

The Feminist Transformation of the Femme Fatale in Homer's the Odyssey and Gillian Flynn's Gone Girl

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femme fatale, feminist criticism, female agency, gender representation, classical literature, contemporary literature

Abstract. This study explores the feminist transformation of the femme fatale through a comparative analysis of Circe in The Odyssey and Amy Dunne in Gone Girl. Using Feminist Criticism guided by Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex and Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, the research investigates how the femme fatale evolved across different historical, cultural, and literary contexts. Specifically, the study explores the common and unique traits of both characters, the contrasting themes and patterns that shape their portrayals, the influence of literary form on the representation of the femme fatale, and the impact of this transformation on contemporary perceptions of women. A qualitative research design was employed through content analysis. Selected excerpts from Homer's The Odyssey and Gillian Flynn's Gone Girl were examined using predetermined themes, including allure, ulterior motive, weaponized seduction, calculated deception, female authority, and male downfall. The findings reveal that both Circe and Amy Dunne embody the essential characteristics of the femme fatale by resisting patriarchal authority and challenging male dominance. However, their methods of exercising power differ according to their sociocultural environments. Circe relies on supernatural authority and symbolic forms of entrapment, while Amy utilizes psychological manipulation, media control, and performative identity to achieve her goals. The study concludes that although the femme fatale continues to function as a disruptive force associated with male downfall, the archetype has evolved from a mythic representation of patriarchal anxiety into a more nuanced symbol of female agency and resistance that reflects contemporary feminism in literature. Overall, the findings contribute to contemporary feminist literary scholarship by highlighting the relationship between literary representation, sociocultural change, and the continuing evolution of women's roles in literature.

Introduction

Tripathi (2022) revisited the long history of feminism and literature, asserting that it is a continuously evolving dynamic that operates as a catalyst for social transformation by integrating alternative possibilities in texts. In fact, literature remains a powerful tool for the feminist movement that can both reflect and challenge the current social order of its time (Halířová, 2016). Aligned with the study, Elhallaq (2015) discovered that the femme fatale is originally depicted as a witch, hag, or enchantress before the coined term 'femme fatale' was first used. It is considered one of the oldest themes of literature, mythology, and religion in most cultures and is often viewed as an opposite manifestation of traditional feminine traits at a time when femininity is transitioning into a cultural concept. Additionally, Farrimond (2018) featured several discussions on early depictions of a femme fatale and how it is often attributed to male anxieties about women's shifting societal roles, contrasting the contemporary femme fatale, which features the social context of America at the height of feminist movements. Alongside, Hogan (2024) observed how the femme fatale weaponizes seduction to lure male protagonists for their benefit, frequently linking the femme fatale to a man's downfall. In fact, a discussion by Minowa et al. (2019) also defined the modern femme fatale as a fatal, attractive, and self-determined seductress who purposely causes anguish to men involved with her. She is described as both glamorous and monstrous, highlighting the duality of the femme fatale. Meanwhile, Curtin et al. (as cited in Minowa et al, 2019) stated the reason why

the femme fatale became a part of today's popular culture media and artworks is due to modern femininity ideologies that challenge traditional feminine structures and the 'ideal womanhood.' Although, from the perspective of Segal (2019), the femme fatale figure may be portrayed as a dangerous woman, that allure becomes the sole invitation to receiving violence from the targeted men. This theory connects female seduction with male anxieties and aggression. Moreover, Dennon (2017) recognized the characteristics of femme fatale characters as an inverted version of Carl Jung's mother or caregiver archetype, also known as the vixen that reflects patriarchal resistance. The femme fatale characters' traits, ambiguity, patriarchal resistance, and transformation across times provide an angle of discovery. Acknowledging the cultural shift and feminist empowerment throughout the decades, this study can investigate the femme fatale in its representation and usage in literary works and films.

In this study, the focus is centered on the analysis of Circe's character in Homer's *The Odyssey* and Amy Dunne's character in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*. Each work of literature features a female figure who embodies the qualities of the femme fatale, both written at different periods in history. This qualitative study applies the process of content analysis in gathering data by evaluating patterns and recurring themes during a close reading of each piece of literature. This study also utilizes the lens of Feminist Criticism to synthesize the evolution of the femme fatale and its connection to the feminist movement. This approach will widen the understanding of how each character operates in their narrative. The primary aim of this study is to determine the influence of time and sociocultural contexts on the representation of the femme fatale in literature. To meet this aim, the study focuses on (1) examining the common and unique traits that define the femme fatale in Circe and Amy Dunne; (2) identifying the contrasting themes and patterns of the femme fatale in each literature; (3) searching for narrative and literary structures that contribute to the portrayal of the femme fatale; and (4) distinguishing the cultural impact of the modern femme fatale in contemporary literature. This study will fill a gap on the lack of research from the Philippines exploring the femme fatale as a common figure in literature. Relatively, there are only a few local studies closely related to the discussion of the femme fatale and its contribution in classic and modern literary works despite its prominent appearance in literary texts. This study is limited to the literary theory used, chosen theoretical frameworks, and textual evidence from the novel of Homer's 'The Odyssey' and Gillian Flynn's 'Gone Girl' to successfully interpret findings on the femme fatale and its progression through time. This study does not tap into an in-depth study of the archetypal critique behind the femme fatale but rather investigates the feminist impact and shifting representation of the femme fatale by comparing Circe's and Amy Dunne's characters. As noted by Plain & Sellers (2007), there has been a significant shift in women's relationship with textual culture, suggesting that the feminist movement used literature as a tool to empower women. Hence, the application of the feminist literary approach fits the examination of the femme fatale. By exposing the power dynamics and feminine ideologies, this study can highlight how female characters are represented then and now. Therefore, it is also relevant for this study to provide conclusive findings by exploring the femme fatale and its feminist projection from each character to determine the evolution of its implication and usage in the modern world. This opens a discussion and provides a new angle in studying evolving feminist characters in literature.

Statement of the Problem

The study aims to examine the differences between the femme fatale in classical and contemporary literature. To be precise, it searches for answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the common and unique traits that define Circe and Amy Dunne as embodiments of the femme fatale?
2. What are the contrasting themes and patterns of the femme fatale in the chosen classic and modern literary works?
3. How did the evolution in literary structure and literary form portray the femme fatale?
4. In what ways has this transformation influenced cultural perceptions of women in the contemporary world?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework above is created to conduct a thorough qualitative analysis that determines the evolution of the femme fatale in the characters of Circe and Amy Dunne. The methodological process requires the usage of feminist critiques, and the qualitative method used is content analysis to meet the main objectives of this study. To meet this goal, close reading, extracting excerpts from each literature, identifying prominent patterns, similar and distinctive traits, and sociocultural factors involving Circe and Amy Dunne are distinguished, categorized, and organized. Documenting the excerpts is deemed necessary to ensure the focus of the study and to synthesize the data in a structured manner.

