Universidade de Aveiro Departamento de Línguas e Culturas
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Cláudia Susana Tavares Rodrigues

Reflexos e Reflexões Femininas nos Contos de Fadas: *A Bela e o Monstro* e *A Branca de Neve e os Sete Anões*

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Feminine/ Feminist Reflections on Fairy Tales

Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Estudos Ingleses, realizada sob a orientação científica da Dra. Maria Aline Salgueiro Seabra Ferreira, Professora do Departamento de Línguas e Culturas da Universidade de Aveiro.

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agradecimentos

Nos últimos meses tenho explorado as interligações entre o conto oral, o conto de fadas literário, e o conto de fadas como filme, e grande parte desta tese resulta da minha interpretação dos diversos livros e artigos que li e da troca de ideias que tive neste período. Agradeço a colaboração dos professores David Callahan e Anthony Barker, que sempre me apoiaram durante o curso de Mestrado. Em todo o meu percurso recebi várias sugestões acerca do que ler e como ler, as quais segui de diversas formas; por estas sugestões agradeço, em especial, à minha orientadora, Doutora Maria Aline Salgueiro Seabra Ferreira.

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A presente tese foi escrita para dirigir e expressar o meu interesse relacionado com a socialização das crianças, o impacto dos contos de fadas em crianças e adultos, e o futuro desenvolvimento dos contos de fadas enquanto filmes. Simultaneamente, o meu interesse pelo conto de histórias aumentou, e eu procurei explorar o renascimento do conto de histórias em geral e a sua relação com o efeito da indústria da cultura na história. Como resultado da análise da trajectória histórica do conto de fadas e do conto de fadas literário, este estudo move-se desde o século dezasseis até ao presente, entre diferentes culturas e sociedades. No final, espero que as sequências dos meus argumentos estejam elaboradas de forma a clarificar porquê eu acredito que os contos de fadas, em todas as suas formas, têm um significado tão profundo na nossa procura da felicidade.

resumo

Analisar alguns contos de fadas como *A Bela e o Monstro* e *A Branca de Neve e os Sete Anões* sob a perspectiva do feminismo moderno é como rever os paradigmas que formam as nossas expectativas românticas e ilustrar ambiguidades psicológicas que frequentemente confundem as mulheres contemporâneas. Retratos de adolescentes à espera e sonhando, padrões de encanto, e o romantismo do casamento contribuem para o poder dos contos de fadas. Contudo, tais fantasias exaltam a incapacidade das heroínas em agir independentemente, a confiança na salvação exterior e a ligação ao pai ou a um príncipe. Apesar de muitos(as) leitores(as) reconhecerem elementos de fantasia óbvios, eles(elas) por vezes ainda se identificam com os heróis e especialmente com as heroínas. Inconscientemente, as mulheres podem transferir dos contos de fadas para o mundo real normas culturais que exaltam a passividade, dependência e auto-sacrifício como virtudes femininas. No fundo, os contos de fadas perpetuam o status quo patriarcal, fazendo a subordinação feminina parecer um destino desejável e ao qual é impossível escapar.

É esta perspectiva feminina e de crítica feminista que eu pretendo expor na minha tese de mestrado, abordando a importância que os contos de fadas continuam a ter hoje, em pleno século XXI, não só na educação das crianças como no comportamento dos adultos. Nesta tese, faço um breve resumo explanando como os contos de fadas surgiram há vários séculos atrás e como eles evoluíram até aos nossos dias em várias versões, com perspectivas diversas. O meu intuito é analisar a forma como os contos de fadas, por um lado nos podem influenciar positivamente, mostrando-nos o que é o bem e o mal, e por outro lado nos podem influenciar negativamente pois apresentam-nos os comportamentos “socialmente” aceites e esperados das mulheres. Nos contos de fadas, as mulheres são sempre representadas como madrastas e bruxas más ou então como princesas meigas, passivas e dependentes da imagem masculina (pai ou príncipe) para serem felizes. É esta representação da imagem feminina que eu pretendo explorar e analisar, expondo o meu ponto de vista de como os contos de fadas continuam a representar modelos comportamentais considerados adequados ao sexo feminino e a espelhar uma imagem feminina que ainda hoje é aceite e vista como a mais adequada – a imagem da mulher submissa, passiva e à espera do seu príncipe encantado para a salvar e lhe trazer a felicidade tão ambicionada.

abstract

To analyse some fairy tales such as *Beauty and the Beast* and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* from the perspective of modern feminism is like revising the paradigms which form our romantic expectations and illustrate psychological ambiguities that frequently confuse contemporary women. Portraits of adolescents waiting and dreaming, patterns of enchantment, and the romanticism of marriage contribute to the power of fairy tales. However, such fantasies praise the heroines' incapacity to act independently, the reliance on exterior rescue and the binding to the father or to a prince. Although many readers recognise obvious elements of fantasy, they sometimes still identify themselves with the heroes and especially with the heroines. Unconsciously, women can transfer from the fairy tales to the real world cultural norms, which exalt passivity, dependency and self-sacrifice as feminine virtues. Intrinsically, fairy tales perpetuate the male status quo, making female subordination seem a desirable fate from which it is impossible to escape.

It is this feminine perspective and feminist criticism that I intend to expose in my thesis, touching on the importance that fairy tales still have today, in the 21st century, not only on child rearing but also on the adults' behaviour. In this thesis, I briefly explain how fairy tales emerged several centuries ago and how they evolved until our time in several versions, with several perspectives. My purpose is to analyse how fairy tales, on the one hand can influence us positively, showing us what is good and what is evil, and on the other hand, can influence us negatively because they present us with the "socially" accepted behaviours expected from women. In fairy tales, women are almost always represented as stepmothers and bad witches or as sweet, passive princesses dependent on the male image (father or prince) in order to be happy. It is this representation of female image that I intend to explore and analyse, showing my point of view of how fairy tales continue to represent behavioural models considered adequate to the female sex and to mirror a female image which is still accepted and seen as the most adequate – the image of a submissive, passive woman waiting for her prince charming to save her and bring her the desired happiness.

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Introduction

The term *fairy tale* is nebulous and often used to embrace myth and folk tale. If we look up in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* the term *Fairy Tale*, it is defined as "a story about fairies and other magical people; a story or account that is hard to believe, especially one that is intended to deceive". It was in the French salons that the term *Fairy Tale* (*Conte de fée*) was coined – a misleading label because many of the stories falling under it do not contain creatures called "fairies". They are wonder tales, or Märchen, about ordinary men and women in a world invested with magic. Fairy tale, as a derogatory term, implies fantasy, escapism, invention and the unreliable consolations of romance.

How did literary fairy tales originate and how did they spread? There are numerous theories about the origins of the fairy tale, but none have provided conclusive proof about the original development of the literary fairy tale. It is almost impossible to identify such proof because, as Jack Zipes points out, the literary "fairy tale is similar to a mysterious biological species that appeared at one point in history" (Zipes, 2001: XI) and has evolved from the stories of the oral tradition, in a process of adaptation, in the different cultures of the people who spread the oral tales.

Storytelling is a pre-eminently feminine occupation. Telling fairy tales has been considered a "domestic art" at least since Plato referred to the "old wives' tales" told by governesses, grandmothers and nurses to amuse or to frighten children. Although virtually all the national collections of fairy tales compiled in the nineteenth century were the work of men, the tales themselves were attributed to women narrators. The woman appears as the natural storyteller through her traditional position in the family dating from classical antiquity.

A good example of the drastic change of the folk tale for aristocratic and bourgeois audiences is "Beauty and the Beast". The transformation of an ugly beast into a saviour as a motif in folklore can be traced to primitive fertility rites in which virgins and youths were sacrificed to appease the appetite and win the favour of a famished dragon or serpent. Parallels can be found in other tales and wall paintings during the Ice Age when people worshipped animals as protectors and providers of society. It was also believed that human beings were reincarnated after death as animals or plants and could intercede for the

maintenance of a social order. Their magic power provided balance and sustenance for people opposed to forces which they could not comprehend. In 1740 Madame Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve published her version of *Beauty and the Beast* in *Les Contes Marins.* It was 362 pages long. In 1756, Madame Le Prince de Beaumont published her shorter but similar version in *Magasin des enfants, ou dialogues entre une sage gouvernante et plusieurs de ses eleves* which has served as the basis for the numerous popular English translations widely circulated right up to our times. Both versions are didactic stories which totally corrupt the original meanings of the folk-tale motifs and seek to legitimise the aristocratic standard of living in contrast to the allegedly vulgar values of the emerging bourgeoisie. The theme of this aristocratic tale involves "putting the bourgeoisie in their place". If we can historically recall - and this means suppressing our Walt Disney consciousness - the tale concerns a very rich merchant whose children become arrogant because of the family's acquired wealth. Indeed, with the exception of Belle, all the children aspire beyond their class. Hence, the family must be punished. The merchant loses his money and social prestige, and the children are humiliated. Yet, they remain haughty and refuse to help the father overcome his loss, particularly the two older daughters. Only Belle, the youngest, exhibits modesty and self-sacrificial tendencies, and only she can save her father when he is in danger of losing his life for transgressing against the beast, i.e., the nobility. As a model of industry, obedience, humility and chastity, Belle saves her father by agreeing to live with the beast. Later, impressed by the noble nature of the beast (appearances are obviously deceiving, i.e., aristocrats may act like beasts, but they have gentle hearts and kind manners), she consents to give him a kiss and marry him. Suddenly he is transformed into a handsome prince and explains that he had been condemned to remain a beast until a beautiful virgin should agree to marry him. So, the good fairy now intercedes and rewards Belle because she has preferred virtue above either wit or beauty while her sisters are to be punished because of their pride, anger, gluttony and idleness. They are to be turned into statues and placed in front of their sister's palace. Surely, this was a warning to all those bourgeois upstarts who forgot their place in society and could not control their ambition.

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm gathered many versions of fairy tales, namely in their edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen,* in 1812. With this collection came perhaps one of the first attempts (at least in the first edition) to provide not only a reasonably comprehensive collection of the stories of the folk, but also a sense of the authentic style and language in which they were told. Ironically, while these qualities of the Grimms' initial edition make this a landmark collection of fairy tales for folklorists and thus would seem to have been the logical basis for its historical significance, it was Wilhelm Grimm's subsequent literary edition (revising the style and publishing an abbreviated collection of only 50 of the most popular tales) that eventually made that collection the best-selling one in Germany and assured its pre-eminent place in the subsequent literary history of fairy tales. Anyway, these brothers collected their version of "Snow White" (another fairy tale I will focus on) from Jeannette and Amalie Hassenpflug, family friends in the town of Cassel. The Grimms' version starts, like so many fairy stories, with a barren queen who longs for a child. It's a winter's tale in this northern clime. The queen stands sewing by an open window. She pricks her finger. Blood falls on the snow. "If only I had a child," she sighs, "as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the window frame". Her wish is granted, but the gentle queen dies as soon as her baby is born. The death of the queen, the "good mother", was a plot twist introduced by the Grimms who turned her into an evil stepmother in editions from 1819 onward. Whether mother or stepmother, the murderous queen remains one of the most vivid villains in folkloric history. She orders the death of an innocent girl after being informed by the enchanted mirror that Snow White is the fairest of them all. After some unsuccessful death plots, the disguised queen succeeds in killing the young girl with a poisonous apple. Latter on, Snow White's body is handed over by the dwarfs to a prince who happens to be passing by. Struck by the girl's extraordinary beauty, he swears he can't live without her and will prize her as his dearest *possession*. When the fatal piece of poisoned apple flies from her mouth, Snow White wakes up. The prince declares his love and offers marriage.

As happens to most innocent beauties in many fairy tales, Snow White's fate is to be abused, tortured, banished, persecuted, and reformed in order to conform to the female image of patriarchal family systems. Subservience,

patience, endurance, passivity, devotion, and industry are the virtues of women in tales like Grimms' "Schneewittchen" and the almost symptomatic acceptance of these role models by women has been noted by feminist authors as well as psychiatrists.

As Roger Sale points out, "the fears and wishes themselves are never extraordinary, but what animates a good tale and distinguishes it from other similar ones is a precision about them" (Sale, 1978: 38). In this context, one of the greatest tales, "Snow White", is great because it is very precise about both its fears and its wishes. Furthermore, it is helpful because it can help us sharpen our sense of method or procedure in working with fairy tales, and because it offers clear insight into some historical conditions of the periods when fairy tales were still being told.

We know that children are socialised or culturally conditioned by movies, television programmes, and the stories they read or hear, and we have begun to wonder at the influence that children's stories and entertainments had upon us, though we cannot now measure the extent of that influence.

Generations of children have read the popular fairy books, and in doing so may have absorbed far more from them than merely the outlines of the various stories. What is the precise effect that the stories of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" or "Beauty and the Beast" have upon a child? Not only do children find out what happens to the various princes and princesses, woodcutters, witches, beasts, and children of their favourite tales, but they also learn behavioural and associational patterns, value systems, and how to predict the consequences of specific acts or circumstances. Among other things, these tales present a picture of sexual roles, behaviour, and psychology, and a way of prediction outcome or fate according to sex, which is important because of the intense interest that children take in endings; they always want to know how things will 'turn out'. A close examination of the treatment of girls and women in fairy tales reveals certain patterns which are very interesting not only in themselves, but also as material which has undoubtedly played a major contribution in forming the sexual role concept of children, and in suggesting to them the limitations that are imposed by sex upon a person's chances of success in various endeavours.

Fairy tales are among the cultural forms which help consolidate this belief that the best thing which can happen to a girl is to fall in love, get married and have lots of children. Fairy tales are not just entertaining fantasies, but powerful transmitters of romantic myths which encourage women to internalise only aspirations deemed appropriate to their 'real' sexual functions within a patriarchal society. They seem to be training manuals for girls, which serve to acculturate women to traditional roles.

A girl learns that she is by nature a passive creature. Submissive and helpless, she must expect to drift from one kind of dependency to another without ever exercising her autonomy, her consciousness of which has never been raised. She should hope she is beautiful and she should avoid being an ugly sister, cruel stepmother, hag or witch, for men find all such women sexually undesirable. Fairy tales focus on the princess because men prefer young women: hence the shock when the female writer Anne Sexton rewrites some of Grimms' fairy tales from the point of view of a middle-aged witch.

Even more appealing to children are fairy tale films, which take precedence over literature. Children are more readily exposed to fairy tale films through television and movie theatres than through books. Nonetheless, children are continually exposed to fairy tales through reading, viewing, and listening. They are encouraged to sort out their lives through fairy tales, but too often they are served up the classical models of Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and Hans Christian Andersen or the contemporary equivalent in a Disney film that reinforces the patriarchal and consumer tendencies of the culture industry. Resistance to these models does not have to take the form of "politically correct" books, but rather occurs in tales that help young people question the familial and social standards that they are expected to respect and in tales that excite their imaginations and encourage them to explore their environments and to learn to make moral and ethical choices through involvement in challenging narratives.

As Jack Zipes (1997) points out, storytelling through books and film is only one way that children can be induced to become their own decision-makers and creators. Oral storytelling has never ceased, and it continues to play a significant role in our lives.

As Marina Warner states, “however universally distributed, stories spring up in different places dressed in different moods, with different twists, and regional details and contexts which give the satisfaction of particular recognition to their audiences” (Warner, 1994: XVIII).

Psychoanalytical and historical interpreters of fairy tale usually enter stories like “Snow White” or “Beauty and the Beast” from the point of view of the protagonist, the orphaned daughter who has lost her real mother and is tormented by her stepmother, or her sisters, sometimes her stepsisters; the interpreters assume that the reader or listener naturally identifies with the heroine. Indeed, this is commonly the case. But that perception sometimes also assumes that because the narrator makes common cause with the protagonist, the narrator identifies with her too. The audience is also invited to identify with the mishaps and reversals in the protagonist’s life.

Because complex characters are rare, and the distribution of villainy and virtue is not muddied by ambiguity, Beauty and Snow White have become rich symbols for psychoanalysts to interpret. But the thrust towards universal significance has obscured the genre’s equal powers to illuminate experiences embedded in social and material conditions. These are subject to change over time and eventually more capable of redress than the universal lessons of greed, lust and cruelty which fairy tales give us; in one sense, the historical interpretation of fairy tale holds out more hope to the listener or the reader than the psychoanalytic or mystical approaches, because it reveals how human behaviour is fixed in material circumstance, in the laws of dowry, land possession, feudal obedience, domestic hierarchies and marital dispositions, and that when these pass and change, behaviour may change with them.

Evidence of conditions from past social and economic arrangements co-exist in the tale with the narrator’s innovations: Angela Carter’s Beauty is lost to the Beast at cards, a modern variation on the ancient memory, locked into the plot of “Beauty and the Beast”, that daughters were given in marriage by their fathers without being consulted on the matter. The matter of fairy tale reflects such lived experience, with a slant towards the tribulations of women, and especially young women of marriageable age; the telling of the stories, either as a historical source,

or a fantasy of origin, gains credibility as a witness's record of lives lived, of characters known, and shapes expectations in a certain direction. Fairy tale offers a case where the very contempt for women opened an opportunity for them to exercise their intelligence and communicate their ideas: women's care for children, the prevailing disregard for both groups, and their presumed identity with the simple folk, the common people, handed them fairy tales as a different kind of nursery, where they might set their own seeds and grow their own plants.

During the 1970s, great changes occurred in the family and socialization processes of western countries. Given the questioning of traditional roles in the family, changes at the work place, and the reshaping of stereotypical gender expectations, there were many other rewritings of the tales "Snow White" and "Beauty and the Beast". All of these versions are very different from one another, but they share a questioning attitude toward the manner in which the fairy tale has had the tendency to impart stereotyped roles of gender behaviour in the service of patriarchal rule.

The underlying associational pattern of these stories links the figures of the victimised girl and the interesting girl; it is always the interesting girl, the special girl, who is in trouble. Because victimised girls are invariably rescued and rewarded, indeed glorified, children learn that suffering goodness can afford to remain submissive, and need not strive to defend itself, for if it did so perhaps the fairy godmother would not turn up for once, to set things right at the end. The special thrill of persecution, adjacent at once to self-pity and self-satisfaction, would have to be surrendered. Submissive, humble, passive female behaviour is suggested and rewarded by the action of these stories. Many of the girls are not merely passive, however; they are frequently victims and even martyrs as well. One of the pleasures provided by these stories is that the child-reader is free to indulge in pity, to be sorry for the heroine. The girl in tears is invariably the heroine; that is one of the ways the child can identify the heroine, for no one mistakenly feels sorry for the ugly villains or villainesses. What these stories convey is that women in distress are interesting. Fairy stories provide children with a concentrated early introduction to the archetype of the suffering heroine.

The sexes of the rescuer and the person in danger are almost as constantly predictable; men come along to rescue women who are in danger of death, or are enslaved, imprisoned, abused, or plunged into an enchanted sleep, which resembles death. The well-known story that was not included in Andrew Lang's *The Blue Fairy Book,* "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", is a notable example of this type: Snow White is saved from a sleep which everyone assumes is death by the arrival of a handsome prince. On the other hand, Beauty ends up with a beast who, in fact, becomes a handsome prince.

Since 1980 the woman-centred perspective has led some writers such as Mary Daly and Susan Griffin to argue for the intrinsic superiority of women due to psychological causes, the renunciation of rationality as masculine, and an undifferentiated view of women as powerless victims of male violence.

One of the major contributions of the feminist critique still pertains to the power relations of domination in capitalist societies and their reinforcement by a specific arrangement within child rearing and the family as well as the sexual division of labour. Children are conditioned to assume and accept arbitrary sex roles. These socially conditioned roles prepare females to become passive, self-denying, obedient, and self-sacrificial as well as nurturing, caring, and responsible in personal situations. They prepare males to become competitive, authoritarian, and power-hungry as well as rational, abstract, and principled.

According to Dorothy Dinnerstein, it is senseless to describe the prevailing male-female arrangements as "natural" even though they are part of nature. Our impulse to change these arrangements is as natural as they are, and more compatible with our survival on earth. (Dinnerstein, 1976, quoted in Zipes, 1993: 4) The criticism which deals with fairy tales has stressed the positive notion of change. That is, the criticism underlines our deep desire to change the present male-female arrangements and endeavours to demonstrate that we can raise our awareness of how fairy tales function to maintain the present arrangements, how they might be rearranged or reutilised to oppose the destructive tendencies of male-dominant values.

It is obviously difficult to define *the* feminist fairy tale. Part of the difficulty is due to the fact that some feminist fairy tales are written by authors who would not

necessarily define themselves as feminists. Despite this fact, their tales are imbued with a particular vision of the world, which could be called feminist. Not only do the authors challenge conventional views of gender, socialisation, and sex roles, but they also map out an alternative aesthetic ground for the fairy tale as genre to open up new horizons for readers and writers alike.

Created out of dissatisfaction with the dominant male discourse of traditional fairy tales and with those social values and institutions which have provided the framework for sexist prescriptions, the feminist fairy tale conceives a different view of the world and speaks in a voice that has been customarily silenced. It draws attention to the illusions of the traditional fairy tales by demonstrating that they have been structured according to the subordination of women and some critics even believe that in speaking out for women the feminist fairy tale also speaks out for other oppressed groups and for an *other* world, which may have appeared Utopian at one time but is now already within the grasp of those people seeking to bring about more equality in social and work relations. Thus the aesthetics of the feminist fairy tale demands an open-ended discourse, which calls for the readers to complete the liberating expectations of the narrative in terms of their own experience and their social context.

The form which some Utopian models assume is most comforting, but "Utopian reformulations" of classical fairy tales can also be discomforting. For instance, Angela Carter in *The Bloody Chamber and other Stories* and Tanith Lee in *Red as Blood or Tales from the Sisters Grimmer* have rewritten tales by Charles Perrault, the Grimm Brothers, and other classicists to indicate that the path of Utopia is filled with thorns. It is not by chance that both authors project the image of blood in the title of their collections. If women are to control their destinies, if there is to be a rearrangement of gender in child rearing, then blood will indeed be shed and it will not be simply the blood of one sex.

As far as Angela Carter is concerned and as Ellen Cronan Rose demonstrated in "Through the Looking Glass: When Women Tell Fairy Tales", most of Carter's stories disclose the machinations of male domination and depict

how women discover their own sexuality and human dignity through intense struggles.[1]

Angela Carter is one of the most successful contemporary writers of adult fairy tales. She is an English writer whose peerless work continues to inspire many other writers and critics in the field of fantasy literature. She has become almost alarmingly "central" for all sorts of readers and researchers. In the last years, there have been dozens or even hundreds of applicants all over the world waiting to do doctorates on Carter, making her by far one of the most fashionable twentieth-century topics. That is why I will not concentrate too much on her work since much has been said and written about her and about her work and I don't want to become repetitive. However, Angela Carter is perhaps the feminist writer most commonly associated with fairy tales. She has worked with them in her collection of short stories *The Bloody Chamber and other Stories* (1979), a modern, sensual and fantastic rewriting of familiar fairy tales and legends. Among the themes of 'feminism' and 'sexuality' the author introduces 'Magic Realism' as one of her main stylistic devices. "The Snow Child", as the sixth of ten tales, is placed at the heart of *The Bloody Chamber*. Within the whole narrative of the collection, it occupies a central position where Carter's *re*-presentation of familiar folktales is combined with the unavoidable 'strait-jacket of their original structures' (Duncker quoted by Bushi). Carter's "The Snow Child" is a rewriting of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's fairy tale "Snow White", and it presents the heroine's birth as the direct outcome of her father's desire. Clearly, the Snow Child is a masculine fantasy, an image of "woman". In Carter's version of the tale, the innocent heroine, Snow Child, pricks her finger when picking up a rose for the Countess and falls. In the end, she melts and vanishes.

In any case, we may say that there is no end to Snow White's story: even though this heroine is constantly mutilated by the Queen and dies, she is always reincarnated in some retold form to mark shifts in our attitudes toward gender formation, sexuality, and the use of power. My intention is to reflect once again

[1] See Rose, Ellen Cronan. "Through the Looking Glass: When Women Tell Fairy Tales". In *The Voyage In Fiction of Female Development*. Eds. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983), p. 69-89.

upon the cultural and political significance of Snow White's continual reappearance.

During the last years there has been a large number of new intriguing versions of "Snow White" and "Beauty and the Beast" including plays, films, records and advertisements that have appeared and will continue to appear. Obviously, these tales are still two of the most popular and certainly of the most provocative fairy tales in Western world. Why? Simply put, because they raise issues about gender identity, sexuality, violence and the civilizing process in a unique and a succinct symbolic form that children and adults can understand on different levels. All the issues raised in these tales are crucial for establishing principles of social justice and gender equality that have not been satisfactorily practiced in Western societies and are thus continually readdressed in different versions of these two tales.

In each country of the Western world the resurgence of storytelling is manifesting itself in different ways that reflect the currents of tradition and folklore. In the United States, for instance, many ethnic minority groups are attempting to use storytelling to recover their history and to keep rituals alive in a dynamic way. Storytellers create family sagas out of their personal experiences, research different types of tales and retell them in highly dramatic ways, put on performances for children in schools. There are storytelling festivals, workshops, classes, and demonstrations. Telling a magic folk tale was and is not unlike performing a magic trick and listeners are placed under a magic spell. They are linked with the teller and other members of the group, transcending reality for a brief moment, to be transported to extraordinary regions of experience.

Anyway, it is not by chance that most of the new and experimental versions of "Snow White" and "Beauty and the Beast" in the last decades have been written by women and are feminist. The confrontations and situations that women experience in our society have compelled them to reflect upon the encounter between Snow White and the Queen/ Witch and the role Beauty plays that they may have heard, read or seen as children. Feminists endeavour to change our gaze and challenge our perspective with regard to literature and society. And they accomplish this change by forcing us to look at and take our everyday occurrences

more seriously than we do. As we know, the everyday for a woman often consists of menial tasks at work or at home where her rights and needs are denied in various ways and her rewards are unequal. One could even argue that some of the difficulties experienced by women today are due to the great gains they have made toward their liberation, and that they have qualitatively easier lives than ever before. Still, the liberation and ease have brought with them more subtle forms of oppression, and the daily life of a woman is filled with harassment and obstacles that men rarely experience. A woman's life is far from that of a fairy tale, and feminist fairy tales depict the struggles women undergo to define their lives in opposition to the daily lives they experience. Writers such as Jack Zipes believe that the discourse on manners and gender roles in fairy tales has contributed more to the creation of our present day social norms than we realize. Fairy tales reveal to what extent the boundaries of our existence have evolved from male fantasy and sexual struggle for domination. According to Zipes, "to talk about fairy tales today, especially feminist fairy tales, one must, … talk about power, violence, alienation, social conditions, child-rearing and sex roles" (1993: 2).

Certain premises and patterns emerge at once, of which only the stereotyped figures of the wicked stepmother has received much general notice. The beauty contest is a constant and primary device in many of the stories. Where there are several daughters in a family, or several unrelated girls in a story, the prettiest is invariably singled out and designated for reward, or first for punishment and later for reward. Beautiful girls are never ignored; they may be oppressed at first by wicked figures, as the jealous Queen persecutes Snow White or the Beast haunts Beauty, but ultimately they are chosen for reward. Two fundamental conventions are associated here: the special destiny of the youngest child when there are several children in a family, and the focus on beauty as a girl's most valuable asset, perhaps her only valuable quality. Good-tempered submissiveness and humbleness are so regularly associated with beauty, and ill-temper with ugliness, that this in itself must influence children's expectations. One of the most famous examples of this associational pattern occurs in "Cinderella", with the opposition of the ugly, cruel, bad-tempered older sisters to the younger, beautiful,

sweet Cinderella. Even when there is no series of sisters, the beautiful single daughter is nearly always noted for her docility, gentleness and good temper.

This pattern, and the associated one of reward distribution, probably acts to promote jealousy and divisiveness among girls/ women. The stories reflect an intensely competitive spirit: they are frequently about contests, for which there can be only one winner because there is only one prize. Girls win the prize if they are the fairest of them all; boys win if they are bold, active, and lucky. If a child identifies with the beauty, she may learn to be suspicious of ugly girls, who are portrayed as cruel, sly, and unscrupulous in these stories; if she identifies with the plain girls, she may learn to be suspicious and jealous of pretty girls, beauty being a gift of fate, not something that can be attained.

There are no examples of a crossed-pattern, that is, of plain but good-tempered girls. It is a psychological truth that as children, and as women, girls fear homeliness (even attractive girls are frequently convinced that they are plain), and this fear is a major source of anxiety, and convictions of inadequacy and inferiority among women. It is probably also a source of envy and conflict among them. Girls may be predisposed to imagine that there is a link between the lovable face and the lovable character, and to fear that they will also prove to be unpleasant, thus using the patterns to set up self-fulfilling prophecies.

As Jack Zipes points out in his *Don't Bet on the Prince*, whatever the condition of younger women in fairy tales, the older women in the tales are often more active and powerful than men. The truth is that some older women in fairy tales have power and in order to understand the meaning of women's power in fairy tales, we must examine the nature, value, and use of their power. The good fairies only appear to save young people in trouble and then disappear again. They "have gender only in a technical sense; to children, they probably appear as women only in the sense that dwarfs and wizards appear as men. They are not human beings, they are asexual, and many of them are old. They are not examples of powerful women with whom children can identify as role models; they do not provide meaningful alternatives to the stereotype of the younger, passive heroine" (Zipes, 1993: 196).

There seems to be many more powerful, bad, older women than powerful, good ones and most of those women are witches or bad fairies, and consequently not fully human. Either extra-human race or extreme ugliness is often associated with female wickedness, and in such a way as to suggest that they explain the wickedness. In the case of wicked human women, it is also implied that being ill-favoured is consequence of being ill-natured. Whether human, or extra-human, these women who are evil are generally shown as active, ambitious, strong-willed and most often ugly. They are jealous of any woman more beautiful than they, which is not surprising in view of the power deriving from beauty in fairy tales. Powerful good women are nearly always beautiful fairies, and they are distant, they come only when desperately needed.

Interestingly, what is praiseworthy in males is rejected in females; the kind boy who seeks his fortune is assured of success. The counterpart of the energetic, aspiring boy is the scheming, ambitious woman. Some heroines show a kind of strength in their ability to suffer, but they do not actively seek to change their lot. Therefore, we can say that these stories reflect a prejudice against the active, ambitious woman, and have probably also served to instil this prejudice in young readers. They establish a division between those women who are gentle, passive, and fair, and those who are active, wicked, and ugly. Women's power in fairy tale is very marked, for good and evil, and much of it is verbal: riddling, casting spells, conjuring, hearing animals' speech and talking back to them, turning words into deeds according to the elementary laws of magic, and sometimes to comic effect. Women who are powerful and good are never human; those women who are human, and who have power, are nearly always portrayed as repulsive and not attractive to men.

As Marina Warner points out, "the mother who persecutes heroines like Cinderella or Snow White may conceal beneath her cruel features another familiar kind of adoptive mother, not the stepmother but the mother-in-law, and the time of ordeal through which the fairy tale heroine passes may not represent the liminal interval between childhood and maturity, but another, more socially constituted providing ground or threshold: the beginning of marriage" (Warner, 1994: 219). If arranged marriages were abolished, women would be free to express their own

desires – and this would spell the end of male authority in the household.

In many fairy tales it is possible that the older women bewitched the heroine and her potential allies, including the man she married: stories of the Beauty and the Beast group invoke a spouse to whom the young woman has been sacrificed at her father's wish. They then go on to relate how an old and wicked fairy has cast the spell on him that makes him repulsive and stupid, and unable to express his love to his bride until that spell is broken.

The weddings of fairy tale bring the traditional narratives to a satisfying open ending which allows the possibility of hope; but the story structure disguises the fact that many stories picture the conditions of marriage during the course of their telling. It is clearly a late, conventional moral reflex to make marriage the issue between Beauty and the Beast: Beauty is living alone with the Beast from the moment she agrees to save her father by leaving home. The issue is not sex, but love, and the pledging of lifelong mutual attachment.

It is important to note that the silent princess embodies the audience of fairy tale as well as taking part in the story itself, because the tale itself exists to excite responses, to bring life, to assert vulgar rude health against pale misery and defeat, to stir laughter or wonder or tears or hope. Fairy tales break the silent.

In this thesis, I will briefly focus on the role of women in the development of the literary fairy tale as a genre and discuss how women are portrayed in fairy tales such as "Beauty and the Beast" and the Grimms' classical fairy tale "Snow White" besides some feminist new versions of these fairy tales, such as Anne Sexton's *Transformations*, Tanith Lee's "Beauty" and Carter's new version "The Snow Child" since, superficially, Carter's use of the fairytale genre does not disrupt the patterns of the genre, of female alienation through age and beauty, as also happens in "Beauty and the Beast" for example. I will also refer briefly to Liz Lochhead's *The Grimm Sisters*, Eudora Welty's *The Robber* Bridegroom and Donald Barthelme's novel "Snow White" as well as to Walt Disney's nineteenth century versions of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (1937) and "Beauty and the Beast" (1992) since these films play an important role in the widespread use of these tales and in the education of our children and are part of the adults' imagination and fantasy. All these narratives are symbolical representations of the

authors' critique of the patriarchal status quo and of their desire to change the current socialisation process, which I want to focus on. It is, however, the variations from Grimms' and Mme Villeneuve's versions that mirror social reality. After all, the more one knows fairy tales the less fantastical they appear; they can be vehicles of the grimmest realism, expressing hope against all the odds with gritted teeth.

1. The origins and evolution of the fairy tale as a literary genre

Many different kinds of storytelling existed in antiquity before the oral wonder tales came into existence, and there were many kinds of wondrous oral and literary tales that served to form the mixed "species" of the literary fairy tale as a genre, even though we cannot say with historical precision when the literary fairy tale evolved. In the western European tradition, this occurred sometime in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and led to a special literary genre in the sixteenth century that we today call the literary fairy tale. As a hybrid genre, the fairy tale borrowed from myth, legend, anecdote, and epic to formulate its own rules and to stabilize itself throughout Europe by the end of the eighteenth century.

In the course of development, there was an interaction between oral storytelling and literary reproduction and invention of tales, which means that we need to distinguish between the oral folk tales and the literary fairy tales of Europe. Magical folk tales have been part of the storytelling tradition since the dawn of time, including stories of fairies, sorcerers, witches, and human folk under enchantment. Folk tales are humbler stories than the great heroic romances, and as such have been passed through the generations largely by the lower caste portions of society: women, peasants, slaves, and outcast groups such as the gypsies. The literary fairy tale, by contrast, began as an art form of the upper classes – made possible by advances in printing methods and rising literacy. Unlike the oral tradition, the literary tale was written down to be read in private, although, in some cases, the fairy tales were read aloud in parlours. However, the book form enabled the reader to withdraw from his or her society and to be alone with a tale. This privatisation violated the communal aspects of the folk tale, but the very printing of a fairy tale was already a violation since it was based on separation of social classes. Extremely few people could read, and the fairy tale in form and content furthered notions of elitism and separation. No matter where the literary tale took root and established itself, it was written in a standard high language that the folk could not read, and it was written as a form of entertainment and education for members of the ruling classes. The literary fairy tales tended to exclude the majority of people who could not read while the folk tales were open to everyone. Nevertheless, literary fairy tales borrow heavily from the oral folk tales of the peasant tradition, but these motifs are crafted and reworked through a single

author's imagination. All the early writers of fairy tales (such as Giovanni Straparola, Giambattista Basile and Charles Perrault) borrowed from many literary and oral tales, and their narratives can be regarded as retellings that adapt the themes and characters to fit their tastes and the expectations of the audiences for which they were writing. The Brothers Grimm created a large and stable body of tales (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 1812-15), which some critics designate as the first major equilibrium of the literary genre. The Grimms' body of tales rests on numerous Oriental, Italian, French, Scandinavian, and Slavic literary and oral stories. It is the richness of this intercultural mesh that makes the genre of the fairy tale so fascinating and the Grimms' stabilisation of the genre so significant. The Grimms' tales involved oral procreation of tales that became very relevant for the survival of people in specific societies, the interaction of oral and literary tales, and the writing down, repetition, and transformation of relevant tales.

