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Examining *Wonder Woman* through a Feminist Voice: How  
Patty Jenkins' 2017 Adaptation Upheaved her Creation,  
Representation, and 80 Year Legacy

A Thesis by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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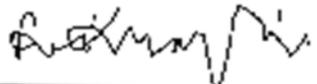
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May 2022

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Year Legacy

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by Tatiana Madrid

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## ABSTRACT

# Examining *Wonder Woman* through a Feminist Voice: How Patty Jenkins' Adaptation Upheaved her Creation, Representation, and 80 Year Legacy

by Tatiana Madrid

This thesis aims to contribute to the scholarship on the modern female superhero by exploring Patty Jenkins' 2017 film *Wonder Woman* and how the female super-heroine is viewed. In this study I look at Jill Lepore's renowned novel *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*, Patty Jenkins's 2017 film *Wonder Woman*, Signe Bergstrom's *Wonder Woman: Ambassador of Truth*, Allison Harvey's *Feminist Media Studies* and other scholarship as well as reviews of the film and articles pertaining to the feminist movement Patty Jenkins portrays in the film. First, I will explore *Wonder Woman's* Creation and Intent. Second, I delve into Director Patty Jenkins and her Feminist Voice. Then I explore The Rejection of the Male Gaze in *Wonder Woman*. Finally, I examine at the legacy of *Wonder Woman* and how Patty Jenkins along with Gal Gadot has changed how *Wonder Woman* will be viewed.

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# Examining *Wonder Woman* through a Feminist Voice: How Patty Jenkins' Adaptation Upheaved her Creation, Representation, and 80 Year Legacy

## *Introduction*

In 1941, Wonder Woman landed her invisible jet in the United States, entering the world of man for the first time after Zeus granted her life. Shield and god-killing sword strapped to her back, she came ready to fight for peace, justice, and those that could not fight for themselves. Wonder Woman has created a conversation between feminists, viewers of the film, and readers of the comics, and critics, who have engaged in the endless debate over her feminist voice. Wonder Woman has starred in comic books, live TV shows, and two films in her existence. Eighty years later, with millions of loyal fans, across continents and several oceans, Wonder Woman is the world's most recognized superheroine of all time, and she has never been out of print. She is the gold standard of superheroes and superhero comics. Through the various depictions of the heroine, only one female director finally fearlessly gave her a feminist voice. According to director Patty Jenkins, Wonder Woman, historically a victim of the male gaze and mercilessly objectified by her male counterparts, will no longer let her past representations define her. Jenkins emphasizes Wonder Woman's values, warmth, sense of humor, strength, and the years spent training to be the greatest warrior on Earth. On-screen is a woman who naturally embodies respect, hope, compassion, and women's rights, proving the accuracy of this feminist version. The only adaptation to have fulfilled Wonder Woman's feminist potential is Patty Jenkins' adaptation of Wonder Woman in the 2017 film that changed how female superheroes

will be viewed. Throughout this study, I will examine how Jenkins, using her powerful feminist voice, has finally turned Wonder Woman into a feminist, the ultimate admirable female lead.

### I. *The Creation & Intent of Wonder Woman*

As the most popular female comic-book superheroine of all time, Wonder Woman has a secret identity like all other superheroes. Unlike any other superhero, she has a secret history that one scholar made her mission to discover. Jill Lepore, the author of the renowned book, *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*, dug up decades of history on the golden tiara, red bustier, red leather boot wearing female superhero, and her polymath creator, William Moulton Marston. Marston had a hidden identity, too, one that he kept “as well stowed as the flask of rye he tucked into the pocket of his coonskin coat—until, later in his life, he spilled his secrets all over the pages of his comic books” (Lepore 26). Through thousands of pages of photographs, manuscripts, legal briefs, medical records, sketches, FBI files, detailed meeting minutes of a sex cult, and diaries written in secret code, Lepore found the history of *Wonder Woman* (Lepore xiii). She discovered that Wonder Woman is no ordinary superhero:

She’s the missing link in a chain of events that begins with the woman’s suffrage campaigns of the 1910s and ends with the troubled place of feminism fully a century later. Feminism made Wonder Woman. And then Wonder Woman remade feminism, which hasn’t been altogether good for feminism... Wonder Woman began in a protest march, a bedroom, and a birth control clinic... Wonder Woman has been fighting for women’s rights for a very long time, battles hard fought but never won. This is the story of her origins—the stuff of wonders, and of lies. (Lepore xiii-xiv)

Lepore had her hands on decades of secrets that revealed how Wonder Woman could be traced to the history of comic books and superheroes while also at the center of science, law, politics, birth control, polygamy, and women's rights. She discovered that Wonder Woman wasn't superior to everyone else; she was created to fight for equality and women's rights. Wonder Woman "wasn't meant to be a superwoman; she was meant to be an everywoman" (Lepore 220). Though Wonder Woman's comics have not always upheld that same oath of representation, it was always her creator's intention. *Wonder Woman* was inspired by William Marston's belief and support of the feminist movement, particularly during the first wave. During the first wave, feminism "meant advocacy of women's rights and freedoms and a vision of equality marked different from that embraced by the "woman movement" of the nineteenth century" (Lepore 18-19). Though the women's suffrage movement was prominent in Europe, one feminist said, "All feminist are suffragists, but not all suffragists are feminists" (Lepore 19). Feminists distinguished themselves claiming: "feminists rejected the idea of women as reformers whose moral authority came from their differentness from men," Lepore explains (Lepore 19). Women at the time were fighting a hard battle for equality, and female feminists "advocated instead [for] women's full and equal participation in politics, work, and the arts, on the grounds that women were in every way equal to men" (Lepore 19).

In the winter of 1911, during his first year at Harvard University, William Moulton Marston thought it was time to end his own life via cyanide poisoning. He decided to take his finals instead and see how he did before he ceased to exist. Before his exams, Marston attended a lecture by none other than British suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst in Brattle Hall, a block from Harvard Yard, where she was banned from speaking (Lepore 11). She talked to 1,500 students packed into a hall fit for 500 at capacity. Arms in shackles, she lectured about the ignorance of

men knowing nothing of the needs of women and getting away with aristocratic attitudes simply because they are men. Marston watched in fascination as the feminist revolution took place right before his eyes. The image of Emmeline Pankhurst in shackles stuck with him and decades later, being shackled appeared in the *Wonder Woman* comics as her only weakness and his evolving fetish.

