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ABSTRACT

Fairy tales are an integral part of popular culture, as most people grow up listening to and reading these stories, while also watching adaptations of them in movies and TV series. This thesis seeks to analyze two versions of “Snow White” that are typically regarded as the traditional versions of the fairy tale, as these are well established in the landscape of popular fairy tales, that is “Snow White” (1857) by the brothers Grimm and the movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) by Walt Disney. These traditional tales will be juxtaposed with three postmodern fairy tales that are either variations of the traditional tale, or use “Snow White” as an intertext in order to scrutinize how these narratives disclose the ideology of the traditional tales, that is “The Snow Child” (1979) by Angela Carter, “Snow, Glass, Apples” (1999) by Neil Gaiman and Toni Morrison’s novel *God Help the Child* (2015).

This thesis will argue that fairy tales are capable of conveying central truths about culture, ideology and the structures in which we establish ourselves as individual subjects. This thesis aims to investigate the traces of patriarchal ideology that can be found in literature, and the roles that narratives play in challenging or affirming dominant ideology. The texts that have been selected for the analysis extend from 1857 to 2015, and it will be argued that the same ideological structures can be found in all these text, while also proposing that literature might function to displace this ideology.

This thesis is written to explore the relationships made possible between women within a patriarchal structure, and it will put a particularly focus on how images of female beauty restrict the roles available for women, and how these ideals of femininity inevitably turn women against each other. Throughout this thesis I will investigate how images of beauty and ideals of femininity concern both internal and external beauty, and how the concept of beauty then might work to instill social values in the readers, as the ideal of beauty in “Snow White” does not merely prescribe features of appearance, but also images of accepted female conduct.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely.”

(Oscar Wilde 2014: 4)

This thesis aims to investigate the traces of patriarchal ideology that can be found in literature, and the roles that narratives play in challenging or affirming dominant ideology. In order to conduct this investigation I have chosen to base my analysis on fairy tales, with a distinct focus on several versions of the fairy tale “Snow White”. Two versions of the story, which might be deemed traditional versions of the tale, will be juxtaposed with two postmodern revisions of the tale and a contemporary novel which can be read as a variation of “Snow White”.

I have chosen to focus on two versions of “Snow White” that are typically regarded as the traditional versions of the fairy tale, as these are well established in the landscape of popular fairy tales, that is “Snow White” (1857) by the brothers Grimm and the movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) by Walt Disney. This thesis seeks to investigate the ideology that underpins these tales in order to unveil the ideals of femininity that are conveyed through them, which is interesting as one might argue that these tales have influenced generations of readers and viewers.

This investigation will be a comparative reading of three postmodern narratives with a distinct focus on scrutinizing how these narratives reveal the ideology of the traditional tales, and also how they disclose ideals of femininity and masculinity. Three postmodern revisions of the classic tale have been selected in order for the analysis, that is “The Snow Child” (1979) by Angela Carter, “Snow, Glass, Apples” (1999) by Neil Gaiman and Toni Morrison’s novel *God Help the Child* (2015) which can be regarded as a meta-fairy tale as it employs “Snow White” as an intertext in the way that it echoes and parodies both characters, plot and symbolism as the story unfolds. The novel works within the framework of the fairy tale as it is a story of a Snow White who has to leave her initial home in order to reconstitute home in the end, but at the same time it also contests the notion of the happy ending, and depicts a heroine who plays an active role in saving herself, while the two postmodern tales thematize how the social structures in society make it impossible for the female character to save herself.

1.1 SOCIALIZATION AND IDEOLOGY IN FAIRY TALES

The reason why fairy tales have been chosen for this investigation is because these narratives can be seen to “mirror the basic patterns of the psyche more clearly” than other forms of literature where the specific conscious cultural material is more immanent (cf. Von Franz 1996: 1). Along the same lines, Jack Zipes also argues in *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* that “[f]airy tales are not unreal; they tell us metaphorically that “life is hard,” or that “life is but a dream” (Zipes 2012: xiii). Hidden behind the enchanting veil of images and symbols, princes and princesses, spells and magic formula, and the presence of the fantastical and impossible, fairy tales are capable of conveying central truths about culture, ideology and the structures in which we establish ourselves as individual subjects in society.

Marina Warner notes in her book *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of Fairy Tale* (2014) that there are six characteristics that define a fairy tale. She asserts that fairy tales are short narratives, and these stories are “familiar stories” as they have either been passed down from generation to generation, or because the story embodies elements which makes it “resemble another story”. Moreover, a fairy tale is a story that is easy to recognize as it combines plots, symbols, devices and characters which one associates with specific tales. What is more, Warner also insists that “the scope of fairy tale is made by language” in the way that it uses symbolism and images to convey meaning. The fifth characteristic that Warner notes is that “supernatural agency” is embedded within these stories, and finally she states that the notion of the happily ever after, and the expression of hope against all odds is a defining characteristic of the fairy tale (cf. Warner 2014: xvi-xxiii).

The genre of fairy tales originated as an oral tradition, which, according to Zipes “afforded moral and ethical pleasure while not preaching or prescribing how to act” (Zipes 2012: x). But while most literary fairy tales are based on an oral version, Andrew Teverson states that it is not the oral sources that have survived the test of time, but rather, the literary adaptations of them, which have then been subjected to alterations and manipulations (cf. Teverson 2013: 41). One of the ways in which fairy tales have been subjected to change, is the way that it has been altered to accommodate another audience than to which it was purposed for originally. Fairy tales were not intended for children initially, but when print became a dominant tool for communication, they were often adapted for children in order to “reinforce dominant religious and patriarchal attitudes about gender, mating, law, and order” (Zipes 2012: xi). One might argue, then, that with the rise of the printing press and the shift from oral to literate fairy tales, the inherent ideological structures became increasingly

indoctrinating as the texts were now less flexible which ensured that the stories, and their inherent ideology, seemed much more finite. What is more, the tales could now be read in private, and children engaged with them from a younger age.

Marina Warner notes that in order to find the meaning of fairy tales, one has to investigate who was telling these stories, two whom they were telling them, and the reason why they were telling them (cf. Warner 1995: XII), echoing Terry Eagleton, who proposes that “[i]deology is less a matter of the inherent linguistic properties of a pronouncement than a question of who is saying what to whom for what purposes” (Eagleton 2007: 9). Moreover, Zipes suggest that:

[a]lmost all critics who have studied the emergence of the literary fairy tale in Europe agree that educated writers purposely appropriated the oral folktale and converted it into a type of literary discourse about mores, values, and manners so that children and adults would become civilized according to the social code of that time.

(Zipes 2012: 3)

Fairy tales, then, could be seen to convey the ideology of the time in which they have been told, but they also reveal the values and social code of those who tell them and the inherent power structures in society. Teverson states that fairy tales speak powerfully of the context in which they have been told (Teverson 2013: 7), and this is why they make a good starting point for an investigation of patriarchal ideology and the roles that patriarchal society has prescribed for women and men.

1.2 THE FAIREST OF THEM ALL

This thesis is written to explore the relationships made possible between women and men within a patriarchal structure, and will particularly focus on how images of female beauty restrict the roles available for women, and how these ideals of femininity inevitably turn women against each other.

Naomi Wolf asserts in her book *The Beauty Myth* (1991) that “[t]he way to instill social values [...] is to eroticize them” (Wolf 1991: 142). In all five of the variations of the tale that have been chosen for the analysis, the notion of appearance is central to the plot, and the possibilities and restrictions of the characters in these stories are connected to the traits of appearance they embody. Throughout this thesis I will investigate how images of beauty and ideals of femininity and masculinity concern both internal and external beauty, and how the

concept of beauty then might work to instill social values in the readers, as the ideal of beauty in “Snow White” does not merely prescribe features of appearance, but also images of accepted female conduct. Maria Tatar notes that the values that underpin the ideal of femininity in “Snow White” have been reproduced, and are still reproducing, “a cultural script in which women are enmeshed in a discourse connecting beauty, death and femininity” (Tatar 1999: 77). While this thesis will investigate the role of literature in reinforcing or challenging ideology, the particular focus will be on versions of the tale “Snow White” and how it reflects an image of femininity and masculinity, and moreover, especially female beauty, and also how new revisions of the tale might reveal the contrariness and deficiency in these ideals and in this way, hope to contest them.

CHAPTER 2: LITERARY REVIEW

“Sometimes fairy stories may say best what’s to be said.” (C. S. Lewis 1975: 35)

This thesis will investigate representations and presences of patriarchal ideology in a selection of literary texts, from a feminist perspective. The thesis will focus on the relationships made possible between women in patriarchal society, and it will place a particular emphasis on the tale of “Snow White”, in which the plot centers on the relationship between the female characters. In order to investigate this relationship two traditional versions of the tale will be examined, together with three postmodern revisions of the narrative that entails many of the same central elements as those found in the more widely known versions of “Snow White”.

This thesis will examine the roles that narratives play in challenging or affirming dominant ideology. Terry Eagleton argues that ideology is always most effective when invisible (cf. 2007: xvii), and that it “make[s] reference not only to a belief system, but to questions of *power*” (Eagleton 2007: 5). This thesis seeks to analyze how literature can function to reinforce ideological structures by creating stories that are underpinned by dominant ideology, but also how literature could be used as a means to reveal hidden ideology, and in this way hope to challenge the power it holds. For this reason I have chosen to include five different versions of the fairy tale, namely “Snow White” (1857) by the brothers Grimm, the movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) by Walt Disney, “The Snow Child” (1979) by Angela Carter and “Snow, Glass, Apples” (1999) by Neil Gaiman, to show how different versions of the tale either reveal, or challenge, patriarchal ideology in different ways. The versions by the brothers Grimm and Disney might be regarded as traditional versions of the tale, while Carter and Gaiman puts a new spin to the story in order to question the ideology evident in the standard versions.

The thesis will also analyze one novel that establishes a dialogue with Snow White in its representation of the relationship between daughter and mother, but also in the way that it questions the notion of the happy ending as portrayed in the traditional tales, that is Toni Morrison’s *God Help The Child* (2015). Moreover, this novel also functions to redefine the symbolism found in traditional versions of “Snow White”, and thus is seeks to reveal hidden ideologies that are still predominant in our culture.

In addition to this, this thesis will also explore aspects of society that concern how patriarchy restricts the roles of both women and men, as there are certain factors that influence the possibilities the characters in these narratives have. Naomi Wolf argues in her book *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* that ideals of feminine beauty are used to keep “male dominance intact” (cf. Wolf 1991: 12), and this thesis seeks to investigate how the ideals of beauty that are presented in the traditional tales limit our perception of the roles available for men and women. Warner proposes that the notion of the Silent Woman is, and has been, an accepted ideal, as virtues such as silence, obedience and discretion have largely been considered essentially feminine (cf. Warner 1995: 29). Wolf notes that women in culture loses their desirability when they show character (cf. Wolf 1991: 59), and Warner asserts, along the same lines, that “[w]hen an object of desire raised her voice, her desirability decreased; speaking implied unruliness, disobedience” (Warner 1995: 44). Moreover, she states that images of beauty has to do with both how women look, but also how they behave:

The association between a woman’s body and her speech, between her face and figure and her tongue, lies at the heart of the public male quest for a desirable match. To look fair and speak fair are linked feminine virtues [...]

(Warner 1995: 44)

This thesis shall explore how this ideal is embedded within patriarchy, and how intrinsically related to images of internal and external beauty, and, what is more, how a woman must incorporate this ideal in order to appear desirable. Warner states the speaking woman contrasts with her antithesis, as she refuses to be confined to a passive object of desire (cf. Warner 1995: 30), and thus it becomes evident that patriarchal desire is closely linked to the ideal of the Silent Woman. This analysis will use the ideal of the Silent Woman as a central concept in understanding how images of beauty concerning both appearance and conduct have restricted the roles that are available for women, and how these ideals have functioned to limit the female character’s possibilities for social mobility and definitions of self within a patriarchal framework. It will also be argued that these images of beauty have created patriarchal desire in society; women want to embody the beauty and innocence of Snow White, and men want to possess the woman who personifies this ideal. What is more, this thesis will also explore how the ideal of the Silent Woman is reinforced and challenged in literature.

2.1 IDEOLOGY - WRITTEN AND ORAL FAIRY TALES

Andrew Teverson states that fairy tales are not timeless or innocent in conveying values and ideological structures. All literature is a product of the culture that produced it, and that is the reason why stories, in the words of Teverson (2013: 7), “speak powerfully of the time in which they were told”. Even though many forms of literature might be capable of revealing the ideology of the time and place in which the texts were written, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2000: 36) claim that “myths and fairy tales often both state and enforce culture’s sentence with greater accuracy than more sophisticated literary texts”. Because fairy tales are far removed from everyday life and culture’s immediate context, they help us see our own culture from the outside. Warner explains:

Paradoxically, the remoteness of their traditional setting – the palace, the forest, the distant and nameless kingdom, the anonymity and lack of particularity of their cast of characters, the kings and queens and princesses with names like Beauty or the Fair with the Golden Hair – which could not belong to anybody in the social and historical milieu of the tellers or the receivers of the tale – all this underpins the stories’ ability to grapple with reality.

(Warner 1995: XVI)

Because fairy tales are so general and flexible they end up saying something really specific about our culture and society, and this is why it makes sense to base an investigation of the representations of patriarchal ideology on the genre of fairy tales.

Zipes states that it was necessary for the establishment of the bourgeoisie to alter the tales to the values of the higher social classes in order to control and influence the imagination and desires within the Western culture (cf. Zipes 1999: 335) echoing Eagleton’s claim that ideology does not refer only to ways of thinking or believing, but it also concerns questions of *power* (cf. Eagleton 2007: 5). In order to influence people’s lives and behavior in the way that was profitable for the higher social classes, the tales would have to communicate the values that would function to sustain the power relations between the different genders and social classes. Because few people could read, the very form of the literary fairy tale would now be a factor in the separation between social classes (cf. Zipes 1999: 335). While the oral tales were open to anyone who wanted to listen, literary fairy tales became inaccessible to the part of the population who could not read, and those who were unable to afford books (cf. Zipes 1999: 336). In other words, what had once been an inclusive oral form, was now turned into an exclusive high-class form. The literary tale in its very form and

content functioned to emphasize separation between social classes. The tales were adjusted to the tastes and concerns of the bourgeoisie, and this was necessary if it was, in the words of Zipes, “to establish itself as a genre”(cf. 1999: 334-335). Eagleton argues that one might understand dominant ideologies as a means that unifies social structures that are agreeable with those who inscribe them. In this way, ideology doesn’t simply entail “imposing ideas from above”, but its effect is also that it secures the subordinating of lower social classes (cf. Eagleton 2007: 30). Shifting from oral to literate form, and adjusting the fairy tales to the values of those who wrote them down not only ensured that people acted and behaved in lines with patriarchal society, it also secured the status and position of those in power.

Zipes argues that the implications of this “privatization violated the communal aspects of the folk tale” (Zipes 1999: 335). While oral fairy tales would encourage community fellowship and a sense of group identity, the book form encouraged a reader to engage with a tale privately. In addition to disrupting the social characteristics of the genre, privatization of fairy tales also secured individual indoctrination of the inherent ideology. Similarly, Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle note that reading demands an individual response. The act of reading is at once singular as the activity of reading is private, but it is also general in the way that the text makes the reader conform to the patterns of meaning deducted by the text (cf. Bennett & Royle 2014: 16). Though an oral tale might invite a response from its audience, texts in literary form invite an individual response. As the activity of reading is dependent on the reader in order for it to commence, one might argue that the reader engages more actively with a text when read in private, which might cause the reader to conform more easily to the ideology offered in the tales.

In their oral form, moreover, fairy tales inherit the capacity to evolve and take on new meanings. Bruno Bettelheim argues that in order to “attain to the full meaning of its consoling propensities, its symbolic meanings, a fairy tale should be told rather than read” (Bettelheim 1991: 150). Though it is possible to read the story with enthusiasm and emotion, and to adapt the presentation to the listener, the literary versions do not entail the same dynamic as the oral ones. The oral form of the tale allows greater flexibility, according to Bettelheim, which makes it possible for the teller to adjust the story to the listeners. Zipes elaborates on this and claims that when the tales originated they were a direct result of collective thoughts and experiences, and that “they were altered as the beliefs and behaviors of that particular group changed” (Zipes 1999: 334). The oral form, then, allows the story to have a life of its own, serving the purpose of creating meaning for the listeners, and explaining what needs an explanation at that particular time.

When fairy tales were put into literary form, their inherent meaning changed. Teverson debates that the versions of the texts that contemporary readers experience are not necessarily similar to the form they may have taken in oral tradition (Teverson 2013: 41), meaning that in the process of putting the tales into writing they were altered to better communicate dominant values. So when fairy tales were put into writing, the ideological meaning became stronger, as the written word is much more finite than the spoken word. While oral fairy tales were told in order to create meaning for the *listeners*, literary fairy tales were written to convey the values of the *tellers*. And while oral tales were a result of collective thoughts and needs, literary fairy tales were a consequence of the ruling class' tastes and opinions.

One might argue that fairy tales in their oral form were adjusted to the listeners, while in their written form the listeners are taught to adjust themselves to the values that underpin that particular tale. Warner debates that stories have the capacity to “engineer social citizens and inculcate values and ideology” in order to set an example of how to act according to social class, and especially gender (Warner 2014: 125-126). Eagleton argues that ideological ideas “are functional for the maintenance of an oppressive power, and [...] those who hold them are ignorant of this fact” (Eagleton 2007: 24-25), and this is also why fairy tales can be seen as a functional tool in conveying an ideology that enhances the power of a socially dominant class. As fairy tales were altered to fit patriarchal ideology, these ideological structures were further established in society as the readers altered their behavior according to the values expressed in the text. Through the texts, then, patriarchal values were reinforced and strengthened. And as the text was told, and read, over and over, the ideology that underpinned it became stronger and stronger.

2.2 STRONG VOICES

The brothers Grimm set out to collect folktales, or *volksmärchen*, after having gathered collections of German traditions to “shore up an idea of German nation-hood by rooting it in a long past and by giving it a coherent linguistic and cultural identity in the present” (cf. Teverson 2013: 63). From 1806 they began procuring popular traditional tales, and the first volume of the Grimm's tales, containing 86 numbered stories, went to press in December 1812. Five more editions of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* followed after the first, but the 1857 edition is the version that is used today for most translations and editions. This edition is

known as the *Grosse Ausgabe* – Large Edition – and contains 2010 stories. (Teverson 2013: 67). A smaller version of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* was produced from 1825, and it “became standard fare in the nineteenth-century nursery, in which context they functioned to reinforce conventional ideas about family, about German cultural identity and about society” (Teverson 2013: 67).

Even though the Grimm’s motivation was to find the authentic tradition, and “a true original” (Warner 2014: 58), the material they found was altered to fit the scope of the quest, creating “what they set out to discover” (Warner 2014: 62). “Schneewittchen” (Snow White) was rewritten, as it was the real mother who in the first version was obsessed by jealousy and sought to have Snow White killed. Warner explains that the reason for this alteration was that the Grimms, in their romantic idealism, had to be done with the bad mother altogether, as they “literally could not bear a maternal presence to be equivocal, or dangerous”. They had to banish the bad mother so that it would not threaten the ideal of the essentially feminine and the institution of the family (cf. Warner 1994: 211-212). In doing so they ensured that the patriarchal values of femininity and institution of marriage and family became dominant in this literary version of the tale.

The influence of the work of the brothers Grimm has been immense. Both in the way it has shaped the way the readers think, but also in the shaping of “a cultural identity”(Warner 2014: 62). Teverson observes that the Grimms made it desirable for the educated elite to be concerned with this form of literature by paving the way for the fairy tale to enter into nurseries in middle-class homes, and by using fairy tales as a way to preserve and understand cultural identity. The attitudes towards the genre changed as a result of the Grimm's altering the narratives to be consistent with the world-view of those who held power (Teverson 2013:71-72).

In his article “Breaking the Disney Spell”, Zipes describes how the fairy tale genre had changed by the end of the nineteenth century. He writes that though many fairy-tale books had illustrations in them “they were generally subservient to the tale” (1995: 338). But the importance of illustrations in the scope of the fairy tale was about to change. Attempts at turning fairy tales into films were done as early as 1896 (Zipes 1999: 339) but one might argue that in terms of combining the arts of fairy tales and filmmaking, Walt Disney has been most influential. Or, to quote Zipes, “Walt Disney cast a spell on the fairy tale, and he has held it captive ever since” (Zipes 1999: 332).

Before making *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), Walt Disney had made other animated films and commercials, but these were not the ones that captivated the

audience, and they were not the ones that set the standard for the films to come (cf. Zipes 1999: 345). Zipes concludes that it was with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* that Disney “fully appropriated the literary fairy tale and made his signature into a trademark for the most acceptable type of fairy tale in the twentieth century” and in this way defined “the way other animated films in the genre of the fairy tale were to be made” (cf. Zipes 1999: 345). So popular and well known has Walt Disney’s *Snow White and the seven Dwarfs* become that it has, according to Maria Tatar, “eclipsed other versions of the story” and thus making it “easy to forget that hundreds of variants have been collected over the past century in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas” (Tatar 1999: 74). Zipes is of the same opinion as Tatar, and argues that “[i]f children or adults think of the great classical fairy tales today, be it *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, or *Cinderella*, they will think of Walt Disney” (1999: 332). As this thesis seeks to investigate the impact of ideology in the chosen stories, it seems relevant to include the Disney version of this tale, as it has been arguably the most influential one in the 20th century.

According to Zipes, there are several main differences between the versions by Grimm and Disney. The first difference is the emphasis the two versions place on the parents of Snow White. In the Disney version, Snow White is presented as an orphan who is forced to do the work of commoners in her father’s castle. In Grimms’ tale, on the other hand, the mother dies, but the father is still alive, though he plays a humble role throughout the tale. Secondly, the role of the prince is portrayed differently in these tales. While the prince appears towards the end in Grimm’s tale, his role is rather negligible compared to the focus put on him in the Disney version in which he appears both at the beginning and the end of the story, confessing his love through a song to Snow White. Further on, it is the kiss which the prince bestows on Snow White’s lips that breaks the spell in the film, while in the Grimm version Snow White returns to life when a dwarf who is carrying the glass coffin stumbles and falls, resulting in the piece of apple being released from Snow White’s throat.

In both versions it is Snow White’s beauty that leads the evil queen to persecute her with murderous jealousy. But in the film, the queen’s jealousy increases when she notices that Snow White is being serenaded by the handsome prince. What is more, the stepmother’s life and death is portrayed in different ways in these two narratives. In Grimm’s tale the evil queen attempts to kill Snow White three times, and her actions are punished by her having to dance in red hot iron shoes at Snow White’s wedding until she dies. In the film, however, the evil queen only comes to the cottage one time, and she dies while trying to destroy the dwarfs in her escape from the cottage. A fourth difference is the role that the dwarfs play in these

narratives. The brothers Grimm give them a humble role, while Disney portrays them with human-like attributes and they are all given individual names. They are hardworking miners, and they are involved in defeating evil in the film. The last contrast between the text and the film is the way the forest and the animals appear in these stories. In Grimms' tale the animals are depicted as Snow White's friends as they don't try to hurt her when she is alone and scared in the forest, and animals even come to weep at the glass coffin when she is believed to be dead. Disney takes this even further, establishing an even closer relationship between Snow White and nature, as the animals become Snow White's friends and protectors (cf. Zipes 1999: 347-348). Though these tales differ both in plot, cast and means of representations, they are all, moreover, underpinned by patriarchal values, and in this way they both tell the same story in terms of ideology.

Zipes postulates that Disney retained the structures of the Grimms' tale which reinforce 19th century patriarchal ideology through preserving and enhancing many of their attitudes toward women (cf. Zipes 1999: 348). In both versions, Snow White is allowed to stay at the dwarfs' cottage because of her domestic skills, and during this time she is educated in what Gilbert and Gubar call "submissive femininity" (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 40). In both of these tales, then, Snow White is allowed to stay with the dwarfs because she accepts her new domestic responsibilities and her survival in life outside the castle is then dependent on her taking the role that is available to her, namely the role of the homemaker.

Another shared aspect is the voice of the mirror. Gilbert and Gubar argue that although the father plays an inconsequential role in the Grimms' tale, and does not even appear in the film, he is clearly present in at least one way. They argue that his is the voice in the mirror, the patriarchal voice that judges the queen based on her beauty, and he is also the voice that rules the queen's evaluation of herself (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 37-38). The queen never sees her own face in the mirror, she can never decide for herself whether her beauty is sufficient. Thus, it is the voice in the mirror that decides the standard for beauty, and whether her beauty measures up to this ideal.

Moreover, Snow White also portrays the ideal of the Silent Woman (cf. Warner 1995: 29) in both of these stories, as she remains pale, passive, and in need of male salvation in order to escape the queen, and, ultimately, break the spell. Although the way the spell is broken is portrayed differently in these two tales, Snow White is not able to save herself in either of them. It is her own choice to eat the apple, and she needs a man to save her from her mistake.

According to Bettelheim (1991: 201) most fairy tales begin with a situation where the protagonist no longer fits in, or belongs. This is true in the story about Snow White as her hardship starts when the stepmother replaces Snow White's biological mother following her death. The stepmother's jealousy of her stepdaughter creates a conflict between these women, and it is this conflict that is the central plot of the story.

2.3 REBELLIOUS DAUGHTERS

Cristina Bacchilega states in her book *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* (1997) that postmodern fairy tales are “contemporary narratives which rewrite and revise ‘classic’ fairy tales” (Bacchilega 1997: 4), and they play with “framed images” in order to deconstruct their meaning, and reveal the ideology that underpins them. Agreeing with Zipes that contemporary artists have approached fairy-tales from a critical perspective, Teverson (2013: 137) states that the “simultaneous endeavor to critique the cultural objectives of dominant versions of fairy tales whilst opening up new uses for fairy-tale magic, has become one of the foremost characteristics of creative responses to fairy tales in literature, film, fine art and visual culture in recent years.” Zipes writes that this shift has happened in the visual arts, while Teverson broadens the scope of this shift to also include literature. Teverson (2013: 137) debates that there is now one – even perhaps two – generations “of fairy-tale makers” in both literature and other media, “committed to exploring new possibilities for fairy tales” and that is capable of challenging the notion of society and identity, including names such as Margaret Atwood [...] and Salman Rushdie [...]. The pioneer of this approach was Angela Carter. Her book *The Bloody Chamber* was published in 1979, and it is a collection of short stories which she has based on well-known fairytales. Teverson argues that this book is “a work that both exposes misogynist elements in conventional fairy tales, and at the same time, uses some of ‘the liberating magic that fairy tales has at its disposal’ to express alternative models of gendered identity and gender relations” (2013: 137).

Carter's short story “The Snow Child” from *The Bloody Chamber* has been chosen as one of the texts for the analysis of “Snow White”, as it builds on older versions of the text at the same time as it challenges the well-known models of fairy tales, and the ideology they offer. Eagleton notes that ideology “represents the points where power impacts upon certain utterances and inscribes itself tacitly within them” (Eagleton 2007: 223). Teverson notes that Carter writes her tales “under the licence of fairy tales itself” but she reshapes the tale to serve

another purpose (cf. Teverson 2013: 139), and in this way she uses language, or narratives, to challenge the power that has been inscribed on these tales.

