie, for instance, viewers witness an influential executive as she reports to a day at the Runway magazine offices. As a sleek limo pulls up at the offices' entrance, a woman steps out and it is evident that her

shows are designer. Once the audience sees a body shot of the woman, it discovers that she is Miranda and that she has an undeniable aura of power around her [CITATION Hat06 \l 1033].

Ultimately, *The Devil Wears Prada* offers a study on women and career. It explored the sub-themes of professionals who can speak up for themselves and those who are able to exploit their positions for the sake of career survival or progression. As an illustration—when Andy reported for her interview, Miranda ignored her completely. Moreover, when Nigel entered the room, both he and Miranda pretended that Andy was not even in the room at all. It is only after Andy stood her ground did the two executives finally acknowledge her presence [CITATION Hat06 \l 1033]. In another case, when Miranda faced the scary prospect of losing her job at the magazine, she exploited her power networks to survive. When the owner of the company sought to bring onboard Jacqueline as the new editor-in-chief, Miranda simply enumerated the employees that she would walk off with from Runway magazine. Using her power networks, therefore, Miranda managed to fend off the imminent dismissal [CITATION Hat06 \l 1033].

CONCLUSION

The Devil Wears Prada explores how women handle self-actualization and their relationship with power. It, however, ends up offering contradictory views about the same. For instance, even though the main protagonist advances in her career, her private relationships suffer in the process. Nonetheless, most viewers will benefit from finding that the characters can serve as role models. Both Andy and Miranda, for example, have something that they can teach. As the film ended, Andy broke her relationship with the quasi-villain, Miranda. As a result, those that frowned upon her servitude would applaud her action. Notwithstanding Miranda excelled at displaying how women can use power to their advantage. For that reason, she also qualifies to be

a role model for all women and girls who watch the film. Eventually, whichever character one supports there is something that one can learn regarding 'girl power.'

Works Cited

Bodden, Valerie. Telling the Tale: Narration and Point of View. 1st. Mankato: Creative Education, 2009.

Kauffmann, Stanley. "High Fashions." New Republic 31 July 2006: 20-21.

The Devil Wears Prada. By Aline Brosh McKenna and Lauren Weisberger. Dir. David Frankel.

Perf. Anne Hathaway, Meryl Streep and Adrian Grenier. Prods. Wendy Finerman and

Karen Rosenfelt. Fox 2000 Pictures, 2006.

Tobias, Ronald B. 20 Master Plots: And how to Build Them. Georgetown: F&W Media International, 2012