Lepore speaks about Marston's decision to create *Wonder Woman*, writing, “As a consulting psychologist, Marston convinced [the publisher] that what he really needed to counter the attacks on comics was a female superhero” (Lepore 187). Marston’s argument on female superiority stemmed from centuries of women’s writing, particularly from the philosophy of the nineteenth-century women’s movement (Lepore 170). He deemed women the superior gender; he thought women should rule the world because love is stronger than the greed of dominance (Lepore 103). In 1925, Marston began teaching at Tufts University as a professor in psychology, where he met his secret second wife, Olive Byrne, in his Experimental Psychology class. Byrne, the niece of the famous feminist and Birth Control Federation of America (later called Planned Parenthood) founder Margaret Sanger, became infatuated with Marston. She took four of his offered courses and began working as his research assistant: “They decided—or maybe he decided and she agreed to—conduct a study together. He wanted to know how women felt when they were tied up and how other women felt when they beat them” (Lepore 113). When he conducted the experiment at a Baby Party that female freshman pledges of Alpha Omicron Pi were obligated to attend, he reported seeing pleasure and desire on the diaper-clad women as they were blindfolded, restrained, and hit with sticks by the sophomores in the sorority. Marston later adds the same scene to the *Wonder Woman* comics Marston is not only subjecting women to captivity and violence, but he’s also thriving off his supposed results, claiming that women find pleasure

in perpetuating violence and being dominated by other women. There are many aspects of this study that later appear in the *Wonder Woman* comics that are problematic. First, violence against women is not acceptable. To have women purposefully demean themselves and act like babies who are being punished like children by other women is wholly wrong. Women are the bearers of children, the gender that gives life and furthers humans, so to imply that there is an inner or subconscious captivation to overcome the supposed suppressed side of violence and needing to inflict it upon other women is sickening. It reverts women back to suppression, slavery, and not having any rights or say in what happens to their bodies. His entire hypothesis and argument for the study is antifeminist. Marston claims to be a supporter of the feminist movement, a supporter of women and yet he views this scenario as pleasurable. Needless to say, he was not the most morally sound.

Marston may not have exerted dominance in the form of bondage with his wives, but he displayed his desire to do so by binding Wonder Woman and every woman featured in every *Wonder Woman* comic book produced during his reign. While the strength of women was a constant theme in the *Wonder Woman* comics, bondage was another. Marston thrived on finding creative ways to tether Wonder Woman, and it showed in every single comic; as Lepore explains, “Not a comic book in which Wonder Woman appeared and hardly a page, lacked a scene of bondage” (Lepore 233). Marston kept his quest for dominance a secret until it spilled out onto the pages of Wonder Woman, and not even the publisher of the comics could talk him out of creating the illustrated scenes. Lepore says how “in episode after episode, Wonder Woman is chained, bound, gagged, lassoed, tied, fettered, and manacled” (Lepore 233). Marston has her collared, locked in an electric cage, forced into a straitjacket, eyes and mouth taped shut, roped then shoved into a glass box and dropped into the ocean, locked in a bank vault, tied to railroad

tracks, pinned to a wall, on every single comic page (Lepore 233). While Marston claimed to support the feminist movement, he indubitably was not. Marston does not exempt Wonder Woman's alter ego, Diana Prince, from being shackled, as displayed in one episode where she is chained to a kitchen stove. It's true that many of these same images of Wonder Woman and every woman appearing in the comics in chains are represented through images and hold a prominent place in the feminist and suffrage movement protest "as an allegorical representation of their lack of rights and liberties—there's more to it than that" (Lepore 234). Though loyal fans and critics voice objections to these tired scenes, Marston sees them as educational.

As Marston responded in a letter to Charles Gaines, the publisher of DC Comics, voicing his sexist views:

This, my dear friend, is the one truly great contribution of my *Wonder Woman* strip to the moral education of the young. The only hope for peace is to teach young people who are full of pep and unbound force to enjoy being bound — enjoy submission to kind authority, wise authority, not merely tolerate such submission. Wars will only cease when humans enjoy being bound. (Lepore 238)

Marston's great contribution to educating the young revolved around submission and learning to enjoy it. His claims to support the feminist movement and being one himself remain claims; his mastery in deception from his psychology degree is unmatched. Marston was no feminist; he was a con artist and a good one. He had an entire country fooled with his *Wonder Woman* comics and was teaching generations of boys to keep girls tied down. When female comic staff member Dorothy Roubicek, with six months of experience, was asked her opinion on the current *Wonder Woman* comics, she objected to incorporating bondage. Marston met her objections with laughter. Lepore adds that Marston told Gaines that "the secret of a woman's

allure, [is that] women enjoy submission—being bound” (Lepore 237). Marston may have created her for the feminist movement, but his actions only harmed her. The version of Wonder Woman that he created was heavy on exploring themes reflective of specific gender roles. He claims to have created Wonder Woman as “a standard among children and young people of strong, free, courageous womanhood” (Lepore 220). With every intention to “combat the idea that women were inferior to men, and inspire girls to self-confidence and achievement in athletics, occupations and professions monopolized by men” (Lepore 220). Marston gave her a space to be an independent woman where she ran for president and became a scientist and leader. Yet, he subjected her to men’s metaphorical and literal tyrannical chains, which she spent the majority of comics freeing herself from. Marston set the tone for Wonder Woman to constantly be at the mercy of men who captured her time and time again. He enjoyed writing detailed scenes with specific instructions to her first illustrator, H.G. Peter, on how to tie her up, stating, “All women enjoy submission, particularly in sexual ways” (Morris 78). Stuck in his superiority complex, Marston claimed to know what women subconsciously desired, ignorantly believing he understood the female mind and argued that their power resides in traditional feminine roles: “their superiority came from the ability to nurture, protect, to submit” (Morris 78). He believed that men craved dominance and power, whereas women’s ability to submit “to loving authority” was the only solution to lead America into peaceful bliss; his actions were more accurate than his words. He took this potentially strong character and made her a victimized woman.

After he died in 1947, Marston’s exploitation of Wonder Woman continued for seventy-five years and forty-four artists. As each new editor and comic team arrives with their own ideas and values for Wonder Woman, the previous storylines are abandoned. Each comic becomes a reboot of the infamous heroine. The suit she wears morphs into an over-the-top, barely-there

leather bikini, a one-piece swimsuit that reveals more than it covers, and even unfortunately, a thong that she is illustrated wearing during an interview with Lois Lane in 2001. As Morris explains, the superheroine's waist shrunk, her breasts and legs grew, her uniform a size extra small, and she was sidelined as a secretary (Morris 79). Marston, cast aside as Gardner Fox, who worked mainly on the *Batman* and *Hawkman* comics, wrote the *Justice League* Comics, where Wonder Woman is yet again helpless and useless (Lepore 211). She hardly ever leaves the Justice Society headquarters because she must answer the mail. Fox claimed that she did so happily in Justice League. In doing so, Morris explains how it strips Wonder Woman of her power: "effectively making Wonder Woman unable to obtain the right to individual conscience and judgment, but instead giving her the role of upholding the characteristics that men believed best suited a 'powerful' woman" (Morris 79). At the time, men including Fox believed that women, and Wonder Woman needed to be silent, secretarial, to focus on the home, and ultimately, to submit to men.