The Conceptual framework illustrates a systematic but linear analysis. The study applies Simone De Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex' as the main foundation of feminist criticism; Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* complements the in-depth focus on the usage of the femme fatale and the qualitative method of content analysis to gather and interpret structured and feasible data. All three are confined inside an irregular polygon to symbolize its importance throughout the study. The shift in color intensity, which reaches a maroon color at the end of the analysis, represents the data achieving its goal and reflects the understanding of the ambiguity and cunning power of a femme fatale. At the beginning of the analysis, the distinct traits

and common constructs surrounding a femme fatale will be explored. This step aims to grasp an initial understanding on how each character operates as the femme fatale and increase the reliability that the chosen characters are, in fact, femme fatales. After establishing these contexts, it seeks an answer to the second goal of the study, which is to identify the unique traits of Circe and Amy Dunne as femme fatales that may suggest a shift in the cultural implications or representation of the femme fatale. The systematic comparison of each character will make the data viable in spotting recurring patterns, themes, and character traits needed for comparison among time periods. The next step of the study is to analyze the narrative and literary forms that serve as a bridge for exploring the personal unconscious depth of the femme fatale, allowing for a comparison of the impact of literary techniques on her portrayal. By spotting the difference between Circe's and Amy's narratives, this study can determine how the femme fatale is intended to be perceived by readers in classic and modern times and take note of the structural differences in how the femme fatale's story is written and understood by the reader and the author. After gathering the data for this research question, the exploration of the character portrayal continues by identifying how the femme fatale is represented in the modern world, further analyzing the changes in the portrayal of the femme fatale. Overall, this framework can address the ultimate aim of this study: to learn how the femme fatale has evolved in modern times through literature, reflecting each work's current cultural tides and contributing to the navigation of women's empowerment.

This conceptual framework is manually structured to seek a thorough feminist analysis from the surface level down to its inner depth just as Beauvoir defined the disparity among gender representations. Her study can contribute to the literary world especially in the Philippines, with limited studies on the femme fatale characters despite it being a prominent theme, appearing in many modern literatures works and films.

Methodology

This contains the methods of research and analysis required in gathering data for this study. The study will conduct a qualitative approach in research to analyze the femme fatale qualities of Circe and Amy Dunne, taken from the two literary works. A qualitative method in a research paper focuses on data collection that relies on feelings, ideas, or experiences through verbal, textual, or visual material. It focuses on results that can turn into testable hypotheses, often derived in a narrative form instead of numerical data (Ugwu & Eze, 2023). Feminist criticism identifies economic, social, political, and psychological forces that define women's positioning (Guo, 2018). Therefore, the qualitative method of content analysis fits the research method to generate findings from textual data that reveal crucial feminist outcomes.

Data Collection

The data gathered will be accessed online, specifically accessed through the official e-book copy of Homer's 'The Odyssey' as translated by Samuel Butler (1999), obtained from gutenberg.org. Meanwhile, 'Gone Girl' by Gillian Flynn will be evaluated based on the official movie script accessed through screenwritersnetwork.org. The chosen excerpts will be manually extracted from each literary work and transferred into Microsoft Word for further synthesis and categorization, thereby structurally providing an answer to the study's research question.

Methods

Since the study aims to compare and analyze the femme fatale characters to determine the findings that differentiate the two literary works written in contrasting periods, the suitable methodology to be used is feminist criticism, which will showcase consistent patterns in themes and traits. Alongside the application of the theoretical framework in synthesizing textual data, content analysis, in its summative and deductive form, will serve as the primary approach for categorizing the gathered data.

Feminist Criticism

The sole literary critique used for this study is feminist criticism, a lens that would deepen the layers of understanding the origin and evolution of the femme fatale as a character archetype. Backed by Dhivya (2016), the literary lens highlights women's operation and lived experiences as a form of revisiting literature shaped mostly by male-dominated traditions and history. Thus, the aim of searching for evolution among the characters of Circe and Amy Dunne as femme fatales and how it symbolizes the feminist movement fits this study, providing significant results that will answer the research questions.

Feminist criticism is employed through the framework of Simone De Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex.' As Al-Utoom (2016) observed, Beauvoir's study believed that women are shaped by cultural, social, and historical forces rather than being born into a fixed identity, solidifying the focus of the study, such as exploring the distinct traits of the femme fatale to understand how it operates in a narrative and gain knowledge on how it can be utilized in a feminist perspective. Simultaneously, the

supporting framework of The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan will help define the similarities and differences in how each femme fatale operates and its modern transformation. By creating a tabulated form for content analysis, the visual material will illustrate the archetype's definitive qualities and prominence in the narrative, ensuring an unbiased interpretation of the findings and meeting the study's goals.

Content Analysis

A deductive approach in content analysis follows a specific lens that guides the data collection process, such as a hypothesis, theoretical framework, and research questions, to determine what to look for in qualitative material. Meanwhile, the summative analysis of data in content analysis counts the frequency of the data before interpreting the underlying meaning (Bengtsson, 2016). Based on the study of Parveen and Showkat (2017), content analysis is a systematic classification process of coding that identifies themes or patterns present in a narrative. Measured by the frequency of codes and their units, a viable content analysis is organized and conducive, following a step-by-step procedure. These are narrowed down into five major steps by (a) mapping out core themes, (b) creating a coding system, (c) classifying the content, (d) quantifying themes through frequency, and (e) interpreting the gathered data.

(a) Core themes

The formulated research questions and chosen sample in this study will serve as the main guides to map out the list of themes that align with the study. It is crucial to define the core themes in their simplest form, as operational definitions are deemed cardinal (Parveen & Showkat, 2017). Through manual reading, the deliberate selection process of documenting excerpts will be narrowed down to fixed themes of allure, motive, weaponized seduction, calculated deception, and male downfall to define femme fatale traits.

(b) Coding System

Codes are translated into a quantifiable form, turning large data into manageable categories ("Analysis and Coding Example: Qualitative Data," 2025). The coding system applied will be deductive reasoning, beginning with predetermined codes established in the first step of content analysis. This allows the scope of the study to remain consistent. It is important to include sub-categories, if needed, to avoid overlooking reliable data and to avoid creating overlapping categories (Parveen & Showkat, 2017). A study discussed by Leavy (2000) provided a procedural guide in employing a qualitative content analysis. Below is the coding table adapted and modified in context to correspond with the aim of this study.

