Neil Gaiman’s Subversive Fairy Tale Revisions - “Snow, Glass, Apples” and “The Sleeper and The Spindle”

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1. INTRODUCTION

Fairy tales have been a hallmark of children's literature for centuries and are still considered the most appropriate reading for young minds both as a form of entertainment and a didactic tool. However, fairy tales were not always, as J. R. R. Tolkien puts it, "relegated to the 'nursery'" (50) as they were initially designed with both adult audiences and children in mind. The oral folk tale is commonly considered the fairy tale's processor whose primary function was to transmit dominant ideologies as well as generate discourse that would give rise to subversive ideas and ideologies – functions which were then adopted by the literary fairy tale. Subversive waves of writing have continued throughout the ages and have marked a notable increase in literary production during the 20th and 21st centuries.

An author that made a contribution to the genre of subversive fairy tale revisions is Neil Gaiman. Influenced by works of Angela Carter, Gaiman wrote several pieces of short fiction which use fairy tales as hypotext. Among the longer pieces of such fiction are the two short stories, "Snow, Glass, Apples" and "The Sleeper and the Spindle", both of which are using Grimms' fairy tales of Snow White and Little Briar Rose, better known as Sleeping Beauty, as their hypotexts.

The goal of this thesis is to examine the above-mentioned short stories by examining the history of each of the hypotexts and determining the subversive elements at play in Gaiman's revisions. Primary focus shall be put on the comparison of the civilising processes evident in the original Grimms fairy tales and their subversion in Gaiman's retelling for the purposes of foregrounding the major issues that patriarchal ideologies of the originals present. In order to address the definition of revision, Kevin Paul Smith's work on fairy tale retellings as well as Patrica Waugh's theory of metafiction will be utilised.

The thesis is divided into three major sections. The first section reviews the history of the fairy tale's predecessor, the oral folk tale, and outlines the genesis of what is to be the literary fairy tale. This section applies theories by Karel Čapek, J. R. R. Tolkien and Jack Zipes as its primary sources in order to examine the nature of fairy tale as a genre and its role. Most notable is Jack Zipes' definition of the civilising process as a tool of conveying the social standards and dominant ideologies to children as well as his reading of fairy tales as a meme which enables ease of transmission.

The second section deals with the short story "Snow, Glass, Apples". After a brief summary, an analysis of the short stories' subversive elements is provided by employing Zipes' theories as well as readings pertaining to the fairy tale of Snow White. This section is additionally divided into three subsections, each examining a specific aspect of the story: first subsection deals with the notion of revision in the fairy tale genre, second with the civilising process present in the story with specific focus on gender stereotypes, and third with the chromatic symbolism which enhances the civilising ideologies of the original fairy tale.

The third and final section examines the second short story, "The Sleeper and the Spindle", in a similar fashion. It is divided into two subsections. The first focuses on Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of chronotope in order to review the unique spatio-temporal setting of the revision and its effects on the civilising process. The second subsection deals with the civilising process of the original, the gender norms and the archetype of the male saviour, and its subversion in "The Sleeper and the Spindle".

The primary goal is to provide examples and determine the nature of the subversive elements in Gaiman's revisions in order to argue that Gaiman's revisions offer alternative

viewpoints for the problematic patriarchal ideologies present in the civilising processes of the originals.

2. THE HISTORY OF FAIRY TALE

2.1. Oral Folk Tales and Primary Tales

The history of the fairy tale as a genre is inextricably linked to the phenomenon of the wonder or oral folk tale which is considered to be the fairy tale's predecessor. Due to the difficulties in ascertaining the boundaries between the two, the fairy tale may at times be conflated with or regarded indiscriminate of the folk tale. Nevertheless, scholars commonly differentiate between wonder folk tales and literary fairy tales, and usually consider them separate entities in a symbiotic relationship (Zipes, *Irresistible Fairy Tale* 2). As Jack Zipes explains, the main difference between the two modes is the mediation of print which essentially gave birth to what is widely regarded to be the literary fairy tale (2). This new genre of printed literature appropriated themes, motifs and imagery of oral wonder folk tales, while simultaneously introducing aspects of other literary genres (Zipes, "Introduction" 17). The literary fairy tale proceeds to further emphasise the issues of moral and cultural values in order to convey them to adults and children alike in what Zipes interprets to be the civilising process of fairy tales (Zipes, *Fairy Tales* 3).

The origins of oral folk tales cannot be clearly determined as the form is encompassed within a broader field of exploration of the history of oral storytelling. However, it is generally assumed that it sprung from numerous tales circulating in different communities over the ages, told to adults and children alike (Zipes, *Fairy Tales* 8) in order to address the perception of the society and its issues. As Zipes argues,

> Originally the folk tale was (and still is) an oral narrative form cultivated by non-literate and literate people to express the manner in which they perceived and perceive nature and their social order and their wish to satisfy their needs and wants (*Breaking the Magic Spell* 7).

Zipes maintains that oral folk tales, hence the fairy tale as well, originated from what he calls "primary tales." These stories "enabled humans to invent and reinvent their lives", address important issues, and voice relevant experiences. They also aided in the initiation rites of various communities (*Irresistible Fairy Tale* 4). As the stories were passed on through the centuries, each community decided on the appropriate alterations to the tales so as to accurately reflect the society's needs and norms (Zipes, *Breaking the Spell* 8).

These precursors of oral folk tales often included supernatural entities and pagan divinities, which Zipes believes were forebears of fairy tale creatures (Zipes, *Irresistible Fairy Tale* 57). The oral wonder tale distinguished itself from other forms of simple narratives of the time by including the motif of a "miraculous transformation" (Zipes, "Introduction" 17). Zipes additionally links the pagan supernatural creatures to the Greco-Roman "fairies", goddesses and fates, maintaining that the transformational power of these stories and its entities spans centuries and continues until today (*Irresistible Fairy Tale* 37).

The supernatural elements were a key aspect of the wonder tales as they bore the connection to the initiation rituals of pagan times and served to set up a dialogue with the dominant ideology (Zipes, "Introduction" 19). Over time however, their connection and relevance to the initiation rituals was lost as they "'degenerated' into secular wonder tales" during the Middle Ages (Zipes, *Irresistible Fairy Tale* 68) and were later transcribed into fairy tales. The new form continued to serve a role in the socialising process, much like its predecessors. The narrative patterns and character tropes were retained in the fairy tales mainly

in the form of witches and fairies (Zipes, *Irresistible Fairy Tale* 57). Important aspect in this transition is the inscription of new meanings for the female characters, primarily the vilification of characters and tropes related to female divinities. Zipes notes the influence of the patriarchal system in the transformation of the goddesses of the primary tales into witches and fairies but admits that a clear connection has not been established (Zipes, *Irresistible Fairy Tale* 59). He emphasises and attributes the transformation of the female supernatural entity to the rise of Christianity that saw the demonization of goddesses into "the stereotypical image of the witch as bitch" (Zipes, *Irresistible Fairy Tale* 77). Once powerful and benevolent entities were now depicted as cruel and devious and as such have remained in the popular imagination to this day, bolstered by the output of Disney Studios in their renditions of canonised fairy tales.

Karel Čapek echoes a similar idea in his essay "Towards a Theory of Fairy Tale", where he offers a review of the ethnographic research of fairy tales and its origins based primarily on the idea of polygenesis (53). He notes that fairy tales are often marked by ritualistic concepts, native beliefs and customs which found their way into a new form,

> It is only partly true that a fairy-tale finds or invents its subjects: it is nearer the truth that the subjects take refuge in it as if they wished to give up reality for the sake of remaining alive as fiction. [...] To these belong mythologies which have sprouted beyond the scope of a socially binding creed, or which have come into conflict with a more recently accepted cult. The fairy-tale preserves them as subjects, but only at the price that they no longer feature as something we believe in (70).

The transformation of female supernatural entities caused by Christianity as pointed out by Zipes aligns with Čapek's supremacy of a newly adopted cult in conflict with old mythologies. Furthermore, the key feature of the fairy tale is, according to Čapek, something that

is no longer plausible in the real world – old mythology, lore, or magic. Nevertheless, the things featured are firmly accepted as real in the world that the fairy tale creates. The fairy-story matter, as he calls it, turns what is a foreign motif in the real world into a familiar one in the world of the fairy tale (56). J. R. R. Tolkien considers this crucial for the genre and remarks that the matter of fairy tales must be presented as unequivocally true in order for the fairy tale to fulfil its task, for the spell to leave its effect: "[S]ince the fairy-story deals with 'marvels', it cannot tolerate any frame or machinery suggesting that the whole framework in which they occur is a figment or illusion" (35). Since the fairy tale does not require belief in the supernatural in the Primary World, the reader can accept the existence of the supernatural in the tale's world which maintains the integrity of the Secondary World. The magic in the fairy tale is real and never questioned by its denizens and the readers partake in the Secondary World through "the enchanted state" of Secondary Belief. Secondary Belief is explained by Tolkien as a result of a skilful Sub-Creator (author) who manages to have the reader surpass the willing suspension of disbelief:

> He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside. If you are obliged, by kindliness or circumstance, to stay, then disbelief must be suspended (or stifled), otherwise listening and looking would become intolerable. But this suspension of disbelief is a substitute for the genuine thing, a subterfuge we use when condescending to games or make-believe, or when trying (more or less willingly) to find what virtue we can in the work of an art that has for us failed (52).

The ability to engage Secondary Belief while simultaneously conveying certain notions as universally true across both Worlds is what may have provided a fertile ground for fairy tales to become crucial in the civilising process of young children from the 18th century onwards.

2.2. Fairy Tales and the Civilising Process

While the origins and development of the wonder folk tale are quite hard to define due to the lack of physical evidence, the history of the literary fairy tale, albeit still unclear and hardly diachronic (Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick* 62), is less difficult to examine in regard to the material evidence. The evidence accounts for an important difference between the oral folk tales, which is the existence of identifiable author(s) of literary fairy tales (Zipes, "Introduction" 16). As fairy tales were being written during the Middle Ages, they shifted the language to address a new audience – the literate public.

The literary fairy tale is initially most prominently found in the 14th-century Italian literary production in works of Giovanni Francesco Straparola and Giambattista Basile who utilised the frame narratives under the influence of Boccaccio and Chaucer to present a series of fairy tales (Zipes, "Introduction" 21). Zipes considers the works of Straparola and Basile to be the origin of what will be defined and institutionalised in the 17th century as the genre of fairy tale (Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick* 20) and maintains that their works set a precedent for using fairy tales as a means to intervene in the civilising process (Zipes, *Fairy Tales* 20).

