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Femme fatale

En forførerisk, “farlig” kvinne som (i noen fortellinger, filmer og bøker) lurer og utnytter menn. “*Femme fatale* – the archetypal woman who both threatens and attracts the man, beautiful, erotic and sensual, so attractive and mesmerizing that she weakens the man, causing him to lose his abilities, his talents, his intellectual faculties, even his life.” (Markus 2013)

“In the 30s and 40s of the 19th century the *femme fatale* became known as a “vampire”. This term originated in Heinrich Marschner’s opera by that name – *Vampire* (1826). [...] *Femme fatale* in the movies was often referred as “Vamp” – from the term Vampire.” (Markus 2013) Ordet “vamp” brukes i norsk om en erotisk tiltrekkende kvinne som har en tvilsom moral.

“[S]ince in the 19th century the *femme fatale* was [...] perceived as a creature that was all sex, desire and seduction, who enchains the man and destroys his intellectual ability.” (Markus 2013) “A lingering Victorian morality that demonises the unchaste women as dangerous, controls the construction of the *femme fatale*. She is evil and threatening because she is alien and other by virtue of her sexuality, the fantasies she conjures up disturb patriarchal notions of order and control.” (Redmond 2014 s. 20)

“The *femme fatale* of the hard-boiled era, who arrived in the late 1920s, seduced, shot and poisoned her way through pulp magazines, hard- and paper-backed novels, and films for almost fifty years, as the iconic figure of evil” (Redmond 2014 s. ii). Hun er “a composite of power, lust, and greed.” (Snyder 2001) Hun har “sexual power” og blir en “villain we love to hate” (Redmond 2014 s. 52 og 54).

“En femme fatale er en attraktiv kvinne som leder mannen ut i farlige eller kompromitterende situasjoner. Hun er forførereren, som styres av et ufokusert begjær, og som ikke har annet mål for øyet enn makt over andre menneskers sinn eller lengsler. [...] Den gåtefulle og farlige kvinnen forekommer også i urgamle mytologier som knytter henne til mørke jordkrefter og tildeler henne magiske, besvergende eller til og med destruktive evner. [...] Figuren er forankret i en evig

biologisk konflikt mellom mann og kvinne, eller mellom kultur og natur. [...] Bak den mannlige forestillingen om femme fatale er det med andre ord åpenbart at det ligger en stor porsjon kvinneforakt eller kvinneangst. Som [Camille] Paglia har påpekt kan den kvinnelige seksualiteten, og denne seksualitetens mystikk, virke truende på mannen. Ikke desto mindre er det en kjensgjerning at mange menn også finner den skjebnesvangre og nådeløse kvinnen dypt fascinerende.” (Beate Petersen i *Morgenbladet* 30. mai –5. juni 2003)

“An extremely intelligent, attractive and seductive woman who has a tendency to use men in many ways either for sex, money, help, attention, support. She never falls in love with a man, but rather uses him and takes the advantages that he gives her. Usually her heart is already broken and incapable of love and intimacy because of her dark past and troubling history. She might have loved once and trusted someone but was betrayed and failed at and her deceptions of the past left irrevocable scars. She is amazing in bed and at all the arts of seduction but she only gives her body, never her heart. She has lost all hope in mankind and does no longer believe in happy endings. She learned the hard way: her dark past taught her too well, she’ll never make the same mistake twice.” (<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=femme%20fatale>; lesedato 15.02.18)

“The *femme fatale* comes out of a need to reconstitute a particular representative of masculinity that can demonstrate its control over women. Whatever his style, whatever his methods, the detective’s aim is to enclose women within predictable gender boundaries. He corrals them behind the clichés and stereotypes of the male imagination” (Redmond 2014 s. 33).

“The *femme fatale* is likewise a patriarchal construct. She represents the threat of female independence. As Toril Moi sees it, she comes out of a system that defines women as marginal to the symbolic order, and “construes them to be at the *limit*, or borderline, of that order” (166). She represents the necessary frontier between man and chaos. Locatable neither inside or outside, or even straddling the border, her position is fluid, and changes to meet the needs of the society.” (Redmond 2014 s. 34)

“By placing women on the borderline of the symbolic order it allows the patriarchy to vilify women as representing darkness and chaos, or if the occasion demands venerate them as Virgins or domestic goddesses. Neither position reflects any “essential” truth about women; rather, they represent a masculine construction that suits the needs of the patriarchy.” (Redmond 2014 s. 34)

En femme fatale “conjures up the sense of primitive dread at the awakening of physical desire by which women make their impact on men.” (Chitnis 1991 s. 2) En mann kan bli så fanget i hennes garn at det for han blir en “insane love” (Markus 2013). Hun forsterker sitt renommé hvis en mann tar livet av seg på grunn av ulykkelig kjærlighet til henne (Zima 1995 s. 90).

