

A Lovable Bossy Lady: The Characterization of Miranda Priestly in *The Devil Wears Prada*

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Miranda Priestly, the remarkable antagonist in Lauren Weisberger's best-seller *The Devil Wears Prada*, has been widely considered to be a typical tyrannical female leader since the novel was published. Her forceful image and her impolite language features have attracted researcher's attention, but the puzzle remains of why Miranda is a fashionable devil of great charm. To figure it out, this paper investigated the characterization of Miranda by exploring the explicit and implicit aspects of the novel's characterization as well as the multiple faces of Miranda Priestly. It was found that Lauren mainly used the protagonist Andrea's description, dialogues between Andrea and other characters, Miranda's remarks and behaviour to create the character, Miranda. She is a multifaceted person and her complexity made her a realistic round character. She has become a representative sample of a bossy female leader owing to her perfectionism, unreasonableness, arrogance and self-centredness. However, Miranda is still a lovable character for the following reasons: First, the things she does are contradictory and ironic. Second, her perfectionism made people work at Runway in a comical way. Lastly, Miranda's great talent as a fashion magazine editor, her marvellous achievements as well as her perfectionism can compensate for the suffering she has caused. The findings are believed to make a positive contribution to practical knowledge of building a bossy female leader character.

Keywords: Miranda Priestly, *The Devil Wears Prada*, characterization

Miranda Priestly, the editor-in-chief of Runway, is the most remarkable character in Lauren Weisberger's *The Devil Wears Prada*. She has excellent dress sense, high intelligence and a vicious temper. As a forceful antagonist, she makes both her colleagues and people serving her suffer her strict instructions and changeable moods. Miranda has been widely considered to be a typical bossy lady ever since the novel was published.

The way Miranda abuses the persons at her office has become so famous that it has drawn researchers' attention. A lively discussion followed about what a newcomer should do to survive a bossy leader in the workplace (Cheng, 2012; Meneghetti & Xiong, 2013). Besides, some researchers focused on feminism belief (Shi & She, 2010) and the 3rd feminism wave (Putri, 2017). Others analysed Miranda's various impoliteness strategies (Ratri & Ardi, 2019), her power and perceived influence (Bohns & Daniel, 2019), and her language features (Oktapiani, Natsir, & Setyowati, 2017).

But Miranda is not all that hateful. She has certain personal traits that attract a lot of interest. She was ranked number 343 out of over 5,600 characters on CharacTour with a high rating of 8.6.¹

Why is she still lovable despite all her bad behaviour? Her abusing persons in the workplace does not necessarily make Miranda a fashionable devil of great charm. Is it just because she is a powerful woman—or is it because she has used all of the available impoliteness strategies? Those factors may account for her bossiness, but not for her attractiveness. To reveal what makes Miranda an attractive character, it is necessary to do a careful examination of her.

The purpose of the paper is to explain why Miranda has become a representative sample of a bossy female leader and what makes her a lovable character by exploring the direct and indirect aspects of the novel's characterization as well as the multiple faces of Miranda Priestly.

To avoid any misunderstanding, it is necessary to explain the next three terms that are frequently used in the paper.

Characterization is the method that a novelist uses to make imaginary characters in a novel seem real. **Direct or explicit characterization** refers to what the narrator tells about the character in a direct way, for instance, to describe his or her appearances, way of communication, behaviour and psychology. **Indirect or implicit characterization** refers to what the narrator tells about the character in an indirect way, for instance, to describe the character by telling what other characters in the novel think of him or her.

Literature Review

The Devil Wears Prada is a best-selling novel written by Lauren Weisberger and was later made into a popular film. Both the novel and the film have been studied in the last ten years. We will look at them separately in this section.

The majority of those studies are about the film. The film has caught researchers' attention as it is about the fashion industry and full of wealthy people wearing fashionable clothes and accessories. Liu (2019) examined the aesthetic qualities of those clothes and accessories while Limbachiya (2020) focused on the elements of fashion and social-economic factors in the film, arguing that the luxurious fashions had contributed to people's class-awareness and the division of society into different groups, and that luxuries had become a symbol of hegemony.

Some researchers discussed about office worker's survival guide as Miranda is a bossy leader who is difficult to satisfy (Meneghetti & Xiong, 2013; Fang & Liu, 2018). Others tried to explain Miranda's power and influence through her behaviours and language features. Bohns and Daniel (2019) explained that Miranda denied responsibility for Andrea's conduct or misconduct because people in positions of power usually fail to see an issue from the perspective of their employees and are likely to believe that other people could have a different choice. Oktapiani et al. (2017) carried out a qualitative analysis of the utterances by female characters in the film and demonstrated that most of the utterances are expressive, directive and metalinguistic². Wonata et al. (2018)

¹ Writers of CharacTour, "Miranda Priestly," 2021, <https://www.charactour.com/hub/characters/view/Miranda-Priestly.The-Devil-Wears-Prada> (accessed on May 5, 2021).