Another important source are the translations of *The Arabian Nights*, a collection of oral folk tales connected to the Indian, Persian and Arab cultures which were written down sometime between the 9th and 14th century (Zipes, *Irresistible Fairy Tale* 170). The narrative framework tells a story of a cruel ruler who murders a woman each night for three years before he is

confronted with Scheherazade, a woman who tells him a fantastical story each night to stave off her death. The tales told by Scheherazade are embedded in the narrative framework and have been authored by various storytellers throughout the years with varying styles and themes. The collection was first translated in France at the start of the 18th century by an orientalist scholar Antoine Galland. At the time of French and German Romanticism, which found inspiration in orientalism and romanticised the mystic cultures of the East, *The Arabian Nights* proved to be an immense influence for the creation of collections of literary fairy tales (Zipes, "Introduction" 24).

Jack Zipes uses the term "civilising process", coined by Norbert Elias, to examine how social patterns, group pressure, social codes and legislation influence fairy tale production and the social implications embedded in the texts (*Fairy Tales* 20). In order to supplement what he feels to be an omission in Elias' work, Zipes uses Pierre Bourdieu's views on gender formation and resulting conflict in a society in order to address the process of masculine domination inherent in the civilising process and therefore reflected in the canonised fairy tales (21). He outlines a system in which literary fairy tales as transcribed from the 18th century onwards "operate ideologically to indoctrinate children so that they will conform to dominant social standards" (34). The dominant values are conveyed through actions and demeanour of characters; for example, it is becoming for a young woman to be docile and self-sacrificing because, as Zipes claims,

> [s]he must be passive until the right man comes along to recognize her virtues and marry her. She lives only through the male and for marriage. The male acts, the female waits. She must cloak her instinctual drives in polite speech, correct manners, and elegant clothes. If she is allowed to reveal anything, it is to demonstrate how submissive she can be (41).

Such female characters are usually depicted as possessing admirable beauty, which becomes one of their most valued assets, and are rewarded with the ultimate prize by the end of the tale – marriage.

The wonder tales' socialising functions have undergone the process of "bourgeoisification" and the new fairy tales were "to indoctrinate children so that they will conform to dominant social standards that are not necessarily established in their behalf" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales* 34). The civilising process is complete once the values embedded in the tales are internalised by the reader through identification with the protagonist of the tale. As Zipes explains,

> Direct identification of a child with the major protagonist begins the process of socialization through reading. […] . As children read or are read to, they follow a social path, learn role orientation, and acquire norms and values. […] For a child growing up in a capitalist society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the socialization process carried by the pattern and norms in a Grimms' fairy tale functioned and still functions to make such a society more acceptable to the child. […] [F]airy tales emphasize a process of socialization through reading that leads to internalizing the basic nineteenth-century bourgeois norms, values, and power relationships, which take their departure from feudal society (70-1).

As Cristina Bacchilega points out, it is also important to note that the literary fairy tales provided a sense of continuity, a "fictionalized past of social communing" (6) which was an especially notable part of the collecting process for authors such as the Grimm brothers. Fairy tales are, therefore, inextricably tied to their oral predecessors and their much broader implied readership prior to the 19th century.

Furthermore, to explain the propagation and adaptation of these tales containing the instructions for the civilization of the children, Zipes utilises the term "meme" coined by Richard Dawkins. He adopts the term as expanded by Konner as "an elementary unit of cultural transmission" (*Irresistible Fairy Tale* 18) which is circulated and repeated in the society by virtue of its relevance to the cultural structures and applies it to both oral folk and fairy tales. Zipes maintains that "in the case of fairy tales, [...] memes help create and build traditions by creating pools of stories, millions of stories, predicated on the human communication of shared experience" ((*Irresistible Fairy Tale* 19).

In order to be successfully disseminated, the meme must be relevant, meaning the society must find it addresses their needs and concerns and articulates issues that require attention (*Irresistible Fairy Tale* 19). Fairy tales, as stories of shared experience, help build repositories of tradition that can then be further modified and propagated. As Zipes further explains,

> The salience and/or relevance of memetic fairy tales, which offer alternative patterns of action to real social behavior, is a cultural indication of what we have endeavored to communicate to help one another adapt to changing environments while preserving an instinctual morality. The memetic crystallization of certain fairy tales as classical does not make them static for they are constantly recreated and reformed, and yet remain memetic because of their relevant articulation of problematic issues in our lives. Fairy tales, like our own lives, were born out of conflict (*Irresistible Fairy Tale* 20).

These repositories bear witness to the civilising processes extant at the time, either with the desire to preserve and bolster those sets of values or subvert them. Once recognized as such, the meme, in this case the fairy tale, must "justify itself through an ongoing process of replication" (*Irresistible Fairy Tale* 67). The stories found relevant are passed on, revised and

restructured to better suit the needs of the era and sometimes expose the issues of the previous iterations.

The civilising process present in the original fairy tales did not stay uniform throughout the ages. It was often contested and questioned in parodies. Zipes uses the works of Italian fairy tale writers who relayed their tales through female narrators as an act of subversive writing with the aim of exposing the gender roles manifest in the civilising process of their state:

> It is also not by chance that the majority of the tales told in Straparola's frame are spoken by elegant ladies, and in Basile's frame they all are told by gifted female storytellers from the lower classes. In each case, the perspective is from the dominated sex, from down under, from a subversive point of view that exposes the darkness of court societies and the absurd and arbitrary ways men use power to enforce what they consider to be the proper gender roles and social codes of their civilizing processes (*Irresistible Fairy Tale* 21-2).

Furthermore, Zipes notes that the majority of fairy tale writers in Italy and France were educated individuals that had connections to the aristocracy and were dissatisfied with the current state of affairs which led them to explore alternatives through the genre of fairy tale. Many of them were women who used the form as a way to discuss issues of the patriarchal society in a subversive way,

> They were drawn to the genre and wrote subversively to question the mores, customs, habits, and use of power during their own time. […] Given the different cultures and different times the Italian and French tales were written, the tales reflect on the particular civilizing processes of their states in very specific ways. But they do have one thing in common: they lay bare the contradictions of the civilizing process, reveal how power works for those who are opportunistic

and well situated, and propose modes of self-restraint in keeping with the civilizing process (*Fairy Tales* 22-3).

Waves of subversive fairy tale production continue throughout history and provide an important window into the issues present in the architext that each age feels the need to tackle and amend. The French production, as well as the translation of *the Arabian Nights*, in turn "had a profound influence on German writers of the Enlightenment and romanticism, and the development in Germany provided the continuity for the institution of the genre in the West as a whole" (Zipes, "Introduction" 26). Instead of providing mere entertainment, the fairy tale was supposed to spark debate and address philosophical issues because "[t]he romantics did not intend their fairy tales to amuse audiences in the traditional sense of *divertissement*. Instead, they sought to engage the reader in a serious discourse about art, philosophy, education, and love" (25).

The beginning of the literary fairy tale written exclusively for children can be traced back to 1743 and Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's *Le Magasin des enfants*, a didactic collection of children fairy tales which began the civilising process of children through literary fairy tales (Zipes, "Introduction" 23). The term itself originates from the French *conte de fées*, coined in 1697 by a French writer of fairy tales Madame d'Aulnoy, which according to Zipes became "a term that stamped the genre and indicated the narrative power of women, for the fairies and writers/tellers of these texts are in control of the destinies of all the characters" (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 69). The term "fairy tale" then became standard translation and was adopted as a term in the English language in the 1750s (Zipes, *Irresistible Fairy Tale* 22).

On the other hand, the fairy tales intended for children were under heavy scrutiny until the 1820s as they "were not considered to be 'healthy' for the development of young people's

minds" (25). Fairy tales collected by the Brothers Grimm underwent several revisions as they made the stories "more appropriate for children than they had done in the beginning and cleans[ed] their narratives of erotic and bawdy passages" while simultaneously making sure they "underlined morals in keeping with the Protestant ethic and a patriarchal notion of sex roles" (26).

The conception and evolution of both the wonder folk tale and the literary fairy tale necessarily involves the issue of intended audience. The issue is contentious in the case of the fairy tale because there seems to be a general misconception that fairy tales were primarily and from its very conception intended as bedtime stories for children. As Tolkien points out in his essay "On Fairy Stories",

> [t]he association of children and fairy-stories is an accident of our domestic history. Fairy-stories have in the modern lettered world been relegated to the 'nursery', as shabby or old-fashioned furniture is relegated to the play-room, primarily because the adults do not want it, and do not mind if it is misused (50).

It is important to note that, prior to the 18th century, the literary fairy tale as well as its oral predecessors were intended primarily, albeit not exclusively, for adults (Zipes, *Fairy Tales* 3). What led to creation of the idea of the fairy tale as a genre of children's bedtime stories is the emerging perception of children as a unique age group:

> Throughout the Middle Ages children were gradually regarded as a separate age group with a special set of characteristics, and it was considered most important to advance the cause of *civilité* with explicit and implicit rules of pedagogization so that the manners and mores of the young would reflect the social power, prestige, and hierarchy of the ruling classes. Thus it became vital

to bring about socialization through fairy tales and the internalization of specific values and notions of gender (Zipes, *Fairy Tales* 8-9).

As children were considered more fragile, "a special kind of creature, almost a different race, rather than as normal, if immature, members of a particular family, and of the human family at large" (Tolkien 50), fairy tales proved to be a useful vessel in conveying the civilising process to the future members of the society. They aided with the establishment and internalisation of dominant social values and perspectives, especially gender roles and stereotypes, while simultaneously providing entertainment. (Zipes, *Fairy Tales* 9) Tolkien maintains that the dismissal of the fairy tale as a valuable form of literature for adults has ultimately diminished its value. As he maintains, "[f]airy-stories banished in this way, cut off from a full adult art, would in the end be ruined; indeed in so far as they have been so banished, they have been ruined." (51) Nevertheless, the fairy tale persisted as a genre and is seeing its revival as literature for adults as well, as it will be argued is the case with the works of Neil Gaiman.

As may be noted from the history of the genre, the fairy tale provided a useful tool for discussion about the civilising process. The waves of subversive fairy tale writing never abated and attempts at furthering the discourse on the issues of the civilising processes present in the canonised fairy tales appear, for example, in the works of authors such as Oscar Wilde, George MacDonald, and Lyman Frank Baum. Important to mention are also the feminist revisions created during its Second Wave in the 1970s. Authors such as Angela Carter and Anne Sexton explored the conventions of the genre in order to challenge the patriarchal ideologies present in the originals (Zipes, "Introduction" 31). Production of those authors led to experimentation with the genre as seen in Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1993). In the context of subversive fairy tale production, the thesis will examine the two fairy tale retellings of

Snow White and Sleeping Beauty by the British author Neil Gaiman – short stories "Snow, Glass, Apples" and "The Sleeper and the Spindle."