“[T]he image of *femme fatale* transmits added ambiguity: although she controls, she herself is controlled by her desires. [...] the *femme fatale* is somewhat submissive and a captive of her desire, she is nevertheless not weak, since her behavior can be perceived as masculine – she is changing partners, shows no devotion, unfaithful and does not surrender to love. She may in certain cases surrender to her passion, but not for long.” (Markus 2013) “Ever-present feminine qualities of duplicity, selfishness, and manipulative sexuality compete against positive masculine traits” (Redmond 2014 s. 21).

“*Femme fatale* has appeared throughout history in the form of different women and given names originated in assorted Biblical stories, various mythologies, literature and poetry: Eve, Lilith, Salome (beheading John the Baptist), Yael (who killed Sisra), Judith (beheading Holofernes) and many others.” (Markus 2013) Salome var kong Herodes’ stedatter, som ba om Johannes døperens hode på et fat. Hun danset så vakkert at Herodes ville gi henne det hun ønsket seg som takk, og Salome spurte sin mor hva hun burde be om. Moren hatet døperen Johannes fordi han hadde kritisert hennes ekteskap. “In the 19th century Salome became one of the principal images representing *femme fatale*” (Markus 2013).

“The construction of the modern *femme fatale* in the late nineteenth century thus represents one of many responses from the forces of the patriarchy to quell the rising demands of feminism. As portrayed in art and literature, she attests to the historic specificity of an otherness that bears the marks of original sin, criminality, duplicity, and disease that serve as a warning to all men about the dangers represented by the sexually liberated women. [...] increasing anxiety about masculine identity in the face of feminist agitation constructs the *femme fatale*” (Redmond 2014 s. 7).

“It could be said that the *femme fatale* at the turn of the 20th century served as alternative to the four traditional female stereotypes as determined by the male discourse: virgin, wife, mother and whore. She provided almost the sole outlet for women who were not prepared to submit to the role assigned to them by men. But by taking their fate into their own hands they were forced to utilize their power of attraction in order to control the men, ultimately suffering from the ambivalent attitude shown them not only by men but by women as well: women who submitted to the male directives viewed them to be wayward, while those who protested the male directives viewed them as women abusing their sex and sexuality, and in so doing, perpetuate the defamation of women.” (Markus 2013)

“Men hva er det egentlig ved denne kvinnen som virker så fristende? Er det det rent animalske, individutslettende og dionysiske begjæret i all sin råhet? Eller er det selve det skjebnesvangre spillet der begjærstilfredsstillelsen og den påfølgende avvisningen er åpenbare ingredienser, og det svimlende fallet og i verste fall døden en sannsynlig utgang? Om menn som uavvendelig drives inn i tragedien av

skruppelløse – og vakre – kvinner er det gjennom tidenes løp blitt laget en rekke filmer. [...] det berømte filmkysset som suger all viljestyrke ut av mannen, slik som i filmen *A fool there was* fra 1915. [...] Hans avhengighet av henne er like fullt mye sterkere enn hennes avhengighet av ham. Så hva er det mannen er ute etter? Jo, etter rusen, ekstasen. Det dreier seg om å la sterke følelser vekkes. Han gir seg hen til sansene, og legger det som finnes av ansvar og sosial aktelse fra seg. [...] den litt naive og fomlete Chris Cross i *Fritz Langs Scarlett Street* fra 1946 som et typisk eksempel for den fatale kvinnens bytte. [...] I likhet med førkrigstidens filmer blir hennes uimotståelige og forføreriske grep ubønnhørlig straffet i siste scene.” (Eva Liestøl m.fl. i *Morgenbladet* 30. mai –5. juni 2003)

