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Deconstructing Cinderella and Shahrazad: Mythology through a Feminist Phronetic Lens

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Abstract

The function of a story (myth) is the art of using words to produce pictures in the minds of the listeners. Those pictures combine with the situation at hand to create a powerful lasting message capable of producing change. Although players and circumstances vary with time and place, there remains something unalterable and true at the core of myths. Myths are not just told; they are *felt*, they resonate throughout the body as well as the mind. We believe that a conscious use of mythology as a pathway to the imagination is a powerful key to the challenge of gender identity and relations in the workplace. Working from a mythic stance allows for emotional engagement and begins the revitalization of gender relations within organizational life.

The wildish nature does not require a woman to be a certain color, a certain education, a certain lifestyle or economic class ... in fact, it cannot thrive in an atmosphere of enforced political correctness, or be being bent into old burnt-out paradigms. It thrives on fresh insight and self-integrity. It thrives on its own nature. (Pinkola-Estes, 1992, p. 20).

Introduction

The quote by Jungian Analyst, Clarissa Pinkola-Estes reminds us that fresh insight is a constant in the complex world of business. Fresh insight provides a competitive advantage by seeing what others might not. Thus, our desire to find a different approach to some tired questions about women and the workplace. Our search led to an age-old form of making sense of experience – mythology.

The function of a story (myth) is the art of using words to produce pictures in the minds of the listeners. Those pictures combine with the situation at hand to create a powerful lasting message capable of producing change. Although players and circumstances vary with time and place, there remains something unalterable and true at the core of myths. Myths are not just told; they are *felt*, they resonate throughout the body as well as the mind. Throughout the ages, the power of story has nourished the human soul (Grant, 2005). We believe that a conscious use of mythology as a pathway to the imagination is a powerful key to the challenge of gender identity and relations in the workplace. Working from a mythic stance allows for emotional engagement and begins the revitalization of gender relations within organizational life.

It is common for stories to change as they move from place to place and transmitted from generation to generation, altered to fit local social and psychological needs (Yolen, 1982). *Cinderella* and *Shahrazad* (Arabic spelling) are two such popular stories that have endured for thousands of years, both having gone through change and re-crafted by different writers with different worldviews than the earlier tellers of each tale. The mass-market American version of *Cinderella* tells the story of a helpless, nice girl who waits patiently to be rescued by her prince. The Orientalist versions of *Shahrazad* tell the story of an oppressed and sexually exotic character, imprisoned and at the mercy of her master (Gauch, 2007). We wondered how the protagonists are portrayed in these myths are reflected in contemporary gender inequalities and gender relations in organizations?

What stereotypes do these interpretations of each myth perpetuate about women within our increasingly diverse organizations? What are these interpretations saying? What are they not saying? And most importantly, what should they say? Our intent is to deconstruct each myth for the underlying message being delivered to women initially in their homes and then the workplace. The original intent of each myth has been distorted serving to disenfranchise and disempower women. We seek to challenge the dominant stereotypes that these stories perpetuate. A return to the original intent of mythology is required to reclaim, resurrect and restore women's voices and their role in organizations.

Within the next five years, Canadian organizations will face a talent shortage as senior executives prepare for retirement (Silliker, 2012). According to a survey conducted by Odgers Berndtson, "nearly one-half (44 percent) of employers anticipate losing 20 percent or more of their executive staff by 2017" (Silliker, 2012, p. 2). The same study reports that 90 percent of respondents "believe the next generation of managers is not ready to take over at the executive level" (Silliker, 2012, p. 5). According to the *Benchmarking Study of Women Leadership in Canada*, in 2011, women held 29% of senior management positions, while constituted 47% of labour force (Centre for Women in Politics and Public Leadership, 2012). The same study reports that women experience underrepresentation even in sectors where they hold a significant percentage of middle manager positions and dominate in terms of educational credentials. The *Corporate Gender Gap Report 2010* by The World Economic Forum indicates that the barriers to women in senior management have nothing to do with supply of women (Centre for Women in Politics and Public Leadership, 2012). In fact, two main barriers include the country's norms and cultural practices as well as masculine and patriarchal corporate cultures (Centre for Women in Politics and Public Leadership, 2012). These findings suggest that women still face societal expectations of senior leaders as male and stereotypes about women's roles.