(c) Classification of the Content

This step involves the active transcription of excerpts from predetermined codes, often grouped based on similarity or relevance. This procedure ensures that the analysis aligns with the theoretical framework for this study. Data that does not fit into these initial codes can still be documented by adding a new code or category (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281)

(d) Themes and Patterns

Counting the frequency in content analysis is conditional, but it can emphasize prominent or recurring themes within the sample. However, it should not rely solely on this interpretation. Identifying patterns, themes, or how the characters build relationships provides a more comprehensive analysis (Bengtsson, 2016).

(e) Interpretation of the Results

Content analysis makes use of tables, figures, and narrative interpretation to interpret the result (Bengtsson, 2016). This process does not merely tally codes or derive the meaning and significance of each code, but rather, it seeks an answer to the research questions and the theoretical framework used (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). Thus, this step will determine the final data that corresponds to the femme fatale's defining traits and evolution through time. Feminist criticism and the chosen theoretical frameworks would refine the process of extracting excerpts from the literary works, while a summative and deductive form of content analysis would facilitate a structured analysis to answer the aim of the study.

Results and Discussion

This demonstrates the process of gathering and interpreting textual data through the application of the primary theoretical framework of the Second Sex Theory of Simone de Beauvoir, The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan as the supporting framework, and the qualitative method of content analysis to ensure credibility. The findings are systematically organized to answer the research questions in this study.

RQ1: Common and Unique Traits Behind the Femme Fatale

This section presents the findings on the common threads of the femme fatale taken from Circe in The Odyssey and Amy Dunne in Gone Girl. It includes tables that investigate the key contextual elements identified in each excerpt to better understand the femme fatale's portrayal. The discussion further incorporates the application of Beauvoir's theory of woman as the "Other" and Friedan's The Feminine Mystique to study how the femme fatale resists and manipulates patriarchal structures across different times.

Excerpts on Circe	Condensed Meaning Unit	Feminist Interpretation	Themes and Patterns
Thence, we came to the Aeaeon island, where Circe lives, A great and cunning goddess who is the sister to the magician Aeetes.	Powerful divine figure	Circe as powerful, positioned as 'Other.' Her identity isn't limited by domesticity.	Allure
Thence we sailed sadly on, glad to have escaped death, though we had lost our comrades, and came to the Aeaeon island, where Circe lives	Seeking refuge in Circe's Island	Separate feminine territory unknown to men. Female autonomy exists.	Ulterior Motive
Presently they reached the gates of the goddess's house, and as they stood there they could hear Circe within, singing most beautifully as she worked at her loom.	Inviting atmosphere by Circe's song.	Her attractive qualities hid her fatal power, luring male attention. Traditional femininity.	Ulterior Motive
When Circe strikes you with her wand, draw your sword and spring upon her as though you were going to kill her.	Magic versus violence	Circe's power is a threat. Display of fear to dominant women.	Ulterior Motive
They called her and she came down, unfastened the door, and bade them enter.	Allowed entrance twice with malice intent.	Deception as Traditional Femininity. Malice masked as acts of hospitality.	Weaponized Seduction
When I got to the gates I stood there and called the goddess, and as soon as she heard me she came down, opened the door, and asked me to come in.			
So she swore at once as I had told her, and when she had completed her oath then I went to bed with her.	A deal for safety and desire.	Submission for protection. Patriarchal aggression.	Weaponized Seduction
She set them upon benches and seats and mixed them a mess with cheese, honey, meal, and Pramnian wine, but she drugged it with wicked poisons to make them forget their homes.	Food poisoning	Traditional femininity masking control and power. Personal gain.	Calculated Deception
When they had drunk she turned them into pigs by a stroke of her wand, and shut them up in her pig-styes.	Dehumanizing magic	Fatal reveal, retaliation, and dominance.	Calculated Deception
She set me on a richly decorated seat inlaid with silver.	Luxury and comfort to lower guard down	Fatal entrapment.	Calculated Deception
She mixed a mess in a golden goblet for me to drink; but she drugged it, for she meant me mischief.	Luxury and poisoning for personal benefit.	Fatal malice.	Calculated Deception
She will mix a mess for you to drink, and she will drug the meal with which she makes it.	Performance as an ideal host	Power and malice intent.	Female Authority

Meanwhile her four servants, who are her housemaids, set about their work.	Highest in the hierarchy	Dominant and superior threat	Female Authority
When I had said this she went straight through the court with her wand in her hand and opened the pigstye doors.	Magical power	Circe as a mystique. Display of male anxiety.	Female Authority
They became men again, younger than they were before, and much taller and better looking.	Elevated by magical power	Circe as the 'other.' Male-domination.	Female Authority
Thus, then they shut up squealing, and Circe threw them some acorns and beech masts such as pigs eat.	Dehumanizing punishment	Reversed traditional gender hierarchy. Authority over male bodies.	Male Downfall
She struck me with her wand. 'There now,' she cried, 'be off to the pigstye, and make your lair with the rest of them.	Eternal destruction	Authority and Independence.	Male Downfall

Table 1. Common and Unique Traits of a Femme Fatale in Circe

Excerpts on Amy Dunne	Condensed Meaning Unit	Feminist Interpretation	Themes and Patterns
Amy Elliott, you are beyond amazing. You are incredibly smart but entirely unsnobby. You are kind but never a martyr. You surprise me. You challenge me.	Idealizes Amy as extraordinary or one of a kind.	Women as male fantasies, instead of complex individuals	Allure
I meet Amy at this party-2004. We CLICK. She's perfect. Like, if I c o u l d make up a girl, this would be the fucking girl.	Instant connection based on perceived ideal of a woman.	Attraction on projection.	Allure
Amy does that. I was an average guy from an average place with mediocre aspirations, and I met this woman who dazzled me. And I wanted her to love me.	Nick feels inferior and seeks for validation.	Possession of an Ideal woman is male status.	Allure
I pretended to be better than I was. I made a pledge to her, when we married, to be that man. The man who tries harder. The man who thinks and acts and feels with as much passion as she does. The man who makes her happy. I failed her.	Play-pretend for Amy.	Gender Expectations	Ulterior Motive
You haven't told anyone about us, have you? Texting, facebook. Anything that might be... You buy my presents in cash. You talk to me on a disposable phone. Now you grill me like I'm a criminal. I'm your girlfriend.	Nick's Hidden Affair.	Male infidelity, women are forced into secrecy.	Ulterior Motive
Nick Dunne took my pride and my dignity and my hope and my money. He took and took from me untill no longer existed. That's murder. Let the punishment fit the crime.	Nick's betrayal is emotional destruction.	Female identity in Marriage.	Ulterior Motive
But Nick got lazy. He became someone I did not marry. And he actually expected me to love him	Resentment over Nick's cheating.	Ageism and women treated as secondary.	Ulterior Motive

unconditionally. Then he dragged me, penniless, to the navel of the country and found himself a newer, younger, easier Cool Girl. You think I would let him destroy me and end up happier than ever? No. Never. He doesn't get to fucking win. He needs to learn.