In the collection of essays titled *Feminism in the Worlds of Neil Gaiman*, a number of scholars discuss the approach to feminism throughout his work, as Gaiman does hold a unique, and to some arguably controversial, position of a male author utilizing feminist framework in his writing. Editors of the collection, Aaron Drucker and Tara Prescot, offer a conclusion that emerges through the majority of the essays, acknowledging that Gaiman "moves from one medium to another, with equal felicity, imparting messages to little boys and girls, to grown men and women about agency and ability, about transgression and the improbably bizarre world right in front of them" ("Introduction" 19-20). Rachel R. Martin in her essay "Speaking the Cacophony of Angels" considers Gaiman's construction of women through masculine language and states the following:

> Gaiman operates within and utilizes the phallocentric discourse in his creation and depiction of women, even to the extent that he evokes some of his strongest, most popular female characters through the voices of his male characters and through dominant narrative structures, utilizing the dominant discourse to critique and problematize its own assumptive frameworks. […] The language of Gaiman's narratives strives for a critical self-awareness within a discourse he is unable (and perhaps unwilling) to fully transgress, but in the attempt, he motions towards a fuller understanding of the limits the language we use (24).

Much like in his work in the form of a graphic novel *Sandman*, Gaiman uses a phallocentric form of discourse inscribed with patriarchal civilising process – the fairy tale – in order to assess and re-examine its axioms. Gaiman does not aim to create a new language outside of the patriarchal normative which would embody the feminine, but rather uses the phallocentric

discourse to showcase the limitations imposed on women through fictional works such as fairy tales.

3. “SNOW, GLASS, APPLES” - RETELLING OF SNOW WHITE

3.1. Summary of “Snow, Glass, Apples”

A short story published in the collection titled *Smoke and Mirrors* (1998), Neil Gaiman’s “Snow, Glass, Apples” uses the tale of Snow White as its hypotext in order to offer a new vantage point for the beloved fairy tale. Recounted from the perspective of Snow White’s stepmother, the events of the original are viewed through an alternative lens of a vilified character which helps outline the problems of the civilising processes implied and accepted in the original, especially ones pertaining to gender roles.

In Gaiman’s short story, the new Queen, Snow White’s stepmother, is introduced as the narrator and focalizer of the story. She reports her version of the events that transpired, providing an account of Snow White that directly opposes the original’s portrayal of the young Princess as innocent and virginal. Arriving at the castle, the Queen’s interactions with the Princess become increasingly menacing. The little Princess attacks her new stepmother soon after her arrival, sinking “her teeth into the base of her thumb, the Mound of Venus” (“Snow, Glass, Apples” 373) and continuously drains blood from her father throughout her youth, until he becomes too weak and is essentially killed by his own daughter. As the story unfolds, it is implied that Snow White is a vampire and is rumoured to have killed her mother upon birth. Knowing that Snow White is responsible for her lover’s death, the Queen decides to deal with the monster her stepdaughter has become. She promptly orders for Snow White to be taken into the forest and her heart to be cut out of her chest. Once she receives the still beating organ, she hangs it above her bed.

As time passes, the Queen notices that their annual fair is frequented by less forest folk each year. Concerned that Snow White might be the source of the dwindling attendance, the

Queen decides to use her mirror to scry on the Princess and sees her still alive, residing in the forest and harming its denizens. Resolved to put an end to the suffering of the forest folk, the Queen performs a ritual at first snowfall during which she enchants several apples using her own blood. At dawn, she casts a "glamour" on the apples and herself. Pretending to be an old woman, the Queen ventures into the forest caves where the Princess is living and offers the apples to her. Once the Queen returns to the castle, the Princess's heart above her bed is no longer beating, signalling the death of the Princess.

Years go by and the Queen is considering an alliance with the Prince who visits her kingdom. As they engage in sexual intercourse, she notices a peculiar fetish of his, "[h]e told me not to move, and to breathe as little as possible. He implored me to say nothing" ("Smoke and Mirrors" 382). He begged her to "just lie there on the stones, so cold and so fair" (383). As she fails to fulfil his fantasy, he leaves for the forest and, later on that very night, the Queen wakes to the renewed beats of the heart above her bed and footsteps in the hallway. The Princess and her new Prince sentence the Queen to death. As the story comes to a close, the reader is made aware that the Queen has been recounting these events while standing in a kiln, covered in goose grease, resolved not to scream as she burns to death.

3.2. Analysis of "Snow, Glass, Apples"

In his essay, "Reflections on Myth", Neil Gaiman recounts his experience attending a symposium on myths and fairy tales where he was to be a featured speaker. As he was listening to the academics giving presentations on the topic, Gaiman was unpleasantly surprised by the attitude present throughout the event, "an attitude that implied that these tales no longer had

anything to do with us" (81). As he tried to voice the opinion that the stories possess a certain power and can be utilised to address crucial issues, he was met with reluctant nods. The response prompted him to give up on his prepared speech for the next day and read one of his short stories instead. The story was "Snow, Glass, Apples". After finishing, he marked a change in their attitude: "As I said, these stories have power,' I told them as I finished. This time they seemed far more inclined to believe me" (83).

The aim of this section of the thesis is to analyse the short story in question and examine the ways in which it functions as a meme as it subverts a well-known tale in order to address the crucial contemporary issues. It will also be noted that it simultaneously highlights the problems and the civilising processes present in its hypotext, which keep both the original and the revision relevant in this process of mirroring.

3.2.1 A Fairy Tale Revision

In order to analyse "Snow, Glass, Apples", the term revision and its purpose in the context of the fairy tale genre should be noted. According to Kevin Paul Smith, revision is one of eight distinct ways in which a fairy tale is used as a folkloric intertext in postmodern texts (9). Smith offers an expanded definition of the term pertaining to the fairy tale:

> The purpose of producing a revised fairy tale is to create something new that incorporates the critical and creative thinking of the producer and corresponds to changed demands and tastes of audiences. As a result of transformed values, the revised classical fairy tale seeks to alter the reader's views of traditional patterns, images, and codes (35).

He further points out that a number of revisions aim to supplant the original; however, that is not always the case. Certain revisions primarily aim to expose the underlying ideological

structures and processes buttressing the original. They also attempt to give voice to the silenced parts of the narrative by listening to the "the many 'voices' of fairy tales" in order to reveal the things that were initially left unsaid. (Bacchilega 50) These types of revisions maintain the desire to reflect the values of their age as well as to affect the reader's perception of the original by replacing it. They provide a chance to ponder the issues of the hypotext more thoroughly without negating them. As Jack Zipes notes, "[t]hey [authors] don't worship the past and tradition, but demand that the past and tradition justify themselves in the present. In turn, they ask that their remoulding of the past and tradition be questioned" (*Why Fairy Tales Stick* 241).

The form of revision corresponds to Patricia Waugh's study of metafiction, a type of self-reflective fiction which purposefully points to its constructed nature in order to call to question the relationship between fiction and reality (2). In her work *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction,* Waugh argues that postmodern fiction uses self-conscious parody to lay bare the devices of its making in order to defamiliarize a mode or a text, thereby making the audience aware of the established conventions. The procedure allows for the historical context in which the parodied form was created to be emphasised and questioned in the current context. As Waugh maintains,

> [p]arody of an earlier literary norm or mode unavoidably lays bare the relations of that norm to its original historical context, through its defamiliarizing contextualization within a historical present whose literary and social norms have shifted. Parody of a literary norm modifies the relation between literary convention and cultural-historical norms, causing a shift in the whole system of relations (66).

This process enables creation of new forms and meanings in order to "renew perception" (65-6). In parodying the original fairy tales, the subversive revisions provide insight into the

issues, may offer alternatives as well as open up spaces for what was initially left out. For example, a space may be made for LGBTQ+ characters, as is the case in "The Sleeper and The Spindle", and the original restrictive idea of gender roles may be further expanded to include more than the patriarchally defined norms, as in "Snow, Glass, Apples". As Zipes points out,

> [f]airy tales and art do not liberate; they subvert by projecting metaphorical alternatives to the norm and by interrogating artificial absolutes, myths, and stereotypes. They do not guarantee happiness and success. Rather they open up – sometimes painfully – relative possibilities for people of all kinds of genders, sexuality, colors, and religions to define themselves and determine their lives (*Reinvigorating* 3).

Fairy tale revisions act as a mirror, simultaneously reflecting and re-imagining the civilising processes present in the originals, using them as a point of contrast to draw attention to important social issues. This process of disenchantment inevitably emphasises the form's fabricated nature and endangers the Secondary World constructed by the original. As Zipes notes, the aim is to dismantle the pervasive fantasy of "happily ever after", introduce alternatives that correspond to the current context, and warn that such an ending may not even be an option if burning socio-economic issues are not addressed (*Reinvigorating* 2) which may lead to the erosion of the Secondary World and Secondary Belief in readers. This process leads the retelling away from the eucatastrophic ending of the original fairy tale. According to Tolkien, eucatastrophe is the "good catastrophe, the sudden joyous 'turn'" (75) which grants the fairy tale its function. By dissolving the possibility of the eucatastrophe, the revision inevitably further distances itself from its hypotext.

3.2.2. The Civilising Process and Its Reflection

The tale of *Little Snow White* is one amongst many of the oral folk tales transcribed by "bourgeois missionaries" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales* 62), the Brothers Grimm. It is a tale of a young girl who finds herself in the role of an Innocent Persecuted Heroine (Bacchilega 14) as a result of the actions of her envious (step)mother who, seeing the beautiful girl as a threat to her existence in the patriarchal society, seeks to kill the princess. The original tale contains several transgressive elements as well as social and political implications which have been the focus of revisions. The revisions, such as Angela Carter's "Snow Child" and Emma Donoghue's "The Tale of the Apple", reveal its civilising processes by pointing out the overgeneralization and objectification of female gender.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's study *The Madwoman in the Attic* in particular puts the rivalrous relationship of Snow White and her (Step)mother under scrutiny. Pointing out the strong antipodal characteristics of both women, angelic Snow White versus demonic (Step)mother, they maintain that the relationship is deliberately cultivated by the patriarchal system, pitting women against each other to support its own existence:

> The Grimm tale of "Little Snow White" dramatizes the essential but equivocal relationship between the angel-woman and the monster-woman [...]. "Little Snow White," which Walt Disney entitled "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves," should really be called Snow White and Her Wicked Stepmother, for the central action of the tale-indeed, its only real action-arises from the relationship between these two women: the one fair, young, pale, the other just as fair, but older, fiercer; the one a daughter, the other a mother; the one sweet, ignorant, passive, the other both artful and active; the one a sort of angel, the other an undeniable witch (36).

Gilbert and Gubar note that the characters written by figures supporting the patriarchal system serve as tools for creating, defining and owning women and femininity in the patriarchal mythology which “defines women as created by, from, and for men, the children of male brains, ribs, and ingenuity” (12). Though the King is barely physically present in the story, according to Gilbert and Gubar,

> His, surely, is the voice of the looking glass, the patriarchal voice of judgement that rules the Queen's-and every woman's-self-evaluation. He it is who decides, first, that his consort is "the fairest of all," and then, as she becomes maddened, rebellious, witchlike, that she must be replaced by his angelically innocent and dutiful daughter, a girl who is therefore defined as "more beautiful still" than the Queen. […] [H]aving assimilated the meaning of her own sexuality (and having, thus, become the second Queen) the woman has internalized the King's rules: his voice resides now in her own mirror, her own mind (37-8).

