

## Hollywood Globalism and Transnational Cultural Production in *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012) and *Mirror Mirror* (2012)

Yukari Tamazaki

2012 saw the releases of four visual adaptations<sup>1</sup> of a beloved fairy tale "Snow White," 75 years after Walt Disney made history with his *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), the very first full-length animated feature film in the world. While the trend in updating classic fairy tales is nothing new, it has become more conspicuous than ever in the past decade in various fields, reinforced by the hegemony of consumer capitalism the popular culture industry ensures. More than a third of film reboots or reworkings of popular princess stories such as "Snow White," "Beauty and the Beast," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Cinderella" are produced during these first sixteen years of the new millennium, and TV production teams are also getting inspirations from fairy tale elements and motifs to create characters and stories, oftentimes presenting modern and allegedly feminist takes on the classic tales. A drama anthology *Fairy Tales* which aired on BBC One in 2008 featured four traditional fairy tales<sup>2</sup> adapted into modern settings, both ABC's *Once Upon a Time* and NBC's *Grimm* premiered in October 2011 in the United States of America and are still on-going<sup>3</sup> after receiving generally favourable critical responses, and two more recent South Korean TV drama productions that have completed airing in January 2017 with excellent viewership ratings, *The Legend of the Blue Sea* and *Guardian (Goblin): The Lonely and Great God*, depicted mermaids and mythical characters, respectively, as main characters who live across time, sometimes in their reincarnated states.

Although each work must address diverse issues and send out distinctive messages, the fact that these modern reinventions of fairy tales appeal to the mass audience as well as creators and producers proves that we are in need of a fantasy whether it can provide an escape from the harsh reality or it rings true to the fowl side of human nature which is to be conquered in the narrative to show us hope. Largely due to Disney's creations of animated princesses, fairy tales are commonly considered to be children's bedtime stories and dismissed as saccharinised fiction that can impose outdated, patriarchal gender roles and stereotypes on children -- unless they are made-over or rewritten as dark fantasies for older, mature audience. However, as a renowned scholar of fairy tale studies Jack Zipes imparts, fairy tales actually started to be suitable for children only in the mid-seventeenth century when they were reprinted in a series of chapbooks, which consequently led to the distribution of fairy tales in abridged forms with simplified language that would make the stories more accessible for the lower class, children and non-literates, and then further developed as moralistic or didactic tales for children in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, during the rise of the middle classes, when the collectors of the fairy tales toned down the darker implications of the stories to suit their new audience.<sup>4</sup>

From the very beginning, thousands of years ago, to the present, . . . fairy tales are

written and told to provide hope in a world seemingly on the brink of catastrophe. . .; they emanate from specific struggles to humanize bestial and barbaric forces, which have terrorized our minds and communities in concrete ways, threatening to destroy free will and human compassion. The fairy tale sets out to conquer this concrete terror through metaphors.<sup>5</sup> . . . Although many of the fairy tales were ironical or ended on a tragic tone, they still subscribed to the utopian notion of the transformation of humans -- that is, the redemption of the humane qualities and the overcoming of bestial drives.<sup>6</sup>

These realistic depictions of people's ruthless behaviours and bestial drives that were originally present in the stories were gradually lost in the process of fairy tales' institutionalisation. Grimm's tales underwent changes even through editions: for example, sexual references such as suggestions of Rapunzel's pregnancy were removed, the wicked mothers in the tales like "Snow White" and "Hansel and Gretel" were transformed to stepmothers to make the stories easier for naive children to swallow, and references to cannibalism became vague or absent in later versions of many fairy tales.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, contemporary productions of fairy-tale based (dark) fantasies are not entirely fanciful fabrications, but something that can be perceived as attempts to rediscover the lost realism and to revive the power and the significance of fairy tales they originally held, which makes them worth exploring, especially at times like this when people are terrorized by a new leader who sounds like a fascist.