The key is the treasure hunt: Amy was taking me on a tour of my infidelities and rubbing my nose in them.

With me - regular, flawed, Real Amy - Jealous, always, of the golden child. Perfect, brilliant. Amazing Amy. Who is getting fucking married.

Nick loved a girl I was pretending to be. Cool Girl. Men always use that to define don't they? She's a cool girl. She's a Cool Girl. Cool Girl is fun. Cool Girl is game. Cool Girl is hot. Cool Girl never gets angry at the man.

Nick teased things out in me I didn't know existed. A lightness, humor, and ease. And I made him smarter, sharper. I inspired him to rise to my level. I forged the man of my dreams. We were happy pretending to be other people. We were the happiest couple we knew.

What's the catch? A few months and it hit me: She was just playing at being an Indie Rock Dream Girl. I mean, girls like a fixer-upper, She invaded me.

We'll play hot, doting husband and sweet loving spouse.

I 've sworn never to be one of those wives. I think I've done a pretty good job.

Nick, I don't get it . It's like you're daring me to be someone I don't want to be. The nagging wife. The controlling bitch. I'm not that person. I'm your wife.

Nick is happy to be home, but I don't know if he's happy I'm with him. I feel like something he loaded by mistake. Something to be jettisoned if necessary. Something disposable. I feel like I could disappear.

I used the last of my trust fund to buy him a bar, but so far i t ' s just costing us more money. Nick uses me for sex when he wants. Otherwise, I don't exist.

To fake a convincing murder you have to have discipline. You befriend an idiot and cram her with stories about your husband's temper. You create some money troubles. You bump up your

Nick's infidelity.

Identity comparison to idealized persona.

Fake persona to please.

Relationship thrives on reciprocity.

A testimony of Amy's pattern in relationships.

Performing in relationship.

Marriage as a roleplay.

Resistance to become a nagging wife.

A deception tactic to appear victimized,

Feelings of being used.

Weaponizes pregnancy for sympathy.

Fatal woman depiction and revenge.

Internal battle between the real self and the ideal woman.

Internalized misogyny in women and feminine deception.

Illusionary romance and manipulation.

Both gender are capable of being complex and fatal.

Equal footing in identity performativity.

Women as participants of manipulated gender roles.

Rejects patriarchal stereotype.

Unmet emotional needs due to feelings of male inferiority. Women's identity can be limited.

Women's exploitation and as a necessity.

Female victimhood.

Ultior Motive

Weaponized Seduction

Weaponized Seduction

Weaponized Seduction

Weaponized Seduction

Calculated Deception

Calculated Deception

Calculated Deception

Calculated Deception

Calculated Deception

Calculated Deception

life insurance.. And then you realize the piece de resistance, your story was missing. America loves pregnant women. As if it's so hard to spread your legs.

You know what is hard? Faking a pregnancy . First, drain your toilet. Invite a pregnant idiot for lemonade. Steal pregnant idiot's urine. Voila. A pregnancy is now part of your legal medical record. Buy a getaway car. Stage crime scene. You need to bleed. You need to clean. You need a diary! Minimum two hundred and seventy two entries on the Nick and Amy story.

Amy's crime, strategic fabrication.

Female power and control.

Calculated Deception

Start with the fairytale early days-those are true and those are crucial. You want Nick and Amy to be likable. After that, you inven: The spending, the abuse, the fear, the pregnancy, the murder. And Nick thought he was the writer . Burn it just the right amount. Make sure the cops will find it. Finally, honor tradition with a very special treasure hunt.

Evidence and identity fabrication.

Women's resistance through a negative manifestation of control.

Calculated Deception

Amy has a new persona: SURVIVOR

Survivor persona.

Strategic deception to societal, law, and media constructs.

Calculated Deception

My wife is a lying, murderous sociopath.

Amy as a Sociopath

Women with power and poses threat.

Calculated Deception

After so much darkness we have come out united. We communicate. We are honest. We're partners in crime. And Ellen, I'm happy to announce on your show: soon we'll be parents.

Public image of reunion.

Idealized gender role narratives

Female Authority

Well, she's complicated. She has high expectations.

Right.

Female standards are a threat.

Female Authority

For our anniversary, Amy always did this treasure hunt-

Treasure hunts designed by Amy.

Imposes control and dominance.

Female Authority

Hey, handsome man—let's go undercover. You be the spy, and I'll be his lover. Let's head on over to the little brown house.

A riddle written by Amy.

Psychological testing.

Female Authority

Money. At least when I had a job. Now it's different. Now I'm beholden to you. No money, no jobs.

Financial instability.

Gender power imbalance.

Female Authority

First, you need to understand Amy. She loves to teach lessons. Play God. Old Testament God.

Controlling outcomes.

Female authority.

Female Authority

Need to make sure you're not wearing a wire. She womanhandles him more. Nothing.

Dominates the relationship.

Reversed traditional gender power.

Female Authority

Kiss my cheek. Now.

Demands reciprocity.

Reversed motional labor expectations.