The idea corresponds to the notion of the Mirror Stage as defined by Jacques Lacan in which a child is able to recognize the image in the mirror, the “Ideal I”, a version of itself that does not necessarily correspond to the reality it experiences. By receiving confirmation from the Other that the image is its own, it learns to distinguish between the Self from the Other and strives to become the “Ideal I” it sees in the mirror:

> The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject’s entire mental development (Lacan 3).

According to Veronica Schanoes, the alienation women experience through this mirror is undermining their sense of self by "the reducing effect of that image, a comment perhaps on how often women have been reduced to objects of the gaze, rather than subjects in their own right" (8). These narratives provide women with a mirror in which they are to identify their being and find an image considered appropriate and desirable for the system. The image in the mirror has a crucial role in the civilising process as it offers a blueprint for indoctrination of children for whom these stories are intended and they are thereby introduced into the system of gender roles extant in patriarchy. The female image presented in the patriarchal mirror of fairy tales is that of a passive, selfless, noble and submissive woman which becomes the angelic ideal – "a life of death, a death-in-life" (Gilbert and Gubar 25). In order to successfully correspond to the reflection in the patriarchal mirror, which is confirmed by the patriarchy to be the "Ideal I", the woman must close the gap between the reality she experiences and the mirror's image. In the case of Snow White, a character through which the Grimms codified the angelic standards of femininity: passivity, submissiveness and superficial beauty must become her defining traits.

However, Schanoes maintains that the mirror also harbours a potential for positive female representations. Using Angela Carter's works as an example, she points out that mirrors can show "both the patriarchal hostility […] to female subjectivity" but also ways in which they may "support the development of that subjectivity" (7) as they help "awaken the protagonist to a sense of herself as an *object*" (9). What is seen in the mirror is a socially constructed image of gender which may not correspond to the viewer's identity. Once an understanding of the image in the mirror is achieved, one is able to reveal "the mystery of the mirror" which is the mirror's inability to fully and faithfully reflect:

> What one sees even in the most perfect mirror is not a perfect replica but a rearrangement: a reflection is the converse of the original image, in which every element is present, but reversed. In the most perfect mirror, one sees one's converse; in any other mirror, one sees a distorted converse (Schanoes 12).

There is an intricate hall of mirrors being built in Snow White. In the tale, the mirror is an entity which plays an important role as a vessel and disseminator of knowledge and judgement and proves to be a key plot device as it furthers the conflict between the (Step)mother and Snow White. Gilbert and Gubar maintain it to be the voice of patriarchy (36). Alternatively, Bettelheim contends that "[t]he magic mirror seems to speak with the voice of a daughter [...] as the older girl thinks she is much more beautiful than her mother" and he considers the verbiage to be "more akin to an adolescent's exaggeration"(207); while for Barzilai it is Snow White's own voice she turns to "in an attempt to recap the sense of totality, albeit of an imaginary order, which the birth of her daughter had extended and enriched" (529-30). According to Cristina Bacchilega, the mirror has a double role of reflecting "the natural process of life and change," in this case the Queen's ageing, and then inducing that natural reflection with an authoritative ideology which favours youth and innocence. Therefore, anything the mirror utters must be the objective truth (33).

If the mirror fails to reflect the ideal image, a monster-woman is born, one whose independence, autonomy and rebelliousness causes anxiety for the creator as she "generates a story that 'gets away' from its author" (Gilbert and Gubar 27). In *Little Snow White*, this is the role of the evil (Step)mother. As she is framed and "sentenced" (13) by the Grimms, her identity is boiled down to that of a jealous, conniving and evil woman seeking to destroy the pure, innocent protagonist. Her independence and insubordination to the system are perceived as evil

and do not allow her to expand her role beyond that of the monster-woman. This makes her essentially act in favour of the patriarchal system as her actions "lead a young woman to seek salvation in marriage with a prince" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales* 150). Both female characters are penned in their respective, extremely limited and limiting roles: one as a "a living memento of the otherness of the divine" (Gilbert and Gubar 24) and the other as "the sacrilegious fiendishness of what William Blake called the 'Female Will'" (28). According to Andrea Dworkin, in fairy tales

> [t]here are two definitions of woman. There is the good woman. She is a victim. There is the bad woman. She must be destroyed. The good woman must be possessed. The bad woman must be killed, or punished. Both must be nullified. […] The moral of the story is the happy ending. It tells us that happiness for a woman is to be passive, victimized, destroyed, or asleep. It tells us that happiness is for the woman who is good – inert, passive, victimized – and that a good woman is a happy woman. It tells us that happy ending is when we are ended, when we live without our lives or not at all (33-34).

Both women are created and voiced by an external entity in order to reflect and comment on the propriety of female behaviour to bolster gender norms and establish authority. The woman's life is either conforming to one of the two definitions or she may as well be, as Snow White was for a short while, dead. Nevertheless, certain retellings of the tale offer an opportunity for both characters to escape the confines of patriarchally defined roles and claim the narratives for themselves.

Such is the case of the Queen in "Snow, Glass, Apples". Gaiman ushers in the voice of the silenced by transposing the evil stepmother from the villainous antagonist into an imperfect protagonist – an anti-hero. The evil stepmother is granted the opportunity to narrate her version of the events that transpired, which do not align with the canonised version the reader is familiar

with. The reader is introduced to a woman whose life has not turned out as she had imagined, and her well-being and kingdom are now threatened by the blood-thirsty and malicious stepdaughter, Snow White. The quintessential "bitch witch" of fairy tales is offered the role she might have once had in the primary tales: she is presented as a powerful female sorceress and a teller of tales.

Gaiman deliberately shifts the focalization from the survivor of the tale to the person whose identity was reduced to villainy. Furthermore, by choosing the form of a monologue for his protagonist, Gaiman's narrator manages to build an emotionally complex and morally ambiguous world of the Queen which upsets the objectivity of the original tale. In the introduction to the collection, Gaiman makes a remark on the opportunity to reveal the magic of mirrors which are able to "lie so convincingly you'll believe that something has vanished into thin air" (Gaiman, "Smoke and Mirrors" 3). The vanishing voice of the Queen bolsters the idea that history is written by the survivors and that there is no such thing as an objectively true record of events. The "objectivity" silences the voice that contests the ideal angelic image presented as the norm and supplants it with its own script in which any action outside of the patriarchal norms of femininity is defined as vile, villainous and undesirable in a woman.

In Gaiman's tale, the monster of the story turns out to be the innocent and pure Snow White, or rather the idea of an angel-woman as designed by the patriarchy. Gaiman's narrator chooses to present her as a sexually voracious young girl as well as an active, malicious antagonist. When she first meets his father's new wife, Snow White bites her Stepmother's thumb on the so-called Mount of Venus. Gaiman deliberately chooses to spell the term as *Mound of Venus* (373), giving it explicit sexual connotations, further disrupting the angelic ideal. Later on, the Queen discovers scars covering her husband's body, reaching all the way to his phallus

and a link to the sinister behaviour of the daughter is heavily implied (373). Additionally, when the Queen is scrying on Snow White and witnesses her having intercourse with a monk in the woods, she notices black ooze dripping between her thighs, as she feeds on his blood (377). By upsetting the canonical image of Snow White, Gaiman tilts the mirror on the Grimms' tale to disrupt the unrealistic idea of female purity and chastity as portrayed by the civilising process of the original. Simultaneously, the choice of the focalizer questions the subjectivity of the "omniscient" narration which presents the standards as the truth. The Queen is the narrator of the untold story of the defeated which reveals the omissions and fabrications of the victor, in this case Snow White. Gaiman's Snow White embodies the detrimental nature of the angelic ideal in a blood-thirsty monster, an image that is hiding behind the mirror of the original fairy tale. Such a narrative offers a unilateral interpretation of femininity which calls for passivity and self-abnegation in women, and is being subverted by allowing the Queen to offer her experience in Gaiman's revision and question the established patriarchal standards.

As she is slowly being cooked to death in the kiln, the Queen recounts the story of her life to herself. She does so almost as if to probe its validity while simultaneously trying to upset the narrative created by her stepdaughter. The narrative that has been widely distributed by Snow White will become the canon of history in the fairy world and a classic institutionalised fairy tale with an embedded patriarchal civilising process in the world of the reader. Without a voice to contest those narratives, they may appear as the truth. Commenting on the narrative that Snow White has disseminated, the Queen mourns the death of her story: "Lies and half-truths fall like *snow*, covering the things I remember, the things I saw. A landscape, unrecognisable after a *snowfall*; that is what she has made of my life" (347, my emphasis). As she looks into Snow

White's eyes for the last time before her death, she sees her own reflection. Schanoes points out the significance of the reflection:

> [S]he has been overcome by the stories spread about her by her stepdaughter and transformed into a reflection of herself in her stepdaughter's eyes. Reflections tell stories; reflections are stories. And losing oneself in reflections puts one at the mercy of somebody else's stories (19).

The Queen's tale reveals a mirror which fails to reflect as intended; the narrative that was safely familiar to the reader is violently subverted and one is faced with the uncomfortable topics of the fickle nature of unilaterally presented truth as well as underlying patriarchal notions detrimental to the oppressed groups present in the original.

As for the male characters in the short story, they have become passive participants for the purposes of exposing the issues the patriarchal system imposes on women in the tale. Snow White's father is barely present in the story, similarly to the original tale. However, unlike the Grimms' version, he is important insofar as he is used as a tool to establish the Queen's affectionate nature and Snow White's vicious sexual abuse and fiendish behaviour. The Queen laments her husband's predicament and the injuries he suffered at the hands of his daughter:

> My husband, my love, my king, sent for me less and less, and when I came to him he was dizzy, listless, confused. He could no longer make love as a man makes love, and he would not permit me to pleasure him with my mouth: the one time I tried, he started violently, and began to weep. […] I ran my fingers across his skin as he slept. It was covered in a multitude of ancient scars. […] He died unshriven, his skin nipped and pocked from head to toe with tiny, old scars (Gaiman, "Smoke and Mirrors" 373).

It may be conjectured that Snow White absorbed her father's energy by drinking blood during sexual acts. This is confirmed later on by Queen's account where she finds that "there

were scars on [the Queen's] love, [Snow White's] father's thighs, and on his ballock-pouch, and on his male member, when he died" (374). Aside from being an object of both the Queen's and Snow White's desire, and a way to point out the issues of gender roles and incestuous nature of certain tale's iterations, the King is of little consequence.

