



Once Upon an Ideology

**Exploring the ideologies and identities of female figures through a
selection of classic and contemporary fairy tales**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the ideologies and identities of women in selected traditional and contemporary fairy tales. It does this by utilising existing folklore theory but also by drawing on various literary theory theoretical approaches to ensure a comprehensive and rigorous analysis. It draws on the schools of deconstruction, feminism and psychoanalysis to analyse the role of the female in fairy tales, and also, to examine how the ideologies governing them affect identity construction, and also the representations of female identity in contemporary culture. The texts analysed are divided into two sections. The first section uses the literary texts of *Cinderella* and its modern counterpart *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*, and also explores the traditional tale of *Bluebeard* along with the contemporary envisioning *The Bloody Chamber*. The second section analyses modern interpretive filmic texts, which lend a voice to the previously silent figures of the traditional tales. The texts to be discussed are *Frozen*, *Maleficent* and *Snow White and the Huntsman*. This project engages with traditional and contemporary fairy tales, in both literary and filmic genres. It examines these texts as vehicles of gender ideology, and also as agents of change in that ideological position. This project suggests that contemporary tales, such as *Frozen* and *Maleficent*, offer a fresh ideological perspective, which complicates and humanises the previously one-dimensional evil female figure. It will look at how these modern representations struggle against the binary oppositions of good versus evil perpetuated by traditional tales. The analysis is not limited to the female figures *in situ*, as it also shows how the fears and issues of these representations are reflected in contemporary society. It interrogates the dynamic between the

tales as constituted by prevailing ideologies and between the tales as instruments of ideological change. It examines the relationship between female identity and the beauty myth, and also looks at process of the commodification of beauty in these stories.

Declaration of Originality

Declaration: I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and does not contain the work of any other individual. All sources that have been consulted have been identified and acknowledged in the appropriate way.

Signature of Candidate:

Miriam Walsh

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my sisters, Jenny and Carla, for everything that you both have done for me, which words cannot express. Thank you the love, the support, the encouragement and the wine.

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‘Let it Go: An examination of the female representations in Frozen’ at *Ms/representation: mass media & feminisms in historical context*, University of Westminster, London, November 2014

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‘Someday you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again’ –

C. S. Lewis

Introduction

This project seeks to explore the ideologies governing women in both traditional and modern fairy tales, and to understand how such ideologies affect female identity construction. Fairy tales are enjoying an unprecedented resurgence in popularity in all forms. The film genre is inundated with fairy tale remakes, such as *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012), *Frozen* (2013), *Maleficent* (2014), *Into The Woods* (2014) and *Cinderella* (2015), to name but a few. This project aims to analyse the ideologies of these new versions, both in literary and filmic genres, and to assess whether the modern phenomena of contemporary interpretations are subverting or reinforcing the ideologies and gender constructions found in the traditional tales. It will also look at how these ideologies impact on female identity construction, and analyse the function of these ideologies, both from the perspective of the male characters and also in society at large.

This project engages with ideological studies mainly from the Marxist perspective, where, ‘ideology refers to the way meaning is used to justify the power of ascendant groups that encompasses classes but also includes social groups based on race, gender, age etc. This kind of understanding of ideology refers only to the ideas of the powerful’ (Barker 2004, p.98). While one can argue against the concept of ideology as falsity, looking at the traditional tales, one can see how they are being propagated as being true. A young beautiful

submissive woman will meet a wealthy prince and enjoy a patriarchal happy ending. However, through the analysis of the more contemporary fairy tales, which give a voice to a 'lived experience' of the ideologies, the project demonstrates how these ideologies are detrimental to how the female both views herself and her place in society. As Terry Eagleton states in *Ideology: An Introduction*:

Jon Elster reminds us, ruling ideologies can actively shape the wants and desires of those subjected to them but they must also engage significantly with the wants and desires that people already have, catching up genuine hopes and needs, reinflecting them in their own peculiar idiom, and feeding them back to their subjects in ways which render these ideologies plausible and attractive. They must be 'real' enough to provide the basis on which individuals can fashion a coherent identity, must furnish some solid motivations for effective action and must make at least some feeble attempt to explain away their own more flagrant contradictions and incoherencies. In short, successful ideologies must be more than imposed illusions, and for all their inconsistencies must communicate to their subjects a version of social reality which is real and recognizable enough not to be simply rejected out of hand. (Eagleton 1991, pp.14-15)

Ideologies work as truths, or perhaps more correctly, as meanings that have become naturalised and accepted as truths. Eagleton describes how they can appear as 'a kind of anonymous universal truth' (Eagleton 1991, p.20). From a Marxist perspective, they are the means to subordinate and subjugate a particular class or group, or in the case of the narratives addressed in this project, the female gender. As Barker states, 'ideology is understood to be both lived experience and a body of systematic views whose role is to organize and bind together a bloc of diverse social elements, to act as social cement, in the formation of hegemonic and counter hegemonic blocs' (Barker 2004, p.97). Fairy tales can be said to propagate these ideologies by helping to form the social cement, which constructs our notions

of female identity. Eagleton provides us with six ways in which the processes of legitimating ideologies, which serve to sustain relations of domination, operate:

A dominant power may legitimate itself by *promoting* beliefs and values congenial to it; by *naturalizing* and *universalizing* such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; by *denigrating* ideas that might challenge it; by excluding rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and by *obscuring* social reality ways convenient to itself. Such 'mystification', as it is commonly known, frequently takes the form of masking or suppressing social conflicts, from which arises the conception of ideology as an imaginary resolution of real contradictions. In any actual ideological formation, all six of these strategies are likely to interact in complex ways. (Eagleton 1991, pp.5-6)

Jack Zipes, in *The Art of Subversion*, outlined that the purpose of Charles Perrault's fairy tales was to endow the child with a sense of morals and codes of conduct for behaviour: 'in other words, Perrault amalgamated folk and literary motifs and shaped them in a unique way to present his particular bourgeois view of social manners' (Zipes 1983, p.27). In this way, fairy tales are a vehicle for ideas and meanings that become taken for granted and viewed as common sense, a point made in a more general way by Antonio Gramsci:

Common sense is not something rigid and immobile, but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life. 'Common sense' is the folklore of philosophy, and is always half-way between folklore properly speaking and the philosophy, science, and economics of the specialists. Common sense creates the folklore of the future, that is as a relatively rigid phase of popular knowledge at a given place and time. (Gramsci 1992, p.326)

These notions of common sense or ideas and practises, become maps of meaning, supporting the authority of a particular social class. One can see then, that ideology provides the masses with rules of practical conduct and moral behaviour, which are embedded in daily life

(Barker 2004, p.97). Fairy tales provide templates as to how one should behave and view one's place in society. They are aimed at both boys and girls, with the male learning to be rich and active while the female learns to be beautiful and submissive. Zipes sums it in *The Art of Subversion*: 'the male acts, the female waits' (Zipes 1983, p.25). Contemporary fairy tales are aimed at both adults and children, and are readily available in modern society, having permeated all aspects of contemporary culture.

While fairy tales have ideological imperatives for both males and females, it is the female who responds most completely to the genre, given that often, the main narrative of the tale involves a female being gradually directed towards a 'happily ever after'. Cristina Bacchilega has stated that 'fairy tales are ideologically variable desire machines'. She reaffirms this in *Fairy Tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations & the Politics of Wonder*, when she describes how this 'could be said of all stories really, but perhaps holds higher stakes when applied to a genre that so overtly puts desire for transformation in notion and one that is too often reduced to the narrative articulation of purportedly universal wish fulfilment' (Bacchilega 2013, p.4). Contemporary fairy tales are most often aimed at a female audience, with the accompanying merchandise ensuring that women are fully aligned with the representation provided. Using Louis Althusser's terms, the fairy tale, and the accompanying merchandise/music and attendant cultural codes, interpellate or hail the young female into that ideology. As Althusser maintains, 'an individual is always-already a subject, even before he is born', as language and the symbolic order are constitutive factors in the creation of identity (Althusser 1971, p.176). Developing Althusser's views in the context of the relationship between ideology and our sense of selfhood or subjectivity, Stuart Hall notes that 'we are constituted by the unconscious processes of ideology, in that position of recognition or fixture between ourselves and the signifying chain without which no signification of ideological meaning would be possible' (Hall 1985, p.100). In terms of this

study, the female is hailed into the passive and objectified role as promoted by the fairy tale. In this area, Althusser's theory reflects the work of Lacan, especially in terms of how narratives, both consciously and unconsciously, enculturate the young child into society:

it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father's Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. Before its birth, the child is therefore always already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration in which it is 'expected' once it has been conceived. (Althusser 1971, p.176)

This is naturalised so that the speaker 'forgets that he or she is just the function of a discursive and ideological formation, and thus comes to misrecognize herself as the author of her own discourse. Rather as the Lacanian infant identifies itself with its imaginary reflection, so the speaking subject effects an identification with the discursive formation which dominates it' (Eagleton 1991, p.196). The ideological function of fairy tales is such that it perpetuates, and indeed, makes desirable, the condition of female passivity that patriarchy needs to maintain its own structures. Such texts could be seen as part of Althusser's notion of ideological state apparatuses, what he terms the 'cultural ISA' (Althusser 1971, p.143), which enculturates people into hegemonic ideals through culture as opposed to repression. However, it is important to note that ISAs, while functioning 'massively and predominantly by ideology' [*italics original*], also function 'secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic' (Althusser 1971, p.145).

Contemporary fairy tales are now trying to give a voice to the previously marginalised women of the traditional tales. The silent females of the traditional tales have found a voice in modern fairy tales. This can be viewed as a deconstructive technique, and offers new perspectives into how the ideologies governing women today have changed, and also into how modern fairy tales treat their traditional counterparts' ideologies. Eagleton quotes

Althusser stating how ideology ‘expresses a will, a hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality’ (Althusser cited in Eagleton 1991, p.19). Eagleton explores this further, noting that it is fundamentally a matter of either reverencing or reviling a particular concept, group or position through cultural modes, which then is inscribed into an ideology, which in turn appears as if it is describing the way things actually are. This project will assess whether the changes in the tales amend the ideological construction of women as perpetuated by the traditional stories. It will also examine whether fairy tales, having been for so long a narrative that was deemed creative of female passivity, can now be seen, in new and deconstructive iterations, to be a more emancipatory genre in terms of contemporary female identity.

This project will look at existing research to help formulate new perceptions of the ideologies governing women in society today. While this thesis is not engaging with empirical research to prove their influence, it will employ theoretical perspectives to demonstrate these texts’ ideologies and to offer a theoretical analysis of their effects. It will also look at how these ideologies help to form the identity construction of the female characters, and how they also influence female relations with other women, and with patriarchy in general. Using carefully selected theoretical approaches, it will assess the function of these ideologies and the power dynamics that they create in culture and society. It will provide a well-grounded analytical exploration of these issues, using existing research and specific theoretical approaches, in order to understand how the female characters view themselves, and how they see their place in society. It will also comment on the attempts of contemporary fairy tales at challenging typified female gender roles.

This project will not be engaging with an in-depth analysis of the background or socio-historical content of the tales. There is already much relevant and insightful analysis on the socio-historical background of fairy tales and also on how specific stories have progressed and been adapted. Marina Warner, Jack Zipes, Donald Haase, Cristina Bacchilega

and many other thinkers have done extensive research in this area, and their works will provide theoretical support for my project. While this thesis does indeed engage with some history of the tales, it does so in order to give the reader a more rounded understanding of the tale being analysed. This project is engaging with the tales from an ideological and analytical perspective rather than from a socio-historical stance. This thesis is building on existing research in order to formulate new perceptions of how these ideologies affect women today, rather than in the times in which they were produced. This project will also not engage with the differing narrative techniques of the adaptations, as again, there has been much research into this, particularly the excellent Cristina Bacchilega's *Postmodern Narrative Strategies: Gender and Narrative Strategies*. Rather, this thesis will look at the narrative strategy of allowing 'the other' to speak in contemporary fairy tales, and at how this process of voicing hitherto-unvoiced aspects of gender identity affects the ideologies governing the female characters. It will also be concentrating on the ideologies governing women rather than men. While at times, the analysis does look at the masculine characters in the texts, it is usually to help understand how or why they influence the ideologies and identities of the female characters.

There has been much research on the development of the original folktales into the Disney era of fairy tales. Modern audiences will recognise many of the contemporary tales as being based on some key writers from the fairy tale genre. Many of the Disney tales are based on those of Charles Perrault, who was a French writer who published his most famous works, *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, in 1697. Disney has become synonymous with more modern fairy tales, and is the forerunner of contemporary fairy tale production. Fairy tales are not just limited to the fairy tale genre, however. Donald Haase discusses this point, using Karen E. Rowe's *Feminism and Fairy Tales*, and showing that the idealised romantic fairy tale patterns are also evident in 'mass-marketing reading materials intended for adult women,

including erotic, ladies', and gothic fictions' (Haase 2004, p.5). Many modern 'chick-lit' stories, both literature and film, are also reminiscent of the fairy tale genre.

It would be remiss to dismiss the widespread implications of fairy tales in contemporary society. The legacies of fairy tales are far-reaching not only in their popularity in both literature and film, but also in culture. Fairy tales have infiltrated all aspects of culture. Advertising, product placement material and music often reference fairy tales. Bacchilega discusses this in *Fairy Tales Transformations* stating how this pervasion into all aspects of culture emphasises the powers that fairy tales exercise on adults as well as children: 'because, historically as in the present, fairy tales come in many versions and are in turn interpreted in varied ways that speak to specific social concerns, struggles, and dreams' (Bacchilega 2013, p.4). With this in mind, it is important to analyse and evaluate the ideologies that these fairy tales perpetuate, as even when buying a lipstick, one may be buying into an ideological perspective. In *Breaking the Magic Spell*, Jack Zipes draws on how the *Cinderella* trope is used in advertising which has 'women transformed into Cinderellas by magically buying new dresses, paying money for beauty treatments in a health spa, using the proper beautifying cosmetics' (Zipes 2002, p.118). The most recent contemporary example would be the 2015 *Cinderella* collection of Mac Cosmetics, released in conjunction with the film. The official description on the Mac website of the cosmetic collection describes how:

The most iconic Disney princess of all inspires a limited-edition colour collection magical enough to make all your dreams come true. Beloved for her kind heart and determined mind that dares to dream, Cinderella envisages enough makeup shades to fill a pumpkin carriage. All products are transformed in specially designed pearlized light lavender blue packaging that could rival the most regal of gowns. (Mac 2015)

This is a specialised seasonal collection of cosmetics which are packaged with the *Cinderella* logo, and which reflect the colour scheme of Cinderella's blue ball gown. The packaging and products signify the ideologies and morals that this tale embodies and enunciates, particularly those governing women. A lipstick is not just a lipstick, as it is now imbued with the ideological imperative of the *Cinderella* tale. The products interpellate or hail the consumer into the idealised construction of the feminine. Using the example of Dina Goldstein's *Fallen Princesses* photography series, Bacchilega states that 'fairy tales interpellate us as consumers and producers of transformation' (Bacchilega 2013, p.3). The Cinderella lipstick purchaser is not only consuming the fairy tale ideology, but also transforming herself by using the product to fit the standardised norms of beauty that have been perpetuated through that same ideology. The fairy godmother of the traditional tale, and of the film, has been replaced by cosmetic products in order to create the princess figure through a process of transformation. As Barker states:

if meaning is fluid – a question of difference and deferral – then ideology can be understood as the attempt to fix meaning for specific purposes. Ideologies are then grasped as discourses that give meaning to material objects and social practises; they define and produce the acceptable and intelligible way of understanding the world while excluding other reasoning as intelligible and unjustifiable. Ideologies are thus about binding and justification rather than being concerned with truth, falsity and objective interests. (Barker 2004, p.98)

In short, the fairy tale is being used as a potent signifier in the commodification of beauty, which is suggestive of a commodification of happiness, as in all of the tales it is suggested that to be beautiful is to be happy. Such advertising, and the saturation of culture with fairy tale symbolism, highlight how ideologies are relevant to both the female child and also to the female adult. Oddly, in present-day culture, these tales speak to adult women as well as to children, as such women are more open to receiving and understanding the subtle

implications of what that *Cinderella* lipstick really means, given that they have grown up with fairy tales aimed at all the varying stages of their life. Even modern fairy tales such as *Frozen*, *Tangled* and *Maleficent* have found a market with adult female audiences, as can be seen in the widespread popularity of the films and their merchandise. The Cinderella Mac collection created a huge online presence, particularly on social media. As of June 2015, there were over 1000 photos posted on 'Instagram' alone tagged as '#cinderellamac'. Many of these photos are carefully constructed montages of the products with flowers, perfume or accessories to create and highlight a theme. In this way, the purchasing of the Cinderella products and the subsequent posting of such photos on an online forum, helps create an idealised representation of the virtual self. It is the polysemic relevance of these tales to gender construction among girls and women especially, that has led me to focus on these particular narratives.

Fairy tale texts

I chose the texts in this study specifically in order to enhance my understanding of the ideologies in fairy tales. As Haase states, in *Fairy Tales and Feminism*, 'it is time for scholars to assess the impact of feminism and feminist criticism itself on the way contemporary readers experience fairy tales' (Haase 2004, p.28). My first criterion in selecting the texts was that they were most representative of the ideologies at large in fairy tales today. The second criterion was that I wanted to choose texts that were accessible to modern audiences. As stated, this project will not be looking at the rich historical development of the texts, but rather, at how the ideologies in them relate to women today. In that vein of thought, the texts chosen needed to be both relevant and accessible, as this study aims to engage with culturally significant texts in order to gain a better understanding of the construction and representation of female identity. Given the aims of the project, this research cannot and indeed does not,

delve into the rich tapestry of the history of these tales. In no way does this research mean to ‘universalize traditional narratives at the expense of their specific historical and sociocultural contexts and to generalize the European fairy tale as an ahistorical global genre’ (Haase 2010, p). Rather, the thesis analyses culturally accessible texts to offer a new perspective and insight into female representations in the selected tales. In the interests of accessibility and cultural popularity, this project will engage with both literary and filmic representations. It was also an important part of the originality of this project to traverse the boundary between literature and film, as often, research into fairy tales tends to analyse one genre or the other.

The first four chapters will analyse two traditional tales and their ideological construction, and will then look at their adult modern counterparts, in order to analyse the ideologies present within these modern tales, and to interrogate whether the traditional ideologies have progressed or developed. Given that the modern versions give a voice to the previously silent characters of the traditional tales, this section will look at how the ideologies of the traditional tales affect the identity-construction of the female characters.

The First Section – Literary Reflections

Cinderella

The first text that will be analysed is a simple Ladybird picture book of *Cinderella*, complete with Disney imagery. This book is aimed at a younger audience. It is an important choice, as it will allow for an analysis of the Disney imagery, which is synonymous with the *Cinderella* tale, and this analysis will demonstrate that these images are internalised at a young age. The analysis of the chosen text provides critical information on how ideologies are understood, using popular visual images, and also on how they are naturalised. In addition, as the images in the book are provided by the Disney film version, it will serve a dual purpose, by providing analysis of the film version, as well as of the literary version.

This chapter also looks at the Oxford Classic edition of Charles Perrault's classic *Cinderella* found in *The Complete Fairy Tales by Charles Perrault*, translated by Christopher Betts. This version is chosen because it is one of the more accessible collections of Perrault's work available. Although it is not exactly the same as the original Perrault edition, the translator Christopher Betts aimed to maintain the integrity of Perrault's work. Moderately priced, and complete with some images, it will offer the opportunity for analysis that is more literary than the first text. Disney's version of *Cinderella* is based on the Perrault version, and so the two in tandem allow for a thorough analysis of the ideologies inherent within the *Cinderella* tale.

Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister

The second text looks at a contemporary version of *Cinderella* entitled *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* by Gregory Maguire. It gives a voice to a silent character of the traditional tale, which is similar to his book *Wicked*, a text that has enjoyed global fame due to its Broadway adaptation. This text was chosen as it exemplifies the new phenomenon of voicing traditionally evil characters in a more nuanced way in the narrative. In this case, the story of *Cinderella* is told through the perspective of the stepsister Iris. As a text to be analysed, it will allow for a more in-depth, comparative investigation of the ideologies found in the traditional *Cinderella* text, as well as tracing the development of a more nuanced and plural sense of female identity between the original stories and the more modern version.

Bluebeard

The third chapter looks at the traditional Perrault version of *Bluebeard*. Again, this was taken from the Oxford classics version of the tale, and the accessibility of this version means that the ideologies it permeates are relevant for analysis. It was an important consideration to look

at a tale that was very different to *Cinderella* in order to ensure a varied critical perspective on the analysis of fairy tale ideologies. The editor of the book, Christopher Betts, wrote that he changed little about many of the stories, but had moderated some of the syntax to create more understanding for contemporary audiences (Brett 2009, p.x1). Another reason why this tale was chosen is that, although *Bluebeard* tale is not as well known as other fairy tales, nevertheless its narrative has infiltrated many popular texts such as *Jane Eyre* and *Fifty Shades of Grey*. This text embodies an almost gothic component, and the darker elements suggest differing ideological perspectives to that of the overly saccharine ‘Disneyfied’ fairy tales. The inclusion of this text means that the project is analysing different ideologies and their influences, rather than analysing the same ideologies repeatedly throughout the thesis. As a warning tale, rather than a ‘procurement of a husband’ tale like *Cinderella*, it will provide a new focus of the examination of ideological narrative, which is vital for analysing contemporary fairy tales.

The Bloody Chamber

The fourth chapter looks at *The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter, which is a postmodern reinterpretation of the *Bluebeard* tale. Although there is much research on *The Bloody Chamber* and on Carter’s works in general, this text was chosen, as it was important to look at how the ideologies from the traditional tale are treated in a contemporary version of the *Bluebeard* tale. One can see traces of its darker sexualised overtones in texts such as *Fifty Shades of Grey*. It is a text whose implications, and the analysis of those implications, resonate in society today.

The Second Section – The Other/The Mother/The Evil Princess

The second section of this project will look at the realm of film. This is an important genre in the context of this study, as fairy tales have become much more popular in this medium. Haase wrote, in *Fairy Tales & Feminism*, that ‘studies of fairy tales by and about women have concentrated largely, but not exclusively, on oral storytelling and literature. More research needs to be devoted to other significant media, such as film, video, and television, as well as art and illustration’ (Haase 2004, p.30). The use of contemporary filmic representations allows for a new investigation of the fairy tale female, combining both visual and narrative examples. The second section of this project, as well as examining some filmic fairy tales, will also provide a cultural context to explain the popularity of these tales. There has been a modern phenomenon where fairy tales are often presented from the point of view of the marginalised, offering new perspectives on traditional tales. One explanation of this trend, as outlined by Bacchilega is that feminist and other critical approaches, which have become significant in popular culture since the 1970s has affected ‘power dynamics within and among fairy tales’ (Bacchilega 2013, p.27).

This section will look at the viewpoint of the female characters, of the other, of the mother and of the evil princess. These texts were chosen as they show how identity construction of ‘evil’ characters is often linked to their inability to conform to and/or achieve success within the paradigm of the governing ideologies. While Haase did state that future fairy tale scholarship needed to move beyond the works of Disney (Haase 2004, p.31), the modern fixation and prevalence of Disney films means that to analyse the cultural ideologies that are most relevant to women today, one must address and engage with some of the contemporary Disney examples. Just as originally, cheap editions of books and children’s books made these tales accessible to a modern audience, so film is really the contemporary vehicle and core agent of the transmission of ideological messages, and thus, it is an

important medium in need of analysis. The presence of these films on the internet means that these films are even more widely available. As Cathy Lynn Preston outlines, in her chapter 'Disrupting the Boundaries of Genre and Gender: Postmodernism and the Fairy Tale': 'in postmodernity the "stuff" of fairy tales exists as fragments (princess, frog, slipper, commodity relations in a marriage market) in the nebulous realm that we might most simply identify as cultural knowledge' (Preston, 2004, p.210). Haase states that Preston:

helps us move in this direction by considering how the fairy tale continues to emerge in contemporary media and to redefine in unpredictable ways its relation to both genre and gender. Given the role of electronic and visual media as primary sites for the performance and transmission of fairy tales, work of this kind is critical for understanding the fairy tale's unstable generic identity and multivocality concerning gender in the contemporary world. (Haase 2004, p. 31)

The prevalence of these contemporary tales in all aspects of contemporary culture allows for an analysis that moves beyond that of just the fairy tale genre *per se*, into the realm of cultural knowledge.

Frozen – the evil princess

The first text that will be analysed in this section is the *Frozen* film of 2013. This text was chosen, as it is one of the most popular fairy tales released in the last decade. The cultural implications of the text, and the ideologies it both perpetuates and critiques, have significant potential to influence contemporary female identity. This text will be analysed as a standalone narrative as, although it was originally to be based on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen*, the final product was vastly different from the source text. It would be remiss to ignore *Frozen*, given its popularity, and as the text is so recent, it will add to the originality of the research project. It will provide an insight into how modern animated fairy

tales differ from their previous animated counterparts, and also, into how they deal with ideologies and identity construction. It allows for a questioning of the traditional fairy tale genre through these new representations, and through the use of humour and parody present in the film.

Maleficent – the other

Maleficent was chosen because, more than any other of the filmic fairy tales, it gives full voice to the ‘other’ of the traditional tale on which it is based. Analysis of this text will allow insight into how the ‘evil’ character struggles against the ideologies of traditional tales, and it will help to question the nature of ‘evil’ in the characters of these tales. The question will be posed as to whether these characters are just intrinsically evil, or alternatively, whether they are just victims of the social structures already in place. It will provide a new perspective on the traditional *Sleeping Beauty* tale, and will allow for an exploration of how contemporary society treats and views this tale.

Snow White and the Huntsman – the mother

This text, which is referred to as *SWATH* throughout the project, was chosen as it was more relevant than other contemporary Snow White remakes such as *Mirror Mirror* (2012). *SWATH* demonstrates how modern filmmakers treat, not only the fairy tales, but also how they interpret the ideologies governing women. It will be an important text in showing how traditional ideologies can influence the psyche of the female characters. It will also provide an insight into how these ideologies are translated into contemporary societal paradigms and situations:

Because the genre’s popularity is both persistent and pervasive and because questions of individual agency and social transformation are central to the tales’ narrative permutations,

reflecting on today's fairy-tale adaptations – both their production and reception – illuminates and affects how we construct human relations in the present and how we map out our options for the future. (Bacchilega 2013, p.7)

These texts were chosen as they are the most representative of the ideologies perpetuated by the fairy tale genre in contemporary society, and are the best examples through which to examine how such ideologies evolve from traditional tales to modern tale and from literary to filmic. I understand that it is rather simplistic, given the rich and complicated history of fairy tales, their origins and their evolution, to pick out overarching didactic assumptions of what these selected tales really 'mean'. I also do not suggest that my research accesses the only meaning of these tales. While one can argue against the merits of extracting 'ideologies' or 'meanings' from these tales (again in reference to the complicated tapestry of these tales which is not addressed in the project), it is interesting to note that this is precisely how these adaptations have been crafted. They have extracted meanings from the generalised tales on which they were based, and addressed these in contemporary versions of the tales. This gives validity to my method of approaching these fairy tale texts and the literary theory approaches that I have engage with throughout.

Theoretical approaches

The wide range of theories used in this study may be viewed as problematic, but as this project is looking at ideologies, and at how they evolve in these tales, it is important not to constrain the analysis by only looking at these texts through a single theoretical lens. Much of the research around the idea of gender and fairy tales is from a feminist or folklore perspective. To progress from this, it was important to incorporate differing theoretical views in order to ensure a comprehensive interdisciplinary paradigm of analysis was brought to bear on these ideological aspects of the stories in order to understand how they are interpreted and

naturalised. The theories chosen were also the most useful in assessing how identity is constructed in the fairy tales, and how it affects female relations.

This use of differing literary theories and ideologies means that this thesis can address one of the most recent questions involving literary theory, namely whether culture produces the text, or does the text produce culture? Haase states that:

because of the social, political, and educational uses to which classic fairy tales have been put, the temptation is strong to identify a didactic purpose and abstract a moral – whether repressive or emancipator – from the overall plot of a story. Readings of revisionist texts do not have immunity from this tendency and can just as easily gloss over ideological complexities and contradictions, despite advances in feminist and gender theory. However, understood as a locus of struggle over cultural values and individual desires, the fairy tale actually invites instability and contradictory impulses. (Haase 2004, p.30)

While this thesis does identify some specific ideologies or moralistic overtures in the texts, the multifaceted theoretical engagement with them means that the contradictory nature of the ideologies found in the tales can be uncovered and analysed. The following is a brief overview of some of the key theoretical perspectives with which this project will be engaging.

Folklore theory

While this project is not concentrating on some of the dominant issues of fairy tale scholarship such as originality, historical evolvment, orality, authenticity, nevertheless it still derives much of its understanding from fairy tale studies. It is important to explore aspects of the chosen texts from the folklore lens. This project draws on the works of noted folklore theorists to help form a baseline of existing research on ideologies, and to provide context to the tales and the genre of fairy tales at large. Donald Haase, in his chapter ‘Feminist Fairy-

Tale Scholarship', discusses the varying approaches to the feminist analysis of fairy tales, by tracing the various modes of analysis in the treatment of gender in fairy tales. This project also engages with the works of Jack Zipes, such as *Fairytales and the Art of Subversion*, which provides critical analysis of the folklore/fairy tale genre. Marina Warner's work from *The Beast to the Blonde* is also employed, providing socio-historical contexts to the tales and also analysing the motivations of the characters and the reception of the tale by the audience for which it was written. Cristina Bacchilega's *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* is similarly used, as is the work of other scholars such as Amy Davis and the Grauerholz and Sperry's study of feminine beauty in Grimms' tales, which provides critical insight into the function of beauty in fairy tales and the relation of it to its female characters.

The use of existing folklore research will provide a concrete base from which to develop the literary theoretical analysis. It is also important as many of the texts being analysed are extremely new and so the fairy tale scholarship provided by these theorists provides emergent contexts to such tales.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction is an important aspect of analysing the ideologies in fairy tales. Women are categorised into opposing groupings such as good and evil. Deconstruction is a central tool in helping to understand these binary oppositions, and also in assessing how ideologies are engaged in forming these oppositions. It is also important in evaluating whether the interpretative texts such as *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*, *The Bloody Chamber* and the contemporary film texts, are displacing these ideologies, and in showing how these texts are constructed so as to give a voice to the previously marginalised characters in the classic tales. The main deconstructive theorist with which this text engages is Jacques Derrida, and it will

focus on very specific texts that are relevant to the research question. The thesis will refer to texts such as *Margins of Philosophy, Positions* and his chapter ‘Structure Sign and the play of discourses of the human sciences’. This deconstructive work is also underpinned by other analysts such as Martin McQuillan, Terry Eagleton and Jonathan Culler. Deconstruction allows for a thorough analysis of the ideologies in the existing tales, while also evaluating the subverted ideologies in the newer tales. It provides an analysis of how to interpret and understand the female representations offered by such tales.

Feminism

Given that this project is looking at the ideologies governing women, clearly feminism will form a crucial part of the analysis. Mirroring how the project uses both traditional and modern fairy tales, this study also engages with differing feminist perspectives. This is to ensure that the analysis is well rounded, and also that it is not repetitive. It would be redundant to analyse these fairy tales repeatedly from the same perspective. This project engages with a variety of feminist theoretical perspectives. Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* provides insight into the construction of the female figure in all her multiplicities. Naomi Wolf’s *The Beauty Myth* is a key text for this project, providing valuable insight into the ideology of beauty and its implications for wider culture. Judith Butler and her works, *Bodies That Matter* and *Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity*, highlight how the performative aspects of gender allow for a full evaluation of any new representations of femininity afforded by contemporary tales. Hélène Cixous’s ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’, and her theory on *l’écriture féminine*, provide valuable insight into the more contemporary examples of fairy tales, specifically those written by women. Luce Irigaray’s *Speculum of the Other Woman* allows for a more thorough analysis of the roles woman play, and also enables an analysis of how the ideologies that fairy tales perpetuate can affix social and cultural roles

for certain women. Laura Mulvey's *Visual and Other Pleasures* and *Fetishism and Curiosity* allows for an assessment of the male gaze in the formation of the ideologies in the texts and the impact of the male gaze and these ideologies on female identity construction. In conjunction with the other literary theories, the use of a well-rounded feminist perspective means that these ideologies are not just analysed as they influence the character, but are also investigated in terms of how they are inscribed into society.

Psychoanalysis

It is important to be able to understand how patriarchal ideology helps to form identities, both in terms of the female figure and also in terms of the audience. Psychoanalysis allows us to understand more fully the processes of patriarchal society and the production of these ideologies. The use of psychoanalysis also permits insight into the characters' motivations and into how they construct their identity. This project applies the work of Jacques Lacan, with specific focus on *Écrits*, and this facilitates some significant insights into how the female characters can construct their identity within the context of the tale, based on the overriding ideology of that tale. It also shows how the audience members can also form their identity based on this construction, and on the formation of identity that is being reflected to them. Lacan's notion of the mirror stage is significant, as one could see fairy tale narratives as cultural mirrors that are creative of, and reflective of, the creation of identity, in this case, female identity. This project also engages with Sigmund Freud, specifically his texts, *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *Sex and Love*, helping to provide insight into why men and patriarchal society need these ideologies to be taken as truth in order to relieve their castration fears.

Other theorists

This project engages with aspects of other literary theorists that are seen as important in answering the research question. The use of selected Marxist theories provides an understanding of the nature of ideologies. It also provides a theoretical basis into the issue of commodities and understanding the worth of the female as a commodity in patriarchal society, both in terms of use value and of exchange value.

Some aspects of Roland Barthes's theories provides an analysis of how the females are constructed as good or evil within the tale, while also offering a new perspective on the structure of the tale. Semiotics further abets how the images are powerful signifiers of certain ideals and aspirations and how these help create meaning for the reader.

Chapter Breakdown

The opening chapter engages with the *Cinderella* tale, utilising both the Ladybird picture book and also the Perrault version found in *The Oxford Classic* edition, *The Complete Fairy Tales* by Charles Perrault. It utilises noted folklorists' research to understand the context of the tale and the Disney treatment of it. Jack Zipes' *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tale* provides a theoretical framework through which to show the enduring nature of fairy tales. This chapter also utilises *The Greenwood Encyclopaedia of Fairy tales* edited by Donald Haase, which helps to provide contextual understanding to the key terms and issues found in folk and fairy tales. Marina Warner's *From the Beast to the Blonde* is also employed, providing valuable insight and understanding into the representation of women, especially with regards to the deconstructive interrogation found in this chapter where, 'fairy tales like 'Cinderella' bear witness against women. But there are possible reasons for the evidence they bring, be it true or false' (Warner 1995, p.210).

The analysis is undertaken from a variety of theoretical positions in order to provide a comprehensive and fundamental understanding of the place of women in the fairy tale, and also to show how the fairy tale structure instils these representations in the reader, and by

extension, in society at large. A new analysis of the fairy tale is offered, looking at how it generates and communicates meaning to the reader. In this endeavour, various works of Barthes will be used, such as *Writing Degree Zero*, *S/Z*, *Image and Text* and *Myth Today* in order to provide a comprehensive and understandable analysis of the representations of the female characters. This provides a groundwork in understanding how they are divided in their governing binary oppositions. It also provides analysis of the visual imagery, as Barthes argues that pictures are ‘more imperative than writing, they impose meaning at one stroke, without analysing or diluting it’ (Barthes 1972, p.110). This is further explored using semiotics and signification, drawing on Terence Hawkes’s *Structuralism and Semiotics* to understand how the female characters are divided into good/evil within the tale.

This chapter also employs deconstruction, using Derrida’s *Positions*, allowing for further investigation of the representations of women, and of how they are understood as the weaker part of binary oppositions within the tale. These binary oppositions are then opened up ‘to play’ by investigating the ideology of beauty as the centre of the stories, and also by examining the value of female self-worth, using Derrida’s work ‘Structure, sign and play in the discourse of the human sciences’. The analysis will show how beauty is ‘no longer a simply a concept but rather the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and a system in general’ (Derrida 1982, p.11). This is further substantiated using Naomi Wolf’s *The Beauty Myth*, where she looks at the importance of beauty as a patriarchal tool for subjugation, ‘where male culture seems happiest to imagine two women together when they are defined as being one winner and one loser in the beauty myth’ (Wolf 1991, p.60).

Chapter Two engages with *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister (COAUS)* by Gregory Maguire. Given that this text follows the narrative from the point of view of an ugly stepsister Iris, it allows for a questioning of the binary oppositions where beauty is placed as the centre of the tale. Grauerholz and Sperry’s article ‘The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the

Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales in Gender and Society', provides further understanding of how the presence or absence of beauty provides an understanding of whether a female character is good or evil, 'often there is a clear link between beauty and goodness, most often in reference to younger women and between ugliness and evil' (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.718). This chapter uses Simone de Beauvoir and her chapter in *The Second Sex*, 'The Young Girl', to suggest an understanding of the young female characters of Iris and Clara in the tale, with Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* proving a useful additional lens of examination.

The new treatment of blurred binary oppositions found in the novel is looked at using McQuillan's ideas, where traditionally there is a presupposition of 'the innate superiority of one term over another' which makes 'it is necessary to assume that one term is sealed against contamination by the other' (McQuillan 2000, p.15). The voice of Iris in the tale destabilises this structure. The attention the novel pays to the traditional importance attributed to beauty is further enlightened using the work of Grauerholz and Sperry, and Haase. This provides a conceptual framework through which to deconstruct the central status of beauty in this tale. The affiliation of the concept of beauty through art, and the presence of the tulip economy in the novel, are analysed using Derrida and also Wolf, who draws attention to the ever-changing societal determinations of standardised beauty. Throughout the chapter, there will be an analysis to how the ideology of beauty affects all the female characters.

Finally, the context and background given to the evil mother character in the tale, which was absent in the previous *Cinderella* tale, will be discussed. This will be explored using Warner and Zipes, and also de Beauvoir, who provides insight into the character's motivations as a woman, as 'she is allowed no hold on the world save through the mediation of some man' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.588). The chapter will provide a full theoretical analysis of the text and the female characters.

Chapter Three will engage with the tale of *Bluebeard* found in *The Complete Fairy Tales* by Charles Perrault, and explores the female representation offered by this story. It looks at the moralistic tone of the tale, and at the warning against feminine curiosity. It also analyses the function of ideology using the works of Louis Althusser and Stuart Hall. Maria Tatar's thinking will provide valuable insight into the workings of the tale, especially her *Secrets beyond the Door: The Story of Bluebeard and his Wives* and *Off With Their Heads*, where she discusses how the suppression of female curiosity 'can be seen as a replaying of one biblical master plot: the Genesis account of the Fall' (Tatar 1992, p.96).

The female role as a commodity is explored extensively throughout this chapter in many facets. Irigaray's *The Sex Which Is Not One* is used to suggest how the 'feminine is always described in terms of deficiency or atrophy, as the other side of the sex that alone holds a monopoly on value: the male sex' (Irigaray 1985, p.69). In order to provide a comprehensive reading of the text, the chapter will also engage with Jack Zipes' *The Art of Subversion*, and Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*, focusing on his supposition that the female transgression is of infidelity, leading to punishment.

Female sexuality will also be explored in this chapter, referring back to the work of Irigaray while also drawing on Warner's analysis of the *Bluebeard* tale in her chapter 'The Ogre's Appetite'. Here, and in 'Demon Lovers', she explores the possible meanings of the bloody chamber, writing that, 'Perrault, a realist who clothed his witness in fancy dress, spun a tale of reassurance, in which his heroine is spared one of the most present fears of a young women in the past: that marriage will be the death of her' (Warner 1995 p.264). The sexualised aspect of the female as commodity is explored using Marxist commodity theory to explore this representation of women not only within the tale, but in patriarchal society as a whole, where the female becomes a commodity, 'only because they are something twofold, both objects of utility, and, at the same time, depositories of value' (Marx 2010, p.32).

This chapter will also engage with the character of Bluebeard, and with how he influences the representation of the female characters in the story, with his construction of being 'the other'. To do this Irigaray, Warner and Zipes will be consulted in order to provide a full and comprehensive analysis of the character.

Chapter Four looks at Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* leading on from the analysis of the traditional *Bluebeard*. This chapter engages with Cristina Bacchilega's examination of *The Bloody Chamber* in the chapter 'Be Bold, Be Bold, But Not Too Bold'. It also uses various articles to discuss *The Bloody Chamber* as a revisionist text of *Bluebeard*.

The question of the formation of identity is analysed using Lacan's thinking on the Mirror Stage. Further theoretical analysis is provided by John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, which is appropriate given the dominant trope of mirrors throughout the text. The female character assimilates the identity of a sexualised commodity in order to 'acquire some control over this process, women must contain it and interiorize it' (Berger 1972, p.46). The question of the formation of female identity is further analysed through the male gaze, using Laura Mulvey's *Visual and Other Pleasures*, and the chapter will examine how the male gaze affects the female character. There has already been research on *The Bloody Chamber* using Berger and Mulvey; however, this project develops this analysis further by looking at the traditional tale of *Bluebeard* and at the role of the female as commodity. This is explored further using Laura Mulvey's *Commodity and Fetishism*, which provides a perspective on how the female becomes a fetishized commodity, one that the male character exploits in order to create his ultimate idealised commodity.

This chapter also analyses the presence of the active mother character in the tale, employing Bacchilega's analysis and also drawing on Freud's 'The Medusa Myth' to provide some psychoanalytical understanding as to why an active female character would threaten the patriarchal structure. This analysis is further strengthened using Abigail Bray's work on

Hélène Cixous, and also by using Cixous's 'The Laugh of the Medusa' to understand the change in the progression of the female. Cixous and her theory on *l'écriture féminine* is also utilised to assess the writing of the female body by Carter.

The fifth chapter analyses *Frozen*, the 2013 film, and looks at the cultural significance of the tale using various articles to explore the popularity of the film. It analyses *Frozen* as a parody of the fairy tale genre using Robert Phiddian's 'Are Parody and Deconstruction Secretly the Same Thing?' to explore how *Frozen* questions 'the ideological and structural force on which it depends' (Phiddian 1997, p. 676). The article is used in conjunction with Derrida's theories to assess the parodic/deconstructive nature of this modern tale, and to see whether it is merely repeating the same ideologies, or in fact creating a new space within which to challenge these traditional ideologies.

The analysis looks at the new representations of the female through the characters of Elsa and Anna. Anna is analysed using the England *et al* study 'Gender Role and the Portrayal of Disney Princesses', to assess the new representation of this Disney princess in line with the other Disney tales. The inclusion of two male characters is also investigated using Phiddian and Derrida to assess the new vision of the marriage trope in the tale. Elsa is analysed through Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* showing how every girl is 'compelled to "cite" the norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject' (Butler 1993, p.232). It also looks at identity formation using Lacanian theory, and the physical representation and the ideology of beauty is assessed using Wolf's *The Beauty Myth*, and Grauerholz and Sperry's study. This chapter also inspects how the modern fairy tale concentrates on positive female relations rather than promoting female competitiveness.

Chapter Six considers the film *Maleficent*, and discusses the traditional evil female character using Amy Davis's *Good Girls and Wicked Witches*. This chapter evaluates

Maleficent as a deconstructive text, giving a voice to the other: ‘to deconstruct an opposition is to undo and displace it, to situate it differently’ (Culler 1983, p.150). The analysis will provide an insight into the voice of the opposition of the traditional binary opposition of the classic *Sleeping Beauty* tale. This chapter will investigate the motivations of the writing of a female, using both Davis and also Cixous’s ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’. This analysis also draws on Christy Williams’ text: ‘Who’s Wicked Now? The Stepmother as Fairy-Tale Heroine’, in order to assess the new representation of the evil maternal in the tale.