Female Authority

What are you thinking? How are you feeling? What have we done to each other? What will we do? Amy turns, and gives him a haunting SMILE.	Tension and toxicity	Opposite of romantic idealism.	Female Authority
I can't tell you how bad it was. How shitty and small she made me feel all the time. Flyover Boy. I came home everyday, and my stomach would hurt, because I knew she'd be there... dissatisfied.	Emasculation and inferiority.	Fragile masculinity.	Male Downfall
Next thing I know, the cops are at my door. Amy has wounds that are "consistent with rape."	Framed for rape.	Female Victimhood	Male Downfall
When I think of my wife, I always think of her head. I picture cracking her lovely skull, unspooling her brain, trying to get answers.	Violence against Amy	Male desire for female control.	Male Downfall
"It's a bad day." "Amy?" "Our anniversary. Five." "Five?! That came fast." "And furious."	Relationship strain.	Hidden relationship decay.	Male Downfall
Andie. just made me happy. Amy once made you happy. Amy made me better. She made me work to be clever, thoughtful and cultured. Andie let me be.	Andie offers ease not pressure.	Powerful women are a threat.	Male Downfall
She slices him neatly through the Jugular.	Amy murders Desi.	Female control.	Male Downfall
I'm so much happier now that I'M dead. Technically, missing. Soon to be presumed dead. I am gone and my lazy, lying, cheating, oblivious husband will go to prison for my murder.	Celebrating calculated plan.	Liberation from fake persona.	Male Downfall
I'm so sick of being picked apart by women.	Nick's sentiment.	Female assertion invalidates male dominance.	Male Downfall
You're a murderer, Amy. I'm a fighter. I fought my way back to you. You slit Desi's throat. With a box cutter. You begged for me to save your life on national TV. And I obliged. But I'm leaving. You really think that's smart? Wounded, raped wife battles her way back to her husband and he deserts her? The media will destroy you. Your neighbors will shun you. And I will make sure no one forgets the pain you caused me.	Manipulation of public perception.	Gendered Moral Expectations.	Male Downfall
Was there ever a baby? There can be.	Pregnancy threat	Motherhood as a leverage and power.	Male Downfall
You have a book deal, Lifetime movie franchise The Bar? You're golden. You should thank her. Just remember: Don't turn your back	Perks and a warning on their relationship.	Mutual dependence, power, and entrapment as female manipulation occurs.	Male Downfall
Amy. I don't love you. Because you stopped trying. We a r e toxic. We complete each other in the sickest possible way. You think you could ever be happy with a nice, normal woman? No,	Amy forcing Nick that he needs her.	Tension between Male autonomy and Female Domination.	Male Downfall

baby. I'm it . I complete you. the only one who can.			
No. Stay with me and I will make you happy. You know I can. I've killed for you. You can run away like a boy, or stay. Raise your child. Be the man you want to be. It's your choice,	Entrapment of Nick in the relationship.	Guilt and coercion as female control.	Male Downfall
The world will hate Nick for killing his beautiful, pregnant wife. And when I'm ready, I'll go out on the ocean with a handful of pills and a couple of stones. If they find my body, they'll know. That Nick dumped his beloved like garbage, and she floated down past all the other abused, unwanted, inconvenient women Nick and Amy will be gone. But we never really existed.	Narrative control to Nick.	Manipulating societal sympathy.	Male Downfall

Table 2. Distinct Traits of a Femme Fatale in Amy Dunne

Beauvoir Critique.

Applying Beauvoir's theory from the narratives of *The Odyssey* and *Gone Girl*, findings revealed how Circe and Amy Dunne both embody the femme fatale through five key traits: allure, motivation, weaponized seduction, calculated deception, and a man's downfall. In the allure section, Circe has shown that she relies on her beauty and ability to attract men with her femininity, symbolized by her seductive, inviting, and hospitable figure. Meanwhile, Amy Dunne displays her charm through her beauty, sexual appeal, and ability to perform the ideal persona of a cool girl for her own benefit.

Circe is motivated to turn men into pigs, symbolizing her outlook on men, while Amy retaliates due to Nick cheating with Andy, whom Amy presumed as the younger and easier version of her ideal persona, the Cool Girl. Also, they displayed traits of weaponized seduction to reach their ultimate goal, by Circe manipulating the men who came to her island through her imposed hospitality. Meanwhile, Amy causes Nick's downfall while controlling public perception of her.

Calculated deception is shown in Circe's act of mixing magical potions in the men's food and drinks while Amy faked an abusive relationship with Nick, wrote a diary to back her claims, faked her pregnancy, faked her murder, killed her admirer, and ultimately returned to Nick as a survivor to entrap him into staying in the relationship. Lastly, the downfall of men is depicted in both characters. However, in Circe's narrative, she temporarily instills dread as she becomes an ally and mentor to Odysseus and his men, symbolizing her submission to patriarchal structures for her own safety after being threatened with violence. However, in Amy's narrative, she succeeds in trapping Nick by playing her game and giving him the taste of destruction if he decides to leave.

Both characters are presented as objects of fascination and danger, reflecting Burkeman's (2013) link between fatal attraction and defiance, as well as Beauvoir's concept of woman as the "Other" shown in their resistance to the traditional gender disposition of women in their time.

Friedan Critique.

Through Friedan's perspective, Amy Dunne's performance of the "Cool Girl" persona reflects the pressure imposed on women to conform to idealized feminine roles that satisfy male expectations. Her manipulation of identity exposes the dissatisfaction and psychological entrapment caused by patriarchal standards of womanhood. Similarly, Circe's hospitality, beauty, and domestic presentation initially align with traditional feminine expectations, yet these traits become tools for asserting dominance and autonomy.

Both narratives demonstrate how femininity is socially constructed and strategically performed. Circe and Amy use traditional feminine characteristics such as beauty, nurturing behavior, and seduction not as passive traits but as mechanisms of survival, retaliation, and power. This reflects Friedan's critique of restrictive gender roles that confine women into predetermined identities while simultaneously expecting submission and emotional labor.

Femme Fatale Comparison.

The transformation of the femme fatale across the two narratives highlights the evolution of feminist representation across historical periods. Circe embodies the traditional mythological femme fatale whose power is rooted in magic, mystery, and male fear of female autonomy. Her character symbolizes the patriarchal anxiety surrounding dominant women in ancient literature.

In contrast, Amy Dunne represents the modernized femme fatale whose power lies in psychological manipulation, media performance, and strategic intelligence rather than supernatural abilities. Unlike Circe, Amy operates within realistic social structures such as marriage, media culture, and gender expectations. This shift demonstrates how the femme fatale evolved from a mystical symbol of temptation into a psychologically complex figure that critiques patriarchal systems and societal constructions of femininity.

RQ2: Contrasting Themes and Patterns of Circe and Amy as Femme Fatales

This section includes the comparative content analysis of Circe and Amy Dunne’s presenting tabulated findings that highlight their differences in terms of patterns, themes, and narrative roles, followed by a detailed interpretation. The excerpts in tables 1 & 2 will be the main basis for the findings categorized below. The discussion also applies Simone de Beauvoir’s theory and Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* to examine how both characters resist patriarchal figures while operating within different sociocultural and narrative contexts, particularly in their interactions with male characters.

Themes	Circe	Amy Dunne	Feminist Interpretation	Patterns
Setting	Ancient Greek Mythology	Modern America	Mythical versus Realism	Evolution across historical periods
Female Power	Supernatural Power	Strategic psychological manipulation, media control, Ideal woman persona, survivor persona, and ability to murder	Mystical versus wit	Power through different types of dominance.
Female Strategy	Physical Entrapment	Psychological blackmail and Pregnancy Entrapment	Dehumanization versus loss of psychological freedom	Types of manipulation
Weaponized Spaces	Danger limited to the island and male visitation	Danger limited to Amy’s love interest	Symbolic threat versus realism	Domestic and isolation as threats to male autonomy
Motivation	Retaliation due to violation	Retaliation due to cheating	Intrusive Patriarchy versus Patriarchal Deception	Revenge as the main drive for female fatality
Female Resolution	Circe made an oath	Amy got herself pregnant	Patriarchal control versus Female power continuation	Negotiation of Survival and Control

Table 3. Contrasting Themes and Patterns

Beauvoir Critique.

