Gendered Mentorship across Cultures:
Becoming a Leader in Homer's *Odyssey* and Disney's *Moana*

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In 2015 the *New York Times* ran a story that pointed out that there were fewer *women* who run large companies than men named *John* who run such companies.[1] In April 2018 the paper noted a similar phenomenon:

> "Fewer Republican senators are women than men named John — despite the fact that Johns represent 3.3 percent of the male population, while women represent 50.8 percent of the total population. Fewer Democratic governors are women than men named John. And fewer women directed the top-grossing 100 films last year than men named Michael and James combined."[2]

There are many theories as to why women are underrepresented in positions of leadership, particularly political leadership. The most familiar of course is that women still face many forms of conscious and unconscious bias regarding their capacity to lead.[3] There is also the theory that women generally don't want to take on the stress and responsibility of an executive position. For example, in 2002 the psychiatrist Arnold Ludwig published an exhaustive study of 1,941 heads of state across 199 countries in the 20th century.[4] He noted that only 27 of these heads of state were women and that almost half of these women were either the widow or the daughter of the previous head of state. This means that less than one percent (.78%) of the people in his data sample were women with no prior affiliation to a man in power. For Ludwig the reason why women don't occupy these positions of power is not because they are not competent to do so but because they have no strong drive to do so. Males, in human as well as other primate populations, Ludwig argues, have a biological drive to increase their number of mates and to control vastly more resources than the rest of the population, which helps them provide for their offspring. Ludwig supports this claim by noting that male human leaders are generally more promiscuous and wealthier than the general population. The idea that women don't feel a drive to be in charge finds reinforcement in many narratives we find in story-telling, dating to the ancient

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[1] https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/03/upshot/fewer-women-run-big-companies-than-men-named-john.html
[2] https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/24/upshot/women-and-men-named-john.html
[3] For the case that this bias permeates the American educational system see https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2018/04/23/how-our-education-system-undermines-gender-equity/
[4] Ludwig, Arnold. 2002. *King of the Mountain*. Lexington, KY. For a discussion of Ludwig's book see: https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4588761/king-mountain-nature-political-leadership-arnold-m-ludwig

world. For example, many of the women in Plutarch's *On the Virtues of Women* are shown to have the same virtues of men--courage, cleverness, persuasiveness--but they tend to use their talents to solve a specific problem, often one posed by a foreign tyrant, before restoring the patriarchal order by handing over power to a father, husband, or brother. Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* seems to follow a similar narrative: the women of Greece orchestrate a reconciliation among the warring city-states, but there is no indication that they will later have a larger role in governing their respective *poleis*.[5] Another theory is that women tend to be more self-critical and thus don't feel as qualified for leadership even when they are; they thus need to be asked more often than a man would.[6] What I would like to suggest here, though I will not defend this hypothesis in my paper, is that it is possible that women don't hold as many leadership roles at least in part because they are not *mentored* to.[7]

Is it this process of mentorship, or what I will call using the ancient Greek, the "Menos-plot" that I want to explore in this paper using the examples of Telemachus in Homer's *Odyssey* and Moana in the Disney movie of the same name. Understanding this plot in the two works can give us some clues for how to think about the process of becoming a leader both for men and women, in story and in real life. On the one hand, there are many ways you might play a role in how others become leaders: you might coach them, teach them, train them, sponsor them, advise them, even inspire them. All of these roles are pretty scalable in the sense that you can, e.g., coach several people at once and perhaps advise many more; you might teach millions through a book or a video. But mentoring seems not to have this property of scalability. Mentoring seems to involve a one-on-one personal relationship, where the mentor imparts a sense to the mentee that he/she is uniquely talented, perhaps even supernaturally "chosen" or destined, for a certain leadership role. As we will see, both Telemachus and Moana have this kind of special relationship with their mentors. The similarities and differences in their experiences can tell us a lot about the role that gender plays in the mentoring process.

