Adapting the Grimms: Going Against Patriarchy in Singh's Movie *Mirror Mirror*

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Abstract

Many cinematic adaptations were produced for the Grimms' "Little Snow-White" (1812) including *Mirror Mirror* movie (2012), the contemporary version adapted by Taresm Singh. Singh's version was able to depict the modern reality of women and went against patriarchy by embracing feminist ideologies of the fourth-wave feminism. Therefore, he challenged the ideologies of the mainstream cinema dominated by the patriarchal élite's capitalist mode of production that still adhere to the stereotyped patriarchal image of women's 'victimization,' 'objectification' and 'marginalization,' which did not represent women's modern reality anymore. This paper, however, is a qualitative study aimed to prove that the feminist ideologies could only be retained after a cultural transformation process from the patriarchal élite culture to the popular culture of mass media after the World War II, which noticeably affected women's image in the cinema. And thus, this paper is an analytical study of *Mirror Mirror* that used the analytical textual and production approaches to popular culture along with the Marxist and feminist film theories to unfold the feminist ideologies prevailed in the movie. The study has concluded that the cultural transformation from the patriarchy into the popular culture of mass media led to the emergence of counter-cinema or cinefeminism that encouraged the reversing of the traditional gender roles in cinema. It has also shown that class conflict and economic power caused by the cultural transformation helped in redefining women's role and place in society. Thereby maintaining the feminist ideologies of the fourth-wave's 'women's empowerment' positively affected women and girls to reflect their modern reality.

تحوير الجرمز: الذهاب ضد الابوية في فيلم سينغ مرآة مرآة

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المستخلص

تم إنتاج العديد من الإصدارات السينمائية لحكاية الأخوة جريم الخيالية "الصغيرة بياض الثلج" (١٨١٢) من ضمنها فيلم مرآة مرآة (٢٠١٢)، النسخة المعاصرة لتاريسم سينغ. وقد كانت هذه النسخة قادرة على تصوير الواقع الحديث للمرأة و تبني الأيديولوجيات النسوية للموجة النسوية الرابعة عن طريق معارضته للنظام الأبوي متحديا بذلك أيديولوجيات السينما السائدة التي يهيمن عليها نمط الإنتاج الرأسمالي للنخبة الأبوية والذي لا يزال متمسكًا بالصورة الأبوية النمطية المتمثلة في "إيذاء المرأة" و "تشيئها" و "تهميشها،" والتي لم تعد تمثل الواقع الحديث للمرأة. وبالتالي، فإن هذا البحث هو دراسة نوعية تهدف إلى إثبات عدم إمكانية الحفاظ على الأيديولوجيات النسوية إلا بعد عملية التحول الثقافي من الثقافة الأبوية النخبوية إلى الثقافة الشعبية لوسائل الإعلام بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية التي أثرت و بصورة ملحوظة في صورة المرأة في السينما، و هكذا، يعد هذا البحث دراسة تحليلية لمرآة مرآة باستعمال المناهج التحليلية النصية والانتاجية للثقافة الشعبية جنبًا إلى جنب مع نظريات الأفلام الماركسية والنسوية لتكشف عن الأيديولوجيات النسوية السائدة في الفيلم. وخلص البحث إلى أن التحول الثقافي من النظام الأبوي إلى الثقافة الشعبية لوسائل الإعلام أدى إلى ظهور السينما المضادة أو النسوية السينمائية التي شجعت على عكس الأدوار التقليدية للجنسين في السينما. كما أظهر أن الصراع الطبقي والقوة الاقتصادية الناجمة عن التحول الثقافي ساعدا في إعادة تعريف دور المرأة ومكانتها في المجتمع. وبالتالي الحفاظ على الأيديولوجيات النسوية للموجة الرابعة من "تمكين المرأة" و مناصرتها لتأثيرها الإيجابي في النساء والفتيات بما يعكس واقعهن الحديث.

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1. Introuction

Storytelling engages people across the world and allows the sharing of their ideas, ideologies, traditions and cultures. Many stories have been told through novels and books, and then retold through different mediums like film, theatre and television. They communicate people around the world through the process of literary adaptation. The twenty-first century movie *Mirror Mirror* (2012) was produced during the appearance of the fourth-wave feminism that seeks 'women's empowerment.' It was adapted from the Grimms' nineteenth-century fairy tale "Little Snow-White" (1812) in order to challenge the patriarchal capitalist mode of production in cinema by presenting women's modern reality. Culture was transformed from the patriarchal culture of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the twentieth century popular culture of mass media, which belonged to the Western capitalist society that arose and developed under the influence of mass media.

Filmmakers in mainstream cinema continued adapting the capitalist patriarchal culture to reflect its reality and ideologies in their productions. Nevertheless, the gradual decline of the patriarchal culture was dated back to the appearance of *Feminism* in the mid of the nineteenth century as movements called for women's rights in all fields of life. In the last half of the twentieth century, an important transformation of culture was initiated, represented by the popular culture of mass media, which agreeably goes back to the time before the 1960s to include comic books, film, pulp fiction, television, advertising, computer cyber culture and populist music. The transformation of culture led to the emergence of feminist film theory in the 1970s. In regard to Karen Hollinger (2012), the feminist film theory called for an alternative or counter-cinema to criticize the image of women in mainstream cinema. It generally urged filmmakers to reflect women's modern reality and their positive images that do not encourage women's

victimization, and to refuse the depiction of women as 'others' or a second sex (Hollinger, 2012).

Three studies have been conducted by Ike Anggraini Oei (2013), Katriza Andika Putri (2013), and Roudatul Jannah (2013) to explore the changes in the image of women and gender roles in *Mirror Mirror*. These studies examined the traits and character's transformation of Snow-White that went against patriarchy from feminist perspectives. However, these studies did not address the transformation of other characters' roles whether male or female and most importantly the reasons behind such transformations and changes, the gaps that this paper is trying to fill. Both Putri and Jannah recommended the Marxist theory for the analysis of the movie, where power and authority directly influence gender roles. For that, this paper does not only look at the Marxist theory in terms of power and authority, but also considers class conflict as an essential influencer. Not just this, it claims that the changes in gender roles and women's image in both life and cinema are complicated processes affected by other factors; in addition to the Marxist theory, where feminist film theory and cultural transformations are also important for the analysis.