Though Carter's retelling of the classic fairy tale of "Snow White" is intriguing in the way it challenges dominant ideology, it is also worth including in this project as it, in the words of Marina Warner (2014: 139-140), pushes jealousy between the women "to extremes until the reader can't but notice the horror of the power relations evoked". In the most well known versions of the tale, the birth of Snow White is initiated by the longing of a caring mother to have a daughter with red lips, pale skin and ebony hair. But in "The Snow Child", it is the patriarch who wishes to "have a girl" with skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and hair as black as a bird's feather. The countess hates her, as the girl is the child of the duke's desire (cf. Carter 2006: 105). The countess' jealousy drives her to attempt getting rid of the child, and at her third attempt she is successful. The child of her husband's desire dies while picking a rose for the countess, and in a last spur of passion the count copulates with her, and afterwards he rejoins his wife while handing her the flower that killed the Snow Child. Zipes notes that male framing turns women against each other "in competition for male approval" (Zipes 1999: 348), and this becomes evident as it is the desire of the duke that indeed creates the rivalry between the female characters, and in this narrative it is the Duke's desire that keeps accelerating the rivalry between the women. In excluding the prince from the tale, the story becomes solely about the patriarchal desire for the ideal of female beauty, instead of focusing on Snow White's journey towards adulthood and a life of her own.

Gaiman's story "Snow, Glass, Apples" is written from the perspective of Snow White's stepmother, and it has been chosen for the analysis as it echoes the story line and symbolism of the traditional tales, while from the perspective of a character who has not traditionally been given a voice. In the same way that the brothers Grimm depicts the character of Snow White as a girl with pale skin, red lips and dark hair, the princess in Gaiman's tale also embodies these same features. But while Snow White's appearance is typically associated with beauty in the traditional tales, the same features are in Gaiman's princess terrifying. The queen tells the story of how she fell in love with the king and moved into the castle when the princess was a little girl. Soon she discovers that the princess is not innocent like one often regard a child to be, but she is rather a vampire who preys on other people. In an attempt to save her people from her stepdaughter, the queen begins her quest of trying to take the princess' life, as she has become a threat to the kingdom. While she is at first unsuccessful in several attempts at doing so, finally she manages to, evidently, take the girl's life. Similar to Grimm's tale, dwarfs who seemingly live with the princess, bury her in a

glass coffin, and the prince, who has already slept with the queen bargains with the dwarfs to take her with him, and she returns to life although the reason for her reawakening is never revealed. The prince and the princess return to the queen's palace, and proceed to put her in the dungeon. The tale ends with the queen being stripped naked and rubbed in goose fat as she is prepared to be cooked at the prince and her stepdaughter's wedding feast, mirroring the grotesque ending of Grimms' tale in which the stepmother is invited to Snow White's wedding feast only to find the hot dancing shoes of death already waiting for her.

Tara Prescott and Aaron Drucker argue in their introduction to *Feminism in the Worlds of Neil Gaiman* that Gaiman critiques the inherent ideology that underpin, the dominant versions of fairy tales, in the way that he finds "ways to reach the marginalized, the questioning, the curios, and those who speak for the ones who can't" (Prescott & Drucker 2012: 8). Like Carter, Gaiman "manages to upset the traditional expectations in ways that are consistently against genre type" (Prescott & Drucker 2012: 2). Moreover, Elisabeth Law postulates in her article "The Fairest of All: Snow White and Gendered Power in 'Snow, Glass, Apples'" that this tale:

Interrogates the standards of beauty that would elevate the deathly pallor of "skin as white as snow", questions the motives of a prince who is attracted to an unconscious girl in a glass coffin, and demonstrates how a society driven by fear damns itself when it chooses a scapegoat over truth.

(Law 2012: 177)

By turning the perspective from the character of Snow White to that of the stepmother, Gaiman manages to lay bare the absurdity in the ideal of the Silent Woman and divulge the perverseness desiring this ideal would entail.

As Toni Morrison's novel *God Help the Child* (2015) is still quite new, theory that deals with this novel in particular has not yet been produced. Therefore the analysis of *God Help the Child* will use theory that deals with other parts of Morrison's work. In her book *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction: From Atwood to Morrison*, Sharon Rose Wilson explores how female writers use fairy tales as intertexts for their contemporary work through borrowing structures, motifs, images, plot and characters from the classic tales (cf. Wilson 2008: 5), and she calls this kind of work meta-fairy tales as they are texts that entail elements from myths and fairy tales (cf. Wilson 2008: 1). According to this line of reasoning, *God Help the Child*, can be read as a meta-fairy tale, and the implications of this shall be explored in greater depth in the coming chapters. In the same way that postmodern revisions of classic fairy tales seek to lay bare the implicit ideological

structures of the traditional tales, meta fairy tales generally revise or, even reverse, “the norms of ideology of a intertext” (cf. Wilson 2008: 163).

Morrison’s novel starts with the birth of Lula Ann, and explores how her appearance, that is, the blackness of her skin, destroys the relationship between her mother and father, but also how it how it damages the relationship between mother and daughter. The color of Lula Ann’s skin is much darker than any of her parents’, and the consequence of this is that her father leaves her mother, refusing to accept that he can be the father of a girl who looks like Lula Ann. As a grown-up Lula Ann is known for her beauty, and she is both rich and successful. What is more, she no longer calls herself Lula-Ann, but she now goes by the name Bride.

In the same way that the tale “Snow White” is essentially a conflict based on the mother figure hating her daughter because of traits in her appearance, this novel also is a story about a mother who victimizes her daughter because of the way she looks. In addition to this, Morrison’s novel also questions the notion and importance of names used as a symbolic tool, and there is a particular emphasis put in describing appearance in terms of color, which is also central to the tale of “Snow White”. This will be discussed further in chapter five.

2.5 BAD MOTHERS

Warner states that “[t]he bad mother has become an inevitable, even required ingredient in fantasy, and hatred of her a legitimate, applauded stratagem of psychic survival” (1994: 212). In the same way that there are different versions of all the classic fairy tales, the female villain also appears in different shapes and forms. Warner writes that in our time the bad woman comes in the form of (step)mothers, but this has not always been the case. In Giambattista Basile’s writing she appears in the form of a jealous wife, in the work of Charles Perrault she’s a jealous mother-in-law (cf. 1994: 222), and in the first Grimm version of “Snow White” she appears as Snow White’s real mother. As this thesis seeks to study relationships between women in patriarchal society, this next part will look at theoretical approaches that can be used in order to analyze the female characters in “Snow White”.

Many theorists have made various attempts at investigating the impact and importance of the story of “Snow White”. Jack Zipes articulates the cultural and social history of the fairy tale, while Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar and Marina Warner explore the classic narrative from a feminist position, considering issues associated with gender. Bruno Bettelheim, in contrast,

explores the fairy tale from a psychoanalytical perspective, while Andrew Teverson tries to take a more comprehensive approach in his investigation of fairy tales. Cristina Bacchilega and Elisabeth Law, on the other hand, seek to reveal the inherent ideology of the classic story of “Snow White” through analyzing the narratives of postmodern fairy tales. Finally, Sharon Rose Wilson seeks to explore the use of myths and fairy tales in contemporary feminist, postmodernist, and postcolonial women’s writing. This thesis will focus its analysis in dialogue with these theoretical approaches, while also incorporating Naomi Wolf’s investigations on how images of beauty are used against women in order to explore how different versions of the Snow White-story present and contest ideals of femininity.

In looking at the socio-historical approach to critical thinking about fairy tales two scholars are significant, namely Jack Zipes and Marina Warner. Zipes debates the cultural and social history of the fairy tale, while Warner explores both the context of the tales, and also the cultural and social meaning of them.

In the foreword to her book, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, Warner explains how her starting point was the meaning of the tales, but she soon found out that in order to explore this, it was essential to look at the “context in which they were told, at who was telling them, to whom, and why” (Warner 1995: XII), as already noted in the introduction. Meaning, then, is not something to be found in only the text itself, but it is interwoven with the setting in which it is told. The meaning of fairy tales is influenced and shaped by their tellers, their listeners and the reasons for telling them, as we saw when we investigated the shift between oral and literate tradition.

Zipes states that our notion of fairy tales has “been greatly determined by the collections of Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and Andersen – and not to mention Disney” (Zipes 2012: 105). Although many children grow up watching Disney movies based on literary fairy tales, and reading them as good night stories, the genre is much older than the versions made popular by the Brothers Grimm and Disney. Teverson notes that narratives that resemble fairy tales first began to appear in writing between 1,250 and 2,000 years before the birth of Christ, but they originated long before they were put into writing as oral tales were transmitted from generation to generation (cf. 2013: 43). Tracing the history of the genre depends on how one defines fairy tales. It is problematic, because there is no single, stable original, and there is no single author, nor is it produced in any particular time in history or in a single society, according to Teverson (cf. 2013: 3-5). This thesis will not investigate the origin of fairy tales as the focus here is on the texts, and the meanings they embody, rather than the history of how they originated.

Analyzing the fairy tale from a psychoanalytical point of departure, Bettelheim argues that the function of the bad mother in fairy tales is that she allows the child to be angry with the evil mother without endangering the relationship with the good mother, in this way “the typical fairy-tale splitting of the mother into a good (usually dead) mother and an evil stepmother serves the child well” (Bettelheim 1991: 69). He argues that by dividing concepts in life into opposites – like the good mother and the bad mother – a child is able to create order in his world (cf. Bettelheim 1991: 74), but in saying this Bettelheim once again base his analysis on the most well-known versions of the tales, like that of the Brothers Grimm, and not fairy tales in general. Although many fairy tales indeed presents the characters as one-dimensional, and thus makes them easy to comprehend (cf. Bettelheim 1991: 74), many fairy tales of the approved canon “do not conform to this description. For example, the fairy tales of Giambattista Basile, “which are generally considered to be amongst the first literary fairy tales, are not ‘depthless’, ‘abstract’ or ‘one-dimensional’, but baroque, elaborate, extravagant, and sophisticated” (cf. Teverson 2013: 36).

Warner, on the other hand, analyzes the conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist in “Snow White” from a socio-historical point of departure. Where Bettelheim looks at how fairy tales influence the young reader, Warner focuses her investigation on who is telling the story, and the implications the teller and the social context have on the tale. On the one hand the tale of “Snow White” is the story about an evil stepmother who is threatened by her stepdaughter’s transition from childhood to maturity. From a historical perspective, the stepmother might have reason to be threatened by her husband’s children, because “[w]hen a second wife entered the house, she often found herself and her children in competition – often for scarce resources – with the surviving offspring of the earlier marriage, who may well have appear to have threaten her own children’s place in their father’s affection too” (Warner 1995: 213).

Alternatively, Warner proposes that the woman who persecutes Snow White can conceal another kind of adoptive mother, namely the mother-in-law (cf. Warner 1995: 227). The reason why one might be lead to believe this is because “[a] mother in law had good reason to fear her son’s wife, when she often had to strive to maintain her position and assert her continuing rights to a livelihood in the patriarchal household” (ibid.). In French the word for stepmother is the same as mother-in-law – *belle-mère* (Warner 1995: 218), and Warner argues that it is only in the nuclear family that the word ‘mother’ has become more restricted to the biological mother (Warner 1995: 236).

Thirdly, Warner stipulates that when the reader imagines “that the teller speaks instead as an older woman, as herself a grandmother or a mother-in-law, we can then discover in the tales the fear she feels” (Warner 1995: 227). Warner argues that the teller of the fairytale could be motivated by the fact that as a widow they had no rights in patriarchal society, and that “[t]hrough the medium of children’s literature, the old were shown to be entitled to continuing respect in society and a place in the family, and the fairy tale in which they play a part did not attempt to conceal the bitter conflict within the romance of marriage that fairy tale spins” (Warner 1995: 229).

Traditionally the critical history between psychoanalysts and cultural historians has been “one of disagreement and disputes”. But they have also been combined to form a model of analysis known as the psycho-historical form (cf. Teverson 2013: 110). Teverson notes that this form simultaneously draws

[...] upon the psychologist’s understanding of the ways in which fairy tales function at the latent levels to shape identity, and the historian’s recognition that the forms of identity that the fairy tales shape are not timeless and universal, but culturally specific, and ideologically mutable.

(Teverson 2013: 110)

This model has been used in many fairy-tale studies, among which we find the work of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, which shall be investigated further.

Gilbert and Gubar (1979: 38), target the conflict between mother and daughter, as seen in Snow White, from an ideological point of view, and insist that “[f]emale bonding is extraordinarily difficult in patriarchy: women almost inevitably turn against women because the voice of the looking glass sets them up against each other” (2000: 38), basing their analysis on the versions by the brothers Grimm and Disney. Agreeing with this, Warner also concludes that “in many fairy tales the tyrants are women and they struggle against their often younger rivals to retain the security that their husbands or their fathers afford them” (Warner 1995: 217). In patriarchal ideology women are left to fight for the attention and the security patriarchy offer them, and when this security is threatened they become evil versions of themselves. From this point of view the bad mother is created as a result of patriarchal ideology. Gilbert and Gubar’s criticism of the tale targets the meaning of the narrative “with the objective of challenging and transforming the reader’s perception of it”, and this is what Teverson (2013: 137) calls revolutionary criticism. He argues that it seeks to “reveal how

power operates through the narrative, and, in revealing it, to expose and contest that construction of power” (Teverson 2013: 137).

Similar to how Gilbert and Gubar seek to explore the conflict between mother and child from an ideological point of departure in the way that they see ideology as a “function of the relation of an utterance to its social context” (Eagleton 2007: 9), Cristina Bacchilega, also looks to investigate the images of “woman” that are presented in Carter’s version of “Snow White”, and the ideological structures that underlie these images (cf. Bacchilega: 1997: 4). In the same way that Gilbert and Gubar propose that the conflict between mother and daughter in the traditional tales is caused by patriarchal ideology, Bacchilega notes that the relationship between the female characters in “The Snow Child” is one that reproduces “itself as rivalry, as struggle to survive at the other woman’s expense” (Bacchilega 1997: 38) as the goodwill of the count continually move from one woman to the other. What is more, Bacchilega states that Carter’s postmodern revision of “Snow White” acknowledges how the character of Snow White has been constructed as a child-woman with features that are assumed to mirror her inner person. However, instead of merely repeating and reaffirming the power of the metaphors found in the traditional tales, Carter’s tale, contrastingly, disclose and question the ideological nature which underlies the classic tale of “Snow White” (cf. Bacchilega 1997: 35).

Elizabeth Law also investigates the relationship between the female characters in Gaiman’s version of “Snow White” by exploring the inherent ideology of the traditional narratives, and she states that “Snow, Glass, Apples” elucidates the “valorization of dehumanized women and gendered nature” in the tales by the brothers Grimm and Disney. But while Gilbert and Gubar suggest that the conflict between the two women emerges from a struggle to retain the security of the patriarch, Law argues that the female characters in Gaiman’s tale is not derived from a quest to attain the approval of the absent patriarch, but rather they are fighting for the right to hold power and authority. According to Law, Gaiman displays the limits of patriarchy through the character of the Snow White figure, but also by depicting a stepmother who enacts the feminine roles, such as the loving wife, at the same time as she “goes beyond these roles and maintains her independence” (cf. Law 2012: 181-182). In this way, Gaiman, like Carter, also confronts and resists the ideological structures that underpin the versions by Disney and the Grimms.

For Wolf, in contrast, rivalry between women is not upsurged based predominantly on a need for security, or a struggle to retain power and authority. She argues rather that women in patriarchal society are taught to compare themselves based on an ideal of beauty, and she

postulates that within this kind of economy, women measure their beauty, and thus their value, in each other, and not in themselves, which makes them appear dangerous to each other (Wolf 1991: 284). She notes that:

[i]n assigning value to women in a vertical hierarchy according to a culturally imposed physical standard, it is an expression of power relations in which women must unnaturally compete for resources that men have appropriated for themselves.

(Wolf 1991: 12)

In the same way that Gilbert and Gubar argue that the voice of the mirror determine every woman's evaluation of herself, Wolf also proposes that it is the voice of patriarchy that prescribes the ideal of feminine beauty. And as a further matter, Wolf even claims that the currency system of "beauty" is the "last, best belief system that keeps male dominance intact" (cf. Wolf 1991: 12).

Zipes debates that all the fairy tales by the brothers Grimm follow the same pattern which for the readers lead to a process of internalization of the ideological structures of the 19th century ruling elite (cf. Zipes 2012: 69-70), and according to this argument one might assert that the traditional tales affirm ideology. And in the same way that the traditional versions of fairy tales may strengthen ideological structures, this thesis also seeks to investigate how new versions of the same tales might be able to challenge these structures. Similar to how the criticism of Gilbert and Gubar seeks to expose and contest constructions of power, new versions of "Snow White" look to reveal and challenge these structures which have been both shaped and reinforced as the traditional versions of the tale of "Snow White". One might wonder that if it is true that literature is capable of either challenging or reinforcing ideology, how is this done? And why is it useful to investigate these structures today? The next part of this thesis seeks to investigate whether it is true that traditional literary versions of Snow White have embodied and reinforced patriarchal ideology, and that new versions are capable of destabilizing and resisting these structures.

CHAPTER 3: THE VOICE OF THE MIRROR

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”

3.1 THE TRADITIONAL TALES

As already noted, the versions of “Snow White” told by the brothers Grimm and by Walt Disney, are arguably the most established and most influential versions of the tale. As a consequence, these narratives will be referred to as “the traditional tales”. While these two versions are similar in the way that they are both widely recognized as traditional tales, they are also related in the way that they carry many of the same ideological structures. Eagleton argues that ideological ideas “are functional for the maintenance of an oppressive power, and [...] those who hold them are ignorant of this fact” (Eagleton 2007: 24-25). Zipes notes that almost all collectors of oral tales altered and shaped fairy tales into a “a type of literary discourse about mores, values, and manners so that children and adults would become more civilized according to the social code of that time” (Zipes 2012: 3). The ideological structures we find in the tale of Snow White by the Grimms and Disney are not neutral or innocent, then, but they were induced on the tale in order to convey favorable ideology, and to influence readers and viewers to behave in line with the values that the tales convey.

Although the version of “Snow White” that appears in Grimms’ final publication of 1857 is most well known, there also exists other earlier versions. Jacob Grimm sent a manuscript with the initial version of the tale to his mentor in 1806, and this tale was quite different from the version of 1812, which is the version that appears in the brothers Grimm famous 7th edition of *Die Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1857). The ways in which Disney modified Grimms’ narrative have already been touched upon in chapter two, but the difference between the Grimms’ versions of 1806 and 1857 will be investigated briefly in order to unveil the ideology that underpins Grimms’ final version of “Snow White” of 1857.

Zipes postulates that most of the tales by the brothers Grimm follow the same basic pattern, and they all convey the same ideology. The tales often begin with a young protagonist who must leave home in order to reconstitute home in the end. According to Zipes, most of the tales by the Grimms ask the questions of how one must keep with the norms in order to influence the culture, what must one learn to be accepted in society. The protagonist learns

this lesson along the way from initial home to final home (cf. Zipes 2012: 69). These lessons are different depending on the gender of the protagonist, however, and Zipes notes the necessary lessons to be learned by the female hero in order to succeed in her journey:

The female hero learns to be passive, obedient, self-sacrificing, hardworking, patient, and straight-laced. Her goal is wealth, jewels, and a man to protect her property rights. Her jurisdiction is the home or castle. Her happiness depends on the conformity to patriarchal rule. (Zipes 2012: 69)

Grimms' tale of "Snow White" is no exception from the basic pattern that Zipes describes, in which the protagonist embarks on a journey from first home to final home. The story starts with a queen sitting in a windowpane, wishing for a child as white as snow, as red as blood and as black as ebony.

Snow White is born as the answer to her mother's prayer, but the queen soon dies, and Snow White is left without her mother. A year goes by, and the King remarries. Snow White's new stepmother is known for her beauty, but she is proud and harsh, and she cannot "tolerate anyone who might equal her beauty" (Grimm in Zipes 2007: 237). As time passes, Snow White grows older and matures, and soon the queen's mirror announces that Snow White has become more beautiful than her stepmother. Upon hearing this, the queen is filled with rage towards Snow White and she begins contemplating how to take her stepdaughter's life. This marks the start of Snow White's journey from her home in the King's castle and her education in how to conform to "patriarchal rule" in order to prepare for marriage (Zipes 2012: 69), towards her final home in father-in-law's castle, as the wife of the prince.

The story of 1806 opens in a similar way to the final version of 1857, and that is by describing how the queen longs for a child with certain traits of beauty. The queen only approaches the mirror one time throughout the story (1806), and this is at the point when Snow White has grown "to become a hundred times more beautiful" than her mother (Grimm in Zipes 2007: 904). The queen then waits for her husband to go off to war before she orders her driver to take her and little Snow White deep into the forest. When they arrive at a place where roses are growing, Snow White steps out to pick her mother a rose. Her mother then rides off, leaving her daughter in the forest to be devoured by wild animals. In her despair, Snow White walks further into the forest until she arrives at a small cottage inhabited by seven dwarfs, whom ask her to stay with them and cook for them while they go to work in the mines.

When the queen learns that Snow White is still alive, she dresses up as an old peddler and sets out to find Snow White at the cottage. Twice the queen tricks Snow White, once with laces, once with a comb, and twice the dwarfs revive her when she appears to be dead. The third time the queen offers Snow White an apple, of which she takes a bite, and “sinks to the ground dead”. The dwarfs are not able to save her from the poisonous apple, and they put her in a glass coffin which they guard carefully day and night. Some time passes, and finally her father returns from war and journeys through the forest on his way home. While riding through the forest he sees the glass coffin, and is grieved by the death of his daughter. Incidentally the king has brought several doctors with him on his journey, and by tying a rope to the four corners of the room these doctors are able to bring her back to life. After Snow White is revived, they all continue on the journey back to the castle, and shortly after, Snow White is married off to a handsome prince, while the queen has to dance in glowing hot shoes until she dies.

The most striking difference between the versions of 1806 and 1857, is the portrayal of the mother figure. In Grimms’ famous story “Snow White” from 1857, the villain is Snow White’s stepmother. But, as we have seen, in the manuscript of 1806 the evil queen is in fact Snow White’s own mother. The mother is portrayed as the opposite of her daughter who is submissive, passive and innocent, in the way that the mother plays an active role in trying to take Snow White’s life. She attempts to get rid of her four times all on her own, never sending anyone, like the huntsman, in her place. As stated in chapter two, Warner argues that the reason why the Grimms changed the story was that they “could not bear a maternal presence to be equivocal, or dangerous, and preferred to banish her altogether” (Warner 1995: 212). The mother could not be the evil force in the story, as that would interrupt the female ideal of the nurturing mother. The female evil had to be projected onto someone else, someone not quite mother in order for the ideal to survive (ibid.).

What is more, in Grimm’s “Snow White” of 1857 the father is not referred to other than in the very beginning when he marries Snow White’s stepmother a year after his first wife passes away. But in the version of 1806, he plays a greater part in the story as the patriarch who creates order and sustains life. It is only when the king goes off to war that the queen’s murderous rivalry towards Snow White is unleashed. With the king absent, the queen can give in to her feelings of jealousy, and her desire to eliminate Snow White in order to establish herself as most beautiful. But upon the king’s return Snow White is brought back to life, and she is offered security and revenge by her father, the king.

As a contrast to the story of 1806, it is the prince, not the king, who plays the role of the saving patriarch in the version that appears in the edition of 1857. Zipes states that this change was a conscious alteration, as the Grimms wrote in the margin of their manuscript, “This ending is not quite right and is lacking something” (Zipes 2012: 65). In order to create an ending that the brothers felt to be “more right” they entrusted the prince with the role of the savior. Instead of turning the king against the queen, husband against wife (Zipes 2012: 65), the king now takes on a more humble role, and is absent in the story after we hear of his marriage to Snow White’s stepmother. The ending had to be changed in order for Snow White to complete her journey from first home to initial home, and what is more, if the story were to provide an image of a woman’s journey to become the ideal of the perfect patriarchal woman and to portray marriage as the quintessential prize for women.

It has been stated that the remoteness from everyday life that fairy tales offer is what makes them, in the words of Marina Warner, able to “grapple with reality” (Warner 1995: XVI). It is interesting to note that the final version of 1857 is much less specific and realistic than the first version of 1806, and the effect of blurring the lines between fantasy and reality is that the tale in its final version of 1857 mirrors reality even clearer.

One of the ways in which the version of 1857 is less specific is in terms of geography. When the queen consults the mirror in order to evaluate her beauty in the 1806 version, she asks:

“Mirror, mirror on the wall,
who is the most beautiful woman in England?”

However, in the version of 1857 she stands in front of the mirror and enquires:

“Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
who in this realm is the fairest of all?”

In the 1806 version the queen talks of a specific location for the area in which her beauty surpasses all else’s, but in the 1857 version this is changed to a more abstract term in order to enhance the feeling of remoteness in the tale, which one might argue could help to hide the traces of the socialization project, and also, to make it more universal.

It becomes clear that the Grimms’ fairy tale of “Snow White” underwent major alterations before the final product was finished. Warner argues that many of the Grimms tales were also changed from the initial manuscripts, which were based on oral versions, as

they “were off-colour by the standards of the day” (Warner 2014: 60). But the brothers Grimm are not the only ones who have made their mark on fairy tales to convey ideological structures. Zipes remarks that the Grimms’ “finishing touches could be topped only by the prudish changes made by that twentieth-century sanitation man, Walt Disney” (Zipes 2012: 65). Tatar observes that the covers for the video version of “Snow White” foreground the heroine, the prince, and the seven dwarfs, but even so, it is the wicked queen who dominates the action of the film and virtually monopolizes the film’s visual and narrative energy” (Tatar 1999: 78). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar similarly assert that:

“Little Snow White”, which Walt Disney entitled “Snow White and the Seven Dwarves,” should really be called Snow White and Her Wicked Stepmother, for 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 & Gubar 2000: 36)

It is important, according to Tatar, to note that the reason why Gilbert and Gubar “believe that ‘Snow White’ should be renamed to include the wicked stepmother in that tale’s title, it is largely because they use the Disney version as their interpretive point of departure” (Tatar 1999: 77-78). Disney’s adaptation of the tale was based on the 1857 version by the Grimm brothers, but again, the tale underwent a number of modifications. The differences between Grimms’ tale (1857) and Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* have already been stated in chapter two, but the ideological underpinnings in these two tales shall be discussed in this chapter, through the voice of the mirror and the notion of beauty in the story.

3.2 MIRRORS

A mirror is defined as “[a] thing regarded as accurately representing something else” (*Oxford Dictionaries*) and as “[s]omething that gives a true representation” (*Merriam-Webster*). The concept of the mirror plays a significant role in both Disney’s “Snow White” and the tale by the Grimms’. In the Grimms’ version the mirror is spoken of seven times, while in Disney’s version it is portrayed only twice, and both times the mirror acknowledges that Snow White is more beautiful than the queen. It is only when the mirror announces that Snow White’s beauty has surpassed the queen’s that the story actually begins. In likeness with the

definitions above that state that the representations in a mirror are to be trusted, the magic mirror is known in the story to always be telling the truth. Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant argue in their book *A Dictionary of Symbols* that there “exists a relationship between the object contemplated and the mirror that contemplates it” (1996: 660) There is, in other words, a relationship between the one looking into the mirror and the mirror reflecting the object in front of it. The queen, indeed, looks at the mirror, but the mirror also looks at her. Looking at oneself in the mirror is based on the awareness that someone else will be looking at you. In these tales there are always someone observing the female characters, and in this way the mirror symbolizes how women are observed and objectified in society. This next part will investigate how the female characters in the traditional versions of “Snow White” are being looked at, and it will also explore the thing that is being looked at, and evaluated, and that is namely their beauty.

3.3 THE MEN IN THE MIRROR

As stated above, in Grimm’s final version of 1857, the father figure is only referred to at the beginning of the tale when he marries his new wife, a year after the death of Snow White’s mother. This is a contrast to the tale of 1806 where the king is present at both the beginning and the end of the story. It is only when the king goes off to war that the queen’s murderous jealousy towards Snow White is unleashed. With the king absent the queen can give in to her feelings of rivalry, and her desire to eliminate Snow White in order to establish herself as most beautiful in the land. When the king returns at the end of the story, it is as the father figure who creates order and sustains life.

