

# Deconstructing the Gender Stereotypes of the Villainess in Dan Brown's *Inferno*

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**Abstract.** This study intends to contribute to the existing research about modern female villains by delving deeper into the ways that represent the stereotypical pattern in film and literature. This article examines Sienna Brooks, the primary antagonist in Dan Brown's novel *Inferno* and its film version. She was Bertrand Zobrist's lover and resolved to finish his work by unleashing his *Inferno* virus on humanity. *Vis-à-vis*, articulating feminist momentum through Sienna's antagonism to the hero highlights the boundaries of binary oppositions, challenging literary critics and questioning gender bias in literature. Female villains have empowered characters because they are often multidimensional, stronger, and more complex than female heroines, instrumental to the story's narrative. Brown's block characterisations make inferences about Sienna Brooks both explicitly and implicitly, replicating Sienna's thinking style or how she thinks about the world in her mind. The conceptual portrayal of the feminine villain narrative reflects the evolving role of women in plot construction, highlighting the need for nuanced and equitable gender representation in movies.

**Keywords:** Female Villainy; Feminism; Gender Stereotypes; Film Adaptation.

## Dano Browno „Inferno“ piktadarių lyčių stereotipų dekonstravimas

**Santrauka.** Šiuo tyrimu siekiama prisidėti prie anksčiau atliktų darbų apie šiuolaikines moteris piktadares, giliau analizuojant, kaip jos reprezentuoja stereotipinį modelį kine ir literatūroje. Straipsnyje aptariama Sienna Brooks – pagrindinė antagonistė Dano Browno romane „Inferno“ ir jo ekranizacijoje. Būdamą Bertrano Zobristo meilužė, ji pasiryžta užbaigti jo pradėtą veiklą, paleisdama į žmoniją „Inferno“ virusą. Analizuojant feministinį impulsą, atsiskleidžiantį per Siennos antagonizmą herojui, išryškėja binarinių opozicijų ribos, metamas iššūkis literatūros kritikams ir kvestionuojamas lyčių šališkumas. Moterys piktadarės dažnai pasižymi daugialypių, sudėtingu charakteriu, todėl įgyja daugiau galios nei moterys herojės; tai svariai prisideda prie istorijos pasakojimo. Tiesioginiuose ir netiesioginiuose Browno veikėjos aprašymuose atsiskleidžia Siennos pasaulėžiūra bei mąstysena. Toks moters piktadarės naratyvo vaizdavimas parodo kintantį moterų vaidmenį siužeto konstravime, išryškindamas niuansuoto ir objektyvaus lyčių vaizdavimo kine poreikį.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** moteris piktadarė; feminizmas; lyčių stereotipai; filmų adaptacija.

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## 1. Introduction

Movies are literary products we encounter daily, and people embrace their artistic expression to convey their emotions and moral principles. Authors can influence readers' perceptions of gender and contest established norms via the development of characters and tales. People develop a collection of beliefs on femininity and masculinity, designating gender roles based on a person's sex. Nevertheless, it is evident that several male characters were excused for reprehensible conduct, but female characters were often reviled for the ambiguous transgression of being seen as challenging. Female antagonists, specifically, have been shown as defying societal conventions, contesting patriarchal frameworks, and being a menace to masculinity. Historically, the dread towards women has shown in several ways, including biblical portrayals of not ideal figures such as Eve and Jezebel, mythical images of female evils such as Medusa and the sirens, and historical representations of perilous women like Cleopatra and these characters often touch on issues of morality, power, and sexuality. The femme fatale, a prominent stereotype of feminine villainy, exemplifies the subversion of conventional female identities and the denial of moral goodness. However, the representation of female antagonists has advanced, with contemporary films providing more complex and empathetic portrayals. Incorporating such characters might elicit critical views on gender dynamics, challenging conventional tropes and expanding the parameters of gender equality in narrative portrayal. Villains, as representations of pure malevolence, provide a distinct perspective for deconstructing these assumptions.