With *Mirror Mirror's* production in (2012), the fourth-wave of feminism appeared seeking 'women's empowerment.' It encouraged the feminist ideologies of the counterculture that appeared with liberal feminism during the 1960s and 70s, thereby redefining women's reality, role and place in the society. Feminist ideologies; however, are alternative to patriarchal ideologies in which women across ages were subordinated, marginalized oppressed and 'otherized.' Going with Kadhim (2022), women's plight has always been a consequence of the oppression and misogynistic regime of patriarchy that regularly changed its skin in the past, and even in present times under the umbrella of religion, for example. Hence, through their struggle to get equal rights with men in the society, women fight in every domain, including literature and cinema,

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where the roles of women are stereotyped as 'patriarchal women.' Thus, the present analytical study intends to examine how *Mirror Mirror* challenges both the capitalist class system of production and the patriarchal ideologies of 'women's victimization' in Grimms' "Little-Snow-White." It declares that the transformation of culture from a patriarchal to a popular culture of mass media empowers women and affects their reality, place, and role in the society. Based on this objective, the following research questions are raised: **Why did counter-cinema or cinefeminism appear? How has the image of women in cinema transformed? What is the impact of such transformation on girls or women in real life?**

The theatrical background deals with literary adaptation, popular culture and *Mirror Mirror*. It defines adaptation and its main types with *Mirror Mirror*. It also uses the textual and production analyses of popular culture in order to reveal the transformation of culture along with abbreviated information and the plot of *Mirror Mirror*. On the other hand, the analytical part is concerned with methodology and data analysis. The methodological part traces the circumstances and reasons that have led to the appearance of feminist film theory and cinefeminism. Such a theory and approach called for abandoning the mainstream patriarchal sexist production of films and searching for an alternate or counter-cinema that can present a positive image for women and even reflect their modern reality and culture. The paper has adopted the feminist film theory to examine women's image in *Mirror Mirror* and how it reflects the modern reality of 'women's empowerment.' Further, it introduces the Marxist theory, which is important for the analysis of *Mirror Mirror*. Marx's notions of class struggle, economic power and ideology have also been adopted to reveal the way they are shaped in the movie to unfold the modern reality of women. They also help clarify the transformation of culture cause, reversing the stereotyped traditional gender role assigned for both men and women by patriarchy. It further analyzes the

characters' relationships through Snow-White, Queen Clementianna, Prince Alcott, the dwarfs, the king, the castle's servants and the kingdom's citizens.

To conclude, the significance of this paper lies on its contribution in feminist film studies through tracing the transformation of women's image in cinema and its effect on girls or women in real life. It mainly emphasizes that it is only through class conflict and economic power, the patriarchal culture is gradually undermined and transformed into the popular culture of mass media. This paves the way for liberal feminism's counterculture to challenge the capitalist mode of production in cinema. And so, the image of women and their social reality is transformed in *Mirror Mirror,* revealing how women undermine patriarchy and its ideologies in a cultural transformation process to maintain their feminist ideologies of the fourth-wave's 'women's empowerment' in the twenty-first century.

2. Theoretical Framework
2.1 Literary Adaptation and Mirror Mirror

The dictionary meaning of adaptation is "the action or process of changing something, or of being changed, to suit a new purpose or situation" (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 2022, para. 1). In the same avenue, literary adaptation is the transformation of any literary genre like a poem, short story, or novel into either the same genre for various purposes or different genres and mediums like film, video play or video game. It has appeared from the birth of industry when literature was adapted for film starting with Brothers Grimm's story *Cinderella* (1899). From the disciplines of Adaptation Studies, nonetheless, both of Linda Hutcheon and Julie Sanders were considered one of the pioneering figures in the field. In her book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Hutcheon confirmed that films, songs, video games or books can be regarded as adaptations if they meet three conditions. Firstly, for Hutcheon (2006), an adaptation was defined as an "acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or

works" (p. 8). Here, Hutcheon found that acknowledging a work as an adaptation is necessary. She implied that the unacknowledged works as adaptations will automatically not going to be adaptations. In that she might regard the unacknowledged retelling of any story as non-creative.

Secondly, Hutcheon (2006) recommended that any story must be a "creative and interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging" (p. 8). As another important condition, Hutcheon used "appropriation" to refer to the act of borrowing. She specifically looked for the creation of new texts for different new reasons through the act of borrowing. "Salvaging" is a term used to describe the act of saving old texts from oblivion or paying respect to previous texts. Finally, Hutcheon pointed out that any adapted work must be an "extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work" (p. 8). Rather than true adaptation, allusion appears to be the case when stories are used or borrowed in passing.

On the other side, in her book *Adaptation and appropriation*: *The new critical idiom* (2006), Sandres' definition of "adaptation" focused on the act of transposition from one genre to another. For her, an "adaptation" was the "reinterpretations of established texts in new generic contexts or perhaps with relocations of an 'original' or source text's cultural and/or temporal setting, which may or may not involve a generic shift" (2006, pp. 18-19). In this way, "adaptations" are clearly the re-interpretations or re-readings of a text involving a cultural change. In other words, it entails updating the text for the contemporary audiences or even for a different context. Like Hutcheon, Sanders saw that "adaptations" have to include "intertextual engagement," which refers to more than an allusion or a simple quote. Instead, they must be linked to the notion of hybridity where things are translated, repeated and relocated. For instance, the cinematic adaptation of Jeanne DuPrau's *The City of Amber* (2003) by Gil Kenan is for Mayada Z. Al-Khafaji and Ansam Yaroub (2019,

pp. 189, 195), a successful repetition to unfold DuPrau's implied warning messages about conspiracy theory and the end of the world.

