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SEXUALITY AND GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY RETELLINGS
OF *SNOW WHITE*
MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to investigate the representation of sexuality and gender in four 20th century retellings of the Grimms' *Snow White*: *Snow White* by Donald Barthelme, *The Snow Child* by Angela Carter, *Snow, Glass, Apples* by Neil Gaiman and *The Tale of the Apple* by Emma Donoghue. The main purpose of this thesis is to compare the retellings with the traditional fairy tale in order to see what kind of choices have been made by the contemporary authors to introduce contemporary views on sexuality and gender into the story and to what extent have they been entered into dialogue with fairy-tale scholarship.

The thesis consists of an introduction, two core chapters and a conclusion. The introduction will briefly comment on the works of the brothers Grimm, their relationship with fairy-tale scholarship and introduce the authors of the retellings this paper analyses.

The theoretical framework of the paper will be laid out in chapter one which elaborates on the nature and functions of fairy-tale retellings and their relationship with feminism. In addition to that, the first chapter explores the representation of sexuality and gender in Grimms' fairy tales, providing a backdrop necessary for analysing the retellings.

The empirical chapter consists of the comparison of the traditional tale and its retellings. The chapter will look into the similarities and differences in the representation of sexuality and gender in the the Grimms' version of *Snow White* and its retellings and determine the instances where the authors have entered into dialogue with fairy-tale scholarship.

The results of the study will be presented in the conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Where there is language, there are stories and storytelling has always played a significant role in human experience. The fairy tale stands out from other types of narratives because of its simplicity and pervasiveness. With its easily remembered plots and stereotypical characters, the fairy tale has entertained generations of people. Each of those has contributed to this patchwork of a genre and thus it is impossible to determine the exact origins of the genre. As J.R.R. Tolkien (1949: para 12) has noted: "The history of fairy-stories is probably more complex than the physical history of the human race, and as complex as the history of human language". There are no original stories, but variations upon variations born at different times and social conditions.

Though the abundance of folk material may seem intimidating, it has not stopped people from attempting to collect and preserve them for the future generations. The most well-known work comes from the 19th century. On December 20, 1812, Jacob and Wilhem Grimm published the first volume of the first edition of their *Nursery and Household Tales* (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen*). The collection included 86 folk tales. Two years later, the second volume followed with 70 additional stories. Those two volumes went through several reprints during the Grimms' lifetime and the final version included 200 tales and 10 "Children's Legends" (Ashliman 2010).

200 years later, the world is still fascinated by the tales collected by the brothers Grimm. In order to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the publication of the first volume of Grimms' fairy tales, the program GRIMM 2013 was launched in Germany and throughout this year, a great number of fairy-tale related cultural events will take place all over the country. The first of those, a Grimm brothers' congress was held in the end of 2012 and academics from all over the world gathered together to discuss their work (Müürsepp 2013: para 1).

The Grimms' fairy tales have influenced the Western consciousness greatly. However, the tales have been surprisingly resistant towards the societal change that has taken place over the centuries and they still include behavioural patterns characteristic to the 19th century. Since the latter has had a great influence on our collective consciousness, the ideology encoded in the Grimms' tales can often go unnoticed. Since the 1960s, scholars have conducted extensive research into this matter. Of the four main perspectives in fairy-tale scholarship, Freudian, Jungian, Marxist and feminist, the latter appears to stand out the most, as fairy tales have always touched upon the topic of gender. Not only does the feminist fairy-tale scholarship point out the problematic elements in the traditional tales, it also communicates with writers who produce contemporary retellings which often challenge the traditional narrative in order to introduce contemporary views on topics such as sexuality and gender and this synergy will be the focus of this thesis as well.

The thesis will look into the representation of sexuality and gender in four 20th century retellings of the Grimms' *Snow White* in order to see how the portrayal of those two concepts has changed in comparison to the traditional tale by the brothers Grimm. In order to demonstrate the diversity of contemporary fairy-tale retellings, the thesis discusses two stories by male authors, two by female authors with different literary backgrounds and the texts come from different time periods. Firstly, the thesis will look into the short novel *Snow White* (1967) by an American postmodernist writer Donald Barthelme (1931-1989). In addition to *Snow White*, his better-known works include *The Dead Father* (1975) and *The King* (1990) and in all three novels, Barthelme uses folk tales and legends in order to discuss topics such as politics, consumerism and sexual freedom in the 20th century society (Herrero-Olaizola 1998: 1). Barthelme's style utilizes disconnected narrative and discards traditional plot structures. In his works, Barthelme tends to take elements from both high and low culture and mix them together to provide the reader with a more

multifaceted view of the society. *Snow White* consists of a multitude of short chapters that document the thoughts of the characters during the time Snow White spends with the dwarves. Barthelme's story follows Snow White's daily life as a modern woman enjoying the fruits of mass culture while trying to find her place in a changing society.

Secondly, the thesis will discuss the short story *The Snow Child* by a renowned English feminist author Angela Carter (1940-1992) whose fairy-tale related work has had a great impact on feminist fairy-tale scholarship and thus it has been studied extensively. Carter had a very close relationship with fairy tales. Before publishing her own revisions, she immersed herself in the genre by translating the work of Charles Perrault. *The Snow Child* was first published in *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), which is one of Carter's most celebrated short story collections. In this collection, Carter returns to the dark, violent and sexual content of the peasant tales and rewrites fairy tales in the light of female empowerment. Carter demonstrates the controversial nature of the traditional tales by exposing the patriarchal ideology encoded in them. In *The Snow Child*, Carter presents the reader with a compact gothic retelling of *Snow White* that highlights the inequality of the power relationships in the traditional tale by deromanticizing it completely.

The writings of English mainstream fantasy author Neil Gaiman (born 1960) who is mostly known for his work on the comic *Sandman* and the novels *American Gods*, *Stardust*, *Coraline* and *Good Omens* (co-written with Terry Pratchett), have gradually started to enter academic discussion. Gaiman uses fairy tale motifs throughout most of his work and his writings have also been studied by feminist critics: 2012 saw the publication of the first Gaiman-related essay collection *Feminism in the Worlds of Neil Gaiman*. Gaiman's *Snow, Glass, Apples* was first published in 1994 and it tells the story of Snow White from the Queen's perspective. While staying true to the main plot of the Grimms'

tale, Gaiman's gothic retelling also challenges the traditional setup of the story by showing the Queen in a more favourable light while turning Snow White into a vampiric murderess.

Lastly, the thesis will analyse *The Tale of the Apple* by Emma Donoghue (born 1969) which was published in the young adult collection *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997). Emma Donoghue is an Irish lesbian feminist author who is mostly known for her 2010 international bestseller *Room*, which was also a finalist for the Man Booker Prize. "In her fairy-tale retellings, Donoghue [...] uncovers the underlying assumptions of the classical versions as she explores "deviant" or "perverse" alternatives which challenge stereotypical representations of gender roles and sexual desire and derail the straight path of female destiny encoded in the tales" (De La Rochere 2009: 13). Donoghue's *The Tale of the Apple* employs Snow White as the narrator and concentrates on the relationship between her and the Queen.

In order to analyse these four stories, the thesis will first elaborate on the origin, nature and function of fairy-tale retellings and their feminist agenda. It will then proceed to provide a backdrop for the analysis of the revisionist retellings by discussing the representation of sexuality and gender in the fairy tales by the brothers Grimm with extra emphasis on *Snow White*. This section will comment on the editorial choices made by the brothers Grimm in order to instil the 19th century views on religion, morals and social order in their readers. The main body of the work will conduct a close reading of all four revisions of *Snow White* and concentrate on comparing the contemporary retellings with the views and themes in Grimms' fairy tales in order to see what kind of choices have been made by the authors to overthrow the traditional setup and to introduce contemporary views on sexuality and gender to the traditional fairy tale.

The thesis will use some suggestions for analysing fairy-tale retellings provided by Hilary S. Crew (2002: 92): the paper will comment on the narrative strategies and

conventions and how the stories represent power relations between genders, who is telling the story and from what position. It will also explore to what extent the stories resist ideologies encoded into traditional tales. In addition to commenting on the discarded, transformed and added material and the patterns that emerge in the revisionist retellings, the thesis will also look for traces of feminist fairy-tale scholarship in order to see how and to what degree academic research may have influenced this particular type of literature.

1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 The History and Function of Fairy-Tale Retellings

1.1.1 The Fairy Tale and its Retellings

Fairy-tale retellings became the focus of academic research quite recently, but the stories that we see as the source material which contemporary reworkings draw on were told and retold innumerable times, so that every fairy tale as we know it is, in fact, a retelling. The fairy tale springs from the oral tradition, so each storyteller told their own version, which varied from performance to performance and which was then reworked again by others who passed on the story. Thus, we cannot pin down the sources and when we talk about fairy tales, we cannot use the term 'original fairy tale', because this concept is almost impossible to apply to this genre. Therefore, we should consider fairy tales not as having a linear development, but as networks of hypertexts (Joosen 2011: 10). Fairy tales and their reworkings form a complicated web of texts that are all linked and depend on each other.

The fairy tale's endurance can be connected to its thematic components. As Julie Sanders (2005: 83) notes, fairy tales offer archetypal stories that can be re-used and recycled by different ages and cultures. The characters and the stories are not restricted by social, cultural, geographical or temporal boundaries, instead, they are making themselves available for 'other versions' (Sanders 2005: 84). As Sanders continues to explain, this has largely to do with the abstract way fairy tales present themselves. Once upon a time can mean any time as the tales are not tied to a certain context and thus a story that was told by medieval peasants can be tansformed and adjusted to contemporary standards. Christina Bacchilega (1997: 7) also touches upon this aspect: "In the middle ages, folk tales served more of an emancipatory function because they expressed the problems and desires of the

underprivileged; in modern times, the fairy tale has more often than not been "instrumentalized" to support bourgeois and/or conservative interests". However, the mid-20th century brought about new developments in the society and since then, the conservative aspect of fairy tales has been overshadowed by their liberating function, as people turned to fairy tales in order to voice their disagreement with the values they represented and rewrite them to serve their own purpose.

It can be said that the fairy tale owes greatly to its malleable nature. Its persistence derives from its ability to be adapted according to the historical and social environments it finds itself in. The fairy tale is prone to adopt characteristics of other genres: "The structure and style of traditional tales have been adapted in countless processes (e.g., novelization, versification, and picturebook adaptation), and the content of the best-known tales has been transformed in the form of parodies, updates, role reversals, sequels, and prequels" (Joosen, 2011: 2). One interesting example of such fusions is perhaps the romance novel which keeps imitating and perpetuating prototypes borrowed from the fairy tale, even though, as Karen E. Rowe (1979: 240) points out, the gap between social practice and romantic idealization keeps expanding and the enjoyment the readers get is widely seen as purely nostalgic or escapist.

