

## ABSTRACT

### REREADING FEMALE BODIES IN LITTLE SNOW-WHITE: INDEPENDENCE AND AUTONOMY VERSUS SUBJUGATION AND INVISIBILITY

By Dianne Graf

In this thesis, the circumstances and events that motivate the Queen to murder Snow-White are reexamined. Instead of confirming the Queen as wicked, she becomes the protagonist. The Queen's actions reveal her intent to protect her physical autonomy in a patriarchal controlled society, as well as attempting to prevent patriarchy from using Snow-White as their reproductive property.

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by  
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To Amanda Dianne Graf, my daughter.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, the design, framing, and behaviors of female bodies in Little Snow-White, as recorded by Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm will be analyzed. This study will reveal that the function of these female bodies depict motives and attitudes that do not portray or reinforce the negative female stereotypes of the passive, voiceless, and victimized girl by the wicked, maniacal, and jealous older woman. The way these female bodies are designed and the details used to describe them determine how they function within a specific frame, or setting of these texts. It is another way to establish meaning beyond the typical and usual interpretations that define the protagonist female body as passive and submissive and the antagonist as evil. To support my original reading of the female body in Little Snow-White, I have included a brief overview of the fairy tale genre and review the work of noted scholars and critics who have supported stereotypical views of the typical female characters found in fairy tales.

Male bodies will not be the focus in this study, not because they are not important, rather because this thesis is not a discussion about, or a comparison between how women's bodies are treated differently than male bodies and vice versa. However, female bodies responding to the physical behaviors of male bodies will be discussed, as well as the manner in which male bodies respond to the physical behaviors of female bodies. Also, the analysis of the behaviors and motives of the female bodies in Little Snow-White is not intended to demean or attack male body and it is not a complaint about how men treat women. It must be accepted that the behaviors of male and female

bodies do influence each other's private and public behaviors. The analysis that results from this study of how female and male bodies interact with and then react to each other is intended only for the characters that exist in Little Snow-White.

Additionally, the physical elements of the spaces in which the female bodies function in Little Snow-White help influence and define the behaviors of female bodies. The Queen uses these spaces to frame and fragment her body as a way to maintain her independence and autonomy in patriarchy. On the other hand, Snow-White's body is protected and kept whole and complete, which ensures her dependence and invisibility in patriarchy.

CHAPTER I  
 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE LITERARY FAIRY TALE  
 AND THE TRADITIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE FEMALE CHARACTERS

Literary fairy tales had their origins in the Italian and French courts during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and were written by “Giovanni Francesco Straparola, Giambattista Basile, Mme. D’Aulnoy, Charles Perrault, Mlle. L’Héritier, Mlle. de La Force, and others” as stated by Jack Zipes in Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children, and the Culture Industry, and they “were complex symbolic social acts.... In other words, literary fairy tales appropriated oral folk tales and created new ones to reflect upon rituals, customs, habits, and ethics and simultaneously to serve as a civilizing agent” (4). Alan Dundes explains the idea of *civilizing* in Parsing through Customs: Essays by a Freudian Folklorist:

For example, according to unilinear (one line) evolutionary theory in nineteenth-century anthropology, it was believed that *all* peoples progressed in an unvarying three-stage sequence: savagery, barbarism, and civilization.... Supposedly, myths found among savages or primitives degenerated into folktales among the peasant or folk. According to this devolutionary premise, as the peasant became civilized, as the illiterate became literate, as the rural became urban, he lost what little folklore he had retained. This is why it was a matter of some urgency to collect these



remaining vestigial fragments from peasants in order to have some record, albeit partial, from prehistoric savage times. (4-5)

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were not the inventors of the literary fairy tale genre, but they are recognized for embellishing and transforming oral folktales to a written form. The Grimm brothers undoubtedly understood the significance and power of the fairy tale in addition to their historical value. Thus, it was that understanding that served to motivate their concerted effort to record them. Jack Zipes explains in his introduction to The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm that:

They [the Grimms] were convinced that their tales possessed essential truths about the origins of civilization, and they selected and revised those tales that would best express these truths. They did this in the name of humanity and *Kultur*: the Grimms were German idealists who believed that historical knowledge of customs, mores, and laws would increase self-understanding and social enlightenment [...]. (xxxix)

Although Zipes does not specifically reveal what the Grimm Brothers believed those truths were, he does confirm that the brothers believed these tales contained knowledge that would allow the reader access to truths about the human condition that transcend time. Steven Swann Jones shares the Grimms' sentiment of fairy tales in "The Structure of Snow-White" when stating:

Like crystals that have been shaped by years of pressure, folktales have an intricate beauty that is simultaneously the product of their exceptional longevity as well as an explanation for it. Given their history of being

continually recreated by individual narrators in different social settings, under changing political conditions, with varying psychological concerns, it is no wonder that under these pressures they have become like diamonds, precisely structured and elegantly arranged gems of human expression. (71)

Without question, many of the fairy tales recorded by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in the first half of the nineteenth century continue to maintain a prominent and distinct position in American culture. The prominence and ubiquitous nature of these fairy tale themes and motifs exist, in part, due to Walt Disney and animation. Even those individuals who have not read print versions of the tales are, at the very least, familiar with elements of these tales like the prince, the shoe, and the stepmother, and it takes very little effort to recognize references to Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty in all forms of American media. In “Breaking the Magic Spell: Politics and the Fairy Tale,” Jack Zipes substantiates the predominance of these fairy tale motifs in American society in that they:

continue to exercise an extraordinary hold over our real and imaginative lives from childhood to adulthood. The enormous amount of scholarship testifies to this as does the constant use and transformation of this material in novels, poetry, films, theater, tv, comics, jokes and everyday conversation. (118)

The literary fairy tale holds a unique and secure position in American culture. Alexandra Robbins also recognizes the place of the fairy tale in American culture in her

article “The Fairy-Tale Facade: Cinderella's Anti-grotesque Dream.” Robbins’ concern is that the fairy tale is secure in this position of power because, “we accept the tales and their values as a part of our psyche without questioning their validity; we believe that their status as fairy tales excuses us from asking such questions” (102).

Robbins does not explain, “questioning their validity” other than through implication that these tales should invite alternative readings that do not glamorize the passive, submissive, and voiceless female. Whether or not the fairy tale represents or communicates some kind of unquestioned *validity* for Robbins, they still exist, shape, and inform us privately and publicly by the way in which we use them to suggest or create meaning for experiences in our life. For this reason, they have validity and are still fertile ground for intellectual study even after a century of being the subject of erudite scrutiny as confirmed by Jack Zipes in, When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition that:

It is not only German creative writers who have responded to the fairy tale as institution but also German critics and philosophers [...] More interesting than the traditional scholarly approach is the manner in which various astute philosophers and cultural critics of the twentieth century — such as Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Theodore Adorno, Elias Canetti, Oskar Negt, and Alexander Kluge — have employed the fairy tale to register their insights about society and the potential of the tale itself to have a social impact. Thus, Benjamin writes: “Whenever good counsel was at a premium, the fairy tale had it, and where the need was the

greatest, its aid was nearest [...] The wisest thing—so the fairy tale taught mankind in olden times, and teaches children to this day—is to meet the forces of the mythical world with cunning and high spirits. (86-7)

These scholars and critics named by Zipes certainly have not explored all the ways in which tales can be analyzed and interpreted; rather they helped open doors for alternative ways to evaluate these tales. In fact, the unique and enduring quality of the ever-popular tales and the power of their social impact continue to attract academic curiosity and interest from critics, feminists, philosophers, media, and writers attempting to unlock the “truths” contained within the tale.

Lisa Rettl, is one of a number of scholars supporting a multi-faceted academic approach to the study of fairy tales. She challenges the idea of categorizing tales by their seemingly simplistic themes in, “Fairy Tales Re-visited Gender Concepts in Traditional and Feminist Fairy Tales” by stating:

It seems to be an impossible task to define fairy tales according to motifs, formal or structural criteria, because fairy tales are multi-dimensional and all-embracing, their boundaries therefore remaining unclear on many different levels [...] By all-embracing, I mean that the investigation of fairy tales leads into many different scientific disciplines, among them psychology, history, sociology, ethnography, folklore, linguistics and, of course, literary studies. (182-3)

By their very nature and structure, fairy tales can be studied and authentically interpreted in many ways, including from the popular feminist critical approach. Of

course, it is not surprising that for decades feminist scholars have discussed and berated the seemingly passive submissive stereotypical protagonists of the familiar fairy tales as promoting unhealthy behaviors and attitudes to generations of young girls. It almost goes without saying that feminist critics typically discuss these stereotypical female images and behaviors in fairy tales because they use the young female protagonist as an example of conformity and submission to the patriarchal design of society at the hands of an older woman who is wicked due to her own inherent nature or supernaturally, and do not discuss the young protagonist as a victim of patriarchy at the hands of men. The favorite victimized protagonists used to illustrate passivity and victimization at the hands of women are Snow-White, Sleeping Beauty, and Cinderella.

In “Women and the Study of Folklore,” Rosan A. Jordan and F.A. de Caro acknowledge the work of Jennifer Waelti-Walters, Karen E. Rowe, Rose Oliver, and Marcia R. Lieberman, and they say:

Fairy tales promote unhealthy sex stereotypes. They teach girls to “play dead across the path of some young man who has been led to believe that he rules the world,” “glorify passivity, dependency and self-sacrifice as a heroine’s cardinal virtues,” promote a “theme [that] is the inferior position of women,” teach that “girls win the prize if they are fairest of them all; boys win if they are bold, active, and lucky.” They acculturate girls to certain conventional roles such as dependence on males and traditional marriage, deal with females as property to be bestowed, and treat older women as wicked stepmothers and hags to be feared. (507-08)

From this viewpoint, the wicked witch-like step/mother attempts to kill Snow-White because she's beautiful and threatens the mother's image of self. Snow-White lives in exile, is poisoned, and then awakes in the castle of a prince with only one option: marriage. In Sleeping Beauty, a wicked little fairy becomes angry because she is not invited to a party. In her anger, she curses Sleeping Beauty who then must sleep for one hundred years until a prince wakes her up. Once she is awake, she has one option and that is to marry the prince. The ubiquitous Cinderella finds herself at the mercy of her witch-like stepmother and stepsisters who try to stop her from attending the ball. Despite the attempts of the stepmother and stepsisters, Cinderella goes to the ball, loses her shoe, and finds a prince. Only after the prince confirms that the shoe fits Cinderella's foot will he marry her.