Moreover, Sanders did also view "adaptation" as "appropriation" but with some differences in how explicitly they refer to an intertext. According to her (2006), an adaptation indicated an affiliation with an original or source-text. Appropriation, on the other hand, frequently involved a more decisive departure from the informative source and into an entirely new cultural product and realm. As stated before, this may or may not necessitate a generic shift, but it almost certainly necessitates the intellectual juxtaposition of at least two texts. However, the appropriated texts are not necessarily acknowledged, unlike the adaptive process. Additionally, Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (1999) touched on the three main categories of cinematic adaptation; these included transposition, commentary and analogue. Transposition alternated the original texts into new genres, time, geography, culture and any other factors, such as Baz Luhrmann's (1996) film William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which provided alternatives of both time and culture. Commentary was more culturally engaged through commenting on the sources' politics, often using addition or alteration that impacted rely mainly on the audiences' awareness to a clear connection to a source text (Sanders, 2006). Explicit example is Derek Jarman's (1979) film *The Tempest*, which added the Sycorax. Analogue, yet is an adaptation that stood alone with no necessary knowledge of the source text like Michel Winterbottom's *The Claim* (2001), which was a re-vision of Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

Singh's film *Mirror Mirror* (2012) belonged to the first category of "adaptation," which was a transposition, as it provided a shift in genre, culture, time and context to depict the contemporary women's reality. In relation to genre, *Mirror Mirror* was an interesting contemporary reimagining woman's film for the nineteenth-century Grimms' fairy tale "Little

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Snow-White" (1812). Culturally, the most important part here was transformed from patriarchy to pop or contemporary effecting by time that shifted from the nineteenth century into twenty-first century. Both Andrea Chase (2012) and James Berardinelli considered it as a beautiful rethinking and reworking of Snow-White's tale into a new, appealing, and adventurous movie, mixing the sense of modernity and the popular culture attitude with an old-fashioned feel. Being an adventurous movie; however, *Mirror Mirror* was a sub-genre of woman's film, per Hollinger (2012), revived by contemporary action-adventure films with female heroines. This mixture of the old-fashioned Grimms' fairy tale with a modern popular culture adventurous rethinking was brought to the surface by the cinematic adaptation of the director Singh and the director of photography Brendan Galvin. The adaptation designated that time, culture, and genre worked together to create the meanings. Shifting time led to the shifting of culture that led to the shifting of the genre, which was important to depict the other alterations. Genre was the medium through which its techniques and tools could redefine time and culture in their contemporary context.

2.2 Popular Culture and Mirror Mirror

Popular culture was commonly defined as a set of objects, practices, and beliefs that represent the social systems' most widely accepted ideologies. It covered, among other things, linguistic conventions, trends and fashion, leisure activities, and media items. Ashley Crossman (2019) defined popular culture and traced its historical background in his article "Sociological Definition of Popular Culture." As a term, he clarified, "Popular Culture" was coined in the nineteenth century to represent the poor, educated, or lower classes to be distinguished from the "official culture" and the higher education of the upper classes. In Britain, Crossman (2019) found that societal changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries led to higher literacy rates. He (2019) explained that as

capitalism and industrialization spread, people started spending more money on entertainment and reading, which expanded in popularity. A demand for inexpensive popular literature and the ability to distribute it widely became possible through an expanding consumer culture and an increase in transit capacity due to the newly developed railway in 1825. For Crossman (2019), the emphasis on the distinction from "official culture" grew clearer. After the end of World War II, significant cultural and social changes occurred because of the innovations of mass media. Hence, Crossman (2019) stated that the meaning of "popular culture" congregated with "media culture," "mass culture," "image culture," "consumer culture," and "culture for mass consumption."

In his article, *Popular Culture*, the sociologist Dustin Kidd (2017) relates popular culture with either folk culture or mass culture. It distinguished it from high culture and many other institutional cultures like political, educational, or legal cultures, etc.). Kidd (2017) went on to explain how popular culture was related to mass culture. The relationship with mass culture emphasized popular culture's place within a capitalist mode of economic production. Here, popular culture was viewed as a collection of commodities created through capitalistic processes motivated by a desire to make a profit and market to customers. In their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), Marxist theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer highly critiqued popular culture. In the words of Adorno, capitalism popular culture was not a genuine expression of the people's culture but rather a system of uniform and standardized goods produced to support the elite's hegemonic control of the capitalist system. For him (1947), the élite are the ones who commodify goods based on their limited ideological standards. As a whole, popular culture's association with mass culture led to the emergence of countercultures of the 1960s, an anti-establishment cultural phenomenon that spread over much of the Western world between the mid-1960s and the

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mid-1970s. Counterculture, such as the second-wave feminism, called for a counter-cinema to challenge women's image in mainstream cinema that supported the capitalists' patriarchal élite ideologies.

Consequently, *Mirror Mirror*, a work of popular culture that academicians only began to study in the 1960s, could be examined using one of the four popular culture theories put forth by Wilfred Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman, and Willingham (2011). According to Guerin et al. (2011), the main four popular culture analyses were 'textual analysis,' 'production analysis,' 'audience analysis,' and 'historical analysis.' These analyses; however, went beyond the (denotative) meanings of the stories of any texts or cultural artifacts. They rather looked for more (connotative) social meanings. In regard to *Mirror Mirror* , it can be analyzed by focusing on 'textual analysis' and 'production analysis.' 'Textual analysis' studies how meanings can be created by specific works of popular culture (Guerin et al., 2011). In *Mirror Mirror*, the editors Nick Moore and Robert Duffyalong, with the screen story and writers Melisa Wallack and Jason Keller, created the story's meanings by reversing Grimms' patriarchal culture Snow-White's tale into *Mirror Mirror* feminist counter-culture. Furthermore, Kristal Cooper (2012) stated that Singh worked on the screen players Melissa Wallack and Jason Keller to stretch Grimms' Snow-White by turning the story into a feminist tale with a more conventional tale of quasi -medieval intrigue. The aim of their work was to criticize the old-fashioned ideals.

