

ing, even funny, and you would have to be pretty hardened not to get a little excited or misty-eyed when the geese do finally take to the sky.

The best moments in the film are the lyrical aerial sequences, significantly without Rodat and McKerwin's dialogue. Daniels and Paquin make an appealing father-daughter team, ably conveying their evolving relationship even in silence. There is one wince-inducing scene toward the end of the film when, having run out of fuel and crashed, he must encourage her to fly on alone with the geese, that brings the film to a grinding halt for a deeply unfortunate inspirational moment. While the narrative runs its predictable course, the craft of the director makes it hard to resist, so it is formula given first-class treatment.

According to the rhyme, "Old Mother Goose, when/She wanted to wander/Would ride through the air/On a very fine gander." And — with a 1990s makeover — she still does.

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Happily Ever-Single: Disney's *Hunchback* and the Modern Hero without a Mate

The Hunchback of Notre Dame. Buena Vista Pictures / Walt Disney Productions, 1996. 90 minutes, colour. Directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise.

Disney's recent attempt at adapting Victor Hugo's classic novel *Notre-Dame de Paris* into an animated feature has sparked more than a few suspicious reactions. Those critical of past Disney films (myself included) may expect to enter the theatre and see "Beauty and the Beast, Part II." Fortunately, such is not the case with this film. Disney's current rendition of the story of Quasimodo changes Victor Hugo's original story of tragic eloquence to one which is admittedly "happily ever after." It does, however, retain some of the novel's more interesting and important features.

First, the film keeps the cathedral of Notre Dame as its centrepiece, much like Victor Hugo does in the novel. Both the film and the book open with the ringing of the bells of Notre Dame, which in the film is accompanied by the song "The Bells of Notre-Dame," which is fully six minutes long. Further, the detail and attention to the cathedral as not only a place for sanctuary and imprisonment but also as a character itself is not unlike Victor Hugo's treatment of her as a force and presence in *Notre-Dame de Paris*.

Disney should also receive recognition for retaining some of the more difficult and adult parts of the novel. The film's "Hellfire" sequence is certainly among the most memorable of these, where Claude Frollo reveals his lustful desires for Esmeralda. Both the music and visual content are surprisingly adult: an image of Esmeralda dances in the flames of a huge fireplace as Frollo sings "this burning desire is turning me to sin." Disney could have easily overlooked Frollo's sexual desire for Esmeralda and replaced it with fear or jealousy, but I think the right decision is made to characterize him in his disgusting complexity

as a hypocritically chaste and pious man who is overcome with sexual desire for someone whom he detests.

The greatest acclamation, however, goes to Disney's very wise choice in keeping Quasimodo "single." In a "happily-ever-after" world, the thought of marrying Quasimodo and Esmeralda must have crossed the writers' minds, as it certainly crossed the minds of the viewers. If Quasimodo in this film must be a hero rather than a tragic victim, at least he is one who is not compromised or complicated with a love interest. Unlike countless other Disney films, this hero doesn't go off into the sunset with his newly-acquired mate. At last, Disney is telling young people that they don't have to end up with Prince Charming or Princess Jasmine to be a hero! Quasimodo's real dream of being part of the people (beautifully expressed in Tim Hulce's performance of the song "Out There") is realized in the end. In this way, Disney departs from the repetitive themes found in many of their past films.

True, Quasimodo is a hero rather than tragic figure in this film, but he lives in a world not entirely unlike that of Victor Hugo's creation. The film owes its richness to the genius of Victor Hugo, but its own boldness establishes itself as Hugo's worthy benefactor.

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***The Adventures of Dudley the Dragon.* TV Ontario (Dragon Tale Productions).**

Quietly, amidst the noise and confusion of children's TV shows, a gentle revolution has been taking place on TVO. This is the appearance of a series of productions which thoroughly engage, instruct, and impart cheerfulness to those children lucky enough to watch them. I count myself among these. Immobilized for the better part of a year by a disability, I have been forced to leave a university teaching career and find new activities around the home. After about six months virtually every hit TV show has lost its appeal, even the tragi-comic soaps for the uninitiated. One series of programs, however, has kept fresh — TVO's offerings for young children. Programs such as *Inquiring Minds*, *Polka Dot Door*, and the *Crawl Space* cluster near the noon slot where pre-schoolers, kindergarteners, kids home for lunch, and especially unemployed adults can enjoy them.

Foremost among the TVO offerings, in my own mind and among most children who watch, is *The Adventures of Dudley the Dragon*. The premise, a simple one, is of a not-so-magical, actually rather inept, dragon who goes through a series of adventures with a small group of children and various forest inhabitants. The children are, in fact, the heroes or protagonists in each adventure as they attempt to sort out their own feelings and values, and help Dudley decide on appropriate moral choices.

These are often concerning environmental responsibility or just the