As new versions are presented, the king disappears more and more from the narrative, and in Disney’s version he is no longer present at all. Gilbert and Gubar state that the fact that the king is absent in the story actually emphasizes the intensity of how the conflict in the mirror centers between “mother and daughter, woman and woman, self and self” (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 37). In other words, even though the king is not present in the vast majority of the tale, he is manifested throughout the story as the patriarchal savior through the huntsman, the seven dwarfs, the prince, and most importantly, as the voice of the mirror, whose words create the conflict between the female characters.

Chevalier and Gheerbrant state that a mirror can be read as “symbol of the non-activity of the wise man” as it is passive in the way it remains unaffected by that which it

reflects (cf. Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 658). The king might seem to be absent in the story, but Gilbert and Gubar note that one of the ways in which the King is present in the tale is as the voice of the mirror, which answers to the queen's request to measure her beauty up against all others' in that realm (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 37-38). As the father in the story, the king appears passive, but as the voice of the mirror he is both active and directive in the way that he dominates every woman's evaluation of herself (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 37-38). The voice of the mirror is the voice of the king, but it is also everyone who is looking at, and evaluating, the women in the reflection.

But while Gilbert and Gubar seem to suggest that the ideals articulated by the mirror are the ideals to which patriarchy wants women to aspire to, Bettelheim comes at this from a different angle. He argues that the voice of the mirror is actually the voice of the daughter. When the voice of the mirror acknowledges the mother's beauty in the beginning of the tale, this is because the young daughter regards her mother as the most beautiful in the world. But as the girl grows she starts to think of herself as more beautiful than her mother, and this is what the mirror then tells the queen (cf. Bettelheim 1978: 207). The difference between the reading of Bettelheim and Gilbert and Gubar, is that while Bettelheim contemplates the story from a purely psychoanalytical perspective, Gilbert and Gubar read the story from a feminist point of view.

In addition to the mirror taking the place of the father in these versions of the tale, the huntsman also plays a similar part. When the mirror has given its verdict, and announced that Snow White is more beautiful than her stepmother, the queen's jealousy drives her to want to take Snow White's life. In the first attempt at killing the princess, the queen sends a huntsman in her place. In both Grimms' tale and Disney's movie, the huntsman brings Snow White with him into the forest with the intent of taking her life. But in both tales he is unable to complete the task, and Snow White's reaction to the huntsman's attempt to kill her is portrayed differently in these two tales. In Grimms' version Snow White begs the huntsman to save her life, and she is the one who proposes that she should run into the forest and never return to the castle again. In Disney's version, however, it is the huntsman who convinces her to run away. In Grimms' tale the heroine has some fighting will, begging to be saved, but in the film, on the other hand, she appears as passive, even naïve. She is not capable of saving her own life, and she is dependent on the huntsman to tell her how to escape.

Bettelheim states that the huntsman can be read as an "unconscious representation of the father", as he is sent out to kill Snow White, but ends up saving her (Bettelheim 1991: 204). A huntsman is supposed to defend the vulnerable against wild animals and other

dangers, and to act as a “protective figure”, and Bettelheim argues however that the father-huntsman fails in both his obligation as servant to the queen and as a protector of Snow White. The father-huntsman does not kill Snow White, but she is still left to take care of herself in the forest (cf. Bettelheim 1991: 205-206). Along the same lines, Gilbert and Gubar note that the queen asks the father-hunter, the patriarch, to act on her behalf:

[T]he Queen has foolishly asked her patriarchal master to act for her in doing the subversive deed she wants to do in part to retain power over him and in part to steal his power from him. Obviously, he will not do this. As patriarchy’s angelic daughter, Snow White is, after all, *his* child, and he must save her, not kill her.

(Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 39)

While Bettelheim argues that the huntsman cannot kill Snow White, because as the father figure he possesses inherently protective skills, Gilbert and Gubar conclude that the reason why the huntsman cannot kill Snow White is because she is the perfect image of the perfect woman. Bettelheim is, according to Warner, biased towards fathers, brothers and lovers (Warner 2014: 124) and his reading of the huntsman is proto-patriarchal in the way he regards men as intrinsically protective. Gilbert and Gubar, on the other hand, imply that the reason why the huntsman wants to protect Snow White, is because he needs to preserve the ideal of the perfect patriarchal woman in order for it to survive.

Finally, Disney’s Snow White arrives at the dwarfs’ house, and as in the Grimms’ story, the dwarfs are still in the mines when she knocks on their door. But what happens inside the house is quite different in these two tales. When Snow White enters the house of the dwarfs in Grimms’ tale, everything seems to be in order as the house is tidy and food is already at the table. What is more, when the dwarfs let her stay with them, and in return they ask her to help them keep the house tidy and clean, and to cook food for them in time for when they come home from the mines. But in the film, Snow White enters the dwarfs’ cottage to find it dirty and untidy, and she immediately starts to get the house in order and prepare dinner with the help of her animal friends. As a consequence, the dwarfs do not ask Snow White to keep their house and cook for them, because she had already taken on this role. In Grimms’ tale she is given domestic chores as a way to return a favor. In Disney’s version she takes the responsibility as if it comes “naturally” to her. The implications of this will be discussed in the following parts.

In likeness with the mirror and the huntsman, the dwarfs can also be read as a representation of the father and Gilbert and Gubar read the dwarfs as patriarchal figures because they teach Snow White feminine submission (cf. Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 40) while

she stays with them, which puts them in a position of power. But Bettelheim, on the other hand, does not regard the dwarfs as a representation of a strong male presence. He views them as men who have been “stunted in their development” (Bettelheim 1991: 210). While Gilbert and Gubar conclude that the dwarfs are powerful and successful in the way they mold Snow White in line with patriarchal values, Bettelheim deems them unsuccessful when they are not capable of protecting Snow White from the temptations of the evil queen (Bettelheim 1991: 208), again laying bare how he believes that men possess inherently protective skills. Gilbert and Gubar argue that Snow White is molded into patriarchal structures during her time with the dwarfs and in this way, the dwarfs function as an extension of the King's voice in the mirror, teaching Snow White to be the woman he wants her to be. According to this argument, then, the dwarfs can be read as a representation of the patriarch, and the time that Snow White spends with the dwarfs comprises an integral part of Snow White's journey towards maturity.

In Grimms' tale the prince only appears towards the very end of the tale. And although he is present in the story for a shorter time than the dwarfs, his role is arguably more significant as it is at the moment of the prince's arrival that Snow White returns from the dead and is secured a life where she no longer has to live in danger of the evil queen. The dwarfs are present in the story for a longer time than the prince, but he is the one who succeeds in doing what the dwarfs failed at, namely to keep Snow White safe.

Grimms' Snow White is revived from her sleeping death when the prince persuades the dwarfs to let her go. The spell is not broken by an act of magic, but instead it is the notion of security that brings Snow White back to life. He can offer her a secure position as his wife in his father's castle, which means that Snow White is finally safe. On her own, Snow White is in constant danger, but as the wife of the prince she is out of harm's way. It is not his love for her that brings her back, but the life he can offer her. Bettelheim remarks that it is when Snow White eats the red part of the apple that the child in her dies (cf. Bettelheim 1991: 213), and when she wakes she is reborn as the prince's wife.

In Grimms' version there is a natural remedy to the spell that has been put on Snow White when she takes a bite of the apple, but in Disney's version, the remedy is love's first kiss, and in this way she becomes dependent on the prince, as he is the only one who can wake her up from her sleeping death. In Grimm's version anybody could have saved her by removing the piece of apple from her throat. In Disney's versions nobody but the prince can bring her back to life. The story is framed by her longing to be with her prince, and after eating from the apple there is no life for her without him.

But while Gilbert and Gubar conclude that the true action of the tale is a result of the relationship between the two women, Zipes argues that in Disney's version the prince becomes the focal point of and frames the whole narrative (1995: 350). In the beginning of the film he announces his great love for Snow White, and she cannot be fulfilled until he arrives to kiss her and break the spell (cf. Zipes 1999: 349). While the story is essentially centered on the rivalry between the princess and the queen, the action in the film starts and finishes with the appearance of the prince. And while we wait for his return, the role as the male protector is vacated by the seven dwarfs. Zipes argues that Disney's heroines are young, "helpless ornaments in need of protection" and the film is framed by Snow White's need for male protection, which is made obvious by the fact that both the huntsman, the dwarfs and the prince save her at different times, and it is only when she is left alone that she falls into the wicked queen's traps (cf. Zipes 1999: 349). Finally, then, there is no life for Snow White other than a life with the prince. When she is not with him, she dreams of that "someday" when he will return, and it is only when the prince finds her and kisses her that she can continue living.

The changes Disney made in the narrative not only resulted in a stronger male presence throughout the story, beginning and ending the story with Snow White's desire to be united with prince, but Zipes (1999: 347) also states that Disney "cast a spell over this German tale and transformed it into something peculiarly American". Meeta Rhani Jah states in her book *The Global Beauty Industry: Colorism, Racism, and the National Body* that the American dream is a concept that includes the recurrent motif of:

hard-working individuals who overcome multiple obstacles, taking risks to shape the land and nature in order to transform poverty to profit [...] and in this way, capitalism, economic success, and free-market ideology are integral to the foundational myth of America.

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According to Zipes, Disney's version celebrates these ideals through the triumph of the banished and the underdogs, and the male myth about perseverance, hard work, dedication, loyalty and justice, (cf. Zipes 1999: 348) in essence, the American dream. What is more, the determination of the dwarfs to work and earn can be read as the determination of every humble American worker, who pulled together during the depression. It also signifies the promise for success as a result of every worker playing his part, and every wife staying home to take care of the house and children. (Zipes 1999: 349), and the implication of these changes, means not only that the underlying ideology is patriarchal, but also that the ideology

of capitalism and that if the American dream is presented as something inherently positive through the characters of the dwarfs.

The Grimm's "Snow White" starts with Snow White's mother sitting in the window, longing to have a child. In Disney's tale, however, Snow White's real mother is never shown, nor is she referred to. The story begins by portraying Snow White in ragged clothes, cleaning the steps outside the castle when the prince suddenly arrives as an answer to her prayer of being found by "the one she loves". Instead of seeing Snow White's mother in the window, as in the tale by the Grimms, we are instead presented with the evil queen who is depicted observing Snow White and her prince. Tatar observes, as noted, that while the cover posters of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* display the princess, the prince and the dwarfs, it is actually the evil stepmother "who dominates the action of the film and virtually monopolizes the film's visual and narrative energy" (Tatar 1999: 78). Right from the outset of the story, the evil queen curbs the action of the tale. There is no maternal nurturing presence in the film, like the one we see in Snow White's mother in the tale by the brothers Grimm. In the film Snow White is a girl who has already been orphaned and who has to do without the love of caring parents.

But it is not only the queen who looks into a reflective surface. In the opening scene, even before the queen has turned to the mirror, Snow White is depicted singing into the well and looking at her reflection, while her stepmother watches her from the window behind. From the very beginning, then, Snow White is also being looked at and observed by someone else. This also becomes evident as Snow White looks down into the well, watching her own reflection, and the prince appears behind her. While Snow White is able to see a glimpse of her own image in the water, her stepmother is actually never able to detect her reflection in the mirror. In other words, neither Snow White nor her stepmother are ever all alone in their reflections. Snow White's image is soon merged by the image of the prince, and the queen no longer has a reflection in the looking glass, as it is absorbed in the face in the mirror. Gilbert and Gubar assert that the second queen has "internalized" the rules of the king as his voice dwell in her mirror and in her mind (cf. Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 38). In the same that the wicked queen keeps going back to the mirror, because it is said to be a voice of truth, the well is also a symbol of knowledge, or truth (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 1095).

While the stepmother is arguably a prisoner to the voice of truth, Snow White has also been confined in a reflective surface. She does not have a mirror of her own, nor does she confer with her stepmother's looking glass, but the mirror in the well shows that she cannot

exist on her own, her life is dependent on a coexistence with the prince. And thus, Snow White has already internalized the voice of king, the voice of her internal mirror.

3.4 FEMALE RIVALRY

While the tale of Snow White is told in different ways, the elements of beauty and female rivalry are central in every version. It is always Snow White's beauty that sparks the jealousy of her stepmother, and it is the reason for the stepmother's persecution of her. Snow White's entire existence, then, is based on, and upheld by, her beauty, and beauty is thus the essence of her life. It is beauty that makes her mother wish to have her, and it is her beauty that makes her new mother regard her as an enemy. The reason why her mother wishes her to have beauty is because she knows that it is what she will be evaluated by, it is the only thing that can save her from harm, and secure her future. Her mother knows that Snow White's beauty will save her. As long as the voice of the mirror holds the power of evaluation, Snow White needs beauty to make it through her journey and arrive at her final home safely.

As we have noted repeatedly, it is the beauty of Snow White that causes the rivalry between daughter and stepmother. The evil queen tries to get rid of Snow White in different ways. She sends a huntsman in her place, in some versions she eats what she thinks is Snow White's liver and lungs. When she learns that Snow White is still alive, she begins to plot other ways to kill her. In some versions she appears three times at the cottage, in other versions she appears just once. But in every version one element is the same, namely that Snow White always needs a male savior in order to break the spell and bring her back to life.

As the evil queen cannot "tolerate anyone who might rival her beauty" it is Snow White's beauty that drives her into murderous jealousy. And the evil queen attempts to kill her twice with objects used to enhance beauty, firstly with laces and secondly with a comb. Gilbert and Gubar argue that Snow White's desire for these objects is the only hint of self-interest that she shows throughout the tale (cf. Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 41), and Bettelheim notes, along the same lines, that the way Snow White so easily gives in to the temptations of her stepmother, in spite of the dwarfs' warnings, proves "how close the stepmother's temptations are to Snow White's inner desires" (Bettelheim 1991: 211). The evil queen knows Snow White's inner desires, because they are both confined within the entanglement of the patriarchal desire to be the fairest of them all.

In line with the argument of their books as a whole, Gilbert and Gubar argue that the rivalry between Snow White and the evil queen “dramatizes the essential but equivocal relationship between the angel-woman and the monster-woman” (2000: 36). They note:

An angel in the house of myth, Snow White is not only a child but (as female angels always are) childlike, docile, submissive, the heroine of a life that *has no story*. But the Queen, adult and demonic, plainly wants a life of “significant action,” by definition an “unfeminine” life of stories and story-telling. 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.

(Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 39)

Snow White is portrayed as submissive, passive and inherently innocent, while the queen is dangerously active. Beauty in the stepmother is only external, and Elisabeth Law postulates in her article “The Fairest of All” in *Feminism in the Worlds of Neil Gaiman*, that “[t]he Queen’s sins are authoritarianism and self-confidence – both traditionally masculine traits” (Law 2012: 180-181). In other words, power, magic, and an active lifestyle, all of which the stepmother engages with, are considered to be unfeminine, and even ugly, within in this patriarchal framework. It is the stepmother’s own actions that lead her into death, fulfilling her own prophecy that she will kill Snow White, “even if it costs me my own life!” (Grimm in Zipes 2007: 243), confirming that in many stories “[t]he very steps taken to prevent the fulfillment of the prophecy actually bring it about” (C. S. Lewis 1975: 15). Warner states that the woman who does not remain silent, and “refuses subjection, turns herself from a passive object of desire into a conspiring and conscious stimulation” (Warner 1995: 30). In having a will of her own, the stepmother indeed refuses to be turned into an object, and in having a will of her own, a life that has a story, she refuses to embody the ideal of the Silent Woman. Chevalier & Gheerbrant note that “[t]he individual, like a mirror, reflects beauty or ugliness” (1996: 660), and it is when the evil queen refuses to conform herself into the ideal of the Silent Woman (Warner 1995: 29), that she can no longer hold the position of most beautiful in the land as the internal qualities in the queen are mirrored onto how her beauty is perceived.

Snow White’s journey towards adulthood, her journey away from home, begins in both tales when the voice of the mirror acknowledges Snow White as more beautiful than the queen in the beginning of the story. But the way in which the mirror conveys this message is different from Grimms’ tale to Disney’s version. In Grimms’ tale the mirror refer only to

Snow White's beauty when it announces her as the fairest in the land. In Disney's version, on the other hand, the mirror makes mention of both Snow White's beauty, but also "her gentle spirit" when it presents her as the most beautiful in the land. The socialization aspect in the tale becomes stronger as it is not only Snow White's beauty that makes the mirror deem her fairer than her stepmother. It is also the way her inner beauty and the fact that she behaves along the lines of patriarchal values that makes her fairest of them all. The clean mirror can be read as symbol of how "the soul cleansed from earthly corruption, receives in purity the image of incorruptible beauty" (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 660). When Snow White acts according to the voice of the mirror, and becomes more and more molded into patriarchy's perfect daughter as her internal and external beauty work together to create the "image of incorruptible beauty".

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines beauty as "[t]he qualities in a person or a thing that give pleasure to the senses or the mind", and as central as the notion of beauty is to this tale, it is important to note that this concept does not merely refer to external appearance. According to this definition, beauty is not only that which gratifies the visual senses. Warner notes that virtues such as "silence, obedience and discretion" have been associated with ideals of femininity (cf. Warner 1995: 29), showing that ideals of female beauty also include certain internal qualities and ways of conduct. The essence of beauty can thus be understood in a much broader sense, including both the internal and the external aspects of a person who is then considered to be beautiful if these features are pleasing to the senses.

Snow White's journey towards adulthood starts at her father's castle, it plays out at the dwarfs' cottage after having made her way through the forest when the huntsman left her, to her final destination, as the wife of the prince. When Snow White wakes from her sleeping death, the prince lets her know that her journey has come to its final stop:

'Oh, Lord! Where am I?' she exclaimed.

The prince rejoiced and said, 'You're with me,' and he told her what had happened. Then he added, 'I love you more than anything in the world. Come with me to my father's castle. I want you to be my wife.'

(Grimm 1857 in Zipes 2007: 240)

Tatar observes that it is "a combination of labor and good looks that Snow White earns a prince for herself" (Tatar 1999: 78), because it is both her beauty and her conduct that qualifies her for her to become wife and queen. While she is born with her beauty, it has been noted that her time at the dwarfs' cottage teaches her what Gilbert and Gubar call "submissive femininity" (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 40). Once she has learned this lesson she is ready to

receive her prize, that is, the prince. In the same way that the apple looked beautiful on the outside, beauty can be poisonous if the inside is tainted, and in this way the story teaches that beauty can be both redeeming and deceiving. But Snow White's journey has taught her how to construct herself in line with patriarchal ideology, and now both her beauty and her conduct make her fit to be queen.

Both the monster-woman and the angel-woman appear as not quite human. The evil queen on the one hand, lacks humanity in the way she persecutes her own stepdaughter, a young girl of seven years in the Grimms' version, and about fourteen in Disney's adaptation. Snow White, on the other hand seems elevated above the human form as her beauty surpasses all in the realm, and even though the queen attempts to kill her four times, death can never quite hold her. Gilbert and Gubar assert that it is this lifelessness in Snow White that makes her patriarchy's ideal woman and the perfect candidate for queen, and as she lays "dead and self-less in her glass coffin, she is an object, to be displayed and desired" (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 41). Not quite human, not quite alive, Snow White represents the femininity of the Silent Woman as she is depicted as merely an object to be desired. While both Snow White and her stepmother embody certain notions that make them both appear with an element of inhumanity, Bettelheim, however, remarks that there is one aspect that makes Snow White appear more human and attractive, and that is her inability to resist temptation (Bettelheim 1991: 209) as is made obvious when the princess arrives hungry at the dwarfs' cottage in Grimms' tale and her inability to resist her stepmother's enticements.

Twice death comes in the shape of objects of beauty, and twice death is accompanied by the notion of what Bettelheim calls "oral cravings" (Bettelheim 1991: 208). In her book *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (1991), Naomi Wolf states that the notion of eating is closely linked to concepts of beauty, but that there is a distinction between eating to sustain life and eating for pleasure (cf. Wolf 1991: 98). In Grimm's story there are three instances in which eating is involved, namely when the evil stepmother eats what she believes to be Snow White's liver and lungs, when Snow White arrives at the dwarfs' house, and when she takes a bite of the poisonous apple.

The only time someone in the story eats to sustain life, is when Grimms' Snow White arrives at the dwarfs' cottage and eats a little portion of the food she finds on their plates. Bettelheim argues that Snow White has learned to control her oral cravings before her time with the dwarfs, as she only takes a small piece from each of the plate, and only a tiny sip from each glass (Bettelheim 1991: 208). In Disney's version, however, there is no food on the table for Snow White to eat when she arrives at the dwarf's house. Instead, she "naturally"

takes on the responsibility of cleaning the house, and she also makes dinner for the dwarfs. So while Bettelheim remarks that Grimms' Snow White has learned to control her oral cravings, Disney's Snow White takes on the role of a mother, making the dwarfs dinner instead of waiting for it to be served at the table. Following the arguments of Wolf, one might propose that both in Grimms' tale and in Disney's the meal in the cottage concerns elements of beauty that are linked to domesticity and female submission. As Grimms' Snow White knows how to control herself when she is hungry, how to constrain herself and carry herself with discretion, Disney's Snow White, on the other hand, has matured even more, presenting herself as the perfect patriarchal woman, who has no need for food before the house is clean, the "children" have washed their hands, and food is on the table. She is too concerned with the needs of others to be bothered with herself.

When the evil stepmother sits down to eat the liver and the lungs that the huntsman has brought to her, this is an instance of eating for pleasure. Bettelheim argues that by eating her stepdaughter's internal organs, the evil queen was hoping to incorporate Snow White's beauty (cf. Bettelheim 1991: 207). Eating is again concerned with elements of beauty, as the evil queen wanted to internalize the beauty that Snow White possesses. But while eating to sustain life indeed sustains life, eating for pleasure is accompanied with the notion of death.

However, the second time the queen brings death in the form of something to be consumed, she does not devour it herself, but instead she offers death to the princess in the form of an apple. This is the second instance throughout the tale in which eating happens for pleasure. Snow White is determined not to let the old peddler in when she knocks at the door a third time, but as soon as she sees the apple that the queen presents her with, she is enticed, because "[i] looked beautiful – white with red cheeks" (Grimm in Zipes 2007: 243). Snow White desires to eat the apple because of its beauty, but also in this instance, eating for pleasure ultimately leads to death, validating that "[a]nyone who saw [the apple] would be enticed, but whoever took a bite was bound to die" (Grimm in Zipes 2007: 243). This implies that in order to become most beautiful in the land Snow White must not only be externally beautiful, but she must also learn how to restrain herself in order to become the ideal of the Silent Woman, the expression of feminine attractiveness.

The apple represents a turning point in the story, as the queen's final attempt at taking Snow White's life. It is, of course, not a coincidence that the turning point in the story is represented by an apple, as "[t]he logic of a fairy-tale is as strict as that of a realistic novel, though different" (C. S. Lewis 1975: 13). Gilbert and Gubar debate that the two-faced fruit represents the ambiguous relationship the stepmother has with her stepdaughter, as she is both

her self and her opposite, her daughter and her enemy (cf. Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 41). Bettelheim, on the other hand, argues that “the apple stands for love and sex, in both its benevolent and its dangerous aspect” (Bettelheim 1991: 212). Moreover, he elaborates that the apple also represents Snow White’s double nature in the way that “she was as white as snow and as red as blood – that is, her being both its asexual and its erotic aspect. Eating the red (erotic) part of the apple is the end of Snow White’s ‘innocence’” (Bettelheim 1991: 213).

As noted in chapter two, Gilbert and Gubar assert that “[f]emale bonding is extraordinarily difficult in patriarchy: women almost inevitably turn against women because the voice of the looking glass sets them up against each other” (2000: 38). In the story of Snow White, there is no time in which the stepdaughter and the stepmother live in harmony. From the moment Grimms’ Snow White is pronounced as fairer than the queen the rivalry begins. The notion of death, or the danger of death, is recurrent in the Grimms’ version of “Snow White”. The mirror is consulted seven times throughout the tale, and twice the queen is deemed most beautiful in the realm. But these two instances are also marked by progression in Snow White’s life, that is when she is gaining beauty, and when the prince finds her in the glass coffin and brings her back to life. The other five times the mirror speaks, it is accompanied by death, or the possibility of it. When the mirror speaks on these five occasions, it acknowledges that Snow White is fairest of them all. In other words, when Snow White is deemed most beautiful, the danger of death is immediate, in the form of the huntsman, the laces, the comb, and finally, the apple. Whereas the vast majority of the tale is centered on the stepmother’s attempts to kill Snow White, Grimms’ story both begins and ends with the death of mother figures. The story starts with the death of the mother, and it is concluded, not with the marriage of Snow White and the prince, but with the death of the stepmother. And both the times a mother figure dies, it signals a birth for Snow White. When Snow White’s real mother dies, it marks the birth of the princess. However, when the stepmother dances into her death, it signifies how Snow White is being reborn as a wife. In order for Snow White to live, the mother has to die, signaling that beauty will eventually also die for Snow White, because someday she will also become a mother, and mothers, the tale teaches us, has to die.

Gilbert and Gubar state that vanity is “[t]he ultimate female sin” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 552), and although the tale teaches that beauty is capable of saving one’s life and secure one’s future, there is also the warning that vanity is dangerous. Bettelheim notes:

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.

(Bettelheim 1991: 203)

The story teaches that beauty will get you far, it can even make you queen, but beauty has its limits and is capable of bringing you to destruction if you are not careful. In the start of the tale the new queen is described as "beautiful but proud and haughty" (Grimm in Zipes 2007: 237). The lesson to be learned is to be submissive, because beauty alone will not make someone the most beautiful in the land, and "the fairest of them all" cannot be proud, jealous and dangerously active.

Bettelheim argues that the reason for this emphasis on Snow White's beauty is that it is too threatening for a child to know that he or she has created jealousy between his or her parents. When this jealousy does arise, a reason for it has to be given. And in the story of Snow White, the evil queen's jealousy is accredited to Snow White's beauty (cf. Bettelheim 1991: 203). Taking another point of view, Wolf debates that "women's desperation for beauty" is not an expression of narcissism, because fighting for beauty means to fight for life and for love in patriarchal society (cf. Wolf 1991: 259). Put differently, the rivalry between the women, then, is not an expression of vanity, nor is it a consequence of the jealousy that a child has created between the parents. Conflict between the women in this story is a result of having to fight for the right to live, and the right to be loved in patriarchal society.

The stepmother has to atone for her acts in both versions of the tale. But while she is put in red hot iron shoes and made to dance until she dies in the Grimms' tale, the evil queen is responsible for her own undoing in Disney's version, where she falls from a cliff in an attempt to get rid of the dwarfs who are chasing her after she has tempted Snow White to eat the apple. Though the cause of her death is portrayed differently in the version by Disney and in the tale by the Grimms, both narratives depict a monster-mother who has to die alone, while the angel-daughter lives on, seemingly happy together with the prince. In Disney's adaptation Snow White rides to her new castle as if it were eternal life, while the stepmother lies dead somewhere in deep darkness. By taking the death of the stepmother out of Snow White's wedding, and putting the blame of the death on the evil queen herself, Disney preserves the image of Snow White as inherently good and innocent, as a perpetual angel-woman. Moreover, by making the queen responsible for her own death, Disney teaches that it is important to behave, because the villain always loses in the end.

