

‘NOT JUST ANODYNE CONFECTIONS: RESPONDING TO JACK ZIPES’ POST-
MARXIST READING OF DISNEY’S FAIRY TALE FILMS WITH A SPECIFIC FOCUS
ON *SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS*’.

By

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ABSTRACT

Within the fairy tale corpus, there are constant retellings of the tales using a range of mediums. Furthermore, amongst these retellings, Disney's fairy tale films stand alone as being both the most popular and most criticised of all fairy tale adaptations. Leading the criticism toward Disney's films is fairy tale scholar and critic Jack Zipes. However, Zipes only presents one reading of Disney's fairy tale adaptations, that of denouncing them by applying both a historicist and post-Marxist reading to them.

This thesis looks at two interconnected areas in order to be better placed to respond to Zipes' comments regarding Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and to answer the questions of why the film has such an enduring longevity and popular reception. Firstly, there needs to be a clear definition of what constitutes a fairy tale. This is especially pertinent as Zipes dismisses Disney's films as a 'violation' of the genre (Zipes, 1999, p. 353). Once this has been achieved, a close reading of *Snow White* as belonging to a larger fairy tale corpus which includes literary, dramatic, live-action and animated versions of fairy tales can be embarked upon and it is here that the link between chapters one and two of this thesis are to be found. If Disney's *Snow White* adheres to the characteristics that delimit and define all fairy tales, then Zipes' dismissal and partial reading of the film can be responded to by approaching Disney's film from the same perspective as one would approach any other version of a fairy tale: by judging the film on its own merits as a *version* of a literary tale. Chapter two looks at these merits which include the adoption and innovation of new technology, and the multimodal nature of the film to render meaning and produce pleasure.

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1. Fairy tales: delimiting and defining the genre

1.1 Defining fairy tales

Fairy tales are amongst the most popular of literary genres for children. Their recurrent motifs, relatively fixed narrative strands and finite character roles resonate with the myriad of cultural concerns that exist around the world. The tales comprise common themes including romance, avenging injustice, reconciliation, and the ever present identity quest. Many cultures have their own individualised versions of popular fairy tales; these versions may elucidate upon certain aspects of the tale at the expense of others, whilst others still may truncate narratives within the overall plot. Yet, as Jones (2002, p. 3) affirms, regardless of minute details being embellished within fairy tales, there is a ‘surprisingly strict adherence to some basic structures characterising the genre’.

The literary fairy tale is often mistakenly classified as belonging to a much larger literary stable: that of the folk tale. Whilst it is true that many fairy tales did have their origins in the folk wonder tales of the Middle Ages, the fairy tale evolved from these *conte merveilleux* into a literary canon which has undergone two distinctive appropriations, and has become established as a genre which has its own motifs, conventions, structures and plot devices. Furthermore, it is these structures that have allowed the genre to forge its own identity within a literary field that has many other genres which possess similar *topoi*.

Vladimir Propp’s seminal work, *Morphology of the Folktale*¹ (1968/2005), approaches fairy tales from a structural perspective. Following his structural analysis, Propp identified thirty one functions of the *dramatis personae* within fairy tales (*ibid.*, pp. 25-65). Propp posited the idea that ‘the names of the *dramatis personae* change (as well as the attributes of each), but neither their actions nor functions change’ (*ibid.*, p. 20). These functions also include the use of unnamed character types such as a prince, or a king, and the use of aptronyms which allude to physical characteristics. As can be seen in many of the more popular fairy tales, a prince is just a prince, he has no discernable traits or characteristics which set him apart from other princes, or even male characters, save his royal title. Through maintaining certain actions and functions, individual cultures are able to produce their own version of a tale. For example, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont’s 1756 version of ‘Beauty and the Beast’ is widely accepted as the original literary incarnation. However, Leprince de Beaumont’s tale

was inspired by, and derived from the second century Latin tale 'Cupid and Psyche'. The same is true of the origins of 'Cinderella':

The first Cinderella we know was named Yeh-hsien, and her story was recorded around A.D. 850 by Tuan Ch'eng-shih. Yeh-hsien wears a dress made of kingfisher feathers and tiny shoes made of gold. She triumphs over her stepmother and stepsister. Her salvation appears in the form of a ten-foot-long fish who provides her with gold, pearls, dresses, and food. The Cinderellas who follow in Yeh-hsien's footsteps all find their salvation in the form of magical donors.

(Tatar, 2002, p. 28)

This example presents a peculiar conundrum to critical debates within this literary field, one that focuses particularly on the notions of authenticity and originality. If there are certain common structures that underpin the genre, as Propp believes there are, then any translation which embodies these structures must surely be judged on its own merits, and not as part of a textual comparative analysis against what some may perceive as the 'original' text of a particular tale, for no such thing exists.

The distinctive nature of a fairy tale depends upon its adherence to a succession of definable characteristics that set it apart from other tales, and, more importantly, from folk tales, from which its oral history can be traced. Marina Warner (1995, p. xv) argues for 'shape-shifting' and 'metamorphosis' as being fundamental defining motifs in fairy tales. This accords with Zipes' view, as he affirms that it is 'the sense of wondrous change that distinguishes the literary fairy tale from the moral story' (Zipes, 2000, p. xviii). I would argue that magical change in fairy tales should not be viewed as an end in itself, but as integrally related to the quest trajectory that underlies all such tales. Even though the quest is a narrative strand that features within other literary genres, it is within fairy tales that the quest trajectory is the overriding strand of the tale. It permeates throughout all of the actions of the protagonists, and is the trigger for the 'wondrous change' previously mentioned by Zipes. This 'wondrous change' would include the magical and transformational motifs that are found within fairy tales and that help define the genre. However, this is not to say that any tale that has a magical element, a quest strand and some form of metamorphosis or any one of these (three) is therefore a fairy tale. There are other elements which need to be considered and it is the

coincidence of the motifs of magic and metamorphosis, with an underlying identity quest strand that helps to delimit these tales.

But, is this enough? Are there any other elements that need to be considered in understanding the distinctive nature of fairy tales? Furthermore, is it the coinciding of multiple narrative strands and other plot devices that delimit the fairy tale? Finally, is there such a thing as the prototypical fairy tale, or do fairy tales exist on a continuum, with an adherence to set structures, but containing plot devices that are not all needed in every story in order to class them as fairy tales?