Kvinneskikkelsen Lulu stammer fra den tyske forfatteren Frank Wedekind. “Lulu er kanskje det nærmeste vi kommer en femme fatale, hun er selve urdjevelen. Hun har ingen egen individualitet, men er en inkarnasjon av den kvinnelige seksualiteten, av det Goethe omtaler som det evig-kvinnelige. Lulu dør som offer for en konfrontasjon mellom to seksuelle krefter; den utøylede og degenererte mannlige seksualiteten hos masse-morderen, og den seksuelle frigjortheten hun selv representerer. En av de mest berømte femme fatale-skikkelsene gjennom tidene er imidlertid Salome. Historien er slik: På sin fødselsdagsfest blir Herodes trollbundet av sin stedatter Salomes forføreriske dans, og lover å gi henne hva hun enn måtte be om. Etter et råd fra sin mor velger hun seg intet mindre enn Johannes døperens hode på et fat. [...] Mens Salome lovpriser Johannes’ kropp, forakter han hennes. Johannes har forlenget kvittet seg med kroppen – han har kun et hellig hode. Halshuggingen er på den måten ikke noe reelt problem. [...] Samtidig blir denne figuren et symptom på en krise i maskuliniteten som har utviklet seg gjennom hele det tjuende århundre og frem til i dag. Krisen oppstår ved at kvinnen ikke bare ønsker et rom for seg selv, men også nekter å innordne seg. Gjennom den sterke kvinnen inntreer det altså en form for ubalanse. Så kan hende er det ved å iscenesette henne at mannen føler at han kan gjenopprette sitt herredømme. Men paradoksalt nok er det som om hun motsetter seg den iscenesettelsen hun utsettes for – at hun tar kontroll over rollen, og kommer ut som den sterke. [...] den klassiske todelingen mellom femme fragile og femme fatale, som utfordrer den mannlige fantasien. [...] Det komplekse ved femme fatale-figuren er at hun nettopp inkorporerer begge, at hun både er hore og madonna. Hun har det glassaktige og knuselige i seg, men skjuler det bak en nærmest ugjennomtrengelig maske.” (Eva Liestøl m.fl. i *Morgenbladet* 30. mai –5. juni 2003)

“In Paul Cain’s 1933 [krimfortelling] *One, Two Three*, the *femme fatale* successfully incites three detectives, who are tracking her down over an insurance fraud, into a pitched battle that leaves them variously bloodied, trussed up, or unconscious while she disappears with the loot.” (Redmond 2014 s. 22) “[T]he classic *femme fatale* [...] killed for money, or more often than not got someone to do it for them [...] the *femme fatale* waltzes off with the cash.” (Redmond 2014 s. 59)

“The opposite of the domestic woman is the figure of the femme fatale. The femme fatale is another example of woman defined in relation to her sexuality. She is a figure of excess; of a dangerous and threatening sexuality. She is also the antithesis of the maternal for she produces nothing. There is a sense of mystery about her, a ‘secret’ to be explored, which is the very fact of her excessive sexuality. For these reasons she is a figure of discursive unease, she threatens instability as her power is in revealing fears of uncontrollable drives which could lead to the loss of agency and subjectivity. The femme fatale is an articulation of male fears about sexual difference. The sense of danger she represents has to be removed for the male subject to reassert control. For this reason conventions of dominant cinema require her eradication from the filmic text; she is either punished or killed, or – less likely – domesticated. [...] the visual representation of the femme fatale has become so heavily coded it could now be considered iconography. [...] the seductive clothing of the femme fatale, emphasising the fetishised female body” (Lisa Morton i http://www.otago.ac.nz/deepsouth/vol1no3/morton_issue3.html; lesedato 05.01.18). “In Hollywood, at least, *femmes fatales* were always punished in the end.” (Markus 2013)

“The femme fatale had her greatest moment in the film noir of the Forties: it’s claimed that she signified male fears of women liberated by their part in the war. This period is well represented by *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Gilda* (1946) and other greats. [...] She returned to haunt the paranoid thrillers of the Seventies, such as *Chinatown* (1974). And she had a brief fling in the early Nineties, with *Basic Instinct* (1992), *The Last Seduction* (1994) and *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1995). [...] she thrives in the exotic Far East, in the work of Japan’s Hideo Nakata or Hong Kong’s Wong Kar Wai” (Sheila Johnston i <https://web.archive.org/web/20090228103849/http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/whatever-happened-to-the-femme-fatale-1633088.html>; lesedato 07.03.18).

Da 2. verdenskrig var slutt, “blomstret film noir opp og fikk sin kvantitativt største periode. Filmene ble dystre og var mer i strid med tidens moral. Mange har sett på dette som et resultat av tidens desillusjonering. Amerikanerne hadde seiret i krigen, men nye farer dukket opp. Freden var ikke sikret. Dessuten hadde krigsøkonomien ført mange kvinner ut i arbeidslivet. Mannens posisjon som eneforsørger var truet. Ut av dette vokste den film noirske femme fatale opp, kvinnen som fremfor alle andre filmkvinner symboliserer mannens kastrasjonsangst. Det at film noir blomstret opp rett etter andre verdenskrig er altså ingen tilfeldighet. [...] Den typiske film noir-helten er ikke en helt i vanlig forstand. Hovedpersonen minner ofte om en såret hund; han har fått teften av noe han aldri burde ha nærmet seg. Noir-helten er ofte en flertydig skikkelse. Han er sterk, men blir et offer for sin egen moral. Film noir har en grunnleggende eksistensiell tematikk, som personifiseres gjennom denne melankolske og ofte handlingslammede helten. Få genre og stilretninger innen filmhistorien har hatt en så kompleks fremstilling av kvinner som film noir. Kvinnen er seksuell og farlig, hun er attraktiv, forførende, maktlysten og manipulerende. Dette bildet av kvinnen som

