

POST- TRUTH ANALYSIS OF PATTY JENKINS WONDER WOMAN

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Abstract:

Post-Truth was first used in this meaning in a 1992 essay by the late Serbian American playwright Steve Teisch in The Nation magazine. The word 'post' does not indicate "after truth" but calls attention to the irrelevance of truth in the context. Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the President of the United States, recently used the term "alternative facts" (Conway6). With the concept of post-truth, many things we take for granted are suddenly up for a political debate, for instance the idea that, before the current era, our political sphere was democratic and inherently enlightened. With the advent of post-truth, the didactic approach has seen a rapid surge in reading of a text or a film. The moral side of a text today is of more value than the story itself. Wonder Woman is one of the most popular and well known superheroes, and her influence can be seen in nearly every artistic medium. Human beings know and communicate truth in words because we are spiritual beings. A worldview that discards spirit has to discard truth also. By reducing man to a soul-less, biological machine, secular materialism in effect has killed truth. Patty Jenkins Wonder Woman through Diana shows us the various sides of a post-truth society. She presents a way to deal with the post-truth crisis through the character of Diana. Diana's character shows that introducing ideas that are different and making them familiar may slowly believe.

Keywords: truth, post, wonder woman, etc

Post-Truth was first used in this meaning in a 1992 essay by the late Serbian American playwright Steve Teisch in The Nation magazine. Reflecting on the Iran-Contra scandal and the Persian Gulf War, Teisch lamented that "we as a free people, have free people, have freely decided that we want to live in post-truth world" (Teisch9). There is evidence of the phrase post-truth being used before Teisch's article, but apparently with the transparent meaning and not with the new implication that truth itself become irrelevant. A book, The Post-truth Era, by Ralph Keyes appeared in 2004, and in 2005 American comedian Stephen Colbert popularized an informing word relating to the same concept: truthiness. Post-truth extends that notion from an isolated quality of particular assertions to a general characteristic of our age.

The word 'post' does not indicate "after truth" but calls attention to the irrelevance of truth in the context. Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the President of the United States, recently used the term "alternative facts" (Conway6). If we take a closer look at the recent global events, it

is abundantly clear that facts, evidence and data have a very little role to play in what people believe in and decide to do. Nations and states across races, geographical boundaries are relying heavily on half-truths and lies. The underlying assumptions of the Post-truth world might completely be different.

In the Post- truth era, the boundaries between truth and liars are blurred. There is apparently no significant difference between honesty and dishonesty, and what can be termed as fiction and non-fiction. Deception has become a sort of norm in the post-truth era. The advance of Globalization and the World Wide Web has led to a remarkable raise in the number of strangers and acquaintances in our lives. One of the results of this phenomenon is the widespread sense that much of what we're told can't be trusted. We no longer have any surety on what we are facing in our daily lives.

With the concept of post- truth, many things we take for granted are suddenly up for a political debate, for instance the idea that, before the current era, our political sphere was democratic and inherently enlightened. Or, that our media was once free of ideological bias. These debates paves way for reflecting on the reliability of the concept of post- truth and look more closely at the supposed novelty of the phenomenon it has identified. The debate needs to be put in relation to a classic problem of political philosophy: that of factual truth and political opinion, as famously discussed by Hannah Arendt in her essay *Truth and Politics*. Even then, Arendt drew attention to a “clash of factual truth and politics, which we are seeing today on such a large scale”(Arendt89).

Meanings and truth can be found through literary criticism and analysis This can either be done by using the traditional schools of literary schools or adopting the new perspectives in literary criticism. Addressing new perspectives and insights in literary criticism in the post-truth era, raises several questions regarding the truth in the text or its meaning. How do we get the meaning in Post-truth era literature? And finally, how the new perspectives of literary criticism are applied to criticize any literary text? One way to arrive at the ultimate meaning of a text is through the didactic approach to literary criticism.