Whilst it is true that all fairy tales feature some form of metamorphosis, whether figuratively, as exemplified by the wolf in 'Little Red Riding Hood', and his metamorphosis into the grandmother, or a literal transformation, as demonstrated by the Beast/Prince in 'Beauty and the Beast', all fairy tales also feature some form of quest narrative. Whether it is the quest for a spouse, freedom, redemption, justice, or to defeat a malevolent force, the quest is perhaps *the* defining ingredient of fairy tales. Nonetheless, this does not dictate that any tale that has a magical element, a quest strand and some form of metamorphosis, or any combination of these narratives can be classed as a fairy tale. There are other elements which need to be considered and it is the coincidence of metamorphosis, the quest strand and the magical that are key features of any fairy tale. The quest narrative is an aspect that is bound up with both the magical trope that is inherent in all fairy tales, and it is the completion of the quest that provides the conclusion to an unresolved issue that allows for any metamorphosis to occur. Warner (1994, p. 276) posits that the 'fairy tale as a form deals with limits: one of its fundamental themes treats of a protagonist who sets out to discover the unknown and overcome its terrors'. Within all fairy tales there is the goal of completing the quest, an overcoming of the dangers and malevolent forces that seek to thwart the protagonist. Without a resolution to the quest, there cannot be a complete transformation or change. Whatever change there may be is only a temporary and incomplete one. Consider Beauty in 'Beauty and the Beast'; her initial residence at the Beast's castle does not transform the Beast back into his human form. He may mellow or show signs of human behaviour, but this is not enough; there has to be more; there has to be a reciprocal sharing of emotion. It is the completion of the Beast's quest for someone to love him as he is that will facilitate his transformation from his anthropomorphic form. Whilst I can embrace Warner's notion of metamorphosis as being one of the defining criteria of the genre, as she is not conclusive in

stating that it is *the* defining feature, I would argue that Zipes, by contrast, has been somewhat parsimonious in his characterisation of the fairy tale compared to the folk tale. To fully understand the nature of fairy tales there needs to be an acknowledgement of the quest narrative as being one of the *key* facilitators of any wondrous change that may occur within a particular tale. However, the quest narrative's completion is not the sole agent of change in a fairy tale. There is another criterion that sets the fairy tale apart from the folk tale and that is the presence of magic.

The use of magic within fairy tales serves, amongst other things, for the facilitation of the wondrous change and metamorphosis that is inherent in all fairy tales. However, the juxtaposition of magic and metamorphosis within a tale is not to state that the change that may occur to a character is solely due to magic. Consider Cinderella; after her father's remarriage, she is cast down as a servant girl and dwells among the cinders. Her initial transformation into a beauty fit for a royal ball is the result of magic. However, this prefigures her literal transformation into a princess when she later becomes the Prince's bride. Ultimately, Cinderella's metamorphosis is not attributable to the use of magic, but due to her shoe size. Granted, without the initial figurative transformation through magical enchantment Cinderella would never have gone to the ball. However, the story could also have read that "Cinderella made a dress of silk and lace so fine that she resembled a princess. Waiting outside the palace, she happened to catch a glimpse of the Prince about to enter into the ball. The Prince turned and was struck by Cinderella's beauty and asked her in to the ball, assuming that she had just arrived and was lost". Had the story been written like this, there would have been no need for magic, especially if: "as the clock struck midnight, Cinderella knew that she had to return home as her stepmother would soon be awake and calling for her. Cinderella rushed down the stairs from the ballroom, and, as she did so, dropped her shoe. Having no time to go back for it, she pressed on toward home. The Prince, seeing the shoe, reached down, picked it up and declared...". However, there is magic in the Grimms' version of '*Cinderella*', and it is this magic that enables the tale to be located within the fairy tale corpus.

The magical within a fairy tale can be traced back to the usage in the seventeenth century of the French phrase *conte de fée* (fairy tale). This was the term given to the literary wonder tale, which was to later evolve into the literary fairy tale, as the genre was becoming established as separate from other tales, whether oral or literary. Sheringham (1996, p. 5) claims that 1698

saw the first use of the term *conte de fée*. This coincided with the publication of Countess Marie d'Aulnoy's *Conte de Fées*. The following year saw an English translation of this body of work as *Tales of the Fairys*. This was followed in 1790 by *Le Cabinet des Fées (The Fairy Library)*, a collection of forty one volumes of hundreds of seventeenth and eighteenth century tales, described by Warner (1995, p. xii) as 'the heyday of the genre'. The term gained popularity as d'Aulnoy's collection was reprinted and translated into other languages. However, ironically, many of the stories in this emerging genre still lacked fairies within their tales. Carter (1990, p. ix) comments that 'fairies, as such, are thin on the ground, for the term "fairy tale" is a figure of speech and we use it loosely'.

The term was perpetuated thanks to folklore and mythology related to the fantastic, some of which was believed to be true. Up until the end of the nineteenth century fairies were seen as a magical force that could be called upon for help when needed, and as Zipes (1999, p. 13) notes 'anyone could call upon the fairies for help'. The fairies were used by writers as the beings able to resolve conflicts without the aid of real agencies, or figures. Opie (1974, p. 15) observes that in the eighteenth century notions about 'the fairy legend, the story about fairy folk and their activities were half believed to be true'. Fairies were seen as magical, miniature, good natured versions of humans. They were quite unlike goblins, sprites, ghouls or other such mythical magical creatures who displayed evil characteristics and possessed unattractive physical attributes. The nature of fairies helped the genre to flourish, and led to the perpetual retelling of stories involving fairy type characters. Opie (*ibid.*, p. 15) comments that 'although a fairy tale is seldom a tale about fairy-folk, and does not necessarily even feature a fairy, it does contain an enchantment or other supernatural element'. Tolkien (1964, pp. 15-16) concurs with Opie's reading regarding the nature of fairy tales and their use of fantastical elements; he also expands upon the lack of fairy folk in the tales: 'stories about fairies are too narrow...most fairy stories are about the *adventures* of men in the perilous [fairy] realm'. Tolkien (*ibid.*, p. 15) further explains that the '*faërie* realm is the state in which fairies have their being'. This is a realm where humans are inhabitants alongside the more traditional fairy tale creatures such as witches, dragons and fairies themselves. Furthermore, the realm incorporates the natural physical world and is able to utilise these elements to act as plot devices within the tale. Certainly, the quest narrative is a vital component of all fairy tales. However, it is enchantment within the *faërie* realm which permits the quest narrative to reach a resolution. As a narrative strand, the quest occupies a

place within a plethora of literary genres, but, it is only when the quest combines with magic that the combination lends itself to providing an understanding of how the fairy tale genre can be delimited.

