

Denise Nunez

Professor Meg Wise-Lawrence

FIQWS

09/01/18

Aesthetic Experience Through a Musical: *Mulan*

It was one of those nights where Disney channel would show one of their famous animated musicals and that night they decided to put on *Mulan*. I knew the day before that they were going to show it because I watched the channel every day, as most days they would show a different animated musical, and between the commercials Disney would show the showtimes for the shows or movies for the following day or week. My cousin lived right next door to me at the time and watching these musicals together was a pact we made to each other while growing up side by side. Eliana is one of my closet cousins, even though she is four years older she was never bored by what I wanted to do like an older sibling would be. She was always happy when it came to the both of us doing things like this together. So as soon as I found out that they were going to give *Mulan* that night at eight o'clock, I called Eliana and told her to come over and she was just as excited as I was because it was our favorite animated musical followed by *The Lion King*. Eliana came over that night and as usual we put multiple blankets on the floor and grabbed several pillows because my younger brothers were joining us as well. We made popcorn, grabbed our cups of fruit punch or sprite, and turned the lights off in my room. We loved to make it look like as if we were in our personal movie theater.

The beginning of the musical starts off with the song "Honor to us All", as Mulan's mom and grandma set her up to meet the matchmaker. They're dressing Mulan in a traditional dress

with a traditional makeup look and hairstyle. However, it also shows Mulan helping a man out in chess and helping a little girl get her toy from a little boy who snatched it from her. Through this song, the stereotypes given to men and women in China at the time are represented in Mulan's actions as well as through the lyrics. This song became my favorite as soon as I heard it in this movie. I was always the one to prove to people that women can be just as strong, just as smart, and just as a leader as men whether it was through my actions or through my words supported by evidence. I saw it among my own family how women would sometimes be treated lesser than a man. A woman must stay home, clean, take care of the kids, have a good hygiene, and be obedient to their husband, just as stated in the lyrics, "men want girls with good taste, calm and obedient who work fast paced, with good breeding and a tiny waste". They were viewed as a fragile persona. They were given the stereotype of being weak, not being able to make decisions of their own on their own and having a perfect body as if they are being viewed as an object. What I liked most about Mulan is how she tried to prove that common stereotype wrong whenever she saw a situation that was unfair, or whenever she had the opportunity to show people, specifically men, that a woman can have just as much knowledge.

In the song "make a man out of you" the soldiers are being trained to prepare for war, and this is where Mulan jumps in and decides to dress up like a man to go into war to help her father. This was my favorite scene because it was different seeing a girl being dressed as a man and it also brought in some comedy to the movie. When the dragon was telling Mulan how to walk and the gesture she should have, she was trying too hard that it made her the center of attention. All the other soldiers were eyeing her, which was bad for her because she didn't want anyone finding out what she had done, knowing the consequences that could result from it. Throughout the song, the captain is providing tasks to the soldiers that test how much of a "man" they are.

They must climb up a tree trunk, be able to carry heavy amounts of water, fight with sticks, and know how to precisely use a bow and arrow. The song states, “did they send me daughters, when I asked for sons”, while singing this lyric it showed the soldiers, including Mulan, failing to do the tasks provided by their captain. So as women are viewed as weak, the captain was referring to the failing soldiers as daughters.

After seeing how much she was failing, the captain wanted to kick her out. Once the song is coming to an end the chorus begins again saying, “be a man, we must be as swift as a coursing river”, Mulan tries to complete the first task that was given to her, climbing the tree trunk, and she succeeds while her ex-captain was looking at her. After seeing that, he kept Mulan and she continued to successfully complete the other tasks. Thus, proving that, even though it couldn’t be seen then by the soldiers, a woman had the ability to be better than multiple men. This was Eliana's favorite scene, as well as mine because it vigorously showed us how a woman can do whatever she wants to do if she puts in the efforts needed for that task or goal. We loved how the common pattern of what makes a man was expressed through Mulan's determination, and persistency through this scene.

As a little girl watching this play I was fascinated by the music and the beauty in the characters and in the setting. But seeing the play now and seeing it a few years ago as I got older, I was able to pick these two scenes as the most impactful ones because of having a better understanding of the message this musical was giving me. I feel that *Mulan* should be the musical that should be shown more often now on tv like how it was before. Nowadays younger kids have a more aged mindset and the knowledge they learn in each grade is becoming more advance, so they would be able to have a better understanding of the movie than I did when I was in elementary school. It’s a motivational musical for girls who get bullied by boys at school or

for girls who were always taught that men are the more powerful gender. They can learn the equality that can exist among genders.