Beverly Gross states that “the metamorphosis of bitch from the context of sexuality (a carnal woman, a promiscuous woman) to temperament (an angry woman, a malicious woman) to power (a domineering woman, a competitive woman) is a touchstone to the changing position of women through this century” (Gross, 1994, p. 146). While some varieties of feminine malevolence are identified in the literature, many of them intersect with one another. In addition to being widely depicted in literature, cinema, art, and history, the femme fatale is possibly the most pervasive representation of female evil since it incorporates a range of subcategories of feminine malevolence. Female villains, irrespective of their manifestations, are predominantly shown as invaders of masculine identity and as contrasts to morals and goodness (Guerrero, 2016).

Moreover, the societal gap between the two genders in cinema is further illustrated by the selection of the film's narrative protagonist. The analysis from San Diego State's Centre for the Study of Women in Television and Film indicates that in 2022, women appeared in around one-third of produced films while being almost half of the global population (Caruso, 2024). While the statistics indicate a rise in the allocation of main parts to women relative to prior years, they concurrently demonstrate that, in the majority of produced films, the protagonist is mostly male. Consequently, this production strategy presupposes that the audience is exclusively male.

Dan Brown's *Inferno* serves as an ideal narrative for deconstructing the gender stereotype of villainess, offering a multilayered portrayal of Sienna Brooks. Traditionally,

female villains are depicted as manipulative, emotionally unstable, or defined by their relationships with men, but *Inferno* challenges and reinforces these tropes simultaneously. Sienna's character is introduced as a brilliant, compassionate doctor, aiding Robert Langdon in his quest to prevent a global catastrophe. However, as the plot unfolds, she is revealed to be an accomplice to Zobrist's apocalyptic vision, embodying the archetype of the seductive and duplicitous femme fatale.

*Inferno* serves as an incisive study of Sienna's intricate motivations, shaped by childhood trauma, intellectual acumen, and a profound ideological synergy with Zobrist. Her childhood trauma, intellectual superiority, and ideological alignment with Zobrist add depth to her character, subverting the stereotype of a villainess driven purely by malice or vanity. At the same time, the narrative ultimately reduces her nature by linking her actions to her emotional vulnerabilities and romantic devotion to Zobrist, reinforcing patriarchal notions of women as overly sentimental and morally ambiguous.

By presenting Sienna as a character torn between altruism and extremism, *Inferno* provides fertile ground for analysing how contemporary narratives can both challenge and perpetuate gender stereotypes, especially in the portrayal of female antagonists.

## 2. Methodology and theories to deconstruct gender bias

This research analyses the gender stereotype of the female villain in the film '*Inferno*.' The study used a descriptive qualitative research methodology, using Nick Lacey's (2000) structural narrative analysis to explore the narrative. A content analysis is conducted throughout the film. Qualitative research is especially appropriate for this subject since it facilitates a comprehensive analysis of the texts and offers a profound insight into the intricacies of gender representations. A varied array of modern literature was analysed to enable a thorough examination of gender roles and stereotypes. A methodical strategy was used to discern pertinent texts. Comprehensive literature research was performed using both scholarly databases and well-recognised literary sources. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined to guarantee that only pertinent literature examining of the representation of gender and the reinforcement of stereotypes in literary works, highlighting how authors and their creations either uphold or contest societal norms, was chosen for analysis.

The first study observed is the paper titled "Gender Politics in the Projection of 'Disney' Villains" (Sharmin & Sattar, 2018). This paper explores the disparate gender roles depicted through villainous characters, focusing on how Sienna Brooks in Dan Brown's *Inferno* and its film adaptation embodies and challenges stereotypical representations of women in literature and cinema. Disney has created numerous unforgettable villains since it has been making memorable characters for almost 80 years and is one of the most influential media companies in the world. However, it is interesting to note that the way men and women are portrayed as villains is frequently in doubt. The study discovers that the female villains gradually distance themselves from their dainty heroines, and their expertly designed creepiness depends on a clear break from stereotypically gendered traits. As a result, the contrast between the male and female villains is intriguing. It presents a

problematic message about differences and gender that is continuously being communicated to Disney's young audience.

