

A Tenacious Ragdoll among Monsters:

Sally's Identity in *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)



Laura González Herrero

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Nightmare Before Christmas is an award-winning¹ stop-motion animated film² based on a poem by Tim Burton and directed by Henry Selick. Burton had the idea for *Nightmare* while he was filming his short film *Vincent* in 1982. The poem Burton wrote followed the same tone as the stories for children by Dr. Seuss, though also Edgar Allan Poe's style, and was based on Clement C. Moore's "The Night Before Christmas". The story was initially adapted by Michael McDowell even though the screenplay was finally written by Caroline Thompson. Danny Elfman composed the musical score for the movie and gave Jack Skellington his singing voice, while Chris Sarandon became Jack's non-singing voice; Catherine O'Hara voiced Sally. Burton only participated in the movie as a producer but *Nightmare Before Christmas* has been usually credited to him as one of his works because, as Selick explains, "Tim Burton's name before the title was going to bring in more people than mine would" (in Felperin, 1994: 27).

¹ The film won the 20/20 Award for Best Original Score (2014), Saturn Award for Best Fantasy Film and Best Music (2009), Annie Awards for Best Individual Achievement for Creative Supervision in the Field of Animation and Best Individual Achievement for Artistic Excellence in the Field of Animation (1994), the DFWFCA Award for Best Animated Film (1994) and the Kid's Choice Award for Favorite Movie (1994).

² Stop-motion is an animation technique done by taking a series of still photographs of an object moved manually from one frame to another. When all frames are played, this gives an illusion of movement.

Nightmare narrates in its 76 minutes the misadventures of Jack Skellington, king of Halloween Land, who, tired of frightening people, stumbles one day upon doors that connect his with other holidays. When he opens the door shaped as a Christmas tree a freezing breeze makes him fall into Christmas Land. The problems begin when upon returning to Halloween Town, Jack obsesses over Christmas and decides to take over the colorful holiday with the help of the other habitants of Halloween Town. In his plans to have that year's Christmas to himself, Jack goes as far as kidnapping Santa Claus (mistakenly called Sandy Claws by the Halloween monsters) and nearly having Christmas ruined with his actions. However, after he realizes his mistake and accepts once again his identity as the king of Halloween Land, Jack rescues Santa Claus and the monster ragdoll Sally from their jailer Oogie Boogie. Finally, Santa Claus restores Christmas and brings it to Halloween Town while Jack and Sally become a couple.

In addition, the film also presents a subplot: how Sally tries to emancipate herself from her creator. Sally, a ragdoll resembling a Frankenstein creature, was created by Dr. Finklestein in order to have someone to care for him and his home. Sally, however, desires more from life than being his companion and tries to escape from him at any chance she gets by using her abilities and skills. Although this subplot is about a female character who tries to escape from a patriarchal fig-



A Tenacious Ragdoll among Monsters: Sally's Identity in *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)

ure, Sally is actually unable to fully free herself from the heteropatriarchal relationships that hold her and changes from being her creator's companion to the protagonist's companion.

Nightmare narrates in its 76 minutes the misadventures of Jack Skellington, king of Halloween Land, who, tired of frightening people, stumbles one day upon doors that connect his with other holidays.

Nightmare Before Christmas was originally released through Touchstone Pictures (a film division for older audiences), as the Walt Disney Company did not believe it was suitable for children. It was later commercialized as *Tim Burton's Nightmare Before Christmas* because Disney felt it would help the movie to be known by a sort of brand name (Salisbury, 2006: 126). Its popularity has increased through the years, once it was seen as animation suitable for children, and *Nightmare* is considered today an iconic children's Gothic horror film. Although horror is normally a genre for movies that produce reactions such as revulsion or fear, children's horror, as Troutman observes, "cannot simply subsume all the characteristics of mainstream horror; the subgenre adapts the characteristics of horror like fear, monster aesthetics, gothic elements and settings and re-appropriates

them for intended audience and ratings" (2015: 7-9).