Enchantment in fairy tales comes in many guises: a magic talking mirror; a loving kiss to awaken a sleeping princess; a tainted poisonous apple that induces a long, long sleep; changing from a beast to a prince; enchanted beans, and a pumpkin magically transformed into a carriage, to name but a few of the many enchanted devices that occur. The use of a supernatural, fantastical, or magical element is one of *the* underlying constituents for a fairy tale. Without this vital component within the tale, it ceases to be a fairy story, since the connotations around the term 'fairy' denote the magical. Crago (1993, p. 10) also acknowledges that the use of magic in tales has arisen from their early inception. This becomes evident when one looks at the Disney Corporation's (henceforth Disney) versions of classic fairy tales, which all explicitly feature the magical and enchanted. The use of magic is one of the defining criteria for a taxonomy of fairy tales. Magic within these tales allows for all possibilities within the narrative, especially for the fulfilment of the quest narrative that is threaded throughout all tales in this genre. Bottigheimer (2005, p. 25) adds that 'fairy tales with their narrative trajectories [are] moved along by magic'. Without magic, the vanquishing of evil and fulfilment of the utopian ideals sought by many at the end of the story would cease to be possible; in that respect, there would cease to be the happy ending that fairy tales are known for.

Propp (1968/2005, p. 5) highlights that, when classifying any tale as a fairy tale, 'the most common division is into tales with fantastic content, tales of everyday life, and animal tales'. These three sub-genres certainly seem to be inherent in all fairy tales to varying degrees. However, Propp does concede that such a classification is too broad, and, hinting at the ability for tales to be retold across generations and cultures, raises the question of how these cultural inflections affect the classification of various tales. If one culture were to place a greater focus on Red Riding Hood's grandmother, and her wish to see Red Riding Hood, and to taste the bread that she was bringing, whilst marginalising the Wolf and his antics, would this tale be one of everyday life? Conversely, if another culture were to expand the Wolf's role, introducing not just one wolf, but a pack, and marginalise Red Riding Hood, would this then become an animal tale? Furthermore, should tales of everyday life be classed as fairy tales? Propp, himself, does not use such a threefold schema when classifying fairy tales;

instead, he maintains his structural analysis based upon the functions that are common to all fairy tales, although, he hints that such a classification is ‘basically correct’ (Propp, *ibid.*, p. 6).

Tales of the fantastic usually do incorporate the use of magic, and animal tales involve some form of anthropomorphism, itself a magical element. Everyday life does not usually involve magical intervention. Rather, it is the ingenuity of the protagonists which allows for any resolution to issues experienced within the tale. Whilst fairy tales contain magic as the facilitator for providing completion of the quest and for enabling the magical narrative thread to be woven, folk tales eschew the use of magic. Instead, they rely upon wit, not magical wonder. Reinstein (1983, p. 46) argues that ‘each collection of folklore embodies a sense of what the world is like and how one must live to succeed in that world’. To succeed in the folkloric world, from which folk tales are derived, one must understand how to live according to the natural laws of the world, and use their natural intelligence and resources to overcome any obstacles they may encounter. By contrast, the fairy tale world is set within the *faërie* realm, a realm which relies upon magic to live and succeed. However, Reinstein does not distinguish folk tales from fairy tales; instead, she conflates the two terms and uses them interchangeably. She does, however, distinguish the fable from the folk tale (which could mean both folk and fairy tale in this sense): ‘the fables teach self-protection and the value of hard work. Goodness is rarely rewarded, but evil is often revenged’ (Reinstein, *ibid.*, p. 47). This is in contrast to the self-sacrificing nature of fairy tale protagonists. There are examples of hard work in fairy tales, but they are rewarded. The reward is usually in the form of romance and love, as is the case with both Cinderella and Snow White, who conclude their stories living ‘happily ever after’ with their respective princes. As tales which are concerned with ‘everyday life’, it may be that this type of tale sits firmly in the folk tale category.

It is true that some fairy tales do feature an ‘everyday’ quality about them. However, this serves to frame the story and to give an insight into the characters within the tale. Furthermore, the initial ‘everyday’ framing of the tale allows for the reason for the quest narrative to become evident. Without an initial ‘everyday’ glimpse into the lives of the protagonists, the reader is left unaware of why they are downtrodden, persecuted, and, sometimes, cursed. By understanding the reasons why they behave as they do, the reader is left free to allow the tale to unfold and to reach its conclusion. If readers had no knowledge of Cinderella’s life of servitude, they would not be able to understand how it is that Cinderella is

so mistreated or why she desires so greatly to attend the ball. Some fairy tales may also incorporate elements of all three sub-genres and so weave them into a singular tale. If we consider 'Beauty and the Beast', there is the fantastical element with the Beast's initial curse and subsequent salvation; next, there is the 'everyday' nature of Beauty's life with her family, which frames the story, and provides the trigger for her father's initial journey to the Beast's castle. Finally, the Beast is cursed to live as an animal. As Tatar (1999, p. 29) comments 'Beauty... must accept an animal suitor'. However, this is not enough; the Beast must find love whilst in his anthropomorphic form, and have a human willingly love him as he is. This one tale incorporates all three sub-genres that Propp uses to provide a taxonomy of fairy tales. This is a common occurrence with the fairy tale genre: that the majority of tales are not in isolation from one sub-genre, or category of tale; they contain plot devices that can be found in all three of Propp's divisions. It is possible to further sub-divide the fairy tale canon into other divisions, and Propp (1968/2005, pp. 6-8) notes two such attempts by folklorists Wundt and Volkov. Here, also, the problems of dividing the fairy tale canon into sub-genres becomes more evident as a greater division invariably leads to a greater diffusion of the myriad plot strands found within any tale. Propp (1968/2005, p. 7) labels such an attempt 'total chaos' and, furthermore, 'impossible'. If it is then 'impossible' to classify fairy tales according to theme, which is itself an ambiguous term as critics may conflate the term to include 'element', 'narrative' and 'motif' and it is also impossible to classify according to category (animal, fantastical, everyday) as these categories are often merged into one tale, and may not exist as three separate stories, then how is it possible to classify a fairy tale? Underpinning any attempt to classify fairy tales is the fact that fairy tales migrate across sub-genres to form a tale that retains the three *key* plot ingredients mentioned earlier. Perhaps it is here that fairy tales can best be defined and classified; not in terms of sub-genres, or even according to the thirty one functions that Propp utilised in his structural analysis, but as tales which may vary in form and genre, but retain an adherence to incorporating the two related, though not wholly interchangeable, motifs of magic and metamorphosis which drive the central narrative trajectory of the quest.

