# Re-articulating the Femme Fatale Archetype: Snow white and the Evil Queen

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## Abstract

In Disney's 1937 movie, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, the female is represented as a prototype of innocence, naivete, and gullibility. Offering her services of cooking and cleaning for the dwarfs, they accept to hide her in their house to keep her away from the eyes of the evil queen. Like any stereotypical female, she dreams of her prince charming who comes at the end of the tale to rescue her with his magical kiss, bringing her back to a life abundant with servitude and passivity. In Rupert Sanders' 'Snow White and the Huntsman' (2012), Snow White fights the evil queen, aided by both the natural world and the patriarchal society, to avenge for her father and claim her throne back. Whereas Disney's movie does not provide us with ample details about the evil queen or even furnish the story with the necessary context behind the queen's evil doings, the 2012 movie does. Clearly, the Disney movie puts clear boundaries between the concepts of good (Snow White) and evil (the queen) while the 2012 movie seems to be uncertain in drawing these lines. Like Snow White, Ravenna was a victim who lost her entire family and found retaliation the only response to a life of misery and loss. Ravenna is the villainous woman who marries men only to kill them and take everything they possess; she is the charming woman who enchants all men by her beauty and grace and thus fits the profile of the 'femme fatale'. I propose, however, that the real femme fatale in the movie is not Ravenna, but Snow White herself, who plays the role of the evil queen's alter ego, putting an end to Ravenna's rebellion against the male-dominated society but only to elicit another form of uprising where males and females are no longer at the ends of the spectrum, but collaborate to put an end to Ravenna's evil. Using a feminist/archetypal theoretical framework, I will explore Victorian tendencies towards gender stereotyping and trace the transformation that befell female representation over time. The conceptual focus of the paper examines the impact of feminism and feminist literary criticism on the construction of the femme fatale character and explores feminist perspectives on its representation in literature and film. The paper endeavours to trace the femme fatale's evolution ideologically through the characters of the evil queen and Snow White by placing the archetype vis-à-vis Victorian and modern tenets.

**Keywords:** femme fatale, Snow White, gender stereotyping, feminism

## 1. Introduction

Feminism began as a response to the oppression of females that resulted in their stereotyping and incarceration into specific moulds since the beginning of time. Those who referred to themselves as 'feminists' had a mutual objective, that is to help women in their struggle to end the notion of gender stereotyping. As a political movement, feminism crystalized in the 1960s and 1970s as a "belief that women are and should be treated as potential intellectual equals and social equals to men" (Mukhaba, 2016). Female status in the society was marginal as they did not have any concrete rights including the right to suffrage and "were barred from receiving a university education" (Gamble, 2001). Women should be seen as men's equals in the society, in the establishment of marriage and most importantly, they should be granted the right to vote.

In the early modern period, women suffered immensely from the domination of the patriarchal society for everything was controlled through the male mindset. The majority of the early texts were male-centred as they were written by men who, mostly, denigrated the opinions of women and regarded them as their subordinates – being the intellectuals of the day, their ideas were seen as 'universal truths'. One of the earliest forms of resistance in late 16th century England was females' participation in debates. This was a challenge to the society who saw females as meek and docile and the "ideal [female] behaviour was 'chaste', 'silent', and 'obedient'" (Gamble, 2001). In the years following 1700, women started to defy their inferiority which was clearly culturally imposed on them. In 1792, Mary Shelley's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* signalled the beginning of modern feminism. In her book, Shelley was concerned about the education of girls and her aim was to "prepare them for the possibility of economic independence, to give them freedom and dignity" (Gamble, 2001). The book instigated various reactions by writers who supported her cause such as Sarah Ellis and others.