Behind *Nightmare Before Christmas*

Since the movie has been better known as one of Burton's works, many scholars have neglected the team that worked behind the scenes to make the movie possible. Burton did not want to direct the film because "stop-motion would be too slow and painful for him" (Selick in Failes, 2018: online) and he was already committed to *Batman Returns*. Thus, the role of director was passed on to Henry Selick, who already had experience with stop-motion and who lived in San Francisco, where "many of the stop-motion and special-effects artists who were best qualified to tackle this unprecedented production" lived (Thompson, 2002: 12).

The filming began without a screenplay because the songs Elfman composed have plenty of storytelling in them. In fact, *Edward Scissorhands'* screenwriter Caroline Thompson was brought into the project after storyboarding had begun. Her job was to write a story that would connect all the songs together. It needs to be noted that storyboarding is crucial to the production of an animated film because it helps to visually figure out how to tell the story. In *Nightmare* it was a very important step as the movie was filmed twice. First it was filmed with all the storyboards that were "edited to run the same length as the final shot in the film", and once the stop-motion version was done, "the storyboard scene was removed and the stop-motion version was inserted" (McMahan, 2006: 95).

As if it was a living being, the movie evolved from its early stages to the final product, though not many scholars have considered the early stages of the process or how these should be approached when analyzing



A Tenacious Ragdoll among Monsters: Sally's Identity in *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)

the movie. In fact, the script and the storyboards were constantly changing as Thompson rewrote the screenplay based on the artists' drawings; subsequently, they would re-board the story from her latest draft (Thompson, 2002: 93-96). This shows that the early stages of the film production should be considered in any analysis, as they reveal plenty of relevant information about the characters, their relationships, and the plot.

Sally's Evolution

Before presenting an analysis of Sally, it is necessary to study and analyze how Sally came up to be because she does not appear in the poem Burton wrote nor in the illustrations that accompany this text in its published version. Sally was created for the movie, but it is not known who was the person that decided to include her in it. It is known, however, that it was Burton who first drew her. The first drawing that Selick and his team saw had a sweetness to her that made them decide to make Sally unlike the other characters appearing in the film: still a monster, but not grotesque.

In addition, and regarding her design, Sally needed to have small feet and hands following Burton's request though that became a serious problem: her ankles were so thin that the puppet could not stand on its own. To solve the problem, Selick proposed giving her socks so that her legs could be thin, and the socks would hide the extra volume that the puppet needed. Her patchwork dress, made of fabric strips she had found (as a production sketch informs), is just like her body held with many stitches. In her analysis of costumes and self-fashioning in Burton's works, Spooner observes that: "In early films from *Beetlejuice* (1988) to *Ed Wood* [1994], moreover, clothing is linked to narratives of individual development and self-expression in

which personal appearance provides a way of visually displaying outsider status, and the process of self-fashioning through one's appearance is foregrounded at the level of plot" (2013: 51). This is also Sally's case.

Everything about Sally alludes to Frankenstein's creature: her creator's name, Dr. Finklestein, is an allusion to Victor Frankenstein, whereas her body parts are stitched together by huge sutures, which recalls the monster's film image. For a character like Sally, who is not flesh and blood, her body and her clothing have the same function as she is actually a ragdoll. In fact, her ability to stitch her body back together whenever it is dismantled is essential for the plot both when she uses it to try to help Jack and in relation to the subplot of her emancipation. As Solaz explains, her peculiar ability and how she uses it for her own gain, show that Sally is the only character that is conscious of her body's exceptionality (2001: 87).

One of the most distinctive traits of Sally, then, is her ability to re-stitch herself; this was given to her by Michael McDowell when he adapted the original poem. However, Sally is one of the characters that underwent most changes from the early drafts³ to the final screenplay when Caroline Thompson took on the role of screenwriter. As Mitchell notes:

Yet in early drafts of the film's script (1991), she both has far more dialogue than in the final version and largely depends on Finklestein's stitching skills rather than her own ability to reattach her separated limbs. The official script of the 1993 film, however, presents a more silent version of Sally. (2017: 232)

In fact, in the 1991 script of *Nightmare*

³ It is not known whether the extant 1991 script is a version of Michael McDowell's unfinished adaptation completed by Caroline Thompson, or an original one written by Thompson and inspired by McDowell's adaptation.