A considerable number of contemporary retellings are aimed at children and this material should also be in the focus of academic interest, since they "/.../ still produce certain models of social practice and reinforce cultural beliefs and ideologies shared in the Western world" (Malarte-Feldman 2003: 210). Children receive the legacy of those stories and they share it with adults. Parodic tales, for instance, can entertain both younger and older audiences: "Parodic retellings assign to both adults and children the role of textual interpreter, forging a strong bond of complicity between readers or listeners and authors or storytellers (Malarte-Feldman 2003: 210). What should be pointed out here is that

nowadays, fairy-tale retellings come in abundance and even though the traditional tales are embedded in our collective consciousness, children may encounter retellings and parodies before they read the traditional story.

Thus, postmodern fairy tale retellings can be regarded as an addition to storytelling heritage. The societal change that took place during the 1960s and 1970s and the emergence of new critical approaches paved way to something that is referred to as fairy-tale renaissance (Joosen 2011: 4). Renewed interest in fairy tales produced new critical texts on the traditional fairy tales which in turn triggered fresh retellings. Vanessa Joosen (2011: 5) notes that the fairy tale seems to become more popular at times when it is under academic scrutinization and therefore the discussion of traditional texts along with their retellings contribute to the canonization of the stories.

Joosen (2010: 99) argues that when we expand the tradtitional understanding of intertextuality so that it includes non-fictional texts, we get new possibilities to study fairy tales and their connection to theoretical discourses: "Various thematic overlaps and mutual concerns can be perceived between fairy-tale retellings and feminist, psychoanalytic, and Marxist criticism so that fairy-tale criticism appears as a relevant intertext for the retellings, and vice versa". From this we can see that fairy-tale retellings and criticism have a reciprocal relationship. As Joosen notes, the authors of postmodern retellings sometimes draw inspiration from the work of fairy-tale scholarship and the latter may incorporate the reworkings into their studies. Two examples of literary works that have been used by fairy-tale scholars to back up their studies in such way are for instance Anne Sexton's poetry collection *Transformations* (1971) and Donald Barthelme's *Snow White*, which were referred to by Bruno Bettleheim in *The Uses of Enchantment* and Shuli Barzilai in Reading "Snow White": The Mother's Story (1990), respectively (Joosen 2011: 6). When we look at more recent retellings, the influence of fairy-tale criticism is relatively

evident. As it often happens, the authors may also use critical texts unconsciously, as the most infuential texts in fairy-tale scholarship have entered popular literature and have thus become part of our collective consciousness.

In order to discuss the mechanics of fairy-tale retellings, Joosen borrows the term coined by Maria Nikolajeva called "open dialogue", which describes a method that authors use to make intertextual references. New texts are designed so that the reader recognises the elements of the original setting (Joosen 2011:11). Retellings draw attention to those elements and the reader is expected to compare and contrast the two versions. Those elements may come in the form of a paratext, for instance, a reference in the title, characters that are directly plucked out from the pre-text or a certain concept that is widely associated with fairy tales (Joosen 2011: 11).

While traditional fairy tales are known for their temporal ambiguity, flat characters, magical elements, happy endings and repetitive style, retellings are often likely to disrupt this traditional setup. Therefore, many retellings try to set the tale in a certain sociohistorical context. Joosen (2011: 13-14) lists several aspects in which retellings disrupt the traditional narrative: revisions often place the story in a certain temporal setting, repetitions are dropped, narrative style changes, magic is put under question, characters are developed further and take more action and happy ending becomes a rarity. Some parts of the traditional tale are preserved, while others are being transformed greatly. These kinds of changes allow the authors to elaborate on some aspects of the traditional tale and to incorporate ideas that are relevant to the current sociocultural setting and by doing so, the finished product not only criticises the source texts, but it also keeps them alive and contributes to their canonization. Christina Bacchilega (1997: 22) has also noted the importance of this relationship and argues that postmodern retellings are "/.../ both

affirmative and questioning, without necessarily being recuperative or politically subversive".

Joosen (2011: 29) argues that one of the reasons why retellings are used to spread ideas connected to fairy-tale criticism is that a thought that is expressed in fiction does not have the same impact as the same idea being presented in criticism: "It makes a substantial difference whether a literary scholar claims that the mirror in "Snow White" is a patriarchal instrument or Snow White does so herself". Retellings allow the reader to assess the data themselves. They allow more freedom for both the authors and the audience and because of that, retellings can, in theory, make critical ideas more palatable for the reader. Reworkings offer the readers elements that they remember from their childhood and this familiar framework makes it easier to understand the issues the author may be addressing and to trigger critical thinking. In addition to that, the audience for fiction is wider, allowing critical ideas to reach those who would not normally pick up a book on critical theory. Lastly, Joosen (2011: 41-42) mentions the escape from the rules and regulations applied to literary criticism. Retellings allow more room for playing with intertextuality and is not constrained by the laws of literary criticism which demands every source to be marked down with precision.

1.1.2. Fairy-Tale Retellings and Feminism

Fairy tales have always had something to say about the politics of gender and sexuality as they inhabit a part of cultural space where these identities are formed. The literary world was ruled by male authors and therefore it was for them to decide what kind of ideology was woven between the lines. When the brothers Grimm started editing folk tales in the 19th century, they based their editorial choices on contemporary ideas about

sexuality and gender and in their hands, the fairy tale became a means for preserving the traditional gender system and conservative gender roles. Still, the women also managed to have their say, though more covertly. For hundreds of years, women writers had used the fairy-tale genre to subtly discuss matters of gender and "to create tales spoken or written differently from those told or penned by men (Haase 2004: viii-ix). Since the fairy tale had proved to be effective in perpetuating conservative views while also having the potential to rewrite them, it did not take long for the 20th century feminists to realise the power of this genre and thus they set out to comment on the classic tales as well as to write new ones. As a result, a considerable amount of work done in the field of fairy-tale scholarship since the 1970s has been concerned with gender.

Feminist fairy-tale scholarship started out by closely analysing the traditional tales in order to shed light on the values they represent. Its main interest was the fairy-tale heroine and the scholarship identified the stereotypes that are still used when talking about the representation of gender in fairy tales. The scholarship demonstrated how the fairy-tale genre has been used to subjugate women to patriarchy and to spread ideas of gender antagonism. One of the seminal works in this field is Ruth B. Bottigheimer's *Grimms' Bad Girls and Bad Boys: The Moral and Social Vision of the Tales* (1987), which documents the differences in the representation of heroes and heroines in Grimms' tales. Feminist critics also found faults in the previous work done with the tales. The famous Aarne-Thompson classification system, which lists recurring plot patterns in folk tales and has influenced the work of many fairy tale scholars, proved to be partly responsible for the pervasiveness of the patriarchal values coded in fairy tales as it "places both male and female protagonists under male headings, ignores female activity, focuses on male activity at the expense of females, portrays females as passive, and uses different standards to evaluate male and female behavior" (Ragan 2009: 227).

However, as time went by, the scholars realised the complexity of the genre and the field of research became more varied. Faced with difficulties such as the restrictive categorisation of the Aarne-Thompson model, feminist fairy-tale scholars had to revise their research tools and turn to other disciplines in order to reach a better understanding of the tales. Even though traditional fairy tales seem to present everything in black in white, one has to take into account the influence cultural changes have had on the tales. The traditional dichotomies of good and evil and activity and passivity are not always that clear cut and fairy tale characters may sometimes reveal something unpredictable about themselves and the society that helped to create them.

Thus, the fairy tale genre is not only studied by feminist scholars in order to criticise the supposedly sexist approach of the traditional tales, but the tales can also be viewed in the framework of women's empowerment. There are instances, even in Grimms' tales, where the fairy tale genre offers us a character who differs greatly from the stereotypical damsel in distress. One such rarity is Grimms' Maid Maleen who is borrowed from the Scandinavian folk tale tradition and who refuses to be silenced, acts according to her own will and refuses to wait passively (Bottigheimer 1987: 78). Fairy-tale scholars have also argued that seemingly powerless fairy-tale heroines may actually have heroic potential and good and evil can be interpreted in different ways. For instance, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2000: 29) offer a feminist reading of *Snow White* where they argue that the rivalry between the two female characters in this story represents a conflict within one woman's psyche: the active queen wants to reject the passive side of herself. In their reading, Snow White loses her status as a role model because of her passivity and it is given to the Queen instead, as the character represents female empowerment and independence.

The advances in feminist fairy-tale scholarship in the 1970s paved way to revisionist mythmaking. The accessibility of the genre made the fairy tale the best candidate for bringing gender-related fairy-tale criticism closer to the general public and revisionist retellings quickly entered into a dialogue with feminist fairy-tale criticism by exchanging material and contributing to each other's causes. Feminist criticism found its way to literature and vice versa. 20th century female writers saw this as an opportunity to regain their status as storytellers (Haase 2004: 22) and started to fill the tales with female voices that were lost in the centuries of editing done by male authors.

However, this was not a simple process of reevaluating and rewriting patriarchal views that were found in the traditional tales. Revisionist mythmaking is not concerned only with subverting the gender roles in favour of the fairy-tale heroine. The feminist fairy-tale scholarship both rejects and embraces the traditional tales and the retellings follow the same pattern. Christina Bacchilega argues that the way retellings produce subjectivity, narrativity and gender can differ greatly. Some retellings may question the traditional fairy tale's production of gender

> "/.../ only to reinscribe it within some unquestioned model of subjectivity or narrativity. Other postmodern tales expose the fairy tale's complicity with the "exhausted" forms and ideologies of traditional Western narrative, rewriting the tale of magic in order to question and re-create the rules of narrative production, especially as such rules contribute to naturalizing subjectivity and gender" (Bachhilega 1997: 23).

This is also the view held by Donald Haase (2004: 22) who believes that revisionist myths do not simply reevaluate patriarchal values and stress the rewriting of the traditional fairy tale, but most importantly, they "reject the model of the intergrated subject that texts such as fairy tales hold up as normative". Postmodern fairy tale retellings emphasise the multivocality of the traditional tales, rejecting and embracing the source text at the same time.

These new reworkings of old tales express our current cultural situation in a number of different ways, as contemporary authors have many stories to tell. For example, some authors analyse gender in detail in order to represent changes in identity, reimagined tales are being filled with the voices of sexual and racial minorities and very often, the tales demonstrate new methods of storytelling (Redington Bobby 2009: 9). As the body of fairy-tale related text is constantly growing, it is hard to capture all the new retellings in works of fairy-tale criticism. Despite the difficulties, this is one area that the future fairy-tale research should focus on.