In the early 19th century, the position of a married woman was that of 'femme covert' which meant that "by marriage, the very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended or at least it is incorporated or consolidated into that of the husband under whose wing, protection, and cover she performs everything" (Blackstone, qtd. in Gamble, 2001). Thus, a woman who is not married is not considered a 'complete' member of that society, it is marriage that gives her the title of 'female' which permits her to do everything under the patronage of her husband and by extension the whole male-centred society. In response to the image of the 'femme covert', in the 1850s, famous female writers such as Barbara Leigh Smith and Bessie Rayner Parks, among others, established 'The English Women's Journal' and a society for advocating for female employment. They raised issues related to the limited opportunities provided to women

in both the education and the employment sectors and called for certain measures to help promote awareness to the importance of these concerns for the well-being of females and of the society as a whole. As a result, the 1850s saw a marginal improvement in the status of females with regards to the said challenges and female presence was marked especially in teaching and nursing.

The first time the word 'feminist' was used was in the 1890s (one year after the novelist Sarah Grand coined the phrase 'New Woman') describing the new generation of females whose aim is to resist stereotyping on the basis of gender and to seek equality with men particularly in marriage. Feminism progressed slowly specifically during the war years until it was generated once more in the 1970s which witnessed a diversity of perspectives concerning the struggle against coercion and injustice. The first wave feminism was "individualist and reformist" and focused more on the equal rights between males and females whereas 'new feminism' or 'women's liberation' was "collective and revolutionary" (Gamble, 2001). As feminism became more politically cognizant, as a movement, aiding women in their struggle towards emancipation, feminist theorists were given a chance to explore the new female identity and think of potential transformative paths. Feminists such as Betty Friedan, in her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and Simon de Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex* (1949) argue that a woman is not born a woman but is made one by the society's cultural construction seeing her as an 'other'. This 'otherness' is nothing but a man-made fantasy as men viewed themselves the ultimate constructors of civilization. Generally, feminist theoreticians centre their writings on female liberation on cultural, psychological, and intellectual levels.

With the advent of film industry in the 1890s, representations of females were heavily dependent on Victorian ideologies and convictions of womanhood which rested on the dictum that a woman should be obedient, innocent, domestic, and an angel in the house. Any diversion from this prototype suggested that this lady will be considered a 'fallen' woman. The angel in the house has very strong ties with the "eternal feminine" which means being submissive, modest, self-less, graceful, pure, delicate, civil, compliant, reticent, chaste, affable, polite (Gilbert and Gubar, 1980), "slim, pale, passive", snowy and immobile in a porcelain-like manner (Gilbert and Gubar, 1980). Thus, the dichotomy of the angel/fallen woman came into practice especially when the patriarchal society placed itself as protectors for the angel women and the punishers for the fallen ones. Walt Disney's evil queen is one example of the femme fatale who gets punished at the end of the tale, but nonetheless, is the main heroine and catalyst of the whole story. This paper focuses on the re-articulation of the femme fatale archetype to fit into the modern world in face of gender stereotyping. By utilizing a feminist-archetypal theoretical framework, the paper attempts to propose how Disney's femme fatale (the evil queen) is today's version of modern women.

## 2. Literature Review

*Meriam-Webster Dictionary* defines a femme fatale as "a seductive woman who lures men into dangerous or compromising situations." Before she becomes a key figure in Victorian literature, the fatal woman appeared in "authoritative literary criticism of the 18th century" (Braun, 2012). In his *Preface to Shakespeare*, for instance, Samuel Johnson "invokes the notorious Cleopatra to denote the force that drives Shakespeare to chase relentlessly after "quibbles", or "puns" regardless of where they might lead him" (Braun, 2012). Here, Johnson refers to an ostensible interrelation between the imperceptibility of language and the femme fatale. He, also, suggests "ways in which the fatal woman, like the language used to frame her, can expand beyond her creator as a demanding, irresistible force that defies scrutiny or elucidation" (Braun 2012). Any connection, hence, drawn between obscurity and the female was considered dangerous and challenging.