"Disney's Portrayal of Women: An Analysis of Female Villains and Princesses" (Wellman, 2020) provides an insightful examination of how Disney's media impacts societal perceptions, particularly in shaping ideas about gender roles. By analysing eight Disney films, the study investigates the development of gendered narratives and their societal implications. This research contrasts male and female characters in Disney films, exploring key concepts such as character relationships, appearances, and belief systems. Highlighting recurring negative stereotypes and Disney's attempts to subvert them, the study underscores the long-lasting effects of such portrayals on public perceptions of women in media and promotes awareness of these issues in contemporary culture.

Amanda Putnam in her chapter "Mean Ladies: Transgendered Villains in Disney Films" in the book *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability* (2013) reflects on her hesitation to show a Disney movie to her daughter due to concerns about the potential reinforcement of harmful gender stereotypes. Disney often portrays its female characters as "mean ladies," a stereotype subtly imparted to young audiences. Princess characters are frequently depicted in form-fitting and revealing dresses, while female villains are characterised as unattractive or unconventional in appearance, perpetuating negative stereotypes and instilling fear in children.

Feminist literary theory originated within the feminist movement and analyses literature through a gendered lens. Feminist theory extends the criticism of masculine dominance and ideology by integrating aspects of psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and deconstruction to examine the influence of gender on the creation, interpretation, and distribution of literary works. Initially focused on the politics surrounding women's authorship and their representations in literature, feminist theory, representation theory, and gaze theory have recently expanded to explore concepts of gender and sexuality across various disciplines, including film studies, geography, and economics (Mandeville, 2023).

Psychological factors, familial conditions, and socio-cultural influences affect stereotypical thinking in individuals, hence reinforcing gender biases and hindering women's progress in media. This paper discusses theoretical shifts in the literature and media to better understand gender stereotypes. Several theories from literary, gender and film studies provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the causes and implications of contextualising female villains within the evolving paradigms of gender representation in narratives.

### 3. Discussion

Gender and racial stereotypes in movies remain persistent, though they are undergoing a gradual transformation. Dan Brown's portrayal of Sienna as a feminine villain reflects a deliberate narrative focus, granting her character a distinct thematic significance. However, her depiction in the novel reveals underlying elements of entrenched gender bias. This stereotypical chauvinism manifests in the way her motivations and actions are framed,

potentially reinforcing conventional gender norms despite the complexity of her character. Such representations call for a critical analysis of how female villains are constructed within literary and cinematic narratives. Still, in the movie, Howard somewhat adjusts the material with Sienna, i.e., changing the route of her scheme, such as Sienna's eventual death in the climax where she truly wants Zobrist's quest to be achieved. To influence more favourable images and be more inclusive to the national audience, the audience's demographics and genuine preferences should be considered more seriously in production decisions. Audience preference for specific scenes in films does not necessarily denote a disregard for elements such as action, adventure, hyper-masculinity, or tragic narratives. Rather, it reflects an underlying desire for balanced and relatable storytelling that normalises and integrates diverse perspectives, thereby enhancing the realism of cinematic experiences. Female representation emerges as a pivotal strategy to disrupt entrenched cinematic stereotypes and provide a more nuanced reflection of societal realities. When female characters are depicted with depth and authenticity, they not only challenge conventional portrayals but also contribute to a more equitable narrative framework. Genres such as Romance and Horror have historically demonstrated a relatively greater prevalence of female representation, underscoring their potential to address gender disparities and advance inclusive character depictions in film, while genres such as Action and Crime were found lacking in female appearance. This phenomenon, however, can be expounded by the gender preference for genre based on the societal gender role.