One of Marston's widows, Sadie Elizabeth Holloway, pitched herself as the new writer and publisher of *Wonder Woman* to the new editor-in-chief, Jack Leibowitz. Still, the DC comic editor did not think she suited the position. Robert Kanigher, who replaced Marston as editor and remained the dictator of Wonder Woman's life for twenty years, the longest run by a writer on the comic to date, transformed Wonder Woman into a degraded female whose primary concerns centered around her forced marriage to Steve Trevor rather than her superhero duties. He was not known for his support of the women's movement and was later called a chauvinist by his assistant. Kanigher had Wonder Woman quit her job as the Justice Society secretary and made her the editor of a Hopeless Hearts advice column where she advised brokenhearted couples. Nonetheless, the powerlessness that Wonder Woman experienced only increased when Mike

Sekowsky joined the comic team as an illustrator, where he completely removed Wonder Woman's powers, stripping her of the iconic star-spangled outfit instead, making her a fashion designer. The only attribute of Wonder Woman that remained consistent throughout her adaptations was the power she had to control men with her body. Her figure transformed into, what Sekowsky defined as, a feminine, womanly body, her features softened, her clothing not suitable for battle and defending the World, and he replaced her boots with ballet slippers because they looked good to the male viewer (Bergstrom 59).

In the mid to late 1950s, DC Comics and other comics in the industry were subject to hearings by the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency that claimed comics were becoming a threat to the values of American children. Hannan Morris explains how the U.S Senate, upon hearing the concerns of Fredric Wertham, a psychiatrist who pleaded to the Senate that the comics and their violent depictions harmed children, further led the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA) to enforce a new code of conduct (Morris 79). The Senate concluded that the CMAA needed to adopt a unique code that put American values first. It prohibited specific material from hitting the shelves and said that comics could not: "contain or make a reference to anything cruel, kinky, unconventional, or homosexual" (Bergstrom 20) and those comics need to be conventional, "the treatment of love-romance stories shall emphasize the value of the home and the sanctity of marriage" (Morris 79). This new code encouraged Kanigher to create a version of the *Wonder Woman* comics solely concerned with marriage. Steve Trevor became a dominating figure in her life, altering her motivations and forcing Wonder Woman to marry him in one comic by using her lasso of truth— "destroying Wonder Woman's freedom to choose for herself" (Morris 79-80). Wonder Woman remained powerless

and objectified when Mike Sekowsky took over scripting and illustrations; Wonder Woman's lips get fuller, more luscious, and her eyes full of lust.

The hearing followed the end of World War II when millions of women were told that for the sake of peace, their labor was no longer needed as it threatened the stability of the nation and undermined male authority (Lepore 271). Wonder Woman entered what is known as the "Diana Prince Era," in which she chose to abandon her superpowers to live and fit into the world of man and run a clothing boutique. No longer Wonder Woman, Diana Prince became a babysitter, a fashion model, a movie star, and a housewife to Steve Trevor. Meanwhile, the rising popularity of second-wave feminism that was governing daily newspapers and magazines:

Focused on supporting women's autonomy over their bodies through access to contraception and abortion and on increasing the number of women in domains previously dominated by men, such as education, politics, and the corporate world. Public awareness discussion of women's rights, issues, and criticisms of patriarchy were amplified (Harvey 11).

Second-wave feminism's focus was everything that Wonder Woman's creator intended her to represent. Yet, she was busy being tied up, again and again, she had no autonomy over her own body because it was dominated by her illustrators and editors. While Diana was cooking dinner for Steve Trevor, she was meant to be a representation of the one-woman revolution happening in feminism. In July of 1970 Wonder Woman's illegal comeback in an underground comic, *It Ain't Me Babe* featured the heroine marching in a protest, but DC Comics still had Wonder Woman in chains. It wasn't until a few years later, that *Wonder Woman* made a strong comeback thanks to the efforts of feminist icon Gloria Steinem, who called DC Comics directly stating her concerns on the whereabouts of the beloved superheroine. She told them how important Wonder

Woman is to the “young women of America” (Lepore 287). Steinem grew up reading the original *Wonder Woman* comics and when she looked back in the 70s at the *Wonder Woman* stories from the 1940s, she saw their underlying feminist message. In the beginning, *Wonder Woman* was intended to have a feminist message but as time passed, while her superhuman strength remained she became more submissive to men. (Lepore 285-285). At first, it’s difficult and incomprehensible to discern why Steinem would be such a fan of the *Wonder Woman* comics. She was not a feminist icon like Steinem, she had not accomplished anything. Upon further inspection of Jill Lepore's *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*, it becomes clear that perhaps Steinem admired *Wonder Woman* despite the fact that she is bound in every single comic on just about every single page, because she is able to get out of her binds. *Wonder Woman* escapes using her intellect, wit, and her training she spent a lifetime on Themyscira learning. Naturally, Steinem was upset when the Diana Prince era began in 1968 and *Wonder Woman* wasn’t called *Wonder Woman* anymore. She had lost her iconic outfit and superpowers. With the renewed women’s movement in 1971, Steinem was determined to see *Wonder Woman*’s comeback. *Wonder Woman* was featured on the cover of *Ms. Magazine* along with a four page pull out that re-introduced *Wonder Woman* into the era and second-wave feminism. Steinem inspired *Ms. Magazine*'s declaration of *Wonder Woman* for president in July of 1972, another feminist confrontation directed at DC Comics. By 1973, *Wonder Woman* was named “a symbol of feminist revolt” and the Supreme Court issued a ruling legalizing abortion (Lepore 287). Again, it took a feminist voice to get *Wonder Woman* back to fighting for justice and those that cannot fight for themselves.

However, there was no feminist voice among her many different creators. The constant in Diana's life is her treatment by her male counterparts and using her ever-transforming body to control men, in comic after comic. Her body that was once created and built for fighting, which showed the lifetime of training she experienced on Themyscira, was altered every time a new male illustrator drew his version of the ideal woman. Seventy-five years went by, and all Wonder Woman had to offer was sex appeal. Loyal fans stuck by Wonder Woman but were eager, if not desperate, for her to have an authentic female and feminist voice. Wonder Woman needed to be let loose and untamed; after all, she's the greatest warrior Earth has ever known. In the hands of Wonder Woman's one authentic feminist voice, Patty Jenkins completely altered this aspect of the comic. She emphasizes Wonder Woman's values, warmth, sense of humor, strength, and the years spent training to be the fiercest Amazon warrior the world has ever seen. On-screen is a woman who naturally respects other women as strong, beautiful individuals capable of making their own decisions and frankly beating out male warriors because they can do it better. Jenkins' most crucial decision in her portrayal of Wonder Woman was casting Gal Gadot – a producer of the film and former law student who won Miss Israel 2004 – is a professional in Kung Fu, Kickboxing, Jujitsu, Swordsmanship, and Brazilian Capoeira (Virginiás 485). She also served a mandatory two years as an enlisted soldier of the Israel Defense Forces. She was promoted to a combat trainer, meaning she could handle a weapon, and herself (Bergstrom 105). Gal Gadot, a woman who represents and exudes strength, compassion, kindness, beauty, and is well-versed in various fighting disciplines, is unlike any Wonder Woman before her. She naturally embodies qualities that women and girls should look up to. With feminist values embedded into the direction, acting, and after a long-fought battle over compensation and budget, Gal Gadot helped Patty Jenkins turn this film into a feminist movie.