In addition to being seen as an invincible creature that defies the norms of the society, the figure of the femme fatale was the catalyst for revising biblical and mythical tales: Eve, Salome, Medea, Circe, the Sirens, and Lilith, all represented the "antithesis of the perception that women were the pristine upholders of virtue and restraint" (Braun, 2012). Ironically, as women's movements began to be more systematized and structured, and the boundaries between public and private spheres became more subtle, enticing women to ask for their rights and fight for more privileges, the image of the femme fatale began to change from "this rather charming, complex, devious young woman into a one-dimensional, dangerous archetype" (Hedgecock, 2008). This prototype encompasses a certain degree of violence, power, and destruction with a dangerous sense of allurement that the femme fatale herself might not be aware of its presence. Unlike the meek angel in the house of the 19th century, the femme fatale "threatens, but never wearies the reader, arousing an increased curiosity about her, to untangle her mystery, to have power over her, as she becomes more of an enigma" (Hedgecock, 2008). The character of the 'femme fatale' depicts the most explicit attack on 'traditional womanhood' because she objects to confirm to the role of 'loving wife' and 'devoted mother' that the society prescribes to women. Unsurprisingly, the femme fatale is often rewarded for her unscrupulous means, harvesting the fruits from the men she seduces and happily destroys, even though her victory is usually short-lived.

Femme fatales have been portrayed as mere archetypes beginning, it could be argued, from mid-19th century with W.M. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848). Late 19th century artists such as Oscar Wilde and Gustave Moreau "embellished the biblical tales of Judith Salome and Delilah" (Braun 2012). These famous females as well as other 'fatal' ladies such as John Waterhouse's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (1893) and Frederick Sandy's *Morgan Le Fay* (1863) "aroused fear of seductive vamps that elicited the violent destruction of powerful men" (Braun, 2012). Other examples include but are not limited to Mary Elizabeth Braddon's and Willie Colling's fiction in the 1860s as well as the introduction of the gothic antiheroine in the 1890s in *Dracula* and

*She*. By "characterizing the femme fatale as a specific danger to men, sensation novels in the 1860s implicitly suggest the degree to which an independent woman is viewed as a threat to the fabric of Victorian culture" (Hedgecock, 2008). Feminist critic Rebecca Scott argues that the femme fatale is more prevalent in late 19th century literature. Janey Place notes that the archetypal violent woman has savoured a central status in the Judeo-Christian heritage: "the dark lady, the spider woman, the evil seductress who tempts man is among the oldest themes of art, literature, mythology, and religion in Western culture" (1996).

The trope of the dangerous woman, the woman who dares to challenge the patriarchal society, had to be instilled in children's stories in an attempt to plant the seeds of obedience and meekness in young girls. Fairy tales such as 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs', 'Little Red Riding Hood, 'Cinderella', to name a few, are built on the equation: obedience equals reward, disobedience equals punishment and jeopardy. Young girls have been taught to be 'angels' in the true sense of the word. To be appreciated and accepted by the patriarchal society, a girl/woman has to acquire certain characteristics most important of which is to be submissive and docile. Stables maintains that:

> The fatale myth is common to all cultures and her iconography is widely recognized as a result of a blanket of 19th century European representations as well as earlier cinema incarnation. Woman = sec = death is an equation inscribed into mass consciousness around the world. (qtd in Hockley, 2001).

Hence, if a woman fails to display such qualities that presented her as an ideal Victorian female or did not adhere to the dictates of the society, she was labelled as a fallen woman as she serves as a negative force forbidding the positive character(s) from achieving happiness and success. The 'femme fatale' plays the role of the antagonist to the woman who acquires the opposite characteristics. From a different perspective, the two females might not be foils, but as Brode suggests, the women are "complex entities of the female principle" (qtd in. Toth, 2017) as one symbolizes the docile image of female, and the other projects her violent side.