We will deconstruct (Martin, 1990) the stories using a feminist phronetic perspective (Eubanks, 2011; Flyvbjerg et al, 2012). "Deconstruction is able to reveal ideological assumptions in a way that is particularly sensitive to the suppressed interests of members of disempowered, marginalized groups" making visible the devalued "other" (Martin, 1990, p. 340). The stories we seek to deconstruct have been translated and interpreted by men, as is the case with most organizations that are lead and controlled predominantly by men. Women's interests and voices

are thus often suppressed and silenced (Martin, 1990). As such, we are interested in deconstructing the texts using feminist phronetics, which considers contextuality and placing power at the center of analysis. Contextuality is of importance as we deconstruct Arabian *Shahrazad* from her context and American *Cinderella* from hers. By surfacing these hidden values, beliefs and interests in our deconstruction we seek to challenge the prevailing issues of power, gender inequality and the absence of women in the executive suite within organizations. Deconstructing the stories using a feminist phronetic lens has much to offer and to our knowledge the two have not previously been combined.

Purpose of Myth

According to mythologist, Joseph Campbell (1964), there are four functions of a living mythology:

1. Mystical/metaphysical - evoke in the individual a sense of gratitude and awe before the mystery of existence. Focus of religion.
2. Cosmological - present an image of the cosmos. Focus of science.
3. Sociological - validate and maintain a certain sociological system. Focus of ethics.
4. Psychological. Carry the individual through the stages of life. Focus on reflection as a form of psychological wellbeing.

Whether Campbell's body of work is considered scholarly or not is debated; we make no claim or judgment here to the scholarly value. Instead, we focus on the practical aspects of his work as providing a common language easily accessible to all. In this paper, we will focus on the latter two functions that he suggested being the personal or psychological, and the collective, or the sociological. As a common language, myth delineates patterns collected over human history that have prepared us for a changing world. Myth serves as a manner of exploration and also a manner of discovery, deconstructing the evolving story according to the need of time and place. To work from a mythic perspective means to become aware of your personal and collective origins. To work from a mythic perspective means to re-create the mythologies of the past from the stance of personal experience.

We sometimes forget that life did not begin at our birth. Over thousands of years, many have gone before us who have walked the path of finding an authentic voice. Mythology allows those wise voices to be heard, if only we are willing to listen. Building theory may be understood as disciplined imagination (Alvesson and Karreman 2011; Mills 1959; Weick 1989). It is from this

disciplined imaginal field that a myth lives and operates. Stories are imprinted on our brains from birth. We are hardwired to respond to a story. As such, it is the most powerful tool to be used as the basis of forming or deepening relationships through phronetic dialogue.

The difference between a myth and a story or fairytale can be pictured as the difference between the living body and a skeleton (Von Franz, 1980). A story, sometimes called a ‘mythoi’ or little myth, represents a small part of a larger value system, which is held in the mythology. Stories effectively teach because people comprehend them and research indicates that stories evoke prior knowledge, provide details and improve comprehension (Haven 2007). Researcher Kieran Egan conducted decades of study and research into how children learn through storytelling and concluded we are evolutionarily hardwired to respond to story (1997).

Our ongoing comprehension depends on the integration of new knowledge into a network of previous knowledge (Egan 1989, 1992, 1997; Haven 2007). Polkinghorne (1988) states that stories are “universal” – story is the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful. In other words, our ability to tell and our ability to hear stories are what define the human race as mythopoetic (meaning-making). Our conversations in particular and human actions in general, are enacted narratives. In order to understand our own lives, we put them in narrative form. Similarly, in order to understand others, we do the same thing (Czarniawska, 1997). Storytelling defines us as human. The focus of study of the human psyche and meaning-making lies in the realm of a psychiatrist by the name of Carl Gustav Jung.

Purpose of a Jungian approach – Archetypes, Persona and Shadow

A common expression in academe when attempting to construct new insight into a topic is that we are ‘standing on the shoulders of giants’. A giant, who has informed much of the study of the psychology of the human psyche, is the work of C.G. Jung. Jung’s work is rich and varied but can also be difficult to interpret. In reading Jung, one needs to keep in mind that the map is not the territory (Stein 1998). Understanding human nature is still a largely uncharted territory and the *Collected Works* as a body of knowledge remains to be thoroughly explored.

Jung’s label for a universal construct was archetype – coming from the Greek ‘arche’ meaning first and ‘typos’ meaning imprint. His first use of the word ‘archetype’ came in 1919 (CW8:270). He reiterated throughout his *Collected Works* that archetypes are not determined as to their

content, but only as regards to their form, and then only to a limited degree (CW9i:155).

Archetypes (being energy or patterns of behaviour) are irrepresentable in themselves but their effects are visible through images and motifs, and as such are brought into conscious awareness (CW8:435). Jung believed that you cannot define an archetype, any more than you can define meaning. You can only experience it (Stevens, 1982, p. 67).

There are two archetypal constructs as explored by Jung that inform our analysis of this material, being the Persona and the Shadow. We posit that both constructs have a direct bearing on the interpretations of our two chosen myths. Both are archetypes that Jung thought represented systems of readiness for action, and at the same time, are images and emotions (CW10:53). In our deconstruction, we noted that interpretation draws out these binary oppositions.