In these particular tales, it seems the only role available to a woman, other than the submissive, abused young protagonist is one that defines her as devious, manipulative and therefore subversive in patriarchal society. From a feminist perspective, Snow-White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty as protagonists are victims of women who ultimately enforce domestic constraints on the allegedly innocent girl because they have been and are victims of patriarchy. Therefore, the older woman helps prepare the protagonist for marriage to a prince and domesticity. If this is the case, then it is a logical to surmise that the young innocent female protagonist indoctrinated to the woes of a patriarchal society will turn into the mother/witch, who in turn will victimize the next generation of young girls in order to maintain patriarchal power and control.

In an article written by Marcia R. Lieberman, in the early days of women's

liberation titled, “‘Some Day My Prince Will Come’: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale,” she suggests the function and purpose of the fairy tale was for the education of children. It must be noted that Lieberman’s use of “Some day my prince will come,” does not come from the literary tale, rather it is a line from a song in the 1937 Disney film Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, but it does emphasize her point that we are acculturated through the Disney versions of fairy tales. Lieberman states:

Only the best-known stories, those that everyone has read or heard, indeed, those that Disney has popularized, have affected masses of children in our culture. Cinderella, the Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White are mythic figures who have replaced the old Greek and Norse gods, goddesses, and heroes for most children [...]. (383-84)

Also worth noting that Marcia R. Lieberman claims Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow-White are mythic figures with power that transcends those figures in Greek and Norse mythology. Because these female characters have ascended to mythic status, their power through the medium of the fairy tale acculturates young girls to accept passivity and submissiveness as an acceptable way to behave throughout their lives.

In addition to the characters of Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow-White, the nameless fairy tale wicked step/mother and/or queen should be added to Lieberman’s list of fairy tale mythic figures. The wicked step/mother’s precursor was Venus, the Roman goddess of fertility, beauty, and love. Venus wanted to punish Psyche, whose beauty commanded the attention and adoration of men. She became very angry and ordered Cupid, her son, to make sure that Psyche would fall in love with an extremely ugly man.

Instead, and much to Venus' dismay, Cupid fell in love with the beautiful Psyche and married her.

Throughout her article, Lieberman asserts that fairy tales have only one function and that is to shape girls' perceptions to conform to a gendered identity through stereotypical characters like the wicked mother and the beautiful, helpless child. Fairy tales do have authority to inform attitudes and Lieberman acknowledges this when she credits fairy tales with the power to have shaped the perceptions of:

Millions of women [who] must surely have formed their psycho-sexual self-concepts, and their ideas of what they could or could not accomplish, what sort of behavior would be rewarded, and of the nature of reward itself, in part from their favorite fairy tales. These stories have been made the repositories of the dreams, hopes, and fantasies of generations of girls.  
(385)

To secure her point, Lieberman uses the Charles Perrault's version of Cinderella; or, The Little Glass Slipper from Andrew Lang's Blue Fairy Book as her example to support the premise that Cinderella is passive to present a convincing argument that this tale has significantly shaped girls' perceptions because:

Cinderella plays as passive a role in her story. After leaving her slipper at the ball she has nothing more to do but stay home and wait. The prince has commanded that the slipper be carried to every house in the kingdom, and that it be tried on the foot of every woman. Cinderella can remain quietly



at home; the prince's servants will come to her house and will discover her identity. (389)

Yes, in the Perrault version Cinderella “left behind one of her glass slippers, which the Prince took up most carefully.” The fact that Cinderella left her slipper at the ball implies that she intended to leave her slipper at the ball. Her intent becomes an invitation to discuss the purpose behind her act, which easily can be interpreted to mean that she wants the Prince to find it and then use that shoe to find her. The only outcome of the Prince confirming that the shoe fits Cinderella's foot, of course, is marriage.

There are other versions of this tale that unequivocally show that Cinderella did not *leave* her shoe at the ball. Joseph Jacobs and the Grimm brothers' versions have Cinderella's golden slipper, not glass slipper, get stuck in tar that a servant, who obeyed the orders of the Prince, put on the steps. The Prince intends to trap and then catch the girl. Whether she leaves her shoe there by choice or design, she dances, has the undivided attention of the Prince, plus admiration from all the people attending the ball. While dancing with the Prince, Cinderella does not engage the Prince in conversation. It seems that she is not interested in developing a relationship with him. She is there to have fun. In the Perrault version, when the details of how Cinderella loses her shoe offer an alternative motive for Cinderella's behavior and is glossed over by Lieberman in order to sustain her argument that girls are acculturated to a patriarchal society through the behaviors of these submissive protagonists in fairy tales.

The reason Lieberman may have chosen Cinderella as the protagonist to illustrate and confirm her point is plausibly explained by Susanne Sara Thomas in her article

“‘Cinderella’ and the Phallic Foot: The Symbolic Significance of the Tale’s Slipper Motif,” in which she reveals the results from a survey she conducted to identify which element in the Cinderella story was “the most memorable image in the tale.” She says, “A large proportion of respondents [...] stated that the glass slipper was the image which first came to mind [...] Not a single respondent to my survey claimed to have no knowledge of ‘Cinderella.’” (24). The glass slipper element is from Charles Perrault’s tale Cinderella; or The Little Glass Slipper. It didn’t seem to matter if the respondents’ knowledge of the glass slipper came from the Perrault or Disney versions of the fairy tale because that factor was not significant to her study. It is telling, however, that elements of this tale are so well known and raised the possibility that Little Snow-White and Sleeping Beauty may contain elements that are just as easily recognized as the glass slipper such as the apple and the hundred-year sleep.

One last point that must be noted is that Lieberman does not specifically differentiate between the acculturating influence of the Disney version or the Perrault version of the Cinderella tale. This is unfortunate because she erroneously implies that the literary tale’s purpose was to train girls to function appropriately in a society constructed by masculine ideals and traditions. However, as Jack Zipes emphatically states in his introduction to When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition:

Nothing could be further from the truth.

From the very beginning, thousands of years ago, when tales were told to create communal bonds in the face of inexplicable forces of nature, to the

present, when fairy tales are written and told to provide hope in a world seemingly on the brink of catastrophe, mature men and women have been the creators and cultivators of the fairy-tale tradition. (1)

If the literary fairy tale was not originally intended for children, then they must serve other purposes besides training young girls in the art of patriarchal conformity. Jane Yolen agrees. She criticizes Disney and the author of Womenfolk and Fairy Tales in “America’s Cinderella,” by stating:

The final bit of icing on the American Cinderella was concocted by that master candy-maker, Walt Disney, in the 1950s. Since then, America’s Cinderella has been a coy, helpless dreamer, a “nice” girl who awaits her rescue with patience and a song. This Cinderella of the mass market books finds her way into a majority of American homes while the classic heroines sit unread in old volumes on library shelves.

Poor Cinderella. She has been unjustly distorted by storytellers, misunderstood by educators, and wrongly accused by feminists. Even as late as 1975, in the well-received volume *Womenfolk and Fairy Tales*, Rosemary Minard writes that Cinderella “would still be scrubbing floors if it were not for her fairy godmother.” And Ms. Minard includes her in a sweeping condemnation of folk heroines as “insipid beauties waiting passively for Prince charming.”

Like many dialecticians, Ms. Minard reads the fairy tales incorrectly. Believing—rightly—that the fairy tales, as all stories for children,

acculturate young readers and listeners, she has nevertheless gotten her target wrong. Cinderella is not to blame. Not the real, the true Cinderella. Ms. Minard should focus her sights on the mass-market Cinderella. She does not recognize the old Ash-girl for the tough, resilient heroine. The wrong Cinderella has gone to the American ball. (297)

Yolen definitively advocates for alternative ways of reading the Cinderella protagonist. If Cinderella and her behaviors can be read in other ways than as the victim, then so can the behaviors of the other well-known fairy tale protagonists.

The evidence that literary fairy tales were not originally intended for child audiences also supports and invites alternative ways of reading and analyzing the female body. Yes, stereotypical depictions are maintained in the absence of descriptive details that would effectively flesh characters into whole physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual bodies. Despite, or maybe because of the lack of details, we easily recognize the wicked witch, the absent or silent mother, the abusive stepsisters, and the beautiful, passive, victimized daughter as representing virtuous and not so virtuous traits of human temperament. In “Cross-Cultural Connections and the Contamination of the Classical Fairy Tale,” Zipes again states that through fairy tales, we can learn what it is to be human through the process of civilization:

The truth value of a fairy tale is dependent on the degree to which a writer is capable of using a symbolical narrative strategy and stereotypical characterization to depict, expose, or celebrate the modes of behavior that were used and justified to attain power in the civilizing process of a given

society. Whether oral or literary, the tales have sought to uncover truths about the delights of existence and the intricacies of our civilizing processes. (845)

Even though popular media helps shape our perception of female bodies and their motives for how they function in literary fairy tale texts, there is interest among scholars to read these female bodies other than as confined within stereotypical images that target young girls for the sole purpose of training them in the art of patriarchal conformity. Not only have Alan Dundes, Jack Zipes, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm postulated that fairy tales connect to something ancient in the human psyche, so does Marina Warner when she says in, “The Absent Mother: Women Against Women in Old Wives’ Tales,” that:

The stories of Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, and Little Snow-White have directly inherited features from the plot of Apuleius’s romance, like Psyche’s wicked sisters, the enchanted bounty in her mysterious husband’s palace, and the prohibitions that hedge about her knowledge of his true nature. (27)

Warner also gives a brief overview of the historical role of women in shaping the literary fairy tale genre and gives a reason for their popularity in aristocratic France from 1694-99 by explaining that it coincided with:

Louis XIV’s capricious policies, his wars and depredations, [which] were plunging the country – and even the nobles – into ruin.

The fairytale offered a coded way to dissent at a time of thought censorship and monarchical control, it created a picture of a possible

escape from tyranny, and it used the naïve setting of childish beliefs in magic, the simple structure of the marvelous tale with its binary oppositions and neat resolutions [...].

Fairytales offer a case where the very contempt for women opened an opportunity for them to exercise their wit and communicate their ideas: women's care for children, the prevailing disregard for both groups, and their presumed identity with the simple folk, the common people, handed them fairytales as a nursery indeed, where they might seed their own gardens and foster their own flowers. (24)

Warner also celebrates the creative power of women in their story telling, which results from the experience of women. For example, the stepmother was common because of the high rate of mortality in childbirth, and it was not uncommon for tension and animosity to develop between step and biological members of families. In no way, however, does Warner suggest that this should be the only way to read the literary tales, and neither does Julius E. Heuschcer quoted by Kay Stone in "The Misuses of Enchantment: Controversies on the Significance of Fairy Tales," who:

reminds us, echoing the observations of other scholars, the dynamic possibilities of such stories in meaning and impact, understanding and response, are richly varied: "The fairy tale is not static, is not a rigid image of an immutable situation. It is subject of all kinds of modifications which depend on the psychological makeup of the narrator [and audience] as well as on his [their] cultural environment" (Heuschcer 1974:389).