Brief Background on *Moana*

Because most readers of this paper will be more familiar with the *Odyssey* than Disney's *Moana*, some brief background information will be helpful. *Moana* grossed nearly $650 million worldwide and was nominated for the best animated film and best song at the Academy Awards

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[5] For a contemporary account of this phenomenon see this NPR interview with Susannah Wellford, founder and president of RunningStart: https://runningstartonline.org/blog/npr-d-c-politics-camp-girls

[6] https://www.npr.org/2014/05/05/309832898/best-way-to-get-women-to-run-for-office-ask-repeatedly

[7] See https://hbr.org/2016/12/the-men-who-mentor-women for support of the claim that with proper mentoring women in business at least can rise to positions of leadership commensurate with their representation in the general population: "Mentoring was recently found to be the most impactful activity for increasing diversity and inclusion at work, compared to diversity training and a variety of other diversity initiatives. Receiving mentorship from senior males can increase compensation and career progress satisfaction for women, particularly for those working in male-dominated industries."

in 2016.[8] The movie tells the story of how a 16-year-old woman from the fictional island of Motunui (modeled loosely on Samoa) disobeys her father the chief and sets sail in search of the trickster figure Maui, in order to convince him to return a gemstone "heart" to the goddess of fertility named Te Fiti by navigating past the lava monster Te Kā. Moana undertakes this quest because her island is running out of food; coconuts are rotting and the fish are not appearing in the nets anymore. Ultimately, we learn that, contrary to expectation, it is Moana herself who must save the day: Te Kā is none other than Te Fiti herself, enraged at the loss of her heart. Moana thus restores the heart and prosperity returns to all the islands.

Within the context of Polynesian history, Moana serves as an etiological myth for what is known as "The Long Pause" in sailing culture from about 3,500 years ago to about 1,500 years ago (a phenomenon still unexplained).[9] Moana's restoration of the heart of Te Fiti and her revival of wayfinding culture undoes this "Long Pause" and unleashes a new generation of sailing throughout the islands. While Moana herself is not found Polynesian myth, the figure of Maui--trickster, traveler, culture-hero--dominants the tradition. He shares many similarities with the ancient Greek hero Odysseus, but their respective roles in their two stories are quite different, as we will see.

The *Menos* Plot

I want to begin the comparison between the Moana and Telemachus with what I believe is the most salient point of comparison, what I call the "*Menos* Plot."[10] This is a plot where the protagonist is "mentally activated" by a list of instructions (an "orientation phase") and then is accompanied by a mentor while these instructions are carried out (an "integration phase"). For Telemachus this process begins when Athena announces to Zeus that she will put *menos* into him, so that he may speak out against the suitors who are consuming his home and courting his mother Penelope and so that he may win *kleos* (good repute) by visiting two heroic friends of his father from the Trojan War, namely, Nestor in Pylos and Menelaus in Sparta. Greg Nagy explains how *menos* works in the epic here:

> "At the council of the gods, Athena lays out her intent, saying that she will put *menos* into Telemachus. It's a Greek word that's usually translated as "heroic

[8] http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=disney1116.htm
[9] "How the Story of 'Moana' and Maui holds up against Cultural Truths": https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/how-story-moana-and-maui-holds-against-cultural-truths-180961258/
[10] The stories of Telemachus and Moana may be critiqued more broadly as a *Bildungsroman*; but I choose the term "*Menos* Plot" here because I am focusing more narrowly (1) on the role of the mentor in (2) the process of becoming a leader. Side note: in addition to its prevalence in traditional storytelling this narrative is found in many contemporary stories of succession in a family business.

> strength." But really, *menos* is not just strength of any kind—it is mental strength. And by that, I mean the kind of surge of power you feel in being able to put things into action. You can see the connection between *menos* and "mentor." *Menos* is mental strength, and a mentor is someone who gives mental strength to someone else."[11]

We know that Athena has been successful in putting *menos* into Telemachus when the poet tells us that "she made him call to mind his father *even more than before,*" i.e., *before* the inception of the mentoring process (*Odyssey* 1.321-322; cf. 1.115).

Much of what Telemachus must do in his *Menos* Plot is to assert himself as the son of Odysseus and the head of Odysseus' household. This involves gestures of courage or boldness (*tharsos*). For example, when Penelope tells the palace singer Phemius to cease from singing about the homecomings of the Greek warriors, Telemachus seizes the opportunity to declare to her that public speech-making (*mythos*) belongs to men and that he himself now has preeminence (*kratos*) over the house (*Odyssey* 1.345-359).[12] Telemachus follows this self-assertion with a bold injunction to the suitors that they may feast in his house this evening, but tomorrow will be summoned to assembly and told to depart from his house (*Odyssey* 1.368-380). On the following day, Telemachus carries through with his threat and then prepares to sail for the homes of Nestor and Menelaus.