Table 3 reveals that the comparison between established themes and patterns in Circe and Amy Dunne highlights the evolution of female power across myth and modern literature. Circe’s supernatural abilities and control over physical entrapment reflect a world where female autonomy is constrained and feared, aligning with Simone de Beauvoir’s concept of woman as the “Other,” defined in relation to men and bound by patriarchal expectations.

Segal (2019) notes that the allure of the femme fatale invites male aggression, linking female seduction to patriarchal anxieties. Amy's retaliation against deceit, contrasted with Circe's punishment of intrusion, demonstrates a shift from externalized, symbolic threats to socially controlled, realistic forms of power. In this way, both characters reveal how patriarchal resistance and the ambiguity of female agency evolve across time. Circe embodies divine, mythic authority and functions as a patriarchal obstacle, while Amy reflects modern psychological complexity, performative identity, and moral ambiguity. Together, these figures illustrate the enduring tension between female agency and patriarchal fear.

Friedan Critique.

Applying Betty Friedan's perspective, Amy reflects modern domestic confinement and the socially constructed feminine ideal through her performance of the "Cool Girl" persona, media manipulation, and strategic use of pregnancy as leverage. Her character demonstrates how women negotiate identity and power beyond patriarchal prescriptions, reflecting Friedan's critique in *The Feminine Mystique*.

Circe, meanwhile, embodies a more traditional form of feminine power rooted in myth and isolation. Although she operates outside domestic expectations, her eventual submission after threats of violence reflects patriarchal control over female autonomy. Both characters therefore expose the pressures imposed upon women by patriarchal systems, though expressed through different historical and cultural contexts.

Contrasting Themes and Patterns.

Amy embodies the modern femme fatale, described by Minowa et al. (2019) as both glamorous and potentially monstrous, through her calculated psychological manipulation, media control, and emotional entrapment. In contrast, Circe represents the classical femme fatale whose danger is supernatural, symbolic, and tied to male fear of dominant women.

The traits, ambiguity, and transformation of femme fatale figures like Amy provide a lens to trace the continuity and divergence of female authority from myth to modernity. Circe embodies divine and mythic authority, while Amy reflects psychological realism and socially embedded manipulation. Together, these figures demonstrate how the femme fatale evolved from mythic and supernatural representations into psychologically nuanced and socially constructed forms, offering insight into changing feminist perspectives and the persistent anxieties surrounding female power (Abdelmalek, 2014; Tragstaad, 2011).

RQ3: Literary and Narrative Form of the Classic and Modern Femme Fatale

This section presents the findings on how the evolution of storytelling from an epic poem like *The Odyssey* to a modern film like *Gone Girl* influences the representation of feminist perception and the femme fatale. It includes tables that outline differences in narrative structure, characterization, and narrative focus, followed by a thorough analysis on how these elements reflect shifting feminist discourses. Table 1 to 3 are used as reference in forming the following codes written below. The discussion further integrates Simone de Beauvoir's theory and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* to interpret how changes in literary form correspond to evolving portrayals of female identity and agency.

Themes	Circe	Amy Dunne	Feminist Interpretation	Patterns
Genre	Mythic	Modern Psychological Thriller	Cautionary versus complexity	Evolution across literary genres
Point of View	3rd Person	1st Person	Telltale versus film	Portrayal of female agency
Type	Epic Poetry	Novel	Ancient literature versus societal critique to gender roles	Evolution of gender discourse
Moral Aspect	Symbolism of danger to female autonomy	Symbolism of Patriarchy, inequalities in marriage and societal constructs	Male Anxiety versus Moral Ambiguity as cultural context across time periods	Shifting moral perceptions among women

Power Dynamics	Circe as a Patriarchal Obstacle	Amy as a resistance to Patriarchy	Morality versus negotiation of power dynamics as symbols of patriarchal norms of its time	Female power against patriarchy
Femme Fatale Representation	Domestic and Magical	Performative and strategic	Traditional Ideologies Versus Female Empowerment as a reflection on existing feminist perspectives	Transformation of the femme fatale

Table 4. Literary and Narrative Form in Circe and Amy Dunne

Beauvoir Critique.

The literary figure of the femme fatale has long been constructed as a seductive, intelligent, and morally ambiguous woman whose power lies in her ability to manipulate, control, and destabilize men. In classical literature, Circe exemplifies this archetype when she combines supernatural authority, sexuality, and cunning to dominate male characters (Butler, 1998). Applying Simone de Beauvoir's theory, the femme fatale embodies Otherness by challenging male dominance through intelligence, sexuality, and strategic manipulation, making her a disruptive force in narrative structures.

In ancient texts like The Odyssey, Circe embodies the cautionary archetype: her magical and domestic domain symbolizes both the dangers to male and female autonomy and the pervasive control of patriarchal structures. The narrative emphasizes morality, male anxiety, and the symbolic threat of female agency, reflecting traditional ideologies and gendered warnings. Circe's power positions her as both alluring and dangerous, embodying patriarchal fears toward women who resist submissive gender roles.

Friedan Critique.

Similarly, Betty Friedan critiques the social construction of femininity that confines women to domesticity. The literary femme fatale, whether Circe or Amy Dunne, actively resists these limitations, using intellect, charm, or sexuality as instruments of agency.

This shift is evident in literary portrayals of Amy Dunne, whose manipulation simultaneously critiques societal expectations for women to perform perfection, mirroring Friedan's "problem with no name," while asserting subjectivity within Beauvoir's framework. Amy operates within realistic social frameworks, negotiating power dynamics through performative and strategic manipulation, challenging patriarchal and social expectations while embodying moral ambiguity. Her performance of the ideal woman exposes the pressures imposed upon women to maintain socially acceptable identities despite internal dissatisfaction and oppression.

Literary Transformation.

Contemporary literature such as Gone Girl demonstrates that the femme fatale has evolved from mythic or gothic stereotypes into psychologically complex figures, reflecting modern anxieties about gender, power, and authority. In contrast to Circe's mythic and supernatural dominance, Amy's power is psychological and internalized, reflecting the shift from symbolic cautionary tales to critiques of societal inequalities, marriage, and gendered norms.