According to Adam Kirsch:

The meaning of a literary text is a lesson, and the teacher is the author. The teacher is tasked with teaching with teaching his/her students, who are the readers. The book's author is considered a great educator leading the reader through life. He/She is the intellectual who is enlightened and whom society follows. The literary work can make people better. The meaning in the literature, which is considered the truth, can be taught by reading the literature. (kirschh17)

With the advent of post-truth, the didactic approach has seen a rapid surge in reading of a text or a film. The moral side of a text today is of more value than the story itself. Analysing a text based on post-truth reveals the emotional surge in society. Applying ideas of post-truth to texts that were written way before these ideas gained frequency, reveals the overwhelming relevance of post-truth throughout history. For instance the comic books of early twentieth century display a kind of emotional quantity in them that is relevant in contemporary world as well. These comics were more than just children's plaything. They represented a particular a particular value that society upholds. Comic book characters spoke of values, that parents and the society wanted children to have. Captain America for instance have always stood for patriotism and honesty, a view that is so much relevant in today's world as well.

Wonder Woman is one such character, which has stood as an icon of female empowerment, the embodiment of feminine strength, and ultimately, a fiercely determined superhero who fights side by side with Superman and Batman, superhero icons in their own right. Wonder Woman through the years has become a spokesperson of women's freedom around the globe. The values and ideas she hold are similar to the ones women in real world crave for. Her presence in the mainstream media helped women across nations to raise their interests. Superhero genre was something that was confined to published works and never actually made into any kind of adaptation from book to other fields. With the release of Superman in 1978, superheroes emerged from the back shelves of dusty comic book are released a year, with lucarative budgets. What is more noteworthy about these films is the social relevance of these comic book films. Even though the stories of these films are pretty much similar to the early twentieth century ones, the values and ideas are still relevant and can easily be related to the contemporary world.

Wonder Woman is one such comic book character whose ideas regarding truth and deception having have a lot of relevance especially in contemporary world where truth is slowly loosing its identity. Wonder Woman was a stark of departure from the female comic book characters of the day, and she has developed over the years into an inspiring role model for what women can achieve. She is a strong, independent, and intelligent warrior of the Amazons, and is someone who fights for truth, justice, and peace. Wonder Woman is loyal, honest, and courageous, and seeks to improve the world of humans; leading by example as she teaches the values of her Amazon sisters.

Created by William Moulton Marston in 1941, Wonder Woman began publication during what is known as the Golden age of Comics. In her first appearance in All Star Comics# 6, the world is in the midst of World War II, and American military pilot Steve Trevor crash lands on Paradise island. This island, unknown to the outside world, is the home of the Amazons, and Diana, daughter of Queen Hippolyte, discovers this strange man among the wreckage. Diana nurses Steve back to health, and in the process she falls in love with this

mysterious stranger. When the time comes for Steve to return home, a tournament is held among the Amazons to decide who will escort Steve on his journey back to the United States, and Diana emerges as the victor. Upon returning Steve home, Diana assumes the identity of a US military nurse, Diana Prince, in order to remain close to Steve and to learn how she can help the US military fight the Nazis under the alias of Wonder Woman. Steve knows her as both his nurse, Diana, and as the superhero Wonder Woman, but he does not realize that the two women are one in the same. Originally, Wonder Woman's powers came from her Amazon upbringing and training, and her weapons included her bullet deflecting bracelets and the Lasso of Truth.

Wonder Woman is one of the most popular and well known superheroes, and her influence can be seen in nearly every artistic medium. References to Wonder Woman can be found on television, in music, and in feature films, and the character has spawned countless fan fiction, tributes, short films and parodies. The recent screen adaptation of Wonder Woman by Patty Jenkins moves beyond female empowerment. The plot being pretty much similar to the real origin story of Wonder Woman is its amused respect for its heroine's ethical absolutism. Diana (Gal Gadot), is inevitably disillusioned in her quest to eliminate all the mere existence of evil is something that everyone can easily relate to. "They're killing children," (Wonder Woman 2017) she observes with a horror that will ring true to anyone following world affairs 100 years after the first world war, is always treated as a key tool in her superhero skill set, rather than as a mark of inexperience. It would have been easy for Jenkins and screenwriter Allan Heinberg to rest on their laurels as the creators of a vehicle that, by the very nature of its casting and directing choices, was bound to be a crowd pleaser for feminist comic-book fans starved for mainstream representation. But their Wonder Woman (2017) is her own brand of warrior, and Gadot endows the character with a fierce compassion and burning moral clarity that renders all to support her claims even if they seem delusory.