## II. Director Patty Jenkins and her Feminist Voice

Women directing action movies are a rarity in the cinematic world. Only nine female directors have directed big-budget films of \$100 million or higher within that realm. To name a few, Kathryn Bigelow, having directed three out of the ten most well-known action movies (*The Hurt Locker*, *Zero Dark 30*), is the first and only female director to win an Oscar for Best Director for *K-11: The Widowmaker*. Jennifer Yuh Nelson, the director of *Kung Fu Panda 2*, had one of the enormous budgets of \$150 million and was brought back for the third and final installment but was paired with a male director (Welk). Lana and Lily Wachowski teamed up to bring us the *Cloud Atlas* (\$128 million) and *Jupiter Ascending* (\$176 million) films that raked in just as much money as they spent (Welk). Another female director worth mentioning is Anna Boden. She was also matched with a male co-director Ryan Fleck for Marvel Comics' 2018 debut female lead film *Captain Marvel*, a year after the premiere of *Wonder Woman*. *Wonder Woman's* budget (\$150 million) comes in just under *Captain Marvel's* at \$158 million to create the film, which is more than what was spent to make *Captain America* in 2011 with a budget of \$140 million (Welk). The common theme to each of these female directors is how hard they had to fight to make these movies and get compensated like a man. Even in 2014, in a world full of advancements in technology, and access to information, 85% of all films produced and made in Hollywood still did not have female directors or writers, and 92% had no female cinematographers (Morris 81). The male perspective and thus the male gaze is an unfortunate and consequential outcome of the lack of females on set (Morris 81). The pressure for a woman to take on an action film is a heavy burden because of past representations of female characters in action movies. For instance, Patty Jenkins shattered records for a female director's largest

opening. *Wonder Woman* is the highest-grossing film directed by a woman bringing in close to \$1 billion worldwide as women and men watched *Wonder Woman* take claim to the big screen. The difference with Jenkins' direction is the authentic depiction from her own experience of what it means to be a woman and a feminist. She establishes her characters, her female characters as independent subjects, the center of the film, and not sexualized objectified items. Jenkins cares about how her characters, specifically female characters, are viewed in her films. One of the most impressive and liberating aspects of the film is that while critics have read the film as a feminist manifesto, Jenkins did not set out to intentionally create a feminist film. She says, "That is the success of feminism. I have always wanted to be last-wave feminism, where you're so feminist, you're not thinking about it at all. Where are you're like, 'Of course this superhero is the greatest superhero of all time. Oh, she's a woman? I wasn't even thinking about that!'" (Setoodeh) Which speaks to Jenkins' skills as a director that she could naturally embody these feminist qualities in a film and portrayed them beautifully without trying to oversell *Wonder Woman* as a feminist film. It's a wonderful notion to think that at her core, Jenkins is so feminist, and believes in the movement to the point that she doesn't have to try to be feminist at all, it comes as naturally as breathing.

Patty Jenkins was under a lot of pressure to produce a *Wonder Woman* film that would set the stage for how female-directed, female-led action films and any action film would be directed from this point forward. Jenkins fought a hard battle for her compensation to direct *Wonder Woman* and produce this film in a way that brought not just women and girls to watch it but also the male ticket buyer. One critic commented, "The success of 'Wonder Woman' will probably encourage studios to do more to equalize the playing field. For years, female superheroes were held back by the argument — a ridiculous one in the eyes of most critics — that male ticket

buyer would stay home if a woman held the action; the failures of ‘Catwoman’ in 2004 and ‘Elektra’ in 2005 were used as proof” (Barnes). Female action leads were not given the time of day, yet there have been ten film adaptations of *Batman* since the first film, *Batman: The Movie* in 1966, and the most recent, *The Batman* in 2022 (Sharma). DC Comics' other infamous hero *Superman* has had his run of films with six film adaptations beginning in 1978 with *Superman* and ending with *Man of Steel* in 2013 (NinjaSelection). The box office success of the DC Comics films *Superman* and *Batman* did not make it easier for Jenkins to lead *Wonder Woman* to success. It made the pressure astronomical and came loaded with gender politics because the superhero genre is known to be the film industry’s biggest boys’ club on both sides of the camera.

If Jenkins had failed, it could have further excluded female superheroes and given critics another reason to leave the superhero films for men. Instead, *Wonder Woman* was a great success. The past *Batman* and *Superman* films don’t even compare to the numbers that *Wonder Woman* brought in. An estimated \$227.5 million in tickets, domestic and international, were sold on opening weekend for *Wonder Woman* (Barnes). The president of Warner Brothers noted in a poll that turnout for the opening weekend of *Wonder Woman* was 52% female and 48% male (Barnes). Though, some *Wonder Woman* fans, and supporters didn’t care to cater to the male viewer. In fact, “The Alamo Drafthouse theater chain angered some men and drew a smattering of formal discrimination complaints when it scheduled a series of ‘no guys allowed’ screenings. ‘Apologies, gentlemen, but we’re embracing our girl power,’ Alamo’s announcement read” (Barnes). The results of the complaints were women rallying together, “the screenings sold out; proceeds were to go to Planned Parenthood” (Barnes). Gal Gadot and Patty Jenkins joined forces to create the best version of *Wonder Woman* the world had ever seen. Jenkins’ choice of