en femme fatale, kan ses på som en reaksjon på kvinnens styrkede stilling etter krigen.” (Fredrik Færden i tidsskriftet *Cinematket* nr. 4 i 2013 s. 9)

“Hun er utspekulert, tiltrekkende og livsfarlig. Hun velger rike menn, for sex. Hun er fristerinnen med ett punkt på agendaen: trøbbel. [...] Den ekte femme fatale, er dama som for alvor ålet seg inn på filmlerretet på 1940-tallet. Med røde lepper og erotikk i blikket. Hun ble den obligatoriske ingrediensen i film noir-stilen. Den attraktive kvinnen som ledet menn inn i fordervelsen. Så betyr da også femme fatale “dødelig kvinne” på fransk. [...] En femme fatale er en sterk, selvstendig kvinne med ambisjoner. Hun er ikke spesielt interessert i karriere, men vil realisere seg selv gjennom penger. Ofte ved å få tilgang til menn med penger [...] Rita Hayworth ble et kulturelt ikon, den ultimate femme fatale i “Gilda” (1946) og “The Lady from Shanghai” (1948). Lana Turner dukket opp i “Postmannen ringer alltid to ganger” (1946). Ann Savage ble uforglemmelig i rollen som tuberkuløs femme fatale i “Detour” (1945), B-skuespilleren Jane Greer kom til Hollywood i 1945 og fikk sitt gjennombrudd i “Dick Tracy” og ble uforglemmelig i “Out of the past”, og Ava Gardner var stor i “The Killers” (1946). Datidas hardkokte litteratur skildret umoral, utroskap, svik og kriminalitet. Menneskene var kyniske og manipulerende. [...] Og da andre verdenskrig var over, ble de mørke og dystre filmene flere. Noen mener det er et resultat av tidas desillusjonering. Amerikanerne hadde seiret i krigen, men hva nå? Hvilke nye farer kunne komme?” (*Dagbladets Magasinet* 18. april 2009 s. 38 og 41)

“Sultry, smouldering temptresses lit up the screen in cinema’s golden age [...] Rita Hayworth in ‘Gilda’ (1946), a black-and-white film noir directed by Charles Vidor, in which Hayworth performed a legendary one-glove striptease that made her into a cultural icon as the ultimate femme fatale. [...] They never needed to diet, displayed but a flickering interest in men for money, power and meaningless sex, and were more likely to accessorise with a gun than a Chihuahua. [...] the glorious likes of Louise Brooks and Theda Bara [...] the femme fatale is about mystery.” (Sheila Johnston i <https://web.archive.org/web/20090228103849/http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/whatever-happened-to-the-femme-fatale-1633088.html>; lesedato 07.03.18)

“Motion pictures can influence the development of both normal and disordered personality. The *femme fatale* of the *film noir* movies of the 1940s and 1950s is representative of several related personality disorders characterized by histrionics, self-absorption, psychopathy, and unpredictability.” (Snyder 2001)

Fatale kvinner “lures men into dangerous or compromising situations. [...] The fatal woman who leads men to their moral ruination and sometimes death is not unique to *film noir*, but the character reached its apotheosis in the genre. These *femme fatales* represented a concerted attempt by American filmmakers to depict women in a genuine, if somewhat harsh, way. They could be just as “sexually voracious and as potentially murderous as any man, and just as susceptible to

corruption and greed” (Stephens, 1995). [...] These women are defined in terms of their relation to men. Feminist authors have viewed them as energized, intelligent, powerful, and able to elicit strength from their sexuality, cinema portrayals usually reserved for men. Society developed terms such as “dark lady,” the “spider woman,” and the “evil seductress” as a reflection of our misogynist, phallogocentric worldview (Place, 1980). *Film noir* is one of the few exceptions to the usual domination of American cinema by men. It is not the eventual destruction of these women that we remember as much as their potency, drive, and compelling ability to manipulate men through the power of their sexuality. Porfiro (1976) notes that “a host of domineering women, castrating bitches, unfaithful wives and black widows seemed to personify the worst of male sexual fantasies.” ” (Snyder 2001)

