The Strong Female Character That Wasn’t
~Female Comic Leads of the 21st Century~
I argue: The way femininity is depicted in the mainstream American comic industry is inherently disempowering and doesn’t represent the complexity of real people of all genders and none.

**With some exceptions**
Pervasive

Definition: existing in or spreading through every part of something, e.g. a pervasive odor.

-Merriam Webster
Pervasive

Definition: existing in or spreading through every part of something, e.g. a pervasive odor.
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Each individual instance of a trope—such as a love triangle—might have an arguable justification, but it is the pervasiveness of that trope that is the problem, rather than each individual example.
"the fact of showing or depicting events, or looking at women from a male point of view."
- Cambridge dictionary

Defined by feminist critic Laura Mulvey in 1975 in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

Consists of three perspectives:
- That of the person behind the camera
- That of the characters within the story itself
- That of the spectators

TL;DR: Cinema, and other forms of narrative entertainment, are constructed for (‘traditional’, binary) heterosexual male sexual pleasure.
Pervasive

Love triangles
Why Write Love Triangles?

These are attractive, desirable characters- it’s more believable for them than for the readers!

People want to read about charismatic, attractive characters having more sex than them!

It’s escapism and harmless.

Happy couples are boring!

It reminds the audience of the attractive qualities of the lead.

It’s a way for your lead to grow and change.
Why Don’t Write Love Triangles?


Two women competing for one man: reinforcing masculine validation as central point female existence. Catfights. Frigid vs whore. See: Jean Grey/Cyclops/Emma Frost.

Two men after one woman: “the ‘faux feminist’ love triangle.” The men have to fight it out for her validation! Female agency is at the centre! OR it promotes the trope that women don’t know what they want- that they reject male advances out of confusion rather than a lack of desire for the male. A woman can change their mind on sex and relationships if romantically pursued for long enough. See: Gambit/Rogue/Magneto.
“...love triangles tend to reinforce misogyny and uphold masculinity no matter their configuration... Their implications predictably reinforce gendered hierarchies.”

- Erin Tatum, Bitchflicks 5/12/13

“...it’s wishful thinking to suggest love triangles are inherently feminist or empowering. Just because a heroine gets to make a choice in a story, it doesn’t mean the story is pro-choice and therefore feminist.”

- Shana Mlawski, www.overthinkingit.com 04/06/2013

“I find love triangles incredibly problematic: they seriously weaken the nature of the heroine involved... It takes away ... the power she gains as a decisive, intelligent character who is in charge of moving the plot ... It tells me that no matter how high a girl could go, her inability to have clear, decisive relationships ... is always going to make her insecure and fragile and, essentially, drag her down.”

- Sharanya Sharma 07/15/15
Pervasive

Love triangles

Sexualised behaviour and appearance
Let's Talk About Marvel Comics And Spider Woman's Ass

Marvel Is Actually Going to Publish That Sexist Spider-Woman Cover

Can Cosplayers *Really* Pose Like Milo Manara’s Spider-Woman?

An Artistic Critique of Milo Manara and Greg Land’s Controversial Spider-Woman Covers

Alternate title: "Milo Manara's DisHEARTening Spider-Woman Variant Cover Gets An Artistic ReBUDDal"

Why Marvel gave us a sexualized Spider-Woman no one asked for

This is how to draw Spider-Woman rather than a sex object
Groupthink?

A pattern of thought characterized by self-deception, forced manufacture of consent, and conformity to group values and ethics

-Merriam Webster Dictionary

Not specific to gender, race, age but specific to groups that share a unifying factor, e.g. job, religion, political belief.
Why Didn’t Anyone Notice X/Y/Z was Offensive?

GROUPTHINK
The main topic of the lecture?

Women.

**Frank Cho, Milo Manara E Le Donne – Un Dialogo Tra Due Maestri.**
Frank Cho è capace come pochi altri artisti di evocare la figura femminile a cui ha dedicato buona parte della sua carriera. Al pubblico italiano racconterà il suo punto di vista sulle donne e sui fumetti che le ritraggono a cominciare dalla sua serie Liberty Meadows.

Which translates as

**Frank Cho, Milo Manara And Women – A Dialogue Between Two Masters.**
Frank Cho is capable like few other artists to evoke the female figure who has devoted much of his career. The Italian public will discuss his perspective on women and comics that portray starting with his series Liberty Meadows.
I'm so pleased Frank Cho & Milo Manara doubled down on their creepy schtick. Please boys, make it harder to justify your employment #comics
RIRI WILLIAMS, MARVEL'S NEW IRON MAN, BASED ON 14-YEAR-OLD ACTRESS SKAI JACKSON

The 'Jessie' and 'Bunk'd' actress expressed her gratitude on Instagram

Mike Deodato, Jr.  
@mikedeedoato

Riri Williams was based on the beautiful young actress  
@skajackson

1:59 PM - 11 Jul 2016

460 1,157
Marvel pulls sexualised Riri Williams cover after backlash

The issue will hit stores on November 8

Justin Carissimo New York | @JstinMch | Friday 21 October 2016

MARVEL PULLS J. SCOTT CAMPBELL’S RIRI WILLIAMS IRON MAN COVER

10.20.2016 by Anthony Couto in Comic News Comment

Things We Saw Today: #TeensThatLookLikeTeens Claps Back at Sexualized Riri Williams on Invincible Iron Man Variant Covers

by Keisha Hatchett | 6:32 pm, October 19th, 2016 1721

Under Pressure, Midtown Comics J Scott Campbell Riri Williams Cover Cancelled. One Of Them.

Posted October 20, 2016 by Rich Johnston

Dear Marvel: Stop Sexualizing Female Teenage Characters Like Riri Williams. Love, Everyone

by Teresa Jusino | 6:22 pm, October 19th, 2016 284
J. Scott Campbell

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Riri Rethink

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J. Scott Campbell

Nope, not an official cover. Just did it to do it.

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J. Scott Campbell

Well... Anything is possible I suppose Eva. If the people's demands made the other one go away.

J. Scott Campbell

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Riri Rethink

Like

10 Replies • 10 hrs

Edgardo Miranda-Rodriguez

J Scott Campbell, in this image you've captured the innocence and curiosity of a child which is truly empowering.