Yet, it could be argued that fairy tales are not alone in combining these narrative ingredients. Other literary genres, such as fantasy, and more classical quest narratives, such as those by Homer, incorporate similar narrative elements. Arising from this, there exists the need to further define the distinctive place that fairy tales occupy within literature as an entity that is

separate from those genres that may also possess similar devices, and thus, avoid conflating fairy tales with these other literary incarnations.

Fantasy literature emerged as a modern literary genre in the nineteenth century, with writers such as Lewis Carroll, who would later influence the works of William Morris and George MacDonald, being at the forefront of this newly emerging genre. They were later to be followed by authors such as L. (Lyman) Frank Baum. Coinciding with the emergence of modern fantasy literature, fairy tales were being used by the bourgeoisie as vehicles for emphasising social values and norms, something which was intended to result in a civilising process for their audience, an audience that fairy tales were increasingly becoming appropriated for, an audience composed of children. The increase in fantasy texts since the mid-nineteenth century allows for a refining of the distinctions that can be made between fantasy and fairy tales. It is a distinction which will allow for the shaping of a taxonomy of the fairy tale genre.

Fantasy, as a branch of children's literature, is currently one of the most popular of all genres. Books, such as the *Harry Potter* series and Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy (1995-2000), have spearheaded a resurgence in interest in the genre. If we were to also add recent reworkings, in various modes of adaptation, of classic fantasy by Barrie, Lewis and Tolkien to this list, we would arrive at a compendium of titles that all feature narratives which incorporate, in some form, the three *key* narrative devices also found within fairy tales.

What, then, separates these works of fantasy and adventure from fairy tales? Zipes (2000, p. xviii) argues that it is 'the sense of wondrous change that distinguishes the *literary* fairy tale from the moral story, novella, sentimental tale and other short literary genres'. Whilst I am not in disagreement with Zipes, and, indeed, concur that fairy tales are short literary compositions, as opposed to fantasy literature, which usually takes the form of full length novels, Zipes' comments are rather reductive in that he does not engage with other literary genres which share common *topoi*. Take, for example, the change that occurs to Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955); he changes from a humble ranger to the King of Gondor by the end of the adventure. Yet, he is far from a fairy tale type character as his naming marks him out as being specific. He is not simply a role or character type; he is vital to the story and the trajectory of the story revolves around his actions, as well as those of Frodo Baggins. Also, consider that changes that occur to the Pevensie children in *The Chronicles of*

Narnia books; they are transformed from ‘normal’, if there is such a thing, adolescents into the future kings and queens of Narnia. Furthermore, they are transformed back to their younger selves at the close of the story, signalling that any transformation in the tale is only transient and material.

However, Zipes does not engage with examples such as these, and, instead, proceeds to detail the conditions which led to the development of the literary fairy tale. Indeed, Zipes is able to produce a rich and detailed account of the evolution of the fairy tale genre. However, he is unable to provide a succinct definition of the genre, and, instead, bypasses the subject and relies upon Propp’s aforementioned work to aid him in defining the oral wonder tale, a genre that Zipes juxtaposes and conflates with fairy tales. Furthermore, he ignores the triumvirate of *key* devices that shape and define each fairy tale as belonging to that corpus of work. Instead, he states that:

The definition of both the wonder tale and the fairy tale, which derives from it, depends on the manner in which a narrator/author arranges *known* functions of a tale aesthetically and ideologically to induce wonder and then transmits the tale as a whole according to customary usage of a society in a given historical period.

(Zipes, 2000, pp. xix-xx)

He later adds an ambiguous and ultimately unhelpful second historicist definition of a fairy tale: ‘it is the interaction of the writer/publisher/audience within a given society that makes for the definition of the genre in any epoch. This has certainly been the case with the fairy tale’ (Zipes 2000, p. xxviii). This definition makes no reference to what separates the fairy tale genre from any other; nor does Zipes engage in any debate regarding the classification of the genre. Instead, he has focused on the milieu that fashioned the oral wonder tale. This is a vague definition and does nothing to draw generic boundaries between fairy tales and other types of story. There needs to be clarification on the various motifs that collectively combine to form a fairy tale, and that are common to the majority of fairy tales and not to other genres of literature.

Unfortunately, Hugh Crago's 2003 article 'What are Fairy Tales?' is marked by the same evasiveness as Zipes' definition, and does not advance study in the field, nor is it any nearer to providing a clear taxonomy for fairy tales, to enable them to forge their own identity in literature as a distinct genre; this is true despite the immediate, attention grabbing title of his article. Crago's has, like all psychoanalytic approaches to fairy tales, focused on the symbolism contained within the tales, as opposed to actually posing an answer to his own question. It is a strange thing to ask "what are fairy tales?" and then to not even arrive at some semblance of a definition. I would argue that Crago's inability to answer his own question stems from a lack of focus on the task in hand, and his refusal to forgo his own psychoanalytic slant. These two events lead Crago to argue that a fairy tale is:

A narrative form which represents a society's collective concerns with some aspect of 'growing up', and it explores these concerns at the level of magical thought.

(Crago, 2003, p. 24)

Does this mean that any narrative form which is concerned with growing up can be classed as a fairy tale, as long as it is at the level of magical thought? This definition is simply a rewording of Bruno Bettelheim's (1976/1991, pp. 6-7) argument as to why fairy tales are important for children as methods which deal with the problems of growing up and making the transition through adolescence into adulthood, whilst using the non-reality aspect of fairy tales to serve as fantastical daydream worlds. Crago has offered nothing new in this definition; worse than that, he has been unthinking and has attempted to masquerade a well-respected and universally acknowledged psychoanalyst's ideas as his own. The inability of both Crago and Zipes to provide clarity when defining the fairy tale genre has led to a gap in the academic study of the fairy tale, a gap that I shall hope to fill.