On a personal level, these archetypal motifs are patterns of thought or behavior that are common to humanity as expressed through myth. We are all born with much the same human nature. That nature includes virtues of compassion, wisdom, and loving generosity to name but a few. That same nature can also include the potential for cruelty, greed and envy to again, name but a few. These personality traits may vary from person to person, but the process of shaping and socializing a child by reward and punishment is universal. That shaping builds both the Persona and the Shadow and is continued throughout our life, both at work and at home.

To elaborate, firstly, the Persona – the “I” that we present to the outside world. Originally, the word persona meant mask worn by actors to indicate the role that was being played. Jung’s description was ‘that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others think one is’ (CW9i:211). The persona can be assumed and dropped at will enabling an individual to have a variety of ‘masks’ that can be utilized depending on the context. It is ‘the person-as-presented, not the person-as-real’. The persona is a psychological and social construct adopted for a specific purpose (Stein, 1998, p. 111). Too much identification with a professional persona has been aptly called being a ‘stuffed shirt’. Such total identification would lead to losing sight of the authentic self and potential, if not probable, neurosis. In our current world of work, the resulting split state is considered ‘professional’ behavior. Paradoxically, the persona may also act as a protective adaptation to a context. A large part of education is devoted to constructing the socially acceptable persona. Regardless of consequence, the formation of the Persona seems as necessary

as it is universal. The mask corresponds to adaptation to our environment and our communities and defines what is considered acceptable behaviour. This will be explored further.

Secondly, the Shadow. What the Persona tends to hide or conceal, all that one is not proud of, resides in the Shadow. All that we hide or are unconscious of in our personality, both good and bad, is contained in the Shadow. These two aspects, being Persona and Shadow, stand in a compensatory relationship. Think in terms of standing in bright sunlight – the brighter the light, the darker the shadow. To become conscious of the shadow, involves recognizing the dark aspects of one's own personality. Further, whatever is denied and disowned by the individual or within the family, will be discovered in another person or group and there seen as inferior or subhuman, the enemy. Jungian analysis in its beginning self-reflexive stance allows for an encounter with the shadow part of the personality. An interesting result, is usually an increased empathy and tolerance for the 'other'. Through ongoing social dialogue and praxis - the act of phronesis, allows for a 'more true and more just' account of the phenomena being studied (Flyvbjerg, 2012).

Deconstruction through Feminist Phronesis

Phronesis was first articulated by Aristotle (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Sliwa and Cairns, 2009). Aristotle terms *phronesis* generally interpreted as "reason capable of action" or "practical wisdom" (Flyvbjerg et al, 2012). Aristotle (1934) believed that phronesis was "concerned with acts that are just and admirable and good for man" (p. 162). Flyvbjerg expands that definition and posits the principle objective for social research with a phronetic approach is to perform analysis and interpretation of values and interests aimed at social change. In his seminal work, *Making Social Science Matter* (2001), Flyvbjerg states that the principle objective for social science in using a phronetic lens is to carry out analysis and interpretations of values and beliefs aimed at social commentary and social action. Our study draws on Flyvbjerg's elaboration of phronesis as the mode of inquiry "that opens up discussion on the good or bad man through exploration of the structures of power and rationality inherent in interactions between groups and individuals" (Sliwa and Cairns, 2009, p. 229). Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 60) proposes the application methodological guidelines for phronetic studies in which the following questions are addressed:

1. Where are we going?
2. Is this desirable?

3. What should be done?
4. Who gains and who loses; and by what mechanisms of power?

Feminist scholars (Eubanks, 2011) have highlighted the unexplored links between phronetic social science and feminist epistemology and methodology (Flyvbjerg et. al, 2012). Eubanks (2011) draws out the parallels between the two methods of inquiry, which include placing power at the center of analysis, the acceptance of the bounded nature of rationality and an insistence on reflexivity and praxis. Flyvbjerg (2012, p. 9), recognizing this oversight, offers the following path for feminist phronesis inquiry, which we will adopt for the purposes of this study:

1. begin by grounding analysis in the subjectivities and everyday/everynight experience of the people being studied (Smith 2004);
2. recognize that different individuals and groups inhabit different social locations in relationship to the phenomena being studied, locations shaped by their relationship to power along the lines of race, class, gender, sex, ability and nationality (Crenshaw, 1991);
3. uncover how this social location shapes how individuals and groups understand the world, developing different 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1988);
4. put these specific situated knowledges in conversation with each other in the context of collaborative, action-oriented practice in order to develop better accounts of the world, accounts that are both more true and more just (Harding 1992); and
5. therefore, produce knowledge that is useful for praxis and social movement.