Thus, while fairy tales are not inherently sexist, many readers receive them as such. (144)

The Grimm Brothers believed that reading and knowing fairy tales would “increase self-understanding and social enlightenment.” Fairy tales are those “gems of human expression,” that can “open the culture to intelligibility” when read in ways other than the familiar and stereotypically sexist as those exemplified in the analysis of Cinderella, which happens to be one of the most recognized of all fairy tales. Therefore, female characters, no matter their age or design, need not exhibit personality complexities in fairy tales because they are effective as character types, and they are effective by how they use or do not use their physical, intellectual, and magical abilities in the landscapes of the fairy tale environment. As material rhetorical devices, female bodies in fairy tales should be looked at in new and innovative ways. Seeing the female body from different perspectives, such as a means to subvert the customary patriarchal expectations in civilized society, will allow the female body to be analyzed and interpreted in ways other than as those all-familiar negative images of the submissive, voiceless, or wicked.

## CHAPTER II

### THE QUEEN STEP/MOTHER

There are two literary versions of Little Snow-White credited to Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. The one most recognized is the 1857 version wherein lives the beautiful and seemingly wicked stepmother who appears soon after Snow-White's mother died childbirth. Although the mother in the 1812 version and stepmother in the 1857 version are essentially the same character, the established image of the stereotypically wicked stepmother in this tale, and in the animated Disney version of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs often prevents reading the character of the Queen/Stepmother/Peddler Woman as something other than evil and maniacal. A close study of the Queen/Stepmother/Peddler Woman body and its behavior in this tale will reveal that she is not motivated to kill Snow-White because she is jealous of the girl's physical beauty. Quite the contrary, this Queen, as will be discussed, does not desire beauty for the sake of beauty. Instead, her behaviors are motivated by her desire to maintain her independence from patriarchy as well as her desire to keep Snow-White's body out of the hands of patriarchy.

The Queen's attempts to kill Snow-White are altruistic thus making her the protagonist of this tale. In the Queen's mind, if she kills Snow-White, patriarchy cannot use the girl's body to reproduce itself or confine the girl to a domestic role in order to serve the needs and interests of patriarchy. An examination of the design of the Queen's body and how she uses the spaces within the text to frame her body will show that she is not the stereotypical wicked mother or stepmother. She will prove herself to be intelligent



and capable of independent thought and able to maintain her autonomy in a society controlled by patriarchy.

The tale begins:

Once upon a time in mid winter, when the snowflakes were falling like feathers from heaven, a beautiful queen sat sewing at her window, which had a frame of black ebony wood.

Three details in this first sentence confirm the queen's elevated and privileged position in society: first, by the title of queen; second, by her beauty; and third, by the feather-like attributes of the falling snowflakes from heaven. Details in this sentence also introduce the theme of opposites illustrated by the feather-like snow falling from heaven to earth, and by the black ebony frame and the white snow.

We know she lives in a castle because she is a queen. Castles are typically filled with all kinds of people engaged in all kinds of activities, but not this one. There are no attendants, servants, children, or King present. Instead the Queen decides to keep herself away from others. She is solitary and isolated by choice, or design, and obviously not the type of queen who requires or will require the attention of servants, attendants, or her husband, even if he is the King. She is a woman who prefers her privacy instead of displaying herself in public or taking advantage of the privileges afforded her as the Queen.

Despite the absence of attendants and servants, without doubt, the kingdom in which the Queen lives is wealthy and has financial resources as confirmed by the choice of wood used to frame her window. Exotic and extremely black, ebony only grows in

tropical Africa or Asia far from northern regions of winter climates. Not only is it an exotic and intensively black wood, ebony's other unusual property is its density. It is one of the few woods in the world that will actually sink in water. Its density keeps it close to the earth and this element symbolically connects and anchors the Queen close to the earth. In addition to keeping her close to the earth, the frame of the window separates the expansive, outside, public space from the close, inside, domestic space where she sits sewing.

She purposely puts her body within the window frame and confines her movements and actions to that space. In fact, we do not see her walk to her window, or seat herself at her window; rather we see her hands constructively engaged in that traditional female art of sewing behind a white feathery screen of snowflakes falling from heaven. Her sewing commands the attention of her eyes. For now, she appears to accept the role of domesticity as illustrated by the productive work of her hands.

The Queen presents herself as an image of domestic art within her ebony frame. She behaves in a way that does not threaten the fabric of patriarchal society because she is engaged in work deemed appropriate for women. However, it is the Queen who decides which parts of her body appear within the frame of her window, and it is the Queen who decides how her body is displayed within its frame. The sewing in her hands is the focus in this scene rather than her face or any other part of her body. Given that she sits at the window with her sewing, it is logical that the material of her sewing would conceal her breasts. In fact, there are other parts of her body such as her feet, legs, and hips that not visible because they exist outside the ebony frame, and in essence, they are

invisible. The Queen consistently and deliberately uses various frames within the setting to prevent her body from being seen in its entirety. These frames that fragment her body also allow her to protect and maintain her physical autonomy. Furthermore, by keeping her body in pieces and incomplete, she prevents patriarchy from defining her as an object of sexuality or sensuality.

For the time being, she seems content to sit complacently and sew. The absent attendants and servants confirm her desire for solitude and her desire not to be distracted from the domestic work of her hands. However, the work of her hands does not have the power to hold and keep her attention to her work:

As she sewed, she looked up at the snow and pricked her finger with her needle. Three drops of blood fell into the snow. The red on the white looked so beautiful that she thought to herself, "If only I had a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black this frame." Soon afterward she had a little daughter that was as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony wood, and therefore they called her Little Snow-White.

Her window must be located very close to the ground, which supports the nature and properties of the density of ebony. Another detail that realistically places the window close to the ground is the Queen's ability to clearly see the three drops of her hot-red blood in the cold-white snow. There are a couple of ways to explain why the Queen moved her hands outside the window in order for the blood to drop into the snow. It could have been when her finger got pricked, she put her hand outside the window to prevent her blood from staining her sewing, or she could have moved her still sewing

hands outside the frame of the window when the falling snow distracted her. Either way, in her distraction, the phallic needle took that moment to prick her finger and make it bleed.

The Queen recognizes beauty when looking at the three drops of her hot-red blood on the cold-white snow. However, it is beauty represented by the colors of red and white that specifically defines the masculine view of beauty in patriarchal society. In fact, in medieval times red and white literally and figuratively represented the masculine view ideal feminine beauty. Linda Woodbridge states in her article "Black and White and Red All Over: The Sonnet Mistress Amongst the Ndembu," that:

Even in medieval and Renaissance love poetry, roses in the cheeks, lips like cherries or rubies, skin like ivory, lilies, or snow were stiffly conventional: freshness of complexion prompted no freshness of metaphor. The mistress's red-and-white face was relentlessly emblazoned, "red and white" becoming a short-hand notation for feminine beauty. (247)

Even though she recognizes the masculine ideal of beauty in the colors of red and white, the three individual drops of her blood reinforce that beauty for her exists in pieces of herself and not as unified in a whole and complete body. From the Queen's perspective, the female body is beautiful only when it exists in pieces separated from the whole.

Unmistakably, the Queen offers a definition for the beauty she sees illustrated by red on white as very different from the way patriarchy sees the beauty of red on white. From this point onward, the Queen will not be distracted and will never be pricked by a

needle again. Also, she will never allow her hands to engage in the act of sewing, and she will not frame herself in this window again. Apparently, she didn't like being pricked and not wanting her body to be pricked again simply shows that she has no interest or desire in losing control of her body to anything phallic.

The Queen intends to own her body and by keeping her body fragmented, it is her exclusive property. As owner of her body, from this point forward she will protect it by maintaining her sexual independence. In this way, she can prevent her body from being reduced or confined to domesticity through reproduction thus securing her sovereign right to govern her own body. Historically, it has been difficult for women to define themselves as independent and not confined to reproduction. Jane M. Ussher in The Psychology of the Female Body supports this view when she states:

To position women purely in terms of their reproductive status is to deny their autonomy, to deny them the possibility of self-actualization. We have seen how, within the present discourse concerning women, reproduction plays an insidious role in maintaining subordination: it defines women through her womb, through her body, through the presence or absence of a child, the presence or absence of menstruation, the presence or absence of attractiveness, and sexuality. 138

When the needle pricked the Queen's finger, it literally and symbolically forced her into the domestic space as a mother. During the time of her pregnancy, she lost her ability to maintain her autonomy. While the Queen was pregnant, she never allowed her body to be seen in its pregnant condition. As soon as she was pricked, she hid her body until after

the child was born. It was a domestic duty she was forced to perform, and in performing it her body disappeared because it was made subject to the King. It was not her desire to have her body changed, reshaped, or redesigned as a result of coming into contact with the phallic. This Queen will never literally or symbolically share the same setting or space with the King again. In fact, the King's voice and physical body are invisible and inconsequential to the upcoming events in the text despite that the King and the Queen agree to name their baby together because "they called her Little Snow-White."

The mother in the 1812 text lives after giving birth to Snow-White, but in the 1857 text she dies, which opens the door for a stepmother to become Snow-White's adversary. It really doesn't matter if the character is a mother or a stepmother, because the design of these female bodies is similar. Both these women are determined to protect their independence in patriarchal society, and both are determined to prevent patriarchal society from having it way with Snow-White's body even if this means that they must kill the daughter.

After the birth of Snow-White, the Queen refuses to perform any motherly or maternal behaviors. She never holds, feeds, dresses, plays, or comforts Snow-White. The Queen would rather spend her time protecting her independence as illustrated by how she uses the setting frames to fragment her body to prevent it from being forced into sexual submissiveness for reproduction. Her body, literally and symbolically, will never subordinate itself to the King again. By using setting frames to fragment her body, she controls how, when, and where her physical body appears and what it does or does not do

when it appears. The Queen also refuses to share the same setting spaces with Snow-White until she transforms into the old beggar woman.

It is not until after the birth of Snow-White that the Queen allows parts of her body to become visible again as she stands before her mirror.

She was a beautiful woman, but she was proud and arrogant [...]. She had a magic mirror. Every morning she stood before it, looked at herself, and said:

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,

Who in this land is fairest of all?

To this the mirror answered:

You, my queen, are fairest of all.

Then she was satisfied, for she knew that the mirror spoke the truth.

The narrator tells the reader that the Queen is beautiful, proud, and arrogant. These qualities define her in a voice that is not her own and attempt, albeit unsuccessfully, to objectify and stereotype her as the wicked mother. However, it is irrefutably understood that this mirror belongs to the Queen. It is her property as is her window. This mirror hangs in an undisclosed room in the castle, a room to which only she has access. Each morning, the Queen stands in front of her mirror to look at herself, specifically her face. She is her own exclusive and privileged audience gazing upon the mirror image of her face within the frame of her mirror. It reflects her thoughts and her ability to think independently. The mirror is literal and symbolic and confirms that she can think independently. It is one more way she rebels against patriarchy.