Bennett and Royle assert that we are born “into patriarchal language, into being identified by a patronym, by a paternal proper name” (Bennett & Royle 2014: 131). Though no paternal proper names are stated in this tale, the names of the female characters signal certain patriarchal values. While Snow White is given a name that plays on elements of her beauty, the queen remains nameless throughout the story, signaling that her story is not important, she is not the one who will last. She is called “stepmother” based on her position as the second mother, but she is also known as “the evil queen” referring to her actions towards her stepdaughter. As the active monster-woman she is not granted the humanity that a name imparts, emphasizing her role as not quite human. Although Snow White is in possession of a given name, and the evil queen does not, they are both referred to in terms of how they appear in front of others. Snow White’s name goes to the heart of the matter as her name signals that she has a pure white complexion, but also that she is passive, submissive, and unawakened. She has no self-assertive consciousness and no desire for self-gratification (cf. Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 616). The princess appears as white as snow – both literally and figuratively – while the stepmother is experienced as manifested evil. Snow White’s name also implies that she is as white as a bride (ibid.) signaling that the story is essentially concerned with Snow White’s journey towards being presented as a wife.

Though Disney presents Snow White as a teenager in the story in contrast to the Grimms’ seven-year-old protagonist, both versions portray the heroine with the elements of beauty that her biological mother wishes her to have. Her skin is as white as snow, her lips are as red as blood, and her hair is as black as ebony. But while Grimms’ tale is the story of a young girl who has to flee home in order to find security somewhere else because of her stepmother’s jealousy of her beauty, Disney’s version of “Snow White”, on the other hand, is also a story about finding love. As argued, Grimms’ tale starts and ends with death of mothers, implying that in order for the daughter to live, the mother has to die. Disney’s tale, however, starts and ends with romantic love, signaling that if the daughter is to live she has to be loved by the prince. In the opening scene of the film, Snow White is depicted singing, “I’m wishing for the one I love to find me today”. From the very beginning of the story, it is clear that Snow White does not have a real life of her own. The action in the story is the one that the stepmother makes, while Snow White is “waiting” for her love to find her. Hers is both a story of persecution and rivalry, but it is also a story about finding, or being found by, love, as she becomes a woman who is lovable, or rather, worthy of love.

As the prince’s wife, the power relationship between the queen and Snow White has been shifted, and this is emphasized as the queen in Grimms’ tale is getting ready to attend

Snow White's wedding celebration, and asks the mirror one last time to measure her beauty up against the others in the land. When the mirror responds that Snow White is the fairest of them all, her reaction no longer unleashes outrage. Contrastingly, the evil queen now reacts with fear. As an unmarried young girl Snow White feared for her life, but as a married, mature woman she instills fear in her stepmother instead. Wolf notes:

For many men, the [beauty] myth is a drug that insulates them from the dangers of self-knowledge. Contemplating an art object made out of a living woman is one way a man can fool himself that he is immortal. If the woman's face is his mirror, and the mirror ages, the gazing man must see that he is aging as well. A new mirror, or a fantasy mirror made of "beauty" rather than degenerating flesh and blood, saves him from this self-awareness.

(Wolf 1991: 173)

When the evil queen no longer conforms to the internal standards of beauty, she cannot hold the position as most beautiful in the land, signaling that when the woman ages, there is no longer any need for her. Another aspect of her fading beauty is also the fact that Snow White has grown more and more beautiful, implying that some time has passed, and the queen is aging as well. Warner stipulates that "in the area of sexuality and its linked sins – like Vanity – the aging woman emerges as the most fittingly abhorrent image" (Warner 1995: 46). When the woman ages, her beauty fades, and she is no longer the ideal woman patriarchy needs and wants. As patriarchy's most loved daughter, the fairest in the land, Snow White has to take the place of the queen, but only until her beauty also fades, and the mirror has to change the object in front of it in order to maintain the illusion of its own immortality. Indeed, beauty is not found in the appearance of the object. Beauty is actually in the eyes of the beholder.

John Berger claims, in his book *Ways of Seeing*, that one difference in the way men and women express themselves is that "*men act and women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only the relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves" (1972:47). The queen looks at herself in the mirror in order to learn how she appears in front of others. While Gilbert and Gubar argue that the mirror directs the queen's self-evaluation, one might agree with Berger in saying that the queen confers with the mirror in order to find out how "the voice of truth", that is, men, and society as a whole, might evaluate her. Wolf also debates that the reason why men want to control the evaluation is that in doing so they are safe from being evaluated themselves (Wolf 1991: 153). Hidden behind the reflective surface of the looking glass, the patriarch evaluates the women and directs the action of the tale, while escaping the danger of

himself being evaluated. The patriarch acts, in directing the plot, while the female characters concerns themselves with how they appear, continually consulting mirrors and wells. And as the thing being measured is appearance, the women inevitably turn against each other, as the other will always be seen as competition for the mirrors' only reward, being deemed "most beautiful in the realm".

The notion of seeing is central to story in Grimms' "Snow White" (1857). The first mother looks out of the window, and the second mother looks into the mirror. The intense obsession to look leads both to life and death for several of the characters in this story. The desire to look leads to Snow White's death when she first refuses to let the old peddler into the house, but falls prey to the queen's tricks when she tempts her and says, "[s]urely you're allowed to look". And when the evil queen is invited to Snow White's wedding, the queen cannot calm herself until she sees the young woman. The need to see the bride leads to her dance of death in burning hot shoes.

But the notion of seeing, and looking at beauty is also what sustains and saves. It is when Snow White's mother sees the blood on the snow that she yearns for a daughter as beautiful as the sight before her. It is when the huntsman sees Snow White's beauty that he realizes that he cannot take her life. Similarly, when the dwarfs see how beautiful Snow White is when she sleeps they cannot help but feel sorry for her, and it makes them want to protect her from her stepmother. Further on, it is because Snow White is put in a glass coffin following her death that the prince is able to see how beautiful she is, which leads to his declaration of love. Because he takes her with him, the apple is released from her throat and she miraculously returns to life. The prince takes her to his castle and marries her. In other words, it was because the prince was able to see Snow White's beauty, that she comes alive, and she is also secured a safe position as his wife because of it. Being looked at is what secures Snow White safety and true love.

In Grimms' tale of Snow White (1857), the young protagonist is the main character and the vast majority of the tale centers around her attempts to escape her stepmother's traps. But at the same time as the story is about the trials and tribulations of Snow White, the notion of the mother is very central to the tale, as the story begins and ends with representations of a mother figure. As we have seen, the story starts with the mother who sits in the window and sows, while dreaming of having a beautiful daughter. Soon, however, she dies, and is replaced by a new mother. The middle part of the story portrays the rivalry between the mother and the daughter, and in the same way that the story starts with the death of a mother; it also ends with the death of a mother, as she is made to dance in red-hot iron shoes at Snow White's

wedding until she dies. Put differently, there is no story of Snow White without the story of the mother.

Gilbert and Gubar note that when we meet both of the mothers in Grimms' narrative they are trapped inside looking glasses. The first mother is framed by a window as she sits and sows, and the new mother is caught inside the magic mirror (Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 37). While both of these looking glasses make seeing possible, a window offers the opportunity to look out into the world, while Gilbert and Gubar argue that being "caught and trapped in a mirror is to be driven inward, obsessively studying self-images as if seeking a viable self" (2000: 37). The only real function the mirror has in the story is to decide who is the most beautiful in the land, and the queen trusts it because it is known to always be telling the truth. The evil queen's existence revolves around her obsession to be most beautiful, and she often stands in front of the mirror in order to hear the words that makes her content; the words that secure her status as the fairest of them all. Her own evaluation of her beauty is irrelevant and it is the reply of the mirror that puts her at ease. The first mother looks out into the world, and her obsession with beauty results in her desire to project beauty onto a child. The second mother looks into a representation of herself, and her obsession with beauty results in her rivalry with anyone who might equal, or surpass, her beauty.

And in the same way that the mirror directs the evil queen's evaluation of her self, it also directs the queen's evaluation of Snow White's beauty. While the queen often stands in front of the mirror to bask in the testimony of her beauty, Snow White grows to become more and more beautiful, without the queen noticing before the voice of truth tells her. In the Grimms' tale it is the words of the mirror that causes the wicked queen to hate her stepdaughter. In Disney's tale, however, it is undisputable that the queen hates Snow White even before she is declared as fairer than she. Even before the queen approaches the mirror, she is seen looking at Snow White through the window, with an expression of hostility on her face. Both the look on the stepmother's face and her need to dress Snow White as a servant, suggest that Disney's queen has already noticed Snow White's growing beauty, in contrasts to the stepmother in Grimms' tale. And as she has noticed the beauty of her stepchild, stepdaughter, she is filled with jealousy towards her even before the mirror confirms her fear.

As stated above, Chevalier and Gheerbrant remark that there "exists a relationship between the object the object contemplated and the mirror that contemplates it" (1996: 660), suggesting that the active part is actually the mirror, and the one in front of the mirror is reduced to being merely an object. In the tale of "Snow White" the relationship between object and mirror is intensified by the fact that the mirror speaks. In Disney's version the

queen doesn't even see her own face in the magic mirror, and in this way she is denied the opportunity to evaluate herself, completely relying on the mirror to tell her the truth. Not being able to form an opinion of her own, the queen stands as a piece of art in front of the mirror, ready to be evaluated, ready to be objectified.

CHAPTER 4: OTHER VOICES

“Fresh snow fell on snow already fallen” (Carter 2006: 105)

4.1 NEW SPINS TO THE TALE

This chapter will explore how ideological structures that underpin the traditional versions of “Snow White” are broken down and revealed in “The Snow Child” (1979) by Angela Carter and “Snow, Glass, Apples” (1999) by Neil Gaiman, by analyzing the symbolic elements that these two versions have in common. Eagleton expounds that “[i]f dominant ideologies often involve falsity [...] it is partly because most people are not in fact cynics” (Eagleton 2007: 27). If most people do not question dominant ideologies because they are not in the words of Eagleton, “cynics”, it follows then, that in order to reveal and contest the inherent ideology of the traditional versions of “Snow White” one would have to portray it differently in order to see the ideological structures that underpin them in new light. It is possible to distinguish the tales by Carter and Gaiman as variations of the story of “Snow White” because the symbolism is so widely associated with this narrative. But while the symbolism is similar, these tales portray the story in an unfamiliar way. One might argue that Snow White in the traditional tales personifies the ideal of the Silent Woman, and they demonstrate how the Silent Woman becomes the manifestation of patriarchal desire. As stated in chapter one, Warner stipulates that the opposite of the Silent Woman is the speaking woman, and she contrasts with her opponent in the way that she “refuses subjection, and turns herself from a passive object of desire into a conspiring and conscious stimulation: even fair speech becomes untrustworthy on a woman’s lips” (Warner 1995: 30).

In these narratives the reader is presented with Snow White-figure who never utters a word, and a stepmother who tells her own story, reversing how the story has traditionally been narrated. Moreover, both tales are governed by the concepts of time and place, and these concepts will be dealt with through the symbols found in the story, that is the notion of snow, blood and nakedness, in order to disclose the lifelessness of the Silent Woman and the depravity that desiring a woman like her would entail. On the one hand, these tales are governed by the time as Gaiman repeatedly refers to the queen and the princess’ specific ages, and also in the way that both the element of snow and blood can be associated with time since

the falling of snow and the shedding of menstrual blood takes place within a specific time cycles. On the other hand, these tales are also governed by place as the narratives are played out in specific locations, namely, at the Spring Fair, the palace, the caves, the forest, and, in the tale of the Snow Child, in the landscape of midwinter. Both of these concepts are concerned with the idea of home and growing into maturity, and the contrast between nature and culture, and they will be explored through the symbolic elements found in the tales.

Marina Warner states that some collectors have dominated the landscape of fairy-tale literature. In her book *From the Beast to the Blonde* she states that “Charles Perrault (1628-1703) has become the most famous pioneer teller of fairy tales. But he was greatly outnumbered, and in some instances preceded, by women aficionados or *contes de fées* whose work has now faded from view” (Warner 1995: XII). Although well known writers and collectors such as Charles Perrault, the brothers Grimms, H.C. Andersen and Asbjørnsen and Moe, have dominated the scene, they were not alone. Many of the collectors were actually women, though today most of them remain unnamed. Warner notes that while it was men who dominated the production and publication of wonder tales, their work was a continuation of tales told by women” (Warner 1995: 17). Through the work of Carter, and other female fairy tale writes, women are taking back their role as the tellers of fairy tales. Carter’s version of Snow White is a retelling of the dominant tale that Disney and the brothers Grimm tell, but it goes further back and takes up the tradition of the *contes de fées*. Even though the story is told in writing, it is based on the oral tradition which was mainly dominated by women. By avoiding to ground her retelling of the tale in the tradition represented by Disney and Grimm, she rebels against the ideology they offer, while Gaiman, on the other hand, includes elements from both Grimm and Disney in order to lay bare the inherent meaning of the tales.

Both Carter and Gaiman's stories portray Snow Whites who are a part of regal families, though neither of them are born into them. Bettelheim postulates that:

[w]hile, psychologically speaking, the parents create the child, it is the arrival of the child which causes these two people to become parents. Thus, it is the child who creates the parental problems, and with these come his own.

(Bettelheim 1991: 201)

In these two tales, however, it is the only the fathers who are involved in creating the child, and the wives are not a part of the process. But even so, the child still creates parental problems, as these stories reveal that the problem is not really the child, it is the desire of the patriarch that sets the parents up against each other.

These stories are also both embedded with desire, both in a sexual and socio-economical way, and they investigate the implications and dangers of that desire. Warner postulates that fairy tales teach us that we should be careful what we wish for (cf. Warner 2014: 41), and these stories teach that desire can, in fact, be dangerous. In Gaiman's story the queen dreams about her king when she is a young village girl, and this is indeed what leads to her doom. In Carter's tale the king's desire prompts the countess' brutal resentment towards the Snow Child, and the same desire leads to rivalry between the female characters, the punishment of his wife, and death of his daughter. The dangers of patriarchal desire and the ideal of the Silent Woman will be investigated further throughout this chapter.

4.2 "THE SNOW CHILD"

Helen Simpson states in her introduction to Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* that the short story called "The Snow Child" is "only a page long, just a few hundred words, and yet in some ways it is the most shocking piece of all, with its incestuous rape and murderous sexual rivalry" (Carter 2006: xvi). In the few lines that makes up the story, the reader is presented with a count and a countess, a girl who appears out of the snow, rivalry between the girl and the wife, the death of the girl, an incestuous rape, before the tale ends exactly where it started, namely with the count and the countess riding in the snow.

The story starts out by describing a similar longing for a child like the mother expresses in the traditional tale, with similar beauty features as those found in version by the brothers Grimms. In her book *Postmodern Fairy Tales*, Cristina Bacchilega notes that the three wishes that the father expresses, mirror his surroundings, but what is more, they also mirror "what we have come to think of as Snow White's legitimate origin – the mother's wish" (cf. Bacchilega 1997: 37). While the brothers Grimm, as we have seen, tell the story of the mother who sits in the window and longs for a girl (Grimm 1857 in Zipes 2007), the tale of "The Snow Child" describes how the girl is a direct result of the father's desire (cf. *ibid.*). Simpson notes that this deviation was based on a variant of the tale where the father expresses an inclination to have a daughter, which the brothers Grimm collected but never published (Carter 2006: xvi).

The tale goes on to depict how the girl materializes out of the snow as soon as the count has completed his description of her, echoing the longing of the mother in Grimms' tale for a girl while sitting in a landscape covered with snow. The Snow Child embodies all the

elements of beauty that the count wishes her to have, and she appears in front of them “stark naked” (Carter 2006: 105). Because she is the daughter of the count’s desire, the countess hates her from the moment she sees her. With that starts the rivalry between the wife and the daughter, and the countess wants the girl to complete a task for her three times in order to get rid of her, echoing the three times Grimms’ stepmother appears at the dwarfs’ cottage in order to do away with Snow White. The Grimms’ evil queen is unsuccessful in her first two attempts at killing her stepdaughter, but the schemes are not punished as such. The count in Carter’s story, on the other hand, punishes the countess for her evil undertakings. Bacchilega notes that:

[a]ny shift in the Count’s affection 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.

(Bacchilega 1997: 37)

The count strips his wife first of her furs, then of her boots, until she is the one who sits stark naked, while the girl is “furred and booted” (Carter 2006: 105). Upon seeing how he has deprived her, the count feels “sorry for his wife” but does nothing in order to help her get clothed again (Carter 2006: 105).

The third time the countess addresses the girl, it doesn’t seem like the aim of the task is to kill the girl, as she innocently asks the girl to pick her a rose. This scene mirrors the Grimms’ story of 1806 in which the queen asks her daughter to pick her a rose in order to ride away while she carries out the request. The count consents as his wife sits naked beside him and asks for a rose, and the girl obediently steps out to pick the rose from the bush. However, when she does so, she falls to the ground dead, as if the rose were as poisonous as the bite of the apple in the tale by the Grimms’. Bacchilega argues that Carter here parodies the initiation of the traditional fairy tale heroine, and states:

Mirroring the traditional “innocent persecuted heroine”, the Snow Child is thus given a task and, in a way, she completes it. By plucking a rose, the “eternal” symbol of femininity in both its sexual and its mystical sacrificial connotations, she comes of age – she bleeds – and then fulfills 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 fetishizing becomes painfully visible.

(Bacchilega 1997: 37-38)

In the same way that Disney and Grimm's Snow White is prepared for marriage when she takes a bite of the apple, because, according to Bettelheim, the apple symbolizes sexual maturity (Bettelheim 1991: 139), the Snow Child also "comes of age" when she plucks the rose, and is thus also prepared for sexual relations. In contrast to the traditional tale, however, the girl is not put in a glass coffin while she waits for her prince to save her from her sleeping death. Instead, her father gets down from the saddle and rapes her while his wife watches them "narrowly" (Carter 2006: 106) from the side. And after the count has finished, the only thing that remains of the girl is "her post-initiation symbolic ingredients" – the black feather, a bloodstain, and a rose (cf. Bacchilega 1997: 38). The countess is once again fully dressed, and the count hands the rose that the child picked to his wife, but she drops it while exclaiming that it bites.

While fairy tales traditionally describe the journey from first home to final home, Carter's story describes how the Snow Child is birthed out of the same thing which she melts back into, that is the element of snow, which means that she, in a way, returns to where she came from, as snow always does. But while the element of snow goes in a circular movement, from clouds to earth, the prophet Isaiah writes that snow and rain never return to its point of departure without completing the task for which it came, namely to water the earth and to make it fertile (Isaiah 55: 10). In "The Snow Child", however, there is no progression, her short life bears no fruit. While the Snow White in the stories by Disney and the Grimms matures from child to woman, from daughter to wife, the Snow Child never journeys from one place to the next. Chevalier and Gheerbrant argue that the rose can be seen as a symbol of initiation, but also rebirth (cf. Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 814), and in the same way that snow melts away in spring, and reappears when colder weather returns, we know that while Snow Child's life ends quickly and brutally when she plucks the rose, the rose also signifies that she will be rebirthed again as soon the count's desire is once again aroused as he starts wishing for a girl as red as blood, as black as a feather and as white as the snow from which she appears.

4.3 "SNOW, GLASS, APPLES"

Neil Gaiman writes in his introduction to *Smoke and Mirrors*, a collection of short fiction in which we find his version of "Snow White", namely "Snow, Glass, Apples", that while he had read variations of this narrative countless times from the age of three, one day he

suddenly saw the story in a different light. In his revision of the tale, the reader is presented with the story from the stepmother's point of view, and it is done in such a way that the reader is left to question the credibility of the traditional tale. After reading Gaiman's retelling of "Snow White", the reader "may never be able to read the original story in the same way again" (Gaiman 2013: 32).

When the queen arrives at the palace, the king's daughter is only five years old. The queen states that the girl doesn't eat together with her and the king, and the reason for this will soon be revealed. One night, the girl comes to knock at the queen's chamber, asking for food. When the queen hands the girl an apple, the king's daughter attacks her stepmother instead, sucking blood from her hand. This is the first instance in which it becomes clear that the girl is a vampire, and this is the first of several assaults that takes place throughout the story.

Soon after the queen's first encounter with the true nature of her stepdaughter, she starts noticing the same scars that the girl's attack left on her hand on her husband's body as well. The king grows weaker and weaker, and the queen becomes a widow at the age of eighteen. Paralleling the traditional tale, the queen orders her huntsmen to take the girl deep into the forest and cut her heart out. However, when they return with her heart, it has not stopped beating. But the queen soon finds out that the girl is still alive, even without her heart, and she regrets not being more thorough when she instructed her huntsman to finish off the girl. The queen then promises that she will take it upon herself "to make the forest safe once more" (Gaiman 2013: 378), similar to how the Grimms' stepmother says that she will kill Snow White, "even if it costs me my own life!" (Grimm in Zipes 2007: 243). At this begins her yearlong preparation to meet her stepdaughter once again, ending with the queen setting out to find her stepdaughter, dressed as an old peddler. The queen offers the princess a basket containing laces, a hair ornaments and poisoned apples which are drenched in the queen's blood, and runs off before the girl has time to attack her again. When the queen arrives back at her palace, the heart has ceased to beat, and she "felt safe once more" (Gaiman 2013: 380).

Before long the prince arrives at the queen's castle. With a possible alliance of their countries in mind, the queen goes to the prince's chambers. The prince seems excited, and asks the queen to act as if dead while she lay naked in his room. Chilling her naked body in front of the window, and laying completely silent with eyes open wide, the queen attempts to look as lifeless as possible. When she fails at being utterly silent, completely still, the prince cannot finish, and she leaves his room while his curses and tears resound in her ears (cf. Gaiman 2013: 382).

He leaves early the next morning, and before long he arrives at the glass coffin in which the queen's stepdaughter lay. Similar to Carter's tale "The Snow Child", the prince copulates with the dead girl, as she is the manifestation of his desires. In the same way that Grimms' Snow White comes back to life when the prince arrives and accidentally releases the bite of the apple from her throat, the queen imagines that the lump of the apple is shaken away or washed down when the prince "pound[s] into her cold body"(cf. Gaiman 1999: 382). The queen can only imagine how the meeting between the prince and her stepdaughter takes place, but she is sure that the apple has been removed from her stepdaughter's throat, because she wakes up in the middle of the night when the girl's heart that hangs above her bed starts pulsing once again.

All of a sudden, there is a knock on the queen's door and the girl and the prince make their way into her chamber. The girl takes back her heart and pushes it deep into her chest. They announce that they will marry, and that they want the queen to attend the wedding. They then proceed to lock her up in the dungeon underneath the palace all through the autumn. When winter finally arrives and the wedding is set to happen, the queen is brought out, and she is stripped of her of her clothes, washed and shaved, and rubbed in goose-grease, mirroring the beginning where the queen describes the midwinter feast:

Winter is the time of hunger, of snow, and of death; and it is the time of the midwinter feast, when we rub the goose fat into the skin of a whole pig, stuffed with autumn's apples; then we roast it or spit it, and we prepare to feast upon the crackling.

(Gaiman 2013: 372)

The tale ends with the queen in the oven, being prepared as food for her stepdaughter's wedding feast. Her last thoughts are that even though they take her body, they cannot take her soul or her story, and as she contemplates her stepdaughter's semblance, she thinks about "her hair as black as coal, her lips, redder than blood, her skin, snow-white" (cf. Gaiman 1999: 384). In a sense, Snow White has indeed taken the stepmother's story, as it is her version that has continually been heard. But as the stepmother reflects on her stepdaughter's appearance, which starkly contrasts with the associations her appearance brings the traditional tales when it is narrated from the perspective of the stepmother, it becomes obvious that the stepmother is now on a quest to take her story back, in order to displace the traditional tale as the true version of "Snow White".

Looking back, the queen considers how her life have been narrated, and made to look like different than the truth by someone other than herself:

“Lies and half-truths fall like snow, covering the things I remember, the things I saw. A landscape, unrecognizable after a snowfall; that is what she has made of my life.

(Gaiman 2013: 328)

Here the queen refers to the lies that her stepdaughter has told about how the story between them has unfolded, but the snow that covers these half-truths can also be read as that of patriarchy, in the way that this has become the governing story of what the stepmother really is. Her own voice has been covered by snow, and the lies of the daughter have been covered, as well, in the sense that they have been transformed into truths.

4.4 AS WHITE AS SNOW

Out of all the three features that her mother, and the count, wishes for Snow White to have, it is always whiteness that is largely associated with the heroine. Both the traditional tales and the narratives by Carter and Gaiman emphasize the beauty trait of paleness in the title of the tales, but also in the way that they portray her persona. In her article “The Fairest of All” in the book *Feminism in the Worlds of Neil Gaiman*, Elisabeth Law debates that Disney and the brothers Grimm “draw attention to Snow White’s chastity through their titles” (cf. Law 2012: 178) by emphasizing the color white rather than the other elements of her appearance, that is the lips as red as blood and her hair as black as ebony. Both Carter and Gaiman, however, exclude this emphasis and instead bring attention to the element of snow. Law notes that “Gaiman’s title omits ‘white’ and its association with innocence”, and Carter does the same, once again highlighting the lifelessness and coldness of Snow White’s persona.

In the same way that the Grimms’ tale of “Snow White” is set in midwinter, “with snow falling like feathers from heaven”, both Carter and Gaiman’s tales are set in a landscape covered with snow. Though the element of snow in Grimms’ tale predominantly refers to the paleness of the heroine’s skin and, as we have seen, the features of conduct that makes her the ideal woman, that is, being beautiful both externally and internally, the concepts of winter and snow in the tales by Carter and Gaiman, are central to the motif and overall mood of the stories. The presences and consequences of the elements of snow and winter shall be explored in this next part.

As noted above, the tale of “The Snow Child” reflects the beginning the Grimms’ “Snow White” in the way it is set in a winter landscape. The story begins with the words: “Midwinter – invincible, immaculate”, and Bacchilega debates that these words rely only abstractly on the symbolic elements of nature. As a symbolic tool, the reference to "midwinter" functions to question the relationship between men and women within patriarchal structure (cf. Bacchilega 1997: 36). In the same way that winter is both impossible to conquer and spotlessly clean, the concept of the ideal woman as morally pure and undefiled seems in this story impossible to conquer.

Furthermore, Bacchilega notes that “midwinter ritually marks the end of a cycle and the beginning of another, thus externalizing and generalizing a specific event from 'Snow White': the Queen must die for Snow White to be born” (Bacchilega 1997: 36). In the traditional tales, as we have noted, the mother has to die in order for Snow White to live. But in this story, it is the daughter who has to die in order for the mother to live. Bacchilega argues that “[i]n this snow-covered landscape, the only relationship possible between women is one that re-produces itself as rivalry, as struggle to survive at the other woman’s expense” (Bacchilega 1997: 38). Interestingly, the first two schemes the countess attempts are based on elements that reflect the season, but it is the element that has to do with spring, and life, that finally marks the end of the Snow Child’s life. While the first two schemes were done in order to kill the girl, the last action was not aimed directly at the girl, but done out of countess’ self-indulgence. When the girl touches the flower, which grows on a bush of roses in full flower in the midst of winter, she falls and dies, indicating that the ideal she represents can only survive in the cold, harsh environment of rivalry, fighting for the goodwill of the patriarch.

In Gaiman’s tale “Snow, Glass, Apples” the notion of midwinter as the cycle that implies endings and beginnings is also present in the way that there is a continual struggle between the seasons of winter, autumn and spring, which mirror the struggles between the queen and her stepdaughter. Autumn marks both the beginning and the end of the story, and Law notes that “[t]he king, as the patriarch of the fatherland, embodies both the preparation for and the survival of the frozen season. His warmth and vigor stand in stark contrast to the deathly pallor of his daughter” (Law 2012: 182). Law postulates that the story continues over a time span of ten years, but almost every significant event happens in the winter (cf. Law 2012: 184). The chill of the frozen season, moreover, is also present in the way that the girl “personifies winter” (Law 2012: 184). The queen states that “[w]inter is the time of hunger, of snow, and of death” (Gaiman 2013: 372), mirroring the hunger of the girl that drives her to

vampirism. What is more, the snow covers the “lies and half-truths” (Gaiman 2013: 374) that the girl has told about her stepmother, and the winter will also last when the girl becomes queen in the land. While the recrudescence of autumn frames the tale, the rise and fall of the Spring Fair frames the plot of the story, and the relationship between the female characters are reflected in the success and failure of the Fair. It is winter every time the girl has progress, and the Spring Fair is only successful when the girl does not present any threat.