Grounding phronetic research in transnational feminist theory (Calas & Smircich, 1996; Holvino, 2010; Mohanty, 2003) understandings allows for more robust interpretations of *Cinderella* and *Shahrazad*, with respect to gender inequalities and relations in the workplace. As organizations continue to become more diverse through globalization and mass migration, a feminist phronetic approach (Eubanks, 2011; Flyvbjerg, 2012) offers emphasis on difference, intersectionality (Holvino, 2010), and how different social locations create different knowledge and interpretations (Eubanks, 2011). "Gender, race, class and nation are recognized as sites of heterogeneous subject positions and complex and shifting dimensions of individual and collective identity" (Holvino, 2010, p. 261). A number of scholars argue that exploring identities and organizational experiences at the intersection of gender, race, class, and nation offer more complex and complete analyses (Holvino, 2010). Allowing for dialogue and sharing of more complex stories helps change the experience that diverse women have of each other, disrupting hegemonic and essentialized identities (Harding 1992; Holvino, 2010).

Using deconstruction (Martin, 1990) and drawing on feminist phronesis allows us to approach notions of gender inequality and relations in the workplace through a different lens. Our intent is to inform women as actors who negotiate and challenge prevailing issues of power, gender inequality and upward mobility as reflected in masculine and patriarchal corporate culture (Centre for Women in Politics and Public Leadership, 2012). Flyvbjerg (2001) contends that phronetic research is dialogical including a multiplicity of voices and interpretations, with no particular voice claiming authority. “The goal of phronetic research is to produce input to the ongoing social dialogue and praxis in a society, rather than to generate ultimate, unequivocally verified knowledge” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 139). Therefore, as researchers we do not claim final authority on a privileged position from which to answer the questions above.

Feminist phronetic inquiry insists on reflexivity and praxis (Eubanks, 2011). Alvesson and Karreman ask “what is an interesting research problem?” (2011). In the search for novel insight that makes a contribution to our field, we believe that a multivocal approach provides a rich resource and provides a more ‘interesting problem’ to bring to our applied research. When we make the claim to speak for others, tolerance for and utilization of a multivocal lens is required. We must first start with our own constructions and projections as reflexivity is no longer an optional stance; it is a requirement for good research (Alvesson and Karreman 2011). Our reflexivity is deepened and enhanced by the addition of alternative voices and interpretations outside of our own, adding various perspectives and metaphors, differing political, socio-cultural and religious interests.

Martin (1990) indicates that organizational research is usually written in a traditional scientific writing style, using an impersonal tone with passive verb construction. Such an approach makes the author(s) invisible. Conversely, deconstruction requires subjectivity and reflexivity, which is in accordance with our phronetic stance. “It inevitably reveals the I/eye/ideology of the deconstructor as well as the deconstructed” (Martin, 1990, p. 341). Therefore, we will use a more personal voice in order to acknowledge our own reactions to the interpretations and sources of limitations in our perspective.

Our Method: Women and Social Dialogue

Narrative is an ancient method and a seminal form for sense making of experiences (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Our research taps into the narratives of five women and well as our own. Flyvbjerg

(2001, p. 84) contents that “good narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life.” Often such narratives may be difficult to summarize as they offer multiple interpretations that are diverse and sometimes conflicting. Therefore, this complexity leaves ample space for not only the researchers and the narrators but also the readers to make different interpretations and draw different conclusions (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

Our beginnings start with the individual participants and their respective relationships to society. We include our own experiences in the discussions of myth (at a meta level). We offer that myth is both current and past and allows space to develop the myth toward the future. Our personal myths will be influenced by the collective myths, both inform and potentially transform the other. Using personal myth, re-tells the experience of a confrontation with the unconscious and returns us to the imaginal realm, creating a sacred space or *temenos* that contains the experience. In the re-remembering, there is a re-creation – that again gives body to the experience, emphasizing that myths are not just heard but *physically resonate within the body* (Grant, 2005). The personal stories (at a micro level) become enfolded within the world myths, which wraps around the personal story once again. Both myth and story hold the intensity of emotion until transformed into experience. Jung believed that this intensity of experience corresponded to certain collective (and not personal) structural elements of the human psyche, and like the form of our own bodies, are inherited (CW9i:262). He states “in reality, we can never legitimately cut loose from our archetypal foundations unless we are prepared to pay the price of a neurosis, any more than we can rid ourselves of our body and its organs without committing suicide” (CW9i:267).

In accessing and using that vehicle in an individual or collective context, a space is formed for mythopoesis, an act of the imagination in which prevailing mythic images or motifs are reshaped, reformed, and given new life. Behind the particulars of any situation, a mythical move provides a ‘seeing-through’ to the mystery of the unconscious beyond, to a field of potential that cannot be directed known but can be intuited. The resulting dialectic, the dialogue between the “I” and the “You”, was expressed by our sharing of stories.