This chapter also studies the controversial symbolic rape scene of the film. It examines the motivations of why the character is violated and how this action affects the character using Cathy Roberts’s *Women and Rape*, ‘passive femininity is made vulnerable to abuse by aggressive masculinity’ (Roberts 1989, p.8). It also discusses the passivity promoted by the traditional *Sleeping Beauty* tale, and how this has infiltrated contemporary films, using Adriana Novoa’s chapter ‘Rough Awakenings: Unconscious Women and Rape in *Kill Bill* and *Talk to Her*’. This chapter will consider how this new representation of the female creates a fresh possibility outside of the binary oppositions ‘something transgressive of the horizon off legitimation’ (Caputo 1997, p.81). This point is reinforced by Cixous’s ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’ where she states ‘it is time to liberate the New Woman from the Old by coming to know her’ (Cixous 1976, p.878).

The final chapter engages with *Snow White and the Huntsman*, utilising Cristina Bacchilega’s work on the Snow White mirror trope to provide context to the mirror trope found in *SWATH*. The chapter will also examine the connection of the mirror with the ideology of beauty, using both Wolf’s *The Beauty Myth*, and Grauerholz and Sperry’s study. This links in with how identity construction can be formed on the premise of the beauty myth, using Lacan’s theory on the mirror stage and also Simone de Beauvoir’s chapter ‘The Narcissistic Woman’ in *The Second Sex*.

This chapter evaluates how aging affects the identity of the evil character, Ravenna. It analyses Ravenna's acts of evil in her quest to retain her youth and power, and aligns this to contemporary beauty practises such as cosmetic surgery and their link with the fear of aging. This chapter investigates the commoditisation of beauty using Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* and Kathryn Pauly Morgan's article 'Women and the Knife: Cosmetic Surgery and the Colonization of Women's Bodies', which provides some understanding of the character's motivations as 'women have traditionally regarded (and been taught to regard) their bodies, particularly if they are young, beautiful, and fertile, as a locus of power to be enhanced through artifice and, now, through artefact' (Morgan 1991, p.34). This chapter will also evaluate the representation of women using Bacchilega and Butler. It looks at the voice of the other through deconstruction and the motivations of the character drawing on Grauerholz and Sperry. It will probe the construction of the evil character in fairy tales, drawing on the works of Wolf and Morgan, and on Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous Feminine*.

Donald Haase, in 'Yours, Mine, or Ours?', speaks about the ownership of fairy tales. He argues that if fairy tales are read from nationalist and universalist perspectives, then they 'confine and limit us, narrowing our views of reality while allegedly giving us greater insight into the other, into ourselves, or into humanity. From these perspectives, fairy tales own us, we don't own them' (Haase 1999, p.360). Through the carefully selected literary theories, this project analyses the ideologies that are operative through the selected texts, to assess whether the modern phenomenon of these modern fairy tales are subverting or reinforcing the ideologies and gender constructions of traditional tales. It looks at how these ideologies influence female identity construction, and examines the function of these ideologies in society at large. Haase also poses the question 'So who owns fairy tales?' in which he answers 'To be blunt: I do. And you do. We can each claim fairy tales for ourselves' (Haase 1999, p.361). If contemporary society has taken ownership of fairy tales, then the issues and

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problems present, should not only address the problems and issues from the traditional tale, but also reflect the issues and problems affecting female society, and it is to one of the most seminal of traditional tales that the focus of this study now turns.

Chapter One: ‘Once Upon a Time’ – Understanding the Representation of Women through *Cinderella*

Understanding *Cinderella* through the lens of Perrault and Disney

Donald Haase states that ‘like the Bible, fairy tales – especially in the classic tales of Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm – hold a revered if not sacred place in modern Western culture’ (Haase 1999, p.353). Much of our understanding of the modern literary fairy tale for children can be attributed to Charles Perrault’s *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* published in 1697. The intended audience of these tales was not children but adults, as these stories were seen as a means of demonstrating how French folklore could be adapted to the palette of the French bourgeoisie, hence creating a new genre of art within the French civilizing process (Zipes 1994, p.17). Later, they were used as a method of educating children in a code of *civilté* by ‘endowing (the literary fairy tale) with an earnest and moral purpose to influence the behavior of children in a tasteful way’ (Zipes 1991, p.16). Thus, the fairy tale depicts an upward growth, the overcoming of insoluble problems and moral dangers, the yearning for the highest things and, in the hero/heroine’s case, the attainability of them (Lüthi 1976, p.140). These fairy tales are indoctrinated with an unshakeable ideology, namely that to be the heroine of one’s own tale, one must have the necessary attributes of the heroine, as in the case of Cinderella who is endowed with not only virginal beauty and grace, but also with composure and a great self-discipline tempered with politeness (Zipes 1991, p.27). It is through deconstructing *Cinderella*, primarily through the Disney literary incarnation, that I

hope to probe the naturalised values dictating how women should be seen in society and culture. This chapter engages with two versions of the classic *Cinderella* fairy tale, both the traditional Perrault version found in the Oxford Classic collection, and also the literary Disney version which is published by Ladybird Books, 'who have now struck a deal with Disney so that all the illustrations are based on the film's graphics and storyline' (Warner, 1995, p. 416). A structuralist and semiotic analysis of these illustrations shows how the ideologies of this fairy tale are both perpetuated and naturalised.

'*Cinderella*' is a much loved fairy tale originating from Charles Perrault's 'Cendrillon', stressing that good grace is more important than mere beauty, and also that one needs a good godmother to succeed in life. The Grimms brothers then reworked Perrault's classic, titling it 'Aschenputtel' (Ash Girl, 1812). There are some notable differences between the two works. There is a more prominent presence of Cinderella's biological mother within the Grimms' version, and both religion and cruelty are heavily emphasised. The fairy godmother is absent from the Grimms' adaptation. Disney's animated picture, based on Perrault's '*Cinderella*', appeared in 1950. Unlike previous versions, the stepsisters are made extremely ugly and dim-witted. The portrayal of the maternal figure is twofold, spanning the demonic representation in the form of the stepmother and the chubby, scatter brained fairy godmother (Joosen, V. cited in Haase 2008, p.203). As is usual for Disney fairy tale films, there is an absence of a natural mother:

None of the Disney films suggest that the heroines' mothers return to help them – not even the crowd-pleasing calculations of the recent *Beauty and the Beast* could produce a natural mother for Beauty, but only a cosy teapot-cum-housekeeper in lieu. (Warner 1995, p.206)

It is the Disney version of *Cinderella* that has homogenised the *Cinderella* fairy tale, allowing people to have a, 'preconceived notions of what a fairy tale is and should be' (Zipes 2002, p.118). Walt Disney fed his audiences what they desired, but not on their behalf:

He reduced the wants and dreams of the American people to formulas which prescribed how to gain a measure of happiness by conforming to the standards of industry's work ethos and the constraining ideology of American conservatism. (Zipes 2002, p.129)

The *Cinderella* animated picture has become synonymous with the literary version, with the two now being almost indistinguishable from each other. Using a contemporary example of the *Cinderella* classic fairy tale, complete with Disney imagery, allows for a well-rounded analysis of the tale, as it impacts the impressionable minds of a young audience and acts as a basis on which the analysis of the research title is built. Marina Warner puts forward the idea, that 'children are not likely to be committed to a certain way of thought; they can be moulded, and the stories they hear will then become the ones they expect' (Warner 1995, p.410). One can then see that children make the ideal audience in which to perpetuate an idealised form of the aspirational female figure. 'Once upon a time,' is a powerful signifier which suggests that we are about to enter an enclosed realm of magic, where goodness and beauty are rewarded, and where good always triumphs evil, ending in a 'happily ever after'. The use of the idiom 'once upon a time' is a powerful aspect of a discursive practise cohering to provide a meaningful exposition of a very specific generic narrative. Thus, the reader is automatically drawn into the world of the fairy tale with this simple utterance.

This discourse creates meaning (Barker 2004, p.54). Meanings are not limited to the connotations of social experience, but also refer to unconscious meanings within the self, that is, to assimilations of social identity that enable people living in industrial capitalist societies to make sense of themselves and their social relations (Fiske 1992, p.285). This is of particular relevance to the female figures of the fairy tale, as 'the misogyny of fairy tales engages women as participants, not just targets; the antagonism and sufferings the stories recount connect to the world of female authority as well as experience' (Warner 1995, p.208). This literary adaptation of *Cinderella* parallels that of the film version, using the same

illustrations. The scenarios within the fairy tale help set the socially acceptable boundaries for the serving of the civilising aspirations of adults (Bacchilega 1997, p.5). Just as the fairy tale opens with its influential idiom, so at the conclusion, it also closes its hermeneutic circle, 'and they all lived happily ever after'. This single phrase connotes a powerful wielding of hope which allows one to 'overlook the knowledge of misery within marriage that the preceding story reveals in its every line. The conclusion of fairy tales works a charm against despair, the last spell the narrating fairy godmother casts for change in her subjects and her hearers' destinies' (Warner 1995, p.217).

Cinderella – the idealisation

The ascension of Cinderella from lowly housemaid to the object of attention of the prince's eye, is a pattern which enculturates young girls into the methods of good grace which will procure them a husband. Cinderella is beautiful, with 'golden hair', and eyes 'as blue as forget-me-nots.' Her characteristics are equally as compelling as her beauty: she is industrious and kind. This perpetuates the internalisation of feminine beauty for the reader. 'The feminine beauty ideal can be seen as a normative means of social control whereby social control is accomplished through the internalization of values and norms that serve to restrict women's lives' (Grauerholz, Sperry 2003, p.712). Hence, beauty is rewarded; ugliness is punished. The language seeks to reproduce 'natural' beauty and to perform 'natural' wishes, thus the aesthetics themselves are naturalised (Bacchilega 1997, p.32). This series of binary contrasts shape the reader's response to the characters, while seeming to be ideologically neutral. Stuart Hall states that 'in a determinate moment the structure employs a code and yields a 'message'; at another determinate moment, the 'message', via its decodings, issues into the structure of social practices' (Hall 1993, p.93). This enables us to understand how these ideologies surrounding beauty, and the rewards associated with it, are consumed and

naturalised for the reader. Cinderella is the eternal, 'Innocent Persecuted Heroine'; she is endlessly passive, always waiting for someone else to instigate control of her future: her father, her stepmother, her godmother and then her prince, resulting in what psychotherapist Carol Dowling refers to as *The Cinderella Complex*, which she describes as a woman's unconscious yearning to be taken care of by others, founded on a fear of independence. Dowling explains that one 'doesn't want to be like [one's] mother, cloistered and passive' (Dowling 1981, p.71). The female's main identification of independence lies with her father. Dowling goes on to explain that the female 'doesn't want to have to be that powerful, all providing figure in her own life. That's what the man should do for her' (Dowling 1981, p.71). Within society today, '*The Cinderella Complex*' draws on modern issues such as the glass ceiling, which revolves around the differentiation between men's and women's salaries in favour of the former, to explain how the ideologies perpetuated by the *Cinderella* fairy tale still allow man to maintain the position of breadwinner, and thus remain the rescuer of woman. However, through deconstructing the tale within the social context of the time, one would say that, given the subordinate role of woman as a resource (or commodity as explored in later chapters), '*The Cinderella Complex*', is more indicative of the evolving social and ideological roles of woman in contemporary society than an original moral or ideology embedded within the text.

The structure of meaning

Structurally, fairy tales in all their multiplicities, according to Vladimir Propp as outlined in Chapter 3 of his book *Morphology of the Fairy Tale*, are adherent to 31 functions:

1. A family member leaves the home.
2. An interdiction is articulated to the hero. The hero issued a warning.
3. There is a defiance of the interdiction allowing the villain to enter.

4. The villain makes an endeavour at reconnaissance – attempts at seeking information.
5. The villain gains information about the victim.
6. The villain tricks the victim to take possession of their belongings.
7. Through deception, the victim inadvertently helps the villain.
8. The villain causes harm or injury to a family member or alternatively a family member lacks something or desires something.
9. Misfortune or lack is made known causing the hero to be dispatched.
10. Counter action is decided upon.
11. The hero departs from home.
12. The hero is tested paving the way for the introduction of the magical helper.
13. Hero reacts to actions of future donor.
14. Hero acquires help of magical helper.
15. Hero is led to the location of the search.
16. Hero and villain join in direct combat.
17. Hero is branded or wounded.
18. Villain is defeated.
19. Initial misfortune or lack is resolved.
20. Hero returns.
21. Hero is pursued.
22. Hero is rescued from pursuit.
23. The unrecognized hero returns home.
24. False hero presents unfounded claims.
25. A difficult task is proposed by the hero.
26. The task is resolved.
27. The hero is recognized possibly by the previous branding.
28. The false hero/villain is exposed.
29. The hero is transformed be it physically or materialistically.
30. The villain is punished.

31. The hero marries and is rewarded such as ascension to the throne. (Propp 1968, pp.25-65)

The rigid structure of the fairy tale is duplicated by the rigidness of the dogma inherent within the fairy tale structure, and the seduction of the female figure into this paradigm is another important aspect which emerges throughout all fairy tales, be they aimed at child or adult. Marina Warner further discusses Propp's analysis of the wonder tale, and concentrates on the role of the princess, noting that 'Propp could not sever her function from her father's but treated them as belonging to a single sphere of action' (Warner 1995, p.238). This segues with the findings of Carol Dowling's work noted earlier, where she states that the female's main identification of independence lies with her father. This further regulates Cinderella into her patriarchal role in society, because as Warner describes it, the story discloses 'unwittingly, the strictly patriarchal character of the traditional marriage plots' (Warner 1995, p.238). Propp further neglects the role of women in his casting of the mother figure as donor or villain: rather than exploring 'their place in the system of family authority, like the father'. Indeed, for Warner, Propp 'inadvertently reproduces the weight of male power in the wonder tale, and the consequent alliances which set women against women; the tension erupts within the stories as female dissension and strife' (Warner 1995, p.238). This serves not to caste woman in the traditional opposition against man, but rather, it pits woman against woman.

Roland Barthes, in his book, *Writing Degree Zero*, focuses his attention on the classical French style of writing, *écriture classique*. Barthes saw this as not a style of writing, but in fact a 'deliberately adopted "way" of writing developed at a particular time and place' (Hawkes 1991, p.107). Barthes states that 'writing was a ceremonial which manifested the implantation of the writer into a particular political society' (Barthes 1967, p.27). This corresponds with the Charles Perrault adaption of *Cinderella* and its Disney edition. Barthes saw this classical French style of writing as an attributive act of bourgeois expropriation, 'part of a grand design whereby all aspects of bourgeois life silently acquire the same air of

naturalness, of rightness, of universality and inevitability' (Hawkes 1991, p.107). Barthes' accounts that this style of writing is not innocent, because, rather than simply reflecting reality, it 'in fact, it shapes reality in its own image, acting as the institutionalised carrier, transmitter or encoder of the bourgeois way of life and its values' (Hawkes 1991, p.108). This is particularly true of the representations of women which it offers, where 'fairy tales like "Cinderella" bear witness against women. But there are possible reasons for the evidence they bring, be it true or false' (Warner 1995, p.210). These reasons are further emphasised in the progressive version of *Cinderella*, which will be discussed later in the chapter, entitled *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*. Barthes' 'écriture classique' can clearly be paralleled with Charles Perrault's endowment of the *Cinderella* fairy tale with a moral purpose, using it as a method of educating children to a code of *civilté*, by 'endowing (the literary fairy tale) with an earnest and moral purpose to influence the behavior of children in a tasteful way' (Zipes 1991, p.16). The Ladybird Disney edition of *Cinderella* further cements the limited roles offered to the female figures through making the morals and ideologies already inherent within the tale much stronger by reinforcing them with visual images. Warner states that 'the disequilibrium between good and evil in these films has influenced contemporary perception of fairy tale, as a form where sinister and gruesome forces are magnified and prevail throughout – until the very last moment, where, *ex machina*, right and goodness overcome them' (Warner 1995, p.207). This reinforcement of such textual ideologies with illustrations reinforces, not only the disequilibrium between good and evil, but also the female representations it exemplifies. Thus, using Barthes' thinking, Disney and Perrault can be seen to reinforce gender stereotyping because they 'accede to those values', and 'confirm and reinforce the nature of that way of life' (Hawkes 1991, p.108). The fairy tale then becomes a 'means to save oneself all the preliminaries of a choice' (Barthes 1967, p.33). Classical Marxism applied to the *Cinderella* story might argue that the mass audience would believe

that the *Cinderella* film is harmless entertainment, offering a way to unwind at the end of the day. In actuality, however, the medium persuades the mass audience into passive inaction, absorbing bourgeois values and promising that fulfillment can come through the practices and products of current consumer society (White 1992, p.165). This coincides with the earlier quote from Zipes about how Disney 'reduced the wants and dreams of the American people to formulas' (Zipes 2002, p.129), and this is particularly evident in the redundant roles offered to the female figures in *Cinderella*. Disney has made the visual imagery of *Cinderella* iconic, in terms of aspects such as the 'glass slipper', to the point that popular culture has become saturated with these famous images.

In *S/Z*, Barthes establishes two modes of writing, one of which is applicable to the genre of fairy tale. He terms it a readerly (*lisible*) mode of writing (Hawkes 1991, p.114), suggesting that this mode positions the reader as a consumer so 'instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, he is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text' (Barthes 1990, p.4). He terms all classic texts to be readerly texts (Barthes 1990, p.4), and for Barthes, fairy tales are classic texts given their fundamental role in the construction of notions of childhood and in their persuasive tone. He sees such a tone as central to classic texts, which organise their 'discourse in such a way as to persuade' (Barthes 1967, p.63). The premise of the classic text is similar to that of the fairy tale, as both are 'static, virtually "read themselves" and thus perpetuate an "established" view of reality and an "establishment" schemes of values, frozen in time, yet serving still as an out-of-date model for our world' (Hawkes 1991, p.114). In terms of the character of *Cinderella*, she must prove herself worthy through beauty, submission and excellence in domesticity to be validated for a patriarchal happy ending. Such traits can be seen as being out of date in contemporary society. While beauty is still a rewarded and revered characteristic, it no longer needs to be coupled with excellence in domesticity and docility in order to ensure marriage.

Thus one can indeed categorise fairy tales into what Barthes terms as a 'readerly texts', serving 'as an out-of-date model for our world' (Hawkes 1991, p.114). This struggle to reconcile the ideological redundant teachings governing women with modern society will be more apparent in later chapters through the deconstruction of modern fairy tales.

Image and Text

The Disney literary version of this classic fairy tale is a simply-constructed tale based on images from its own movie and from the original text similar to Charles Perrault's rendition of *Cinderella*. These images are powerful signifiers to an impressionable mind, and have the effect of inculcating readers into their ideology. Few words are spent articulating Cinderella's beauty, but her image is one of a beautiful, slender fair woman. Although the text does not spend much time amplifying such qualities, it is clear to the child reader from the imagery that Cinderella is indeed beautiful, and so must be the heroine with whom the reader identifies as 'fairy tales play to the child's hankering after nobler, richer altogether origins, the fantasy of being a prince or princess in disguise, the Freudian "family romance"' (Warner 1995, p.210). Barthes' works provide a theoretical framework through which to read images such as Cinderella's loveliness, and to analyse their cultural significance. In *Myth Today* he describes pictures as 'more imperative than writing, they impose meaning at one stroke, without analysing or diluting it. But this is no longer a constitutive difference. Pictures become a kind of writing as soon as they are meaningful, like writing, they call for a *lexis*' (Barthes 1972, p.110).

Thus, the images provided in the tale are powerful signifiers of the ideologies which are inherent within this classic tale. These images do not duplicate the text as they do not progress in real time, and both image and text tell the same story independently, yet the symbiosis of both text and image amplifies the intrinsic ideologies. For Cinderella a 'happy

ending' must be a patriarchal one, and her submission, docility and prowess as a home maker, as shown in the images, marks her as being ready for such a conclusion. As Barthes states, the images become a lexis, they tell a story endowed with meaning without needing to be endorsed by the text. The images in the book independently tell the story. The fairy tale both visually and textually becomes a myth, which is 'a mode of signification', which is a system of communication containing meaning (Barthes 1972, p.109). Barthes wrote how this is 'the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature' (Barthes 1972, p.129). One can ascertain that the ideological positions which the *Cinderella* fairy tale perpetuate, therefore, move from their historical significance into the realm of culture and naturalisation in this most readerly of texts. Thus, the ideologies become natural and accepted, as can be seen through the eternal popularity and acceptance of this fairy tale. When speaking of advertisements in *Myth and Ideology*, Barthes states that they 'are regarded as positioning the individual subject in such a way as to naturalise a dominant ideology' (Bignell 1997, p.47). Similar to how Barthes's uses the imagery of advertisements, the images in the fairy tale also position their young audience in such a way as to make them more receptive to the ideological imperatives which they endorse. This can be seen in the image of the mice dressed as humans. By humanising the mice with voices and clothing, the innocent child is encouraged to identify and respond to them and to their choices, such as their love for the character of Cinderella. This affiliation with the anthropomorphised and loveable mice reinforces Cinderella as the heroine and makes her the idealised female figure of the tale, a role to which the reader should aspire.

The literary Disney version is one in which the images are the main basis of telling the story which, combined with a simplistic text, is aimed at a young audience. In Barthes's, *Image, Music, Text*, he writes on the use of text and image. The text is comprised of a parasitic message designed to connote the image, and to accelerate its reception through one

or more signifieds. Barthes sees this as an important historical reversal, where the image no longer illustrates the words, but now it is the words which are structurally parasitic on the image (Barthes 1977, p.25). The text is secondary to the images, both structurally and also in the context of the intended audience. The rudimentary images provided are a visual basis in which the child, of any age, can interpret meaning. The presence of the text 'to all appearances, it is one of making explicit, of providing a stress; the text most often simply [is] amplifying a set of connotations already given in the photograph' (Barthes 1977, p.27). Charles Perrault is credited, when writing *Cinderella*, with creating his '*femme civilisée*', of upper class society, the perfect female, who is 'polite, graceful, beautiful, properly groomed, mannerly and [has] supreme self-control' (Zipes 1991, p.25). The blonde and beautiful heroine in the form of Cinderella and her consequent 'goodness,' are powerful signifiers to the child that beauty equates with goodness.

To use Pierce's theories on semiotics, beauty becomes an indexical sign arbitrarily signifying that it is a signifier of a worthwhile character (Bignell 1997, p.11). This can be further emphasised in how Barthes describes that 'what we grasp is not all one term after the other, but the correlation which unites them: there are, therefore, the signifier, the signified and the sign, which is the associative total of the first two terms' (Barthes 1972, p.113). Barthes demonstrates this using the example of a bouquet of roses to signify passion. This method can be transferred to the equation of beauty and goodness with fulfillment and happiness in the context of the fairy tale, where it becomes impossible to 'disassociate' beauty from goodness. This is demonstrated in the narrative with the rise of Cinderella and the fall of the evil stepmother. This is further abetted by the objects in the images, as Barthes himself stated, 'the interest lies in the fact that the objects are accepted inducers of associations of ideas (bookcase = intellectual)' (Barthes 1977, p.22). Therefore, the objects or entities associated with Cinderella reinforce her status, such as her animal helpers, the elderly

horse, the anthropomorphised mice and birds, as well as her companion Bruno, the dog. The fact that Cinderella is habitually surrounded by these creatures helps to further construct her identity as a beautiful, worthwhile young woman, learned in the arts of homemaking, submission and grace and very much in tune with nature. The idea that these animals are drawn to Cinderella as shown in the images proves her worth as a beautiful young maiden who is inherently good. Cinderella is very much the over-determined locus of signification and this attraction to her is a powerful ideological signifier at work.

This affiliation with animals is also true of the wicked stepmother and her 'nasty cat, Lucifer'. The religious connotations of the name are deliberate, further showcasing the evil nature of the stepmother, seen cradling this evil cat and perhaps symbolically cradling her evil nature and emphasizing what De Beauvoir calls the 'masked horror of maternity' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.206), in relation to the role of the stepmother. The use of this religious imagery accentuates the binary oppositions of the female figures of both Cinderella and the stepmother, providing a religious threat to the choices the reader can make in identifying with either female. Fairy tales can then be said to 'have done more than any other creation to naturalize female – maternal – malignancy in the imaginations of children worldwide' (Warner 1995, p.207). The first two images provided by the book are representative of the relationships with animals, and signify the division into binary oppositions, not only of the female characters, but also the animals with which they are associated. The first is of Cinderella as a young girl with her handsome father leading the horse and dog to water; the latter is of the stepmother cradling the menacing cat Lucifer with her daughters by her side looking intently on at the first image. The images provide an interesting complexity, dual binary oppositions both in the female figures and also in the animals. This reinforces the idea of good versus evil by affiliating it with, as Barthes put it, objects.



Figure 1 Cinderella and her Father



Figure 2 Stepmother and the Ugly Sisters

Another example of objects creating a symbolic meaning is that of the slipper motif. This is one of the most important analogies, one which is entrenched through many modern refigurations of fairy tales, and not just limited to retellings of *Cinderella*. When speaking of the true meaning of the slipper, Bruno Bettelheim notes that it can be seen as ‘a tiny receptacle into which some part of the body can slip and fit tightly can be seen as a symbol of the vagina’ (Bettelheim 1977, p.265). The fact that the slipper would be made of a brittle substance such as a glass, and therefore would be unstable if stretched:

reminds us of the hymen; and something that is easily lost at the end of the ball when one’s lover tries to keep his hold on his beloved seems an appropriate image for virginity... Cinderella’s running away from this situation could be seen as her effort to protect her virginity. (Bettelheim 1977, p.265)

The ideological undercurrent may be seen to inculcate into young girls the need to protect their virginity and virtue in order to remain like Cinderella, whose ‘innocence is stressed; her virtue is perfect’ (Bettelheim 1977, p.246). As the traditional fairy tale progresses, the climax is reached, ‘the fitting on of the slipper is a betrothal, and it is quite clear that Cinderella is a virginal bride. Every child knows that marriage is connected with sex’ (Bettelheim 1977, p.265).

The Disney adaptation of the *Cinderella* fairy tale uses subtlety in its imagery to show this, in the framing of Cinderella's makeover as she is prepared for the ball. The glass slippers sparkle with a blue hue, mirroring that of the shade of the royal castle in the background. This framing of this segment of the narrative further shows the linking of cherishing one's virginity with the patriarchal reward of marriage to a suitor deemed acceptable by society. Thus the ideological chains are bound tighter, and it is through the deconstruction of modern fairy tales, that we see how these chains chaff the modern woman abiding by these ideological rules in a contemporary society. For Bettelheim, in *Cinderella*, the sweet, tiny foot exercises an unconscious sexual appeal. The fairy tale prince cherishes her slipper, symbolically communicating that he adores her femininity as represented by the symbol of her vagina (Bettelheim 1997, p.265).

The division of women

The division of the female figures and their associative animals into their binary oppositions is unambiguous and easily recognisable to the intended young audience. Terence Hawkes provides an explanation of binary oppositions by drawing on semiotics just:

as the phonemic structure of a language rests on the principle that a sound's function is determined by what it is phonemically felt to 'oppose' as much as by what it actually phonetically is, so our fundamental concepts of 'meaning' present themselves to us through the opposition we feel to exist between basic 'semes' or semantic units. (Hawkes 1991, p.88)

He further explains this concept, using the rudimentary binary oppositions of male and female; light and dark. The 'contrastive ordering of this sort form the basis of what Levi Strauss has termed the "socio-logic" of the human mind, which structures nature in its own image, and thus establishes the foundation for the systems of totemic "transformations" that overtly or covertly underpin our picture of the world' (Hawkes 1991, p.88). Accordingly, one

can transfer such a theoretical process to the use of the associative animals in the Cinderella story, further emphasising the natural binary oppositions of the two female figures (good/evil), by linking them further into nature with the positioning of the animals. Another interesting aspect of the animals is the crafty use of the cat/ mouse opposition. This fortifies the oppositional stance of not only the animals, but also of the key female figures of Cinderella and her evil stepmother, as 'it exposes the normative bourgeois ideology of the "classic" fairy tale: in the modern Western world, telling fairy tales has been a bedtime, de-sacralized, but powerful initiation into a social class, a class with its own gender values' (Bacchilega 1993, p.11). Hawkes, using Greimas's argument, states that 'the perception of oppositions underlies what he terms the 'elementary structure of signification' on which his semantic theories rest' (Hawkes 1991, p.88). Hawkes further quotes Greimas, noting that we 'perceive differences and thanks to that perception, the world 'takes shape in front of us and for our purposes' (Hawkes 1991, p.88).

Bettelheim in his book, *The Uses of Enchantment*, offers reasoning in the duality of the representations of the mother in fairy tales which Marina Warner discusses. This links with Greimas's reckoning of the perception of differences as for Bettelheim:

The typical fairy tale splitting of the mother into a good (usually dead) mother and an evil stepmother serves the child well. It is not only a means of preserving an internal all-good mother when the real mother is not all-good, but it also permits anger at this bad 'stepmother' without endangering the goodwill of the true mother who is viewed as a different person. (Warner 1995, p.212)

This provides an unconscious channel for the child through which to vent any antagonistic fantasies about their own mother by focusing them on the evil stepmother 'without endangering the goodwill of the true mother who is viewed as a different person...' (Warner 1995, p.212). This helps explain the popularity of the fairy tale, as at an unconscious level, it

allows for a safe place for one to enact any negative parental feelings. Although Marina Warner speaks of the endorsement of this fantasy in therapeutic circles, she remains skeptical of such endorsement and of their popularity due to the effacement, 'from memory the historical reasons for women's cruelty within the home and have made such behaviour seem natural, even intrinsic to the mother-child relationship. It has helped ratify the expectation of strife as healthy and the resulting hatred as therapeutic' (Warner 1995, p.213). Warner makes an excellent point relating to the reasons as to why such hatred should exist, given the socio economic context of the fairy tale. This will be explored more thoroughly using the classic *Cinderella* fairy tale and also its adult literary counterpart, *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* by Gregory Maguire, where such issues become more relative to the narrative plot of the female figures.

In terms of the focus of the research question on the Disney literary version of *Cinderella*, it must be noted that Bettelheim's supposition on 'the wicked stepmother [acting] as the Janus face of the good mother, who can thus be saved and cherished in fantasy and memory, split from the bad mother' (Warner 1995, p.212), provides an interesting correlation with the Oedipus Complex. The young Cinderella is indoctrinated, by the patriarchal ideologies governing the narrative, to honour her father by finding in his duplicate an appropriate suitor. Cinderella's genteel father is introduced in the first page. There are palpable physical parallels in the imagery between that of the 'widowed gentleman', and Cinderella's prince. The only differences are those of their dress and moustache. Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, notes how for a male it is almost fate, 'to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first murderous wish against our father' (Freud 2010, p.280), leading to the development of the Oedipus complex. In the uncanny presentation of the duality of the prince and her father, one may draw on the Oedipus complex, where 'the little girl has to turn from her pre-Oedipal attachment to the mother and take her father as

love-object instead' (Moi 2002, p.32). Bettelheim notes that the stepmother acts as an outlet for any innate aggravation which a child may hold towards the natural mother, and for Freud, this could be seen directly through the Oedipus complex which has, 'as its content the distressing disturbance of a child's relation to his parents owing to the first stirrings of sexuality' (Freud 2010, p.280). The stepmother acts as the conduit through which both *Cinderella* and the reader may channel their grievances in the rivalry for the affections of the father/suitor. The use of the stepmother as such a conduit may also explain the absence of the natural mother. The natural mother's absence may incite some antagonistic feeling, which is fundamental to the Oedipus complex. For the idealised heroine to display ugly traits towards her own natural mother would disrupt the entire narrative of the fairy tale, and accordingly, would upset the embedded ideologies. The presence of the stepmother directs any possible antagonism towards a more suitable outlet, and protects the ideological stance of the natural mother. There is a substitution of the father physically in the form of the prince who also shares the attributes of her father. Using both Freud and Jung, the Oedipus complex can be expressed in a masculine form, but in the context of its application to *Cinderella*, can be 'expressed in terms of the relationship between daughter and father; the daughter turns to the father as an object of love and becomes hostile to her mother as a rival. This is for Jung an "Electra complex"' (Morford 1999, p.7). Hence, it can be seen that while *Cinderella* would hold resentment towards her natural mother, whose death could be viewed as an abandonment by such a young girl, she would have an even stronger resentment towards her step-mother, because as Carl Jung observes 'that mother had robbed her of her father' (Jung 1915, p.69).

The unpacking of binary oppositions is not just central to the idea of structuralism, but is also integral to the primary objective of deconstruction, which aims 'to rethink the conceptual and non-conceptual foundations of the Western tradition from the ground up'

(McQuillan 2000, p.8). Derrida further emphasises binary oppositions by stating that they are not merely equals, but rather that one of these terms is constantly privileged above the other (McQuillan 2000, p.8). In *Positions*, Derrida states that in 'a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand' (Derrida 1981, p.41). So rather than 'man' and 'woman' being seen as equal aspects of the binary opposition, instead, 'man' becomes exalted over 'woman' in conjunction with Western thought which can be seen as 'patriarchy or phallo-centrism' (McQuillan 2000, p.9). Through deconstructing both female figures, one can see that Cinderella is weak and passive, while the evil stepmother is ambitious and strong. The evil stepmother thus showcases more masculine traits than those of Cinderella, and in accordance with Derrida's expression that one of the terms governs the other in a violent hierarchy, it is the evil stepmother (the seemingly marginal side of the binary opposition), who retains the power over Cinderella. Reading the monochrome representations through these binary oppositions offers an interesting complexity. Neither is read based on their traits; they are merely divided into good versus evil. In this way the stepmother is not central, so she remains marginal. She does not hold the tools of power that Cinderella possesses, domestic prowess, subservience and beauty, which clearly lead to the patriarchal happy ending. This throws the binary oppositions into disarray. Rather than being categorised into oppositions based on their traits, as is the custom (man / woman; strong / weak), the female figures are themselves internally divided into the terms of good and evil. As the audience, we are treated to a glimpse of the wedding, and the narrative of the fairy tale disallows us to see Cinderella take the inevitable upper-hand over her stepmother through a happy and successful marriage. This can be read as showing that the struggles of the female figures in the fairy tale are altogether futile, and that they can never gain the upper hand based on their own merit in a patriarchal

society. The ideologies governing these women place them under the terms of the opposition, Cinderella is submissive and passive so is therefore 'good' while the stepmother is active and challenging is therefore 'bad'.

In this patriarchal construct, the most any female figure can hope to achieve is a suitable marriage. But, fairy tales 'overlook the knowledge of misery within marriage that the preceding story reveals in its every line' (Warner 1995, p.217), as shown through the discordant joining of two families and hostile family relations. The values of the opposition of the females are moral, as opposed to those of power. Neither female truly has any power, given that any partial victory they achieve is limited to a patriarchal construct of female victory, that of marriage. Neither female retains power over their individual destiny, but rather this path is dictated by the path through which they choose to succeed, be it that of virtue, as in the case of Cinderella, or the underhanded schemes of the stepmother. Warner demonstrates that fairy tales:

concentrate on unions made by law, on the reshaping of families from the biological to the social: on mothers and sisters bestowed by legal arrangement, as well as the husbands. The plots characteristically strive to align such social fiats with the inclinations of the heart. (Warner 1995, p.217)

In terms of *Cinderella*, the prince and marriage become the prize, rather than personal fulfillment. The 'inclinations of the heart' in fairy tales relentlessly follow the ideologies which patriarchy dictates. It is this representation of patriarchy that allows such binary oppositions, regarding the representations of the female figure and their resulting constitutive ideologies, to become naturalised over time by presenting them as such. Thus this perspective makes binary oppositions vital to how fairy tales promote their ideological thrust that a 'good' woman embraces the choices of her father, as seen through the duplication of his image in her suitor, and that she must embrace domesticity, unlike the evil stepmother, who

rejects domesticity as seen in her making Cinderella a virtual slave to the hearth. A Marxist interpretation of ideology allows for the bourgeoisie to keep the proletariat in a state of false consciousness, and this is mirrored in how a female views herself and how she relates to the social order produced by society and in this case enunciated through fairy tales. This Marxist interpretation will come into sharper focus upon analysing *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* by Gregory Maguire in the next chapter.

The meaning of beauty

Fairy tales thus serve as an important vehicle for the transmission of such 'natural' concepts, becoming a discourse in which they can be deconstructed. Although deconstruction employs no structured methods, there are some ways in which to 'reveal a text's undecidability ... to show that the 'meaning' of the text is really an indefinite, undecidable, plural, conflicting array of possible meanings and that the text, therefore, has no meaning' (Tyson 1999, p.252). Within *Cinderella*, although it is congruent with patriarchal society, the primary binary opposition is within the representations of the female figure, namely that of good girl /evil stepmother. A reversal of these binary oppositions would illustrate the ways in which 'the subordinate term is devalorised within the text's conceptual system even though there is no justification for this gesture outside logocentrism's own logic' (McQuillan 2000, p.12). This deconstruction involving the reversal of binary oppositions will be explored later using Gregory Maguire's *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*, where the ugly stepsister is given the primary voice in this twist of the classic tale of *Cinderella*. In the present section, I shall concentrate on the undecidability of the *Cinderella* text, where, 'meaning is not a stable element residing in the text for us to uncover or passively consume. Meaning is created by the reader in the act or reading' (Tyson 1999, p.252). In this sense, meaning is understood only through the act of reading and is singular to the individual. To refer back to the use of

the 'humanised' mice, this trope positions the reader to sympathise with the plight of Cinderella. To fully understand the positioning of the representations of the female characters into their oppositional stances, one must look at the characteristics which take on a metaphorical status in depicting these characters.

One such characteristic is beauty, particularly the meaning of beauty within the text and images. Derrida advocates that there has always been a desire for a centre within structure, as 'even today the notion of a structure lacking any center represents the unthinkable itself' (Derrida 2008, p.212). It is this desire for a centre to govern structure, which generates binary oppositions. One can therefore understand that beauty and its meaning, in the structure of the fairy tale and its relations to the female figures, acts as a centre for the story. 'The function of this centre was not only to orient, balance, and organise the structure – one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure – but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we call the play of the structure' (Derrida 2008, p.212). Cinderella the character is beautiful, docile and kind hearted. The evil stepmother is haughty, proud and ambitious. Yet using the visual imagery provided by the Disney *Cinderella* book, this evil stepmother is not ugly or unattractive, but rather her image can be read as being that of a woman with an older type of beauty. In this, the traditional transcendental notion of the character of Cinderella's beauty equating with goodness is one which becomes destabilised, given that both sides of this binary opposition possess the quality, which now no longer signifies the desired single ideological meaning.

Thus the meaning of beauty changes, and rather than being symptomatic of a worthwhile character, one may now read how that beauty becomes a marker of an admirable adversary as 'authentic power lies with the bad women, and the plump fairy godmother in *Cinderella* seems no match for them' (Warner 1995, p.207). This can be further exemplified using the classic Disney fairy tale *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937), where the evil

queen is clearly a beautiful woman, so much so that drawing on the Greek myth of Narcissus, the evil queen's obsession with her own reflection leads to her eventual demise. Her beauty can be used as a gauge denoting her as Snow White's nemesis. Though the evil queen does indeed turn into an evil hag with dark powers, it was her beauty which initially cast her as Snow White's adversary. Thus beauty now becomes the marker of a primary character commendable of inclusion in such fairy tales. The ugly stepsisters further prove this point. Neither beautiful nor magical, they become minor characters relegated into the shadows of both their stepsister and natural mother in the traditional tale, but not, as will be seen, in the more modern deconstructive version of the tale. This destabilisation, using the concept's meaning in relation to beauty, throws into anarchy not only the meaning of beauty but in a sense its fragility.

The conflicting meanings surrounding the metaphor of beauty in *Cinderella* can be further assessed using Derrida's work on *Difference*. Martin McQuillan, in his book *Deconstruction: A Reader*, asserts that for Saussure, the relationship between signifiers is 'differential (constituted by difference)' (McQuillan 2000, p.16). This means that the link between signified and signifier, although subjective, is constant. For Derrida, the signified concept only exists in relation to other concepts expressed by signifiers (McQuillan 2000, p.17). In the context of *Cinderella*, this can be understood in terms of the concept of beauty as 'every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences' (Derrida 1982, p.11). The chain or system which signifies Cinderella includes aspects such as her submissive nature, and her beauty becomes indicative of her goodness and of her worthy character. Beauty and its equation with goodness becomes part of the fairy tale system, as beauty is, 'no longer simply a concept but rather the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general' (Derrida 1982, p.11). This can be further seen in the 'happy ending'

narrative. It is only through her worth of character, as demonstrated by her beauty, that Cinderella achieves the fairy tale ending. This conceptual process becomes an ideology to be internalized. Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth* acknowledges the presence of a 'beauty myth in some form for as long as there has been patriarchy' (Wolf 1991, p.14). This is clearly present in the literary form of fairy tales and in their continuing female representations of Cinderella and the evil stepmother as 'male culture seems happiest to imagine two women together when they are defined as being one winner and one loser in the beauty myth' (Wolf 1991, p.60). The problem of the beauty myth surrounding females is that the female will always lose; beauty is fleeting and is an absolute patriarchal construct, a means of male dominance and control: when it is gone, so is the value of the woman. The struggle of the aging beauty in the fairy tale is explored using *Snow White and the Huntsman* in the final chapter of this project. The character of Cinderella perpetuates the beauty myth with positive affirmations such as the attraction of the humanised mice, the fairy godmother and the culmination of the idealised happy ending. This narrative affirms how 'a girl learns 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, p.61).

The meaning of aging

For the evil stepmother, the concepts surrounding her beauty such as her proud and haughty nature and her age, enable us to disallow her beauty. To refer back to Derrida, in the signifying chain of concepts, the presence of both beauty and age nullifies her beauty. Beauty is linked with youth and virility and 'whereas man grows old gradually, woman is suddenly deprived of her femininity' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.587). The system of play surrounding beauty has changed, given the evil stepmother's personality and age, 'it is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called "present"

element... is related to something other than itself' (Derrida 1982, p.13). Thus the meaning of beauty becomes unstable and *différance* subverts the logocentric quality of beauty. 'The recuperation of the margins is a necessary step in demonstrating the injustices which are disguised by the work of logocentrism' (McQuillan 2000, p.23). *Différance* offers us to view the resemblances within the characters of Cinderella and the evil stepmother by focusing on their similarities such as beauty. It does this by allowing us to:

reconsider all the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is constructed and on which our discourse lives, not in order to see opposition erase itself but to see what indicates that each of the terms must appear as the *difference* of the other, as the other different and deferred in the economy of the same... (Derrida 1982, p.17)

Both Cinderella's and the stepmother's feminine beauty form a connection between the two women, and deconstructs the binary oppositions by showcasing that they are both imprisoned by their role as women in a patriarchal society. Cinderella's ultimate release involves marriage to a prince and the evil stepmother uses marriage as a means to forward her own daughters as 'she was only interested in her mean, selfish daughters' (Disney 2003, p.3). Once one removes the negative textual associations of meanness and selfishness, what remains is that the evil stepmother was interested in her own natural daughters. Wolf states that 'in the bourgeois marriage markets of the last century, women learned to understand their own beauty as part of this economy' (Wolf 1991, p.20). Cinderella, true to her docile compliant nature, is unaware of her own beauty, but the evil stepmother, having been cast aside by society due to her failing beauty, is acutely aware of the importance of beauty as a currency in the marriage market. 'Women strove against women because they wished to promote their own children's interest over those of another union's offspring; the economic dependence of wives and mothers on the male breadwinner exacerbated – and still does – the divisions that may first spring from preferences for a child of one's flesh' (Warner 1995,

p.238). This further disrupts the binary oppositions, as rather than finding the evil stepmother wholly evil, she now retains vestiges of nature in her cherishing of her own children.

This can be further demonstrated in the absence of Cinderella's own natural mother. The absence of the natural mother in contrast to the evil stepmother further upsets the binary oppositions. Had Cinderella's own mother been a part of the story, one can assume that she too would have striven for her own child's interests. In the Perrault version of *Cinderella*, the unnamed natural mother is described as 'amazingly sweet-natured and kind ... [the] most charming person you could imagine' (Perrault 2009, p.130). This is perhaps a reason for her exclusion, necessary to the imparting of ideologies, which *Cinderella* perpetuates; the inclusion of the natural mother would undercut such ideologies due to their impracticality, as Warner states 'the bad mother had to disappear in order for the ideal to survive and allow Mother to flourish as symbol of the eternal feminine, the motherland, and the family itself as the highest social desideratum' (Warner 1995, p.212). Much consideration is often given to the absence of Cinderella's natural mother; however it is important to note that the prince's mother is also absent, reinforcing the idea that a natural mother would demolish the ideological arrangement of the fairy tale. This is a concept which will be further explored in other chapters using modern fairy tales, where the presence of a loving or natural mother figure disrupts or questions the traditional ideologies, such as in *The Bloody Chamber*. The conclusion will see the summation of the ideological reasoning that a natural mother must be absent to preserve the ideological structure dictating the female figures in fairy tales.