A Tenacious Ragdoll among Monsters: Sally's Identity in *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)

Before Christmas Sally is more self-confident and talkative; her relationship with her creator and her feelings for Jack are more openly manifested than in the final version. At the beginning, when Thompson was hired for the project, she was inclined to make Sally “a sort of little match girl, a will-o’-the-wisp” but that Sally “was far too passive” and the screenwriter was struggling with her character (Thompson, 2002: 34). “Sally’s Song” was not yet written and it was the way she was animated that inspired the screenwriter to strengthen the ragdoll’s character.

Precisely, it is with “Sally’s Song”⁴ that the character finally expresses herself frankly. As Mitchell (2017: 232) observes, it is with this song that Sally finally breaks her silence⁵ and reveals her loneliness and melancholy while the development of her voice and identity is emphasized, a process that will gain momentum when she decides to help Jack by rescuing Santa Claus alone. Before the song, it is mainly through her body language and her actions that the viewer knows about her feelings and thoughts. Before her and Santa’s rescue, every time Sally speaks, she is ignored, or interrupted by one of the two main male characters, Dr. Finklestein and Jack.

In Sally’s character, especially in her actions, it is possible to see one of the main problems feminist film scholars highlight: in the filmic discourse women are characterized and treated following the most traditional stereotypes of femininity. Women are objects of desire, adoration or violence, passive subjects that are punished if they try to have an active attitude (Colaizzi, 2001: IX). In Sally’s case, she is subjected to gender stereotypes

and even her skills are what one would traditionally expect of a woman: some scenes show Sally cooking or sewing, and her room in Dr. Finklestein’s house has a bed, a hearth, a sewing machine and a broom. She was created to be a caretaker and by the end of the movie continues to be one, though as Jack’s lover rather than Finklestein’s slave. Her actions to prevent Jack’s plans from succeeding fail, and even when she tries to help Jack by rescuing Santa, the only help she actually gives Jack that her screams confirm his suspicion that something is going on in Oogie Boogie’s lair. In addition, as a female character she is needed for the happy ending involving romance that it is typical of Disney.

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However, although Sally may be a silent character, she is not a passive one. She acts following her own initiative in different moments of the movie, for instance by drugging her creator to escape or by attempting to rescue Santa Claus. It is true, though, that the ragdoll gets punished for this. She is locked away by her creator for drugging him and she ends up in danger because of her trying to rescue Santa. In fact, we must agree with Troutman when she states that gender in *Nightmare Before Christmas* is “far from revolutionary”. Sally shows courage and heroism, and while she uses traditionally feminine skills to rebel against expectations, “she ultimately waits to be saved and reunited with her ‘true love’” (2015: 148).

⁴ Sally sings her song after Jack takes off to the human world to take over Christmas. The song starts at minute 53:30.

⁵ Although she is a major character, before “Sally’s Song”, Sally only has 28 lines—in total the character has only 35 lines—without the songs.



A Tenacious Ragdoll among Monsters: Sally's Identity in *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)

The Citizens Singing Together Remain Together

Musical scenes in *Nightmare Before Christmas* are important for the story because, as I have mentioned before, the movie took them as its departure point and Caroline Thompson was hired to write a screenplay that, basically, connected them. As a citizen of Halloween Land, Sally appears with the rest of her neighbors when the musical numbers begin. However, she occupies a different position, not really mixing with them.

The film opens with a voice-over and immediately "This Is Halloween" starts, "the first and longer song that directly introduces Halloween Town's atmosphere" and its different inhabitants, who "join the song when it is time to present themselves" (Solaz, 2001: 45-6). However, not all characters appear or sing. Jack, presented by the others as "Skeleton Jack", the "King of the Pumpkin Patch", and "Pumpkin King" only appears at the end of the song. Dr. Finklestein is missing because Sally has drugged him, as it is later revealed.