Fairy tales were first told by gifted tellers and were based on common beliefs and experiences of the daily lives of members of a group. With the rise of literacy and the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century, the oral tradition of storytelling underwent an immense revolution. The oral tales were taken over by a different social class, and the form, themes, production, and reception of the tales were transformed.

The literary fairy tale was first developed in salons by aristocratic women as a type of parlour game by the middle of the seventeenth century. It was within the aristocratic salons that women were able to demonstrate their intelligence and education through different types of conversational games. Such games led the women, in particular, to improve the quality of their dialogues and ideas about morals, manners, and education and at times to oppose male standards that had been set to govern their lives. Urban elite ladies killed their boredom with tales, enjoying each other's company and narrating skill. Eventually, women began telling the tales to amuse the listeners and the "Märchen" became the recognised and fashionable pastime story of women. The telling of fairy tales enabled women to picture themselves, social manners, and relations in a manner that represented their interests. The last decades of the seventeenth century saw an early outbreak of feminist argument, and the right of women to voice their opinions was at the

centre of the struggle. Christian tradition held the virtues of silence, obedience and discretion as especially, even essentially, feminine. The silent woman was an accepted ideal. By the 1690s, the salon fairy tale became so acceptable that women and men began writing their tales down to publish them. These tales were **not** told or written for children.

According to Jack Zipes, "the institutionalisation of the literary fairy tale, begun in the salons during the seventeenth century, was for adults and arose out of a need by aristocratic women to elaborate and conceive other alternatives in society than those prescribed for them by men" (Zipes, 1994: 23). The literate fairy tales were consciously cultivated and employed in 17th-century France to reinforce the regulation of sexuality in modern Europe. This literary mode was received largely by members of the aristocracy and gradually the tales were changed to introduce morals to children that emphasized the patriarchal code of civilization to the detriment of women, even though women were originally the major tellers of the tales. Thus, even though it has generally been assumed that fairy tales were first created for children, nothing could be further from the truth. In most European countries it was not until the end of the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries that fairy tales were published for children, who were to be educated according to a patriarchal code of civilization. As an oral form, the fairy tale was always one among many different oral genres, it was never categorized as a children's genre. Throughout the nineteenth century in Europe and North America, well-intentioned publishers, clergymen, educators, and parents began discussing "proper" reading material for children and setting criteria for stories that were considered beneficial. At first, fairy tales were regarded as dangerous because they lacked Christian teaching and their symbols were meaningful and stimulating as far as children's growth and development was concerned. But by the beginning of the nineteenth century, fairy tale writers had learned to rationalize their tales and to incorporate Christian and patriarchal messages into the narratives to satisfy middle-class and aristocratic adults. For example, the Brothers Grimm purposely changed their fairy tales between 1819 and 1857 to make them more instructional and moral, and other writers worked to create tales more appropriate for children, not realizing that often, in seeking to protect children, we harm them most. Hans

Christian Andersen, Wilhelm Hauff, Ludwig Bechstein, George Cruikshank, and Mme. de Ségur are among the writers who sought to sweeten tales and to direct them at children in a wholesome fashion. The literary fairy tales of Giovanni Francesco Straparola, Giambattista Basile, Mme. D'Aulnoy, Charles Perrault, Mlle. L'Héritier, Mlle. De la Force, and others were complex symbolic social acts intended to reflect upon mores, norms, and habits organised for the purpose of reinforcing a hierarchically arranged civilizing process in a particular society. At the same time, many writers during the latter half of the nineteenth century, such as George MacDonald, Lewis Carroll, and Oscar Wilde, used the fairy-tale-for-children form to question the overly didactic tales.

The fairy tales for children were cleaned and censored versions of the fairy tales for adults, or they were new moralistic tales that were aimed at the domestication of the imagination. The child had to derive a moral lesson from every story to which he/ she was exposed and the Brothers Grimm were pleased with the educational nature of the tales. In other words, literary fairy tales appropriated oral folk tales and created new ones to reflect upon rituals, custom, habits, and ethics and simultaneously to serve as a civilising agent. The fairy tale demonstrated what it meant to be beautiful and heroic and how to achieve "royal" status with the help of grace and good fortune. In addition, for many readers of that time, and even of our time, to read or listen to a fairy tale provided a means to distance themselves psychologically from their present situations and to be transported to a magical realm. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Brothers Grimm set about to celebrate German culture through their country's folk tales, the literary fairy tale had already been institutionalised. Most storytellers consulted by the Grimms were women with a rich repertoire of folklore. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, between 1819 and 1857 the Grimms purposefully changed their fairy tales to make them more instructional and moral and one thing was clear, the "proper" fairy tale for children had become a hot commodity used expressly to socialise children in families and at school.

The process by which the Grimms gradually made their heroines more polite, well-spoken, or even silent, from one edition to the next, while their wicked female characters become more and more malicious and articulate, was imitated

in mass children's publishing of the nineteenth century, and tales of brave or disaffected young women who baulk their suitors, defy their parents or guardians and generally offer opposition to their lot often had to wait until, in the renewed feminist mood of the 1970s and 1980s, they were reclaimed by pedagogues with other views of appropriate female conduct.

The important issue is that, what had once been exclusively reading matter for adults was transformed in part into reading matter for children. For example, Mme. Le Prince de Beaumont's *Magasin des enfants* (1756) used approximately ten fairy tales, including "Beauty and the Beast", to instruct young girls in how to domesticate themselves and become respectable young women, attractive for marriage.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century there were four broad currents in the development of the fairy tale as genre:

> (a) The oral tradition was enriched by the incorporation of literary tales that were transformed by their listeners and readers, and new kinds of oral tales were developed by talented storytellers whose narratives often returned to influence the literary tradition; (b) literary fairy tales with illustrations were published for children, and the content and structure of the tales were made more appropriate to what educators and governing bodies within bourgeois institutions deemed suitable for children; (c) literary fairy tales for adults became a highly sophisticated genre and expanded their audience so that different types of tales, some with a strong political content and others as *L' art pour L' art* were produced by the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth; (d) the fairy tale served as the structural and thematic determinant for operas, plays, ballets, poems, musicals, and advertisements that became part of the genre as institution. (Zipes, 1997: 66)

The literary tradition of separating the fairy tale for children and that for adults continued with both the radio and film. However, it is quite clear that by the onset of the twentieth century, the fairy tale had become the predominant literary

genre for middle-class children, especially preadolescent children, and it was also family fare. The entire family could read, listen, and view a fairy tale at the same time, and each member could get something out of it. The crucial question in the early twentieth century, which is still pertinent, was how to package the tale to attract the largest audience: as book, radio program or film. In radio and film the narrator's voice-over was both anonymous and specific. The voice was characteristically gentle, soft but assured, always promising that happiness would be achieved in the end. One needs only to listen to the voice in Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.*

It would seem that the fairy tale has been conceived and exploited to manipulate children and adults, but it has also been changed in innovative ways to instil hope in its youthful and mature audiences so that no matter how bad their lives are, they can still believe they can live happily ever after. The crucial question is how the culture industry compromises our notion of the pursuit of happiness gathered from fairy tales. How did a specific rationalist aesthetics develop in the seventeenth century and make its way into the fairy-tale films of the twentieth-century culture industry?

In the twentieth century the creation of fairy tales in all their forms, their effective use by individual artists, corporations and institutions, and their reception by different audiences take place within the culture industry. Simply put, all art is subject to changes, even though some aspects are maintained, and these changes have no other purpose than to capture and play upon our desire for pleasure and happiness. The culture industry is in fact global, given the globalisation of corporate capitalism. As David Denby points out, "our reality has changed. The media have become three-dimensional, inescapable, omnivorous, and self-referring – a closed system that seems, for many of the kids, to answer all their questions" (Denby, 1996: 51).

The media penetrate the lives of children very early, the referential system of the culture industry is strong, and it sets the terms for socialisation and education in the Western world. Nevertheless, adults should not explain the tales to children since that would destroy their magic. However, adults should tell the tales because that shows approval of children's imaginative play. It is not by

coincidence that numerous feminist critics, women and men, feel that the fairy tales of their childhood stamp their present actions and behaviour in reality. There are certain fairy-tale patterns, motifs, and models which constantly arise in our life and in literature which appear to have been preserved because they reinforce male domination in the civilisation process. And the exploration of the mediations between society and fairy tales seems to be breaking new ground in feminist literary criticism.

1.1 Recent Feminist Critics and Classical Fairy Tales:

> To examine selected popular folktales from the perspective of modern feminism is to revisualize those paradigms which shape our romantic expectations and to illuminate psychic ambiguities which often confound contemporary women. Portrayals of adolescent waiting and dreaming, patterns of double enchantment, and romanticizations of marriage contribute to the potency of fairy tales. Yet, such alluring fantasies gloss the heroine's inability to act self-assertively, total reliance on external rescues, willing bondage to father and prince, and her restriction to hearth and nursery. Although many readers discount obvious fantasy elements, they may still fall prey to more subtle paradigms through identification with the heroine. Thus, subconsciously women may transfer from fairy tales into real life cultural norms which exalt passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice as a female's cardinal virtues. In short, fairy tales perpetuate the patriarchal status quo by making female subordination seem a romantically desirable, indeed an inescapable fate. (Rowe quoted in Zipes, 1993: 209)

The fairy tales' ideological impact is great. When we think of fairy tale today, we mainly think of the classical fairy tale. We think of those fairy tales that are the most popular in the Western world: "Cinderella", "Snow White", "Little Red Riding Hood", "Sleeping Beauty", "Beauty and the Beast", and so on. It is natural to think

mostly of these fairy tales as if they had always been with us. Newly written, innovative fairy tales are exceptional because they do not conform to the pattern set by the classical fairy tale and, even if they do, we tend to forget them after a while and remember the traditional tale. The classical fairy tale makes it appear that we are all part of a universal community with shared values and norms and, as Jack Zipes (1994) points out, it seems that these classical fairy tales have undergone a process of "mythicisation". The power of fairy tales and their popularity suggest that they address issues that have a significant social function. Fairy tales register an effort on the part of both women and men for coping with personal anxieties, family conflicts, and the frustrations of everyday life.

Nevertheless, while in folk tradition there appears to exist a reasonable balance between the number of male and female protagonists in fairy tales, in printed collections and in the minds of literate audiences, the female folk fairy tale seems to dominate. "Snow White", and "Beauty and the Beast" are just some of the most commonly remembered fairy tales that have female protagonists.

According to Steven Swann Jones,

> perhaps one reason for this gendered preference in the genre has to do with the relative popularity of male versus female protagonists in related folk genres, particularly heroic legends. Given the disproportionate number of heroic legends that feature male protagonists, female audience members might have a greater need for role models in the fairy tale genre to compensate for the dearth of legendary heroines. This generic discrimination, however, reveals an implicit sexist bias in Western culture. (Jones, 1995: 64)

According to this author, the genres of legend and fairy tale are not equal. While legends speak for a culture and their protagonists are culture heroes, embodying cultural values and ideals, fairy tales are more personal documents, speaking of individual needs and desires in familiar and quotidian situations. While their language is fantastic their subjects are the typical family relationships and problems of common people. They have ordinary protagonists dealing with

everyday issues.

Consequently, we can see a sexist preconceived notion evident when males are used mainly to represent the ideals and models of behaviour for a culture, and females are relegated to the domestic roles of the family romances in fairy tales. This does not mean that the psychological concerns depicted in fairy tales are less important than the social models depicted in legends, but there is an absence of such socially recognised role models. Even if she tries, Snow White is not a heroic figure who benefits the entire community through her actions as other heroes do. Her successes are essentially more personal and individualized, and thus she does not become a social model or ideal. She represents the ordinary person, which is the cherished subject of fairy tales, not the exceptional person, which is more associated with legends.

Moreover, some intellectuals have argued that the content of fairy tales promulgates prejudicial depictions of women and is evidence of a sexist unfairness and prejudice against female gender. This means that the treatment of fairy tale heroines might be regarded as unequal compared to fairy tale heroes. The female protagonists are relegated to passive roles, expecting others to provide them guidance and solutions to their problems. In many fairy tales, they are discouraged from telling what is on their minds or taking their own initiatives. Their representation is stereotypical and they are associated with nature and primitive emotions and values, portrayed as inferior to the civilised representations of patriarchal roles and values. Even worse, it seems that women don't have another choice but to submit to those patriarchal conventions and values.

As I have already noted, there are numerous experiments with the traditional fairy tale repertoire that could be called feminist. Such experiments did not appear out of thin air. Apart from a long tradition of matriarchal tales that were printed and continue to be printed in folklore collections of various lands, there were feminist precedents set in the literary fairy tale tradition by the end of the nineteenth century. Such Victorian writers as Mary De Morgan, Mrs Molesworth, and Evelyn Scharp (who incidentally played a major role in the British suffragette movement) conceived tales with strong heroines who rebel against convention-ridden societies.

Ever since the late 1960s there has been a growing tendency on the part of women – and not only women – to express a non-sexist view of the world through fairy tales or through criticism about fairy tales. The feminist discussion about the social and cultural effect of fairy tales began in the early 1970s. As Jack Zipes points out, in her article “Some Day My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation Through The Fairy Tale” (1972), Marcia Lieberman did a close textual study of some tales and found that they were indeed very much sexist because, even though there is no biologically determined role for women, most of the heroines were passive, helpless, and submissive, and most of the times they functioned mainly as a prize for a courageous handsome prince. “Lieberman questioned whether the acculturation of such normative values conveyed by the tales could foster female emancipation. … She argued that fairy tales which disseminate notions of rigid roles for male and female characters are detrimental to the autonomous development of young people”. (Zipes, 1993: 5)

Especially since the 1970s and 1980s, the fairy tale has become more aggressive, aesthetically more complex and sophisticated, and more insistent on not distracting readers but helping them focus on social problems and issues in their respective societies. Perhaps the major social critique carried by the fairy tale can be seen in the restructuring and reformation of the fairy tale itself as genre on the part of feminists. The result has been a remarkable production of non-sexist fairy tales for children and adults as well as theoretical works that explore the underlying implications of gender roles in fairy tales. Not only have individual writers such as Anne Sexton, Liz Lochhead, Angela Carter, Olga Broumas and Tanith Lee created highly innovative tales that reverse and question traditional sex roles but also there have been collective enterprises in different countries that have reacted critically to the standard canon representing silent females waiting to be brought to life by charming princes. If we think about the characteristics that can be distinguished in the contemporary fairy tale and the tendencies expected for the future, we realise that most feminist fairy tales subvert the male discourse and patriarchal ideology apparent in the traditional fairy tales by shifting the narrative voice, undoing plots, and expressing the concerns of women through new images and styles of writing.

Women should govern their own destiny and write their own history and the movement toward autonomy has been a dominant tendency in feminist literary criticism. Furthermore, it provided the basis for the first complete study of fairy tales and everyday episodes by Madonna Kolbenschlag. Her book, *Kiss Sleeping Beauty Good-Bye: Breaking the Spell of Feminine Myths and Models* (1979) attempts to grasp and triumph over the negative features in the role models of characters such as Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, Cinderella, and Beauty. Kolbenschlag is mainly interested in the usual manner in which women are forced and influenced to adopt particular roles and identities.

She believes and states that the contemporary crises between men and women are indicative of the feminine need for ethical autonomy that is prevented by men and institutions. Therefore, she asks for the destruction of the traditional feminine identity. If men have the capacity for self-realisation (reinforced by the socialisation process and cultural education) so should women, but for the most part they must seek and appropriate this capacity in ways that are often painful.

The goal of Kolbenschlag's book is, according to Jack Zipes, to make both men and women think about alternatives to the universally accepted role models in our lives. After reading Zipes's book entitled *Don't Bet on the Prince*, we understand that this author believes that the fairy tales themselves are not responsible for the creation of these traditional roles but to a certain extent they are the symbolical forms that reinforce certain social and psychological patterns of behaviour in our daily lives. This means that it is not the fairy tale that is responsible for the dependency of women. The fairy tale is important because it reflects how women are oppressed and allow that oppression.

The female critic Colette Dowling is of the opinion that:

> personal, psychological dependency - the deep wish to be taken care of by others - is the chief force holding women down today. I call this "The Cinderella Complex" - a network of largely repressed attitudes and fears that keeps women in a kind of half-light, retreating from the full use of their minds and creativity. Like Cinderella, women today are still waiting for something external to "transform their lives". (Dowling,

1981: 21)

This means that, according to Dowling, women themselves psychologically invent various traps and tricks to play the role of Cinderella. She draws remarkable connections between fairy-tale images and wish-fulfilment that brought light to the contemporary dilemma of many women.

Andrea Dworkin, however, refuses to tolerate the possibility of preserving tales that were more or less forced upon us and that have been so effective in promoting stereotypical gender roles. She agrees with Marcia Lieberman that the traditional fairy tales spread false notions about sex roles and speaks about the evil effect of these tales in her book *Woman Hating:*

> … we have not formed that ancient world [of fairy tales] – it has formed us. We ingested it as children whole, had its values and consciousness imprinted in our minds as cultural absolutes long before we were in fact men and women. We have taken the fairy tales of childhood with us into maturity, chewed but still lying in the stomach, as real identity. Between Snow-white and her heroic prince, our two great fictions, we never did have much of a chance. At some point the Great Divide took place: they (the boys) dreamed of mounting the Great Steed and buying Snow-white from the dwarfs; we (the girls) aspired to become that object of every necrophiliac's lust – the innocent, *victimized* Sleeping Beauty, beauteous lump of ultimate, sleeping good. Despite ourselves, sometimes knowing, unwilling, unable to do otherwise, we act out the roles we were taught. (Dworkin, 1974: 32-33)

Andrea Dworkin shows how fairy tales manipulate our notions about sex roles by examining such traditional role models as the evil stepmother, the passive virgin or the active prince. However, she doesn't distinguish the possible positive effects of the fairy tales. Implicit in her analysis is the assumption that all the fairy tales contain the same messages. Dworkin's contribution to feminist criticism about the complex reception of fairy tales is somewhat limited because she stereotypes

the tales in much the same way as she understands the fairy tales as conveyors of stereotypes for children.

In the same line of thought, Robert Moore maintains that the classical fairy tales represent the cultural values and prejudices of white people from Europe and that they maintain male privileges. As Jack Zipes writes,

> like Dworkin he emphasises primarily the negative features of the tales: 1. Females are poor girls or beautiful princesses who will only be rewarded if they demonstrate passivity, obedience, and submissiveness; 2. Stepmothers are always evil; 3. The best woman is the housewife; 4. Beauty is the highest value for women; 5. Males should be aggressive and shrewd; 6. Money and property are the most desirable goals in life; 7. Magic and miracles are the means by which social problems are resolved; 8. Fairy tales are implicitly racist because they often equate beauty and virtue with the colour white and ugliness with the colour black. In sum, there is very little in the classical fairy tales which Moore would consider positive and worthwhile in the interest of a humanist education. Fortunately, he does not argue that these tales should be eliminated. … Undoubtedly there is a dark side to the tales, and both Moore and Dworkin are empirically correct in demonstrating the sexist and racist aspects of many traditional fairy tales. However, they deal only with a small selection of the tales and with surface features. (Zipes, 1993: 6)

Though Dworkin and Moore raise important questions about classical fairy tales, they also forget to deal with their historical evolution. Feminist criticism has the important task of discovering how and why certain changes were made in the tales during the course of centuries so that women can regain a sense of their own history and possibly alter contemporary socio-political actions. This is the point of Kay Stone's essay "Things Walt Disney Never Told Us" (1975). She compares the original Grimms' fairy tales with the British and American translations of the past two centuries as well as with the Disney versions of the twentieth century, and the

results of her study reveal that the products of the modern culture industry specify that a woman can only be considered a heroine if she is patient, industrious, calm, beautiful and passive. The fairy tales of the twentieth century correspond to the sexual preferences of males and the conservative norms of the dominant classes. On the other hand, those tales that portray women in folklore as aggressive, active, clever, and adventurous have been suppressed in literature and the mass media. The final result of this mass-marketed development was the Walt Disney films, which presented Snow White and Beauty in their most "perverted" forms – the patient, submissive, defenceless young women, whose happiness depends on a man who actually defines their lives.

With a different point of view, Alison Lurie sees the tales as reflecting an admirable level of gender equality, along with a power asymmetry leaning in favour of older women:

> These stories suggest a society in which women are as competent and active as men, at every age and in every class. … The contrast is greatest in maturity, where women are often more powerful than men. Real help for the hero or heroine comes most frequently from a fairy godmother or wise woman, and real trouble from a witch or wicked stepmother. … To prepare children for women's liberation, therefore, and to protect them against Future Shock, you had better buy at least one collection of fairy tales. (Lurie, 1970: 42)

Alison Lurie suggests that perhaps fairy tales are the first real women's literature, that they are literally old wives' tales because throughout Europe the story-tellers from whom the Grimm Brothers and their followers heard those tales were most often women - in some areas they were all women. Therefore, Alison Lurie wonders if the stories do not reflect a matriarchal society in which women held power. However, an examination of the best-known stories shows that active resourceful girls are in fact rare; most of the heroines are passive, submissive, and helpless.

Radical feminists, apparently, didn't adopt Lurie's ideas. An analysis of the women in Lang's *The Blue Fairy Book* presents a picture that does not accord with Lurie's hypothesis and an analysis of the fairy tales that children actually read indicates that they serve to acculturate women to traditional social roles.

Lurie has repeated her arguments in an article, in which she objects to the opinion that feminists actually have of such stories as "Snow White":

> It is true that some of the tales we know best, those that have been popularised by Disney, have this sort of heroine. But from the point of view of European folklore they are a very unrepresentative selection. They reflect the taste of the refined literary men who edited the first popular collections of fairy tales for children during the Victorian era. Andrew Lang, for instance, chose the tales in his *Blue Fairy Book* (first published in 1889) from among literally thousands known to him as a folklorist; and he chose them… partly for their moral lesson. Folk tales recorded in the field by scholars are full of everything Lang leaves out: sex, death, low humour, and female initiative.
>
> In the other more recent collections of tales – as well as in Lang's later collections – there are more active heroines… (Lurie, 1971: 6)

Only the best-known stories, those that everyone has read or heard and those that Disney has popularised, have affected masses of children in our culture, and Andrew Lang's compiled *The Blue Fairy Book* contains many of the most famous stories. Heroines like Snow White or Beauty are mythic figures who have replaced the old Greek gods, goddesses, and heroes for most children. These stories were made not only to amuse children, but also to teach them. Many of the stories have a moral, although we think more as we read them of the diversion than of the lesson.

Thus, while Andrea Dworkin argues that fairy tales perpetuate gender stereotypes, Alison Lurie claims that they unsettle gender roles. Besides, while some critics denounce fairy tales for their melodrama and violence, psychologists like Bruno Bettelheim find them crucial to a child's healthy mental development.

Who's right? According to Margaret Atwood, it depends. Amazed by reports that Grimms' fairy tales were being denounced as sexist, she observed that one finds in the brothers' volume "wicked wizards as well as wicked witches, stupid women as well as stupid men". When people talk about "sexist fairy tales", they often refer to stories such as "Beauty and the Beast" or "Sleeping Beauty" but, according to Atwood, "there are a good many forgetful or imprisoned princes who have to be rescued by the clever, brave, and resourceful princess, who is just as willing to undergo hardship and risk her neck as are the princes engaged in dragon slaying and tower climbing" (Atwood quoted in Haase, 1993: 291-292).

Most fairy tales accommodate a wide variety of interpretations, and it's the reader who derives its meaning. There is no definite version and no definite interpretation of a fairy tale. As far as the fairy tales I am going to focus on are concerned, some versions of Snow White and Beauty's story may appear to reinforce stereotypes, others may seem radically feminist. All are of historical interest, revealing the ways in which these stories have adapted to a culture.

Many folklorists have been engaged in recovering fairy tales that have succumbed to a cultural amnesia. Rosemary Minard's *Womenfolk and Fairy Tales* explicitly seeks to identify tales in which women are active, intelligent, and courageous human beings. Likewise, Ethel Johnston Phelps tries to collect tales that feature active and courageous women in the leading roles for her volume *Tatterhood and Other Tales*. By contrast, Angela Carter's *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* chooses texts for the way in which they provide models of how women struggled, succeeded, and also sometimes failed in the challenges of everyday life.

Feminists agreed that earlier studies ignored the subtle inner strength of heroines. Many other feminist writers have reworked old stories in new ways, to emphasise unrecognised aspects of feminine strength. While Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, for example, reinterprets ten versions of beauty/ beast tales, similarly, the poems of Anne Sexton and the stories of Tanith Lee attempt to review Märchen women both negatively and positively.

In the critics and the rewritten stories, Märchen women, both as heroines and as secondary characters, were set in irreconcilable opposition to male

characters. Thus the Märchen was regarded as no longer a romantic tale about living happily ever after but instead as about the inner development of the unique female persona.

The major intended audience of feminist fairy tales consists of children and women, but this does not mean that men are excluded. By reconstructing non-sexist fairy tale worlds, the writers of feminist fairy tales address society at large, question recurrent patterns of values and the expectations about roles and relations. One can change gender arrangements and social behaviour by simply reformulating the traditional fairy tales. Stories and fairy tales influence the way in which children conceive the world and their places in it even before they begin to read.

As a key agent of socialisation, the fairy tale enables the child to discover his or her place in the world and to test hypotheses about the world. For years the classical literary fairy tales were mainly representations of a male viewpoint. Even when women wrote and told the tales, they submerged their voices to serve a patriarchal social order or to disguise their discontent with it. The fact now that male and female writers have explicitly altered the social contents of the tales to present a feminist viewpoint is an indication that the feminist tales themselves have emerged from the struggles of the women's movement and are being used to elaborate social choices and alternatives for both females and males. They are also agents of a new socialisation.

Jack Zipes claimed that nowadays it is impossible to be a critic without being a feminist. However, "most men suffer from male myopia" (Zipes, 1993: XIII), and their vision can only be corrected by adjusting their lenses to include a feminist viewpoint. Neither male morality nor female morality in society is superior to the other. Nonetheless, people have governed their lives and continue to govern their lives according to male norms as though they were normal and superior. Many studies have shown that forms of gender behaviour have been produced culturally through social interaction. The social essence of the fairy tale in particular as well as the manner in which we continually return to it and reformulate it to conceive new worlds indicates that we attribute great moral and ideological power to it in the process of socialisation and educating our children

and these fairy tales will continue to provide us with intriguing choices to chart our lives for years to come. Jack Zipes draws on the writings of numerous feminists, who have a particular interest in the fairy tale due to the type of female images it tends to perpetuate and states that not only are the tales considered to be too sexist, racist and authoritarian, but the general contents are said to reflect the concerns of patriarchal societies.

As already mentioned, the major social critique carried by the fairy tale can probably be seen in the restructuring of the fairy tale itself as genre on the part of feminists and the result has been a remarkable production of non-sexist fairy tales for children and adults as well as theoretical works that explore the essential implications of gender roles in fairy tales. Not only have collective enterprises reacted critically to the standard canon representing catatonic females flat on their backs waiting to be brought to life by charming princes, but also some individual writers such as the previously mentioned Angela Carter, Anne Sexton, Liz Lochhead, Olga Broumas and Tanith Lee created extremely innovative tales that question traditional sex roles.

Tanith Lee is a prolific English writer of novels, short story collections, radio plays, and television scripts. Initially she was known mostly as a children's writer although her first published work was a collection of short stories for adults.

Lee's output is diverse, but the genres which dominate her work are fairy tale, fantasy and science fiction, often intermingled in very creative ways. Her contribution to fairy tale is of three main kinds: playful original stories for young readers, which adduce familiar conventions for comic or parodic purposes; retellings for an adult audience of classic tales, placing the tales in a new context, or giving them a startling new twist or point of view; or more allusive uses of known tales within other genres, especially fantasy.

The adult fairy tales, a good selection of which were gathered together in *Red as Blood, or Tales from the Sisters Grimmer* (1983), are parables of the human psyche. The significances of the nine stories in this volume are readily evident in those tales which are re-workings of classics, such as "Red as Blood" ("Snow White") and "Beauty" ("Beauty and the Beast"). Here the comedy of Lee's children's tales is replaced by grim irony and the simple conflicts between good

and evil are teased out into a kind of psycho-machia. Lee's adult writings deal in almost overwhelming emotions, and human desires are figured by supernatural horrors and illuminations. In the science-fiction retelling of "Beauty" the heroine's relationship with the "monster", who figures a fusion of mind and body transcending mundane existence, lifts her above the superficiality and boredom of meaningless being.

Common to all of Lee's fairy tales, whether for children or adults, and whether they explore the positive or negative aspects of human desire, is a faith of what she has elsewhere called "the rays of human love and human ability, that are the best of all of us" (Lee quoted in Zipes, 2000: 292).

Besides Tanith Lee's tales and stories, all the tales of Sexton, Lochhead, Broumas, and Carter emanate from a basic impulse for change within society, and though the writers have reacted to this impulse on different levels, they share the same purpose of questioning socialisation, have influenced one another to some degree, and have been stimulated by feminist criticism to rethink both fairy tales as aesthetic compositions and the role they play in conditioning themselves and children. This is the basic irony of feminist fairy tales: they intend ultimately to remove the adjective feminist and to conceive worlds in which the contradictions are not concerned with sexism and domination.

There are a number of unusually funny feminist fairy tales whose main purpose is to show the absurd side of sexist expectations in classical fairy tales. For example, "Cinderella" is treated to various satirical interpretations in the hands of Tanith Lee, John Gardner, Richard Gardner, and Judith Viorst. Going against the grain of sexist classical fairy tales, these writers have also written other parodies mocking other fairy tales such as "Snow White".

This means that there have been some remarkable adaptations of folktales and motifs from a feminist point of view. In many of these tales, the women rely on their intellect, which enables them to overcome oppressive conditions. In many other feminist fairy tales it is magic, symbolising the potential of women, which helps them grasp and control opposed forces which might keep them in a submissive position. Whereas the heroes of traditional fairy tales often pursue power to dominate and rule others, the heroines of the new feminist tales use

power to rearrange society according to a more nurturing moral concept and to attain independence for women and mutual respect. For instance, there are several remarkable fairy tales which revolve around the question of sexual domination and relations of power in society, and they reveal how changes must be made in the private and public sphere if a young woman is to come into her own. Many feminists' goal is the rearrangement of gender and social roles so that power is not used to gain advantage but to resolve contradictions. The most noticeable change in the narratives concerns the heroine who actively seeks to define herself, and her self-definition determines the plot. As she moves to complete this task, traditional fairy-tale motifs are transformed to indicate the necessity for gender rearrangement and the use of power for achieving equality.

A tale which ends in marriage but suggests that gender roles are not biologically determined and that power can be used for the liberation of both sexes is Angela Carter's "The Donkey Prince" published in 1970. Daisy, a young working girl, enables Bruno, the enchanted donkey prince, to recover a magic apple in the Savage Mountains. Due to her courage, cleverness, and skills, she helps Hlajki, the wild man, and Bruno to survive a dangerous mission, and in the end she marries Bruno, who is transformed into a human due to her compassion and actions. The entire question in Carter's tale is a humanising one: the beast becomes human and humane, and the hard work of a working girl is recognised and duly rewarded in a way that she appreciates.

With her collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter reworked the familiar writing of fairy tales, to mount a critique of current relations between the sexes. Carter positions herself as a "moral pornographer", since many stories have a violently sexual side to them that becomes manifest in her re-scriptings of fairy tales for an adult audience. Carter aims above all to demystify these sacred cultural texts, to show that we can break their magic spell and that social change is possible. As many psychoanalysts have observed, myths and fairy tales often both enforce culture's sentences with greater accuracy than more sophisticated literary texts.

The notion of contradiction of the patriarchal view of the world is at the centre of many tales written by different authors and in many of these tales the

parallels to actual social conflicts in society are apparent, and the endings point to new beginnings in which underprivileged groups take destiny in their own hands with a new political consciousness.

In most feminist fairy tales for older readers the patterns and themes are also designed to stress liberation and transformation. But there is a more sober attitude with regard to the possibilities for gender rearrangement. In some cases the writers are completely pessimistic, or pessimistic in a provocative manner that makes the reader desire change. For instance, Anne Sexton, one of the first writers to use fairy tales as a vehicle to comment on the difficulties of women in a male-dominated society, portrays her heroines as prisoners or commodities. In her book *Transformations* (1971) she adapted 17 of the Grimms' fairy tales in verse form to demonstrate the diverse ways in which women are circumscribed by language and custom in daily life so that the possibility for them to attain self-expression and free movement is partial. In general, Sexton begins each one of her poems with a first person exposition that elaborates her "transformed" position regarding the original Grimm tale.

For instance, in "The Frog Prince", Sexton retells the Grimms' story line in the third person to illustrate the situation of women in general and her predisposition is clear for she is constantly concerned with the manner in which women are 'obliged' to internalise conventional norms and values which prevent them from pursuing their own desires. Sexton describes each step the princess takes as part of a destiny planned for her by others. Though she wants to rebel against this destiny, there is nothing she can do to save herself. One can say that each one of Sexton's transformed fairy tales is a premonition of that fate which awaits the young woman as she matures.

Sexton, who never considered herself a feminist, does not pose the possibility of sexual rearrangement, but she does nevertheless question the present arrangement in such a radical way that the reader of her poems must ask why sex roles must be so destructive. There is urgency in the rhythm and tone of Sexton's poems which give rise to an increased awareness about the need to transform the socialised human condition before it is too late. Anne Sexton questions whether the awakening we see in tales such as "Snow White" and even

"Beauty and the Beast" is really an awakening and thus opens our eyes to the desperate situation of women, whose "resurrected" lives may be just as bad as their deaths. She is overly pessimistic in her "transformation" and we must have in mind that her radical poetical versions are intended for adults. The pungent ironies of *Transformations* are based on the insights (and the dogmas) of psychoanalysis. Most of Anne Sexton's reinterpretations turn the Grimm stories into the gruesome versions of an Oedipal family drama, mostly as experienced by daughters. Her heroines, sleek naïve virgins, are at the mercy of evil witches or puritanically loving fathers.

Poetry appears to be especially suitable to women who want to speak their mind and in their own voice about fairy tales. Aside from Sexton, many other writers such as Olga Broumas have experimented with fairy-tale motifs in unusual poems which ask questions about oppressive gender expectations in the socialisation process. Broumas takes Anne Sexton's method of applying the fable to real-life situations, which in her case are autobiographical. Most of the poems are filled with bitterness and disappointment, and heterosexuality is viewed suspiciously. If there is hope for women, the poems project it in a woman-centred society, in which men can no longer interfere with the lives of women.

The tendency of the revisionary storytelling in Sexton's *Transformations* is remarkably determinist and even the Scottish poet, playwright and performer Liz Lochhead does not escape the determinist implications of interpretative storytelling, with her collection of poems *The Grimm Sisters* (1981), which contains ironic re-telling of fairytales and myths, texts full of humour and provocation, and an exploration of archetypal women, often in their own imagined voices.