In order to bring this screen play to a Hollywood movie, it is important to understand the production circumstances in popular culture. We should know how the Hollywood industry makes movies through Guerin's, et al., (2011, p. 324) 'production analysis' that calls for considering of "Who owns the media?" "Who creates texts and why?" "Under what constraints?" "How democratic or élitist is the production of popular culture?" "What about works written only for money?" The box office

cinema and more than two production companies were estimated $85,000,000 as the budget needed for the production of *Mirror Mirror*. It was produced by four production companies: Relativity Media, Goldman Pictures, Misher Films, and Rat Entertainment. In addition to these companies, a great number of producers contributed like Ryan Kavanaugh, Brett Ratner and Bernie Goldmann along with executive producers like Tucker Tooley, Jeff G. Waxman, Kevin Misher, Robbie Brenner, Tommy Turtle, Jamie Marshall, John Cheng, Josh Pate and Tom Foden as a production designer. Although Brothers Grimm wrote the original version in the nineteenth century, *Mirror Mirror* was a contemporary reimagining of the story in the twenty-first century. The screenwriters, Jason Keller and Marc Klein, from a screen story by Melisa Wallack and the editors Nick Moore and Robert Duffy, created the text to reflect the positive image of women that reflected their modern reality for the contemporary audience or the masses.

Mirror Mirror was rewritten and produced to be addressed to the masses and not to the élite members. Cuddon (1998) argued that according to Marxist critics, individual works of art can be reproduced in infinite ways and through numerous techniques, making them available to the 'masses' rather than a 'minority élite' (as cited in Cuddon, 1998, p. 494). The production of *Mirror Mirror* first and foremost, was not made for money, since it did use lavish production though it its artistic elements were not neglected; a matter that kept Singh's artistic vision turning the story into an interesting mixture of results (Lovell, 2012). As part of the production process, *Mirror Mirror*'s casting witnessed a notable set of characters represented by: Julia Roberts as (the Queen), Lily Collins as (Snow-White), Armie Hammer as (Prince Alcott), Nathan Lane as (Brighton) and Sean Bean as (the King) along with Michael Lerner, Mare Winningham, Mark Povinelli, Danny Woodburn, Jordan Prentice, Sebastian Saraceno, Martin Klebba, Ronald Lee Clark, Robert Emms

and Joe Gnoffo. Another important part of the production was the setting; *Mirror Mirror* included amazing pictures and settings that were shot in Canada, Québec, and Montréal to be finally released in (the USA) on 30 March 2012.

Briefly, *Mirror Mirror* narrated the story of Snow-white, which was based on the Grimms' fairy tale "Little Snow-White" with a remarkable feminist twist. The movie started with an animated prologue that presented the birth of the king's and the queen's little daughter (Snow-White). But, the queen died, and the king remarried again, but with a wicked queen (Queen Clementianna). The wickedness of the new queen was revealed along with the growing up of the king's daughter, who became more beautiful with the progress of time. Thus, when the young charming Prince Alcotthas crashed on Snow-white, the new queen, her step mother, began to be jealous of her, as she wanted the prince for herself to keep her classical position and economic power. As a consequent, the wicked stepmother ordered Brighton, her servant to murder Snow-white, but he left her escape to the forest instead. There, she met the seven dwarves who were bandits and mini-warriors. Thereby they taught her how to be a brave woman who could fight to rescue her father's kingdom and her people from Queen Clementiannaand and married her charming prince. With such a plot, Nick Pinkerton (2012) proclaimed, "the familiar tale is retold with concessions to feminist self-determination […] bending the Grimm Brothers' tale without infringing on its basic beauty." (para. 1)

3. The Analytical Part
3.1 Methodology
3.1.1 Feminist Film Theory

Feminist film theory was emerged in the 1970s as a complement to feminist literary theory and criticism to question gender role, deeply examine the image of women and strongly challenge the sexist ideology in mainstream cinematic films. For Anneke Smelik (2016), the function of feminist film theory was to criticize and reject the classical mainstream cinema for representing the stereotyped women in its productions in favor of presenting female desire and subjectivity on the silver screen. Throughout history and in any human form, all the writings and filmmaking have been from a male point of view; thereby, women have been deliberately thrown away not only from literature, but also from films. With the emergence of the feminist literary criticism as a revolutionary thrust in literature during the 1960s, it extended to include media and films through the appearance of feminist film theory in the 1970s. All of the cinefeminst critics like Laura Mulvey, Pam Cook and Clair Johnston were largely affected by the feminist literary movements in literature. In the words of Hollinger (2012), they started to critique the sexist ideology in films and they mainly focused on how films in mainstream cinema work to maintain patriarchal ideology in female audiences. Sharon Smith (1999) denounced that women's role in the mainstream cinema was restricted to their physical feminine beauty, revealing her in relation to the men even if she was the central character. For this reason, feminist film theory appeared to call for an alternate cinema or counter-cinema that reflects women's modern reality and began to challenge the patriarchal bourgeoisie reality and culture. Smelik (2016) defined feminist film theory as a theoretical speculative approach in which gender was the main focus; it aimed to understand cinema as a cultural practice that depicts, reproduce and reimagine issues related to women and feminity. Therefore, it developed cinefeminism as a response to 'the untheoretical nature' of women's images in films that came from patriarchal ideology (Hollinger, 2012).