The majority of the work done by the feminist fairy-tale scholarship so far concentrates on canonical female authors like Anne Sexton, Margaret Atwood, A. S. Byatt and Angela Carter, while the more recent changes in the periphery are being overlooked. The aforementioned writers influenced the genre of the contemporary fairy tale greatly and they are still worth studying, yet what one has to bear in mind is that more recent fairy tale retellings include themes that these authors have not touched upon (such as the introduction of non-heteronormativity to the fairy tale) and therefore scholarship should look for authors who carry on their legacy in the modern world. Redington Bobby (2009: 9) believes that some of those authors such as Jane Yolen, Gregory Maguire, Neil Gaiman and Emma Donoghue are overlooked simply because their literary background (fantasy and young adult literature) is different from that which is usually linked to the critically acclaimed writers of earlier fairy-tale retellings, yet their contributions to this genre are not of lesser value.

In addition to that, it should be pointed out that there is a great lack of research regarding the works of male authors. The female authors were triumphant at reclaiming their role as storytellers, but even though fairy-tale revisions by female authors left the male authors in the shadow, they never stopped writing. Thus, the contemporary fairy-tale

scholarship would benefit greatly from the comparison of the past and current retellings and tales spun by male and female authors, as this would help to form new connections in the intertextual web of the fairy tale and offer new information about the changing nature of this genre. However, in order to do so, one must start with analysing the material that is already there in the stories that serve as a basis for contemporary retellings.

1.2. SEXUALITY AND GENDER IN GRIMMS' FAIRY TALES
1.2.1 Sexuality and Gender in Grimms' Fairy Tales

The first European fairy tales were very different from the stories that are told nowadays. Children's literature is a relatively recent genre and fairy tales became a part of it in the last two centuries. Before that, fairy tales included adult themes, gore and overt sexuality (Darnton 1984:15). When people first started collecting fairy tales in Europe, they were still intended for adults, but since the brutality of the peasants' tales was not appropriate in higher social circles, revisions had to be made. Before the brothers Grimm, this work was carried out by Charles Perrault (1628-1703) who wrote down the nowadays widely known stories *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella*, *Puss in Boots* and *Bluebeard*.

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's highly influential project started out as an idealistic effort to preserve German folk traditions in print and to contribute to the history of German poetry (Tatar 1987: 11). At first, their interest in the tales was purely academic and this also set tone for the first edition of their *Nursery and Household Tales*. This, however, was not a commercial success, and it was criticised for its bad language and inappropriate themes. Since stories for children had started to become increasingly popular, many critics believed that the brothers Grimm had missed their potential market by pursuing their academic interests (Tatar 1987: 16). Thus, the collection underwent another revision and

this time the changes were more drastic. When the first edition of *Nursery and Household Tales* was published, the brothers had insisted that they had followed the folk tales closely, but now they admitted that they had consciously removed all the offensive passages and "expressed the hope that their collection could serve as a "manual of manners" (*Erziehungsbuch*) (Tatar 1987: 19). The preface highlighted its value for younger audiences and casually mentioned that adults may find the tales entertaining as well.

As Ruth B. Bottigheimer (1987: 156) points out, "easy eroticism, jocular sex, domestic trickery and adultery run through the traditional European collections of tales of which Grimms' Tales forms a part". While the Grimms were strangely comfortable with the violence and horror in the peasant tales and toned it down only after getting complaints from their friends and colleagues, after the publishing of the first edition, they did not tolerate any references to characters' sexual activities: "The Grimms appeared to share the contemporary intention that children's literature should improve its readers religiously, morally, and socially" (Bottigheimer 1987: 19). Since the Grimms tried to instil Christian values in their readers, illicit affairs and sexual desire had to be purged from the tales and the characters had to appear morally acceptable.

While Grimms' sources spoke freely of pregnancy, this was a matter that made the brothers uncomfortable and thus they worked hard to edit it out of the tales. The first edition included a story of Hans Dumm, who could impregnate women simply by wishing them to be with child, yet this was not included in the second edition (Tatar 1987: 7). Another example of such editing can be found in *Rapunzel*. In this case, Wilhelm Grimm removed the references to the girl's tightening clothes and her being curious as to why she is growing bigger after the daily visits by the prince. In the edited version, Rapunzel's relationship with the prince appears more chaste and the couple is only found out after Rapunzel asks her godmother why she is harder to pull up the tower than the prince (Tatar

1987: 18). In order to make the characters' affairs less questionable, the Grimms often introduced marriage to the stories, so they would represent Christian values and not offend their readership.

The Grimms were also adverse to references to incest and incestuous desire (Tatar 1987: 8). According to Tatar (1987: 10), when a tale had several versions, the Grimms preferred the one where incestuous desires were not in plain sight and they made sure to edit out the remaining references to incestuous conflicts. Another stratagem to deal with such instances was to introduce passages that would condemn such behaviour and demonstrate the character's moral integrity. In those cases, the Christian element in Grimms' tales becomes evident again, as the brothers bring up God's will and Christian views on family relationships to fight against the incestuous practices in peasant tales.

However, it must be pointed out that the Grimms had a subtle way of sexualising their female characters in order to indicate their ascent to adulthood and readiness for marriage that does not come across in the English translation of the tales. The 2007 study by Orrin W. Robinson shows that in the original German, the Grimms had the tendency to refer to their young female characters using the neuter pronoun 'es'. After reaching the threshold of adulthood, encountering a potential love interest or disobeying a prohibition, however, the Grimms start referring to the character using the feminine pronoun 'sie'. This kind of shift can be observed in classic tales like *Cinderella*, *Rapunzel* and *Sleeping Beauty* (Robinson 2007).

When it comes to representing gender roles, the most significant process that the tales underwent in the hands of the brothers Grimm was silencing the female voice. Historically, storytelling had always been a female art, so when the Grimms took upon themselves the task of collecting and editing the folk tales, they firstly robbed the storytellers (the Grimms got most of their source material from two women, Marie Hassenpflug and Dorothea

Viehmann) from their voice. Further editing took place in the tales themselves, as the Grimms forced the male perspective on even the tales with a female protagonist and silenced female characters by seemingly simple revisions or by removing them from the picture altogether, as many tales include absent biological mothers (Bottigheimer 1987: 53). Ruth B. Bottigheimer studied the speech patterns in the Grimms' tales and discovered that the number of sentences assigned to any given character was the result of conscious choices made by Wilhelm Grimm. Grimm changed the indirect speech in the folk tales into direct speech, but he also deprived good female characters of it and gave it to men or wicked female characters instead (Bottigheimer 1987: 58-59). This means that the thoughts and desires of female protagonists are often mediated through the storyteller and the characters act like ventriloquist's puppets, vocalizing the social conventions of the time.

Bottigheimer believes that Grimms' lexical choices were mostly unconscious, yet they seem to express the storyteller's views on gender differences and construct a set of power relations similar to that of the time when the tales were written down. The verb *asked* is rarely linked with a question asked by a (good) female character. Instead, it introduces a question uttered by an authority figure or one of Grimms' "bad girls", a female character who is shown in negative light (Bottigheimer 1987: 54). In addition to that, the female voice in the Grimms' tales is often responsive to the male voice and *answered* usually goes together with instances where a female character shows her obedience to the male characters in their lives. *Cries* is more often linked to female speech and it seems that it is used to emphasise the powerlessness of female characters (Bottigheimer 1987: 54-55). In general, when a female character speaks her mind in Grimms' tales, it is a sign of visciousness and as Bottigheimer (1987: 169) notes, it echoes the misogyny of contemporary German chapbooks which also belittled women's speech.

As the previous discussion already indicated, there is a certain tendency in Grimms' tales to divide the female characters into two types: fair, obedient and pure good girls and cunning, wicked and powerful bad girls who are often witches and whose appearance is not always pleasing. While men's appearance is rarely discussed, the emphasis on the feminine beauty is prevalent in most of the tales. The study by Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz (2003: 717) shows that in Grimms' fairy tales, there are five times more references to women's beauty than that of men. The references to the feminine beauty are usually coupled with hyperboles. Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz (2003: 718) also point out that very often there is a strong link between beauty and goodness as well as ugliness and evil and while beauty and purity is normally rewarded, ugliness and taintedness deserves a punishment.

It appears that Grimms' tales advocate the angel-monster distinction characteristic to the 19th century literature. Female characters in Grimms' tales are either thoroughly good or thoroughly evil and there is no middle ground. Female agency is seen as dangerous and is often connected to witches and other female villains, while passivity and obedience is shown in a positive light. Grimms' good girls are beautiful, they speak when spoken to and rely heavily on the male presence in their lives. Grimms' female protagonists often find themselves in the midst of a web of prohibitions and when they take action and disobey they are often punished while male protagonists in a similar situation tend to escape, sometimes even with a reward (Bottigheimer 1987: 89). Female villains often find a gruesome end, yet that cannot be said about their male counterparts. As Bottigheimer (1987: 94) demonstrates: "Within the 210 tales of the Grimms' collection, a witch-burning notion of eradicating (generally female) evil coexists with an indulgent tolerance of (generally male) malefaction".

In Grimms' tales, men are clearly allowed more freedom than women and they are also allowed to have more skills. According to Linda Dégh (2003: 26), heroes are usually more ambitious and they have a certain set of skills that helps them on their way, while fairy-tale heroines are generally passive and solely rely on their beauty and moral purity to save them from their difficult situation. If the heroine happens to be blessed with a set of skills, they are usually of the domestic type like yarn spinning, cooking or cleaning. While the male characters in Grimms' tales are adventurous and often team up with other men in order to reach their common goal (Mendelson 1997: 113), the female characters are isolated, they do not collaborate with other females and they do not go on a journey out of their own desire, as their travels are usually the result of a difficult domestic situation, for instance, the abovementioned threat of incest (Dégh 2003: 26). In many cases, the heroine simply waits for their rescuer and Dégh (2003: 26) believes that this kind of passive image is hard to get rid of, even if the heroine has a chance to take action and contemporary narratives that employ this feminine ideal familiar from fairy tales are a further proof of its persistent nature.

1.2.2 Sexuality and Gender in *Snow White*

Snow White is one of the most popular tales in Grimms' collection and along with classics such as *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*, it belongs to the core of the stories that are often the focus of academic research. Due to their popularity, these stories and their variations have been highly accessible to generations of children and thus we can assume that they have played a role in forming their gender and sexual identities.

In accordance with the Grimms' views on the matter, *Snow White* is devoid of references to sex. The only image that can be thought as remotely sexual is Snow White's

mother pricking her finger with a needle in the beginning of the story, resulting in her blood dripping on pure snow. *Snow White* does not hint at any illicit relationships and the characters appear to be highly moral.