With its roots in the Victorian period, the film industry, relied heavily on the dominant female stereotypes of the late 19th century. The studio founded by Walt Disney in 1923, for example, has already constructed several examples of evil characters (femme fatales) in contrast to the meek, cute princesses celebrated in his films. The messages these movies carried within were addressed to females who thought of seeking their freedom and hence subverting the bourgeois ideology that "disenfranchises a woman who (transgresses) social boundaries and exploits men for their power and wealth" (Hedgecock, 2008). In the 21st century, adaptations of such stories seem to have worked on a re-articulation of that archetype in support of feminist precepts. These movies included femme fatales such as Merida in 'Brave' (2012), Elsa and Anna in 'Frozen' (2013), Maleficent in 'Maleficent' (2014), and Moana in 'Moana' (2016). Toth explains that these were among the first films in the Disney universe where "these iconic evil, wicked and violent women were actually asked what their problem was" (2017). The creators

of these movies decided to give these characters a chance for the first time to tell their own stories. The femme fatale of Disney's Victorian-based depictions has become the newly born woman of the modern period.

## 3. Research Methodology

This paper employs Victorian female-related dictums by exploring the image of the femme fatale incarnated in the character of the wicked queen (or not wicked?) in Disney's 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' (1937). The discussion will focus on how Victorian audience sympathized (or were rather instructed to) with Snow White as she is the representative of the woman-martyr, angelic victim while regarding the only antagonist in the story the evil, mysterious, dangerous, nameless queen. The second part of the paper comprises a comparison between Disney's (1937) evil queen and Rupert Sander's modern version of Snow White in the movie 'Snow White and the Huntsman' (2012). I refer to the Disney production available on you tube (**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5vauARw-JM**) and the movie 'Snow White and the Huntsman' (2012) available on Netflix. I argue that the modern Snow White is a re-incarnation or rather the alter-ego of Disney's evil queen notwithstanding the fact that Snow White was never described in demonic terms although she is no different from Disney's antagonist.

## 4. Disney's Evil Queen and Snow White

In Disney's 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs', initially adapted from a fairy tale by the same name by the Brothers' Grimm, the evil queen marries the king and after his death, decides to get rid of his daughter, princess Snow White. Based on the description provided by the Disney production, the queen is immensely beautiful and gets infuriated when she knows from her mirror that someone else – Snow White – is more beautiful than she is. The 1937 movie, however, does not focus on narrating the background history of the queen or the context of her marriage to Snow White's father. As a mainstream fairy whose main aim is primarily didactic, the story focuses on how it is dangerous to trust strangers and how prince charming should arrive at the right moment to save the princess. In contrast, in the movie 'Snow White and the Huntsman', Snow White is not depicted as the victimized soul in distress: she is shrewd, resourceful, and strong. With the help of William and Eric, Snow White fights Ravenna and claims the throne of her deceased father who fell prey to the magical charms of the femme fatale. On her odyssey towards victory, Snow White uses her charms too – physical as well as mental – to customize, not only the patriarchal world, but also the natural one, in her favour, to destroy the evil queen and to take her place.

In her book *Merry Murderers: The Farcical (Re)Figuration of the Femme Fatale in Maurine Dallas Watkins' Chicago (1927) and its Various Adaptations*, Zsofia Anne Toth (2011), refers to the figure of the femme fatale explaining that:

> The femme fatale is that iconic female image which is connected to the figure of the female transgressor and criminal in literary and filmic works as well as cultural representations. The femme fatale is primarily linked to tragedy and tragic desire and 'her' fall is inevitable traditionally. A prototypical femme fatale is endowed with extremely attractive physicality as well as sharp intelligence. She is generally beautiful, pretty, (often strikingly) clever and intelligent, very deceitful, manipulative, and greatly ambitious. She is usually willing to do anything to achieve her goals and entirely disregards everybody else's interests and feelings.