At the homes of these two kings Telemachus further asserts himself with Athena's encouragement by engaging in conversation with the wise and intimidating Nestor (*Odyssey* 3.14-28) and then with Menelaus. It is at the home of Menelaus that he negotiates a better hospitality gift than the one the king had initially sought to give him (4.593-619). At both locations Telemachus is integrated into the world of elite royalty by being recognized as the son of Odysseus both in his appearance and manner of speaking (3.124-125, 4.138-154).

Moana's Double *Menos* Plot

Simply put, the mentor's message that Athena sends to Telemachus is as follows: "you are special; you can assert yourself and become the leader of your father's kingdom; here's how to do it; I will help you." All of these elements of the *Menos* Plot are familiar to readers of the *Odyssey*, but there are several striking points of comparison with the mentorship that Moana

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[11] https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/10/the-odyssey-mentorship/542676/

[12] On the word *mythos* as marking out particularly authoritative speech (as opposed to *epos*) see Martin, Richard. 1989: 22. *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad*. Ithaca. Mary Beard comments on the gendered nature of this moment:
https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/nov/05/mary-beard-women-and-power-review-modern-feminist-classic

receives in her journey to restore the heart of Te Fiti. Drawing comparisons between these two works can open up a dialogue that improves our understanding of both. The biggest difference, as we will see, is that Moana experiences *two* competing *Menos* Plots, one initiated by her father Chief Tui of Motunui and the other by her Gramma Tala.

The first of these *Menos* Plots begins when Chief Tui proclaims to the toddler Moana that she will one day become the chief of Motunui. He then proceeds to sing a song about the lifeways of the villagers in a song entitled, "Where You Are" (7:39). This is her "orientation phase" to the leadership role. In the course the song Moana ages, becomes crowned as a future chief, and seems to have accepted her role with some enthusiasm; that is, she seems to have *menos* in her. At the conclusion of the song Moana hikes to the top of the highest mountain on the island, to learn about the ritual of placing the next stone on an existing cairn, something that chiefs have been doing for a thousand years. As the makers of the film explain, one of the themes they sought to capture from Polynesian culture is the idea of "knowing your mountain."[13] Here the theme becomes reified, as Moana is reminded of her ancestors and her relationship to them. Immediately after this scene we see Moana's integration as future chief: she cleverly fixes the roof of one of the *fales*, the open-air structures of the villagers; she leads the young children in a traditional dance; and she encourages someone as he receives his first tattoo (12:00). Most importantly, we see Moana addressing the problems of increasing famine on the island. First, the coconuts have turned to ash, so Moana instructs the villagers to plant another grove in a better area, for which she receives validation in front of her father that she's "doing great." Secondly, the fishing baskets are no longer trapping fish. Moana suggests a number of solutions that have already been tried. She then proposes that they try fishing beyond the reef, but here she meets with firm resistance from her father: "No one goes beyond the reef!" It is here that her first *Menos* Plot reaches a dead end: the traditions that have sustained the villagers of Motunui for a thousand years will no longer work. Now the second *Menos* Plot begins to take hold, though the foundations for it had been laid from the beginning of the movie.

Telemachus notes that Athena in her disguise as Mentes (i.e., "the one who puts *menos* in someone") is treating him like a father (*Odyssey* 1.307-308), which makes sense because Telemachus has grown up while Odysseus is fighting at Troy and attempting to return home. Moana has an actual father to guide her, but he will prove insufficient for the kind of mentoring she needs. The role that she needs from a mentor will be distributed across three figures, the most important of whom is Moana's Gramma Tala (the other two are the trickster Maui and the ocean itself, as we will see). Gramma Tala is the first speaker of the movie and she is the one who communicates the legend of how Maui stole the heart of Te Fiti, incurred the wrath of Te Kā, and later became part of the prophecy that someone would need to find Maui to restore the

[13]Julius, Jessica and Maggie Malone. 2016: 9-15. *The Art of Disney Moana*. San Francisco.

heart. Gramma Tala's name in many Polynesian languages means "tale" or "story"; she is the one who gives Moana the narrative that will guide her on her journey. In providing this guiding narrative she reminds us of Athena when she inspires Telemachus with the tale of how Orestes avenged his father Agamemnon (*Odysseus* 1.298-302). By the end of Gramma Tala's story, Moana is filled with "*menos*", wide-eyed and eager for more, while her fellow toddlers are crying and fainting around her (3:43).