Our narrators are all professional women working within academia. The five women are immigrants – three from the Middle East and two from Western European countries. Both authors also work in academia; one immigrated to Canada from the Middle East, the other was

born in Canada. In particular, their educational, professional and socioeconomic backgrounds are somewhat similar. All participants have completed graduate level credentials, with the majority holding doctoral degrees. They come from a variety of disciplines including accounting, marketing, engineering, mathematics, and operations. All women have worked in a variety of organizational settings in the private sector as well as academia.

The narrators participated on a voluntary basis. The two authors, both known to the participants, facilitated a one and a half hour discussion that was recorded. The discussion was allowed to be emergent, using open-ended questions about *Cinderella* and *Shahrazad* as role models. As facilitators, we made a conscious decision to allow the narratives and interpretations to emerge from which subsequent discussion points were drawn out. The participants were asked to share their views about the two mythical figures and their response to duress. They were encouraged to share their own stories and interpretations of these myths. They were asked questions about the protagonists, antagonists, and other enablers in the myths.

The narratives were later transcribed into a 15-page document for the purpose of deconstruction and analysis. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, responses were coded P1 through P5. What was interesting for both of us was the depth of the narratives and the unexpected directions and multiple interpretations offered by the participants. We had not anticipated the contradictions and complexities that arose. As we transcribed the narratives, we found ourselves engaged in an iterative analytical and reflective process questioning our own “previous” interpretations, documenting these shifts and changes.

By using deconstruction to analyze the narratives, we seek to bring to the forefront multiple interpretations, and to also destabilize taking for granted meanings of the narratives and objective claims of truth (Calas and Smircich, 1991). Deconstruction (Martin, 1990) is complementary to feminist phronetics, which is dialogical in nature. Deconstruction opens up space for limitations in the narratives (Kilduff, 1993). For example, we ask what did the narrators exclude from their interpretations of the Cinderella and Shahrazad myths? Why did they never question or alternatively condemn the protagonists, antagonists and enablers? This space of hidden and silenced negligible issues, allows us as deconstructors an opportunity to uncover what the narratives and interpretations hide from our view and develop this space through democratic dialogues between knowledge-producing groups (Harding, 1992; Kelemen & Rumens, 2008).

Another hidden aspect of the narratives is their dependence on sets of hierarchically-oriented binary oppositions (Kilduff, 1993). Examples of such binaries include woman/man, antagonist/protagonist, East/West; persona/shadow. From a deconstruction perspective, these binaries are placed in opposition to one another, where one element of dualism is privileged over another which is suppressed (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008). Deconstruction allows us to dismantle these binaries, letting go taken for granted notions or beliefs about gender inequalities and relations, and develop alternative, multiple, open ended ways of interpreting.

Discussion

Our intent was to utilize two ‘simple’ myths as a starting point to elicit discussion. We felt that using these myths would enable a safe starting place, provide a working container so that our participants would be relaxed and at ease so that the proposed discussion would be initiated from a non-threatening framework. We wished to explore the constraints and influence of society, culture and family contexts that may impact a woman’s trajectory in her business field of choice. Also, we wanted to elicit personal beliefs, conscious or unconscious, that might inform a woman’s ability to lead an organization. What is causing the gap between potential and actuality for women in the workplace? Is it imposed by self or others?

For a culture to advance, the process must begin with the individual. This is true whether the advancement is made by an organization or a nation (Grant, 2005). It is necessary for an individual to first establish a personal myth or core set of beliefs and values that govern behavior in order to begin the articulation of a collective myth or core set of beliefs and values that enable cultural change – again within an organization or a nation. The power of phronesis lies in how theory and practice reinforce each other (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 2012).

The two archetypal aspects of Persona and Shadow aforementioned in this paper became evident in our discussions with the participants and with ourselves. The impact was unanticipated and significant.

Deconstructing Cinderella

In the case of Cinderella, we both agreed that she was a weak and willing victim of her unfair circumstances. The Hollywood movies, ‘Sabrina’ and ‘Pretty Woman’ were examples we used in

our original discussion as examples of how Cinderella-like characters still influence us with the message that women still need to be saved by their prince. Our interpretations were constructed by the mass-market Disney version of the 1950's. We did not consider the original interpretations that are contained in volumes of old; we instead bought into the popular media version of Cinderella being a helpless dreamer, a 'nice' girl (Yolen, 297).

Our Question:

When you think about Cinderella – what comes to mind about values, beliefs and attitudes?

Our Participants:

P1: She's tough.

P2: Hardworker, yeah – she didn't give up.

P1: Self-confidence, she didn't give up.