The representation of gender, however, has fallen victim to the Grimms' editing process. *Snow White* offers us a number of examples of the silencing of the female voice. Firstly, Snow White's mother is absent in the story, as she dies after giving birth. Secondly, the number of utterances given to each of the characters matches with the conclusions made in the previous chapter: direct speech is mostly used by male characters and the queen, whose speech is a sign of female assertiveness, which is frowned upon. When Snow White speaks, she often responds to the male voice. A good example comes from the passage where the dwarves ask her to become their housekeeper: ""With all my heart," said Snow-white; and so she stayed, and kept the house in good order." (Grimm 1963). Snow White's desires and thoughts are often expressed in indirect speech. While the prince asks her to marry him using direct speech, Snow White's answer is worded by the storyteller: "And Snow-white was kind, and went with him, and their wedding was held with pomp and great splendour" (Grimm 1963). Thus, the choices Snow White makes are not really autonomous, her voice is used to assert male dominance.

Apart from the height of the dwarves, the appearance of the male characters in the story has not been described. However, female beauty is central to this particular tale and references to it are abundant. It seems that the only source of power for the passive female protagonist of this tale is her good looks, as Snow White's beauty is what appears to save her from her troubles, as it attracts the attention of male characters who are then willing to protect her from harm. The story even introduces the character of the magic mirror which is another contribution to the multiplicity of male voices in the tale. The mirror looks at the

woman, judges her and thus: "/.../ holds up before women the male's projection of female identity" (Haase 2004: 23).

The main conflict between Snow White and her stepmother is connected to the pursuit of beauty, supposedly in order to please the male eye and thus, some scholars like Bruno Bettleheim in his work *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), have also detected Oedipal undertones in this tale and suggest that Snow White and her stepmother are competing for the attention of the king. The beauty worship in this tale is detrimental to relationships between female characters. Since patriarchy has created an environment where woman's only asset is her physical appearance, the loss of her youth means the loss of her social capital and thus there is no room for female collaboration in this story, as the female characters can only be rivals. Mutually beneficial relationships between women cannot exist in the world that is described by the Grimms' *Snow White*, as patriarchy is keen on keeping female characters apart.

Grimms' *Snow White* also presents us with the bipolar division of female fairy-tale characters into active evildoers and passive good girls. The queen's actions are shown in negative light and it has been emphasised by adjectives like *cunning*, *envious*, *proud*, *wicked*. Snow White's obedience, however, is valued highly and when she violates the prohibition set on her by the dwarves and opens the door to the queen in disguise, she is punished immediately for breaking the rules set by patriarchy. When she abandons her modesty for a second and reaches for the beautiful comb the old woman is offering her, Snow White is again punished. In this tale, being beautiful is a sign of goodness, however, one must not desire to be beautiful, as vanity belongs strictly to the spectrum of characteristics associated with Grimms' bad girls.

As the lexical and other editorial choices show, Snow White is largely at the mercy of the storyteller and the male characters that surround her in the tale. She escapes her

execution only because the huntsman takes pity on her and she finds refuge at the dwarves' house because she is willing to do the housework for them. While the queen has the chance to realise herself through her magic and the male characters have their professions, Snow White is isolated, bound to passivity throughout the story, she never takes any action to improve her own condition and is always pushed around by the authority figures in her life.

The exclusion of sexual themes, silencing of the female voice, eradication of the female will, bipolar views on characters and the glorification of the female beauty ideal indicate that Grimms' *Snow White* is a rather stereotypical example of the brothers' idea of a tale that would instil proper behaviour into the minds of their readers and teach them Christian ways. The patriarchal views of the 19th century can be underlined with ease in this story and the type of female fairy-tale character that has been described here is one of the most pervasive ones as her characteristics can even found in today's romantic literature, proving that the editorial choices made by the brothers Grimm centuries ago are still buried deep in our collective consciousness and cannot be erased.

2 SEXUALITY AND GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY RETELLINGS OF *SNOW WHITE*

2.1 *Snow White* by Donald Barthelme

Donald Barthelme's novel *Snow White* (1967) is one of the earliest texts that entered into dialogue with fairy-tale scholarship during the period of renewed interest in fairy tales during the 1960s and 1970s. Barthelme has used a well-known fairy tale to provide a commentary about sexual liberation and second-wave feminism and to discuss the societal change that took place during the 1960s. Even though the story shares some similarities with the traditional tale by presenting the reader with a somewhat supernatural setting and two-dimensional characters, thus ignoring two of the seven characteristics that Vanessa Joosen (2011: 13-14) noted in connection to fairy-tale retellings, Barthelme has abandoned the form of the traditional fairy tale and tells his story through short scenes which follow Snow White's stay with the dwarves. It is not certain which version of Snow White acts as the basis for Barthelme's novel and therefore it seems to borrow elements from all of them, including the Disney adaptation. As Alejandro Herrero-Olaizola (1998: 4) notes: "Barthelme's text alters the popular narration of Snow White's story and, simultaneously, revises interpretations of this narrative by including a wider reflection on literature, language, psychology, history, and feminism".

Barthelme's *Snow White* uses several narration techniques. While it retains the function of an omniscient narrator, this story also contributes to the multivocality that is often associated with fairy-tale retellings by letting the characters express their own thoughts. Barthelme offers the reader several perspectives and the narrators change throughout the story. The language also varies in order to convey the different facets of contemporary society and the characters' position in it. Every character gets a word in and

Snow White, who was effectively silenced in the traditional tale, uses language to take a step towards her independence. "Oh I wish there were some words in the world that were not the words I always hear" she exclaims (Barthelme 1971: 6) and proceeds to assume the role of an author, composing a four-page poem (Barthelme 1971: 10) that she refuses to let the dwarves read. Snow White rebels against being silent, yet dwarves are reluctant to laud her literary endeavours and accept her in the role of a creator, as her dirty poem does not fit into their world. Snow White desires change, yet the dwarves desire uncomplicated life where food is always on the table, the house is clean and the benefit of long erotic showers in the company of the happy housewife heroine, Snow White.

From the very first page, Barthelme marks Snow White as a sexualised character and an object of desire. However, Barthelme's Snow White is also a college-educated woman and the list documenting her studies includes literature, music, art and psychology. Yet Snow White has no use for her intelligence, as she is forced to be passive, wait for the prince and meanwhile do the housework for the dwarves. While the dwarves have a career, Snow White has been denied one, just like in the traditional tale. ""Someday my prince will come." By this Snow White means that she lives her own being as incomplete, pending the arrival of one who will "complete" her" (Barthelme 1971: 70). This role has been forced upon Snow White by the society and as the novel unfolds, Snow White starts to question the prevailing ideology and notices the differences between stories and reality.

In Barthelme's story, Snow White has heard fairy tales from a singing bone (reference to another tale by the Grimms, *The Singing Bone*), stories about magical items and transformations and now she is rejecting them: "This must not continue. The behaviour of the bone is unacceptable. The bone must be persuaded to confine itself to events and effects susceptible of confirmation by the instrumentarium of the physical sciences. Someone must reason with the bone" (Barthelme 1971: 70). This can be seen as a

comment on the truth value of the information found in traditional fairy tales. As the world changes, the fairy tales need to be adapted. However, Snow White appears to be torn between living according to the society's expectations and letting go. She admits that "waiting as a mode of existence is [...] a darksome mode" and "I would rather be doing a hundred other things" (Barthelme 1971: 77), yet she still enjoys her sexual encounters with the dwarves in the shower and ponders on the prince. However, this is not because she needs to be saved, but rather because she is curious.

Snow White's desire to become active puts the continuation of the narrative designed for her into question and the same happens with Paul who is cast into the role of the Prince in Barthelme's tale. While the Grimms' Prince is the brave fairy tale hero ready to save damsels in distress, Paul, like Snow White, questions the role he has been given. In Barthelme's novel, the active and masculine Prince has become a rather passive one:

> "Probably I should go out and effect a liaison with some beauty who needs me, and save her, and ride away with her flung over the pommel of my palfrey, I believe I have that right. But on the other hand, this duck-with-blue-cheese sandwich that I am eating is mighty attractive and absorbing, too" (Barthelme 1971: 27-28).

Paul is indifferent to the lure of power and the call of adventure, he wants to ignore his blue blood and become a monk instead, but unlike Snow White he is not strong enough to resist the pressure of the fairy-tale narrative. Paul catches a glimpse of naked Snow White through the window and this act of voyeurism reignites his desire. In a way, Paul's worship of female beauty is what causes his death in the end of the book.

Barthelme has left the references to female beauty untouched, yet in this story, it is not necessarily connected to Snow White's inner qualities (Bacchilega 1988: 13) as the symbolic meaning is lost. Instead of connecting Snow White's beauty with her purity like the Grimms did, Barthelme opens his novel by sexualising the character by describing beauty spots on her body, some of which mark erogenous zones: "[...] one above the

breast, one above the belly, one above the knee, one above the ankle, one above the buttock, one on the back of the neck" (Barthelme 1971: 3). Taking Paul's story into account, it can be said that in this story, female beauty becomes a somewhat destructive force which affects those who like to gaze upon it. The dwarves, along with the character of Hogo and the people who witness Snow White's hair hanging out of the window can be seen as representatives of the male voice of the mirror in the traditional tale, judging the beauty of the female characters while also being enslaved by it. Hogo spies on Snow White and is as obsessed with her as the dwarves who also enjoy looking at women when they are doing their day job cleaning buildings. There are several instances where the male gaze enters into the story and where female characters are being objectified. "We are very much tempted to shoot our arrows into them, those targets. You know what that means" (Barthelme 1971: 8), says one of the dwarves when they are gazing down at the passing women.

The dwarves feel a sense of ownership over Snow White, they see her as an aesthetic object and their desire is depicted as sexual, as they long for the erotic showers in her company. Each dwarf fetishises Snow White in his own way and secretly believes that he is the one she favours the most. Snow White, who is aware of the effect she has on the dwarves, starts making tentative steps towards her escape from the narrative assigned to her by patriarchy, so she decides to start wearing shapeless trousers instead of tight ones which the dwarves admire (Barthelme 1971: 16) and her appearances in the shower become less frequent. Snow White's attempt to "reason with the bone" develops into a conflict between her and the dwarves who simply want to worship her. She no longer tries to please the men by sexualising herself and this makes the dwarves angry: "We are getting pretty damned sick of the whole thing, of her air of being just about to do something and of the dozen-odd red flags and bugles she has nailed to the dining-room table" (Barthelme

1971: 16). They do not understand the reasons behind Snow White's actions and blame her for making their life complex with her existence, even though the fault is theirs as they try to fit Snow White into the framework they have constructed for her and do not recognise Snow White's dissatisfaction and her wish to be free.