direction for the *Wonder Woman* film got its perhaps fourth-wave feminist script that writer Alan Heinberg enhanced (Barnes). For example, “one of the best things about ‘Wonder Woman’ and its script by Allan Heinberg is its lightness, sense of discovery, and the way it flips the script on anyone who ever nattered on about how feminists are ugly, man-hating prudes” (Rosenberg). With Gadot taking on the feminist role in the film, *Wonder Woman* is finally front and center, obtaining the cinematic attention and critical audience reception that she has deserved in the seventy-five years it took to get to this adaptation. A large part of the reason Gal Gadot took on this project was representation. She says, “for boys— lucky them – they got to experience, since the beginning of movies, that they were the protagonists, they were the strong ones, they saved the day” (Sales). Unfortunately, women and girls, especially of color, do not get the same representation in media and film. Gal continues to say, “of course it’s ultra-important for me because I’m a mother of two girls – to show them the potential of what they can be. And it doesn’t necessarily mean that they have to be athletic or physically strong – that too – but they can be bigger than life” (Sales). This aspect of dreaming about becoming someone or something after you have visually seen it and it is represented to you is a large part of the film and why so many girls and women identify with *Wonder Woman*. Gadot speaks about providing and being role models to the next generations and educating them on equality. Interestingly, Gadot attributes her definition of feminism equally to her husband. She says that “feminism is not about burning bras and hating men” rather it’s about gender equality and educating boys and showing them strong women in powerful positions doing good with that power. It’s also, “expanding the possibilities of what women can be. I know I couldn’t do this without my husband.” (Chitwood) That is the beautifully depicted aspect of the 2017 *Wonder Woman* film. It is not just placing a female into a superhero movie; this film embraces a larger message of what it means to be

feminist about what equality means and signaling to young people everywhere that gender equality can be achieved if we take the right steps towards it.

One of the most well done and greatest challenges of the 2017 *Wonder Woman* film was establishing a balance between portraying Wonder Woman as strong, confident, and feminine, and warm. “Diana is erudite but unworldly, witty but never ironic, supremely self-confident, and utterly mystified by the modern world. In his film review, its capacity for cruelty is a perpetual shock to her, even though she herself is a prodigy of violence,” critic A.O. Scott says. While she may have been born in the aftermath of a war amongst the gods, another difference to note is that Wonder Woman’s background differs from many of the lone wolf male superheroes suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and extreme trauma in their youth. This further explains how, “unlike most of her male counterparts, its heroine is not trying to exorcise inner demons or work out messiah issues. She wants to function freely in the world, help when needed, and be respected for her abilities. No wonder she encounters so much resistance” (A.O.Scott). Wonder Woman’s childhood and growth prepared her not just to compete against others and train together. She also learned how to work as a team, providing Wonder Woman with a solid foundation as she set out on her mission to save the world from Ares, the god of war.

Princess Diana, who later adopts the name of Wonder Woman, and her alter ego, Diana Prince, is raised in the presence of feminism and equality on the island of Themyscira, home to the Amazons. Amazonian women were created to influence men’s hearts with love and restore peace during the deadly war between the gods. Jenkins' choice of actresses that play the Amazonian women includes professionals in Wrestling, CrossFit Champion women, Olympians, trainers, and farmers who train and fight (Morris 84). Jenkins’ depiction of the Amazons does not ooze with sexuality or submission; they are portrayed as warriors, women of all trades. The

camera focuses on their armor, their intelligence, and their motion skill sets. Jenkins creates a space and presence for strong, feminine women in this cinematic medium. Each Amazonian woman has distinct outfits and hairstyles that only aid the fierce women in their quest to defend the universe against Ares. Diana grew up admiring the Amazonian women:

To her, the only child on the island, this is the norm for what warriors look like: racially diverse, agile and precise, lethally strong—and female. Some of the Amazons are young, many more look over 40. Some are muscular, others more slight. They trade blows with spectacular, staggering power, all in spirited camaraderie. Diana sees herself in them. She wants to be just like them. They are, well, her superheroes (Leon).

While her mother, Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, was hesitant to begin her training, she finds Diana cannot resist learning to fight. Hippolyta interrupts a secret training session between Diana and Antiope, her aunt, and the fiercest warrior. The Amazon Queen accepts Diana's training as a necessity with the condition that "[Antiope you] will train her harder than any Amazon before her. Five times harder. Ten times harder. Until she is better than even you" (Jenkins). Antiope, true to her word, focused on Diana's training until she defeated every Amazon on the island. "You can never expect a battle to be fair!" Antiope yelled to Diana as they engaged in their final training session (Jenkins). Diana, being pushed past her limits, crosses her arms in defense, discovering her power as the camera focuses on the blast it exudes, knocking both Antiope and Diana to the ground as her untapped, godly potential is realized.

Another empowering moment follows as Steve, a spy for British Intelligence, plane crashes into the waters surrounding Themyscira. Diana rescues him from drowning instead of the usual male rescuing a female. The last thing Steve sees before he sinks along with his stolen plane is her shadowy figure standing on the part of the plane above him. The absence of Diana

running in slow motion, as the camera focused on her figure while she swam, is praised for focusing on the task, not the body. Arguably the best and one of the most comedic moments Jenkins uses her female voice is in the bathing scene as well. After being patched up from the battle on the beach, Steve is bathing when Diana walks in to see if he's finished. It's the first time she experiences the male physique; she does focus on his figure for a second, but not in an uncomfortable ogling manner, and returns her eyes to his face. Steve making light of the situation, humbly claims he is not a "typical example of his sex." He's "above average" (Jenkins). Jenkins establishes a sense of humor in the scene, simultaneously flipping the script on the male gaze. The scene could have been cheesy or backfired on Jenkins, rather it stands as a remarkable moment between two people getting to know each other. This moment in the movie goes to the next level and argues that it's not merely girls who will gain from growing up free of the "distorting influence of misogyny" men and boys would also greatly benefit from the wonderful and liberating influence of a world free of misogyny (Rosenberg). Diana's lack of experience doesn't hinder her character or as a hero. Rather it enhances her ability to understand humans on the most basic level of being human. To Diana, though she has not met a man before Steve, her extensive knowledge through her studies on the island has prepared her to be the exact person, the exact hero that was needed to end the war of all wars, World War I. As she and Steve bid the Amazonian women farewell, at set sail to England, they share a fascinating moment that portrays her enlightened sense of equality and his being influenced by a patriarchal society:

"You don't sleep with women?" Diana asks, not understanding why it's taboo for the time.

“No, I mean, I do sleep with... I sleep with... Yes, I do. But, out of the, uh,... Confines of marriage, it's not polite to assume you know?” Steve then explains marriage to Diana because they don't have it on the island.

“So you cannot sleep with me unless we're married?” Diana asks.

“I'll sleep with you if you want. I'll sleep right there.” Steve says. (Jenkins)

Diana sees the sleeping situation on the small boat as common sense, and she cannot grasp why a man and a woman cannot sleep in the same make-shift bed together. In her mind, nothing would go on besides sleep. There was no invitation to do anything else but sleep comfortably. Steve, however, believes she is innocent, having grown up on an island of women. This scene was very well played and directed because Diana could be depicted as naïve, yet Jenkins is commenting on the assumptions that Steve and men make about women. Women and men can coexist in the same space without any expectations for sex. Diana is a soldier, Steve is a soldier, and Jenkins is using her female voice, her feminist voice to say that the two can coexist on an equal level as soldiers headed to war.