As for the Prince, he appears as a potential suitor to the Queen and serves to introduce the issue of transgressive acts in the original. As the Queen engages in intercourse with the Prince for pragmatic purposes of creating an alliance which would benefit her lands, he provides her with instructions which eerily echo a familiar scene: "[…] he asked me to lie upon my back, with my hands folded across my breasts, my eyes wide open – staring only at the beams above" (381). As he instructs her to mimic what the reader recognizes as the image of the original Snow White, dead in her glass coffin, a strong emphasis is placed on the sexuality of Snow White as well as the Prince's transgressive acts. The reader is faced with the problematic nature of the original's attitude towards necrophilia and rape which reveals the Grimms' legitimization of fetishes detrimental to female autonomy and consent.

Not only does the mirror prove to be a tool of knowledge within the fairy tale, it also proves to be an invaluable symbol for the fairy tale itself. Schanoes maintains that mirror is an apt symbol for fairy tale retellings:

> The visual elements that compose the real object are all shown; they are simply inverted, or converted, a new image. For this reason, the mirror is an ideal symbol for the writer of fairy-tale revisions to use for their brand of literary magic; such writers rewrite, invert, and convert a continually changing but ultimately recognizable story. (20)

In the context of mirror, the paratextual frame of "Snow, Glass, Apples" becomes quite important. In the introduction to the collection *Smoke and Mirrors*, which contains the tale,

Gaiman remarks on the choice of the title. He mentions the magicians of the Victorian era who performed wondrous acts with carefully placed mirrors and likens the illusions produced to works of fiction:

> Fantasy – and all fiction is fantasy of one kind or another – is a mirror. A distorting mirror, to be sure, and a concealing mirror, set at a forty-five degrees to reality, but it's a mirror nonetheless, which we can use to tell ourselves things that we might not otherwise see ("An Introduction" 4).

His tale, as well as many other revisions, may be considered a mirror set against the original. A fairy tale revision creates new meanings by employing the original as a meme, highlighting the fairy tale's cultural value and relevance, and questioning its contents. Revision reveals the ideology disguised as magic in the original fairy tale. By using one of the most popular fairy tales, Gaiman creates a metafictional short story which positions itself against the hypotext as a mirror, reflecting the troubling relationship and implications of the original fairy tale and its historical context. It also opens the space for new voices to be heard. The new image Gaiman's retelling of Snow White offers is one in which the inherent issues of the patriarchal system and civilising processes for women of the original are laid bare. In his version, the mirror is employed as a powerful tool which reveals information useful to the Queen but it has no voice of its own – it is just an object utilised by a skilful woman to gain information. The mirror which is the voice of patriarchy for Gilbert and Gubar is silenced and the mirror is the short story itself.

The mirror in Gaiman's short story seeks to expose the restricting patriarchal norms of femininity of the original; Snow White's pure, angelic femininity is questioned as she becomes the villain whereas the villainous nature of the (Step)mother is humanised. The image the original Snow White reflects is not the woman herself but the idea of the woman constructed by the civilising process which created the story. It is an image constructed by an external,

patriarchal entity and it fails to provide agency to the female reflection. The Queen, a woman in the patriarchal system, must struggle against this "reflection" in the mirror, both on a systematic as well as internal level. By refusing to don the "mythic masks male artists have fastened over her human face" (Gilbert and Gubar 17), the monster-woman takes hold of her narrative and refuses to give into the power relations which aim to subjugate her and lessen her experience and identity. The Queen in Gaiman's story utters a powerful, rebellious statement as she dies: "I will not scream. I will not give them that satisfaction. They will have my body, but my soul and my story are my own, and they will die with me" (384).

Gaiman's revision does not wish to replace the canonised tale, as Smith proposes revisions often do, but aims to provide an account, a hypertext which is to stand alongside the hypotext. The revision is highly dependent on its predecessor and the problems it addresses can only be understood by an audience familiar with the tale. The implied audience for this short story includes both adults and young adults even though the processes at work in "Snow, Glass, Apples" will only be fully understood by adults familiar with both the original and its context. When it comes to imagery which may be considered mature, Gaiman claims children possess a penchant for self-censorship, "a pretty good sense of what they are ready for and what they are not, and they walk the line wisely" (78). If they cross the line, the child may encounter a topic they may not be ready to process but, in Gaiman's opinion, the experience of having read such stories at a young age may prove to be invaluable. ("Introduction" 13).

3.2.3. Chromatic Symbolism

One of the aspects further aiding the memetic revision and transmission of the original tale is the chromatic symbolism present in both "Little Snow White" and "Snow, Glass Apples".

In his study on the use of colours in fairy tales, Francisco Vaz da Silva attempts to ascertain whether fairy tales use colours in a patterned way similar to their use of tropes, potentially revealing underlying folk notions of ideal femininity and womanhood (241). Basing his analysis on research done by Brent Berlin and Paul Kay, he examines the "basic chromatic trio" of black, white, and red which appears across a number of languages as the primary trio (241), and applies it to the tale of Snow White in its many iterations. As Jessica Hemming points out, this "basic chromatic trio" is encountered as universal hues throughout the history and across most of Eurasia and Africa (310), especially when it comes to the use of pigments (321). Furthermore, the three colours in specific were "the earliest three to be lexicalised in languages" (310) and even the languages that have a narrow range of colour terminology will still have designated names for these three hues (310). Additionally, Hemming raises several questions in regard to the ideal of beauty that the tricoloured woman represents. Particularly interesting seems to be the black aspect, especially in association with hair colour, as the blonde woman was considered the ideal in the European context for centuries. Furthermore, when the tricolour motif appears in areas such as the Middle East and North Africa, it explains the ideal of dark-haired woman but does not account for fair complexion as the desired standard (315). According to Hemming,

> The only satisfying explanation […] is that the unrealistic combination of red, white, and black is so compelling cross-culturally that the local standards are almost irrelevant. It is a testament to the symbolic power of the primal tricolour that in certain circumstances it can override culture-specific preferences, or even ethnically-possible options (316).

In his examination of Snow White, da Silva interprets the colour red as the sign of feminine bleeding in instances of "puberty, defloration and giving birth" (245). As a contrast to red, da Silva notes on the "red on white threshold" and connects white to "purity of infancy"

which is being overtaken by the red or "mature realm of procreation" (246). Black, according to da Silva's further analysis, relates to death and enchantment, which are often intertwined and are a prerequisite for rebirth, as is the case with Snow White (247). Da Silva interprets the red and white contrast as a dynamic duo with black being the passive, "null member" in the triad:

> Both white and red stand for life for they represent life-giving elements, such as milk and semen on the one hand, and blood and its attendant power on the other – whereas black symbolizes darkness and death. But whenever black is displayed openly, it refers to "ritual death" and the inherent notion of "regeneration" (250).

In the original fairy tale, the mother wishes for a tricoloured child which would mimic her surroundings at that instant – one white as snow, red as her blood that had just seconds ago fallen onto the snow, and as black as ebony, referring in some instances to the frame of the window, embroidery frame or a raven **(**243-4**)**. In warmer climates where snow is not present, the mother in the tale wishes for a child as white as milk or marble, which further emphasises the importance of this chromatic triad for the tale (Tatar, *Hard Facts* 46). In certain versions, it is the father's wish that gives birth to the child **(**Bacchilega 36-7**)**, which is the version referenced in Carter's "Snow Child", where the girl is a product of the patriarchy being completely father-born.

In Gaiman's story, the chromatic triad appears in the description of Show White and her mother, emphasising the genetic traits the two share rather than the birth through wish, which is not included in this retelling. However, the symbolism is also found in more subtle details: red in the king's beard, whiteness of his bones, redness of apples, black liquid dripping from between Snow White's legs. An interesting sequence of colours is the Queen's arrangement above her bed where she keeps the heart of her stepdaughter "that [she] strung with rowan berries, orange-red

as a robin's breast, and with bulbs of garlic" (Gaiman, "Snow, Glass, Apples" 375). By having the Queen arrange the red rowan berries and white garlic next to the heart of the young girl, the Queen is using magical means to protect herself from the girl. Choosing this arrangement, Gaiman implies that the heart itself is black, fulfilling the chromatic triad associated with Snow White. Following da Silva's theory, the black heart would then imply a supernatural intervention, enchantment, death and rebirth: "[B]lackness connotes enchantment as well as death. In fairy tales the two notions are intertwined. Enchantment is something like reversible death, and death itself appears in tones of enchantment" (247).

Gaiman subverts the ideals implied in the original through the chromatic symbolism utilised in the civilising process, much like the stereotyped tropes, to generate standards of beauty and femininity. The ideals of femininity used to describe the angelic maiden in the original are subverted by Gaiman to emphasise its fabricated nature in the form of a vampiric Snow White. The colour scheme is perverted – black is no longer the colour of Snow White's hair but the ooze dripping from her vagina and her black heart; the red is the blood she drains from her victims; her white complexion is not a sign of otherworldly beauty reflecting the angelic image but a sign of death. The image of ideal femininity is tainted and revealed to be a fabrication.

4. “THE SLEEPER AND THE SPINDLE” – RETELLING OF SLEEPING BEAUTY

4.1. Summary of “The Sleeper and The Spindle”

The second short story that will be examined is “The Sleeper and the Spindle” which reinterprets the fairy tale of both Sleeping Beauty as well as Snow White. It was published as a part of an anthology edited by Melissa Marr and Tim Pratt titled *Rags and Bones: New Twists on Timeless Stories* (2013) as well as a standalone work illustrated by Chris Riddell (2013) and then later as a part of Gaiman’s short story collection *Trigger Warning* (2015). The story is told by a third-person omniscient narrator and follows three narrative strands which eventually converge – the dwarves’, the queen’s and the princess’s.

The story opens with a short geographical description of the two neighbouring kingdoms – Dorimar and Kanselaire – which share a mountainous border but no safe passage over it. The only creatures able to cross under the mountain itself are the dwarves. Three of such dwarves are on their way to Dorimar to purchase the finest silks as a wedding gift for their queen, queen of Kanselaire. As they enter a tavern in the village of Giff, innkeeper Foxen and people gathered inside inform them of a plague that is taking over the kingdom – people falling asleep as a result of a spreading curse cast on their princess approximately seventy years prior. The guests recount the incident in which a forest witch (“bad fairy” or an “enchantress”) cast a curse upon the newly-born princess “such that when the girl was eighteen she would prick her finger and sleep for ever” (Gaiman, “The Sleeper and The Spindle” 229). As the curse came true on the princess’s eighteenth birthday, she and the people in the castle were put into an enchanted sleep. As years passed, the castle in the forest of Acaire became encased in an impassable thicket of roses which now stops brave men and women from entering the premises. The curse’s effects are now spreading across the land, engulfing towns and putting their residents to sleep. The people

gathered in the inn have fled their towns and villages and are awaiting their final slumber with Foxen.