As per this definition, the wicked queen in Disney's movie fits the profile of the femme fatale perfectly. Ostensibly, we don't have a clear idea of what the queen was before she becomes the 'queen' or what her real motivations are but as Braun argues that the "lure of the fatal woman begins to fade when her motives are revealed and she becomes both obvious and familiar" (2012) Zipes claims that this story "has very little to do with the trials and tribulations of the virginal protagonist Snow White, but much more to do with the passionate queen, her stepmother, and the queen's struggles with her omniscient and authoritative magic mirror" (2011). Everything that happens in the story takes place as a result of her actions, imperatives, and desires. As noted earlier, we are not furnished with the needed context behind her reasons for marrying the king, yet, the results are palpable. This woman has clear aims in the story, at least as far as Snow White herself is concerned. The wicked queen feels it is her right to demolish any creature who is more beautiful than she is especially if it is her innocent daughter-in-law. This could be partly associated with her dislike to her (being the daughter of the deceased king) or with the fact that the queen represents everything that Snow White does not. The existence of Snow White's passive entity and being would threaten the queen's identity and put her face-to-face with the society that would definitely side with the 'angel in the house' and not with a fallen woman.

The evil queen, thus, decides to change/rule the patriarchal society as she is the only symbol of authority in the story. The queen rules alone without a male authoritative figure which is considered an anomaly as far as the society's protocols are concerned. The only real male in the story, who is the huntsman, is "rather impotent and frail: portrayed as a servant, who is enchanted and awed by the domineering queen as well as feeling sorry for Snow White. He is incapable of any (significant) action in effect" (Toth, 2017). The King, Snow White's father, is already dead by the beginning of the story and the prince plays no significant role in the tale. The dwarves are also depicted as annoying children who are incapable of protecting Snow White from the evil queen. Despite their caricatural portrayal, the dwarves still constitute the vision of the patriarchal society that sees women as domestic creatures born only to cook, clean, and wash the dishes. The only voice of authority, hence, comes from the queen herself who consults no one but her mirror. As a major motif in the story, the mirror acts as the bridge

between the queen and the outer world; she believes what the mirror says about her instead of having a clear-cut opinion about herself.

Closely tied to the mirror motif is the theme of beauty which plays a paramount importance in generating the metaphorical and physical connectedness and similitude between Snow White and the queen. As Bell notes, "their similarities were remarkable" (1995) both being pale, white, and beautiful. Yet, even though the queen is beautiful, the fairy tale itself negates the usual equation of good equals beautiful. However, the situation is far more complicated. Why would the queen decide to believe that mirror when it informs her that Snow White is more beautiful than she is? As confident and authoritative as the wicked queen is, why wouldn't she break the mirror (or its spell) and believe more in herself than she does with that mirror? The mirror, consequently, introduces a hidden layer, a veiled connection between the queen and Snow White that puts them both on the same ground of victimization. Snow White is in danger of becoming the Queen, and the issues of beauty as image and conferred power confront them both. The "intergenerational conflict between the Queen (knowingly) and Snow White (apparently unknowingly) vying for a single throne provokes reflections on the conflict of girl-woman facing the evaluating mirror of society, discussed first in terms of beauty - in the eyes of which beholder?" (Strayer, 1996). As villainous as she seems to be, the queen still sees herself in the eyes of those around her – the patriarchal world – and believes what they say about her and how they see her which hints at a sense of immaturity with regards to the queen's understanding of herself and her capabilities. Remaining captive to the society's rules is one reason of the wicked queen's failure.

The fact that the wicked queen could be seen as a potential developmental model for Snow White highlights interrelated themes in the tale that include not only beauty, but aging and power as well. The mirror plays the central role of the "'looking-glass' self in the face of continuing needs for 'mirroring', and the psychosocial challenges of mid-life development" (Strayer, 1996). It could be argued, accordingly, that the queen's jealousy "is actually directed at a younger version of herself now ready to succeed her" (Do Rozario, 2004). In the patriarchal world, beauty is usually held up more for women, than men. If a woman is not beautiful, she loses her sense of self. If the queen loses her beauty, and thus her charm, she will lose the authority withheld with that beauty. Sontag argues that "aging is harsher for women than men [as] it steals powers formerly granted to them by what I have called 'the image'" (qtd. In Strayer, 1996). That is why the evil queen decides to retaliate from the competitive Snow White who would take her place and thus, distort the queen's image in the society.