Chapter Two: ‘What is the use of beauty?’ – The questioning of *Cinderella* through Gregory Maguire’s *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*

Gregory Maguire’s *Cinderella*

Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister (COAUS) is one of the most interesting and dynamic retellings of the *Cinderella* tale. The author, Gregory Maguire, is well renowned for his contemporary fairy tales, which often interrogate traditional narratives from the perspective of the marginalised. *Wicked* is perhaps his best-known work: a postmodern retelling of *The Wizard of Oz* from the point of the wicked witch Elphaba. When reading his work, one can detect an interesting parallel between the work of Maguire and of L. Frank Baum, who wrote *The Wizard of Oz*. Jack Zipes describes Baum, as ‘a man who believed in human perfection but who did not believe that perfect humanity could be attained through conformity to a society which allowed common people to be degraded’ (Zipes 1991, p.121). This is comparable to Maguire’s work in providing a voice to the marginalised. *COAUS* is set in seventeenth century Holland, and follows the journey of plain Iris, her dim-witted sister Ruth and her virulent mother Margarethe, as they flee England following the violent murder of Margarethe’s husband Jack Fisher. The ugly stepsister is traditionally portrayed as a one-dimensional character, described as, ‘deceitful, wicked, envious, (and) cold hearted’ (Lüthi 1976, p.142). Physically Iris (the ugly stepsister), is as unattractive as she is in tradition, as

'gaunt and unlovely, as a hermit' (Maguire 2008, p.8). Once in Holland, they become embroiled in the world of art and tulips. They are introduced to art by Schoonmaker, a local painter, and his apprentice Casper, when they find refuge in his house as domestic servants. It is through Schoonmaker's commission to paint the locally-famed beauty Clara, the *Cinderella* character, that the Fisher family meet and assimilate into the Van de Meer family upon Clara's mother's death mirroring the original tale.

In *The Art of Subversion*, Jack Zipes quotes Rosemary Jackson:

Each fantastic text functions differently, depending upon its particular historical placing, and its different ideological, political and economic determinants, but the most subversive fantasies are those which attempt to transform the relations of the imaginary and the symbolic. They try to set up possibilities for radical cultural transformation by making fluid the relations between these realms, suggesting, or projecting, the dissolution of the symbolic through violent reversal or rejection of the process of the subject's formation. (Zipes 1991, pp.99-100)

CAOUS thus destabilises the traditional female roles affirmed by *Cinderella*. It can be argued that *COAUS* is a deconstructive account of the *Cinderella* tale analysed previously. It undermines the governing centre of the tale, and collapses the binary oppositions of fairy tales by giving voice to the previously relegated element, the ugly stepsister Iris. This throws the ideologies governing the fairy tale into disarray, and brings the female characters out of their one-dimensional shadows, thereby helping to encourage 'radical cultural transformation' within the *Cinderella* genre.

The voice of an ugly stepsister

The questioning of the binary oppositions is an important deconstructive element in the novel. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, women are divided into binary oppositions

under the terms good/evil. This placement emphasises the simplistic characterisation that fairy tales employ. The characters often remain one-dimensional, and function merely as a means 'to indoctrinate children so that they will conform to dominant social standards which are not necessarily established in their behalf' (Zipes 1991, p.18). Beauty is a key indicator to the audience of the females' character. Using Grimms' fairy tales, Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz found that 'often there is a clear link between beauty and goodness, most often in reference to younger women and between ugliness and evil (31 per cent of all stories associate beauty with goodness, and 17 per cent associate ugliness with evil)' (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.718). Rather than using the evil stepmother as in the previous *Cinderella* edition, Maguire uses the ugly stepsister in binary opposition to Cinderella. Both of these are applicable given the context of 'good' versus 'evil' as indicated by the presence or absence of socially acceptable terms of beauty. Maguire blurs the traditional binary opposition by giving each character vestiges of both good and evil and thereby questioning the worth and validity of beauty as a moral signifier.

The primary voice of the novel belongs to Iris, representing the submissive half of the fairy tale binary opposition, and this narrative perspective offers a voice to the habitually marginalised element. This allows for the 'emergence of a new "concept" a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime' (Derrida 1981, p.42). Traditionally, the stepsisters are limited to the margins of the novel, and merely exemplify the stepmother's failings as models of badly behaved children. The combination of the destabilisation of the meaning of beauty, and the choice of Iris as the main narrative voice of the novel, upsets this logocentric narrative inscription of the traditional fairy tale. Although Clara is beautiful and wealthy, she no longer has the primary voice of the fairy tale thus destabilising the primary ideological binary opposition. The novel can be read as a deconstructive interpretation of *Cinderella*.

Iris is a complex character struggling with an abusive mother, and she has to act as the caretaker of her slow-witted sister, Ruth. She is vulnerable, having been driven out of England and also because of the loss of her father. Although she does not say whether or not he was a kinder parent than Margarethe, the uncertainty they have experienced since his death means that only in marriage 'will she find again the same security as in her father's arms' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.352). Her mother is quick to point out Iris's lack of commercial (or marriageable) beauty, and reiterates the traditional narrative that it should define her; 'Iris is plain to look at. Painfully plain. Don't exaggerate her physical virtues, Casper; it does no good in the end. She must accept it like the rest of us' (Maguire 2008, p.53). It is through the character of Schoonmaker, and through her immersion in the world of art, that Iris gains a sense of perspective on the fallacy of beauty, and also, on the nature of her own appearance. At first, Iris is entrapped by her physical appearance. Schoonmaker needs her to sit for a painting for him, which perturbs her, 'He has a hound, and he wants beauty' (Maguire 2008, p.39). Her mother instructs her to be anything he needs, reiterating, 'that to please they must abdicate' (De Beauvoir 1997, p.359). Margarethe enquires if Schoonmaker asked to paint Iris nude. 'Iris shakes her head. Now, oddly, she's irritated. Clearly she's not interesting enough to be insulted in this way' (Maguire 2008, p.39). In a perverse way, it presents as a slight on her self-esteem as 'not to have confidence in one's body is to lose confidence in oneself' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.355).

Iris's sense of self is being defined by the scopical gaze of a powerful man. To be desired nude is mark of self-identity for her, as women's identity is so often defined by their physical self. Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth* explains this that, 'women's identity must be premised upon our "beauty" so that we will remain vulnerable to outside approval, carrying the vital sensitive organ of self-esteem exposed to the air' (Wolf 1991, p.14). Iris's own self-worth and identity are intermingled with patriarchal approval. It is Schoonmaker, and his

apprentice Casper, who teach Iris the fallacy of physical beauty and that she has other attributes that can be thought of as beautiful:

No one can pretend you are a pretty wench, but you are smart and you are kind. Don't betray those impulses in yourself. Don't belabour the lack of physical beauty, which in any case eventually flees those who have it and makes them sad. (Maguire 2008, p. 191)

Iris is reluctant to follow her heart in terms of her feelings towards Casper, as she feels undermined by the presence of Clara's beauty. Iris allows the archaic social code (stemming from the traditional fairy tale), to determine her path. It is only when she steps outside of this cultural code that she begins to live and find happiness. It is through Iris's perception of others, and her recognition of beauty in herself that she learns of other types of beauty and attributes than those that have been prioritised in the stereotypical fairy tales. This allows both Iris and the reader to acknowledge a different path to the ones offered in traditional stories.

Binary Oppositions

Looking at the paradigm and ideology of the traditional tale *Cinderella*, there is a presupposing of 'the innate superiority of one term over another (man/woman, white/black)' and 'it is necessary to assume that one term is sealed against contamination by the other' (McQuillan 2000, p.15). *COAUS* marks the lack of difference between Clara and Iris by demonstrating that both have attributes of beauty, be that physical beauty, or a beauty of personality and temperament. Logocentrism works by sustaining a fiction of purity around its privileged terms (McQuillan 2000, p.15). Maguire's attention to the inclusion of beauty of both terms of the opposition thus destabilises the purity of the privileging factor of a single type of patriarchally-validated beauty. He further criticises the use of beauty as the

privileging factor due to its fleeting nature through the prevalence of art in the novel. In addition, apart from the presence of beauty, they both women in this story share a number of similarities: neither are perfect idealisations of the female; 'beautiful, polite, graceful, industrious, properly groomed, and knows how to control herself at all times' (Zipes 1991, p.25). In the traditional tale:

There is no character development because the characters are stereotypes, arranged to a credo of domestication of the imagination. The domestication is related to colonization insofar as the ideas and types are portrayed as models of behaviour to be emulated. (Zipes 1994, p.94)

Neither Clara nor Iris is purely good or evil; they share attributes of both which rounds out the characters from their one-dimensional representations in the original tale. Using Homi K. Bhabha's term 'hybridity', we can say that Clara and Iris both form hybrid identities based on the blurring of the boundaries of the binary oppositional structures governing them. They both appropriate aspects of each other's traditional identities. Derrida proposes (using ethnology), that this deconstruction of the binary opposition must accept that it is contingent on that which it seeks to abolish. 'The ethnologist accepts into his discourse the premise of ethnocentrism at the very moment he denounces them' (Derrida 2008, p.215). McQuillan asserts that in fact hybridity is impossible that 'there is nothing to stop those characterised by that identity turning this hybridity into another privileged term within a binary logic' (McQuillan 2000, p.15).

Arguably, this can be demonstrated in the 'ever after' of the novel. Clara marries a prince, who has possibly taken advantage of her, and loses her beauty through age, thus ruining the signifying process that to be beautiful is to be good which means to marry well and live 'happily ever after'. Iris marries Casper for love, and leads a fulfilling but short life as an artist. It is the character of Ruth that can be said to disturb the space of hybridity at a more fundamental level, by bringing about the dissolution of the binary oppositions. It is only

in the epilogue, in which Ruth is granted a voice, that we learn she is not the slow and dim-witted character that both the reader and the other characters perceived her to be, 'silent but not dull... slow but not vacant' (Maguire 2008, p.389). Thus, it can be read that Ruth became marginalised in the presence of the new hybrid representation of the fairy tale female figure. The silencing of Ruth and the subsequent realisation of her competence jolts the reader into questioning everything that had been hitherto taken for granted in the story; this is in direct contrast to the traditional formulaic fairy tale. Not only does it throw into focus the mechanical structure and patriarchal teachings of traditional fairy tales; it also encourages the reader to interrogate the fallacy of appearances. This plot twist helps underpin the deconstructive nature of the novel and exposes the how naturalised the ideologies of the traditional tale have become.

The reversal of the binary oppositions not only helps to destabilise the logocentric inscription of these oppositions, but it also destabilises the ideologies inherent in the fairy tale. Traditionally, the heroine of the tale should be beautiful, passive and focused on making a good marriage to ensure her future, living only 'through the male and for marriage' (Zipes 1991, p.25). Iris challenges these ideological norms in numerous ways. Rather than submitting to her mother's guidance, she constantly questions her judgement and motives. Despite Margarethe's bemoaning of her 'ugly' and 'useless' children, Iris does not concede to Margarethe, or by extension to the ideological imperatives of Perrault who 'directed his energies in writing his fairy tales for the most part to civilise children and to prepare them for roles which he idealistically believed they should play in society' (Zipes 1991, p.14). Not only does Iris turn away from Margarethe's direction, but she also stops herself becoming like Margarethe.

Iris further expands the ideological boundaries of fairy tales by choosing to have an occupation other than that of a wife. Iris challenges the socially acceptable role given to her

and decides to build upon her own abilities and intelligence. As Zipes states, 'intelligence could be dangerous. In [Perrault's] mind as in that of many men (and women) beauty is an attribute of woman, just as intelligence is the attribute of man' (Zipes 1991, p.25). Margarethe taunts Iris that she will need domestic prowess to find a place in the world, something that Iris readily acknowledges: "because I'm ugly," says Iris, "and I have to know these things, so I can take care of myself someday" (Maguire 2008, p.125). Ultimately, it is through the world of art, and the encouragement of Casper and Schoonmaker, that Iris finds a career. They notice the 'talent for drawing that she possesses' (Maguire 2008, p.87), and teach her how to perceive, and perhaps more significantly, how to represent and narrate the world in a different way, a subtle meta-narrative device within the tale.

This is a strong metaphor, not only for the character, but also for the reader, as the novel enables one to view the limitations that traditional fairy tales enforce upon the reader. Mirroring the progression of the novel, Iris is viewing her world in a new way and creating her own vision of that world. Schoonmaker encourages Iris to see past the limitations of her gender, 'It isn't such a bold step to move from needle to paintbrush' (Maguire 2008, p.191). He encourages her to follow the footsteps of another female painter, and when Iris worries about how it will look to others, Casper reminds her that 'approval and disapproval alike satisfy those who deliver it more than those who receive it' (Maguire 2008, p.195), helping to expose the notion that looking for approval is only a means to further subjugate women.

Ultimately, it is through art that Iris finds a career. She becomes an active participant in her own life rather than, 'projecting another model of passive femininity' (Zipes 1991, p.30). She finds a way to carve out a different path to that of the traditional heroine or villain. She overcomes her own apprehensions and becomes an apprentice to Schoonmaker in his studio, and it is through her immersion in the art world that 'she is released from obsession with the male' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.391). Ruth's epilogue allows us to see that although she

had a short life, she was successful in both her career and her marriage to Casper. She even published the art under her own name, which was a significant achievement given the social context of the setting. Iris ultimately challenges the beauty myth whereby, 'Culture stereotypes women to fit the myth by flattening the feminine into beauty-without-intelligence or intelligence-without-beauty; women are allowed a mind or a body but not both' (Wolf 1991, p.59).

The 'new' beauty

As previously discussed, beauty is of central importance in the traditional fairy tale as 'the notion of a structure lacking any center represents the unthinkable itself' (Derrida 2008, p.212). 'The role feminine beauty plays in moving the story along' (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.719) functions as a key indicator for the reader as to who is good and who is evil. Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz, in *The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales in Gender and Society*, assert that *Cinderella* is the mostly frequently reproduced tale, with 322 reproductions on record (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.720). They also assert, using technical data, that there is a direct correlation between the number of times a tale has been reproduced, and the number of times women's physical beauty was mentioned (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.720). This is an important factor to consider, both in terms of the traditional fairy tale, and also in the postmodern envisioning of that tale that is *COAUS*.

It is traditionally accepted that beauty belongs to the heroine, setting out 'the ideal of the passive beauty who silently suffers for her goodness and often ends up entering into marriage with a noble man' (Gedik cited in Haase 2008, p.1037). Mirroring the classic tale, Clara, the Cinderella character, is extraordinarily beautiful, as 'Haarlem's hidden beauty' (Maguire 2008, p.26). However, this is the only virtue that she retains of the original

Cinderella. She is 'considered a stropy child – sullen, secretive, and ordinary' (Maguire 2008, p.91). Thus, the signifying chain that beauty equates with goodness has been disturbed 'as a linked chain of determinations' (Derrida 2008, p.212). The novel is struggling to destabilise the inherent associations that prove the beauty/goodness equation, as the centre becomes 'a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play' (Derrida 2008, p.213). The decentring then can be said to strip Clara of her hierarchal status in the post 'rupture', or deconstructed, structure. Clara, aside from her beauty, does not display any of the other intrinsic values that demonstrate the charms that a young woman may need for marriage. 'The young girl is supposed not only to deck herself out to make herself ready, but also to repress her spontaneity and replace it with the studied grace and charm taught her by her elders. Any assertion will diminish her femininity and her attractiveness' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.359). Her lack of grace and charm, 'there's no tenderness in her words, but some unrefined brutality' (Maguire 2008, p.100), may be understood as a deconstructive struggle where the signifiers around her beauty change the original fairy tale determination that to be beautiful means to be an object of desire and as a consequence, to marry well. Beauty is treated as a woman's currency that is necessary to enter the marriage market, where, 'she becomes an object, and she sees herself as object' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.361). For Clara, the commodity of her beauty entraps her into a prison. It becomes her defining feature; her extraordinary beauty means that she can be viewed as nothing else, 'I am too pretty to do anything but be looked at!' (Maguire 2008, p.200).

As a very young child, Clara was kidnapped and held to ransom. For Clara, this traumatic event holds mystical significance, as she believes she was kidnapped by a 'crow man'. Her captors transformed her to a 'changeling', a creature 'said to be deficient of something essential' (Maguire 2008, p.26). Clara believes they changed her from a foolish ugly child and as she says, they 'made me fair and obedient, and gave me beauty and gifts of

music and language' (Maguire 2008, p.297). Her father's account casts a shadow on the magical aspect because gold was demanded for her return, as does the reference that, over the years, her mother brought in multiple teachers to govern Clara in the skills and attitudes that would make her socially acceptable as a woman. This traumatic event has significant consequence in the narrative of the novel. It refers to why the wealth of the Van der Meer household is diminished; it suggests the reason why Clara is so insulated from society; and it also brings into question whether the character Nicholaes Van Stolk, who buys the family's debt, is really the 'crow man' who abducted Clara as a young girl. The kidnapping of Clara at such a young age, and her transformation from a vivacious, curious child into a passive, beautiful one, endowed with socially accepted qualities, may be read as symbolic of the function of fairy tales in general. They are widely accepted as 'a literary discourse about morals, values and manners so that children would become civilized according to the social code of that time' (Zipes 1991, p.3). Fairy tales capture children at a young age, essentially making them 'changelings', which makes them devoid of something essential such as their capacity to choose another role in society rather than the one which society sets out for them.

The kidnapping weakened Clara's capacity for curiosity, and made her more submissive to the governing cultural codes of her mother, as well as enabling her transformation into accepting the role of the beautiful child. It socialised Clara to meet the 'normative expectations at home and in the public sphere' (Zipes 1991, p.9). Clara believes she received her beauty at the hands of the kidnappers. This can be read as paralleling the original Cinderella's transformation for the ball. Through the appropriate attire, she emphasises her beauty, and displays 'what superior people should wear and how they should carry themselves' (Zipes 1991, p.27). This transformation shows the child that she too can achieve beauty through grooming and wealth. Thus, we can read the kidnapping as emblematic of the role of fairy tales. It is only through Clara's questioning of the true

purpose of her beauty, that the novel achieves the rigorous questioning of the ideological centre that governs the structure of the fairy tale. In both cases, the beauty seems to be 'given' from outside of the woman herself. It is a gift to allow her to be favoured by the male gaze.

It is with her mother Henrika's death that Clara assimilates herself into a semblance of reality. When Henrika was alive, Clara:

Is treated like a live doll and is refused liberty. Thus a vicious circle is formed; for the less she exercises her freedom to understand, to grasp and discover the world about her, the less resources will she find within herself, the less will she dare to affirm herself as subject. (de Beauvoir 1997, p.308)

Henrika's treatment of Clara is further demonstrated in the aftermath of the painting *Girl with Tulips*. This painting serves as Clara's debut into society, and as a consequence, into the marriage market. It is at this point that Henrika chooses to have another child 'as Clara emerges into her adult station' (Maguire 2008, p.134). She had previously declined to have another child because of her devotion to her '*femme civilisée*' Clara. Her 'doll' has outgrown her childish beauty and moved to the realm of feminine beauty, which proves so influential in the marriage market. Clara, in turn, views her capture in the painting as a hostile process, one that further imprisons her through an agent of representation of the male gaze. It is still expected that Clara, despite her shortcomings, will make an advantageous marriage and 'be planted in some rich man's garden so he can admire [her]' (Maguire 2008, p.200). Margarethe, her stepmother, is willing to leverage Clara's beauty as a commodity in order to ensure the survival of her family. She is ready to give Clara to whoever is the highest bidder. Clara's beauty means that Clara is also a commodity, and the trope of the female figure as commodity is explored more fully in the *Bluebeard* analysis. The novel provides us with enough background on the character of Margarethe to allow us an understanding, if not an

acceptance, of her motives. In addition, Margarethe's scheming is not limited to just Clara but is also focused on her own daughter Iris. The characters of Margarethe and Henrika will be fully assessed later in this chapter.

Following the financial ruination of her family, the death of her mother and the rising to power of Margarethe in the family dynamic, it is Clara who subjugates herself to the domestic role of kitchen maid. She covers herself with ashes, and declares herself Cinderling, Ash girl, Cinderella. Similar to the original Cinderella character, she finds peace in domesticity. This may be read as an appropriation of the ideological values instilled within the traditional Cinderella-tale, as she needs such domestic virtues to prepare for marriage. It may also be read as suggesting that harmony may be found in a more simple way of life rather than in the lofty expectations of finding a prince who will make her social, sexual and financial dreams come true. The reader, recognising the contemporary moral aspect of the narrative, may see that it is plausible for any women to be happy in any role they choose to assume. It is imperative to note that Clara's declaration that in domesticity she finds peace is the only point in the novel where she finds a semblance of repose. Although goaded by Margarethe that 'even a pretty flower has to learn to work' (Maguire 2008, p.188), it is Clara's choice to subjugate herself to the kitchen. The repression of her beauty is symbolised by her disfiguring of herself with ashes:

she smudges her cheeks and her forehead. 'I am no beauty anymore, I'm a simple kitchen girl, a cinderlass, at home in my ashes and char'. (Maguire 2008, p.223)

It is during this role of being a domestic servant and repressing her beauty that any likeable qualities surface in Clara, such as her friendship with the ignored and abused stepsister Ruth. 'The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely' (Derrida 2008, p.213). The decentering of beauty opens up a new world for Clara.

This repression of beauty through disfigurement is seen, when discussing the contemporary filmic text, *Snow White and the Huntsman*, released in 2012.

Paralleling the original *Cinderella* tale, a ball is held for visiting royals as a means to procure a wife for the prince. It is also an opportunity for local artists to display their paintings, and to compete for a coveted commission for the visiting dowager queen. Margarethe views it as a means of the securing the family's salvation, and is determined that Iris will capture the eye of the prince. She is unperturbed by Iris's lack of beauty, as both Iris and the prince have a passion for art. Margarethe also believes the prince is flawed, given that he is reduced to looking in the rank of commoners for 'a bride capable of bearing a child before the poor dim prince falls off his rotten legs and expires!' (Maguire 2008, p.357).

Initially, the prince displays an interest in Iris's intelligence, but is quickly captivated by Clara's momentous beauty. She takes on the role of Clarissa of Aragon, so that only Iris, Ruth and Casper are aware of her true identity. Casper and Iris have plotted, and provided her with a beautiful dress, which magnifies her beauty. The ball ends in tragedy and confusion as *Girl with Tulips* has been set alight causing a fire throughout the hall. In fairy tales, there is often a direct link between victimisation and the presence of beauty (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.719). The link between victimisation and beauty is also true of *COAUS*, which provides a startling example of the consequence of beauty in the novel. It is at this point that the novel deviates most profoundly from the original tale as it is suggested that Clara has been coerced to have sex by the prince. However, this is not openly stated, given that the narrative does not belong to Clara. She entices the prince into a private room claiming a twisted ankle in order to escape from the clutches of Nicholas Van Stolk, the crow man, who arrives at the ball with the aim of possessing her. A rumour spreads throughout the ball of the wanton behaviour being carried out in the private room, 'the Prince has removed one of the maiden's white slippers. He has been seen on his knees before her, caressing the pretty ankle

that has suffered from twisting' (Maguire 2008, p.359). The imagery invoked by the gossip further emphasises the slipper trope which had already emerged earlier in the novel as a symbol of Margarethe's greed, and her supposed entrance into the upper echelons of society. These slippers were part of the ensemble that Iris had given to Clara in her quest to beautify herself for the ball. The slipper trope is one which symbolic of the *Cinderella* fairy tale. As stated in the previous chapter, the slipper serves as a symbol for the fair princess's virginity, and as a warning to guard it carefully. It can be read that Clara was raped by the prince, as she arrives home weeping, her breath heavy with alcohol and with a broken spirit. She only has one slipper. She burns her gown and pleads to be allowed to die. She strips off her clothes and Margarethe points out her bloodstained underwear, which insinuates her loss of virginity. The signifying chain of beauty from the original tale has been decimated. Clara, whether voluntarily or not, has lost her virginity and 'a glass slipper, once shattered, can't be re-soled... the chalice of virginity, once emptied, can't be refilled' (Maguire 2008, p.376).

The slipper trope has been inverted in a second way in *COAUS*. When Casper, Schoonmaker's apprentice and the prince arrive at the Van der Meer household, the prince uses the slipper ruse not to find the owner, but rather as a means to apprehend the culprit who started the fire. The prince does not cherish or protect the slipper, symbolising Clara's virginity, according to Bettelheim's theory; instead, he uses it as a means to deceive. To his surprise at the house he also finds his Clarissa of Aragon in the shape of Clara, and only recognises her when sunlight, 'as it always it will.... has travelled the thousands of miles from the sun just for the benefit of illuminating her beauty' (Maguire 2008, p.386). He recognises her only for her beauty. Clara, contrary to the characteristics that she has displayed throughout the novel, does an unselfish act by using her beauty as a means to exempt Ruth from punishment for starting the fire by burning *Girl with Tulips*. It is the most redeeming quality of Clara's as it is 'a gesture of charity, the only beauty that has consequence'

(Maguire 2008, p.386). Even with the prince's returning of the slipper and the fulfilment of the slipper trope, and with Clara's displaying the traditional virtues of a fairy tale heroine and her marriage to the prince, Maguire still reiterates that beauty is temporary and that 'Clara outlived her magnificent beauty, as a woman must' (Maguire 2008, p.395). Through the subversion of the traditional narrative, beauty no longer affords Clara the hierarchal status in the binary opposition and so she outlives her beauty. This is exemplified not only through the characters but also through the presence of art within the novel.

The temporal nature of beauty

Art is an important deconstructive tool within the novel. The setting of the novel is integral to achieving this. Seventeenth century Holland was a society embroiled in religious upheaval with a move from Catholicism to Calvinism. With this cultural and religious transformation, the art world also changed, as there was no longer a demand for the idolatrous paintings and sculptures depicting scripture, but rather there was a transition toward portraiture and landscapes. This move from religious paintings to portraiture helps emphasize the social preoccupation with physical beauty. A further complicating factor was the tulip-mania that gripped seventeenth century Holland, and this is adverted to in the novel. These two become intertwined within the novel as they did in Holland of the time:

The collecting of art seemed to go with the collecting of tulips. This meant that the tulip craze was part of a much bigger mentality, a mentality of curiosity, of excitement, and of piercing together connections between the seemingly disparate worlds of art and nature. It also placed the tulip firmly in a social world, in which collectors strove for social status and sought to represent themselves as connoisseurs to each other and to themselves. (Goldgar 2007, p.67)

The worlds of art and tulips collide when Clara's father hires Schoonmaker to paint the beautiful Clara with the newest breed of tulip. The motive of this is twofold: the first point is

to introduce the newest breed of tulip, 'flowers for commerce, beauty to sell as if it had its own sake!' (Maguire 2008, p.27). The secondary motive functions as a means to introduce the beautiful Clara to society. The painting serves to signify both Clara's and the tulip's beauty as tradeable commodities. The tulip and Clara become entwined, 'this isn't just any child, but a bloom as perfect as a tulip' (Maguire 2008, p.114). The tulip serves as a symbol for the beauty in the novel; both are fragile and temporary. This lesson is further emphasised by the tulip crisis. The consequences of the tulip crisis are far-reaching for the town of Harleem. The first crisis of the tulips involves their fragility while being transported. There is a worry that they may have been damaged *en route*. For the reader, this is the first implication that to invest so heartily in such a fragile commodity is a risky business. One can also draw the analogy between the privileged status of beauty and also female virginity. The crash of the value of the tulip, due to the shifting perception of the value of certain aesthetics, emphasises society's fickle view of what determines beauty.

In *The Beauty Myth* Naomi Wolf discusses society's changing views on what determines feminine physical beauty as a means of continually subjugating women. The move from artistic representations that glorified women's plump flesh, to the sickly starving 'heroin chic' of the nineties, displays society's changing determination of the nature of beauty (Wolf 1991, p.184). Ultimately, the tulip crisis is brought about as interest feigns in the flower, it is 'not more beautiful or less beautiful. Simply less desirable' (Maguire 2008, p.245). The speculative value attached to the beauty of the flowers grossly exceeds the demand of the flower in actuality. Both the townspeople and the Van de Meer family have invested heavily in the tulip trade, and are now destitute. The ethic of the tulip crisis in the novel accentuates that not only is beauty fragile and undependable, but it also exists in the eye of the beholder. What is beautiful and in demand one day may not be desired or desirable the next, and given that physical beauty is temporary, the demand for it is always changing.

Schoonmaker as an artist has not invested in the tulip trade, being aware of the fickle nature of both societies' demands of beauty.

Schoonmaker is the most apt character to probe the fallacy of beauty. He is an artist who struggles to reconcile himself with the altered concept of beauty as dictated by the changing society. During the demand for religious paintings, he felt bound to capture on canvas 'God's mistakes'. When commissioned to paint Clara and immortalise her beauty, he decides that he would rather paint Iris in her plainness. It is Schoonmaker who first questions what purpose beauty serves. His painting of Clara and the tulips is his most important piece. It is the one with which he struggles as he is aware that his rendering is so magnificent that he will never be able to replicate its splendour. His execution is so skilful, 'it seems that the more wonderful this painting becomes, the less chance there is of the Master's ever surpassing it' (Maguire 2008, p.117). The novel laments the need to understand the world in opposites such as good versus evil and beauty versus ugliness. Schoonmaker's perceptiveness as an artist allows him a better view of the world and the transient nature of beauty.

Schoonmaker serves as the fairy godmother figure to Iris. He is a creative entity similar to the traditional fairy godmother, albeit of a different gender. His role evolves from that of the conventional fairy godmother, who simply makes Iris aesthetically pleasing, to a more truly transformative one of making her aware of her inner worth. Rather than beautifying Iris, he bolsters her confidence. Through his art, he educates her about the shifting perceptions of beauty. His tenuous position in the art world, and the struggles he endures as an artist, trying to make his art relevant based on societal demands of beauty and art, teaches both Iris and the reader about the fallacy of beauty, and also about the absurdity of the commoditising of such a temporary state. Schoonmaker reincarnates and recreates the fairy godmother role when he urges Iris to consider a career in the art world. He recognises her eye for painting, and does not believe her gender is a reason to ignore this talent. He is the

instigator of her being able to achieve happiness outside of social conformity. He is also the means by which she meets the man she loves, Casper, his apprentice.

The absent mother

There is a psychoanalytical rationale as to why the natural mother is absent, and the evil stepmother is present, in many fairy tales. Bruno Bettelheim outlines it as a means to preserve goodwill towards the natural mother, while still channelling anger towards a mother figure (Warner 1995, p.212). Marina Warner uses the Grimms' work, and explains how 'for them, the bad mother had to disappear in order for the ideal to survive and allow Mother to flourish as symbol of the eternal feminine, the motherland, and the family itself as the highest social desideratum' (Warner 1995, p.212). This can also be said to be true of Perrault's version of *Cinderella* and of the Disney *Cinderella*. Maguire subverts this tradition by not only including Clara's mother Henrika, but also in giving Margarethe a more comprehensive presence than often portrayed in other *Cinderella* versions.

The ideological teachings of fairy tales are undeniable and have been thoroughly excavated in this thesis. The female figure 'lives through the male and for marriage. The male acts, the female waits. She must cloak her instinctual drives in polite speech, correct manners and elegant clothes if she is allowed to reveal anything; it is to demonstrate how submissive she can be' (Zipes, 1991, p.25). Henrika may well be an almost perfect example of Perrault's *femme civilisée*, but she does not submit to her husband. She outwardly displays a passive nature but this is but 'a masquerade, for though Henrika's step is silent, it is nonetheless heavy' (Maguire 2008, p.89). She is in control of the family finances, and it is her portrait that takes pride of place over her husband's, '[t]he henpecked man must leap to respond to every complaint that Henrika makes' (Maguire 2008, p.90). Her role as head of the household over her husband threatens her embodiment of what can be termed the eternal feminine.

Henrika begins to break away from the ideologies that are governing her. Not only has she assumed control as the patriarchal figure, but she also has assumed control of her body, denying Van de Meer another child until she was ready to let go of Clara, thus disturbing 'the patriarchal symbolical order based on rigid notions of sexuality and gender' (Zipes 1994, p.74). Henrika has not been a model mother to Clara, as her fear and concerns, although deriving from love, have produced a closeted and fearful child, 'Clara is trapped She's expected to be endlessly docile. Who knows why – maybe because she is so attractive? We're all in our prisons ... but Clara's is made worse for her by the fears and strengths of her mother' (Maguire 2008, p.124). Henrika suppresses Clara's natural curiosity, keeps her fearful of the outside world, and helps to reinforce the ideologies taught to her by teaching them to Clara in turn.

She dies with her unborn child, which supports Warner's reasoning as to why the natural mother may be absent so often in fairy tales:

[t]he absent mother can be read literally as exactly that: a feature of the family before our modern era, when death in childbirth was the most common cause of female mortality, and surviving orphans would find themselves brought up by their mother's successor. (Warner 1995, p.213)

Margarethe murdered Henrika and her unborn child in order to secure herself a place in the Van de Meer family. It was not done out of an undying love but rather due to an unrelenting need for security for herself and for her two daughters. Henrika remains beautiful until her death, but it is clear that, like Clara, she too would have aged and lost her looks.

Henrika can be read as the embodiment of what fairy tales aim to instil in female readers, but she is not the perfect representation of this ideological position. Removed from the one-dimensional incarnation in previous versions, she stumbles in trying to uphold the ideological constraints. It is for this reason that I believe the natural mother may be absent

from so many fairy tales. In her death, she is the exaltation of all the ideological ideals that fairy tales endeavour to teach us. The ultimate female achievement is death, and it is the only way for her to fulfil her role as the idealised female. However, these ideologies are so constrained that should the natural mother be alive, there would be a chance as in *COAUS*, that she would fail to meet some of the desired ideological outcomes, and diminish her role as a perpetuator of the ideologies. In death, she is better placed to serve as a convenient ideal.

Margarethe also provides further examples as to why the natural mother must be absent in order to uphold the ideological stances of fairy tales. In contrast to her previous embodiment, she is an extremely complex character. She is malevolent but there is enough background to explain why she is such a bitter woman. Margarethe does not possess the social graces, beauty or wealth that has earned Henrika her secure life. As a woman, 'she is allowed no hold on the world save through the mediation of some man' (De Beauvoir 1997, p.588). Her husband has been murdered, and she has had to flee England in the hope of finding family with which to live. She has two daughters but no son 'who might have been a comfort to a mother in distress' (Maguire 2008, p.15). Without the security of a man or a home, Margarethe is acutely aware of the dangers threatening her family. She is unyielding in her determination, as she puts it, to 'jump' in society. She turns down Schoonmaker's hand in marriage to take a position in the Van de Meer household. Once there, she performs her most heinous act, and assists Henrika to her grave. This is Margarethe's unforgivable crime. Once Henrika is dead, Margarethe manoeuvres Van de Meer into a marriage. Then when married, she squanders any chance of redemption through her greed and her airs and graces, and becomes all that de Beauvoir has classified: 'she exaggerates her femininity, she adorns herself, she uses perfume, she makes herself all charm, all grace, pure immanence' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.590).

Margarethe verbally abuses her children. She is embittered by life and constantly lashes out at Iris and Ruth. She is quick to point out their flaws. In this respect, she treats Clara no differently. Although Margarethe constantly bemoans her daughters' lack of beauty, as a grown woman she understands that beauty is temporary and constantly questions what purpose it serves. One of the main tensions between the original Cinderella character and her stepmother is that Cinderella is almost denied her opportunity to meet the prince. The stepmother places her daughters before her stepdaughter. This is also true in *COAUS*, where Margarethe pushes Iris to ensnare the prince, using her wit and artistic knowledge. Margarethe proves correct in her assumption that Iris has the capability to capture the Prince's attention, however briefly. Margarethe is hoping that Iris can salvage the family's finances so that, 'through her daughter she will satisfy her old desires for wealth, success and fame' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.601). Warner puts the placing of one's child ahead of another's into perspective:

women strove against women because they wished to promote their own children's interests over those of another union's offspring; the economic dependence of wives and mothers on the male breadwinner exacerbated – and still does- the divisions that may first spring from preferences for a child of one's flesh. (Warner 1995, p.238)

It can be viewed as natural that Margarethe and the stepmother would each strive for their own child's advancement. Margarethe is willing to barter either Clara or Iris in marriage for financial security.

This struggle for security is a preoccupation that consumes Margarethe. Her greed disallows her from marrying Schoonmaker, as she is compelled to aim higher. This can be attributed to the ideological lesson of how 'the fairy tale also served to encourage notions of rags to riches, pull yourself up by your bootstraps, dreaming, miracles, and such' (Zipes 1994, p.74). Margarethe cannot find peace in the ordinary and domestic spheres, and so

becomes more and more embittered with life. This is the lesson that Iris learns from her mother, so she finds happiness in being an apprentice and marrying for love as opposed to wealth or status. The historical setting of the novel sharply puts into focus why Margarethe proves to be such an 'evil' stepmother, yet at the same time, it does not excuse her behaviour. The placing of the novel into a historical context can be read as another deconstructive element of the novel as it subverts the stereotypical characters of the *Cinderella* tale discussed previously:

When history falls away from a subject, we are left with Otherness, and all its power to compact enmity, recharge it and recirculate it. An archetype is a hollow thing, but a dangerous one, a figure or image which through usage has been uncoupled from the circumstances which brought it into being, and goes on spreading false consciousness. An analogy—a harmless one—occurs in metaphors of sunrise and sunset, familiar metaphors which fail to represent the movement of the sun or the relation of the planet to it. (Warner 1995, p.239)

Warner makes this point in relation to the reason a wicked stepmother may act in the way she does. It is a point that resonates with all the characters. The placing of the traditional fairy tale in a land 'far far away' removes it from any genuine historical or social context that may provide sound reasoning as to why the female figures in fairy tales act the way they do. A historical setting would impede the processing of the ideologies within the fairy tale, which attempt to suggest that passive and submissive behaviour, allied to the requirement to be beautiful and ultimately a mother, are aspects of the 'Eternal Feminine', to quote de Beauvoir. The implication is that these traits transcend all historical context, hence the very general and non-specific locations of all fairy tales. However, the traits and descriptions of this far away land are sufficiently familiar to allow it to become something of a mirror image

of the society from which it stemmed. As such, it can act as a reflector of so many of the values and ideological positions of that society.

The new Cinderella

Gregory Maguire's *Confession of an Ugly Stepsister* provides a unique perspective on its traditional counterpart. It exposes the fallacies of the ideologies which fairy tales impart, while also demolishing the fundamental 'truths' which these ideologies attempt to convey, such as beauty being equated with goodness, and ugliness with evil. The novel, using the characters, setting, economy and art, constantly questions the purpose of subjecting society to conflicting oppositions, '[how] we try to pin the world between opposite extremes! And in such a world, as Margarethe used to ask, what is the use of beauty?' (Maguire 2008, p.396). The novel accentuates how difficult it is for a female to live in the restricted role offered to her by fairy tales. Maguire helps to:

Raise the question of individual autonomy versus state domination, creativity versus repression, and just the raising of this question is enough to stimulate critical and free thinking. The end result is not an explosion or revolution. Literature and art have never been capable of doing this and never will be. But they can harbour and cultivate the germs of subversion and offer people hope in their resistance to all forms of oppression and in their pursuit of more meaningful modes of life and communication. (Zipes 2002, p.21)

Using the tale of *Cinderella* Maguire also provides a commentary on modern society's obsession with beauty and physical appearance. 'The rise of the beauty myth was just one of several emerging social fictions that masqueraded as natural components of the feminine sphere, the better to enclose those women inside it' (Wolf 1991, p.15). Therefore, *COAUS* does not just provides insight into the fairy tale genre, but also links this genre and its ideology to contemporary society.

Chapter Three: ‘The knowledge you looked for is not worth the cost’ - The degradation of female curiosity in Perrault’s *Bluebeard*

Bluebeard

Bluebeard is one of the less celebrated fairy tales found in Charles Perrault’s *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (1697). Perrault’s original source for *La Barbe bleue* is not known, but his tale is often attributed to the story of the Breton nobleman, Gilles de Rais, a comrade at arms of Joan of Arc, who was hanged in 1440 for practising Satanism and murdering children. Marina Warner provides an alternative source in the Breton story of Triphine and Cunmar, based on a ruler of Brittany in the mid-sixth century. Cunmar was accused of murdering seven wives who preceded Triphine (Warner 1995, p.260). These more sinister elements of the traditional tale of *Bluebeard* argue against its inclusion in the contemporary library of children’s fairy tales. Although not as proliferate as other tales, it has a dark legacy, and remnants of the tale exist in popular culture today. It has often been postulated that *Jane Eyre* is a version of this fairy tale, but one can also draw *Bluebeard* analogies with the highly controversial *Fifty Shades of Grey* and the connotations of the red room.

The traditional tale follows the progress of a beautiful young woman who marries, against her instincts, the fearsome Bluebeard, a man who is marked as grotesque by his formidable blue beard. She enjoys the financial rewards of her advantageous marriage, but

the illusion is shattered when she breaks her new husband's one rule, that of not entering the locked room. Upon entering the room, she discovers the bloody bodies of his dead wives and when Bluebeard learns of her betrayal, through the bloodstained key, he condemns her to join them. Ultimately, the young bride is saved by her brothers, the cruel Bluebeard is slain and the natural order is restored. It is a dark tale with rich gothic overtones that allows for a more thorough analysis of how fairy tales as a genre are instrumental in governing how females should view themselves and their place in society. Both the narrative and the gender representations in the tale will be examined using various theoretical approaches allowing for thorough and vigorous analyses of the tale. These analyses will provide insight into the ideologies inherent within the tale and also, how the tale constructs female identity.

The dangers of female curiosity

The Oxford Classic version of the *Bluebeard* fairy tale, which is the chosen version analysed in this thesis, is inscribed with strong moral warning about the dangers of female curiosity:

Curiosity's all very well in its way,
But satisfy it and you risk much remorse,
Examples of which can be seen every day.
The feminine sex will deny it, of course,
But the pleasure you wanted, once taken, is lost,
And the knowledge you looked for is not worth the cost. (Perrault 2009, p.113)

This moral helps to enforce the patriarchal construct that a female should remain docile to her male counterpart, while also suppressing any innate female desire for knowledge or pleasure. This is not a new trope in folklore, and 'can be seen as a replaying of one biblical master plot: the Genesis account of the Fall. For several centuries now, standard interpretations have identified Eve as the principal agent of transgression and have infused her act of disobedience

with strong sexual overtones' (Tatar 1992, p.96). The principal female character in the tale is being taught the same lesson for which Eve was punished in the Bible, 'to the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you"' (Genesis, 3:16).

As summarised in this biblical quote, the description of female curiosity as a possible weapon of destruction, both personal and societal, is mirrored in *Bluebeard*, and helps to promote a specific ideology, supporting submission to male authority, a submission that is underscored by the threat of punishment. Stuart Hall sometimes conflicts with aspects of Louis Althusser's theories; however his analysis of them in 'Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post Structuralist debates', provides valuable insight into Althusser's works. 'Ideologies are the frameworks of thinking and calculation about the world – the "ideas" which people use to figure out how the social world works, what their place is in it and what they *ought* to do' (Hall 1985, p.99). As Maria Tatar, in *Off With Their Heads* states, the fairy tale helped to place women as targets of 'disciplinary intervention', with the aim of suppressing their unruly nature. In exposing the evils of negative personality traits, such as curiosity, it enables the fairy tale to educate young women in how to ensure a happy marriage, while also 'participating in the cultural project of stabilizing gender roles' (Tatar 1992, p.96).