Gaiman’s tale is also structured by time in the way it mixes between the past tense and the present tense. The queen tells her story while she stands in the oven at her stepdaughter’s wedding, looking back upon past incidents. The effect of this is that it emphasizes the feeling of truthfulness, leaving the reader with the impression that this is the original, the authentic tale, and what is more, that one is given an actual recording of what really happened. As the tale is told right at this moment, it makes us question the validity of the traditional tales.

As stated in chapter three, the color of snow is often associated with innocence and purity of the soul. In both the traditional tales, and in these revisions by Carter and Grimm, there is a strong emphasis put on the age of the heroine. The Grimms portray Snow White as a young girl of seven years old, while Disney turns the protagonist into a teenager in order for her to be at the proper age for marriage. Carter and Gaiman also focus on the age of the protagonist in the way that both of these tales portray Snow White as a child. In Carter’s tale, the name of the girl reveals that she is a child. In Gaiman’s story, on the other hand, the story starts when the King’s “daughter was only a child” (Gaiman 2013: 372), and even though the story spans over a time period of 10 years, the girl is continually described as a small girl with tiny waist, tiny feet, tiny body. When the girl comes to the queen’s chamber, she says that the reason for her visit is that she’s hungry, “like any child” (Gaiman 2013: 372), and the nature of the assault underlines that the innocence normally associated with Snow White, and children in general, is nowhere to be found in her. While the traditional tales teach that looks are capable of saving Snow White and securing her future, Gaiman’s tale challenges this, and reveals how looks also can be deceiving, because while the girl looks like a child, she doesn’t embody the innocence of a child, and she is, in fact, not even quite human.

In the same way that the princess in Gaiman’s story journeys from a young girl of 5 years old to a teenager at the verge of marriage, the Snow Child also, in a way, journeys from girl to woman. Bacchilega argues that:

[b]y plucking the rose, the “eternal” symbol of femininity in both its sexual and its mystical sacrificial connotations, she comes of age – she bleeds – and then fulfills her function as passive object of the Count’s desire.

(Bacchilega 1997: 37-38)

But while virginal heroines in traditional fairy tales are rewarded with marriage after having succeeded at their tasks (cf. Law 2012: 179), there is no reward for the Snow Child. She melts back into the snow from which she appeared, having completed what she was created for, namely to be, as we saw above, the “object of the Count’s desire” (Bacchilega 1997: 38).

Warner argues that the point of the traditional tales is “[t]o shore her up in marriage” (Warner 1995: 224-25), in the way that they portray the prince as the anecdote to all of Snow White’s tribulations, and marriage as that which will keep her safe and happy through life. Carter and Gaiman’s tales, on the other hand, challenge the bliss of marriage and the life that awaits Snow White when the saving patriarch comes to claim his prize. The marriage between the queen and her husband at the start of Gaiman’s tale, and the marriage between her stepdaughter and the prince at the end, mirror the versions by Grimm and Disney, but Law notes that “[e]ven though there is a marriage celebration and a king back on the throne, we have gone too far to believe in the happily ever after” (Law 2012: 191). Gaiman continually refer to the specific ages of the characters, and it becomes evident that the narrative is not actually about a mother and a daughter, it is in reality about two children caught in the rivalry between women. Indeed, they are both actually children, but one, only slightly older than the other, has been placed within the role of the woman, and the other within the role of the child.

While the action of the traditional tales is outplayed predominantly in the forest and at the dwarfs’ cottage, Carter’s story is set in a snowy landscape. Gaiman’s story, on the other hand, is played out both in the forest and also in the palace’s most private rooms, such as the chambers, the tallest tower, the stone cell beneath the palace. The forest is the place of darkness and death in Gaiman’s tale. This is where the girl attacks a monk, it is where she lays in the snow after the huntsmen have taken her heart, it is where she eats the apple and it is also where she lies dead in the glass coffin. The chambers make up the locations for where the queen makes love to her husband, where she visits the prince during the night. But it is also where the girl commits her first assault, and where she comes back to fetch her stepmother when the prince has woken her from her death. The palace can be read as the queen’s domain, while the forest is the habitation of the girl. Though separate, these two realms continually engage with each other. The forest people habitually attend the Spring Fair, and the queen seeks out the girl in the forest where she has made her dwelling in “a high

sandstone cliff, laced with deep caves going back into the rock wall” (Gaiman 2013: 379).

What is more, the queen lives safely at the palace when the girl is left dead in the forest – both times – but the girl is still, in a sense, a part of the palace. In the queen’s chamber hangs the girl’s heart, pulsing and beating, signaling that although the queen attempted to be rid of the girl, the journey will not end before she returns to her initial, and final home, and retracts her heart.

4.5 AS RED AS BLOOD

When Snow White’s mother describes the daughter she longs for, while looking out her window, she asserts that she wants a girl as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony. The element of snow in her daughter’s character has already been discussed. But as important as the element of snow is to the retellings of this tale, the presence of blood is also worth investigating, as it is central to the versions by both Carter and Gaiman. Though the descriptions of the traditional tales and these postmodern revisions are similar to each other, the contexts of the new tales make them appear different, and it becomes evident that in the telling of the traditional tales, only a fragmented version has been presented. In the traditional tales the description of Snow White is associated with beauty, but in Gaiman’s tale the same description becomes associated with horror. The descriptions are similar, but the effect is different. The count is depicted wishing for a daughter as red as the hole filled with blood that he and his wife ride by (cf. Carter 2006: 105), and the girl in Gaiman’s story feeds on the blood of other human beings. Blood is often associated with life and vitality, fire and passion, but also sexuality, as it is the result of breaking the hymen which distinguishes the child from the woman, and the virgin from the whore.

As Snow White has become a teenager in Disney’s tale, the issue of sexuality is more present in the film than in the written tale. In the Grimms’ tale (1857) Snow White reports that the dwarfs’ linens are as white as snow, implying that no indecent undertaking has occurred in these beds. But while the Grimms’ tale in this way warns against immorality, the dwarfs still sleep in the same bedroom as Snow White. The seventh dwarf whose bed Snow White lay upon, slept one hour in the six other dwarfs’ beds, but in Disney’s version the dwarfs sleep in the living room, and Snow White has the whole bedroom to herself, as if sleeping in the same room with invoke the danger of something obscene happening. In Grimms’ version (1857) there is no need to keep a separation between the dwarfs and the girl,

but the fact that Disney's seven dwarfs decide to sleep in various places in the living room, and let Snow White have the bedroom, and all of seven beds, to herself underlines the sexual implications of the tale, implications which are brutally displayed in Carter and Gaiman's tales.

While Snow White is described as remarkably beautiful in the narratives of Disney and the Grimms, the princess in Gaiman's tale is merely described as the king's pale daughter. As she stands in front of the queen in her chambers, the similar features of appearance that are described in Disney and Grimm are there, but without any mention of beauty. While the Grimms' story describes Snow White as a girl "who was as white as snow, as red as blood, and her hair as black as ebony" (Grimm in Zipes 2007: 237), Gaiman's stepmother gives an account of how "[h]er eyes were black as coal, black as her hair; her lips were redder than blood" (Gaiman 2013: 372). These elements of appearance are referred to three times, and after each description the girl is depicted attacking a victim, indicating how her appearance mirrors her inner person, as she does not only have skin as white as snow, and lips as red as blood, but she is literally "cold with death" and her lips are indeed "red with blood" (cf. Law 2012: 184, italics removed). The first time the girl is described marks the beginning of the tale, and is accompanied by the assault on her stepmother. The second account of her appearance signifies the middle of the story and precedes the girl's seduction and domination of the monk. The final presentation of the girl's outward form signals the ending of the tale and this account is presented as the queen's last thoughts, as she stands inside the oven her stepdaughter and her groom have presumably ordered her to be put into in order to be baked alive.

In her book *The Beauty Myth*, which investigates how contemporary images of beauty are used against women, Wolf claims that what is deemed beautiful has to do with behavior, not appearance (cf. Wolf 1991: 14). In Carter's tale, the Snow Child emerges naked from the snow at the third wish of her father, mirroring the symbolism of the three wishes in myths, and as she is merely his desire incarnated, she is not really real. She is the manifestation of dreams and wishes of what patriarchy hopes can be, utterly unnatural, as there is nothing natural about her birth, life or death. In the same way, Law proposes that Gaiman's princess also appears as unnatural with her paleness, smallness, frigidity and lack of passion, and it is these traits, not beauty, that makes her fairest of them all (cf. Law 2012: 182), validating Wolf's claim that beauty is associated with conduct, not appearance. It is both Snow White's lack of humanity, and her lack of objection that makes her patriarchy's perfect daughter, the

fairest of them all, in both the tale by Gaiman and Carter, as “[t]he Snow Child is a masculine fantasy, an image of ‘woman’” (Bacchilega 1997: 37)

In both Carter and Gaiman’s tale the relationship between naturalness and innocence is challenged. Law notes that nature is still associated with good in “Snow, Glass, Apples”, but in the sense that it is linked to fertility and vivaciousness rather than “purity and submission”, as in the tales by Grimm and Disney (cf. Law 2012:185-186). The ideals of beauty that are deemed natural in the traditional tales, namely passiveness and innocence up to the point of lifelessness, come across as unnatural in these tales, as they are made into literal metaphors (cf. Law 2012: 184). In this way the narratives reveal the ideology that underpins the ideals, and what is more, they also reveal the ideology that underpins our reading of the narratives, and the effect is that the validity of the traditional tales have to be questioned and reevaluated.

The mother in Grimms’ tale sheds three drops of blood on the snow outside her window at the beginning of the story, and Bettelheim argues that these three drops of blood can be read as “a symbol of achieving sexual maturity” (Bettelheim 1991: 139). This scene is mirrored in the way that the hole filled with blood arouses the count’s desire in Carter’s tale, and in the way that Gaiman’s queen lets three drops of her own blood fall unto the apples she intends to kill her stepdaughter with, preparing the Snow Whites to achieve sexual maturity. The blood in the snow in Carter’s tale foreshadows how she will be raped in the snow, and the blood on the apples in Gaiman’s story indicates that the girl will achieve sexual maturity, but also that, while the queen is not much older than the princess, she is wiser than the girl, as the apple is a symbol of knowledge (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 37). Twice the princess is depicted bleeding from between her legs, but Bettelheim argues that it is the three drops of blood that symbolizes sexual maturity, which indicates that she is not mature yet (Bettelheim 1991: 139).

Along the same lines, the blood that appears between the legs of the princess can be read to mean that the princess is reaching maturity as the blood can be associated with menstrual blood. As this blood only appears after she has preyed on another human being, one might argue that the princess matures into a woman, in the sense that the shedding of menstrual blood separate the girl from the woman, only when she consumes other human beings. In the same way that these narratives portray how men can only embody the ideal of patriarchal masculinity when they consume, and prey on, the ideal of the Silent Woman in order to establish themselves as the opposite of feminine, the princess also preys on people in order to mature into a woman. In this way, Gaiman’s tale discloses how the patriarchal ideals

of masculinity and femininity operate within a structure of binaries in which one part will always be the victim of the other.

Wolf suggests that men understand beauty “as that which never says no, and that which is not really human” (Wolf 1991: 164), and in these two stories the implicit ideals of lifelessness and inhumanity that underpin Snow White’s beauty in the traditional tales are made literal. The Snow Child is indeed not really human, as we have seen, and she never expresses disapproval towards the count’s desires, and neither does she complain about the countess’ ill treatment of her. Indeed, she doesn’t utter a single word in the entire story. There is no need, it seems, to make reference to her beauty, because her silence and her lifelessness make her the most beautiful in the realm, and this is why the countess hates her.

Gaiman also portrays his Snow White with qualities connected with inhumanity, as has been stated above, and Law asserts that he “illuminates the valorization of dehumanized women and the gendered nature of power in 'Schneewittchen' and Disney’s *Snow White*” (Law 2012: 178). In contrast to the way Carter’s Snow Child is depicted as inhuman through being literally and metaphorically lifeless, Gaiman’s Snow White embodies the ideal of inhumanity which qualifies Snow Whites to be the fairest of all, through attributes which are continually compared to those of an animal.

The queen states from the beginning that she doesn’t know what matter of *thing* her stepdaughter is (Gaiman 2013: 371), and, mirroring the huntsman in the traditional tales who brings back the heart of an animal instead of the heart of Snow White, the queen compares her stepdaughter’s heart to “that of a nanny goat or a she-bear” (Gaiman 2013: 383). At the same time, the queen is certain that the heart belongs to the girl as “no sow’s heart or doe’s would have continued to beat and pulse after it had been cut out” (Gaiman 2013: 375). Similarly, the monk smiles at the girl when she approaches him in the forest “as if it was a long time since he had seen another human”, but it becomes evident that the girl is not just another human, first signaled by the way her hand resembles as spider when creeping through his hair (cf. Gaiman 2013: 377). But while the girl is compared to an animal because it becomes evident that she is not fully human, the queen is also made into an animal, but in quite a different way, as she is stripped of all humanity, and sacrificed as a scapegoat. She is distorted, and she is made to look like a predator who preys on the innocent lamb that is Snow White, and, as we have seen in the traditional tales, she is the one who has to bear all the blame.

While the color red points back to Snow White’s beautiful red lips in the traditional tales, the sexual underpinnings of being “red as blood” is explored in Carter and Gaiman’s stories. Bettelheim debates that “[s]exual innocence, whiteness, is contrasted with sexual

desire, symbolized by the red blood” (Bettelheim 1991: 202), and Law argues that the contrast between the symbols of snow and blood are represented in the way that female characters are portrayed as either completely moral, like a virgin, or utterly immoral, like a whore (cf. Law 2012: 179). While Carter’s story about the Snow Child reveals that the ideal of patriarchal virginity is “the complete absence of passion: not purity but frigidity” (Law 2012: 178), Gaiman’s tale challenges these strict categories that allows for women to be either virgin or whore, and thus revealing “that not all princesses are beautiful virgins, not all stepmothers are wicked, and not all princes are charming and handsome” (Law 2012: 178).

Law elaborates:

“Snow, Glass, Apples” challenges the feminine ideal of the innocent, submissive Snow White like it is portrayed in the traditional tale, as the princess exposes that patriarchy does not valorize physical or moral purity, but cold, lifeless chastity [and] she reveals the consequences of idealizing a kind of virginity based not on purity or chastity of mind, but instead upon the absence of passion in women.

(Law 2012: 180)

Law, furthermore, asserts that real women always fail to live up to the virgin ideal as it is based on undermining humanity and dulling down traits of passion and vitality. If a woman is regarded as this ideal, she must, in fact, actually be masquerading as a whore (cf. Law 2012: 182). Moreover, Law notes that “[t]he whore exists to be desired and to create desire, but without desire of her own” (Law 2012: 180). According to this line of thought, the Snow Child, together with Disney’s and Grimms’ Snow Whites, fall into the category of the whore, as they instill desire in their saving patriarchs while remaining lifeless, without expressing desire, on beds of snow, or in coffins of glass, while Gaiman challenges the ideal of virginal beauty by turning the traditional tales’ Snow White from the virgin to a vampire, from the protagonist to an antagonist, from external beauty to internal beast.

Carter states that “[a] free woman in an unfree society will be a monster” (Carter qtd in Bacchilega 1997: 52). The queen is an independent woman, as we have seen, fully capable of managing her life and her kingdom without a man by her side. But even though she is free, in the words Carter, the society in which she finds herself seems to read her independence as monstrosity, and Law states that while the queen plays the “expected feminine roles, such as the virginal village girl and the dutiful wife”, she exceeds these roles and keeps her independence both before and after her husband dies (Law 2012: 182). “Justness, wisdom and demeanor, and even beauty are not enough to compensate for the grievous sin of female self-

sufficiency” (Law 2012: 181), and this is why the queen cannot survive within this patriarchal structure. But the princess, on the other hand:

Unlike her stepmother, she needs a prince or a king, someone off of whom she can live parasitically. She is the physical embodiment of the patriarchal fantasy of woman: a sexualized girl that simply cannot survive without a man’s self-centric potency.
(Law 2012: 182)

As noted repeatedly, Gilbert and Gubar insist that women within the structure of patriarchy turn against each other. But in contrast to what Gilbert and Gubar propose, the rivalry in “Snow, Glass, Apples” is not caused by the absent patriarch, neither are they competing to be counted as “the fairest of all”. Law proposes instead that the women in Gaiman’s tale “[a]re fighting for the right to authority because fairy-tale women have no hope of self-rule unless they are able to rule others” (Law 2012: 181).

In the same way that a person’s blood is always hidden inside a one’s body unless the body gets wounded, or in relation to menstruation or losing one’s virginity, the two tales play on the dichotomy between that which is hidden, and that which is seen, in order to challenge the ideology that is hidden behind the traditional tales. Both the mirror and the rose can be read as symbols of secrecy, and both the Snow Child and Gaiman’s queen are examples of the danger of seeking out that which is hidden, as the characters who engage with these symbols of secrecy have to pay the cost of their endeavor, which is the penalty of death. In Gaiman’s story the stepmother keeps her looking-glass “wrapped in a doeskin, in a chest, in my chamber” (Gaiman 2013: 376) and large portions of the action in the tale happen deep within the chambers of the castle, deep within the forest, deep within the caves of the cliffs, emphasizing that this story functions to reveal that which is hidden.

There is also a strong emphasis on the burials, or attempted burials, signaling that things one tries to hide underground might end up in clear view instead. The queen and her helper cannot bury the King when he dies, as the ground is too cold (Gaiman 2013: 373-374), while the bowl in which the queen makes her poison is readily hidden underneath the ground (Gaiman 1999: 379). The dwarfs bury the princess in a glass coffin, for all to see (Gaiman 2013: 381), and the queen is stripped naked, shaved and put into an oven at her stepdaughter’s wedding, visible for everyone at the feast (Gaiman 2013: 384).

Gaiman’s tale seeks to reveal that which is hidden, and to put it on display, in the same way that the queen stands naked in the tallest tower of the palace, and the girl appears before her in the forest utterly naked. Carter’s tale also depicts the Snow Child naked as she appears

before the count and the countess. Carter writes that “[f]resh snow fell on snow already fallen” (Carter 2006: 105), and it does so both literally in her story, but also in the way that these stories play on the dynamics between that which is hidden and that which is revealed, as we have seen earlier, but also in the way that they display the ideology that lay latent in the traditional tales.

4.6 NAKED WOMEN

The importance of names was explored in traditional tales, and it became evident that “[t]he title and the heroine’s name insist that white is the dominant color and the heroine’s defining trait” (Law 2012: 178), in the stories by Grimm and Disney. Though the heroine in both these stories goes by the name Snow White, the same character in the tales of Carter and Gaiman are left naked in the way that they don’t have names, as names are tied together with identity, and thus, humanity. By not naming the girls, they are left naked and stripped of humanity. Carter’s Snow White is referred to as “the girl”, or “the naked girl”, while Gaiman’s girl is referred to as “the princess”, “the child”, and even only as “she” or “her”. Law argues that Gaiman’s “refusal to name the child, or even identify “what manner of thing she is” ties the female pronoun to an unnamed, unknowable darkness” (Law 2012: 179). Though Gaiman’s princess is inhuman in the way that she preys on other human beings, the Snow Child lacks humanity in the way that she does not, actually have a life. Bacchilega notes that the Snow Child is “[o]nly an imaginary being” (cf. Bacchilega 1997: 38), and by refusing to name the girl, Carter emphasizes that the life of the girl is fictional and that she is indeed not really human.

Wolf states that “[t]o live in a culture in which women are routinely naked where men aren’t is to learn inequality in little ways all day long” (Wolf 1991: 139), but what is interesting in these two tales, is that it is not only the women who appear naked, but also the men. The Snow Child is naked from birth, as we have seen, while the countess is stripped of her clothes at the expense of clothing the child. The count, on the other hand, undresses before raping his daughter. It is implicit that the king in Gaiman’s tale is undressed when he sends for his queen, but when his daughter comes to his chambers, the undressing is involuntary, it seems, as the thought of the incidents later makes him weep in the arms of his wife. The queen stands naked in the tower of the palace, while preparing to meet her

stepdaughter in the forest, and the stepdaughter is naked when she comes out of the caves to meet the queen who is dressed as an old peddler. The prince is also naked when the queen seeks him out in his chambers, while his nakedness is only implied when the queen imagines him taking her stepdaughter in the glass coffin.

Oxford Dictionaries define nakedness as a state of being exposed to harm, or to be vulnerable, and states that it may imply a state of nature, destitution or defenselessness. It is this state of vulnerability that is expressed through the nakedness of the women in Gaiman's story. The queen engages in activities that require nakedness in six instances throughout the tale, but only three times out of these six are described in detail. During the three occurrences in which she shares a bed with her King her nakedness is only implied, signaling that this kind of nakedness is not the one that leaves her exposed to harm. The three times in which the queen is described as naked, however, parallel the three times the girl also emerges unclothed. The princess is naked when she meets the old peddler, in the same way as her nakedness is exposed while lying in the glass coffin, and also when she enters her stepmother's chamber at the end. While the princess' nakedness is always visible when she encounters other people while, the queen's state of undress is not perceived by onlookers the first two times. Her nudity is concealed while she stands naked in the highest tower of the palace, preparing to meet the princess, in the same way as the rendezvous with the prince happens behind closed doors. But when the queen is stripped naked at the end, her nakedness is open for everyone to see.

In the same way that the bodies of the queen and the princess are exposed in "Snow, Glass, Apples" the girl in "The Snow Child" also appears naked before the count and the countess in the beginning of the tale. But as the story unfolds, the count takes the clothes from his wife's back and puts them on the child, as if playing the part of the saving patriarch. When the countess, then, finally sits "bare to the bone", and the girl is "furred and booted", the count feels sorry for her, and his affection continually follows the female character who appears most vulnerable and in need of his protection. The count, then, creates someone to save, and when he has saved her, she once again becomes deprived, as he cannot engage with her when she is not in need of him. Validating the claim that women turn against women because patriarchy sets them up against each other (cf. Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 38) Warner argues:

[...] another set of conditions set women against women, and the misogyny of fairy tales reflects them from a woman's point of view: rivalry for the prince's love. The effect of these

stories is to flatter the male hero; the position of the man as savior and provider in these testimonies of female conflict is assumed, repeated and reinforced [...]
(Warner 1995: 238-239)

As one woman is stripped of her clothes in this story, the other one is covered up, implying that there is no room for women to co-exists in this ideological structure, as one woman will have progress at the expense of the other. It is only when the girl dies, the countess has “all her clothes again” (Carter 2006: 106) and is able to ride on with her husband.

There is no patriarchal hero in Carter and Gaiman’s tales. None of these men of high status are able to save or protect the women in these stories, thus challenging what Warner calls the “position of the man as savior and provider” (Warner 1995: 239), but instead we are presented with incestuous fathers, a necrophilia prince, and weeping men.

Similarly to Carter, Gaiman’s “Snow, Glass, Apples” also neglects to portray a story of a protagonist who journey from initial home to final home. Instead this tale depicts the story of the stepmother who regrets ever meeting her prince charming, as the “ever after” of her story includes the death of her husband and being victimized by her own stepdaughter. She even complains that she wishes that she had killed herself before she encountered the princess, and that she had never started her fairy tale with the king (cf. Gaiman 1999: 371). Before the queen married the king, she was a commoner, so her story was that of a girl who went from rags to riches, from first home to final home. But once she moved in to the castle, there was no “happily ever after”. Rather, the final home represents the beginning of her story of destruction.

As suggested above, “Snow, Glass, Apples” tells the story from the stepmother’s point of view, implying that the traditional version of the tale only contains “a little truth to add savour to the dish, but mixed with many lies” (Gaiman 2013: 384). From the very start, the reader sympathizes with Snow White’s stepmother, as she tells her tale of heartbreak, bravery and ruin. Warner argues that women who were unmarried and getting older were vulnerable in society (cf. Warner 1995: 229), and she postulates that by “reversing the angle of approach” into, for instance, that of a grandmother or a mother-in-law, or maybe even a stepmother, we can discover the fear she might have had (cf. Warner 1995: 227). Moreover, Warner states that the way we read fairy tales has been greatly altered by the focus on flesh bond between mother and child. She notes:

Our understanding of the stock villain, the wicked stepmother, has been dangerously attenuated and even misunderstood as a result. In the stories, she may not even be a stepmother, and the evil she does is not intrinsic to her nature, or to the strict maternal relation,

or to her particular family position. It cannot and should not be extended to all women, for it arises from the insecurity of her interests in a social and legal context that can be changed, and remedied.

(Warner 1995: 236-237)

Law postulates that “the stepmother is always already wicked” (Law 2012: 180), but by giving a voice to the villain who has not traditionally had a voice, the fear that Warner suggests that stepmothers have reason, in many instances, to harbor towards their stepdaughter, is revealed, and the effect is that one is left to question the notion of the stepmother as always already evil. The queen describes both the girl and herself throughout the story, and we get a portrayal of the characters through the perspective of the character the reader has been nurtured into seeing as a villain. This story portrays the stepmother from a new angle, and this way it challenges the our preconception of the wicked stepmother as the villain, and what is more, it shows that the evil she does is not, actually, intrinsic to her nature, instead her persecution of her stepdaughter can be read as a result of trying to keep her Kingdom safe. While the patriarchs in this story are only concerned with satisfying their desire, she represents a different kind of rule, a matriarch who is concerned predominantly with the needs of her people.

The queen starts out by reminiscing about how she met her king, mirroring the traditional endings where the princess finally meets the prince. She describes how she, from her youth, was able to know secrets and “seek out things hidden” (Gaiman 2013: 376) by staring into the surface of still water, pools of ink, or “the cold surface of my mirror” (Gaiman 2013: 371), and that this is how she foresaw that she would meet her king, whom she dreamt about the first sixteen years of her life. Theirs is a story of binaries as she is a woman and he is a man, but these binaries are even more visible because she is a commoner and he is a king. She narrates how he took all he wanted from her, because it was the king’s right. But even so, she describes their relationship as one based on mutual love. And as a contrast to the traditional tales, where the true marital bliss is restricted to the relationship between Snow White and her prince, it is the queen’s marriage that is presented as the companionship that depicts the ideals of love and mutual respect.

Law notes that by providing an image of companionate marriage, the queen demonstrates that “[s]he is strength without dominance, power without repression of the feminine” (Law 2012: 179). The traditional tales also teaches that if a woman is to rule the land, she has to stand alone. The king is never present in the traditional tales when the stepmother takes charge, because within the patriarchal structure the woman has to embody

the ideal of the Silent Woman if she is to be allowed to stand by her husband. That is why Snow White can only marry the prince when she has learned feminine submission, and that is also why Gaiman's princess can only overcome her stepmother when she marries the prince, as is made clear by the fact that the queen is killed at their wedding, and not before. Only when the king is absent, can the woman rule the country by herself.

As noted in chapter three, the stepmother cannot be fairest of them all, because by being the ruler, she no longer embodies the female ideal of the passive, lifeless woman, which paradoxically also means that in order to be a ruler she has to repress the feminine traits in herself. But the queen in Gaiman's story shows a new way of being a female ruler, as Law points out. The queen shows that her rule is better than that which the prince will provide. While she goes to his chamber with the benefit of the kingdom in mind, he is only concerned by the satisfaction of his phallus. Moreover, the queen also shows that it is possible to be a strong woman without repressing the feminine within the framework of marriage. While the traditional tales teaches that strong women inevitably stand alone, she portrays an image of a strong woman who can stand together with her husband.