P3: I get the feeling of unfairness. It was unfair to grow up with a stepmother.

P1: But she still did it. She still managed. She didn't cry, she didn't kill herself. You know what I mean? She motivates.

P2: Very high degree of fairness in what was taken from her. As a child, you do not have power. So unfair. And it was taken from her.

P3: Important for kids. I told them the story so that they understand what is the value of having fairness in life. They have to learn that from the beginning and they have to be fair. And try to live in or create and at least to see when unfairness happens.

P1: It's karma too. With her story it's a lot of karma. She didn't give up. The unfairness became fair. What you do to others will come back to you. That's way we have parables and every religion believes it. Do unto others as you want to be treated. Otherwise it comes to you in a bad, bad way.

P4: There is light always at the end of the tunnel. If you think positively like Cinderella then basically that's the karma we are talking about. She was good to everybody and at the end she found her happily ever after.

P5: In my country we have many stories similar to it (Cinderella). One story would be that the stepmother sent her stepdaughter to the woods in the winter to find some flower that grew in the spring. They are all similar. This kind girl would do anything to please her stepmother. ... I didn't kind of think much about this person. She always complies, why does she do it. She doesn't earn anything. ... Why do you all conform? I don't think I ever saw her as a model. In all the movies, she is brave, kind and an angel. She is not a role model for me at all.

P4: According to my husband, you are not supposed to step out. You are supposed to keep going. Let it go or whatever. Then everything is going to be good.

P5: The only way out for all those ladies is to marry a prince. Right? Maybe the best strategy at the time. What could she have done? There was no other way out except for freezing to death in the forest. Magical forces help here. Father Frost helps her. He helps her. Its magic. Right. The only thing that could have helped her is magic. Or marrying the prince which is also kind of magic.

P1: She had hope right? As bad as it is, you always have to have hope. She had no choice and that is why the magic comes to you. She couldn't eat, she couldn't do anything else. She has to rely on her parents, because she was pure of heart and a good person and that is why the magic comes to her.

Their interpretation of Cinderella constructs not a helpless nice girl, but instead, a tough confident, hardworking woman who did not give up. Cinderella is seen as one who motivates given her tenacity and 'good heart' towards unfair circumstances. The prevailing attitude was that there was light at the end of tunnel – that if you have patience and wait for your 'happily ever after', it will come to you.

One of our participants then brought forward the attitude of unfairness and that this story was used as an example to her children as a learning opportunity for discussion. This prompted dialogue around fairness being taken away from Cinderella who lacked power (agency) within her context. It was felt she had no other option. Another perspective was that according to the 'prince', the woman was to do nothing and ride out the circumstances. Another participant offered that she was offended by the compliant, conforming woman who would not act on her own behalf.

It became obvious that the stories offered, and the interpretations made by our participants were context dependent and situation specific. This is in keeping with the method proposed by Flyvbjerg where such context dependency is not just a more complex form of deterministic construct, but rather an open-ended contingent relation between context and actions (p. 43). It is in keeping with our own philosophy – that this type of research needs to be grounded in a both/and approach instead of the current mass market American either/or.

Our exploration of this myth indicates that multiple versions have existed for some time. Yolen states that the story of Cinderella has been around for over 1000 years and first surfaced in a literary source in 19th century China (1982). This tale has been brought to life over and over

again and in recent versions, has been coopted by mass market versions that masquerade as literature and lose the meaning of the original myth. The Cinderella of old was hardy, helpful and inventive and had no forgiveness in her heart, just justice (Yolen 1982). Yolen states it succinctly when criticizing the current mass-market interpretation whereby “it was an English version of an Italian adaptation of a Spanish translation of a Latin version of a Hebrew translation of an Arabic translation of an Indian original” (Yolen quoting Joseph Jacobs, p. 297).

In a global context, if we want to understand a society, we need to discover its repertoire of legitimate stories – its history in narrative form (Czarniawska, 1997). Using a stance of both/and enables insights into the ability to maintain this tension of opposites. Working with interconnected tension allow us to become open to more possibilities (Clandinin et al, 2010). Finding that the viewpoints expressed about Cinderella were polar opposites did not become contentious, but instead a space was created that held both without any attempt at reconciliation. That is in keeping with a truer version of this myth on meta level.

In keeping with a metalevel stance, we need a practical participatory process rather than definitive process limiting results; we value experience over things. When only 26% of senior management positions in Canada are held by women, even though 43% of the labour force are women, such conversations are obviously limited (Centre for Women in Politics and Public Leadership, 2012). What are the contributing factors to this gap? Yolen questions if the rise of feminism and women’s rights movement make it clear that women in modern society (and we propose contemporary organizations) must ask what stereotypes are being perpetuated and encouraged and by whom? “If Cinderella is a role model for women, is she an appropriate one or not?” (Yolen, p. 295).