After hearing about the plight of the neighbouring kingdom, dwarves reach out to the queen of Dorimar. The queen is in the midst of the final wedding preparations as the ceremony is to take place the next day. However, once she hears the dwarves' account of the events, she calls off the wedding and decides to set on a quest to aid the neighbouring kingdom, "[s]he called for a map of the kingdom, identified the villages closest to the mountains, sent messengers to tell the inhabitants to evacuate to the coast or risk royal displeasure" ("The Sleeper and The Spindle" 232). Neither the dwarves nor the queen is concerned about succumbing to the curse – the dwarves are magical creatures and the queen was once put to sleep for a year "and then [...] woke up again, none the worse for it" (232). As the party reaches Foxen's inn, all of the guests have fallen asleep; however, the party notices that the spiders seem to be the only creatures awake, spinning webs over the sleepers. As they discuss the possible reason, the sleepers start whispering under their breaths before the group continues on their journey towards the heart of the kingdom.

The reader is now briefly introduced to the old woman in the castle who roams the hallways of the castle, leaning on her stick, "as if she were driven only by hatred, slamming doors, talking to herself as she walked" (236). She reaches the tower room which contains only a spindle, a stool and a lavish bed in which a young girl with warm skin, golden hair and pink lips sleeps. As she threatens to pierce the young girl's heart with the spindle, she hears voices outside the castle.

The party has entered the city at that point and have been seeing sleepers following them and mumbling phrases such as, "Are you spinning? Can I see?" (238) and "Bring me roses. I

would be so happy if only you would bring me roses" (241), establishing a connection with Sleeping Beauty. As they move closer to the castle through the forest, the spell's effects are taking their toll and, as she teeters on the edge of sleep, the queen sees memories from her life as Snow White – her father as well as her stepmother. They reach the entrance overgrown with dry rose vine and burn it to clear the path. The party climbs up to the tower and seize the old woman whom they suspect to be the witch behind the curse. The queen approaches the bed and kisses the sleeping girl to break the curse.

At that point the old woman shares a memory from her childhood of an old woman sitting in that very room, spinning wool. As it becomes clear the old woman is the princess, the young girl wakes and reveals herself as the enchantress:

> I said, now I take your sleep from you, girl, just as I take from you your ability to harm me in my sleep, for someone needs to be awake while I sleep. Your family, your friends, your world will sleep too. And then I lay down on the bed, and I slept, and they slept, and as each of them slept I stole a little of their life, a little of their dreams, and as I slept I took back my youth and my beauty and my power. I slept and I grew strong. I undid the ravages of time and I built myself a world of sleeping slaves (246).

While the enchantress is gloating about her achievement, the queen passes the spindle to the old princess and she thrusts it into the girl's chest. As the enchantress is dying, the sleepers across the city are rousing from their slumber, and once the curse is undone, the enchantress is left merely "a tumble of bones, a hank of hair as fine and as white as fresh-spun cobwebs, a tracery of gray rags across it, and over all of it, an oily dust" (250). Once their mission is complete, the party heads not West, where the queen's lands and marital obligations await, but East "away from the sunset and the lands they knew, and into the night" (251).

4.2. Analysis of "The Sleeper and The Spindle"

In the introduction to *Trigger Warning*, Gaiman provides some insight into the creation process of "The Sleeper and The Spindle." After being asked to pen a story for an anthology collection, Gaiman chose the fairy tales of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty (or Little Briar-Rose). As he explains,

> I had been pondering what would happen if two stories were happening at the same time. And what if the women who were already the subjects of the stories had a little more to do, and were active and not passive…? ("Introduction" 35)

The goal of the second section of the thesis is to analyse "The Sleeper and The Spindle", examine the ways in which it subverts the original tales it is based upon and the way in which it merges the two stories together. As was the case with "Snow, Glass, Apples", a note will be made as to how fairy tale retellings point out the civilising processes extant in its hypotexts.

4.2.1. Spatio-Temporal Setting of "The Sleeper and the Spindle"

An interesting feature of Gaiman's short story "The Sleeper and The Spindle" is the spatio-temporal continuity and consistency established throughout the narrative. It is hinted at in the opening lines of the story:

> It was *the closest kingdom* to the queen's, *as the crow flies*, but not even the crows flew it. The high mountain range that served as the border between the two kingdoms discouraged crows as much as it discouraged people, and it was considered unpassable. More than one enterprising merchant, on each side of the mountains, had commissioned folk to hunt for the mountain pass that would, if it were there, have made a rich man or woman of anyone who controlled it. The silks of Dorimar could have been in Kanselaire *in weeks, in months, not years*. But there was no

> such pass to be found and so, although the two kingdoms shared a common border, nobody crossed from one kingdom to the next ("The Sleeper and The Spindle" 226, my emphasis).

In order to examine this feature further, a theory by Mikhail Bakhtin should be introduced. Bakhtin offers the term "chronotope", borrowed from Einstein's Theory of Relativity, to designate "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). He envisions each genre as a distinct chronotope and the fairy tale may fall under what Bakhtin names "the miraculous world in adventure time" which Bakhtin applies to the chivalric novel. This chronotope is characterised by distortions of time within its narrative matter:

> There appears a hyperbolization of time typical of the fairy tale: hours are dragged out, days are compressed into moments, it becomes possible to bewitch time itself. Time begins to be influenced by dreams; that is, we begin to see the peculiar distortion of temporal perspectives characteristic of dreams (Bakhtin 154).

The events of the standard fairy tale take place in a commonly vague but consistent Secondary World, "detached from our own in both space and time" (Nikolajeva 152). The narrative context is introduced with vague spatio-temporal terminology such as "'Once upon a time' [...] 'in a certain kingdom', 'beyond thrice three realms', 'East of the moon, West of the sun'" (152). Although it provides the reader with sufficient contextual information for the narrative that is about to be presented, it does not flesh out the world to the extent where the reader might perceive it as connected to their reality. In her examination of fairy tale retellings, Vanessa Joosen uses Anne Wilson's notion of "magical thought" which explains the reader's process while reading a fairy tale and ultimately comprehending its chronotope: "We are not making the effort to think rationally and imaginatively so as to deal effectively with the external

world. It is effortless, spontaneous and solipsistic, wholly free from the laws and realities of the external world" (Wilson qtd. in Joosen 228).

As it is clear from the very first lines, the world which the reader encounters in "The Sleeper and The Spindle" has a unique spatio-temporal consistency which is juxtaposed to that of the standard fairy tale. The context is clearly established by using concrete descriptors in terms of distances and time. There are also temporal units such as years and days used to describe the history and events which occur in the story: "'This was, what, a hundred years ago?'/ 'Sixty. Perhaps eighty.'" ("The Sleeper and The Spindle" 229); "It was a full day's ride…" (233). Additionally, a discussion takes place that provides exact population numbers for capitals of both kingdoms, thereby creating a deeper awareness of the occupied space as the reader is able to compare the population of fictional cities with cities in reality,

> "How many people, human people I mean, live in a city?" asked the smallest dwarf.
>
> "It varies," said the queen. "In our kingdom, no more than twenty, perhaps thirty thousand people. This seems bigger than our cities. I would think fifty thousand people. Or more" (238).

These instances of specificity contribute to the overall atmosphere of a cohesive universe and a more concrete chronotope which distances the short story from the fairy tale chronotope to a certain extent. Even though the discussion of a city's population and specific amount of time that passed since the curse could have been omitted or compressed without depriving the reader of the information vital to the story, these details provide the reader with a more nuanced understanding of the tale's world. Moreover, such instances provide an opportunity for establishing a connection with the reader's reality and therefore a chance for them to identify with the characters inhabiting the fictional world with ease. Identification is especially vital when it comes to the civilising process and transmitting its ideology; however, it is also crucial for highlighting inconsistencies and omissions of the original fairy tale. By employing "the

miraculous world in adventure time" chronotope, Gaiman creates a backdrop which contrasts the setting of the original fairy tale and ultimately aids in distinguishing the unrealistic norms and civilising ideology created in the hypotext. As the reader grasps the spatio-temporal relations of the narrative, they may be inclined to draw parallels with the real world and establish a connection which will be further transferred to all other issues the fairy tale retelling will tackle, primarily those concerning the gender stereotypes and its manifestations in both original fairy tales and real life.

Furthermore, Gaiman creates a Secondary World in which characters from different fairy tales coexist in one shared spatio-temporal reality. What were once separate Secondary Worlds of Snow White and Little Briar Rose is now a united world, sharing temporal, spatial and socio-political reality. The queen of Kanselaire is Snow White after the events of the original fairy tale whose kingdom borders that of Little Briar Rose or Sleeping Beauty. The narrative strand concerning Sleeping Beauty overlaps with the events of the original fairy tale. Since the narrative of Sleeping Beauty is being directly reimagined in the short story, Smith's classification of "re-vision" applies for the said part of the hypertext. However, the queen's arc takes place after the events of the original Snow White, with several allusions that events may have transpired differently than in the original. Therefore, it would be more apt to conclude that Gaiman employs both Smith's "re-vision" as well as "fabulation" or "crafting an original fairytale" (10) to create the queen's narrative. According to Robert Scholes, fabulation arises from the uncertainty of reality and the inability to truly record through the genre of realism. Fabulations is a "whole new set of fictional skills" (4) that is required to grasp the reality and which makes "an attempt to find more subtle correspondences between the reality which is fiction and the fiction which is reality" (8). As Scholes maintains,

> Reality is too subtle for realism to catch it. It cannot be transcribed directly. But by invention, by fabulation, we may open a way toward reality that will come as close to it as human ingenuity may come. We rely on maps and mirrors precisely because we know their limitations and know how to allow for them. But fiction functions as both map and mirror at the same time (13).

By combining revision and fabulation in a single story while employing a distinct chronotope, Gaiman creates a patchwork narrative which complements the nature of the Secondary World which is welded together by a mountain range. The points of direct contact for the two kingdoms are few and magical in nature, as the queen and the dwarves seem to be the only creatures able to cross over from one kingdom to the other due to their preternatural essence, which is more than can be said for the original fairy tales. As Gaiman brings the two worlds together by creating a cohesive unit and establishing points of contact, a bridge is created which allows the characters to cross over and interact internally while simultaneously providing ample opportunity for the narrative to outline the issues of the originals through their interaction, and offer alternatives by subversive intervention.

4.2.2. The Civilising Process of The Sleeping Beauty

The tale of the Sleeping Beauty appears in several versions throughout the Middle Ages; in "Troylus and Zellandine" in the 16th-century France, in Basile's "Sole, Luna e Talia", in Perrault's "La Belle au Bois Dormant" and, perhaps most famously in the Grimms' "Dornröschen" (Goldberg 467). Perrault's and the Grimms' tales open with a miracle birth followed by a curse from an evil fairy, which is then realised on the princess's fifteenth birthday, putting her and the entire castle into a deep slumber for a century. The girl is then awakened by a kiss from a prince, forming a happy ending for the Grimms' tale whereas Perrault proceeds to describe the misfortunes that Sleeping Beauty encounters with her Ogress mother-in-law (476).