This is also made explicit in the presentation of Gaiman's stepmother as a ruler. The queen sits on the throne and governs the land even after her husband's death, and "[e]xceeds the constraints of patriarchy" in the way that she rules in solitude, without being a "wife, mother, or even mistress to any man" (Law 2012: 187). As stated in chapter three, Grimms' Snow White needs to be domesticated when she appears at the dwarfs' cottage, while in Disney's version the heroine has already taken on the role of the housewife. In Carter's tale, however, there is no journey of learning feminine submission, as the Snow Child is already everything that the count yearns for. As she is already the ideal daughter of patriarchy, there is no need for a journey. Neither of Gaiman's female characters, on the other hand, succumb to these domestic ideals, as Gaiman's Snow White does not stay with in the domestic sphere of the cottage, nor is she transformed into a housekeeper during the course of the story. Law argues that the princess "embodies the external traits of virginity, complete with physical submission epitomized in the image of her unconscious body encased in glass" (Law 2012: 189), and this is why there is no need for a journey. She has already, in the same way as the Snow Child, become that which is desirable within a patriarchal structure.

Gaiman's queen repeats several times that her people call her wise, and when the lord of the Spring Fair approaches her it is not because she is his queen, but because she is wise (cf. Gaiman 1999: 376). Traditional tales favor youth and young love, as the Snow Whites they depict stand as the ideal woman in comparison to her older stepmother. Gaiman's tale,

however, portrays age as wisdom, and thus as a favorable trait in comparison with youthful folly. Whilst the stepmother in the traditional tales look at herself in the mirror in order to evaluate her beauty, the stepmother in Gaiman's story looks into her reflective surface in order to "seek out things hidden" (Gaiman 2013: 376). In the same way that the first mother in Grimm's tale looks out of the window into the world, Law proposes that the stepmother in Gaiman's story "looks into the mirror to see the outside world" (Law 2012: 188).

Marie-Louise Von Franz postulates that the stepmother is in a way a false wife, as she is the king's second wife (cf. Von Franz 1996: 121), and following this argument, the queen in Gaiman's tale can also be regarded as, to a certain extent, unnatural, as "mothers cannot appoint themselves, or be assigned the role at will" (cf. Warner 1995: 236). In Disney's versions of the tale, evil is linked with the unnaturalness in the stepmother (Law 2012: 183), and this is why nature does not come to her rescue like it does for Snow White. Snow White is helped by the trees and animals when she is deserted in the forest. But the stepmother, on the other hand, dies by falling off a cliff when lightning strikes it, which keeps both Snow White and the dwarfs' hands clean as they are innocent in her death, while also emphasizing the relationship between "evilness and unnaturalness" (cf. Law 2012: 183).

4.7 NAKED MEN

As stated above, both tales present Snow Whites who embody frigidity and lifelessness up to the point where the characters seem inhuman, and it becomes evident that it is these qualities that draw the patriarchs towards them. Wolf states that the appeal of the ideal woman, as presented in magazines and pornography, is not in "the fantasy that the model will come to life; it is precisely that she will not, ever. Her coming to life would ruin the vision" (Wolf 1991: 176). Traditionally seen as the saving patriarch, the prince in Gaiman's tale and the father-figure in Carter's story, are drawn to women in the story only when they are devoid of vitality, and because of this they find the women most beautiful when they are dead, because it is only then that they embody the full potential of the ideal of the Silent Woman. So when the Snow Child lies dead on the ground, she finally fulfills the vision the count had when he dreamed about her, which is why he rapes the dead girl. In the same way, the prince cannot engage in intercourse with the queen because she appears too human, too much like him. Upon seeing the dead girl in the glass coffin, on the other hand, he knows that she is the dream of the ideal woman personified, and he pays off the dwarfs in order to take her with

him. With the girl he can merely pay to take her with him, but with the queen it would not be as fulfilling for him as he would have to strike a deal, and in that way acknowledge her as an equal partner with a voice and opinion of her own.

But while the count and the prince seem powerful in the way they dominate the women by raping them, all the men in these tales are in reality left emasculated by the standards of patriarchy, as all three of the patriarchs are left weeping after an encounter with one of the female characters. When the Snow Child picks the fatal rose and falls down dead, the count weeps as he copulates with her. In the same way as the count weeps when his daughter dies, Gaiman's king weeps when his daughter has visited him in his chamber, sucking the life out of him, little by little. The queen also recounts how the sound of the prince's tears and curses resounds in her ears (Gaiman 2013: 382) when he cannot complete the act, because the queen doesn't play the role of the dead woman convincingly enough. Both the queen and the girl are, in a way, then, castrating the patriarchs in the tale (cf. Law 2012: 185; 189). The girl assaults her father, her stepmother's husband, by sapping blood from "her father's thighs, and on his bullock-pouch, and on this male member" (Gaiman 2013: 328). The queen, on the other hand, fails to conform to the frigid, lifeless woman the prince, her stepdaughter's coming husband, wants her to appear as, which leaves him impotent and furious.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie asserts in her book *We Should All Be Feminists* that society teaches women "that they cannot be sexual beings" (Adichie 2014: 32). It is frightening within patriarchal framework to imagine women as sexual beings, particularly because this would also reveal that women are not inherently passive and lifeless. Gaiman's queen is a liberated, sexual woman who expresses pleasure during intercourse both when it is out of love, and when it is done in the practical hope of joining two kingdoms in order to expand her area of dominance, and it is always she who seeks out her lovers. Law states that "[t]hrough the princess literalizes patriarchal fears of feminine sexuality, it is the queen who becomes the scapegoat for those fears" (Law 2012: 189), and that is why she has to die. What is more, Law also notes that "[p]leasure other than his own is terrifying and paralyzing" (Law 2012: 188). That is why the count copulates with the girl when she is dead, because then there is no fear of the pleasure of anyone else's but his own, and it is also why the Gaiman's prince prefers the girl over her stepmother.

None of the instances of intercourse in these stories are set within the framework of marriage, even though both the count, the king and the prince find themselves as husbands, or at the verge of marriage. The countess in Carter's tale is always regarded in relation to her

husband. When the count and the countess are referred to in the same sentence, she is always referred to as “his wife”. But when she is alluded to in a sentence in which her husband is not, she is simply called “the countess”. Being left alone gives her more power, as it is only then that she is defined by her position, not by her husband. Contrastingly, the times when she is referred to as the countess are the times when the count prefers the girl to her. So while at the same time as she becomes more independent when she is seen as an individual and not merely a wife, she also becomes decentered. She can only hold the attention of her husband, and enjoy the safety and privilege that he offers her, when she defines herself solely in the light of who he is. What is more, the husbands of these tales are never exclusive in their relationship with their wives. The count rapes the Snow Child while his wife is watching, the king is raped by his daughter, and when the prince goes on to be with the princess, he has already been with her stepmother.

Contrasting with the way that the countess relies on her husband for security and entitlement, the queen in Gaiman’s story manages well to guard herself and rule her country even after her husband’s death. Law states that the queen “is not ashamed of her passions” (Law 2012: 182) which is reflected in the way that while her husband sends for her, she also offers herself to him, and to the prince also. And this is what makes her so dangerous, to point that she, in the end, has to die. Wolf postulates that “[w]omen who love themselves are threatening; but men who love real women, more so”, because that would mean the end of male dominance (cf. Wolf 1991: 143) The queen, implicitly, proposes marriage to the prince by going to his chambers. But she cannot be his wife, as he requests a wife that embodies the ideal feminine beauty. In the same way that the king has to die as he were one to love a “real woman”, the queen also has to die, as her existence is much too terrifying.

The voice of the queen in Gaiman’s story and the story of the life of the Snow Child contests the voice of the mirror, which was investigated in the chapter three. If the voice of the mirror represents patriarchy, then these other voices challenge the way that the voice of the mirror tries to mold women into the ideal of the Silent Woman. In telling her story the queen contests the “[l]ies and half-truths” that have been falling like snow (Gaiman 2013: 328), in the same way that the story of the Snow Child also does so. She challenges the lies that have been told about Snow White, but also the lies of society as a whole. The snow on the ground signifies women, as the beings of women are covered by the ideal of beauty. Molded into an ideal of feminine beauty, they are stripped of beauty, and their personality covered like the ground after a snowfall. But like a flower exploding through the snow, these

tales unveil the absurdity and perversity of the ideal of femininity, and they invite the reader to consider a new way to be a woman.

CHAPTER 5: HAPPILY EVER AFTER

“What kind of love is it that requires an angel and only an angel for its commitment?”

(Morrison 2015: 160)

5.1 METAFICTION

In her book *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction: From Atwood to Morrison*, Sharon Rose Wilson states that the work of Toni Morrison “embeds and sometimes parodies the plot, structure, themes, images, motifs, characterization, and even language of its fairy-tale and myth intertexts” and she states that the work of writers such as Morrison mirrors fairy tales in the way that they “[a]re about the timeless things that myths and fairy tales are about” (Wilson 2008: 159). An example is Toni Morrison’s *God Help The Child*, which can be read as a variation of “Snow White” in the way that it incorporates many of the same elements as those found in the classic tale, such as the bad mother, the symbolic meaning of names, the importance of beauty in order for the female protagonist to succeed in her journey, and the notion of the happy ending.

As will be argued, the plot, characters and motifs of *God Help the Child* resemble the story of “Snow White” to such an extent that the novel can be viewed as a meta-fairy tale. Wilson states that meta-fairy tales connect “the old, wise stories where magical transformation, rebirth, and healing are again possible” (Wilson 2008: 163). In this way, meta-fairy tales go further back than the literary tales, and seek to tell the tale in the same way that the oral tales were told. In this way, meta-fairy tales rearrange the narrative context as they go beyond the male narrators, such as Grimm and Disney, and back to the setting where the old crone is allowed to tell the story. Moreover, in the same way that the oral tales were aimed at an adult audience, *God Help the Child* is also written for a grown-up audience:

Contrary to usual expectation, rather than critiquing fairy tales’ use in female socialization, most women writers use fairy-tale structures, images, motifs, settings, and characters in the same way that they use myths: These old stories resonate as intertexts in their contemporary work.

(Wilson 2008: 5)

While the work that we have examined by Carter and Gaiman criticize the female socialization project which underpin the traditional tales, Morrison's story, on the other hand, uses the fairy tale to lay bare ideology that is still predominant in our culture today. Wilson notes that meta-fairy tales comment on the frame story (cf. Wilson 2008: 161), and this is done by deconstructing and reconstructing the characters, the motifs, the themes and the symbolism of "Snow White". In this way *God Help the Child* comments on both the tale of "Snow White", but also the ideology that is embedded within it.

5.2 GOD HELP THE CHILD

We have already seen how Gaiman told his versions of "Snow White" through the voice of the queen, while it is customary in the traditional tales to tell the story from the point of view of a third-person narrator. *God Help the Child* is a story that consists of several stories that are intertwined, and the whole novel is told from the perspective of six different characters, while continually shifting from the third person narrator to the characters' own voices, Wilson notes that the effect of this shift is that it might function to displace the ideology and the values that are embedded in the traditional tales, while at the same time also give voice to the silenced (cf. Wilson 2008: 162).

The book is divided into four parts, and part one, two and four is told from the perspective of the three most predominant female characters in the narrative, that is Sweetness, Bride and Brooklyn. Part three is told entirely from a male point-of-view, and while the perspective of the patriarch has not been given in neither Grimm, Disney, Carter nor Gaiman's narratives, Morrison here portrays the childhood and interior life of the "prince" through his own perspective. The chapters in the book are not numbered, but they are titled with the names of the characters, signaling whose perspective of the story is being portrayed. Three chapters are told from the perspective of Bride's mother, Sweetness, and three chapters are told from the Bride's friend Brooklyn's point of view. In addition to this, we are also presented with the voice of Sofia Huxley, the woman Bride testified against, two times, and one chapter is told from the perspective of Rain, the little girl Bride meets in the woods. However, large portions of the story is told from the perspective of Bride, as every second chapter is portrayed from her point of view. But there is one exception from this structure, and that is when Booker tells his story. This way of interchanging the voice of Bride with the voice of Booker might be seen as a parody to the traditional tales. Disney portrays a Snow

White who doesn't have any other story to tell the dwarfs than the story of her longing to be with the prince, and she doesn't have any other song to sing than the song that depicts how she longs for that "someday" when her prince will come, and by interchanging the story of Booker and Bride, Morrison parodies the way in which the traditional Snow White has no life of her own, no life without the prince.

Morrison's novel starts with the birth of Lula Ann. From the moment she is born, her mother is repelled by her, as she has skin so black that it scares her mother, "[m]idnight black, Sudanese black" (Morrison 2015: 3), Sweetness explains. The hostility grows when Lula Ann's father leaves them, because he doesn't believe that he can be the father of a girl as black as Lula Ann. Lula Ann's mother looks back at how she and her husband had three good years together and how it changed when Lula Ann was born. He blamed her "and treated Lula Ann like she was a stranger – more than that, an enemy" (Morrison 2015: 5).

Already from the very beginning, it is apparent that Morrison's novel incorporates elements from the tale of Snow White. The opening of "Snow White" begins with the parents rather than the child herself, and in the same way that the traditional tales start with the mother and an implicit father-figure, this narrative also begins with the voice of the mother. However, in contrast with the tales by Grimm and Disney, a reason for the father's absence in the rest of the story is presented, namely his daughter's appearance. In both the traditional tales and the postmodern revisions it has been investigated how it is evident that Snow White's problems does not arise from any external problem, but the relationship between Snow White and her parents (cf. Bettelheim 1991: 201).

Bettelheim argues, as already noted, that "[f]airy tales usually begin when the child's life in some manner has reached an impasse" (ibid.), and for Lula Ann the impasse coincides with the moment when she is born. While the Snow White in the traditional tales is loved by her mother because of her beauty and her pale, white skin, Lula Ann is, contrastingly, rejected by her parents because she is so exceptionally black. Her mother blames her daughter for her husband's abandonment of them, and she believes the color of Lula Ann's skin to be the reason for it. Her mother is so repulsed by her daughter's appearance that she does not allow her to call her any name associated with the biological bonds between them. Instead, the child is instructed to call her Sweetness. Refusing to be named according to her role as mother, she also declines to act out the role of the good mother.

Her birth does not only cause problems between the parents, however. Like Bettelheim states, "it is the child who creates the parental problems, and with these come his own" (ibid.). For Lula Ann, her birth creates the problems between the parents, and the

treatment she receives because of it causes a physical and emotional journey from first home in order to reconstitute a new home, which is typical in the tale of “Snow White”. The theme of the novel is the unhappy childhood, and the lesson to be learned is both one that Sweetness learns much too late, namely that “[w]hat you do to your children matters” (Morrison 2015: 43) and one that Lula Ann eventually also learns.

While Lula Ann is rejected by her parents because of the blackness of her skin, she grows up to become widely known for her beauty, and she turns heads anywhere she goes. She is exceedingly successful and accomplished at her job working at a cosmetics company, and she becomes wealthy enough to buy, amongst other expressions of capital, her own apartment and a Jaguar. But preceding her success, she changes her name when she leaves for college in order to remake herself. First she changes it to Ann Bride, before shortening it to Bride, “with nothing anybody needs to say before or after that one memorable syllable” (Morrison 2015: 11). Moreover, she begins to only wear clothes in different shades of white, following the advice the “total person” designer Jeri (Morrison 2015: 33), who claims that “black is the new black” and that is why she should emphasize her skin by only wearing white clothes (ibid.). Both Bride’s name and the importance of white and black as symbolic tools, brings reference to “Snow White”. In the same way that Snow White’s name mirrors how she is on a journey to become a wife, Bride’s name also suggest that she is on a quest to find her prince, a quest that will cumulate in companionship. Similarly, the names of both Snow White and Bride also bring association to the color white, which underline the way that they are both described and characterized through the social and symbolic signification of colors.

The first chapter of the book describes the first part of the fairy tale that is hidden before the “once upon a time”, and when Bride starts telling her story in the second chapter, it is clear that in the same way that the story in Disney’s tale is outplayed while Snow White waits for her prince to return, Morrison’s story is also framed by romantic love. Bride starts out by describing how Booker, her former lover, has left her after having pronounced that she is “not the woman” he wants (Morrison 2015: 8). Thus begins Bride’s journey to find out why he left her, and what he meant when he uttered those words that continually return to her memory. But there is also another reason why Bride has to embark on a journey, and that is to make right something that happened back when she was still Lula Ann, at eight years old. Wilson states that meta-fairy tales “generally convey character’s transformation from alienation and symbolic amputation to greater consciousness, community, and wholeness” (Wilson 2008: 1), and as the story unfolds it becomes clear that Bride has to journey back into

her childhood, back into the court room where she pointed her finger towards Sofia Huxley, in order to be transformed and become whole.

When Lula Ann is eight years old she is asked to testify against her teacher, Sofia Huxley who is being accused of taking advantage of some of the children at the school where she works. In an attempt of making Sweetness proud of her, Lula Ann testifies against Sofia who is put behind bars for fifteen years. The day Booker leaves her is the day that Sofia is released from prison, but what Bride doesn't know is that Booker decides to leave because Bride wants to make amends towards Sofia, bringing her presents and apologizing for her false testimony. Booker, not knowing that Bride has lied, leaves her without an explanation as he thinks that his lover supports a child molester.

When Bride comes to see Sofia and tells her who she is, Sofia beats her up so badly that Bride cannot work for weeks. The decision to try to make up for her lie, then, leaves Bride without the ability to work, without her beauty and without her prince, and at this point Bride is starting to notice how her body is changing, as shall be investigated further on. Following the incident with Sofia Huxley, Bride then sets out to find Booker, and find out why he left her.

After an accident that results in her staying with a family in the woods for six weeks, Bride's journey leads her to Booker's aunt Queen Olive, and it is while she chats with this woman that it dawns on Bride how little she actually knew her prince charming. Almost ready to give up, Queen nudges Bride to find Booker, and at this point she understands that her journey is not about finding him, it is actually about finding herself, and she exclaims that "[t]his is about me, not him. Me!" (Morrison 2015: 152). Bride is "[d]etermined to find out what she was made of – cotton or steal – there could be no retreat, no turning back" (Morrison 2015: 143). She sets out on her journey to find herself. Interestingly, however, this does not involve an idea of becoming the perfect woman. In fact, she becomes less and less the ideal of feminine beauty as it is portrayed in the traditional tales of "Snow White", in the way that her corporeal beauty fails her through this process of reversal, and also, in the way that she grows more active and more determined throughout the tale, which are characteristics that are usually associated with the villain in traditional fairy tales. This deconstruction of the feminine ideal of beauty as presented in Grimm and Disney can be read as a protest against women's internalization of the ideal of feminine beauty and how they are taught self-definition based on appearance, and it can also be regarded as an objection to how women are evaluated by others based on the hierarchy of beauty.

When her quest eventually leads her to Booker, she is finally confesses that she lied in her testimony against Sofia Huxley, and she reveals that the reason why she did so was to make her mother want to hold her hand and look at her with proud eyes (cf. Morrison 2015: 153). Booker, then, tells her why he walked out on her, and he explains that it was because his brother, Adam, was killed by a child predator, and he thought that Bride was supporting one. After having professed the darkest secret of her childhood, Bride falls asleep and wakes up, feeling strong and newly reborn as her journey has finally reached its destination (cf. Morrison 2015: 161; 162). Having journeyed back to her childhood, both physically in the sense that her body has retracted into that of a child, and emotionally in dealing with the past, Bride is now born again, finally able to be both the woman Booker wants and also the woman that she wants to be.

Right after their reunion, Queen is injured in a fire, and Booker and Bride work together “like a true couple” to nurse her and comfort her (Morrison 2015: 167), but in spite of temporary progress she suddenly dies. In the midst of their grief, Bride notices that her body has returned to the way it used to be, and she also learns that she is pregnant. After having scattered Queen’s ashes, Bride tells Booker the news, and he then proceeds to offer her “the hand she has craved all her life” (Morrison 2015: 175). While Snow White in the traditional tales becomes beautiful before the death of the mother figure, Bride’s beauty returns after the death of Queen, who, as shall be argued in the coming parts, can be read as a mother figure, signaling that these women are confined within the same ideological structure in which Snow White and her stepmother are found, namely within an ideology that turns women against each other based on appearance. Queen and Bride are in a position of friendship as one is an old woman, and the other embodies the figure of a child, but in the same way that the stepmother has to die in the traditional narratives, Queen has to die in order for Bride to emerge as a beautiful woman.

In the same way that Grimms’ tale starts with the birth of Snow White and ends with marriage, and, with that, the possibility of a new birth, Morrison’s story also starts with a birth, and ends with the prospect of a new life entering the world. The story of Bride and Booker is concluded in the same manner as the tale of Snow White and her prince, while both of them imagine “what the future will certainly be” (Morrison 2015: 175). The story ends in the same way that it started, with Sweetness reflecting on the arrival of a child, but the happiness of the expecting parents are contrasted with Sweetness’ warning that “it all changes when you are a parent”, indicating that the stories that have been narrated, are set to repeat

themselves again (Morrison 2015: 178), and thus this story challenges the notion of the “happily ever after”.

5.3 A SNOW WHITE AS BLACK AS EBONY

Wilson notes that when intertexts are used in metafiction in the way that *God Help the Child* incorporates elements from “Snow White”, these elements function to highlight the shortcomings of the original tale (cf. Wilson 2008: 161), and this becomes evident in the way that the similarities between the intertext and the metafiction are both contrasted and parodied in Morrison’s story in order to enhance these shortcomings. While Snow White is a girl with skin so pale that it is associated with snow, Bride’s skin is as dark as “[a] panther in snow” (Morrison 2015: 34). Another similarity between Snow White and Bride is the way that they both leave home because of the hardship that the mother figure in the story gives them, based on their appearance. Grimms’ Snow White is loved by her mother and hated by her stepmother because of her beauty, but Bride is despised by her mother from birth because of the way she looks. Both Snow White and Bride, then, are only evaluated because of their appearance, whether it causes them to receive hate or love, indicating that daughters are only valued and evaluated from the outside.

While Snow White in the traditional tales leaves home after being warned by the huntsman that her stepmother is seeking to kill her, Bride leaves home voluntarily after high school, which also indicates that Bride is a different kind of Snow White-figure than the one found in the traditional tales as she plays an active role in surviving her childhood, in contrast to the traditional Snow White who has to rely on the huntsman to incite in her the courage to run away from the evil queen.

The last words that Booker tells Bride before he leaves is that she is not the woman he wants. These words frame Bride’s journey as she on the one hand wants to know why he left, but also because she cannot be fully human, fully woman, fully Bride, until she has resolved the wounds of the Lula Ann, the child in her. This is further emphasized through the way that Booker always used to call Bride “my girl”. Bride states that the only time Booker referred to her as a “woman” “was the day he split” (cf. Morrison 2015: 11), indicating that in order for Bride to be the woman Booker wants, she has to complete her own personal journey, mirroring also how Snow White has to go through the forest and a kind of “sleeping death” before she can be reborn as a wife. It seems that Booker's words partly function in the same

way as the voice of the mirror in the traditional narrative, driving the plot forward through the declaration that “[y]ou not the woman I want” (Morrison 2015: 8). On the one hand, this implies that Bride is confined to the same ideological structure as Snow White in the traditional tales, but the symbolic significance of the name "Bride" can also be seen to suggest that she is on a quest to marry herself. As her childhood has left her wounded, Bride needs to unify the parts of her selfhood that have been wounded by her upbringing. These internal scars need to be healed through consolidating her fragmented and divided self. In this way, Bride is, in a sense, her own bride, as she marries her internal woman and child, and the fragments of her being that have been wounded. She is not disinheriting the past, but she is rather incorporating her past with her present in order to reconstitute herself as a full person

In the same way that Disney’s Snow White lives in the space between the first time she sees the prince and when she is finally reunited with him, Bride’s story is also framed by the desire to find Booker. But while Disney’s Snow White longs for her prince to find her, so that she can become his wife, Bride is the one who sets out to find “the prince”, and she does so, not predominantly on the grounds of love, but in order to acquire answers to her questions, signaling that “the prince” is not only Booker, but also the answers to her questions about herself and the selfhood that she has neglected. What is more, while Snow White passively waits for her prince in the dwarfs’ cottage, Bride leaves her own house and sets out to find Booker where *he* passively exists.

As already stated, Bride falls asleep after “[h]aving confessed Lula Ann’s sins” (Morrison 2015: 162), and her dreamless sleep is “deeper than any she had known” (Morrison 2015:161), mirroring Snow White’s sleeping death. In the same way that Snow White is reborn after her sleeping death, Bride, on the other hand, reawakes also with sense of having been newly born, as she is no longer forced to outlive “the disdain of her mother and the abandonment of her father” (ibid). But while Snow White is reborn as the passive, ideal woman, the perfect candidate to become the new queen, Bride, reawakes feeling strong. The transformation is indicated by Booker, who contemplates that the woman he once enjoyed now was “changed into three – demanding, perceptive, daring” (Morrison 2015: 173). Unlike Snow White’s journey, which cumulates with Snow White embodying the ideal of the Silent Woman, Bride’s journey ends when she finally speaks up for herself. And this is when she emerges as a woman who manages to portray an image of femininity that counters with the flat ideal of the Silent Woman. Eagleton suggests that ideology is not “immune to rational considerations” (Eagleton 2007: 31), and Wilson hints at how it is possible to challenge ideological structures by using language to reverse the norms of ideology (cf. Wilson 2008:

7). Bride, then, transforms the classic ideal of femininity, while her character at the same time also plays on the traditional ways of presenting “the woman”. In this way, this narrative uses language to reveal and contest the ideological structures that are found in the traditional tales.

The relationship between Bride and Sweetness resembles that of Snow White and the stepmother in the traditional tales, as has been stated before. But what is more, Sweetness also mirrors the real mother in Grimms’ tale as she longs for a pale daughter. But while Lula Ann becomes known for her beauty and is obviously the fairest in the realm, her mother doesn’t recognize it in her. And what is more, while it is the voice of the mirror in Grimms’ tale that makes the stepmother resent her stepdaughter, Sweetness’ hostility towards Lula Ann grows because of the problems she creates between her and her husband. In the traditional tales the mother figure starts to begrudge Snow White when she gets older and more mature. In Morrison’s tale, however, Sweetness is repulsed by her child from the moment she is born, and she turns into what Bettelheim calls “the ‘typical’ fairy-tale stepmother” when her husband leaves them (Bettelheim 1991: 202). In the same way that Snow White’s stepmother tries to take her life because she can not tolerate her beauty, moreover, Sweetness holds a blanket over Lula Ann when she is a little girl, “just for a few seconds”, because she can not condone the blackness of her daughter’s skin (cf. Morrison 2015: 5).

In this story, the characters that are found in the traditional tale of “Snow White” are not recast by one single character in Morrison’s tale, but instead elements that resemble the characters in “Snow White” are to be found in several of the characters in *God Help the Child* in order to combat stereotypical expectations of femininity as they are found in the traditional tales. Wilson notes:

[A]n author may reverse the gender of the hero, “heroine,” or other characters to shift females from object to subject. She sometimes doubles roles so that the same person may be both rescuer and rescuee and, in terms of divided archetypes or foils, princes and stepmother or witch.

(Wilson 2008: 162)

While Sweetness embodies many of the elements as those found in Snow White’s stepmother, she is not the only one who does so. Booker’s aunt Queen Olive also mirrors the evil queen, both in respect to her name, but also in the way that she, in likeness with Snow White’s stepmother, used to be acknowledged because of her beauty, which with age started to fade. In the same way that the stepmother fails at taking on the role of the nurturing mother, and

becomes known as “the evil queen”, Booker’s aunt also fails at taking on the role of the good mother, as she continually chose new husbands over her children.