Deconstructing Shahrazad

In the case of Shahrazad, we both agreed that she was a strategist and courageous. One of us has always thought that if you could hold off death for 1001 nights, you were a woman worth knowing. Unfortunately, the Orientalist interpretations constructed Shahrazad as an exotic seductress, complete with bellydancing, veils and blatant sexuality. Yet this portrayal of Shahrazad by Europeans limited the degree to which one of us could identify with her (Gauch, 2007).

Our Question: What about Shahrazad?

P3: That's real power of human being is the brain, not the physical being. How you can use the brain to use power is higher level than physical power. That's what she had. She used her brain, to tell the stories - the stories changed her fate, and the fate of other women.

P5: I read it as a story. Cinderella that could happen, but Shahrazad was so alien for me. European tradition and Asian tradition. It wasn't real for me. I didn't think of her as a real person, unlike Cinderella. Because it was so different. Now that I think it could be a real story. Some crazy king, wants to kills all women in the world and she wants to stop him. Maybe it could have happen. I didn't realize it was a real issue. Now that I think about it as an adult, I see it as a power of human brain. It doesn't even happen in European story because she didn't use her brain. She was hoping to conform.

Our comment: Cinderella is the good girl, Shahrazad is the temptress. Initially presented Shahrazad as dangerous, temptress and trickster, Cinderella as good, well behaved and rewarded. If you're good the prince will come, saved by prince.

P3: Power in the brain not just in the body.

P4: One is good girl, Shahrazad more physical, sexual. It cannot be one or the other. It has to be a mixture of both. We always have options and up to you what you are going to do. You have to have enablers, some countries you would get killed if you have an education. Just being strong, or good and living your dream is not enough. If it is a question of staying alive, not always able to fulfill your goals and live up to your dreams.

P3: Marrying is another way of getting a change happening. I don't want to say marriage is damaging or bad.

P2: I'd like to build on that. I immediately think of the power of a woman who has the opportunity to choose many faces to face the world. As a woman we have that ability. We can play the good girl. We can play the temptress. We can be whatever face we choose to be. I don't think women are always aware of the power that they have to choose the face when they walk into the room. When I hear the stories of the two women, I think of the versatility and flexibility to manifest the face to get what needs to be done. All women, and even the ones considered the good ones or the weak ones, that was a choice that they manifested to make something happen.

Fewer participants directly engaged in sharing their understanding of Shahrazad. This may be that her character lays more silent than Cinderella within a North American contest. One participant noted Shahrazad's intellect, and her ability to use her brain to affect change. This interpretation is in line with Gauch (2007) where Shahrazad is seen as a courageous woman who confronts King Shahrayar who is so angry by the infidelity of his first wife that he married a virgin every evening and putting her to death the next morning. Knowing this, Shahrazad offers herself to the king yet postpones her execution and that of other women by telling him a lengthy

story each night, leaving it unfinished as dawn breaks. Through using her intellect, she alters the representation of women by both entertaining and changing the way the king looks at human behavior (Gauch, 2007). In this interpretation the character is admired for her brain, resolve and agentic abilities.

Another participant who grew up in Europe did not initially see Shahrazad as intelligent and courageous. To her the story was ‘alien,’ wondering to herself how this story could be real, as she was so different to Cinderella. Yet through this social dialogue, she was able to see Shahrazad in a new light. She also recognized that in European Cinderella-like stories, the female protagonists are not portrayed as strategists, but conformists. Through this experience of social dialogue, more empathy for and understanding of Shahrazad, the ‘other,’ was realized. Thus the act of phronesis allowed for a more just account of this story (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 2012).

Islamic Feminist Mernissi asserts that when Shahrazad “stakes her life on the power of her stories, she affirms her intelligence, sangfroid, courage and political astuteness” (Gauch, 2007, p. xii). She contrasts this interpretation with Orientalist readings where Shahrazad is constructed as a submissive, exotic woman who survives the King’s cruelty and power because of her beauty and sexuality. For many Arab Feminists Shahrazad is an agentic feminist storyteller who “profoundly transforms the manner in which [the king] perceives not just her but himself, his subjects, and his authority” (Gauch, 2007, p. 14). These interpretations allow us to envision Shahrazad as a woman who controlled her own destiny through knowing herself as worthy and the power of her language.

Much in line with the earlier dialogue about Cinderella, the women created a space that held tensions about Shahrazad. Is Shahrazad the beautiful seductress? Or a learned, courageous political strategist? Or Both? The discussion amongst participants led to weighing the ways in which women can choose their face. Two participants felt that as women can be what we want to be by the masks we choose to wear. We can be the temptress or the nice girl; the seductress or the strategist. They felt that women can be both and all things, having the ability to choose the face/mask, they want based on their context.