² When an utterance is metalinguistic, it is used to describe a particular language.

showed that among all the illocutionary act³, directive act was the most used one in Miranda's utterances in the film. Ratri and Priyatno (2019) took the idea further and analysed Miranda's various impolite remarks and stated that Miranda had used all the available impoliteness strategies in the film.

But there is a difference of opinion as to Miranda's image. Chaerani (2017) argued that Miranda had succeeded in obtaining equality in education and in the workplace, which indicated the condition of the 21st-century women. Putri (2017), which focused on Miranda in the novel, argued that Miranda, who was beautiful, discipline, persistent and independent, possessed characteristics of a 3rd feminism waver.

Feminism is a popular topic that many researchers are interested in. Researchers stated that Miranda had to behave like an aggressive man as she was living in a world dominated by males (Shi & She, 2010). If she was a man, everything would be acceptable and she would not have to sacrifice her marriage for her career (L. Zhang, 2017; Fu & Chen, 2017; Y. Zhang, 2021). Her powerful-leader image was totally different from what a real woman leader looked like and conformed to the stereotyped female image which was in accordance with men's expectation (Cheng, 2012). Likewise, Lü (2020) suggested that Miranda and Andrea were both independent women during the rise of feminism and women were not the possessions of men.

Besides, a study of the characterization of Miranda in the film suggested that the playwright intendedly wrote about Miranda's divorce and crisis of losing her job to show her remarkable inner strength and steeliness (Zhao, 2013).

In the literature, there is another study on the novel. It analysed the success of Runway from the perspective of spatial criticism and claimed that Runway used physical, social and body spaces to foster its culture and force people to accept its idea of beauty, manipulating the public into buying fashionable clothes and accessories (Ning, 2015).

As was stated above, there are few studies on the characterization of Miranda in the novel and the literature has not discussed why Miranda is a lovable character in the novel and why she has become a representative sample of a bossy female leader. In fact, Miranda does not totally conform to the stereotype of an aggressive leader. Although she is sometimes arrogant, she is willing to listen to other's suggestions. She is affectionate towards her children and she left her second husband to seek her true love. Miranda is, in short, a more multifaceted character, or a rounder character in the novel than in the film. As the motivation behind one's behaviour is usually related to the role one acts as (Culler, 2013), it is necessary to look at Miranda again thoroughly.

Method

Gondosaputro (2019) described the four levels of characterization: the physical level (e.g. sex, age, etc.); the social level (e.g. economic status, profession, etc.); the psychological level (e.g. habitual response, attitudes, etc.); the moral level (e.g. moral decisions). To know more about Miranda, it is useful to examine every level of the characterization of her.

³ An illocutionary act refers to an action performed by speaking or writing, for example ordering, warning or promising.

As a character is usually built in an explicit and implicit way, it will also be helpful to examine Miranda's behaviour as well as other characters' opinion of her. In this paper, both of the two above methodologies will be used to find out who Miranda Priestly really is in the novel.

The Multiple Faces of Miranda Priestly

Miranda Priestly is a woman who has multiple faces. At Elias-Clark, she is the editor-in-chief of *Runway* and the great lady of American fashion. At home, she is the wife of a nice man and the mother of two daughters. At a five-star hotel in Paris, she is an autocratic customer. Miranda's changing faces offer the readers intriguing windows into her life.

In this section, we will look at her family, career, behaviour, social status, values etc. when she takes on the following roles. Most of these kinds of information are described by other characters or media, for instance the Internet.

The Editor-in-chief of Runway

Miranda is the Editor-in-chief of *Runway*, who is at the very top of her profession when she first appears in the novel. According to Sharon, who works in human resources at Elias-Clark, "Miranda Priestly is the single most influential woman in the fashion industry and clearly one of the most prominent magazine editors in the world" (Weisberger, 2003, p. 16). Her upper-crust British accent, perfect editorial skill and great power has made her seem perfect, but she has an unconventional family background.

When Andrea, the protagonist in the novel, was preparing for her new job, she googled Miranda to see what information was available about her on the Internet. She found that Miranda Priestly used to be an ordinary girl born in a poor but religious Jewish family. Her ethnic name was Miriam Princheck, and she was the youngest among all the eleven children. Her father worked blue-collar jobs and her mother died when she was born. As a result, they depended heavily on the community for support. The young Miriam was not satisfied with her life and tried hard to get rid of her family. "She became the single exception to her family tradition" (Weisberger, 2003, p. 39).

Miriam dropped out of high school voluntarily to work as an assistant to a new British designer in her early twenties and had built a good reputation in the British fashion world within just a few years. Then she became a junior editor at the French Chic magazine in Paris and began calling herself Miranda Priestly and changed her cockney-girl accent to a more educated one. Her quick rise was uncompetitive. After being in charge of at French *Runway* for ten years, she was transferred to the editor-in-chief of American *Runway*. Miranda managed her transformation from a poor girl to a major celebrity owing to her great talent, hard work and indomitable spirit.

Despite her success in the fashion world, Miranda is hated by most of her assistants for being overly strict with them for she wants everything to be perfect. When Andrea first arrived at Elias-Clark, she heard a young girl, who had only just quit the job, hiss her displeasure with Miranda. It is almost unlikely for Sharon to find a fitting candidate who can stick for one year.