### ***1. Stereotyping the representation of Sienna in the movie***

The stereotype of female characters as villains is less prevalent than that of nurturing, benevolent women since society often favours a loving disposition in women (Connell, 2005). Ultimately, the presumption emerges when women do not conform to expected feminine behaviour, they are deemed monstrous. The notion of a monster, specifically Monstrous women, as articulated by Rosi Braidotti (1994) in her work *Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, pertains to the intrinsic essence of entities considered to be a subordinate or inferior status, thereby diverging from societal norms of what is deemed "normal." The outcome is 'extreme othering,' a profound relationship whereby those designated as monsters are unable to live harmoniously with society or adhere to societal expectations.

Viewing Sienna as a villain, particularly as a female antagonist in the film, demands the use of Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation, which elucidates how cinematic narratives and visuals are infused with ideology and how such ideologies may be contested. This theory is especially effective in assessing Sienna's character since it reveals whether her portrayal as a villainess conforms to or contests traditional conventions around women and authority. In the narrative structure of *Inferno*, Sienna serves as both a helper and an antagonist, reflecting her dual role in advancing the plot. Narratology highlights how her transformation from Langdon's ally to Zobrist's accomplice creates suspense and reinforces her complexity. The novel offers a more in-depth understanding of her motives,

but the film simplifies her character for dramatic purposes, diminishing her complexity. This structural alteration in the film connects her more closely with conventional evil characteristics, weakening the complex depiction seen in the novel.

Representation theory proposes that cinematic representations are neither neutral or objective; rather, they are formed via processes of selection, emphasis, and interpretation. Sienna is shown as a complex girl whose intellect and fortitude first confront conventional gender stereotypes. Nonetheless, her definitive position as Zobrist's partner supports the views of women being emotionally volatile and deceptive. The film accentuates her physical attractiveness and grace, according to the archetype of the femme fatale. Hall's theory elucidates how Sienna's portrayal is influenced by societal expectations of powerful women, especially villainesses, as duplicitous or ethically dubious characters. This paper employs the concepts of otherness, stereotyping, exclusion, and power, as delineated by Hall, to analyse representative practices that elucidate the second principal issue: the atypical portrayal of Sienna as a female villain.

Sienna is presented as a kind, intellectual lady as well as a cunning villainess. Feminist theory underlines how her initial depiction as Langdon's ally conforms to the archetype of the supporting female sidekick. As the story unfolds, her malevolence is shown, and she is reduced to Zobrist's collaborator, defined by her association with him rather than her own identity. Tzvetan Todorov's framework of equilibrium-disruption-restoration, alongside Gérard Genette's narrative techniques such as chronology, focalisation, and point of view, offers instruments for examining the introduction, development, and revelation of Sienna's character as a villain, emphasising the narrative's manipulation of audience perceptions of her. Although her intellect and tenacity have the potential to establish her as a feminist heroine, both the novel and the movie undermine her individuality by associating her acts with emotional pain and love attachment, so promoting the image of the emotionally unstable woman. Freud's concepts of unresolved trauma affecting adult behaviour are appropriate, since Sienna adopts Zobrist's philosophy, attempting to reconcile her internal struggle with exterior actions. Lacan's notion of the "Mirror Stage" is evident in her veneration of Zobrist, who serves as a reflection of her aspirations and convictions, underscoring the human need to seek affirmation and identity via external connections (Lacan, 1949). Her villainy is a psychological reaction to her unsolved internal conflicts, rather than a mere malevolent intention, confounding her moral alignment. Intersectionality elucidates the intricacies of identity, demonstrating how social hierarchies affect depiction and treatment in narratives. This theory elucidates Sienna's character, examining the influence of her gender, intelligence, and socio-economic standing on her depiction and behaviour in *Inferno*.