A conscious feminism affects Liz Lochhead's poems in a way not shared by Anne Sexton. She works with a variety of feminist and folkloric themes and the poems from her collection *The Grimm Sisters* (reprinted in *Dreaming Frankenstein*) include renditions of Beauty and the Beast, assorted witches, ogres, hags, and a wonderfully ascerbic "Tam Lin", a fairy tale and folk ballad from the English-Scots border country about a young woman who saves her lover (and the father of her unborn child) from hell and the Faery Queen. The search for the passing image takes her to myth, children's stories and popular culture, e.g. the

wicked witch, evil stepmother and girl sent into the forest in “The Mother”, which combines Snow White, Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood. Lochhead uses motifs from fairy-story as allegories of female experience, metaphors for an already realised drama.

Liz Lochhead plays around with plots from Grimm to articulate a woman’s exasperation at male obtuseness or she interweaves traditional fable with ironic commentary, not unlike a Scottish Anne Sexton. There is always a subtle and cunning metaphorisation of these classic works as a commentary on the contemporary condition of women, and in particular the Scottish working-class woman, who is both marginalised by patriarchal Scottish culture and is simultaneously the pillar and carer for that culture. The lyricism of her writing as well as the visual sweep of her grammar attempts to negotiate this double bind as an educated woman reflecting back upon both her own ontogenesis, and the violence which formed her as a writer and intellectual.

One of the principal ways Lochhead has demonstrated her interest in female identity and in women’s writing is through the playful and ironic re-writing of traditional myths about women. *The Grimm Sisters* features a whole cast of stock characters or stereotypes of women: the ‘spinster’, the ‘bawd’, the ‘harridan’, who are enabled to speak for themselves in these poems, from the female point of view. In poems such as ‘Rapunzstiltskin’ Lochhead plays with the myths of Rapunzel: the trapped and helpless female, and Rumplestiltskin, the aggressive, self-serving male, to mock the injustices of conventional male power in romantic relationships.

Lochhead has many tricks for shattering received images of women. “The Furies”, a sequence of three dramatic monologues, lets the “Harridan”, the “Spinster” and the “Bawd” speak for themselves. Placed in the collection *The Grimm Sisters,* these monologues contribute to Lochhead’s extensive revision of fairy tale material. The fairy tales with which we are all familiar have their origins in folk narratives told by women to each other, were collected and anthologised by the Brothers Grimm and became the stuff of childhood in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because of their importance in our cultural lives, such fairy tales are open to cynical media exploitation on the one hand and radical feminist

revision on the other. Parodic exploitation by one group is matched by urgent critique by the other. Lochhead is typically sensitive to the claims of both camps and her work here is profoundly ironical, taking on the lessons in propriety, and good fortune afforded by the childhood stories as well as their questionably normative cultural values and their more sinister step-sisters in the commerce of contemporary adult life. Although the three 'furies' do not emerge from anyone narrative, they are archetypes which lurk through many stories, and stereotypes which figure in social attitudes today. In each case Lochhead invites the reader behind the scenes, to hear how the woman determines to construct herself according to type. The roles are therefore simultaneously adopted and abandoned, to reveal various kinds of difficulty experienced by the single woman in securing her social place.

The speaker of "Harridan" begins at some distance from the mask she will adopt, subjecting the figure of 'Mad Meg', from Bosch, Breughel and Magritte, to art-historical consideration: "took pains . . . to reduce it all to picture planes." The first stanza ends, "discussed: Was Meg 'mad' or more the Shakespearian Fool?" The rejoinder in the second stanza takes off from this: "The fool I was! Mad Meg, Sour-Tongued Margot, / maddened slut in this mass of misery, a Virago/ … Oh that kitchen knife, that helmet, that silent shout, / I know Meg from the inside out" (Lochhead: 2003: 84).

Irregular line length is punctuated by the insistently recurring rhyme of the couplets so that chilling senses of order and inevitability shape the expression of anger. Experience intervenes between stanzas and radically changes the perspective of the earnest student. She is hurled into the picture, and becomes herself the creature once viewed with dispassion. The 'shout' which was necessarily seen and not heard, continues to be 'silent', despite the loud emotion of the speaker, simply because society will not listen. One way in which society conspires to collective deafness is to make the aggrieved woman laughable, and Lochhead points to this with the incongruous collocation of 'kitchen knife' with 'helmet'. This locates the battlefield in the home, toys swiftly with the tendency to ridicule and at the same time highlights both the pathos and the nightmare of the situation. The submerged narrative of what has befallen the speaker is indicated

by the accusations of the final stanza: “Oh I am wild-eyed, unkempt, hellbent, a harridan./ My sharp tongue will shrivel any man./ Should our paths cross/ I’ll embarrass you with public tears, accuse you with my loss” (84).

She now revels in the persona of Mad Meg, welcomes the opportunity to express her unreasonable grief. Her ‘loss’ is not simply that of a loved one, but also of her composure and assured social status. She is separated from her lover, and with that she is outcast from the larger community.

“Spinster”, the voice of another kind of outcast, presents from inside the problem of having no obvious function as wife or mother. She must find other ways of constructing a social identity. And the extent to which the speaker has internalised the fact that the community deals with the literal eccentricity of her situation by finding it funny is expressed by her comic rhymes: “My life’s in shards./ I will keep fit in leotards”, or the final couplet, “I’ll grow a herbaceous border. / By hook by crook I'll get my house in order” (85). While the first example is playful, reflecting a self-mocking desire for routine and discipline, the last example, on which the poem closes, carries a note of resignation. The allusions suggest that the speaker will be assimilated with the figure of the witch (“herbaceous border” to provide the ingredients for cures and spells), and also that she is destined to be a figure of nursery rhyme fun. “By hook by crook” alludes to the predatory wolf who will blow down the house of the three little pigs. The spinster is both social aggressor and victim. She wants her house to be allowed to stand. “Accept” is the imperative that is repeated four times in the three-stanza poem, and this is addressed not just to herself but also to her audience, the community. Yet it seems that her efforts to make the best of a bad job all lead her further into eccentricity and stereotype.

“Bawd” imagines a different way of acting out her fate. This woman decides to be bad, now that “I've hauled my heart in off my sleeve./I’ll let my hair down,/ go blonde, be a bombshell, be on the make/ I’ll gold-dig, I’ll be frankly fake” (85-86). She confesses the tactics she will use to get herself the reputation of “fatal dame”, hiding behind a breathtaking repertoire of clichés. In contrast to ‘Spinster’, this speaker finds it only too easy to acquire a vocabulary and a style. But the very fact that the bawd speaks such idiomatic English means that the last stanza of the

confession is not, technically, a surprise: “I’ll be a bad lot./ I’ve a brass neck. There is mayhem in my smile./ No one will guess it’s not my style" (86). The linguistic cast-offs she has picked up, together with too solid a protestation of bad intent already labelling herself as others will, reflect the inauthenticity of the stance and a bitter sense that there is a better life (both in terms of pleasure and ethics) than the one she adopts.

Liz Lochhead in *The Grimm Sisters*, and Anne Sexton in *Transformations* chose to situate themselves at an angle to tradition by writing poems which are based on but critical of traditional stories. This strategy I found attractive if finally limited because political reinterpretations can deflect but not alter traditional meanings, which either return to haunt the poem that discards them or vanish into witty analysis. The reinterpreted folk-tale or myth has famously become a feature of feminist poetry. For revisionary storytelling is, unless the poet makes her traditional material into a new plot altogether, a limited project. All the poems I have discussed here have a vitality, poignancy and wit, but they neither exorcise nor assume the power of their originals. I do not mean by this that the storytelling poems are failures, only that their success is necessarily limited.

In contrast to the poets, Robin McKinley portrays self-confident, courageous young women who take the initiative in a world which they help to define with men. In her adaptation of “Beauty and the Beast” (1978)[2] it is the woman who dares to oppose tyranny, to seek alternatives to oppression. Though McKinley is often naïve and too facile in the manner in which she depicts women assuming active roles, it is this very unquestioning attitude that is significant. That is to say, for McKinley there is no reason why women cannot live the lives they choose for themselves if they are willing to struggle and overcome obstacles which apparently deter men, too, from realising their identities.

Feminist writers have resisted the temptation to move in the imitative mode, choosing instead the way of critique and parody in their rewriting of tales. With her collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter took the fairy tales, transformed them and created new stories of her own, just like Anne Sexton in her *Transformations*, Liz Lochhead’s *The Grimm Sisters* or Tanith Lee in her *Red as*

[2] See McKinley, Robin. *Beauty*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

Blood or Tales from the Sisters Grimmer. We may conclude then that many feminist critics make productive use of fairy tales by reacting to them and rewriting them rather than passively consuming them, portraying the truth of women's lives. Angela Carter, Anne Sexton, Olga Broumas, Robin McKinley and others I have referred to are only some of those critics.

2. Fairy tales for children and *Beauty and the Beast*

Up through 1700, there was no literary fairy tale for children. On the contrary, children like their parents heard oral tales from their governesses, and servants. As I have mentioned before, the institutionalisation of the literary fairy tale, begun in the salons during the seventeenth century, was for adults and arose out of a need by aristocratic women to elaborate and conceive other alternatives in society than those prescribed for them by men. The fairy tale was used in refined discourse as a means through which women imagined their lives might be improved. This literary mode was received largely by members of the aristocracy and haute bourgeoisie. This reception was collective and social, and gradually the tales were changed to educate and introduce morals to children that emphasized the enforcement of a patriarchal code of civilization to the detriment of women, even though women were originally the major writers of the tales.

The fact is that the products of the imagination are set in a socio-economic context and are used ultimately to impose limitations on the imagination of the producers and receivers. The mediation between the imagination of the producer and audience becomes instrumental in standardizing forms and images of the fantasy in that it seeks to govern the independent resistance of the imagination to such instrumentalization.

The splitting of the fantasy is at the core of the instrumentalization process but what is important to consider here is that there were already definite tendencies to utilize the fantastic images of literature in the seventeenth century in an instrumental way and that folk tales were subjected to a controlled process of reutilization that belied the original social function of the tales.

In the case of “Beauty and the Beast”, not only was a folktale motif transformed and adorned with baroque features by the imagination of the writer, but the literary mediation controlled the production, distribution and reception of the tale. As a written, innovative, privately designed text which depended on the technological development of printing and the publishing industry, the fairy tale in the eighteenth century excluded the common people and addressed the concerns of the upper classes. It was enlarged, ornamented, and filled with figures and themes which would appeal to and further the aesthetic tastes of an elite class. Moreover, the new class perspective began to establish new rules for the

transformed genre: the action and content of the fairy tale subscribed to an ideology of conservatism which informed the socialization process functioning on behalf of the aristocratic class. The fantasy of the individual writer covered the ideological message with personal ingredients. But it was European absolutism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which determined the structure and mediation of the fairy tales.

The example or lesson of “Beauty and the Beast” is an extreme one and must be further studied in relation to the French tradition. I purposely selected it to demonstrate the most obvious way in which the folk tale was mass-mediated and changed by technology to serve the interests of the ruling class in French society of the eighteenth century. Not all writing of fairy tales was as one-dimensional and class-biased as “Beauty and the Beast”. However, the transformation of the oral tale into the literary fairy tale does mark a significant historical turning point in the arts, for with the rise of such technology as the printing press the possibility to instrumentalise products of the fantasy and govern their effect on the masses was made manifest.

It becomes clear that folklore prospers on the collective, active participation of the people who control their own expressions. Literature as the printed form of individual and collective products of the fantasy brings an entirely new dimension to the way people relate to their own cultural expressions. The technology of printing by itself is not the decisive factor in analysing the development of the fairy tale in relation to the culture industry but rather the formation of a new group of middle-class readers, the growth of literacy among the people of this class, and its creation of a public sphere which began organising and exercising control over all forms of cultural expression. Consequently, folk art when appropriated by middle class writers and publishers underwent drastic changes in its printed mass-mediated form.

As far as “Beauty and the Beast” is concerned, and unlike most fairy tales, this tale accommodates two developmental trajectories. It not only charts the challenges facing Beauty but also registers the transformation sustained by Beast, showing how these two antithetical allegorical figures resolve their differences to be joined in marriage. What makes this story especially attractive is the way in which it

is deeply entrenched in the myth of romantic love even as its representational energy is channelled into the tense moral, economic, and emotional negotiations that complicate courtship rituals. Virtually every culture knows this story in at least one of the variant forms of the tale. While we may be burdened with a version of "Beauty and the Beast" that reflects the social mores of centuries ago, we also have a collection of adept rescriptings that address the rich complexities and troubling anxieties of contemporary romantic entanglements.

The story of "Beauty and the Beast" has been around for centuries in both written and oral form, and more recently in film and video. "Beauty and the Beast" is a fairy tale of the modern world related in plot to "Cupid and Psyche", the earliest known version of "Beauty and the Beast", which appeared in the second century A.D. in Lucius Apuleius's *Transformations of Lucian, Otherwise Known as the Golden Ass.* Unknown during most of the medieval period, "Cupid and Psyche" re-emerged in the late Middle Ages and was printed in 1469 in an edition whose Latin text eventually spread throughout Europe. Subsequently it was translated out of Latin for larger reading publics with less education. From this process emerged a family of European "Beauty and the Beast" tales, whose plots arise from a narrative requirement that characterises modern stories, namely, that a beautiful woman accepts and loves an ugly husband. Told by a half-demented woman to a young bride kidnapped by bandits on her wedding day, "Cupid and Psyche" is described as a fairy tale meant to console the distressed captive. In this version, Cupid becomes enamoured of the beautiful Psyche and saves her life. He sleeps with her at night on the condition that she never looks at him. However, on the urging of her jealous sisters, she turns a light on him, and he disappears. Venus makes her complete three difficult tasks before Psyche can be reunited with her lover.

The writer Eudora Welty also wrote a version of this story in her novel *The Robber Bridegroom* (1978), a novel about history, myth, fairy tale and fantasy, a novel about the plots we live by, about the stories we tell ourselves and how they affect our lives. In this novel, Welty makes use of the Grimm brothers' fairy tale "The Fisherman and His Wife" and narrates the story of a greedy woman who is always discontented with what she and her husband have got. Salome Musgrove,

never content, tries to push her husband Clement into action and scheming against his daughter, Rosamond. The traditional narratives are hard to subvert, but Welty's text does not allow the novel's heroine, Rosamond, to remain as the domesticating influence on bandits. Her quest is interwoven with Welty's allusions to Psyche myth, commonly viewed as a pattern of female initiation and development. In Apuleius' version of the myth, Psyche draws Aphrodite's anger because mortals begin to celebrate Psyche's beauty and neglect Aphrodite's temples. But when the goddess sends her son, Eros, to punish Psyche, he falls in love with her instead and makes her his mistress. Forbidding her to ask who he is, forbidding her even to see his face, comes to her only under the cover of night and leaves her before dawn every morning. Psyche's jealous sisters convince her that her lover is a monstrous snake, thus tempting her to disobey his commands and look at him. Lighting a lamp while he sleeps, Psyche recognizes Eros and falls in love with him. But just as she discovers his identity, a drop of hot oil from the lamp awakens him, and he deserts her because of her disobedience and her knowledge.

To recover Eros, Psyche, now pregnant with his child, becomes a quester. She must undertake four tasks assigned by angry Aphrodite. The first three tasks she performs with help from the natural world. These tasks take her from the protected palace of Eros, from the dubious safety of the erotic plot, out into the world and lead her through a process of self-discovery to a stance of self-reliance. The final task takes her on a journey to the underworld to seek the secret of beauty from Persephone. Bringing back a casket of a special beauty potion, Psyche succumbs again to her desire for knowledge: opening the casket causes her to fall into an enchanted sleep from which Eros must rescue her. He wakes her, and Aphrodite finally approves their union. Psyche is made a goddess, and the divine world celebrates her marriage to Eros and the birth of their child, Pleasure. Eudora Welty ties the Psyche myth to the imaginative world of *The Robber Bridegroom.* Jamie's berry stains, the disguise in which he carries on his work, in which he kidnaps Rosamond, and in which he has continued to keep his identity secret from her after she joins him in the robbers' house (he never lets her see his face unwashed) are conventional in history and still more widely in song

and story. Bandits, adventurers, lovers and gods have the disguise in common. But girls always fall for taking it off. Psyche, in the fable, held a candle over Cupid's sleeping face - a god who only came in the dark - then let a drop of hot wax fall, and up he jumped, away he flew.

Jamie and Rosamond re-enact the myth of Eros and Psyche. Once Jamie kidnaps Rosamond, she lives with him happily except for one flaw: he will not allow her to see his face and to know his identity. Though he may see, know, and thus possess her, his mask of berry stains prevents her from knowing him, and he remains a mystery to Rosamond. In this state of ignorance, Rosamond is denied knowledge of her lover, of her world, and therefore of herself; her fear of losing Jamie overcomes her desire for knowledge. Welty's imagery connects Jamie's disguise to language and narrative: "Sometimes she would wake up out of her first sleep and study his sleeping face, but she did not know the language it was written in. And she would look out the window and see a cloud put up a mask over the secret face of the moon" (Welty, 1978: 84-85). Rosamond not only does not write but also cannot even read the texts that control her life.

When she does manage to remove the berry stains, there occurs a moment of instantaneous recognition for both Rosamond and Jamie: "You are Jamie Lockhart!" (134) cries Rosamond. As in the story of Psyche, Rosamond's assertion of her desire for knowledge is viewed as an act of selfish disobedience: "Good-by", Jamie says. "For you did not trust me, and did not love me, for you wanted only to know who I am. Now I cannot stay in the house with you" (135). Rosamond's assertion of her desire for knowledge is interpreted as selfish, as a threat to patriarchal power and identity, and results in his abandoning her.

Just when Jamie abandons her, Rosamond discovers that she is pregnant. Pregnant, like Psyche, Rosamond must venture out into the world beyond the robbers' house to search for her lover. Welty's heroine steps outside the passive female role inscribed by the text and into the quest narrative usually reserved for our culture's heroes.

Rosamond once again succeeds in her quest: she finds Jamie Lockhart. And there her story stops. Rosamond's final tale has a curiously rehearsed sound, as though she tells someone else's story in someone else's language. Supplanted

by husband and children, she is no longer the subject of her own story. Her lies now add colour to her narrative but no longer subvert and revise the traditional plot. She tells her father that she misses the house in the wood, and even their old life. And no wonder; once again the fulfilment of Rosamond's quest lands her back in the marriage plot in which feminine identity becomes fixed and static. Living in wealth in New Orleans, she has stepped out of the frontier setting that could accommodate her courageous and adventurous qualities. No longer a "little pioneer", she now fulfils the prescribed social role of wife and mother. When Jamie thanks Clement for his daughter, their original deal - Clement's daughter in exchange for Jamie's finding her - is completed. It does not matter that Rosamond actually found Jamie; the patriarchal script reduces her to a commodity. She has stepped outside of the fairy-tale world of "happily ever after" and returned to the central narrative for women - the narrative of exchange, marriage, motherhood - and no longer narrates her own story.

While the tale "Cupid and Psyche" shares many features with "Beauty and the Beast" as we know it today, it deviates from what has become our canonical version of the tale in a number of key ways. The first "Beast" is only rumoured to be a monster, and it is he who abandons Psyche, after her sisters urge her to take a look at the "enormous snake" that is her lover. More importantly, Psyche's story is what one critic has declared a "paradigm of female heroism" (Edwards, 1979: 37). The brave heroine, left by Cupid, never indulges in self-pity but sets off on an epic quest full of risks and requiring her to accomplish one impossible task after another. Unlike her eloquent avatars in European versions of "Beauty and the Beast", Psyche undertakes a mission that not only requires the performance of tasks, such as sorting grains, fetching a hank of golden wool or bringing Venus a jar of ice-cold water from the river Styx, but also demands that she renounce that quintessential feminine virtue known as compassion - the very peculiarity that comes to the fore in European variants of "Beauty and the Beast".

The plot of "Cupid and Psyche" was well known in 17th-century France and was transformed by La Fontaine into a long story, *Amours de Psyche et de Cupidon* (1669). Early versions of tales such as Fontaine's project an image of women who are either too curious (Psyche) or vengeful (Venus). Some of the basic

changes in the motifs and plot broke radically from the male tradition of Psyche and Cupid. It was Madame D'Aulnoy, Baronne or Comtesse Marie-Catherine Le Jumel De Barneville D'Aulnoy, who prepared the way for the literary version of "Beauty and the Beast", and not Perrault as many people believe. She wanted to make the fairy tale part of the living practice of the aristocratic salon, and her tales were elaborated in the parlour games that she and her contemporaries (mainly women) played before they were composed. In the conscious composition of her tales she clearly intended to present a woman's viewpoint with regard to such topics as tender love, fidelity, courtship, honour, and arranged marriages. As a member of the aristocratic class, who had experienced the benefits of changes in education and social roles for upper-class women, Madame D'Aulnoy created a setting in her tales that placed women in greater control of their destinies than did fairy tales by men, and it is obvious that the narrative strategies of her tales were meant to expose decadent practices and behaviour among the people of her class, particularly those who degraded independent women.

The Ram and *The Green Serpent* [3] are D'Aulnoy's two most interesting commentaries on what manners a young woman should cultivate in determining her own destiny. The power in all her tales is held by fairies, wise or wicked women, who ultimately judge whether a young woman deserves to be rewarded. If there is a divinity or transcendental God, it is a powerful female fairy or a group of fairies. The issue at hand in both fairy tales is fidelity and sincerity, a topic of interest to women at that time. However, in her tales she creates an image of female autonomy but submitting to a male code. Madame D'Aulnoy seems to have been particularly fascinated by the animal spouse cycles for *The Green Serpent* was one of the five animal groom tales she wrote.

The first truly similar tale to the one we know today was published in 1740 by Madame Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Gallon de Villeneuve as part of a collection of stories *La jeune amériquaine, et les contes marins* (told by an old woman during a long sea voyage). She wrote fairy tale romances drawn from earlier literature and folk tales for the entertainment of her salon friends. Madame Gabrielle de Villeneuve was one of Madame D'Aulnoy's followers and she published her highly

[3] See the classical collection by Baronne D'Aulnoy, *Les Contes de Fées* (1st ed. 1698).

unique version of “Beauty and the Beast” and it became a classic model. The social function of the fairy tale had now changed: the literary fairy tale was intended to amuse or instruct the isolated reader. Like Madame D’Aulnoy, Madame de Villeneuve was also concerned with the self-realization of a young woman and her message for women is ambivalent. While all the rules and codes in her fairy tales are set by women, Beauty is praised most for her submissiveness, docility, and earnestness.

Almost half of the Villeneuve story revolves around warring fairies and the lengthy history of the parentage of both Beauty and the Prince. Beauty is one of 12 children, her stepfather is a merchant, her real father being the King of the Happy Isles. The Queen of the Happy Isles is both Beauty’s mother and the Dream Fairy Sister. Villeneuve also made various digs at the many enforced marriages that women had to submit to, and her Beauty ponders that many women are made to marry men far more beastly than her Beast.

In Madame de Villeneuve’s version, the Beast was enchanted by a fairy whose love he had rebuffed and Belle is a princess and not the daughter of the merchant who raised her. Belle’s story is crucial to the end when it is revealed that the Beast may marry only a woman of royal blood. For a good part of the narrative – and unlike the vast majority of French fairy tales at the time – Belle is portrayed as a non-noble but nonetheless virtuous heroine. In the end, though, her virtue is revealed to be the innate consequence of her aristocratic birth, and she may marry the Beast-turned-prince. The justification of Beauty’s right to marry is part of a series of discourses on manners that constitute the major theme of the tale: virtuous behaviour is true beauty, and only true beauty will be rewarded, no matter what class you are. Eventually, we learn that Beauty is really a princess, who had been raised by her supposed merchant-father to escape death by enemies to her real father, a king. Considered as a whole, Villeneuve’s tale displays a somewhat ambiguous stance towards social class, witnessed especially in the favourable treatment of Belle’s adoptive father (a merchant).

Villeneuve makes explicit the transgressive sexual union at the heart of this tale type. Not only does the Beast repeatedly ask Belle to sleep with him, but also Belle has pleasurable dreams of being courted by a handsome prince. The

trangressiveness of these descriptions is intensified by details of the Beast's frightening appearance and his equally repulsive stupidity. But at the end of the tale, this transgression is resolved when Belle discovers that the Beast is none other than the prince in her dreams.

One of Villeneuve's most important contributions is her representation of women. In her fairy tales she pays particular attention to women's plight in marriage, their financial constraints, and ultimately their difficult quest for happiness.

The world in which such a story was made was fading almost as surely as was that of the tales of the oral tradition, and it was, even more than the French Revolution, the coming of children's literature which was responsible. The profusions for which d'Aulnoy is most remarkable soon became, in the hands of her contemporaries and followers, excesses. As already mentioned, in 1740 Madame de Villeneuve concocted a "Beauty and the Beast" over three hundred pages long, puffed out with invention and decoration, and so the fashion soon changed. Since, furthermore, it was as children's literature that all fairy tales were to survive, it was Perrault's *contes* rather than the great efforts of the ladies which effected the transition, and d'Aulnoy's stories had to be retold, to remain hers only in name and outline, before they could be handed on. Inevitably her stories lost something in the pruning, and some of her best tales proved so hard to shorten they were ignored and were only very infrequently republished as fairy tales for children.

The best known of d'Aulnoy's kind of tale had a more fortunate fate than any of hers has ever enjoyed. After Madame de Villeneuve's epic version of "Beauty and the Beast" it had to undergo immediate surgery if it was to survive at all, and, fortunately, a woman named Madame LePrince de Beaumont was at hand to do the job. LePrince de Beaumont was not a grand lady of Versailles but a governess living in England, and she was concerned primarily with laying down her ideas of the best ways to educate the young. She flourished in the middle of the eighteenth century and so was a contemporary of Madame de Genlis, who also wrote instructive books for children. As a result, while LePrince de Beaumont saved "Beauty and the Beast" for later generations, she also gave it earnestness - rather

than a seriousness, which it should have. Madame de Villeneuve's version opens with the merchant with six children when he needs only one; describes gardens and furnishings; adds a whole series of visits in Beauty's dreams by Beast-as-handsome prince; and succeeds in making Beauty seem awfully dense. As Sale (1978) points out, it is a great story, yet no one ever reads it in the best of all possible versions.

This means that the version of "Beauty and the Beast" best known to Anglo-American audiences was penned in 1757 by Madame de Beaumont (Jeanne-Marie LePrince de Beaumont) for her *Magasin des Enfants* (translated as *The Young Misses' Magazine*). Although taking all the key elements from the Mme. de Villeneuve story, Mme. de Beaumont omits some dream sequences and the fact that in the original the transformation to handsome prince takes place after the wedding night. Intended as a lesson for her students, some of the subversive edges were polished off the story. Its plot is as follows: a rich merchant has three daughters and also three sons who have little to do with the story. All the girls are good looking, particularly the youngest who becomes known as Little Beauty. The older girls loved the social life of the rich; the youngest loved to read and was mocked by the others. The sisters are vain and jealous of Beauty who is by contrast modest and charming and wishes to stay with her father.

All of a sudden the family loses its money and is forced into a poorer lifestyle which makes life more difficult all around and exaggerates the differences between Beauty and her sisters. Beauty and the three brothers throw themselves into working for their new life while the sisters are bored. The father takes a trip in the hopes of regaining his wealth, and the older sisters demand he bring them expensive garments. Beauty asks simply for a rose.

The father is unsuccessful in his attempt to regain his wealth and in despair, wandering in the forest, is trapped in a snow storm. He comes upon a seemingly deserted palace where he finds food and shelter for the night. There seem to be no people evident but there is hay in the stable for his horse and food on the table for him. He eats and thanks "madam fairy" for being so kind to him. In the morning he wanders into the garden where he sees the perfect rose for Beauty. Upon plucking it, a hideous Beast appears and says that for his thievery he must die. The father

begs for his life and, the Beast agrees to let him go if one of his daughters will take his place. If she refuses, then he must return to die himself. The Beast gives him a chest filled with gold and sends him home. This treasure enables the older daughters to make fashionable marriages. On giving Beauty the rose, her father cannot help but tell her what happened. The brothers offer to slay the Beast but the father knows that they would die in the process. Beauty insists on taking her father's place, and so she returns with him to the Beast's palace where he reluctantly leaves her.

In a dream Beauty sees a beautiful lady who thanks her for her sacrifice and says that she will not go unrewarded. The Beast sees that she is good and treats her well; all her wishes are met by magic. He visits her every evening for supper and gradually Beauty grows to look forward to these meetings as a break to the monotony of her life. At the end of each visit the Beast asks Beauty to be his wife, which she refuses although agreeing never to leave the palace. Beauty sees in the magic mirror that her father is desperately missing her and asks that she might return to visit him. The Beast assents on the condition that she return in seven days, lest he die.

The next morning she is at home. Her father is overjoyed to see her but the sisters are once again jealous of Beauty, her newly found happiness and material comfort with the Beast. They persuade Beauty to stay longer, which she does, but on the tenth night she dreams of the Beast who is dying. Wishing herself back with him, she is transported back to the castle where she finds the Beast dying of a broken heart. She realizes that she is desperately in love with the Beast and says that she would gladly marry him. At this the Beast is transformed into a handsome prince, the father joins them at the palace and the sisters are turned into statues until they own up to their own faults. The statues into which her wicked sisters are turned warn viewers against personal vanity and sisterly jealousy.

The heroine preferred virtue over beauty and wit and has won a great throne with her prince, so the Prince and Beauty live happily ever after because their contentment is founded on goodness.

Based on the previously mentioned literary version written in 1740 by Mademoiselle Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve, Madame de Beaumont's courtly

"Beauty and the Beast" reflects a desire to transform fairy tales into vehicles for indoctrinating and enlightening children about the virtues of good manners, good breeding, and good behaviour. But the lessons and moral imperatives inscribed in Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast" concern almost unilaterally to the tale's young women, who, are showered with either praise or blame. According to Angela Carter (1991: 128), the moral of Madame de Beaumont's tale has more to do with "being good" than with "doing well". It seems that Beauty's happiness is based on her abstract quality of virtue. With much pedagogical zeal, Madame de Beaumont concludes her tale with a tone of approval. Beauty has preferred virtue to looks and has many virtues along with a marriage founded on virtue. Her two sisters, by contrast, have hearts filled with envy and malice. This way, in 1756, Madame LePrince de Beaumont condensed and altered the tale to address a group of young misses, who were supposed to learn how to become ladies. It was the first fairy tale written expressly for children.

It must be noted that the origins of the fairy tale for children should be associated with the change in the institution of the fairy tale created by women. There is no exact date, but it is likely that the fairy tale for children arose in the 1720s and 1730s through the distribution of chapbooks for a broad audience including children.

Madame LePrince de Beaumont based her tales' structure on the way she organized the day that she spent with her wards. As Maria Tatar (1999) points out Madame de Beaumont was very ambitious as far as the girls' education was concerned. Her method of teaching was based on free debate and gentle persuasion, which nevertheless did not always avoid some clash of wills. They usually began with one of her fairy tales from which she extrapolated a moral through elaboration and questions, then proceeded to a practical demonstration of physics, history, or geography, or else a commentary on a passage from the Old Testament.

Madame de Beaumont's version of "Beauty and the Beast" not only endorses the importance of obedience and self-denial, but she also uses the tale to preach the transformative power of love, more specifically the importance of valuing essences over appearances. This lesson is inscribed in a tale with a

heroine who embodies physical perfection and a seamless fit between external appearances and inner essences. In men, by contrast, external appearances, and even charm, count for nothing. In Madame de Beaumont's tale it is neither good looks nor great wit that makes a woman happy with her husband, but character, virtue, and kindness, and Beast has all those good qualities. She might not be in love with him, but she felt respect, friendship, and gratitude toward him. It seems that Beast's kindness makes his "deformity" virtually disappear.

Just as "Beauty and the Beast" was entering print, it took various didactic turns that had been absent from many of the folk versions. Madame de Beaumont's tale, which has become the canonical text in Anglo-American and European cultures, erases the bizarre twists and turns found in many folk versions of the tale. Written at the dawn of the Enlightenment, it attempted to steady the fears of young women, to reconcile them to the custom of arranged marriages, and to brace them for an alliance that required them to eliminate their own desires and to submit to the will of a "monster".

The French tradition of the time was to unfold stories in a more everyday situation, with a tendency to substitute dramatic development founded on human emotions in place of actions based on magic forces. They eliminated whatever was bloody or cruel and relied on a story with direct action and without accessory actions, a style sober and unadorned. French storytellers subjected traditional stories to their own classical, logical, even rational taste. Perrault began this trend away from the traditional folk manner, and the ladies who followed him – such as Mme. d'Aulnoy and Mme. LePrince de Beaumont - went even further. The lowliest of people in their tales are gentlemen, shepherds are princes in disguise, and the stories are peopled by the upper levels of the court. These influences over the story explain some of the differences we find between today's *Beauty and the Beast* rooted in these French tales and more traditional versions. In the 1843 poetic version attributed to Charles Lamb, as well as in the sumptuously illustrated Victorian editions that followed, the idea of *fate* (a metaphysical obsession of the period) is introduced. Beauty's actions, such as going to the Beast's castle in her father's stead, are not simply attributed to either blind obedience (de Villeneuve) or honour (de Beaumont), but to the heroine's acceptance of the predestined fate

that lies before her.

That there are multiple alternatives to the social norms presented in Madame de Beaumont's story becomes evident not only in recent recastings of "Beauty and the Beast" by Angela Carter, Tanith Lee and others, but also in earlier versions that found their way into print. "Beauty and the Beast" stands as a model for a plot rich in opportunities for expressing a woman's anxieties about marriage, but, in recent years, it has turned into a story focused on Beast rather than on Beauty. It seems clear that the attraction of the wild in twentieth-century culture cannot be overestimated. As the century advanced and new revisions of the tale appeared, Beauty stood in need of the Beast, rather than vice versa, and the Beast's beastliness was seen as good, even adorable. While eighteenth and nineteenth-century versions of the tale celebrated the civilizing power of feminine virtue and its triumph over crude animal desire, our own culture calls over Beast's heroic defiance of civilization, with all its discontents.

As already mentioned, there is a clear shift in the social function of the literary fairy tale as it began to be scripted for children: it was to instruct in an amusing way and was now received by children of the upper classes in the home where lessons were taught by private tutors or by governesses. Besides, some of the fairy tales were used in schools or in schooling the children of the upper classes. That boys were to be treated differently than girls is apparent from the structure and contents of Madame de Beaumont's book. This means that "Beauty and the Beast" originated as a sex-specific tale intended to inculcate a sense of good manners in little girls.

> Madame LePrince de Beaumont's classic fairy tale enables us to see key features of how the fairy tale was institutionalised for children. The framing conditions of this institutionalisation are: (1) the social function of the fairy tale must be didactic and teach a lesson that corroborates the code of civility as it was being developed at that time; (2) it must be short so that children can remember and memorize it and so that both adults and children can repeat it orally; this was the way that many written tales worked their way back into the oral tradition; (3) it

> must pass the censorship of adults so that it can be easily circulated; (4) it must address social issues such as obligation, sex roles, class differences, power, and decorum so that it will appeal to adults, especially those who publish and publicize the tales; (5) it must be suitable to be used with children in a schooling situation; and (6) it must reinforce a notion of power within the children of the upper classes and suggest ways for them to maintain power. (Zipes, 1994: 33)

In Roger Sale's opinion, for the most part Madame de Beaumont's tale is quite good enough. Its simplicity of outline makes it seem as close to "Snow White" as to "Green Snake", but the appearance is deceiving. As he points out, its ways and means are spare, but they are in important respects very different from those of the oral tradition, and this story announces that the next, the nineteenth-century, form of the fairy tale will be the ballet. By comparison, most oral fairy tales seem primitive, and earlier written tales seem clumsily wordy and pompous. For instance, when the merchant is about to leave Beast's palace for his home, he picks a rose in Beast's garden, and Beast accuses him of insulting his hospitality. A number of things happen at once, lines are drawn, and meanings emerge. "Perhaps you'll bring me a rose", Beauty had said when her father left, "I can't seem to grow them here". Now:

> As he passed under a trellis heavy with roses he thought of Beauty's wish, and picked a rose for her. Just then there was a terrible roar, and a monstrous beast rushed up. "I saved your life, and you show your thanks by stealing my precious roses. You'll die for this. Say your prayers, for in ten minutes I'll kill you." "Majesty, forgive me," begged the trader. "I took the rose for one of my daughters. She asked me to bring her one."[4]

Instantly a role is established for the father to play with his daughter, a role different from his bringing home presents. It is sexual, because he wants to give

[4] "Beauty and the Beast" quoted in Sale, (1978, p. 59).