Added to the confusion of defining the fairy tale genre is the work of Tolkien, and his 1939 lecture, and subsequent publication, *On Fairy Stories* (1947/2008). There are few critics who would class Tolkien as anything but a fantasy author, and, as shall be argued, his major works are situated firmly within the fantasy corpus. However, there needs to be a critique of *On Fairy Stories* to enable me to correctly and fully delimit the fairy tale genre and argue why, despite the *fairy* element of the lecture's title, fairy tales are not what is solely remarked

upon, and how Tolkien's works, although he alludes to them in his definition of fairy stories, are not fairy tales.

The title, *On Fairy Stories* is something of an oddity given that Tolkien first delivered this work as part of the Andrew Lang series of lectures. Lang, perhaps most famous for the publication of his various coloured *Fairy Book* collections, referred to the works within the books as 'fairy tales', and not fairy stories. It seems strange, then, that Tolkien would subvert this and use the term 'fairy stories'. Within *On Fairy Stories*, Tolkien interchangeably uses the terms fairy stories and fairy tales. It could be argued that they are coterminous, and that Tolkien is able to use the terms as such. However, most critics of the genre prefer to use 'fairy tale', as the term also provides a link to the historic nature of the tales as arising from oral folk tales. Perhaps, wishing for his blossoming collection of stories to be included within the fairy stable, Tolkien decisively choose to use 'stories' as oppose to 'tales' as his own works do not bear any semblance to historic folk tales, and owe more to Norse myth than to European folk history.

As previously mentioned, Tolkien refers to fairy stories as those stories that take place in the *faërie* realm, and not stories about fairies themselves. Tolkien does not attempt to define this realm, or any of the inherent characteristics which may be associated with it; rather, he concedes that any attempt to define it 'cannot be done' (*ibid.*, p. 32). Although he does admit that it is the occurrence of magic within the realm that perhaps would best allow for an understanding of the term, I find this rather evasive and somewhat incomplete. The *faërie* realm is one that *can* be defined: it is a realm where the magical and supernatural are manifested and operate on those within it. However, although other genres, such as ghost stories, also incorporate the use of supernatural elements, these are often characterised by the supernatural taking the form of a deceased character and then operating in a malevolent manner toward the protagonists, something that fairy tales do not include. These two characteristics of the magical and the supernatural are unscientific in their application (unlike fantasy literature, which may utilise cutting-edge scientific research to facilitate elements such as teleportation, or explain away occurrences in an almost pseudo-scientific way, such as the creation of the orcs in *The Lord of the Rings*) and are necessary ingredients to facilitate the wish-fulfilment nature of the inhabitants of the realm. Furthermore, the topography of the *faërie* realm is one that echoes our own world, albeit in a rather more non-descript way.

Tolkien (*ibid.*, p. 33) defines a fairy story as ‘one that touches on or uses *faërie*, whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy’. This definition is too encompassing and allows for a multitude of works to be neatly ascribed to fairy stories. Regarding children’s literature, using Tolkien’s definition would allow for nearly all works within the children’s literary canon to be included as a fairy story. This is rather unhelpful. However, it is a definition that is to be acknowledged, and deconstructed. The combining of genres under one literary umbrella does not allow for a definition of any of the types of stories that Tolkien mentions; it also reduces these other genres to simple fairy stories which have a range of plot types and plot devices, and not as a separate genre with their own motifs and conventions.

Fairy tales are certainly not works of satire, unlike picaresque tales, whereby the hero must use his wits to overcome the challenges presented. Fairy tales’ protagonists rely upon the magical aspect of the tale to assist in overcoming the difficulties that they face. The use of wit is more akin to folk tales, a genre that Tolkien does not refer to in his definition, a rather strange occurrence when we consider that literary fairy tales emerged from oral folk tales. Satirical works have an intended audience and the stylistic elements of irony, humour and recognisable satirical targets, to name just three, are literary conventions that are not present in fairy tales. The use of humour is not present in literary fairy tales, nor is there irony. The brevity of language within the tales would exclude any ironic narratives, as a fairy tale’s main narrative thread moves along in linear fashion towards the conclusion and any incorporation of more sophisticated narrative elements would detract from the tale and would not be in keeping with the fairy tale ‘style’. Adventure and fantasy stories differ fundamentally from fairy tales in their settings, character types and use of language, the only similarity being that all three genres may use magic. However, as shall be explained more fully later, the use of magic in fantasy literature is significantly different in its execution from the use of magic in fairy tales. Finally, morality tales are, once again, a literary genre designed for a particular purpose. Tales, such as Belloc’s *Cautionary Tales* (1907), are designed with a cautionary and moralistic warning. By contrast, fairy tales are not tales of morality, or even caution, although certain tales may allude to moral elements. It is possible that Tolkien included morality tales in his list of genres that may be classed as fairy stories due to the work of Perrault, who would often finish his fairy tales with a moral. However, this further marks Perrault’s tales as being ‘tongue in cheek’. Moral tales and stories do not predominantly feature magic as a plot

device; rather they, like folk tales, require the protagonist to make choices based upon their wishes and desires. It is only when the results of these choices are realised that the morality aspect of the tale is understood. Furthermore, many morality tales are rooted in Christianity, whereas fairy tales typically exclude any religious undertones, owing to their pollination from their oral origins in various cultures. Not content with, incorrectly, including four genres under the fairy story umbrella, Tolkien further adds to the confusion by labelling the Norse poem of *Thórr* as ‘folk-tale kind’ and ‘fairy story’ (Tolkien, 1947/2008, p. 43-44). I can accept that *Thórr* is a type of folk tale as the themes that the poems and prose tales which mention this Norse god of thunder, the Edda, are folk type in their etymology and narrative. However, *Thórr* is most certainly not a fairy story; it lacks any of the conventions which are characteristic of other fairy tales or stories and it deals with mythology, further moving the tale toward fantasy literature. This is especially true when the stories concerning *Thórr* are a succession of fantastical elaborate adventures. Owing to the oral and ‘everyday’ allegorical nature of the initial poetic Edda in the thirteenth century, *Thórr* is rightly to be classed not as a fairy tale, but as a folk-type tale.