This reflects in Althusser's approach to ideologies where 'an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices' (Althusser 1971, p.166). The fairy tale genre serves as an educational vehicle in which to impart ideologies. The stabilising of the gender roles is underpinned by the feminisation of curiosity and the attribution of intelligence as a male trait as promoted by *Bluebeard*. Tatar states, in *Secrets beyond the Door: The Story of Bluebeard and His Wives*, that the story of Adam and Eve and the myth of Prometheus's theft of fire from the gods:

... link curiosity with knowledge, sexuality, evil, and mortality in powerful ways. These two stories have functioned as compass roses for our culture, helping us to navigate reality, define our values, and reflect on the value of intellectual inquiry. And yet these stories are also powerfully symptomatic of gender asymmetries. (Tatar 2004, p.2)

The *Bluebeard* tale can be seen as a very strong example of the empowerment of patriarchy through culture and ideology, as the dangers of women seeking any form of power through knowledge is seen as problematic and as something that will result in dire consequences.

In the introduction to Frederick Engels' book, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Pat Brewer discusses how Marxism has been utilised to determine the female's place in the family, and 'the word family comes from the Latin term *famulus* which means household slave, and *familia*, the totality of slaves belonging to one man, the patriarch, who inherited all the wealth and wielded absolute power over all members of the household' (Brewer cited in Engels 2004, p.11). There was a distinct shift in relation of the importance of paternity with the introduction of the domestication of animals and production. This is mirrored with the shift from the ownership of wealth by the clan to 'private ownership in the family' (Engels 2004, p.11). There was a need to be able to prove lineage in order to protect the male assets, and because of this, a new emphasis was placed on sexual monogamy for women in order to ensure this protection of the male bloodline (Engels 2004, p.11). Engels states that, 'the overthrow of mother right was the *world-historic defeat of the female sex*. The man seized the reins in the house also, the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children' (Engels 2004, p.67). The degradation of female sexual curiosity becomes instrumental to maintaining the patriarchal order.

The role of the female as commodity

Luce Irigaray, in her book *The Sex Which is Not One*, throws into a sharp light the role of the female as a commodity in patriarchal society. Her ideas allow for an in-depth analysis of the female character, of the male character, Bluebeard, and also of the role which this fairy tale plays in endorsing and naturalising the representation that this female character projects. Irigaray elaborates how, the 'feminine is always described in terms of deficiency or atrophy, as the other side of the sex that alone holds a monopoly on value: the male sex' (Irigaray 1985, p.69). The *Bluebeard* fairy tale helps to promote gender disequilibrium by subjugating the female, and by placing her fate securely under the control of her male protector: the young bride's life becomes forfeit if her husband decrees it so. She becomes his property without any human rights of her own. Further analysis of the tale also demonstrates Irigaray's point that only the male sex holds the monopoly on value, as it is the female character's brothers that save her from the monstrous Bluebeard, and in the conclusion of the tale, this young female is safely re-enfolded in to the patriarchal order by immediately marrying 'a man of true worth' (Perrault 2009, p.113), a worth, we imagine, that will be decided by her brothers. The wealth that the young bride inherits when Bluebeard is slain is repatriated into the patriarchal order of her family, as she utilises the money to buy captain commissions for her brothers and to make new marriages for herself and her sister. As a female, she cannot hold the wealth herself, and can only use it as a means to secure herself a husband. As outlined in Chapter One, beauty is the only currency a female can employ in the marriage market.

The first chapter of this thesis, using the classic *Cinderella* tale, clearly outlined how beauty is an indexical signifier of a worthwhile female character; and this is also true of the *Bluebeard* fairy tale. The heroine (in this Perrault Oxford edition), is unnamed, but has been singled out through her possession of the 'greatest beauty' (Perrault 2009, p.104), and thus as

someone who is worthy of having a suitor. As with the character of Cinderella, it is because of her beauty that she is included in the narrative of the tale in the first place. Although the Bluebeard character initially disgusts the sisters, due to his fearsome and grotesque blue beard, one of the sisters soon acquiesces to Bluebeard, being seduced by his wealth and comes to believe that his 'beard was not as blue as it had been, and that he was just what a gentleman should be' (Perrault 2009, p.104). The danger of marrying for wealth is also outlined in the second moral of the story, 'people with sense who use their eyes/Study the world and know its ways' (Perrault 2009, p.113). The young female is captivated by Bluebeard's wealth and ignores not only her own natural instinct, but also the fact that Bluebeard is not a 'normal' man as symbolised by his unusual beard, an issue that will be analysed later in this chapter. This capitalistic undertone to the novel, marrying purely for wealth, is also mirrored in Irigaray's notion that women are viewed as a commodity in a patriarchal society.

This is very true of the *Bluebeard* tale, where in this 'social order, women are "products" used and exchanged by men. Their status is that of merchandise, "commodities"' (Irigaray 1985, p.84). This is evident in the tale where Bluebeard has no preference as to which sister he marries, as both possess the only quality that matters in their status as his potential commodity, namely beauty. The function of this tale is to help to coerce women into their restricted place in patriarchal society as a commodity, 'so women have to remain an "infrastructure" unrecognized as such by our society and our culture' (Irigaray 1985, p.84). The notion of a woman as part of a man's possessions becomes naturalised and integrated within the reader. The tale then becomes doubly endowed as an ideological means of subjugating women, because both woman as character and woman as reader become part of the system where, 'the use, consumption, and circulation of their sexualised bodies

underwrite the organization and the reproduction of the social order, in which they have never taken part as “subjects” (Irigaray 1985, p.84).

I would further elaborate on this by reiterating the original function of fairy tales, which was to instruct the morals and ideologies of the upper classes in order to make the perfect composite of a young male or female. Fairy tales, ‘were and are important because they set standards for sexual and social conduct which complied with inhibiting forms of socialization and were to be internalized by the readers and auditors of the tales’ (Zipes 1991, p.33). The subtle narrative of such tales, of commoditizing females and hence locating and defining their value in the male sphere alone, allows for a quiet indoctrination, resulting in not only the subjugation of woman, but also in the normalisation of this subjugation through the medium of this tale. This is also compounded by the accessibility of fairy tales, and by their seemingly innocent nature, a point that bears out some aspects of Marxist thinking on ideology. These ideologies form our reality, making them appear true and natural. As Althusser states:

What thus seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character by ideology: ideology never says, ‘I am ideological’. (Althusser 1971, p.175)

In Marxist terms, it is ‘because the ruling class controls the main means by which ideology is propagated and spread throughout society’, that ‘it can then make the working class see its subordination as ‘natural’, and therefore right’ (Fiske 1990, p.166). The ideological media that encourage these values include fairy tales. ‘Women’s social inferiority is reinforced and complicated by the fact that woman does not have access to language, except through recourse to “masculine” systems of representation which disappropriate her from her relation to herself and to other women’ (Irigaray 1985, p.85). To refer back to a Marxist

interpretation, the female only has access to masculine systems of representation as a means of maintaining dominance and control. As Stuart Hall states drawing on Althusser:

Language and behaviour, are the media, so to speak of the material registration of the ideology, the modality of its functioning. These rituals and practises always occur in social sites, linked with social apparatuses. That is why we have to analyze or deconstruct language and behaviour in order to decipher the patterns of ideological thinking which are inscribed in them. (Hall 1985, pp.99-100)

The young girl is indoctrinated into the fairy tale belief system, and learns of her value as a commodity through distinguishable markers such as her beauty, or as Irigaray puts it, 'on the exchange market woman would also have to preserve and maintain what is called *femininity*' (Irigaray 1985, p.84). She further postulates that it is 'a role, an image, a value, imposed upon women by male systems of representation. In this masquerade of femininity, the woman loses herself, and loses herself by playing on her femininity' (Irigaray 1985, p.84). Tales such as *Bluebeard*, emphasise how a woman should enhance and maintain her position as a commodity, in order to enhance the male's position in society.

The warning tale

The main narrative of the tale concentrates on the marriage of the young bride to Bluebeard, rather than on the journey towards procuring a husband, as discussed in Chapter One with *Cinderella*. The tale proves to be a disturbing account of how, even as a bride, a woman becomes disposable should she fail her duties of subservience. The woman encompasses a physical and societal entity that even in death, remains as the property to her husband, as shown by Bluebeard's hoarding of his deceased wives' bodies. As Katherine J. Kim observes in her article, 'Corpse Hoarding: Control and the Female Body in *Bluebeard*', the displaying of these corpses serves not only as a means of punishing and dominating his current wife,

through their shared fate as his condemned wives, but also, as a means of revealing 'himself as not only sadistically homicidal but furthermore perverted in his corpse hoarding, the display he arranges, and his desire to repetitively relive his physical dominance over his victims' (Kim 2011, p.411). It also suggests the idea of wives and women as a form of currency with their dead bodies being hoarded as a part of his holdings. In this warning nature of the tale, *Bluebeard* resembles *Little Red Riding Hood*. Both tales concentrate on suppressing women's perceived faults such as curiosity and pleasure with the threat of physical harm should they deviate from the patriarchal norm. Zipes in *Fairy tales and the Art of Subversion*, speaks of *Little Red Riding Hood* and of how the tale, 'instead of really warning girls against the dangers of predators in forests, the tale warns girls against their own natural desires which they must tame' (Zipes 1991, p.29). Zipes further shows the consequences inherent within these warning tales, exemplifying how in *Little Red Riding Hood*, 'she is *raped* or punished because she is guilty of not controlling her natural inclinations' (Zipes 1991, p.29). In the *Bluebeard* tale, the young bride 'began to see the floor was all covered in clotted blood, and that it reflected the bodies of several women dead, and tied up along the wall (they were the wives whom Bluebeard had married, and whose throats he had cut one after the other)' (Perrault 2009, p.108).

Both tales mirror the ideologies governing women, and the sense that to fail at total submission to male authority, and to lose control of one's desires, results in dire consequences. The ideological imperative of the tale, then, functions to support these oppositions and subjugate women to the demands of what is necessary for patriarchal society. The dire consequences resulting from losing control of one's desires, further helps to place pleasure and desire as female qualities which must be policed. Hence, should a woman falter, then she must be punished. This is reminiscent of how Althusser describes the function of the (Repressive) State Apparatus as they function to punish those who reject the dominant

ideology (Althusser 1971, p.143). Because the female character provokes her accepted reality by transgressing against her husband's orders, she must be punished.

There is a sexual undertone to the demonisation of female curiosity. The language in the moral such as, 'feminine sex', and 'pleasure' is sexually evocative. This mirrors the sexual aspect of the tale, 'Bluebeard is a bogey who fascinates; his very name stirs associations with sex, virility, male readiness and desire' (Warner 1995, p.241). The feminisation of the language of the moral suggests that females should guard their own virtue, even though their very nature makes it difficult to do so. It is the bloodstained key that alerts Bluebeard to his wife's betrayal. Upon discovering the bloody bodies in his private room, the young bride drops the key in blood and as in such tales, it is a 'magical object(s) in the sense that once they are touched, the blood cannot be washed off them. The motif of blood that cannot be washed off is an ancient one' (Bettelheim 1976, p.301). This is a trope that is seen throughout literature, Lady Macbeth is culpable in the degeneration of the patriarchal order and cannot wash off the blood on her hands, 'Out, damn'd spot! out, I say!' (*Shakespeare 1963*, Act 5, Scene 1, line 38). The bloodstained key is also evocative of the apple in the Genesis account of Adam and Eve, and may be emblematic of a phallic symbol. As Freud states in his *Interpretation of Dreams*:

All elongated objects, such as sticks, tree-trunks and umbrellas (the opening of these last being comparable to an erection) may stand for the male organ... Boxes, cases, chests, cupboards and ovens represent the uterus, and also hollow objects, ships, and vessels of all kinds. Rooms in dreams are usually women... if the various ways in and out of them are represented, this interpretation is scarcely open to doubt. (Freud 2010, p.367)

Drawing on the ballad of Count Eberstein, Freud states how it is redundant to name the key that unlocks the door, as the symbolism of locks and keys are obviously sexual (Freud 2010, p.367).

The key in *Bluebeard* is an obvious phallic symbol, fitting into the vaginal symbol of the lock of door of the secret chamber. Both the apple and the key symbolise women's susceptibility in succumbing to their curious nature and the ominous penalties that result from such capitulation. Bruno Bettelheim, in *The Uses of Enchantment*, draws the analogy, that 'the key that opens the door to a secret room suggests associations to the male sexual organ, particularly in first intercourse when the hymen is broken and blood gets on it. If this is one of the hidden meanings, then it makes sense that the blood cannot be washed away, 'defloration is an irreversible event' (Bettelheim 1976, pp.300-301). This theory of the veiled connotation of the bloodstained key is plausible in advocating that women should protect their virginity. This helps reiterate the ideological point of the worth of a woman being validated only in terms of her being a desirable physical entity. Virginity is irretrievable and parallels the beauty as discussed in Chapter One, because without it, the 'worth' of the fairy tale heroine is diminished. Bettelheim further theorises that rather than simply disobeying her husband's will by entering the locked secret room, the young newlywed has betrayed her husband by engaging in sexual relations with male guests during the husband's absence.

Maria Tatar sees these theories as 'wilfully idiosyncratic in its attempt to produce a stable ideology. The story itself offers no grounds for connecting the heroine's act of opening a door with sexual betrayal' (Tatar 1992, p.111). I concur with Tatar's view that the linking of the opening of the forbidden chamber with the act of sexual transgression is tenuous at best, and, that this theory reiterates the misogynistic tone of the tale, namely that the young bride must be responsible in some way in order to receive such a punishment. The idea that Bettelheim would theorise natural curiosity as sexual transgression is emblematic of the tale itself, and of the repression of female curiosity through patriarchy. Haase notes that 'the values that Bettelheim views as timeless and common to us all frequently turn out to be those of the authoritarian, patriarchal society in which he was raised' (Haase 1999, p.359). The

ideology of the tale, which can be seen as warning of the fatal effects of curiosity (Warner, 1989), serves to instruct the female at all levels, both physically and intellectually. The female becomes imprisoned by her own body, denied knowledge and natural curiosity to further explore her body, its nature and its desires. The female body thus becomes a site of patriarchal control; female sexuality is suppressed and controlled through the demonisation of curiosity and through the inherent threat of violence and punishment should this injunction be transgressed. The mystery surrounding the issue of female transgression is further aligned to the biblical account of Adam and Eve, where Eve's transgression and thirst for knowledge resulted in punishment for all women.

The fairy tale can be said to be an ideological conduit for this means of controlling and oppressing women through a persuasive and seemingly unthreatening form of narrative. This is similar to the function of the education system in Althusser's terms of ISAs, where the school 'teaches 'know-how', but in forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology* or the mastery of its "practice"' (Althusser 1971, p.133). It provides the young reader with ideals, and acts as a Lacanian mirror through which their own 'model' behaviour is continually reflected. The theory of identity construction via Lacan's mirror stage is one that this thesis explores extensively in later chapters.

The story of Eve can be associated with the *Bluebeard* fairy tale, where the first wife's alleged transgression means that all Bluebeard's future wives must also be punished. The mystery remains as to what was the first wife's transgression that allowed her husband to murder her and mutilate her body. It would be simplistic to concur with Bettelheim's theorisation that sexual misbehaviour is at the core of this transgression, but it a redundant riddle. The aim is surely to terrorise the female reader into submission and docility. The unknown transgression cannot be understood because the female is not allowed to analyse or question; perhaps that transgression is in her very femaleness, her otherness from her

husband. This further imprisons the female in two ways: the first being the fear of the unknown transgression that cannot be understood, and the second being that the only way to avoid committing such transgressions is to submit fully to male authority without question. The aim of the *Bluebeard* story is to signify a dread of disobeying the rules, be these social conventions or sexual ones. This adherence to the governing norms and rules, with the implicit threat of violence should one transgress, helps to underpin identity construction, based on the fundamental understanding of the division of the fairy tale female into good/evil. Should a 'good' female figure transgress, or fail to uphold the ideological idealisation, then she will become 'bad' or 'evil' and need to be punished, as exemplified in the cautionary tone of *Bluebeard*.

Female Sexuality

Underpinning the female status as a commodity within the text is the apparent dangers of feminine curiosity. Curiosity is feminised, and the female character's transgression is any act that is deemed a capital offence according to her husband. The demonising of feminine curiosity has a twofold effect. The first is that it ensures the female does not question her position within the social order and remains submissive and controlled. It ensures that woman does not think outside of her role as commodity. Secondly, the demonising of feminine curiosity has a very specific sexual undercurrent. It denies the female access to any pleasure. The virgin heroine is revered, and young women are taught to guard their virginity as shown in the analysis of *Cinderella* using the slipper trope. This analysis is mirrored in Irigaray's work, when she states that the virginal woman holds immense value, solely as an exchange value to enhance the male position within patriarchal society (Irigaray 1985, p.186). The virgin woman is a commodity whose worth is defined by her newness. Virginity becomes

enshrined in the market-worth of a young woman as a commodity, and also becomes interwoven with beauty.

Without these traits, the fairy tale female characters would not have progressed within the narratives. Irigaray categorises the social roles offered to women as mother, virgin, and prostitute, she further explains that the characteristics of feminine sexuality derive from these roles:

the valorization of reproduction and nursing; faithfulness; modesty, ignorance of and even lack of interest in sexual pleasure; a passive acceptance of men's "activity"; seductiveness, in order to arouse the consumers' desire while offering herself as its material support without getting pleasure herself... Neither as mother nor as virgin nor as prostitute has woman any right to her own pleasure. (Irigaray 1985, p.187)

This denial of pleasure to the female further signifies her subjugation within the patriarchal construct. The sexual connotations of the tale are clear as Warner states:

Bluebeard the ogre husband plays two parts at least in his own story: the patriarch whose orders must be obeyed on the one hand, and on the other the serpent who seduces by exciting curiosity and desire and so brings death. (Warner 1995, p.246)

Rather than suggesting, as Bettelheim does, that entering the forbidden room and the bloodstained key are symbolic of the young bride having committing adultery, one may postulate that this room may be symbolic of female sexuality itself. Using Irigaray's point, namely that no socially constructed female role allows a woman 'a right to her own pleasure', then perhaps the young bride's transgression may be that of sexual curiosity, rather than sexual misconduct as Bettelheim theorised. As a virgin bride, she did not have access to sexual experience, and now, as a married woman, she must show restraint. Pleasure and

sexual curiosity are only permissible when they are framed by the role of a commodity for male gratification.

The female character, in her pursuit of knowledge of the forbidden room, is clearly in defiance of her role as commodity, and must be chastised with the threat of capital punishment. In light of Irigaray's work and the obvious sexual implications of this tale, one can read that not only is the female denied any social standing outside of her value to the male dominant, but she is also denied access to her own body. The patriarchal social order, as perpetuated by the *Bluebeard* tale, denies the woman access to her natural curiosity without the fear of being punished. The implications within the tale are clear: should a woman, married or not, succumb to sexual curiosity it may be to her detriment. As Irigaray says it is required that a woman maintains:

in her own body the material substratum of the object desire, but that she herself never have access to desire *Socially*, they are 'objects' for and among men and furthermore they cannot do anything but mimic a 'language' that they have not produced; *naturally*, they remain amorphous, suffering from drives without any possible representatives or representations. For them, the transformation of the natural into the social does not take place, except to the extent that they function as components of private property or as commodities. (Irigaray 1985, p.189)

The female character in *Bluebeard* emphasises Irigaray's point; her natural desire or curiosity cannot translate into her social role, because she exists purely as a commodity. As Marx states about commodities:

They are, however, commodities, only because they are something twofold, both objects of utility, and, at the same time, depositories of value. They manifest themselves therefore as commodities, or have the form of commodities, only in so far as they have two forms, a physical or natural form, and a value form. (Marx 2010 p.32)

Reading this, one can suppose that the term 'commodity fetish' is at play, where an extra value is ideologically attached to a commodity to make it more desirable; thus, the brides are then transformed into fetishist commodities. Women are reduced to vessels of desire without having any access to this desire. Because his wives are commodities to Bluebeard, sexual curiosity cannot be tolerated as it threatens the patriarchal order. Not only does the female serve as a commodity to Bluebeard, but also in the construct of the tale she serves as a vehicle for ideologies. Using Marxist's definition of a commodity, the representation of the female is both an 'object of utility' and also, a depository of value (Marx 2010, p.32), as it is through her that the tale and patriarchal society reinforce and indoctrinate the reader to consume these ideologies.

The other role of the female as a commodity is that of reproduction. As a wife and as a mother, in Irigaray's terms, she is removed from the market of exchange in order to reproduce and continue the male line. Marina Warner states how 'the horror that terrifies the wives in marriage is not always the ogre's direct responsibility- their fear may arise from another cause, which happily, for historical reasons, has been eclipsed by much more prominent phantom of the serial killer' (Warner 1995, p.257). The worth of a woman, in this patriarchal context, is based on her ability to further the male line. Reading the tale in this way, one can make a supposition on some aspects of the plot. Warner already identifies how it can be read that this tale is an anxiety of childbirth and the high mortality rates associated with it during the time the tale was written as 'one of the principal causes of death before the nineteenth century was childbirth, and both child and female mortality was high. In the forbidden chamber, Bluebeard's wife perhaps found herself face to face with the circumstances of her own future death' (Warner 1995, p.263). The death chamber holding the dead wives can symbolise those who have died performing their wifely duty of producing an

heir, or perhaps those who were murdered by Bluebeard for their lack of ability in producing a son.

These readings can be further strengthened by the fact that the tale clearly states that Bluebeard left no heir. The death room, awash with blood and the corpses of the ex-wives, with their throats cut, can be said to be symbolically representative of the female womb and the anxieties that surrounded childbirth at that time. This theoretical reading would also answer the provocative question of the tale, which is that if the main female character and the other wives transgressed by entering the forbidden room and uncovering Bluebeard's secret, then how did the first wife transgress? It would be impossible for her to uncover his secret in the same way as the other wives, and so in the patriarchal order, it can be hypothesised, given the context, that she failed in providing an heir and so became the first to transgress against her husband and this patriarchal order, whose hegemonic control her physical body was expected to uphold and perpetuate. One can also draw the link between the forbidden room and the bloody womb, a symbol of the power of the female in reproduction. In this light, Bluebeard's murderous actions would symbolise the male Freudian fear of castration, a notion that will be explored more fully in the analysis of *The Bloody Chamber* in the next chapter.

Such a narrative of death, terror and lack of knowledge helps to indoctrinate the young reader into a culture of fear, which sustains her submissive place in the patriarchal order. It denies her any worth or value outside of her physical body as a form of commodity fetish. Furthermore, it vilifies any natural curiosity on her part, denying her access to her own body, her own pleasure and any concrete knowledge of her own reproductive future and her place in the patriarchal order. Warner writes that 'Perrault, a realist who clothed his witness in fancy dress, spun a tale of reassurance, in which his heroine is spared one of the most present fears of young women in the past: that marriage will be the death of her' (Warner

1995, p.264), through the very real and present danger of death through childbirth. As Warner states the 'fear of death in childbirth may represent of the story's latent meanings, but it does not figure among its patent meanings' (Warner 1995, p.265).

This analysis provides concrete readings of how the forbidden room can be read as a symbol of not only female anxieties surrounding childbirth, but also, as a symbol of female sexuality. The bloody tableau of wives serves as a mortal warning, enabling the ideological suppression of the female, in all her facets: her curiosity, her physical body, her sexuality and her reproductive function, all of which reinforce her status as a commodity within patriarchal society. The denial of curiosity to the female is integral in maintaining the status of women as commodities within society, as object as opposed to subjects, and as passive as opposed to active. The *Bluebeard* tale has an important role in helping to reinforce this ideology, both in the reader and in society.

Bluebeard – the collector of wives

Bluebeard the character is the holder of wealth and power within the narrative. When discussing Freud, Irigaray maintains that 'Freud asserts that the "masculine" is the sexual model, that no representation of desire can fail to take it as the standard, can fail to submit to it' (Irigaray 1985, p.72). This can be read in the tale as, despite reservations about his fearsome beard, and what it possible represents, and also despite the fact that 'nobody knew what became of [his previous] wives' (Perrault 2009, p.104), the young beautiful female submits to Bluebeard and becomes his bride. Despite his physical appearance as a male, he can be viewed outside of his physical entity, as his wealth and social status are also a part of his overall value. The female character transgresses because she succumbs to her curiosity, which is detrimental in her maintaining her femininity and worth as a woman, whereas the male is allowed to be curious and additionally, given the sexual undertone of the narrative,

one can read that the male is allowed to follow his sexual curiosity be it in his own body or with a partner, because as Irigaray says, 'the economy of desire – of exchange – is a man's business' (Irigaray 1985, p.189). Only the male is allowed any curiosity – which within a masculine perspective is called intelligence. Bluebeard sees his wives purely as property. They are only commodities and even in death, they remain his property. The fact that he displays the corpses of his murdered wives further emphasises that these women are merely properties to him; beyond their reproductive duties (in which they may or may not have failed), they remain as his possessions:

The possession of a woman is certainly indispensable to man for the reproductive use value that that she represents; but what he desires is to have all of them. To "accumulate" them, to be able to count off his conquests, seductions, possessions, both sequentially and cumulative, as measure or standard(s). (Irigaray 1985, p.174)

This helps further reiterate how the female is merely a commodity, even in death she remains a possession.

The naming of the tale after the eponymous character is unusual when one looks through the titles of the Oxford Classics collection of *The Complete Fairy Tales* by Charles Perrault. It is one of only two tales named after male characters, the second being *Ricky the Tuft*. As already discussed, this is a tale with dark and gothic overtures, explicitly outlining female punishment. The use of the name 'Bluebeard' as a title helps to promote the sense of foreboding within the tale. His name alone strikes fear in the young reader. The name holds a connotative function in endorsing existing ideologies. It then becomes imbued with the ideological imperatives of the tale, namely the warning of female curiosity. He is described as a fearsome man with a grotesque blue beard. The blue beard is unfamiliar and exerts a particular implication of sexuality. Marina Warner paints him as an eastern man of mystery (Warner 1995, p.241). This helps to construct his representation as 'the other' as 'the Orient

has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience' (Said 2006, p.25). Even with his foreign appearance, and the strange mystery of his previous wives, his wealth allows him to be considered a man worthy of being a suitor, as Zipes wrote, 'younger women of bourgeois and aristocratic circles were constantly being forced into marriages of convenience with elderly men, who were not physically appealing or likeable' (Zipes 1991, p.34). While much scholarly attention is paid to the negative aspects of Perrault's female representations, Warner emphasises that depicting such a marriage showed that 'however frivolous [Perrault's] tone, he took the part of daughters against the arranged marriages of the day, with their cynical ambitiousness for social position and wealth and their disregard for personal inclination' (Warner 1995, p.265).

The very name Bluebeard 'stirs associations with sex, virility, male readiness and desire' (Warner 1995, p.241). As Warner notes, Bluebeard embodies man against nature, as signified by his fearsome blue beard, by either dying his hair like an Oriental, or by naturally growing such a monstrous beard without having to resort to artifice (Warner 1995, p.243). The infamous beard is also significant, as beards signified masculinity in the Olympic Games, and 'beards came increasingly to define the male in a priapic mode' (Warner 1995, p.242). This is noteworthy, as the overtly masculine representation of Bluebeard mirrors not only the sexual aspect of the tale, but also, his hyper-masculinity is in direct proportion to the violent deaths of his wives. This 'hyper' male mirrors the 'hyper' response to the wife's transgression of entering the forbidden room. In her position as a commodity, she is obligated to obey her husband, and therein lays the transgression. The female in the story is punished, not for the uncovering of Bluebeard's secret, but merely because she entered the locked room. The fact that she is being put to death is not directly linked to maintaining Bluebeard's secret but rather, she is being condemned to die because she succumbed to her curious nature. Her inevitable death sentence (given the fate of the previous wives), feeds Bluebeard's

sadistic appetite. This helps to reiterate the stance of Bluebeard as 'other' and helps to further emphasise how feminine curiosity must be controlled, as 'though the narrative perspective may vary, the starting point for the discourse on manners through fairy tales affirms the dominant view regarding the regulation of inner and outer nature in favour of male hegemony and rationalized industry' (Zipes 1991, p.33). Bluebeard, through his fearsome depiction and representation of the eastern 'other', is the enforcer of male hegemony, not only within the narrative of the tale but also within Perrault's collection. Death is the ultimate sanction, and in his world, he is empowered to enforce it.

The attribution of curiosity to the female, and intelligence to the male, means that the female's curiosity is the focal point of transgression within the tale. Zipes draws on Lilyane Mourey, saying that:

Perrault argues for the total submission of the woman to her husband. Feminine coquetry (which is only the privilege of the dominant class) disturbs and upsets him: it could be the sign of female independence. It opens the way for the amorous conquest which endangers one of the fundamental values of society – the couple, the family. As we have seen, the heroines of the tales are very pretty, loyal, dedicated to their household chores, modest and docile and sometimes a little stupid insofar as it is true that stupidity is almost a quality in women for Perrault. Intelligence could be dangerous. In his mind as in that of many men (and women) beauty is an attribute of woman, just as intelligence is the attribute of man. (Mourey cited in Zipes 1991, p.25)

This reiterates Chapter One's analysis of why beauty is so important to the representation of the female character. This differentiation between gender representations also allows for an insight into how the reader can ignore Bluebeard's artificial and fierce beard. In the male representation, beauty is not as consequential as intelligence and wealth. These are the key signifiers that indicate when a male fairy tale character is eligible to be wed. The female is

placed as the focal point of ideological intervention because of her curious nature. This focus allows the tale to disregard the fact that Bluebeard is in fact a serial killer. Not only does this man kill his wives, he also displays their bodies in a gruesome tableau, exhibited in a private room for his own voyeuristic pleasure. The sadistic and murderous transgressions do not warrant the same focus as female curiosity. It is only female transgression that is worthy of punishment within the tale:

instead of projecting the female's fear of sexuality, the tale depicts Perrault's own fear of women and perhaps of his own sexual drives which he disguised so that he could accept them in a more "civilised" form. From his fears and desires he shaped the configurations of the fairy tale to engender an aesthetic-ideological constellation of dependable and temperant male governance over whimsical female naiveté. (Zipes 1991, p.24)

Bluebeard – patriarchal enforcer

The second moral of the tale states that women should not fear her husband because this is a tale of men in a different era:

People with sense who use their eyes,
Study the world and know its ways,
Will not take long to realize
That this is a tale of bygone days,
And what it tells is now untrue:
Whether his beard be black or blue,
The modern husband does not ask
His wife to undertake a task
Impossible for her to do. (Perrault 2009, pp.113-114)

This distinction between Bluebeard and 'modern' men has a twofold effect, the first being that painting Bluebeard as a murderous monster allows the narrative to concentrate on the female transgression. The second is that by analysing the second moral of the tale, it effectively allows one to paint Bluebeard as 'the other'. Bluebeard represents the monstrous other who is ruled by his primitive sexual and violent nature. The characterisation of Bluebeard, his eastern appearance and his violent and sadistic tendencies, clearly marks him as other within the text. In this regard, one may draw on Bram Stoker's character Dracula, mirroring how, 'If in some relatively obvious ways Dracula stands for transgression, he also stands for – or, paradoxically, enables – a recuperation of stability and order' (Kuzmanovic 2009, p.413).

One can read that the representation of Bluebeard as 'other' means that the female can be punished as intensely and violently as is desired without casting any aspersions on the male gender. This allows the ideologies and morals that the tale projects to maintain their integrity. The sexual nature and excessive use of violence against the young bride would throw into question the ruthlessness of the male control and the patriarchal order. Bluebeard, with his eastern connotations, is 'other' from the normal representation of man as offered by the other fairy tales' valiant princes, or the chivalrous brothers that aid the female's rescue. This allows patriarchy to operate without reproach, as it uses Bluebeard 'as a mirror that reflects the colonialist's self-image' (JanMohamed 2006, p.19). Through his violent reinforcement of feminine ideologies, Bluebeard creates and reinforces a positive reflection of the western ideologies within the text.

The final part of the second moral, 'and even when dissatisfied, With her he's quiet as a mouse. It isn't easy to decide, Which is the master in the house' (Perrault 2009, p.114), reinforces the ambiguity of the forceful nature of the monstrous representation of the male. While it may be read that, in the final remnants of the moral, Perrault is lobbying for a more

gendered balance, this can be easily disregarded given the preceding moral. Rather, one can read this as softening of the harsh warning of the first moral. As previously noted, the connotations of just the name 'Bluebeard' become synonymous with the bloody deaths of curious wives. Such evocative imagery is hardly forgotten with the simple indication that even when a male is dissatisfied with his wife, he will do nothing against her, considering the tale that went before was of a murderous serial killer husband who condemned his wife to death for merely being too curious:

In *Bluebeard* the message is almost the same except that the wife of Bluebeard is saved because she realizes her error and says her prayers. Here the heroine is beautiful, well-bred, but too curious. Again the moral explains that it is a sin to be curious and imaginative for a woman and that she must exercise self-control. This message is softened by a second moral which ironically implies that the relationship between men and women has changed: men are no longer the monsters they used to be and women have more power. Nevertheless, the female role is dictated by conditions that demand humility and self-discipline. (Zipes 1991, p.24)

This reiterates the representation of Bluebeard as 'other' within the text; he is further aligned with being a male in the most primitive state, as opposed to the well-educated and evolved men found today. Furthermore, the second moral adds that a modern husband would never ask his wife to undertake a task impossible for her to do. This enables the representation of the female gender as weak and fundamentally flawed, the female is naturally disposed to being overly curious, which must be controlled.

Bluebeard as a text provides valuable insight into the ideological tools patriarchy employs in order to ensure female submission. Through the analysis, one can see that there are many ideologies at play within the story: 'ideologies do not operate through single ideas: they operate in discursive chains, in clusters, in semantic fields, in discursive formations'

(Hall 1985, p.104). The ideological crux of the story is that a female should be passive in order to avoid transgressing and ultimately punishment. This passivity is integral in ensuring male control over the female body, reproduction and maintaining the that female worth is grounded in their role as commodity, while also suppressing any freedom to engage with curiosity and or knowledge to allow them to think outside of this role.

Chapter Four: ‘To be the *object* of desire is to be defined in the passive case’ – The formation of female identity in Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber*

New wine in old bottles

Chapter Three’s analysis of the original *Bluebeard* tale, showed how women are constructed as ‘commodity’ in patriarchal society and how this ideology and the demonisation of female curiosity is perpetuated by the fairy tale genre. Such analysis utilised the works of Luce Irigaray and the Marxist concept of commodity fetishism, showing how it was the virgin bride that was most prized in the marriage market in the traditional tale of *Bluebeard*. The analysis highlighted that for these women, ‘The use, consumption, and circulation of their sexualised bodies underwrite the organization and the reproduction of the social order, in which they have never taken part as “subjects”’ (Irigaray 1985, p.84). The short story *The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter explores, not the demonisation of female curiosity, but instead looks at how women in patriarchal society, allow themselves to being objectified by the male gaze. As Cristina Bacchilega states, in *Postmodern Fairytales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*, it ‘highlights the seductive socio-economic dynamics of sex-gender oppression’ (Bacchilega 1997, p.119). Using the familiar basis of the *Bluebeard* tale, Carter’s short story exposes how women subject themselves to the male gaze and assimilate it, as part of their identity construction, for economic reasons.

The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories, published in 1979, is a collection of short stories by Angela Carter, which explores traditional fairy tales through new perspectives. The introduction by Helen Simpson, quotes Carter's intention to 'extract the latent content from the traditional stories and to use it as the beginnings of new stories' (Carter 2006, p.viii). The 'latent content' of the stories was provided by Carter's translations of Charles Perrault's classic tales published in 1977. Martine de la Rochère and Ute Heidmann in their article, "'New Wine in Old Bottles": Angela Carter's Translation of Charles Perrault's *La Barbe bleue*', quote Jack Zipes stating how, 'as she began her work on Perrault, she also started writing her own original stories that formed the basis of *The Bloody Chamber*' (Zipes quoted in de la Rochère and Heidmann 2009, p.41). *The Bloody Chamber* offers a new perception on the *Bluebeard* tale where a young naive female pianist marries the rich aristocratic Bluebeard character called the Marquis, from which point the story follows a similar plot to that of *Bluebeard*. She marries him against her natural instincts, and despite the dubious circumstance of his three previous wives having disappeared or being presumed dead. The young female character learns that the Marquis has some perverse sexual appetites, which seem to involve her death as a means of providing an ultimate form of satisfaction for him.

As Cristina Bacchilega states, the character 'soon realizes that death, more than sex, is the ritual he wishes to enact and she is apparently fated to pass through. Her martyrdom will place her for eternity in his crypt' (Bacchilega 1997, p.120). This is reiterated throughout the story through the imagery of the lilies, which she associates with the Marquis, 'he seemed to me like a lily' (Carter 2006, p.3). He also filled her 'bedroom with lilies until it looked like an embalming parlour' (Carter 2006, p.14). In their courtship, he alluded to his perverse sexual inclinations, by showing her sado-masochistic pornography. She continues with the engagement, enjoying the materialistic gains and marries the Marquis. Once living in his castle, she is isolated except for her contact with the blind piano tuner. Paralleling the

Bluebeard tradition, the Marquis departs for a business trip during their honeymoon, and bequeaths the keys to every room in the castle to his young bride, but warns her against entering the one forbidden room. Haunted by the need to know her real husband, beneath his façade, she enters the room. He returns and discovers her transgression, condemning her to death. The blind piano tuner stands with the young bride at the hour of her death, but it is her mother who comes to save the bride from her execution and slay the evil Marquis.

The formation of identity

The Bloody Chamber is a rich, sumptuous, evocative short story, told in a first person retrospective narrative from the point of view of the young bride. De la Rochère and Heidmann propose that for Carter 'translating and rewriting were rather a means to pursue and develop a complex and productive dialogue with Perrault by engaging with aspects of his texts that she couldn't integrate in her translation' (de la Rochère and Heidmann 2009, p.41). *The Bloody Chamber* interrogates the identification of the female character as 'object' rather than warning of the dangers of female curiosity as did the traditional tale. Much academic analysis is centred on the issue of the prevalent presence of pornography in Carter's work, with theorists split on Carter's stance. However, as Merja Makinen states, 'neither the mystification of her gentleness, nor the assumption that representations of sexuality are locked into pornography, should blind us to Carter's works' attempt to decolonize our habits of thoughts' (Makinen 1992, p.14). De la Rochère and Heidmann quote Renfroe in their article, stating that 'Carter thus realized that depending on the treatment of the story, *Bluebeard* can be used to confirm traditional stereotypes of women as daughters of Eve and serve patriarchal interests, or on the contrary (sometimes simultaneously) to criticize them' (Renfroe cited in de la Rochère and Hedimann 2009, p.44).

It is through the subversive aspects of the tale that one can see how Carter is exposing, not only the fallacy of woman positioned as object, but also the existing social structures that allow women to identify with being said object. As Bacchilega describes, the female character 'seems to enjoy the cruelty that goes with the "luxurious defiance" of privilege. Carter reminds us how victimhood for women often carries with it the dangerously seductive companions of "willingness" and "virtue"' (Bacchilega 1997, p.123). In the introduction to *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, Helen Simpson states that it is incorrect to assume that these are subversive stories with a feminist twist (Carter 2006, p.vii), yet one cannot deny that by exposing and probing the ideologies of the *Bluebeard* tale, Carter provokes a feminist dialogue around the issues and ideologies that traditional fairy tales perpetuate.

The Bloody Chamber, through the retrospective narrative of the lead female character, allows for insight into *how* the female comes to view herself as a commodity. She understands her worth as an adult female through her marriage, her new place in society, the economic gains of both, and, most importantly, through her husband's gaze. Bacchilega aptly describes, that 'the young bride's minutely detailed, hauntingly visual, and soul-searching account reveals that she self-consciously viewed her innocence as an asset – she exchanged her virginal body for her husband's riches' (Bacchilega 1997, p.120). The patriarchal lens not only objectifies the female character, but also naturalises how she should view herself as a male object. Such naturalisation can be said to be perpetuated by the fairy tale genre as seen in the previous analysis of *Bluebeard*. One can draw on Jacques Lacan and his theory of 'the mirror stage' in the construction of the female character's identity. Mirrors are featured prominently throughout the short story and are a tool used to reflect the male character's desires. 'I saw him watching me in the gilded mirrors with the assessing eye of a connoisseur, inspecting horseflesh, or even a housewife in the market, inspecting cuts on the slab' (Carter

2006, p.6). The young bride is exposed not only to the male gaze, but also to the reflection of both the gaze and herself in the mirrors. Lacan's theory of the mirror stage discusses the development of the child between the ages of six to eighteen months, where 'the child for the first time becomes aware, through seeing its image in the mirror, that his/her body has a total form' (Homer 2005, p.24). As Lacan states:

For the total form of his body, by which the subject anticipates the maturation of his power in a mirage, is given to him only as a gestalt, that is, in an exteriority in which, to be sure, this form is more constitutive than constituted, but in which, above all, it appears to him as the contour of his stature that freezes it and in a symmetry that reverses it, in opposition to the turbulent movements with which the subject feels he animates it. (Lacan 2006, p. 76)

The use of the mirror stage in the formation of identity will be discussed more fully in the *Frozen* chapter, where the image identification is not as tainted or constrained by such a forceful male gaze as is found in *The Bloody Chamber*. For the purposes of this chapter, one can ascertain, that it is a process where the mirror image provides a sense of unification and wholeness to the individual (Howard 2005, p.25). It becomes '*an identification*, in the full sense analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes [assume] an image' [*italics original*] (Lacan 2006, p.76). However, the images of the female character reflected to her in *The Bloody Chamber* are constructed by the Marquis, as he constructs her physical appearance and also the environment reflected back to her. In this way, the mirror image takes on a cinematic quality. The image she is assuming is how the Marquis wishes her to be, he is controlling all the facets of the production and reflection. Lacan states that 'the function of the mirror stage thus turns out, in my view, to be a particular case of the function of imagos, which is to establish a relationship between an organism and its reality' (Lacan 2006, p.78). Both the organism and the reality reflected in the mirror are false or constructed, suited to the needs of the Marquis. The image that the

female character is assimilating, and which is forming the basis of her ego and identity, is thus another projected image of the male gaze.

Through the mirror image of the Marquis watching her, the female character aligns herself with the image of horsemeat, she identifies herself as 'commodity' and is a purely a physical entity that has a commodity value for her husband. 'Having marketed her child-like innocence the girl must now look to her buyer for her self-worth' (Bacchilega 1997, p.123). The mirror image formed is one based on his sexual desire as can be seen when she first views the marital bed where she will relinquish her virginity:

Our bed. And surrounded by so many mirrors! Mirrors on all the walls, in stately frames of contorted gold, that reflected more white lilies than I'd ever seen in my life before. He'd filled the room with them, to greet the bride, the young bride. The young bride, who had become that multitude of girls I saw in the mirrors. (Carter 2006, p.10)

The female character identifies with her reflection in the mirror. The Marquis likens the multiple reflected young brides to 'a whole harem for myself' (Carter 2006, p.10). The mirrors, not only help construct her identity as a young bride, but they also enable the Marquis to fulfil his sexual appetite. It is through her reflection in the mirror that the character begins an understanding of her sexual identity, 'My breath came thickly, I could not meet his eye and turned away ... and watched a dozen husbands, approach me in a dozen mirrors' (Carter 2006, p.10).

One can draw on John Berger's analysis in *Ways of Seeing* to realise that the use of the mirrors means that she is both the subject and object of her own gaze, 'and so she comes to consider the *surveyor* and the *surveyed* within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman' (Berger 1972, p. 46). By watching herself being used as a commodity, through the mirror, it further emphasises her identity construction as a 'commodity'. Drawing on Berger, the young bride has to constantly watch everything she

says or does, because of how it appears to others, or more specifically, because of how it appears to her husband, which becomes the main crux of her existence, 'her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another' (Berger 1972, p.46). She declares to the reader '(I swear to you, I had never been vain until I met him)' (Carter 2006, p.8). Her personal self-awareness of her physical appearance is a direct result of her relationship with the Marquis. She is merely an object for his sexual gratification, both physically and through the image that she is projecting via the mirrors, and this ongoing construction of her mirror identity highlights her place in patriarchal society. Thus, the female character's identity is formed and moulded by the mirrors in the castle, she assimilates the identity of a sexualised commodity for her husband as to 'acquire some control over this process, women must contain it and interiorize it' (Berger 1972, p.46). This interiorization enables the young female to form her identity.