This mental activation continues throughout Moana's journey. During Chief Tui's song "Where You Are" (discussed above), Gramma Tala inserts her own subversive verse about the behavior of ocean water: "I like to dance with the water. The undertow and the waves. The water is mischievous. I like how it misbehaves" (9:36). In a verse of the song "More," which did not make it into the final version of the film, we are told that Gramma Tala actually named Moana.[14] Moana's name means "ocean" or "large body of water"; so in describing the water as "misbehaving," Gramma Tala is inciting Moana herself to misbehave and defy the traditional path to leadership set by her father.

Moana is at first inspired to give into her calling as a sailor of the sea, but after she fails in an attempt to sail beyond the reef, she seems resigned to her life on the island. Here, in a moment of doubt, she wonders if her Gramma has any advice:

> Moana: Is there something you want to tell me?
> Gramma Tala: Is there something you want to hear? (21:18)

It is at this point that Gramma Tala, again in her role as keeper of traditional stories, orients Moana to a past history of her people that diverges from the one her father has maintained, namely, that a thousand years ago her people were wayfinders, connected--not divided--by the ocean. Just as Telemachus comes to have a more vivid mental picture of his father through Athena's *menos*, Moana now receives inside a cave a clear vision of what wayfinding among the people of Motunui used to look like. It is at this moment that Gramma Tala gives Moana the heart of Te Fiti, which had been given to her (Moana) by the ocean as a small child. A few moments later, on her deathbed, Gramma Tala gives Moana one final encouragement to fulfill the prophecy to restore the heart of Te Fiti and adds one final instruction (29:41). When she encounters Maui, who (it is believed) will be the one to physically restore the heart, Moana must assert herself: "I am Moana of Motunui. You will board my boat and restore the heart of Te Fiti." Moana will continue to practice and recite this self-assertion throughout her journey. As she departs the island in search of Maui her grandmother's spirit animal, a glowing manta ray, accompanies her.

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[14] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upjbIJESEUU. This practice of a grandparent name a grandchild mirrors Odysseus' own relationship with his grandfather Autolycus (*Odyssey* 9.405-412).

Finally, near the end of her adventure Moana again despair that she cannot in fact restore the heart. Maui has abandoned her. Her boat is badly damaged from a violent encounter with Te Kā, the lava monster. And she has handed back the heart to the ocean. Gramma Tala appears once more in the shape of the manta ray, which then takes human form. In a scene reminiscent of Odysseus' encounter with his mother Antikleia in the Underworld (11.204-208), Moana embraces her grandmother and receives a final injection of "*menos*," which sets her back on the path to restore the heart (1:18:50). She dives into the ocean to retrieve the heart, repairs her boat, and is then reunited with Maui who has himself had a change of heart.

If Gramma Tala is the mentor who puts *menos* in Moana by orienting her to an alternative tradition that predates her people's time on Motunui, it is the ocean and Maui who further orient her to the life of wayfinding and integrate her into that culture. The ocean, described by the animators as kind of a "sock puppet," first "comes to life" when it bestows the heart of Te Fiti on Moana as a toddler.[15] Then it serves as a physical guide throughout her journey when her own seafaring and swimming skills are insufficient (cf. 34:11, 35:21, 43:00, 52:28). By the conclusion of the film Moana is not only being helped by the ocean, she is *commanding* it. When she realizes that the lava monster Te Kā is no monster at all, but rather a transmogrified Te Fiti, she tells the ocean to clear a path for Te Kā to approach and receive the heart, "Let her come to me" (1:28:30). We may compare this to Telemachus' more confident, commanding presence before Peisistratos, the son of Nestor, when he prepares to leave him in Pylos (*Odyssey* 15.195-219). Maui, by contrast, teaches Moana the traditional Polynesian art of wayfinding using the stars as guides. While he is reluctant throughout the film to acknowledge the ocean's appointment of Moana to restore the heart, in the end he recognizes and validate her fitness for the challenge:

> "I've figured it out. You know, the ocean used to love when I pulled up islands 'cause your ancestors would sail her seas and find 'em. All those new lands, new villages. It was the water that connected them all. And if I were the ocean, I think I'd be looking for a curly-haired non-princess to start that again" (1:1309).