Why is Miranda a difficult woman to please? We have found that it has something to do with her experiences. As she herself is hard-working and talented and she has gone through hard days in her youth, it is understandable that she cannot tolerate working with incompetent people and she desires everyone to be ready to

help her because she thinks they should be committed to their jobs. Those are the reasons why she became a demanding boss.

The Great Lady of American Fashion

In the novel, *Runway* is described as the most influential magazine in the world. Miranda, who is at the helm of American *Runway*, is loved and esteemed by millions of fans. She also has a hold on the magazine world. Proof can be found in a conversation between Andrea and Alex, Andrea's boyfriend, after the job interview. Alex said:

But with *Runway* on your résumé and a letter from this Miranda woman, and maybe a few clips by the time you're done, hell, you can do anything. The New Yorker will be beating down your door. (Weisberger, 2003, p. 29)

What Alex said is true. People look up to Miranda so much that they may believe everything she said without careful consideration. In a letter from a girl named Anita, a big fan of Miranda and the magazine, said that she wanted to look like the models appearing in the magazine and was not pleased with her body although her friends and family told her that she was not fat.

While Miranda, who always wears stylish and expensive outfits, is regarded as the Great Lady of American fashion, her attitude towards fashionable clothes and accessories is not as serious as her fans. "She seems to truly believe they were disposable" (Weisberger, 2003, p. 140). Miranda has a fetish of white Hermès scarves. When Hermès decided to stop providing her particular style, she bought all of their remaining stock. Those were about five hundred of the scarves, which cost a considerable amount of money. But it seemed that she did not care about them since she left her Hermès scarves everywhere, as if they were handkerchiefs or tissues.

As was stated above, Miranda is the most important person in the fashion and magazine world in the novel and her talent, fame and social status have offered her the power to manipulate public opinion on beauty, so her decision to purchase large quantities of clothes can be accepted by her company.

The Wife of a Nice Man

In the film, Miranda feels terribly sad about her divorce with her third husband, but things are totally different in the novel. Miranda does not leave her third husband from the beginning to the end. She is the wife of a nice man, Mr Hunter Tomlinson, a successful businessman.

Actually, Miranda has a strong desire for love. Although Miranda was married and had two children, she could not help falling in love with Mr Tomlinson. According to Emily, Miranda's senior assistant, "she chased him relentlessly until he'd yielded from the mere exhaustion of ducking her" (Weisberger, 2003, p. 86). When they decided to get married, Miranda promptly left her second husband, who was the lead singer of one of the most famous bands and the twins' father. The divorce was quickly done and only twelve days later, she and Mr Tomlinson held their wedding ceremony.

It was morally wrong for Miranda to love Mr Tomlinson while she was married because they both lived in a monogamous society, but she had not regretted it for she had a happier marriage and Mr Tomlinson was her true love. Miranda was willing to do everything for him. For instance, to invite him to a lunch with Iry Ravitz, Elias-Clark's CEO, and to organize a party for his wild younger brother, Jack Tomlinson, whom Miranda disliked so much. Andrea thought that Miranda worked night and day and had no friend, but she had a good husband.

Incidentally, there are two reasons why Miranda disliked Jack Tomlinson. One is that Jack was not a moral man. He “was leaving his wife and three children and marrying his masseuse” (Weisberger, 2003, p. 181). What Miranda did was also immoral, but there was a significant difference between Jack and Miranda. Miranda took care of her twins when leaving her second husband, but Jack did not. The other is that Jack’s southern-boy behaviour and bad manner had reminded Miranda of class and sophistication.

The Mother of Two Daughters

Miranda is an awful boss but a caring mother. She cares about her two ten-year-old twin daughters very much. She knocked off around five almost every working day to spend some time with the twins. When she was not available, she would ask Andrea to pick up the twins from school. She even prepared Christmas gifts for the twin’s teachers every year.

But Miranda would accept some of the twins’ unreasonable requests and thus spoiled them. The 4th book in Harry Potter series is a good example of the indulgence she shows to her children. Each of the twins wanted a copy of the book two days before the first copies arrived in bookstores. Miranda asked Andrea to get the books and send them to Paris by jet without telling her how to do it. To get the books, Andrea had no choice but wrote a letter to Julia at Scholastic, forging Miranda’s signature. She then transferred them to Paris in Mr. Tomlinson’s private jet, finalizing the impossible Harry Potter project.

Miranda misused power for her own ends and made her assistants work overtime, which aroused their anger. For example, the most unbearable thing for Andrea was that she had to work more than 14 hours a day and sometimes cancel her holiday plan. “Everybody, at least at Runway, had a motive” (Weisberger, 2003, p. 101) to kill her, according to Andrea. It is Miranda’s over-indulgence and failure of noticing the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour that made her repugnant.