The final point that I wish to make regarding Tolkien is that he argues that ‘a fairy story [is] a thing built on or about fantasy, of which fantasy is the core’ (*ibid.*, p. 68). However, he later contradicts himself by arguing against the above and claiming that ‘actually, fairy stories deal largely, or (the better ones) mainly with simple or fundamental things, untouched by fantasy’ (*ibid.*, p. 68). Tolkien, here, does not take these polarising statements any further and explain how he is able to posit that ‘fantasy is the core’ of any fairy story, and then refute this by acknowledging that fairy stories are untouched by fantasy. I find that a refusal to engage with his own discourse has cemented my thoughts about Tolkien’s conflation of the nature of the fairy tale genre, thoughts which lead me to conclude that Tolkien believed that he was writing ‘fairy stories’, but only because the events that took place within the books were set within the magical *faërie* realm. Furthermore, as Tolkien professed that fantasy was at the core of fairy stories and his works were fantastical works, following this line of reasoning, it is natural that Tolkien may have allied his works with fairy stories. Yet, as Matthews (2002, p. 83) comments ‘it is nearly impossible to overstate Tolkien’s importance in the history of fantasy’.

Within literary fairy tales there are various structures and conventions which, when combined with the three key narrative elements that have previously been discussed, mark the genre out

as being distinct from other genres, and it is these that I shall elucidate upon to establish why fairy tales are a distinct literary form from all others which may possess common narrative characteristics. This will culminate in the positing of a clear taxonomy of the fairy tale genre, a taxonomy which will delimit the genre, and serve to occupy the vacant space within critical debates in this literary field. The latter is true in spite of the plethora of studies of fairy tales that have been written in the last fifty or so years, studies which have thus far failed to approach the process of defining the literary fairy tale as a branch of literature, and instead have engaged with fairy tales from theoretical stances. These stances have served the critics' intentions well, and I shall be utilising some of these approaches in analysing the reasons for the occurrence of certain conventions within fairy tales. However, they have not resulted in establishing an understanding of how the fairy tale corpus may be defined. Of particular disappointment is Crago's previously mentioned article; this is an article which alludes to defining the fairy tale genre, and establishing a set of criteria which may be used in forming a paradigm for fairy tales that would be of note to any scholar within this field. However, Crago fails to answer his own question, and is unable to define the genre. This is due to his reluctance to shift from his psychoanalytic stance, and constant self-reference throughout the article, which draws upon other psychoanalytic perspectives from earlier works. As someone who is interested in furthering an understanding of this literary field, Crago's article is disappointing and is a paper which serves little purpose in delimiting the fairy tale genre. Thus, it is with the conventions and motifs that are found within fairy tales alone that I shall take up my debate within this literary field, and attempt to succeed where Crago, Zipes *et al.* have failed.

'Once upon a time'; 'there was a time when'; 'it happened once'; these are three familiar opening lines that are common to the vast majority of fairy tales, and certainly to the opening of the most popular tales. The phrases themselves conjure up images of nostalgia, either real or imagined, and of times past. These formulaic openings leave readers in no doubt that they are most likely reading a fairy tale. Such is the ownership of the 'once upon a time' gambit within fairy tales that any attempt by other genres to use the term would precede an almost carnivalesque story unfolding, or signal the unfolding of a work of metafiction. Through their origin in the oral tradition, fairy tales were often used as allegories to expose social and political injustice. Hence common themes within the tales 'spoke' to the peasants, and provided some light relief from their present hardships. To achieve this relief, the audience

had to be transported from their current situation into a world that was without time, and that offered them something other than what they had hitherto experienced. For this reason, the ‘once upon a time’ formulaic opening was devised. It enabled tellers to locate their tales whenever they wanted; they were not bound by the constraints they faced in their real life, and it appealed to the demands of the audience. ‘Once upon a time’ occupies all of time; it is outside of physical laws, and, as such, is permitted to be shaped by all who hear the tale that follows. Owing to the non-specific temporal setting of fairy tales, tellers had freedom to place their tale whenever they wish. This, in turn, enabled the teller to conjure up fantastical elements within the tale: dragons may have existed; giants may have walked with normal humans; a princess may have slept for one hundred years. Bettelheim (1976/1991) remarks that [the] ‘deliberate vagueness in the beginnings of fairy tales symbolizes that we are leaving the concrete world of ordinary reality’. However, in the case of fairy tales, this is not an absolute departure; the term ‘once’ implies that what is about to be retold has occurred in the past. More than this, if it happened once, it is possible that it may happen again. ‘Once’, as the opening word of a fairy tale, is semantically different from the term ‘in the past’, which predicates that things were, but shall not be so again. Rather, ‘once’ allows for the reader to imagine that the magical events contained within fairy tales were not only possible, but are *still* possible; all that is needed is to be transported from ordinary reality. Leaving the real world for a liminal one is, perhaps, one of the reasons for their enduring popularity. Certainly, this would have been true when the tales were presented as oral tellings and when life was much more arduous.

‘Upon a time’, as the continuation of many fairy tales’ opening lines, further distinguishes the genre as being separate from both fantasy and adventure literature. There are no allusions to a definite time; it may be that the events within the tale occurred fifty or one hundred years ago, or they may have happened outside of time as we know it. Fantasy and adventure literature, by contrast, does not begin with such a vague, limitless opening; their narratives are located within a definite time. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) is set during World War Two, when the four Pevensie children are evacuated from London to escape the Blitz. By framing the story in this particular time, Lewis was attempting to portray a given style to his work: that of mid-war Britain. The children would wear the common attire of the day, and the vehicles and the buildings were all of a certain design aesthetic. The reader does not need to wonder what London in 1940 looked like; they could use images

from that time to supplement their reading of the story. The same is true of Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1911); the time setting of the play (which was to later be expanded into the novel as we know it today) is concurrent with London in the early 1900s. The description of Kensington Gardens allows the reader to engage with the reality of Edwardian London. The story does not unfold as 'once upon a time', it is within a *defined* period of time. As such, the story is constrained by the prevailing ideas of the day, ideas which frame the narrative form that the story may take. Fantasy works, such as those by Tolkien, are also framed within a set time. *The Lord of the Rings* is set during the Third Age of Middle-Earth. Even though it is a fictional time, it is thus named and 'anything which one names is no longer quite the same; it has lost its innocence' (Sartre, 1948/1993, p. 13). Perhaps this is the allure of fairy tales; by having no named time in history (real or fictional) they remain a place of innocence, untainted by the events which have shaped previous historical eras, and by so doing the fairy tale world remains one that allows for the magical as it is outside of reality.