Beyond the Hero

As characters in similar stories, Moana and Telemachus have a lot in common. Both go through a familiar *Bildungsroman* in which they demonstrate courage and self-assertion in order to identify and be identified as leaders in their communities. They both exhibit remarkable prosocial behavior at the outset of their journeys. This behavior helps reinforce the idea that they are supernaturally "chosen" for leadership. When Athena first arrives in Ithaca disguised as

[15] *op. cit.* Julius 2016: 72.

Mentes, it is only Telemachus--and not the suitors--who notices her in the doorway and proceeds to show her all of the signs of hospitality (*xenia*), the custom par excellence that marks one out as civilized in the *Odyssey* (1.113-122). By the conclusion of his journey he has formed an exceptionally close bond of friendship with Peisistratos the son of Nestor based on their "like-mindedness" (*homophrosune*), a trait that a husband and wife team like Odysseus and Penelope also share (15.196-198; cf. 6.180-185). For her part Moana demonstrates pro-social behavior as a toddler when she protects a baby sea turtle from some predatory birds and then escorts it to the sea; it is at this point that the ocean awards her the heart of Te Fiti. Initially at odds with the hero Maui, she, too, comes to develop a like-mindedness with him and a bond of lasting friendship. Another similarity that both stories share is the image of a prosperous community under a good leader. Odysseus describes life under a good king as an earth that bears barley, trees laden with fruit, flocks ceaselessly bearing young, and a sea full of fish (*Odysseus* 19.107-122). So, too, does life on the islands return to one of exuberant fecundity as a result of Moana's successful quest on behalf of her people.

Despite these similarities, Moana and Telemachus have a different role to play within their respective narratives. It is clear from the outset that Telemachus, while he must reach maturity to one day take over his father's kingdom, will play a supporting role within the epic, an epic, which of course is called the *Odyssey*--not the *Telemachy* (but for the first four books).[16] From the outset it is Telemachus' fantasy that Odysseus will return to exact revenge on the suitors; it is this thought that Athena activates when she puts *menos* into him. Telemachus does assert himself on many occasions and he demonstrates his fitness to lead. But at the conclusion of the epic it is Odysseus who succeeds in the contest of the bow and initiates the slaughter of the suitors. The poet says that Telemachus could have strung the bow but his father forbids it with a glance (*Odyssey* 21.124-135). After the slaughter Telemachus is also pushed aside when he chastises Penelope for her reluctance to embrace Odysseus right after his victory and then Odysseus tells him that there are symbols which only they two know that will allow for a true recognition (23.97-122).

At first it seems that Moana and Maui will be cast in roles analogous to Telemachus and Odysseus. Gramma Tala activates Moana with the prophecy that someone will apparently perform a supportive role similar to that of Telemachus to Odysseus: "The heart will be found by someone who would journey beyond the reef, find Maui, deliver him across the great ocean, to restore Te Fiti's heart and save us all" (4:05). There is a subtle ambiguity in this prophecy, however. It has to do with the subject of the verbs "restore" and "save." Moana and her grandmother seem to believe that *Maui* is the one who will perform these actions. Maui is indeed "delivered" across the ocean by Moana, but we discover that she herself is the "restorer" and

[16] See Clark, Howard. "Telemachus and the Telemacheia". *AJP* 84.2 (1963) 129-145.

"savior." Moana acts as though it is her role to help Maui return to his prior status as culture-hero and let him do what he has done so many times in the past. Continually she is the one who encourages/mentors him when he despairs of his seemingly epic labor. Her supportive role is of course quite common to many famous stories. We could recall here Rick Blaine (Humphrey Bogart) at the end of *Casablanca* when he explains to Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman) why she must leave him and stay by the side of Victor Lazlo:

> "Inside of us, we both know you belong with Victor. *You're part of his work, the thing that keeps him going.* If that plane leaves the ground and you're not with him, you'll regret it. Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow, but soon and for the rest of your life."