An Autocratic Customer

No one knows how autocratic Miranda can be when she is with Monsieur Gerard Renaud, the concierge at the Ritz Hotel. Miranda and the twins often stayed at the Ritz and gained a certain notoriety as customers difficult to satisfy. “Miranda found fault with his every move” (Weisberger, 2003, p. 98), but he had to lie about how much he loved her.

Besides, Miranda often barked orders at Monsieur Renaud at the hotel as though she was his superior officer. She has never said thank you to him at any time. When Miranda’s car arrived at the hotel, he opened Miranda’s door himself and wished her a happy day, but she neither smiled nor replied. The only thing she said was that she wanted the car to be ready at nine tomorrow morning. It seemed that there was no humanity left in her.

As a famous celebrity and top leader, Miranda Priestly is welcomed and served by a great number of followers. It can be concluded that she was under the illusion that she had the right to order any employee at the hotel to help her. But she did not actually have such right. As a result, her imposition made everyone at the Ritz disliked her.

Explicit Aspects of the Characterization of Miranda

Explicit Characterization refers to what the narrator tells about the character in a direct way. In the novel, the explicit aspects of the characterization refer to Miranda’s appearance, way of communication, behaviour,

psychology, attitudes and values. As the novel is written in the first person and Andrea is the narrator and the viewpoint character, the analysis will be based on her description, hearsay and conversation with others.

Since we have already described Miranda's appearances in the last section, we will mainly focus on her manner of communication, behaviour in particular situations and attitudes and values in this section.

Manner of Communication

According to Oktapiani et al. (2017), the most of Miranda's utterances are expressive and directive in the film. It is also true in the novel because on most occasions she talks to her assistant, Andrea, in the novel. We can also find what she talks to other people in Andrea's description. As most of the conversations take place over the phone, we will first look at the phone calls and talks between Miranda and others, and then her confusing instructions.

Phone calls and talks

Miranda does not sound genial over the phone. When Andrea succeeded in getting the job at Elias-Clark, she called her mother and said, "You should have heard how hard-core this woman was on the phone" (Weisberger, 2003, p. 31). Here, **hard-core** means stubborn and violent. According to Andrea, she was in a panic and immediately passed the phone to the senior assistant, Emily "when an unidentified woman barked something incoherent in a strong British accent" (Weisberger, 2003, p. 45). Miranda always barked questions, orders at her, which made her feel like torture.

Here are another two examples:

Example (1)

Ahn-dre-ah, you know how I feel about excuses. I'm not particularly interested in hearing yours now. I expect something like this will never happen again, correct? That's all. (Weisberger, 2003, p. 100)

Example (2)

Ahn-dre-ah. It's Mir-anda. It's nine in the morning on Sunday in Pah-ris and the girls have not yet received their books. Call me at the Ritz to assure me that they will arrive shortly. That's all. (Weisberger, 2003, p. 101)

Both of the above examples show what it is like when Miranda complains or gives orders. In Example (1), Miranda was criticising Andrea for not sending two copies of the Harry Potter books because she had only received one copy. In fact, Andrea did send two copies, but all Miranda did was express her feeling of anger. She did not listen to Andrea's explanation. She would consider it as an excuse, not the truth. In Example (2), Miranda called again and she spoke as if she had never received the books, which gave Andrea the impression that she had made a terrible mistake. It is noticeable that both examples end in the same short sentence "That's all", which appears every time she gives instructions, meaning "The conversation is over. Now go".

In the novel, Miranda was described as a forceful woman whenever she talked on the phone to Andrea. She made decisions based on her feeling rather than logic. She would not listen to reason, nor make small talk. Her aggressiveness made people believe that they were wrong.

What about when they talked face to face? Andrea and Miranda's first met at the interview. To Andrea, the interview with Miranda Priestly was a tiresome experience. Here are two examples:

Example (3)

“What brings you to Runway, Ahn-dre-ah?” She asked in her upper-crust British accent, never taking her eyes away from mine. (Weisberger, 2003, p. 21)

Example (4)

“So, does your affinity for writing mean that you’re not particularly interested in fashion?” She took a sip of sparkling liquid from a glass and set it down quietly. (Weisberger, 2003, p. 23)

Different from phone conversation, Miranda tried to behave carefully, partly because this was the first time they met. It can be concluded that she wanted to maintain an image as a graceful lady.

The questions Miranda asked sounded reasonable and penetrating. In Example (4), when Andrea talked about her lover for writing, Miranda asked whether she was interested in fashion. She noticed that Andrea might go on and on about her hobby, which had nothing to do with the job. In Example (3), Miranda began the interview directly without greetings. It seemed that she hated to talk much with Andrea and her peers and she did not care about their opinions.

The only people Miranda talks to politely are of high social rank or have a close relationship with her, for example her twins and husband, Irv Ravitz, the CEO of Elias-Clark and Nigel, the fashion authority usually appears on TV. Here is a conversation between Nigel and Miranda:

Example (5)

On the first go-round of fittings, I’d walked by the Closet just in time to hear Nigel shouting, “MIRANDA PRIESTLY! TAKE THAT RAG OFF THIS SECOND. THAT DRESS MAKES YOU LOOK LIKE A SLUT!” (Weisberger, 2003, p. 238)

It is surprising that Nigel criticized Miranda for not dressing the right clothes. Andrea expected that Miranda would reproach Nigel for such a rude comment, but she did not. She murmured her agreement and took off the dress.

