

Snow white



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Since the beginnings of the abridged and 'sanitized' versions of classic fairytales were publically circulated, the design and principle intentions of the fairytale have steadily morphed and changed as society similarly paralleled. Over time fairy tales have been transformed radically as they naturally will continue to do according to the age they are rewritten and reproduced. Traditional fairy tales retold today have been too recurrently rewritten and revised that it has become almost impossible to grade the single most accepted moral understandings.

In a critical analysis of the classic tale of Snow White, the various transformations from the retelling of the original Brothers Grimm story to the modernised Disney version will be examined. Further analysis of the modern remakes; 'Sydney White' and 'Snow White and The Huntsman' will be investigated to see just how far the numerous changing themes, intended lessons and implied gender roles and how they are made to relate to and influence children are evolved. The concerns of childhood and discipline are spread widely, yet variously throughout the transformation of classic to modern retellings.

The basic storyline of Snow White mainly portrays the themes of femininity and how a woman should act, the patriarchal themes of women and their role in the world in regards to men and stereotypical ideals of beauty and their consequences. In the original telling of the story, Snow White although only a young teenager and a princess, is taught and affirmed that in turn for being obedient for being told what to do, she is a 'good girl', rewarded with a place to stay and love in a home like environment.

In order to be accepted and allowed to live with the dwarves, she must do the cooking, cleaning and housework in return for a place to live and their protection. By assenting to their proposition, she is essentially placed in the status of a servant to the dwarves, or the representation of the 'man' in the story. This confirms the traditional gender roles of women being passive and in charge of the house work, while the man is the guardian and the intelligent thinker. Before the dwarves leave for their day, they cautiously inform Snow White to never answer the door but she disobediently goes against their advice. By disobeying 'the man', her actions end in adverse consequences in the form of death from eating the poisoned apple she received.

These events in the storyline reaffirm the traditional gender notions of the era that women's intelligence is lower than a man's and that she must always listen to their instruction and advice. Another major theme in the story is the idea of the importance of women always being beautiful and striving to become 'the fairest of them all'. Snow White's stepmother is a slave to beauty, who incessantly affirms the certainty of her attractiveness by the means of her magical talking mirror, however in doing so, grows to be effectively wicked. The story, to all intents and purposes, portrays a mixed message to the reader, being beautiful is of the utmost importance; however the tale presents a word of warning about the negative side of the effect of beauty. The downfall of the Queen presents the notion of the terrible results which come from obsessing over the exterior and how there is a different type of beauty which only comes from within.

There is for example, no implication that the queen's obsession with her appearance ever rewards her with happiness or delight, or that her need and fixation on supremacy and power through beauty and sexual attractiveness is itself a sexually rewarding feeling. However, the point which is made evident is the fury and panic which presents the queen's understanding that as she grows older and ages, she must lose to Snow White (Sale, 1979). These themes in the storyline affirm the notions that women fixate over appearances and hold beauty superior to any other quality such as intellect.

The most obvious way in which this is achieved is by the only question ever being asked to the magical mirror by the Queen involves asking about 'the fairest of them all'. The mirror is magical and it is seen to be an authoritative source of knowledge, yet the only question it is ever asked involves the question of beauty and appearance, making the subject appear to be of real substance and magnitude. Since these questions are only pondered by the female characters, and contrastingly all the men in the story focus on hard work and masculine characteristics, a link can be established that beauty is conceivably of the highest value to women.

The unquestionable contest amid the queen and her obsession over Snow White is affirmed by the mirror, which additionally strengthens the notion that appearances should be of the most significance to women. In the context of the time that the tale was created, the implied teachings was to delegate these ideas and gender roles to little girls and boys to illustrate them their customary roles and what was expected of them in the masked way disguised as a fairy tale. The tales were told to caution the children and

almost scare them into doing what was expected of them, showing adverse consequences if they disobeyed.

The differences between the classic versions of the Snow White and the modernised retelling of Snow White and The Huntsman (2012) are significant. The modernised retelling of the tale restores the Brothers Grimm's dark original telling of the story, greatly differentiating between the light hearted romanticised Disney version which did away with these dark and gory themes. ' Snow White and the Huntsman' is far away from the romantic Disney love story and takes the classic fairy tale intended for young children, and transforms it to a dark action film.

The film adds an additional theme to the original plot; the theme of empowerment for women, reflecting feminist influences of the modern day in the western world. In previous versions, the tale always ends in the Queen dying from punishment and having to dance herself to death. The film takes on the key change of Snow White herself overruling the Queen and stabbing her in the heart, proving her power and control as a woman. The conclusion of the film poses a major modern-day theme development of female empowerment.

The movie transforms Snow White from a helpless princess into a strong and powerful warrior woman. The modernised retelling transforms the ' damsel in distress' with the ultimate ambition to get married model for protagonist females into one teaching young girls of their own power and control. One a similar note is the modern film Sydney White (2007) which takes on a similar typecast for the empowered female. The main principles in the film center on

self empowerment, staying true to oneself even if it goes against the mainstream or makes you unpopular.

At the beginning of the film, Sydney, the Snow White character adaption is distressed about being rejected from a college social club which her mother was a member of. After being cast off from the popular group she comes to the conclusion she would rather be happy and accepted in a different social group of '7 dorks', rather than the popular group who treats others badly. This theme of being yourself and mutual acceptance is extremely common in films and stories aimed at young children and adults. Differences in the telling of fairytales are apparent simply by analysing them in a modernized context.

Parents in today's world focus on teaching their children these positive lessons, contrasting with the teachings of conformity and obedience in the cautionary, fear evoking fairy tales of the past when the stories were composed. Sydney is the contrary of the classic happily servitudinal, damsel in distress model of earlier versions of Snow White, and teaches the viewers an entirely different set of morals and principals. Once she was treated poorly by the girls in the sorority, she joins another group of social outcasts and teaches them self respect and to stick up for themselves.

In an interesting twist from the classics, the character's qualities in the story line get switched. The 7 dwarves (dorks) become the damsel in distress and Snow white ends up saving them from their qualms and worries of social rejection by pushing them to run for the presidency position of the student council. Far from being unintelligent and merely a housewife good for house

duties, Sydney holds a college scholarship and is presented as a headstrong, smart thinker who upholds the importance of an education.

The fairy tale of Snow white is a story with the purpose of engaging and entertaining young children and even adults, but consequently provides a further venture. The story affirms the conventional positions of women ordered by the social order within a made up story of a clean cut fairy tale. Such a fairy tale portrays the ideals in which women must be submissive and obedient to their male counterpart or circumstances will result in dire consequences. The story reaffirms the always prevalent ideal about beauty asserting attractiveness is imperative and necessary in turn to be the 'winner' of the circumstances.