The ritual that begins her day supports the Queen's intent to keep her body fragmented by using setting frames. She uses the frame of her mirror the same way she used the frame of her window to divide her body to keep it disconnected from the whole. In this way, she protects her body and it cannot become an object of sexuality or sensuality. In its disconnected condition, her body cannot be forced to perform reproductive or motherly duties in patriarchal society.

Even though this mirror belongs to the Queen, she does not allow it access to her entire body. Neither does she allow herself to be seen walking or moving toward or away from these frames. When she does stand before her mirror she refuses to behave in a way that typically defines women. Her mirror is not intended as a surrogate for the male gaze. She does not primp her face, or comb or fix her hair; instead she controls her body keeping it emotionally inexpressive and immobile. Her mirror is a reflection of her ability to think independently and apart from society. She does not use her ability to think independently to contemplate her beauty, rather she asks: "Mirror, mirror, on the wall / Who in this land is fairest of all?" After the Queen poses her question to the mirror, the mirror truthfully answers, "You, my queen, are fairest of all." The mirror, whether literal or symbolic, confirms the Queen's ability to contemplate her identity and individuality despite the constraints patriarchy imposes on women.

The use of the word *fairest* invites a study of the queen in other ways than the obvious ones of beauty and light hair that define and showcase her physical body as feminine. She uses her mirror to reflect the truth of her. The mirror is *the* mirror and is not designated male or female. The Queen consults the mirror about her degree of



fairness, but never asks the King, her husband, his opinion about the quality or degree of her fairness; nor does the Queen ever intend to ask the King, or any other man to validate or confirm her *fairness*. The use of the word “fairest” also implies personal integrity and a reputation that can successfully endure scrutiny. Additionally, the Queen’s use of *fairest* suggests a moral subtext that extends beyond the nature of her physical beauty as defined by the narrator attempting to objectify her for the reader as someone who is simply proud and arrogant because she is physically beautiful. The Queen’s moral subtext is that she intends to prevent herself and Snow-White from becoming domestically subordinate to prevent patriarchy opportunity to reproduce itself through their female bodies.

During the first seven years after the birth of Snow-White, the Queen keeps her body from being seen in its entirety and seen as an object of sexuality for reproduction. By not allowing patriarchy access to her entire body and by not performing the role of mother to Snow-White, she defies that society. She is a subversive force that tears at the domestic fabric maintaining patriarchal power. Therefore, without remorse, she abdicates maternal responsibilities most likely to servants. With Snow-White out of her way, she does not have to perform motherly duties.

The Queen consistently separates herself from society, yet remains visible in pieces of her body so she can maintain her physical autonomy and freedom. Unlike the Queen, Snow-White is dependent on that society for her care, and it is significant that this girl’s physical body does not actually appear in the text until she is seven years old when:

Snow-White grew up and became ever more beautiful. When she was seven years old she was as beautiful as the light of day, even more beautiful than the queen herself.

One day when the queen asked her mirror:

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,

Who in this land is fairest of all?

It answered:

You, my queen, are fair; it is true.

But Snow-White is a thousand times fairer than you.

The queen took fright and turned yellow and green with envy. From that hour on whenever she looked at Snow-White her heart turned over inside her body, so great was her hatred for the girl. The envy and pride grew ever greater, like a weed in her heart, until she had no peace day and night.

The Queen's physical reaction, described by the narrator to the mirror's answer that Snow-White is "is a thousand times fairer than you" is extremely severe and results from the time the needle pricked her finger causing it to bleed on to the snow. She thought about how red and white are beautiful together. However, this is the feminine ideal of beauty upheld in patriarchal society. She became pregnant when she had no intention of becoming a mother, and it was always her intent that her body not be defined, or controlled by its sexual and reproductive functions by how she kept her body fragmented. In her distraction, she assisted patriarchy in creating an object of ideal beauty for their use. Her submissiveness in the act of reproduction reinforced the power of the

patriarchal society she attempted to avoid before and after the birth of Snow-White. For seven years, Snow-White is suspended in invisibility and is of no consequence to the Queen until she appears as the feminine beauty product of patriarchal society. Now, with the appearance of Snow-White, the product of her womb, the Queen is once again reminded that her body was made sexually submissive in order to ensure the continuance of patriarchal society.

It is highly unlikely that the Queen would be jealous of Snow-White's beauty as defined by patriarchy because she never catered to the demands of patriarchal society or sought approval or acknowledgement from any man to identify or validate her as beautiful. In fact, the Queen does possess those qualities of beauty valued by patriarchy. There is nothing red and white about her, and she never uses her body in any way to make it sexually desirable or interesting to men. It is more likely that she is jealous of Snow-White's pristine body because it has not yet reached reproductive maturity, and at the moment it cannot be distracted, pricked, or confined to domestic duty. However, the design of Snow-White's body demands she fulfill her domestic destiny. Her body will always be a completely whole body and therefore always visible, and this visibility gives patriarchal society absolute sexual and reproductive control of her body.

In order to prevent patriarchy from using Snow-White, the Queen must destroy her body. Therefore, the Queen orders a huntsman to take Snow-White into the woods, kill her, and bring the girl's heart and liver as proof she is dead. There are two plausible reasons for the manner in which the Queen wants the huntsman to kill Snow-White. First, the Queen desires to eliminate all evidence of her motherhood and her unwilling

participation in helping to create the masculine ideal of feminine beauty; and secondly, the Queen may know that Snow-White will not be able to escape her reproductive fate at the hands of patriarchy, which means that Snow-White's body cannot remain whole. It must be in pieces to maintain its autonomy and not become an object of sexuality to be used for reproduction. In the Queen's mind, she may well think that not only is she eliminating the physical reminder of that moment in her life when she was distracted, she believes that she is doing Snow-White a great service by preventing her from living her life confined to domesticity as defined by patriarchy.

The huntsman agrees with the Queen's request and escorts Snow-White into the woods. These woods are full of things that are dangerous to women, and if the huntsman follows through with the Queen's request that it be a remote spot, it will be a place where Snow-White's violent death will have no witness. The huntsman is willing to obey the Queen, but:

When he took out his hunting knife to stab her, she began to cry, and begged fervently that he might spare her life, promising to run away into the woods and never return.

The hunting knife and its ability to stab are literally and symbolically phallic. It is much larger than the needle and able to damage Snow-White's young body in ways other than how the needle damaged the Queen's body. Undoubtedly, the knife is a much more threatening and dangerous phallic tool than that of the needle. Clearly, there are differing degrees of violence associated with sex in this tale. For the younger the woman, sex is a much more violent the act.

As the Queen's agent, the huntsman intends to cut the girl's body into pieces. Although, if he obeyed her request to kill the child it would ensure Snow-White's autonomy and freedom from patriarchy. The huntsman refusing to dissect Snow-White's body, especially in the environment of the woods, confirms that a whole and complete female body is desired. Yet, at only seven years old, Snow-White is too young for a literal or symbolic encounter with a phallic knife. The huntsman will not damage the body destined for domesticity, but he must appease the Queen, so he brings her the heart and lungs of a boar, and, "She cooked them with salt and ate them, supposing that she had eaten Snow-White's lungs and liver." The Queen seemingly goes above and beyond what is necessary to make sure that Snow-White will never have a whole or complete body. She thinks she eats pieces of the girl. The Queen takes back into her body that which came out of her body believing she has denied patriarchal opportunity to use Snow-White's body to reproduce patriarchy.

Believing that she had eaten pieces of Snow-White body, the Queen confidently stepped in front of her mirror. The narrator tells the reader that she thinks, "she was again the most beautiful woman in the land..." Beautiful to the Queen means physical autonomy without exhibiting or showing a feminine sexual identity. Beautiful also means not giving patriarchy opportunities to suppress or confine her to sexual, domestic, or maternal roles. With complete assurance she asks:

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,

Who in this land is fairest of all?

The mirror answered once again:

You, my queen, are fair; it is true.

But Little Snow-White beyond the seven mountains

Is a thousand times fairer than you.

It startles the Queen to hear this, and now she knows the huntsman deceived her. He did not kill Snow-White. This is the second time the Queen has been caught off guard by a man. From now on, she will carry out her plan to murder Snow-White alone. Even though the Queen wants Snow-White dead, she need not fear for her life because men will do everything in their power to preserve her their reproductive and domestic use. The girl need fear one person and one person only: the Queen, who persists in preventing patriarchy from owning her body. The Queen will do everything in her power to stop patriarchy from owning Snow-White's body to fulfill its destiny as reproductive property. Domesticity is not a thing of beauty to the Queen.

The Queen knows that only the seven dwarfs, who live beyond the seven mountains, rescued Snow-White from the forest. The Queen is more determined in her zealousness to prevent Snow-White from being used as domestic property. If murder is the only way for her to accomplish her goal, so be it. Obviously, for the Queen, death is preferable to domestic subordination. She begins to plan immediately how she might kill Snow-White because she will have no peace until the mirror once again says that she is the fairest in the land.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE OLD PEDDLER WOMAN

So far, the first and only time the Queen's body moved outside the domestic space was when she put her hands through the opening of her window to bleed into the snow. Despite the Queen's attempts to maintain her autonomy and independence, patriarchy found a way to force her participation in motherhood. The pricking her finger and the resulting pregnancy forced her back into the domestic space for seven years. Since that time, the Queen never risked sewing at her window again. She isolates herself giving no opportunity for patriarchal society to domesticate her by confining her to reproductive and maternal duties. She is successful in her endeavor because she keeps her still reproductive body fragmented, and never again gives patriarchy opportunity to access to her body to reproduce itself.

The first seven years of Snow-White's life were not spent with her mother, and there is no evidence supporting the idea or notion that the Queen felt any obligation or desire to act in any way that would define her as the mother of Snow-White. Instead, the Queen devoted herself to protecting her body from another sexual encounter. In so doing, Snow-White was left in the care of other subordinates under the authority of patriarchy society, the society that the Queen makes every effort to avoid. Now that Snow-White is seven, it has come to the attention of the Queen, via her mirror, that she has not protected her daughter from acculturation at the hands of patriarchy. The consequences are that Snow-White will be a sexual, reproductive, and maternal tool for the continuation of

patriarchal dominance. The only way to save Snow-White from this fate demands that the Queen kill her because no amount of training or education will undo the first seven years of Snow-White's life.