Sally herself is seen but she does not sing. Her presence is so unremarkable that in Solaz's analysis of the song, she is not even mentioned:

El fundido a negro encadena con la imagen de un Payaso montado sobre un monociclo que se quita la cara y desaparece a continuación con una explosión de humo rosado. Se nos muestra la sombra de Oogie Boogie, el encargado de llenar nuestros sueños de terror, proyectada sobre la luna llena. (2001: 47)

However, in the 1991 script, she interacts with some ghouls. These were replaced in the final version by the Clown with a tear-away face, the wind that lifts Sally's hair, and Oogie Boogie. In addition, in the early script she sings with the rest of the citizens the last

part of the song when they present Jack, their king, to the audience. The gender stereotypes to which Sally is subjected are already present the first time she is seen on screen: alone, she brushes her hair, taking care of her appearance for the celebration. Meanwhile, the other characters present Halloween and/or who they are, sometimes interacting with each other. Sally, though, remains alone during the song and after it finishes. Then Dr. Finklestein appears to take her back to his lair and she flees, leaving her unstitched arm behind in his hands.

The next time she joins the other inhabitants of Halloween Town is the song "Town Meeting", which follows Jack's telling them about Christmas Land and his findings. Throughout the song Sally only gets a close-up twice; the rest of the song shows her as if hiding from the camera. Once again, she does not sing and only the close-ups allow the audience to know what she thinks about Jack's revelations. While the other citizens besides Jack are shown in close-ups looking horrified by their first impression of Christmas, Sally is curious and captivated. Nonetheless, when the citizens are the ones charmed by the festivity Sally shows a doubtful expression.⁶ She realizes that the others misunderstand Christmas as if it was another Halloween.

The other citizens think that the presents and the Christmas decorations must also be frightening for, as Solaz explains, "[n]o encuentran ningún sentido a nada que no sirva para asustar" (2001: 54). Jack also realizes the citizens' confusion about the holiday, but he is too obsessed to mind:

Well, at least they're excited,

⁶ One of the most important characteristics of animation is that there is nothing in the film that is there by mistake. Every single detail, expression or shot is calculated and done on purpose. It is no mistake that her expression shows how she is the only one who starts wondering where Jack's fascination will lead him.



A Tenacious Ragdoll among Monsters: Sally's Identity in *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)

But they don't understand
That special kind of feeling
In Christmasland
Oh, well...

As a consequence of his obsessing over Christmas and going to Dr. Finklestein's house to borrow some equipment for experiments, Sally visits Jack to bring him some food. Somehow, she has a vision while playing a thorny version of "He loves me, he loves me not" with a thistle, which turns into a Christmas tree that ends up on fire. The next day she wakes up in front of his house, where the other citizens start singing "Jack's Obsession". No one cares about why Sally has slept outside the Pumpkin King's house, they are far too preoccupied with the king to care for the ragdoll. By the end of the song, Jack decides to take over Christmas and tells so to the citizens. However, as Solaz (2001: 59) further maintains, the enthusiasm which the citizens show is motivated by their wanting to make the depressed Jack happy than by any need to adopt a strange and colorful celebration.

**Musical scenes in
Nightmare Before
Christmas are important
for the story because [...] the movie took them as its departure point [...]**

The only one who has serious reservations about Jack's plan is Sally because of her scary vision. This does not appear in the 1991 script in which Sally, instead, simply tries to talk some sense into Jack. However, the re-

sult is the same in both versions: Jack does not understand her anxiety and believes that Sally is just worried about the Santa Claus outfit he has asked her to make.

"Making Christmas" treats Sally in the same way as the other musical scenes. Once again Sally appears in the song but she is left out alone; she doesn't sing nor does she interact with her happy, excited fellow citizens. Sally is unable to dismiss her worries, increased by her sewing Jack's Sandy Claws outfit (the 1991 version of the script shows her being more expressive regarding her distress about the situation). It is in "Sally's Song" when the ragdoll finally expresses her concerns about the whole situation and why she cannot join in the other citizens' happiness about taking over Christmas:

What will become of my dear friend?
Where will his actions lead us then?
Although I'd like to join the crowd
In their enthusiastic cloud,
Try as I may, it doesn't last.⁷

The last three lines of this stanza apply, in any case, to her situation in all the songs sung by the citizens, though the causes may vary. In "This is Halloween" it is because of Dr. Finklestein's interruption, while in "Town Meeting", "Jack's Obsession" and "Making Christmas" this is because of her worry about Jack's fascination over Santa Claus's holiday.