The socialist feminist Maria Mies (1981) realized that patriarchy stems from "the origin of gender hierarchy," in which women rebel against the inequality in the hierarchical relationships in society that advantage men over women. Patricia White (2000) discovered that the main issue in media, films theory and criticism was the portrayal of women's image in films where gender represented the central "axis of analysis"

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thereby any film by, for or about women gained an interesting reevaluation that has led to an inventible change in the film's studies canons. Because of capitalism, the mainstream cinema was dominated by middle-class bourgeois thinking. Johnston (1999) coped with the notion that films and works of art in mainstream cinema are products of "the bourgeois, sexist ideology of male-dominated capitalism," which should reflect reality because, as Marx put it, "ideology is a reality." For instance, the mainstream cinema can be represented through many films like Disney's *Snow- White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), which adapted the original nineteenth century tale of Grimm's "Little Snow-White" to serve the patriarchal sexist ideology and women's oppression that did not actually reflect women's reality in the twentieth century. Fatin Khaleel Ismael (2019) found that in this version, Snow-White was revealed of being weak all the times with a serious need of protection either by her father, stepmother, the seven dwarfs or even the glassy coffin, which was used to protect her beauty. This depiction, nonetheless, did not really reflect women's reality at the movie's time. In the 1920s, according to Smith (1999), women began to be employed in several fields and they worked at 'man's' jobs, and went to college in order to support themselves while men were at war at that time. Johnston (1999) declared that during the war, women were responsible not only for their own protection, but also for the protection of their families as well. Therefore, the images of women in mainstream cinema did not represent women's reality, but rather they were constructed around the patriarchal ideologies

Accordingly, filmmakers must be changed to transform this patriarchal, sexist ideology in films into feminist and popular culture ideology. Their *minds* must be altered, and they must reconsider the traditional male attitudes and women's given roles in films to fit and even reflect their modern reality (Smith, 1999). Feminist film theory, then, aims to criticize mainstream cinema, which accelerates

the patriarchal sexist ideology and calls for "an alternate or counter-cinema" (Hollinger, 2012, p. 7). That is why, Johnston (1999) deeply scrutinized and criticized the works of the directors Howard Hawks and John Ford through auteur theory to examine how women are depicted in different meanings through different texts revealing them either with "negative qualities" in Ford's works or with "positive qualities" in Hawks' works (as cited in Hohnston, 1999, p. 35). And so, according to White (1998), Johnston's study revealed women in a film as a sign in language and not just as "a transparent rendering of the real" (p. 118). Thereby, new feminist studies patterns of Hollywood women genres emerged like film noir, the musical and the Western, etc. (White, 2000, pp. 116-17). In addition, Johnston (1999) proposed that the portrayal of reality and cinema language has to be seriously questioned. Thereby, a break between text and ideology can be affected. Actually, Johnston's suggestion for a feminist counter-cinema was able to "disrupt mainstream film practice both on the narrative and formal levels by telling stories differently and presenting them visually in new ways" (Hollinger, 2012, p. 13). All this will be interpreted in the next sections revealing how the transformation of culture affects women's reality through retelling Grimms' "Little Snow-White" in a way that reflects women's modern reality as depicted in the women genre film, *Mirror Mirror*.

3.1.2 Marxist Theory

Marxist theory is important for the analysis of this paper because from the capitalist point of view, I can clarify how power and authority may affect the function of gender in society. It directly causes the reversal of gender roles in society. Marxist theory initiated by Karl Marx (1818-83) and Friedrich Engels (1820-95), is mainly interested in explaining the capitalist theory mode of production, economic power, class conflict, materialism, literature, art and ideologies that are primary areas of studies. Later, this theory was adapted to shape Marxist

theory in literature, where the job of Marxist critics was to unfold the previous areas in any given literary text. They focused on texts' content that built-in fundamental economic power and class conflict issues. Douglas Grudzina (2010) elucidated that society for Marxists was shaped around two classes: the bourgeoisie, who possess the economic power and control the means of wealth and production and the proletariat, which are controlled by them and run the means of production. As long as the bourgeoisie controls the money by possessing the means of production, they can manipulate governments and politics, education, art, and media.

Charles E. Bressler (2011) clarified that the Marxist criticism unfolded how the dominant class ideology controlled and oppressed the lower working class, revealing economics as the main motive that accelerated class struggle between classes. Marx (as cited in Guerin et al., 2011) convinced that life is materialistically created by capitalism, which values the individuals according to their material objects, materialistic possession and wealth, not their subjects. For him, the material economic world was the driving force of both society and class differences between the proletariat, the working class that supplied the capitalists or the owners of wealth, with their labor, the bourgeoisie and the capitalist upper class (as cited in Guerin et al., 2011). This inevitably led to class conflict, as classes fought each other across history, showing "dialectic between opposing economic forces." (as cited in Guerin et al., 2011, p. 125) Yet, the future came when the proletariat rejected the bourgeoisie's social structure and created new rules to end the oppression. And so, change can be instigated by such a dialectical materialism or constant class conflict (as cited in Guerin et al., 2011).

Moreover, Marxists (as cited in Grudzina, 2010) contended that art, literature and media were some of the methods the bourgeoisie used to enforce their ideologies whether through sponsorship or patronage. Since they owned the means of production and served as the major consumer, they financially supported artistic productions like films. Thus, those films must not violate bourgeoisie principles or ideologies simply because anything considered provocative or disrespectful to them was not going to be sold. For example, as capitalism controlled Hollywood movies, women's image and role in these products supported the patriarchal ideologies and stereotyping of women. So far, the transformation of culture from patriarchal into the popular culture of mass media has become necessary for the appearance of countercultures like the second-wave feminism to challenge the mainstream cinema and call for counter-cinema to redefine women's role in movies. Guerin et al. (2011) wrote that the world gradually turned to be "globalized," and so Marxist feminists challenged the patriarchal West's "classist" mode of production.

In view of Marxism, Cuddon (1998) saw that the Marxist theory and criticism are dedicated to examining the representation of "social reality" and unfolding the "social injustice" in any given text through the "reflection theory" that reflects any system (or ideology) that has gradually spread out at any given time (Cuddon, 1998). In agreement with Cuddon (1998, p. 494), reality can be reflected through mass media, which has also developed significantly under the Marxist theory. The Marxist critic was mainly interested in "mass culture" and how it was packaged and consumed by the masses (as cited in Cuddon,1998, p. 494). In regard to him, the media, which are in intimate contact with reality, can rid art and literature of its bourgeois élitist rituals and grant them a certain amount of political "freedom." (as cited in Cuddon, 1998, p. 494). Technology also allowed for individual pieces of art to be repeatedly replicated, using various media, making them accessible to a wider audience than to a minority élite (Cuddon 1998).