From Miranda’s attitudes towards Andrea and Nigel, we can learn that Miranda is willing to listen to other people only when they are from a high social class and say the right thing.

Confusing instructions and no questions

Miranda usually gives confusing instructions at inconvenient time, and changes her mind frequently, which makes her assistants mad. Those instructions can be classified into two categories: the ambiguous ones and the unreliable ones. Here is an example of the former ones:

Example (6)

Cassidy wants one of those nylon bags all the little girls are carrying. Order her one in the medium size and a colour she’d like. (Weisberger, 2003, p. 141)

In Example (6), Miranda told Andrea to buy a trendy nylon bag for one of her daughters, but she did not tell her which bag it was and what colour Cassidy would like. In fact, Miranda may tell her employees, both her assistants and designers, what to do and why to do it, but she never tells how to carry it out, so they frequently make mistakes.

The next example is an unreliable one:

Example (7)

I'll be needing the address and phone number of that antique store in the seventies, the one where I saw the vintage dresser. (Weisberger, 2003, p. 141)

While this one seems clearer, it contains wrong information. The shop was actually located in the 68th Street, not the 70th. Andrea followed the instruction and spent three days to look for the shop but found nothing.

Although the problem can be easily solved by asking her for some more information, no one wants to. They think "questioning Miranda was apparently off-limits. Better to muddle through and wait to be told how off the mark' their results were" (Weisberger, 2003, p. 142).

Why are they afraid of asking Miranda for clarification? The answer is that she will consider them incompetent and throw grave insults in her way at them before she condescends to tell them the information, for instance she would say, "The details of your incompetence interest me very little" (Weisberger, 2003, p. 7). To avoid irritating her and protect themselves, they made an unwritten rule that one should post his or her questions on the bulletin to see if anyone can solve them. It is clear that Miranda's aggressiveness and condescension made her employees work in an abnormal way.

Behaviour in Particular Situations

Depicting a person's behaviour in various situations contributes to the characterization (Tong & Zhao, 2016). In the novel, Miranda usually shows up in the following four places:

1. Miranda's office in Manhattan;
2. Luxurious hotels in European countries;
3. Venues for parties;
4. Miranda's home in Manhattan.

We will look at Miranda's behaviour in the above four situations and study the similarities and differences among them in this section.

Miranda at the office

As the editor-in-chief of *Runway* and a committed member of Elias-Clark, Miranda appears at her office most of the time. Her office is a white and cold place without much decoration. There she gives orders to her assistants Andrea and Emily or the editorial staff, face-to-face or over the phone.

Miranda prefers staying alone at her office to being with her employees. She usually eats alone unless she has lunch with Irv Ravitz, the CEO of Elias-Clark. Irv loves eating in the dining room to present a united front, but Miranda does not. It is clear she thinks she is better and more important than the others.

Miranda is well versed in the manners, which is also a show of her arrogance. Her way of drinking coffee during the interview with Andrea is a good example.

She took a sip of sparkling liquid from a glass and set it down quietly. One quick glance at the glass showed that she was the kind of woman who could drink without leaving one of those disgusting lipstick marks. (Weisberger, 2003, p. 23)

In the above example, she drank coffee with great care before Andrea, a perfect stranger at that time. Her one quick glance to check whether there were lipstick marks on the cup differentiated her from other ordinary women. She did it to tell Andrea that she was a noble woman.

Another example of Miranda's aristocratic manner is her dislike of small talk with her employees. She never speaks to them except that she gives instructions or complains. When she speaks to them, her choice of word is careful. Although, she sometimes sounds offensive, but she uses no slang word.

Miranda in a foreign country

Miranda sometimes goes to the European countries to attend fashion shows or related events, and stays at five-star hotel such as the Ritz. While she is welcome due to her frequent visit and great fame, she is hated for her ordering people around. She behaves as if she is the boss no matter where she goes.

Miranda's two assistants cannot relax even though she is in a foreign country. Trouble comes at any time. She would call the office to ask the two girls to fax her a magazine, or to find a new nanny for her twins, or to locate Karl Lagerfeld who was also in Paris without giving them his phone number. If she could not reach them, she would call her nanny or anyone else to remind them to call her back. When she finally reached them, she would tell them that they had to answer the phone immediately every time she called. It is not easy for the two assistants to deal with her instructions for they cannot leave her unattended.

Miranda at parties

It is interesting that Miranda behaves differently at parties. At the engagement party for his husband's younger brother, Jack Tomlinson, her face was plastered with "the fakest of smile" (Weisberger, 2003, p. 293). She hung his arms and talked to the guests in a pleasant way. Although she was not good at social graces, she would try for her husband.

In the list of guests expected at the engagement party, there are celebrities as well as employees at *Runway*. On most occasions, Miranda would welcome the former ones and patronize the latter ones. But at the party, she tried to impress both of them. The sharp contrast in her behaviour was amusing.