Sally, thus, is always separated from the other citizens of Halloween Town but, at the same time, she is the one depicted as the only

⁷ The complete lyrics are as follow: I sense there's something in the wind / That feels like tragedy's at hand./ And though I'd like to stand by him./ Can't shake this feeling that I have/ The worst is just around the bend./ And does he notice my feelings for him?/ And will he see how much he means to me?/ I think it's not to be./ What will become of my dear friend?/ Where will his actions lead us then? /Although I'd like to join the crowd/ In their enthusiastic cloud./ Try as I may, it doesn't last./ And will we ever end up together?/ No, I think not, It's never to become/ For I am not the one.



A Tenacious Ragdoll among Monsters: Sally's Identity in *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)

sensible, rational inhabitant of Halloween Land. This is further proved by Santa Claus, who tells Jack that he should listen to Sally before trying anything again. Only she is worried enough about the consequences of Jack's obsession over Christmas to try to stop him or to rescue Santa Claus before things went awry. Yet, although she could have been celebrated as the voice of reason by the other characters, her thoughts and warnings are always dismissed.

“That Treacherous Sally”: Dr. Finklestein's View

Regarding the relationship between Sally and her creator, Dr. Finklestein, the scientist was a character that Thompson included so that she had someone hindering her relationship with Jack. The idea of the romantic triangle was ultimately dismissed but Dr. Finklestein remained as a character. The relationship between Dr. Finklestein and Sally is always paternalistic: that of creator and creature, jailer and prisoner, and, possibly for the scientist, that of future husband and wife.

As Hernández de la Fuente observes, the trope of the man giving life to a piece of flesh transformed into a woman is a classic theme that re-appears in Romantic and Gothic literature, including Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (2010: 31). As happens in the myth which narrates how Pygmalion created Galatea,⁸ Dr. Finklestein created Sally and fell in love with his creation. However, Finklestein, who just wanted someone to take care of him and appreciate his work, never considers that she could fall in love with another, instead of with him.

⁸ In the myth, Galatea is a statue that Pygmalion created after losing interest in women. He fell in love with his own work and prayed to Aphrodite for a wife just like the statue. The Goddess sent a signal and Pygmalion's touch brought the statue to life. Galatea became then his wife.

According to Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, men have the dream to be “god the mother” to an artificial woman who is “[b]eautiful, but passive; hence desirable” (cited in Mitchell, 2017: 233) believing they will be able to fully control her. However, in many stories these artificial women search for their own path and identity following their own desires⁹ while the creator tries but fails to dominate them by any means necessary. These artificial beings, as García Adánez observes, clash with the humans that created them because their passage from machine to being human by acquiring language skills awakens their capacity to develop an independent conscience, which includes the ability for artistic creation, the ability to feel, and often an awareness of the body, time and death (2010: 224-6). Sally possesses these abilities: she can communicate with others and has her own independent thoughts. Besides cooking and sewing, she feels love, worry, and even fear. Moreover, Sally is conscious of her own body, using it to her advantage. Thus, it is only to be expected that Sally should rebel against her creator's control just like other artificial women in other works did before her.

In a version of a storyboard that was turned down,¹⁰ after Jack dismantles Oogie Boogie's body by pulling the thread that holds it together, it is revealed that Oogie Boogie was, in fact, Dr. Finklestein. In this storyboard's version of the villain's final moments, the scientist explains that he just wants is someone to appreciate (and, possibly, love) him:

Yes, it is me! Me! The man who created Sally from bits of flesh and scraps of cloth. She loves

⁹ *Blade Runner* (1982) or *Ex Machina* (2014) are examples of this.