Barthelme has also retained the rivalry between Snow White and the Queen figure of this story, Jane. Hogo rejects Jane's advances, because he is obsessed with the beauty of Snow White and as a result, Jane lets her anger consume her: "I am alone with my malice at last. Face to face with it. For the first time in my history, I have no lover to temper my malice with healing balsam-scented older love. Now there is nothing but malice" (Barthelme 1971: 158). As Betty Flowers (1974: 37) has noted, Jane is the only character who does not question her part in the story and fulfills her fairy-tale role, by trying to poison Snow White. However, since the other characters fail at living up to the expectations of the classic tale, Jane's triumph seems exaggerated and her character seems out of place in the story. The rivalry in this tale seems to have no logical grounding. Thus, the character of Jane is a relic of the traditional narrative and she appears to be another device that Barthelme uses to ridicule the rules by which the traditional fairy tale operates.

In the end of the novel, Barthelme demonstrates the damaging effect of playing by the rules of the exhausted narrative of the traditional story of Snow White. Paul, his eyes on the prize once again, plays the role of the Prince while simultaneously casting Snow White into her traditional role as a damsel in distress and tries to save her by drinking the poisoned vodka handed to her by Jane: "It is too exciting for you. If you had drunk it, something bad would probably have happened to your stomach. But because I am a man, and because men have strong stomachs for the business of life, and the pleasure of life too, nothing will happen to me" (Barthelme 1971: 175). Underestimating Snow White and acting according to the society's expectations results in his death. Snow White, however,

rejects the role of a submissive beauty completely and thrives. Similarly to other contemporary fairy-tale retellings, the book ends at crossroads. The dwarves are left with a wish to "break out of this bag" (Barthelme 1971: 179) as well, while Snow White ignores them completely and is trying to embrace her new self. Still, she "continues to cast chrysantemums on Paul's grave, although there is nothing in it for her, the grave" (Barthelme 1971: 180). Paul's grave can be seen as the grave for fairy-tale traditions and Snow White's mourning as the contemporary society's yearning for nostalgia.

Barthelme wrote his novel in the 1960s, so *Snow White* is using themes from a traditional fairy tale to document and elaborate on the change that took place in the society. In *Snow White*, Donald Barthelme places a well-known fairy tale into a consumerist and sexualised contemporary setting and allows the characters to set themselves apart from the roles they have been assigned, stressing the importance of individual experience. Through role-reversal and multiple perspectives, the author shows that traditional fairy-tale values cannot survive in modern environment. One may try to act according to them, but in the end, one must accept the defeat like prince Paul. Barthelme does not tell the story of Snow White as a battle between good and evil, ugliness and beauty. Instead, it is a story of conflict between traditional values and a changing society, patriarchy and a modern independent woman. Barthelme uses parody to highlight the differences between the values of the past and present and encourages the reader to rethink the stories that they have heard, just like Snow White in the novel. However, this parody is not only used to criticise the traditional values, but it also works as a critique of the society Snow White inhabits, which also produces new stories to influence new generations. Thus, the novel displays a certain sense of continuity and indicates that the communication between the society and fairy tales, scholarship and literature will continue well into the future and the fairy tale genre continues to transform.

2.2 *The Snow Child* by Angela Carter

When it comes to the structure, Angela Carter's 1979 retelling of Snow White resembles closely to that of the classic tale penned by the brothers Grimm. However, it must be pointed out that even though the story plays with the readers' knowledge of the Grimms' tale, the roots of Carter's retelling lie in the peasant tales, as the story is based on one of the earlier versions of *Snow White* that the Grimms did not publish in which Snow White's father is the one who wants to have a daughter (Chainani 2003: 217). While maintaining the traditionalist structure, the story is still acting as a fully conscious revisionist text that utilizes feminist fairy-tale criticism.

Carter presents the reader with an omniscient narrator just like the brothers Grimm did. The story is compact and it does not set out to provide the reader with complex additions to the traditional tale. Instead, the characters remain mere sketches and we do not learn much about their thoughts and motives, morality and inner life in general. They appear as flat as the characters in the Grimms' tale. Carter has chosen not to burden the narrative by adding additional characters and scenes and concentrates on the conflict between three characters, the Count, the Countess and the Snow Child, in a forest. However, the information that is coded in the traditional tale is still there, as Carter has transformed it into symbols and gestures. The lack of a magic mirror and dwarves makes the Count a representative of the male voice, the Countess is cast in the role of an active female and the Snow Child plays the part of a passive beauty.

Most of the direct speech in the story belongs to its only male character, the Count, which quickly establishes him as the main authority figure in Carter's tale. The Count gives instructions to the female characters and acts like a puppet master. The Countess, who is cast in the role of the Queen, also gets a few lines and she uses them to command the Snow

Child to do potentially hazardous things, which, according to the traditional rules described in the previous chapter, puts her in the role of one of the bad girls and a threat to patriarchy. The titular character remains silent throughout the story and her passivity almost works like a camouflage: the Snow Child does not seem to have a purpose in this story, she is simply a shadowy figure in the background. The only sound the Snow Child makes in the story is her death scream and this echoes the conventions of the fairy tales by the brothers Grimm where verbs connected to distress were often attributed to female characters, as pointed out by Ruth B. Bottigheimer (1987: 54-55).

Carter's story emphasises the silence of the female characters in fairy tales. In addition to her silence, the Snow Child does not have a mother, as she is born solely out of the Count's want. The Count wishes for a child who is white as snow, as red as blood and as black as a bird's feather and he only has to commit these three speech acts to make her appear. The Snow Child is born out of his wishes, she is designed for his needs and therefore she represents his beauty ideal. It seems that Carter is trying to draw attention to the Snow Child's dependence on patriarchy. The Snow Child is not autonomous, she is an image constructed by the society that is ruled by men, who only appreciate her physical appearance. She appears in the forest naked, which represents both her vulnerability to the male gaze and her role as an object of sexual desire. The Snow Child is not capable of taking independent action and she has no story of her own, as she is simply an object in the hands of her creator, just like Snow White's life depends on the goodwill of the dwarves and the Prince in the traditional tale. Angela Carter does not attempt to flesh out her personality and thus the reader is presented with the same image that can be seen in the version by the brothers Grimm, only this time it has not been spruced up with comments about her beauty, purity and virtue and shows the character's real face, blank and lifeless.

In addition to that, Carter maintains the rivalry between the female characters which starts from the moment the Snow Child appears in the middle of the forest: "As soon as he completed her description, there she stood, beside the road, white skin, red mouth, blach hair and stark naked; she was the child of his desire and the Countess hated her" (Carter 1993: 226). The hate in this story, however, can be interpreted in two ways. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's reading of *Snow White* sees the rivalry between the two main female characters as a fight between the two sides of female psyche and if we bear that in mind, the hate the Countess shows towards the Snow Child springs from her hate towards the ideas she represents. In this case, the Countess in this story is not jealous of the girl, but despises her passivity and vulnerability. She hates the fact that this is the female image created by and for patriarchy and she tries to distance herself from it. The Countess attempts to take action in order to get rid of her, yet she is helpless in the hands of the dominant ideology the Count represents. Similarly to the Snow Child, the Countess is not allowed to take action on her own, as everything needs to be approved by the authority figure in the tale. When the Countess tries to leave the Snow Child behind by dropping her gloves, the Count offers to buy her a new pair and when the Countess wants the girl to dive after her brooch, the Count stops her from doing that. The Countess is punished for both of those actions, as her clothes leap off her and twine around the naked girl. Again, this is reminiscient of the traditional tale where obedience was rewarded and active females punished.

Secondly, the story echoes Bruno Bettleheim's reading of the traditional tale where the conflict between the two female characters boils down to a sexual competition for the attention of the king. Carter's resexualisation of the tale brings back the theme of incest that the Grimms were eager to remove from the picture, as the Snow Child is referred to as the object of the Count's desire and the story culminates with the Count copulating with the

girl's corpse. The Countess notices the Count's sexual desire towards the girl and sees her as a threat to her position on the Count's side. From the moment of the girl's appearance, the Count only has eyes for her and this favouritism results in the Countess being robbed of her clothes, which can be seen as the symbol of her stature. Moreover, Carter has made the clothing itself appear as a sign of the patriarchal fetishisation of the female image that is characteristic to this tale as well as the classic version by the brothers Grimm: the Countess is a Venus in furs "[...] wrapped in the glittering pelts of black foxes; and she wore high, black, shining boots with scarlet heels, and spurs" (Carter 1993: 226). The Count has power over both female characters, but at that point in the forest, there are clothes only for one person and the rivalry can almost be seen as a simple fight for survival in which appearance and sexuality are great advantage. Thus, the tableau that Carter creates in that forest can be seen as an allegory of the predominantly male Western culture (Kaiser 1994: para 14) and also a blueprint for the classic tales that vocalize the patriarchal ideology. Male characters have the right to decide over who gets to be in power positions and thus there is no room for harmonious relationships between two women.

Even though it seems that Carter relies heavily on the structure and the values of the source material, the story does undermine the ideology coded in the traditional tale. By focusing on the brutality and raw sexuality, Carter manages to simplify the hidden message in the classic tale and expose the key features that help to spread patriarchal ideas. Strong emphasis on violence, incest and necrophilia forces the reader to reevaluate the traditional tale and question the goodwill of such characters like the King. By stressing the helplessness of the female characters in the hands of patriarchy, Carter draws attention to their situation in the traditional tale. In the end of the story, the Snow Child pricks her finger on a thorn of a rose, dies and is raped by the Count, after which she simply melts away. As Christina Bacchilega (1988: 18) suggests, this indicates that she has performed

her duty to the Count and thus she no longer has a function: "[...] the Snow Child has lived her life and fulfilled her function as object of his desire, because of him, she has experienced some sexual and social transformation, but no psychological growth". This is also the case in the Grimms' version, as it is always the male characters (and the male storyteller) who assign meanings to the female characters, making them suitable for their needs while refusing to add substance to their personality.

Critics like Patricia Duncker (Bachhilega 1997: 50) and Avis Lewallen (Makinen 1992: 4) have argued that Angela Carter's fairy tales fail at undermining the prevailing ideology, as thematically and strucurally they do not differ much from the traditional tales and she appears to be compromised by sexist psychology. Carter has been accused of perpetuating patriarchal attitudes and using compact style that does not leave room to expand the narrative and offer solutions. However, the effect that this kind of approach proves to be positive. Carter disguises her feminist deconstruction as rewriting the tale within its original framework. As she herself has marked: "I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode" (Carter 1983: 69). While other fairy-tale retellings may use some elements from the traditional tale to reject and question its ideology and others to endorse it, Carter seems to use the same material to do both at the same time.