Miranda at home

As stated in the last section, when Miranda is with her twins and her husband, she is an amiable mother and devoted wife. She would accept her kids' unreasonable requests. But she is also strict with them. She is so manipulative that she asks the twins to attend various classes and she will not allow them to miss a day of school.

Miranda does not respect her employees' right to privacy. She often calls Andrea in the midnight or on holiday. But Miranda herself is a very private person. She does not want to be interrupted when she is with her twins or her husband. The first time Andrea delivered her dry cleaning to Miranda's house, she made a mistake to put them into the closet, which interrupted Miranda's dinner with the twins. Miranda was upset and barked:

Let this not happen tomorrow night. We're not interested in the interruption. (Weisberger, 2003, p. 121).

As Miranda does not like to talk to her employees when she stays with the twins, this becomes the only period of time when her employees can work without interruption, which sounds really ironic.

Attitudes and Values

In the last two sections, we have discussed Miranda's way of communication and behaviour. We will look at Miranda's attitudes towards fashion, work and interpersonal relations as well as her values in this section.

Fashion first

To Miranda, fashion is a top priority. She cares about what people wear and what people talk about fashion. Andrea mispronounced Givenchy, a famous brand, when ordering new clothes. Miranda criticized her and

informed her of “the correct pronunciation” (Weisberger, 2003, p. 244). In the job interview at Runway, Emily quickly grabbed Andrea’s briefcase and threw it under her desk so that Miranda could not see it. Both examples show how deeply Miranda loves fashion.

Miranda is extremely serious about her job. Different from Andrea and Emily, she works night and day and never makes a complaint. She attends various fashion-related events throughout the world and never asks for leave of absence. A workaholic as she is, she cannot tolerate the people who are not committed to their jobs. That is why she asked Andrea to focus on her job even though she found that Andrea was a talented writer after reading the speech Andrea wrote for her.

A practical and rational boss

Although Miranda is an artistic editor and designer, she works practically. She does not like small talks to her employees and only focuses on useful things. What she said when she first appeared in the novel is a good example. When Andrea told her that she spoke Hebrew, Miranda said, “Hebrew? I was hoping for French, or at least something more useful” (Weisberger, 2003, p. 22).

But why did she hire Andrea? Andrea neither read *Runway* nor spoke French. It seemed Andrea was sure to fail in the interview, but she did not. Andrea should owe her success to Miranda because she knew that one did not have to read *Runway* or speak French to be qualified for her assistant. She also knew Andrea was a splendid graduate of Brown, who was interested in newspapers and magazines. Miranda hired Andrea because she was a rationalist.

Interpersonal relationships

According to Andrea, Miranda’s friends “all fell into one of two categories” (Weisberger, 2003, p. 293). The first category refers to the people who are in a higher position in society than Miranda herself, such as Irv Ravitz, Hillary Clinton, etc. The second refers to the people who work for Miranda or who are in a lower position in society than Miranda. Miranda impresses the first category and patronizes the second.

As was stated before, Miranda always fails to notice the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when she deals with her employees. She never says thank you to her employees. Nor does she want to be talked to by them. But she will not do the same thing when she deals with Irv or Oscar de la Renta, the famous fashion designer, for Miranda cares about her public image.

Implicit Aspects of the Characterization of Miranda

In this section, we will discuss the implicit characterization of Miranda Priestly. Implicit characterization refers to what the narrator tells about the character in an indirect way. In the novel, the implicit aspects of the characterization refer to what other characters, such as her assistants, fans, designers, leaders, etc. think of Miranda, how they respond to Miranda and why they admire, hate or fear her. Most of these kinds of information can be found in dialogues between the protagonist, Andrea, and other characters or in Andrea’s description.

Responses to Miranda

Characters will “evaluate the world through the use of her feelings” (Schmidt, 2012, p. 5). Feeling is a way of evaluating just like thinking. We can observe each character’s emotional response to a certain character to know how they feel about him or her.

In this section, we will look at the responses of people around Miranda, such as her assistants and other characters to her to find out their impression of her.

Responses of Emily and Andrea

Emily and Andrea are the two assistants of Miranda. Emily is the senior assistant, who has worked for Miranda more than one year. She is interested in fashion and admires Miranda for her talent and remarkable achievements. Andrea is the new junior assistant, who maintains a less serious attitude towards fashion and has not heard of Miranda before she got the job. Both Emily and Andrea have been abused by Miranda but they respond differently to Miranda.

Andrea hates Miranda and her way of ordering people around. She sometimes complains about it to Emily or her friends. Although Andrea knows that Miranda is a brilliant lady, she cannot easily change her attitude because she has been treated high-handedly and she does not want a career as a fashion designer or an editor of a fashion magazine. What Andrea can do is try her best to be docile and patient with Miranda. She feels sympathy for almost every innocent victim of Miranda's abuse, including Emily.