The reflected male gaze

This identity of the female character, formed through the mirrors, is further compelled via the male gaze, which Laura Mulvey outlines in *Visual & Other Pleasures*, looking at the medium of the cinema. 'Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning' (Mulvey 2009, p.15). The female character of *The Bloody Chamber* becomes the bearer of the image, which is necessary for his sadistic desires. The Marquis utilises the 12 mirrors surrounding the marital bed as a way of creating a voyeuristic production, reflecting how 'a dozen husbands impaled a dozen brides' (Carter 2006, p.14). Mulvey states how scopophilia is the pleasure in looking, but that 'there is pleasure in being looked at' (Mulvey 2009, p.7). It is this 'pleasure in being looked at' that builds within the

short story, showing how the female comes to align herself and her identity with that of a form of possession, via the male gaze.

As Berger states 'we never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves' (Berger 1972, p.9). She is treated as a purely sexualised object, dictated by his sexual needs and desires as shown through the mirror scenes, which she internalises. 'Freud isolated scopophilia as one of the component instincts of sexuality which exist as drives quite independently of the erotogenic zones. At this point he associated scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze' (Mulvey 2009, p.17). One can see throughout the short story that the Marquis's gaze is both controlling and creative:

I saw him looking at me with lust, I dropped my eyes but, in glancing away from him, I caught sight of myself in the mirror. And I saw myself, suddenly, as he saw me, my pale face, the way the muscles in my neck stuck out like thin wire. I saw how much that cruel necklace became me. And, for the first time in my innocent and confined life, I sensed in myself a potentiality for corruption that took my breath away. (Carter 2006, p.6)

The controlling gaze of both the Marquis and the mirrors emphasises Mulvey's description of scopophilia in her analysis as active, and 'although the instinct is modified by other factors, in particular the constitution of the ego, it continues to exist as the erotic basis for pleasure in looking at another person as object' (Mulvey 2009, p.17). The Marquis dresses and enjoys his bride as his object and as his possession. This echoes how Berger says, 'we can only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice' (Berger 1972, p.8).

Linking back to Lacan, it is the viewing of the female character through the constructed mirror of the patriarchal gaze, which forms her self-identity as object/commodity. The young female then subjects herself to this construction as commodity. It is an active choice in looking at the mirror construct and thus identifying with this image. She identifies

herself as something to be consumed by her husband, 'He stripped me, gourmand that he was, as if he was stripping the leaves off an artichoke – but do not imagine much finesse about it; this artichoke was no particular treat for the diner nor was he yet in any greedy haste' (Carter 2006, p.11). She becomes a figure, as Mulvey states, who in herself had 'no signification, unless attached to an idealisation' (Mulvey 2009, p.19). It is this idealisation of being a product to be consumed, which the Marquis's gaze creates:

I heard no change in his breathing but my heightened, excited senses told me he was awake and gazing at me. A huge man, an enormous man, and his eyes, dark and motionless as those eyes the ancient Egyptians painted upon their sarcophagi, fixed upon me. I felt a certain tension in the pit of my stomach, to be so watched, in such silence. (Carter 2006, p.7)

His idealisation of the figure he wishes her to represent constitutes her identity, as a visual object. She becomes the embodiment of this constructed figure, and derives a certain pleasure from it. When discussing works of art involving women holding mirrors, Berger shows how, 'the real function of the mirror was otherwise. It was to make the woman connive in treating herself as, first and foremost, a sight' (Berger 1972, p.51). The young bride becomes manufactured in their combined reflection:

No. I was not afraid of him; but of myself. I seemed reborn in his unreflective eyes, reborn in unfamiliar shapes. I hardly recognized myself from his descriptions of me and yet, and yet – might there not be a grain of beastly truth in them? (Carter 2006, p.17)

The Marquis is not only controlling with his own gaze, which dominates the text, but he also controls the mirrors which help form her identity via Lacan's theory of the mirror stage. He is the orchestrator of the mirrors and the images they provide, but she is an active participant in viewing herself via the mirrors. As Mulvey states 'recognition is this overlaid with misrecognition: the image recognised is conceived as the reflected body of the self, but its

misrecognition as superior projects this body outside itself as an ideal ego, the alienated subject which re-introduced as an ego ideal, prepares the way for identification with others in the future' (Mulvey 2009, p.18). It is this identification with the projected female ideal, formed by the male gaze and reflected by the mirror, which allows us to see why she would be missing her tyrannical husband when he leaves during their honeymoon, as she has formed part of herself in recognition of her role as commodity to him. 'I lay in bed alone. And I longed for him, and he disgusted me' (Carter 2006, p.19). The confusion of the narrator's experience is both contradictory and compelling.

The voice of the young bride and the insight into her lack of power over her own body subverts the idealisation of the submissive and passive heroine. Bacchilega explores how:

the narrator's sensual style both uses and exposes seduction as a trap. The survivor looks back on her victimising experience from varying distances: an oscillating focalization that tricks readers – women readers specifically – in and out of identification with the heroine's disturbing *mélange* of displayed cleverness and passivity. (Bacchilega 1997, pp.121-122)

One can also see in the husband's formation of the 12 mirror scene and the depiction of the consummation of the marriage that, 'The first, scopophilic, arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The second, develops through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, comes from identification with the image seen' (Mulvey 2009, p.18). The Marquis transforms the female character into his object of sexual stimulation through dressing her and adorning her with specific jewellery so as to make her his idealised sexual object 'and when nothing but my scarlet, palpitating core remained, I saw, in the mirror, the living image of an etching by Rops from the collection he had shown me when our engagement permitted us to be alone together' (Carter 2006, p.11). Having achieved the physical representation he wishes, and then having transgressed by entering the forbidden room, her death helps to further constitute his ego, and helps formulate his identity

as sadistic murderer. 'In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female' (Mulvey 2009, p.19). Not only has the Marquis constituted her image, through the mirror representations, but also her dead body would lie with her sister-wives displayed for his future perverse pleasures. It would become the ultimate passive female for his pleasure. His pleasures are diverse, not only sadistic pornography, but also the sadistic displaying of his wives' corpses. 'Carter's mirroring of pornography ultimately does not endorse heterosexual sado-masochism, however, because destructive relations are not presented as natural, but as symptoms of specific repressive socio-cultural dynamics' (Bacchilega 1997, p.124).

The passivity of the female is shown through various methods: woman as object, the mirror and even the macabre display of the dead brides, and for Mulvey, 'the woman displayed has functioned on two levels' in the screen story, as an erotic object for the male characters in the story but also for the audience' (Mulvey 2009, p.20). The Marquis uses the female character sexually, and her death is used as a means of his sadistic fulfilment but then he also plans to use her cadaver to further his enjoyment as a spectator mirroring the audience member so crucial in Mulvey's theoretical analysis. For the Marquis, the penultimate pleasure is his wife's execution, 'I have a place prepared for your exquisite corpse in my display of flesh!' (Carter 2006, p.40). As Mulvey states, 'the power to subject another person to the will sadistically or to the gaze voyeuristically is turned onto the woman as the object of both' (Mulvey 2009, p.24). The young bride is subjected to both.

Mulvey draws on the Freudian analysis that 'woman's desire is subjugated to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound; she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it' (Mulvey 2009, p.15). The young female character cannot transcend her image of woman as commodity as shown in the text. The Freudian analysis of castration means that the

Marquis uses his brides, and the fetishising of their dead bodies, as a means of placating his own male anxiety:

Thus the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified. The male unconscious has two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object... or else complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it become reassuring rather than dangerous (hence overvaluation, the cult of the female star). (Mulvey 2009, p.22)

The Marquis does both, as he fetishes the female body and he also displays their dead bodies in his desired positions, so that the image of these women becomes reassuring rather than threatening. Drawing from the analysis of the *Bluebeard* text, one can postulate that the Marquis's fear of women is due to his lack of control over their reproductive power. The bloody chamber symbolising the bloody womb, is the source of their power and that may be why he chooses to display their bodies there.

Hélène Cixous states that, 'men say that there are two unrepresentable things: death and the feminine sex. That's because they need femininity to be associated with death' (Cixous 1976, p.885). In death, they become the ultimate subdued and silenced females. They have been conquered through male force, and their bodies remain on display like trophies on a wall. As reliant as the female character is on the male gaze to form her identity, so is the Marquis in killing her, 'the process of knowing and designating the other is always made through a reference to the self. The subject is produced through the object' (Skeggs 2014, p.19). His sadistic killings of his brides are an attempt to assert himself into his male lineage. This can be seen when the piano tuner tells the young bride, 'there was a Marquis, once, who

used to hunt young girls on the mainland; he hunted them with dogs, as though they were foxes' (Carter 2006, p.32). The Marquis's murderous acts are almost a way of repatriating himself into his male family dynasty. 'The attempt to objectify others, however, signals the instability of those who claim themselves as subjects' (Skeggs 2014, p.19). His desperate need to control and exert his power over various representations of woman (bride/iconic representation of St. Cecilia/his matriarchal line) reveals his instability. The females are merely tools to allow the Marquis to exert his masculine dominance and follow in his family's footsteps. The ideologies and idealisation of submission and passivity for the females make it easier for him to do so.

Commodity Fetishism

It is through the retrospective narrative experiences of the female character that we learn how the female comes to understand herself as a commodity. 'The actual image of a woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man takes the argument a step further into the content and structure of representation, adding a further layer of ideological significance demanded by the patriarchal order' (Mulvey 2009, p.25). The display of the gruesome wives fulfils the Marquis's need to punish and annihilate the female threat, but also serves as a memento of man's strength over women. 'On yet another level within this retrospective first-person narrative, the religious framework, which seeks to provide a foolproof representation of the heroine's innocence and virtue, shows itself as a victimizing, self-serving ideology – iconoclastically working in tandem with the more common sexual commodification of women through marriage' (Bacchilega 1997, p. 125). The issue of the female character's formation of her identity as commodity is further complicated by the issue of commodity fetishism. Articles such, 'A Scopophilic Fairy Tale: Deconstructing Normative Gender in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*' by Caleb Siyver (2013), have explored the idea of

gender construction via Mulvey's work on the male gaze and Berger's analysis in *Ways Of Seeing* on the text *The Bloody Chamber*.

This chapter while also utilising the work of Mulvey and Berger, builds on such existing research to develop further insight. Through looking at the original *Bluebeard* tale and the ideology of woman as commodity, it is important to address the fetishistic aspect of the commoditisation of the female. As Mulvey states:

while curiosity is a compulsive desire to see and to know, to investigate something secret, fetishism is born out of a refusal to see, a refusal to accept the difference the female body represents for the male. These complex series of turnings away, of covering over, not of the eyes but of understanding, of fixating on a substitute object to hold the gaze, leave the female body as an enigma and threat, condemned to return as a symbol of anxiety while simultaneously being transformed into its own screen in representation. (Mulvey 1996, p.64)

Commodity fetishism was explored using the traditional *Bluebeard* tale where virginity was said to make a more attractive bride. Commodity fetishism is also a part of the construction of the female as commodity in *The Bloody Chamber*. The brides that the Marquis chooses have not been selected due to their virginity; in fact, he muses in the short story that it is only the most recent bride who will come to his bed as a virgin. Rather, the fetishist aspect of his choosing of these brides/commodities is due to their ability to fulfil his sadistic appetite by being representations of different aspects of women. They become passive puppets in his theatre of cruelty.

The Marquis murders his first wife, an opera singer, through strangulation; his second a model is killed by suspending her from the ceiling and the third wife, a descendant of Dracula, died from exsanguination in an Iron Maiden. He chooses the young female narrator of the story because of her innocence: 'then I realized, with a shock of surprise, how it must have been my innocence that captivated him – the silent music, he said, of my

unknowingness' (Carter 2006, p.16). Her musical ability and her innocence are reminiscent of the patron saint of music, St Cecilia, whose portrait had been hung by the Marquis in the young bride's music room as a wedding gift. In this painting, the female character states 'I saw myself as I could have wished to be' (Carter 2006, p.10). St Cecilia was beheaded, foreshadowing the choice of death the young bride's husband has in store for her. In second century Rome, the virgin Cecilia was given in marriage and told her husband that she was protected by an angel and could not be touched. Her husband was baptized in the Catholic Church upon which he too was able to see the angel. Cecilia was condemned to be executed for converting pagans to Catholicism, but the beheading was a failure as the executioner struck three times and was unable to sever her head from her body. She eventually bled to death, all the while praying and converting more souls, and was later sanctified for her efforts (catholiconline.org). The Marquis also bestows a ruby choker upon the young bride, an heirloom of an ancestor who escaped the guillotine. He forces his young bride to enact a prelude to her death by decapitation by making her wear 'a choker of rubies, two inches wide, like an extraordinary precious slit throat', with the colour of the rubies being as 'bright as arterial blood' (Carter 2006, p.6). As Bacchilega explains, during the young bride's sexual imitation, 'he does not kiss the girl but the rubies of her choker, a fetishizing essential to this sado-masochistic ritual in which the encounter of two bodies, two individuals, is in fact merely a gendered, socio-economic interaction' (Bacchilega 1997, p.123). Each of the brides is chosen because they have the potential to be moulded to fit his sadistic murderous appetite. As Berger states, 'although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing' (Berger 1972, p.10). The Marquis envisions his brides as they will fit into his bloody chamber, and it is this vision that gives rise to the commodity fetishism attached to them.

The idealised commodity

Mulvey discusses the fetishistic aspect attached to commodities in *Fetishism & Curiosity* stating that:

Jean Baudrillard pointed out that originally the word 'fetish' derived from the Portuguese *feitico*, which in its turn stemmed from the Latin *factitius*, the root of the Spanish *afeitar*, meaning 'to paint, to adorn, to embellish', and *afeite*, meaning 'preparation, ornamentation, cosmetics'. He suggests that this etymology implies a homology between the fetishised figure of bodily beauty and the fetishism of the commodity. Both are constructed, made out of raw material or the body, to acquire value. In both cases, the embellished surface conceals and enables a sliding of connotation from the eroticised feminine to the eroticisation of consumption. (Mulvey 1996, p.47)

The female character adorned with the ruby necklace, and the Poiret shift dress, is constructed to represent the Marquis's ultimate eroticised woman for his personal consumption, including the subsequent displaying of her body in his bloody tableau of wives. This underlines the commoditising of woman, as show in *Bluebeard*, and further shows how patriarchal society constructs the female to suit the commercial needs of males. 'The principal protagonist is never painted. He is the spectator in front of the picture and he is presumed to be a man. Everything is addressed to him. Everything must appear to be the result of his being there. It is for him the figures have assumed their nudity' (Berger 1972, p.54). This trope of woman as commodity can also be seen in more naturalistic fiction, a point made by Mulvey when she explores the Marilyn Monroe character in *Some Like It Hot*:

the main point of exploration for the plot to unfold focuses on Lorelei's meaning and her value in a system of commodity exchange. She replaces an exchange of sex/love with money/diamonds. Moreover, the film implies, she understands her erotic value simply as

exchange value, and her position as woman as that of ultimate consumer. (Mulvey 1996, p.49)

When speaking of his departure during their honeymoon the Marquis says, 'I know quite well that this child I've bought with a handful of coloured stones and the pelts of dead beasts won't run away' (Carter 2006, p.15). The young bride marries the Marquis for his wealth and social standing, as shown in the opening of the short story where on being asked by her mother: 'Are you sure you love him?', her response is the evasive but definite: 'I'm sure I want to marry him' (Carter 2006, p.2). This attitude of marrying for wealth is juxtaposed with her mother's actions, who had 'gladly, scandalously, defiantly beggared herself for love' (Carter 2006, p. 2). Both the young bride and her husband view her marriage to him as an exchange, a means to ensure a more luxurious and secure lifestyle for her and both characters are aware of the exchange of sex/virginity for wealth/social standing. 'The narrator's attention to material conditions undeniably promotes an unflinching and self-implicating understanding of heterosexual sado-masochism with a socially exploitative society' (Bacchilega 1997, p.123). She is exchanging her virginity for wealth. This exchange helps emphasise both the 'eroticised feminine' and the 'eroticisation of consumption' and as Mulvey states, 'In this new sense the new discourse of marketed sexuality and the new discourse of commodity consumption were articulate together, reinforcing each other as though in acknowledgment of a mutual interest' (Mulvey 1996, p.48). The female and her sexuality are commodities, which she willingly exchanges, in the patriarchal structure and are fodder for the Marquis's dark appetites.

Another interesting myth that Mulvey draws on when discussing fetishism and curiosity is the Pandora myth, which serves as a model, along with the biblical account of Eve, for the demonisation of female curiosity found in the traditional *Bluebeard* tale and also in *The Bloody Chamber*. The Marquis leaves the young bride during their honeymoon with the keys

to every room in the castle. Following *Bluebeard* tradition, the female character enters the forbidden room with the key to his 'enfer' (Carter 2006, p.18), in the hopes of uncovering his true identity beyond his public mask:

The story of Pandora's creation, and the story of the purpose behind her creation, also install her as a mythic origin of the surface/secret and interior/exterior topography. She is artificial, made up, cosmetic. As a manufactured object, Pandora evokes the double meaning of the word fabrication. She is made, not born, and she is also a lie, a deception. There is a dislocation between her appearance and her meaning. She is a Trojan horse, a lure and a trap, a *trompe-Voeil*. Her appearance dissembles. (Mulvey 1996, p.55)

The young female is also made in the reflection of the male gaze as a quasi-representative of St. Cecilia. She becomes the St. Cecilia who is not protected by angels and so can be touched and defiled by the Marquis. He exposes her to his sado-masochistic desires and when she finds his explicit violent pornographic material he states, 'my little nun has found the prayer book, has she?' (Carter 2006, p.13). It is obvious that he had planned from the start to abuse her innocence as a surrogate for St. Cecilia. He plans to further desecrate his version of St. Cecilia by successfully beheading her, thus becoming the master in his twisted scene of power. This can also be seen in the placing of his third bride Carmilla, a descendant of Dracula, in the Iron Maiden where she bleeds to death. Unlike his ancestor, hunting young girls as if they were foxes, this Marquis enjoys scenes where he can draw on his brides' natural attributes or lineage, to corrupt them and take the power from them and what they may represent to him. It is the ultimate form of control, as he is rewriting myths in order to exert his dominance and will. During the consummation of the marriage and at the time of her execution, the Marquis arranges her appearance to his desires, 'and, once again, of my apparel I must retain only my gems; the sharp blade ripped my dress in two and it fell from me' (Carter 2006, p.40).

He constructs his bride to form a sacrificial victim, a victim of his sadistic hunger. This is further complicated when one notes that the ruby choker he makes her wear is a 'family heirloom of one woman who had escaped the blade' (Carter 2006, pp.13-14). Not only is the Marquis attempting to kill the young bride and the representation of St. Cecilia, but also to kill, symbolically, his maternal ancestor alluding to his fear of the female form and the fear of castration. Ultimately, the young bride's identity becomes fractured between her sense of self, her sense of identity formed by the male gaze via the mirrors, and the symbol of St. Cecilia the Marquis which he wishes her to represent:

To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space. But this has been at the cost of a woman's self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. (Berger 1972, p.46)

The female character is a construct of the idealised female that the Marquis creates as displayed through the mirrors. Her curiosity is necessary and something that he may have sensed in her, 'because, in my innocence, he sensed a rare talent for corruption' (Carter 2006, p.17). It proved to be essential in the traditional tale, as a means to warn females of the dangers of their curiosity, the transgression of the female character acts as a warning that subservience to male authority is the only way to avoid punishment. In *The Bloody Chamber*, curiosity is also essential, as it is the only way in which the Marquis can fulfil his need to punish his young bride and feed his murderous desires. As the young bride states 'I knew I had behaved exactly according to his desire: had he not bought me so that I should do so?' (Carter 2006, p.34).

The Marquis wants and needs the young bride to succumb to her curiosity so that he can punish her and fulfil his need to kill and display her body. He is the orchestrator of her

downfall. As Berger states 'you painted a naked woman because you enjoyed looking at her, you put a mirror in her hand and you called the painting Vanity, thus morally condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure' (Berger 1972, p.51). The young bride is condemned because of the trap he set for her. This is exemplified in the exchange the young bride has with the piano tuner after she is sentenced to death by the Marquis:

'You disobeyed him,' he said. 'That is sufficient reason for him to punish you'

'I only did what he knew I would.'

'Like Eve,' he said.' (Carter 2006, p.38)

As Bacchilega says of the narrative of *The Bloody Chamber* in relation to the Marquis, 'what it does suggest is that the very structures that support his privilege repress his own capacity for compassion. Preserving his blue blood, his riches, his power apparently depends on his isolation, his criminal reproduction of beautiful symbols of death' (Bacchilega 1997, p.124). The female character even references Pandora herself, 'I must pay the price of my new knowledge. The secret of Pandora's Box; but he had given me the box, himself, knowing I must learn the secret. I had played a game in which every move was governed by a destiny as oppressive and omnipotent as himself, since that destiny was himself' (Carter 2006, p.34). Discussing the possible meanings of the box, Mulvey states that:

An 'inside' space may generate connotations of a maternal femininity (the womb, the home), but may also link to the enclosed, concealed space of secrecy (a box, a room). These associations, one feminine, the other secret, link further to the topography which splits femininity into an inside/outside polarisation. A mask-like surface enhances the concept of feminine beauty as an 'outside', as artifice and masquerade, which conceals danger and deception. And lingering alongside is the structure of the fetish, which, with its investment in eye-catching surface, distracts the gaze from the hidden wound on the female, or rather the

mother's, body. It is as though the repeated spatial structure creates a homology across these different ideas which then enables them to flow across each other, as though by conduit. The imaginary space, that is, supports the process of displacement. (Mulvey 1996, p.56)

The fetishisation of the woman as a sexual/sadistic commodity displaces any male anxiety towards the female. The notion of a box or hidden chamber may have some symbolic reference to the vagina/womb/female reproduction. This suggests that the need to subdue and fetishise the female is linked to the lack of male control over reproduction. The Marquis is exerting his control in order to bolster his masculinity in light of this fear. The objectification of women keeps them grounded in their physical appearance, which promotes the ideology of beauty, an ideology, which subjugates the female, and is, explored more fully in later chapters.

The active mother

The Bloody Chamber explores the passivity of the female character by showing how her identity is constructed in the male gaze, which perpetuates the patriarchal ideologies of submission and passivity in the female. As Bacchilega says:

the religiously sanctioned subject position of "virtuous victim" not only fosters passivity when she is fated for "immolation," but also lets the narrator justify that passivity. Though bold and courageous in the blood chamber she does very little indeed to defeat death. Slipping right in to the martyrdom form of initiation, she accepts her fate, hoping all the while to be saved. (Bacchilega 1997, p.125)

The passivity of the young bride is highlighted by the active nature of her mother, who is an 'eagle-featured indomitable mother; what other student at the Conservatoire could boast that her mother had outfaced a junkful of Chinese pirates, nursed a village through a visitation of

the plague, shot a man-eating tiger with her own hand...' (Carter 2006, p.2). It is her natural instinct when her daughter calls her, forlornly blaming the 'gold taps', that makes her realise there is something amiss in the bride's marriage. This is attributed to '*maternal telepathy*' in the short story. Unlike the traditional *Bluebeard*, where the female character is saved by her musketeer brothers, in this story, it is her mother who saves her daughter from being beheaded by her husband. She blazes in like an avenging angel and slays the Marquis. She is referred to as Medusa which can be read in light of Freud's theory of the Medusa Myth and the fear of castration, where 'the terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something' (Freud 1997, p.202). As Abigail Bray states 'in Freud, Medusa is appropriated as a symbol of the mother's castrated genitals and thus, for the men who gaze at her, a representation of the possibility of their own castration and symbolic annihilation' (Bray 2004, p.41).

The mother figure in *The Bloody Chamber*, with her active nature, is an embodiment of this Freudian fear of castration, one which dismantles the patriarchal structure which keeps the Marquis in power. His fear of women and the need to pacify them is exemplified through the interaction with the mother figure. His reaction is resonant of the Freudian reading, where the sight of Medusa's head makes the spectator rigid with terror and turn to stone (Freud 1997, p.202): 'and my husband stood stock-still, as if she had been Medusa, the sword still raised over his head as in those clockwork tableaux of Bluebeard' (Carter 2006, p.40). One can also align the mother figure with Cixous's interpretation of Medusa in 'The Laugh of the Medusa', which becomes a positive figure one of parody, rather than a symbol for women's lack or castration (Bray 2004, p.41):

The Medusa's laughter is rebellious, for she not only mocks the fragility of patriarchal myths about the mother's lack but she also opens up the possibility that it is the mother's sexual/symbolic power which is feared. (Bray 2004, p.41)

Bray goes on to quote Cixous, 'wouldn't the worst be, isn't the worst, in truth, that women aren't castrated' (Cixous cited in Bray 2004, p.41). The mother figure does not 'lack', and unlike her daughter, does not dwell in passivity 'now, without a moment's hesitation, she raised my father's gun, took aim and put a single, irreproachable bullet through my husband's head' (Carter 2006, p.41). She is the symbolic fear that the Marquis was continually trying to repress and control by killing his wives and displaying their bodies, an active woman who dismantles the patriarchal structure by not adhering to the ideologies governing women that one should be submissive.

In this version of the tale, the mother takes on the assertive role of rescuer and this is a significant development from the original *Bluebeard* story. As Robin Sheets states Carter, 'restores to prominence a figure who is strikingly, ominously, absent from fairy tales, from pornographic fiction, and from the Freudian theory of female development: the strong, loving, and courageous mother' (Sheets 1991, pp.644-645). In Carter's envisioning, agency is transferred to the female sphere, which is seen again in later chapters with texts such as *Frozen* and *Maleficent*. As stated in the analysis of the traditional *Bluebeard* text, 'the economy of desire – of exchange – is a man's business' (Irigaray 1985, p.189). Yet *The Bloody Chamber* subverts this, as Carter gives 'her easily – taken – in heroine a future by revising the "good" mother into the powerful and active keeper of an alternative economy of desire' (Bacchilega 1997, p.128).

The mark of blame, shame and curiosity

Ultimately, it is through the mother's actions that the young woman is saved and is free to build a new life, turning the castle into a school for the blind, and marrying the blind piano tuner. However, she does not emerge unscathed as the bloody key which the Marquis pressed against her forehead leaves her with a heart shaped stain 'no paint nor powder, not matter

how thick or white, can mask that red mark on my forehead' (Carter 2006, p.42). Similar to Eve's curse of the pain of childbirth, this mark is a reminder of her folly. Bacchilega describes it that:

most obviously this sanguine tattoo proclaims a number of initiations – sexual (she has lost her virginity), epistemological (having entered his hell, she recognises herself as one of his victims), ritual (she is reborn after an encounter with death), and spiritual (no longer blinded by gems, her heart now guides her). (Bacchilega 1997, p.128)

Bacchilega also describes that this mark or stain reflects or shame, not of her disobedience but of her been so easily bought with the rich lifestyle of the Marquis (Bacchilega 1997, p.128). The young bride has learnt the harsh lesson of being a commodity and of the danger of identifying herself as a commodity. She is glad that the blind piano tuner cannot see her stain as it 'spares her shame' (Carter 2006, p.42). It is a remainder of her culpability in willingly entering into the exchange. The piano tuner's blindness frees her from the male gaze, which was so overt in her first marriage, as he sees her 'clearly with his heart' (Carter 2006, p.41). Bacchilega offers another meaning for the mark, 'the heart-shaped stain's significance spreads for it is the sign of an alternative economy of blood relations, the mark of women's alliance and a third eye vision' (Bacchilega 1997, p.128). It is the 'maternal telepathy' and the transference of power from the male musketeers to the female mother figure, which subverts the traditional power structure of retribution. Through the inclusion of the maternal figure in the plot and writing of the female body, Carter's writing becomes an act:

An act which will not only "realize" the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal... (Cixous 1976, p.880)

Not only does Carter's work expose the female body, and how it is a site of patriarchal control, but she also portrays an active female body, which contains agency, in the figure of the mother, and in her actions of rescuing her daughter and the killing of the Marquis. It shows he had reason to fear the bloody womb, and the power of the female control of reproduction, as it gives rise to the 'maternal telepathy', which alerts the mother to the daughter's plight. It is the restoration of the natural mother figure into the tale and the presence of a strong, active woman that displaces the binary oppositions and their underwriting ideologies. In addition, while Helen Simpson railed against *The Bloody Chamber* being interpreted as a subversive feminist text, it does promote female unity rather than the female discord usually so present in fairy tales.

Writing the female body

While one can argue the merits of *The Bloody Chamber and Other Short Stories* as new stories rather than retellings the 'latent content' is taken from Perrault's tales and these new stories allow Carter to investigate angles of the Perrault tales, which she was unable to do in her translations. In looking at Carter's work, one can draw on Cixous and her theory of *l'écriture féminine*. Bray asserts that:

l'écriture féminine is not just a writing practice, it is a mode of thinking otherwise. It describes a path towards thought through the body. I would also argue that *écriture féminine* is not just about 'writing the body'. It is not just about putting the (female) body back into discourse, inscribing a repressed female sexuality, playing with metaphors and images of femininity, subverting existing narratives about the inferiority of sex over the mind and so on. (Bray 2004, p.71)

By allowing the bride to speak through the first person narrative, it permits the short story, to not only investigate and explore the issues of the female body, but also to explore the female

body through the 'latent content' of the *Bluebeard* tale. As Cixous herself states, 'woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies-for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal' (Cixous 1976, p.875). It is this interrogation into the female form not only from the perspective of the patriarchal lens, but also in the unflinching and unforgiving insight into how the female views herself and exchanges her virginity for economic and social comfort. From a folklore point of view, one can say that Carter's work is not a subversive feminist twist on traditional tales, but from a feminist perspective, her writing aligns itself with Cixous's theory of *l'écriture féminine*. As Cixous states:

The future must no longer be determined by the past. I do not deny that the effects of the past are still with us. But I refuse to strengthen them by repeating them, to confer upon them an irremovability the equivalent of destiny, to confuse the biological and the cultural. Anticipation is imperative. Since these reflections are taking shape in an area just on the point of being discovered, they necessarily bear the mark of our time-a time during which the new breaks away from the old, and, more precisely, the (feminine) new from the old (*la nouvelle de l'ancien*). (Cixous 1976, p.875)

It is this sense of a new feminine, which *The Bloody Chamber* embodies. It is not repeating the past or denying the ideological effects of the traditional *Bluebeard* tale, but rather it exposes and voices the marginalised subject of the traditional tale, by giving a voice and element of agency to the young bride.

The text looks at the sexuality of the young female character, albeit formed by the male gaze, and her confusion at how his gaze, his sexualisation and objectification, makes her and her body feel 'the desirous dead for this mysterious being who, to show his mastery over [her], had abandoned [her] on [her] wedding night' (Carter 2006, p.19). Carter depicts how the female body becomes a commodity, a process that the female also endorses ideologically,

forming her identity through the male gaze. By writing the bodies of women, Carter has embodied the return of woman:

to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display – the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. (Cixous 1976, p.880)

Reading *The Bloody Chamber*, through the lens of the traditional tale of *Bluebeard*, both exposes and questions the ideologies so inherent in the classic tale. Mirroring the function and inclusion of the natural active mother in the plot, upsetting the patriarchal order, Carter's writing has a similar effect:

The puppet master, open-mouthed wide-eyed, impotent at the last, saw his dolls break free of the strings, abandon the rituals he had ordained for them since time began and start to love for themselves; the king, aghast witnesses the revolt of his pawns. (Carter 2006, p.40)

The Bloody Chamber is then, not only questioning the ideologies of the Bluebeard tale and its warnings of female curiosity and sexuality but also the wider ideologies at play within contemporary society.

Chapter Five: ‘Let It Go’ – The construction of female identity in

Frozen

The *Frozen* phenomenon

Frozen is a children’s film which has become a global and cultural phenomenon. It was released in November 2013, and its popularity has not waned. It is important when one is considering *Frozen* as a text to acknowledge the unprecedented success that the film and its franchise has enjoyed and, as such, it has become a cultural reference point for modern society. Its presence is all-encompassing, and has infiltrated all aspects of contemporary culture. According to June 2014 article, in *The New Yorker*, written by Maria Konnikova, it has earned 1.2 billion dollars, becoming the fifth-highest-grossing film of all time and by far the highest-grossing animated film. It is a film that appeals to both young and adult audiences alike. It has won two academy awards, and a BAFTA. It has a sound track that has gained a million album sales, and seven million Spotify streams, an official YouTube video whose views number in the hundreds of millions, and a DVD that became Amazon’s best-selling children’s film of all time based on advance orders alone (Konnikova 2014). *The New Yorker* article discusses the marketing campaigns and strategies that have helped make *Frozen* such a worldwide success such as its pre-Christmas release date, and the ‘buzz’ the film generated on the internet particularly the soundtrack, ‘as the lawyers allowed the music to spread naturally through social media’ (Konnikova 2014). The music of *Frozen* has become especially popular. The article also touches on the idea of young children being drawn to

stronger representations of Disney princesses. 'The story keeps the audience engaged because it subverts expected tropes and stereotypes, over and over' (Konnivoka 2014). The global success of *Frozen*, and the new representations it offers to the genre of children's films, means that:

The notion that this category of media texts is somehow excluded from ideological concerns – that the films are "ideological empty," so to speak – reflects a widespread perception within both broader cultures that children's films are just innocent escapist fun. (Ebrahim 2014, p.43)

The evolutionary representations presented by *Frozen* have the capacity to incite change. As England, Descartes and Meek state in their article, *Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses*, the Disney Princess line has significant international implications regarding gender portrayal and children's media (England *et al* 2011, p.555). The strong Disney Princess marketing campaign of 2010 was aimed at 'encouraging children to personally identify with the characters so that they will purchase the associated products' (Do Rozario 2004 cited in England *et al* 2011, p.555). The marketing campaign of *Frozen* already outlined highlights this campaigning endeavour as an exemplary instance of this process. *Frozen*, and its resulting franchise is arguably the most successful and profitable of all Disney films, and as a result, the representations it proffers are hugely influential. As Bacchilega states:

The fairy tale continues to be hypercommodified, and not just in the film industry, and that the fairy tale has, together with other fantasy or speculative genres, a renewed appeal today; however, I want to stress once again the genre's social uses are – as they have been in the past – multiple and somewhat unpredictable, and that in today's convergence culture audiences are more knowledgeable and active participants. (Bacchilega 2013, p.76)

The popularity of the film and the many ways in which it engages with different audiences means that *Frozen*'s use of parody and these new female characterisations make it a fundamental text in which to examine the evolving ideologies emanating from modern fairy tales.

***Frozen* the parody**

Much of *Frozen*'s appeal is its use of ironic humour through the many subversions of generic norms employed in the tale. While it is not as blatant as other modern fairy tale parodies such as *Shrek*, one can argue that elements of *Frozen* are themselves deconstructive. By highlighting tropes found in traditional tales, the film draws attention to, and destabilises, the traditional meanings or centre of the tales. As Derrida notes, this means that the idea of the centre is not in any way unique as every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic:

can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturatable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring. This citationality, duplication, or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is not an accident or an anomaly, but is that ... without which a mark could no longer even have a so-called "normal" functioning. What would a mark be that one could not cite? And whose origin could not be lost on the way? (Derrida 1982, pp.320-321)

Robert Phiddian states, in his article *Are Parody and Deconstruction Secretly the Same Thing?*, that 'repetition, alteration, iterability: these doublings and distortions of truth into language are what fascinate Derrida, rather than truth as essence or truth as brute fact' (Phiddian 1997, p. 673). Successful performatives, Derrida argues, would not transpire without the possibility of 'a general citationality – or rather, a general iterability' (Derrida

1988, p.17). Performatives, in both serious and non-serious language, can be repeated, reused, quoted or cited in a new context. The possibility of a sign being rewritten or repeated in new contexts which depart from the original meaning, allows Derrida to conclude that, 'no context can entirely enclose it' (Derrida 1988, p.19). *Frozen* as a deconstructive text offers not only new representations to influence modern audiences, but its parodying of some of the fairy tale genre's core elements also draws attention to the irrationalities found in established fairy tales. Phiddian argues that 'deconstruction is political in the sense that it provides a powerful mode for questioning authority and the ideological and structural force on which it depends' (Phiddian 1997, p.676). Such a statement has already been asserted throughout this thesis by investigating assorted fairy tale female characters using deconstructive approaches. Given that this thesis actively engages in deconstruction throughout, the *Frozen* text with its parodic elements is a good example of deconstruction *within* a text as opposed to *against* a text, 'but you get a very different critical practise if you use it *with* another sort of textuality, with texts that consent to the movements of deconstruction, foresee them, and play within them – if you use deconstruction with parodic texts' (Phiddian 1997, p.677). Derrida asserts that the elements of deconstruction are already there in the text, these deconstructive elements of the traditional fairy tales are made more palpable in this text.

Frozen as a deconstructive text exposes and probes the ideological structures upon which it is built. As Phiddian further states, 'hermeneutic theory and textual practise develop diachronically and dialogically-over time and in response to each other' (Phiddian 1997, p.678). This can be said to be true of *Frozen*, which developed from traditional fairy tales and the static female representations they perpetuate, but which now consciously deconstructs those formally static representations. This allows for a thorough insight into the ideologies governing Anna, Elsa and the audience members. Derrida regards the repetition compulsion as important in the relationship between psychoanalysis and deconstruction because

iterability (meaning repetition and/or alteration) is 'the condition of the constitution of identities' (Derrida 1996, p.31). It is this constitution of identities and their governing ideologies, which will be explored in *Frozen*.

The narrative of *Frozen* is loosely based on the traditional story of *The Snow Queen* by Hans Christian Andersen, which follows the story of Gerda as she rescues her male friend Kay from the evil Snow Queen. *Frozen*, having gone through many script revisions as a film, has changed many elements of Andersen's tale. As a completed text, *Frozen* shares little of *The Snow Queen's* narrative but rather becomes, similar to *Enchanted* (2007) and *Shrek* (2001), a parody of the fairy tale genre at large. Parody is not a new concept, 'however the twentieth century has, in all the arts, been peculiarly obsessed with those doublings, repetitions, transformations, and sensations of derivativeness that can be categorized as parodic' (Phiddian 1997, p.679). Phiddian also draws the analogy that deconstruction 'frames all writing as parody', given that it treats the text as a reverberation or appropriation of a structure (Phiddian 1997, p.680). This is reminiscent of how fairy tales are enjoying a massive resurgence in popularity in both film and literature. *Frozen* now centres on Anna rescuing her sister Elsa, with the help of a male companion named Kristoff and an animated snowman named Olaf. The traditional evil female character of the Snow Queen has been removed, and the focus of the movie is placed on female relationships rather than on the traditional procuring of husband, as per Disney tradition. Traditionally a female with power is almost automatically evil, queen/matriarch/witch, but the gradual change being traced throughout this thesis allows a woman to retain this power. Although initially, this powerful woman is viewed as evil, she is proven through the narrative to be ultimately good.

The equation of woman with power as being necessarily evil is deconstructed in *Frozen* and other contemporary tales explored in this thesis. Habitually, fairy tales depict female characters as weak, submissive figures who passively accept their fortunes. As Zipes

states, the fairy tale heroine 'must be passive until the right man comes along to recognize her virtues and marry her' (Zipes 1991, p.25). Outside influences, such as a fairy godmother or providence, guide them towards their destiny of marriage, while the female princess or heroine is proving her worth through domestic chores, obeying authoritative figures and dwelling on her feminine beauty. Such attributes are instrumental in ensuring that the female character is worthy, not only inclusion within the narrative, but also of the desired happily ever after state, namely marriage. As England, Descartes and Meek discuss, drawing on previous studies surrounding gender role portrayal and the effects on children, 'the constructivist approach and cultivation theory suggest that the gender role portrayals present in the films may influence children's beliefs and ideas about gender, social behaviours, and norms' (England *et al* 2011, p.556).

In light of this statement, and given the widespread popularity of the *Frozen* phenomenon, one must conclude that the representations it depicts have the power to change or enhance the fairy tale female representations presented to contemporary audiences. The fairy tale genre's tropes and ideologies have saturated popular culture, meaning that they are easily understandable and accessible to all types of audiences. In this way, the parodying of the fairy tale genre is an ideal vehicle in which to subvert gendered representations such as the stereotypical female characters as 'literary hoaxes and causes celebres show that parodic language is language in play and that, for parody to work, the players and readers need to understand the rules of the games' (Phiddian 1997, p.683).

Anna the atypical princess

Anna, the *Frozen* character, channels that of the traditional Gerda in *The Snow Queen* in that she is active. She actively engages in not only rescuing the kingdom from the fallout from Elsa's magic but also in defending and saving Elsa. This state of 'active princess' is very

much representative of the data of England, Descartes and Meek, where they found that there was a progress towards more active princesses in recent Disney interpretations such as '*Pocahontas* and *Mulan*, in which the princess was in a position of power during the final rescue' (England *et al* 2011, p.561). This can be attributed to the incorporation of more masculine attributes in middle to late Disney films. These princesses are imbued with characteristics such as 'conducting diplomacy and war' (England *et al* 2011, p.563). Unlike the previous representations of the sleeping princess as the feminine ideal, such as in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* and *Sleeping Beauty*, Anna proves to be both assertive and active, even more so than Pocahontas or Mulan.

As England *et al* point out 'assertiveness is a traditionally masculine behaviour, though it is worth noting that the majority of the princesses' assertive behaviours, particularly in the earlier Disney Princess movies, were directed toward animals rather than people' (England *et al* 2011, p.560). Anna proves more self-assured than her original counterparts, attempting to assert herself with Kristoff in engaging his help as a guide to find Elsa:

ANNA

Oops. Sorry. Sorry. I'm sorry. I

didn't—

(catching herself)

We leave now. Right now. (Buck and Lee 2013)

Not only has the character of the princess progressed from assertion with animals to assertive interaction with humans, but she is now asserting herself against a male force other than a father figure, as was the case in *The Little Mermaid*. This brings into question the idealisation perpetuated by fairy tales that a female should be docile and submissive in order to attract a male suitor. As England *et al* state in their study of the earlier Disney Princess movies, 'the princess was rarely, if ever, seen asserting herself with the prince' (England *et al* 2011,

p.563), while the middle and contemporary Disney Princess films have princesses that are more assertive with both people and animals (England *et al* 2011: 563). The lack of assertion in any interaction with a princely character or potential suitor is congruent with the idealisation of the subordination of women to men found in most fairy tales. This representation of a more assertive and active fairy tale female allows for a new version of a Disney Princess. One may read that the *Frozen* text is parodying the representation of the submissive, docile Disney princess.

It operates from inside the arguments of metaphysical texts and systems such as structuralism and phenomenology, showing how they cannot totalize the visions they proclaim, and precisely where they double and collapse. It is not primary thought, always secondary, always “borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure”. And this is precisely what parody does too. It is predominantly a *genre-bricoleur*, living off the energies and inadequacies of previous writings, “borrowing them structurally” and transforming them with a critical eye. (Phiddian 1997, p.681)

Anna no longer needs to be submissive to a male counterpart in order to maintain her attractiveness as a female and a new representation of a princess, more in line with current society is presented.

It must be noted that although she asserts herself with Kristoff, he is from a lower social circle than she is, and she is already engaged to Prince Hans. The fact remains that despite her being assertive and attempting to prove her dominance with Kristoff, it does not in any way damage her potential as a suitor for him. To highlight this, one can draw from the *Frozen* script where it states after Anna displays her independent nature by trying to scale a mountain that ‘she hops down, brushes off her dress, and bounds off. Kristoff watches after her, digging her fearless pluck’ (Buck and Lee 2013). Kristoff is drawn to this stronger female princess. This new representation of the princess character no longer needs to remain

submissive to a male counterpart and she incurs no punishment for it, unlike the female character analysed in *Bluebeard*.