“It is important to separate the popularity of the Hollywood bombshell as personalities versus the animosity many American viewers felt toward these *femme fatale* portrayals in selected films. Joan Crawford, Ava Gardner, Rita Hayworth, Veronica Lake, Lana Turner, Jane Russell, Gene Tierney, etc. were worshipped in the forties as popular icons in American culture based on a wide array of film roles. But it is crucial to realize that their screen personae in their *noir* appearances engendered an entirely different reaction to many viewers of the time. A substantial portion of women harbored ambivalent feelings toward them, reflecting the confusion some American women felt about assuming a more passive role after World War II in contrast to their vigorous involvement in the war effort.” (Snyder 2001)

“For both protagonist and spectator alike, the question of the femme’s loyalty is the crucial and fundamental issue in film noir, and not an unconscious Oedipal investigation of sexual difference, as psychoanalytical accounts have claimed. It is for this reason that the blackest of classic noirs – *The Strange Loves of Martha Ivers* (Milestone, 1946), *Out of the Past* (Tourneur, 1947), *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944), *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Garnett 1946), *The Lady from Shanghai* [1947] – are those in which the duplicity of the fatale is either established beyond a shadow of a doubt, or worse still, remains unanswered (Constable, 2005), creating a vortex of “epistemological uncertainty” and paranoia into which the narrative swirls and disappears, most often taking both hero and fatale with it.” (Walker 2006)

“Gauging, winning and keeping the heart of the fatale... a risky business. All of which begs the question of why the noir hero falls for her in the first place, particularly when the narrative often provides him with a choice. Why is it that he wavers between and almost invariably prefers the sexy, mysterious, uncontrollable, potentially treacherous fatale over the homely promise of maternal security and sexual fidelity offered by the good woman or ingénue (*Out of the Past*; *The Killers*, Siodmak 1946; *Vertigo*, Hitchcock 1958)? The proximal narrative cause is that the noir hero is blinded by lust (desire and/or greed) so that he is unable to discern or be deterred by the fatale’s duplicity.” (Walker 2006)

“High-risk competition by males for young, beautiful women is particularly the case in societies where the latter are typically the married property of older, dominant (wealthy) males. In noir, this phenomenon feeds into the classic scenario of the handsome hero becoming involved with the seductive, possibly treacherous young wife of an older, usually wealthy man whom she wishes him to eliminate (*Double Indemnity*, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *La bête humaine*, Renoir, 1938; *Human Desire*, Lang 1954)” (Walker 2006).

“Feminists have long deplored the reduction of woman in film to visual surface and erotic spectacle, her imprisonment within the frame as largely passive object of the male gaze. [...] in most cultures, since it is heterosexual men who monopolise resources and power, women’s value has been seen almost exclusively in terms of visually coded reproductive fitness and it is the female body that has become the primary site of visual spectacle. Empirical, cross-cultural research confirms the common sense intuition that men place greater emphasis on physical beauty than do women. In terms of the attributes most sought after in a mate, although both men and women value physical (beauty), intellectual (intelligence, humour), moral (kindness) and economic (wealth) qualities; wealth and status are typically rated higher by women while physical beauty is typically rated higher by men (Buss, 1989). The emphasis on feminine beauty and the construction of woman as visual spectacle, as quasi-universal features of our species, can thus be seen to represent the evolutionary price women have been forced to pay (unwittingly perhaps) in exchange for male parental investment: the establishment of pair bonds (durable love relationships), protection and provision of material resources. Which brings us to examine the precise nature of the visual spectacle, i.e. the specific attributes of feminine beauty, particularly as they relate to the fatale. Fashion trends and cultural variation notwithstanding, evolutionary psychology posits that in humans as in other animal species, there exist a number of universal features of physical sexual attractiveness, which are essentially markers of reproductive fitness: for women, the potential to bear, and for men, the potential to father, protect and provide for many fit, healthy offspring. In women, unsurprisingly, these visual markers include: youth (indicating optimum reproductive potential); regular features, clear skin and shiny hair (absence of parasitic infestation); firm, full breasts; and a low waist-hip ratio (absence of an existing pregnancy). In other words, cross-culturally recognized definitions of feminine beauty equate broadly to visual markers of health and female reproductive fitness (Sugiyama, 2005). The make-up and tight-fitting or suggestively flowing costumes that are the sartorial hallmark of the fatale, the sensual lighting and framing of her face and body, are unambiguously designed to accentuate and display these features.” (Walker 2006)