Once Miranda had telephoned Emily fifty times to ask her confirm hair and make-up and to redo the itinerary for her, which made Emily cry (Weisberger, 2003, pp. 223-224). Andrea spoke ill of Miranda to comfort Emily, but, to her surprise, Emily stopped crying and defended Miranda. Emily insisted that Miranda was the amazing editor-in-chief without whom the *Runway* magazine would be nothing. Emily did not want Andrea's sympathy even though she agreed with Andrea to some extent. She was full of admiration for Miranda and was willing to endure her lunatic demeanour because she was working for one of the most wonderful editors in the world.

Responses of other characters

A sentence, frequently used by many characters, writes: "A million girls would die for your job". The sentence has been repeated in the novel for 10 times (Weisberger, 2003, p. 17, 19, 20, 22, 31, 49, 107, 157, 212, 277). From Sharon in human resources, Allison, who is Miranda's former senior assistant, to famous designer Tommy Hilfiger all said the same thing. They all consider Miranda as a highly respectable editor, who is worth working for. According to Emily, a man would rearrange his travel plans to serve Miranda, which "could make his whole career" (Weisberger, 2003, p. 227).

In addition to admiration, most employees at *Runway* hold Miranda in some awe. When Miranda was on her way to her office, all the assistants, editors, publishers would be in a state of panic. They were busy checking their clothes, shoes and make-up as soon as they could (Weisberger, 2003, p. 106), because Miranda would examine whether they were wearing the right things that could represent *Runway*. When Miranda criticized them for twittering during work, they all apologized and "kept their head bowed" (Weisberger, 2003, p. 270). None of them dared to justify themselves to Miranda.

Still, there are people who do not welcome Miranda. The servants at the Ritz perceived her to be difficult to please. No matter how hard and carefully they tried to serve her, Miranda could always find fault with them. Despite of this, they had to make every effort to deal with her, for she was one of their most important customers.

Different Opinions on Miranda Priestly

People have different opinions on Miranda Priestly. Some think that Miranda is a great lady of American fashion, while others think that Miranda is a devil who enjoys treating other people irreverently. Their opinions are also part of the implicit characterization of Miranda. In this section, we will look at what people think of Miranda so that we can know about the image of her more precisely.

The fashion industry

Most people work in fashion have positive opinions on Miranda Priestly. Their opinions can be divided into three main categories: (1) commendable and graceful; (2) respectable but somehow horrible; (3) talented but not respectable.

Most celebrities and Irv Ravitz, the CEO of Elias Claik, fall into the first category. The great designer, Tommy Hilfiger, is fond of Miranda. She provided Miranda's daughter with jeans in three colours and believed that Andrea was lucky to be Miranda's assistant. Other celebrities, such as Donatella Versace and Alberto Ferretti, send miscellaneous Christmas presents to Miranda. These people admire Miranda and share the profit that the *Runway* magazine makes. They respect Miranda for her talent as well as her position. As they do not work for Miranda, they do not know that Miranda is difficult to please.

Most *Runway* employees, for instance Sharon and Emily, belong to the second category. They esteem Miranda for her perfect taste in fashion and worship the magazine she edits, but they are afraid of being criticised or treated with disdain by Miranda. They are willing to follow Miranda even though she is difficult to please and they have been abused by her many times. They believe that Miranda is a legendary figure and it is an honour to work for the best ever editor-in-chief.

Andrea and former assistants sacked by Miranda are included in the third category. Although they admit that Miranda is a wonderful editor, they pay more attention to her unacceptable behaviour, which forces them into working overtime. The most common complaint they make about Miranda is that she does not treat them with patience and respect. The reason why these people cannot tolerate Miranda is that they neither have an endless love for fashion nor want to work in fashion forever.

Common people

Opinions on Miranda differ considerably among common people, which can also be divided into three categories: (1) attractive and impressive; (2) famous but forceful; (3) tyrannical and absurd.

The first category includes fans of the *Runway* magazine, for example owners of fashion shops and fancy restaurants, editors working at *The Washington Post*. They think highly of Miranda and would cancel their plans or bend their rules to help her. As they know nothing about the tyranny of Miranda, they never speak ill of her.

Andrea's parents and friends belong to the second category. Lily is Andrea's best friend. While Lily is envious of Andrea due to the free luxurious clothes and shoes Andrea wears at work, she cannot stand Andrea's frequent absence when she needs Andrea.

Andrea's mother is also not satisfied with Andrea's devotion to her job. She thinks Miranda has made Andrea work too hard and Andrea has been evading her responsibilities for her family member. She expressed deep dissatisfaction when Andrea's sister, Jill, gave birth to her baby.

Alex is Andrea's boyfriend. Unlike the film, he does not live with Andrea in the same apartment. He works as a teacher and is usually busy working, but he has managed to find time to stay with Andrea. Things changed

when Andrea started working at *Runway*. Alex and Andrea have cancelled their dates several times owing to Andrea's tight schedule.

To Andrea's family and friends, Miranda is just a famous lady who is distant from their life. Instead of being interested in Miranda's achievement, they care more about Andrea, and therefore they have low opinions on Miranda.