By contrast, Tolkien's world is one that is rich in history, one shaped by his family's involvement as military personnel during World War Two. It was the fight against the Nazis that gave birth to the allegorical good versus evil narrative that is seen throughout *The Lord of the Rings* with the gathering of men, elves, hobbits and dwarves united against the evil Sauron. This mimesis in fantasy literature is used to create both history and plot narratives; fairy tales have no need for such precise mimetic functioning as they have no history and do not attempt to act as an allegory for real historic events. Rather, it is the non-specific nature of the tales and their degree of obliqueness that allows for them to be constantly shaped and mapped onto by new retellings and cultural inflections. Furthermore, because of this indirectness, fairy tales are well equipped to be used as metaphors for all manner of problems and situations. This is perhaps why the fairy tale genre has attracted such a strong psychoanalytic approach, as the themes within the various tales deal with situations and problems which are common to all, regardless of history or culture. Different retellings and the use of varying modes of representation *do* permit specific cultural inflections of the tales, which may account for the longevity of the fairy tale genre, and certainly of the more popular tales. However, the underlying quest narrative, and character types contained within the tales do not truly change. It is the superficial, non-pertinent aspects of the tales, and embellishments to the stories that have changed to meet these cultural needs, and not the central motifs that can be derived from the key narrative elements.

Fantasy as a literary genre has its own set of definable characteristics, characteristics which firmly distinguish it from the fairy tale genre, as fantasy depicts:

...adventures in a real and coherent fantasy world. The events and characters in the book cannot ambiguously be ascribed to a dream, a vision, or an aberration. Fantasy cannot be reduced to mere allegory or symbol; it is not a product of madness, superstition or satire. Fantasy has a compelling and even disturbing reality.

(Matthews, 2002, p. 21)

Fairy tales, however, *are* quite often products of superstition and they may also provide an allegoric or symbolic interpretation of events. They are not real and they do not purport to be reflective of reality; the magical element of the tales further alludes to this, even if ‘once upon a time’ fairies *were* believed to exist. However, it is the ‘once upon a time’ aspect of fairy tales that is one of the defining characteristics which sets them apart from fantasy works. This non-specific time setting of fairy tales further marks out the enchanted element within the tales and, paradoxically, locates the tales as being outside of both time and reality. It is thus a narrative framing device that is an integral part of all fairy tales, and belongs to this genre alone, as ‘once upon a time is a precise evocation of constructedness that signals an explicitly nonmimetic function, a transition to a different reality from our own’ (Tiffin, 2006, p. 48). Along with ‘once upon a time’, the use of aptronyms, together with the non-specificity of location, time and characters all testify to the nonmimetic nature of fairy tales, and their difference from fantasy literature.

The next major distinction that can be made between fairy tales and those genres that possess similar *topoi* are the characters that are featured in the tales. Fairy tales are defined by their rather flat assortment of characters, many of whom may provide a contrast to the hero of the tale. Propp (1968/2005) has provided an extensive analysis of the character types contained within fairy tales. He has stressed that it is not the external characteristics of the characters that are important, rather it is their function and their role within a fairy tale that are important in emphasising the plot, and in furthering the quest narrative which underpins fairy tales. He labels these functions as ‘the basic components of the tale’ (Propp, 1968/2005, p. 21).

Furthermore, fairy tale characters usually exist and are defined in binaries. A character is either good or bad; there does not seem to be much middle ground. The witch is always bad, the beautiful princess is always good, as is the prince. The only caveat to this is the Prince turned Beast in 'Beauty and the Beast'. He occupies a place in between good and bad. It is his bad nature which initially saw him cursed. However, his good 'true' nature does reveal itself by the end of the tale, and, once again, we have binary opposites. Protagonists in the majority of fairy tales are young, physically attractive (although this may be initially hidden) and have siblings of varying ages. Crucially, there usually exists a dichotomy within the nature of these siblings. Consider Beauty in Leprince de Beaumont's 'Beauty and the Beast', the youngest of six children, three brothers and two other sisters. Whilst her sisters constantly occupy themselves with social gatherings, are a burden to their father and refuse to fraternise with any but those of a high standing, Beauty stays with her father; she is helpful, courteous, and charming to all those she encounters. Jones (2002, p. 22) attests that 'sibling rivalry is often reflected in fairy tales by the disadvantageous position of the protagonist relative to his or her siblings'. A similar character description can be seen in the myriad literary versions of the 'Cinderella' story when comparing the protagonist to her step-sisters. Bettelheim (1976/1991, p. 9) asserts that it is this 'polarization [that] dominates fairy tales, a person is either good or bad, nothing in between'. This decisive moral character trait is evident in all of the classic fairy tales, and in their contemporary revisions. This is an assertion that is based upon the aforementioned work of Propp (1968/2005, pp. 26-27) and his argument regarding the functions of the characters contained within fairy tales, specifically the occurrence of paired functions, as illustrated by the functions of the hero and villain.

In Disney's 1991 Oscar winning, animated version of *Beauty and the Beast*, Gaston, Belle's admirer, displays traits and characteristics that Belle finds repulsive. She describes Gaston as "primeval" and "conceited". The only girls who fall for Gaston's excessive and humorous male bravado are the three giggly, vapid, and caricatured blondes. This is true despite Gaston embodying the ideal 'athletic male' physique. However, the decision to create a handsome, athletic and testosterone-fuelled male as the villain of the story who is externally what one would imagine a prince to resemble, but internally is truly a beast, provides a contemporary twist to the hero/villain dichotomy. The characters within fairy tales are also not like those found in other genres; there is something special about them. This may be in the form of their beauty (as is common with most female protagonists), their unreserved heroism, or their

abilities, as Bettelheim (1976/1991) comments ‘the fairy tale hero has a body which can perform miraculous deeds’. Nikolajeva (2000, p. 151) agrees with Bettelheim as she affirms that ‘the essential difference between the fairy tale hero and the fantasy protagonist is that the latter often lacks heroic features’. Fairy tale characters are born with physically attractive attributes and heroic features, unlike their folk tale and fantasy equivalents who have to develop their heroism through the enduring of trials and tasks, and are not often noted for their beauty.