Ultimately, the gradual transformation in the modern age culture from patriarchy into the popular culture of mass media affected the social

reality of the capitalist mode of production and then women's reality to cause in transforming the patriarchal ideology into feminist ideology. As stated above, the second-wave counterculture appeared along with feminist film theory in the 1970s of the twentieth century and called for counter-cinema where ideologies challenged those of the patriarchal mainstream cinema. For this paper, analyzing *Mirror Mirror* in terms of the Marxist theory, class struggle and economic power are revealed through Snow-White, the Bad Queen (Queen Clementianna) and the Prince (Prince Alcott) as the capitalist, rich, ruling, upper class and the Seven Dwarfs, the castle's servants along with other citizens in the kingdom as the proletariats, working class or the masses. In *Mirror Mirror*, class conflict was represented by both the capitalist upper-upper class conflict and the capitalist upper class–lower class struggle to retain economic powers. The feminist ideology of the twenty-first century, fourth-wave feminism of women's empowerment, was maintained, causing the transformation of culture, and reversing the stereotyped traditional gender roles.

3.2 Data Analysis
3.2.1 Snow-White and Queen Clementianna

For the Marxist theory, Snow-White and Queen Clementianna in *Mirror Mirror* represent the capitalist upper-upper class conflict because Snow-White and Queen Clementianna were portrayed as strong women. Whereas the previous rewarded with a happy ending, the latter confronted her ridicule deadly end. The feminist film theorist Smith (1999) saw that not passive, active or strong women must not always be confronted with unhappy or mocked endings. Throughout the film, Snow-White and Queen Clementianna represented the images of both 'good' and 'bad' women, but these images were not patriarchal stereotyping roles. The Bad Queen Clementianna revealed her vain and obsession by describing herself as "the most beautiful woman in the world […] intelligent and strong" (Singh, 2012) and through her oppression and attempts to kill Snow-white to keep her

economic powers and class position as Queen belonging to the capitalist upper-class rather than because of Snow-White's beauty and youth.

Peter Bradshaw (2012) claimed that the Queen's mirror in this film "turns against Snow White, not out of seething sexual jealousy, but because the child was encouraging her downtrodden subjects to rise against her excessive taxes." (para.3) For that, the mirror here was not a characterization of patriarchy; however, a reflexive image of the Queen, since the Queen's magic mirror said, "I am after all the only reflection of you", but "not an exact reflection" for "I have no wrinkles." Thereby, the Queen objected, "They're not wrinkles, They're crinkles" (Singh, 2012). Richard Corliss (2012) and Oei (2013) commented that this scene did uncover new characteristics of women in the third wave feminism where they ridiculed the progressing of age as long as modern moms and their daughters who attended the movie were capable of laughing at bad jokes about their incidental decay. Even Snow-White's initial weakness and vulnerability in *Mirror Mirror*, in line with Steven D. Greydanus (2012), were not caused by the patriarchal society, since she was portrayed as a victim of the Bad Queen. After the vanishing of Snow-White's father (the King), Queen Clementianna oppressed Snow-White socially and politically by imprisoning her in her room and preventing her from ruling her father's kingdom by spreading rumors accusing Snow-White of being "Incapable of leading the castle" (Singh, 2012).

Conversely, Snow-White did represent the 'Good Girl' in *Mirror Mirror*, but she was not a patriarchal woman, since she was not a passive figure. Instead, she disobeyed Queen Clementianna by breaking all the social and political oppression on her birthday as she exited to the public looking for the kingdom's citizens who represented the working class or the proletarians. This behavior revealed Snow-White's assertiveness and ability to break down the solid border that was made for her by Queen Clementianna (Oei, 2013, pp. 15-16). Snow-

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White's assertiveness and disobedience, however, came from her rationality and the awareness of her position and right to rule and keep her class status in the kingdom; a matter which confirmed the feminist consciousness in the contemporary women's culture. And such awareness was drawn through her encounters with the kingdom's baker Margaret:

> Margret: I know that one day you are going to pick back your kingdom.
> Snow-White: It is not my kingdom.
> Margret: Oh !but it is. Your father meant for you to inherit his crown… (and gives her the dagger of her father).
> Snow-White : What I'll do with this?
> Margret: Perhaps you need to see yourself what is going on your kingdom; the people […] need to see who you really are and you need to believe. (Singh, 2012)

Too, this encounter unveiled Marx's notion about class struggle when here a sort of rebellious trend from the working class was presented against the capitalist upper class oppression represented by Queen Clementianna who mistreated the servants and the kingdom's people by helping Snow-White. The image of Snow-White, then, was confirmed not through the patriarchal ideology, but by both class conflict and the feminist ideology of the feminist consciousness. In view of that, Gerder Lerner (1986) thought that such a feminist consciousness was developed from "the awareness of a wrong", women's "autonomous definition" and aimed in changing their hard conditions that "inevitably run into resistance" and Snow-White's resistance represented everyone's resistance within or out the kingdom. Being disobedient to her, Queen Clementianna realized that Snow-White was a marvelous threat for her. Due to this, Queen Clementianna ordered her servant Brighton to kill Snow-White thereby regarding to Putri (2013); she could maintain power and authority. In spite of the Queen's order, Brighton did not kill Snow-White because he was still faithful to her father, letting her flee towards the forest where she defeated many challenges and threats to overcome the Queen's last attempt to kill her through a poisoned apple, revealing Snow-White's intelligence and strength.

Oei (2013) admitted that Snow-White's role has largely changed because she was not weak and naïve, but smart and armed. That was because the Queen was able to deceive her when she, in her wedding's last scene, disguised and gave Snow-White the poisoned apple. Snow-White did not eat from it, but she cut a slice with her father's dagger and provided it to the Queen first to eat and die, saying that "Age before beauty […] It is important to know when you have been beaten, yes?" (Singh, 2012*)*. Putri (2013) and Oei (2013) assured that Snow-White was portrayed as an active, strong armed subject and having a dagger, a weapon commonly used by men, made Snow-White an armed girl that could defend herself. Besides, the model of Bad Girl in this scene was punished for maintaining the feminist ideology rather than the patriarchal ideology. This is because, Cate Fricke (2012), Snow-White's expression "Age before beauty" revealed age as something not to worry about. The punishment of Queen Clementianna, yet, sustained "social justice", since she, as the King said, led the kingdom through "Her wretched ways" (Singh, 2012), to eventually be constructed under "Greed and Vanity" (Singh, 2012). In the end, Snow-White, as a model of Good Girl, was rewarded by marrying the prince and living a happy ever after.