## ***2. Analysing the Film's portrayal of Gaze theory***

Audience preference for specific scenes in films cannot be fully understood without considering the implications of Laura Mulvey's (1989) Gaze Theory, which situates the concept of the 'male gaze' firmly within the domain of cinema. Mulvey argues that mainstream

cinema often positions women as objects of visual pleasure, framed through the lens of male desire, thereby reinforcing patriarchal ideologies. Audience engagement with cinematic elements such as action, hypermasculinity, or tragic narratives often reflects the dominance of this male-oriented perspective. However, the evolving representation of female characters challenges this traditional framework, introducing narratives that disrupt the male gaze and foster a more balanced depiction of gender dynamics. By normalising diverse perspectives, particularly through multidimensional female representation, films can transcend the constraints of stereotypical portrayals and offer a more authentic reflection of societal realities. Through such representations, the cinematic space becomes a site for deconstructing entrenched gender hierarchies and advancing more inclusive storytelling.

For Mulvey, “it is the presence of the female that defines the patriarchal order of the society as well as male psychology of thought” (Mulvey, 1989, p. 14). “What counts is what the heroine provokes; or rather, what she represents. She is the one who inspires love or fear in the hero, in herself; a woman has not the slightest importance” (Mulvey, 1989, p. 14). Mulvey’s essay addresses critical concerns such as the male gaze, fetishism, objectification, and spectatorship, which are important to highlight in any feminist film studies. Mulvey used psychoanalysis and gaze theory to analyse this process of objectification of women in her seminal work “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975). The theories highlighted how preconceptions based on class, culture, sexuality, and other factors colour our perceptions and how this seemingly innocuous behaviour affects the target of our gaze. Films should not be perceived merely as harmless entertainment. Instead, she advocates for a critical approach to film analysis that considers the historical, social, and ideological contexts of its production and reception. Mulvey argues that cinema operates as a cultural text shaped by patriarchal structures, which perpetuate gendered power dynamics through visual and narrative techniques. She underscores the importance of dissecting how a film is constructed, who creates it, the socio-political circumstances of its creation, and how audiences interpret it. This multidimensional critique shifts focus from passive consumption to an active interrogation of the gaze, ideology, and representation embedded in cinematic texts.

From the understanding of the Gaze Theory in John Berger’s seminal work *Ways of Seeing* (1972), audiences often find themselves empathising with the villain’s motives, as they are encouraged to view the unfolding narrative from the antagonist’s perspective. This perspective can make the villain’s actions appear genuine or even justifiable within the story’s framework. However, such narrative escapism – offering temporary relief from the present crisis – does not alter the trajectory of inevitable consequences, symbolising how unresolved issues can lead to future disasters. This dynamic invites viewers to reflect on the moral ambiguities and broader implications of the antagonist’s actions. Sienna’s decision to align with her late lover Bertrand Zobrist, despite the catastrophic implications of his vision, challenges the traditional moral framework of humanitarianism. From a humanitarian perspective, her actions appear unconvincing as they involve endorsing a plan that threatens the lives of countless individuals. However, when viewed through the lens of predictive futurism, Sienna’s choices reflect a deeper concern for the long-term survival



of humanity, which Zobrist believed could only be secured by addressing overpopulation. This duality in her characterisation underscores the complexities of her motives, situating her actions within the broader ethical debate of ends versus means.

Additionally, her portrayal in the novel as emotionally driven, vulnerable, and manipulated by a male figure perpetuates the gender stereotype of women as secondary to men's narratives. This representation aligns with societal expectations of female subservience, reinforcing a patriarchal lens rather than allowing for her character's independent moral agency to emerge fully. The tension between her personal motives and societal perceptions of her actions offers a critique of how gender stereotypes influence the interpretation of moral complexity in female characters. The feminist propulsion within Sienna's characterisation has captivated readers, particularly through her portrayal as sly and morally ambiguous. While both Zobrist and Sienna exhibit villainy, Sienna's depiction as a female antagonist uniquely challenges traditional feminine archetypes, representing a significant departure from established norms. Female villainy, as portrayed in her character, not only threatens the liberation and evolution of traditional feminine roles but also destabilises the structures of masculinity and patriarchy, highlighting the anxieties surrounding female power.