Love is an open door

Much criticism has been attributed to the change from *The Snow Queen* where Gerda undertakes the final rescue on her own, whereas in *Frozen* Anna enlists the help of Kristoff to locate the North Mountain and find Elsa. However, one must recognise that Anna initially undertakes the journey of her own accord to save her sister. Anna as a character, with her more dynamic nature, is perfectly in tune with the progression of Disney princesses. Similar to the most recent Disney incarnations, Anna is also capable of rescue agency (conventionally a male characteristic), and surprises Kristoff in helping him fight off a wolf attack. 'He screams, as she ... BAM! ... swings past Kristoff and knocks a wolf away. KRISTOFF (shocked)' (Buck and Lee 2013). The character of Kristoff allows for exposure to one of the most prevalent issues of the fairy tale genre, namely the issue of marrying a man one has just met. There are now two male prominent characters, Prince Hans and Kristoff in the film, which blurs the traditional narrative of marriage and offers both Anna and the audience a choice of male partner.

England and Descartes highlight in their study that in the established narratives of fairy tale marriages, as shown in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, 'it was not clear how or why the princess fell in love with him; she seemed to be chosen by him and obligingly fell in love' (England *et al* 2011, p.563). This trope is assimilated into the *Frozen* narrative, like Snow White, Anna sings a song about finding 'the one' with the following tongue in cheek lyrics:

ANNA: (GASP) What if I meet THE ONE?

Tonight, imagine me gown and all fetchingly

Draped against the wall.
The picture of sophisticated grace.
I suddenly see him standing there,
A beautiful stranger tall and fair.
I wanna stuff some chocolate in my face!
I suddenly see him standing there,
But then we laugh and talk all evening.
Which is totally bizarre.
Nothing like the life I've led so far.
For the first time in forever,
There'll be magic, there'll be fun.
For the first time in forever,
I could be noticed by someone.
And I know it is totally crazy
To dream I'd find romance.
But the first time in forever,
At least I've got a chance! (Buck and Lee 2013)

Again reminiscent of *Snow White*, Anna and Prince Hans share a duet named *Love is an Open Door*, declaring their love for each other. The lyrics are humorous and absurd, where they are not sure if it is the 'chocolate fondue' talking, but they clearly feel that their 'mental synchronisation can have but one explanation', namely that 'love is an open door' and that they are 'meant to be' (Buck and Lee 2013). It ends with their engagement after only meeting that day. However the subsequent sequence of events in the film subverts the traditional marriage narrative by exposing the fallacy of Anna's rush to marry Prince Hans. Both the audience and Anna learn simultaneously that Hans is merely playing on her hopes of finding 'the one', as a means to further his own agenda, 'you were so desperate for love you were

willing to marry me just like that' (Buck and Lee 2013). Thus, the signifying chain discussed in Chapter One, of the beautiful princess marrying the first handsome prince she meets and achieving a 'happy ever after', has been disturbed 'as a linked chain of determinations' (Derrida 2008, p.212). This is achieved by the subversion of the traditional trope through the humour of the characters' interactions and also the other characters' reactions to the hasty engagement. Traditionally the princess character 'lives only through the male and for marriage' (Zipes 1991, p.25). Disney Princess films often revolve around the narrative of marriage and 'the child viewer is provided with consistent exposure to the social script that one falls in love either very quickly, at first sight... against all odds... or both' (England *et al* 2011, p.565). It is this that *Frozen* subverts.

The character of Prince Hans is the perfect idealisation of the conventional Prince character, and he is an effectual leader during the snow crisis in Arendelle, but he is also a greedy power hungry character who will kill Elsa and Anna to secure a place of power. When she is accidentally harmed by Elsa's magic, Anna is in need of true love's kiss to heal her, Hans responds, 'Oh Anna. If only there was someone out there who loved you' (Buck and Lee 2013). He leaves her to die so he can become the ruler of Arendelle. It is an interesting twist to the trope, as in this deconstructive narrative, it is Prince Hans who needs to make a successful marriage to secure a position of power, telling Anna 'As thirteenth in line in my own kingdom, I didn't stand a chance. I knew I'd have to marry into the throne somewhere' (Buck and Lee 2013). The gender switch of the marriage trope and Hans's weakened position helps to 'overturn the hierarchy' (Derrida 1981, p.41) attributed to the male gender in fairy tale marriages. *Frozen* is challenging the traditional trope, that it is the female who needs to marry to secure her position, which has a deconstructive function:

From its basic moves, deconstruction frames all writing as parody in the sense that it treats it as caught up in a tissue of echo, allusion, appropriation and misprision. As a mode of

interpretation, it violates the broadly mimetic and expressive assumptions of “straight” writing and reads with the indirections of the “crooked”. (Phiddian 1997, p.680)

Through this ‘double writing’ of the traditional marriage-system, this film ‘puts into practise a reversal of the classical oppositions and a general displacement of the system’ (Derrida in Culler 1983, p.86). The subversion of Prince Hans as the character in need of marriage for security exposes the tenuous position generally assigned to the female character in the traditional narrative. Marriage is the only means of female advancement in fairy tales. Prince Hans is willing to dupe Anna into marriage by pretending to be the perfect idealisation of a traditional prince and murder the two sisters to secure a kingdom.

The humour assigned to Anna’s choice of marrying a man she has just met parodies the ‘fall in love at first sight’ narrative of fairy tales. Elsa and Kristoff are horrified that Anna would agree to marry a man she has just met:

KRISTOFF: Because I don’t trust your judgement

ANNA: Excuse me?

KRISTOFF: Who marries a man they just met? (Buck and Lee 2013)

Kristoff also admonishes Anna, asking ‘didn’t your parents ever warn you about strangers?’ (Buck and Lee 2013). He also shows how she does not know any personal details about Hans such as his favourite food, surname, foot size or if he picks his nose. Kristoff’s questioning deconstructs the expectations of the fairy tale world by asking real world questions, and thus exposing the fallacy of these fairy tale relationships in the real world. The use of humour exposes the illogicality of the traditional narrative of marriage found in the original Disney Princess films. As England and Descartes point out, in the later princess films, the romances:

developed over time as the characters interacted with each other, often overcoming obstacles together and fostering a friendship as well. This suggests that the more recent Disney Princess

movies show a more balanced portrayal of a relationship formation. However, a heterosexual romance is inevitable and often a central conclusion of the movie. (England *et al* 2011, p.565)

Frozen is the first Disney text to outwardly address the 'love at first sight' ideal perpetuated by fairy tales, with Elsa's and Kristoff's comical incredulity at Anna's choice. Phiddian states that parody and deconstruction share a similar function (Phiddian 1997, p.679). This can be seen in light of *Frozen* where the humour and ridicule attached to Anna's wanting to marry Hans after just meeting him exposes the absurdity of such a proposition. Indeed this was one of the most popular aspects of the film, with countless memes devoted to Disney 'finally getting it right', with Elsa rebuking Anna saying that 'you can't marry a man you just met'.



(Pinterest 2015)



(Clara 2014)

These memes are an example that 'thanks to the electronic accessibility of a wide range of fairy tales, the filtering of feminist and other social critiques into children's education and globalized popular culture, and the greater possibilities for reader response to become production and be shared in new media' (Bacchilega 2013, p.9). The attention to the issue of marrying a man one just met also displaces the traditional marriage narrative outlined in

previous chapters, where marriage is the definitive reward for the good, beautiful and submissive heroine and the ultimate 'happy ever after'. As Phiddian states:

To use deconstruction with parodies is to commit deconstruction with consenting texts rather than against victim texts, because parodies are already thematically and structurally about the play of absence, presence, and rhetorical illusion. Deconstruction does not discover shocking gaps in the mimetic illusion of parodic texts, because parody is not, in any straightforward sense, mimetic. (Phiddian 1997, p.679)

Frozen concludes with a developing romance between Anna and Kristoff but significantly, there is no mention of marriage. Where once, the narrative concentrated on the securing of a husband in the form of a singular choice of the prince and the culmination in a marriage, now the plot revolves around the relationship of the sisters, as well as around the choice of marriage partner and the acceptance of an individual as they are, rather than attempting to end with a sense of conforming to societal demands for a marriage as a point of closure. This changes and evolves the gender and behaviour norms offered to modern audiences. As England et al say, drawing on MorrSerewicz and Gale, 'research has supported the notion that romantic behaviours such as dating and flirting are influenced by an individual's social scripts and understanding of norms' (MorrSerewicz and Gale 2008 cited in England et al 2011, p.556). *Frozen* is changing the traditional norms and so may influence the individual's social script.

Elsa the 'evil' character

When discussing the treatment of the 'happily ever after' trope and marriage in *Frozen*, there is no question of Elsa and marriage. Her 'evil' powers/curse are not considered in the light of impeding a possible male suitor such as in *The Prince and the Frog*, where:

the princess was career-orientated, which initially prevented her from socializing and pursuing romantic opportunities. This was presented as a worrisome trait, in keeping with a society that might still be somewhat cautious of a women's greater role in the workplace and what that means for family life (Coltrane and Shih 2010). At the conclusion of the movie, however she was able to both pursue a successful career and marry the prince. (Coltrane and Shih 2010 cited in England *et al* 2011, p.563)

Elsa's fears of her powers and their implications do not translate into a fear of not finding a suitable mate. Elsa is not looking for a male partner, but rather, is looking for acceptance of her own individual identity. She is the first Disney princess to be without a male suitor or the possibility of a male suitor. At the end of the film, when Elsa takes her place as the ruling queen of Arendelle, she rules by herself and does not need a male counterpart to compliment or supplement her. This is a new perspective on the marriage trope. Like Anna with the possibility of more than one suitor for marriage, Elsa too subverts the premise that a Disney princess must be looking for a male partner. Marriage is not a consideration for the character and as such, her 'happy ever after' does not conclude with a romance but rather concentrates on her personal identity.

Elsa is also a more liberal character than traditional Disney interpretations of the princess figure. Rather than being an evil character, the audience learns that she merely cannot control her natural physical powers of snow and ice. Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the character is how her parents encourage Elsa to suppress her magic, and try to model her into the perfect representation of a 'good' female fairy tale character, which can be read as a passive female character. As a child, she and her father recite a mantra together 'conceal it, don't feel it, don't let it show' (Buck and Lee 2013), to try to help her contain and conceal her powers. This suppression of her powers can also be seen when Elsa sings the song with the lyrics 'be the good girl you always have to be'. Elsa can be said to be

at the site of both ideological imposition and identity construction as, rather than being a magical figure who is in control of her powers, she is encouraged to be a 'good' (meaning passive and controlled) girl.

Elsa as a character is struggling to conform to the traditional representation of the beautiful princess. Her magical powers are connotative of evil characters (she is declared a monster upon the public discovery of her powers), which can harm individuals, as in the case of her sister Anna, but can also damage her society in the frozen wasteland of Arendelle. Unlike previous representations of princesses, Elsa is feared by the other characters, and does not warrant the attention of animal helpers or possess any of the other traditional signifiers of a 'good' character. Elsa has to contain herself and her natural powers to conform to her role of the 'perfect' princess, '...the female waits. She must cloak her instinctual drives in polite speech, correct manners, and elegant clothes. If she is allowed to reveal anything, it is to demonstrate how submissive she can be' (Zipes 1991, p.25). Elsa must continually 'put on a show' as to 'make one wrong move and everyone will know' (Buck and Lee 2013).

The performance of the princess role

When looking at Elsa's struggle to conform, one can draw on Judith Butler, and especially on her concept of performativity. In order to uphold her status as a good princess/a loyal daughter, and as the 'good girl' she has to control and constrict her natural powers in order to fit within society. As Anita Brady and Tony Schirato point out in *Understanding Judith Butler*:

for Butler, gender is not a question of having or of being, but of doing, and it is something one is compelled to do in order to be constituted as a recognisable human subject. Gender is a culturally sanctioned performance, a requirement that a body coheres, and continues to cohere, according to certain norms of intelligibility. (Brady 2011, pp.44-45)

Elsa's magical powers threaten her status of being a good princess, as traditionally her powers would reduce her to the status of an evil fairy tale character. The singing of the now iconic song 'Let It Go' with the lyrics, 'be the good girl you always have to be' (Buck and Lee 2013), exposes how:

it locates the speaker within an existing framework of authority, and thus forces the recognition that the power of the speaker's words do not originate within the speaker, but rather from the codes and conventions that the speaker finds his or herself within. (Brady 2011, p.46)

Elsa is struggling to fit the 'normal' code of behaviour for a fairy tale princess, her repeated efforts to be normal, 'couldn't keep it in/Heaven knows I've tried' (Buck and Lee 2013), mirrors how Butler describes gender performativity as operating through repetition and citation (Brady 2011, p.46). This certain performance of gender, 'produce the status and fixity of gender through the forced reiteration of norms' (Brady 2011, p.46). This is mirrored through the constant repetition of the lyrics, and the sentiment of concealing her powers and submitting to others' perception of her. Butler argues that the series of 'impossible idealizations' that constitute the position of gender in discourse, function to produce 'culturally viable sexual subjects' (Butler 1993, p.106), or as in the character of Elsa, to produce a viable fairy tale princess who remains in perfect control. One can see through the degeneration of her relationship with her sister Anna and her reclusive behaviour that this has detrimental effects on the character. To ensure her role as the good, beautiful, submissive princess, Elsa must perform the role given to her, 'be the good girl you always have to be'. As Butler states:

every girl is 'compelled to 'cite' the norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject. Femininity is thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose

complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment. (Butler 1993, p.232)

It is this struggle to adhere to the social norm that makes the character of Elsa so appealing. As Maria Konnikova states, 'what's at the heart of *Frozen* are the relationships, the very adult emotions that you can't easily knock off' (Konnikova 2014). Elsa is not an inherently evil character, but rather, she is a character who is flawed, and one who struggles to play her gender role in society. Brady states how:

for Butler gender is a performance, and a performance is not something one has or something one is, but rather something one does. Because gender is a performance, a culturally sanctioned doing, then the opportunity to undo, or to at least intervene in that doing, must reside in the very means by which gender is produced. (Brady 2011, p.48)

This is an interesting statement when one looks at Elsa's embracing of her powers and her attempt to reject the societal norms dictated to her, 'I don't care what they are going to say', and 'the fears that once controlled me can't get to me at all' (Buck and Lee 2013). We now have a Disney Princess who is attempting to remove herself from the constraints of the traditional representations of the good princess, 'Let It Go... that perfect girl is gone'. There is also an interesting correlation to how Zipes describes Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen*, when he notes that 'in many ways, the tale is a baptismal ritual: Gerda and Kai must prove that they have expunged the evil in their bodies before they will be accepted in the kingdom of God' (Zipes 2011, p.271). Elsa's embracing of her powers within her provides a different type of baptismal ritual, one that is not based on 'perfect' representations that fit in with patriarchal society.

Elsa's journey in the ice castle is reminiscent of Lacan's mirror phase. This developmental stage corresponds to Freud's stage of primary narcissism, and occurs during

an infant's development between the ages of six to eighteen months (Homer 2005, p.21). It is at this stage that 'the child for the first time becomes aware, through seeing its image in the mirror, that his/her body has a total form' (Homer 2005, p.24). As Lacan states:

the *infans* stage thus seems to me to manifest in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the /is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject. (Lacan 2006, p.76)

It is only when Elsa builds her ice castle with her magic that she embraces her powers and becomes a totalised form. One can draw the analogy that it is in the reflection of the ice i.e. the mirror, that Elsa views herself as autonomous being without any outside interference. This is in contrast to the 'child's experience of its own body, over which it does not yet have full control. While the infant feels their body as not yet unified – 'it is the image that provides him/her with a sense of unification and wholeness' (Homer 2005, p.25). Elsa has always suppressed her powers, and so she has not felt a sense of unity until she accepts them and embraces her new reflection echoed by the ice castle. As Dylan Evans states, 'the moment of identification, when the subject assumes its image as its own, is described by Lacan as a moment of jubilation, since it leads to an imaginary sense of mastery' (Evans 1996, p.118). In Lacan's words, 'what demonstrates the phenomenon of recognition, implying subjectivity, are the signs of triumphant jubilation and the playful self-discovery that characterize the child's encounter with his mirror image' (Lacan 2006, p.91). Elsa's jubilation is embodied in her song lyrics, 'Here I stand/in the light of day/let the storm rage on/the cold never bother me anyway' (Buck and Lee 2013).

Elsa's identification of herself in the ice castle is seen as a triumphant moment as seen through her singing the now iconic *Let It Go* song, where she sings 'It's time to see what I can do, to test the limits and break through. No right, no wrong. No rules for me... I'm free'

(Buck and Lee 2013). As Evans states '[the child's] joy is due to his imaginary triumph in anticipating a degree of muscular co-ordination which he has not actually achieved' (Evans 1996, p.118). Perhaps there is also a suggestion that she is breaking free of the constricted image of gender ideology to which she feels she must conform. Elsa sees herself fulfilled in the ice castle telling Anna, 'I never knew what I was capable of' (Buck and Lee 2013). However, it is Anna's arrival with the knowledge of what her powers have unleashed on Arendelle, which shatters Elsa's ego and conflicts with her reflection found in the ice castle:

this contrast is first felt by the infant as a rivalry with its own image, because the wholeness of the image threatens the subject with fragmentation, and the mirror stage thereby gives rise to an aggressive tension between the subject and the image. (Evans 1996, p.118)

Elsa realises that her mirror reflection perceived in the ice castle is imaginary and she does not have control over her limbs, namely her magical powers.

This realisation is summed up when she sings 'I'm such a fool!/I can't be free!/No escape/From the storm inside of me' (Buck and Lee 2013). Just like the infant in the mirror, Elsa realises that the control she felt in the ice reflection is an illusion and it is only as she develops later, in conjunction with her relationship with Anna, that she achieves total mastery over her body. Elsa's magical powers and her lack of control over them may be symbolic of her lack of control of the pressures of her subordination into society. Only when Elsa removes herself from that society, is she able to envision herself as a person who is free from all the constraints dictated to her and embrace the differing facets of who she is.

Parodying the traditional princess role

This new progressive representation of a Disney princess in the form of Elsa who has attributes that do not fit the traditional mould, such as her magical powers and her lack of

control of them, is in direct violation of the traditional representations. It is also interesting how Butler postulates that 'the opportunity to undo, or to at least intervene in that doing, must reside in the very means by which gender is produced' (Brady 2011, p.48). Fairy tales, as has been noted, are a vehicle for producing ideologies and representations of women, and here is that vehicle being used to create a new persona, one that struggles against the traditional stereotypes. Mirroring how Butler says that the opportunity to undo such representations is often to be found in the very means by which they are produced, one can draw on *Frozen* and its parodic elements:

Parodies *deconstruct* the discourses they invade; they do not blankly *destroy* the discourses on which, parasitically and critically, they live. Instead, both genesis and structure of those discourses appear "under erasure" (visible but problematized and devalued). (Phiddian 1997, p.682)

As Phiddian asserts, parody lives off the failures of preceding writings and structures and transforms them with a critical eye (Phiddian 1997, p.681). Through the use of parody, *Frozen* offers new representations of the female, which help challenge the previous stereotypes. As England and Descartes state 'consistently portrayed gender role images may be interpreted as "normal" by children and become connected with their concepts of socially acceptable behaviour and morality' (England *et al* 2011, p.557). This new depiction, then, modifies the stereotypical previous representations and offers new models. As outlined throughout this thesis, binary oppositions operate as a means to enhance our understanding of the world, good/evil, man/woman and other constituent binaries.

Frozen destabilises our traditional understanding of binary oppositions in fairy tales, good/evil, young/old, beautiful/unattractive. Both the primary characters are young and beautiful, and through the narrative space offered to Elsa to explain her actions, we understand that she is not an evil character. As Derrida himself notes, 'to deconstruct the

opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment' (Derrida 1981, p.41). Neither character can control the other, nor does 'good' triumph 'evil' as the boundaries of the traditional evil are blurred. When drawing on Derrida's theory of *différance*, Phiddian states that 'the essential thing here is the image of parodic repetition both adding to and hallowing out its model' (Phiddian 1997, p.686). It is through the parodic repetition of the traditionally evil snow queen, and of the fairy tale genre in general, that Elsa is presented as character with both good and evil qualities. 'Parodies stand for the things they displace, but they do not merely repeat them, as translations aspire to do, or extend them like imitations. They displace, distort, differ and defer, Derrida argues that *différance* is both a spacing and a temporization' (Phiddian 1997, p.686). As Derrida himself states, 'Deconstruction does not consist in passing from one concept to another, but in overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the nonconceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated' (Derrida: 1982; 329). The conceptual order governing the primary female characters has been displaced, allowing for more realistic female representations than their predecessors.

The ideology of beauty

One of the more regressive elements of the portrayal of the characters of Anna and Elsa is to be found in their physical representations. Fairy tale heroines are consistently depicted as beautiful, and much consideration is given to the physicality of the princesses. The first expectations of the princesses, by the common people, are that they will be 'absolutely lovely' and 'beautiful' (Buck and Lee 2013). As outlined in Chapter One, using the *Cinderella* text, the importance of beauty is further emphasised through the 'happy ending' narrative. It is only through her worth of a character, as demonstrated by her beauty, that the Disney princess achieves the fairy tale ending. This conceptual process becomes an ideology

to be internalized. Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth*, as has been already discussed, acknowledges the presence of a 'beauty myth in some form for as long as there has been patriarchy' (Wolf 1991, p.14). The female characters are beautiful and without that beauty, they cannot progress within the narrative of the texts. While the female characters of *Frozen* are more progressive in their personality traits, physically they are promoting the ideology of beauty.

Upon meeting for the first time at Elsa's coronation, the sisters exchange awkward greetings. She and Elsa sneak awkward peeks at each other.

ELSA

... Hi.

ANNA

Hi me ... ? Oh. Um. Hi.

ELSA

... You look beautiful.

ANNA

Thank you. You look beautifuller. I mean, not fuller. You don't look fuller, but more beautiful. (Buck and Lee 2013)

While the awkward encounter is appropriate given that the sisters have been living in the same castle, but in isolation from each other, it is an odd greeting for their first interaction. The mutual compliments are appropriate in the context of a ball. However, there is a policing of the determination of what constitutes the socially constructed terms of beauty. From the quotes, one can see that the characters are aware of the ideal of female beauty accepted in their society. Anna is quick to correct herself in case she insinuates that Elsa looks 'fuller', which would have implications of the term 'fuller figure' implying that she might be overweight.

There is a reiteration in this interaction of what determines beauty, which is concurrent with societal expectations of beauty. Both Anna and Elsa are beautiful in an almost ethereal way. While Disney Princesses have always been beautiful, Elsa and Anna are doll-like in their physicality. They are pale, slender and beautiful, with small button noses, long lashes and exceptionally large eyes. One can consider this as them being sisters, but their physicality is also similar to that of Princess Rapunzel in *Tangled* (2010). This may be read as a progression in the societal norms of beauty as reflected in fairy tales, as Naomi Wolf points out in *The Beauty Myth* the societal norms of beauty are always changing from the emphasis on voluptuousness after World War II, to the nineties fixation on 'heroin chic'. The physical ideals the sisters present are even more unrealistic than those of the previous princesses. There is also an interesting correlation between these depictions and how modern technology has now devised extremely popular smartphone apps, where men and women can photo-shop themselves to achieve wider eyes, smaller noses and perfect skin tones. The physical ideals perpetuated by Elsa and Anna in the film (such as the perfect skin tones and exceptionally large eyes), are achievable by everyone through such technology.

Given the widespread popularity of the female characters, their physical representations have huge cultural significance. The emphasis on a prescribed type of feminine beauty may, as Grauerholz and Sperry suggest, 'operate as a normative social control for girls and woman' (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.723). They further add that the prominence of such feminine beauty ideals in the twentieth century has become increasingly important as a means of suppressing women (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.723). The head of animation for *Frozen*, Lino DiSalvo said was cited in a *Times* article:

Historically speaking, animating female characters is really, really difficult, because they have to go through these range of emotions, but you have to keep them pretty and they're very sensitive too — you can get them off a model very quickly. So, having a film with two

Male representations of beauty are allowed to be more varied, while the female representations are static and fixed.

Another interesting aspect in the physical representation of Elsa is that when she embraces her powers and removes herself from society, her physical appearance also changes. Her hair is worn down and her dress is more provocative than before. As a character she is trying to break free from the gender performativity of the 'perfect' princess on an emotional and intellectual level. She isolates herself so that she no longer has to perform this role. Physically however, she is re-inscribing herself to fit an idealized representation of the female found in modern society. This can be read in two ways, the first being that her physical transformation means she is rejecting the performative role of the traditional Disney princess. Her confident demeanor and change of dress is symbolic of her rejection of conformity. This can be reiterated through Elsa's parade through the ice castle. Her newly sexualized appearance and swaying hips are not aimed at any other character be it male or otherwise, and are also atypical of the normal Disney princess who is usually not as sexually overt as Elsa. She is alone in the castle, and her transformation is for her alone. This can be said to be paralleled by Elsa's desire to be alone. Mirroring the character of Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*, where 'the princess promoted the idea of wanting to explore, and was portrayed as independent and assertive' (England *et al* 2011, p.564), Ariel can be said to be the first Disney princess to display such characteristics and Elsa develops them further. They are attempting to break the patriarchal rules which govern them as object rather than subject. Rather than wanting to explore or break away in the hopes of meeting a male partner, Elsa desires to be alone in her 'kingdom of isolation' where she can be 'the queen' without 'rules' and be 'free'.

The second interpretation may be that her exaggerated performance of femininity as seen through her physical change is substituting for this rejection. She becomes overtly

feminine, bordering on overtly sexual (as seen in her walk out to the steps of the ice castle balcony), in order to re-equate herself as someone of worth. This reaffirms how Wolf states that 'a girl learns that stories happen to "beautiful" women' (Wolf 1991, p.61). For both the character Elsa and the audience, the importance of beauty is clear. In their article, *The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales*, Grauerholz and Sperry discuss how beauty acts as a 'normative social control' with the result that women may "voluntarily" withdraw from or never pursue activities or occupations they fear will make them appear "unattractive" (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.723). Elsa counteracts such fear with a physical transformation that even further aligns her with the ideals of feminine beauty. As she has subverted the traditional characteristics of a princess with her powers and her desire to be alone, she then displays an even more beautiful appearance to counteract this.

This is reminiscent of Descartes' findings that although Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* is the first of the Disney princesses to promote independence, the film exhibited 'high levels of feminine behaviours, including fearfulness, affection, and tending to physical appearance frequently' (England *et al* 2011, p.564). Ariel's high levels of feminine behaviours help to neutralise the threat of her pursuit of independence. Elsa parallels Ariel's thirst for exploration with a desire to be alone, and she also exhibits high levels of fear. Elsa's physical transformation may be read as a reaction to counteract her independent nature. Independence is tolerated as long as it is sexualised and attractive to the male gaze. Thus, one can read that *Frozen* is promoting the ideology of beauty and its importance more forcefully than its counterparts.

Some people are worth melting for

Ultimately, *Frozen* is a poor adaption of *The Snow Queen*, or perhaps more accurately one can call it a postmodern revision, as it uses a loose connection to the original to subvert the traditional Disney Princess representations: 'postmodernism is concerned with the ways in which all general and generalized models of behaviour and morality are fictions that have acquired that status of truth' (Benson cited in Haase 2008, p.763). Rather than merely replacing *The Snow Queen* story with another model, *Frozen* explores the Disney representations of the female by portraying an active princess in the character of Anna, and the impossible attainability of perfection through the character of Elsa. The title *Frozen* may be read as symbolic, as through parody and subversion, the film investigates the frozen narratives of traditional tales. As a parodic text, it displays a sense of reflexive writing and a sense of irony in its structure (Phiddian 1997, p.683), and the 'crucial point for parody is that the body of words is always preloved and redirected' (Phiddian 1997, p.683).

The film actively promotes the importance of beauty, which can be considered as symptomatic of modern society, as Grauezhholz and Sperry state, 'recent Disney films and even contemporary feminist retellings of popular fairy tales often involve women who differ from their earlier counterparts in ingenuity, activity, and independence but not physical attractiveness' (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.722). Most importantly, *Frozen*'s narrative concentrates on the relationship between the sisters. This, in itself, is subversive, as 'the misogyny of fairy tales engages women as participants, not just targets' (Warner 1995, p.208). When discussing the film *Brave*, released before *Frozen*, Ebrahim writes how before the release, the question was 'would Pixar be able to give us girl stories comparable to its narratives of male homosocial bonding?' (Ebrahim 2014, p.44).

The issue of homosocial relationships is addressed more strongly in *Frozen* than any previous Disney Princess movie. True love in *Frozen* is found in familial love rather than

male partnership. Olaf, the magical snowman, acts in place of the fairy godmother of traditional tales. He guides Anna towards true love in the form of Kristoff, and to her own ultimate salvation, as his kiss will heal her from the ice curse in her heart. Anna, however, chooses her sister Elsa over Kristoff. It is Elsa's and Anna's sisterly love that undoes the curse, and restores Anna to life. Not only does their love heal Anna, but also as Olaf states 'an act of true love will thaw a frozen heart' (Buck and Lee 2013), and the sisters' love also saves Elsa by giving her the tools to control her innate magical powers. Zipes states that 'fairy tales are informed by a human disposition to action – to transform the world and make it more adaptable to human needs, while we try to change and make ourselves fit for the world' (Zipes cited in Bacchilega 2013, p.3). Perhaps *Frozen* is the product of such a human disposition to action, a product of the drive to see female relationships on screen based on love and respect, changing not only the traditional female relationships in the genre, but also in the audience. Anna and Elsa progress further than any previous Disney princesses. While they share screen time with the male characters, the ultimate moment of rescue involves the two principal female characters unlike previous Disney princess films, where 'no princess ... did a final rescue without the assistance of the prince' (England *et al* 2011, p.561).

The male characters of Kristoff and Prince Hans act as secondary figures whose presence destabilises the traditional tropes of fairy tales. One of the most popular lines of *Frozen* is delivered by Olaf, the anthropomorphised snowman, 'some people are worth melting for' (Buck and Lee 2013), and the latest Disney princess film instalments advocates that it is sisterly/female love that is the ultimate love. Discussing *Shrek* and *Enchanted*, Bacchilega states that 'the gestures of rebellion, whether they are against patriarch convention or corporate convergence, are only pretexts setting up the eventual triumphant celebration of family values and consumerism' (Bacchilega 2013, p.119). While *Frozen* is indeed guilty of perpetuating the consumerist aspect of commercialising fairy tales, the

family values it employs in its conclusion, are creating new envisions of female representations and dynamics of female relations. *Frozen* can be considered a more progressive envisioning of the Disney princess trope as is the first of the Disney princess genre to concentrate on female relations and promote female comradeship rather than competition.

Chapter Six: ‘Let us tell an old story anew’ – The voice of evil in *Maleficent*

The mistress of all evil

Maleficent is a full-length animated feature, which was released in 2014 and is based on the 1959 Disney film version of the tale of *Sleeping Beauty*. The film was directed by Robert Stromberg, stars Angelina Jolie and the screenplay was written by Linda Woolverton. Charles Perrault is credited as a writer for the film, as it is based on Perrault’s *La Belle au bois dormant*, which served as a framework for Disney’s *Sleeping Beauty*. Woolverton is a screenwriter for Disney, who also was involved with *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lion King*, *Mulan* and was the sole writer for *Alice in Wonderland*. Angelina Jolie is an actress who is famed for her work with the UN, particularly her work as a UN special envoy, raising awareness around the crisis of sexual violence in conflicts. *Maleficent* was met with varied reviews. It was applauded for its unflinching representation of the evil character of Maleficent as a victim, but many critics remained unimpressed with the saccharine Disney ending. It was a global box office success, helping to highlight the cultural significance and popularity that modern fairy tales now hold for contemporary audiences.

Concurrent with popular trends, it tells the story of *Sleeping Beauty* from the perspective of the evil fairy, Maleficent. Little space is given in the original narrative as to why Maleficent becomes such an evil character, who is intent on destroying the innocent

baby Aurora. This mysterious motivation may be a contributing factor as to why Maleficent is widely considered one of the most evil fairy tale villains 'the mistress of all evil'. She is regularly listed in the top ten Disney villains of all time, and in the Disney computer game 'Kingdom Hearts', Maleficent is one of the main villains and often acts as the foremost leader of both the male and female 'evil' characters. Amy M. Davis states in her book, *Good Girls and Wicked Witches*, 'it is the traditional evil women in Disney – the Evil Queen/Hag, the Evil Stepmother, the Queen of Hearts, Maleficent, Madame Medusa, and Ursula the Sea Witch – who are portrayed in nightmare-ish seriousness, and as not being simply bad, mean or evil, but also insane' (Davis 2009, p.233). This tale, told through the lens of Maleficent, allows a new claim on the *Sleeping Beauty* tale, where 'if we avoid reading fairy tales as models of behaviour and normalcy, they can become for us revolutionary documents that encourage the development of personal autonomy' (Haase 1999, p.361).

There is no explanation or reasoning to Maleficent's evil behaviour, unlike other female evil characters: Ursula in *The Little Mermaid* is looking for retribution against Ariel's father; the evil stepmother in *Cinderella* is jealous that her stepdaughter outshines her; and the evil queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* is simply jealous. However, what is it that motivates Maleficent to curse not only a child but an infant? As Angelina Jolie stated in a BBC Radio *Women's Hour* interview, 'the question was asked, "what could make a woman become so dark?" To lose all sense of her maternity, her womanhood, and her softness?' (Women's Hour, 2014). It is this question that the film aims to address, by offering a new perspective on one of the most maligned female characters in Disney history. It offers a different narrative paradigm in terms of the ownership of fairy tales, that 'beyond presenting children with a variety of fairy tales ... can also encourage the creative reception of fairy tales. In other words, children can make fairy tales their own by creating and re-creating their own versions' (Haase 1999, p.363). This new perspective of a well-known tale may enable

children the creative power to re-envision other tales in their daily lives. It is by analysing this new perspective that new insight will be developed in this thesis, into the traditional ideologies of the *Sleeping Beauty* tale in all its facets, and how these ideologies can impact on identity construction in the fairy tale.

This modern interpretation shows how the young fairy Maleficent, as a beloved leader of her home in the supernatural Moors, befriends, and eventually falls in love with, a local human orphan named Stefan. Maleficent is considered the most powerful fairy in the Moors because of her magical abilities and her vast wings. The neighbouring human kingdom tries to invade the Moors, as they are 'forever discontent... envious of the wealth and beauty of their neighbours' (Stromberg, 2014). The humans are looking to exploit the natural resources of the Moors. Maleficent defends their home and defeats the greedy King. The king promises his daughter and his kingdom to anyone who can defeat Maleficent. Stefan, under the guise of friendship, drugs Maleficent and viciously cuts off her wings in order to become the next king and marry the human princess. Disillusioned with both humanity and love, Maleficent curses Stefan's daughter Aurora that, on her sixteenth birthday, she shall prick her finger on a spinning wheel and fall into a sleep like death, and goes on to add that only true love's kiss can revive her. The true love's kiss clause of the curse is a reminder of Stefan's betrayal. In a manner that parallels the traditional story, Aurora is sent to live in the countryside, in ignorance of her true heritage for her safety. Maleficent watches over Aurora as she is cared by for three inept pixies, and eventually a bond develops between the two female characters. Unable to break the curse, which eventually becomes fulfilled, Maleficent vows to keep Aurora safe in her cursed slumber. It is not the kiss of Prince Phillip that awakens Aurora, but Maleficent's love. Aurora reunites Maleficent with her stolen wings and after a battle with Stefan, peace reigns, with Aurora ruling both the Moors and the human kingdom in harmony.

In a *Forbes* article, June 2014, entitled 'Why Maleficent Matters', Jordan Shapiro states how in the film 'we see two competing social structures, the monarchy of the human kingdom and the utopian democracy of the Moors. The humans order the universe into resources for industry. The fairies care for a sustainable planet' (Shapiro 2014). Shapiro proposes that *Maleficent* is a 'moral allegory about politics and wealth distribution', and that by concentrating on gender, one is ignoring the fact that *Maleficent* is 'a social commentary arguing that any hierarchal rise to power inherently happens through the exploitation of others and is, therefore tantamount to rape' (Shapiro 2014). However, given that economics and power are based on social structures, one cannot ignore the gender issue and the social commentary it also provides. Gender construction and female subjugation are important parts of the patriarchal structure, and it is critically remiss to dismiss the gender aspect of *Maleficent*. The analysis of the traditional tale of *Bluebeard* highlighted how women are subjugated within the family dynamic as a means to protect assets and wealth. Stefan gains his position by exerting control over two women, through the wing-rape of Maleficent and through the marriage to the princess, which makes him king. This patriarchal power is reiterated through the sleeping curse placed on Aurora, as it removes Stefan's daughter from his power, instead, transferring power to the new man who will kiss this sleeping beauty. The question of gender cannot be separated from the wealth politics, which Shapiro outlined, particularly given that the victimisation of Maleficent is a means of advancement for Stefan. *Maleficent* as a deconstructive text, through the voice of 'the other' of *Sleeping Beauty*, highlights how easily women are disregarded and abused in matters of wealth and politics in patriarchal society.

Maleficent as a deconstructive text

Maleficent can be said to be a deconstructive text, as the plot focuses on the voice of the previously marginalised character of the traditional tale. As Jonathan Culler states, in *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, 'to deconstruct an opposition is to undo and displace it, to situate it differently' (Culler 1983, p.150), and that one of the ways to do this is by 'reinstating it with a reversal that gives it a different status and impact' (Culler 1983, p.150). The reversal of the traditional *Sleeping Beauty* tale highlights the constraining representations and ideologies governing women in both fairy tales and also in society. This reversal of prevailing hierarchical binary oppositions is a necessary step in a deconstructive reading. As Derrida himself notes, 'to deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment' (Derrida 1981, p.41). Nevertheless, this reversal is only the first step in the deconstructive project. Making the point that an opposition of metaphysical concepts is never the face-to-face of two terms, but a hierarchy and an order of subordination, Derrida goes on to say:

Deconstruction cannot limit itself or proceed immediately to a neutralization: it must, by means of a double gesture, a double science, a double writing, practice an *overturning* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system. It is only on this condition that deconstruction will provide itself the means with which to *intervene* in the field of oppositions that it criticizes, which is also a field of non-discursive forces. Each concept, moreover, belongs to a systematic chain, and itself constitutes a system of predicates. There is no metaphysical concept in and of itself. There is a work - metaphysical or not - on conceptual systems. Deconstruction does not consist in passing from one concept to another, but in overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the nonconceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated. (Derrida 1982, p.329)

One of the ways in which the audience is alerted to the change in direction of the movie is by the altering of the traditional Disney logo of Cinderella's castle at the beginning of the film.

This is something that Shapiro notes in his article:

The cultural shift that *Maleficent* endeavors to catalyze is clear from the start of the film. The castle of the ubiquitous Disney logo is absent. A new castle stands in its place behind Walt's signature. I know this seems like a simple cinematic gimmick, but it is significant. In the world of fairy tales, 'the kingdom' is not just the setting, it is also the symbolic representation of a current psychic state—a way of being in the world that is in need of attention. (Shapiro 2014)

It is not the first time that Disney has altered the castle logo at the beginning of a film but it signifies to the audience that the realm they are about to enter, while still a fairy tale, may not be as familiar as one would expect.

In his article 'Hypertextual Gutenberg', Donald Haase uses the term 'Law of Replication', where drawing from the old medium, the new medium 'attempts to appropriate its features in order to benefit from its aura of authority and authenticity' (Haase 2006, p.228). From this perspective, one may say that, as a text, *Maleficent* is utilising the castle logo to lend authority to the tale from the perspective of Maleficent, as the castle logo is indicative of Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* tale. The *Cinderella* castle of the Disney logo has been changed to a slightly more foreboding image of the *Sleeping Beauty* castle, which transforms from an animated image into a real life castle. This alerts the reader to the change of setting of the traditional tale, and to the evolution of the tale from animation to that of real life action.

Eugene O'Brien in his article 'there's a lot more to ogres than people think': *Shrek* as Ethical Fairy Tale', shows how the linguistic phrases of 'once upon a time' and 'happily ever after' act as a structural frame for the fairy tale (O'Brien 2008, p.140). O'Brien further

clarifies this drawing on Derrida's work *The Truth in Painting* discussing Kant, where he considers the 'relationship between the frame [*parergon*] and the work itself [*ergon*]' (O'Brien 2008, p.140). He states that:

Derrida's point is that the structuration of work of art is predicated on a framing device which is both part of the work of art, and at the same time, part of the ground from which that work originates. In this context, he is examining the interrelation of the frame, which gives structure and specificity to a work of art, and the work itself. (O'Brien 2008, p.140)

The transforming of the castle logo helps give both structure and specificity to the following narrative. O'Brien goes on to say that the strong linguistic phrasing of 'once upon a time', and 'happily ever after', works at creating a hermetically-sealed world where good triumphs over evil, the princesses are beautiful and the princes are brave and true (O'Brien 2008, p.141). Such ideologies have been examined throughout this thesis but looking at the altered Disney castle as a parergonal frame for the fairy tale, one can see how, as O'Brien discusses, using the linguistic frames, 'the frame of any work of literary art involves the philosophical and epistemological context out of which that work derives, and towards which that work is addressed' (O'Brien 2008, p.140).

In the case of *Maleficent*, the film begins with 'let us tell an old tale anew, and see how well you know it' (Stromberg, 2014), but the preceding transformed logo has already indicated this to the audience. The darker, more malignant castle logo is a frame, suggesting and conceptualising the subsequent darker narrative. It reframes the traditional narrative, which is indicative of the deconstructive nature of the film. One can also draw on what Haase describes as 'The Law of Replication,, where the 'image of an open storybook became key to the success of Disney's technologically new magic on screen' (Bacchilega 2013, p.78). The storybook framing has been replaced by the castle logo. The new castle logo then, becomes a composite enunciation of the ideas of O'Brien and Shapiro. It becomes a frame of the tale,

highlighting issues that need attention in wider society. There is a second close-up of the castle image near the end of film, after Maleficent has battled Stefan and the natural order has been restored, highlighting that peace has been restored to the two kingdoms. This altered frame of the castle mirrors the reframing of the ruling traditional ideologies in the *Maleficent* film.

The motivations of 'evil'

Unlike many of the contemporary fairy tale revisions such as *Mirror, Mirror, Enchanted*, and *Snow White and the Huntsman*, very little of the narrative is afforded to the princess character Aurora. The plot revolves around Maleficent. As Davis says, 'the role of the witch/evil woman is vital, since it is on her actions that the films' plots turn. Over the course of the century, however, as feminist interpretations of witches evolved, this change in conceptions of the witch has been reflected in the Disney animated films' (Davis 2009, pp.231-232). This deconstructive technique of allowing the previously marginalised and silenced half of the binary opposition to speak is similar to the technique employed in *Shrek*. The device of allowing the 'other' to speak is symptomatic of modern fairy tales, which in a cynical light, can be seen as a means to further the commercialisation and merchandise of the fairy tale machine. However, it is still a deconstructive technique, as emphasised in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*:

for Derrida, a deconstructive reading is exceedingly close, fine-grained, meticulous, scholarly, serious, and, above all "responsible", both in the sense of being able to give an account of itself in scholarly terms and in the sense of "responding" to something in the text that tends to drop out of view. (Derrida 1997, p.77)

Maleficent can be seen to be a response to the 'something' that was 'out of view' in the Disney tale, namely that of the evil character's motivations. It exposes not only the fallacy in

the polarized representations of the female, perpetuated by traditional fairy tales, but also the social and cultural structures in place which limit and reinforce such representations. It demonstrates that the evil character has hitherto generally been the object of focus of the narrative perspective, with the good characters being the agents or subjects with whom we can empathise.

Given that *Maleficent* is written by a female writer, and is very much attuned to motivation of the character, one can draw on *l'écriture féminine*, as utilised in the analysis of *The Bloody Chamber*. Cixous states in 'The Laugh of the Medusa':

It is by writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence. (Cixous 1976, p.881)

In this text, the evil character is given a history, a back-story, and a sense of subjectivity which makes us question her actions as opposed to merely condemning them out of hand.