Grimm's Snow White (2012) kicked off the successive releases of Snow White films in February on video-on-demand from the Asylum production and distribution company which focuses on producing low-budget, direct-to-video films. It is most likely to be intended to capitalize on later Snow White films, for its script seems like a mash-up of other fantasy films and major Snow White concepts. It has the goriness of some other dark fantasy films, the Lord-of-the-Rings type elves instead of dwarfs, mythical and scary creatures as in Snow White and the Huntsman (2012), and a Queen who intends to snatch away Snow White's prince to marry him herself as in Mirror Mirror (2012). Even though this blonde<sup>8</sup> Snow White barely cuts off the Queen's head in the end, she is the familiar, vulnerable damsel in distress in the Snow White tradition who needs to be helped and saved from her entrance to the last minute, and she turns out to be an unconvincing saviour of the land where the elves have been enslaved by humans. The next two Hollywood<sup>9</sup> films Mirror Mirror and Snow White and the Huntsman were both released around the end of March and in April in the UK, but the American audience had to wait another three months before they could enjoy the latter. As these two films will be the focus of this essay, I will come back to them in detail later. Finally, Blancanieves (2012), a highly acclaimed, multi-award winning Spanish black-and-white silent drama film, came out in September at the 2012 Toronto International Film Festival. It is a "reimagining of the classic fairy-tale,"<sup>10</sup> having its plot and characters based on The Brothers Grimm's "Snow White," but the story is set in Seville, Spain in the 1920s, and the protagonist who is named Carmen is a daughter of a bullfighter and a flamenco dancer. Since all of the four films above share most of the familiar Snow White tropes, it would be interesting and indeed productive to examine and analyse the narratives and the meanings of these films in terms of fairy tale studies. Nevertheless, only the two Hollywood studio film productions will be discussed here, for it is my purpose in this essay to explore the ways in

which recent Hollywood major and mini-major retellings of the fairy tale exemplify Hollywood globalism and transnational cultural production.

## SNOW WHITE AND THE HUNTSMAN

Snow White and the Huntsman is an American<sup>11</sup> Dark Fantasy Action Adventure "major" film, directed by Rupert Sanders (English<sup>12</sup>) and produced by Joe Roth (American), Palak Patel (Indian American), and Sam Mercer (American), starring the Twilight (2008) star Kristen Stewart (American) as Snow White, Charlize Theron (South African and American) as Snow White's evil stepmother, Queen Ravenna, Chris Hemsworth (Australian) as Eric, the Huntsman, and Sam Claflin (English) as William, Snow White's childhood friend and the son of Duke Hammond. Seven out of eight dwarfs are played by English and Scottish actors, leaving the last one<sup>13</sup> Irish, of average height (who had their faces digitally superimposed onto small bodies).<sup>14</sup> All the actors speak with non-American, mostly British accents in the film, which was principally filmed on locations in the United Kingdom and edited with extravagant computer-generated imageries. The credits for the screenplay go to the initial writer of the screen story Evan Daugherty (American), John Lee Hancock (American), who is best known as the director of *The Blind Side* (2009) and *Saving Mr Banks* (2013), and the London-based writer Hossein Amini (Iranian-British), who has adapted several literary works such as Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, Henry James' *The Wings of the Dove*, A. E. W. Mason's *The Four Feathers*, and more recently John le Carré's *Our Kind of Traitor* for the big screen. Another noteworthy member from the production team is Colleen Atwood (American), who was nominated for the Best Costume Design award at the Academy Awards and the BAFTAs for her work in this film.

As in literary works, the place of the narrator is significant in films as well, for it controls the overall voice of the narrative, and in the case of *Snow White and the Huntsman*, the story starts out as Eric narrates a variation of the Grimm's account<sup>15</sup>:

Once upon a time, in deep winter, a queen was admiring the falling snow, when she saw a rose blooming in defiance of the cold. Reaching for it she pricked her finger, and three drops of blood fell. And because the red seemed so alive against the white, she thought: "If only I had a child as white as snow, lips as red as blood, hair as black as a raven's wings, and all of the strength of that rose." Soon after a daughter was born to the queen, and was named Snow White. And she was adored throughout the kingdom, as much for her defiant spirit as for her beauty [emphasis added].<sup>16</sup>

In the first edition of Grimm's "Snow White," Snow White's mother is "sewing" by a window with a frame of black ebony, and on pricking her finger with the needle, she sees how "beautiful" the red looked on the white snow and wishes for a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as the ebony window frame. In the film's opening narration, Grimm's association of the Queen with domestic work is scored out, and on the other hand, descriptions of Snow White's strength and defiant spirit are added. This Snow White is undeniably an intelligent, spirited young woman, unlike the useless child<sup>17</sup> in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* or the naïve maiden in Grimm's *Snow White*, as she uses all her strength and brainpower to escape on her own from the north tower of the castle she has been locked away in, rides a (white) horse herself to the

Dark Forest without whimpering, fights for her life and for what she believes in, and eventually comes back as the leader of the troop to defeat the evil Queen's army and end the Queen's life. Observably, as this is voiced out by Eric, who develops romantic feelings toward Snow White, it can be presumed that his insights are already biased by his feelings, but this feminist twist in the characterisations of Snow White and her birthmother can also be found in the portrayal of Queen Ravenna.

Even though nothing can ultimately justify what she has done and is going to do to others, Ravenna is given an opportunity to unravel the inner workings of her mind behind the malevolence as she stabs the King to death on their wedding night:

King Magnus: You will be the ruin of me.

Queen Ravenna: Indeed, my lord. I was ruined by a king like you once. I replaced his queen, an old woman. And in time I too would have been replaced. Men use women. They ruin us, and when they are finished with us, they toss us to their dogs like scraps.