Wonder Woman (2017) has a lot more to do with the Post-truth environment than its predecessors. The emotional side of Diana and her utter awe at the way humanity views situations is what comprises the plot of Wonder Woman (2017). Thus, a Post-truth analysis of Patty Jenkins' Wonder Woman (2017) brings out the contemporary social relevance of the character who was created in 1941.

Wonder Woman (2017) is an American superhero film based on the DC Comics character of the same name. The film is directed by Patty Jenkins, with a screenplay by Allan Heinberg, from a story by Heinberg, Zack Snyder, and Jason Fuchs, and stars Gal Gadot in the title role, alongside Chris Pine. Wonder Woman (2017) is the second live action theatrical film featuring the titular character, following her debut in 2016's *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*. Wonder Woman is about the journey of the Amazon princess Diana, who sets out to stop World War I, believing that the conflict was started by the long-time enemy of the

Amazons, Areas after American pilot and spy Trevor crash- lands on their island Themyscira and informs her about it.

The film starts in present- day Paris, when Diana receives a photographic plate from Wayne Enterprises of herself and four men taken during World War I, prompting her to recall her past. Daughter of Queen Hippolyta , Diana was raised on the hidden island of Themyscira, home to the Amazonian history with Diana, including how Ares, Zeu's son, became jealous of humanity and orchestrated its destruction . When other gods attempted to stop him, Ares killed all but Zeus, who used the last of his power to wound areas and force his retreat. Zeus left the Amazons the island and a weapon, the Godkiller,to prepare them for Are's return.

Although she initially forbids Diana to be trained as a warrior , Hippolyta reluctantly agrees to let her sister , Antiope, train Diana only more rigorously than any other warrior. In 1917, Diana, now a young woman, rescues American Pilot Captain Steve Trevor when his plane crashes off the Themysciran coast. The island is soon invaded by a German ship that had been pursuing Trevor. The Amazon kill the crew, but Antiope sacrifices herself to save Diana. Steve is interrogated with the Lasso of Hestia, it is the first appearance of Lasso which is also called the lasso of truth. The lasso plays an integral part in Wonder Woman's journey. The lasso represents the power of truth . It turn out to be the most powerful weapon of Wonder Woman as it compels a person to rebveal the truth . The lasso works as Wonder Woman, William Moulton Marston invented the early prototype of lie detectors.

The lasso compels a person to tell the truth by inflicting pain on them when they lie. When Steve is lassoed, he tries to resist the urge of speaking the truth, the more he insists, the more pain it causes, thus completing him to reveal the truth. Steve reveals that a great war is consuming the outside world and that he is an Allied spy. He has stolen a notebook of the chief chemist Isabel Maru, who is attempting to engineer a deadlier form of mustard gas, under the orders of General Erich Ludendorff from a weapon facility in the Ottoman Empire. Believing Ares to be responsible for the War, Diana arms herself with the Godkoller sword, the lasso, and her armour before leaving Themyscira with steve to locate and stop Ares for good. Diana is driven more by emotions rather than logical reasons like her mother. She thus dons the role of a true post-truth heroine charged with emotions and mistaking her ideals and views with truth. Steve, who is aware of this mis-conception, lies Diana inorder to escape the island. He even plays along in Diana's views and makes a deal with her to take her to Ares. "You help me out of here and I will take you to Ares". (Wonder Woman 2017).