Across both literary forms, the femme fatale structure contrasts traditional ideologies with female empowerment, illustrating the transformation from epic cautionary narratives into feminist examinations of social manipulation, identity performance, and moral negotiation in literature. These interpretations depict women who are morally ambiguous yet strategically intelligent, subverting the older stereotype of the femme fatale as purely destructive and instead presenting her as a complex figure negotiating power within patriarchal systems.

RQ4: Contemporary Representation of the Femme Fatale

This section presents the findings on how the transformation of the femme fatale influences contemporary cultural perceptions of women. It includes tables summarizing key traits and interpretations of Circe and Amy Dunne, followed by a content analysis of how these representations contribute to modern views on femininity, power, and morality. For reference, Tables 1-4 are utilized in the creation of codes categorized below. The discussion also applies Simone de

Beauvoir's theory and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* to examine how the evolution of the femme fatale reflects broader shifts in gender discourse, ultimately shaping how women are perceived as complex, autonomous, and multifaceted figures in contemporary society.

Themes	Yonic Symbolism In The Odyssey	Yonic Symbolism In Gone Girl	Feminist Interpretation	Patterns
Form of Entrapment	Food and drink laced with magical potions	Treasure Hunts	Both are tools of control, dominance, and active manipulation of male power.	Physical and Psychological Manipulation
Dehumanization	Men turned into Pigs	Amy's Diary	Both reverse male dominance as men in Circe are emasculated and Nick becomes vulnerable to suspicion. Symbols are designed by females to put men in a trap.	Patriarchal structures reversed.
Manipulative Control	Opening of doors, thresholds, and pigstyes	Media and Narrative Manipulation	Circe and Amy asserts authority both physically and socially, symbolizing control of power and redirection to manipulate for personal gain.	Female Authority and Influence
Representation of Female Fatality	Magical Potions	Blood	Both represent the extent of fatality both women are capable of. Circe through magical abilities and Amy through murderous tendencies.	Feminine Ambiguity to Deceive.
Weaponization of Femininity	Music and Weaving	Wife and Survivor Persona	Highlights femininity, whether performative or strategic. Circe and Amy utilizes femininity as a tool for deception and seduction.	Strategic Manipulation
Female Autonomy Spaces	Island	Nick and Amy's House	Both spaces illustrate female autonomy or Otherness, symbolizing full control of their space.	Spaces symbolizing female power and entrapment.

Table 5. Cultural Representation of the Femme Fatale

Beauvoir Critique.

Analyzing the yonic symbols in Table 5 deepens the significance of the femme fatale beyond imagery, as it resides in the premise of the feminist perspective through symbols of femininity. Findings show how the femme fatale functions within systems of gendered power. From the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir, Circe's island, potions, and control over thresholds reflect woman as the "Other," positioned as both desired and feared within a patriarchal order that defines her in relation to men. Her yonic symbol becomes a site of exclusion and resistance, yet it is still framed through male anxiety, reinforcing her role as a disruptive figure rather than an autonomous subject.

In contrast, Amy Dunne's use of blood, pregnancy, and the domestic sphere illustrates a more conscious negotiation of this "Otherness," as she weaponizes the exact expectations imposed upon her, transforming feminine passivity into her strength shown as calculated dominance.

Friedan Lens.

Through Betty Friedan's lens in *The Feminine Mystique*, Amy's yonic symbols, particularly her pregnancy and performative wife persona, expose the suffocating ideal of domestic femininity and the ways women may resist it. Her brief liberation from this persona was expressed through her sense of freedom, as shown in Table 1.

While Circe operates outside domestic norms through mythic isolation, Amy operates within them, turning the home into a strategic arena where traditional roles are manipulated rather than rejected. This reflects a shift from outward resistance to internal subversion, where feminine identity itself becomes a constructed and controlled tool.

Yonic Symbolism.

The persistence of yonic symbols as markers of danger reinforces how femininity is represented as both powerful and threatening. Circe's magical potions, island, thresholds, and acts of transformation symbolize control over male bodies and spaces, while Amy's blood, pregnancy, and domestic performance symbolize psychological entrapment and manipulation.

Both characters utilize symbols traditionally associated with femininity and domesticity as instruments of authority, deception, and resistance. These symbols deepen the femme fatale's role beyond seduction, emphasizing how feminine spaces and bodily representations become contested sites of patriarchal anxiety and female agency.

Cultural Representation of the Contemporary Femme Fatale.

Moreover, the persistence of these symbols as markers of danger aligns with Barnes-Smith's (2015) argument that modern society remains entrenched in fear of feminism and gender equality. Both Circe and Amy are framed as monstrous not simply because of their actions, but because their yonic power symbolizes resistance to patriarchal control over female bodies and spaces. This fear balances the femme fatale as a cultural figure who embodies both ideal fascination and threat.

Expanding this, Farrimond (2017) positions the modern femme fatale as a response to contemporary gender politics, shaped by contradictions between empowerment and limitation. Amy, in particular, reflects this duality as she became the mastermind over their narrative, yet it is still mediated by the patriarchal gaze and societal expectations of womanhood.

Conclusion, and Recommendations

What are the common and unique traits that define Circe and Amy Dunne as embodiments of the femme fatale?

The findings of this study show that Circe and Amy Dunne are parallel in portraying and experiencing the journey of a femme fatale, but they differ in their setting and form of manipulation, as influenced by sociocultural representations that shape the femme fatale's individuality. It is encapsulated by allure, motivation, weaponized seduction, female authority, and man's downfall. These reflect evolving gender norms and ideologies, as both have nuances that allow them to utilize femininity to their advantage. In *The Odyssey*, Circe reflects an ancient patriarchal Greek society where women were often associated with danger when they held power, aligning with these early representations of female otherness. Meanwhile, Amy Dunne exists within a modern, media-driven American context where femininity is intertwined with identity performance and public perception, reflecting more contemporary cultural anxieties about control, autonomy, and narrative power.

Overall, Circe still portrays being taken over by patriarchal structures, but the contemporary femme fatale has taken actions that manipulate not only her target, Nick, but also others, allowing her to take full control of her narrative and protect her traditional feminine image in the public eye.

What are the contrasting themes and patterns of the femme fatale in the chosen classic and modern literary works?

Circe and Amy Dunne share similarities in their function as femme fatales, particularly in how both characters resist and challenge patriarchal symbols represented by male figures such as Odysseus and Nick Dunne. Although the differences arise in their execution, as Amy Dunne demonstrates a more extreme and calculated manipulation, particularly through media control and public deception, while Circe's power evolves into a more relational and even supportive role as an ally, hinting that she still conforms to patriarchal norms in the end.