Beauty what she needs and Beast has, but the father is not implicated in the sexuality. However, since the episode works primarily as a pivot for the plot, whatever we might call suggestive or symbolic about the action is apprehended simply as a matter of narrative, unlike the many pricked fingers in oral fairy tales where the isolation of the episode calls attention to itself.

Or, for instance, the moment when Beauty first comes to the Beast's palace. In de Villeneuve's version this takes pages, many animals and creatures offer their welcomes, and Beauty goes through many rooms before she finally comes to one marked to be hers. LePrince de Beaumont's version shortens all that and insists that Beauty's fear of Beast's intentions is balanced by her sense of wonder at his delicate silence and considerateness. Beauty slowly learns about her lover with every move she makes, and attention is drawn away from the appearance and toward the inner self, the unseen figure who worried about what she most needs.

There is, moreover, a very positive reading of "Beauty and the Beast" and the role it played in the institutionalisation of the fairy tale. In her day, Madame LePrince de Beaumont was a progressive thinker who contributed a great deal to raising the esteem of girls and women in countries like England and France. Patricia Clancy explains that:

> Mme LePrince de Beaumont would by no means have been considered a radical in her own country, yet what she saw and experienced in England fired her with a reforming zeal for both the status and the education of women in society. With her as with most other feminist reformers, the two went hand in hand, and she never ceased to deplore the fact that men denied women education which would make them virtuous, then reviled them for their moral shortcomings. (Clancy, 1982, quoted in Zipes, 1994: 34)

Her main goal in writing "Beauty and the Beast" was to celebrate the virtuous behaviour of her heroine, who bravely chooses to sacrifice herself for the sake of her father. But Beauty's actions give rise to a certain ambivalence that

destabilizes the intentions of Madame LePrince de Beaumont: on the one hand, Beauty can be admired for her courage and, on the other hand, criticised for submitting to the will of two men, her father and the beast. It would seem that she actually seeks to be dominated and to be praised for her submission as a virtuous and courageous act.

Beauty's ambivalence can be attributed to Madame LePrince de Beaumont's own ambivalence as reformer because she did not want to alter the structure of the family or society and yet wanted to improve the status of women. Therefore, she rationalised the submission of women as female desire in her fairy tales. According to Zipes, "this rationalisation of desire is what makes 'Beauty and the Beast' so powerful and explains how her version assumed mythic proportions in the eighteenth century and continues to exercise such a compelling appeal up to the present" (Zipes, 1994: 34). Mme LePrince de Beaumont was a sensible governess, who found the use of the fairy tale form to shape the young girls and boys. Her vision of female love and sympathy redeeming the brute in man has made "Beauty and the Beast" one of the best-loved fairy tales in the world, and it has not stopped inspiring dreams of experiencing love's power in little girls and little boys.

If we think about the Oedipus complex and how girls were, for a long time, socialised to desire domination and boys to dominate, we realise that Beauty is already bonded by the time that we are introduced to her. She lives in a master/slave relationship with her father and accepts all his decisions without question, for he is the ultimate male authority. She has no other model or option because the mother is conveniently dead. In fact, Beauty has already become a type of *Ersatz*-mother, and because of her willingness to be dominated and to serve, she is easily exploited by the father.

"Beauty and the Beast", in many of its versions, focuses on the intimate bonds between father and daughter which impede the heroine's rite of passage into maturation. Pursued by suitors, Beauty chose to stay with her father for a few years longer. For a heroine, Beauty acts with unusual decisiveness in consigning herself to a passive waiting and in prolonging her commitment and loyalty to her father. The abrupt loss of the merchant's wealth casts the family into genteel

poverty, which again elicits Beauty's determination: she will not leave her father in his misfortunes, but would attend and comfort him. She sacrifices individual happiness one more time by volunteering to die in her father's stead to satisfy the offended Beast. Lacking a jealous stepmother to prevent this excessive attachment and to force her into a rebellious search for adult sexuality, Beauty clings childishly to her father. The tale suppresses intimations of incest; nevertheless, it symbolises the potent, sometimes problematic Oedipal dependency of young girls. Well before her encounter with the Beast, Beauty's three decisions – to stay, to serve, finally to sacrifice her life – establish her willing subservience to paternal needs. Complementary to the mother's role as model for appropriate female adaptations the natural father's example of desirable masculine behaviour likewise shapes her dreams of a saviour and encourages the heroine's later commitment to the prince.

In "Beauty and the Beast", the attraction to the father, prohibitions against incest, and the transference of devotion to the prince round out the saga of maturation. In the throes of Oedipal ambiguities, a young girl who still desires dependency seizes upon her father's indulgent affection, because it guarantees respite from maternal persecutions and offers a compensating masculine adoration. This tale, among others, implicitly acknowledges the potent attraction between the female and the father.

It is because of Beauty's desire to please the father that she does not hesitate to sacrifice herself to the Beast. This means that it is not a great step for Beauty to move to the Beast's castle because she is merely exchanging one master for another. What is difficult is the adjustment to the new surroundings and the face of the new master. Once she learns that she can be comfortable in the new surroundings, she is willing to give up her father. In effect, she is calm and pacified because her "new" life will be richer and more comfortable. But her position will not be much different, for she is to be the nurturer, the one who sacrifices her body for the desire of the Beast. It is the Beast who wants her. She must learn that his desire is her desire just as she had learned that her father's desire was her own desire. Both her father and the Beast cast Beauty in the role of rescuer and nurse. We are left then with Beauty as an exemplary figure who

predicates all her desires on how she can please men, and all this seems reasonable, for they apparently cannot live without her.

Yet, this conclusion is all illusion, for her identity is determined by them. Her function in life is predetermined. Beauty must learn to tame her own desires to fit a male civilising code in such a way that she appears to be the agent of her own desires. However, in submitting to the Beast's desire, she is complying with her father and the socio-psychological authorities that promise rewards for masochistic behaviour. The reward is a move up the social ladder: Beauty comes from the mercantile class and will be symbolically ennobled by marrying the Beast/ prince. But her noble action, self-sacrifice for father and Beast, will only strengthen the bonds of domination that will constrain her for the rest of her life. Moreover, it should be stressed that the Beast is also portrayed in a stereotypical "Oedipal" manner that rationalises his will/ desire to dominate. Why must he have a virginal daughter to compensate for the father's trespass? Why must he manipulate her to rescue him? The fact is that Beast's desires have also been scripted, for he supposedly knows no other way to win a woman than through power and emotional blackmail.

What is this good sense? The sense to sacrifice one's life for the mistakes of one's father, learn to love an ugly beast-man if he is kind and has manners, keep one's pledge to a beast, no matter what the consequences may be. When confronted by her sisters, who accuse her for not being concerned about her father who is sentenced to death for picking a rose, Beauty responds that she will not lament her father's death because he is not going to perish since she will offer herself to the Beast (to placate his fury), and feels very fortunate to be in a position to save her father and prove her affection for him.

Beauty's virtues, as her story makes clear, stem from a willingness to sacrifice herself. After discovering that Beast is prepared to accept one of the daughters in place of the father, she declares that she feels fortunate to be able to sacrifice herself for him, because this way she will have the pleasure of saving her father and proving her feelings of tenderness for him. To be sure, not all Beauties are such willing victims. In the Norwegian "East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon", the heroine has to be talked into marrying the beast (a white bear) by her father.

Marrying her daughter off to a swine does not appear to be a terrible prospect to a woman in Giovanni Francesco Straparola's "Pig King", especially after she learns that the daughter stands to inherit a kingdom. And in words that seem like a parody of paternal expectations, the king of Giambattista Basile's "Serpent" pleads with his daughter to take a snake as her husband.

That the desire for wealth motivates parents to turn their daughters over to a beast points to the possibility that these tales mirror social practices of an earlier age. Many of the arranged marriages must have seemed like marriage to a beast, and the telling of stories like "Beauty and the Beast" may have furnished women with a socially acceptable channel for providing therapeutic advice, comfort, and consolation. Yet what many of these tales seem to endorse in one cultural inflection after another is a re-inscription of patriarchal norms, the subordination of female desire to male desire, and a glorification of filial duty and self-sacrifice. Angela Carter's "Courtship of Mr. Lyon" is unique in its effort to demystify these "natural" virtues by subjecting them to grotesque exaggeration. Her heroine perceives herself to be immaculate and sacrificial. This tale, "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon", lifts the covers from the body of carnal knowledge usually more modestly draped in fairy tales.

After some subversive versions of "Beauty and the Beast", Angela Carter picked up the notion of the decadent father in a second reworking of that tale in her collection *The Bloody Chamber and other Stories* called "The Tiger's Bride" (1979), and elaborated it in a brilliant and unique manner that depicted the mutual fulfilment of desire by two sensual individuals. In the opening line of Carter's "The Tiger's Bride" Beauty informs the reader that her father, a degenerate Russian aristocrat who has gambled away his entire estate, lost her to the Beast at a game of cards. Fully aware of her status as object to be negotiated in a male economy, Beauty bitterly resents it. The Beast takes his prize to his remote stable where he desires to see her naked. When she discovers that the Beast wants only to look at her naked, she laughs in his face and, in tones that mock the obscenity of his request, makes her counteroffer, to expose herself only from the waist down: even though the tiger keeps her prisoner, she refuses to give in to his demand. Only after the tiger removes his clothes (his human disguise) for her does she freely

undress for him, after which she feels free for the first time in her life. This story ends with the heroine's own transformation, under the Beast's caresses, into a furry, naked creature like him. The happy ending to Angela Carter's "The Tiger's Bride" reverses the traditional terms of "Beauty and the Beast". Fulfilling a contract requiring her to strip before the Beast, the heroine approaches her oppressor as if offering the key to a peaceable kingdom in which his appetite need not be her extinction. Haunted by fear, she nonetheless courageously approaches Beast, prepared to hold up her father's end of the bargain. In the end, an authentic happy ending is found in a return to nature for both partners. Carter has turned the power structure around. Not only does the protagonist refuse to become the object of the gaze until she obtains the status of the subject, but she also narrates her own story, the narrator being now both subject and object. One of the main obstacles that Carter's female characters confront is their treatment as objects, as things for men to look at, manipulate and possess. As happens in "The Tiger's Bride", Carter's protagonists learn that being an object of desire is dangerous, leading not only to a diminishing of the self, but sometimes to physical annihilation. She acknowledges the pleasure as well as the danger of being desired, of being thought beautiful. However, Carter condemns neither women for wanting to be desired nor men for desiring them. Anyway, in commenting on this tale, Bryant (1989) has argued that the transformation centres on the girl, not the beast, thus presenting a challenge to the Oedipal myth, for Carter rewrote the traditional social/ sexual patterns, turning them inside out and against themselves to offer the possibility for mutual understanding and respect for other-ness. Part of Angela Carter's audacity – which made her unpopular in some quarters of the feminist movement in the 1970s – was that she dared to look at women's wilfulness, and especially at their attraction to the Beast in the very midst of repulsion. *The Bloody Chamber* offers her answer to Perrault's vision of better things. Angela Carter returned to the theme of Beauty and the Beast again and again. In a spirit of mischief, she was seizing the chance to hurt governessy moralisers. Carter's beauties choose to play with the beast precisely because his animal nature excites them and gives their desires licence.

Deliberately breaking conventional ladylike aspirations (the love of the prince), with which, since the nineteenth century, fairy tales had been identified, Carter places her protagonists in the roles of Beauty or Snow White. As the English critic Lorna Sage writes:

> [Carter] produced her own haunting, mocking – sometimes tender – variations on some of the classic motifs of the genre… in retelling these tales she was deliberately drawing them out of their set shapes, out of the separate space of "children's stories" or "folk art" and into the world of change. It was yet another assault on Myth… done caressingly and seductively. The monsters and the princesses lose their place in the old script, and cross forbidden boundary lines. (Sage quoted in Warner, 1994: 309)

In her two revisions of "Beauty and the Beast", Angela Carter engages the fairy tale by exposing its traditional taboos against looking and telling to a spotlight which projects multicoloured "shadows" of Beauty's performance as problematic subject of transformation. In Carter's employment of female characters from fairy tale and fantasy, she portrays young women facing male and female sexual desires, male attitudes toward women, and self-knowledge.

Angela Carter's work excites contradictory and powerful feelings in her audience because, while openly challenging conventional misogyny in the very act of speaking, she also refuses the wholesome or pretty pictures of female gender (nurturing, caring) and deal plainly with erotic dominance as a source of pleasure for men and for women. Nevertheless, Carter's work should not be viewed as an isolated or exceptional achievement.

In *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979), Christopher Lasch asserts that the Oedipus complex is no longer the prime organiser of psychic life or the prevalent cause of psychic disturbances in American society thus eroding a significant sense of the past and of all forms of patriarchal authority.[5] In contrast, Jessica Benjamin (quoted in Diggins, 1981: 198-199) questions whether the Oedipal model, with its

[5] See Lasch, Christopher. *The Culture of Narcissism*. (New York: Norton, 1979), especially the first two chapters and the last one entitled 'Paternalism without Father'.

affirmative view of paternal authority as a result of autonomy, is an ideal or universal path to individuality. In fact, she perceives the Oedipal paradigm as holding back the free development of gender identity. She believes that the Oedipal father represents our peculiar form of individuality. He teaches us the lesson that she who nurtures us does not free us, that he who frees us does not nurture us, but rules us. This constellation seems to be the basis for gender domination in our culture.

If the decisive years of developing gender identity and individuality occur in the pre-oedipal phase, then it is the responsiveness or non-responsiveness of the mother which influences the child's basic drives. The attachment to the mother and a mutual recognition of needs can encourage the independent development of a child. It is this phase which is key to the future gender identity and autonomy of an individual. However, this phase is rarely completed in a successful way in society because generally the father is internalised as an ideal of absolute autonomy. However, the man/ father achieves absolute autonomy because the woman/ mother represents dependency. Man's domination of woman has found expression in the Oedipal relationships in which the split between male and female is reproduced in each generation.

Ilene Philipson is concerned with the way mothers were and are forced to play the primary role in child rearing and unconsciously engender early narcissistic disturbances by using and misusing their children in a variety of ways. In "Heterosexual Antagonisms and the Politics of Mothering" (1982), Philipson argues that it is due to the failure to develop a consistent sense of self-worth in the pre-oedipal phase of a child which leads to narcissistic disturbances and social behaviour that are exploitative and parasitic. In the present framework of child rearing, the mother's faulty empathy gives rise to a false gender differentiation that in turn leads to heterosexual antagonisms.

This policy of keeping the woman at home has been maintained to the present.[6]

[6] See also a book by Nancy Chodorow. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

Philipson (1982) argues for family ties based on emotional intimacy, reciprocity, and equality, and this demand is not to be understood as some kind of idealistic declaration of rights on behalf of children and women. The feminist critique of the family and child-rearing practices emanates from a careful examination of the mediations between psychic and social structures. Power is at stake, and the control exercised by fathers as authority figures and mothers as their surrogate legislators will not be abandoned easily, especially when social policies do not encourage and increase the self-esteem of an individual.

The literary critics have not explored the subtle connections between traditional tales which reveal contradictions of patriarchal societies and the oedipal model upon which numerous tales were based. Nor have the critics made much headway in examining the new feminist fairy tales as reflecting mass social changes since 1945 that have affected the psychic structure of individuals and the general socio-genetic development culture.

Though it is clear that the male characters in the feminist fairy tales have other interests than the heroines, they are not portrayed in a one-dimensional way. Generally, they are associated with false differentiation or with the Oedipal phase which undermines healthy narcissistic longings. However, the male characters are also capable of learning and changing just as the traditional fairy-tale form itself reveals a capacity for transformation.

One dominant curve can be discovered in the retellings from the seventeenth century to the present day: at first, the Beast is identified with male sexuality which must be controlled or changed or domesticated through *civilité*, a code chiefly established by women, but later the Beast is perceived as a principle of nature within every human being, male and female, young and old, and the stories assert beastliness's intrinsic goodness and necessity for survival. The variations in the ways of telling "Beauty and the Beast" offer us a text where this fundamental change of mentality can be deciphered; the representations of the Beast circulating in other forms, in films and toys for instance, also illuminate one of the most profound changes in human sensibility in modern time: the re-evaluation of animals.

If we think about this tale and analyse its main male character, as many animals in different tales, the Beast does not wish to be an animal and, while enchanted, he is the kindest, the most patient, the most gentlemanly or ladylike, and the most civilised creature in the story. He is willing to put up with faithless, unkind and rude human behaviour in order to regain human form, so he can marry the person who sometimes is hard on him. His delicate behaviour might lead us to think that he is used for satiric purposes to show how animals can be closer to what human beings ought to be than humans are. In fact, the Beast serves an opposite purpose. The enchanted animal is royal and behaves beautifully not because it is an animal, but because the spell under which it has fallen cannot enchant the beauty of its spirit or the sweetness of its manners. The spell is limited because the power of evil is limited to changing appearances. We can all be magnetised by beauty or repelled by ugliness, and we usually want human beings for our dearest companions and mates and so find ourselves condescending even to the most impressive of animals. So fairy tale heroes and heroines can be deceived when they see an enchanted animal, and only the animal's patience and kindness can wear away the deception, establish trust and thereby begin to break the spell.

As far as Beauty is concerned, she is selfless, and perhaps that is why she has no name. She is nameless. All girls are supposed to become "beauties", i.e., selfless and nameless. There is a false power attributed to Beauty as a virtue. By sacrificing oneself, it is demonstrated, the powers that be, here the fairies, will reward her with a perfect husband. The most important thing is to learn to obey and worship one's father (authority) and to fulfil one's promises even though they are made under duress. Ugliness is associated with bad manners like those of her sisters. The beast is not ugly because his manners are perfect. Beauty and the Beast are suited for one another because they live according to the code of civility. They subscribe to prescriptions that maintain the power of an elite class and patriarchal rule.

Beauty's apprenticeship in her father's house reveals an early conformity to domestic rules, but her subsequent palatial captivity by Beast symbolises a further stage in her maturation. Relinquishing filial duties, she must confront male

sexuality and transform initial aversion into romantic commitment. Comparable to the substitution of a stepmother, replacement of Beast for the merchant exemplifies the adolescent's ambivalent longing for continued paternal protection, yet newly awakened anxieties about masculine desires. Initially horrified by Beast's proposal of marriage, Beauty first ignores his overt ugliness, an act which signifies her repression of sexual fears. When she discovers his spiritual goodness, her repugnance gradually gives way to compassion, then romantic adoration, and finally marital bliss. Having schooled herself to seek virtue beneath a physical repulsive countenance, she commits herself totally and tells him she cannot live without him. The magical transformation of Beast into a dazzling prince makes possible a consummation of this love affair, which is no longer grotesque. Beast's transformation rewards Beauty for embracing traditional female virtues – patient servitude. She has willingly reformed sexual reluctance into self-sacrifice to redeem Beast from death. She trades her independent selfhood for subordination. She gains social and moral approval by agreeing with this marriage. While the repositioning of her passions from father to prince avoid incest and psychologically allays her separation anxieties, still the female remains childlike – subjected to masculine supervision and denied any true independence.

It is obvious from this tale that the narrative perspective is sympathetic to a young peasant girl who learns to cope with the world around her. She is, after all, wise, brave and tough. The maturing young woman proves she can handle needles, and contend with the opposite sex.

Romantic tales exert an awesome imaginative power over the female psyche – a power intensified by formal structures which we perhaps take too much for granted. Heroines, like Beauty, habitually spend their adolescence in servitude to an evil stepmother, father or beast, or in an enchanted sleep, either embalmed in a glass coffin or imprisoned in a castle tower. On one level an "enchantment" serves as a convenient metaphor to characterise the pubertal period during which young women resolve perplexing ambivalences toward both parents, longingly wish and wait for the rescuing prince, and cultivate beauty as well as moral and domestic virtues. Charles Perrault's sixteen-year-old Beauty slumbers blissfully for a hundred years, but retains her capacity to dream, even to plot strategies for her

opening conversation with the prince. By dramatizing adolescence as an enchanted interlude between childhood and maturity, romantic tales can aggravate the female's psychic helplessness. Led to believe in fairy godmothers, miraculous awakenings, and magical transformations of beasts into lovers, that is, in external powers rather than internal self-initiative as the key which brings release, the reader may feel that maturational traumas will disappear with the wave of a wand or prince's unexpected arrival. This symbolic use of enchantment makes vulnerability, avoidance, sublimation, and dependency charmingly virtuous.

Tales of romance like this one frequently employ a structure of double enchantment, the stepmother's malevolent spell and the seemingly beneficent counter-charm instituted by a guardian spirit. In "Beauty and the Beast" the disenchanted prince attributes his monstrous disguise to the tricks of a wicked fairy that had condemned him to remain under that shape till a beautiful virgin should consent to marry him. Appropriately enough, it is a beautiful lady, that appeared to her in her dream, who reunites Beauty with her family, transforms the envious sisters into statues, rewards Beauty's judicious choice of Beast, and transports everyone to the prince's kingdom. This supernatural lady controls the finale with a stroke of her wand, counteracting the wicked fairy's earlier enchantment. Double enchantment thus reinforces cultural myths about both female adolescence and maturity. It suggests that marriage, like the servitude, is also an "enchanted" state with the prince or a fairy godmother rather than evil stepmother or bad fairy as charmer. Not really disenchanted into reality or self-reliance, the heroine simply trades one enchanted condition for another; she is subjected in adolescence to anticipatory dreams of rescue and in womanhood to expectations of continuing masculine protection. Romantic tales thus transmit to young women an alarming prophecy that marriage is an enchantment, which will shield her against harsh realities outside the domestic realm and guarantee everlasting happiness.

The nuptial rites conventionally climax trials through which the heroine passes: the father's desertion, adolescent waiting and dreaming, and a final awakening by the prince. Festive nuptials signify the heroine's conformity to the socially dictated roles of wife and mother and signal her assimilation into the

community. As the culminating event in most folktales and in life, marriage more importantly displays the victory of patriarchal culture itself, since the female receives her reward for tailoring personal behaviour to communal norms. But marriage is an estate long sanctioned by culture and theoretically attainable by all women; thus, the female may well expect it to provide a protected existence of happy domesticity, complete with an ever-hovering male to rescue her from further dangers. As irrational as this translation of fantasies into ideals for real life may seem, it is often true that romantic myth rather than actual experience governs many women's expectations of men and marriage.

In most of the standard illustrations of Beauty and the Beast, Beauty is depicted as compassionate, kind, and considerate. It is through her great compassion and her self-denial that she assumes heroic proportions. The key image in most of the illustrated versions of Madame LePrince de Beaumont's tale from the eighteenth century to the present reveal Beauty, full of pity leaning over some enormous furry creature or cuddling a freakish monster. What is interesting in all these illustrations is that they also bring out what boys are socialized to expect from young women: total abandonment, nurturing, mercy, obedience, responsibility. No matter what the male/ beast is portrayed to resemble - and the imaginations of artists have drawn great pleasure in conceiving the most bizarre creatures imaginable - the female is supposed to curb her disgust and learn to love the Beast for his dignity and power. Or she is supposed to learn to love her chains and bonds. The illustrations in most books generally underline the thesis that the male is a beast despite his noble sentiments and can change with a submissive and tender wife. Males are not supposed to find the tenderness and compassion within themselves; they obtain much sustenance through emotional blackmail and manipulation.

The sentimental if not melodramatic scene of Beauty holding and seemingly rescuing the Beast at the end of the tale is a picture that has been impressed upon our imagination and scripted in thousands of books since Madame LePrince de Beaumont printed her story in 1756. It was almost immediately frozen as a myth because it complied so "beautifully" with the prescriptions and desires of the male middle class that was solidifying its power in Europe and North America. Fairy

tales do not become mythic unless they are in almost perfect accord with the underlying principles of how the male members of society seek to arrange object relations to satisfy their wants and needs. The fairy tales must seem natural and celebrate submission by the opposite sex or the dominated so that the dominated can feel the beauty of their actions. This is not to say that the dominant pattern and constellation of the fairy tale, frozen as myth, has not been questioned or subverted. Many critics have pointed to the numerous endeavours by gifted writers and illustrators to suggest alternatives to the rationalization of female submission in the tale.

Indeed, it is not by chance that the mythic Oedipus complex came under heavy attack and careful scrutiny during the 1970s when great changes occurred in the family and socialization processes of western countries. Given the questioning of traditional roles in the family, changes at the work place, and the reshaping of stereotypical social and gender expectations, the ideological status quo of the Oedipal myth has been compelled to undergo reformation. Consequently, there were many other rescriptings of the frozen mythic constellation of *Beauty and the Beast* such as Olga Broumas's "Beauty and the Beast"[7] and Tanith Lee's "Beauty".[8] These versions and others are very different from one another, but they share a questioning attitude toward the manner in which the fairy tale has become mythicized to impart stereotyped roles of gender behaviour in the service of patriarchal rule.

In *From the Beast to the Blonde*, Marina Warner discusses some CBS series as an example of current interpretations that are threatening to women consumers because these "current interpretations focus on the Beast as a sign of authentic, fully realised sexuality, which women must learn to accept if they are to become normal adult heterosexuals" (Warner, 1994: 312). Tanith Lee's "Beauty" participates in this sinister project. Even though Lee's collection of short stories ambitiously transforms the fairy tale to foreground women and their desires, "Beauty"'s feminist utopianism is weighed down by an essentialist representation of both Beast and Beauty. Tanith Lee's collection *Red as Blood or Tales of the Grimmer Sisters*, an innovative collection of traditional fairy tales written from a

[7] In Broumas, Olga, *Beginning with O.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).
[8] In Lee, Tanith, *Red as Blood or Tales from the Sisters Grimmer.* (New York: Daw Books, 1983).

feminist perspective, historicizes the representation of women in fairy tales: by ordering her tales chronologically from the "Last Century B.C." to "The Future", she portrays fairy tale heroines to parallel the way women were treated in a certain period. "Beauty" is the last tale in the collection and its futuristic setting assumes a utopian dimension when read in contrast to the earlier tales.

In her novella "Beauty", Lee wishes to remain true to her heroine's self-fulfilment. The setting is Earth and the Future. No wars, no poor people, the weather is artificially controlled, the world's family structures, life styles, and entertainment seem familiar, though its sexual relations seem freer and the arts prosper. Estar, a young girl with "green-brown hair" and an "unrested, turbulent spirit" (168) has an extraordinary destiny. The aliens who control the earth without ruling over it confer on Mercator Levin, her father, a pale green rose as a sign of their demand for one of his children. His other daughters have commitments and interests, so he chooses Estar, who is surprised by the alien summoning even though her earlier wish for a rose unconsciously seem to have foretold this fate. Estar leaves a home that was never "home" to her, and a family that made her feel like a guest. She nevertheless is angry with the aliens for depriving her of "her own chance at becoming human" (178). Once in the alien host's house she exercises her autonomy, yet complains about being held against her will. As seasons pass, however, she becomes increasingly comfortable with the alien's heavily camouflaged presence, until it is obvious to her family that she has fallen in love. The problem, as one of Estar's sisters puts it, is "the way they *look*" (193). Humans say that the aliens disguise themselves so thoroughly because they are ugly. When the alien agrees to show himself naked to Estar, she returns to her family and spends a week of "temporary oblivion, aping the release of death" (198). Her relatives believe the alien's ugliness has shocked her out of love, but when dreams of him make further forgetfulness impossible, she returns to the alien. A double revelation follows. First, he was beautiful, utterly and dreadfully beautiful. Shamed by her own inadequacy, she left humiliated and did nothing. But second, the alien finds her "strangely, alienly lovely" (208). Not only wanting to be her lover, he also informs her that while she looks human she actually belongs to his species. To defy their sterility, the aliens have devised a technologically astute

plan: for each green rose, a spirit is waiting to come "home" from Earth. Having found her "raison d'Estar" (178), the heroine gladly agrees to love spontaneously, but without any choice. Uncomprehending yet certain, her family and other humans remain in the dark.

The connections with "Cupid and Psyche" are quite explicit, especially because Estar is named after a planet "meaning the same as the Greek word *psyche"* (168). The rose, the family, the sisters' suitors, the invisible servants, the telepathy, and the water near which the alien's beauty is revealed obviously connects this novella with "Beauty and the Beast" as well. Less explicit analogies, however, point to issues of gender and narrative construction: as in "Cupid and Psyche", the alien does not change form and Estar's fulfilment comes from recognizing her innate affinity with the alien - which is Beauty's task as well.

Neither Estar nor the alien changes physically. At first, considering the alien to be a superior and wondrous monster, Estar dared him: "'This is the house of a beast, . . . Perhaps I could kill it . . .'" (184). Later, Beauty senses a lie in her own words and is ashamed. Quite simply there is no Beast in "Beauty", a narrative move that exposes xenophobia as a defensive mechanism grounded in misunderstandings and blind superiority. The taboo against looking naturally complements such wilful blindness. Fed by occasional sightings of "some inches of pelted hairy skin, the gauntleted over-fingered hands, the brilliant eyes empty of white" (176), the human-centred, humanistic look assumes that the aliens are hidden ugliness. When Estar does look and sees beauty, thereby challenging the human-centred taboo, does she think the alien is beautiful only because she is one too? Ultimately, even the phantom of the "Beast" vanishes for Estar. It continues to endure only in the earthlings, whose wilful ignorance leaves them as children, who will not or cannot learn about what stands before them.

If the alien is no beast, then Estar has no need to change him, but neither must she change herself, needing instead simply to acknowledge her nature - to be with the alien. The two "changes" her father notes in Estar after her first stay with the alien are only in the eye of the beholder. If she no longer dyes her hair green, that is because the aura of the green roses now surrounds her, and if she looks sad and distant at times, the fact is that she always has, though with less

intensity and self-consciousness. The alien is therefore the channel for an event, not a transformation. Treating her like a child, he reassures her of her autonomy even while knowing where her path will take her. Recognizing herself as a child in his company, Estar "inhumanly" comes to see that love is a matter of being, not choice. "If I were human", she thinks, "it might offend me" (208). But what humanly may seem a sacrifice now seems a privilege. Controlling or being controlled is not the issue: "she loved him with a sort of welcome, the way diurnal creatures welcome the coming of day" (187). Their love is founded on sameness, rather than the attraction for what is unlike, incompatible. Estar has little to change in a world she finds herself so essentially a part of.

In Tanith Lee's text, Estar's innate superiority is ensured genetically: the god-like beings are her relatives. Such predestination - some see the light because they are made of light - has its own relation to basic fairy tale themes. Cinderella does not become a princess, but comes to be revealed as one, and unpromising heroes eventually find their way in the right circumstances because they are "heroes". While those who consider fairy tales to be literature for children tend not to emphasize this possibility, this inherently conservative vision has interpretive power. The gender implications of such looking and telling are similarly constraining. A fully compliant heroine, with a neatly packaged, unproblematic self-centredness, Estar is a Beauty who can say goodbye to "Beast" without hesitation or regret because transformation gets raised only to be made unnecessary. Though Estar's look is shaped by her alien-ness, her true culture, these forces are also her essence - her soul's nature in its freedom and beauty merges with the alien, and her look proves to be "un-human", and explicitly superior. The alien order is thus naturalized, and so is the magic of the fairy tale's limited and constraining representation of change.

Tanith Lee's story "Beauty" takes *Beauty and the Beast* beyond fairy tale forests and into the far future. Lee retains the magical rose, the wayward father, the two sisters, and the monstrous suitor who must not be refused. But the Beast in this case is an alien being, and the climax of the story is a clever one - the transformation centered on the heroine and her ideas about herself and her life. Lee returns to this theme in her chilling dark tale "The Beast", (published in *Ruby*

Slipers, Golden Tears, Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling's volume of reworked fairy tales meant for adult readers), mingling *Beauty and the Beast* with elements of *Bluebeard* and *Mr. Fox*. Tanith Lee's "The Beast" is set in a futuristic winterscape. When Isobel's father finds that he is dying of cancer, he arranges a marriage for her to a wealthy collector of beautiful things, Vessavion. Their marriage and relationship is cold but there is much eroticism in this tale. It is only after the marriage that Isobel discovers just how extensive her husband's collection is.

The often romanticised classic "Beauty and the Beast" has come to epitomise the adage that beauty is only skin-deep, usually implying that there is more to a person than physical ugliness. Lee, using her trademark lush language, alters the traditional tale in order to turn its lesson upside down. Lee's tale explores the nature of beauty and the fine border it shares with beastliness.

Of course, it is important to bear in mind that these and other versions of "Beauty and the Beast" represent the extreme side of the fairy tale as institution in which a heated debate about sexuality and role models has evolved in the last three hundred years. The voices of the traditional and dominant side of the debate since Madame de Beaumont's 1756 tale have continually reproduced the Oedipal mythic features to reinforce the theme of female submission and male domination. One need only look at the key versions that have marked our imaginations and served the domestication of desire to verify this tendency. Significant here are Walter Crane's picture book *Beauty and the Beast* (1875), Andrew Lang's story of "Beauty and the Beast" in *Blue Fairy Book* (1889), and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and Edmund Dulac's depiction of "Beauty and the Beast" in *The Sleeping Beauty and Other Tales from the Old French* (1910). All of these renditions have been re-produced countless times up to the present along with thousands of duplications of Madame LePrince de Beaumont's version as the classical tale, as a means to show how we should script our libidinal urges. "Beauty and the Beast" tales, which all require a woman's patient tolerance of an ugly mate, have no companion tales in the modern period in which the obverse obtains, that is, a man who must love an ugly wife. From the 17th to the 19th century, the plot of "Beauty and the Beast" was adopted and adapted for musical drama, cantata, comedy, ballet, lyric tragedy, and fable. In the 20th century film has predominated: Jean Cocteau's

1946 *Beauty and the Beast* (inspired in Beaumont's tale) began a tradition that has included a broad range of variations on the theme of female beauty vs. male ugliness. Filmed in black-and- white with an astonishing amount of craft and care, Cocteau created a masterpiece of mythic art, blending magical motifs with strong elements of realism to bring the tale to vivid life. He strove for what he called the supernatural within realism, mixing shots of the Beast's enchanted castle with chickens pecking on the ground and other glimpses of ordinary life, skillfully grounding his fairy story within the natural world. Cocteau made the film in France after World War II - a time when post-war blackouts and equipment shortages were daily problems, and when the idea of filming a fairy tale struck many people as shockingly trivial. But Cocteau avoids triviality through a deep understanding of his source material, as well as through an intense personal vision and an almost fanatical attention to the details of lighting and design. The resulting film has stood the test of time, and become a classic of the art.