But this is not how Moana's story ends. When Maui abandons the mission to restore the heart of Te Fiti after Te Kā nearly destroys the hook that enables him to shape-shift, Moana, with the final inspiration of her Gramma Tala, decides to carry on alone. Maui does return at the last minute, but this time he is the one who will play the supporting role: he will distract Te Kā with combat (he performs the traditional Haka war cry) while Moana seeks to place the heart on Te Fiti herself. It will turn out that Te Kā actually is Te Fiti, and so Moana will make peace with the lava monster without recourse to Maui's threatened violence.

Indeed whereas Telemachus aspires to be but never quite becomes Odysseus, Moana seems to become and surpass Maui in every way, even according to the traditional mythology, which figures Maui as a nimble, lithe hero more like Moana herself than his muscular version in the film.[17] In the tradition Maui is the persistent one, pursuing his labors even as others discourage him. But the roles are reversed in the film, with Maui doubting and Moana persisting.[18] Even at the level of trickery and deception (though not amoral), Moana is the master of wiliness. In the encounter with the coconut crab Tamatoa, Moana wears a disguise to distract him while Maui seeks his hook and she tricks Tomatoa into believing that a barnacle coated in bioluminescent algae is the actual heart of Te Fiti (1:00:00, 1:04:41). Indeed, as the human embodiment of the ocean, Moana seems to shift into whatever shape she needs. In their last

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[17] On the controversy surrounding the depiction of Maui see Herman 2016: "As my Native Hawaiian friend Trisha Kehaulani Watson-Sproat says, 'Our men are better, more beautiful, stronger and more confident. As much as I felt great pride in the Moana character; as the mom of a Hawaiian boy, the Maui character left me feeling very hurt and sad. This is not a movie I would want him to see. This Maui character is not one I would want him to watch and think is culturally appropriate or a character he should want to be like'."
https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/how-story-moana-and-maui-holds-against-cultural-truths-180961258/

[18] See "The Maui Myths." *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*. 38.1(1929): 1-26. For example, Maui, the youngest of five brothers, wants to seek his mother in kind of an underworld cave, despite the fact that his brothers have no interest (7). Maui goes fishing with his brothers and upon hooking something, his brothers plead with him to give up; but Maui persists and ends up pulling up an island with his special hook made from an ancestral jawbone (12).

exchange Moana entreats Maui to return with her to Motunui on the grounds that her people will need a "master wayfinder," to which he replies, "They already have one" (1:32:52). Moana's validation for, and integration into, the leadership role is thus complete, a transformation that is commemorated when she receives undying *kleos* on Maui's chest: her restoration of the heart of Te Fiti becomes a tattoo in the veritable catalogue of all of his other labors.

Conclusion: What Do the Telemachus and Moana Stories Have to Do with Gender?

The two stories of mentorship we have been comparing and contrasting here are about gender in both straightforward and less straightforward ways. Both Telemachus and Moana receive mentorship from someone of the same gender (Athen-Mentor/Mentes and Gramma Tala, respectively). Both defy the authority of someone of an opposite gender, Penelope and Chief Tui, respectively. Both must complete a series of challenges that either conform to or go against gender stereotypes. Telemachus must call an assembly and challenge his rivals; he must travel at sea and forge alliances with other men; in the end he must kill a lot of people--all of which are typical male activities in the Homeric epics. Moana, too, performs typically male activities in her story: she speaks out in assembly, to the consternation of her father, even contradicting him in public; she, too, takes up seafaring, which is figured as a dominantly-male activity in her culture. [19] She struggles throughout her story to overcome the stereotype of the "Disney Princess," as this one exchange with a skeptical Maui illustrates:

> Moana: Teach me to sail. My job is to deliver Maui across the great ocean. I should...I should be sailing.
> Maui: It's call wayfinding, princess. It's not just sails and knots; it's seeing where you're going in your mind. Knowing where you are by knowing where you've been.
> Moana: Okay, first, I'm not a princess. I'm the daughter of the chief.
> Maui: Same difference.
> Moana: No.
> Maui: If you weary dress, and you have animal sidekick, you're a princess. You're not a wayfinder. You will never be a wayfinder. (52:00)