¹⁰ The storyboard, called “Oogie Boogie's Alternate Identity”, was included as extra content in the collector's DVD edition of the film.



A Tenacious Ragdoll among Monsters: Sally's Identity in *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)

you, Jack! You, oblivious twit! As Oogie Boogie I wanted to teach her a lesson that she'd never forget! I'm through with both of you. I'm going to make myself a new creation. Someone who will appreciate me!

Here, as Thompson originally wanted, Dr. Finklestein hinders Jack and Sally's romantic relationship. He intends to teach her a lesson,¹¹ namely, that she was far better with him confined in the tower than in the outside world. In the film, Dr. Finkelstein wants the ragdoll to stay with him at home and obey him, going as far as locking her in her room, as if by punishing her—as a father would punish his child—she would change her behavior. In other words, Dr. Finklestein is an oppressive figure to Sally because he is her creator but also because of how paternalistic and patriarchal he is. McMahan notes that in classic Gothic tales, evil is incarnated in a malevolent aristocrat or as an oppressive father figure but Burton, instead, uses father figures as “positive role models and sources of love” (2006: 68). Dr. Finklestein's negative characterization suggests this is not always the case.

Sally escapes Dr. Finklestein's grasp little by little every time her body is unpicked and reconstructed. Spooner rightly claims that “Burton's self-fashioning patchwork girls”¹² are his strongest feminist statement: they rewrite the Frankenstein narrative into a version in which the female creature escapes the patriarchy that created and took control of her “through the manipulation of body-as-costume” (2013: 53). This is clearly seen in Sally's case. By destroying and rebuilding herself she modifies her identity making her-

self different from Dr. Finklestein's enslaved creature, as this scene shows. Sally does not want to be restrained by her creator, who does not believe she is ready to be outside and celebrate with the others:

Dr. Finklestein: You are not ready for so much excitement!

Sally: Yes, I am!

Dr. Finklestein: You're coming with me!

Sally, unstitching her arm: No, I'm not!

Sally had drugged her creator to join the celebration, a rebellious act already showing how limited her freedom is. She is here desperate enough to leave her arm behind to escape his grasp.

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Sally, however, must return to his side sooner or later, as he literally holds a part of her. Dr. Finklestein reprimands her for her actions against him and stitches her body back together, as if she could not do it on her own. He tries to make Sally believe that he is needed in her life and that she should be grateful to him. However, this scene also shows that he does not listen to Sally, thinking he knows better than her:

¹¹ It needs to be noted that Oogie Boogie appears to be a reference to the Boogiemán, a mythical figure to frighten children into following the will of the parents and behave well. Dr. Finklestein takes this form to “teach her a lesson” as if she was a naughty child.

¹² Another self-fashioning character is Catwoman in *Batman Returns* (1992).



A Tenacious Ragdoll among Monsters: Sally's Identity in *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)

Dr. Finklestein: That's twice this month you've slipped deadly nightshade into my tea and run off...

Sally: Three times!

Dr. Finklestein: You're mine, you know! I made you with my own hands.

Sally: You can make other creations. I'm restless! I can't help it.

Dr. Finklestein: It's a phase, my dear, it'll pass. We need to be patient, that's all.

Sally: But I don't want to be patient.

The 1991 script shows an even more fatherly and patriarchal Dr. Finklestein who appears to be psychologically manipulating Sally into feeling guilty for trying to leave him. Dr. Finklestein tells her that even though he grants that she has to leave someday there is no need to hurry because if she went away, no one else would be there to take care of him. He stresses that by drugging him to escape other citizens may have got the idea that Sally is unhappy, and that his comfortable home is not enough for her.

In a later scene, Sally drugs Finklestein again, this time to attend the town meeting. She returns home and he locks her up once more, leaving Sally no option but to jump out of the window to escape her imprisonment. The scene is quite shocking as she falls from a great height and the audience can hear the sound of her body crashing against the pavement. This time, she herself re-stitches her broken body while Dr. Finklestein rants and raves like a father failing to manage an unruly daughter. "You can come out now if you promise to behave", he offers, which does not quite ring true. Sally stays away having finally freed herself and Finklestein stops looking for her. Instead, he decides to create another creature to replace Sally.