Although it is a film that can be watched by children, the subtext is adult, and powerfully so. Beauty's nightly refusal of the Beast and the slow awakening of both her attraction and her sexuality are contrasted with the Beast's struggles to contain his own animal nature. He comes to her door covered with the blood of the hunt, and with anguish she sends him away. In the myth of *Cupid and Psyche*, Psyche weds a hideous flying serpent - who is really Cupid, under a spell. By night, a man makes love to her - but she, too, is forbidden to look. She breaks this taboo, and is punished by losing her now-beloved husband. A series of arduous tasks must be completed to win him back. In *Beauty and the Beast* there is no equivalent taboo or insistence on obedience. Beauty's task is the opposite: to look where others would not, and to perceive the man within the Beast. The Beast's own task is patience, and the reclaiming of the human within himself.

Though praised for its innovative artistic experimentation, the major accomplishment of Cocteau's film is in its retelling of the Oedipal myth in a more stark and impressionistic manner than had ever been done in print. As Rebecca Pauley has perceptively remarked,

> the attraction for Cocteau of the Beaumont *Beauty and the Beast* as an oedipal myth must have been considerable. Numerous elements of the story mark it as a covert tale of incest. First of all, there is no mother present in Beauty's family. She refuses proposals of marriage, stating that she prefers to stay with her father. The request of the rose, symbol of love, perfection, and feminine sexuality, among others, traps her father in a fatal gesture in the realm of the Beast. In the original fable, the father accompanies Beauty to the Beast's castle and spends the night in the same bed with her before returning home. In a later sequence, Beauty returns home to her ailing father and they spend a quarter of an hour in transports of rapture in bed in each other's arms. Even discounting the eighteenth century tradition of receiving people socially in the bedroom and ruling out any possible libertine overtones, the implication of these two scenes as workings of a thematic incest is undeniable. Moreover, the pairing of the father and daughter reverses the Oedipal attraction of the son to the mother, thus offering an incestual mirror of Cocteau's own situation. (Pauley, 1989: 87)

However, given the manner in which the tale was forged with the Oedipal myth as its basic underpinning, Cocteau had no choice but to work through the Oedipal motifs by deepening their meaning or posing alternatives to the complex of submission and domination. In this regard, the film has a frightening sadistic side to it, for Cocteau plays a cruel joke on Beauty at the end of the film. Not only does he depict her as totally beholden to her father, but he also has the Beast turn into a prince that resembles Avenant, the very man she did not want to marry.

Beauty's goodness inspired some idealistic lessons and fairy tales, with their generic commitment to justice, frequently rewrite a simple notion of retribution. When men adopt this material, they often introduce special pleading on their own behalf. Cocteau's film, for all its delicacy and dreamlike seductiveness, concentrates on awakening Beauty to consciousness of Beast's goodness. He does not have to change at all, except in outward shape. She has to see past his

unsightliness to the gentle and loving human being trapped inside. The film presents a trial of her limits, not his.

Cocteau, as a Surrealist, was reinterpreting Symbolist doctrine of the feminine role in creativity. This does not prevent Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* from spellbinding a female spectator – the film profoundly affected Angela Carter, for instance, who specially remembered the way the Beast smouldered – after a kill. But its masculine sympathy does not divert the story from the female subject to stress male erotic hunger for beauty as the stimulus to creativity, as the vital principle. The ravishing aestheticisation of the whole film, from the flying laundry at the start to the twilit luxuries of the castle magic, extends the function of the feminine as the Beast's necessary lifeblood. And at the end the disenchanted Beast turns out to have the same human face as Belle's aspiring lover Avenant, whom she rejected kindly, but firmly. So *La Belle et la Bête* traces a promise to male lovers that they will not always be rejected, that human lovers can be saved, and it withdraws at the last moment, any autonomy in love from Beauty herself.

Cocteau's merit as filmmaker seems to have been to bring out the dark side of the fairy tale while rationalising the domination of Beauty with an ethereal happy ending.

Numerous women writers up to the present have felt compelled to confront the stereotypical fairy tale roles in some form or another to establish a sense of their own identities and voices. When examining the function of the "Beauty and Beast" motif in contemporary literature, we must have in mind that many versions of several fairy tales depict "beautiful" women who fall in love with "beast-like" men only to learn that the men do not turn into princes when they, the women, sacrifice their lives for them. The women break their relations with these men either to take destiny in their hands or to succumb to a bitter fate. In this way, the novels reveal the patriarchal lie of the happy end in the classical fairy tale.

As in many other fairy tales, in "Beauty and the Beast", although the girl at first refuses to go, her beauty is seen as the family's sole asset, and she is sold, like a commodity, to the beast (the family does not know that he is a prince under an enchantment). The immediate and predictable result of being beautiful is being chosen, this word having profound importance to a girl. The beautiful girl does not

have to do anything to merit being chosen; she does not have to show courage, resourcefulness, or wit; she is chosen because she is beautiful. The heroines are chosen for their beauty, not for anything they do, they seem to exist passively until they are seen by the hero, or described to him. They wait, are chosen, and are rewarded. Like many other heroines of different fairy tales, the Beauty of "Beauty and the Beast" becomes rich upon marrying an enchanted prince who had been a monster. The system of rewards in fairy tales equates these three factors: being beautiful, being chosen, and getting rich. As already mentioned, marriage is the fulcrum and major event of nearly every fairy tale; it is the reward for girls, or sometimes their punishment. While it would be futile and old-fashioned to suppose that these tales could or should have depicted alternate options or rewards for heroines or heroes, we must still observe that marriage dominates them, and note what they show as leading to marriage, and as resulting from it. The other peculiar aspect of the depiction of marriage in these stories is that nearly all the young heroes and heroines are the children of widows or widowers, as happens with Beauty's father.

Since girls are chosen for their beauty, it is easy for a child to deduce that beauty leads to wealth, that being chosen means getting rich. Beauty has an obviously commercial advantage even in stories in which marriage appears to be a punishment rather than a reward: the stories in which a girl is wooed by a beast as "Beauty and the Beast".

But Beast is ugly. As well as being a topic of interest to most fairy tales, the placement of beastliness is especially relevant to Beauty and the Beast because of the overt monstrosity of the Beast. The Beast's beastliness is rooted in several different places across the retellings, and the differences and inversions alter the general effect considerably. Oral fairy tales seldom concern themselves with ugliness as such, "The Frog Prince" being an exception rather than the rule. The written romances of the great Italian and English Renaissance writers also have little to do with ugliness. Being both profuse and knowing, the already mentioned Countess d' Aulnoy knows many things about ugliness: it can make the ugly one envious and spiteful, it is the worst infliction of a wicked fairy, it is intolerable in a mate, even if the ugly one in other respects is superbly endowed. In *Cupid and*

Psyche, beastliness takes two forms. There is physical beastliness, which curiously exists only in the negative - Psyche is beautiful, Cupid is beautiful, and Venus borrows beauty from the underworld in a box. Physical beastliness is only imagined, as Cupid is only hidden. The second form is a spiritual beastliness, personified in the sisters and, to a certain extent, in Venus. This is the beastliness of jealousy, and it is the struggle against the effects of jealousy drives the tale - Psyche fights the sisters' temptations, and succumbs, and then struggles against the more direct jealousy-inspired tasks Venus sets. Although spiritual or psychological, it is important to note that jealous beastliness is still external to Psyche. Her sisters are inherently jealous; they must be destroyed, and are killed by falling off a cliff. Psyche is untarnished, pure, and at the end she is made immortal, befitting the villagers' conception of her at the beginning. There is no grey area for the characters.

To Madame de Beaumont, the beast's beastliness was complete in his physical appearance. His initial impression implied a deeper animosity, but that is later revealed as being ill-used to others and perhaps eagerness for the end of his enchantment.

LePrince de Beaumont, with characteristic simplicity, seems to go to the heart of our fear about ugliness: it matters more than it should. Beauty, a girl recently removed from the protection of her father, is at first merely frightened of Beast and obedient to him because of his power. The moment he grants her a choice, however, it is his ugliness that preoccupies them both. When Beast asks Beauty if she finds him very ugly, she doesn't lie. She tells him she finds him ugly but also very good. And then later when he asks her to marry him she says, honestly and simply, "No, Beast."

Tanith Lee moves beastliness fully into the psychological realm in an interesting way - the Beast(s) are hidden. By hiding the Alien's beastliness, it becomes entirely imaginary, and Estar (and the reader) must confront the fact that she is creating his beastliness in (her) mind. This fits with the modern 'politically correct' sensibility rejecting any direct connection between physical appearance and greater human worth. It also makes for better character development, which might be considered a modern literary sensibility.

Moreover, Estar's trial while facing this new sort of beastliness is entirely of her own devising, a realization which Estar (and the story itself, it seems) takes some time to get to. Estar is an underacheiver, and listless at home; though she undergoes a considerable process of introspection to realize herself, she is shown to be of the same elevated race as the beast. There is the same transcendence that occured in *Cupid and Psyche* and which was granted in the Beaumont retelling.

At the same time, Beauty is not entirely elevated. In each story, Beauty must redefine true beauty. Some of her reward at the end is deserved - in Tanith Lee's retelling, she undergoes a fairly rigorous self-examination which leaves her with a richer understanding of herself (made explicit in her knowledge of her ancestry). The reward for Beauty's struggle is harmony with herself (in this tale and Carter's) or with her societal role (the first two retellings).

The girl in *The Tiger's Bride* must rise above the role her father will allow, but furthermore she rises beyond humanity. Like Estar, she is revealed as a member of the same race as the Beast, or is made so. Angela Carter takes Lee's realization of beauty one step further. The beast is, in fact, frighteningly in his beastliness; he is powerful and graceful but dangerous and inhuman even more than Lee's Alien. Tanith Lee's Beauty not only overcomes this to see his beautiful love for her, but becomes beastly-beautiful herself. The tiger's beastliness becomes even more arbitrary as Beauty feels a release as she sheds her skin for her "beautiful fur". Carter has boiled down the nature of the beast to its core component within the subject - a misperception leading to a misconception of the other. Beauty by Carter is distinctly beastly for most of the tale - the Beast has a relatively benign motive, a real love (though Beauty has no way to know this), which Beauty misinterprets as physical lust only. Contrasted with this pure hunger is Beauty's father's greed, his gambling hunger. Eventually she sees through the beast's physical beastliness (an inhuman beauty) to the human beastliness.

Ugliness puts Beast in the position of having to act as though his goodness were no real compensation; Beauty is forced to reject what she otherwise might be eager to accept.

As Beauty falls in love with Beast's love of her in those months where he calls every night, she is being weaned from the love of her father; yet when she sees her father lying ill in her magic mirror, she insists she'll die if she can't go home. So she returns and is tempted by her sisters to stay longer than she promised, because she cannot learn by herself that she no longer belongs at home and that she must now go where her heart leads her, even if it is to the ugly beautiful Beast. Beauty, a latter-day heroine though she lived a long time ago, needs to learn more: there is love deeper than kindness, and in that love, kindness is more important than ugliness.

Afraid of having killed him, Beauty runs into the garden, remembering her dream. When she gets near Beast, he whispers that now he could die happy because she was there. That's when she tells him that he mustn't die but live and let her be his wife. She loves him.

As far as Mme LePrince de Beaumont is concerned, she wanted to say to the young women in her charge that they could be sexually happy if they could believe in sexual happiness and could thereby transform the beast in every man into a young prince. This story wishes only for the evolution of a love that can overcome the fear of ugliness. The logic of "Beauty and the Beast" is firm, because it gives the young woman frightening and lonely tasks. Beauty must disenchant Beast and make real the burden of sexual love.

Naturally the ideal shown by LePrince de Beaumont is not our ideal. It is quite defensible to say that Beast creates Beauty's love of him by his care of her, and to add that both her father and Beast cast Beauty in the role of rescuer and nurse – at crucial moments both males cry out that they will die without her. Love is conceived of as a range of emotions from pity to fondness, and Beast's kindness and sadness wear Beauty down as much as they interest or excite her. Again here, we are coming on something that makes the story datable. We can say that the era in which the ideal of women's love as a redeeming force is now an era past, or passing. This tale has been understood as a means of harnessing female sexuality, of describing female destiny or of coming to terms with sexual aspect of love.

Another important aspect about "Beauty and the Beast" is that this is a tale that also touches on the problem of identity in a profound manner. It appears to

suggest that individuals can gain an identity by making daring and risky commitments, in which, perhaps, concern for the well being of others is more important than concern for themselves. A merchant who has just suffered heavy losses finds himself abandoned by his former friends. As a result, most of his children experience problems of their own, only the youngest managing to hold herself together. In fact, as she grows more and more supportive of her father, she also grows more and more beautiful. Seeking to improve his condition, the poor man makes a bitter winter journey, loses his way, and at length comes upon a seemingly deserted castle, where he falls asleep amidst various delights. But the place lies under the control of the Beast, who demands that one of the merchant's daughters be brought to him. The beautiful youngest girl agrees to return with her father despite her fears, and with the encouragement of the Beast sends gifts back home to her sisters. At night she dreams of a prince who comforts her and seeks in return only gratitude, loyalty and trust. While she is at the castle, the young woman reflects long and seriously on her own nature, exploring her inner world carefully, and twice she refuses the Beast's offer of marriage. A visit to her childhood home proves exceedingly dull, and so she is motivated to keep her promise to return to the castle. But she has delayed so long that the Beast has died in sorrow and loneliness. However, her own grief and her willingness to venture into a new dimension of her own life break the enchantment, and the Beast revives as a handsome young prince.

The identity issues are clear enough. The youngest daughter and her father become persons by exerting themselves against all that life thrusts upon them, whereas the other sisters wring their hands in distress and lose whatever possibilities might open up for them. They reject roles as actors and become simply the frustrating physical setting which the third sister must put up with. She, by contrast, is involved in rich vectors – her negotiations with her father and the Beast – and these open up power sources for her, most notably, her capacity for love. She rapidly becomes a true actor, as does the Beast, who has been enduring incredible frustrations.

As a conclusion, we may say that the tale "Beauty and the Beast", despite the differences in many versions of this tale, is basically about the marriage of a

young woman to a monster. The focus of the story is on the young woman and how she becomes involved with or engaged to this monster. This is almost the last story in the canon of what is now known as children's literature that does not deny a central role for romance and sexuality.

The true heirs of the tellers and writers of fairy tales wrote poems, composed operas, and choreographed ballets. For their part, the writers of children's literature had to turn away from fairy tales and to point children toward adult enlightenment and education, not adult romance and sexuality.

Throughout the years, many films and TV series have also been made based on the tale "Beauty and the Beast". The profound shift in cultural values registered in Angela Carter's "The Tiger's Bride" also finds expression in the Disney Studio version of "Beauty and the Beast". The 1992 Disney film animation was one of the biggest box-office draws of all time. This fairy tale film is more vividly aware of contemporary sexual politics than any made before. Linda Woolverton's screenplay put forward a heroine of spirit who finds romance on her own terms. Beneath this storyline, the interpretation contained many subtexts about changing concepts of paternal authority and rights, about permitted expressions of male desire, and prevailing notions in the quarrel about nature/ nurture. Above all, the film placed before the 1990s audience Hollywood's cunning domestication of feminism itself. Walt Disney's Beast, virile yet sensitive, remains attuned to nature and open to the notion of regeneration by cultivating his feminine side. The Disney version in this particular case gives us a Beast-centred narrative devoted almost exclusively to the development of the male figure in the story. Marina Warner finds in Belle nothing but a cover for telling the story of Beast:

> While the Disney version ostensibly tells the story of the feisty, strong-willed heroine, and carries the audience along on the wave of her dash, her impatient ambitions, her bravery, her self-awareness, and her integrity, the principal burden of the film's message concerns maleness, its various faces and masks, and, in the spirit of romance, it offers hope of regeneration from within the unregenerate male.

(Warner, 1994: 314)

Everything about the Beast's character is big, and apt to grow bigger: he has an engorged torso, with an enormous, bull-like head compacted into massive shoulders, manned and shaggy all over, bristling with fangs and horns and claws that almost seem belittled by the creature's overall bulk. The animal which Disney's Beast most resembles is the American buffalo, and this tightens the beast's connections to current perceptions of natural good – for the American buffalo represents the lost innocence of the plains before man came to plunder.

The Beast's longstanding identity with masculine appetite nevertheless works for him rather than against him, and interacts with prevailing ideas of healthy male sexuality. The Disney cartoon has double-knotted the lesson in contemporary ecological and sexual politics, by introducing a second beast, another suitor for Belle's love, the human hunk Gaston. Gaston is a killer of animals and remains one. He is a lyncher, who preys on social outcasts (suspected lunatics and marginals), he wants to breed, and he is capable of deep treachery in pursuit of his own interests. The film wastes no sympathy on Gaston and he is the true villain in this cinematic tale, a man who endorses the rigid, self-destructive logic of Western civilization and sanctions ecological devastation. The penalty for Gaston's brutishness is death: he falls off a high crag from the Beast's castle. In the film, he takes the part of the real beast and what is above all significant about this caricature is that he is a beast in a man's shape.

Disney's film of *Beauty and the Beast* is still disturbing perhaps because it has not been billed as a new story inspired by the old fairy tale - rather, it has been presented to us as if it were the old fairy tale, and such is the power of the Disney name that audiences around the world will perceive this as truth. Yet it's not the old tale. Too many fundamentals have been changed for the film to make that claim - and changed in sloppy ways that lessen the story's classic themes. The father has been changed into a harmless comedian, his role in Beauty's imprisonment diminished into an accident of circumstance. Beauty's request for a rose, and her father's unfortunate way of procuring one, have been deleted altogether, along with the jealous sisters. An arrogant suitor, Gaston, has been

added and presented as the villain of the piece. In short, the heroes and villains of the story are clear-cut, unambiguous - Beauty and her father are always Good, Gaston and his minions are Bad. In the old fairy tale, Beauty makes mistakes - she goes home, she forgets about the Beast, and by doing so almost causes his death. In the Disney film, we have a perfect heroine who never grows, never undergoes a transformation of her own to echo the Beast's. The requisite happy ending is achieved, but the price for it has not been paid - except by the dull-witted characters unfortunate enough to be wearing the black hats. Yet, in the Disney animated film *Beauty and the Beast*, despite the clever changes in the depiction of Beauty, we have the exact same plot of the young woman who sacrifices herself for her father and for the improvement of a monster such as the Beast. She wants a male to free her, to take her away so she can submit to his desires, which she believes to be hers. Even with its "feminist" slant, the Disney *Beauty and the Beast* is basically a duplication of a traditional tale and follows the usual prescriptives of the Hollywood and Broadway musical.

However, the animators have introduced certain emancipated touches: she is dark-haired, a book worm and walks with a swing. The script even contains a fashionable bow in the direction of self-reflexiveness, for Belle likes reading fairy tales more than any other book, and consequently recognises, when she finds herself in the Beast's castle, the type of story she is caught in.

With such a profusion of tales about animal grooms, it is easy to forget that women also often fall victim to enchantments and suffer in silence as snakes, frogs, and ravens, waiting for the right man to come along. While these tales may have fallen into cultural disfavour, with few incorporated into the current canon of children's literature, they are worth looking at to see the extent to which gender becomes destiny in folklore. Comparisons of the two tale types can reveal the degree to which the folkloric imagination constructs subjectivity and desire differently for men and for women. However, their stories reveal that the gender roles in "Beauty and the Beast" and other tale types are not as fixed as we are accustomed to believe. As stories swap back and forth, new elements are introduced and exchanged. Whatever the varying versions, the basic values that the stories convey are similar. The story and its questions regarding human values

run deeper than the simple facts and details of the tale and remain timeless. We all have the potential to be beautiful or beastly.

3. Snow White (and the Seven Dwarfs)

"Snow White" is a typical traditional magical fairy tale. In Grimms' story, as in many others, the young heroine is humiliated and degraded. Later in the story, she finds a man (a prince) since it seems that without a man, these heroines are nothing. Only when they find their prince, who comes to rescue them, can their lives assume meaning, and the meaning is marriage and departure for another kingdom. The heroine wants a male to free her, to take her away so she can submit to his desires, which she believes to be hers just like Beauty does. This story has strong sexist overtones to our day and age because the female protagonist is essentially passive. In most of the standard illustrations of "Snow White", the protagonist is depicted as innocent and kind, and it is through her innocence that she assumes heroic proportions. All those illustrations also bring out what boys were socialized to expect from young women: total abandonment, purity, innocence, nurturing and obedience.

Best known nowadays in its Walt Disney movie version "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and the Grimms' nineteenth century printed text, the immensely popular "Snow White" has hundreds of oral versions, collected primarily in Europe, but also in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. When preparing their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen,* the Brothers Grimm themselves collected several German versions, and the tale they selected for publication has in turn influenced the oral tradition.

"Snow White" versions vary greatly in details. The (step)mother attacks Snow White in a variety of ways; the girl finds refuge with robbers, assassins, giants, fairies, instead of with dwarfs; Snow White's coffin may be made of glass, gold or silver, displayed on a mountaintop, adrift on a river, or locked in a room and surrounded with candles. "Snow White" may vary tremendously from culture to culture in details, but it has an easily identifiable, stable basis. This fairy tale is among the "innocent persecuted heroine" fairy tales, a particularly "fixed" narrative. Different interpretations of "Snow White" tend to agree that its basic themes are female development and female jealousy. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar emphasize the essential but equivocal relationship between the "angel-woman" (Snow White) and the "monster-woman" (the Queen) of Western patriarchy. Jones (1990: 32) concludes that "the overall plot structure of 'Snow White'… is a

reflection of a young woman's development" and the fairy tale is a metaphoric representation of the types of problems a young woman is likely to encounter, while Shuli Barzilai reads "Snow White" as the story of "a mother who cannot grow up and a daughter who must" (Barzilai quoted in Bacchilega, 1997: 31).

Within this narrative of female development, jealousy seems a necessary ill. The heroine's exceptional beauty sets in motion the drama of jealousy, which may help to explain why critics have focused on the magic mirror so insistently. When we first encounter the King's "new" wife, she is framed in a magic looking glass, just as her predecessor - that is, her earlier self – had self-images as if seeking a viable self. The first Queen seems still to have had prospects; not yet fallen into sexuality, she looked outward, if only upon the snow. The second Queen is doomed to the inward search that psychoanalysts like Bruno Bettelheim define as "narcissism". The Queen's consulting the mirror about her beauty repeats the ancient theme of Narcissus, who loved only himself, so much that he became swallowed up by his self-love. It is the narcissistic parent who feels most threatened by his/ her child's growing up, because that means the parent must be aging. As long as the child is totally dependent, it remains part of the parent; he/ she does not threaten the parent's narcissism. But when the child begins to mature and reaches the independence, then he/ she is experienced as a menace by such a parent, as happens to the Queen in "Snow White".

Narcissism is very much part of the young child's make-up. The child must gradually learn to transcend this dangerous form of self-involvement. The story of Snow White warns of the evil consequences of narcissism for both parent and child. Snow White's narcissism nearly undoes her as she gives in twice to the disguised queen's enticements to make her look more beautiful, while the Queen is destroyed by her own narcissism.

Most critics point to the tale's powerful mother/ daughter conflicts. Bruno Bettelheim (1989) defines those conflicts as Oedipal (though the person for whose love the two are in competition is never mentioned), basing his interpretation of the story on the Grimms' "Snow White", which features a "good" biological mother who dies in childbirth and an "evil" queen who persecutes her seven-year-old stepdaughter. The story begins in midwinter, with a Queen sitting

and sewing, framed by a window. As in so many fairy tales, she pricks her finger, bleeds, and is thereby assumed into the cycle of sexuality, giving birth soon after to a daughter "as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the window frame"[9]. All the motifs introduced in this prefatory first paragraph - sewing, snow, blood, enclosure - are associated with key themes in female lives (therefore in female writing). However, the tale's opening is merely prefatory and according to Gilbert and Gubar (1979), the real story begins when the Queen, having become a mother, metamorphoses also into a witch - that is, into a wicked "step" mother.

Paradoxically, the best possible intentions can also contribute to the absence of mothers from the tales. In the case of "Schneewittchen" (*Snow White*), for instance, the Grimms altered the earlier versions they had taken down in which Snow White's own mother suffered murderous jealousy of her and persecuted her. The 1819 edition is the first to introduce a stepmother in her place; the manuscript and the editions of 1810 and 1812 place Snow White's natural mother at the pivot of the violent plot. But it was altered so that a mother should not be seen to torment a daughter. This is still the case in a version collected in the Armenian community in Detroit this century: having pursued her daughter with murderous rage, this mother finally dies of surprise when she hears from the moon that her daughter is still living and is more beautiful than her.

The Grimm Brothers worked on the *Kínder- und Hausmärchen* in draft after draft after the first edition of 1812, Wilhelm in particular infusing the new editions with his Christian fervour, emboldening the moral strokes of the plot, meting out penalties to the wicked and rewards to the just, to conform with established Christian and social values. They also softened the harshness - especially in family dramas. They could not make it disappear altogether, but on the whole, they tended towards sparing the father's villainy, and substituting another wife for the natural mother, who had figured as the villain in the versions they had been told. "Snow White" adds a stepmother figure to exculpate the natural mother. The good biological mother's early death does not alter the fact that succeeding versions of this tale exculpate the father-figure who remains alive but does

[9] Grimm, J., W. "Schneewittchen", in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 7th ed. (Berlin: Dieterich, 1857). Translated for the Norton Critical Edition by Maria Tatar, 1999, p. 83.

nothing to protect his children against the evil machinations of his second wife.

The struggle between Snow White and the wicked queen dominates the psychological scenery of this fairy tale and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have proposed renaming it “Snow White and Her Wicked Stepmother”. The Grimm tale of “Little Snow White”, which Walt Disney entitled “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs”, dramatizes the essential but equivocal relationship between the angel-woman and the monster-woman, a relationship that is also implicit in some critics’ bewildered speculations about her dead mother. In their significant study *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar rely upon fairy-tale motifs to examine the socio-psychological situation of women writers inscribed in the dominant male discourse of the nineteenth century. In particular “Snow White” serves them as the paradigmatic dramatisation of a male-manipulated conflict between two types of females, the witch and the angel, who are played off one against the other. In their view the stepmother/ witch wants to kill Snow White because the witch has become an artist who also wants to lead an active life with stealth, and the submissive, innocent and passive stepdaughter is a threat because she has not been entrapped by the masculine mirror, and she naïvely accepts the world as it is. In contrast, the stepmother, who has learned to practise the art of black magic in a world dominated by men, has no longer any chance to attain independence. This is why she is jealous of Snow White and attempts to kill her. However, *she* must die so that Snow White can continue her role.

These two feminist critics emphasize the contrast between protagonist and antagonist:

> The central action of the tale - indeed its only real action - arises from the relationship between these two women: the one fair, young, pale, the other just as fair, but older, fiercer; the one a daughter, the other a mother; the one sweet, ignorant, passive, the other both artful and active; the one a sort of angel, the other an undeniable witch. (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 36)

But if Snow White is "really" the daughter of the second as well as of the first Queen (i.e., if the two Queens are identical), why does the Queen hate her so much? According to those two feminist critics, the traditional explanation - that the mother is as threatened by her daughter's sexuality as the daughter is by the mother's "possession" of the father - is helpful but does not seem entirely adequate, considering the intensity of the Queen's rage. It is true that in the patriarchal kingdom of the text, the Queen's life can be endangered by her daughter's beauty, and female life is difficult in patriarchy: women almost inevitably turn against women because the voice of the looking glass sets them against each other. Where Bettelheim sees a generational conflict between mother and daughter, Gilbert and Gubar see a psychic drama played out between two women, one docile, and submissive to patriarchal norms; the other creative, and socially subversive. An angel in the house, in her absolute chastity and innocence, Snow White is not only a child but (as females always are) childlike, docile, submissive. But the Queen, adult and demonic, clearly wants an "unfeminine" life of stories. And therefore, to the extent that Snow White, as her daughter, is a part of herself, she wants to kill the Snow White *in herself,* the angel who would keep deeds and dramas out of her own house. For Gilbert and Gubar (1979: 38-39), the queen is a "plotter, a plot-maker, a schemer, a witch, an artist, and impersonator, a woman of almost infinite creative energy, witty, wily, and self-absorbed as all artists traditionally are". The story's turning point comes from Snow White's significant willingness to be tempted by the Queen's gifts, despite the dwarfs' warnings. Indeed, the only hint of self-interest that Snow White displays throughout the whole story comes in her "narcissistic" desire for the stay-laces, the comb and the apple that the disguised murderess offers. As Bettelheim remarks in his book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, this suggests how close the stepmother's temptations are to Snow White's inner desires. It seems that the Queen and Snow White are in some sense one. This angelic girl seems to be both the Queen's daughter and enemy.

Significantly, the conflict between these two women is fought out largely in the transparent enclosures into which both have been locked: a magic looking glass and an enchanted glass coffin. The mirror image and the glass coffin have

become the privileged sites for feminist interpretive projects. For Gilbert and Gubar (1979: 42), “the magic looking glass and the enchanted glass coffin are the tools patriarchy suggests that women use to kill themselves into art, the two women literally try to kill each other with art”. Image destroys image in the crystal prison because beauty’s image is connected to death. For these critics, the story of “Snow White” shows how women are considered to be trapped in beauty, death, and femininity. Beauty may be attractive, but its seductions have a sinister, lethal side. But, beyond all this, it seems as if there is a sense in which the intense desperation with which the Queen enacts her rituals of self-absorption causes or is caused by her hatred of Snow White. Innocent and selflessly free of the mirror madness that consumes the Queen, Snow White is destined to replace the Queen because the Queen hates her, rather than vice versa. The Queen’s hatred of Snow White exists before the looking glass has provided an obvious reason for hatred. On the other hand, in her absolute chastity, her frozen innocence, her sweet nullity, Snow White represents precisely the ideal of “contemplative purity”, an ideal that could quite literally kill the Queen. Snow White reinforces the ironic commentary of femininity by impersonating a “wise” woman, a “good” mother, or an “educating heroine”.

After the Queen’s artfulness has killed Snow White (or so it seems), the girl becomes even more dangerous to her stepmother’s autonomy than she was before for, dead in her glass coffin, she is an object to be desired by patriarchy. When the Prince first sees Snow White in her coffin, he begs the dwarfs to give “it” to him as a gift, “Make me a present of it, for I can’t live without seeing Snow White.” (Grimm, 1996, translated in Tatar, 1999: 89). A possession, like a decorative object, Snow White has proven to be patriarchy’s ideal woman, the perfect candidate for Queen. At this point, therefore, she expels the poisoned apple (stuck in her throat) and rises from her coffin. The fairest in the land, she will marry the most powerful in the land.

Gilbert and Gubar analyse how this basic cultural pattern in “Snow White” is linked to other images of women and the portrayal of conflicts between women in the English literature of the nineteenth century, and they draw parallels with other fairy tales, which ostensibly had an effect on women writers, for it is not by chance

that particular fairy tale motifs continually appeared in their writings.

These authors also outline Snow White's future and comment on the significance of her destiny. When her Prince becomes King and she becomes Queen, what will her life be like? Trained to domesticity by her dwarf instructors, will Snow White have the same fate as her mother? According to Gilbert and Gubar:

> Surely, fairest of them all, Snow White has exchanged one glass coffin for another, delivered from the prison where the Queen put her only to be imprisoned in the looking glass from which the King's voice speaks daily. There is, after all, no female model for her in this tale except this "good" (dead) mother and her living avatar the "bad" mother. And if Snow White escaped the first glass coffin by her goodness, her passivity and docility, her only escape from her second glass coffin, the imprisoning mirror, must evidently be through "badness", through plots and stories, duplicitous schemes, wild dreams, fierce fictions, mad impersonations. The cycle of her fate seems inexorable. Renouncing "contemplative purity" she must now embark on that life of "significant action" which, for a woman, is defined as a witch's life because it is so monstrous, so unnatural. (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 43)

Gilbert's reading of "Snow White" is powerful and persuasive, but it may be regarded as overly attuned to and thus overly stressing the theme of sexism in the tale. Although her analysis certainly provides evidence of sexist values in certain versions of the tale, the tale might be also regarded as offering some useful advice to its female audience members, not just co-opting them into prescribed and undesirable social roles. In "Snow White", the heroine is simply rescued from her catatonic condition by a prince who is attracted by her beauty or reports of her beauty.

Women writers have longed to escape from the many-faceted glass coffins of the patriarchal texts whose properties male authors insisted that they are. In their attempt at the escape that the female pen offers from the prison of the male

text, women begin by alternately defining themselves as angel-women or as monster-women. Like Snow White and the wicked Queen, their earliest impulses are ambivalent. Either they are inclined to immobilize themselves with suffocating tight-laces in the glass coffin of patriarchy, or they are tempted to destroy themselves because of the looking glass. Yet, despite the obstacles presented by those twin images of angel and monster, despite the fears and anxieties from which women have suffered, generations of texts have been possible for female writers. Anne Sexton and her poems gathered in her *Transformations* (1971) are good examples, deserving to be mentioned here.

Anne Sexton was a major American poet, whose book *Transformations* (winner of the Pulitzer prize for poetry) was one of the most significant "subversive" adaptations of the Grimms' tales from a woman's perspective.

In Sexton's poetic transformation of the Grimms' "Snow White", called "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", an aging Queen ("brow spots on her hand / and four whiskers over her lips") is pitted against a thirteen-year-old "lovely virgin". "Beauty is a simple passion" (Sexton, 2001: 3), Sexton declares, "but, oh my friends, in the end / you will dance the fire dance in iron shoes" (5). The scene that stages the Queen's death juxtaposes a mobile Queen, dancing herself to death with "her tongue flicking in and out / like a gas jet" (9), with a frozen Snow White, "rolling her china-blue doll eyes open and shut / and sometimes referring to her mirror / as women do" (9). Sexton's inert Snow White is destined one day to become her mother, galvanised into action and turned into an agent of persecution by the divisive gaze into the mirror. Irony bordering on sarcasm informs Anne Sexton's narrative voice when she calls Snow White a "dumb bunny". Here, the humour resides in the listener's knowing the generally sedate language of the original tale, which makes Sexton's ironic distancing quite apparent to the twentieth-century reader.

All Sexton's poems are intensely personal and reflect the pain and suffering she endured during her life. *Transformations* is unique in that she gains distance on her personal problems by transposing them on to fairy tale figures and situations. The book consists of 17 poems taken from the Grimms' *Children's and Household Tales*, and among them are such classics as "Snow White and the

Seven Dwarfs". In each of the poems, written in free verse, Sexton has a prologue in which she addresses social and psychological issues such as sexual abuse, abandonment, incest, alienation, and sexual identity. Then she retells the Grimms' tale in a modern idiom with striking and frequently comic metaphors and with references to her own experiences. Instead of a moral at the end, there is a coda that raises disturbing questions about the issues with which she has dealt.

Indeed, Sexton retold those fairy stories because she wanted to expose the ugly truths they contained to question the deadlines of bourgeois life, the power relations between the sexes, and the oppression of women. Her outlook on women's liberation was not optimistic, but her fairy tale poems can be considered feminist in the manner in which they seek to deal with the true situation of women during the 1950s and 1960s and undermine the false promises of the classical fairy tales.

The poems of Anne Sexton's fifth volume revisit familiar tales, transforming them into new shapes which are both strange and true. Sexton's recreation of seventeen fairy tales from the brothers Grimm is at once witty, weird, and terrifying; these poems reinvent their models by manipulating proportion and form to express unique insight. They are mythic materials recalled, recast, and reshaped by the poet. In the magic mirror of Sexton's imagination language is reinvented.