The femme fatale is often an inverted version of traditional feminine archetypes and is strongly associated with a man's downfall, which is evident in both characters' narrative roles. This aligns with Thoman (2024), who describes the modern femme fatale as a figure who uses seduction, manipulation, and intelligence to assert power over male protagonists. This contrast highlights how the femme fatale adapts across time, with Amy embodying a more contemporary and psychologically complex version of the archetype.

To emphasize, the contrasting themes and patterns are governed by the time, motivation, form of manipulation, morality, and the lengths to which their fatality could reach. They differ because Circe's environment is much more complex; however, compared to Circe's outcomes, Amy Dunne's character is more developed and has a greater influence on Nick and the public.

How did the evolution in literary structure and literary form portray the femme fatale?

Findings show that the evolution from classical epic poetry to modern film significantly contributes to the positive portrayal of feminist themes in literature. The narrative form of *The Odyssey* reflects ancient oral traditions, while *Gone Girl* represents a modern cinematic and psychological storytelling approach that allows for deeper character complexity to challenge traditional feminine ideals.

As supported by Farrimond (2018), the femme fatale is shaped by cultural, historical, and industrial contexts, evolving alongside feminist discourse to reflect changing ideas about female empowerment. Similarly, Dennon (2017) explains that femme fatale characters are dynamic archetypes influenced by societal and psychological factors, reinforcing how literary evolution allows for more nuanced feminist interpretations.

This progression demonstrates how storytelling mediums shape the representation of women and reflect broader cultural shifts that widely accept female authority in feminist ideologies. The findings reflect the current literary discourse and how the usage of genres have widened over time, hinting at societal acceptance in using female characters in literature as empowering figures.

In what ways has this transformation influenced cultural perceptions of women in the contemporary world?

Findings reveal that the transformation of the femme fatale archetype has influenced cultural perceptions of women by allowing for more complex and multidimensional portrayals. In modern times, women are no longer confined to passive or purely virtuous roles but are instead depicted as capable of both empowerment and moral ambiguity. Amy Dunne represented more than women's marginalization and oppression, even during moments wherein she deliberately created stereotypical narratives as her weapon to lure and manipulate the public. Farrimond (2017) explains that the contemporary femme fatale reflects contradictions shaped by patriarchal structures and feminist interpretations, highlighting her dual role as both empowering and problematic. This argument is further supported by Baumbach (2015), who notes that the femme fatale continues to embody cultural fascination with female sexuality and power, reflecting societal tensions surrounding gender roles.

As seen in both *Circe* and Amy Dunne, this transformation allows women to be portrayed as active agents rather than passive figures in literature, reinforcing the idea that femininity can encompass strength, independence, and ambiguity in contemporary culture. This study directly reflects the sociocultural context of today, which is characterized as limitless, powerful, and influential, as feminist movements are now supported rather than discouraged. Amy Dunne empowers women in literature, as her psychologically cunning strategies put women on par with men even among complex and negative manifestations.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the representations of the femme fatale in both *Circe* and Amy Dunne share notable similarities in how they portray resistance against patriarchal symbols, particularly male authority figures who function as the primary subjects of their defiance. In both cases, the male figure represents the patriarchal system that the characters confront, reinforcing the femme fatale's traditional role as a figure of disruption and subversion. However, despite these similarities, the differing sociocultural contexts of each text shape distinct narrative trajectories and character motivations, resulting in variations in how their stories unfold. Ultimately, both characters reflect the continued evolution of the femme fatale archetype, as their central narrative function aligns with the longstanding motif of contributing to a man's downfall.

The femme fatale is often constructed in relation to male anxieties about women's changing roles, showing how the archetype adapts across different historical and cultural contexts. By observing how the femme fatale frequently "weaponizes seduction to lure male protagonists," it reinforces the recurring narrative function of male downfall across literary representations.

Overall, this study contributes to the modern feminist revolution through the comparison of female figures in literature. Although they are negative manifestations of feminine ideals, their capability to be psychologically complex shows a definite evolution on a feminist lens, making them an empowering representation in literary works of today. Together, these insights demonstrate that while the femme fatale evolves in response to sociocultural shifts, her core role remains consistent, making *Circe* and Amy Dunne fitting modern embodiments of an enduring, functional, and adaptive archetype.

Recommendations

This study, which focuses on female fatality, contributes to the modern feminist movement by providing an academic discourse centered on the evolution of women's representation, highlighting feminist progress in both the literary sense and the current sociocultural context. The feminist movement has long existed by also using writing as a tool to empower women. With this, the study's importance aims to further encourage related studies to gather more insights on how women are valued, disseminated, and portrayed in today's time, especially among future researchers who would like to place importance on female representation in all areas of life beyond academic writing.

The cultural context of each period strongly shapes its corresponding literary context, particularly in how the femme fatale is constructed and interpreted. As noted by Elhallaq (2015), "literary texts often mirror the social and cultural conditions of their time," highlighting how representations of gender are shaped by prevailing ideologies. In the Philippine setting, however, the femme fatale remains underexplored as a critical framework despite the presence of comparable archetypes in local literature and media. This gap indicates that examining the femme fatale within Philippine texts would be a suitable and valuable area of study, as it can reveal how global feminist ideas intersect with local cultural values, gender expectations, and historical influences. Exploring this archetype in Filipino narratives may also uncover how femininity, power, and transgression are uniquely represented in a Southeast Asian context and to synthesize if it has existed across historical periods.

Future researchers are encouraged to expand studies on related archetypes such as the "man-eater" or "vixen" within both contemporary and classic Philippine texts. A new take on Circe's mythological journey written by Madeline Miller may help deepen the understanding of Circe's character for future reference. According to Dennon (2017), "archetypal female figures continue to evolve in literature as reflections of shifting gender dynamics and societal attitudes," suggesting that these representations remain relevant to modern analysis. These figures, which often overlap with the femme fatale, can be analyzed to better understand how female agency, desire, and social perception are constructed in local literature. By revisiting canonical works in Philippine literature, researchers can trace how these archetypes have evolved over time and how they reflect shifting attitudes toward gender and morality. Such an approach can provide a richer and more contextualized understanding of Filipino female characterization across different literary periods.

In addition, future studies may benefit from employing a range of literary and theoretical frameworks to deepen analysis. As emphasized by Michiotis (2005), "the integration of multiple critical approaches allows for a more comprehensive interpretation of texts," supporting a multidimensional analysis of literary figures. Approaches such as feminist literary criticism, postcolonial theory, psychoanalytic criticism, and gender performativity theory can offer multiple perspectives in examining the femme fatale and related archetypes. Combining these critical lenses can help uncover underlying power structures, cultural ideologies, and psychological dimensions embedded in texts, ultimately broadening and strengthening the analysis of female representations in Philippine literature and beyond.

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Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.