The last time her body needs stitches is the scene in which she dismembers herself to liberate Santa Claus. This time, she does so to help Jack become a hero. However, she

gets caught by Oogie Boogie and, instead, Sally becomes a damsel in distress. After being rescued by Jack and returned to Halloween Town, Sally is no longer Dr. Finklestein's creature but her own woman (or ragdoll). He already has a new creation, a companion and caretaker that is literally a female version of Dr. Finklestein endowed with half of his brain. The problem is that though Sally's identity is no longer tied to her creator she seems tied to Jack in other ways.

"My Dearest Friend": Jack's View of Sally

Although *Nightmare Before Christmas* is a work by different persons collaborating and inspiring each other continuously, Jack is the character that makes the audience believe they are watching a Tim Burton film. Selick's team made sure the film looked as if it was one of Burton's and this is most perceptible in how Jack follows the usual main character pattern of his films. As Solaz (2001: 102-4) explains, the typical Burton character is an outsider, someone who is lonely, depressed and systematically misunderstood, unable to adapt to his surroundings. These male characters live with anguish until the moment when they make peace with who they are.

Sally is the only character that understands Jack's dilemma: the desire to be much more than the Pumpkin King. Jack is tired of being the king of Halloween Town and believes that no one will understand his wanting to be someone else. Sally understands him because she herself wants to be more than just Dr. Finklestein's creature. She is also misunderstood by her creator, who cannot (and does not want to) see her desire to be free from her position under his control. For screenwriter Caroline Thompson, Sally and Jack are very similar with one important difference: Jack's dilemma gives the film its



A Tenacious Ragdoll among Monsters: Sally's Identity in *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)

plot, while Sally's gives *Nightmare Before Christmas* its heart (Thompson, 2002: 35). On her side, Mitchell affirms that female main characters in Tim Burton's films depend on a male counterpart because they are "doll-like doubles" that "cannot be defined as autonomous beings." That is because their identity is "often fragmented, unstable, and strongly shaped by male influence." Sally steadily evolves into Jack's double, someone "who tracks his movements, shares his sentences and mirrors his behavior" (2017: 231).

Not only do Sally's movements or behavior mirror Jack's, but their bodies are quite similar, too. Both can take off different parts from their body with ease, and still be able to control them. Even their songs are counterparts as "Sally's Song" does for Sally what "Jack's Lament" does for Jack: Jack and Sally are able to freely express their feelings and dissatisfaction through their respective songs. This further shows that one is the counterpart of the other. However, even though they are counterparts and each other's romantic interest, the pair do not directly interact until halfway into the movie. Their first verbal interaction occurs in minute 39, after Sally leaves Dr. Finklestein for good, when she tries to warn Jack of her vision:

Jack: Sally, I need your help more than anyone's.

Sally: You certainly do, Jack. I had the most terrible vision.

Jack: That's splendid.

Sally: No, it was about your Christmas. There was smoke... and fire!

Jack: That's not my Christmas. My Christmas is filled with laughter and joy and this, my Sandy Claws outfit. I want you to make it.

Sally: Jack, please! Listen to me. It's going to be a disaster!

Jack: How could it be? Just follow the pattern. This part is red, the trim is white.

Sally: It's a mistake, Jack.

Jack: Now, don't be modest, who else is clever enough to make my Sandy Claws outfit?

Sally: But it seems wrong to me. Very wrong.

Sally tries to warn Jack about the impending disaster yet her prophecy is dismissed by Jack, who is too obsessed with taking over Christmas. In this scene there is an implicit reference to the Greek myth of Cassandra,¹³ as Sally's vision of Jack's Christmas ending up on fire and smoke is not believed. Instead of listening to her warning, Jack thinks she is talking about the outfit, worrying that she may not be good enough to make it. Needless to say, Jack acts here like Dr. Finklestein towards Sally: he dismisses her and her worries, only needing her to do what he wants from her.