In London, after entering the world of men, instead of taking Diana to the War Front, Steve takes her to the war council to deliver the stolen notebook. This is where the deceptions start playing their part in Diana's journey. Steve, who is aware of Diana's intention, still lies to her. He in a way uses Diana's emotions to further his plans. They deliver Maru's notebook to

the Supreme War council. Diana translates Maru's notes and reveals that the Germans plan to release the deadly gas at the western Front. Although forbidden by his commander to act, Steve, with secret funding from Sir Patrick, recruits spy Sammer, marksman Charlie, and smuggler chief to help prevent the gas from being released. The team reaches the front in Belgium. Diana goes alone through No Man's Land and captures the enemy trench, allowing the Allied forces to help her liberate the village of Veld.

The team learns that a gala will be held at the nearby German High Command. Steve and Diana separately infiltrate the party, with Steve intending to locate the gas and destroy it, while Dianna intends to kill Ludendorff, believing that he is Ares and thus killing him will end the war. Steve stops her to avoid jeopardizing his mission, but this allows Ludendorff to unleash the gas on Veld, killing its inhabitants. Blaming Steve for intervening, Diana pursues Ludendorff to a base where the gas is being loaded into a bomber aircraft bound for London. Diana fights and kills Ludendorff, but is confused and disillusioned when his death does not stop the war. Sir Patrick appears and reveals himself as Ares. He tells Diana that although he has subtly given humans ideas and inspirations, using Ludendorff and Maru as pawns in the process, it is ultimately their decision to resort to violence as they are inherently corrupt. When Diana attempts to kill Ares with the Godkiller sword, he destroys it, and then reveals Diana to be the Godkiller, as the daughter of Zeus and Hippolyta. He falls to persuade Diana to help him to destroy mankind in order to restore paradise on Earth. While the two battle, Steve's team destroys mankind in order to restore paradise on Earth. While the two battle, Steve's team destroys Maru's laboratory. Steve hijacks and pilots the bomber carrying the poison to safe altitude and detonates it, sacrificing himself in the process. Ares attempts to direct Diana's rage and grief at Steve's death by convincing her to kill Maru, but the memories of her experiences with Steve cause her to realize that humans have good within them. She spares Maru and redirects Ares's lightning into him, killing him for good. Later the team celebrates the end of the war. In the present day, Dianna sends an email to Bruce thanking him for the photographic plate of her and Steve and reaffirms her new mission to fight and give on the world's behalf.

Wonder Woman may be set in the time of World War I, but the movie's themes are particularly relevant in the contemporary world. It is perfectly at home in a culture contending with weaponised lies. Diana represents the emotionally charged Post-truth era human beings while Steve acts as the instrument of propagating false facts. Steve's character pretty much reflects on the contemporary political heads that bend facts so as to emotionally charge the general public and then take advantage of their emotions.

Wonder Woman's lasso is part of a shared concept of truth that must be had if there is to be any hope for civilization. And truth and deception, fittingly, are key themes in Jenkins's latest adaptation of Wonder Woman. The character that is also sometimes known as the

Goddess of Truth is, in the movie, repeatedly deceived. Her love interest is a spy, a profession that specifically involves lying. “What one does when faced with the truth, is more difficult than you would think.” (Wonder Woman 2017). This voice over narration by Diana serves more as a realisation by the character about her social circumstances. A matured Diana utters these lines in the contemporary world where there is no perceivable difference between truth and lies. It reveals that her realisation of the post-truth era.

Wonder Woman(2017) is a work that is decidedly at home, across its dimensions, in the world of 201, a world that is deeply concerned about alternative facts, about fake news, about politically weaponised lies, about falsehoods that are uttered with no seeming consequence. The princess's lasso, a metaphor for objective truth, is a symbol of aspiration. Seen in another way, though, it is a symbol of despair. Lasso in this sense is a tool of truth that is decidedly ambivalent about its own powers. “ How do I know you're not lying to me right now?”(Wonder Woman 2017) the princess asks the spy. And the only way she can know for sure is to trust, not the humans, but magic.