Upon reflection, we wondered about the parallels between the masks advocated by one participant and the Muslim veil. Do the masks, like the veil provide the empowerment and the

ability for us engage in our public spaces? By wearing the masks are we asserting our identity and gender equality? By wearing the masks are we surfacing more strongly our “womanhood,” resisting barriers within the workplace? Are the masks a symbol of justice, resistance and solidarity within our workplaces? Are the masks a source of oppression or liberation?

This discussion also brings us back to Jung’s description of Persona/Shadow, leaving us with even more questions. By choosing different faces and masks are we as women portraying ourselves as we are or not? By choosing our mask based on our context, are we losing sight of our authenticity or engaging with it? Are the masks necessary to adapt to our environment and workplaces, in order to combat gender inequalities, and mobility upward within organizations?

General Conclusions and Need for Future Research

Our exploration for this paper started from a place of concrete understanding, or so we thought. Now, we are not as sure of our own interpretations; our own reflexivity and phronetic dialogue with others has created a space where a deeper understanding can be realized and is needed. The experience has changed our perceptions and brought confirmation that direct experience is a powerful ‘storied phenomenon’, that requires more thought. Lives are composed, recomposed, told, retold and lived out in storied ways on storied landscapes’ (Clandinin et al, 2010, pg. 82). The realization that the stories told of the interpretations of the stories heard are one voice among many voices was brought home by our discussions. As researchers, our exploration is always in relation to the voices we hear and the many silenced voices that have yet to speak. That multivocality is a necessary component of finding a new mythology that encompasses the world of business. As Jung stated even the best attempts at explanation are only translations into a metaphorical container. “The most we can do is to *dream the myth onwards* and give it a modern dress (CW9i: 271).

To foster imagination and proactive effort, emotional commitment is required. Change is a psychological event that requires physical and emotional embodiment. The work of Campbell and Jung both speak to the understanding that most people are imprisoned in lives that are too small. In combining the power of myth, both personal and collective, through phronetic dialogue untapped and forgotten potentials may resurface and be re-energized. Through these discussions, shadow projections may be withdrawn. We know that empathy increases through the sharing of

stories. Perhaps through such process, the fear of change can be mitigated and the associated emotion captured in support of the change toward a more global awareness. Obviously, in the world of business something needs to shift. To work from an interdisciplinary perspective allows a different voice to be brought into the conversation. To work from a cross-cultural perspective provides a multivocality previously unheard. The tensions created from cross-cultural conversations are a necessary component in understanding the experience of people in relationship (Clandinin et al, 2010).

We need to continue the conversation and ask many more questions. We need to initiate many more discussions about what myths we are living. For in order to ‘dream the myth onwards’, we first need to recognize the myths we are living. For ideas we have, and do not know we have, have us (Hillman, 1995). These discussions should shed some light on the 2012 report on women’s leadership in Canada which indicates, and moreover, demands a shift in how leadership is developed and constructed with corporate culture. A commitment to inclusive leadership practices is necessary. Given the shifts in demographics, globalization and Canada’s increasing public commitments to equality in the workplace, prioritizing inclusion and increased diversity in senior leadership are imperative (Centre for Women in Politics and Public Leadership, 2012).

We must continue to ask: Who is the author? These myths we have explored, written by men with interpretations by men. We now author our own myths through this process. This is possible because the power of using story depends not on its reference to some extralinguistic reality but on its openness for negotiating meaning (Czarniawska, p. 20). As such, phronesis is mythopoetic - myth making - and is a necessary competency for leadership in any sector. Phronetic dialogues need to reach across and within various sectors as well as across national and international boundaries.

The ultimate form of agency for women is to make our own myth, individually and collectively. Perhaps our notion of agency itself needs revisioning. Is agency a heroic act or a nurturing one? Or is it both and contained with the tension of the opposites? Individual interpretations are constructed and only one piece of an entire system. Collective interpretation and construction allows the lens to widen and deepen, making more room and space for all of us to reside. For at the heart of storytelling, journalism, writing, filmmaking, scholarship, and teaching there still lies

that hope that words wield power over understanding, perhaps over the very course of history – if only someone is listening (Gauch, p. 135).

In order to dream our myths onward and provide a modern dress will take many voices from around the globe. Through listening to the old tales, and in phronetic discussions both around the campfire and the water cooler, we will create our modern dress and perhaps create a mythology powerful enough to encompass our global reality. The current state of business has captured our undivided attention. We are listening.

The cure for both the naïve woman and the instinct-injured woman is the same: Practice listening to your intuition, your inner voice; ask questions; be curious; see what you see; hear what you hear; and then act upon what you know to be true. (Pinkola-Estes, p 68).

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