In the analysis of *Frozen*, the Disney marketing campaign of 2010 was cited using the *Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princess* article by England, Descartes and Meek, showing how the goal of the campaign was to encourage children to identify with the characters in order to increase merchandise sales (England et al 2011, p.555). Amy Davis says that 'the marketing of "The Princess Collection" seems to be an attempt by Disney to reconstruct its image as a friend and supporter of women's solidarity, even going so far as to group the various villainesses together as a sort of "evil alternative" to the Princess Collection' (Davis 2009, p.227). Of all the Disney wicked characters, Maleficent was the most silent. There is a presumption in the Disney *Sleeping Beauty* that it is because Maleficent was snubbed from the celebrations of Aurora's birth that she curses the infant. Such a reaction is indeed an aggrandised response, and one that is short on both logic and

understanding, underlining the unhinged characterisation of the original Maleficent. The *Maleficent* version also draws on the 'awkward situation' of the christening and her gatecrashing of this celebration. As the film's writer, Linda Woolverton states, in an interview with *The Hollywood Reporter*, 'the biggest challenge [making the film] was how to make a villain into a protagonist' (Couch, 2014). This mirrors how Cixous states that:

where woman has never her turn to speak – is all the more serious and unpardonable in that writing is precisely the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures. (Cixous 1976, p.879)

The traditional Disney *Sleeping Beauty* was both written and directed by men, and little consideration was given to the reasons behind Maleficent's motivations. Davis discusses how:

in the majority of mainstream Hollywood films, stories are usually told, of not explicitly from a male point of view, then at least implicitly by making male characters the "boundaries" within which the films' central characters operate, thereby re-framing what are ostensibly women's stories into women's stories as seen through the eyes of the men in their lives. (Davis 2009, p.229)

Maleficent readdresses this with a female writer aiming to give a voice and a sense of agency to the evil character. As Caputo states in relation to deconstruction, 'so, the only way to be really loyal to the tradition, that is to keep it alive, is not to be too loyal, too reproductive; the only way to conserve a tradition is not to be a conservative' (Derrida 1997, p.79). The traditional representations have been transformed. Maleficent takes on a type of mother-figure role to Aurora in this interpretation; with Aurora telling her she is not afraid of her as 'You've been watching over me my whole life. I've always known you were close by'

(Stromberg, 2014). Due to this representation of a mother figure, one can then draw on the representation of the traditional evil stepmother character.

When looking at it from this perspective, one can draw on Christy Williams's article 'Who's Wicked Now?: The Stepmother as Fairy-Tale Heroine', which discusses the novel *Stepmother* by Robert Coover. This is a novel that reconceptualises traditional fairy tale narratives. Similar to *Maleficent*, 'Coover's conflation of fairy-tale conventions in the novel *Stepmother* rewrites female roles in popularized fairy tales by complicating the situations and motivations of the female characters and creating alternate paths to the end of the story' (Williams, 2010, p.257). This is also true of *Maleficent*, which exposes the motivation of arguably the most evil Disney character, and depicts the treatment of women in society, while also exposing the rigid patriarchal structure of the fairy tale genre. In a manner that is comparable with *COAUS*, it destabilises the traditional binary oppositions where women are divided into good versus evil. More so than any of the other texts examined within the context of this project, *Maleficent* truly aims to give context on how the 'evil' character became evil, while also highlighting how the injustices the female characters endure in a patriarchal construction can make them evil. Similar to the discussion of Ravenna in *Snow White and the Huntsman*, the focus of the narrative on the previously marginalised exposes how one can attribute the 'evil' nature of these characters to the victimisation they endure. As Williams points out in her article in relation to *Stepmother*, it:

encourages identification with a traditional villain through shifting focalization and unmask the limitations of one-dimensional gendered character types by collapsing the mainstays of the fairy-tale genre on a diegetic level. In doing so, *Stepmother* challenges the authority of popular fairy-tale narrative patterns. These fairy-tale patterns – perpetuated by the reproduction of a fairy-tale "canon" contrived from a few select stories from Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and solidified by Walt Disney—are so

pervasive that they dominate the possibilities for fairy tales in Western popular culture and do not allow other stories to take root. Additionally, *Stepmother* performs the struggle undertaken by feminist writers who try to reshape the gendered narrative patterns entrenched within the genre without losing the wonder that makes these stories the fairy tales to which we keep returning. (Williams 2010, p.257)

The identification with *Maleficent* that is created further emphasises how one can view the film as a deconstructive text. This identification means that the audience is viewing the *Sleeping Beauty* plot through the new narrative of *Maleficent*.

An example of this can be seen when Prince Phillip fails to awaken Aurora from her curse with a kiss. The audience is viewing this event from the perspective of how it would affect Maleficent. Identification lies with the traditionally evil character rather than the princess heroine. Through witnessing the character growth of Maleficent and her maternal affections for Aurora, we the audience learn to identify with her:

I will not ask your forgiveness

Because what I have done to you is unforgivable.

I was so lost in hatred and revenge.

Sweet Aurora, you stole what was left of my heart.

And now I have lost you forever.

I swear, no harm will come to you as long as I live.

And not a day shall pass that I don't miss your smile. (Stromberg, 2014)

It is through the characterisation of Maleficent, and the violence inflicted upon her, that the audience learns to understand her reprehensible act of vengeance through the cursing of Stefan's child. Similar to *Stepmother*, one can say that *Maleficent* is also helping to 'reshape the gendered narrative patterns entrenched within the [fairy tale] genre' (Williams 2010, p.257).

Symbolic rape

True to the traditional pre-Disney fairy tales, there are explicitly violent aspects to the film. War and greed threaten the peaceful home of the fairies, the Moors. The king decrees on his deathbed that anyone who can kill Maleficent will inherit his kingdom and his daughter in marriage. Stefan, seeing his opportunity for advancement returns to the Moors, under the guise of friendship and love, in order to betray her. He seeks to exploit her innocent nature, 'I've come to warn you. They mean to kill you.... Please you have to trust me' (Stromberg, 2014). Having gained her trust, he drugs her, but finds himself unable to kill her, and so cuts off her wings as evidence to fool the king that he has murdered her. The most violent aspect of the film is undoubtedly this symbolic rape scene, the barbaric stealing of Maleficent's wings by Stefan. This violent scene is a shocking brutal act, not just for the principal character, but also for the audience. In an online review for *rogerebert.com*, Matt Zoller Seitz describes:

The scene of Maleficent waking up on a hilltop with huge scars in her back, then weeping with rage, is the most traumatizing image I've seen in a Hollywood fairy tale since the Christ-like sacrifice of Aslan in 2005's *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. (Seitz, 2014)

The scene is poignant, divisive and completely shocking for the audience. Davis's affirms, 'the fact is, however, that Disney films rarely cause controversy, and what little there is usually has no affect upon the general public's decision to see (or allow their children to see) a particular Disney film' (Davis 2009, p.235).

With the metaphorical rape and the devastating consequences for the principal character, *Maleficent* is embracing more controversial topics than previous Disney texts. There were many heated internet debates whether this 'wing stealing' scene was suitable for a

Disney audience, and whether it was in fact representative of rape. An article entitled 'The *Maleficent* Rape Scene That We Need To Talk About' by Hayley Krischer appeared in the Huffington post in June 2014. The writer equated the wing-stealing scene with symbolic rape, and received severe online criticism, to the point where she was 'trolled' and threatened with violence for her view. However, the writer was vindicated when a few days later, in a BBC interview, Angelina Jolie confirmed it, stating, 'we were very conscious, the writer and I [the scene in question] was a metaphor for rape... the core [of *Maleficent*] is abuse, and how the abused have a choice of abusing others or overcoming and remaining loving, open people' (Women's Hour, 2014). Much credit has been attributed to the raw and emotional scene when *Maleficent* wakes up and realises her large sturdy wings have been cut off by the man she loves. Both physically and emotionally, she is broken, a series of emotions to which the audience is privy. Amy Davis quotes Linda Williams in her book, *When the Woman Looks*, saying:

that the female audience of horror films often refuse to watch the victimisation of the female characters on the screen because, rather than turning away in fear as has been traditionally assumed, they are in fact refusing to bear witness to the crimes against women which are being played out on the screen. (Williams cited in Davis 2009, p.229)

The scene portraying *Maleficent*'s symbolic rape is both shocking and uncomfortable, and Jolie received much praise for her ability to convey the depths of the character's despair and devastation.

The accurate and painful portrayal mirrors how Cixous advocates that women 'must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies' (Cixous 1976, p.875). This violation of her body is the motivation for *Maleficent*'s subsequent evil deeds. She cannot fathom his reasoning of such a betrayal, 'he did this to me so he would be king?' (Stromerg, 2014). Her time in the idyllic

Moors, where nature and acceptance are revered, has ill prepared her for the greed and violence of patriarchal society. While it is true that this *Maleficent* adaption is based on the Disney version of *Sleeping Beauty*, violence and rape is not a new facet to the *Sleeping Beauty* trope. In her book, *Women and Rape*, Cathy Roberts discusses 'Using and Abusing Feminine Passivity', using a quote from Andrea Dworkin stating that:

For a woman to be good, she must be dead, or as close to it as possible. Catatonia is the good woman's most winning quality. Sleeping Beauty slept for 100 years, after pricking her finger on a spindle. The kiss of the heroic prince woke her. He fell in love with her while she was asleep, or was it because she was asleep? ... It awake was not readily distinguishable from it asleep. Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, Rapunzel – all characterised by passivity, beauty, innocence, and VICTIMISATION. They are the archetypal good women – victims by definition. They never think, act, initiate, confront, resist, challenge. Sometimes they are forced to do housework. (Dworkin cited in Roberts 1989, p.5)

The fairy tale genre's promotion of the passive feminine ideal has been explored throughout this thesis, particularly in the *Bluebeard* analysis. In this genre, women are traditionally viewed as a commodity, and as property in the patriarchal structure, and a passive commodity is the ideal aim of this ideological construction. Roberts states that 'the feminine model provides an idea of women as existing to be used, social situations can help set a woman up, and assumed passivity will both delete her will and provide the rapist with an excuse – he didn't notice she didn't want to so it must have been OK' (Roberts 1989, p.15). By opening up the question of violence and the subjugation of the female, *Maleficent* is questioning the ideology of passivity and submission perpetuated to females. In this respect, it is important to consider previous *Sleeping Beauty* adaptations. While the more sanitised Perrault and Grimms' versions involve a chaste kiss from the male prince to awake the princess, the pre-existing Basile version of 1634 entitled *Sun, Moon and Talia* is more disturbing.

Max Lüthi, in *Once upon A Time: On the Nature of Fairy Tales*, referred to Basile's tales as 'charming and humorous' (Lüthi 1976, p.29). He also states how Basile's 'indelicate jokes were not intended for children' (Lüthi 1976, 3). However, looking at this tale through the lens of gender representations, and in light of *Maleficent*, the text is far from humorous or charming. The sleeping maiden is raped and impregnated by a passing king who was captivated by her beauty, 'but since she did not awaken no matter how much he shout at her and shook her, and since he was enraptured by her beauty, he took her away in his arms to a place where he lay down with her and there picked the fruits of love' (Basile cited in Lüthi 1976, p.30). He has sex with the corpse-like female, impregnates her with twins, and then promptly forgets about her. As Roberts points out 'passive femininity is made vulnerable to abuse by aggressive masculinity' (Roberts 1989, p8). The king's abuse of Talia's body for his own pleasures in Basile's version reiterates the point made in the *Bluebeard* chapter, namely that the female is purely a commodity in the male patriarchal structure, where she is 'degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children' (Engels 2004, p.67). Talia's unconsciousness or passivity provides, as Roberts stated, an excuse, 'he didn't notice she didn't want it so it must have been OK' (Roberts 1989, p.15). It is only when one of the babes sucks the poisonous fibre from her finger that she awakens from her death-like slumber. As a man and as a king, he was entitled to have sex with the corpse like beauty. As a human man, trying to rise to kingship, Stefan was able to justify and proceed with his violation of his childhood friend.

Lüthi noted, when looking at the meaning and form of fairy tales, that 'large number of versions recorded at different times and among various peoples, lead us to believe that, in the over-all course of events, a significant, constantly, recurring process is at work: danger and redemption, paralysis and rejuvenation, death and resurrection. The individual compilers cast the fairy tale in the garb of their time' (Lüthi 1976, p.34). *Maleficent* is addressing the

crime against the subdued female. This disturbing victimisation of the sleeping maiden is one that is not limited to fairy tales, and which has infiltrated culture beyond that of the fairy tale genre. It must be noted in *Maleficent*, that while Aurora is under the sleeping curse Prince Phillip is not comfortable kissing her, telling the three pixies, 'I wouldn't feel right about it. I barely know her. We've only met once' (Stromberg, 2014). *Maleficent* is challenging the premise that it is tolerable to kiss a sleeping or unconscious female without their consent. The idealisation of the passive female and the sexual connotations of the *Sleeping Beauty* myth have been subtly questioned through Prince Phillip's hesitation.

In her chapter, 'Rough Awakenings: Unconscious Women and Rape in *Kill Bill* and *Talk to Her*', Adriana Novoa discusses the 2003 film *Kill Bill* and the *Sleeping Beauty* myth. Novoa clearly links the abuse and violation central to the *Sleeping Beauty* myth to the rapes suffered by the female characters in these films. She states that 'female agency, as in most fairy tales, expresses itself through silence, naturalizing the annihilation of the female voice. Women wait to be saved and their bodies remain open to the rescuer, communicating their need to be awoken' (Novoa 2010, p.168). It perpetuates the commoditisation of women, and the notion that their bodies are property and so that explicit consent is not needed. While in a coma, Beatrice, the protagonist of *Kill Bill*, is repeatedly raped by a male nurse who also prostitutes her unconscious form to other males for money. As a female, her body is used purely as a commodity, and her unconscious form becomes, as Luce Irigaray would state, 'merchandise' (Irigaray 1985, p.84). This is mirrored in *Maleficent*, as it was only in their most passive form, that these formidable females could be violated. Beatrice in a coma and *Maleficent* drugged by Stefan, are both despoiled as a form of male advancement. *Maleficent*'s body becomes a type of currency, enabling Stefan to advance in society and secure himself wealth and power.

Upon waking, Beatrice in the film *Kill Bill*, remembers how she came to be in a coma and also recalls the violations against her that had occurred. She begins a murderous rampage against the man who shot her, killed her child and put her in the coma. She violently kills the male nurse who assaulted her unconscious form. Analogies can be drawn between Beatrice's reaction to her coma rape and Maleficent's reaction to her wing rape, where we can see 'in the protagonist an attempt to build a new identity from the models imposed by men' (Novoa 2010, p.184). Both females eschew the traditional form of femininity and the passive ideal, in order to exact revenge against their rapists. For Maleficent, she chooses to curse Stefan's daughter as a means of exacting this revenge, which is in contrast to her previous identity of being a loving and protective leader with a 'bright heart' (Stromberg, 2014). The violence against her has hardened Maleficent. 'The female protagonist wants revenge, and the restitution of her body [and] her identity' (Novoa 2010, p. 184). Although Maleficent is metaphorically raped through the theft of her wings, one can see that she responds in a similar way to that of a 'traditional' rape victim. She is disorientated and confused after being drugged and assaulted. She is physically spent, and has to make a cane in order to enable her to stand. She is emotionally fragile and so locks herself away, building a wall of thorns around the Moors to protect herself from the patriarchal structure of the neighbouring kingdom, which helped to make her a victim.

When speaking of Beatrice in *Kill Bill*, Novoa states that, 'the penetration of her body does not open up the space of the magical, but instead evokes an irrational violence that ends up destroying the male world' (Novoa 2010, p.185). Like Beatrice, Maleficent's revenge annihilates not only the world of her rapist, but also the patriarchal structures that positioned her as a victim. She seeks revenge against Stefan, and this overhanging threat of retribution sends him into an obsessive paranoid state where he ignores his dying wife and has delusional imaginary conversations with Maleficent's encased wings, which 'mock' him.

Even though Maleficent's cut wings are boxed and displayed, like a hunting trophy, they provoke Stefan to fear and madness. Unlike *The Bloody Chamber*, wherein the Marquis's corpse display, soothes and bolsters him, the presence of Maleficent's wings terrorises Stefan. It must be noted that Maleficent's curse is a displaced form of vengeance, for although Stefan's paralysing paranoia mirrors the paralysing sleeping curse, it is the innocent Aurora who is the target of the curse. This act of vengeance places women in conflict with women. In the original *Sleeping Beauty* versions, it is a man who is given the power to break the curse; however, this agency is repatriated to the feminine sphere in *Maleficent*.

When discussing the psychological response to rape trauma, Roberts noted that, 'where anger was so clear, the women all had some previous contact with the rapist and the anger did seem to be built up around some perceived slight, perceived by the women only afterwards and with a thorough review of all and any contact with him' (Roberts 1989, p.105). When she learns of the reasons why Stefan violated her, this sharpens and focuses Maleficent's anger. At the conclusion of the film, her wings have been restored, she has found true love in form of her bond with Aurora and she has saved the Moors from the human world. Davis states that 'films in which women function in a female-centred or female-motivated universe (and which, again, are not female/female sexual relationships but instead deal solely with women as mothers, daughters, friends, and –above all- autonomous individuals) are so rare to excite comment from fans, critics, the media, and scholars alike' (Davis 2009, p 230-231). *Maleficent* confounds this by examining the raw emotions behind female victimisation, while also simultaneously exploring the themes of female comradeship and motherhood. Maleficent's journey is a powerful reminder of how:

coping with rape means struggling to resume control, to deal with the anger and fear that victimisation produces, and learning to feel safe again To all women, rape is a threat. It hangs

over us whether we try to conform to the feminine ideal or whether we choose a different path for our existence. (Roberts 1989, p.132)

The delicate and thought-provoking way in which *Maleficent* deals with rape (albeit symbolically), highlights and questions the passive feminine ideal perpetuated by the preceding *Sleeping Beauty* tales. It shows how this ideology ultimately leads to the victimisation of Maleficent, and one can say that it is undermining the traditional ideologies so inherent in the fairy tale genre. In his article 'Children, War, and the Imaginative Space of Fairy Tales', Haase shows how children living through profoundly stressful times such as the Holocaust, were able to 'appropriate fairy tales a psychological strategy in order to create meaning in the midst of violent conflict' (Haase 2000, p.366). It is a hopeful assumption that *Maleficent* with the raw emotional account of the character's trauma and her reaction to it may be used as a way to appropriate the tale in a positive way for the audience.

One can also read the wing-stealing scene and symbolic rape of Maleficent as a means to ground her into patriarchal society. Without her wings, she cannot fly and escape the economic politics and ideologies trying to govern her. Her wings were a part of her identity as a strong, active female. She describes them in a scene to Aurora:

So big they dragged behind me when I walked.

And they were strong.

They could carry me above the clouds and into the headwinds.

And they never faltered, not even once.

I could trust them. (Stromberg, 2014)

Her wings were stolen from her by Stefan, an act that is meant to strip her of her power. As Stefan tells her in their final battle, 'How does it feel? To be a fairy creature without wings in a world where you don't belong?' (Stromberg, 2014). The de-winged Maleficent can be seen as an attempt to keep her compliant to patriarchal dictates, and can be read as symbolic

of the fairy tale genre. Through traditional fairy tales and their imposing ideologies, the readers are being grounded into patriarchal norms. By allowing 'the other' of the fairy tale genre to speak, it gives the female back her wings, exposing the fallacy of the ideologies perpetuated by the fairy tale genre.

Maleficent as mother

Unusually, the film explores the issue of maternity through the character of Maleficent. It is an interesting tale in which to depict an 'evil' or reluctant mother figure, as in the traditional tale, her role did not have a maternal dimension. Other texts, such as *Cinderella* or *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, may have seemed more appropriate in terms of engaging with maternal relationships, but *Maleficent* the film does so in quite a poignant way. It displaces or weakens the sense of competition so rife in female fairy tale relations with 'one character threatening the other's very existence' (Davis 2009, p.228). Rather, the film presents Maleficent as a maternal figure removed from a biological predisposition.

Traditionally, the natural mother quickly vacates the narrative, as does Aurora's natural mother. As already discussed in this thesis, my hypothesis as to why the traditional mother must be removed is she cannot uphold the perfect idealisation of the fairy tale figure as a living, aging woman. Maleficent is removed from such idealisation, as she is a magical creature, and so is not held to the same standards; given that she is a fairy, her beauty is negligible. The natural mother vacates the *Maleficent* narrative in order to enable a differing perspective on maternal relations than the ones found in traditional tales. The film offers a new perspective on motherhood; rather than being a natural, biological relationship, it is seen here as a state of love that develops between the two principal characters. Upon meeting Aurora, Maleficent declares her an 'ugly little thing', and nicknames her 'beasty'. It is a problematic statement to link femininity with motherhood, yet as already stated, Angelina

Jolie herself made this link 'what could make a woman become so dark? To lose all sense of her maternity, her womanhood, and her softness?' (Women's Hour, 2014). Femininity and maternity are often constructed together to form the assemblage of 'woman'. Maleficent's rejection of, and her struggle with, her maternal feelings towards the child, are portrayed as a consequence of Stefan's violation of her.

Not only is Aurora a by-product of this, via Stefan's marriage with the king's daughter, but she is also presented as the carefree and loving child that Maleficent once was, before she was victimised by patriarchal society, both through Stefan's violation, and also through the wars threatening her home. She has already cursed the child, yet throughout the film acts as a caregiver, feeding and protecting her from harm, albeit from the shadows. Aurora is drawn to Maleficent, despite the lack of encouragement and her 'fearsome' appearance. It is an interesting point to note that it was Angelina Jolie's own child Vivienne, who had to play the toddler Aurora, as 'other 3- and 4-year-old [performers] wouldn't come near me. It had to be a child that liked me and wasn't afraid of my horns and my eyes and my claws. So it had to be Viv' (Breznican, 2014). This helps to emphasise Maleficent's terrifying appearance, yet Aurora senses something in her. When Aurora first meets Maleficent as a teenager, she declares that she has always felt Maleficent watching over her and calls her godmother:

Princess Aurora: I know who you are.

Maleficent: Do you?

Princess Aurora: You're my Fairy-Godmother!

Maleficent: What? (Stromberg, 2014)

Despite her antagonistic feelings towards King Stefan, a bond develops between them and although she tries, Maleficent is unable to break the curse. It is an interesting twist that Aurora should call Maleficent her fairy godmother. Fairy godmother's are generally

secondary characters whose function is to propel the princess character to her destiny, namely that of marriage. Maleficent's role is more complex, and so she becomes a new mother figure representative of differing traditional representations fairy godmother/evil mother/natural mother. She becomes a polysemic symbol of different types of female agency.

Another interesting aspect of the portrayal of maternity is that in an age where there are many new types of motherhood via surrogacy, IVF and adoption, *Maleficent*, as a text, questions the importance attributed to biological motherhood by fairy tales. Ultimately, the film strengthens the notion of femininity and motherhood being linked. It is only through her love for Aurora that Maleficent begins to heal from her trauma, and it is Maleficent's love for Aurora that awakens her as there is, 'no truer love' (*Maleficent*, 2014). Similar to the mother figure in *The Bloody Chamber*, the presence of a loving, active, strong maternal figure destabilises the binary oppositions so integral to the binary oppositions and ideologies governing women.

The new space

One of the more interesting aspects of this modern depiction, as opposed to other contemporary revisions of fairy tales, is that *Maleficent* is not built on the premises of female jealousy, nor is the plot propelled forward by feminine beauty. Obviously, the female characters of *Maleficent* and Aurora are both very beautiful; contemporary culture dictates that female characters need to be beautiful for commercial success. Jolie is conspicuously not green unlike the original *Maleficent*. Yet beauty as a source of friction or as an inciting incident is absent, unlike in other modern fairy tale revisions, such as in *Snow White and the Huntsman*, *Enchanted* or *Shrek*. The characters are not aware of or make reference to their own or each other's beauty as seen in *Frozen*, although we are told through the narration that Aurora grew in 'grace and beauty' (Stromberg, 2014). This is one of the most progressive

elements of the tale, as the lack of narrative importance of beauty allows for a new reading of traditional tales. As Cixous explains, male writing has 'committed the greatest crime' against women, pitting them against not only other women but also themselves (Cixous 1976, p.878).

The female relationships are not built upon beauty or its absence; rather new insights into female relations and Maleficent's deeds are told through the lens of her experiences as a victim of male patriarchal structures. She is attacked because she is a threat to the human structure, not because of her beauty. The king fears her power and needs to control and pacify her. Her active, powerful nature is a threat to both the king and to patriarchal society. The lack of importance of beauty attributed to the plot of the film, as a reason for victimisation, is even more interesting when one considers that Angelina Jolie as the principal character of *Maleficent*. Angelina Jolie is widely hailed as one of the most beautiful women in the world, and perhaps it is because of her obvious beauty, even as Maleficent, that the issue of beauty is no longer a concern.

Shapiro states how 'the movie's final narration reminds us that Maleficent is both hero and villain. It is time to leave the kingdom of familiar partisan oppositions: let's replace the *either/or* with *neither/nor* or *both/and*' (Shapiro 2014). While Shapiro was not thinking in terms of deconstruction, or of the notion of binary oppositions, nevertheless his statement helps to highlight the deconstructive stance of the text. Through looking at these 'partisan oppositions', or binary oppositions, we see that 'the invention of the other requires first the conventions of the same in reference to which one sets out to find something contravening and counter-conventional, something transgressive of the horizon off legitimation' (Derrida 1997, p.81). In this way, *Maleficent* as a text is opening up a third space, rather than having representations of the female being divided into good and evil or hero and villain, a space is created between/beneath/outside of the two. As Cixous states:

It is time to liberate the New Woman from the Old by coming to know her-by loving her for getting by, for getting beyond the Old without delay, by going out ahead of what the New Woman will be, as an arrow quits the bow with a movement that gathers and separates the vibrations musically, in order to be more than herself. (Cixous 1976, p.878)

This space becomes 'some third thing which distinction omits, some untruth, or barely true remnant, which falls outside the famous distinction, which the truth of either separately or both together fails to capture, which is neither and both of the two' (Derrida 1997, p.84). It is through the voice of Maleficent, and the character's progression, that one can construct this third space where the woman is neither hero nor villain, but an unnameable third representation which 'pushes up against the very limits of naming' (Derrida 1997, p.95). Caputo discusses this in relation to Derrida's his use of the term 'Khôra' as an example of 'a third thing, a third nature or type' (Derrida 1997, p.84). The highlighting of a character who is neither purely evil nor purely good becomes 'a hybrid or bastard reasoning. Khôra is neither intelligible being nor sensible becoming, but a little like both, the subject matter of neither a true *logos* nor a good *mythos*' (Derrida 1997, p.84).

Maleficent is an embodiment of the Khôra, and as such, she challenges the stereotypical representations afforded by traditional tales. This new representation or third space highlights 'where the abyss in things opens up and we catch a glimpse of the groundlessness of our beliefs and practises' (Derrida 1997, p.98). It shakes the very dichotomy of the female representations and breaks the limitations. This mirrors why Cixous advocates for women to write as it is:

an act that will also be marked by woman's seizing the occasion to speak, hence her shattering entry into history, which has always been based on her suppression. To write and thus to forge for herself the anti-logos weapon. To become at will the taker and initiator, for her own right, in every symbolic system, in every political process. (Cixous 1976, p.880)

This third space then 'makes it possible to get beyond (or beneath) two kinds, not just to three but to the "innumerable" that is, to the indefinitely new, because differential, possibilities that are opened up once you acknowledge the contingency of "two"' (Derrida 1997, p.105). In this way, *Maleficent* is opening up infinite possibilities in the representation of the female allowing for *khôra-ographies*.

Hence it can be said that *Maleficent* is the *Khôra*, that which 'suppress nothing, releasing the innumerable, the unforeseeable, the "invention of the other"' (Derrida 1997, p.105). Ultimately, it is Aurora becoming queen, that unifies the human and supernatural realms, yet it is the *Maleficent* character who embodies and challenges the binary oppositions of fairy tales. In addition, *Maleficent* opens up a 'third space' of motherhood, embodying all the facets found in fairy tales, a natural love, a godmother and an evil stepmother. As Aurora states in the closing narration:

In the end, my kingdom was united,
Not by a hero or a villain,
As legend had predicted.
But by one who was both hero and villain
And her name was Maleficent. (Stromberg, 2014)

Maleficent challenges the assigned identity construction, that a female must be good or evil in fairy tales. As Cixous states it is only by writing from and toward women, that new spaces or representations will be made, in a place 'other than silence' (Cixous 1976, p.881). *Maleficent* depicts a character who has attributes of good and evil by giving a voice to the previously silenced, and it is this destabilising of the binary oppositions that weakens the ideologies, which are so integral in keeping the separation of the oppositions. It exposes the fallacy of ideologies, such as the perpetuation of the idealisation of the submissive, passive female. Moreover, while it shows how a female character can be both good and evil, ultimately,

Maleficent with her strong active nature tears down part of the patriarchal structure of the kingdom and its male leaders.

The saccharine ending of Aurora with Prince Phillip, and the implication that Maleficent is to be paired with Diaval, means that the film is also simultaneously celebrating some of the same set of patriarchal conventions it is trying to subvert. In this way, similar to how Bacchilega describes *Enchanted*, *Shrek* and *Mirror Mirror*, *Maleficent* as a text 'testifies to some impact feminist critique on the production and reception of fairy-tale films, on the one hand, and to the underlying strength of the gender ideology that feminists have sought to contest, on the other' (Bacchilega 2012, p.117). Donald Haase writes in 'Kiss and Tell: Orality, Narrative, and the Power of Words in *Sleeping Beauty*', that 'even when we are drawn in the direction of the tale's irritating gender politics, it would be difficult not to recognize in the tale-type description and the richly resonant motifs of sleep and awakening the equally evocative themes of birth, death, and rebirth' (Haase 2011, p.279). In light of the chapter's analysis of *Maleficent*, one can postulate that the themes of birth, death, and rebirth are utilised in the text's struggle to create new representations of the female in contemporary fairy tales.

Chapter Seven: ‘You don’t realise how lucky you are never to know what it is grow old’- The monstrous mother in *Snow White and the Huntsman*

Snow White in the 21st century

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was released in 1937, and it was with this film 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’ (Zipes 1995, p.34). It marked Disney’s first foray into full-length features, and ‘once Disney realised how successful he was with his formula for feature-length fairy tales, he never abandoned it’ (Zipes 1995, p.34). It is a film that produced culturally acceptable representations of the female figure, similar to those that have been already outlined in Chapter One, through the classic *Cinderella* tale, demonstrating how such representations fit into ‘neatly ordered patriarchal realms’ (Zipes 1995, p.40). The Snow White character is sweet, innocent, passive and domestic, while the evil stepmother is narcissistic, evil and unrepentant. Jack Zipes writes in *The Enchanted Screen*, about how the animators of the Disney film ‘preferred to draw the evil queen because she was more real and complex as a woman, more erotic, and driven to desperate acts by her magic mirror’ (Zipes 2011, p.115). Zipes further comments on the traditional passive female characters, that ‘despite their beauty and charm, these figures are pale and pathetic, compared to the more active and demonic characters in the film’ (Zipes 1995, p.37).

The traditional representation of Snow White focuses on her role as a domestic helper as 'the house for the Grimms and Disney was the place where good girls remained, and one shared aspect of the fairy tale and the film is about the domestication of women' (Zipes 1997, p.37). Similar to *Cinderella*, the female relationships are constructed on the premise of beauty and, as such, the plot is centred not on the burgeoning relationship of Snow White and the prince but rather on female jealousy resulting from the patriarchal construction of beauty. When speaking of the traditional Disney film, Zipes states:

The queen's actions are determined by the mirror's representations of her as exemplifying beauty and evil, or associating evil and vanity with beauty, and these mirror representations are taken as truth by the queen. Had she perhaps doubted and cracked the mirror, cracked the meaning of the mirror, she might be alive today. (Zipes 2011, p.115)

Snow White and the Huntsman (SWATH) can be considered a postmodern reimagining of the classic Snow White tale. It is a full-length feature film, released in 2012, and moves from the animated realm to that of live action. It was directed by Rupert Sanders with Charlize Theron as the evil queen Ravenna, and Kirsten Stewart as Snow White. Aspects of the revision are similar to how Bacchilega describes the 1998 film *Ever After*, where to reach its target audience the film had to be "realistic", which meant using live action and also presenting more rounded characters than Disney's, and not relying on the supernatural to bring about the heroine's success' (Bacchilega 2013, p.110). SWATH is part of the modern trend, where fairy tales are now aimed at both adults and children. There are definite adult themes running through the film, such as the implication of a possible rape attempt, the use of sex for social advancement, self-mutilation and murder, although these themes are more implicit as they are not explicitly shown.

Congruent with the traditional tale, Snow White is considered the most beautiful and the sweetest child in the land. Upon her mother's death, her father is grief stricken and

marries a stunning woman named Ravenna, whom he believes he rescues during a local war, 'so enchanted by her beauty was the king that he forgot for the first time his broken heart and the very next day she would become his wife' (Sanders, 2012). He marries her for her beauty alone. Before the consummation of their marriage, Ravenna tells the king that she:

was ruined by a king like you once. I replaced his queen, an old woman. And in time, I too would have been replaced. Men use women. They ruin us and when they are finished with us, they toss us to the dogs like scraps. (Sanders, 2012)

She murders the king and overthrows the castle with her army, which is controlled by black magic. Snow White does not escape with her childhood friend William and his father Duke Hammond, and Ravenna keeps her 'imprisoned high up in the north tower' (Sanders, 2012), until her later escape, years later.

While the film received mixed reviews from critics, some of the most interesting aspects are the depictions of the female characters. This is similar to how modern cinema treats the fairy tale genre, where evil characters are given a back-story, and princesses are endowed with more active qualities in order to partake in their own rescue as Bacchilega notes: 'even in mainstream fairy-tale cinema today, there is no such thing as *the* fairy tale or one main use of it. This multiplicity of position-takings does not polarize ideological differences, but rather produces complex alignments and alliances in the contemporary fairy-tale web' (Bacchilega 2013, p.28). Bacchilega, in *Postmodern Fairy Tales Gender and Narrative Strategies*, discusses how 'some postmodern revisions may question and remake the classic fairy tale's production of gender only to re-inscribe it within some unquestioned model of subjectivity or narrativity' (Bacchilega 1997, p.23). *SWATH* is the perfect text in which to examine such a statement. While it portrays an active princess, and offers a perspective on why Ravenna has become an evil queen, some of the ideologies that it perpetuates are enforced more strongly than in its traditional counterpart. As Bacchilega

states, the contemporary 'proliferation of adaptations and twists on the fairy tale, however does *not* guarantee the articulation of new social possibilities for the genre' (Bacchilega 2013, p.28).

The mirror trope and the formation of identity

Cristina Bacchilega, when discussing the framing of postmodern *Snow White* texts, emphasises the importance of the mirror in the *Snow White* trope. The mirror is a magical object wielded by Ravenna, which allows her to access dark magic. In this adaptation, it is a large gold circular plate, which reflects and melts to form a human appearance to answer questions. Questioning the function of the mirror in the *Snow White* trope, Bacchilega asks, 'who is holding the mirror, and whose desires does it represent and contain?' (Bacchilega 1997, p.28). In both its traditional incarnation, and in this postmodern revision, one may argue as Bacchilega does, that the mirror helps 'sustain the fairy tale's wonder by unobtrusively easing us into recognizing correspondences between the natural world and the psycho-social world' (Bacchilega 1997, pp.28-29). The mirror becomes a symbolic reflection of the cultural expectations placed on women. *Snow White* along with *Cinderella* is one of the most reproduced tales and 'references to women's beauty are associated with the likelihood that a tale has been reproduced many times, as is the number of references to women's physical appearance' (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.721).

The ideology of beauty has become more important in modern interpretations, and the mirror, both real and symbolic, has become a seminal trope in this ideological interpellation of women. The mirror is a conduit for society's ideologies, just as the fairy tale genre is also a conduit of such ideologies. It helps to reinforce the socially accepted terms of beauty as discussed in previous chapters. Naomi Wolf states in *The Beauty Myth*, that 'there is no legitimate historical or biological justification for the beauty myth; what it is doing to women

today is a result of nothing more exalted than the need of today's power structure, economy, and culture to mount a counteroffensive against women' (Wolf 1990, p.13). The mirror alerts the evil Queen that she is failing as the perfect idealisation of beauty, because she is aging and Snow White is replacing her. In a cultural context, one can draw on Lacan's theory of the mirror stage, which describes the how the child's recognition and identification with its specular image effects the development of the child's perception of its environment, physicality and intellectual understanding.

The function of the Lacanian mirror stage, as discussed in previous chapters, is to establish the relationship between an individual and its reality (Lacan 2006, p.78). The mirror image reflected to the child is its first instance of feeling control over its body and the child internalises this image of a unified body afforded by its specular image. This image allows the child to establish its place in the world, forming the 'I' function and establishing the ego:

the important point is that this form situates the agency known as the ego, prior to its social determination, in a fictional direction that will forever remain irreducible for any single individual or, rather, that will only asymptotically approach the subject's becoming, no matter how successful the dialectical syntheses by which he must resolve, as *I*, his discordance with his own reality. (Lacan 2006, p.76)

This identification of the self is based on an imaginary reflection, an illusion, provided by the mirror. It is this imaginary image of initial wholeness that haunts Ravenna. She is obsessed by the image of youthful beautiful that the mirror once afforded her. Simone de Beauvoir discusses the importance of the image and narcissism in *The Second Sex* stating that 'in women particularly, the image is identified with the ego. Handsome appearance in the male suggests transcendence; in the female, the passivity of immanence; only the second is intended to arrest the gaze and can hence be captured in the motionless; silvered trap' (de Beauvoir 1997, pp.642-643). Ravenna's reflection becomes instrumental in the evolvment

of her ego and also her narcissism. The beauty myth is operating via the text but also via the mirror. It becomes, 'a "special effect" of ideological expectations and unspoken norms – a naturalizing technology that works hard at, among other things, re-producing "Woman" as the mirror image of masculine desire' (Bacchilega 1997, p.29). The mirror in *SWATH* has a similar to the function of the mirror in *The Bloody Chamber* reflecting the idealised representation of the female based on masculine desires.

Beauty, power and aging

As Ravenna no longer naturally sustains the image of masculine desire and the societal norms of beauty because she is aging, she must find ways to uphold her beauty and thus her power. Beauty and power are inextricably linked in the world of fairy tales, and it is a premise that *SWATH* heavily promotes, as the mirror states to Ravenna after overthrowing the kingdom, 'Yet another kingdom falls to your glory! Is there no end to your power and beauty?' (Sanders, 2012). Beauty is Ravenna's power:

Women must want to embody (beauty) and men must want to possess women who embody it. This embodiment is an imperative for women and not for men, which situation is necessary and natural because it is biological, sexual, and evolutionary: Strong men battle for beautiful women, and beautiful women are more reproductively successful. Women's beauty must correlate to the fertility, and since this system is based on sexual selection, it is inevitable and changeless. (Wolf 1990, p.12)

Beauty is linked with youth and fertility. Interestingly, the evil Queen in the traditional *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, is not depicted as using any magical means in order to enhance or retain her beauty. Rather, the mirror informs her that she is no longer the fairest in the land, and so the evil Queen sets out to destroy Snow White. Ravenna, on the other hand, uses

beautiful young women's essences as a means of prolonging her own beauty. She feeds on their youth and beauty, and Snow White's heart will offer an eternal solution to aging.

The evil Queen of the original tale externalises the threat to her beauty by attempting to eliminate the threat of Snow White. Ravenna, on the other hand, both internalises and externalises this threat to her beauty, by using magical methods to maintain her beauty and attempting to murder Snow White. Reading through the lens of *The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf, one can see a progression within the texts of how the ideology of beauty has developed: 'since "beauty" follows fashion, and the myth determines that when something female matures it is unfashionable' (Wolf 1990, p.69). An aging form of beauty, such as the one Ravenna possesses, becomes 'unfashionable'. When looking at Snow White revisions in *The Enchanted Screen*, Zipes describes how:

The mirror itself is never neutral and sets an arbitrary standard of beauty, for we know that there is no such thing as essential beauty. Nevertheless, the mirror appears to have some kind of divine authority and it only derives its power because the queen acknowledges its authority. (Zipes 2011, p.117)

The queen in *SWATH* acknowledges its authority, because as an aging woman she is all too aware that she is losing her power in society. The mirror is channelling societal terms of beauty, which do not include aging. In the postmodern version of *SWATH*, beauty becomes something that one can obtain through magical methods; the process of beauty has become commoditised. One may read this as a cultural progression in a society where cosmetics and cosmetic surgery are encouraged as socially acceptable ways of attaining and maintaining cultural expectations of beauty. As Kathryn Pauly Morgan states in her article, 'Women and the Knife: Cosmetic Surgery and the Colonization of Women's Bodies', 'cosmetic surgery entails the ultimate envelopment of the lived temporal reality of the human subject by technologically created appearances that are then regarded as "the real." Youthful appearance

triumphs over aged reality' (Morgan 1991, p.28). Cosmetic surgery is society's equivalent of Ravenna's supernatural powers and both are instrumental in maintain the ideological idealisation of beauty.

The fear aging and the commercialisation of this fear is echoed in *The Beauty Myth*: 'there are in the woman whose horror of wrinkles is so great that the lines around her eyes shine with sacred oil, whether at a party or while making love' (Wolf 1990, p.130). Beauty and the fight against aging in *SWATH* becomes achievable through dark magic, in a manner that is similar to how contemporary society advocates the use of beauty products and cosmetic surgery. Ravenna's fear of aging and her desperation to reverse the clock is very much understood by contemporary society where plastic surgery has been normalised. According to the *British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons*, the top three plastic surgery procedures of 2014 were breast augmentation, eyelid surgery and neck and face lifts (BAAPS 2015). Two of the top three female cosmetic surgeries relate to the aging process. The quest for beauty (be it through cosmetic surgery or murder/magic), has thus become a focal point, not only for female fairy tale character, but also for the contemporary woman.

Wolf speaks of beauty as a commodity in the post-World War II environment where, 'beauty was no longer just a symbolic form of currency; it literally *became* money' (Wolf 1990, p.21). This is similar to how beauty equates with power in the fairy tale genre. The consumerist aspect of the achievement of beauty through unnatural means is not limited to *SWATH*, as many modern fairy tales utilise the 'makeover' aspect (be it through magic or consumerism) such as *Enchanted* and *Mirror Mirror*. *SWATH* becomes a cultural vehicle that 'reflects and legitimates hegemonic beliefs surrounding gender and feminine beauty' (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.724). Morgan provides more understanding of this when discussing the prevalence of cosmetic surgery, 'women have traditionally regarded (and been taught to regard) their bodies, particularly if they are young, beautiful, and fertile, as a locus

of power to be enhanced through artifice and, now, through artefact' (Morgan 1991, p.34). Women are taught to regard and protect their youthful beauty as their ultimate attribute.

The commoditisation of the idealised beauty

There is an interesting correlation between the move from domesticity in the original *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* to a more focused concentration on beauty in *SWATH*. This emulates Wolf's description of how in pre-war magazines, women were told to strive for perfection as wife, mother and homemaker. Nevertheless, 'the definition of perfection, however, changes with the needs of employers, politicians, and, in the post-war economy that depended on spiralling consumption, advertisers' (Wolf 1990, p.64). Snow White in *SWATH* no longer needs to be skilled in the art of domesticity or submission but merely to be beautiful. To draw on Barthes from Chapter One, it is the correlation between Snow White's beauty with youth and nature that signifies that she is a good character. There is a tangible change in how beauty is treated within these texts. It has evolved based on cultural dictates. In the traditional version, it is treated as a natural state of being, whereas in the postmodern versions, beauty is treated as something that is attainable using the correct products and methods. This is evident through the heavily promoted scene of Ravenna in the mud bath, or through her supernatural powers reversing the aging process, showing how the quest for beauty has become commoditised.