Similar to how the father in Disney’s version of “Snow White” is never present in the story, the father in Morrison’s tale chooses to abandon his family, and he remains absent throughout the narrative. Both the brothers Grimm and Gaiman depict stories in which the father is present in the beginning, but while the father in Grimms’ tale simply disappears from the story, he dies after being attacked by his daughter in Gaiman’s version. Comparable to the tales by the brothers Grimm and Gaiman, the father is only present at the beginning of the Morrison’s story.

While the patriarch is absent from the tales in the stories by the Grimms, Disney and Gaiman, the mother figure is still allowed to stay at the palace, and it gives her an opportunity to rule the kingdom. But for Sweetness, the departure of her husband means that she had to find a new place to stay (Morrison 2015: 6). Warner suggests that the evil actions of the stepmother in fairy tales may not be “intrinsic to her nature”, but it may arise “from the insecurity of her interests in a social and legal context” (Warner 1995: 237). In contrast to the traditional tales, then, Sweetness experiences socio-economic consequences of being abandoned, and, according to Warner’s line of reasoning, her wickedness towards Bride may be due to how her economic and social situation changes when her husband, Louis, leaves the mother and child to themselves. What is more, the socio-economic nature of Bride and Sweetness’ relationship is further amplified as the story unfolds, moreover, and Sweetness states that their “relationship is down to [Bride] sending [her] money” (Morrison 2015: 177). Barbara Walker notes in her book *The Woman’s Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects* that money is “[p]erhaps the primary symbol of power in patriarchal society today” (Walker 1988: 146). Grimms’ Snow White manages to out-power her stepmother only when she has gained a position as the wife of the prince, while Bride is able to assert some power of Sweetness by making her dependent on the money that she sends to her. Though Snow White and Bride use different means to shift the structure of power between themselves and their evil mother figures, they both do so within the framework of patriarchal power.

After Bride’s accident on her journey to find Booker, Steve and Evelyn, a white couple living in the woods, take care of her and help restore her back to health. Steve and Evelyn are a couple who live together with a little girl named Rain whom they have taken in as she had to run away from home after her mother kicked her out of the house because she bit a man who had paid her mother to take advantage of her. Bride stays with them in their humble home in a converted machine shop or something of that kind, (cf. Morrison 2015: 87)

for six weeks until her car is fixed and she can walk again (cf. Morrison 2015: 92). The house in the woods, and the context of the forest in which Bride is left scared and alone after her accident, evokes an association to how Snow White finds the dwarfs' cottage in the traditional tales. Similar to the way that the cottage in the traditional tales is inhabited by kind-hearted dwarfs, Bride is also taken to the home of the nice couple. And in the same way that the cottage in the traditional narratives is inhabited by a group of dwarfs who do not comprise a family, the people Bride ends up living with is indeed not a real family either, as the daughter is only borrowed from someone else. But while Snow White's stay at the cottage has her cleaning and cooking for the dwarfs, Bride is the one being cooked and cleaned for.

Booker, of course, is the character who embodies the role of the prince in the tale of "Snow White". Resembling Disney's story, he is only present for a brief moment at the beginning of the story, in that Bride explains how he has left her. Then he reappears again at the end of the tale, and the story ends when the prospect of a happy future together is secured at the announcement of their pregnancy. But in contrast to the traditional tales, and also the tales by Gaiman and Carter, in which the perspective of the prince is never offered, the third part of the book is Booker's story, where he reveals how his brother was murdered. He also depicts how his father told him to leave the house when years later he wanted his parents to consider some kind of memorial for his brother, and he believes that his family sees him as trying to "outfather" their father (cf. Morrison 2015: 124-125). Throughout her journey it dawns on Bride how little she actually knows Booker, echoing how Grimm's Snow White is married off to the prince whom she hasn't yet had more than one conversation with. But while Disney's prince goes looking for Snow White, it is Bride who travels into the woods in order to find Booker. Similar to the way that patriarchs frame the story and the quest from first home to final home in Grimms' tale as the father is the symbol of the initial home, and the prince is the symbol of Snow White's quest coming to an end, Bride's story is also confined within a framework that begins and ends with the acceptance or rejection of patriarchs.

While Bride is the most obvious figure of Snow White in this story, both Rain and Booker's stories bring association to the protagonist in the traditional versions of "Snow White". Rain's echoes Snow White as she is a child with "milk-white skin, ebony hair, neon eyes" and "undetermined age" (cf. Morrison 2015: 86). And what is more, she also resembles Snow White in the traditional tales in the way that they both grow up without her father (Morrison 2015: 105), and now live with a "substitute" mother, that is, Evelyn (cf. Morrison 2015: 104-105). Furthermore, in the same way that Snow White is made to flee her home because of the rivalry with her stepmother, Rain is also thrown out of her home by her mother

(Morrison 2015: 101). Booker, on the other hand, corresponds to Snow White in the way that he is the one who is hidden away in a small house far from the city, while waiting passively for someone to save him from his life of grief. Bride comes to find Booker in order to save herself, but in doing so, she also saves Booker who is finally able to let the grief of his brother go, and in this way Bride is reversed from object to subject.

Zipes notes that the Grimms' tales "contained sexist and racist attitudes and served a socialization process that placed great emphasis on passivity, industry, and self-sacrifice for girls and on activity, competition, and accumulation of wealth for boys" (Zipes 2012: 58). Booker, however, contrasts with how the prince is portrayed in the traditional tales as he is not the active part and he doesn't accumulate wealth. Because he doesn't, Brooklyn thinks he is a felon something that signals that the images of masculinity are so strongly connected with wealth and activity that one appears suspicious if one fails to live up to these masculine ideals. Bride, on the other hand, is the one who embodies these characteristics, as she is wealthy and also relentless in her work.

Bride emerges as kind of savior as the story unfolds, as one might argue that she saves Booker from his own despair and isolation and also in the way that she protects Rain from danger when a group of boys drive by and point a shotgun at them after which Rain explains that nobody has ever "put their own self in danger to save me. Save my life" (cf. Morrison 2015: 105; 106). But most importantly, Bride takes on the role of the savior in this narrative as she is the one who delivers herself from the past, that is, a life doomed by childhood trauma, contrasting with how the traditional Snow White needs the prince to save her from the trouble that life at her initial home caused her.

5.4 ONCE UPON MANY TIMES

Warner notes that "[f]airy tales are one-dimensional, depthless, abstract, and sparse" (Warner 2014: xx), but while the plot in *God Help the Child* uses "Snow White" as an intertext, Morrison's narrative is more complex than the one presented by the brothers Grimm and Disney. *God Help the Child* is in a sense a story of several stories, or rather, a number of journeys, and in this way the novel functions to displace the general plotline (cf. Wilson 2008: 7) of the traditional tale. In addition to narrating various stories, the novel moreover depicts the story of Bride's journey to find her prince, but more so, it also delineates her journey to

become fully woman, fully human, and in order for this to happen, she has to journey back into her childhood, like we have seen.

Zipes argues, as noted in chapter three, that most of the tales by the Grimms ask the questions of how one must keep with the norms in order to influence the culture, what must one learn in order to be accepted in society. The protagonist learns this lesson along the way from initial home to final home (cf. Zipes 2012: 69). It has been asserted that Booker's words are the ones that impel Bride on in her journey. In the same way that Snow White's journey prepares her to become the wife of the prince, Bride's journey also prepares her to become the woman Booker wants. In thinking about the little girl that she used to be, Bride wonders whether Lula Ann is more like the woman that Booker wants than what she is today, and concludes that "Lula Ann Bridewell is no longer available and she was never a woman" (Morrison 2015: 11), but as it turns out, she has to become that little girl again in order to become the woman that he "wants", but also the woman that she wants to be. What is more, Booker also has to complete his own journey in order to see Bride as the woman he "wants", because what causes Booker to utter these words in the first place is a reaction to his childhood trauma, and a misunderstanding of Bride's actions. In order for him to see Bride as the woman she really is, he has to complete his own journey and let go of his own hurtful past. While it is only Snow White who has to mature in order for her to become the prince's wife, Morrison's tale shows that in order for Bride and Booker to work "together like a true couple" (Morrison 2015: 167) they both have to journey from their first home of childhood trauma, to the initial home of maturity.

While the Grimms, Disney and Gaiman portray a Snow White who is loved by, and saved by patriarchs, Carter and Morrison question the role of the saving patriarch in the way that they depict a Snow White who is desired by patriarchs who are unable to save her. Zipes proposes that for a male character the goal of the journey is to acquire "money, power, and a woman" (cf. Zipes 2012: 69), criteria by which Booker falls short, and Bride states that Booker is not a savior at all (Morrison 2015: 79).

5.5 TO MAKE A NAME OF ONESELF

In her article "Postmodernism and Post-Utopian Desire in Toni Morrison and E. L. Doctorow" Marianne DeKoven states that the power in naming one's children, and naming oneself, is crucial in other work by Morrison (cf. DeKoven 1997: 114), and the same

emphasis on the power of naming and being named is also significant in *God Help the Child*. The names of the characters in the Morrison's novel are deeply symbolic, and there are several instances in which the characters renames themselves in order to reinvent themselves and impact the way other people might consider them and behave towards them.

Bride's given name is Lula Ann Bridewell, which is a name that brings reference to the family ties that she wants to break with, as she is, one might assume, named after her grand mother Lula Mae (Morrison 2015: 3). After a childhood filled with rejection and hurt, Bride wants to start over, and in an attempt to do so, she renames herself in order to remake herself. She omits her first name, Lula Ann, and excludes her last name, and in doing so, she emphasizes that she has no family ties, or none that she wants to be defined by. Booker states that "Bride's complicated relationship with her mother and repellent father meant that, like him, she was free of family ties" (Morrison 2015: 134), and the lack of family ties is mirrored in the name that she chooses for herself.

What is more, in the tales that have been investigated throughout this thesis, the character of Snow White is either named based on her appearance, or she simply appears without a name at all. In the tales by Disney and the Grimms the protagonist is called, and known as, Snow White. In the stories by Carter and Gaiman, however, she remains unnamed throughout the story, emphasizing how these Snow Whites are stripped of identity and humanity. In the same way that the Snow White in the traditional tales is given a name that reflects her appearance, the Snow White in Morrison's story, namely Bride, also possesses a name that carries symbolic meaning. Though Jeri claims that he doesn't encourage her to wear white predominantly because of her newfound name (cf. Morrison 2015: 33), the link between the color of her dress and her name, is striking. But while the names of both Snow White and Bride bring association to the color white, Snow White's name emphasizes her pale skin which is, in the traditional tales, intrinsic to being seen as "fairest of them all", Bride's name symbolizes her quest rather than her appearance. Moreover, the passiveness of Snow White's nature is further accented by the way that her name doesn't imply any movement or activity; she is in a continuous state of waiting for her "someday". Bride's name, on the other hand, insinuates how she plays and active role in her own life, which is made visible as she wants to make amends for her past, but also in the way that she searches for her prince, and herself. While Snow White is named by her mother, and exists like a blank, white waiting to be written upon, Bride names herself, and sets out to get questions, and, moreover, to live a life that has a story.

In the same way that the name of the prince is not revealed in either of the tales by Carter, Gaiman, Disney and the Grimms, Bride doesn't mention Booker when she writes to Sweetness to tell her that she is expecting a child, which leads Sweetness to assume that in choosing to avoid disclosing the name of "[t]he nameless boyfriend, husband, pick-up" (Morrison 2015: 178), Bride's happiness, as it is expressed in the letter, cannot be rooted in the father of her child (cf. Morrison 2015: 176). But while Bride chooses not to mention Booker when she writes to Sweetness, his name is known in the tale, unlike the princes in the traditional and postmodern tales. And what is more, we have also seen how the third part of the book is dedicated to hearing his story, emphasizing the fact that "the prince" in the story is given both a name, a voice, and a story of his own, as has already been stated.

Wilson notes that fairy-tale intertexts serve to indicate characters', and also that of the reader one might argue, "entrapment in preexisting patterns" (cf. Wilson 2008: 161), and the names of both Booker and Bride, indicate the patterns in which Snow White and the prince are confined within. His name signals intelligence and activity, which mirror both his love for knowledge and books, but also the ideal of masculinity which portrays the man as superior. Moreover, Bride's name refers on the one hand to the beauty that makes her fairer than them all, but it also implies that she is passively waiting for her bridegroom to arrive, and that she is nothing more than what you see on the outside. Booker's name refers to his mind, while Bride's name, contrastingly, brings attention only to her appearance. But unlike Snow White and the prince, both the personas of Booker and Bride contrast with their names, in a number of ways.

Snow White in the traditional tales is the personification of the passiveness which her name indicates, and the prince is one-dimensional and depthless, which, according to Warner is customary for characters in the genre of the fairy tale (cf. Warner 2014: xx). The prince-figure in both the traditional tales and the postmodern revisions has only one desire, that is to possess Snow White. Morrison is parodying the traditional tales by portraying a prince who leaves the Snow White-figure, one who has to be found and rescued by the heroine instead of being the one who saves. Bride, on the other hand, is the savior in the story, as stated, saving both her self and Booker from their separate pasts in order to regain a future together. Wilson postulates that Morrison communicates through tropes in order to make the tale powerfully symbolic (Wilson 2008: 70), and this is evident in *God Help The Child* in the way that the characters contrast with their symbolic names.

In the same way that Gaiman's tale starts and ends with the voice of the stepmother, *God Help the Child* also starts and ends with the voice of Sweetness, though her real name is

never revealed. She is made known to the reader based only on who she is, namely Bride's mother, an "abandoned wife" (Morrison 2015: 6), and who she chooses to be, that is, Sweetness. Although the name of her daughter, Lula Ann, and her mother, Lula Mae, are stated in the narrative, she remains unnamed throughout the tale. She is presented only by her chosen name, a name that she chooses as she considers it safer for her black daughter to avoid calling her "mother" because that could confuse people (cf. Morrison 2015: 6), Sweetness explains.

Similar to how a stepmother is someone who is not quite mother, Sweetness tries to distance herself from her maternal role. Warner notes that it is customary that the kind mother dies at the beginning of a fairy tale, and she is often replaced by an evil mother, or a monster (cf. Warner 1995: 201). While the change of name from mother to Sweetness echoes the shift from mother to stepmother, Morrison's story also resembles the Grimms' version of 1806, in which we have seen that it is Snow White's real mother who turns into a monster who victimizes her own daughter because she is too beautiful. In the same way, Sweetness is also a mother who turns into a monster because she despises the way Lula Ann looks.

The mother in Grimms' tale of 1806 starts resenting Snow White when the mirror tells her that her daughter is fairer than she, and Sweetness thinks that she is going crazy when Lula Ann's skin changes from being "pale like all babies" into "blue-black, right before [her] eyes" (cf. Morrison 2015: 5). Lula Ann, that is, Bride, obeys her mother's wish to call her "Sweetness", but while Bride accepts her mother's command to be named Sweetness, her mother refuses to acknowledge that her daughter, in likeness with her, renames herself, and she doesn't "pay that any attention" (cf. Morrison 2015: 176).

In the same way that Bride and Sweetness changes their names in order to remake themselves and alter other people's perception of them, there are several other instances throughout the story in which characters either rename themselves, or refuse to be referred to in a familiar way. Similar to how Sweetness secures a distance between her and her child by choosing a name that doesn't reinforce a familiar bond, Booker's grandfather is not called "Daddy" or "Papa" by Booker's mother, but "Mr. Drew" as he is openly hostile towards anyone who is not as wealthy as him. (Cf. Morrison 2015: 116), a hostility that is also reflected in the way that he includes his grandchildren, and not his children, in his will (cf. Morrison 2015: 130). The coldness of that relationship is emphasized by the fact that he doesn't leave Booker's mother, or any of his children, any money when he dies. Instead, he only included his grandchildren in his will (cf. Morrison 2015: 130).

In likeness with Mr. Drew, Booker's aunt, Queen Olive is not spoken of according to the familiar label "aunt", but instead her nephew uses her first name when he refers to her. In the same way that Bride and Booker's names hold symbolic meaning in this story, Queen's name is also loaded with symbolic meaning. On the one side, her name, Queen, suggests that she can be regarded as a manifestation of Snow White's first mother, as she is the only character who shows maternal nurture, towards both Booker and Bride. However, her name also parodies the good mother, as she herself has several children with a number of different husbands, and, according to Booker, all her children "hate her for some reason or another (cf. Morrison 2015: 169). And similar to both Snow White's mother and stepmother, she doesn't "raise a single child beyond the age of twelve" (Morrison 2015: 159).

Names matter, and in the context of Morrison's story the notion of not being named is associated with losing one's humanity, as was also argued in relation to Gaiman and Carter's narratives in chapter four. When Bride recovers her beauty after being beaten up by Sofia Huxley, her co-workers throw her a party to celebrate her new line of cosmetics, during which she drinks a lot, and wakes up with a man whose names she doesn't know. Signaling that the lack of knowledge of the man's name is an indication of what state of life she is in, she exclaims, "[m]y life is falling down. I'm sleeping with men whose names I don't know and not remembering any of it" (Morrison 2015: 53). Sofia Huxley, on the other hand, is also a woman who is put into a state of namelessness in the story, as in prison she trades the humanity that a name entails for the inhumanity of being turned into the number 0071140 (cf. Morrison 2015: 30).

It has been argued that Bride's name contrasts with her persona to the point that it functions as a parody of that which her name signals, and the same trait can be found in other characters in the novel as well. For many years, Booker's family has to live with the fact that they don't know what has happened to the oldest sibling in the family, namely Adam, though it becomes apparent that he was killed by a child predator. When Adam's killer is identified his real name is not revealed as he is referred to as "[t]he nicest man in the world" (Morrison 2015: 118; 119), but the names of the children he has raped and killed are tattooed across his shoulders (cf. Morrison 2015: 118). Gaiman's tale revealed how looks can be deceiving in Gaiman's tale, and how the outward form of an innocent girl can hide the manifestation of a monster. In the same way, the man who gives the impression of being "the nicest man in the world" is not suspected for being a rapist and a killer, in contrast, the tattoo artist who tattooed the names of the predator's victims onto his shoulders "said that he thought they were the names of his client's children, not of those other people" (Morrison 2015: 118).

While Brooklyn thinks that Booker is the one who is a felon (cf. Morrison 2015: 140), the criminal is actually the one who appears to everyone as “the nicest man in the world”.

While the “nicest man in the world” turns out to be a monster, Booker’s brother, Adam, turns into an angelic being in the mind of Booker following the time after his death. Booker explains that “Adam was more than brother” to him (Morrison 2015: 115), and in a way he becomes a substitute for Booker’s stillborn twin brother (cf. Morrison 2015: 115), in other words, almost a part of himself. But Adam becomes even more than that in the life of Booker. At Adam’s funeral Queen advises Booker not to let Adam go, “[n]ot until he’s ready. Hang on to him tooth and claw. Adam will let you know when it’s time” (Morrison 2015: 117). Following his aunt’s advice, he clings to the spirit, or to the idea, of Adam, and Booker contemplates that “Adam’s death became [my] own life. I think it’s [my] only life” (Morrison 2015: 147).

In 1 Corinthians, Paul speaks of the first Adam and the second Adam, and he states that it is written that “[t]he first man Adam became a living being” and “the last Adam, a life-giving spirit” (cf. 1 Corinthians 15: 45). In the same way that Paul depicts an Adam that receives life from the second Adam, Booker and Adam can be read as mirroring the first and the second Adam described in the Bible, in the way that Adam becomes Booker’s whole life. Chevalier and Gheerbrant argue that the biblical Adam is in the image of God in the same way that a piece of artwork is in the image of the painter (cf. Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 6), but in the instance of Booker and his brother, Adam continues to live as an image, or reflection in the mind of Booker. Moreover, while the second Adam in biblical context is the metaphor for the Christ, the savior, it is the first Adam, in Morrison’s novel that gives life to the second Adam, that is Booker. But while the first Adam, according to Paul, receives life by the second Adam, Booker has to let go of Adam in order to regain his own life. In the same way that second Adam is a life-giving Spirit, the traditional tales depict a Snow White who reawakes as a life-giving spirit, beyond humanity, living to love the prince and birth his children. But Booker shows that this kind of life is destructive, impossible. The ideal has to be omitted in order for life to spring forth.

5.6 “PRETTY” HURTS

Wolf states that the quality that we call “beauty is not timeless or changeless” and that the ideals of beauty change rapidly” (cf. Wolf 1991: 12), and in Morrison’s novel it is evident

that there is development in how people of black color are being perceived. Sweetness gives an insight into how society treated black people in America when Lula Ann was born:

Back in the nineties when Lula Ann was born, the law was against discriminating in who you would rent to, but not many landlords paid attention to it. They made up reasons to keep you out. But I got lucky with Mr. Leigh. I know he upped the rent seven dollars from what he advertised, and he has a fit if you a minute late with the money.

(Morrison 2015: 6)

Because ideals of beauty are determined by politics, according to Wolf, Sweetness believes that Lula Ann's blackness is a "cross she will always have to carry" and she explains that this is the reason why she had to teach Lula Ann "how to behave, how to keep her head down and not make trouble". In the same way that Snow White in the traditional tales has to learn how to behave in order to become "the fairest of them all", Lula Ann has to learn how to conduct herself, to hide her internal and external "ugliness", validating what Wolf states when she argues that the qualities a woman has to embody in order to be deemed "beautiful" are "mere symbols of the female behavior that that period considers desirable" (Wolf 1991: 13-14).

Rani Jah argues that the cultural ideas of femininity have been shaped through gendered socialization in the way that they elevate gendered norms of beauty, and moreover, that these ideas of beauty "exercise social control over female bodies" (cf. Rani Jah 2016: 1). In the same way that the traditional story of "Snow White" has functioned to socialize women into the Silent Woman, it can also be argued that these narratives have reinforced "[t]he fantasy of patriarchal heterosexual bliss of the white princess" (Rani Jah 2016: 1). Moreover, Rani Jah elaborates:

Dominant beauty standards in the US have positioned and continue to position black girls and women as less beautiful, less feminine, and less human if they possess darker skin and African hair texture and facial features.

(Rani Jah 2016: 33)

Sweetness despises her daughter because the ideal of beauty at the time of Lula Ann's birth was one that made people group themselves "according to skin color – the lighter, the better" (cf. Morrison 2015: 4), a standard to which Lula Ann falls short. The systematic hierarchy of skin color to which Sweetness refers is discussed by Rani Jah, and she notes that having "near-white" skin would entail benefits such as access to skilled work, education and a certain kind of social mobility (cf. Rani Jah 2016: 44). Sweetness' revulsion with Lula Ann's skin, then, could also be read as a socio-economic apprehension as she knows that Lula Ann's

appearance might reduce her, and also Sweetness', opportunities to move from one social class to another.

But as Lula Ann grows, the ideals associated with black skin are starting to change. In the last chapter of the book, Sweetness thinks to herself that if Bride's baby is as black as she was, she doesn't need to worry like Sweetness did, because "[t]hings have changed a mite from when I was young. Blue blacks are all over TV, in fashion magazines, commercials, even starring in movies" (cf. Morrison 2015: 176), suggesting that during the twenty-three years that has gone by since Lula Ann's birth, the ideals of feminine beauty, and black skin, have been radically changed. In this way, Morrison's novel proposes that beauty, indeed, is not timeless or universal.

While Sweetness distances herself from Lula Ann because of the color of her skin, it is exactly that which first captures Booker's attention, and attracts him to her:

Simply dumbstruck by her beauty Booker stared open-mouthed at a young blue-black woman standing at the curb laughing. Her clothes were white, her hair like a million black butterflies asleep on her head.

(Morrison 2015: 131)

Even though Bride works in the cosmetics industry, she does not wear any make up herself. What makes people regard her as beautiful is not then something that is constructed, and she wears white in order to enhance her blackness, in other words, that which she learned in her childhood made her not beautiful, and not worthy of love. While it is Bride's beauty that first intrigues Booker, it is not only her appearance that makes him find Bride beautiful, as her independence and active lifestyle are equally attracting to him. While the prince in the traditional tales and postmodern versions is, as we have seen, attracted to Snow White because of her passiveness, the "prince" in Morrison's novel is attracted to her beauty, but also her mind. Booker explains that "Bride was knock-down beautiful, easy, had something to do every day and didn't need his presence every minute" (Morrison 2015: 133).

Unlike the passive, lifeless Snow White portrayed in the traditional tales and the postmodern revisions, the ideal of beauty that is depicted in Morrison's novel is not confined to being either an angel or a monster. Wolf argues that the myth of beauty tells the story of how beauty exists both objectively and universally, and "[w]omen must want to embody it and men must want to possess a woman who embodies it" (Wolf 1991: 12), but in Morrison's story we are presented with a woman who embodies a beauty ideal that contrasts with the one

that is presented in the traditional tales, and a man who wants the female character both because of her beauty and because of her inner persona.

But Booker has also been a man who objectifies women, similar to several of the patriarchs that have been analyzed in chapter three and chapter four. He recalls how “[h]e and his dorm mates ranked girls according to men’s magazines and porn videos, ranked one another according to characters in action movies they had seen” (Morrison 2015: 121). As already noted, Eagleton proposes that ideology “represents the points where power impacts upon certain utterances and inscribes itself tacitly within them” (Eagleton 2007: 223) and Wilson argues that feminist intertextual revisions display this power by revealing “the ideologically determined discourses encoded in the traditional tales” (Wilson 2008: 4). Booker’s journey from someone who is confined within the framework of evaluating women based on appearance, and men according to their ability to play the saving patriarch like they are portrayed in action movies, to someone who appreciates a woman for more than the way she looks, while also failing to live up to the ideal of men being the hero, challenges the ideological structures that are embedded within the traditional tales.

But while Booker acknowledges that there is more to Bride than her appearance, Bride still feels confined within the patriarchal pattern that insists that women are “allowed a mind or a body but not both” (Wolf 1991: 59), and she explains how the men she has encountered in her life were never “interested in what I thought, just what I looked like” (Morrison 2015: 37). While Booker appreciates, and acknowledges, both her body and her mind, Bride’s experiences reveal that the ideological structures that underpin the traditional tales have been an integral part of Bride’s experience as a woman, indicating that these structures are still prevailing in society today.

Throughout this thesis it has been argued that concepts of beauty are tied up with certain standards of behavior, and it has been asserted that Snow White in the traditional tales learns the certain kind of behavior that deems her worthy of becoming “fairest of them all” along her journey from initial home to final home. From a young age Lula Ann learns how behave to in order to become a beautiful object in the eyes of her mother. Gilbert and Gubar assert that:

[L]earning to become a beautiful object, the girl learns anxiety about – perhaps even loathing of – her own flesh. Peering obsessively into the real as well as metaphorical looking glasses that surrounds her, she desires literally to “reduce” her own body.

(Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 54)

According to Bride, obedience is the only survival choice when fear rules, and she recalls how she, as the young Lula Ann, became good at being obedient, at reducing herself, as she “behaved and behaved and behaved”. To Lula Ann, the ultimate prize was that her mother, the looking glass in which she evaluated her worth, finally smiled at her, appeared proud of her, and, as they left the courthouse after Lula Ann’s testimony against Sofia Huxley, Sweetness held her hand” (cf. Morrison 2015: 31-32). Sweetness taught Lula Ann “how to keep her head down” (Morrison 2015: 7), how to reduce her own body, and as she succeeds at it, she becomes, in the eyes of her mother, a beautiful object, and for a brief moment, worthy of her mother’s love, validating Rani Jah’s statement in which she argues that images of beauty can be used as an oppressive and objectifying socializing force (cf. Rani Jah 2016: 91).