3.2.2 Queen Clementianna and Males Figures

Mirror Mirror revealed how the traditional gender role of the king (Snow-White's father), the Seven Dwarfs, Prince Alcott and Brighton, the Queen's servant, was maintained through class conflict and economic powers with their encounter with Queen Clementianna. Smith (1999) suggested that one of the things in which the female image could be changed and improved in cinema was by fighting men's movement of liberation by portraying them in movies as a group of 'frustrated studs' who were

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mistakenly led to believe they could be ladies who were eventually giving up the fight and being content to be subordinate to her.

This can plainly be manifested when Queen Clementianna objectified and exploited the king through a spell that transformed him into a monster and sent him to the forest thereby he lost his important social position and economic power and maintained her control on his kingdom alone. Queen Clementianna even more, took excessive taxes from the kingdom people (the proletariats), justifying that she was protecting them from a dangerous monster (the king) in the forest, but she, in the words of Andrea Chase (2012), was "financing her exorbitant lifestyle." Both Putri (2013) and Linda Cook (2012) described Queen Clementianna as a beautiful lady who did anything to fulfill her needs, leading the kingdom just for her benefit and neglecting the conditions of people in the land, thereby she ruined "the beautiful, happy kingdom that Snow White's father had built." On his part, the king was 'otherized' and was presented in relation to the Queen's needs, benefits and desires. In addition to the king, Queen Clementianna objectified her servant, Brighton, whom she ordered to kill Snow-White, but he did not. For this reason, she ordered her magic mirror to transform him into a cockroach as a punishment.

Continuously, Queen's Clementianna oppression and objectification of men were extended to the dwarfs causing in reversing their gender role when she expelled them from the society as "undesirable" and "ugly" (Singh, 2012). For Claudia Puig (2012), the dwarfs became "marginalized by society." This marginalization; however, led them to live in the wood and became bandits who stole money, goods and food from any traveler passing by the wood (Putri, 2013). For Chase (2012), the dwarfs in *Mirror Mirror* were pictured to be irrational, stupid gangs not miners as in the original tale. For instance, on one occasion, they were not able to realize that they had the key to get out from their own locked place till Prince Alcott asked

them. Actually, the dwarfs' feeling of being outcast and sacked did make them unconfident and unable to face the Queen. That was why, as 'bandits' they disguised as giants pretending to be strong. In an attempt for revenge, they robbed the Queen's taxes from Brighton after collecting them from the kingdom's citizens.

As a revolutionary thrust against the Queen's oppression, the dwarfs decided to teach Snow-White to defend herself, her kingdom and her people against the Queen despite their weakness and inability to confront the Queen alone. Smith (1999) remarked that improving women's image in films "does not mean that men's and women's roles in films must be completely and irrevocably reversed" (p. 18). This meant that men in *Mirror Mirror*, like the dwarfs and Prince Alcott, could still help Snow-White defeat the 'Bad Queen.'

Similarly, Queen Clementianna tried to seduce Prince Alcott and marry him to keep her authority, class and economic power, but the young prince's affection was for Snow-White, not for Queen Clementianna. Thus, a shift in the Prince's traditional gender role was drawn. In this relationship, the Prince was not the strong, rational knight who rescued Snow-White. Instead, he was revealed to be not only weak, but also naïve. This was manifested in the scene when the dwarfs were able to disguise and deceive him. In addition, his naïvety was shown with Clementianna when he drank her magic portion and spelt to behave like an obedient dog to make him marry her**.** Greydanus (2012), Chase (2012), Bill Goodyknootz (2012) and Puig (2012) described Prince Alcott as a rich, honorable and upright young man who powerfully and effortlessly represented the handsome, charming prince. However, he was somewhat goofy and helpless, thereby he became "as both a dashing hero and a charming goofball." Without doubt, Prince Alcott was objectified, exploited, otherized and was revealed in relation to the Queen to fulfill (her) and not (his) intentions. All male figures in *Mirror Mirror* were intentionally objectified, otherized

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and portrayed in relation to the Queen's needs and desires to enable the power of women over men.

3.2.3 Snow-White and Male Figures

Being oppressed and objectified by Queen Clementianna, the male figures in *Mirror Mirror* were rescued by Snow-White in her adventurous journey in order to restore her social position and economic power. In her attack on the negative image of women in the films, Smith strictly believed that:

> Their characterizations must have heroism and human dignity expressed in fields besides homemaking, loving a man, and bearing children […] Women should be shown in adventures which don't revolve around sexual attraction for a man; or working with other women without cattiness. (1999, p. 18)

Snow-White started her adventure with her escape to the forest and met the dwarfs who accepted to stay with them if she became a robber; she further learnt how to fight and not for doing their household work. She experienced poverty and starvation with the dwarfs, robbed with the dwarfs to gain her food, learnt to fight to restore her social status in the kingdom, and defeated Queen Clementianna. In *Mirror Mirror*, Goodykoontz (2012) implied, "becomes a sort of feminist warrior" (para. 2). In this respect, Olly Richards (2012, para. 2) explained, "Snow White "Snow White fights back against the evil queen, rather than just cleaning, accepting food from strangers and having a snooze", thereby, she "becomes a sort of feminist warrior." This reinforced Snow-White as the controller of her economic and social life after reversing her stereotyped traditional gender role caused by class conflict and economic power.