King Magnus: What have you given me?

Queen Ravenna: When a woman stays young and beautiful forever, the world is hers. First I will take your life, my lord. And then I'll take your throne.

Ravenna provides reasonable grounds for her misandry in the first half of the conversation, which might have garnered feminist sympathy if it were not for what she says in the latter half where she begins to show her insatiable greed. She may have voiced a grain of truth about women's collective experiences, but it cannot rationalise all of her violence on others, controlling her subjects through aggression and fear, draining the life-force of other young, beautiful women, and of course taking people's lives away, since not all that suffered become villains. Her dresses mirror the progression of Ravenna's character, and they go from light to dark. At first, Ravenna pretends, disguised in the symbolic white of snow and innocence, to be a defenceless prisoner until the king is enchanted by her. On the wedding day, gold is added to the colour palette of her costume. From the golden crown and her golden blonde hair to the beautiful off-white and gold wedding dress, the particular look presents her as a beautiful and powerful queen. However, gold is an equivocal colour, for it simultaneously suggests divinity and material wealth. It has also been associated with the extremities of great sanctity and utmost evil throughout history in religious traditions. After the king's death, Ravenna begins to show her true dark colours, and her costume takes on darker tinges. She begins to put on a black and silver colour scheme, the gowns and the crowns become more silver and spiky, and even her golden dress looks darker, combined with the cloak with raven black feathers and a collar resembling a raven's wings. In the end, the metallic glitter on her black dresses is produced by dung beetle shells and obsidian-like material, and the vessel of her being crumbles away along with her costume that looks like it was made out of ravens. As her look and her actions establish her as a vain, cold, power-hungry, wicked Queen, even her feminist voice becomes the object of resentment, and the representation of Ravenna ends up strengthening the idea of equating fascism with feminism. Not surprisingly, the big golden magic mirror from which Ravenna seeks advice takes the physical form of a man, and speaks in a male voice, instead of being a reflexion of the person in front of the mirror and sometimes of her inner self. The mirror is shown as the Queen's possession and

her loyal subject in the beginning, but the Mirror Man gradually starts to dictate Ravenna's psyche and behaviours by not simply answering her questions but also suggesting destructive solutions. The Lonely Queen submits to the patriarchal values that she so detested and denounced, ironically ending up maintaining those values at the same time. In spite of the ideas that seem to have come from feminist thinking, the overall treatment of them (especially in relation to the character of Ravenna) makes the film a show of misogyny.

Snow White and the Huntsman also plays out a twist in the matters of the (poisoned) apple and the true love's kiss that is supposed to lift spells. Snow White does not naively accept the suspicious apple from a hag; rather, in this version, she takes the apple away of her own free will from William (or who she thinks is William but actually Ravenna in the shape of him) as a reaction to her childhood experience when William looked as if he was about to give an apple to the little Snow White whilst playing around the palace garden and climbing on to an apple tree before taking it away from her and took a bite himself. With all the symbolisms an apple may hold within, it is revealing that Snow White kisses William before taking the apple, telling him that she remembers the trick. Although it is still discernible that Snow White brought in the asphyxia herself, the film makes sure it is not something that is given to her and she has passively taken. It is always Snow White who takes the initiative in her matters: she makes the decision, and she controls her own love or life. Accordingly, the tradition of true love's kiss is also challenged in this narrative. William's kiss does not wake Snow White up but the Huntsman's kiss does, as if to signify Snow White's childhood love has ended with her kiss to William before taking the bite out of the apple, and now she is ready for a mature relationship. Of course it would not be possible for a king's daughter to marry a huntsman, as it is shown in the prequel/sequel to Snow White and the Huntsman, *The Huntsman: Winter's War* (2016), where William appears as Snow White's husband,<sup>18</sup> so the love between Snow White and Eric might not have been consummated. However, the little nod and exchange of glances between the new Queen (Snow White) and Eric on the day of her coronation reminds the audience of the last scene in William Wyler's *Roman Holiday* (1953). It may not be pure coincidence that the names of Snow White's suitors already predicted their relationships with the girl. William comes from the Germanic name Willahelm, which is composed of the elements wil (will or desire) and helm (helmet and thus protection), and Eric comes from the Old Norse name Eiríkr, which is derived from the elements ei (ever or always) and ríkr (ruler). William may only have the "will" to protect his first love whereas Eric actually rules the situation when it comes to the protection of Snow White: Eric cuts off Snow White's dress so that she can move around quickly, and it is always Eric who first notices Snow White is under attack.