By removing everything homespun fairy tales have about them, the elements that tie those stories to our childhood, and stripping them down to bare bones, Angela Carter exposes the core of the traditional fairy tales. Without the excess of deceiving details subconsciously convincing the reader to accept the ideology expressed in the narrative, the unequal power relationships coded in Snow White are exposed and therefore it is easier for the reader to notice them. When presented with unexplainably blunt representation of sexuality and violence, the readers are bound to ask themselves what prompted the author

to make such a choice and to turn to other versions of the tale for answers. Carter leaves the ending open and thus, the story encourages interaction between the scholarship and literature, Grimms' retellings and original peasant tales, adding another perspective to the multitude of voices in the fairy tale genre while paving way for further discussion.

2.3 *Snow, Glass, Apples* by Neil Gaiman

While Donald Barthelme added individual voices to that of the omniscient narrator, Neil Gaiman's 1994 retelling *Snow, Glass, Apples* has decided to abandon the third person storyteller completely and to present the readers with a story from the Queen's perspective. When rewriting the peasant tales, the brothers Grimm silenced the female voice in the tales, yet Gaiman's *Snow, Glass, Apples* brings it back in full force and this helps to reestablish storytelling as a female art form, albeit with a looming figure of a male author in the background. Yet the presence of the Grimms' version can still be felt as Snow White's mother remains absent in Gaiman's story and Snow White herself is in the hands of the Queen who makes her stay quiet in the background.

The Queen allows the Lord of the Fair to use direct speech and the Prince also gets one sentence. All other words in *Snow, Glass, Apples,* however, belong to the Queen who in this story is very wordy indeed. The Queen was blessed with a few lines in the Grimms' version, too, although these were used to emphasise her wickedness and disobedience. In Gaiman's story, however, the Queen has the power over the description of the events and the thoughts and reactions of the other characters are filtered through her. In *Snow, Glass, Apples*, the Queen uses her voice to seek understanding and compassion from the readers. As a result, the Queen's activity and talkativeness does not seem as something threatening

anymore, because her actions are triggered by the need to save the family and the kingdom from the monstrous and vampiric Snow White.

One of the methods that fairy-tale retellings often use is blurring the border between good and evil and *Snow, Glass, Apples* is no exeption. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, the Grimms were very keen on dividing their female characters into wicked witches and paragons of beauty and purity and even the rest of the ensemble was divided into two according to their morality. In Gaiman's story, all characters seem to inhabit a grey area: they are neither good nor bad in the traditional sense. Gaiman makes Snow White the villain of the tale, thus overthrowing the traditional angel-monster distinction. The power relationship between the two characters has shifted in comparison to the Grimms' version and the characters appear more complex. However, it is still hard to tell who in this story is good or bad, as there is a possibility that the Queen may be an unreliable narrator and even so neither of the characters complies with the patriarchal archetypes that are familiar from the tale told by the brothers Grimm.

Even though the Queen mentions in the beginning of the story that people have called her a witch because of her wisdom, the evidence that can be found further in the story suggests that her intelligence was also seen as something positive among the commoners: "'I come to you because you are wise,' he continued. 'When you were a child you found a strayed foal by staring into a pool of ink; when you were a maiden you found a lost infant who had wandered far from her mother, by staring into that mirror of yours.'"(Gaiman 2005: 376). The Queen uses her wits to help people and her magic is good. Since the Queen admits her shortcomings by describing herself as foolish and not entirely innocent, it is easier for the reader to accept her negative description of Snow White (Slabbert 2009: 76-77).

Gilbert and Gubar's (2000: 38-39) reading of the Grimms' *Snow White* sees the Queen as a creative force, rather than a destructive one: "The Queen, as we come to see more clearly in the course of the story, is a plotter, a plot-maker, a schemer, a witch, an artist, an impersonator, a woman of almost infinite creative energy, witty, wily, and self-absorbed as all artists traditionally are" and this also the image that Gaiman tries to conjure, as he casts the Queen into the role of an author trying to deconstruct the image that patriarchy has imposed on her and now she has the power to silence the male voice. In the Queen's story, the mirror is an inanimate object and even though it helps the Queen, it does not speak with a male voice and stays as silent as the King. Thus, Gaiman has removed two of the characters who voice the restrictive social conventions in the Grimms' tale. The Queen sets herself apart from the rumors about her by referring to the voice of patriarchy using the vague pronoun *they*. The male voice that echoes the social standards of the Grimms' tale in *Snow, Glass, Apples* can be accredited to the Prince whose only line in the story is quite revealing of his character: ""Please," he said softly. "You must neither move nor speak. Just lie on the stones, so cold and so fair." (Gaiman 2005: 382). The Prince is angered by the Queen's activity and when she fails to comply with his wishes and act as an aesthetic object for the Prince's pleasure, he turns his affections to the passive and dead Snow White who is easier to control.

Gaiman's Snow White is also very different from her counterpart known from the Grimms' version. While Grimms' Snow White is revered for her beauty, purity and obedience, Gaiman's character is a dark vampiric predator who is driven by her need for blood and does not hesitate to seduce men to satisfy her thirst. While the quietness of the Grimms' Snow White is a sign of good behaviour, the silence of Gaiman's instills uneasiness and makes the character appear dark and twisted. In this instance, Gaiman seems to be employing a strategy that is often used in fairy tale retellings to address

underlying patriarchal ideology in the classic tales: he exaggerates the negative traits of the angel character known from the classic tale and adds his own in order to make her desirability questionable (Joosen 2011: 236).

The references to female beauty in Gaiman's story are scarce and as a result it does not help to perpetuate the concept of the female beauty ideal in fairy tales that was described by Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz (2003). The Queen does not comment on her appearance nor does she say anything about Snow White's beauty, except for the ambiguous description of her coal-black eyes, pale skin and blood-red lips. All the descriptions of the women in the tale are neutral. However, there is a hint of female gaze replacing the male one, as the Queen does glorify the appearance of her husband the King: "[...] his beard so red, his hair so gold, his eyes the blue of a summer sky, his skin tanned the gentle brown of ripe wheat" (Gaiman 2005: 371-372). Thus, in Gaiman's story, the male characters seem to be the ones under the scrutiny of the female eye. Along with emphasising the negative traits of the angel character, eliminating the male gaze is also seen as a strategy to combat the patriarchal undertones in the Grimms' tales. While the abundance of references to female beauty in Grimms' tales made it look like as if having a pleasing appearance was the only source of power for the female characters, Gaiman's story equips its female characters with character, cunning and sexuality instead and helps them to become active lookers instead of *objets d'art*.

As it was previously mentioned, *Snow, Glass, Apples* also resexualises the tale rather aggressively and similarly to the other stories discussed in this study, the strain of sexuality runs through the whole tale and cannot really be separated from the characters' motives, desires and actions. Gaiman's story follows the gothic tradition of retellings associated with Angela Carter's fairy tales, which maintains the darkness of the peasant tales that also slipped into the Grimms' versions, while addressing the matters of sexuality, adultery and

incest in a straightforward manner. While in Grimms' tales, sexuality was purged or coded into symbols, Gaiman's contemporary retelling does not attempt to hide the desires of the characters and thus, the main characters are all sexual creatures. Most notably, Gaiman, like Carter, has brought back the incestuous desire that the brothers Grimm were very keen on eliminating from their stories.

In the Grimms' version, the main conflict between the two main female characters is connected to the pursuit of beauty. Even though Gaiman has undermined the importance of female beauty in his tale, the rivalry between the two women remains and takes a slightly different turn. Gaiman's story appears to be a good example of pop psychology entering into literature and whether it was the writer's conscious choice or not, *Snow, Glass, Apples* seems to utilize the ideas that are familiar from Bruno Bettleheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*. Bettleheim (1977: 202) suggests that the original story of Snow White deals with Oedipal conflicts between mother and daughter. This rivalry has been displaced in the concept of beauty that covers up the sexual competition between the two characters. In Gaiman's story, the references to beauty are removed, yet the Oedipal struggle is rather evident in the text and it has been sexualised. The Queen discovers scars on the King's body that have been left there by her vampiric daughter: "There were scars on my love, her father's thighs, and on his ballock-pouch, and on his male member, when he died" (Gaiman 2005: 374). As Mathilda Slabbert (2009: 78) points out, the sexual rivalry is also made clear by the repeated references to the age difference between the two female characters.

The Queen in Gaiman's story seems to enjoy sex: "[...] I would go to him, and pleasure him, and take my pleasure with him" (Gaiman 2005: 372), and even though she shows affection towards her husband, he still appears to be a mere object of her desire. The reader learns that the Queen casts a spell on herself and conquers the King, however, her cunning makes it seem as if she is the one being conquered and she successfully tricks the

King and gains a position of power in return. Similarly, she uses her sexuality in an attempt to form an union with the Prince and agrees to be an aesthetic object for the night. Her failure lies in her inability to remain passive during the act and this undermines the Prince's masculinity. Snow White's sexually perverted behaviour is not very different from the Queen's. Just like the Queen, she appears to be conquered when the monk offers her money for her services, but then she embraces her agency and drains the man from his blood. However, it must be noted that in both cases, the female characters have to use trickery to reach their goals and hide their intelligence. They are still bound by the rules of patriarchy, as they do not hold a power position that is accepted by the society.

Gaiman's story is full of subversion and questioning. He blurs the line between good and evil, demolishing the traditional notions of darkness and light in fairy tales and shows patriarchy being tricked by the cunning of the female characters. By introducing taboo topics such as incest and necrophilia, Gaiman undermines the traditional depiction of the passive Snow White and the noble Prince and makes the traits that these characters were renowned for in the Grimms' tale undesirable, while the reasoning behind the Queen's motives transforms the traditional view that we have of that character. The silencing of the voice of patriarchy within the tale by casting the male characters in lesser roles and removing the talking mirror and references to the female beauty altogether helps to emphasise the female agency in this story. The male characters are being objectified without their knowledge and the female characters, wolves in sheep's clothing, appear just as fierce and controlling as men.

Snow, Glass, Apples is successful at pointing out and addressing questionable elements in the traditional narrative, however, it does not necessarily set out to fix the wrongs, as the story operates within the strict framework of the Grimms' tale. The reader is constantly aware of the backdrop as the Queen refers to the lies told about her and

mentions plot details from the traditional tale. Even though the female protagonist has a voice, she still has to use it to respond to the male figures in her life and her power remains hidden from their eyes. The end of the story indicates that even though the female characters seem empowered in this tale, they are both still chained by the ideology of the Grimms' version. As Bacchilega (1997: 22) noted, fairy-tale retellings are often both affirmative and questioning and this comes across clearly in Gaiman's short story. In the end of the tale, the reader realises that the Queen is telling her story from inside a kiln. The Queen gets punished for being an active female yet again, the reader is the only member of her audience, as there are no other witnesses to her words, and patriarchy prevails, as the Prince stands outside and watches the Queen roast, the submissive Snow White, his prize, by his side.