When they arrived in London, it came to Diana as a surprise that women were limited in their abilities as she arrived in London. Her first conversation with Steve's secretary Etta Candy sums up both parties' thoughts on women's rights as they shop for Diana's more “appropriate” attire.

“What is a secretary?” Diana asks.

“Ooh! Well... I do everything. I go everywhere he tells me to go, and I do what he tells me to do,” Etta Candy replies.

“Well, where I'm from, that's called slavery,” Diana says slowly.

“I like her, I do. I like her. And it does feel like that except the pay is good” Etta says.

(Jenkins)

While Diana is trying on dresses for the first time, she doesn't understand how a woman could fight in restricting attire or why women need to “keep their tummies in” (Jenkins). She cannot find an outfit other than the armor she arrived in that suits her needs and will not hinder her ability to fight.

She may approach the world with a supremely open heart: but Diana isn't a naif when she asks why anyone would think women need to “keep our tummies in,” or wonders why a talented woman like Steve's secretary Etta Candy (Lucy Davis) is toiling away in service to some man. Diana is the only one who sees clearly. It's the world around her that's absurd. (Rosenberg)

Her reactions to other women stem from her experience of women being strong and brave. It's not so much disappointment in women but that she is surprised at their lack of rights and skills; she thinks of both genders as equal and is shocked when this is not the case. Diana is puzzled at the pointless sexist customs of the world of man because there is no point to them. She marvels at how women accept these customs easily, without a fight, and is simultaneously awe-struck at how women breathe let alone fight in garters and restrictive clothing (Leon). After she finds herself in an outfit and specs that will do, they are walking to meet Steve's superiors when he realizes that they are being followed. They back into an ally to lose them; Steve acts like the typical male here, trying to defend Diana's honor. When a German spy takes a shot at Steve and Diana's armor smashes the bullet, the men stand in awe of her. Steve and Diana engage with their enemies. Her specs fall off during the dispute, the camera pinpoints them, giving us a full-on Superman moment without the phone booth (though they are in London), as she defends Steve

and herself. In a prime moment of Jenkins using her feminist voice, Diana strides into a meeting with army generals not knowing why she would not be allowed inside, or her opinion appreciated. Again, another nod to the equality Diana expects. The room falls silent as the men take in the presence of a woman, all curious as to how she has the nerve to enter the room until she becomes an asset to them, reading Dr. Poison's notebook written in Sumerian and Ottoman.

Diana, upset by the plan to do nothing about the poisonous gas, she confronts the general sitting at the head of the table:

“You would knowingly sacrifice all those lives as if they mean less than yours? As if they mean nothing? Where I come from, generals don’t hide in their offices like cowards, they fight alongside their soldiers, they die with them on the battlefield. You should be ashamed. You should be ashamed. All of you should be ashamed” (Jenkins).

This moment justifies Diana's rage. She observes the high-ranking officers as they take in her words, anger boiling inside her because the world of men is turning out to be the world of cowards. Unfortunately, it is 1918 in the midst of World War I where women’s opinions were not valued, yet she stands confident, dauntless, and more adept at winning the war than all the men sitting before her. Jenkin's feminist and female voice adds a uniqueness to the perspective in superhero tropes, she’s shouting to the world, like Diana in the scene, that she’s doing this her way.

### *III. The Rejection of the “male gaze” in Wonder Woman*

Though Wonder Woman is joining the war efforts, she doesn’t use violence unless necessary. Jenkins leaves us with a choice in how we will perceive women in violence. It’s rather

liberating to have a female lead that uses violence when called for and would rather use her perceptions of human beings and what she has learned about them to resolve conflict before resorting to violence. This is a careful choice by Jenkins in this action film because Wonder Woman could be perceived as naïve or gentle. Jenkins takes the assumed perceptions of female superheroes and uses them in a way that is exposing assumptions about female action leads. No longer will Wonder Woman be objectified, and Jenkins has passionately set the stage for female action heroes to be portrayed as strong, capable women.

In one of the most defining scenes for women midway through the film, Diana is climbing the ladder into No Man's Land in the trenches at the forefront of the war after being told she cannot rescue everyone. She looks back at the soldiers behind her and says, “No, but it’s what I’m going to do” (Jenkins). This cinematic moment, Jenkins says, “is my pride and joy” (Leon). Diana takes down her hair, and shakes off her coat, revealing her armor underneath. Though there are soldiers around her, the men do not gaze at her with lust. Hollywood cinema, led by men, subjects women to the male gaze. “With women as the image to be gazed upon and the man as an active subject who engages in the act of looking” (Harvey 68). The male spectator(s) or subjects are the gazers, while the females are objected to and gazed at. Males hold the dominating sexual presence in the film, deciding when, where, and how many women they will sexualize. “When a female figure appears in the filmic form, she is there to be consumed by both characters in the cinematic narrative and the spectator viewing the film, thereby satisfying both voyeuristic and narcissistic desires” (Harvey 68). Jenkins takes these stereotypes, the male-written rules that consume women, and destroys them. She set out to create a standard, an expectation that women in film can and will be seen as the capable, strong, amazing people they are. The difference between Jenkins and her feminist voice is she doesn’t allow the male gaze at

all. As Mulvey describes, it's a process she named "the masculinization of spectators because through gendering the camera and the editing, the conventions of the film can sway spectators-- women and men both--into identifying with a masculine subject position" (Parker 173). Patty Jenkins focused on Wonder Woman's actions with her female voice. Through the angels, Jenkins highlights Wonder Woman clearly stating that Diana will not be subjected to being the object of the male gaze. She is not framed in the background while the soldiers take a nice look, not in this film. Wonder Woman is the feminist star as she fearlessly leads them into No Man's Land taking all the fire with nothing but her shield, allowing the men to gain traction in the war. "Finally, Diana emerges from the trenches, an independent subject rather than a sexualized object" (Morris 84). What a beautiful image of her, holding her ground as if saying, if you want something done right, ask a woman to do it. Jenkins focuses on her perseverance, the set furrow of her brow, then her shield, her sword, her wrist cuffs and boots, the armor that will save the lives of all the men staring at her in awe.

This scene is one of the most important moments in the film. It's not discounting the war that Wonder Woman has joined, it's not glamorizing her either. In fact, it is because of the horrific war that she is witnessing, the refugees and those enslaved and being held hostage, and the women and children that are displaced, that Wonder Woman chooses to fight. They are the reason she courageously charges into No Man's Land alone with nothing but a shield and sword. This is the ultimate scene of Wonder Woman fighting for those who cannot fight for themselves. Wonder Woman is taking a stance on war and saying that it is horrific, it is not right that people are dying and being slaughtered. Wonder Woman is saying in this scene that she will fight for the men and soldiers in the trenches that cannot progress and take into No Man's Land. She does it for them and with them in mind.