The only way the Queen can gain access to the body of Snow-White is to risk travel through the outside landscape inhabited and controlled by men. She cannot do this in the body of the Queen because in order to travel through that landscape she must do so as a whole body. If she enters that landscape as the Queen with her entire body intact, she makes herself vulnerable to men. In order to travel freely, she must disguise herself in such a way that clearly communicates that her body is sexually undesirable and of no value for use in reproduction. Therefore in the disguise of an old woman she is able to move through the exterior spaces belonging to men without having to worry about being forced into sexual submission. The Queen, in her newly transformed non-fragmented, whole peddler woman body, is able to travel safely over the seven mountains to the seven dwarfs' house.

Once she gets to the house, she knocks saying:

"Open up. Open up. I'm the old peddler woman with good wares for sale."

Snow-White peered out the window, "What do you have?"

"Bodice laces, dear child," said the old woman, and held one up. It was braided from yellow, red, and blue silk. "Would you like this one?"

"Oh, yes," said Snow-White, thinking, "I can let the old woman come in.

She means well." She unbolted the door and bargained for the bodice laces.



"You are not laced up properly," said the old woman. "Come here, I'll do it better." Snow-White stood before her, and she took hold of the laces and pulled them so tight that Snow-White could not breathe, and she fell down as if she were dead. Then the old woman was satisfied, and she went away.

When the Queen ordered the huntsman to kill Snow-White, she wanted proof of the girl's death and he was to return with Snow-White's lungs and liver. If the huntsman had obeyed the Queen, he would have had to use his knife to disfigure Snow-White's body, thus mutilating her young breasts and womb rendering them unrecognizable, undesirable, and useless. The old woman does not possess a knife, nor does she want to. She will find another way to accomplish what the huntsman could not. Her weapon of choice is a bodice, and she will use it to suffocate Snow-White. If the bodice is an effective murder weapon, it must completely cover the girl's chest so when the old woman tightens the bodice laces it will suffocate her and subsequently flatten the girl's breasts to her chest. In this way, the old woman redesigns and transforms an element of Snow-White's feminine sexual identity. Once the bodice laces are tightened and Snow-White falls, the Queen, as an old woman, believes she has successfully eliminated evidence of her forced motherhood as well as deprived patriarchal society the use Snow-White's body for reproduction.

The old woman returns home and transforms back to her Queen body. As Queen she consults her mirror only to find out that the dwarfs have once again rescued Snow-White. Her work is not done and:

Then for an entire day and a night, she planned how she might catch her. She made a poisoned comb, disguised herself differently, and went out again.

The Queen still uses the disguise of an older woman, but alters her appearance to prevent Snow-White from recognizing her as the first old peddler woman who attempted to suffocate her. Upon arriving at the dwarfs' house a second time:

She knocked on the door, but Snow-White called out, "I am not allowed to let anyone in."

Then she pulled out the comb, and when Snow-White saw how it glistened, and noted that the woman was a complete stranger, she opened the door, and bought the comb from her. "Come, let me comb your hair," said the peddler woman. She had barely stuck the comb into Snow-White's hair, before the girl fell down and was dead. "That will keep you lying there," said the queen. And she went home with a light heart.

The pretty comb made her forget the dwarfs' admonitions not to let anyone in the house. It was a much too attractive trinket for Snow-White to resist. She agrees to allow the old woman to comb her hair, and almost immediately the poison causes Snow-White to fall on the floor as if dead. It works much more quickly than what the bodice did, and requires less physical effort from the old woman. Satisfied with her work, the old woman returns to the castle and return to her Queen body confident that she has succeeded in her second attempt to kill Snow-White. To confirm the demise of Snow-White, the Queen asks her mirror the same question she always asks her mirror, but to her horror her mirror

tells her that Snow-White is still alive. Once again, the Queen must devise yet another plan to kill Snow-White, and:

Then she went into her most secret room – no one else was allowed inside – and she made a poisoned, poisoned apple. From the outside, it was red and beautiful, and anyone who saw it would want it. [But anyone who might eat a little piece of it would die.] Then she disguised herself as a peasant woman, went to the dwarfs' house, and knocked on the door.

The implication of “her most secret room,” means that she has other rooms that are secret, but not to the same degree as this one. She is its sole owner and occupant and she will not allow anyone else into her room. Her room will not be violated. She protects its integrity just like she protects the integrity of her womb. Even the King, despite his position and authority cannot enter that inner room. These spaces are not to be used for procreation; instead these spaces, her spaces, ensure her physical independence and sexual autonomy. She uses “her most secret room” to create the “poisoned, poisoned apple,” intending to kill Snow-White, and eliminate the evidence of her womb that signifies her as patriarchal property. Motherhood may have been forced upon her by the prick of the needle, but motherhood cannot prevail nor trap her in a life of dependence on and invisibility in the world of patriarchy.

Her choice of red and white for the apple remind us again of her red blood on the white snow and reinforces the masculine ideal of feminine beauty, a feminine beauty to which Snow-White is attracted when the Queen disguised, a third time as a peddler woman:

knocked on the door.

Snow-White peeped out and said, "I'm not allowed to let anyone in. The dwarfs have forbidden it most severely."

"If you don't want to, I can't force you," said the peasant woman. "I am selling these apples, and I will give you one to taste."

"No, I can't accept anything. The dwarfs don't want me to."

"If you are afraid, then I will cut the apple in two and eat half of it. Here, you eat the half with the beautiful red cheek!" Now the apple had been so artfully made that only the red half was poisoned. When Snow-White saw that the peasant woman was eating part of the apple, her desire for it grew stronger, so she finally let the woman hand her the other half through the window. She bit into it, but she barely had the bite in her mouth when she fell to the ground dead.

This is the only item of the three items offered to Snow-White for which the peddler woman does not ask for something in exchange. Snow-White was given the other two items after bartering, although we do not know what Snow-White gave the old woman in trade for those items. The apple is not for sale, but exacts a very high price from the body of Snow-White. Even the dwarfs have been made powerless (impotent) to rescue her from death this time.

The Queen, in the form of an old peddler woman, will not appear again. She transformed herself into an old woman, a spinster, as someone able to operate outside the boundaries of patriarchy and as someone with every intention of killing Snow-White. Her

transformation was necessary and allowed her to travel, without incident, through spaces typically dominated by men, the spaces that would prove to be dangerous to younger women, and to those women not under the protection of patriarchy. She does not travel to see Snow-White as the girl's mother, or as a mother. Furthermore, she does not disguise herself as a man, which, if she had, would give her access to other kinds of weapons such as knives and guns. She does not need to create a weapon or use a weapon that would or could be interpreted as phallic to kill Snow-White. Shuli Barzilai states in "Reading "Snow White": The Mother's Story," that, "...the queen invariably chooses to "get at" Snow White by doing what a mother does for a very young child: dressing, combing, and feeding" (532). What Shuli Barzilai refuses to see is that the Queen does not go to Snow-White as her mother because she never wanted to be a mother. When she arrives at the dwarfs' house it is in the guise of a self-sufficient old woman capable of supporting herself to ensure her freedom from patriarchy control as well as protecting and claiming her right to sexual and maternal independence.

Up to this point in the tale, and after being caught unaware by the prick of the needle, the Queen has been successful in retaining ownership of her body either by fragmenting it as Queen, or by uniting it to transform into the body of the old peddler woman. No matter which body she uses, she refuses to behave in any way that defines or confines her to reproductive submissiveness and maternal responsibilities imposed upon her by patriarchal society.

## CHAPTER IV

## SNOW-WHITE

Although Snow-White's father, the King, was not physically present, the snowflakes falling from heaven denotes the symbolic presence of semen that literally covers the earth and signifies patriarchal authority through sexual dominance. From the day of her conception, Snow-White epitomized the patriarchal ideal of feminine beauty. Even her mother, after her blood dropped into the snow, acknowledged how beautiful red on white looked and thought about having a child, one who would be "as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony wood." Snow-White has no other option than to unambiguously conform to the design and expectations of patriarchal society. She is destined by the design of her body to be the property of patriarchy, and unlike the Queen, she cannot be anything other than the ideal of feminine beauty designated for reproductive submissiveness to support and maintain patriarchal control and power.

Snow-White's body, for the first seven years of her life, as well as the nine months before her birth, is completely invisible. She has no voice, and nothing unique or distinctly individual about her personality transcends her ideal physical appearance. There is no textual evidence to prove the Queen accepts the role of mother to Snow-White. Instead of taking care of her daughter, the Queen spends her time keeping her body fragmented to maintain her autonomy, in addition to her self-imposed isolation. She is able to stay away from the King in order to guarantee that Snow-White will be an only child. It can be conjectured that Snow-White's upbringing is left in the hands of other

women who make sure the girl's body stays invisible. Snow-White's invisibility confirms that her body is the property of patriarchy to be used in the future for reproductive and domestic duties.

The mother and the daughter are both beautiful, but they are not beautiful in the same ways. The mother is beautiful because she does not conform to society; and the daughter is more beautiful than the mother because she conforms to the ideals of society. Therefore, Snow-White's conformity makes her beauty more desirable in and to patriarchal society. It is impossible for these two women to exist peacefully together in the same landscape frame at the same time because the types of beauty they embody signify conflicting ideals. When they do inhabit the same landscape frame at the same time, one of them will have to either appear dead or actually have to die.

Snow-White is the designated target for the Queen's hostility, even hatred toward patriarchy because the girl agrees, supports, and complies with patriarchal ideals. For this reason, Snow-White doesn't understand, nor will she ever understand how or why the Queen persists in her attempts to kill her. In fact, she will never have to understand the Queen's behavior because men will always rescue her from whatever life threatening dangers she faces at the hands of the Queen. So, when the Mirror tells the Queen that Snow-White is "a thousand times fairer than you," the Queen summons a huntsman and tells him to "Take Snow-White out into the woods. I never want to see her again. Kill her, and as proof that she is dead bring her lungs and her liver back to me."

The Queen intends that the huntsman destroy and dissect Snow-White's body, that emblem of the patriarchal ideal of feminine and reproductive beauty to ensure it will

not be used to reproduce and sustain patriarchal rule. Certainly, the Queen would have some sense of satisfaction if she could get a man to destroy that which he needs to guarantee his control and authority in society. At this point, the huntsman has no choice but to obey the Queen and he takes:

Snow-White into the woods. When he took out his hunting knife to stab her, she began to cry, and begged fervently that he might spare her life, promising to run away into the woods and never return. The huntsman took pity on her because she was so beautiful, and he thought, "The wild animals will soon devour her anyway. I'm glad that I don't have to kill her."

The huntsman escorts Snow-White from the familiar and safe domestic space to the unfamiliar and wild masculine space. If the huntsman complies with the Queen's request, the knife would inflict more harm on the body of Snow-White's than what the needle did to the body of the Queen. It is not unrealistic that the huntsman must have thought about using his knife on Snow-Whiter or he would not have agreed to take Snow-White into the woods. The huntsman could have told the King, but he did not.