The etymology of Eric's name brings us back to the issue of the film's framework as well -- to the fact that he is the narrator in the opening scene.<sup>19</sup> The tale begins as it is told from Eric's point of view, and it ends with Eric's glance. He figuratively rules the narrative, and the film is constructed as his story. With this I move onto the other 2012 Hollywood Snow White film because the implications of a film's narrative framework figure more crucially in *Mirror Mirror*.

## MIRROR MIRROR

Two of the most crucial variations a viewer would immediately notice about *Mirror Mirror* in comparison with other *Snow White* films are its evident comedic tone and the Bollywood feel. When dark fantasies are all the rage in the land of postmodern fairy tale films, the Indian-American director Tarsem Singh<sup>20</sup> created yet another alternative to the way we may view the classic fairy tale on a budget of approximately 85 million dollars<sup>21</sup> -- which is about half of *Snow White and the Huntsman's* estimated budget. The mini-major family adventure fantasy film starred Lily Collins (British American) as *Snow White*, Julia Roberts (American) as *Snow White's* stepmother Queen Clementianna, Armie Hammer (American) as Prince Andrew Alcott, the prince of a wealthy kingdom of Valencia, Nathan Lane (American) as Brighton, the Queen's executive bootlicker who is ordered to "take her to the woods and feed her to the beasts"<sup>22</sup> in the place of the huntsman, and Sean Bean (English) as the King, *Snow White's* missing father. The seven dwarfs are played by one Canadian and six American (one of them Asian American) "Little People" actors, and Lisa Roberts Gillian (American), real-life elder sister of Julia Roberts, plays the Mirror Queen, the reflexion of Queen Clementianna, who is supposedly "much wiser, kinder, and somewhat younger than her."<sup>23</sup> The actors seem to speak with their natural accents<sup>24</sup> in *Mirror Mirror* which is filmed in Quebec, Canada. Even though the film, which is produced by Americans and its screen story and screenplay written by Americans as well, obviously places certain amount of emphasis on its American-ness, predominantly in the character of the stepmother Queen played by Julia Roberts, *Mirror Mirror* turns out to be not a typical Hollywood film, reflecting what the Indian-American director and the award-winning costume designer Eiko Ishioka (Japanese), who has worked with the director regularly, have done in it. (Ishioka was posthumously nominated for the Best Costume Design award at the 85<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards for her last work in the film as Atwood did for her work in *Snow White and the Huntsman*.) The film shows signs of South Asian Diaspora at many levels.

*Mirror Mirror* starts with a jingle that sounds like it is taken out of a Bollywood tune as the title in beautifully designed golden letters is shown on screen. Then, on the black-and-white to sepia-tinted screen appears a circular apparatus with a big egg-shaped crystal ball on top, at first hidden under a black lace handkerchief. Queen Clementianna in a golden yellow<sup>25</sup> dress removes the handkerchief and turns the handle of the apparatus to spin the wheel and the crystal ball, in which we can see a graphic image of a red rose. Looking into the spinning crystal ball, the Queen begins the opening narration, claiming that what we are about to hear is her story:

Once upon a time, in a kingdom far, far away, a baby girl was born. Her skin was pure as snow. Her hair was dark as night. They called her *Snow White* -- probably because that was the most pretentious name they could come up with. As fate would have it, *Snow White's* mother died in childbirth. Left on his own...her father spoiled the young girl. He could afford to, of course; he was the king. The king loved his daughter, and all his subjects loved him. The kingdom was a happy place, where people danced and sang day and night. Apparently, no one had a job back then. Just singing and dancing all day and all night. But I digress. The king raised the little girl by himself, grooming her to one day lead. But over time, he realised there were

some things he couldn't teach her. So he sought out a new queen. This queen was the most beautiful woman in the world. She was intelligent and strong. And just to clarify, she was me. And this is my story. Not hers [emphasis added].