Moreover, Barbara Creed (1993), in *The Monstrous-Feminine*, explores the depiction of women as both transgressive and empowering figures, noting that female villains often embody a complex interplay of fear, desire, and power. This duality reflects the societal tension between viewing women as nurturing figures and as disruptive agents of change. In Dan Brown's *Inferno*, Sienna embodies these complexities: while her actions initially align with villainy – betrayal, manipulation, and a willingness to unleash the virus – her motivations are ultimately revealed as rooted in a moral concern for humanity's future. In the novel, her decision to destroy the virus at the end subverts her villainy, aligning her with a feministic intent. However, the film adaptation diverges by maintaining her determination to release the virus, preserving her role as an unyielding antagonist. Sienna's depiction, fluctuating between villainy and moral intricacy, critiques the binary portrayals of women in literature and movies. The incorporation of intersection contextualises her character within a wider historical and sociological framework, highlighting the interaction between gender norms, societal expectations, and the changing representations of female authority.

Sienna is an antivillain in the novel, despite her role as the major adversary, because she just used everyone, including Langdon, to get to the *Inferno* virus and destroy it. This is spared in the film since she is a full-fledged villain intent on carrying on her late lover's legacy of spreading the virus. These reflections emerge at a transitional moment, embodying the ethos of an era where the new – particularly feminine perspectives – diverge significantly from traditional norms. Sienna's actions and accomplishments challenge traditional gender constructs by blurring the boundaries between stereotypical masculine and feminine roles. Her portrayal as a villain is as impactful as any male antagonist, emphasising the complexity of her character beyond mere 'masculine eminence' or reliance on violence. Rather than merely replicating masculine traits, Sienna's rationalisation of her villainy invites a deeper theoretical engagement with the deconstruction of gender norms,



illustrating how her motivations and actions reflect a shift in the narrative representation of power and morality across genders.

Anneke Smelik, in her article “Feminist Film Theory,” states, “The narrative structure of traditional cinema establishes the male character as active and powerful: he is the agent around whom the dramatic action unfolds and the look gets organised. The female character is passive and powerless: she is the object of desire for the male character(s)” (Smelik, 2019). In the end, the absence of male characters would render the film ineffective, thereby prompting the female subject to seek femininity via the appeasement of the male character. Sienna’s status as a prosperous, educated white lady uniquely situates her in the story. Her intellect and access to Zobrist’s riches confer authority upon her; nonetheless, her gender renders her susceptible to conventional villainess stereotypes. Intersectionality elucidates how her gender interacts with her privilege, influencing her representation – her genius is recognised but shown as dangerous due to her psychological turmoil and allegiance to Zobrist. This portrayal undermines her uniqueness, promoting patriarchal stereotypes that identify assertive women as menacing.

### ***3. Contextualising Sienna’s Villainess***

In philosophical discourse and artistic representation, the concept of beauty is frequently epitomised by the image of a young woman, often idealised in paintings and sculptures as the quintessence of aesthetic perfection. Conversely, ugliness has historically been aligned with depictions of villainy, particularly in female antagonists, where exaggerated or distorted physical traits are employed to signify moral depravity or societal deviation. Umberto Eco’s book *On Ugliness* (2007) portrays evil villainess and gives an overview of ugliness in European art from the Classical Era until 1950. The portrayal of female villains in visual and literary narratives is often influenced by hegemonic beauty norms, a concept deeply explored in Umberto Eco’s *On Ugliness*. Eco argues that ugliness, as perceived in cultural contexts serves as a counterpoint to idealised beauty, symbolising moral corruption or deviance. This dynamic is particularly evident in the depiction of female villains, where physical appearance is frequently exaggerated or stylised to convey inner malevolence. In the case of Sienna from Dan Brown’s *Inferno*, her character’s physicality in both the novel and its film adaptation deviates from traditional ideals of feminine beauty, reflecting a deliberate choice to emphasise her intellectual strength and moral ambiguity over superficial aesthetics.