As previously discussed, the absence of an authoritative male figure in the story paves the way for the femme fatale's sweeping control over the princess (who is the only threat to her power being the rightful heir to her father's throne) and the whole narrative per se. Therefore, by

encapsulating the role of the femme fatale in Disney's movie, the queen's representation provides a construction of a powerful critique of patriarchal discourses. Bell notes that the "inefficacy of divine right of kings is both drawn and storied in contrast to the potency of women's evil and their dangerous and carnivorous threats to order. The femme fatale construction of the feminine excess begins the wicked pentimento of Disney evil" (1995). What the queen really hopes to realize is to rule the kingdom on her own so "it is when the princess is on the brink of womanhood and has found her lover that the femme fatale moves from simply victimizing the princess to actively seeking her destruction" (Do Rozario, 2004). Failing to recognize that Snow White is her alter ago, the evil queen fixates on destroying Snow white unaware that she is moving directly towards her own demise.

## 5. Disney Versus Rupert Sanders

Described by many critics as one of the first films that uses the dark concept, Rupert Sanders' 2012 version 'Snow White and the Huntsman', takes the audience to an odyssey into Ravenna's 'dark' past in an attempt to provide contextual background to her evil doings in the movie. Like Disney's evil queen, Ravenna is scared of ageing – the only weapon she possesses in face of the patriarchal society that victimized her and stole her home when she was a little girl. Realizing that her charm is her only means of not only survival, but vengeance too, she decides to utilize every element of her assuaging appeal to seduce men of power and rob them of their kingdoms. Her revenge did not only involve males, but it extended to the natural world itself. By mutilating her relationship with mother nature, Ravenna becomes the epitome of evil itself and thus, a more modern version of herself – the femme fatale – had to be installed in her place to make amends for Ravenna's disturbed self and hence re-instils the motherly facet of nature.

The modern Snow White is no longer depicted in naïve terms. She did not escape from the evil queen's palace to live in imprisonment with the elves, like her predecessor. We are no longer dealing with an 'idol' who matures in the 'depression' and "is happy to pitch in with the working-class dwarves in times of high unemployment and poverty until she is found once again by her prince" (Do Rozario, 2004). In other words, we are not dealing with a Disney princess anymore. The way Snow White appears in the movie: her clothing, style, and mentality are completely different from the earlier 'angel in the house'. The modern Snow white devised a clever plan to escape from the castle without any external help and managed to hide from the queen's guards. The way the princess speaks and thinks denotes a complete metamorphosis from her older submissive self and puts the audience in a place to reconsider what she really represents in the story and whether the movie could still be seen as an adaptation of the old fairy tale. Ostensibly, the movie highlights the clear similarity between Snow White

and the evil queen and succeeds in drawing the lines that connect both characters together, a layer that the Disney movie did not clearly recognize.

Whereas in Disney's movie, the male figures are clearly missing in action, the 2012 version allows them an appearance, but only as helpmates and supporters in Snow White's odyssey towards claiming her father's throne as well as her real identity back. The huntsman in Disney's movie played the minor role of saviour, yet, Eric becomes Snow White's follower or rather subordinate – considering her status as the lawful heir to her father's kingdom. Instead of taking the lead, Eric follows Snow White – not out of love – but out of a promise she gave that he will be rewarded if he helps her flee the evil queen's guards. Eric agrees out of duty, but later becomes aware but the natural world itself is helping Snow White in her quest and because 'mother' nature is angry that Ravenna is representing it, it endeavours to help its new agent. The close link between Snow White and nature is obvious in the two versions suggesting that even though Snow White is growing from an innocent child into a rebellious woman, nature is still on her side. The dwarves, ostensibly, approve of this spiritual association making Eric – the huntsman – confounded in his part. The audience's expectation in the movie move towards the direction of creating a romantic story between Snow White and Eric but they get shocked when the story lines lead them to a completely unexpected trajectory. Throughout the movie, Eric's fascination with Snow White ignites but partly due to her courage and resourcefulness. As a representative of the patriarchal world, Eric is not repelled by Snow White's resilience but in contrast, he respects her for what she is. Is this an indication that the world is changing? Is this a sign that submissiveness is not the only measure of a woman's being?