While the Queen establishes the film as a parody, interjecting personal, sarcastic comments here and there into the narration, a computer animated version of Snow White's story is portrayed in the crystal ball and onto the screen we see. The animated king can be said to have a subtly Western face, but Snow White's mother and Snow White clearly show Asian features. Snow White's mother, in particular, almost looks like she is wearing a traditional make-up of an actress in a Beijing opera. This opening sequence highlights the magnitude of the matter concerning narrative framework. Framing a narrative is a literary device that commonly functions as a distancing technique. The writer (or the director) distances himself from the narrator, and consequently the readers (or the spectators) are distanced from the narrator. *Mirror Mirror* draws attention to the narrative frame first with the sepia colour and the circular apparatus, for these refer directly to the history of early cinema: in other words, the director of the film makes sure we are watching a film, showing that the ideas in the history of cinematic apparatus, from camera obscura to versions of zoetropes and Edison's kinetoscope, are combined in the gadget. The crystal ball (or the snow ball as it is symbolically held by Snow White in the commercial poster for the film) is going to be our magic lantern, and it seems that Queen Clementianna is authorised to play the role of the master of ceremony<sup>26</sup> who spins the wheel of a cinema of attraction.<sup>27</sup> However, the framing technique makes us question the narrator, and an answer is given at the end of the film when Snow White repeats the exact line the Queen has said to her at the beginning of the story; "[i]t's important to know when you've been beaten, yes?" to which the Queen is mute. Snow White has literally taken the voice away from the Queen. The scene is followed by a shot of the mirror room, where the Mirror Queen who seems to have been looking over the story in the crystal ball concedes, "[s]o, it was Snow White's story, after all," as the crystal ball breaks and its fragments fly apart. A second later, the Queen's secret cottage with the mirror room also collapses into pieces along with the mirror door to the cottage. The flying glass pieces are replaced by a sky full of snow and ice crystals, under which the castle in Snow White's kingdom emerges again. The exterior shot of the fairy tale castle shows the snow being blown away and the sky clearing up, indicating the beginning of a bright new world. After a close-up of Snow White with mischievous eyes who grins amid people's cries of excitement and admiration and the end title with the beautiful castle in the background, follow-ups to the seven dwarfs<sup>28</sup> are shown in the style of Victorian still photography, and the film finally welcomes a big Bollywood-like finale, framed in a golden picture frame, where Snow White sings and leads everybody to dance to "I Believe in Love (Mirror Mirror Mix)," a song by an American girl in the 1970s, covered by an Iranian singer shortly afterwards, and this time arranged with Punjabi rhythm for the film.<sup>29</sup> The particular use of narrative framework combined with the South Asian Diasporic mise-en-scène indicates the shift of power away from Hollywood, as represented by Julia Roberts, one of the highest-paid American actresses who has starred in numerous iconic Hollywood films, and by her American accent and colloquialism in the film, to Bollywood, as signalled by the Bollywood style music and Lily Collins' eyebrows.

Lily Collins has distinctive bushy eyebrows that are even more stressed by what it looks like

the Bollywood-inspired make-up (with strong eyebrows, long eyeliners and eyelashes, and deep and dark eyes and lips) in *Mirror Mirror*. Snow White's costume in the film is also suggestive of the significance of colours in India, where people try to feel better by bringing in vibrant colours when their life is hard and nature rough on them. Her dresses employ a similar colour palette to the Disney Snow White, but with more gorgeous details and shining materials, which contribute to the Bollywood look as well. The Disney princess has three colours on her dress; two shades of blue, yellow, and a dash of red, whereas Tarsem's Snow White basically has two gowns; a beautiful classic gown with a floral (pink rose) themed yellow skirt and an embroidered satin pink torso with white puffed sleeves, which she wears at the beginning of the film, and a dress in two shades of blue with white off shoulder collar, deep saffron sleeves and a matching big saffron bow on the back, which she wears at the end of the film. The change from red to saffron is pregnant, considering saffron is one of India's national colours. In addition to the gowns, Snow White's costume includes the bright yellow cape with a hood, a white ball-gown with a peculiar swan head-dress and wings, and a fighting outfit comprised of a teal blue blouse with black corset and black wide pants. Just as Queen Ravenna's costume reflects the progressions in her character in *Snow White and the Huntsman*, Snow White's costume signals the character's development in *Mirror Mirror*. She has been under house arrest as a child princess in the castle, wearing a classic pastel dress, mute as a swan, and is not aware of the changed state of the townspeople who used to "sing and dance" all the time. On the day of her eighteenth birthday, Margaret, the baker who has been on Snow White's side since she was a child, thinks it is time the child grew up and encourages her to fight against the Queen's suppression:

Do you know why I continue to work for that wretched queen year after year? I do it because I know that one day you are going to take back your kingdom, and I want to be here when that happens. . . . Your father meant for you to inherit his crown. And that woman has the entire kingdom convinced that you're a pathetic shut-in, incapable of leaving the castle. And the worst is, she has you thinking it. . . . Perhaps you need to see for yourself what goes on in your kingdom. The people don't sing and dance any more. They need to see who you really are. And you need to believe [emphasis added].

Claiming her right to the country is directly linked with the issues of her identity and independence. These words begin to sound more like a familiar paradigm of decolonisation as the Bollywood jingle fades in when Snow White goes to look out of the window to see her kingdom far to the south on cue of Margaret's mentioning the fact the people stopped singing and dancing. Having learned that "the queen has destroyed everything [her] father believed in" and plans on more exploitation on account of her lavish parties, Snow White first thinks of seeking help from the prince who is coming to the ball, except that the prince in question is the hopeless unclothed one she had to help in the woods. The relationship between Snow White and the Prince in *Mirror Mirror* works as a parody on traditional gender roles in fairy tales and challenges the masculine hegemony that is emphasised by the male characters in Disney's animations. Snow White is the one who always saves the Prince who even has a masculine<sup>30</sup> name Andrew. She saves him from his humiliating state of being hanged upside down half naked, saves him from the spell he was under with her kiss of true love, and even saves his face before the King in the end. The



unclothing of the Prince deprives him of his role and of the power which goes with it, while Snow White in an active costume fights for herself and for the ones she loves.