Diana exudes power and grace in this scene rather than sexuality and the male gaze. She knows her value as an Amazonian and a soldier; she is ready and willing to defend that always. Nevertheless, she persists. Charging into the German trenches, Wonder Woman doesn't bother to use her sword on the soldiers. An important thing to note here is that Wonder Woman does not kill anyone in this scene; she smashes machine guns and pushes the German soldiers out of the way, but mainly she is on defense. "She is not using her body to please a male character, she is using her body to save others on her terms" (Morris 84). Wonder Woman only yields her shield in this scene, knocking grenades out of the sky, using her wrist cuffs to deflect bullets, and even throwing her own body in the line of fire to protect the soldiers behind her. Though the British soldiers wait for Wonder Woman to clear the space first, it's on her terms. The men soon follow Wonder Woman and are left in utter shock, staring after this goddess in all her armored weapon-clad glory. Steve and his fellow soldiers become aware that they are "no match for the literal demigoddess by [their] side, yet [they're] never threatened by the notion of this woman's intellectual and physical superiority" (Leon). They become true male allies, "a manifestation of the film's show-don't-preach approach to feminism" (Leon). As the scene plays out behind Wonder Woman, none of the characters are too two-dimensional; each has a presence in the film, supporting the female lead.

Support is a necessity for Wonder Woman given her secret and delicate history as a female icon. The pressure for the cast and crew to ace this version of Wonder Woman from everything to the costume to the portrayal and storyline and action-packed scenes had to be utter perfection. Each aspect of the film needed to reinforce that the film is a feminist film. One reviewer of the film comments on these details:

Yes, she is sort of naked a lot of the time, but this isn't objectification so much as a cultural reset: having thighs, actual thighs you can kick things with, not thighs that look like arms, is a feminist act. The whole Diana myth, women safeguarding the world from male violence not with nurture but with better violence, is a feminist act. Casting Robin Wright as Wonder Woman's aunt, re-imagining the battle-axe as a battler, with an axe, is a feminist act. A female German chemist trying to destroy humans (in the shape of Dr. Poison, a proto-Mengele before Nazism existed) might be the most feminist act of all.

(Williams)

Choosing to portray Dr. Poison as a woman touches on men's fear of women that has been perpetuated throughout time. The representation of women as wicked has changed in accordance with their ever-evolving roles. Female villains are typically portrayed as usurpers of masculinity, foils to morality, and contradicting the truth and virtue. In a sense, they are articulating the societal intolerance for women to choose to reject female values as well as challenging the male hatred and fear of women's procreative power and equality. Dr. Poison is unlike other antagonists we see in film. She is educated, she was given the chance to be a part of something major. While yes it had villainous intentions, it's huge for a woman's intellectual properties to be valued especially during a World War. Jenkins portrays this version of Dr. Poison in a form of feminine evil that does not correlate to our usual seductress or witch or terrible mother or stepmother. She stands out and is her own liberated malevolent female and that is what makes this choice of casting Dr. Poison as a woman a feminist act.

The other important feminist act made in the film is Wonder Woman's suit, or lack thereof. She is not naked, but rather the fact that her armor, and her super-suit allow her as the female heroine to do her job and fight the way that she was trained to. She is muscular, this

version of Wonder Woman has thighs she is the depiction of a well-trained hero. In fact, Diana's body is a feminist act. It was not chosen to satisfy a man's ideal version of a woman. Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman reimagined Wonder Woman and all her past depictions. Her suit enables her to fight the way that she was trained further proving the feminist acts and feminist decisions made in the creation of this feminist film. Which meant it was a job for none other than a woman. Both Jenkins and Gadot were on a mission to create a modern-day Wonder Woman that was admirable to both girls and boys. There have been few female heroines in cinema that are not allowed or given the opportunity to carve their own path and who don't have to sacrifice themselves for the greater good of the mission or a more dominant male in the film. Jenkins created a fundamentally confident and strong female protagonist that claims the opportunity to be the center of attention on the big screen the same way male heroes have for decades now. "Jenkins went on to explain that being tough did not mean Diana could not be loving, funny, and warm," characteristics that shine bright in Diana's every choice (Leon). Yes, she is a goddess, yes, she is fierce, and she is also warm, kind, and compassionate towards humanity. Jenkins did not want a dummed-down version of a man but rather a capable woman that believes in justice and enforces it. In this version of Wonder Woman, "Out of compassion and a moral obligation to fight for those in need, she dives into battle—in gorgeously shot, exquisitely choreographed sequences that leave no doubt Jenkins was perfect for this job" (Leon). Jenkins's feminist voice extended to all females in the film, including the second villain in the film, Dr. Isabel Maru, also known as Dr. Poison; creator of poisonous gasses, and the most talented chemist in the German army. While yes, Wonder Woman and Dr. Poison on very opposite sides of this war with different perspectives are anything but idealistic in their worldviews. These women are changing the game of the war, standing up for what they believe in, in the case of Wonder Woman, who

came from her safe home on Themyscira to London to fight for those who cannot fight for themselves and defeat Ares along the way.

Wonder Woman is a genuinely independent role model for women, her voice, of course, needs to be a woman's voice. It is unacceptable to subject her to men that are only interested in fulfilling their sexual fantasies and keeping women down. Wonder Woman strives to show women of all ages that they are capable of greatness, but this is only accomplished when a feminine voice speaks for her. A crucial point that Patty Jenkins takes care and consideration to make when she forges the love connection between Diana and Steve, as Morris says in her essay giving credit to Jenkins:

In the newest Wonder Woman movie, directed by Patty Jenkins, Wonder Woman, and Steve put hands on each other's faces, signaling their mutual consent, and a kiss soon follows. Before this moment, Steve and Wonder Woman had several emotional and intellectual connections...In this consensual scene, Jenkins reveals herself as a director who wants her female characters to be subjects, not objects. (Morris 84).

Consent is a fundamental human right. A right that Marston did not afford to Wonder Woman. However, Jenkins is the woman who does, particularly in these moments that began with intellect and trust, allowing their bond to form in a time where two people could get to know one another. Their connection is recognized before the kiss with a dance that solidifies the moment furthering their bond. Diana asks Steve what people do when there isn't a war, and he explains the 9 to 5 life that most people live, including marriage, babies, and growing old together. He walks her to her room, ensuring her safety though we all know that Diana can take care of herself, waits by the door like a gentleman would allow for her verbal and body language to

steak, asking him inside. The entire night's events are her choice. On her terms, the kiss happens, Steve may anticipate the kiss, but he does not rush Diana.