Sexton's variety of themes and subjects from her previous work begins in her very choice of Grimm tales to transform. Her method of selection was spontaneous and instinctive; she chose the stories that she liked. Indeed, fairy tales, which are part of the childhood experience of most of us, suggest a multiplicity of both subconscious and plain messages to readers of any age. The tales which evoked an unconscious message in Sexton are precisely those to which she felt a subliminal connection.

The Grimm brothers made major changes while editing the tales, changes which underline morals in keeping with a patriarchal notion of sex roles. From these tales, then, which project a mixture of entertainment, folk wisdom, and western morality, we remember the beautiful and beleaguered heroines, the evil witches, the threatening monsters, the gentle animals, the powerful kings, and the

handsome princes. The stories are vivid and exciting. Snow White, whose very name is purity, is finally discovered by her prince too, with whom we are certain she will live happily ever after. Her preliminary tribulations are caused by a jealous stepmother whose maddeningly honest mirror continues to proclaim Snow White a thousand times fairer; she supports herself, before the prince's advent (and before she eats an apple, which of course causes a great deal of trouble) by keeping a tidy little house for the seven cute little dwarves. The witch, always a female, appears variously and often in fairy tales; she seems most interested in ruining the innocent by burning them, or by imprisoning them, or by magically creating an unwelcome change in their identity.

Though we probably don't know it at the time, when we are children we are being mentally and imaginatively programmed as we are delighted and terrified. A mature reader can plainly see in these tales the patriarchal bias of a male oriented social view. Bad women are witches, ugly and scheming, wielding over other women and men alike a magical, evil power of transformation, or at least wielding some kind of power. Good women are quiet, domestic, and submissive; they take care of children and/ or home while their men go out and "work". Strangely, housework is drudgery for some heroines, like Cinderella, and her reward is escape. But we do not think that revolutionary thought at the time; it is her discovery by the prince which captures our attention. And surely, there will be no housework in her future. And so, sometimes in these fairy tales if the heroine has not yet become a wife, if she is very lucky and very beautiful (the first depends on the second), and of course if she is virginally pure, her charming prince may come along, discover that the shoe fits, or free her from the tower, or awaken her with a kiss (she has, of course, been only sleeping in all her previous life without the prince). What happens to her then we are never told, except that the beautiful princess and handsome prince live happily ever after.

Though this fairy tale world may be peopled with demure princesses and adventuresome men, however, it is also a world of nightmare and terror, where heroines and heroes must pass through a period of testing before triumphing over the witch, finding their way out of the forest, or breaking the evil spell. While there is in these tales a tendency, which must be recognized, to advocate the

maintenance of a sexist status quo, such a structure alone cannot account for the fairy tales' ageless appeal to children and to adults alike. The previously mentioned child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim argues that fairy tales, by enchanting, terrifying, and delighting children, help them to “cope with the psychological problems of growing up and integrating their personalities” (Bettelheim, 1989: 14). By experiencing the fairy tale world, which simplifies all situations, and in which characters are typical rather than unique, children face and solve moral, psychological, ethical, and emotional conflicts and learn to master by themselves the problem which has made the story meaningful in the first place. Snow White is saved by a male and by her own efforts from her jealous stepmother.

This tale, as other stories, evokes a multitude of responses which are likely to vary depending upon the age, experience, and predilections of the reader. The unconscious message which it evoked in Anne Sexton appear consistent with the thematic concerns of her previous poetry: guilt, love, anger and madness; uneasy relationships between parents and children, ambivalence over women’s roles, imaginative identification of poet with witch, anxiety and fear over sexual awakening, parental rejection, or oedipal conflicts, and the torment and joy of passion. Remarkably, such themes are precisely those which Bettelheim designated as typical fairy tale subjects.

If Sexton’s themes in *Transformations* are congruous with fairy tale concerns, her method in these poems is indigenous to the fairy tale mode as well. Each poem follows a prologue-body form, except for the first poem in the series, “The Gold Key”, which serves as a general prologue to the whole volume (and which is itself a transformation of a short Grimm tale called “The Golden Key”). The remaining sixteen poems begin with a prologue of one or more stanzas, intended to emphasise the prefatory nature of the section and to clarify its boundaries. Here, Sexton introduces the context which she has chosen for the tale, providing a thematic focus for the rest of the poem. Sexton’s retelling of the poem follows; in this section of each poem we find a story which resembles the Grimm version but which also has been reshaped to some degree by Sexton.

While illustrations designate and simplify theme and character, language and imagery underscore the poems' quality of caricature. Snow White is introduced in breezy language as a kind of pop-art poster, "a lovely number: /cheeks as fragile as cigarette paper" (Sexton, 2001: 3); when revived by the dwarfs from her first encounter with her wicked stepmother, she is "as full of life as a soda pop" (7).

Sexton's transformations are spoken by a very real first person narrator who reminds us constantly that mythic materials are being shaped for specific use. Sexton took Grimms' fairy tales and transformed them into something all of her own. The poet has indeed taken these tales, which perpetuate patriarchal and sexist values, which advocate traditional moral behaviour, which facilitate ethical, psychological, and emotional growth, which help us overcome the anxieties and conflicts of childhood and to achieve an integrated identity, and has done something very modern to them. The universe of Grimm is certainly not very far from the universe of Sexton.

We hear the language, the rhythm and sound of this unique voice, in all of the *Transformations* poems and each of them follows the prologue-tale form as well. However, let's concentrate on "Snow White". In the Grimm tale, Snow White's mother dies shortly after giving birth to her beautiful daughter. The new stepmother is beautiful but proud and haughty, and she cannot tolerate anyone else who might rival her beauty. Until Snow White is seven, the stepmother-queen's magic mirror assures the queen that she herself is fairest in the realm, but then the mirror begins to proclaim Snow White by far the fairest. The queen cannot bear this situation and the envy and arrogance grew so dense in her heart that she no longer had any peace, day or night. In an attempt to get rid of Snow White, the queen enlists a huntsman to kill her stepdaughter and bring her lungs and liver to the queen, but the huntsman, amazed at Snow White's beauty, instead warns Snow White of her danger and brings to the queen the organs of a wild boar, which the queen eats. Snow White escapes into the forest (where wild beasts did not harm her), finds the seven dwarfs' cottage, and agrees to keep house for the dwarfs (who are also impressed by her beauty) in exchange for their protection. The evil queen, meanwhile, discovers from her mirror that Snow White has

survived (as long as Snow White was the fairest in the realm, the queen's envy would leave her no peace), and tries three times to eliminate her competition, each time by visiting the dwarfs' cottage in disguise and gaining access to Snow White with pretty wares.

Twice the dwarfs arrive home in time to save Snow White, first by untying a tight staylace which has suffocated the beautiful girl, second by removing from her hair a poisoned comb. The third time, however, the queen entices Snow White to eat a poisoned apple. The dwarfs, unable to revive her, place her in a glass coffin which a passing prince, much later, sees; he falls in love with the beautiful, motionless girl, takes and then drops the coffin so that the apple flies out of Snow White's throat thus reviving her. The evil queen, invited to the wedding of Snow White and the prince, discovers once again from her mirror that Snow White lives and surpasses her in beauty. Arriving for the wedding she finds that iron slippers had already been heated over a fire, and they were brought over to her. Finally, she had to put on the red-hot slippers and dance until she fell down dead.[10]

The contemporary sound of the language Sexton uses to "transform" this tale is the most striking feature of the poem. Anne Sexton's *Transformations* is as its name suggests a work of revision. This is not a matter of shifting the emphasis of the story so that the result is an entirely new plot; it derives solely from the poet's reinterpretation of the stories, which begin with present-day situations of which the stories are archetypes. The voices in the poems are therefore all contemporary, and the narrator, a middle-aged witch, Sexton herself, speaks as a witty, sardonic American. Here is the first stanza and prologue of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs":

> No matter what life you lead
> the virgin is a lovely number:
> cheeks as fragile as cigarette paper,
> arms and legs made of Limoges,
> lips like Vin Du Rhône,
> rolling her china-blue doll eyes

[10] Salome Musgrove's dance of death is also a reference to the fairy tale "Snow White" in Eudora Welty's novel *The Robber Bridegroom* (1942; New York: rpr, 1978).

open and shut.
Open to say,
Good Day Mama,
and shut for the thrust
of the unicorn.
She is unsoiled.
She is as white as a bonefish. (Sexton, 2001: 3)

The cadences are apparently effortless, clear and fluent; the diction is slightly slangy, confidential, and irreverent. Metaphor and adverb contribute to the breezy, contemporary sound. There is also the surprise of odd juxtapositioning: similes that deflate romance, humor as black as ebony. Nearly every line of this first stanza uses a simile or metaphor to develop theme and tone: “the virgin is a lovely number”, “cheeks as fragile as cigarette paper, / arms and legs made of Limoges”, and so forth. Line lengths also express meaning; the three-word lines sound mechanical, doll-like. By all of these means, Sexton deflates characters’ pretensions, undercuts most expectations held by readers of Grimm, and rebuilds in their place her own view of things. Later in the poem, when the wicked queen first visits Snow White and sells her a staylace, she fastens it “as tight as an Ace bandage, / so tight that Snow White swooned. / She lay on the floor, a plucked daisy” (7). When the dwarfs undo the stay, “she revived miraculously. / She was as full of life as soda pop” (7). Words and phrases are carefully crafted; the contrast between the older, appropriately fairy-tale usage of “swooned” and the slangy words surrounding it offers subtle demonstration that Sexton is subverting mythic materials for her own use. With this linguistic technique in mind, this is the poem’s second stanza, which follows the prologue:

Once there was a lovely virgin
called Snow White
Say she was thirteen.
Her stepmother,
a beauty in her own right,
though eaten, of course, by age,

would hear of no beauty surpassing her own.
Beauty is a simple passion,
but, oh my friends, in the end
you will dance the fire dance in iron shoes.
The stepmother had a mirror to which she referred-
something like the weather forecast-
a mirror that proclaimed
the one beauty of the land.
She would ask,
Looking glass upon the wall,
who is fairest of us all?
And the mirror would reply,
You are fairest of us all.
Pride pumped in her like poison. (Sexton, 2001: 3-5)

Clearly, then, Sexton's use of language is one of the principal means by which she "transforms" fairy tales into modern poems, rebuilding the original Grimm materiaIs into something all her own. Furthermore, what the poet achieves in this and other poems through language she also accomplishes with content. The analogy of a funhouse mirror is apt (and recalls the queen's magic mirror in "Snow White"): like a distorting mirror which enlarges and collapses parts of the original image reflected in it, both amusing and frightening the viewer, Sexton's *Transformatíons* poems distort the original Grimm tales, amplifying and magnifying some details, contracting and eliminating others.

To continue with "Snow White", the original Grimm version concerns, as we have seen, an innocent girl beset by the jealousy of her evil stepmother, saved by a hunter, by dwarfs, and by a prince, nearly destroyed by her own vanity and by a poisoned apple, and ultimately delivered from her troubles. Bruno Bettelheim discusses the emotional and psychological structure of this story: this tale, he writes, "deals essentially with the oedipal conflicts between mother and daughter; with childhood; and finally with adolescence, placing major emphasis on what constitutes a good childhood, and what is needed to grow out of it" (Bettelheim,

1989: 202). It is narcissism which undoes the queen and almost undoes Snow White; the queen is a jealous mother whose desire to claim Snow White's attractiveness and sexuality for herself is symbolized by her eating of what she thinks are Snow White's lungs and liver. Snow White's own narcissism causes her to succumb to the queen's evil blandishments; she is nearly destroyed but is ultimately saved by others.

Among those rescuing male figures are the hunter (a protective father-figure who sides secretly with the daughter but is too weak to stand up to the mother-queen) and the dwarfs (substitute fathers with whom she lives in peace but who, because they are not true relatives but represent only wish-fulfillment, are ultimately unable to protect her). The dwarfs (miners, who dig into the earth) represent, as well, "males who are stunted in their development and, as such, demonstrate along with Snow White 'childhood before puberty', a period during which all forms of sexuality are relatively dormant" (Bettelheim, 1989: 211). Snow White's encounters with the queen dramatize her movement into adolescence, showing conflict and unsuccessful attempts to escape back into "a conflict-free latency period" (211) (represented by the dwarfs' cottage), together with the temptation of vanity as Snow White three times lets the queen into the house. After Snow White eats the poisoned apple, which stands for both love and sex (recollecting the apples of Aphrodite and Eden), the child in her dies and she is eventually reborn a woman from the glass coffin. But "before the 'happy' life can begin, the evil and destructive aspects of our personality must be brought under our control"; thus, the queen must die. "Untrammeled sexual jealousy, which tries to ruin others, destroys itself - as symbolized not only by the fiery red shoes but by death from dancing in them" (Bettelheim, 1989: 214).

All of these materials are present in Anne Sexton's transformations of "Snow White", but Sexton's magic mirror elevates Snow White's vanity to a position which moves beyond Grimm and Bettelheim, developing Snow White into someone who promises to follow in her stepmother's shoes, a sort of junior queen. In Sexton's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", as in Grimms' tale, the queen is narcissistic and envious, and Snow White is pre-pubescent, a "dumb bunny", with "china-blue doll eyes" that "open and shut". Unlike Grimm's, however, Sexton's

forest through which Snow White passes on the way to the dwarfs' cottage is full of sexual threat: there is a wolf with "his tongue lolling out like a worm"; there are birds which "[call] out lewdly", and there are "snakes hung down in loops" (6). Sexton also emphasizes the phallic nature of Snow White's environment during her stay with the dwarfs: the dwarfs themselves are "little hot dogs" (6), and the poisoned comb which Snow White buys from the queen is "a curved eight-inch scorpion" (8). Furthermore, if as Bettelheim says the eating of food represents in fairy tales the eater's desire to acquire the powers or characteristics of that one eats, Sexton demonstrates Snow White's sexual urges by having her eat the dwarfs' "seven chicken livers", as the poem has previously shown the queen's will to claim Snow White's beauty by eating her lungs and liver. In Grimm, Snow White eats only the dwarfs' more innocuous vegetables and bread.

Thus, in Sexton's "Snow White", as in many other poems of *Transformations,* sexual themes are magnified, and the fairy-tale promise of finding an emotionally mature, psychologically integrated, happy life remains unfulfilled. The heroine of Sexton's tale fails to work her way successfully through the complex problems of growing up and, becoming her mother, remains caught in a nightmarish world. At the end of the poem, the queen, clearly a figure of evil and destructive sexual jealousy, "danced until she was dead, / a subterranean figure, / her tongue flicking in and out / like a gas jet" (9), a scene which is left out of most modern children's renditions. But her destruction does not represent the lowering of the final barrier to Snow White's happy maturity, for

Meanwhile Snow White held court,
rolling her china-blue doll eyes open and shut
and sometimes referring to her mirror
as women do. (Sexton, 2001: 9)

Sexton's Snow White remains a child who still has china-blue doll eyes that open and shut; since she now refers to her mirror, she has become in all ways the new queen. And this behaviour is, says the poem's last line, not isolated but typical; it is something which "women do".

The sins of the mother are visited in the daughter in this transformed poem; this is a major theme in Sexton's earlier poetry as well. A daughter is never free from the destructive, even if she goes off to live in a castle. Either the mother becomes internalised in the daughter, or marriage offers no escape, or both. There are no fairy tale endings and there should be no surprise in the fact that neither this nor any of Sexton's poems are children's stories. They are quite literally not addressed to children.

The quiet, domestic, submissive fairy tale heroines become, in Sexton's poems, mindless, vapid dolls like Snow White. The happy future of this and other heroines is really a kind of living death. These poems tell us that marriage is, for women, either nightmare, or self-denial, or imprisonment, or drudgery, or some kind of consolation prize. "Ever after" is not the successful achievement of a mature, integrated personality but rather unrelieved monotony, dehumanised captivity, or madness. The fairy tale promise of happiness remains unfulfilled and forever out of reach.

Another novel deserving a short reference here is Eudora Welty's *The Robber Bridegroom* (1978) because, as previously mentioned, it has many references to "Snow White". Despite all the fairy-tale features of this novel, it is not itself a fairy tale, it is much more than a fairy tale; indeed, fairy tales are just one of the genres Welty incorporates into it. Upon opening the novel, the reader enters a maze of intertextuality, a looking-glass world, in which Eudora Welty weaves together the characters, plots and languages of history, folk tale, fairy tale, and myth.

In *The Robber Bridegroom*, Welty makes extensive use of Grimms' tale "The Fisherman and His Wife". This fairy tale recounts the adventures of a fisherman who catches and releases an enchanted flounder. When he returns home to the pigsty in which he and his wife live, his wife insists that he go back to the sea and ask the flounder to give them a cottage. The flounder grants her wish, but the wife soon grows discontented and demands that her husband asks the flounder for a castle. Her greed and desire for power prompt her to demand a series of gifts from the flounder, who makes her king, then emperor, then pope. Finally, when she wishes to be God, the flounder returns the couple to their original

state of poverty in the pigsty.

Interpreted from a feminist perspective, this fairy tale tells the story of a strong-willed woman denied any outlet for action in the world except through the agency of her wicked-willed husband. Welty's Salome Musgrove shares an obvious affinity with the grasping wife of the fairy tale. Like the fisherman's wife, Salome knows the frustration of being married to a man less ambitious than she. Never content with what she possesses, and because she cannot enter the sphere of masculine action and acquisition, Salome expends her calculating energy pushing Clement into action and scheming against his daughter, Rosamond, trying to pit her and Clement against each other. Welty's fictional rendition is the uncontrolled greed and dissatisfaction represented by Salome's desires.

The double portrait of woman as angel and monster that is seen in Rosamond and Salome is central to our culture's mythology of women and central to our fictions. It seems that every angelically selfless Snow White must be hunted or haunted by a wickedly assertive stepmother, for every glowing portrait of submissive women enshrined in domesticity, there exists an equally important negative image of women. In this novel, this negative image is presented by Salome who, like Snow White's wicked stepmother, dances herself to death. Once she is dead, her power reverts back to the patriarchal order and Salome is reduced to a physical body, a mere possession.

Besides this reference to "Snow White", and just like the wicked stepmother, she sees the innocent Rosamond as her opponent in a rivalry based, as in "Snow White", on youth and beauty: "For if Rosamond was as beautiful as the day, Salome was as ugly as the night" (Welty, 1978: 33) Salome expends her energy scheming against Clement's daughter, represented as a fairy-tale heroine. Rosamond has every fairy tale property: she is beautiful, young and unwed, with a devoted father and a wicked stepmother, and she is also an heiress. Salome sends Rosamond on a fairy-tale errand, on the other side of the woods, to gather the herbs that grow there. But Rosamond remains untouched by the dark woods and herbal metaphors of feminine power. Like Snow White, she leaves her father's house and the torments of her stepmother to become housekeeper for a group of men. Later in the story, Rosamond makes a transition from having to care for a

host of unruly males to having a home of her own with one husband and the prospect of a nuclear family. In this pattern, Rosamond follows in the footsteps of her fairy tale predecessors.

Welty's preference for female protagonists and narrators, and her attention to traditionally female activities, roles and ceremonies – mothering, cooking, housekeeping, weddings, reunions – prompted critics in the 1970s to begin viewing her work from feminist perspectives. Welty's novels, such as *The Robber Bridegroom*, are about the women's culture and the interactions of these women, their relationship with each other, and their visions of life. In Welty's fiction, we see a progression in the development of female artists. The women of *The Robber Bridegroom* use lies and plotting as a means of artistically manipulating and gaining control of their lives.

Salome plots to control her world. She directs Clement's successful enterprises since she cannot, as a woman, act on her own. Her plots mark her refusal to live out someone else's script and her attempt to inscribe her own. And no wonder: the other narratives open to women in *The Robber Bridegroom* are not very attractive. Goat's sisters seek matrimony so desperately that they are willing to marry any stranger. Within the cultural/ historical context of the novel, matrimony is the only legitimate story for women. Outside of marriage lie tales of seduction, shame, and danger like that of the Indian woman raped and murdered-consumed-by little Harp. The goals of Salome's plots, like those of the fisherman's wife, are power, choice, autonomy, and wealth - all characteristic of the masculine world of action. Denied the means for direct action in this world, Salome creates narratives, plots in which men, Clement or Goat, act for her. Ultimately, Salome meets her death as the result of an extreme attempt to exert narrative control over the world in which she lives. Challenging the Indians who hold her captive, she claims complete autonomy: "'No one is to have power over me!' Salome cried, shaking both her fists in the smoky air. 'No man, and none of the elements! I am by myself in the world'" (160-61). But Salome loses her battle against the established patriarchal narratives that, like "Snow White", demand the punishment of a powerful and independent woman. Like the madwomen of Gilbert's and Gubar's

study, Salome must be destroyed. She does not succeed in reinscribing a woman's narrative.

Rosamond, the “heroine” of *The Robber Bridegroom,* also uses a covert form of storytelling to subvert the patriarchal script in which she lives so powerlessly. Her lies form an attempt to rewrite the feminine roles dictated to her by her father and lover. Rosamond’s lies, compared by the narrator to jewels, are precious to her: “When she opened her mouth in answer to a question, the lies would simply fall out like diamonds and pearls” (38-39). Her father, however, seeks to silence her attempts to rescript her life, declaring that if a man could be found anywhere in the world who could make her tell the truth, he would turn her over to him. The primary purpose of Rosamond’s lies is self-protection, first from her stepmother who sends her out on dangerous errands, and later from Jamie Lockhart. Rosamond tells him that she has a father who has killed a hundred Indians and twenty bandits as well, and seven brothers and they would come after him for that and would hang him to a tree. She lies again, in both words and behaviour, to prevent being given in marriage as reward to a man she does not know. Later in the novel, she lies to gain release from the Indians. When Goat asks, “And will you let me come sleep in your little bed and be my wife?” (151), Rosamond replies “Yes!” The narrator then remarks, “It was lucky for her she did not have to learn to tell a lie there on the spot, but already knew how” (152).

In her lying, Rosamond seeks to rewrite the traditional narratives for women. Rosamond rejects the traditional plot that limits a young woman’s choices to marriage and legitimacy or to seduction, shame, and death. Rosamond makes a choice - to return home rather than be killed by their seducers. Rosamond replies without shame and with delightful common sense to Jamie Lockhart’s question: “’But wait’, he said, ‘which would you rather? Shall I kill you with my little dirk, to save your name, or will you go home naked?’… ‘Why sir, life is sweet’, said Rosamond… ‘and before I would die on the point of your sword, I would go home naked any day’” (50). Rosamond refuses to live (or die) according to the traditional script for women and uses her lies to create more desirable alternatives.

Rosamond’s imagination is full of fairy tales, of romantic plots that colour her view of the world. But rather than accepting these plots unquestioningly, she

chooses to tell her own story by recasting these plots in a positive key. She is a fairy-tale character with ironic modifications. As many authors remark, women have been restricted to only one plot and through recorded history, women have lived by a script they did not write. Their destiny was to be married, circulated; to be given by one man, the father to another, the husband; to become the mother of men. The question women must all ask is how to be freed from the marriage plot and initiated into the quest plot. Indeed another function of Rosamond's lies is to allow her to step into the quest plot, where men might do anything, whereas women in the marriage plot might only wait to be desired. Rosamond does not remain at home waiting, the passive object of masculine desire. She refuses to enact the pattern of being reward for the heroic quest. Instead, she appropriates the quest plot going on her own quest in search of Jamie: "She set out of the house carrying a lunch of a small cake she had baked especially, to find where he lived" (76). She ignores the warning of the fairy-tale raven, enters the bandits' cave, and finds Jamie Lockhart, the object of her quest. But upon fulfilling her quest, Rosamond ends up back in, if not the marriage plot, at least the domestic plot. Jamie robs and plunders all day long, and she marks time cleaning, cooking, and mending for his band of robbers. Still, Rosamond attempts to order and record her life, if she cannot control it, by labelling and dating all of the "treasures" Jamie brings her.

"Snow White" claims to tell us the truth about the world. Such mirroring frames Snow White as an image of beauty and suffering. Snow White rarely has a voice of her own, and when she does speak, she merely accepts things as they are. It is as a silent image that she arouses the Prince's love. Snow White is a constructed child-woman whose snow-white features and attitudes are assumed to conform to nature in a powerfully metaphoric way. Post-modern revisions of "Snow White" acknowledge the power that such a metaphor has had and they seek to expose this state's generic and gendered "lie" or artifice. For example, just like in Grimms' tale, Angela Carter's Snow Child, like Sleeping Beauty and Little Red Riding Hood, remains nameless apart from a collection of adjectives that signify her birth at the hands of fetishist male desire; she lacks the name that validates the 'I' of subjecthood. She is voiceless, passive, the heroine of a life that has no story.

She is some*thing* unnatural, magical, and forever encased in the 'glass coffin' of childhood that is favoured by a paedophilic societal outlook, through name and through her early death at the hands of an evil stepmother.

The essence of the characterisation in fairy tales of a conflict between an oppressive mother figure and a powerless and pitiable young heroine is a representation of a typical domestic crisis experienced by young girls. In other words, this story bases its appeal on tapping into the emotions of audience members who have felt some conflict or hostility toward their mothers. The fairy tale exaggerates and dramatises this underlying psychological conflict by having the natural mother be replaced by an unrealistically hostile mother figure. Snow White's mother is replaced by a wicked queen who wants to kill the heroine. Other details emphasised are also items illustrating the mother's femininity, such as her brush and her mirror.

Although no mirror appears in Angela Carter's "The Snow Child", published in *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), the story itself mimics the logic and strategies of mirroring to expose the intertwined re-production of narrative and gender in "Snow White". In her fictions, Carter consistently engages not only the mythic representation of all relations between men and women but also the imagination that authorizes them.

Mirroring the beginning of "Snow White" but with a difference, the first words of the two-page long "The Snow Child" –"Midwinter, invincible, immaculate" (91) – show how this story is apparently descriptive and objectively so. However, this phrase seems to rely like the fun tale on abstractly symbolic elements of nature. In the very beginning of her story "The Snow Child", a realistic and sensual world is described. The author uses the image of snow as a stylistic device in order to build up an innocent atmosphere. The colour white symbolises innocence. As snow covers the ground it can hide away any cruel or terrifying occasions, the snow therefore also serves to indicate that something strange might be going on.

This assumption of strange occurrences taking place is soon confirmed. The count's wishes initiate the elements of fantasy that are introduced to this otherwise realistic setting: the formation of the Snow Child. The version of "Snow White" Carter retells (one the Grimms collected, but not one they chose to publish)

presents the heroine's birth as the direct outcome of her father's desire. The Count's three wishes mirror his surroundings: the whole world is white; a hole in the snow is filled with blood; a raven is perched on a leafless branch. Mirroring in reverse what we have come to think of as Snow White's legitimate origin (the mother's wish) the Count's appetite for this "child of his desire" is instantly satisfied. "As soon as he completed her description, there she stood, beside the road, white skin, red mouth, black hair and stark naked" (91-2). Clearly, the Snow Child is a masculine fantasy, an image of "woman". Many stories have a violently sexual side to them that becomes manifest in Carter's rewritings of fairy tales for an adult audience. However, the impression of dealing with a usual fairy tale is conveyed. Midwinter ritually marks the end of a cycle and the beginning of another, thus externalising and generalizing a specific event from "Snow White": the Queen must die for Snow White to be born. By setting her tale in midwinter, Carter invokes this strong symbolic resonance, but her narrative will soon question how "immaculate" and "invincible" this mythic winter actually is in terms of human practice. The landscape of "The Snow Child" does not include the possibility for change as if sexual relations were not necessarily an expression of social relations.

As far as the death plots are concerned, Carter's "The Snow Child" presents totally different schemes from those of other versions such as the one written by the Brothers Grimm. In Grimms' version, the first death plot the Queen invents is a naively straightforward murder story: she commands one of her huntsmen to kill Snow White. But, as Bruno Bettelheim has shown, the huntsman is really a surrogate for the King, a parental - or, more specifically, patriarchal - figure "who dominates, controls, and subdues wild ferocious beasts" and who thus "represents the subjugation of the animal, asocial, violent tendencies in man" (Bettelheim, 1976: 205). The ready acceptance of the hunter figure as a suitable image of a strong and protective father figure must relate to associations which attach themselves to this figure. In the unconscious the hunter is seen as the symbol of protection. As patriarchy's angelic daughter, Snow White is, after all, *his* child, and he must save her, not kill her.

While eating the boar's lungs and liver, the Queen devours her own beastly rage, and becomes even more enraged. When she learns that her first plot has failed, the Queen's story-telling becomes angrier and more inventive. Each of the three plots she invents depends on a poisonous or parodic use of a female device as a murder weapon, reinforcing the sarcastic commentary on femininity. As a kind old merchant woman she offers to lace Snow White "properly" – then suffocates her. As another wise old expert in female beauty, she promises to comb Snow White's hair "properly" – then assaults her with a poisonous comb. Finally, as a farmer's wife, she gives Snow White a poisonous apple. The girl finally falls, killed, so it seems, by the female arts of cosmetology and cookery. Paradoxically, these arts have had on Snow White an opposite effect from those the Queen intended. They have made the girl into precisely the eternally beautiful, inanimate art object patriarchal aesthetics want a girl to be. The fact that both women eat from the same deadly apple in the third temptation episode clarifies and dramatizes the point that the Queen and Snow White are in some sense one: while the Queen struggles to free herself from the passive Snow White in herself, Snow White must struggle to repress the aggressive Queen in herself. The Queen's lonely art has enabled her to contrive a two-faced fruit – one white and one red "cheek" – that represents her ambiguous relationship to this angelic girl who is both her daughter and her enemy, her self and her opposite. Her intention is that the girl will die of the apple's poisoned red half, while she herself will be unharmed by the passivity of the white half.

Through the Countess, however, Carter exposes the naturalized human dynamics presented in "Snow White" as not-so-white lies covering the inequity of patriarchal social relations. With her black fox furs and "high, black, shining boots with scarlet heels, and spurs" (91), she rides beside the Count through the snow-covered countryside with which she seems to share no whiteness at all. When the desired girl appears, the Countess hated her instinctively as a rival. The countess's feelings of pure hatred towards the girl are human and the ways the countess tries to get rid of the girl are those of a logical world. She wants her to freeze to death or to drown. Mirroring the plot of the folk version, the Countess drops her glove in the snow and demands that the girl pick it up - the goal is to

abandon the child, who traditionally then wanders off and finds refuge in the dwarves' home. The Count, however, prevents this course of action by stating: "'I'll buy you new gloves'", and "at that, the furs sprang off the Countess's shoulders and twined round the naked girl" (92). Another attempt on the girl's life by the Countess leaves the older woman as "bare as a bone and the girl furred and booted" (92). And now the Count suddenly feels sorry for his wife. Any shift in the Count's affections is immediately reflected in the relationship of the two women, whose socio-economic fortunes mirror each other in reverse - as the one gains, the other loses - and depend entirely on the Count's words.

Angela Carter's tale places on top of this pattern a highly concentrated and parodic version of the traditional fairy-tale heroine's initiation. As in Grimms' "Snow White", in Carter's version of the tale, the innocent persecuted heroine, Snow Child, pricks her finger when picking up a rose for the Countess, and falls. When the Countess wishes for the girl to pick her a rose, the Count consents. Mirroring the traditional "innocent persecuted heroine", the Snow Child is thus given a task and, in a way, she completes it. By plucking the rose, the eternal symbol of femininity in both its sexual and its mystically sacrificial connotations, she comes of age - she bleeds - and then fulfils her function as passive object of the Count's desire. In this case, however, the shallowness of this initiation, which amounts to her death, rape, and fetishising becomes painfully visible.

At this point the author unexpectedly inserts the sexual action of the Count into the setting, fulfilled on the "child of his desire". He abuses the dead girl. She is subjected to sexual intercourse while asleep/ dead. But this rape brings no re-birth. The plot of a typical fairy story is interrupted by this aspect. This occasion is carefully built in to create shock and surprise on the reader's side. Its' effects gain in intensity, as most readers know the traditional fairy tale Carter's story is based upon. As the Count satisfies his desire, the girl, whose living flesh never really was, melts back into her post-initiation symbolic ingredients - no snow, but a (black) feather, a bloodstain, and a rose. Towards the end of the story the Count and the Countess are on their own again. Nothing, apart from the Count's and the Countess's memories of the girl, are left. We can therefore say that in "The Snow

Child", Angela Carter uses fantasy in order to express the emotions on behalf of the Countess, when being betrayed by her own husband.

In this way, Carter's tale "bites" its readers by exploiting our sentimental familiarity with "Snow White's" scenarios and symbols to expose the sterility of both the Count's desire, and the narrative it sets in motion. No child is produced by the Count's wish - only an imaginary being. And yet, when the Count offers the rose to the fully re-clothed Countess, she must drop the flower, crying out "It bites!" (92). In this snow-covered landscape, the only relationship possible between women is one that reproduces itself as rivalry, as struggle to survive at the other woman's expense. Within this initiatory and narrative cycle no possibility for human growth and transformation exists. Sexual maturity is a deadly event, the act of consummation is a gruesome, unwelcome act of incestuous necrophilia that consumes the Snow Child completely: "Weeping, the count got off his horse, unfastened his breeches and thrust his virile member into the dead girl…Then the girl began to melt. Soon there was nothing left of her" (92).

These, then, are the themes that Angela Carter addresses in her tale. The possibility of female subjectivity despite the patriarchal view of female sexual maturation, the female role as passive object within the male economic realms of marriage and property accumulation, and the repression of female sexuality: Carter addresses all of these, among others, within an ambivalent framework.

Carter's characters are flat, her protagonist is silent and passive, her Countess's jealousy is sufficient motive for wanting to kill the rival, and her Count's words and acts have a logic all their own. And yet, by mirroring these familiar stylistic features Carter encourages us into the comfortable plot even as she makes visible its implausibility and de-humanizing assumptions.

Over the years, this author has continued to pursue the project of undoing the strategies of the magic mirror and her revision of the sexual politics of fairy tales has more definitely been woman-centred. Because women have more consistently worked to refresh the fairy tale, this thesis briefly amplifies and glosses women's voices, looks, and actions especially in a classical fairy tale and a post-modern narrative by a woman.

Lets go to those points in Snow White's story where any reader of fairy tales notes distinctive details: the mirror, the eating of the lungs and liver, the three "temptations", and the red-hot shoes at the end.

Let's start with the mirror, mirror on the wall, because that shows at every point that this is a story about the desire to be the fairest of them all. The previously mentioned term "narcissism" may seem altogether too slippery to be the only one we want here. There is, for instance, no suggestion that the queen's absorption in her beauty ever gives her pleasure, or that the desire for power through sexual attractiveness is itself a sexual feeling. What is stressed is the anger and fear that attend the Queen's realisation that as she and Snow White both get older, she must lose. This is why the major feeling involved is not just jealousy but envy: to make beauty that important is to reduce the world to one in which only two people count. The Queen's desire to eat Snow White's lungs and liver implies only her desire to include Snow White's beauty and power within herself, and whatever sexual feeling is involved in that is included in the original passion to be fairest.

Then we come to the three temptations, where Snow White is at last able to choose. On the first visit Snow White hadn't the least suspicion, and let the old woman lace her up with new laces; on the second visit Snow White didn't suspect anything, and let the old woman do as she pleased. Whatever we might say the stepmother wants, it is clear that what Snow White wants is to be laced, to have her hair combed, and finally to eat the poisoned apple. Her attention is directed toward what will make her beautiful, what will make her sexual even, and that desire need carry with it no suggestion of any desire for the disguised old woman or the wicked stepmother. Against the charm of what she is offered, Snow White is defenceless, not so much because she is innocent as because she is charmed. What the stepmother wants is what Snow White has, the beauty of a young woman, but her intensity is stranger if it isn't tilted from the desire for Snow White's beauty toward the desire for Snow White herself. After asking Snow White if she is afraid of poison, the old woman cuts the apple in two halves - the red cheek was for Snow White while she would eat the white. But the apple was so cunningly made that only the red part was poisoned. Snow White longed for the lovely apple, and when she saw that the old woman was eating it, she couldn't resist it any longer

and took the poisoned half. Snow White wants, and is afraid of, the sexuality implicit in the red of the apple without wanting the one who gives her the apple. Thus, Snow White's desire is the same as the Queen's; it is for beauty and sexual power as goals in themselves. It is not a demonic desire laden with danger and the potentiality of becoming like the Queen.