2.4 *The Tale of the Apple* by Emma Donoghue

Most postmodern fairy-tale retellings are born within the heteronormative framework of the traditional tales and therefore there are certain restrictions in the way they address sexuality and gender. As Jennifer Orme (2010: 121-122) notes, queer theory has not yet had a significant impact on the fairy-tale scholarship, however, the situation has started to change and scholars as well as authors are looking for new perspectives to enrich their readings of the classic tales. Emma Donoghue's young adult collection *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997) can be seen as an attempt to depart from this heteronormativity and introduce queer desires to the fairy tale canon. The collection consists of thirteen interlocking tales, which attempt to re-establish storytelling as a female art form, as in the end of each tale, the role of the storyteller is passed from one woman to

another and this also stresses the continuous nature of the fairy tale. Several of the stories have lesbian undertones and one of those is *The Tale of the Apple*.

One of the major themes of this story seems to be the female entrapment in the patriarchal society. The Grimms' version of *Snow White* presents the reader with several symbols for this: the window by which Snow White's mother sits, the mirror and the glass coffin (Joosen 2011: 217) and Donoghue retains all of them in her story. Snow White retells her maid's story about her mother sitting by an open window during winter. She does not mind the cold, as she appears to suffer from depression because of the pressure put upon her by the King who, as we learn later in the story, is desperate for an heir: "The daughter I carry will have hair as black as ebony, lips as red as blood, skin as white as snow. What will she have that will save her from my fate?" (Donoghue 1999: 44). Snow White's mother fears that her daughter is bound to a life similar to hers, trapped in a gilded gage of domesticity where becoming a mother is the only way of self-realisation.

However, similarly to *Snow, Glass, Apples* by Neil Gaiman, Emma Donoghue's *The Tale of the Apple* rejects the omniscient storyteller and utilizes the first person narrative. In Donoghue's story, the voice belongs to Snow White herself, which, given her silence in the traditional tale is a major step towards her independence. In this case, Snow White becomes the active force, the author, the artist and plotter that Gilbert and Gubar described. Snow White's recollection of the events does not use any direct speech at all, reporting everything with her own words. However, even though Snow White is the narrator of the tale, the story belongs to both her and the Queen. Donoghue's story focuses on the female characters and therefore the male characters remain distant and represent otherness. Like in the other tales in *Kissing the Witch*, Donoghue's interest lies in supportive relationship between female characters which is threatened by patriarchy.

In *The Tale of the Apple*, both main female characters are treated as equals, so once again there is no sign of the traditional angel-monster distinction and the binary opposition of good and evil has been thrown out of balance. The Queen treats Snow White lovingly, yet at first, the latter is reluctant to reciprocate, as she thinks she should see the Queen as a threat and a rival: "But I knew from the songs that a stepmother's smile is like a snake's, so I shut my mind to her from that very first day when I was rigid with the letting of first blood" (Donoghue 1999: 46). The songs here represent the texts penned by a presumably male hand, the fairy tales within a fairy tale, echoing the voice of patriarchy. By referring to the contrast between the reality and the stories people grow up with, Donoghue, like Barthelme, draws attention to the deceptive nature of fairy tales and emphasises the importance of new revisions and perspectives, fulfilling one of the functions of fairy-tale retellings pointed out by Vanessa Joosen (2011: 16).

Snow White chooses to submit to the goodwill of the Queen and their relationship flourishes until the women face the voice of the mirror familiar from the traditional story. In this case, however, the mirror's words come from the mouth of the King who sees both women trying on earrings: "Two such fair ladies, he remarked, have never been seen on one bed. But which of you is the fairest of them all?" (Donoghue 1999: 47). From that moment, both women find themselves trapped in the mirror, as the question of beauty enters onto the stage and creates a dischord between the two. Donoghue continues by hinting at the King's incestuous desire towards his daughter, as both the young Queen and Snow White resemble each other and are roughly of the same age, thus bringing back the forbidden desires that were edited out by the brothers Grimm. While Neil Gaiman introduced incestuous desire to make the traits of Snow White's character less desirable, Donoghue seems to use it to question the heteronormative and patriarchal conventions that the traditional tales support and thus the tale resembles more to that of Angela Carter's.

Donoghue continues to depict patriarchy as a danger to the female will and independence, as Snow White describes the effect his father's desire to obtain an heir has on her helpless stepmother. When all other methods fail, the King simply tells her to stay still and lie on her back and "wait to find herself with a child" (Donoghue 1999: 49). The King does not seem to care that the forced passivity and the means he has taken to strengthen his wife weaken her instead, as barrenness deserves to be punished. Even on his death bed the King is determined to voice his displeasure: "He cursed the doctors, he cursed the enemies, he cursed the two wives who had failed him, and finally with a wet mouth he cursed the son who had never come" (Donoghue 1999: 50).

The King is not the only male character who is shown in a negative light. Donoghue has decided to remove the Prince from the picture altogether, however, the dwarves remain. In the traditional tale, the dwarves also represent the voice of patriarchy, as they ask Snow White to do the housework for them in return for a place under their roof. *In The Tale of the Apple*, the agreement between the woodsmen and Snow White stays the same, however, as it was previously mentioned, Donoghue has resexualised the tale, so the woodsmen in her story also pose a sexual threat: "One of them asked what was in my skirts to make them so heavy, and I said, Knives, and he took his hand off my thigh and never touched me again" (Donoghue 1999: 52). From this we can conclude that in those instances where heterosexual desire is introduced in the story, Donoghue has chosen to show it in a slightly unfavourable light, exposing the underlying threats it may impose to the female character.

In a way, the King and the woodsmen join their forces in this story to eradicate the female will and to maintain a rivalry between the female characters, because the situation benefits them. Similarly to the King who is angered when his wife cannot provide him with a son, the woodsmen scold Snow White when she fails to present them with a meal one

night. When they discover that the reason for this was a visit from the Queen, eager to make amends for her earlier behaviour towards Snow White, they call her a sorceress for finding her so deep in the woods. On another occasion, they call her a witch for putting the "poison of idleness" in her head (Donoghue 1999: 56). Again, this echoes the traditional tale where authoritarian male voice divided the female characters into the obedient and the uncontrollable, the good and the wicked. Moreover, the woodsmen are also shown as thinking that they know what is good for her and that they possess control over Snow White's body. When Snow White slips into sleep after choking on the apple, they put her into a coffin and carry her to "another kingdom where they'll know how to treat a princess" (Donoghue 1999: 58). This is also similar to the Grimms' tale where Snow White's fate lies in the hands of the male authority figures in her life.

It seems that for Emma Donoghue, the solution to Snow White's and her stepmother's problems with the patriarchal social order lies in something that does not exist in the traditional fairy tales. As Michael Mendelson (1997: 119) points out, there is a certain double standard regarding the collaborative interaction in the Grimms' fairy tales. While there is a number of tales that endorse male bonding by featuring a group of men working together for a good purpose, the body of the Grimms' work lacks fairy tales that display positive female collaboration. *Snow White* is a good example of a tale with a solitary female protagonist who is not allowed the benefit of female companionship. Donoghue has noted this gap and woven a story where the happy ending lies in a trusting relationship between two female characters.

Donoghue's Snow White seems to be a woman of action despite the restricting social conventions. She spins her own tale, takes her fate into her own hands when she refuses to accept her stepmother's new position of power after the King's death and flees the castle, and fends away the woodsmen's advances by lying about the knives sewn into her skirts.

Yet she also seems to sense her incompleteness as she yearns for the peaceful days spent with the Queen before they were cast in the roles of rivals by patriarchy. The society is telling her to hate her stepmother, but she wants to love her and in order to find peace she must discard the ideas put into her head completely. The Queen realises that they should break away from their assigned roles first and tries to reconcile with Snow White. "I keep breaking mirrors" (Donoghue 1999: 55), she says, indicating both that she misses Snow White's face that closely resembles hers and that she wants to put an end to the rivalry imposed on them. Both women's realisation seems to be gradual. During the Queen's first visit to the woods, Snow White notes that there is nothing of the wife about her, by the second visit she has left the role of the queen, by the third, the mother.

In the end of the story, Snow White coughs up the first apple from the orchard that her stepmother brought her, chews it up, rises from the coffin despite the woodsmen's protests and starts walking back to the castle to finally join her stepmother. Snow White realises that the apple which used to be a sign of her father's love towards her now expresses that of the Queen's. The supposedly romantic relationship with her stepmother helps Snow White to escape the expectations of patriarchy and provides both women with understanding and equality that the male characters cannot offer as their world is largely built on unequal power relationships. Thus, in Emma Donoghue's *The Tale of the Apple*, Snow White escapes all three confinements meant for her in the traditional tale: the window, the mirror and the coffin. The Queen does the same by abandoning the labels put upon her by patriarchy: the mother, the wife and the queen. Donoghue's female characters distance themselves from patriarchy both literally and metaphorically in order to avoid the objectification and manipulation and to find contentment and peace in the company of each other.

Donoghue's version of *Snow White* does not only highlight the inequality coded in the traditional tale, but it also makes an attempt to save the female characters from their fate. While the story borrows its main details from the Grimms' tale, Donoghue makes a conscious lesbian feminist effort to depart from the traditional plot that keeps perpetuating patriarchal and heterosexual norms. Donoghue shows the reader that the happy endings that are familiar from the classic tales can be quite deceptive, as heroines end up being trapped in a world where self-realisation only comes in the form of housework and childbirth and serving one's purpose often comes at the price of one's health and happiness. Donoghue gives her female characters freedom by making them equal, stressing the importance of questioning the prevailing norms and embracing one's individuality. By taking a large step away from the stereotypical gender roles and heterosexual desires known from the Grimms' tales, introducing new possibilities and stopping the female characters from following the linear path of the traditional tale, Donoghue breathes new life into the story of Snow White and creates a fresh narrative that contributes to the diversity of voices in the contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

Fairy-tale retellings do not inhabit a closed space in the world of literature. Instead, they are a part of a complex framework that includes all the previous versions of the tales, other retellings, fairy-tale scholarship and cultural movements. Fairy-tale scholars like Donald Haase and Christina Bacchilega regard the relationship between those stories and academic readings as reciprocal, since the information encoded in them is being exchanged, analysed and rewritten according to the needs of the contemporary society. Fairy-tale retellings simultaneously reject and embrace the material of the traditional tales: they introduce contemporary ideas while contributing to the canonization of the classic stories.