Parodies are often used to make social and political commentaries, and the fact that *Mirror Mirror* attempts to change popular beliefs and preconceived notions is made clear in the conversation between Snow White and the Prince when Snow White goes out to fight the Beast, leaving the Prince and the dwarfs locked in the cottage, claiming that "this is [her] fight":

Snow White: You know, all the time locked up in the castle, I did a lot of reading. I read so many stories where the prince saves the princess in the end... I think it's time we changed that ending.

Prince Alcott: No, you're messing with tried-and-true storytelling. It's been focus-grouped and it works. Just let me save you.

And of course, the Prince who has supposedly spoken in behalf of the general public turns out to be wrong: he has to admit that "the princess is more than capable of handling things on her own" when Snow White tries to save his face in front of the King by crediting him for "risk[ing] his life to save [the] kingdom." The reversal of conventional gender roles in the film makes Snow White more appealing to the modern (female) audience, even though she becomes, in the process of her development, a "legally" questionable character as the "leader of the bandits" in the Queen's point of view. Here the film tries further to invert established dynamics by criticising the Queen's one-sided enforcement of values through its treatment of the seven dwarfs. The dwarfs are no longer the merry hardworking gold miners<sup>31</sup> as in the Disney film, but unlawful thieves. Instead of simply chastising them as criminals, *Mirror Mirror* gives them a chance to justify themselves and cast the blames on the Queen. Once legitimate workers, the dwarfs became bandits out of necessity when the Queen expelled all the "undesirables" who do not fit her sense of beauty. Recognising the Queen's mistreatment of "different" people, Snow White cleverly distinguishes what they did from who they are, and tries to right the wrong by returning the gold to the townspeople and claiming that it was all their righteous doings to retrieve the gold from the Queen. Snow White not only transforms the bandits into Robin Hoods (though rather forcefully) but also opens the eyes of the townspeople who had accepted the Queen's prejudiced opinions of someone foreign, and reinstates the Queen's "outcasts" back into the society. The princess who knew nothing about the outside world or even about herself learns of the Queen's tyranny and begins to be a leader of the diverse people through her experiences with the dwarfs. She even becomes able to free the King and the kingdom from the Queen's spell in the end. In *Snow White and the Huntsman*, the main narrative drive is the evil Queen's ravenous desires and Snow White's pursuit of life. It is a stylistic, visually engaging action film, although ideologically it is simply a recycling of the popular tale. On the other hand, the main narrative drive in *Mirror Mirror* is Snow White's development, and the issues dealt in the process of her development in this version of Snow White make the film more than just a spectacular family entertainment, but a political statement in the much effective form of parody.

## HOLLYWOOD GLOBALISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Both Hollywood Snow White films seem to challenge aspects of the established order,

specifically in terms of gender roles, through the variations (from the popular narrative) they deploy, and the most noticeable variation from a woman's perspective would be the shift in the female protagonist's character. Unlike the submissive Disney princess who conforms to the Victorian ideal of "angel in the house," those two films have strong female protagonists who are both a princess and a fighter, for it is almost imperative to have a spirited heroine in order to attract modern female audience. Still, it is hardly appropriate to categorise them as feminist films since the characterisations of the evil Queens undermine whatever feminist ideas they present. Queen Ravenna is portrayed as a cruel fascist, as shown above, and Queen Clementianna<sup>32</sup> is a subject of ridicule in the film from what she says and how she says it to the hilarious beauty treatment with disgusting ingredients, such as birds' droppings and insects. She is mocked for everything she stands for, while the Queen as a character is never fully developed in the narrative: it proves that she merely functions as an embodiment in the film. But this lack of development in her character is due to the work's nature of being a parody, and it is not the same as sending out misogynist notions as Snow White and the Huntsman does. The discrepancies in the feminist approach to the characters in Snow White and the Huntsman indicate the film's stereotypical manipulation of faux feminism as a convenient, commercially profitable ideology, making the film a product of Hollywood hegemony that imposes old-fashioned conservative values on the audience.