The fear here is not of the wish for beauty, but of the power of that wish when separated and isolated from love, from handsome princes; the wish is that beauty will not be thus isolated. As we have seen, in fairy tales the primary task for women is bearing children, and childbearing was often fatal; whatever other power women had lay in youth and beauty. After a brief blossoming - shortly after the age of seven in Snow White's case - people grew old rather quickly, and men controlled most of the palliatives against a grim and crimped existence. Older men in fairy tales usually are dutiful, insensitive people, restricted to work, food, and small pleasures. But because their power was not primarily a sexual power, men in fairy tales seldom develop an envious murderous passion against younger men, because whatever power men have does not erode with time. On this score the evidence of fairy tales, taken from almost every country, presents a nearly unanimous view.

Snow White's stepmother, thus, is involved in a struggle she must lose to Snow White, but primarily to the passage of time. Her passion is frightening because the passion to be fairest seeks no value beyond itself; the queen doesn't want anything, or anyone, to be fairest with, except her mirror. She has been given only one power, and that one very briefly, and contrary to all our latter-day desires and hopes that sexuality can mature as youth goes and beauty fades; in the world of fairy tales sex is always allied with youth and beauty. For an older woman to fight against these facts and values made her frightening, and no fairy tale can imagine defeating such a woman without also destroying her. Of course there is the countering wish, that men and women can find mates with whom they can live happily ever after, but when the tales focus on grown people they tend to give us stolid, ineffective men (or else tyrant kings) and frightened and frightening women. Of course, then, Snow White and the Queen are locked in a terrible likeness, because they are the same person at two different stages of life.

The point about “Snow White”, in contrast to many other tales, is that the relation of the older to the younger woman is central. As previously mentioned, in “Snow White” we first note the distinctive details of the stepmother’s mirror and the announcement that Snow White begins to be the stepmother’s rival when she reaches the age of seven. This makes the stepmother important, makes her relation to Snow White important, and diminishes everything else in the tale. The first wife disappears very quickly and unremarkably, and the king-father is barely mentioned. In *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bruno Bettelheim seems to want to ignore these facts, as follows:

> A weak father is as little use to Snow White as he was to Hansel and Gretel. The frequent appearance of such figures in fairy tales suggests that wife-dominated husbands are not exactly new to this world. More to the point, it is such fathers who either create unmanageable difficulties in the child or else fail to help him solve them. This is another example of the important messages fairy tales contain for parents. (Bettelheim, 1989: 206)

Out of context, one would hardly know what “weak father” Bettelheim is talking about, since the father in this tale is just not in evidence. In fact, and as previously mentioned, Bettelheim is referring to the huntsman sent to kill Snow White. It seems clear, though, that because Bettelheim is determined to make most fairy tales concern relations between parents and children - to move them down a few centuries to a time when a strong sense of family prevailed - he is forced to invent parents when they can’t be found. The huntsman, after all, can hardly be said to have created Snow White’s “unmanageable difficulties”, and if he does not help her solve them, he does the essential thing in sparing her life.

Nor, when Bettelheim turns to the impressive Queen, does his sense of the story become any more precise because, in his opinion, the Queen could have killed Snow White the moment she laced and suffocated her. For him, the queen’s goal was to prevent her daughter from surpassing her, reducing her to immobility for a time. This means that the Queen, then, stands for a parent who temporarily

succeeds in maintaining his dominance by arresting his child's development. However, if the tale is momentarily silent on the Queen's intentions as she laces Snow White, she has already eaten what she took to be the lungs and liver of Snow White, and with the poisoned comb and apple that follow the intention is clearly not just to arrest his child's development. Nevertheless, Bettelheim is right to say that the Queen's aim is not simply murderous, though in desperation she is quite willing to murder Snow White in order to be rid of the fairest in the land; in a sense, the most important quality of the Queen's passion is that it is impersonal, aimed at anyone the mirror might name as her rival.

Though it may be argued that the females in many liberating tales are much more interesting than males, many tales, including "Snow White", don't degrade the male characters. In general, figures of female evil stride through the best-loved, classic fairy tales: on this earth, wicked stepmothers, and ugly sisters; from fairyland, bad fairies, witches, and ogresses. In the most famous stories, such as "Snow White", monsters in female shape outnumber those that are male. By accentuating the young female's struggle with the menacing stepmother, this romantic tale only vaguely suggests the father's role in the complex Oedipal and cultural drama.

For both Bettelheim and for Gilbert and Gubar, the absent father in the Grimms' "Snow White" occupies a central, if invisible, position in this domestic drama. Although in Grimms' version we know nothing about Snow White's relationship to her father, Bettelheim insists that it is reasonable to assume that it is competition for him which sets (step)mother against daughter. The Queen's husband and Snow White's father (for whose attentions the two women are battling in a feminised oedipal struggle) never actually appears in this story at all, a fact that emphasizes the intensity with which the tale concentrates on the conflict in the mirror between mother and daughter, woman and woman. At the same time, Gilbert and Gubar find at least one way in which the King *is* present: "His, surely, is the voice of the looking glass, the patriarchal voice of judgment that rules the Queen's - and every woman's - self-evaluation" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 38). According to these critics, the tale reinforces patriarchal definitions and prescriptions. He decides, first, that his consort is "the fairest of all", and then, as

she becomes maddened, witchlike, that she must be replaced by his angelically innocent and dutiful daughter, a girl who is therefore defined as “more beautiful still” than the Queen. The absence of the father is framed as an emphatic narrative denial that only reveals the extent to which he occupies centre stage. What is at stake for the two female characters is, in sum, the love, affection, or approval of the father, a father whom we see only briefly as the huntsman and hear as the voice in the mirror. Through their analysis of this representative tale, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that the struggle between the Queen and Snow White is a battle between the assertive and passive inclinations in all Western women. Snow White’s exhibition in the glass coffin represents the victory of her passivity; she has become a beautiful object, to be displayed and desired. However, Sandra Gilbert also suggests that Western women are encouraged in fairy tales and literature like “Snow White” to reject their mothers who have been simplistically equated in fairy tales and literature with nature and emotionalism, and identify with the father, who is associated with society, morality, and the patriarchal structure.

Although the centrality of the father does not become explicit in many versions of “Snow White”, Carter’s version of this tale (the already discussed “The Snow Child”) presents the heroine’s birth as the direct outcome of her father’s desire. As previously mentioned, the Snow Child is a masculine fantasy. However, after reading Carter’s version of “Snow White”, we can trace numerous elements of the story that mark it as a covert tale of incest. First of all, there is no mother present in Snow Child’s short life; then, she is desired by her father, and later she is subjected to sexual intercourse while asleep/ dead. We may conclude that, in both versions of the tale, the father is the character who is indirectly responsible for the whole plot.

Another aspect deserving a short reference to is the triangle of colours presented in this tale. The colour black presented in Snow White’s hair (black as ebony) is disassociated from the body and presented in the ravens surrounding Snow White’s coffin. Golden hair tumbles through the stories in impossible quantities. Among the heroines of fairy tale only Snow White is dark, because her story specifically opens with her mother’s wish, when she pricks her finger, looking out at the snow: she wishes to have a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and

as black as the wood of the window frame. The colour white is explicitly connected with the snow, which further emphasises a shift from the meaning of the colour to its emblematic support. Are we to equate it with the mirror in which the Queen of the children's tale contemplates herself? Some critics believe that the structure of the tale suggests a parallel. Snow is a transitory, almost intangible substance, and its whiteness leads to a connection between here and the beyond. Whiteness is equated to an absence of colour, specially an absence of red, the term opposed to it in the fundamental mythic triangle. Throughout the text, red invariably suggests blood and the whole range of interpretations that the image brings to mind. Clearly, in the constellation of the text bringing the three colours into play with the mental image of the loved one, the connotations of blood's red colour link it with the sexuality.

As far as gender identity and sexual procreativity are concerned, the red-and-white contrast of the apple in the Grimms' version of Snow White shows us how the tale depicts the intellectual development of the protagonist as she moves from innocence (the purity of the whiteness and the corresponding ignorance of gender difference and the role of sexuality) to experience (the redness representing awareness of the vital truths of life). The absence of red also hauntingly overshadows adultery in the story of the snow child. But blood more generally represents the initiation into womanhood marked by the onset of monthly menstrual bleeding and by the act of deflowering. Fairy tales, such as "Snow White", give form to this interpretation in a way that is still present in folklore. The pinprick that brings a drop of blood to the fingertip of the young girl figures her desire and her access to sexual maturity.

It is not by chance that most of the new versions of "Snow White" in the last decades have been written by women and are feminist. The confrontations and situations that women experience in our society have compelled them to reflect upon the encounter between Snow White and the Queen/ witch that they may have heard, read, or seen as children. However, some men have also dedicated their time and imagination to the writing of new versions of fairy tales, such as "Snow White". Donald Barthelme is one of those male writers, whose first novel

Snow White (1967), a dark comic and erotic parody of the popular fairy tale, set the stage of his writings.

Although Barthelme is undoubtedly the first to retell a fairy tale with as many stylistic innovations as he uses here, his method is traditional, for it recalls the oral nature of folk cultural transmission and the inevitable changes imposed on a tale with each retelling. Even when the Snow White tale became codified by the brothers Grimm in their *Nursery and Household Tales,* it continued to undergo change. Each of the seventeen revisions of the Grimms collection which appeared in their lifetimes further de-emphasized sex, violence, death, and other elements of the original folk tales deemed unsuitable for children. Indeed, the emphasis on cleaning in Barthelme' s perversely told tale - the shower as the "horsewife's" stall and central locus of sexual activity, housecleaning as Snow White's duty and responsibility, the importance for the dwarves of washing the vats and buildings - may be read as a critical comment on the sanitization of the tales perpetrated by the Grimms and subsequent tellers such as Walt Disney.

Many characteristic features of postmodernism (such as the intensification of the world, the ensuing suspicion of concepts such as truth and identity, the immersion in a fast-paced, city-world of consumerism, and the lack of a positive or negative norm to refer to) are present in Carter's work, but these elements can also be found in the works of Donald Barthelme, a post-modern author of novels and short stories who breaks down the conventions of the classical fairy-tale narrative, in order to alter our readings of the privileged narratives that have formed a type of canon in Western culture. The post-modern revisions, however, do not resemble the fairy tales that they break down into fragments into a new whole. Instead, they expose the artifice of the fairy tale and make us aware that there are different ways to shape and view the stories. The end goal of the post-modernist fairy tale is not closure but openness, not recuperation but differentiation, not the establishment of a new norm but the questioning of all norms.

Barthelme's vision was comic, surreal, macabre; and his play with language - giving the reader the unexpected, the grotesque, and above all the fragmented - marked him as a postmodernist even before that classification existed.

With a montage style, Barthelme drew phrases and lines from advertising, songs, comic-book captions, and stereotyped phrases of the times, and created from those borrowings new structures and new perspectives. His first novel, *Snow White,* retold the classic fairytale, but with wit and acerbity that surprised readers of the 1960s. The themes of divorce, repression, and secular self-doubt enter the mix, as they do in the tradition of nineteenth-century realist novels, but in a telegraphed way that some critics see as one of the hallmarks of Barthelme's style. He not only parodies his characters and their concerns, he also mocks the very possibilities and burdens of storytelling itself. Because he calls into question the mechanics of this central cultural activity, and by extension the ability of language to represent reality, he is often credited with influencing many aspects of postmodernism.

Donald Barthelme's (and Carter's) fairy tales are not typical of the major endeavours of contemporary American writers. They provide closure of one kind or another; most retain a strong element of hope. Nevertheless, more than the other contemporary types, the post-modern fairy tale brings out the major characteristic of the best of contemporary fairy tales: the self-reflective search for a fantastical form that will recuperate the utopian function of the traditional fairy tale in a manner that is adequate to the major social changes in the post-industrial world. Barthelme's *Snow White* is a modern repossession of the fairy tale, featuring a succession of incongruous, absurdist episodes, a cast of priapic dwarves, a prince obsessed with hot baths, and a liberated Snow White.

By featuring a questioning but unfullfilled narrator, Donald Barthelme's novel *Snow White* (1967) seeks to escape the frame by explicitly inviting readers to become more aware and wary of our narrative expectations. He breaks down the narrative's transparent unity in a number of ways. *Snow White* has three parts, a structure which perhaps re-produces on a narrative level Snow White's three-fold nature and three-part initiation process (separation, liminality, and aggregation). Otherwise, most of the novel's features are provocatively un-fairy-tale-like. The narrative unity of "Snow White" is dismembered into several voices which rarely communicate. In spite of Bill's and Pau'ls sacrificial deaths, there is no happy ending - actually, there is no recognizable ending. Barthelme greatly

amplifies one episode in the traditional tale - the heroine's stay with the dwarves - and the relationship is explicitly and primarily sexual. Finding a narrative or psychological development is difficult; nothing much happens. Instead, the language of comic books, politics, technology, street talk, and so on unleashes images and replaces the narrative of action.

Nor does a summary of the novel's plot tell us much. Snow White wants something different and does not find it, but in the end she might be transformed into a floating signifier. The alienated bourgeois dwarves (Clem, Dan, and the others) work in the city, washing buildings and making Chinese baby food. Paul, the poet and prince figure, acts out of a fateful misunderstanding when he drinks the poisoned vodka Gibson that Jane, Snow White's rival, had meant for her. Part I culminates in a self-parodying questionnaire which shakes readers out of passivity but offers no direction:

2. Does Snow White resemble the Snow White you remember?
   Yes ( ) No ( )
9. Has the work, for you, a metaphysical dimension?
   Yes ( ) No ( )
10. What is it (twenty-five words or less)?

_____

_____

_____

14. Do you stand up when you read? ( ) Lie down? ( )
    Sit? ( )
15. In your opinion, should human beings have more shoulders?
    ( ) Two sets of shoulders? ( ) Three? ( ) (Barthelme, 1996: 88-89)

Part II "concludes" with Snow White still hanging her beautiful hair out the window, just as she did at the section's beginning. "No one has come to climb up", she laments. "That says it all. This time is the wrong time for me. …There is something wrong with... the very world itself, for not being able to supply a prince. For not being able to at least be civilized enough to supply the correct ending to

the story" (137-138). Part III's inconclusive list of possible endings (or chapter-titles) mocks any expectations of a denouement:

> THE FAILURE OF SNOW WHITE'S ARSE
> REVIRGINIZATION OF SNOW WHITE
> APOTHEOSIS OF SNOW WHITE
> SNOW WHITE RISES TO THE SKY
> THE HEROES DEPART IN SEARCH OF
> A NEW PRINCIPLE
> HEIGH-HO (Barthelme, 1996: 187)

This *Snow White* systematically refuses to provide a linear narrative with a meaning that develops and an ending that satisfies: it refuses to fulfill our expectations of what the fairy tale as a wellmade narrative ought to do. When Barthelme does employ stylistic features of the classic fairy tale, such as externalization, it is with parodic effect. For instance, though the height of Snow White's seven dwarfed companions reflects their moral and aesthetic stature (they have no potential for growth, individually or as a group), their job - washing buildings - is ironically associated with "the idea that man is perfectible" (14). Similarly, Snow White's beauty, which in the fairy tale mirrors her inner qualities, is described so literally that any symbolism fades away:

> SHE is a tall dark beauty containing a great many beauty spots: one above the breast, one above the belly, one above the knee, one above the ankle, one above the buttock, one on the back of the neck. All of these are on the left side, more or less in a row, as you go up and down. (Barthelme, 1996: 9)

Her black hair and moles are identified as landmarks of her beauty, and a schematically visual representation of those beauty spots follows on the same page. But when "you go up and down" her body as if it were a space or object, those very human spots actually de-humanise her.

As Barthelme's plot and style resist the narrative re-production of "Snow

White", he re-inscribes the representation of Snow White as aesthetic object to challenge it with a new framework. The dwarves' reification of Snow White for example parallels the one traditionally enacted by the mirror. In the words of dwarf Dan:

> Now, what do we apprehend when we apprehend Snow White? We apprehend, first, two three-quarter-scale breasts floating towards us wrapped, typically, in a red towel. Or, if we are apprehending her from the other direction, we apprehend a beautiful snow-white arse floating away from us in a red towel. Now I ask you: What, in these two quite distinct apprehensions, is the constant? The factor that remains the same? Why, quite simply, the red towel. I submit that, rightly understood, the problem of Snow White has to do at its center with nothing else but *red towels...* We can easily dispense with the slippery and untrustworthy and expensive effluvia that is Snow White, and cleave instead to the towel. (Barthelme, 1996: 106 -107)

In this parody of the identification of Red Riding Hood, Dan reduces Snow White to a red towel which can be possessed and used as an unproblematic point of reference. Chang responds with a more familiar form of sexual reification: "I don't want a ratty old towel. *I want the beautiful snow-white arse itself!*" (107). In the mind of yet another dwarf, she is a shower, for in that space their sexual encounters take place. Clearly, Snow White is a fetishised object. She is not framed by the magic mirror in these scenes, but because she is a sexual object in the dwarves' imagination she is just as lifeless as the traditional Snow White.

Barthelme's text tries to escape this objectification of Snow White by giving her a voice as one of the novel's several narrators, a strategy which to some extent disrupts both narrative and gender reproduction. Significantly, Snow White's dissatisfaction with language sets Barthelme's fragmentary plot in motion: "Oh I wish there were some words in the world that were not the words I always hear"(12). Snow White's words express her desire to transcend the limits of understanding imposed by society's prevailing discourses. But, unfortunately, she

lacks a transcendent language. In this respect, education was no help to her. The lengthy description of her curriculum at "Beaver College" is a parody of the irrelevance and experimental excesses of a progressive arts education. Faced with the limit of the script she has been handed, Snow White decides to write her own poem which begins "bandaged and wounded" (65) (run together as one word, she insists) and explores the theme of loss. Though not allowed to see it, the dwarves describe it as "a dirty great poem four pages long" (16), while Snow White defines it as "free, … free, free, free" (65). As a deferred presence that affects the relationship, for the dwarves the poem means that "something was certainly wrong", while for Snow White it is a sign that her own "imagination is stirring" (65). Both readings work. Snow White finds out that she does not like the world of the dwarves, that she is "tired of being just a horsewife" (49), and that she is angry at male domination of the physical world and of language. The reproduction of gender in language especially infuriates her: "Oh if only I could get my hands on the man who dubbed those electrical connections male and female! He thought he was so worldly. And if I could just get my hands on the man who called that piece of pipe a nipple! He thought he was so urbane" (137).

In *Snow White*, Barthelme uses a familiar fairy tale to provide a basic narrative framework on which to construct his deconstructions of contemporary America. As the focal point of the dwarves' concern (and therefore of the concern of the nameless narrator, who is presumably one of them), Snow White provides an opportunity for Barthelme to satirize, among other issues, the plight of the newly liberated sixties woman, by turns respecting and rejecting the values with which she was raised. Snow White is riddled with conflicts: she tolerates and even initiates group sex with the dwarves but worries about her reputation in society; she is strongly attracted to Hogo's dark vileness but feels equal longing for Paul's princely blood; she is proud to be writing a poem but ashamed to let anyone see it; she finds the life of a "horsewife" unfulfilling but her exploration of alternatives amounts to sitting passively at the window with her hair hanging down in order to attract another man for whom she will perform a similar role.

Snow White's ambivalence may be seen as analogous to the parodist's attitude towards the original text. One detects in Barthelme's fictions both the

modernists' yearning for a previous wholeness, harmony, and order and the postmodernists' rejection of nostalgia in favour of frolicking in the fragments, exulting in multiplicity, indeterminacy, and the absolute freedom that chaos affords. The use of a fairy tale motif, in this instance, belies not only a longing for the stability and predictability of childhood stories (and perhaps childhood itself) but also the adult's recognition of the disparity between the world such stories represent and the world one lives in. Furthermore, there is the recognition that even if the fairy tale world did coincide with our own, we would feel constrained by its limited range of possibilities since neither Snow White, Paul, Jane, nor Hogo comfortably wears the mantle of his or her respective role as heroine, hero, villainess, and villain. Yet, however much at odds with their assigned roles these characters feel themselves to be, they are curiously compelled to play them, for these roles are all that distinguish them as individuals against the backdrop of colourless, undifferentiated mediocrity provided by the dwarves.

Although the narrator dwarf complains that Snow White's intrusion on their routine, equanimous existence has changed them from simple bourgeois who knew what to do to "complex bourgeois who are at a loss" (94), the dwarves are the only characters who feel comfortably at home in late capitalistic society. They exist in an unalienated relation to the means of production, functioning as both blue-collar workers (washing the buildings, manufacturing plastic buffalo humps) and white-collar bosses (running the Chinese baby food and plastic buffalo hump factories). Whistling while they work to produce fad items for members of a culture so jaded in its incessant appetite for something new and different that even its babies crave exotic cuisine, the dwarves have no moral qualms about the quality or necessity of their contribution to society. The seven dwarves are parodic embodiments of bourgeois values and thinking. But these are thrown into question when they encounter the discontented Snow White, "before we found Snow White wandering in the forest we lived our lives stuffed with equanimity. ... we were simple bourgeois who knew what to do, now we are complex bourgeois who are at a loss. We do not like this complexity" (93-94).It is fitting that their major concern regarding the complexity which love has introduced into their lives is, "Is it, perhaps, *bad for business?*" (94).

Dan, the dwarf, defends their production of worthless consumer goods and conceals their profit motive "behind the veil of flummery that usually veils these matters" (80). Rather than serving as mouthpieces of the author's values, the dwarves are best seen as voicing the values of a money-grubbing society that is hostile to art and thought. That the dwarves are to be seen as anti-artists and anti-intellectuals is evident in their feeling threatened by Snow White's "dirty great poem four pages long". It is also apparent in their plot to steal Paul's typewriter, which symbolizes for them Paul's artistic and intellectual pretensions - he had "wanted to be great once ... make a powerful statement ... make a significant contribution ... bring about a heightened awareness ... provide a definitive account ... achieve a breakthrough" with his "survey of the incidence of weeping in the bedrooms of members of the faculty of the University of Bridgeport" as well as through his "life-enhancing poem" (57-58).

Besides the dwarves' roles as representatives of consumer capitalism, Snow White can be seen as a typical victim of mass culture, the culture of commodities and consumerism with its suggestive message that experiences formerly reserved for those of high birth, deep understanding, or much practical acquaintance of life can be enjoyed by all without effort, on purchase of the appropriate commodity.

This attitude is proper to the dwarves rather than to Snow White. They are the ones who purchase the appropriate commodity (the new shower curtain) as a means of gaining an experience (Snow White's love) formerly reserved for those of high birth (a Prince). Snow White, on the contrary, is the one who resists the bait of the new shower curtain; she also tries to subvert the dwarves' consumer capitalist ethos by slipping "tiny Chairman Mao poems in the baby food" (22). Nevertheless, it would be misleading to conclude from these examples that Snow White is truly revolutionary, for her flirtation with revolution remains at the level of superficial rebellion – "wearing heavy blue bulky shapeless quilted People's Volunteers trousers rather than the tight tempting how-the-West-was-won trousers she formerly wore", nailing a "dozen-odd red flags and bugles ... to the dining-room table", and quoting Maoist poetry (22). She can be identified as an unhappy

product of her society, but she tries to resist that society, however feeble and futile those efforts prove to be.

The dwarves, on the other hand, are "at one" with their society, and their appreciation of its trash includes "those aspects of language that may be seen as a model of the trash phenomenon" (104). One of the dwarves, for instance, says that he finds empty phrases the most interesting part of language, and it is with this in mind that the narrator dwarf explains:

> We like books that have a lot of *dreck* in them, matter which presents itself as not wholly relevant (or indeed, at all relevant) but which, carefully attended to, can supply a kind of "sense" of what is going on. This "sense" is not to be obtained by reading between the lines (for there is nothing there, in those white spaces) but by reading the lines themselves - looking at them and so arriving at a feeling not of satisfaction exactly, that is too much to expect, but of having read them, of having "completed" them. (Barthelme, 1996: 112)

Like everything else in the consumer society the dwarves speak for, literature, too, is something to be devoured but not digested, something which neither nourishes nor satisfies. Barthelme deftly displays the connection between consumerism, consumption, and consummation by introducing the above passage with Hubert's refusal to read his part of the book, "the outer part where the author is praised and the price quoted" and immediately following it with Bill's refusal to take off his pajamas in order to participate in a sexual orgy with Snow White and the other dwarves (111-112).

It is the parodist's task to signal the reader to interpret the writing as parodic distortion rather than realistic reflection, a situation that is problematized by the need for readers who are properly sensitive to the author's signals. One of the ways we can infer the activities of this particular encoding agent is by paying careful attention to the ways in which different voices in the text are presented as carriers of various cultural codes. Barthelme consistently robs these voices of their authority by depriving the text of the formal devices which invest that authority in a realistic novel. For example, there are several instances in the novel where a page

is printed in large, bold-type, capital letters as if meant to be proclaimed authoritatively in a stentorian voice.

These pronouncements fall into two categories: 1) seemingly relevant statements about the Snow White fairy tale, and 2) seemingly irrelevant statements about various aspects of Western civilization: literature, religion, the "horsewife" in history, psychology, and philosophy. What these two categories have in common is that in neither case is the authority who utters these truths identified nor do the fragments of information add up to a full picture either of Snow White or of Western civilization.

Critics have found the statements concerning Western civilization baffling, since they seem irrelevant to the doings of Snow White and the dwarves. Although the sources of the statements are not identified, they all possess the authoritative tone of college textbooks, presenting a subjective interpretation as if it were objective fact, as in the following:

THE SECOND GENERATION OF ENGLISH ROMANTICS
INHERITED THE PROBLEMS OF THE FIRST, BUT
COMPLICATED BY THE EVILS OF INDUSTRIALISM AND
POLITICAL REPRESSION. ULTIMATELY THEY FOUND AN
ANSWER NOT IN SOCIETY BUT IN VARIOUS FORMS OF INDEPENDENCE
FROM SOCIETY:

HEROISM
ART
SPIRITUAL TRANSCENDENCE (*Snow White*, 1996: 30)

It is not surprising, then, that on the facing page, the reader is presented with a catalogue of what Snow White studied at Beaver College. Similarly, a passage on the value the mind sets on erotic needs under various conditions may very well come from her *Theoretical Foundations of Psychology* textbook, the list of various aspects of "horsewifery" reads like an outline for the course Snow White took on the *Modern Woman, Her Privileges and Responsibilities,* and so on.

If Barthelme merely wanted to reflect realistically the modern world, he could have worked these materials into his novel in a less obtrusive way. Instead, he parodies the realist tradition by misrepresenting the mechanics of representation. The very manner in which he presents this material - the unconventional appearance of the words, their spatial arrangement on the page, and their lack of identifying markers - points to his intention to parody the college education of the first generation of women to pursue higher education in large numbers but whose purpose in doing so was neither to improve the mind nor to prepare for a career but rather to participate in a certain rite of passage for white, middle-class women whose ultimate goal was still marriage. The very name of the college, a slang term for the female genitals, implies criticism of this type of curriculum which ultimately reinforces traditional sex roles. The outline on the "horsewife", for example, emphasizes the views of those who advocate "horsewifery" as the proper "career" for women:

VIEWS OF ST. AUGUSTINE
VIEWS OF THE VENERABLE BEDE
EMERSON ON THE AMERICAN HORSEWIFE . . .
ACCEPT ROLE, PSYCHOLOGIST URGES (Barthelme, 1996: 67)

The no-longer-muted Snow White extends her criticism beyond words and language to heterosexuality as procreation, which she contrasts with a different kind of pleasure. Referring to one of her shower rendezvous with the dwarves, Snow White decides to herself: "Everything in life is interesting except Clem's idea of sexual congress, his Western confusion between the concept, 'pleasure', and the concept, "increasing the size of the herd" (40). By insisting that all sexual activities with the dwarves take place in the shower, Snow White tries to minimize her dissatisfaction with her role as textual and sexual object, or as she puts it: "the water on my back is interesting. It is more than interesting. Marvelous is the word for it" (40). In the flow of the water, Snow White finds the same kind of pleasure arid freedom she experiences when writing her own poem.

But she still tries to enact her traditional role as an "innocent persecuted heroine". She invests her hope in "princeliness", a kind of redemption which she expects from her relationship with Paul. She lets down her ebony hair from the window - mirroring the symbolic gesture of another of her imprisoned sisters, Rapunzel - and, like the Disney character, she exclaims: "'Someday my prince will come.' Snow White announces here that she lives her own being as incomplete, pending the arrival of one who will 'complete' her" (76). This is an invitation to be "saved" by any man who dares to climb, but after a long wait she pulls in her hair because no one has come to climb up, showing that there is something wrong, "for not being able to supply a prince" (138). No one responded to Snow White's hair initiative, which "suggests that Americans will not or cannot see themselves as princely" (147). American society cannot provide a prince-figure and, as Paul Maltby states, this prince-figure absence reflects "the felt absence of revolutionary hope in late-capitalist America" (Maltby, 1991: 60). Hogo, a friend of the dwarves, though speaking of his relationship with a girlfriend, expresses the inertia of disaffected Americans like Snow White. She does also realize that "waiting as a mode of existence is… a darksome mode" (83), and cries out: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Thy daughters are burning with torpor and a sense of immense wasted potential, like one of those pipes you see in the oil fields, burning off the natural gas that it isn't economically rational to ship somewhere!" (108). And yet Snow White's consciousness of being imprisoned in her own fiction does not enable her to produce a new narrative or sexual subjectivity for herself. Incapable of playing her assigned role convincingly, she is nevertheless bound to try to sustain it. There is no viable alternative: after experimenting with words and action, she finds herself as powerless as she was to start with, more afraid of "being out" than "being home" (123). At the height of her confusion, she surrenders her new beginnings to the mirror and reproduction, knowingly letting herself be kept in a tower under surveillance by Paul - the prince figure - through a system of mirrors and trained dogs. Reverting to the status of a "long-sleeping stock certificate" (65), Snow White's imagination after Paul's accidental death is reduced to pure aestheticism: "Snow White continues to cast chrysanthemums on Paul's grave, although there is nothing in it for her, in that grave" (186). Though she knows there

is nothing for her in a world where female characters mirror masculine expectations, Snow White knows how difficult it is to imagine a different world. The figure of Snow White is a mish-mash of other characters' perceptions of her, odds and ends of her thoughts, feelings, and memories, and echoes of the voices of her culture which instilled her with her social role.

Does this surrender imply a failure in women's imagination? Does it mirror women's lack? I don't think so, for in Barthelme's narrative Snow White is still, however unwillingly, the image of Woman within a patriarchal scrip which she can disrupt but not change. Like all Snow Whites, she is what some writers describe as the contest winner, a motherless fantasy of helpless purity /pure helplessness that is obscuring the desirability of real women, and almost without a voice.

The version of "Snow White" that has had the most significant impact on children today is Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", the first animated feature in history based on a fairy tale and made in colour with music. "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", produced in 1936 as Walt Disney's first full-length animated feature, is most important because it became the prototype not only for all of Disney's other fairy tales but for most feature film adaptations of folk and fairy tales by other producers. It has also served in part as the basis for his fairy-tale-like family films. The circular pattern is dominant: an ageing beautiful Queen wants her stepdaughter killed because Snow White is fairer than she. However, the young princess is saved by a royal hunter and eventually protected by seven dwarfs in the forest. The Queen learns of this and transforms herself into an old crone who sells Snow White a poison apple. The dwarfs pursue the Queen and cause her death. Snow White is apparently dead and encased in a glass coffin. But then Prince Charming arrives on the scene to give Snow White a kiss, and she is restored to life and power and rides off singing with her prince. The sequential arrangement of the frames, with clear breaks between each scene, follows the same prescribed plot: the oppressed heroine *must* be rescued by a daring prince. Heterosexual happiness and marriage are always the ultimate goals of the story. There is no character development because all characters must be recognisable as types that remain unchanged throughout the film. Good cannot become evil, nor can evil

become good. In a clean world, evil is always recognisable and good takes the form of a male hero.

If "Snow White" should be renamed to include the wicked stepmother in the tale's title, as Gilbert and Gubar believe, it is largely because they use the Disney version as their point of departure. Covers for the video version of this tale may foreground the heroine, the prince or the dwarfs, but it is the wicked Queen who dominates the action of the film. The story's leading character is the terrible Queen, a wicked stepmother. It took Disney's film to make her face a familiar terror – her double face, for she appears twice over as an unsexed woman, endangering and destabilising due order. First as the raven-haired Queen ("mirror, mirror on the wall"…) and then disguised as the old beggar woman who gives Snow White the apple which chokes her. Throughout times her role changed and, in our times, bad women come in form of stepmothers. Interestingly, Disney Studios erased the Grimms' prefatory episode describing the death of Snow White's biological mother in childbirth - the only maternal figure is the stepmother in her double incarnation as beautiful, proud, and evil Queen and as ugly, sinister, and wicked witch. Besides, there were many other differences after all, *Snow White* was Walt Disney's story that he had taken from the Grim Brothers and changed completely to suit his tastes and beliefs. He took this German tale and transformed it into something peculiarly American.

In Disney's version, Snow White is an orphan. Neither her father nor her mother are alive, and she is at first depicted as a kind of Cinderella, cleaning the castle as a maid in a patched dress. In the Grimms' version there is the sentimental death of her mother. Her father remains alive, and she was never forced to do the work of commoners such as wash the steps of the castle. Also, Disney has the Prince appear at the very beginning of the film on a white horse and sing a song of love and devotion to Snow White, though he plays a negligible role in the Grimms' version. In the Disney film, the Queen not only is jealous that Snow White is more beautiful than she is, but also sees the Prince singing to Snow White and is envious because her stepdaughter has such a handsome suitor. Though the animals do not speak, they befriend Snow White and become her protectors. Disney's dwarfs are hardworking and rich miners, and he gave

them names – Doc, Sleepy, Bashful, Happy, Sneezy, Grumpy, Dopey – representative of certain human characteristics. His dwarfs become the star attractions of the film. Their actions are what counts in defeating evil. In the Grimms' tale, the dwarfs are anonymous and play a humble role. Disney's Queen only comes to the cottage Snow White shares with the dwarfs one time instead of three as in the Grimms' version, and she is killed while trying to destroy the dwarfs by rolling a huge stone down a mountain to crush them. The punishment in the Grimms' tale is more horrifying: she must dance in red-hot iron shoes at Snow White's wedding. Finally, Disney's Snow White does not return to life when a dwarf stumbles while carrying the glass coffin as in the Grimms' tale. She returns to life when the prince, who has searched far and wide for her, arrives and bestows a kiss on her lips. His kiss of love is the only antidote to the Queen's poison.