Snow-White is too young to understand the significance of the hunting knife raised to stab her, but she does understand it is dangerous and it will kill her. However, his knife is too large and Snow-White is too young and her immediate reaction to her plight is to cry and then beg for her life. By crying and begging, Snow-White acknowledges the huntsman's position of authority over her because he has the power to decide whether or not she lives or dies. It does not matter that he is not of the same social



class as Snow-White because his authority over her results from the fact that he is a man. Her life is literally in his hands. One lesson for Snow-White to learn in this experience is that her voice is a tool she can use to communicate her helplessness and willingness to submit to patriarchal authority in order to save her life. In essence, she is only able to save her life so men can use it to their advantage.

Snow-White must come to realize that she is completely alone in a man's world and that her body, because she embodies the masculine ideal of feminine beauty, destines her to reproductive servitude to ensure the continuation of patriarchal control. Unlike the Queen's fragmented body, Snow-White's entire body is exposed and vulnerable to the wild and unpredictable elements in these unfamiliar woods. Even though the huntsman will not use his knife on her, he has no reservation of conscience about wild animals ravishing her with their teeth when he allows her to run for her life. No doubt, he expects that the wild animals will attack and eat her. Therefore, he thinks that her body will be completely consumed by the untamed instinctual creatures inhabiting these woods. When he lets her go, he can avoid taking any responsibility for destroying that which patriarchy values.

Of course, Snow-White:

was so afraid that she just looked at all the leaves on the trees and did not know what to do. Then she began to run. She ran over sharp stones and through thorns, and wild animals jumped at her, but they did her no harm. She ran as far as her feet could carry her, and just as evening was about to fall she saw a little house and went inside in order to rest.

It seems that even the wild animals tacitly agree to protect her body and allow it to mature in order to fulfill its designated potential. Although the wild animals did not take advantage of her, she must run “over sharp stones and through thorns.” It is Nature’s way to showing her the degree of phallic power. It also confirms that she lives in a man’s world. The thorns and stones help condition and prepare her for sexual and reproductive duty. These stones and thorns do not have the phallic force or degree of masculine power that will put Snow-White on her back. For now, Snow-White still has the use of her feet, and if she takes it, this is her only opportunity to escape her destiny. Once she walks into the dwarfs’ house, she will never be able to walk, or run outside the domestic space again.

In all probability, women servants took care of Snow-White when she was very young, but these women do not train her or require her to perform domestic duties. Men do. It is no accident that Snow-White is seven years old when she is taken out of her home and left in the world of men. And, it is no accident that seven half-men help prepare her to live her destiny. Seven is the number of perfection and Snow-White is now being perfected for use by patriarchal society by seven half-men. But, just like the stones and thorns, these half-men do not have the same degree of phallic power or force as that of whole men and are not in any way a phallic threat to Snow-White. Their purpose is to serve the greater need of patriarchy by protecting and training the girl for her domestic and reproductive duties. The dwarfs will protect Snow-White’s body by making sure that her body is kept in its virginal and pristine condition for the Prince she will eventually meet.

After a day of running through the woods, Snow-White is hungry and tired:

so she ate a few vegetables and a little bread from each little plate, and from each little glass she drank a drop of wine. Because she was so tired, she wanted to lie down and go to sleep. She tried each of the seven little beds, one after the other, but none felt right until she came to the seventh one, and she lay down in it and fell asleep.

Snow-White does not hesitate to eat and drink from each dwarfs' plate, who have provided just the right amount of food for her. Besides eating just a little from each plate, the manner in which she eats their food shows her ability to control her appetite. She takes less food than she needs symbolically communicating that her sexual appetite is minimal and therefore perfect. Snow-White literally suppresses the power of her hunger and symbolically suppresses the power of her sexual passion. Her lack of appetite guarantees men will always be able to dominate her sexually. They have no need to fear the sexual appetite of Snow-White's, as it will never be strong enough to overpower and devour them. As illustrated in this scene, men will always decide how much and what kind of food Snow-White eats; she will not decide or determine how much or what kind of food men eat. In fact, everything Snow-White uses in this little house belongs to men, including the bed in which she sleeps. These half-men will provide everything for her that she needs to live for now because they own her. She is their shared domestic property.

After she finishes eating, she tries each one of the little beds to find the one that would fit her, and cannot sleep until she lay in the seventh bed. Again, the number seven

represents completion or fullness and is significant in that it is repeated and confirms that Snow-White is being perfected for domestic duty. Snow-White is seven when her body becomes visible; she runs over seven mountains; and there are seven dwarfs with seven candles, beds, plates, knives, and so on. The number seven confirms Snow-White will fulfill her domestic role in patriarchy.

Another interesting detail about the dwarfs and the circumstance of their role in preparing Snow-White for domestic and reproductive duty is that they work in mines. They dig in the earth creating and using the earth's womb-like spaces in order to extract those things that are precious and valuable. Snow-White's womb is not quite ready to be mined yet, but the dwarfs are symbolically preparing her for that purpose. Eventually, the Prince will use Snow-White's womb to obtain that thing he considers valuable, the continuation of male authority through reproduction. And, the earth-wombs located in the mountains emblematically elevate procreation of the dominant society to a noble and worthy calling for women. Half-men or not, this imagery, coupled with the semen-like falling snow in the first scene of the text, reinforces the power and ability of men to dominate women beneath, on, and above the earth through sexuality.

That night, when the dwarfs return home from the mine they realize someone has been in their house. Eventually, they find Snow-White asleep in the seventh dwarf's bed. They do not wake her up; instead they allow her to sleep in that bed while they remark on the degree of her beauty. Snow-White is more beautiful because she is on her back, voiceless, and appears dead. She is also beautiful because her entire body is completely visible and therefore defenseless to resist sexual subjugation at the hands of men. Snow-

White's body will always be whole and complete in the company of men confirming her subservience and submissiveness to their will. It is much easier for men to control and dominate the female body when it is supine, voiceless, and whole rather than when it is fragmented or in pieces.

Finally, Snow-White wakes up and when she does:

they asked her who she was and how she had found her way to their house. She told them how her mother had tried to kill her, how the huntsman had spared her life, how she had run the entire day, finally coming to their house. The dwarfs pitied her and said, "If you will keep house for us, and cook, sew, make beds, wash, and knit, and keep everything clean and orderly, then you can stay here, and you'll have everything that you want. We come home in the evening, and supper must be ready by then, but we spend the days digging for gold in the mine. You will be alone then. Watch out for the queen, and do not let anyone in."

Snow-White will temporarily live in the dwarfs' house and agrees to perform all the domestic duties required to maintain the order and condition of their house. The only thing she is not required to do at this time is procreate. If she cares for the house, the dwarfs tell her they will give her everything she wants. She does not get to decide what she wants, they do. Apparently, they know what she wants and needs because they do not ask her. Those things the dwarfs want become the exact things that Snow-White wants. She cleans, sews, and cooks for the dwarfs confirming her willingness to submit to and perform the duties in the domestic role designed by men for women. Snow-White will

become more beautiful because she maintains the integrity of their domestic space. She is completely loyal to patriarchy. Snow-White will never assert her independence, or act in any way that does not protect and substantiate patriarchal authority.

The dwarfs must go to their mines, but before they leave they warn her not to let anyone into the house, especially the Queen. Snow-White has no reason to fear the Queen; rather it is men who fear what the Queen can do to Snow-White. The Queen, because male authority does not control her, can kill Snow-White and prevent her body from being used by patriarchy for reproduction. But, no matter how many times the Queen attempts to kill Snow-White, men will always rescue her. In some ways, the Queen could be perceived as doing Snow-White a favor by disabling her or killing her so as to prevent her body from performing its reproductive and domestic duties. The first time the Queen knocks at the dwarfs' door disguised as an old peddler woman, she orders Snow-White to open the door, but:

Snow-White peered out the window, "What do you have?"

"Bodice laces, dear child," said the old woman, and held one up. It was braided from yellow, red, and blue silk. "Would you like this one?"

"Oh, yes," said Snow-White, thinking, "I can let the old woman come in. She means well." She unbolted the door and bargained for the bodice laces.

"You are not laced up properly," said the old woman. "Come here, I'll do it better." Snow-White stood before her, and she took hold of the laces and

pulled them so tight that Snow-White could not breathe, and she fell down as if she were dead.

At first, Snow-White peers out of the window to see who is at the door. She does not feel threatened by the old woman so she invites her into the house. As already discussed, the Queen attacks Snow-White because she represents the masculine ideal of feminine beauty and reminds the Queen of her forced pregnancy. However, Snow-White is not attacked by the person of her mother or the Queen, she is attacked by an old beggar woman, who lives outside the boundaries of patriarchy. In this first attack, Snow-White loses her breath. Since the Queen failed to obtain her lungs from the huntsman, the beggar woman does what the huntsman could not and takes her literal breath. Additionally, the beggar woman uses the bodice to redesign Snow-White's body to eliminate evidence of her breasts and denies her a sexual identity preventing them from being used to feed the sexual appetite of men for the sole purpose of reproduction.

After the beggar woman leaves, Snow-White appears dead and must remain on the floor until the dwarfs return home. The beggar woman is confident that she has accomplished her mission in preventing patriarchal use of Snow-White's body; however Snow-White, even with the Queen's assistance, cannot escape her destiny. Unfortunately, the Queen is seemingly unaware that in her attempts to kill Snow-White she assists in preparing Snow-White to serve that society in the ways it wishes to be served, which is on her back, seemingly dead, voiceless, and without the use of her senses.

That evening when the dwarfs return home, they find Snow-White, for a second time, lying in a supine position, and they rescue her by cutting the laces to bring her back

to life. Again, they warn her not to let anyone into the house. The dwarfs warn her to be wary of the Queen, but they do not warn her about the dangers of older women. Despite the dwarfs' warning, Snow-White does not understand that the Queen's attempts to murder her threaten the foundation on which patriarchy thrives and reigns. Snow-White does not yet fully understand her importance to patriarchy. However, she is learning that she is not able to protect herself and that women are her enemies, and therefore she must completely rely on men, and only men to rescue, protect, and take care of her.

The dwarfs do rescue, protect, and take care of Snow-White when they find her *dead* again after her second encounter with a beggar woman. When the beggar woman arrives at the door, Snow-White does not recognize her as the same beggar woman who attempted to suffocate her by pulling the bodice laces tight. She also remembers to obey the dwarfs and tells the woman she cannot come into the house, but the poisonous comb that glistens attracts Snow-White and she cannot resist its beauty. She opens the door and invites the woman in and allows her to comb her hair. The peddler woman "had barely stuck the comb into Snow-White's hair, before the girl fell down and was dead."