Unlike male villains, whose appeal is rarely tethered to their physical traits, female antagonists are often subjected to visual scrutiny that aligns with gendered expectations of beauty and morality. Sienna’s characterisation challenges these norms by presenting a figure whose motivations and actions, rather than her appearance, define her villainy. While Zobrist is the architect of the outbreak, it is Sienna who drives his mission forward, embodying the narrative tension between ethical dilemmas and individual agency. This approach critiques the cultural association of physical traits with moral values, urging audiences to focus on the complexity of character rather than surface-level attributes.

By framing Sienna's portrayal within the context of Eco's discourse, her character transcends simplistic binaries of beauty and ugliness, inviting a nuanced exploration of the intersections between gender, morality, and societal perceptions of appearance.

Every villain perceives themselves as the hero of their own story. Sienna, despite her villainy, embodies feminine values, channelling her love for Zobrist and her unwavering determination to achieve a broader humanitarian goal through her acts of violence. Unlike male villains, whose motivations often stem from selfish or egocentric desires, female villains like Sienna operate from a more universal premise – one rooted in ideals that, though potentially at odds with justice and law, resonate with broader societal or humanitarian concerns. For instance, Sienna's actions, while extreme, are driven by her belief in population control as a means to avert global catastrophe, positioning her as a morally complex antagonist.

This complexity is further revealed through the depth of her characterisation. Readers connect with Sienna based on how much insight they gain into her internal motivations and emotional struggles. As more layers of her thoughts and rationale are uncovered, her character shifts from a mere antagonist to a multidimensional figure, eliciting empathy despite her actions. This nuanced portrayal challenges traditional perceptions of villainy by intertwining ethical dilemmas with emotional authenticity, offering a fresh lens through which to examine gendered narratives in villainous roles.

Literature often casts women as emblematic of resilience, enduring pain and loss with quiet strength – an interpretation that transcends essentialism to explore profound human fortitude. Sienna takes the extremity of villainy; she makes herself bald to disguise herself and progress on her path to the fulfilment of the Prophecy. Sienna is compulsive in her thoughts of progression in achieving the ultimate of Zobrist, saving the human race from extinction. After Zobrist's murder, Sienna did not give up; instead, he focused more on his ways and started analysing his path, becoming more of him.

Deconstruction challenges the notion of her as purely a villainess. Her intent to save humanity through radical means contrasts with Langdon's traditional moral stance, creating a duality where her "evil" is a reflection of her deeper altruistic goals. By veiling her ruthlessness with elegance and intelligence, the narrative simultaneously upholds and subverts gender stereotypes.

#### 4. Conclusion

The reception of female characters in *Inferno* reflects a nuanced negotiation of traditional gender roles, often aligning with traits historically associated with masculinity. While Sienna's character assumes radical roles that challenge established norms, her narrative transcends binary classifications of heroism by blending attributes traditionally viewed as masculine – such as strength and decisiveness – with those perceived as feminine, like compassion and intuition (Bewley, 2015). This amalgamation disrupts rigid stereotypes, highlighting the evolution of gender representation in literature and film. However, the portrayal still grapples with cultural expectations, as Sienna's actions are ultimately framed

by her emotional vulnerabilities, reinforcing certain patriarchal notions. The narrative demonstrates the complexity of multidimensional female villains, where their motives and actions defy simplistic categorisations. Rather than reducing these characters to symbols of evil or embodiments of gender ideals, they exemplify the intricate interplay between individual agency and societal constraints. In contemporary storytelling, female characters increasingly reflect diverse identities, yet narratives often underscore their roles as inherently tied to their gender. To advance feminist discourse, it is essential to explore these portrayals critically, emphasising their cultural significance in reshaping societal norms and expanding our understanding of gendered power dynamics.

Future research could explore the portrayal of female villains across novels and their film adaptations, focusing on narrative and aesthetic shifts. Studies on intersectionality, incorporating race, class, and sexuality, can deepen understanding of villainous complexity. Integrating feminist theories like Judith Butler's performativity or Bell Hooks' oppositional gaze could expand critical frameworks. Audience reception and socio-political influences on gendered antagonists warrant exploration, while a diachronic study of female villains' evolution could contextualise their roles in storytelling and gender politics.

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