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body crashing against the
pavement.**

Sally, as noted, is a traditionally gendered character. She escapes Finklestein but ends up being for Jack the wife and caretaker her maker wanted; Sally even enjoys cooking for the king of Halloween Town. Moreover, she tries to make him understand that he has to accept himself as he is, as the Pumpkin King, despite missing something else from life. Sally knows how it feels to always be reminded

¹³ Cassandra was a princess of Troy who was given the gift of prophecy by Apollo but cursed by the same God — when she rejects his advances — so that her prophecies would never be believed. She foresaw the fall of Troy, but no one listened to her.



A Tenacious Ragdoll among Monsters: Sally's Identity in *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)

of who you are —whether this is an artificial being made by another or the king of a holiday— but even when one is more than that, it is impossible to escape who or what you truly are. Nevertheless, he refuses to listen to her and once again they end up talking at cross-purposes:

Sally: But you're the Pumpkin King!
Jack: Not anymore. And I feel so much better now.
Sally: Jack, I know you think something's missing. But—
(Sally pricks Jack's finger with the needle)
Sally: Sorry.
Jack: You're right. Something's missing but what? I've got the beard, the coat, the boots...

Sally takes part in Jack's plans but only reluctantly. However, since he does not want to listen to her, she acts again against the male figure that dismisses her though for his own good. She returns to her creator's home to fetch a jar of fog juice. With it, Sally tries to sabotage Jack's taking off in a sleigh by creating a fog so thick that the citizens cannot see him;¹⁴ yet, she fails. This is, in any case, the first time she is prepared to do whatever it takes to protect her loved one — even going against that loved one. The second time happens after Jack is hurt and Sally tries unsuccessfully to rescue Santa Claus. Oogie Boogie intends to use Sally and Santa Claus as ingredients for his snake and spider stew but, as noted, Jack appears in time to save both. Sally tries to be a brave hero by trying to help the hero but the film only has room for Jack's heroics.

After Santa leaves, their romantic union finally starts. They understand each other so

well that they can finish each other's sentences:

Jack: How did you get down here, Sally?
Sally: Oh, I was trying to—well, I wanted to, to—
Jack: To help me.
Sally: I couldn't just let you just—
Jack: Sally, I can't believe I never realized, that you—

It must be noted that their happy ending comes after Jack sees that Dr. Finklestein has a new, satisfactory creation as if he could only declare his love when Sally is officially free from her maker. Santa brings a white Christmas to Halloween Land for the first time and while the citizens discover and enjoy Christmas or play in the snow, Sally leaves the scene with Jack following her without her knowing. They meet where "Jack's Lament" was sung but it is an instrumental version of "Sally's Song" playing in the background signifying Jack and Sally's union. They have finally achieved what they wanted and needed: Jack has made peace with who he is, he does not feel that inner emptiness, and finally has someone who understands him, whereas Sally has conveyed her feelings to her one true love. In this new version "Sally's Song" becomes a duet ending with Jack and Sally kissing, sealing their happy ever after:

Jack, singing: My dearest friend/ if you don't mind,/ I'd like to join you by your side/ where we can gaze into the stars
Jack and Sally, singing together: And sit together,/ now and forever,/ for it is plain as anyone can see/ we're simply meant to be.

Mitchell argues that "the unification of their characters" is presented in this last moment as if "two halves of a dual silhouette" finally reunited (2017: 235).

Sally, thus, finally emancipates herself

¹⁴ In the 1991 script she does not create the fog, instead, she laces his tea with a drug that would make Jack fall asleep; the fog suddenly appears, and Sally throws the drink away.



A Tenacious Ragdoll among Monsters: Sally's Identity in *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)

from Dr. Finklestein. However, she is unable to completely free herself as she goes from being her creator's companion and caretaker to being Jack's lover and caretaker. She cooks for Jack, she cares for him, she tries to be the voice of reason against his madness as she tried to be against Dr. Finklestein's selfishness and mistreatment. Sally gets rid of a bad father and of what he wanted her to be but not of what she was made to be. Patriarchy, in short, rules her relationships with the two main characters she interacts with, though at least Jack Skellington wants to make her happy.

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