Another twist in the Disney's story is related to the character of William, the prince. Referred to in the 1937 version as simply 'the prince' denotes the significance of the 'title' and the 'role' and not the individual; as if the only responsibility of princes in such fairy tales in to be saviours of princesses. William in the modern version challenges that stereotype. Introduced in the movie as Snow White's family friend, William is always keen on searching for her despite his father's warnings that he shouldn't. However, the moment he hears that Snow White was on the run from Ravenna's guards, he challenges his father's instructions and sets to search for her. When William finds Snow White, he doesn't rescue her in the true sense of the word but becomes an auxiliary in her quest for self-fulfilment. Whereas the audience anticipate Snow White's loss of excitement towards reaching her goal as soon as William becomes in the picture, the prince never counted on that. Disney's Snow White and the prince are not the same as their modern versions. The modern Snow White is no longer waiting for prince charming to uproot her from her misery, but she uses him as an accessory in her victorious journey.

Disney's Snow White is not Rupert's Snow White – we are dealing here not with a development from innocence to experience as such but a complete metamorphosis. This

transformation is built entirely on Snow White's power to lead her people which is a strength that she has definitely acquired from Ravenna – her alter ago. The wicked queen still plays a crucial role in making the action move forward but is no longer the main catalyst of the narrative, Snow White is. Hence, Ravenna needs to think of a new plan to get rid of Snow White and validate the majesty of the king. Like her older self, the evil queen turns herself into William, gives Snow White an apple, and thus, the princess becomes the prey to Ravenna's wicked thoughts. By then, the audience asks themselves: whose kiss will bring the princess back to life? By continuing his challenge to gender stereotyping, Sunders twists the plot by making Eric's kiss the one that brings Snow White back to life. Belonging to a lower social and working class, the audience are aware that a marriage proposition will not be plausible and hence, Eric's love will never see the light. Thus, by demolishing every romantic supposition, Sunders produces a revision of the fairy tale by placing the princess as the main catalyst in the narrative.

For the transformation to be complete, Snow White and Ravenna – her alter ago – had to indulge into a battle, with the mirror in the background. The mirror, which was the main reason why Ravenna is still alive and in ravaging beauty, is one of the queen's means of power as well as horror. In fact, women, in general, are always reported to feel shame and terror at aging as when they grow older, they feel alienated from themselves as well as from the society as a whole. As exemplified by the queen, "command is linked to an image that has been outlived. The tangible reality of aging, then, may be even more difficult to accept than the abstract concept of mortality" (Strayer, 1996), as shown by Ravenna's readiness to die rather than face a changing image and therefore, a shifting status. Only when Snow White faces Ravenna and kills her will she become truly aware of her true identity and thus, becomes the modern femme fatale who is respected by all the society. Snow White will have no need for the magical mirror because she is conscious that she can keep her image and authenticate both her gender and her title. By the end of the movie, the mirror gets broken suggesting the end of an arena of fear and shame and the beginning of the reign of the real femme fatale who is not scared from the society or awaiting its approval.

## Conclusion

To conclude, this paper traces the re-articulation of the femme fatale archetype from Disney's (1937) 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' to Rupert Sanders' (2012) 'Snow White and the Huntsman'. While the evil queen in Disney's movie fits the profile of the femme fatale albeit with unclear background context, Ravenna, supposedly, is clearly introduced in the 2012 version. In both movies, Snow White plays the role of the wicked queen's alter ego but does not become the real femme fatale per se except in the 2012 production. The modern Snow White puts an end to Ravenna's rebellion against the male-dominated society but only by

eliciting another form of uprising where males and females are no longer at the ends of the spectrum but collaborate to put an end to injustice and inequality. Further studies could be made to reconnoitre the possibility of applying this research findings to other Disney productions and Hollywood movies.

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