Once again, the beggar woman leaves Snow-White on the floor and goes home confident that this time the girl is dead. However, later that evening, the dwarfs come home, pull the comb out of Snow-White's hair and restore her to life, and the dwarfs make her promise "not to let anyone in again." In the meantime, the mirror tells the Queen that Snow-White is still alive, the Queen vows that either Snow-White or she will die. The Queen's willingness to sacrifice her own life illustrates her commitment to do



whatever she can to subvert patriarchy by destroying the domestic and feminine ideal in the body of Snow-White.

The Queen is very clever when plotting her third and final attempt to kill Snow-White. She makes a “poisoned, poisoned apple. From the outside it was beautiful, white with red cheeks, and anyone who saw it would want it. But anyone who might eat a little piece of it would die.” Of course, the red and white are emblematic of the feminine ideal of beauty. If Snow-White eats of the apple, it will kill her. In essence, her beauty is the poison that prevents her independence and individuality as a woman in patriarchal society. The next time the peddler woman knocks on the dwarfs’ door Snow-White remembers their words and refuses to let the woman into the house. She also refuses the apple until the peddler woman cuts it in two and offers the poisoned red half to her. Snow-White cannot resist the temptation. Almost immediately after putting it into her mouth “she fell to the ground dead.”

The Queen as an old peddler woman makes three attempts to kill Snow-White. The tools she uses in her attacks are the ones usually used by mothers to nurture and care for their children. Just like mothers who dress their children, comb their hair, and feed them, the old woman dresses Snow-White, combs her hair, and feeds her. These are the behaviors, the ones that support the feminine ideal of beauty and ensure the continuance and health of patriarchy. These are the behaviors that seemingly agree with and support the masculine beauty ideal in that the Queen as beggar woman models those behaviors that make women desirable to men. Beauty can also be a source of power as Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz point out in, “The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the

Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales,” that:

The feminine beauty ideal—the socially constructed notion that physical attractiveness is one of women's most important assets, and something all women should strive to achieve and maintain is of particular interest to feminist scholars. While the feminine beauty ideal is viewed largely as an oppressive, patriarchal practice that objectifies, devalues, and subordinates women (e.g., Bartky 1990; Bordo 1993; Freedman 1986; Wolf 1991), it is acknowledged that many women willingly engage in "beauty rituals" and perceive being (or becoming) beautiful as empowering, not oppressive (Dellinger and Williams 1997). A further paradox of the feminine beauty ideal is that in a patriarchal system, those women who seek or gain power through their attractiveness are often those who are most dependent on men's resources. (711-712)

However, the price Snow-White pays for being beautiful is objectification. She must give up her right to independence and individuality in accepting the role of motherhood and her willingness to be completely dependent on men. But she does not see that those very things she embodies and idealizes as the reproductive property of men suffocate and poison her.

Another necessary component for patriarchy to reign supreme is that it needs women to distrust women. It also needs to isolate women by keeping them alone in the domestic space. When they are isolated in domesticity, women do not have opportunity for friendships or collaboration and creativity with other women. The easiest way for men

to maintain power over women is by isolating them to prevent them from usurping their power. Isolating women is an effective way to keep them completely involved in domestic functions. As a result of being isolated, it is expected that women give men their full and undivided attention. This is one way men ensure women safeguard the continuing function of their society. Snow-White is the blissfully ignorant, but perfectly domestic woman who learns to distrust women at the hands of the Queen, who is passionately discontented and intensely angry at the circumstance of patriarchy and relentless in her desire to destroy Snow-White.

In her third and final attempt to kill Snow-White and damage the domestic framework of society, the peddler woman believes she has achieved success. Again, Snow-White is left on the ground for the dwarfs to find. When the dwarfs do find her, sadly, they discover that they cannot bring her back to life this time, so:

They laid her on a bier, and all seven sat next to her and cried and cried for three days.

They were going to bury her, but they saw that she remained fresh. She did not look at all like a dead person, and she still had beautiful red cheeks. They had a glass coffin made for her, and laid her inside, so that she could be seen easily. They wrote her name and her ancestry on it in gold letters, and one of them always stayed at home and kept watch over her.

Snow-White lay there in the coffin a long, long time, and she did not decay. She was still as white as snow and as red as blood, and if she had

been able to open her eyes, they still would have been as black as ebony wood. She lay there as if she were asleep.

This is the fourth time the dwarfs find Snow-White on her back and looking beautiful. The fact that “she was still as white as snow and as red as blood” although seemingly dead, emphasizes that she completely embodies the masculine ideal of feminine beauty. In fact, the dwarfs only recognize and acknowledge her beauty when she is on her back and in a condition where she cannot speak, move, or see. Because she is so beautiful, even after appearing dead for three days, they cannot bring themselves to bury her. Instead, they display her in a glass coffin so that her entire body is exposed and visible. The fact that her name and ancestry are written in gold letters verifies her worth and value as the public property of men. Unlike the Queen’s body, Snow-White’s body will never be fragmented or dissected. Snow-White’s whole and complete body, although disabled, makes it easy for men to contain and control for use in reproducing themselves as well as safeguarding their authority in their society.

Snow-White’s body does not decay; rather it is an opportunity to train and conditions her to be the sexually passive, sensually dull, and submissive wife. Snow-White’s entire body effectively expresses her readiness for marriage and her willingness subjugate herself to a man. Her fully exposed, reclined, receptive, voiceless, and passive body also communicates its willing compliance to patriarchal authority, and increases the degree of its beauty. Now she is ready to fulfill all her domestic functions and duty for society. Being a princess, she does not have to wait very long for a prince, who is in need

of shelter for the evening to find the dwarfs' house and the beautiful Snow-White in her glass coffin:

he could not get enough of her beauty. He read the golden inscription and saw that she was the daughter of a king. He asked the dwarfs to sell him the coffin with the dead Snow-White, but they would not do this for any amount of gold. Then he asked them to give her to him, for he could not live without being able to see her, and he would keep her, and honor her as his most cherished thing on earth. Then the dwarfs took pity on him and gave him the coffin. The prince had it carried to his castle, and had it placed in a room where he sat by it the whole day, never taking his eyes from it. Whenever he had to go out and was unable to see Snow-White, he became sad. And he could not eat a bite, unless the coffin was standing next to him.

The Prince observes the magnitude, intensity, and perfection of Snow-White's beauty, an already ideal feminine beauty enhanced by her death-like condition. In this form, she proves her complete and unequivocal submissiveness to the desires and interests of the Prince. No demand he makes will be denied, because in every respect, she is physically, emotionally, and intellectually indoctrinated in and loyal to patriarchal society.

When the dwarfs encased her entire body in a glass coffin, they intended that every part of it would be seen. They made her public property and all men share ownership of her as public property. However, the Prince determines that he individually

owns this specimen of ideal beauty and offers to pay the dwarfs for the coffin, but they refuse to take any amount of money for her. If they had accepted the Prince's offer of money, she would be considered nothing more than a prostitute with seven pimps instead of one. That kind of transaction would make her impure and unfit for domestic service. The Prince must have her and asks the dwarfs to give her to him. They agree. They understand the implication of the Prince's determination to own the coffin containing the body of Snow-White. The dwarfs have finished their work with Snow-White and are now able to transfer possession of her to the Prince who will then take her to his kingdom where she will live her domestic potential.

Once the coffin is relocated to the castle, it is the Prince's constant companion. Every where the Prince goes within the confines of the castle, servants are required to carry the coffin making sure to always keep it in his presence. Symbolically, Snow-White, even when carried by servants, must follow her Prince except when he has business outside of the castle. When the Prince eats, her coffin must be next to him. He is not concerned about her inability to eat because the Prince does not need or want Snow-White to eat with him. He just wants her there so he can eat. In fact, he is quite content to enjoy eating without her knowing that he is eating. As already noted, her sexual appetite has been suppressed. In fact, she does not need to eat at all. The Prince just needs to use her body, and does not require her active participation in order to reproduce himself. Despite Snow-White's condition, or because of her condition, the Prince is content with her. She is not to talk, question, or interact in any physical way with the Prince that does not communicate passive compliance.

Snow-White spends an unspecified amount of time confined to the little house owned by the dwarfs. Then she spends an unspecified amount of time confined in the small coffin carried by servants so she can follow the Prince. It is inevitable that the male servants would tire of carrying her after the Prince, and one day, in anger, a servant:

opened the coffin, lifted Snow-White upright, and said, "We are plagued the whole day long, just because of such a dead girl," and he hit her in the back with his hand. Then the terrible piece of apple that she had bitten off came out of her throat, and Snow-White came back to life.

A male servant hits the princess. His behavior is not called into question because it is not an issue. He will not be punished because men, regardless of their class status have the right, maybe even an obligation, to hit women, even upper class women, when they become a nuisance or useless or dead weight. This event is one more way to guarantee that Snow-White knows and complies with the confines of her position in patriarchy. All men, whether they are servants, huntsmen, or princes have the right to treat women the way they choose to treat them. Even the lowest man on the class ladder is still higher than any woman regardless of their class status. Certainly, it must have surprised the servant when Snow-White came back to life. True to her destiny and domestic training, the first thing she does is walk directly to the Prince. He is overjoyed to see her on her feet and ready to perform her duties as the perfectly domesticated woman.

Not surprisingly, the first experience the Prince and Snow-White have together is eating. This dining event is indicative of one of the most important domestic duties she will fulfill, reproducing her Prince through her willingness to be sexually submissive. Her

body is the epitome of the patriarchal feminine domestic ideal because she is sexually submissive and voiceless. The Prince owns Snow-White's entire body the way he desires to own it, and he can marry her knowing that she will never question his right of ownership of her entire body, nor will she ever question how he intends to use her entire body. This is the last time in the text that Snow-White's entire body is completely visible.

Snow-White has come full circle by returning to an invisible body. She became invisible as soon as she walked over to the Prince to eat with him. Snow-White's dependent, reproductively mature, and soon to be married body has been completely absorbed into patriarchy. Her body was only made visible in the company of men as part of her training to be the quintessentially perfect domesticated woman before her marriage to the Prince. Now, with her marriage to the Prince, her training has concluded and she will fulfill her reproductive and domestic duties. Patriarchy has claimed her body for itself because it is the epitome of the patriarchal ideal of feminine beauty.



CHAPTER V  
THE QUEEN'S LAST DANCE

Even though Snow-White will marry the Prince the next day, she is no longer of interest because she has completely conformed to patriarchal authority. Instead, the focus shifts to the Queen, who has greatly underestimated the power of patriarchy to protect that which it values and exact restitution for subversive acts against their society. Patriarchy will not hesitate to destroy anything or anyone that comes against it, even if that someone is married to a king. Class, rank, and position are not protectors against the authority of patriarchy as it defends its privileged position in this fairy tale world.