“Andrew Spicer’s description of Ava Gardner as Kitty Collins in *The Killers* [1946; regissert av Robert Siodmak] sees the figure as possessing “a dreamlike sensuality, the apotheosis of mythical femininity, sexy and feline, with her sloe shaped eyes, curvaceous high cheekbones, cleft chin, full, upturned mouth, all an open sexual

invitation... reclining suggestively... attractively lit to accentuate the lines of her body.” (Spicer, 2002: 91). The ability of the fatale to capture the scopophilic gaze of the male protagonist and both male and female spectator alike, the explanation for her physical allure and source of her power, is ultimately (in evolutionary terms) that her seductive beauty and youth represent the epitome of feminine reproductive fitness. Of course, differentially gendered and sexually orientated spectatorial desire will mean that the scopophilic drive (present in females as well as in males, despite patriarchal restrictions on women’s looking) may derive from one or other of two causes: either the desire to possess or the desire to *be* the fatale, or in some cases, both. Either way, psychoanalytical explanations for scopophilia as voyeuristic sadism and fetishistic over-investment in the image of the fatale as iconic signifier of Oedipal angst (her tight-fitting, elongated dresses causing her body to resemble the phallus, whose lack can thus be disavowed, allaying unconscious castration anxiety in the male etc., etc.) are as redundant as they are comically improbable.” (Walker 2006)

“In summarizing feminist critical interest in *film noir*, Place (1980) suggests that “it stands as the only period in American film in which women are deadly but sexy, exciting, and strong.” The *femme fatale* has successfully eluded patriarchal ideology. They are victimizers of men, rather than victims of patriarchal exploitation (Wager, 1999). As Richardson (1992) states, “*film noir* depicts spidery women answerable to a host of misdeeds and misadventures. Women connive, steal, and murder. They are not ‘fallen women,’ victimized by patriarchal exploitation...They are ambitious exploiters, whose misdeeds merit punishment...doled out in disappointment, grief, and sometimes...death.” [...] These motion pictures implicitly criticized women for considering alternative roles.” (Snyder 2001)

“The narcissism of these fatal women is demonstrated as they often gaze at their own images in the mirror. They are totally self-absorbed. Scenes involving mirrors are quite common with these women. This may represent the devious, cunning nature of these women, where “nothing and no one is what it seems...oftentimes, these tenebrous reflections are more powerful than the real women they mirror” (Place, 1980). Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) exemplified this narcissism by hanging numerous portraits of herself throughout her mansion. These “mirror shots” are a cinematic technique prevalent in *film noir*. [...] self-absorbed narcissism: the woman gazes at her own reflection in the mirror, ignoring the man she will use to achieve her goals. The self-absorption of Phyllis Dietrichson occurs in numerous scenes in *Double Indemnity* (1944). The “mirror shots” also indicate women’s duplicitous nature: they are visually split, thus not to be trusted.” (Snyder 2001)

“The *femme fatales*’ long hair, make-up, jewelry, and cigarettes are symbols of their sensuality. These women are very concerned with slick clothing styles that signify what has been described as “to-be-looked-at-ness” (Naremore, 1998).

Compelling phallic power is conveyed by the handguns they often possess. Our first glimpse of these spider women is often of her either scantily dressed, wrapped in a towel, or a view of a comely leg (Place, 1980). [...] she is often placed in a superior position vis-à-vis the male. [...] Such women could not be allowed to impede the existing social structure. She would need to be destroyed and American patriarchal culture restored.” (Snyder 2001)

“Barbara Stanwyck, the “undisputed first lady of noir,” had a scornful, taut face and voice. Her posture was tight and defensive in keeping with a tough screen presence. A deadly, cold, sensuality characterized many of her films. Veronica Lake’s face barely moved. Her voice and bearing were notable for their angularity, frigidity, and sleekness. She was shy, yet sexy, with a hazy, muddled quality; chiseled features and flawless beauty highlighted by a translucent Nordic complexion completed the picture. An efficient, dominating, wise-cracking quality set her apart. Joan Crawford had a screen persona characterized by fierceness, willfulness, and an almost diabolical, tyrannical ferocity with which she fought her enemies. She could dispatch men without compunction.” (Snyder 2001)

“In many ways, women were even more conflicted over these “bitch goddesses” than men. They admired their strength, power, and sensuousness but were alienated by their deviousness, sociopathy, and licentiousness. [...] These cinema seductresses, with the potency and strength to annihilate men, may in some ways be viewed as overdrawn, cynical, precursors of the liberated woman of the sixties.” (Snyder 2001)

“Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck), of *Double Indemnity* (1944), demonstrates a range of vicious, calculating acts. In the very early stages of the film, she seduces a young insurance salesman and manipulates him into murdering her husband after insuring his life. She proceeds to coldly participate in the killing, and we later discover that she had poisoned her husband’s first wife. When complications in her scheme develop, she tries to murder the salesman. Toward the end of the movie, we learn that she has been having an affair with her daughter’s fiancé while this whole chain of events has been unfolding. After murdering her husband, Phyllis is located unambiguously as a phallic woman who seeks to usurp male authority (in her desire for money, for the destruction of the family, and for control of Walter [forsikringsagenten som forelsker seg i Phyllis]). But her inability to fire the fatal shot in the climactic scene with Walter signifies a weakness in her, suggesting she cannot fully live up to her own phallic desire. She is made vulnerable through lust and passion, that is, through her nature as a woman. On the other hand, Walter’s comparative potency is callously demonstrated by the ease with which he can pull the trigger on her. The women on the American wartime home front who viewed the movie were taught that it does not pay to violate patriarchal structure. The maintenance of the traditional home and family during these turbulent times was paramount, and the deviant personalities and behaviors of a Phyllis Dietrichson were simply unacceptable. Character and morality meant

something in these times and transgressors would be severely punished. American values had to be preserved for the returning veterans.” (Snyder 2001)

“- En femme fatale ble bildet på trusselen som kom i kjølvannet av krigen. Kvinnene fikk en ny selvstendighet da soldatene dro i kamp. De begynte å jobbe og forsørgeransvaret var ikke lenger mannens alene. Dessuten fryktet mannen at hun var utro, mens han var ved fronten. Kvinnens posisjon i samfunnet var i ferd med å endre seg, og deres nye rolle var både farlig og skummel for menn, sier [Audun] Engelstad. [...] - En femme fatale skulle være sterk og handlende. Hun ønsket makt. Og penger. Barn tenkte hun ikke på, men hun var særdeles oppmerksom på sin egen seksualitet og brukte kroppen sin til å få det hun ønsket seg, sier han. Den klassiske femme fatale følte seg fort fanget dersom ektemannen behandlet dem som “standard utstyr”. I verste fall kunne hun ty til drap, hvis hun ville ha en kontrollerende ektemann av veien. Ekteskap og femme fatale er synonymt med et ulykkelig liv. I “Double Indemnity” føler Phyllis, spilt av Barbara Stanwyck, seg som et dyr i bur og ender med å myrde ektemannen fordi han ikke bryr seg om henne lenger. Som femme fatale er hun mer iskald enn djevelen selv. - Mer fatale enn Barbra Stanwyck og Ava Gardner, går det ikke an å bli, mener Audun Engelstad. Han mener mange kvinnelige skuespillere vegret seg for å ta roller i film noir-sjangeren, fordi de var redde for å bli stemplet. Dessuten var det mer attraktivt å spille i musikalene. - Femme fatalen er nok et produkt av mannens fantasi. Det er stort sett mannlige regissører som har kreert henne. Men det finnes unntak. Her hjemme regisserte Edith Carlmar “Døden er et kjærtegn” i 1949, der direktørfruen Sonja, spilt av Bjørg Riiser-Larsen, blir den farlige femme fatalen som fanger en uskyldig mann i sitt giftige nett, sier han. En femme fatale var ingen feminist. For henne handlet det ikke om søstersolidaritet, men om først og fremst å tenke på seg selv. - Men hun har appellert til feminister. Fordi hun var den sterke kvinnen, den som drev handlingen framover. Mange har likevel vært skeptiske fordi hun så ofte måtte dø til slutt. Dermed seiret patriarken, sier Engelstad. En femme fatale var nemlig en så problematisk figur, med så mye makt at hun måtte ødelegges. Enten ved at hun dør. Eller hun temmes. Det vil si blir gift.” (*Dagbladets Magasinet* 18. april 2009 s. 41)

“Patriarchal dominance in the home, the work place, the ballot box, and the bedroom was under threat. Sexually active women were a threat because their behaviour blurred traditional gender roles.” (Redmond 2014 s. 20)