The shades of how people react when faced with the truth have come into focus in today's increasingly polarized political climate. A decade ago, the comedian Stephen Colbert introduced viewers to the idea of trithiness, he called it “a quality belonging to claims that were based on gut feelings instead of facts.”(Colbert 54) and with Oxford dictionary's definition of post-truth, it can be easily be considered as a description of general characteristic of our time. According to Norbert Schwarz:

When people consider whether something is true or not, they engage in either analytic or intuitive evaluations. Analytic evaluations are cognitively taxing and may involve searching for information like knowledge drawn from books or experts. Intuitive evaluations require less effort and are largely based on gut feelings like familiarity or ease of understanding.(Schwarz 18)

Another criterion regarding the post- truth belief is compatability. “ it is the impression that a claim fits with what one already believe or feel. The more the information fits, the more likely people accept it as truth.” (Garber 57). There is an analytic and intuitive way to assess compatibility, too. To divert someone from the in tuitive to analytic evaluation on this yardstick, all it takes is to make the task feel easier and familiar. Diana was evaluating things intuitively. When Steve and Diana arrived in London, Steve presented his task of going to the war council and surrendering the notes as an easier task than going directly to the warfront. He persuaded Diana to join him on his mission. Steve uses logical reasoning to make his mission seem easier. After arriving in London , Diana asks Steve to take her to the war, but Steve calls against it. Diana reminds him of the deal they made, “you made a deal, a deal is a

promise and a promise is unbreakable". (Wonder Woman 2017) Steve uses the same sentiment to persuade Diana. He tells Diana that they can't go directly into the war and that they need the help of war council to do so and thus make his plan more logical than Diana's. Engaging the brain by slowing facts down can help people appreciate incompatibility and reject claims they might otherwise accept as true. This is why Steve says his plan to go to the War council is much more logical as he has information, written battle plans that he can pitch in the council unlike Diana's, who has no hard evidence of the fact that Ares is responsible for the war.

Another area where the post-truth characteristic appears rather clearly is in the intense exchanges between Steve and Diana . "It is love that that saves," (Wonder Woman 2017) muses Diana at movie's end . For before the end, Steve does muster up the courage to tell a strong post-truth era woman that he loves her. In a way, the this expression of love is something more than just a romantic touch. "What Steve did there was surrender in front of a Post-truth era woman". (Garber 36). Steve in his career as a spy has seen a lot of woman, but the qualities that he saw in Diana was something unique.

Human beings know and communicate truth in words because we are spiritual beings. A worldview that discards spirit has to discard truth also. By reducing man to a soul-less, biological machine, secular materialism in effect has killed truth. Neither Steve nor Wonder Woman has intellectual tools to know what marriage is, when they talk about it. When God brought a naked Adam, He blessed them to be one, but they defied and were fallen. Men and women are fallen. It is indeed an observable fact that they are untrustworthy and undeserving. However, saving them is not about what they deserve. They do need to be saved from their powerful enemies, in Wonder Woman it is the Germans and the god of war(the devil). But the saviour came to save them from something much deeper within their own heart-from the sin of their own deceptions. In this case Diana dons the role of a post-truth savior.

Patty Jenkins Wonder Woman through Diana shows us the various sides of a post-truth society. She presents a way to deal with the post-truth crisis through the character of Diana. Diana's character shows that introducing ideas that are different and making them familiar may slowly believe. And that can change notions about social consensus. This is harder than it sounds, but musicians , novelists and filmmakers engage people with new experiences and points of view all the time. For instance *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970) made the idea of a single woman in the work place familiar to many Americans, the same way Aziz Ansari's *Master of None* (2015), helps non-millennials understand the particular challenges and charms of being a young person in the digital age. Thus Wonder Woman (2017) calls for a change in the beliefs and the attitudes that must be brought to deal with the post-truth era.

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