This commoditisation is not just limited to cosmetic surgeons or to the cosmetic and fashion industries, but also to dieticians, hairdressers, personal trainers, beauticians and similar professions who 'provide services that can be bought; all these experts are perceived as administering and transforming the human body into an increasingly artificial and ever more perfect object' (Morgan 1991, p.31). Post-war ideologies became centred on beauty rather than domesticity. For Wolf the beauty myth originated, as 'a new ideology was

necessary that would compel the same insecure consumerism' (Wolf 1990, p.66), to target the customers of household products who had now entered the workforce. This changing culture aimed at women is supported by texts like *SWATH*. 'To paraphrase Friedan, why is it never said that the really crucial function that women serve as aspiring beauties is *to buy more things for the body?*' (Wolf 1990, p.66). *SWATH*, as a text, is a cog in the contemporary cycle of culture, feeding the consumerist ideals that impossible standards of beauty may be achievable through buying more products and services. An appearance of youthfulness is 'accessible to virtually all women who can afford that technology' (Morgan 1991, p.32). de Beauvoir states 'the young girl who in her mirror has seen beauty, desire, love, happiness, in her own features – animated she believes, with her own consciousness – will try all her life to exhaust the promises of that dazzling revelation' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.644).

Female perfection is exalted as the ultimate female mission in order to ensure happiness and stability, something that Ravenna is continuously trying to achieve. Beauty is the main means of procuring stability in the fairy tale genre, and so 'a woman's pursuit of beauty through transformation is often associated with lived experiences of self-creation, self-fulfilment, self-transcendence, and being cared for' (Morgan 1991, pp.34-35). The commoditisation of beauty means that the Lacanian ideal of an 'I', which is formed in the mirror can be achieved through products, treatments or supernatural practices. It is because of this need for beauty that Ravenna becomes evil. Beauty is power and is her quest to sustain the ideological imperative of remaining beautiful and powerful that makes her evil:

In the past, only those women who were perceived to be naturally beautiful (or rendered beautiful through relatively conservative superficial artifice) had access to forms of power and economic social mobility closed off to women regarded as plain or ugly or old. But now womanly beauty is becoming technologically achievable, a commodity for which each and

every woman can, in principle, sacrifice if she is to survive and succeed in the world, particularly in industrialized Western countries'. (Morgan 1991, p.40)

This notion of beauty becoming 'technologically achievable' is reminiscent of how Ravenna utilises dark magic, and the 'beauty' essences of young females to reverse the aging process. In this way, one can read that Ravenna's struggle mirrors that of real women in society, faced with the struggles of achieving and maintaining the ideology of beauty.

The active Snow White

One of the main progressive elements of *SWATH* is the more active role given to the Snow White character. In the traditional tale, Snow White (similar to Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty*), is the most passive of Disney princesses. She waits in a death-like slumber for true love's first kiss to revive her after the action has taken place. While for Wolf, a beautiful heroine is a contradiction because heroism is ever changing and beauty is generic and boring (Wolf 1990, p.59), contemporary fairy tales portray a beautiful heroine who is more dynamic than her traditional counterparts. This Snow White has been removed from the realm of domesticity. She does not tend to the dwarfs or woodland creatures. She no longer has to prove her feminine worth in terms of housework and docility, but rather her beauty, the attraction of two male suitors and her affiliation with the mythical creatures of the forest, ensure her creation as a new idealised princess.

The incarnation of Snow White in *SWATH* is a more active princess, which is more in line with modern revisions of fairy tales as discussed in a previous chapter on *Frozen*. Snow White in *SWATH* is described in the introductory voice-over as beloved throughout the kingdom 'as much for her defiant spirit as for her beauty' (Sanders, 2012). This is in direct contrast to Bacchilega's analysis of Snow White revisions where, "'Snow White" rarely has a voice of her own, and when she does speak, she merely accepts things as they are'

(Bacchilega 1997, p.35). However, it must be noted that Snow White in *SWATH* shows a very subdued form of defiance, as she does not appear overtly active or determined in the beginning of the film. Her escape is a providential turn of events. While in her cell, she pretends to be sleeping, in order to avoid the lecherous stares of the Queen's brother, as when he enters the cell there is a sense that it is with ill intent. Rather than remaining the traditional passive, slumbering princess who is submissive before his advances, she lashes out, harming him and escapes. One can read this as a break away from the traditional mould of passivity explored in previous chapters; she is not fully asleep/dead/passive. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the man advancing on her does not fit the idealised image of a 'prince', either physically or socially. The advances of the evil Queen's brother will not awaken her, or free her from captivity; she cannot gain anything from them. This is a point that is reiterated when it is the huntsman's kiss that awakens her from the curse.

In *SWATH*, Snow White is tricked into taking a bite of the poisoned apple by Ravenna and falls into a deep slumber. Interestingly, Ravenna does not take on the façade of an old hag, as in the traditional tale to trick Snow White but rather becomes one of her possible love interests, her childhood friend William. This may be read in many ways, the first being that taking on the form of an old hag would interfere with the importance of beauty in the representation of Ravenna. The audience must understand that Ravenna is beautiful, and that this is the most important trait for her character. Another interpretation is that this incarnation of Snow White is not as naïve as her traditional counterpart in accepting a poisoned apple from a stranger in such a perilous time. She is allowed more intelligence and common sense than is the norm of traditional princesses. It also helps to emphasise that this Snow White has more than one suitor in the persons of both the Duke's son William, and the huntsman Eric. Ultimately, it is not the noble William who awakens Snow White; the huntsman kisses her upon which she wakes up from the spell and rouses an army against Ravenna. Unlike other

contemporary revisions such as *Maleficent* and *Frozen*, the power to break the curse remains in the hands of male authority. However, it is the 'right type' of male authority. The huntsman is a flawed character, one who redeems himself. He is not of noble birth, but exerts his hyper-masculinity and so, unlike the previous sleeping Snow White scene, he has the attributes that enable him to awaken her. These attributes include his physical prowess and his ability to protect the princess. There is a subtle shift in that the male rescuer no longer needs to be noble but the princess still needs to be beautiful.

Snow White swaps the realm of domesticity for that of war and an army. She is a part of the army planning to defeat Ravenna. This is in contrast to the original story in which it was the dwarfs who slayed the evil Queen/Old Hag, while Snow White was oblivious, still waiting for the prince to awaken her. The speech that Snow White gives to stir the army is one of the most critiqued aspects of the film due to its confusing analogies: 'iron will melt, but it will writhe inside of itself!' (Sanders, 2012). Despite this convoluted 'call to arms', it has the desired effect and Snow White dons armour to lead a force to take back the kingdom. The physical representation of this contemporary Snow White is one akin to a warrior princess. Snow White's physical characteristics are traditionally accurate. She is 'constructed child-woman whose snow-white features and attitudes are assumed to conform to nature in a powerfully metaphoric way' (Bacchilega 1997, p.35). Differing from her traditional counterpart, however, this Snow White eschews feminine dress, demonstrating her more masculine qualities.

As previously stated in the context of *Frozen*, contemporary fairy tale revisions imbue princesses with more masculine characteristics such as involvement in war and diplomacy (England *et al* 2011, p.563). In the end, it is Snow White who slays Ravenna and restores the natural order through combat. The change of costume signifies the performative aspects of gender. This blurring of the gender characteristics is significant as it marks the evolution of

the representation of the female heroine in fairy tales. This can be seen in light of Judith Butler's contention that:

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one. (Butler, 1990, p.6)

Ravenna's transformation into a man, and Snow White's adoption of more masculine attributes, may be interpreted as creating a performative gender-ideology of women who, while needing to remain beautiful, have no problem in donning the roles, appearance and performative aspects of men. It also suggests that gender now is a fluid and performative category, which can no longer imprison women in an ideological straightjacket. It helps to emphasise how gender is a performance. While both characters take on male dress, they each nevertheless return to a more feminine construction: Ravenna back to herself and Snow White puts on a dress at the end to rule the kingdom.

Snow White attracts the mythical creatures in the forest, particularly that of Whiteheart the mystical stag, with one of the dwarfs claiming that Snow White 'is life itself and she will heal the land' (Sanders, 2012). Given that there is no explanation or premise as to why Snow White is declared 'life', one can only assume it is connected to her being the fairest in the land. Her beauty, youth and fertility are key. For Snow White, the magical nature of her youthful beauty allows her to tap into white magic and attracts magical creatures her as seen in the film. Snow White in armour is taking on the classical male role of a warrior prince defending the land. The concept of Snow White as life, recalls the traditional trope of the king and the land as one. Only through her reclaiming of the throne can the natural order be restored. There is a direct evocation then through the imagery of youth with fertility. This is in contrast to Ravenna whose aging beauty and evil attempts to retain this

beauty lay waste to the country. The attraction of the magical creatures to Snow White is reminiscent of many of the representations of the female. The animals help reinforce her status as the 'good' character and she is blessed by Whiteheart the stag. Like Cinderella in Chapter One, these creatures 'are accepted inducers of associations of ideas' (Barthes 1977, p.22). They help to construct her identity to the audience as being the good female character. This is reminiscent of how 'Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar emphasize that patriarchal images such as the "angel-woman" (Snow White) and the "monster-woman" (the Queen) place on female characters' and woman readers' potential' (Bacchilega 1997, p.31). The affiliation of these animals and imagery (as discussed in Chapter One using semiotics), helps to construct these polarising representations of fairy tale females. It helps reinforce the binary oppositions and the ideologies governing the females in the tale.

The voice of 'the other'

Concurrent with popular trends, *SWATH* delivers a form of context as to why the evil queen is truly wicked. Her story is given space in the narrative, which allows for certain sympathies to develop with the character. She has moved from the space of raging as a form of irrational feminine evil, which is part of the traditional structure, and instead is constructed as a product of her social and cultural status as an aging, beautiful woman. Modern fairy tales such as *SWATH* reflect how, for Wolf, 'women's writing is full to the point of heartbreak with the injustices done by beauty – its presence as well as its absence' (Wolf 1990, p.60). 'The other' is given a narrative in the story. This, in itself, is almost a deconstructive technique, as it takes away the privileged status afforded to the 'good' character, and allows for a questioning of the gender representations afforded by traditional fairy tales. It also provides valuable insight into how a female is categorised into the binary oppositions of good/evil, depending on how successful she is at upholding the existing ideologies. This voice of 'the other'

questions the logocentric inscription of the text, helping to question the 'making the logic of the argument, the demonstrably true or false claims, the center, while sending everything else off to the periphery as mere rhetoric or ornamentation, letting the logic lead the letter' (Derrida 1997, p.83).

The voice of Ravenna from the 'periphery' exposes the fallacy of the seemingly fixed centre. The loss or decline of beauty is an important consideration within fairy tales. 'The murderous actions taken by the stepmother remind readers of the symbolic lengths some women go to maintain or acquire beauty' (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.719). Given the current societal fixation on beauty, audiences can sympathise with the plight of Ravenna. It has already been extensively outlined how and why beauty has become so integral to the female fairy tale characters in Chapter One. *SWATH* destabilises this ideology by exposing a character whose identity was formed on the premise of the ideology, and the implications this can have on identity construction.

SWATH highlights the detrimental effect this idealisation of beauty can have on the aging female psyche. As stated, it provides us with some perspective on the evil nature of Ravenna through monologues and also analepses or flashbacks. One such flashback allows us to see how, as a beautiful young child, Ravenna was imbued with dark magical powers by her mother, as a means of utilising her beauty in order to protect and save her family. Both Ravenna and her beauty have been commoditised. The young Ravenna was still captured and taken from her family by a king, who desired her for her beauty. Beauty is the only means of female advancement in the fairy tale, while, paradoxically, it is also the cause of female degradation, jealousy and malignancy. It entraps and ensnares women into the Iron Maiden that is the ideology of beauty (Wolf 1991). As Grauerholz and Sperry state:

As women gain greater social status and independence, reliance on normative controls becomes more important to maintain gender inequality at structural and interpersonal levels.

In other words, as women's status in society is enhanced, there is likely to be a greater reliance on normative controls via value constructs such as the beauty ideal. (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.713)

Aging is inevitable, and so the female will ultimately fail in upholding her power. As Ravenna says to Snow White before she tries to kill her, 'you don't realise how lucky you are never to know what it is to grow old' (Sanders, 2012).

This new narrative perspective, from the previously silent stepmother figure, allows for a questioning of beauty as the core value at the centre of the fairy tale. De Beauvoir states that a woman is led into narcissism in two ways, the most important being 'that masculine activities are forbidden her. She is occupied, but she *does* nothing; she does not get recognition as an individual' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.641). As a woman she is unable to 'fulfil herself through projects and objectives, [and] is forced to find her reality in the immanence of her person' (de Beauvoir 1997, p641). Ravenna only has her beauty; it is her only source of power as it is inextricably linked to her supernatural powers. By showing Ravenna's struggle in upholding the social conforms of beauty, the text exposes the fallacy of placing beauty as the centre of the fairy tale structure governing the females within.

Woman as victim

Bacchilega writes how it is not surprising that 'different interpretations of "Snow White" tend to agree that its basic themes are female development and female jealousy' (Bacchilega 1997, p.31). *SWATH* also allows insight into the victimisation of the fairy tale females due to beauty and the idealisation of the fixed terms of standardised beauty. An aging beauty is a flawed and therefore is less valuable. The text allows us to investigate more clearly the detrimental effect that aging can have on the female psyche showing Ravenna's struggle to remain beautiful and retain her power:

Youth and (until recently) virginity have been “beautiful” in women since they stand for experiential and sexual ignorance. Aging in women is “unbeautiful” since women grow more powerful with time, and since the links between generations of women must always be newly broken: Older women fear young ones, young women fear old and the beauty myth truncates for all the female life span. Most urgently, women’s identity must be premised upon our “beauty” so that we will remain vulnerable to outside approval. (Wolf 1991, p. 14)

The presence and absence of beauty victimises the female characters, not only in their relationships, but also in the narrative of the tale. Grauerholz and Sperry in their study of the Grimms’ tales, show how ‘forty percent of these acts of victimisation are the direct result of the character’s physical appearance’ (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.719).

Snow White is victimised because of her beauty, by not only her stepmother but also by her step uncle through his untoward advances. Ravenna singles her out as a potential threat, even before it is confirmed that she is ‘the fairest’, and so locks her away. The culmination of the movie sees Ravenna attempting to kill Snow White in a bid for her heart as a means of ensuring her own eternal beauty. However, it is not just the principal female characters that are victimised because of their beauty. The secondary female characters are also victimised, as result of Ravenna’s need to feed on female essences in order to retain her splendour. In order to protect themselves from Ravenna, these characters mutilate their faces with tear like scars and those of their daughters as, ‘without beauty we are worthless to the queen’ (Sanders, 2012). Without this ideologically valued quality, they become invisible and live on the fringes of society. As demonstrated in *COAUS*, the lack of beauty can make a female inconsequential in the fairy tale genre.

Ravenna may easily be considered the most victimised character because of her physical appearance. Through an analepsis, we learn that her mother affiliates her beauty with magic as a means to protect the family through marriage: ‘this spell will make your

beauty your power and protection' (Sanders, 2012). Even then, she is still singled out for her beauty by royal pillagers, and torn away from her family. Though all these female characters are active – Ravenna is securing her own kingdom, Snow White in defending herself and the secondary female characters in removing their own physical vulnerability – they remain victims because of their feminine beauty. In this way, beauty as a commodity is problematic, as it makes the female vulnerable and consistently in need of male rescue and protection, but also the object of sometimes dangerous and threatening male advances. The ideology of beauty, and the multifaceted way in which it victimises women, ensures reliance on patriarchal society to keep them safe. However, as beauty ages, women may once more be open to victimisation, because, as Ravenna explains to the King on their wedding night, men use women and when they are done 'they toss us to the dogs like scraps' (Sanders, 2012). Reiterating the Marxist theory on commodity fetishism, the commodity value of the female becomes void, once the commodity value of her beauty is diminished by aging.

One can further explore the Marxist notion of use/exchange value using the thinking of Jean Baudrillard. 'Amongst Baudrillard's key themes is the idea that the Marxist distinction between use-value and exchange-value has collapsed in favour of the exchange of signs. Thus, a commodity is not simply an object with use-value for exchange but a commodity-sign' (Barker 2004, p.13). The commodity value of the new representation of the fairy tale female has changed, unlike the analysis in the *Bluebeard* tale, where the character had both a use and exchange value, and her virginity/beauty and reproductive power were integral to this dual valuation. In *SWATH*, Ravenna is an older, albeit stunning woman, and the king is not marrying her for her virginity, but solely because of her beauty. In this way, one can say that she has a symbolic value, 'the generation of symbolic value results from a constantly changing symbolic environment in which new demands for access to symbolic status are generated' (Elmore and Koch 2006, p.1). The symbolic value attached to Ravenna

as a character and her beauty provides status for the king, but also for Ravenna herself. Her beauty (and resulting power) is how she transitioned from being a peasant to sitting on a throne. 'Sign value emerges as the new key term for analyzing value in a consumer society, one in which the fetishism of commodities is complemented by a new fetishism attached only to the symbolic value of objects' (Elmore and Koch 2006, p.3). The fetishistic use value attached to the virginity of the female character in *Bluebeard* is replaced by the fetishistic symbolic value of Ravenna provided by her beauty:

In this system, —commodities are no longer defined by their use, but rather by what they signify. And what they signify is defined not by what they do, but by their relationship to the entire system of commodities and signs (Baudrillard 1970, 7). People no longer simply consume objects, but rather they consume objects laden with symbolic meaning, they consume objects, because objects signify more than their use. (Elmore and Koch 2006, p.13)

In light of the symbolic value attached to beauty as a means of power and the ultimate western goal, one can understand the prevalence of cosmetic surgery and 'tweaking' of appearance and the lengths which women will go to achieve this idealisation.

The mirror is an important trope that runs through most *Snow White* revisions. In *SWATH*, not only does it act as an impartial observer of the worth of Ravenna's beauty, but it is also linked to her status as a witch. The crux of Ravenna's identity is based on the initial formation of her identity and her ego. 'The function of the ego is; in other words, one of *mis-recognition*; of refusing to accept the fragmentation and alienation' (Homer 2005, p.25). Ravenna's ego disallows her to accept her aging body and so she must find ways with her supernatural powers to recapture her initial specular image and maintain her power. 'It is a realm of distortion and illusion. It is a realm in which a futile struggle takes place on the part of the ego to once more attain an imaginary unity and coherence' (Homer 2005, p.31). The mirror is related to the supernatural aspects of the text and is linked with how Ravenna's

identity is fixed in the visual reflection, which is the ideal 'I'. De Beauvoir states that a woman sees herself as an object, the reflection in the glass is really *her*. She imbues the reflection and the qualities reflected back to her with 'admiration and desire' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.643):

The mirror stage is a drama whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation – and, for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an “orthopaedic” form of its totality – and to the finally donned armour of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure. (Lacan 2006, p.78)

Ravenna invokes powers to retain her beauty and power by consulting with the black magic mirror, but also by stealing the essences and youth of beautiful young women in order to sustain her own beauty. Ravenna's need to uphold the societal expectation of beauty makes her a witch; a cannibalistic witch, feeding on the youth and beauty of young women.

For Wolf, 'women today are designated as the “beautiful” sex, which relegates them to a similarly useful preoccupation with protecting that “beauty”' (Wolf 1991, p.91). The narrative of *SWATH* revolves around Ravenna's quest to sustain her beauty and power, rather than on Snow White's procurement of a husband. Bacchilega outlines the importance of the mirror in the framing of the Snow White narrative, 'as with all mirrors, though, refraction and the shaping presence of a frame mediate the fairy tale's reflection. As it images our potential for transformation, the fairy tale refracts what we wish or fear to become' (Bacchilega 1997, p.28). The mirror becomes a symbolic instrument in which patriarchal norms and dictates are reflected and enforced for both the characters and the audience. As Zipes describes, the cinematic discourse on *Snow White* is important because it shows how filmmakers that have been touched by some aspect of *Snow White* have consciously and unconsciously tried to unravel the power of the mirror, trying to question the power that the mirror has, on not only

the queen, but also on the spectators (Zipes 2011, p.133). The mirror reinforces female competitiveness based on appearance. It is interesting that Morgan would draw on the Snow White tale when discussing cosmetic surgery:

When Snow White's stepmother asks the mirror "Who is fairest of all?" she is not asking simply an empirical question. In wanting to continue to be "the fairest of all," she is striving, in a clearly competitive context, for a prize, for a position, for power. The affirmation of her beauty brings with it privileged heterosexual affiliation, privileged access to forms of power unavailable to the plain, the ugly, the aged, and the barren. (Morgan 1991, p.35)

How the threat of aging formulates the evil feminine

The Ravenna character is extraordinarily beautiful. As a woman in her forties, she is the epitome of beauty, yet when she gazes in the mirror, she sees something different, and it is the fear of aging and loss of beauty that propels her to evil deeds. The character remains constantly attractive, with intermittent instances of a fluctuating aging process, so one can say the mirror is merely perpetuating the *fear* of aging, a point which underlines Wolf's ideas that when women in the work place were seen to be 'aging, they disappeared' (Wolf 1991, p.35). Upon aging, the mature fairy tale female is expected to disappear to make way for the young ingénue.

This is indicative of the cultural significance of beauty in society, and echoes how Grauerholz and Sperry speak of their study, in that it 'provides critical insight into ways in which children's literature has been shaped by political and social forces over time and yet continues to provide traditional gendered prescriptions for children' (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.715). *SWATH* is aimed at both children and adults and, as such, it has beauty ideals aimed at all female markets. The mirror endowed with societal expectations, is a patriarchal tool aimed at subjugating women by reducing their worth as a person based on their physical

appearance: 'the beauty myth is not about women at all. It is about men's institutions and institutional power' (Wolf 1991, p.13). It is generally the male-dominated advertising sector that decides on the traits comprise beauty in each particular epoch or age. More damaging in *SWATH* is the promotion of the *fear* of aging rather than the actual aging in the character of Ravenna.

This threat of aging is another reason why contemporary western culture feels the need to airbrush 'age' off maturing women in magazines, 'and when they feature celebrities who are over "sixty", "retouching artists" conspire to "help" beautiful women look more beautiful; i.e. less their age' (Wolf, 1991, p.82). *SWATH* is helping to reinforce this through Ravenna's changing physical appearance, promoting the cultural about the aging female and her place in society as a beautiful woman: 'to airbrush age off a woman's face is to erase women's identity, power, and history' (Wolf 1991, p.83). In contemporary culture, this airbrushing or photo-shopping increases woman's symbolic value. By promoting this cultural fascination with youthful beauty and with the preoccupation of retaining this beauty, *SWATH* is part of a cultural structure, which helps to subjugate women. This representation of the evil queen and her fluctuating aging process, a new slant on the traditional ideology is promoted. The terror over the female aging process is in sharp focus:

The fact that women's beauty is particularly salient in tales in the latter part of the twentieth century suggest that normative social controls (such as the internalization of a feminine beauty ideal) may have become increasingly important over the course of the twentieth century as external constraints on women's lives diminished. We do not propose that there is a direct relationship between cultural values concerning feminine beauty and women's behaviour and identities, but the feminine beauty ideal may operate indirectly as a means of social control insofar as women's concern with physical appearance (beauty) absorbs resources (money, energy, time) that could otherwise be spent enhancing their social status. (Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p.723)

The terror of aging promoted by *SWATH* is a means of further subjugation of the female; now one must be beautiful, submissive and young, and one must find a means to retain this acceptable version of beauty.

This mirrors how Wolf describes the commerciality of beauty. It has now become a commodity, and the promotion of the terror of aging feeds directly into the capitalising of this terror. This terror is mirrored in contemporary society where Morgan states that one explanation as to why women who subject themselves to pain and the possible side effects of cosmetic surgery risks, 'that might include her own death is that her access to other forms of power and empowerment are or appear to be so limited that cosmetic surgery is the primary domain in which she can experience some semblance of self-determination' (Morgan 1991, p.42). This terror of female aging in society is mirrored in *SWATH*, a terror that may be curtailed with artifice, be that with surgery or magic. One may say then, that the evolving and developing ideology of beauty is, 'that which depends upon a system of norms, regulating society and therefore is capable of varying from one social structure to another, belongs to culture' (Derrida 1997, p.216). There are contradictions at work in the text. The film appears to be portraying powerful women who have agency and are not as passive as their predecessors. However, in actuality, through close reading, the representations and the importance of beauty are validating the old patriarchal attitudes, which define a woman in terms of her physical appearance.

The monstrous maternal

Although *SWATH* firmly lies within the fairy tale genre, Ravenna as a character can be characterised as the monstrous feminine in multiple ways. Barbara Creed in her book, *The Monstrous Feminine*, utilises Julia Kristeva's work when discussing the representation of the female in horror movies. Some analogies can be drawn with the character of Ravenna, which

allows for a more thorough examination of her as a character and her identity construction. Creed draws on Kristeva's notion of the abject, the human reaction to a breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of distinction between the self and the other (Felluga 2011). Within the context of the horror genre, Creed draws on the examples of the corpse and bodily wastes as well as the monstrous feminine to explain the abject (Creed 1993, p.14). Analysing *SWATH*, one may argue that is the aging process that is creative of the monstrous feminine: Ravenna. The confrontation of Ravenna with her diminishing beauty helps to highlight the youthful fertile beauty of Snow White, and so 'although the subject must exclude the abject, the abject must, nevertheless be tolerated for that which threatens to destroy life also helps to define life' (Creed 1993, p.9). In this female binary opposition, Ravenna is the necessary reaction to Snow White; and conversely, Snow White's youthful beauty can only be understood through Ravenna's aging.

Creed further discusses how 'within a biblical context, the corpse is also utterly abject. It signifies one of the most basic forms of pollution – the body without a soul. As a form of waste it represents the opposite of the spiritual, the religious symbolic' (Creed 1993, p.10). Ravenna has discarded her humanity in order to sustain her beauty; she becomes cannibalistic in her devouring of essences of young women, because 'when a woman stays young and beautiful forever, the world is hers' (Sanders, 2012). Reiterating her break from the 'spiritual symbolic' is her affiliation with the ravens and other demonic animals, an affiliation that further enhances her status as a witch. It is in these ways that one can read Ravenna as similar to the abject found in the horror genre. 'The function of the monstrous remains the same – to bring about an encounter between the symbolic order and that which threatens its stability' (Creed 1993, p.11). The aging Ravenna threatens the patriarchal order, in her deception and persecution of Snow White in trying to keep her beauty. The voice given to Ravenna, exposing her struggle in the fairy tale structure, governed by beauty as the

'centre', destabilises the structure and the purity of the ideology of beauty. To draw from Morgan using an artificial means of enhancing stereotypical beauty (be it through surgery or magic), may be necessary for a woman's material, economic and social survival (Morgan 1991, p.42). To link back to de Beauvoir as Morgan does, 'it may also be the way that she is able to choose, to elect a kind of subjective transcendence against a backdrop of constraint, limitation, and immanence (in de Beauvoir's sense of the term)' (Morgan 1991, p.43). She marries the King, Snow White's father, on the presumption that she is a young beautiful woman. Instead, she is a powerful witch, who is desperately trying to grasp any power she can by retaining her beauty, and so threatens the stability of the natural order. When discussing the representations of female killers in the horror genre, Creed states that:

the definition of sin/abjection as something which comes from *within* opens up the way to position woman as deceptively treacherous. She may appear pure and beautiful on the outside but evil may, nevertheless reside within – that is so popular within patriarchal discourses about women's evil nature. (Creed 1993, p.42)

This is an interesting statement as, to be included in the fairy tale narrative, the female must be beautiful, as outlined in Chapter One. Ravenna's evil nature is initially overshadowed by her extraordinary beauty. It is her inability to fade into the background with her degenerating looks that causes Ravenna to become evil, and also threatens Snow White's life. Her quest for beauty, and therefore power, mirrors how Morgan states that 'present practices in cosmetic surgery also provide an extremely public and quantified reckoning of the cost of "beauty," thereby demonstrating how both the processes and the final product are part of a larger nexus of women's commodification' (Morgan 1991, p.44).

Both the traditional evil Queen, and the character of Ravenna, are among the few Disney female villains who actively strive for their own advancement in a society which values youth, rather than disappearing like the natural mothers in the stories, or becoming a

benevolent figures such as fairy godmothers. To refer back to Creed, and the idea of positioning woman as 'deceptively treacherous', this is concurrent with the evolving ideology of beauty. Ravenna uses supernatural methods to retain her beauty and deceive the king, both in the falsified rescue and in her appearance. This further complicates the ideology of beauty in modern fairy tales. It has evolved from a natural state of being, to an idealisation that can be acquired through magic or products.

Creed points out that another way 'in which the horror film illustrates the work of abjection is in the construction of the maternal figure as abject' (Creed 1993, p.11). As in fairy tale tradition of the evil mother figure, Ravenna rejects the role of mother offered to her through her marriage to the King. One can suppose that because her beauty is artificial she is disassociated from the realm of nature, which is so equated with the maternal:

Rather than aspiring to self-determined and woman-centered ideals of health or integrity, women's attractiveness is defined as attractive-to men; women's eroticism is defined as either non-existent, pathological, or peripheral when it is not directed to phallic goals; and motherhood is defined in terms of legally sanctioned and constrained reproductive service to particular men and to institutions such as the nation, the race, the owner, and the class-institutions that are, more often than not, male-dominated. (Morgan 1991, p.32)

To embrace maternity would mean that she could become a good character, such as in *Maleficent*. From the plot, it is clear that she is jealous and cannot stand the innocent uncorrupted beauty of Snow White, or the idea that she might usurp her place as being the most beautiful, and by extension, the most powerful. 'In these films the maternal figure is constructed as the monstrous-feminine. By refusing to relinquish her hold on her child she prevents it from taking up its proper place in relation to the symbolic' (Creed 1993, p.12). This feeds directly into the notion of women competing in fairy tales. The aged female has no place in the fairy tale apart from fairy godmother, dead mother, or evil entity.

'The monstrous-feminine draws attention to the "frailty of the symbolic order" through her evocation of the natural, animal order and its terrifying associations with the passage all human beings must inevitably take from birth through life to death' (Creed 1993, p.83). This is what the character Ravenna encapsulates, namely the fear of the aging of her beauty. It highlights the how women will always ultimately fail in their role as the perfect female, as they too will age, and lose their social acceptable connotations of beauty. Creed further states 'woman is not, by her nature, an abject being. Her representation in popular discourse as monstrous is a function of the ideological project of the horror film – a project designed to perpetuate the belief that woman's monstrous nature is inextricably bound up with her difference as man's sexual other' (Creed 1993, p.83). This can be further emphasised in the *Snow White* mirror trope when one considers how 'although the mother/woman is the mirror into which men look to find their "other" and thus their identity, she has no identity of her own' (Zipes 1997, p.196). *SWATH* while exposing the fallacy of beauty as the centre of the fairy tale also promotes this fear, further subjugating and controlling the female audience.

The need for Ravenna to uphold her beauty and defeat the aging process is the crux of her evil nature, and it is the reason why she becomes a witch. While the earlier chapters of this thesis provides valuable insight into the female as commodity and beauty as commodity, this analysis of *SWATH* offers culturally relevant insight into how the beautification process also is commoditised. The female spectator cannot use magic or supernatural powers to delay or subvert the aging process, and so turns to the cosmetic industries to attempt to do so. Part of the popularity of this text can be attributed to how it speaks to female society at large. As Zipes describes, 'Filmic representations of mirrors reflecting beauty as in the case of the fairy tale about Snow White are clearly most delightful and helpful when they endeavour to crack those mirrors and compel us to look a bit askance at all mirrors that claim to possess the

truth' (Zipes 2011, p.133). *SWATH* as a text also provides an important perspective into the detrimental effects this ideology has on the female; it shows how the process of achieving this idealisation of beauty can have on the female, be it through magic or surgery.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this thesis was to undertake an exploration of the ideologies governing women in fairy tales. It also set out to analyse the effect of these tales on female identity construction, and to examine the ways in which the representation and agency of women in contemporary society has evolved as fairy tales have entered the twenty-first century. It must be acknowledged that this research is not, and indeed cannot, represent a comprehensive overview of the polysemic representations of women found in modern fairy tales. Through the selected texts, this thesis seeks to provoke further discussion and debate on women's representation in fairy tales and contemporary society.

Passivity/Submission

The ideology of female passivity and submission is one that all the texts addressed, either explicitly or implicitly. As discussed in the *Cinderella* text, it is the fact that the Cinderella character is docile and submissive, in conjunction with her physical beauty, that makes her worthy of the patriarchal happy ending. Indeed, in *Bluebeard*, the warning of female curiosity allows both the female character, and also the reader, to realise that in the perfect idealisation of woman, curiosity is an unwanted trait, one that would be better suppressed to avoid punishment. This enables total submission to male authority. The role of passivity is one that affects the identity construction of the female characters, in that they inertly accept their fates, and do not question their place in society. This helps to construct and enforce the female role

as commodity. The degradation of curiosity means that the female cannot think outside of her given role. The idealisation of passivity is one that becomes exposed and questioned when addressed in contemporary fairy tales. For Iris, in *COAUS*, she struggles against the inherent associations and lack of opportunity due to her lack of standardised beauty. Both Iris and Clara find it difficult to accept passively their designated roles because of their physical traits. For the female figure in *The Bloody Chamber*, it is the passivity of her character that enables her role as commodity. This is further complicated by the self-awareness she expresses in committing herself to the marriage, as she knows she is marrying him for wealth and is just another possession to him.

This idealisation of a submissive and passive nature opens the women to violence in many ways. The perpetuation of passivity in the female, with the implied threat of violence should they transgress, is essential to maintaining patriarchy. The female characters in *Bluebeard* and *The Bloody Chamber* are condemned to death for their curiosity, because curiosity is akin to activity or agency. Passivity is also linked to sexual violence in the tales: there is an inference of Clara being raped in *COAUS*; there is a violent marriage consummation in *The Bloody Chamber*; there is the untoward advance on Snow White in *SWATH* and of course there is Ravenna's telling point about women being used and then tossed to the dogs like scraps (Sanders, 2012). Such instances emphasise how women are passive sexual objects to be consumed and discarded. The clearest example of the violence that may be inflicted on the passive female is undoubtedly through the *Sleeping Beauty* trope, as discussed in Chapter 6 using the *Maleficent* text. The vicious violation of the unconscious Maleficent emphasises how the promotion of passivity/submission/unconsciousness as an ideal state for women in fairy tales, denudes the female of free will and makes her susceptible to male violence. Without access to free will and without the ability to say no, any unwarranted sexual advances can be seen as a form of rape.

In addition, while *Maleficent* is not explicit in condemning the traditional narrative of *Sleeping Beauty*, its treatment through the voice of Maleficent emphasises the violence to which passivity (or in the case of the text, unconsciousness), can lead, and the experience of such aggression is often the nodal point in a character becoming evil. In addition, in a more subtle way, the hesitation of Prince Phillip in kissing the sleeping Aurora opens up a dialogue of responsibility, which is an important commentary in today's society. Through deleting the free will of the female characters, these characters are further aligned as commodities. One can see through the analysis how modern tales are exposing and engaging with the subject of female commodification. *The Bloody Chamber* explored the implications of how the character aligns and views herself in this role of commodity through the male gaze of the Marquis. She becomes implicit in this role, as she has exchanged her virginity for wealth and status. Her inactive and inert role means that she is unable to recoup any agency for herself, and so it is her active mother who must save her.

The active female

The issue of passivity has been further explored through the modern interpretative texts, where there is often an active woman present, who can be seen to threaten the patriarchal structure. An active female nature is something that traditional fairy tales either warn against, as in *Bluebeard*, or ignore, as in other tales wherein submission and docility are required attributes in the female character. The representation of the active female is very much present in modern fairy tales, which threaten and dismantle the hierarchal power structure of patriarchy. One can see the progression of the female figure into a more dynamic presence throughout these revisions. In *COAUS*, the freeing of the character Iris from the constraints of the paralysing ideology of beauty, allows her to become a more independent and thoughtful character, and one who makes her own life choices. The active natural mother in *The Bloody*

Chamber dismantles the patriarchal structure of the tale, and gives agency back to the female, where the mother is the rescuer rather than the traditional male figure. As the analysis throughout this thesis has shown, the presence of an active woman is a deconstructive gesture in terms of the hierarchal power of the male world.

The modern filmic texts evoke different aspects in their varying incarnations of the active female. Female agency becomes more prominent in these interpretations. *Frozen* provides female characters who struggle against the previous Disney princess depictions, and actively pursue their own life choices; for Elsa it is the embracing of her powers and for Anna, it involves the rescue of her sister. It is familial love that saves the sisters and breaks the curse, and at a broader level, this is a narrative empowerment of female agency. *Maleficent* offers a different perspective on the active woman, showing how the patriarchal society had to ‘ground’ the free and dynamic Maleficent by taking away her wings and removing her threat to the human world. The film demonstrates her ability to rise above such victimisation and her designated evil character role, which the narrative had offered to her. Again, agency is handed back to the female sphere when true love’s kiss is found in the love between Maleficent and Aurora.

Contemporary fairy tales are subtly changing the dynamic of traditional female relations, promoting love and unity between women rather than the traditional discord and malignancy, even outside of biological deterrents. *SWATH* is an exception to the tales analysed in this regard. Although it does portray active females, both in Snow White raising an army to take back her kingdom, and also in Ravenna’s refusing to be discarded because she no longer embodies the perfect idealised feminine beauty, as a text, it concentrates on female discord and competition based on physical appearance. However, again one can see that agency is transferred to the feminine sphere, as it is only Snow White who can defeat Ravenna. The space in the narrative afforded to Ravenna allows for a shared context, as well

as a different perspective, and for some understanding for her actions. The active woman and female agency found in modern fairy tales point towards an evolution in the representation of the female figures, providing not only representations of active women, and examples of female agency, but also a form of context in terms of how and why some of the female characters became evil.

The Ideology of Beauty

Throughout the analysis of the tales chosen in this study, one can see the attribution of the importance of beauty to the female character. It is shown to be the ultimate female attribute, and one that would ensure a patriarchal happy ending for the women in the tales. Beauty is a dominant trope in these stories, and ideologically it has a broader remit, as if one does not naturally possess beauty, it can be acquired, in the tales, through the agency of magic or a fairy godmother, be she good or evil. In real life, there is a parallel to this, as a form of idealised beauty can be enhanced by cosmetic products or, indeed, by cosmetic surgery. The exploration of the traditional tale *Cinderella* in Chapter One showed how the reader understands and internalises the meaning and importance of beauty. This analysis also showed that since youthful beauty is indicative of a good character, the natural mother has to vacate the narrative. As an aging woman, she would fail the standards of beauty and so needs to be removed in order to uphold the idealisation of an aspirational female. The temporal and transient nature of beauty as an ideology is one that contemporary fairy tales address in a significant manner. In *COAUS*, the affiliation of ideology with art and the tulip crisis emphasises the transient nature of beauty, and the absurdity of placing such importance on something that is objective and fleeting. While some of the contemporary revisions challenge aspects of the traditional ideologies and traditional representations, the ideology of beauty is

more problematic, given our societal fixation on, and propagation of, standardised norms of beauty.

The Bloody Chamber emphasises how the male gaze helps to construct female identity and also woman's relation to her own body. This reduction of the female's worth to the male gaze mirrors how the value construct of feminine beauty operates as a normative constraint, restraining women's personal freedom, and laying the 'ground work for a circumscription of women's potential for power and control in the world' (Fox cited in Grauerholz and Sperry 2003, p712). The analysis of *Frozen* showed that, while in some aspects, the text is progressive, changing the representation of the female characters, it could still be said to be guilty of propagating the idealisation of stereotypical beauty and feminine gender performativity. The ideology of beauty (and in traditional tales the connexion between beauty, youth and virginity), is very much linked to the status of commodity in both *Bluebeard* and *The Bloody Chamber*, showing how it places an extra fetishist value on the female as commodity in the texts. Although the *Maleficent* text provides no explicit commentary on the meaning of beauty in the story, nevertheless the characters are still perfect representations of societal norms of beauty.

Contemporary culture dictates that for commercial success, the characters portrayed on screen need to meet the stereotypical criteria of beauty. This propagation of the ideology of beauty in this text is stressed by Wolf, when she describes how girls learn that stories do not happen to women who are not beautiful (Wolf 1991, p.61). One can say the filmic representations are reinforcing the ideology of beauty more strongly than are their literary counterparts, as it is the single most important female attribute in modern fairy tales. This is unlike traditional tales, which also promoted ideologies such as domesticity. It is in *SWATH* that the importance of beauty becomes truly exposed in the modern fairy tales analysed. It highlights the contemporary fixation on beauty, and the detrimental effects this can have on

the female psyche. In a conflicting fashion, it simultaneously promotes this idealisation of beauty, using extremely beautiful actresses, and showing how beauty can be achieved through various practises such as supernatural acts of evil. As a text, it promotes the terror of aging through the character of Ravenna, further reinforcing how a female must fear the aging process, and providing a new perspective on the normative control of beauty for the audience.

The textual and contextual analyses in this thesis demonstrate how the ideologies governing women can channel their identify-construction into the binary oppositions of good and evil. The voice of the previously silent female in contemporary fairy tales proclaims that a woman may be termed good or evil, depending on how well she upholds the prevailing ideologies. Activity and age in the representation of the female character are causal factors in their 'evil' character, as 'every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences' (Derrida 1982, p.11); hence, if to be a pretty, young, child-bearing woman is a societal good, then by definition, to be less than pretty, older woman who is past the age of child-bearing must be evil. The voice of the silent half of the binary oppositions questions the preceding ideologies that helped to construct the evil identity, emphasising how ideology helps constitute binary oppositions.

While one can argue the merits of some of the ideologies positioning women in fairy tales, such as Perrault's intention to endow children with social manners, ultimately it is because they are indicative of a general attitude of subjecting women that they become detrimental to constructions of female identity. Drawing on Eagleton, one can say that passivity or beauty, 'need not be ideological; it becomes so when, for example, it begins to engage questions of sexual power, beliefs about gender roles and so on' (Eagleton 1991, p.8). While these ideologies in isolation may not be negative, it is because they are a part of an

attitude and a movement in the pursuit of subjecting the female gender that they become damaging.

In conclusion, the analysis of the representation of female identity in this thesis is one that offers a greater understanding of the social constraints and demands on women. It examines and demonstrates how fairy tales are a conduit for these ideologies. For this reason, the analysis confirms the fairy tale genre as a field that is vital in the discussion of feminist topics and social concerns with regard to issues of gender identity. As Bacchilega states:

Increasingly, the culture industry can depend on and be challenged by adult audiences who want fairy tale films to incorporate the elements people know were part of the pre-Disney genre, or whose immediate recognition of the fairy-tale icons of popular cultural memory gives rise to ambivalence, a double take that is not feeding simply into nostalgia, but moving outward to multiple links in the fairy-tale web. (Bacchilega 2013, p.76)

The texts analysed illustrate how contemporary fairy tales are attempting to discuss the ideologies affecting female identities, and this study has investigated the implications of this development for wider society. Given the wide spread popularity of fairy tales, and their many adaptations, this research offers a glimpse into the evolving ideologies and representations of women, which contemporary fairy tales employ. It is a stepping-stone in the ever-evolving school of fairy tale scholarship, opening up new avenues for future research, for example, an analysis of fairy tale tropes in social media, and their influence on the virtual self. In addition, given the rapidly inclining life span of modern women, new representations in fairy tales are needed to accommodate this, in conjunction with more feminist and gender analysis on aging.

One can see from the analysis, that contemporary fairy tales, while they are still responsible for imposing ideologies, are also the site of change, arming the audience with potentially liberating tools such as the new representations of women that they afford and the

questioning of ideologies and female identities. In this respect, one can say that culture is indeed producing the text, as the contemporary fairy tale genre, is producing texts that reflect and question the struggles and lives of women in society today. To reiterate Haase's quote, 'So who owns fairy tales? To be blunt: I do. And you do. We can each claim fairy tales for ourselves' (Haase 1999, p.361). While the female characterisation and the ideologies that contemporary fairy tales afford us may be contradictory, they are evolving, and show how women are claiming the fairy tale as a site of struggle to develop new representations of themselves in society.

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