Streiff and Dundes argue that *Moana* persists in gender stereotyping and does not transcend it. Applying the model of Freudian psychoanalysis, they claim that the movie portrays undercurrents of an Electra complex between Moana and her overprotective father, a theme they detect in other Disney "princess movies" like *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Little Mermaid*. They see hypermasculinzation in Maui both in his appearance and in his magical fishhook,

[19] For example, during Moana's vision of the long-lost tradition of wayfinding, the idealized representative of this culture is a man, Matai Vasa.

which is seemingly the key to his shapeshifting identity but whose sporadic dysfunction gives him "performance anxiety." Finally, in the contrast between the "good" Te Feti and the "evil" Te Kā, they see an insistence that women's "worth and well-being are dependent upon their procreative function."[20]

While one may certainly detect these elements in the movie, and much of one's sensitivity to them will depend on the context one brings to the interpretation, I think that these elements are not as pronounced as Streiff and Dundes argue. As we have seen, Moana's relationship to her father is important for her first *Menos* Plot. And Chief Tui *is* overprotective because of his own personal tragedy (as a young man, he lost his best friend at sea). But her relationship to him turns out not to be the most important relationship in the movie. Rather it is her Gramma Tala who turns out to be most important in helping Moana mature into a leader and save her people.[21] Streiff and Dundes have no discussion of this relationship in their analysis. Similarly, yes, it is possible to see Maui as a hypermasculine figure, yet, again as we have seen, his heroism is supplanted by Moana throughout the movie and especially in the climactic resolution. An early indication of Moana's eventual dominance is given in their first encounter. Maui shrieks like a child (a little girl?) as soon as he sees Moana for the first time (37:02). Finally, while, yes, there are perhaps competing images of fertility and infertility in the divine figures of Te Kā and Te Fiti, Moana herself is not romantically attached to any figure and there is no reference to her needing to have children in order to be a successful leader. It is thus hard to conclude that the movie seeks to claim that women are only valuable when they procreate.

Where does this analysis of *Moana* within the context of Homer's *Odyssey* leave us in terms of the hypothesis offered in the introduction, namely, that we might expect women to hold more positions of leadership if their mentorship was as thorough-going as it traditionally has been for men: "you are special; you can become a leader; here's how to do it; I will help you"? Moana, with its double *Menos* Plot seems to suggest that women may need more female mentors who can offer alternative narratives to the traditional or familiar path to leadership. It also suggests that men who are accustomed to playing the hero role may need to become more comfortable in a subordinate helping role.

Most importantly, I believe, *Moana* suggests that maybe we all need to become more comfortable with the very idea of women having mentors in their quest for the highest leadership roles attainable. In this vein, it is worth reflecting on America's three most recent and famous candidates for the U.S. Presidency. In 2008 Barack Obama was supported and at times hindered by his actual and apparent association with prominent male figures: William Ayers, a radical

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[20] Streiff, Madeline and Lauren Dundes. 2017. "From Shapeshifter to Lava Monster: Gender Stereotypes in Disney's *Moana*." *Social Sciences* 6, 91.

[21] Disney gives prominence in the narrative to a female ancestor in another recent, highly-acclaimed film, *Coco* (2017).

activist and co-founder of the Weather Underground; Jeremiah Wright, a pastor at the Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, where Obama was a parishioner; and of course Obama's own father. The latter of these two men were the inspiration for the two books that helped Obama articulate his vision for the US Presidency (right-wing conspiracy theorists claim that Ayers penned *Dreams from My Father*). Then there is President Trump who, as far as I can tell, cites no mentors in his development and only occasionally looks back to Andrew Jackson or Ronald Reagan as sources of reference for his own presidency). Hillary Clinton, by contrast, references people in her past who have served as inspirational guides, but no one I know of was presented as a mentor in the sense we've been discussing here other than perhaps her own husband, the former president, who was arguably much more of a liability than an asset to her, at least reputationally. We are at a point in American politics where women are running for office in record numbers, seemingly in response to the election of Donald Trump.[22] Unlike in past narratives such as Plutarch's *Virtues of Women*, where the women serve to restore a "virtuous patriarchy," these women seem to be running to address challenges that they feel especially talented to address, on their own terms and for their own interests. It will be interesting to see, then, whether and how the next generation of female candidates for the presidency tell their stories of being mentored.

[22] https://www.thecut.com/2018/01/women-candidates-2018-elections.html