Despite receiving the invitation to Snow-White's wedding, the Queen really does not believe that Snow-White could have recovered from the "poisoned, poisoned apple." The Queen truly believes she killed Snow-White therefore successfully preventing her subjugation to patriarchy. Obviously, the Queen did not understand that the huntsman, dwarfs, and the Prince would protect and preserve Snow-White's body even after she had allegedly "died." However, the Queen remains confident that she has successfully killed Snow-White, and this is the last time she will ask:

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,  
Who in this land is fairest of all?  
The mirror answered:  
You, my queen, are fair; it is true.  
But the young queen

Is a thousand times fairer than you.

[...] and she became so frightened, so frightened, that she did not know what to do. At first she did not want to go to the wedding, but she found no peace. She had to go and see the young queen. When she arrived she recognized Snow-White, and terrorized, she could only stand there without moving.

The cause of the Queen's terror may be that for the first time in her life she realizes the extent and the capability of patriarchal power, a power able to protect, own, and control Snow-White's body despite all attempts she made to destroy that body. Also, with this realization, comes the awareness that she cannot escape punishment for consistently disrupting this society. The Queen's two greatest offenses are that she refused to be sexually submissive and she attempted to destroy their property. She must know that she is alone and unprotected and unable to escape her fate at the hands of this society. Knowing this is the fear she feels. Nevertheless, her fear did not have the power to stop her from going to Snow-White's wedding.

Of course, as soon as the Queen arrives at the Prince's castle, patriarchy will seize its advantage and attack her body in order to completely destroy it. The Queen risks her body when she enters the Prince's castle because the only way she will be allowed inside is with her whole and unified body. In her whole and unified body, the Queen cannot retain her independence and autonomy. Therefore, when she confirms Snow-White is alive, fear paralyzes her, and she has no choice but to surrender control of her entire body

to the Prince. The Queen is powerless to resist the punishment exacted for her crimes against patriarchy and:

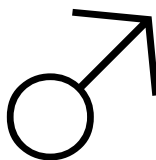
they put a pair of iron shoes into burning coals. They were brought forth with tongs and placed before her. She was forced to step into the red-hot shoes and dance until she fell down dead.

The “they” who forced the Queen to step into the red-hot iron shoes are not identified. However, in all likelihood they are servants following the orders of the Prince. While the Queen dances herself to death, everyone in attendance watches as she dies. Her death is not only cause for the wedding day celebration; it is the most appropriate and desirable wedding gift the Prince could give Snow-White. There is no better way for the Prince to ensure his complete and uncontested ownership of the body of Snow-White than with death of the Queen. The Queen must dance in red-hot iron shoes as a form of punishment for her non-compliance to patriarchy.

Dancing is one way the body expresses itself sexually. Throughout the entire tale, the Queen avoided displaying her body as sexual to prevent it from becoming subordinate to men. Patriarchy makes its position of power very clear in the way they choose to kill the Queen by making her dance to death in red-hot iron shoes. This death sentence appropriately fits the nature of her crime against patriarchy because dancing compels her body to express its sexual and sensual nature. It is now impossible for her to hide this aspect of her body from men, and when the Prince demands her body express its sexuality it kills her.

Making the Queen dance in red-hot iron shoes is really quite interesting and rather clever. Iron just happens to be the most abundant the seven metals of alchemy. The fact that there are seven metals of alchemy again reinforces the significance of the number seven and the perfecting of Snow-White for patriarchy and the destruction of those things that get in the way of patriarchy. Iron has also been made into weapons of war. In fact, the symbol for iron is the same symbol used to signify the Roman god of war, Mars, who facilitated and advocated brutal savagery and aggression. Mars, the red planet, is named for this god and his symbol is an arrow extending from a circle. The circle denotes Mar's shield and the arrow denotes his spear. Following are two examples of this symbol:

QuickTime™ and a  
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.



Not surprising that this symbol is also the symbol of man. Men have literally declared war on the Queen and reinforced the power of their attack with the most significant and definitive of all masculine symbols, that of the Roman god of war, Mars. The Queen has

been punished and destroyed by the power of man. That formidable power demands she die an excruciatingly painful death by forcing her to express her sexuality through dance.

Karen E. Rowe states in, "Feminism and Fairy Tales," that,

By punishing exhibitions of feminine force, tales admonish, moreover, that any disruptive non-conformity will result in annihilation or social ostracism. While readers dissociate from these portrayures of feminine power, defiance and/or self-expression, they readily identify with the prettily passive heroine whose submission to commendable roles insures her triumphant happiness. (247-248)

True, the reader does not identify with the strong woman because they see her as a threat to the younger woman who is willing to subordinate herself to patriarchy. Patriarchy has triumphed and has what it always wanted: the intact and whole body of Snow-White, and the death of the Queen's subversive body.

This is not the only tale that tells of the dangers of dancing in red shoes. In Hans Christian Andersen's The Red Shoes, Karen, an orphan, sees a princess wearing red shoes and she wants a pair for herself. So Karen tricks her guardian, who is blind, into buying a pair of shiny red patent leather shoes. The shoes force Karen to dance, and no matter how she tries, she cannot remove them from her feet. One day Karen danced toward a church and met an angel. Bonnie Gordon quotes Hans Christian Andersen's angel in her article, "Kate Bush's Subversive Shoes," who says:

You shall dance in your red shoes until you become pale and thin. Dance till the skin on your face turns yellow and clings to your bones as if you

were a skeleton. Dance you shall from door to door and when you pass a house where proud and vain children live, there you shall knock on the door so that they will see you and fear your face. Dance, you shall Dance. [...] Redemption ultimately arrives after Karen confesses her sins and the executioner chops off her feet, which then spend eternity dancing without a body. The girl, sans feet, lives out her life in domestic servitude to a local pastor. In this tale dance is both a symbol of and a punishment for female excess. Karen's forced dance represents a struggle to constrain female sexuality and raw passion by violently punishing the female body. (37-8)

Although the Queen dies, and Karen lives without her dancing feet, the similarities between these dancing red shoes cannot be overlooked.

From the beginning of this tale, the Queen refused the company of men, and it was quite obvious that she did not enjoy having her finger pricked or the pregnancy that resulted. She definitely intended to avoid revealing any part of her body that signified her sexuality, which is why she kept it fragmented. By hiding her sexuality, she also intended not to allow herself to be confined to a life of domesticity as a mother. Although unsuccessful, the Queen tried to prevent patriarchy from reproducing itself through her. She could not protect herself from patriarchy, but she tries to protect Snow-White. Understanding the motives of the Queen, her attempts to murder Snow-White could be considered noble. However, she was alone and could not effectively subvert the power of patriarchy or its ability to confine women in domesticity. She may have succeeded in

winning a few minor battles each time she left Snow-White for dead in the dwarfs' little house, but patriarchy won the war of sexual domination.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

This Queen proves herself to be a formidable opponent to the continuation of patriarchy and a force that must be dealt with because of her diligence and determination to damage the fabric of domesticity in her attempts to murder Snow-White. From the very beginning of this tale, she is isolated from society, and in the persona of the beggar woman the degree of her alienation from society is emphasized. She could have chosen to quietly disappear in this isolation, but she did not find that option acceptable. Instead, she is characterized as wicked and evil, and not heralded as a champion for a woman's right to own and control her own body. When the Queen dies, there is a great feeling of relief that Snow-White is now safe and able to live happily ever after with her Prince.

The very first time the Queen appears in the tale, she is alone, except for the seven brief exchanges with her mirror, and for the time it took her to order the huntsman to kill Snow-White. In fact, the servants, attendants, and King never enter, or exist in any domestic space inhabited by the Queen; neither does Snow-White, who for the first seven years of her life lived in the same castle as the Queen. It is not until after the Queen disguises herself as a beggar woman that these two women inhabit the same space at the same time. However, each time the beggar woman and Snow-White shared the same space, the beggar woman did everything in her power, albeit unsuccessfully to kill Snow-White.



Before these incidents, the Queen determines to keep her body from being subjugated to patriarchal control. Additionally, she fragments her body by using the landscape, which makes it problematic for men to find and use her entire body in whatever manner they choose to use it. It is easier for men to provide spaces for the Queen's self-imposed isolation and fragmentation than to expend their energy attempting to unite the fragments of a rebellious woman's body. Her seclusion permits physical independence from the society in which she lives, albeit with consequences.

When the Queen saw her three drops of blood in the snow, she acknowledged how beautiful the red blood on the white snow looked and thought about having a child who would embody these same qualities. Once she had that thought, it was too late to take it back. Then when Snow-White materialized into a whole person from those three drops of blood and in the abundance of semen-like snow, she becomes angry, not because Snow-White is more beautiful or fairer than she, rather because she inadvertently gave patriarchy exactly what it wanted, the flawless incarnation of the masculine ideal of feminine beauty in the body of Snow-White. That perfect child becomes the perfect domestic woman destined to maintain patriarchal power through her reproductive submissiveness and domesticity.

The narrator, huntsman, dwarfs, and Prince say Snow-White is beautiful because of her white skin and red cheeks. Snow-White's ebony eyes are closed for most of the tale, and do not factor into the degree of beauty she possesses. Snow-White will never be unprotected in this society, even when confronted by old women. Her beauty is her protection and progressively confines her to smaller and more restrictive landscapes.

Snow-White initially has the run of the forest until she enters the dwarfs' small cottage. Then in her death-like condition she is confined within a glass coffin until she can be safely delivered to the castle of the Prince. After a servant hits her freeing her from the coffin, she becomes the invisible domestic property of the Prince.

The Queen, on the other hand, is never described using the colors red and white, and she is not the masculine ideal of feminine beauty. Not one male character ever says she is beautiful. Of course, she is not beautiful to men because she uses her body to avoid and defy them. She does this by keeping her body fragmented, which makes it difficult for men to confine and control it. In fact, the only voice to say she is beautiful is the narrator's, and this is same voice that tells the reader she is proud, jealous and hates Snow-White. The Queen is not jealous of the girl's beauty in that the queen desires to be beautiful in the same way Snow-White is beautiful. The Queen does, however, hate what the girl represents. Without doubt, Snow-White belongs completely to patriarchy. She is designed by men for men, and will never live her life independent of men.

This is not a fairy tale about one mother's lack of love for a daughter because no mother would willingly wish or enact harm on a daughter. It is a fairy tale about a mother's hatred for what that daughter represents, the power patriarchy has over women to subjugate them to sexual submissiveness and domesticity. It is also a tale about what happens to women who choose to live outside the confines of the world controlled by men, whether huntsman, servant, deformed half-men, or royalty they all have the right of domination over all women. A woman's royal station does not exempt her from abuse at the hands men.

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