Wolf proposes, as noted, that the ideal of beauty makes women want to embody it, and it also makes men want to possess the woman who personifies the image of the perfect woman (cf. Wolf 1991: 12), and the concept of male possession of women is debated in Morrison’s novel. Even though the relationship between Booker and Bride can be regarded as one of equality, they both have to complete their journeys in order to make equality possible. Booker reminisces about his time with Bride, and states:

Whether he was lying under her body, hovering above it or holding her in her arms, her blackness thrilled him. Then he was certain that he not only held the night, he owned it, and if the night in his arms was not enough, he could always see starlight in her eyes”
(Morrison 2015: 133)

In order for Booker and Bride to see each other as equals, Booker has to learn how to see Bride as a real human being, not as an object that he can own. Along the same lines, Queen states that although she has had many different husbands, they are all “the same where it counts”, that is, when it comes to “[o]wnership” (cf. Morrison 2015: 147). In this way she implies that although she used to be a beautiful woman, she didn’t want to be possessed, and one might argue that is also why she replaces one husband after the other, implying that she is resisting the ideological structures that makes her into an object that men can own and assert power over.

Queen Olive’s first name brings association, as investigated earlier, to the good queen in the tale of “Snow White”, but her last name also carries symbolic meaning beyond this in *God Help the Child*. Queen recollects:

“I was pretty once, she thought, real pretty, and I believed it was enough. Well, actually it was until it wasn’t, until I had to be a real person, meaning a thinking one.”
(Morrison 2015: 158)

As the ideal of beauty was based on the lightness of one's skin at the time when Queen presumably grew up, her last name gives an indication of the color of her skin, and by the standards of beauty, olive skin would then have equaled beauty. But contrasting with the ideal that is presented in the traditional tales which teaches that as long as one is beautiful, the prince will save you in the end, Queen learns that beauty is, in the end, not enough.

While Bride was not perceived as beautiful when she was as child, she is so accustomed to people applauding her appearance as a grown woman that her entire self-confidence vanishes as soon as Queen articulates that she recognizes something other than beauty in her:

'You look like something a raccoon found and refused to eat.' Bride swallowed. For the past three years she'd only been told how exotic, how gorgeous she was, - everywhere, from almost everybody - stunning, dreamy, hot, wow! Now this old woman with woolly red hair and judging eyes had deleted an entire vocabulary of compliments in one stroke. Once again she was the ugly, too-black little girl in her mother's house.

(Morrison 2015: 144)

Even though Queen's words, and maybe also her lack of awe and admiration, are accompanied by a wave of hurtful memories on Bride's part, it is also words that, in essence, help Bride return to Lula Ann. In one simple sentence, Queen helps Bride to deconstruct her confidence which has been based on how she, and society, perceive her beauty and her personal success. Only by breaking free of the notion that she has to be a beautiful object if she is to be worthy of love, and this is why she has to journey back to her childhood where Sweetness taught her how to behave. Only then can she, as Gilbert and Gubar present as necessary, kill the aesthetic ideal through which she herself has been "killed" into art (Gilbert & Gubar 2000:17).

Wolf notes that "[m]ale culture seems happiest to imagine two women together when they are defined as being one winner and the other a loser in the beauty myth" (Wolf 1991: 60), and Gilbert and Gubar assert that the winner and the loser are presented in literature through the extreme images of "angel" or "monster" (cf. Gilbert & Gubar 2000: 17). Within this binary, the Snow White portrayed in the traditional tales always emerges as the angel in the story. But in Morrison's novel, *God Help the Child*, it is not the Snow White-figure, that is Bride, who is presented as an angel. The angel, in Booker's imagination, is his deceased brother Adam whom Booker explains "was the brother he worshipped" (Morrison 2015: 115).

In likeness with the Snow White in the traditional tales, Adam, according to Booker, didn't have any faults; he "was innocent, pure, easy to love" (cf. Morrison 2015: 160). In the same way that the prince in the traditional tales can only love Snow White when she has become the ideal of the perfect woman, in a sense, an angel, Booker can not love any one else than the ideal of his angel-brother. But while the prince in the Grimms' tale "can't go on living without being able to see Snow White" (Grimm 1857 in Zipes 2007: 240), Booker learns that he indeed can not go on living if he doesn't let go of the angel in his imagination. While Bride sleeps in his chair after having screamed at him and hit him with a bottle, he wonders what made her look for him, whether it as outrage or love (cf. Morrison 2015: 16). Booker then realizes that the reason he has loved his brother so extravagantly after his death, is because loving an idea, or an ideal, was easy, and Booker wonders "[w]hat kind of love is it that requires an angel and only an angel for its commitment" (Morrison 2015: 160). It begins to dawn on him that the reason why he has focused his adoration on Adam is because everyone else has flaws, and loving them would then involve taking a risk. We have seen how

Zipes argues that the goal of a male protagonist's journey in a fairy tale is to attain money, power and woman. In letting go of the notion of his angel-brother Booker challenges the ideal of masculinity proposed in fairy tales, and he proceeds to apologize to Adam "for enslaving you in order to chain myself to the illusion of control and the cheap seduction of power" (Morrison 2015: 161), and with that he discloses the facileness of masculine power, but he also reveals the absurdity that underlies the notion of loving an image instead of a person, a dead girl in a glass coffin, instead of a dynamic, vigorous, human woman.

In the same way that Booker undergoes a transformation when he finally lets go of his brother, Bride undergoes a reversal of metamorphosis which cumulates when she falls asleep at Booker's house, echoing how Snow White emerges as a new woman when she when she awakes from her sleeping death. After Lula Ann's testimony against Sofia Huxley, Sweetness has Lula Ann's ears pierced and buys "her a pair of earrings" as she wants to show Bride how proud she is of her (cf. Morrison 2015: 42). But when Booker leaves her, Bride's body begins the process of reversing itself back into the body of a little girl, as we have seen, mirroring the emotional journey Bride has to embark upon.

The first change that she notices is that and her pubic and armpit hair is suddenly gone, and not "gone as in shaved or waxed, but gone as in erased, as in never having been there in the first place" (Morrison 2015: 13). Further on, she notices how her earlobes have closed, and Bride is discomposed at how "[a]fter all these years, [she's] got virgin earlobes, untouched by a needle, smooth as a baby's thumb" (Morrison 2015: 51). Finally she becomes

aware of how her hips and breasts have dissipated (cf. Morrison 2015: 92-93) and she reluctantly starts to suspect that she is “changing back into a little black girl” (cf. Morrison 2015: 97).

However, before Bride notices that her body is beginning to change she wonders whether Lula Ann Bridewell is the woman Booker wants. But she concludes that “Lula Ann Bridewell is no longer available, and she never was a woman” (cf. Morrison 2015: 11). Bride thinks that Lula Ann is no longer available, but her body takes her back to initial home, to the Lula Ann that existed before the testimony in the courthouse. Warner notes that a reversal of metamorphosis leads to “recognition of the protagonist’s value and virtue” (Warner 2014: 39), and the journey which Bride has to partake in, cumulates in the reversal of the metamorphosis and the return of the holes in her ears, her hips and breasts and pubic hair. Once the metamorphosis is reversed, Bride finally recognizes her value and worth.

Wilson notes that “[a]s a tool of feminist critique, feminist metafiction can reveal the conventionality of the codes of fiction, how they have been constructed, and how they can be changed” (Wilson 2008: 4). In portraying a Snow White who is transformed from woman to child, from a renowned beauty to a ugly, little black girl (cf. Morrison 2015: 144), Morrison reverses the structure of the classic tale of “Snow White” in order to challenge the established structure and ideology in which it is submerged. After her metamorphosis, Bride states that

She had counted on her looks for so long – how well beauty worked. She had not known its shallowness or her own cowardice – the vital lesson Sweetness taught and nailed to her spine to curve it.

(Morrison 2015: 151)

Finally free from the ghost of her past which taught her that only when she appeared as a beautiful object in the eyes of others was she worthy of love, Bride recognizes the facility of this kind of love, and thus Bride reveals the shallowness of the ideal of femininity as presented in “Snow White”.

5.7 AS OLD AS THE HILLS

In the same way that Gaiman refers to the queen’s and the princess’ specific ages, Morrison depicts the exact age of Bride. She is eight years old when she testifies against Sofia Huxley,

and she is twenty-three when the story is outplayed, even though her friend, Brooklyn who is twenty-one, has been under the impression that Bride was two years younger than she really is (Morrison 2015: 27). But while we are given the specific ages of some of the characters, other characters' age is not revealed. Rain's age, for instance, remains uncertain, but Evelyn guesses that she is around six, though she doesn't really know, as Rain "never said and [Evelyn] doubt[s] she knows" (cf. Morrison 2015: 97).

It has been asserted how Snow White's journey in the traditional tales is one that brings her to full maturity so that she is prepared to become the prince's wife. But while Bride can be read as a Snow White-figure, her journey is not one that brings her to maturity; contrastingly, Bride's journey is one that reverses the process. Instead of journeying from child to woman, she journeys from woman to child.

Wolf states that within the framework of popular culture "[a]ging in women is 'unbeautiful' since women grow more powerful with time" (Wolf 1991: 14), and this was argued to be true in the traditional tales in chapter three, as the stepmother cannot be fairest of them all when she grows in power and automaticity. However, age is not regarded as "unbeautiful" in *God Help the Child*, rather, youth is that which is portrayed as not beautiful in this novel. When Bride is reversed into a little girl, this is not seen as a blessing, on the contrary, she thinks that she is suffering from an illness that is both visible and invisible, and she is certain that it is Booker's departure, or "his curse", that causes her transformation (cf. Morrison 2015: 95). While Snow White in the traditional tales is portrayed as a young girl, and her youth a premise for her beauty and, thus, a premise for love, Carter's tale displays the perversity of loving, or desiring rather, a young girl, namely the Snow Child. Similarly, Bride shows that if a man can only love a woman in the shape of a child, than his affection is not love at all, it is contrastingly a curse.

While age is a symbol of beauty in Morrison's novel, it is also depicted as that which gives wisdom and insight. Queen states, like we have seen, that it was after her beauty faded that she had to learn how to be a thinking person (cf. Morrison 2015: 158). And it is when Bride grows up that Sweetness learns how to love her child as a person, not as an object that receives love only when it has played its part perfectly. She explains:

At first I couldn't see past all that black to know who she was and just plain love her.
But I do. I really do. I think she understands now. I think so.

(Morrison 2015: 43)

With age, Sweetness learns how to look beyond the surface of things, and see past all that which might be deemed “unbeautiful”, whether in appearance or conduct.

Bride’s friend Brooklyn is younger than Bride, and, in the same way that Bride has had a difficult upbringing, Brooklyn also lives with scars from her childhood. And what is more, Brooklyn, in likeness with Bride, also tries to reinvent her self in order to break free from her past. She explains:

I ran away, too, Bride, but I was fourteen and there was nobody but me to take care of me so I invented myself, toughened myself. I thought you did too except when it came to boyfriends. I knew it right away with the last one – a conman if ever I saw one – would turn you into the scared little girl you used to be.

(Morrison 2015: 140)

Brooklyn equals age with being tough, and youth with being vulnerable, even ignorant. While it is necessary for Bride to revisit initial home in order to reconstitute home, both Bride and Brooklyn associate going back to youth and childhood with being weak.

Similar to Brooklyn and Bride, Rain also has to toughen herself in order to make sense of her life and her time living on the street after her mother forced her out of their home. Evelyn and Steve do not know how old she is, but when they took her in, “[h]er baby teeth were gone [...] [a]nd so far she has never had a period and her chest is as flat as a skateboard” (Morrison 2015: 97). Wolf postulates that friendship between women within patriarchal framework is hard when there exists an age gap between them, as “[o]lder women fear young ones, young women fear old” (Wolf 1991: 14). In *God Help the Child*, however, Bride experiences, while “[l]istening to this tough little girl who wasted no time on self-pity [...] a companionship with little Rain that is surprisingly free of envy” (Morrison 2015: 103). While the friendship between the similarly aged Brooklyn and Bride is one that is filled with lies and deceit, in the way that Brooklyn uses Bride’s time away from work to take her position in the company where they work, and also in the way that she tries to seduce Booker only to prove to herself that she can have anything that Bride has been able to acquire, the friendship between the child Rain and the young woman Bride is the one that is depicted as a true companionship.

Queen Olive associates beauty with youth, but what is more, she also associates youth with ignorance and mindlessness. She announces that youth is “the excuse for that fortune-cookie love – until it wasn’t, until it became pure adult stupidity” (Morrison 2015: 158). In a way, it seems like the character of Queen, and the story as a whole, is a warning against the

happily ever after as it is portrayed in the traditional tales. Queen's statement can be read as a warning against the love that is promised to Snow White when the prince wakes her from her sleeping death, and to say that this kind of love is a risk, a kind of gambling, and it is not what secures the happy ending as promised in the traditional narratives.

5.8 HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Warner postulates that “we expect the ending to be happy because it is a fairy tale” (Warner 2014: 33), but we have already seen in the stories by Gaiman and Carter how the notion of the happily ending can be distorted in order to make the reader question the happiness that follows the “ever after”. In the same way, Morrison also problematizes, and even parodies, the concept of the happy ending, and the life that comes after it in her novel *God Help the Child*.

While the story ends in a way that echoes the traditional fairy tale ending in which Bride and Booker are reunited and they sail into their future as a newly established family, the whole novel can also be read as a continuation of the story that happens after the prince takes Snow White with him in the traditional tales. We have seen how the prince in the Grimms' “Snow White” wants to take the heroine with him and treat her like his wife without even having exchanged a word with her, and Snow White happily goes with him. In the Grimms' version of the tale, this is the first instance in which the prince meets Snow White, and Bride's friend Brooklyn observes the absurdity of the first meeting between Bride and Booker which can be seen as a similar first encounter to that between the prince and the princess in the Grimms' narrative:

I thought he was a predator. I don't care how wild a dancing crowd is, you just don't grab somebody from behind like that unless you know them.

(Morrison 2015: 58)

Gaiman echoes the Grimms' tale in which the prince requests to buy Snow White from the dwarfs as she lay dead in the glass coffin when he portrays the perversity of the prince trying to buy Snow White's corpse in “Snow, Glass, Apples”. Brooklyn states that the notion of a man just taking what he wants is indeed perverse in real life.

If this first encounter between Booker and Bride is read as a parody of how the prince demands to take Snow White with him when he sees her in the glass coffin, then the story that

follows it depicts that which happens after the happy ending at Snow White's wedding. Booker states that his experience of the relationship was that it consisted of "the bliss of edible sex, free-style music, challenging books and the company of an easy undemanding Bride", but six months into the "happily ever after" Booker, however, finds that "the fairy-tale castle collapsed into the mud and sand on which its vanity was built" and the prince who exclaims in Grimms' tale that he loves Snow White "more than anything in the world" and wants her to come with him to his "father's castle" cannot handle the ruin of the dream, and he runs away (cf. Morrison 2015: 135).

In the same way that Booker understands that his and Bride's happily ever after could be likened to a castle built on a shallow foundation consisting of vanity, Bride also learns how insubstantial their relationship was. Unlike the stories by Grimm, Disney, Carter and Gaiman, Morrison gives, as noted already, a voice to the prince in the story, and in doing so, it becomes apparent how little the prince knows the princess, but also how little the princess knows the prince. Morrison complicates the notion of knowledge, it becomes evident that it is not only a problem that the prince in "Snow White" doesn't know his coming bride, but also that heroine doesn't know the man she is about to marry. Throughout the story Bride realizes how little she know the man she has loved and she states that "it suddenly occurred to her that good sex was not knowledge. It was barely information" (Morrison 2015: 146), and also that "[f]inding [his] books prove how little I know about him, that he was somebody else, somebody thinking things he never talked about" (Morrison 2015: 61).

While Morrison's story portrays a Snow White who is a thinking, complex person, the narrative also depicts a prince who has a mind of his own and a past worth knowing. Morrison's narrative reveals that although the story beyond the "happily ever after" does not merely consist of days filled with nothing but bliss and wonder, it is indeed only when the fairy-tale castle collapses that the prince and the princess can see each other as equally human and start a relationship based on true companionship.

Although the first encounter between Bride and Booker can be read as a portrayal of the ending of the traditional narrative of Snow White and her prince, the ending of Morrison's novel *God Help the Child* also echoes the traditional fairy-tale endings which functions as "messages of hope arising from desperate yet ordinary situations" (Warner 2014: 96). The storyline ends with the reconstitution of home, and reunion of Booker and Bride, and the prospect of welcoming a new child into their lives:

A child. New life. Immune to evil or illness, protected from kidnap, beatings, rape, racism, insult, hurt, self-loathing, abandonment. Error-free. All goodness. Minus wrath.

So they believe.

(Morrison 2015: 175)

While Bride and Booker imagine that their future will certainly be “all goodness” (cf. Morrison 2015: 175), the stories and journeys depicted in Morrison’s novel demonstrate that it will perhaps not turn out this way. They believe they will get a child who is innocent and good. And thus begins the cycle over again. They believe that they are, like all the kings and mothers in “Snow White” before them, giving birth not to a child, but a beautiful object that will certainly be “error-free”. Wilson argues that spells in these narratives break when they are reversed (Wilson 2008: 85), but even though Booker and Bride might not get the happy ending that is promised in the traditional tales, “[s]uch texts are about creation against and in the midst of destruction. They are about heroism against all that would deny human projects and value” (Wilson 2008: 159). While Bride has shown how insubstantial and empty the ideal of the perfect woman is, we know that in the same way that Snow White in the traditional tales will grow up to become the queen who looks for her reflection in the mirror and that the Snow Child will be manifested each time the count’s desire is aroused, the story will repeat itself in the case of Bride and Booker as well. They are wishing for a child who is perfect and flawless, and when that child looks or behaves in contrast to that ideal, he or she will be cast out from it’s initial home and has to find the way to final home alone.

Morrison’s novel is a classic tale in the way that it depicts a story in which the princess dreams of that “someday” when her prince will come, whom, after a series of trials and tribulations, offers “her the hand she has craved all her life” (Morrison 2015: 175). But while the structure and the symbolism of the novel resembles the that of the traditional narratives of “Snow White” it actually parodies the plot, as we have seen, and it teaches that the fairy-tale ending might not be as blissful as it seems.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

“We have evolved. But our ideas of gender have not evolved very much.”

(Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie 2014: 18)

This thesis has been an investigation of patriarchal ideology from a feminist point-of-view, and it has used literature in order to explore the roles that narratives play in challenging or affirming dominant ideology. Throughout the thesis we have looked how fairy tales have been altered in order to present a model for accepted behavior. What is more, we have seen how the tale of “Snow White” has been adjusted in order to communicate an ideal of feminine behavior through the intertwining of images of external beauty and feminine conduct. We have investigated how these traditional tales have reinforced images of femininity and patriarchal ideology, but we have also seen how postmodern revisions and metafiction use “Snow White” as an intertext in order to contest the values and ideological structures that are presented in these narratives. Although it becomes evident that it is possible to use literature to combat ideological structures in society, one might wonder why this would still be necessary.

Throughout this thesis we have dealt with texts from different time periods, starting with the tale by the brothers Grimm from 1857 and ending with Morrison’s novel from 2015. We have seen how Carter, Gaiman and Morrison use “Snow White” as an intertext for their tales in order to challenge its inherent patriarchal ideology, and it is startling to note that the same ideological structures that underpin literature in 1857 are still predominant in our culture today. Wolf notes that “[m]ost of our assumptions about the way women have always thought about “beauty” date from no earlier than the 1830s” (Wolf 1991: 15), and in studying texts that span from the 1850s to present time it becomes evident that the ideals of beauty that date from after the 1830s are still being used to restrict women, and the relationship made possible between women.

We have already stated how Wolf asserts that the ideal of feminine beauty is used within a patriarchal framework to keep “male dominance intact” (cf. Wolf 1991: 12), however, while the ideal of the Silent Woman as presented in the traditional tales entails that Snow White has to learn feminine submission and how to appear as a passive, angel-like woman in order for the prince to save her and marry her, the ideal of feminine beauty also

entails female rivalry, as “one’s woman’s pleasure and pride [has] to mean another woman’s pain” (Wolf 1991: 286). Warner states:

These portraits of female evil supported male interests, too. The tales were not merely symptoms but also instruments of strategy: divide women against one another the better to lord over them.

Warner 2014: 133

Within the framework of patriarchal ideology, there is not room for female companionship. One will be winner, and the other will lose. One will be apprehended as angel, the other a witch. One will be the pale, perfect princess; the other will be regarded as the evil, wicked queen.

As the aim of this thesis has been to explore whether literature, through the lens of fairy tales, embody the quality of being able to contest or reinforce patriarchal ideology, it is interesting to note that Bacchilega states that ideals for femininity that are presented in “Snow White” are also apparent in other fairy tales:

Though all popular fairy tales do not inscribe static and “natural” beauties like Snow White, the voices, gazes, and actions of female fairy-tale heroines inevitably find themselves measured against such a normative frame.

Bacchilega 1997: 25

In this way it is possible to argue that the conclusion that has been drawn from the analysis of “Snow White” can then also be projected onto other fairy tales, and one might argue, that the restrictiveness that is portrayed in the ideal of the perfect woman in “Snow White” can also be found in other literature. The voice of the mirror does not only impart its verdict on Snow White’s stepmother, but its power might actually extend further than that. The voice of the mirror may in reality be the voice of society; the voices, the gazes, the actions that teach men and women to evaluate females based on appearance, to measure them against this normative frame.

We have seen how the voice of the mirror holds great power over the stepmother in the tales by Disney and the Grimms. But the power of the voice of the mirror moreover extends to how all women are limited by society, and also in the way that they limit themselves. These narratives have revealed how a character’s possibilities for movement are restricted by their sex. We have seen how the social mobility of the female characters is limited in the stories by Disney, Grimm, Carter and Gaiman, while Morrison presents an alternative way, and portrays a Snow White who possesses the ability to move from one

social, and economical, sphere to an other. Moreover, we have also seen how the voice of the mirror governs the way that society judges women, and also it how it directs each woman's self-recognition as the evaluation of the mirror inevitable becomes internalized. In this way, the ideals of femininity and female beauty, as presented in "Snow White" limits possibilities to know self and be self.

The image of beauty that is presented in the traditional version of "Snow White" have both functioned to influence the way girls and women conduct themselves, and how they evaluate themselves. What is more, these images have also been used as a strategy to secure the position of patriarchal values and power, following Eagleton's argument that ideological ideas are "functional for the maintenance of an oppressive power" (cf. Eagleton 2007: 24-25). This means that the ideals of femininity and internal and external beauty have more to do with those who inscribe them than the ones whom they are described on. Oscar Wilde writes in his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

[E]very portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed; it is the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself.

(Wilde 2014: 9)

In the same way that this extract from Wilde's novel suggests that every portrait reveals the painter, one might also propose that the images of femininity that are portrayed in "Snow White" do not portray an image of how women really are, but rather how they are needed to appear within a patriarchal framework. Wolf notes that the abstract notion that is "beauty", or what Wolf calls the "beauty myth" is not actually about women, but rather "[i]t is about men's institutions and institutional power" (Wolf 1991: 13). In this way, women are merely the object, or in Wilde's words, the occasion, onto which patriarchy projects its artistic power, validating Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's claim in her book *We Should All Be Feminists* that society has taught women to turn "pretence into an art form" (Adichie 2014: 33). Thus, the ideal of the Silent Woman as manifested in the character of Snow White, is not an image of women, but rather of patriarchal ideology. By investigating postmodern fairy tales and metafiction we have seen how it is possible to reveal the ideological structures that invigorates the painter, and as the painter is revealed, it becomes evident that the ideal of the perfect woman as she is presented in "Snow White" is an artificial construction, a lifeless object.

Gilbert and Gubar suggest, as noted many times over, that women ineluctably turn

against each other within the framework of patriarchy, because “the voice of the looking glass sets them up against each other” (1979: 38), and Adichie also states that we still raise girls to “see each other as competitors” (2014: 32). We have seen how Warner and Wolf support this argument, and how the dichotomy of good daughter and bad mother will always be produced within this ideological structure. But Wolf postulates that one of the ways in which a relationship other than one based on rivalry can be made possible for women is if they start narrating “the dark side of being treated as beautiful object” (cf. Wolf 1991: 285). Bacchilega notes that Carter’s “The Snow Child” manages to create an effect of de-naturalization by exploiting mimesis and by “adapting the fairy tale’s mirroring strategies to make us question the immutability and invincibility of the mirror” (Bacchilega 1997: 38), and in the same way that Carter’s tale makes the reader question the authority of the mirror and the ideals it prescribes, Gaiman’s tale and Morrison’s novel also challenge the inherent ideology of “Snow White” by presenting new stories that reveal, what Wolf calls, the dark side of being perceived as beautiful object. Reading the voice of the mirror as the voice of patriarchal society, it becomes evident that in order to combat the ideology of femininity that is presented in the traditional tales, we need new stories to challenge these ideals. In order to counter the traditional stories, and the story of society, new stories play a significant role.

But while this thesis has investigated the roles that are made available for women within a society that is marked by patriarchal ideology, there are several other aspects of patriarchal ideology that could have been productive to explore. This thesis has focused its attention on ideals of femininity, but we have also touched upon masculinity as a limited role through the character of Booker, as he displays the limitedness that lies within the role of the patriarch in Morrison’s narrative. Wolf asserts that men want to control the evaluation in order to keep themselves safe from being evaluated (Wolf 1991: 153) and Booker both underlines this argument and comments on the faults of patriarchy when he states that “[h]e risk[s] nothing. [He] sit[s] on a throne and identif[ies] signs of imperfections in others” (Morrison 2015: 160), in the same way that the voice of the mirror identifies signs of imperfections from the safe spot behind the looking glass. While we have seen how these images of beauty are restricted for women, they are also limited for men, and this could have been investigated further.

In addition to this, it could have been useful to also explore how the story of “Snow White” is communicated differently in different cultures. And even though it has been touched upon, it could have been interesting to further investigate how the ideals of

femininity that are presented in the tales might appear more problematic for black women than for white women. Meeta Rani Jha argues the importance of an analysis of beauty:

An analysis of beauty is important because beauty can be converted into forms of social, economic, and symbolic power that devalue and denigrate some physical features while idealizing and privileging others. More specifically, beauty functions as a symbolic marker of cultural and moral superiority in a hierarchy of racialized difference assigning goodness, godliness, intelligence, competence, and femininity to whiteness.

(Rani Jha 2016: 5)

This thesis has investigated how ideals of beauty underpin the tale “Snow White” have had an effect on women in general, but it could also have been beneficial to explore how these images function to enhance what Rani Jah calls “light-skin ideals” (Rani Jah 2016: 3) which then might serve to reinforce notions of white supremacy. Rani Jah also suggests that the concept of beauty plays a role “in creating structural, and individual privilege, as well as contributing to discrimination and inequality” (Rani Jha 2016: 3), and it could have been fruitful to look at how these images of feminine beauty that are produced and reproduced through literature might also function to strengthen inequality towards black women and to promote a sense of Otherness.

We have seen throughout the thesis how the traditional tales of “Snow White” have supported and strengthened ideals of feminine appearance and conduct, but throughout the investigation it has also become clear that it is possible to shake the ground on which these stories have been made by laying bare the ideological structures that maintain them, either by parodying these values and structures that upholds notions of femininity as in Morrison’s novel, or by taking the inherent ideology found in the traditional tales to the extreme as in the tales by Carter and Gaiman.

Stories like the traditional “Snow White” teach society “that stories happen to ‘beautiful’ women, whether they are interesting or not. And, interesting or not, stories do not happen to women who are not ‘beautiful’” (Wolf: 1991: 61), but by setting forth new stories that combat and lay bare this ideology, or presents the reader with heroines who contrast with this ideal, as in “Snow, Glass, Apples” and *God Help the Child*, we can argue that it is indeed possible to challenge and reveal inherent ideology through disclosing ideological structures embedded within the traditional tales, and propose a less restricted way of being a woman.

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