The use of British accents in Snow White and the Huntsman is another instance where the film betrays Hollywood globalism. While it is tempting to dismiss it as an aesthetic decision, the very imposition of their views that the practice concerning the use of British and European accents in Hollywood major films reflects is a demonstration of the overbearing Hollywood hegemony, because representations matter. In Snow White and the Huntsman, all the actors including non-British actors attempt<sup>33</sup> to speak with British accents perhaps to comply with the filming locations, and as a result, the American film acquires a European feel. While it must be the intended effect to provide the German fairy tale with a sense of authenticity, the idea of adding a distinctive European flavour to an otherwise American film in essence confirms Hollywood's otherisation of non-Americanness. By shooting the film in Britain and making the actors speak with non-American accents, they exoticise Britain through the unrealistic fantasy film. The same principles are more transparent in numerous Hollywood action and espionage films, where characters with non-American (and many a time English) accents turn out to be the antagonists. From Peter Lorre to Alan Rickman, Hollywood is flooded with villains with "foreign" accents. There certainly are various theories to the reasons and excuses for this kind of typecasting: one would say an English accent (specifically Received Pronunciation) works as a shorthand for intellect and sophistication because Europe has been associated with refinement and culture, and the intelligence and refinement in an antagonist would make the character more threatening; or that in order for the American audience to connect with the protagonist, he must have familiarity; conversely, the villain must be "foreign." Whatever their excuses are, the typecasting of actors with foreign accents reinforces American's discriminatory ideology. Through those British representations, the British accents come to be associated with other-ness, cold-hearted villainy, or non-reality.

On the other side of the same coin, Hollywood often resorts to the linguistic imperialism of

(American) English. This is an ideology that is well manifest in such film as *War Horse* (2011), in which German soldiers on the German soil speak in German-accented English, rather than speaking in German accompanied with English subtitles. The basic idea is that characters must speak English in English speaking films. Although the tendency is not limited to Hollywood films, it has partly to do with the scheme of Hollywood's consumer capitalism, since films with subtitles are generally not well received in Western countries, especially by the younger or illiterate audience. Ironically, they still seem to have felt the need to supplement the required foreignness to the speech with something like a German accent and even with short responses in German.<sup>34</sup> The ideology is parodied in Mel Brooks' *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (1993), where Robin Hood played by an English actor Cary Elwes says, "Unlike some other Robin Hoods, I can speak with an English accent," particularly referring to Kevin Costner's character with an American accent in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991), where, interestingly enough, Alan Rickman plays the Sheriff of Nottingham. *Mirror Mirror* offers a transnational approach to this ideology by deliberately making Julia Roberts as Queen Clementianna speak in an American mode of speech, from pronunciation to colloquialism and delivery. Her exact Americanness, juxtaposed with Asian (foreign) visuals and music, serves as a parody in itself, while illuminating the postcolonial implications of the film. In this perspective, the issue of the narrative framework becomes associated with the politics of diaspora. Starting out the narrative as the Queen's story only to deny it in the end, claiming the story to be Snow White's, is an act of bestowing a voice upon people who have been suppressed or expelled by a dominant power. After the Queen's crystal ball of Hollywood narrative is broken, Snow White, in the close-up at the end of the film, looks at us from the screen. *Mirror Mirror* thus ends with Snow White's glance, suggesting she has the control of the narrative. Through a seemingly American film with an entertaining exotic touch, Tarsem Singh contributes to the discourse of decolonisation, offering a hopeful picture of the world where people who have been deprived of their identity and culture find their voice again.

#### Notes

- 1 . The term "adaptations" here may not be appropriate in some context, depending on the definition of "adaptation" and on how each individual work treats its original, but here it is used as a broad, umbrella term which embraces all works that are based on an existing idea or story to any extent.
- 2 . The four tales are "Rapunzel," "Cinderella," "The Emperor's New Clothes," and "The Billy Goat's Gruff."
- 3 . Both series are currently in their sixth season as of January 2017, although NBC has announced that the sixth season would be the final season for Grimm.
- 4 . Jack Zipes, "Introduction," *The Penguin Book of Western Fairy Tales* (New York: Penguin, 1991) xi-xxx.
- 5 . *Ibid.* xi.
- 6 . *Ibid.* xxv.
- 7 . In the first edition of "Snow White," the Queen, the real birthmother to Snow White, says to the huntsman, "I cannot stand to see Snow White every day. Take her into the great forest, to a wide secluded spot, and kill her. To confirm you have carried out the deed, bring back to me her lungs and liver, which I will cook with salt and eat." And when the huntsman hand a boar's lungs and liver to the Queen, she has "the cook salt them... [and] then [eats] them, all the while thinking she ate the lungs