The guards at Elias-Clark, Eduardo and Mickey, and Miranda's nanny Cara fall into the third category. When Andrea told Eduardo that she was Miranda's new assistant, Eduardo said excitedly to his colleague Mickey, "She's one of Miranda's new *slaves*!" (Weisberger, 2003, p. 39). They do not have to deal with Miranda at work so they take pleasure in seeing other's misfortune.

Cara is different from them. She is a calm and grounded person. She works for Miranda and is aware of her tyranny and absurdity, and yet she neither hates nor speaks ill of Miranda. Cara once tried to teach Miranda's daughters a lesson by grounding them, for they talked back to her. However, Miranda, who overindulged her children, sacked Cara because she did not like Cara's way of dealing with them.

An Object of Admiration, Fear and Hatred

We have looked at other characters' impression of Miranda. In this section, we will discuss the reasons why people admire, fear or hate Miranda.

Reasons for admiring Miranda

Admirers of Miranda Priestly consist of celebrities in fashion, most of her employees, her fans as well as the readers of the magazine. Some of them foster a relationship with Miranda because Miranda is the editor-in-chief of *Runway* and is one of the most influential figures in fashion. Others look up to her owing to the fantastic magazine she edits. Still others esteem her hard work, dedication and perfectionism. Whatever reason they admire Miranda for, they all agree that she has great ability and marvellous achievement.

Reasons for fearing Miranda

Most of Miranda's employees at *Runway*, some of her assistants and people who serves her are fearful of Miranda. As Miranda is the most fashionable fashion editor and the leader of *Runway*, her employees are particularly afraid of being disdained by her and thus losing the opportunity to be promoted. They also live in terror of being asked to redo their work. The Ritz concierges fear Miranda because she is an autocratic customer who constantly finds fault with them. Emily and other assistants become apprehensive if they miss a call from Miranda. They are afraid of her harsh criticism and unreasonable request.

Reasons for hating Miranda

Andrea and some of the former assistants who left *Runway* feel hatred for Miranda's icy and mean demeanour towards the people of lower social rank. In addition, they cannot stand Miranda for she always fails to notice the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. To them, the most unbearable thing is that she treats them abominably without noticing that she is hurting them. They do not think Miranda's behaviour can be justified just because she makes great magazines.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have carefully examined the characterization of the antagonist Miranda Priestly in *The Devil Wears Prada*. We have found that the author, Lauren Weisberger, provided information about Miranda

using various devices, such as Andrea's description, dialogues between Andrea and other characters or a detailed profile posted on the Internet. She also described Miranda's remarks and behaviour to create the character.

Miranda is not just a bossy lady but a multifaceted character. She used to be an ordinary girl in a Jewish family, but she was not resigned to her fate. She has earned the respect of people working in fashion by her great talent, hard work and indomitable spirit and has done remarkable achievements as the editor-in-chief of *Runway*. Experience has taught her to be a perfectionist, so she is difficult to please. She is a renowned lady who can manipulate public opinion on beauty but she does not treasure her fashionable clothes as most people do. She dislikes immoral people but she fell in love with another man while she was married. She is a caring mother of two daughters who is willing to respond to their unreasonable requests, and yet she plans tight schedule for them to ensure their academic success. She is not only a tyrannical boss but also an autocratic customer who is very particular about the service. Miranda has become a round and realistic character owing to her complexity.

Miranda has become a representative sample of a bossy female leader for the following four reasons: Firstly, she is a frightening perfectionist who is not easy to satisfy. Secondly, her confusing and unreasonable requests have resulted in her employees working overtime. Thirdly, she treats her employees with no respect and shows a total disregard for their feelings. Lastly, she displays an arrogant attitude towards people who occupy a lowly position in society and is so self-centred that she behaves as if she is the boss wherever she is.

Despite all her bad behaviour, Miranda is still lovable for the following three reasons:

(1) The things she does are contradictory and ironic. Miranda is strict with her employees but is kind to her twins. She intends to behave gracefully but she cannot help criticizing her employees. She dislikes immoral people and behaviour but she has done the same things as they have. She values her privacy and yet she intrudes on others'.

(2) The comical way in which people work at *Runway* owing to Miranda's perfectionism also contributes to her charm. Miranda's forceful attitude and personal prestige leave her employees no choice but to follow her ambiguous orders. Afraid of being disdained by her, her employees never ask her for clarification thus frequently make mistakes.

(3) Miranda's great talent as an editor, her marvellous achievements as well as her perfectionism has attracted most characters in the novel. They are willing to endure her vicious temper for they believe that it is honourable to work for the best ever editor-in-chief in the world and that they will be promoted if she thinks they are competent.

This paper dealt with the characterization of Miranda Priestly in the novel and has discovered the mystery why Miranda is a devil of great charm, which made a positive contribution to practical knowledge of building a bossy female leader character. But there were two avenues not explored that might be useful for follow-on researchers. One avenue deserving further attention is a comparison of the characterization of Miranda in the novel and that in the film. Determining the difference between the two Miranda would be beneficial. The other item worth further study is a comparison between Miranda and some bossy leaders in other novels, which would reveal the uniqueness of Miranda.

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