In both versions of the fairy tale, Sleeping Beauty is the ultimate manifestation of the ideal of passivity and female beauty (Lieberman 388). Akin to Snow White, who is asleep (or dead) only for a short while, Sleeping Beauty patiently awaits her salvation at the hands of a man from the cursed slumber for a century.

When discussing gender institution and stereotypes, Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz note that "[c]hildren's fairy tales, which emphasize such things as women's passivity and beauty, are indeed gendered scripts and serve to legitimise and support the dominant gender system" (711). Therefore, imagery of a passive woman waiting for her male saviour offered in fairy tales such as Sleeping Beauty and Snow White perpetuate the standard and ideal of female passivity, complacency and beauty as a woman's main virtue. As Tatar claims, "Snow White and Sleeping Beauty as the fairest and most desirable of them all may offer a sobering statement on folkloristic visions of the ideal bride" (*The Hard Facts* 146). Even the names of the female protagonists, Sleeping Beauty and Snow White, are actively emphasising their pleasing features and lack of agency. For Sleeping Beauty especially, as Smith points out, the name is "almost a summary of the story rather than a description of the protagonist's personal qualities" (23). She is primarily defined by her beauty and stillness, and Tatar maintains that her name is indicative of the implied "to-be-looked-at-ness" of the male gaze, a term introduced by Laura Mulvey to denote the woman's trait emerging from a "traditional exhibitionist role [in which] women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact" (837). Tatar applies Mulvey's concept to Sleeping Beauty as follows:

> The very name Sleeping Beauty invokes a double movement between a passive gerund (sleeping) and a descriptive noun (beauty) that invites a retinal response. Beauty may be sleeping, but we want to look at her to indulge in the pleasures of her visible charms. [...] Our gaze is aligned with that of a prince stunned by the exquisite beauty of a woman who remains inert and on display for

> the enjoyment of a male viewer. Whether that gaze is ultimately voyeuristic or fetishizing depends on individual spectators… ("Show and Tell" 143).

Taking the inspiration from the Grimms' version of the tale, Gaiman uses Sleeping Beauty alongside Snow White to examine and subvert the original's civilising process and the dominant imagery of the ideal femininity defined through beauty and passivity. Both of the female characters are given a chance to act and react to events in the tale.

The two protagonists are only referred to as the queen of Kanselaire in the case of Snow White and as the old lady for Sleeping Beauty. As the reader encounters the queen for the first time in "The Sleeper and the Spindle" she is contemplating her upcoming wedding, clearly disenchanted with the notion of marital union:

> "A week from today," she said aloud. "A week from today, I shall be married."
>
> It seemed both unlikely and extremely final. She wondered how she would feel to be a married woman. It would be the end of her life, she decided, if life was a time of choices. In a week from now she would have no choices. She would reign over her people. She would have children. Perhaps she would die in childbirth, perhaps she would die as an old woman, or in battle. But the path to her death, heartbeat by heartbeat, would be inevitable ("The Sleeper and The Spindle" 227).

Her demeanour reveals a belief and a fear that, once the vows are uttered, her life would be over as she would be confined to an existence without choices, a social death in the form of a life of noble duty to her family and her people. A remark by Gilbert and Gubar seems to be a fitting parallel for her predicament: "For to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead. A life that has no story […] is really a life of death, a death-in-life" (25). Her sentiment does not match the assumed enthusiasm her canonical counterpart seems to possess. For the fairy tale princess, marriage is "the fulcrum and major event" (Lieberman 386) in her life and after the

ceremony is over "she ceases to be wooed, her consent is no longer sought, she derives her status from her husband, and her personal identity is thus snuffed out" (394). However, this version of Snow White is not a princess but a well-established queen in power. Being the only child, she has inherited the kingdom after her father's death and this version of Snow White is one after the incidents of the original tale. She will not benefit financially or socially from a marital union; however, she still seems to be bound by political circumstances and customs. Even though she has been granted the agency in the revision, the queen still seems to be confined to her societally prescribed role of a woman – she will need to agree to a marriage of convenience, start a family and provide an heir to the kingdom. The queen is afraid of losing her identity as her choices diminish upon consenting to marriage. Hence, once she is presented with an opportunity to set out on a journey and aid the neighbouring kingdom, the queen is eager to halt the preparations and call for her horses;

> "I'm afraid," said the queen, "that there will be no wedding tomorrow."
>
> She called for a map of the kingdom, identified the villages closest to the mountains, sent messengers to tell the inhabitants to evacuate to the coast or risk royal displeasure. She called for her first minister and informed him that he would be responsible for the kingdom in her absence, and that he should do his best neither to lose it nor to break it. She called for her fiancé and told him to take on so, and that they would still be married, even if he was but a prince and she already a queen, and she chucked him beneath his pretty chin and kissed until he smiled. She called for her mail shirt. She called for her sword. She called for provisions, and for her horse, and then she rode out of the palace, towards the east ("The Sleeper and The Spindle" 232-3).

Active female characters of the original fairy tales, who show initiative and exhibit what would be understood as the male protagonist's traits, are often vilified as "the moral value of activity [...] becomes sex-linked" (Lieberman 392). They are turned into a lesson on manners and

often end up assigned the role of a villainous "bitch-witch". The queen in Gaiman's tale is portrayed as a capable head of a kingdom, ready to spring into action and take the reins once the circumstances call for it. The reader learns that she was taught diplomacy and philosophy by her father, presumably in preparation for the time when she takes over as the head of the kingdom. Subjects such as those would be out of place for a princess in the original fairy tale as they would be considered appropriate for the male heir. Additionally, an elaborate description of the regal paraphernalia, which would commonly be granted to a male prince or a knight, brings into focus the subverted gender expectations and roles: she dons her armour, grabs her sword and resolves the logistics of running the kingdom before she sets off. Not only is she obviously skilled in battle but she also manages the strategic and diplomatic matters with ease. The queen says goodbye to her lover, who is purposefully and derogatorily referred to as "but a prince." It is not hard to imagine that that is how a male protagonist would perhaps be expected to leave a helpless and docile maiden before going off to a battle. Gaiman manages to imbue the character of the queen with agency while still hinting at the limitations that gender stereotypes impose on her identity. Even though she is a queen wielding power over armies and people, the societal norms, its gender stereotypes and requirements still pose a threat to her identity. A link may be drawn to the status of many contemporary women – even if one considers them completely "equal" to their male counterparts, more often than not they are still expected to enter a heterosexual monogamous relationship and bear offspring as a part of their perceived womanly duty.

After leading the party to the castle, the queen sets fire to the dry rose vines and they enter the tower. They find a young woman asleep and assume that that is the princess they have come to save. The dwarves note that one of them needs to "do the honours", alluding to the kiss which will break the curse. As a subversive reaction to the canonical saviour's kiss, Gaiman has

the queen lean in and perform the act required to break the spell: “She lowered her face to the sleeping woman’s. She touched the pink lips to her own carmine lips and she kissed the sleeping girl long and hard” (245). Gaiman takes an iconic moment appearing across several fairy tales (including but not limited to both Snow White and Sleeping Beauty), wherein a noble and brave man bestows a kiss of “salvation” upon a princess, and offers an inclusive alternative. The trope of the male heterosexual saviour is subverted to offer non-fetishised queer representation as the saviour of the princess is another woman. Carolina Fernández Rodríguez finds homosexual relationships to be one of the three main alternatives offered for the Male Rescuer in fairy tale revisions, the other two being female cooperation and self-liberation. According to Rodriguez,

> [h]omosexual relationships are often offered as satisfactory alternatives to heterosexuality in contemporary feminist revisions of fairy tales. While heterosexuality is the accepted norm in patriarchy, homosexuality is one of its greatest taboos. Therefore, homosexual relationships are sometimes put forward in revisionist texts not only as a fulfilling option, but also as an efficient way of attacking the establishment (66).

By presenting an alternative version of the famous kiss, Gaiman is not only offering an inclusive representation which naturalizes queer relationships, but simultaneously subverting the original’s civilizing process and its patriarchal roots in which the only appropriate saviour for a woman is a man.

However, there still remains the issue of the princess’s inability to accept the advances as she is the passive recipient of the kiss, neither able to ask nor consent to the act. The civilising processes that have normalised the practice of a saviour’s kiss have further confirmed the princess’s lack of agency as her deep slumber does not allow her to consent to the acts supposedly done in her favour. In Gaiman’s story however, once the true nature of the enchantress is revealed, it could be inferred that the enchantress acted with precisely this

outcome in mind. Being fully aware of the magical requirements that need to be met to wake her from her self-induced sleep and make her the ruler of the world, the enchantress has taken advantage of the socially constraining practices for her own gain. She crafted an enchantment that would ensure she was awakened once at the peak of her beauty and power. The enchantress counts on a young nobleman to be the one to readily transgress the boundaries and wake her from her slumber, as that is the standard practice of the world. Realising that the unknowing accomplice in her magical rouse is a woman "not of our blood" ("The Sleeper and The Spindle" 247) but with certain admirable skills, the enchantress offers the queen to rule the world "not with [her] but beneath [her]" (248).

Gaiman's story provides an example of Rodríguez's second alternative to the trope of the male rescuer, as well – self-liberation. Once the true identity of the sleeping woman is revealed, the princess comes to her senses and offers a recollection of the events from the day the curse came true. She describes how she found an old woman spinning wool in the topmost room of the tower, as well as the moment the old woman pressed the spindle against her thumb and drew blood. The enchanted spindle and yarn are a link between the enchantress and the princess through which the former is able to sap the youth from the latter. The enchantress's actions are fuelled by the desire to obtain youth and beauty in her magical slumber while the princess lives on as her life force is being harnessed by the spell. Beauty and youth are therefore implied to be the source of the enchantress's power, which she feels the need to reclaim. The desire arises from the internalized and naturalised patriarchal mechanisms which confine women to the passive case. The enchantress proceeds to weaponize said values to subjugate and use the young princess thereby perpetuating the patriarchally instilled values. This implication clearly outlines the original's ideal of femininity, one in which the woman in the patriarchal system only has power

and voice, albeit limited, if she is young and beautiful. The ideal is limiting and is designed to further gender roles, stereotypes and ultimately inequality. Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry make an important note on the ideal of feminine beauty:

> The social importance of the feminine beauty ideal lies in its ability to sustain and to reproduce gender inequality (Bartky 1990; Currie 1997; Freedman 1986; Wolf 1991). The feminine beauty ideal can be seen as a normative means of social control whereby social control is accomplished through the internalization of values and norms that serve to restrict women's lives (Fox 1977). In this way, women internalize norms and adopt behaviors that reflect and reinforce their relative powerlessness, making external forces less necessary. (712)

The enchantress seeks beauty and youth because she has been conditioned to understand that those qualities are the source of her power in the patriarchal system. She fears the perceived loss of beauty that comes with ageing as it necessarily means loss of power in the patriarchal context. Not only does this limit the freedom of women but it also harms the female relationships: "Female bonding is extraordinarily difficult in patriarchy: women almost inevitably turn against women because the voice of the looking glass sets them against each other" (Gilbert and Gubar 38). Even though, as Grauerholz and Baker-Sperry point out, it should be noted that many women "perceive being (or becoming) beautiful as empowering" (711) as reclaiming can be a subversive tool, that does not seem to be the case with the enchantress. Having internalised the oppressive patriarchal ideals of femininity, she is deliberately undermining another woman to gain benefit and leverage in the patriarchal society.