Den amerikanske krimforfatteren Raymond Chandlers “*femmes fatales* use sex not sexuality to lure their victims. It is a lure that barely raises Marlowe’s eyebrow, let alone his libido. In *The Big Sleep* the crude and blatant seduction techniques of Carmen and her sister Vivian leave him cold. So much so that Carmen’s advance almost makes him ill: “Her eyes were slate-grey, and had almost no expression when they looked at me. She came over near me and smiled with her mouth and she had little sharp predatory teeth, as white as fresh orange pit and shiny as porcelain. They glistened between her thin too taut lips. Her face lacked colour and

she didn't look too healthy." (5) When he finds her in his bed he turns away, and returns to a chess problem he is trying to solve. Her small sharp teeth glint as she tells him she is "all undressed" under the blankets. To prove it, she flings them off and reveals herself naked and "glistening as a pearl". He tells her to get dressed and get out. "Her teeth parted and a faint hissing noise came out of her mouth." She calls him a foul name, and he becomes angry [...] He throws her out, and after slowly drinking a glass of whisky, he tears "the bed to pieces savagely." Afterwards he says, "You can have a hangover from other things than alcohol. I had one from women. Women make me sick." (159). [...] Marlowe, however, must expel Carmen to establish the boundaries of his identity, which is constituted by its exclusions. Even though she is not materially part of his subject self, she represents a part of his psyche that needs to be abjected if he is to re-establish the boundaries of that self." (Redmond 2014 s. 29-30)

"Women were avid cinema-goers in the Forties and these remarkable roles, and stars, were created to spark their fantasies. [...] It would be a challenge to make a modern film noir and to think about what the femme fatale would actually wear in it, because no one swans around the place in evening frocks like they used to – and to work out what her role would be today [...] The femme fatale has a lineage in literature, from Salome onwards, yet the signs are that she is herself a fatality of the new millennium. Of course there have been scattered examples, mostly paying homage to the golden age of noir: Laura Harring in David Lynch's *Mulholland Dr* (2001), or Rebecca Romijn in Brian De Palma's flashy *Femme Fatale* (2002). [...] It is her destiny to be at the centre of a web of intrigue. She doesn't have to be a predator, but sexuality is her tool, and the rise of feminism and political correctness have made that a bit of a no-no. It's seen as not sisterly and is often equated with barminess. [...] "Maybe you could argue that it's a good thing there aren't so many femmes fatales, because they are so much defined by their relationship to men," [Anne] Billson says. "Their entire *raison d'être* is to seduce and destroy them. I know one whose whole life was based on making erotic conquests. Because she was so beautiful, she never needed to work on her skills, or personality, or interests, or independence." Still, Billson agrees, the world is a less exciting place without such seductresses." (Sheila Johnston i <https://web.archive.org/web/20090228103849/http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/whatever-happened-to-the-femme-fatale-1633088.html>; lesedato 07.03.18)

"In the case of the fatale, her volatility, dangerous appeal and status as feminine archetype are thus intimately causally connected. (One could say the same of the less common figure of the *homme fatal* [...])" (Walker 2006).

I *Laura* (1944; regissert av Otto Preminger) og *Phantom Lady* (1944; regissert av Robert Siodmak) forekommer det en "homme fatale"! (Ritzer og Schulze 2016 s. 292). "The femme fatale [...] her male counterpart – the homme fatale. It could be that immoral or beastly behaviour in men is considered par for the course and merits no special category. When a woman goes rotten, whether it's Barbara

Stanwyck as the wife plotting her husband's death in *Double Indemnity* or Glenn Close as the wronged lover in *Fatal Attraction*, it is seen as a tantalising aberration: a perversion of the maternal ideal, an attack of the Lady Macbeths. When it's a man, the element of surprise is diminished. Boys will be boys. But in two new films with almost identical ironic titles – *Un Homme Idéal* and *The Perfect Guy* – the *homme fatale* reflects anxieties about gender roles every bit as clearly as the female equivalent. In *Un Homme Idéal*, a budding writer, Mathieu Vasseur (Pierre Niney), passes off the diaries of a dead soldier as his own debut novel, then becomes increasingly psychotic when the enchanted life he has wrongfully attained is jeopardised. The picture adopts a Ripley's-eye view of the situation, to namecheck Patricia Highsmith's identity-swapping killer, the patron saint of the *homme fatale*." (Ryan Gilbey i <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/nov/19/handsome-devils-the-birth-of-the-homme-fatale>; lesedato 29.11.17)

Det er ifølge Robert Stanley Redmond "increasingly difficult to use the feminised "other" as the repository of evil, and as a result, the *femme fatale* is fated to become either a weakly realised figure or an ironic one that cannot help slipping into parody. [...] in a postfeminist age, the *femme fatale* is displaced, reconstructed or dematerialized." (2014 s. 2)

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