Feminist critics have been very interested in the fairy tale, as this genre has always had something to say about people's views on sexuality and gender. Because of the continuous popularity of fairy tales like the ones by the brothers Grimm, the 19th century views regarding sexuality, gender and power relationships that are encoded in them have proved to be almost as pervasive as the genre itself and they have influenced the minds of many generations, as people are often introduced to fairy tales during their formative years. With the rise of the feminist fairy-tale criticism in the 1960s and 1970s, scholars like Ruth B. Bottigheimer started to highlight and question the patriarchal ideology encoded in traditional fairy tales. In addition to that, some scholars concentrated on producing new readings of the tales which attempted to find instances where patriarchal ideology is being undermined. Feminists also began to look for ways to disrupt the traditional narrative in order to address current societal views. Contemporary fairy-tale retellings proved to be suitable for the task as they deal with well-known texts and as Vanessa Joosen noted, they have a better influence on the general public than academic criticism.

Grimms' tales, which remain popular even today, were edited in order to educate the 19th century reader religiously, morally and socially. As the studies carried out by Ruth B. Bottigheimer and Maria Tatar show, the Grimms removed all references to sex, illicit relationships and incest, silenced the female voice, divided the characters into active males and passive females, the good/beautiful and the bad/ugly and put a special emphasis on the female beauty. The story of Snow White proves to be a typical example of Grimms' editorial practices. Because of that, Snow White has served as the basis for several revisionist retellings which attempt to address these issues and to subvert the conservative ideology in order to introduce contemporary views to the traditional fairy tale.

This thesis focused on the representation of sexuality and gender in four retellings of Snow White, which is one of the most popular tales among the works of the brothers Grimm. The study revealed that there are two main ways to deconstruct the traditional values when rewriting a fairy tale. One of them is to leave a great part of the structure or the plot of the traditional tale intact while highlighting the problematic elements in the original tale. This is the strategy used by Angela Carter and Neil Gaiman who use gore and taboo topics like incest and necrophilia to change the way the readers perceive the stereotypical fairy tale characters and to make them question the validity of the values the traditional narrative advocates. The other way to retell a fairy tale is to 'fix' and change the story by offering new endings and introducing new themes. This is the case with the retellings by Donald Barthelme and Emma Donoghue who help the female character escape from the destiny designed for them by patriarchy. Both of those ways undermine the validity of the traditional values coded in the traditional tales and very often this theme is also included in the story, as the characters themselves start to question the truth value of the stories that were told to them (Barthelme, Donoghue) or simply declare the traditional narrative to be false (Gaiman).

While the absence of sexual themes leaves a noticeable gap in the Grimms' tales, the resexualisation that happens in the contemporary retellings enables sexuality to reattach itself to the narrative so closely that it is difficult to discuss it separately. All four retellings approach the question of sexuality in a straightforward manner, the characters do not hide their desires and often use their sexuality to manipulate other characters in order to reach their goals. Sexuality is also used to establish new kind of power relationship between the main characters. This kind of open discussion of sexuality, including incestuous desire (Carter, Gaiman, Donoghue) and necrophilia (Carter, Gaiman), brings the retellings closer to the peasant versions of fairy tales that preceded the work of the brothers Grimm and to the contemporary society.

With the exception of Angela Carter, who retells the tale in a compact manner to expose the patriarchal ideology encoded in the traditional tale, the retellings discussed in this study do not favour the omniscient narrator and give voices to the female characters who were forced into silence in the Grimms' version, thus marking them as the weavers of their own tale and introducing the female will to the story. Donald Barthelme makes Snow White one of the narrators among the multitude of voices, Gaiman and Donoghue leave male characters in the background and allow the Queen and Snow White to tell the tale and put words in the mouths of male characters instead. The thoughts of the female characters are no longer mediated by a male narrator and this eradicates the male perspective that was forced on the tale when the brothers Grimm revised the story and allows the characters to become independent from the restrictions of the traditional tale.

As opposed to the Grimms' version, the retellings generally reject the concept of female beauty ideal. Physical appearance no longer reflects the personality traits of the characters and repetitive references to the beauty of female characters are removed. The female characters in the retellings do not have to rely on their looks anymore, as they are

empowered by having a voice. However, the authors still use the voice of the mirror in their tales to draw attention to the female beauty worship as a patriarchal construct. When the retellings bring up the question of beauty, it is usually vocalised by the male characters in those tales. The retellings also tend to retain the rivalry between the Queen and Snow White, even though in those tales it is not necessarily connected to beauty. The stories stress the role that the male gaze and objectification plays in this conflict. When female rivalry enters the picture in a contemporary retelling of a fairy tale, it is usually forced on the female characters by the actions of a male character.

The retellings also tend to overthrow the traditional angel-monster distinction and blur the border between good and evil. In the retellings, quiet obedience becomes undesireable while female assertiveness is valued highly. The characteristics associated with goodness are often labelled as negative in the revisions. In order to emphasise that, some of the stories analysed in this study use role reversal. Barthelme turns his prince figure into a passive character, Gaiman casts the quiet Snow White as the villain of the tale and reveals the Prince's sexual deviance, the good king is shown as having incestuous desire towards his daughter in Carter's and Donoghue's tales. However, the retellings do not simply reverse the roles. The flat characters of the traditional tale become more human and complex. Leaving out Angela Carter's tale once again because of its differences, Barthelme's Snow White is beautiful and forced into passivity, but she is also promiscuous and yearns to escape, Gaiman's version is a monster, yet we only have the Queen's word for it and she may be an unreliable narrator, Donoghue's protagonist is taught to be suspicious of her stepmother, but soon learns that the stories are not always true. Thus, the retellings question the patriarchal ideology in the traditional tale and demonstrate how fairy-tale like simplification of gender roles has no place in contemporary society, which demands multiple perspectives. The characters are stepping out of the traditional roles

they have been assigned and try on new ones that are more suitable for surviving in the contemporary context.

The retellings also support the idea of an ongoing dialogue between (feminist) fairy-tale scholarship and literature, as all of the stories discussed in this study contain details that hint at the author's awareness of the scholarship. Barthelme uses his *Snow White* to reflect on the feminist ideas that spread fast in the society during 1960s and Carter also contributes to that discussion by intensifying the sexist undertones in the traditional tale. Gaiman's story can be read in the light of the work done by Bruno Bettleheim and Gilbert and Gubar, Donoghue's tale is an example of lesbian feminism entering into literature and adding a non-heteronormative viewpoint. As opposed to the Grimms' version, all retellings refuse to provide a conclusive ending to their story. By doing so, the reader is invited to join the discussion. In addition to that, the retellings also recognise the fairy tale genre's dependency of the society and leave room for future debates.

What should be pointed out is that all of the stories could not perform their acts of subversion without the backdrop of the traditional tale and in order to carry out their work they must recognise the influence stories have on the mind of an individual. The readers' understanding of the retellings depends heavily on their knowledge of the traditional tale and thus, the revisions have to maintain certain characteristics of their predecessor. The elements that have been taken over tend to be the ones that carry meaning about gender roles and sexuality in the traditional tale: for instance the stereotypical character types themselves, the mirror and the concept of rivalry between the two main female characters. The details that the authors of contemporary retellings borrow from the traditional tale can thus be seen as the ones that make fairy tales so pervasive and easily recognisable. This confirms the contradictory, but rather symbiotic relationship between the traditional tales and their retellings that was noted by Christina Bacchilega and Donald Haase: they adopt

certain elements and embrace them in order to simultaneously transform and reject them while generating new meanings that vocalize the viewpoint of the contemporary society and helping to spread current views on the matters of sexuality and gender.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
INGLISE FILOLOOGIA OSAKOND

Merilyn Paugus
Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Retellings of *Snow White*
(Seksuaalsus ja soolisus "Lumivalgekese" kaasaegsetes ümberjutustustes)
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Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva töö eesmärgiks on uurida seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse kujutamist "Lumivalgekese" uusversioonides nelja teksti näitel: Donald Barthelme "Snow White", Angela Carteri "The Snow Child", Neil Gaimani "Snow, Glass, Apples" ja Emma Donoghue "The Tale of the Apple". Töö põhieesmärk on võrrelda vendade Grimmide "Lumivalgekest" 20. sajandi uusversioonidega, et näha, kuidas ja milliste võtete abil on kaasaegsed arusaamad seksuaalsusest ja soolisusest muinasjuttude ümberjutustustesse jõudnud ning mil määral on kirjanikud astunud dialoogi muinasjutu-uuringutega.

Töö sissejuhatuses antakse lühiülevaade vendade Grimmide tööst ja selle suhtest muinasjutu-uuringutega ning tutvustatakse analüüsitavate tekstide autoreid.

Töö teoreetilises osas käsitletakse muinasjuttude suhteid ümberjutustustega, viimaste funktsioone ja nende suhet feminismiga. Samuti annab töö esimene osa ümberjutustuste analüüsimiseks vajaliku ülevaate seksuaalsusest ja soolisusest Grimmide muinasjuttudes. Eraldi tähelepanu pööratakse "Lumivalgekesele".

Töö empiiriline osa kätkeb endas eelpoolmainitud nelja "Lumivalgekese" ümberjutustuse analüüsi. Tekste võrreldakse vendade Grimmide "Lumivalgekesega" ja tuuakse välja seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse kujutamisega seonduvad sarnasused ning erinevused. Lisaks sellele pööratakse tähelepanu ümberjutustustes leiduvatele (feministlike) muinasjutu-uuringutega seonduvatele detailidele.

Töö käigus selgus, et erinevalt Grimmide toimetatud tekstist käsitlevad ümberjutustused seksuaalsusega seonduvaid küsimusi avameelselt. Samuti on kaasaegsed autorid andnud naistegelastele tagasi nende sõnaõiguse ja iseseisvuse. Ümberjutustused panevad traditsioonilised soorollid kahtluse alla ning astuvad Grimmide versiooni patriarhaalse ideoloogiaga vastuollu, säilitades samas mõningaid traditsioonilisi elemente. Samuti on ümberjutustustest kadunud Grimmidele omane naiseliku ilu ülistamine. Lisaks soodustavad ümberjutustused aktiivset dialoogi (feministlike) muinasjutu-uuringutega: ümberjutustuste autorid paistavad olevat teadlikud antud valdkonnas levinud suundadest ning kasutavad oma tekste nendega seonduvate ideede arutamiseks ja levitamiseks.

Märksõnad: inglise kirjandus, ameerika kirjandus, iiri kirjandus, ilukirjandus, muinasjutu-uuringud, soolisus, seksuaalsus, feminism.

Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks

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