At one point, the queen gets a hold of the spindle and passes it on to the princess:

> The old woman hefted it, thoughtfully. She began to unwrap the yarn from the spindle with arthritic fingers. "This was my life," she said. "This thread was my life…"
>
> "It was your life. You gave it to me," said the sleeper, irritably (*Trigger Warning* 248).

The princess utilises the weapon that was used to imprison her and steal her voice to liberate herself from the curse. Perhaps contrary to the reader's expectations, she does not regain her beauty and youth. The lack of magical transformation at this point is another subversive aspect which counters the original's civilising ideology. Gaiman emphasises and normalises the natural process of ageing which is implied to be a woman's downfall and degradation in the original fairy tales. The princess is not magically reverted back into a beautiful young girl, as that would reaffirm the implications of the original's civilising ideology – that only the beautiful girls are "ultimately [...] chosen for reward" (Lieberman 385). The princess surpasses the "to-be-looked-at-ness" of the inhibiting patriarchal gaze and, after a century of passive pacing, finally reclaims her agency.

Additionally, the very choice to introduce the fair-haired young woman sleeping on the bed in opposition to the old lady lurking around the castle is subverting the expectations of the reader once their true identities are revealed. The reader may expect for the young and beautiful sleeper to be the pure and innocent princess and the old hag to be the evil enchantress, especially if familiar with the tale. However, the reversal of roles in Gaiman's portrayal subverts the common pairing found in many fairy tales in which ugliness is associated with deviance and beauty with moral integrity, thereby further calling attention to and dismantling the original's notions of beauty, morality and ultimately standards of femininity. Furthermore, neither the queen nor the princess is explicitly described by the narrator as beautiful in the short story. There are mentions of the queen's hair, skin and lip colour, primarily there to establish a connection to her precursor. The only reference in regards to her beauty comes from mother: "'You are so beautiful [...] like a crimson rose fallen in the snow'" ("The Sleeper and The Spindle" 242). It is fair to say that a child is frequently considered beautiful by its mother so the instance serves

solely as the queen's fond memory of her dead mother. More frequent are remarks on her cognitive and physical capabilities, traits that would otherwise be considered masculine in a fairy tale.

The queen could be said to have a self-liberating arc of her own, as well. After the enchantress is defeated, the party is ready to leave the castle and head back home for the wedding:

> "So," said the dwarf with the beard. "If we head due west, we can be at the mountains by the end of the week, and we'll have you back in your palace in Kanselaire within ten days."
>
> "Yes," said the queen.
>
> "And your wedding will be late, but it will happen soon after your return, and the people will celebrate, and there will be joy unbounded through the kingdom."
>
> "Yes," said the queen. She said nothing, but sat on the moss beneath an oak tree and tasted the stillness, heartbeat by heartbeat.
>
> *There are choices*, she thought, when she had sat long enough. *There are always choices*.
>
> The queen began to walk, and the dwarfs followed her.
>
> "You *do* know we're heading east, don't you?" said one of the dwarfs.
>
> "Oh yes," said the queen.
>
> "Well, *that's* all right then," said the dwarf.
>
> They walked to the east, all four of them, away from the sunset and the lands they knew, and into the night ("The Sleeper and The Spindle" 251).

As the queen chooses to walk away from the awaiting burden of gender norms and stereotypes, she makes a choice of her own in much the same way that the princess did when she confronted the enchantress. Vladimir Propp in *Morphology of the Folk Tale* concludes thirty one functions of the Russian folk tales with the function in which "the hero is married and ascends the throne" (65), which showcases the prevalence of the marriage trope ending in folk and

traditional fairy tales. The dominance of marriage as the ultimate goal for women emphasises the ideology embedded in the civilising process of the original, one which glorifies female passivity and presents marriage as the only happy ending. In order to achieve said happy ending, the woman must be the embodiment of *femme civilisée.* As Zipes maintains,

> She must be passive until the right man comes along to recognize her virtues and marry her. She lives only through the male and for marriage. The male acts, the female waits. She must cloak her instinctual drives in polite speech, correct manners, and elegant clothes. If she is allowed to reveal anything, it is to demonstrate how submissive she can be (Zipes, *Fairy Tales* 41).

By having the queen refuse to proceed with the wedding arrangements, Gaiman destabilises the civilising process of the original tale and denounces the final function of the fairy tale as assigned by Propp. The women of the fairy tale are no longer bound to wait for their male saviour as they are more than capable of standing up for themselves. Nor are they expected to marry as, indeed, neither of the female figures in "The Sleeper and The Spindle" find their happy endings at the altar.

In an interview with Telegraph in which he discussed the influence of Angela Carter on his work, Gaiman pays *hommage* to her impact on the genre of fairy tale revisions:

> Angela Carter, for me, is still the one who said: "You see these fairy stories, these things that are sitting at the back of the nursery shelves? Actually, each one of them is a loaded gun. Each of them is a bomb. Watch: if you turn it right it will blow up." And we all went: "'Oh my gosh, she's right – you can blow things up with these!" (qtd in Wood)

That Gaiman drew inspiration from Carter for his revisions comes as no surprise, as both recognize black humour, horror and pornography to be inextricably linked to the postmodernist revisions of fairy tales, as Monica Miller aptly notes in her essay "Feminist Fairy Tales in *Who Killed Amanda Palmer*":

> In fact, Angela Carter points to the qualities of both black humor as well as pornography as crucial in the kind of mythic tale that allows for just such a shift. […] Similarly, Gaiman has pointed out that "humor and horror and pornography are incredibly similar—you know immediately whether you've got them right or not because they should provoke a physiological change in the person reading" (299).

The instances of renewed interest in fairy tales are a part of their postmodernist comeback in the form of retellings which do not shy away from tackling the issues of the civilising process exhibited by their hypotexts. The revisions, in a truly postmodernist fashion, present the tales from an alternative and oftentimes more inclusive perspective, one that self-consciously and often self-critically examines the genre and its social role in the lives of both children and adults. The revisions are turning a gun, or in Gaiman's case, a spindle against the originals. Tolkien maintained that "if fairy story [...] is worth reading at all, it is worthy to be written for and read by adults" (58). This opinion seems to be gaining traction, as fairy tales are a fertile ground for revisions which are finding their readership in a broader audience, one as diverse as its predecessor's, the folk tale. It is a testament to the revisionist's need to unmask the problematic implications of the civilising processes of the hypotexts. As Gaiman concludes in one of his speeches on importance of fiction,

> Fiction can show you a different world. It can take you somewhere you've never been. Once you've visited other worlds, like those who ate fairy fruit, you can never be entirely content with the world that you grew up in. Discontent is a good thing: discontented people can modify and improve their worlds, leave them better, leave them different (Gaiman, *"*Why our future depends on libraries")

The production of subversive revisions of fairy tales is evidence of the changed perceptions towards literature that has been considered children-oriented for a long time, as

adults seem to be embracing the revisions as their personal tools of making sense of the world and engaging in a movement for change. As the party walks away from the sunset and into the dark, the imagery of the Western films in which the hero walks off into the sunset at the end is evoked and reversed in order to emphasise the refusal of the preordained destiny. Gaiman's story provides an escape for the penned in fairy tale princesses, stripped away from their agency and left to settle for a random male savour and the social confines of marriage. Admittedly, neither of the women get their happy ending. What they are granted is arguably more valuable – agency and freedom of choice. It is an open ending, meant to leave the reader with a sense of uncertainty and opportunity, an image of a world free from limitations and expectations imposed by the patriarchal system. It is an ending of possibility as the queen walks away from her kingdom and the confines of fairy tales into a world unknown.

5. CONCLUSION

Neil Gaiman's short stories "Snow, Glass, Apples" and "The Sleeper and The Spindle" use the beloved fairy tales of Snow White and Sleeping beauty as hypotexts in order to highlight how patriarchal ideology has moulded and propagated an ultimately problematic civilising process and the accompanying gender stereotypes and norms. Using Jack Zipes ideas of civilising process and his interpretation of memes in the context of fairy tale production, this thesis has examined the way in which fairy tales as memetic units are easily transmittable, which ultimately aids in the dissemination of the dominant patriarchal ideology inscribed in the tales. However, Gaiman's short stories have been used to prove that this very feature of the fairy tale genre also makes it an extremely malleable material which can be utilised to expose the issues of the patriarchal civilising process and help create a subversive and inclusive work. Gaiman's short stories continue to justify the original for its historical and artistic value while simultaneously questioning the implications of their civilising processes and striving to provide an alternative view which is more inclusive.

The process of subversive fairy tale writing inevitably lays bare the constructed nature of the fairy tale as a form and erodes the Secondary World of the original, which helps further emphasise the parallels between the social norms of the tale and the real world. Additionally, modifications done to the chronotope of fairy tale genre may further amplify the gap between reality and the original fairy tale and their ideologies. Consequently, works such as Gaiman's often bring the retelling closer to the original audience of the fairy tale's predecessor, the oral folk tale, which are adults as well as children. Gaiman ultimately strives to prove that fairy tales are relevant for the audiences today – children and adults alike – not only as a form of

entertainment, but as a valuable insight into burning social issues which call for our immediate attention.

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ABSTRACT

Neil Gaiman's short stories "Snow, Glass, Apples" and "The Sleeper and the Spindle" are an example of postmodern retellings of tales of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty by a male author. Utilizing the phallocentric language, Gaiman creates stories which question the postulates of the hypotexts in order to shed light on the patriarchal ideology its implications. Employing the extended theory of the civilising process in fairy tales developed by Jack Zipes, the paper examines Gaiman's subversive treatment of said processes while simultaneously applying Zipes' interpretation of fairy tales as memes. Chromatic symbolism in the short stories, a topic closely related to the civilising process, is examined through works of Francisco Vaz da Silva and Jessica Hemming. Lastly, in order to further emphasize the results of such subversive writing on the Secondary Worlds of the stories at hand, theories of J. R. R. Tolkien's Secondary World and Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope are introduced.

Keywords: Neil Gaiman, fairy tale, "Snow, Glass, Apples", "The Sleeper and The Spindle", civilising process