As a thief, Snow-White was introduced as a limitless independent woman whose job was not restricted to the house work, mothering and nurturing, but her role was shaped out of the domestic sphere to be perfectly prepared to face any threat against her or others by her own (Oei, 2013). For instance, Snow-White was the one who rescued the hanged half-naked Prince in the forest when she cut the robes with her dagger and freed him with his assistant. Meanwhile, Smith (1999) challenged the biological difference between men and women that articulated women in a weak position, imagining that if "by design a female's genitals are compact and internal, protected by her body. A man's genitals are exposed and must be protected from attack." Snow-White also rescued the dwarfs from the Queen's magic puppets when she took her sword and cut the wire by which Queen's Clementianna dominated the puppets. Here, she was not "Other" or in relation to any man anymore, but rather Snow-White was depicted as a leader in the role of Robin Hood when she told the dwarfs "I have one condition whatever we steal goes back to the people" (Singh, 2012). Justin Chang (2012) noticed that Snow-White's leading powers and characteristics were revealed when she became a political activist, got the needed weapons trainings, and robbed from the rich to help the citizens and the proletariats in the kingdom.

Likewise, Snow-White's leadership was presented when she decided to steal Prince Alcott from his wedding to Queen Clementianna and freed him from the Queen's spell. Courageously, Snow-White left the Prince and the dwarfs behind, saying, "I've read too many stories in which the princess is saved by a handsome prince" (Singh, 2012) to fight the Queen's monster alone. She, really, was able to defeat the monster when she broke the necklace chain and the monster turned out to be her father (the king). For reviewers like David Edelstein (2012) and Fricke (2012), this scene obviously depicted *Mirror Mirror* as a contemporary version of the Brothers Grimm's fairytale in which women could defend themselves and others. Greydanus (2012) observed:

> Snow herself is a winsome heroine […] Better still, her hero's journey is neither a quest of self-empowerment nor a mere romantic quest, but is rooted in something nobler: She discovers, to her dismay, that

the Queen's tyrannical rule has reduced her subjects to poverty and starvation.(para.15)

Oei (2013) affirmed that being an active, not passive and strong woman, Snow-White represented women in the present time who could be more dominant than men (the Prince). She definitely represented the Good Girl model because, to Walker (1995), women must empower themselves if they want to be better in society. Walker (1995) defined the modern age, good women as those who realize "that an ideal woman born of prevalent notions of how empowered women look, act, or think was simply another impossible contrivance of perfect womanhood, another scripted role to perform in the name of biology and virtue." (p.xxxiii)

4. Conclusions

Depending on the above analytical study of *Mirror Mirror*, the researcher is to answer the following questions: **Why did counter-cinema or cinefeminism appear? How the image of women in cinema has been transformed? What is the impact of such a transformation on girls or women in real life?**

4.1 Why did counter-cinema or cinefeminism appear?

Feminist ideologies of the modern age seek not only equal rights with men, but also appeal to women's empowerment. Hillary Clinton asserted, "It is no longer acceptable to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights" (as cited Bressler, 2011, p. 143). With the emergence of the fourth-wave feminism, the appeal for 'women's empowerment' arose during the twenty-first century. Singh's *Mirror Mirror* (2012), however, was a modern adaptation and revisionist of Grimm's fairy tale "Little Snow-White" (1812). It reflected the feminist ideologies of the modern age represented by the popular culture of mass media and the fourth-wave feminism, which was regarded as women's modern reality. It actually belonged to the second-wave feminist's counter-cinema called cinefeminism that emerged along with the feminist film theory during the 1960s and 70s to defy and reject the mainstream popular culture

and its capitalist mode of production dominated by the élite. Cinefeminism, yet, appeared to rebel against the patriarchal stereotyped image of women in cinema, which no longer reflects women's modern reality because of the cultural transformation from patriarchal into popular mass media. From this, the textual meaning of *Mirror Mirror* has not been constructed around the patriarchal male point of view in Grimm's "Little Snow-White," but it took Grimm's tale as a base to construct the feminist point of view in the modern age. Singh's new version of Snow-White's story in consistent with Robert Denerstein (2012), "turns pretty, pure Snow into a warrior princess […] the seven dwarfs into mini-warriors and bandits and, [… the handsome prince […] into a bit of a bumbling doofus." (para.5)

4.2 How the image of women in cinema is transformed?

The transformation in gender roles and women's image in cinema like *Mirror Mirror* movie have been a consequence of cultural transformations because of class conflict and economic power. In *Mirror Mirror*, the proletariats working class revoluted against the dominant capitalist upper class in the movie and the capitalist upper class revolted against each other to keep their class position and economic powers. The film presented two models of strong women, the (Good Snow- White) and the (Bad Queen), struggling not just for feminine beauty, but also to keep their class position and economic and political powers. The Bad Queen represented the social injustice that oppressed, objectified and exploited all the kingdom's people and male figures in the story to fulfill her desires and needs. The Good Snow-White, in contrast, was a sign of social justice because she was the assertive, armed, intelligent and limitless subject who struggled for her survival. She was not as a passive object that needed to be saved by the man; rather, she rescued all male figures in the story and the whole kingdom's citizens.

4.3 What is the impact of such transformation on girls or women in real life?

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The changing and transformation of women's image in cinema, such as this feminist thrust found in the character of Snow-White in *Mirror Mirror* have had positive effects on the young girls' spectators and women. Agreeing with Oei (2013), it taught them to trust themselves and their potentials that could go beyond their domestic atmosphere, as they were no longer weak, passive or dependent objects. In regard to male figures in the story like the king, the Queen's servant, Brighton, the dwarfs and Prince Alcott were all presented as 'other' to women in the story, since they were all objectified, marginalized and appeared in relation to women's needs. In short, this obvious transformation in gender roles has confirmed the impact of culture on cinema and mass media in general. For Smith (1999, p. 19), culture could influence film content and vice versa, thereby the stereotyping images of both men and women are corrected to new images paving the way for "a new world of film themes" and "more constructive models for film viewers." Finally, this movie has been a perfect portrayal and reflection of women's social reality under the feminist ideologies of the fourth-wave women's empowerment affected by class conflict and the economic power, causing in redefining the role and place of women in society.

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