The vast majority of hero films shy away from the presence of romance in the movie. The romantic scene in *Wonder Woman* is not familiar in superhero movies. Traditionally, the action heroes we adore are associated with virginity and righteousness to maintain purity and selflessness in the characters. Not only is *Wonder Woman* the first superheroine to have her film, but she is also the first to have a romance scene in her film. Jenkins took a character that for too many years, by too many men, had been treated with disrespect and dehumanized and turned her into a beautiful feminist.

After Diana and Steve's romance scene, the climactic battle between Ares and *Wonder Woman* begins to unfold. Steve hijacks an aircraft filled with poisonous gases, bombs, and other weaponry and fires a gun into the crates of weapons effectively blowing them up, sacrificing his own life in the process. This is a special tribute moment because Jenkins depicted her own great loss in the movie in this specific scene when Steve Trevor sacrifices his life. Her father, William T. Jenkins was an Air Force captain who fought in Vietnam and later trained and ran maneuvers out of a military base in England. Jenkins was able to join him on all his adventures overseas until he died at the age of 31, when Jenkins was only seven, taking off from a runway similar to Steve Trevor. All that's known about the crash is that it happened in the middle of a NATO mock dogfight in the middle of the ocean (Setoodeh). Jenkins dedicates the film to her father in the end credits. In the scene, *Wonder Woman* watches from the runway in a beautifully executed shot portraying the reasons why she fights for truth, justice, and those that cannot fight for themselves. She takes a moment to crumble with grief as she breaks free from the concrete piled on top of her, leaps into the air, screams, and comes face to face with Ares and Dr. Poison. Ares

offers up Dr. Poison like a sacrificial lamb daring Wonder Woman to abandon her morals and kill her. This moment adds depth to the way Gadot and Jenkins portrayed Wonder Woman because the fight for good tends to involve questioning why any hero would choose good over evil. Wonder Woman lifts a tank over her head and the expression on her face, the anger, grief, and shock at losing Steve almost wins. She closes her eyes and remembers Steve and why he chose to fight. She hears him telling her, “I can save today, you can save the world” (Jenkins). In this moment, she remembers who she is. Dropping the tank and freeing Dr. Poison from her impending death, she tells Ares, “It’s not about what they deserve, it’s about what you believe” and she believes in love, in compassion, in justice and fighting for those that cannot fight for themselves. Charged with lightning buzzing on her bracelets, Wonder Woman charges Ares and destroys him. It’s an epic finale to the super charged film.

#### IV. Conclusion

In the feminist version of Wonder Woman that is over 80 years overdue, Wonder Woman stands triumphant in the 2017 film that not only altered but set the ultimate standard of how female superheroes should and will be viewed. Jenkins has done what no man could; she gave Wonder Woman a feminist voice, despite the many men that subjected her to the male gaze, torture, and unfortunately, made her a sex symbol. Wonder Woman didn’t become an icon out of pure luck or sex appeal that her previous creators and directors were set on portraying. She also isn’t the first woman in comic books or the first female superhero.

Invisible Scarlett O’Neill, Miss Fury, and Sheena, Queen of the Jungle who happens to be the first female comic book character to have her own title, all came before Wonder Woman but did not last as long (Bergstrom 165). While these heroines were created in the shadow of a

male superhero, Wonder Woman stands out because she is her own woman rather than a spinoff of a popular male superhero. Wonder Woman was a strong female superhero before the phrase became a popular cliché. In fact, other female heroines have been spun off of her (Bergstrom 163). The 2017 *Wonder Woman* film gave birth to a new generation of female superheroes. Supergirl, Batgirl, Black Canary, Zatanna Zatara, Hawkgirl, Big Barda, Maxima, and last but not least, Catwoman round out the count for amazing heroines inspired by Wonder Woman. Particularly, Catwoman, Batgirl, Wonder Girl, and the DC Superhero Girls all owe their success to the original female superheroine that started the revolutionary movement a feminist female super heroine: Wonder Woman. Amongst these strong heroines in all their various incarnations, Wonder Woman is the undisputed legendary and favorite superheroine. In the moment she first appears in the terrible *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice* film, Wonder Woman, played by Gal Gadot, not only assumes the role with ease but also rescues Batman and saves the world from the Doomsday Monster.

From the moment Princess Diana landed her invisible plane she has become a beacon of hope and inspiration to fictional characters and real-life people as well. As Jill Lepore mentioned, Wonder Woman “wasn’t meant to be a super woman; she was meant to be an everywoman” (Lepore 220). Every woman is capable of amazing feats in life. From the iconic 1940s Rosie the riveter to the current *American Ninja Warrior* contestants to fashion designers to everyday mothers to female CEOs and entrepreneurs the spirit of Wonder Woman lives on in every woman. Gloria Steinem portraying Wonder Woman on the cover of the 1972 inaugural issue of *Ms. Magazine* that announced Wonder Woman for president to Lynda Carter who played Wonder Woman in the television version in the 70s and was later cast as the President of the United States in the *Supergirl* television series. The 2012 issue of *Ms. Magazine* had Wonder

Woman back on its cover striding the streets of Washington DC amongst women of all ethnicities protesting on the streets demanding rights for women.

The current everywoman that speaks to Wonder Woman's inspiration, to name a few are Serena Williams for instance who is referred to as a Wonder Woman of tennis and draws inspiration for her star-spangled outfits from Wonder Woman. Williams was also featured in a Spectrum TV commercial in which she wore a Wonder Woman costume and acted out one of the scenes from *Wonder Woman: 1984*. Other women like Ronda Rousey, a UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) Champion, expressed her interest in portraying the infamous role of Wonder Woman in the film, or Jessie Graff, a professional stunt woman who went all the way on *American Ninja Warrior* while wearing a Wonder Woman inspired costume. Not only has the Wonder Woman style inspired women, but the Amazonians have also taken their due respect that is emulated in the attire that Rock Stars wear on stage such as Beyoncé, Lady Gaga, and Katy Perry. The Amazonian style has become a power suit for strong women who emulate the Amazonian and Wonder Woman Spirit on and off the stage (Bergstrom 165).

Jenkins' careful consideration of the details behind this film allows it to be titled a feminist film. Jenkins takes her powerful and inspiring female voice and without overpowering the film, she has turned Wonder Woman into a feminist. Wonder Woman gained freedom and independence at her hand, not a man's. Wonder Woman's influence in television, film, art, comics, and more has taken over. Most important is Wonder Woman's message; her unwavering belief in truth, justice, compassion, and fighting for those that cannot fight for themselves has transformed and impacted people all over the world. She stands for hope. She calls us to action and challenges us to rise to the occasion. Wonder Woman is not just a superhero or comic book

character or sex symbol. Wonder Woman and all that she stands for is a feminist movement and reminder that we all are Wonders.

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