At first glance, it would seem that the changes that Disney made were not relevant. The film follows the classic sexist narrative about the framing of women's lives through a male discourse. Such male framing drives women to frustration and pits women against women in competition for male approval (the mirror) of their beauty that is short-lived. No matter what they may do, women cannot chart their own lives without male manipulation and intervention, and in the Disney film, the Prince plays even more of a framing role since he is introduced at the beginning while Snow White is singing, wishing for the one she loves to find her. He announces his great love at the beginning of the film, and Snow White cannot be fulfilled until he arrives to kiss her. He will also appear at the end as the fulfilment of her dreams. During the major action of the film, he is lurking in the background and waiting for the proper time to make himself known. When he does arrive, he takes all the credit as champion of the disenfranchised, and he takes Snow White to his castle while the dwarfs are left as keepers of the forest. It is the prince who is to be glorified in "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" when he resuscitates the heroine with a magic kiss. Afterwards he holds Snow White in his arms, and in the final frame, he leads her off on a white horse to his golden castle on a hill. His golden castle – every woman's dream – supersedes the dark, sinister castle of the Queen. The prince becomes her reward, and his power and wealth are glorified in the end.

Just like Grimms' tale, the Disney version of "Snow White" polarizes the notion of the feminine to produce a murderously jealous and cold woman on the one hand and an innocently sweet girl accomplished in the art of good housekeeping on the other. When the kindly huntsman-father saved Snow White's life (because she was a "good" girl) by abandoning her in the forest at the edge of the kingdom, Snow White discovered her own powerlessness. She had to find her own way of resisting the attacks of the maddened Queen and found refuge at the dwarfs' house. In this connection, the seven dwarfs can do little to help save the girl from the Queen and they represent her own dwarfed powers, her stunted selfhood. At the same time, however, her life with them is an important part of her education in submissive femininity, for in serving them she learns essential lessons of service and domesticity. Besides, that at this point Snow White is a housekeeping angel in a tiny house conveys the story's attitude toward woman's world and woman's work: the realm of domesticity is a miniaturized kingdom in which the best of women is like a dwarfs' servant. Beginning with the Grimms, it is through a combination of labour and good looks that Snow White earns a prince. Here is how the Grimms describe the housekeeping contract extended to Snow White by the dwarfs: "If you will keep house for us, cook, make the beds, wash, sew, knit, and keep everything neat and clean, then you can stay with us, and we'll give you everything you need" (Grimm, 1996, translated in Tatar, 1999: 85). But the dwarfs in the Grimms' tale don't need a housekeeper, for they appear to be models of tidiness and everything in their cottage is spotless. The description of the dwarfs' cottage based on Disney's version of "Snow White" is quite different since their little house was in a total mess, with dirty clothes over the chairs and the sink piled with cups and plates that looked as though they had never been washed.

There is no doubt that Disney retained key ideological features of the Grimms' fairy tale that reinforce nineteenth-century patriarchal notions which Disney shared with the Grimms. In traditional fairy tales that Disney adapted for the screen, there were few major plot changes because Disney and his co-workers generally subscribed to the ideological content of the action. In this respect, Disney depicted clear-cut gender roles that associated women with domesticity

and men with action and power. He preserves and carries on many of their benevolent attitudes toward women. For instance, and as already mentioned, in the Grimms' tale, when Snow White arrives at the cabin, she pleads with the dwarfs to allow her to remain and promises that she will wash the dishes, mend their clothes, and clean the house. In Disney's film, she arrives and notices that the house is dirty. So, she convinces the animals to help her make the cottage tidy so that the dwarfs will perhaps let her stay there. The house of the Grimms and Disney was the place where good girls remained, and one aspect of the fairy tale and the film is about the domestication of women. In "Snow White", a girl passes her days alone, a state that the seven dwarves emphasise in their repeated injunctions to be sure to let no one come in when they are not with her. In this tale, visits that might relieve the daily tedium of solitude are more often perceived as sources of danger than as forms of amusement and, in fact, a witch threatens this cloistered girl.

In one post-Disney variant of the story after another, Snow White makes it her mission to clean up and look after the dwarfs and is represented as serving an apprenticeship in home economics for she was becoming an excellent housekeeper and cook. In almost all the versions, Snow White sweeps the house, washes the dishes, and prepares a meal for the occupants. These domestic tasks represent the young woman's first assumption of responsibility. The Disney version itself transforms household drudgery into frolicking good fun, less work than play, since it requires no real effort, is carried out with the help of wonderfully dextrous woodland creatures, and achieves such a dazzling result. Disney made a point of placing the housekeeping sequence before the encounter with the dwarfs and of presenting the dwarfs as "naturally messy", just as Snow White is by nature tidy. When she comes upon the dwarfs' cottage, her first instinct is "to clean it up and surprise them when they come home and maybe they'll let me stay and keep house for them"[11]. By contrast, in Angela Carter's version of the tale, there are no dwarfs and the Snow Child only encounters the Count and Countess.

Nevertheless, Disney went much further than the Grimms to make his film more memorable than the tale, for he does not celebrate the domestication of

[11] See the film by Walt Disney. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. 1996.

women so much as the triumph of the banished and the underdogs. That is, he celebrates his destiny, and also celebrated the American male myth about perseverance, hard work, dedication, loyalty and justice. In this case, as in many others, the film as fairy tale projects the possibility of a better future with freedom for the imagination if there is unity in struggle against authoritarian rule. In this case, the underdog (i.e. the young daughter) serves as the symbol of the common people.

It may seem strange to argue that Disney perpetuated a male myth through his fairy tale films when, with the exception of *Pinocchio*, they all featured young women as heroines. However, despite their beauty and charm, these heroines (like Snow White) are pale compared to the more active and demonic characters in the film. The witches (such as the Queen) are not only agents of evil but represent erotic and subversive forces that are more appealing both for the artist who drew them and for the audiences. The young women are like helpless ornaments in need of protection, and when it comes to the action of the film, they are omitted.

As previously mentioned, the numerous changes made by Disney endowed the film with an entirely different meaning from the Grimms' tale. The tale involves a violent struggle over power with no holds barred, and it is told with lurid detail and powerful symbols which have deep psychological and social implications. The film saccharinised all these elements and actually switched the focus to the Queen and also to the dwarfs who play a minor role in the tale. This refocusing in the mediation is significant, for it reveals the underlying ideological meaning of the film and images. The dwarfs are little workers, miners, to be exact, and they sing and whistle while they work. In fact, the film does not really become lively until the dwarfs enter the narrative. They are the mysterious characters who inhabit a cottage, and it is through their hard work and solidarity that they are able to maintain a world of justice and restore harmony to the world. The dwarfs can be interpreted as the humble American workers, who pull together during a depression. They keep their spirits up by singing a song and their determination is the determination of every worker, who will succeed just as long as he does his share while women stay at home and keep the house clean. Their names – Doc,

Happy, Grumpy, Sneezy, Bashful, Sleepy and Dopey – suggest the composite humours of a single individual. They represent the healthy instincts of a person. When he or she as viewer orders them properly, they can become a powerful force against the forces of evil. Maintaining order and the ordering of the dwarfs become the central themes of the film. Even Snow White, who becomes the dwarfs' surrogate mother, helps order their house to keep it nice and tidy. The images of the home and forest are all clean-cut, suggesting trimmed lawns of suburban American and symmetrical living as models. To know your place and do your job dutifully are the categorical imperatives of the film. Snow white is the virginal housewife who sings a song about "some day my prince will come", for she needs a dashing male saviour to order herself and become whole, and the boys are the breadwinners who need a straight mom to keep them happy. Though the wicked Queen – the force of disorder – dies, the social order is not changed but conserved and restored with youthful winning figures who will keep the realm and their minds spick and span.

The fairy tale film was, and still is, the centre piece of a package that consisted of various commodities attached to it: a program, an illustrated book, a doll, a poster, a piece of clothing, etc. Whereas a given fairy tale film will be packaged as a commodity, it will be consumed by a public that continues to tell fairy tales orally in all types of situations; is exposed to classical fairy tales as books, cassettes, videotapes, commercials, cartoons, comics, radio plays, musicals, operas, ballets, and video games; reinterprets the fairy tales according to correct reading, ideological conditioning, and personal taste; and produces its own kinds of fairy tales, wishing for the transformation of these tales into reality.

In order for the viewer to determine whether there is something new, meaningful, and utopian in the fairy-tale film, he or she must know the origins of the story. For children, such knowledge is difficult because the fairy tale insinuates itself into their lives as "natural history". It is as though the film has always been there; it is part of their history. This insinuation is exactly why a critical historicizing of the fairy-tale film and fairy tales in general is so important. In the case of traditional fairy tales adapted for the screen, a rereading of the text both by children and adults can lead to an enriched appreciation both of the film and of the

text. Moreover, the reader/ viewer gains a greater sense of the development of the fairy tale genre as an institution.

Curiously, filmmakers did not realize how rich and compelling fairy-tale material really was until the 1930s – coincidentally, just as the great economic Depression was shaking most of the world and causing widespread misery; just as fascism of all kinds was on the rise. The fairy tale was to speak for happiness and utopia in the face of conditions that were devastating people's lives all over the globe. Perhaps this utopian message was why Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" was such a great success in 1937. Obsessed with his own art and with developing his company, Disney succeeded in gathering around him some of the finest artists, animators, musicians, technicians and writers in the business to produce "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs". In his bestseller *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown compares Walt Disney to Leonardo Da Vinci and states that both artists loved to include hidden messages and symbolisms in their art. Most of Disney's messages had to do with religion, myths and stories about the subjugated heroine. It was not by chance that Disney retold stories such as "Sleeping Beauty" or "Snow White" – all of them related to the incarceration of the holly feminism. According to Brown, "Snow White" – the story about a princess that met disaster after biting a poisoned apple – was a clear allusion to the fall of Eve in the Eden Garden.[12]

Yet the fairy tale was not used consciously in the 1930s to provide an opiate for the people. Cinematic adaptation and transformation of the literary fairy tale was a gradual process that began in the 1890s with the innovative experiments of Georges Méliès and continues today with many significant ramifications and a range of complex meanings. Few critics have bothered to explore how the rise of the cinema affected the fairy tale genre and how the function of the fairy tale as a literary genre shifted and was altered with the rise of the fairy tale film and the development of the culture industry from the late 1920s to the present. According to Tatar (1999), in a sense, Gilbert and Gubar have become the professors who tell us what Disney did, for their critical intervention is above all a response to Disney's film, to a motion picture that positions the evil

[12] Brown, Dan. *O Código Da Vinci*. (Chiado: Bertrand Editora, 2005.) p. 313.

Queen as the figure of cinematic fascination and that makes Snow White so dull that she requires a supporting cast of seven to enliven her scenes (Disney's is the only version of "Snow White" that presents the dwarfs as individualised figures). With a sweet voice and pasty figure, the Snow White character lacks the narrative charge present in the representation of her stepmother. It is, in fact, the stepmother's disturbing presence that invests the story with a degree of fascination that has facilitated its widespread circulation and that has allowed it to take hold in our culture.

Disney's films were never intended solely for children but were meant to captivate the "child" in all the viewers. If one can discern an attitude toward children in the films, it is that they are to be swept away as objects by the delightful and erotic images. This sweeping away is an envelopment that involves loss of identity; that is, children as viewers are to lose themselves in the Oedipal wishes that are depicted on the screen. The process of viewing involves infantilisation because each frame regulates the drives and wishes of the viewer according to rigid sexist and racist notions that emanate from the nineteenth century and are recalled in the film with nostalgia.

Since Disney never really wanted to explore the narrative depths of the fairy tale through cinema but instead wanted to celebrate the techniques of animation itself and to figure prominently as the divine power behind these techniques, he left an opening for other filmmakers who have sought to go beyond Disney in re-creating fairy tales for the screen, with varying success. They range from Jean Cocteau to Jim Henson and have used both realistic means and animation to focus more on changing the tale than re-establishing its antiquated view of the world. In light of the fact that there have been hundreds of fairy-tale films produced for both children and adults since 1937, it would be extremely difficult to discuss all the experiments that have sought to transcend the standardised Disney film.

Fortunately, writers have been looking again at "Snow White" and other fairy tales, finding that there is much more to the old material than Disney would have us believe. Prompted by writers like Angela Carter, Olga Broumas, Eudora Welty, Donald Barthelme, Tanith Lee, Liz Lochhead, and many poets like Anne Sexton, fairy tales are being reclaimed from Disney cartoons and from shelves

marked “children only”, explored and restored as a fascinating part of the world's literary heritage.

In fact, everywhere one turns today fairy tales and fairy-tale motifs pop up like magic. Books, plays, operas and musical works are based on fairy-tale themes. Aside from the Disney vintage productions, numerous films incorporate fairy-tale motifs and plots. Even porno films make lascivious use of “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs”. Fairy-tale scenes and figures are employed in advertisements, window decorations, TV commercials, restaurant signs, and club insignias. Indeed, the fantastic projections of the fairy-tale world appear to have become “in”, consuming the reality of our everyday life and invading the inner sanctum of our subjective world. But actually, fairy tales were never “out” since they have been with us for centuries as a necessary part of our culture.

It is not by coincidence that the fairy tale film has become the most popular cultural commodity in the world. We never abandon fairy tales and in recent years, such films as *Beauty and the Beast* have earned millions of dollars and entertained millions of viewers, not to mention the re-releases of such classics as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and the hundreds of fairy tale films made for the video market and fairy tale films produced for television, the most prominent being Ron Koslow’s 1986 series *Beauty and the Beast.* If we include live-action films such as *Splash* and *Pretty Woman*, and the hundreds of sentimental films that rely on the fairy-tale structure in which a magical transformation or miraculous event brings about a satisfying, happy ending, we could argue that Hollywood itself as an industry is inseparable from the fairy tale. In fact, Hollywood as a symbol is a utopian fairy-tale destination, a place where the good fairy as destiny waits to transform unknown talents into known stars. But this would be a theme for another thesis.

Conclusion

Fairy tales have existed for centuries in varied cultures and their functions have been debated for almost as long. People are fascinated with the stories and have passed them down orally. Their survival through oral tradition bears witness to their power and influence. There is evidence of magic folk tales in all the sacred literature of the world. That is, the motifs of magic folk tales were incorporated into all of the early texts, such as the Bible, *The Iliad,* and *The Odyssey,* concerned with the origins of gods and with initiation rituals.

However, one cannot speak of the literary fairy tale as genre until after the invention of the printing press, the growth of literacy and vernacular languages, and the establishment of genres as institutions, which means examining this literary form in light of its production, reception, and distribution. A literary genre could not flower in Europe during the Renaissance until it became socially acceptable, that is, instituted within a social practice that furthered its production, reception, and distribution. As literature, the fairy tale became reading matter, and as such, it was cultivated mainly for the educated classes and became more complex in theme and structure. The Italian and French fairy tales of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are long, sophisticated symbolical narratives that address issues of decorum and behaviour within the European civilizing process and questions of power between classes and sexes. Though often read aloud, they were produced for private absorption and circulated largely among members of the upper classes. They represented the views of particular authors who pretended they were universal tales.

It is important to remember that literary fairy tales were feudal artworks. That is, they represented the concerns of aristocratic or middle-class authors and were directed at a select group of adult readers, generally those who were part of court or salon society. This definition does not mean that the early literary fairytales legitimised absolutism, but it does mean that the power plays among kings, queens, princes, princesses, monsters, and fairies were understood as commentaries on normative behaviour and the use of power in the existing sixteenth- and seventeenth-century hierarchical societies. The fairy tales served a dual social function in representing the power invested in aristocratic elites: they were a mode of entertainment through which the upper classes could take delight

in their own machinations, but they were also symbolically subversive, for they were secular instructive narratives, strategies of intervention within the civilizing process that often revealed abuses of power and authority. It was during this time that the fairy tale as institutionalised genre began to flower and expand as ballet, opera, and court festival.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the major writers of the fairy tale were mostly men - the Brothers Grimm, Wilhelm Hauff, Ludwig Bechstein, Hans Christian Andersen, Carl Ewald, William Makepeace Thackeray, George Mac-Donald, Lewis Carroll, Oscar Wilde, Andrew Lang, Joseph Jacobs, Carlo Collodi, Frank Stockton, and L. Frank Baum - as were most of the collectors. They were responsible - and so were many women writers - for a kind of “family fairy tale”; that is, their tales addressed the entire family, and notions such as industry, diligence, justice, and achievement became more prominent in their tales than aristocratic majesty and absolute power. In fact, the fairy tale was no longer a feudal artwork, but had become autonomous. The family fairy tale as commodity was designed to reinforce patriarchal notions of civilization, whether it was produced by male or female authors.

The most well known Western written collection of these folktales is the German Grimm brothers’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. This collection documents 210 fairy tales including those popularised by the Disney Corporation in the twentieth century. No matter what the contemporary fashion of transmission, be it oral tradition or computerised animation, fairy tales are passed down generation after generation. What need do cultures fulfil with the transmission of these stories and what messages do fairy tales impress upon the culture? These questions are pertinent to contemporary fairy tale scholarship and especially to scholarship on the various roles characters play in fairy tales. Scholars have broken down stories to analyse the messages passed on through characters. Breaking down the fairy tales along gender lines has been particularly instructive. By analysing gender roles as they develop over time in individual Märchen, scholars are able to understand how the fairy tales function within the contexts of their respective culture.

As Jack Zipes points out in his book *Creative Storytelling* (1995), there is no "correct" way to interpret a fairy tale. Nevertheless, the classical fairy tales have become fixed in Western society in ways that often contradict their own richness. This "freezing" of a tale often happens in ways that reinforce negative gender roles and an ideological thinking that stabilizes the hierarchy of a class and race.

This tendency toward the preservation of conservative strands in the classical fairy tales makes the telling of counter-versions all the more important. We must remember that our ideas of what we think a fairy tale should be emanate from the nineteenth century and were developed by writers like the brothers Grimm within a patriarchal framework. Therefore, the codes of the classical fairy tales are not universal. They were not always told and written down the way the Grimms or even Walt Disney imagine they were. They were specific to a male, middle class ideology that has set the frame for their inscription.

The revisions, reforms, and rearrangements in family and social life proposed by feminists such as Benjamin and Philipson are rooted in the very experience of women and men who have already explored alternative life styles and family living. In some cases lesbians and homosexuals have created new forms of communal life just as single women and men with children and without children have conceived ways of going beyond the bourgeois nuclear family in opposition to traditional gender expectations. There has been a shift away from the male-centred society, which has improved the experience of women qualitatively in their struggle to live by their own definitions – and the side effects for men have not been without their benefits, particularly those opposed to the dominant manner in which gender is socially arranged. Such experience has been at the root of the feminist literary criticism and the feminist fairy tales, which originated during the social upheavals of the late 1960s and 1970s.

As a result of the women's movement and continual struggles against sexism during the past decades, our eyes have been opened and made more receptive to a re-framing of Snow White and Beauty's stories. These narrative strategies used by women are intended to undermine the dominant male discourse that does violence to women's bodies, and they are multiplying in Western societies.

The increase in violence may be paradoxically due to the great frustration men feel in the reduction of inducements to violate women and the resistance on the part of women to play out the role of Snow White or Beauty according to male prescriptions.

It would be very simple-minded to pin the picture of female hatred and cruelty in fairy tales like “Snow White” and “Beauty and the Beast” on male authors and interpreters alone. They have contributed to it and confirmed it, from Charles Perrault’s wittily awful sisters (not ugly but beautiful) and terrifying cannibal ogresses to the Grimm Brothers and their brilliantly successful spiritual heir Walt Disney, who made the cartoon film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), which has done more than any other creation to naturalise female – maternal – malignancy in the imaginations of children worldwide.

This film concentrates with exuberant glee on the towering, raven-haired wicked stepmother; all Disney’s powers of invention failed to save the princes from featureless banality and his heroines from saccharin sentimentality. Authentic power lies with the bad women. Disney’s vision has affected everybody’s idea of fairy tales themselves: until writers and anthologists began looking again, passive unfortunate heroines and vigorous wicked older women seemed genetic. Disney selected certain stories and stressed certain sides to them; the wise children, the teeming population of the stories were drastically purged. The disequilibrium between good and evil in these films has influenced contemporary perception of fairy tales, as a form where sisters and gruesome forces are magnified and prevail throughout – until the very last moment, where right and goodness overcome them.

Visual artists have continued to bring relish to the task of portraying the wicked witches and evil stepmothers of the tales: Maurice Sendak and David Hockney have created memorably warty, hook-nosed, crouchback horrors in their illustrations to Grimm. Furthermore, father figures tend to be excused responsibility. The tales consistently fail to ask, why did Snow White’s father marry again so quickly, so unwisely? Or, why does he allow Snow White’s mistreatment at all?

Terror of the witch returns in malignant force through the imagination of film,

and children's books, not in the magic person of the fairy godmother, but in the vicious power of the evil stepmother.

Nevertheless, the misogyny of fairy tales engages women as participants, not just targets; the antagonisms and sufferings the stories recount connect to the world of female authority as well as experience. Also, as they so frequently claim to speak in a women's voice, it is worth pausing to examine the weight and implications of that claim before pointing the finger exclusively at Grimm or Disney. The fact is that men and women often tell the same tales in characteristically different ways. That's why many critics and authors studied storytelling and uncovered parallels and divergences between men's and women's ways with their versions of tales such as "Snow White" and "Beauty and the Beast".

Instances and statistics of female storytelling are not however nearly as illuminating as internal evidence in the tales themselves. This yields a double aspect of femaleness: on the one hand the record of female experience in certain tales, and on the other the ascription of a female point of view, through the protagonist or the narrating voice. The male scribe of the literary monument of folklore may be transmitting women's stories, as they claim.

The story of *Beauty and the Beast* appears in many different cultures in different forms. There are hundreds of tales from different countries with a similar theme to *Beauty and the Beast*. There are usually three daughters, the youngest being the most kind and pure, her sisters displaying some of the undesirable traits of humankind. Beauty often has no name but is referred to as the youngest daughter. There never seems to be a mother, thus omitting the possible conflicts a mother would have allowing her daughter to leave to live with a monster and allowing a closer relationship with the father who is, in most cases, wealthy. Although the Beast takes on many guises (serpent, wolf, even pig) he is never appealing in appearance but is rich and powerful. Hidden powers seem to guide the humans. At one point the Beauty is separated from her Beast and at that time some ill befalls him. Beauty's remorse, sometimes as simple as shedding a tear and sometimes as onerous a penance as going to the end of the earth, saves the Beast and his transformation to handsome man is achieved.

Much psychological hay has been made of the story of *Beauty and the Beast;* the men are all passive, the older women are less sympathetic, the youngest one pure and virginal and even the desired rose has come in for its share of analysis. To the Greeks and Romans the rose was a symbol of pleasure associated with extravagance and luxuriousness. It is considered the flower of romance that blushes with the warmth of worldly delights. Is the father dying in a literal sense or is he dying for the love of his Beauty who is now devoted to the Beast?

Storytellers the world over claim to know their material from an eye witness; the voice of the old nurse lends reliability to the tale, stamps it as authentic, rather than the creation of the storyteller himself. More deeply, attributing to women testimony about women's wrongs and wrongdoings gives them added value. Men might be expected to find women unreliable, self-seeking, cruel and lustful, but if women say such things about themselves, then the matter is settled. What some women say against others can be usefully turned against all of them.

Above all, if and when women are narrating, why are the female characters so often dead at the start of the story? Why have women continued to speak at all with this body of story, which defames them so profoundly? Could they be speaking to a purpose? Fairy tales like "Snow White" bear witness against women. But there are possible reasons for the evidence they bring, be it true or false, which mitigate the wrongs they describe, not entirely, but in part.

The absence of the mother from the tale is often declared at the start, without explanation, as if none were required; Beauty appears before us, in the opening paragraph of the earliest written version of "Beauty and the Beast" with that title, in 1740, as a daughter to her father, a sister to her elders, a biblical seventh child, the favourite: nothing is spoken about her father's wife. Later, it will turn out that Beauty is a foundling, and was left by the fairies, after her fairy mother was disgraced by union with a mortal - not the father Beauty knows, but another, higher in rank, more powerful.

This is the kind of romancing that earned fairy tale some scorn, both in the past and today. Fairy tales play to the child's strong desire for nobler, richer, altogether better origins, the fantasy of being a prince or a princess in disguise,

the ‘family romance’. But this type of fantasy can also comfort bereaved children, who, however irrationally, feel themselves abandoned by their dead mothers, and even guilty for their disappearance.

Looking at the roles that women have played allows one to understand why a particular story may have been valued as an enforcer of cultural mores. “Snow White”, specifically, can be critiqued in various ways to deconstruct its messages. The main character being female accommodates an in-depth analysis of her attributes and actions as well as her relations to others. Because the namesake character is female, scholars have had more material to critique. Women have often been left out of texts all together, so investigation has focused on their absence. However, with “Snow White” there has been ample opportunity to look at a presence, as generic as it may be. Although Snow White is a fictitious character, her actions illustrate the messages that women are taught. Focusing on the brothers Grimm version of “Schneewitchen” and various critiques thereof allows the reader a sample of the various interpretations the popular fairy tale has had.

Considering that questioning the fairy tale’s magic has been a feminist project for several decades, we fortunately do not need to reject fairy tales as inherently sexist narratives, which offer narrow and damaging role models for young readers. Feminists can view the fairy tale as a powerful discourse, which produces representations of gender; and studying the mechanisms of such a production can highlight the dynamic differences and complex interdependence between “Woman” in fairy tales and “women” storytellers/ writers and readers. Many critics take up this challenge by focusing on images of women in classic fairy tales, especially the symbols of beauty. These narratives continue to play a privileged role in the production of gender, and as such are reconstructed in a variety of ways. But then, in considering the possibility that gender has a cultural character and origin we need to examine the primary channels of acculturation. Millions of women must surely have formed their psychosexual self-concepts, and their ideas of what they could or could not accomplish, what sort of behaviour would be rewarded, and of the nature of reward itself, in part from their favourite fairy tales. These stories have been made the repositories of the dreams, hopes, and fantasies of generations of girls.

Today, many children are obsessed with the Walt Disney cartoon versions of “Snow White”, “Cinderella”, and “Sleeping Beauty”, all of which have the same plot: the heroine is beautiful, but sad or in a coma. But then, there comes a handsome prince! He kisses her! She’s happy and everybody’s happy! Even the woodland creatures are dancing!

Many believe that handsome prince equals lifetime happiness, which seems to be the basic Disney message. The alleged exception is “Beauty and the Beast”, wherein the beautiful heroine falls in love with a horrible creature. The enlightened message of this story we are led to believe is that appearance doesn’t matter and inner beauty is what counts. But this message vanishes at the end when the spell on the beast is finally broken and the beast becomes a handsome prince. The heroine has no trouble with the fact that she is living with a prince who looks absolutely nothing like the one she fell in love with. Well, some people may agree that the Disney stories are shallow, gender-stereotyping, ludicrously romanticised girlish fantasies, but don’t we all need a bit of romance and fantasy in our lives? Even in modern society where romance co-habits uncomfortably with women’s liberation, barely disguised forms of fairy tales transmit romantic conventions through the medium of popular literature. Traditional fairy tales fuse morality with romantic fantasy in order to portray cultural ideals for human relationships. In contrast, pulp romances reduce fairy tales to sentimental clichés, while they continue to glamorise a heroine’s traditional yearning for romantic love which culminates in marriage.

When Beauty was confined to the Beast’s castle, she wasn’t expecting to find happiness. When Snow White discovered the forest home of the dwarfs, she wasn’t expecting a rescue by Walt Disney, but only survival. The message for young women from these stories is not about finding Prince Charming, but about hard work, learning to believe in oneself and knowing the power of love.

Beauty had to find her way around the castle, and we are told that she spent long days in the library reading. She needed to learn about the adult world she was about to enter. Snow White had to learn about cooking, cleaning and caring for others. When both successfully accomplished this stage of development, Beauty was startled to find the Beast turn into a beautiful man, and

Snow White's Prince found his way to her in the forest. The reason these two young women "lived happily ever after" is not because of outside events or people, but because of their capacity to expect the best from themselves. Right thought and right action lead to powerful possibilities.

However, the tales implicitly yoke sexual awakening and surrender to the prince with social elevation and materialistic gain. Originally of royal birth, Snow White only regains wealth and a Queen's position by marrying a prince. Although little Beauty experience temporary reversals of fortune, which lead to servitude or genteel poverty, these heroines also miraculously receive fortunes from their marriages. A strict moral reading would attribute these rewards solely to the heroine's virtue but the fictional connection of sexual awakening with the receipt of great wealth implies a more subtle causality. Because the heroine adopts conventional female virtues – such as patience, sacrifice, and dependency – and because she submits to patriarchal needs, she consequently receives both the prince and a guarantee of social and financial security through marriage. Status and fortune never result from the female's self-exertion but from passive assimilation into her husband's sphere. Allowed no opportunity for discriminating selection, the princess makes a blind commitment to the first prince who happens down the highway, penetrates the thorny barriers, and arrives to release her from the charmed captivity of adolescence. Paradoxically this "liberation" symbolizes her absolute capitulation, as she now fulfils the roles of wife and mother imprinted in her memory by the natural mother and re-enters a comfortable world of masculine protection shared earlier with her father.

Nowadays, we live in an age of mechanical reproduction where there are more copies of original art works than there are originals. Fortunately, new forms of fairy tales and storytelling have not been proscribed or prevented from emerging. According to Zipes, to copy a fairy tale is "to duplicate its message and images, to produce a look-alike. … to reproduce a set pattern of ideas and images that reinforce a traditional way of seeing, believing, and behaving" (Zipes, 1994: 9). Revisions of classical fairy tales are different. "The purpose of producing a revised fairy tale is to create something new that incorporates that critical and creative thinking of the producer and corresponds to changed demands and tastes

of audiences. As a result of transformed values, the revised classical fairy tale seeks to alter the reader's views of traditional patterns, images, and codes" (Zipes, 1994: 9).

This is the case of Angela Carter's collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber* (1995), Tanith Lee's *Red as Blood or Tales from the Sisters Grimmer* (1983) and also Anne Sexton's poems gathered in her book *Transformations* (2001).

Almost all the fairy tales I have referred to explore new possibilities for gender arrangement. The reversal of the traditional fairy tale patterns is more than a simple formal matter. All the tales are linked to power, violence, social conditions, child rearing and sex roles. How we have arranged ourselves, our bodies and psyches in society has been recorded and passed down through fairy tales for many centuries, and the contemporary feminist tales indicate that something radical is occurring in Western society to change our social and political relations. At this point, it is fruitless to ask whether the feminist fairy tales can have the impact they obviously seek because they have not been widely distributed, nor have they been in existence very long. What is more important to ask at this stage is why they have come into being and what they reveal about social and psychological conditions in the world.

Likewise, these tales morally censure bad fairies and vain, villainous stepmothers who exhibit manipulative power or cleverness. Allowed momentary triumph over the seemingly dead Snow White or exhausted Beauty, eventually these diabolic stepmothers are thwarted by the prince's greater powers. Facing punishment through death, banishment, or disintegration, the most self-disciplined and courageous villainesses execute justice upon themselves, thereby leaving the sterling morality of the prince and princess untarnished. In condign punishment for jealousy, Snow White's stepmother dances herself to death on iron-shoes. Because cleverness, willpower, and manipulative skill are allied with vanity, shrewishness, and ugliness, and because of their gruesome fates, odious females hardly recommend themselves as models for young readers. By punishing exhibitions of feminine force, tales admonish, moreover, that any disruptive non-conformity will result in annihilation or social ostracism. While readers dissociate

from these portraitures of feminine power, defiance, and self-expression, they readily identify with the prettily passive heroine whose submission to commendable roles insures her triumphant happiness.

The contemporary feminist fairy tales have drawn upon a rich tradition of feminist tales or tales with strong women which may not be widely known but have nevertheless provided models and the impetus to challenge the dominant male discourse. Present-day writers have rearranged familiar motifs and characters and reversed plot lines to provoke readers to rethink conservative views of gender and power. The aesthetics of these tales are ideological, for the structural reformation depends upon a non-sexist worldview that calls for a dramatic change in social practice.

However, feminist literary criticism, though more oriented toward social conflicts than the general literary criticism of fairy tales, has failed to keep pace with the contemporary feminist fairy tales. In this regard, the significance of the feminist fairy tales lies in their Utopian function to criticise current shifts in psychic and social structures and to point the way toward new possibilities for individual development and social interaction.

While feminist political movements of the last century may seem to indicate women's liberation from traditional roles, too often the underlying truth is far more complicated: the liberation of the female psyche has not matured with sufficient strength to sustain a radical assault on the patriarchal culture. Despite an apparent susceptibility to change, modern culture remains itself stubbornly adverse to ideals of female and male equality. Whether expressed in pornographic, domestic and gothic fictions or enacted in the daily relations of men and women, fairy tale visions of romance also continue to perpetuate cultural ideals which subordinate women. They preserve rather than challenge patriarchy. Today women are caught in a dialectic between the cultural status quo and the evolving feminist movement, between a need to preserve values and yet to accommodate changing mores, between romantic fantasies and contemporary realities. The capacity of women to achieve equality depends upon the metamorphosis of these tensions into balances.

If we take the feminist tales for children and adults as a whole and generalise about their aesthetic and ideological features, we can see how closely they are related to feminist demands for gender rearrangement and equality in the family and at the work place. First of all, the structure of most of the feminist tales is based on the self-definition of a young woman. The female protagonist becomes aware of a task which she must complete in social interaction with others to define herself. Instead of pursuing power for the purpose of self-aggrandisement or omnipotence, the heroine rejects violence and seeks to establish her needs in harmony with the needs of others. Power will only be used in self-defence or to prevent violence. Though the heroine may be wronged, she will rarely seek revenge. Rather, the form of the fairy tale resembles the nurturance provided by a parent who does not project her/his wishes on a child but respects the need for the child to define her or his self. That is, the aesthetic form is derived from a sense of nurturing rather than competition. Thus, there is a reversal of the structure of the traditional fairy tale based on power plays and the male protagonist's quest for power.

Though some of the feminist fairy tales end in marriage, this is rarely the goal of these narratives. Feminist fairy tales experiment with the language, motifs, and characters of the traditional tales in pursuit of expression commensurate with alternative forms of child rearing that lead to encouraging the self-worth of an individual. To change the fairy tale for feminists is not simply an act of symbolical writing for self-gratification, but it is also a political act based on their experience with male brutality and general social violence which is the result of the legitimising interests of male control. Ultimately, to write a feminist fairy tale is to write with the hope that future generations will not adapt the forms and ideas found in traditional tales, but that they will arrange their lives in response to non-sexist social conditions and the different options presented in the feminist fairy tales which are still seeking to prove their humanitarian value. Throughout the years, women have been not only writing but also conceiving fictional worlds in which patriarchal images and conventions have been severely and radically revised. As self-conceiving women rose from the glass coffin of the male-authored text, as they

exploded out of the Queen's looking glass, the old silent dance of death became a dance of triumph, a dance into speech, a dance of authority.

We may say that we live our lives through texts and fairy tales in all their forms have a profound meaning in our pursuit of happiness. To read a fairy tale is to follow the narrative path to happiness. The fairy tale has not only been conceived and exploited to manipulate children and adults, it has also been changed in innovative ways to instil hope in its youthful and mature audiences so that no matter how bad their lives are, they can still believe that they can live happily ever after. Simply put, all art is subject to commodification, which has no other purpose than to capture and play upon our desire for pleasure and happiness. The culture industry has to instil standard expectations in audiences so that they think they are getting what they want, and that by getting what they want, they can become like the stars with whom they identify. We use fairy tales in diverse ways as private sacred myths or as public commercial advertisements to sell something. Whatever their form, these stories are what have formed us all. As children, we all hear fairy tales and read our lives into them. But we also want to see and realize our lives as virtual fairy tales even as we grow older. Out of old tales, we must make new lives. We refer to myths and fairy tales as lies by saying "oh, that's just a fairy tale", but these lies are often the lies that govern our lives.

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