- and liver of her daughter (emphasis added)." In later versions, the huntsman is to bring back Snow White's heart as a proof of her death, though the Queen still eats the heart.
- 8 . The hair colour and the colour palette of the characters' costumes are quite eloquent when it comes to the analyses of these films, and I will come back to the topic later when I discuss Snow White and the Huntsman and Mirror Mirror.
  - 9 . They are "Hollywood" films in the sense that they are funded and produced by major (Universal for Snow White and the Huntsman) and mini-major (Relativity Media for Mirror Mirror) Hollywood studios at the time of production. Relativity Media filed for bankruptcy in July 2015, from which they emerged in March 2016.
  10. The tag on the DVD package reads, "The stunning reimagining of the classic fairy-tale by The Brothers Grimm. . . . Never before have you heard the story told like this. . . ."
  11. The film is categorised as an American film in terms of the production company (Roth Films) and the primary distribution company (Universal Pictures).
  12. The national and/or racial identities of the participants in the film are identified in the parentheses after a person's name, for they are not irrelevant in the least to the national and transnational nature, and therefore, the cultural politics of the work.
  13. An Irish actor Brian Gleeson plays Gus, the youngest one of the eight dwarfs, who sacrifices himself to save Snow White from an arrow.
  14. This casting decision invited stern criticisms from the disability rights lobby, and caused a protest, arguing the film industry should be casting actors with dwarfism, from the Little People of America.
  15. The beginning of Grimm's "Snow White" (First Edition) goes as follows: "Once upon a time in the middle of winter, when the snowflakes were falling like feathers from the sky, there sat a beautiful Queen sewing in a window, which had a frame of black ebony. As she worked, gazing out on the snow, she pricked her finger with the needle, and three drops of blood fell upon the snow. Seeing how beautiful the red looked on the white snow, the Queen thought to herself, 'Would that I had a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as this frame.' Time passed and soon the Queen had a daughter, whose skin was as white as snow, cheeks as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony, and therefore she was called Snow White." Snow White is characterised solely on account of her looks and there is no mentioning of her inner strength or beauty.
  16. All the subsequent excerpts from the film script of Snow White and the Huntsman are taken from Snow White and the Huntsman, directed by Rupert Sanders, Universal Pictures, 2012, DVD.
  17. The fairy tale is titled "Little Snow White" in later versions of the Grimm collection, and Snow White is seven years old when the stepmother orders a huntsman to take her away into the forest to kill her. Disney based their film on this "Little Snow White," except that they made Snow White older (to be about 14) in order for her to be able to dream of meeting a prince and experience her first love. The age is not mentioned in the first edition of the Grimm collection.
  18. It is important to note, however, that The Huntsman: Winter's War and Snow White and the Huntsman do not share the directors or the writers, and therefore, they may well stand on different premises even though the prequel/sequel is based on the characters from Snow White and the Huntsman. The Huntsman: Winter's War combines the story of Rupert Sanders' 2012 Snow White film with "The Snow Queen" by Hans Christian Andersen, and the Snow White character played by Kristen Stewart only appears through the use of archive footage.
  19. Interestingly, the narrator in The Huntsman: Winter's War, the Snow White spin-off film which supposedly concentrates on the character of Huntsman, is not Eric but a third-person narrator played by Liam Neeson.
  20. Credited as Tarsem Singh Dhandwar.
  21. Data taken from the Internet Movie Database. 10 Jan 2017.
  22. All the subsequent excerpts from the film script of Mirror Mirror is taken from Mirror Mirror, directed

by Tarsem Singh, Relativity Media, 2012, DVD.

23. A quote from the character descriptions in "Mirror Mirror (film)," Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 27 Dec 2016. Web. 10 Jan. 2017.
24. This makes the casting choice an important part of the film's analysis.
25. She is the only one presented in colour in the opening sequence. Other things are all in sepia.
26. The scene might also be an act of homage to Max Ophuls' 1950 black-and-white film *La Ronde*.
27. The term "cinema of attraction" refers back to Tom Gunning's use in describing early black-and-white cinema in the 1900s and 1910s before narrative cinema. However, it is intentionally used here to suggest its shared quality with Bollywood cinema.
28. One of the dwarfs in *Mirror Mirror* is named Will Grimm, and the follow-up tells us "he wrote a book of fairy tales." This is another example of the inversions achieved through the film: Grimm is in the story he has collected.
29. According to Calutti's article on the quest for the song's copyright, Tarsem Singh knew the version sung by the Iranian singer Googoosh and practically begged one of the executive producers Tucker Tooley to use the song after the test audiences found the song unfavourable.
30. Andrew is an English form of the Greek name *Ανδρέας* (Andreas), which was derived from *ανδρειος* (andreios), which means "manly" or "masculine," being a derivative of *ανηρ* (aner), a "man."
31. They are examples of capitalistic Hollywood, where hardworking people are rewarded.
32. Her name which suggests mercy is a mockery, too.
33. Of course this is more likely a directorial choice, rather than each actor's interpretation of the character.
34. This also happens in the American-German film *The Book Thief* (2013). Most of the main characters in the film are played by non-American actors and they speak in English with European accents, sometimes mixing short responses like "ja" and "nein" in German.

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