Another crucial element is that the protagonist may only have one living biological parent. This is the case with Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, and Jack (of beanstalk fame). If there exists a step-parent, then they may provide the antithesis to the protagonist, such as Snow White’s step mother. However, the wicked step-mother in this tale is not the physical opposite of the protagonist; rather Snow White is physically what her step-mother once was. It is this loss of physical beauty and competition for Snow White’s father that drives the step-mother to order Snow White’s murder. By contrast, parents are often forgotten figures in fantasy literature. This is usually due to the protagonists occupying space in secondary worlds, either through an initial setting in the secondary world, or by transportation to it. Furthermore, whilst fairy tales use parents to act as plot devices and provide the impetus for the quest narrative, fantasy literature operates without any real need of parents. The quest narrative that fantasy literature shares with fairy tales is not the result of parental intervention and ordering. Clearly, there are exceptions to this, and some fantasy stories do require parental characters to move the story along. Of particular note, in this respect, is the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, and the actions of Mrs. Coulter which provide pertinent plot devices for the protagonist, Lyra. Even though the identities of Lyra’s parents are not revealed until some way through the story, they do fulfil a role as necessary ingredients in the tale. However, in the vast majority of fantasy narratives, parents do not serve such an important function and act as plot buffers, merely adding to the history of the main protagonists, and not as plot framing devices.

Further character based elements within fairy tales are the themes of love and marriage, which form one of the enduring devices within the genre. Opie (1974, p. 11) states that ‘fairy tales are unlike popular romances in that they are seldom the enactments of dream-wishes... indeed, wishes are rarely granted. Stringent conditions may be laid down before a wish is granted’. This is seen in tales such as ‘Cinderella’, where the eponymous protagonist must be

home before midnight, and 'Beauty and the Beast', as the Beast must make Beauty love him while in his animal form. Added to this is the fact that 'the Beast's savagery is no illusion, but an aspect of his nature which the heroine has to confront' (Warner, 1995, p. 280). It is this confronting of the savage nature which leads to the breaking of the enchantment placed upon the Beast, and his subsequent transformation back into a handsome prince. Fantasy literature does not feature such a prolific use of romance and love as plot devices to assist in the quest narrative. Indeed, the quest for love is another of the *defining* characteristics of the fairy tale corpus. There are very few fairy tales ('Little Red Riding Hood', 'Hansel and Gretel', 'Jack and the Beanstalk', to name three) which do not feature some form of romance between the protagonists. Whilst fantasy literature may include romance, it is not, usually, central to the plot and does not serve as the quest narrative's resolution.

Another and related striking characteristic of fairy tales is the omission of characters' names. The female protagonists are known for their physical qualities or for their appearance and are given aptronyms that allude to this: Beauty, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Red Riding Hood, and Cinderella. Propp (1968/2005, p. 87) argues that 'these attributes provide the tale with its brilliance, charm and beauty'. However, as these are only external characteristics, 'one character in a tale is easily replaced by another'. The replacing of one character by another easily permits for one character type to be substituted for another in any retelling of a fairy tale. Indeed, the characters of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty are virtually identical in their character traits, and it is only physical appearance that separates the two. Both characters are cast away from their families and forced to live with strangers in the woods/forest; both characters are awakened from a deep slumber by a kiss from a prince, and finally, both are elevated to royal status at the conclusion of the tale. It is perhaps no coincidence that Disney concentrate their marketing of these two characters in their theme parks primarily on the dresses that both characters are seen wearing in the animated versions. This is the only real difference between the two eponymous heroines: external appearance.

By using aptronyms which reflect their physical characteristics, fairy tale writers were able to reflect the neoplatonic tradition of establishing the 'essence' of the characters. For example, is Beauty just beautiful in appearance, or is her beauty an internal character trait? In platonic terms, essence 'may be taken for the very being of anything, whereby it is what it is. And thus the real internal, but generally... unknown constitution of things' (Flew, 1971, p.451). In Beauty's case, her essence is that she is that which her name alludes to: beauty. Not only does

she display physical characteristics which mark her out as having beauty, she internally possesses those traits which are beautiful: kindness, patience, gentleness and a loving nature. By contrast, the essence of the Beast is unknown. In the Disney animated version, he remarks that “she [Beauty] will never see anything but a beast”. This is in keeping with platonic theorising in that externally he resembles a beast, even though internally he senses a change from beastly to more human attributes. Beauty, here, has to defy the conventions of the genre by seeing beyond the ‘beastliness’ of the creature before her. I would argue that the true essence of the Beast in this story comes at that moment when he is loved for his internal qualities, and thus his true self, his essence, is revealed. It is this which permits his metamorphosis from his animal form. Upon transformation, the true essence of the male protagonist is revealed and captured. Moreover, he has become Beauty’s equal, both in nature and appearance.

It is the use of aptronyms that further marks the fairy tale genre as being distinct to works of children’s fantasy. This is in contrast to the more common names associated with characters in fantasy and classical works: Alice, Peter, Roger, Harry, and so on. There are exceptions to this, most recently in relation to the protagonist of Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy, Lyra Silvertongue (formerly Belacqua). The name ‘Lyra’ is similar in speech to ‘liar’, and that is what she is – for she lies throughout the trilogy. In addition, she is given the name ‘Silvertongue’ by Iorek Byrnison after deceiving Iofur Raknison, the faux-king of the polar bears. Although more oblique than ‘Snow White’ or ‘Cinderella’, the reader is aware, through the events leading up to the bestowing of the ‘Silvertongue’ moniker, that Lyra has become a synonym for liar, and her aptronym attests to this. The bestowing of an aptronym in fantasy literature is normally reserved for reaching a certain juncture or key moment within the quest narrative as it weaves through the story. This is in contrast to fairy tales where the protagonist begins the tale with their aptronym already established. Furthermore, in fantasy literature, the aptronym is given by a significant other within the tale, and is not necessarily a self-evident title, unlike the physical characteristic aptronyms which permeate fairy tales. One such example occurs in relation to the four Pevensie children in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* once they have been crowned as the kings and queens of Narnia. Thereafter, they are known as Peter the Magnificent; Edmund the Just; Susan the Gentle, and Lucy the Valiant. The adding of these aptronyms to their first names refers to the characters’ earned traits that become evident only after the defeating of the White Witch and the children have

matured into adults whilst in Narnia (even though no explanations for these aptronyms are given within the text). Clearly, when fantasy literature does use aptronyms, it does so as an addition to characters' names which are already established at the onset of the tale, and not as an aptronym in isolation. Fairy tales, by contrast, are composed of characters known mainly by their aptronyms. However, there is still the question of why do fairy tales eschew more familiar conventions when creating characters? Furthermore, what is it about selecting these more descriptive titles that further characterise the genre as being distinct?

Fairy tales can serve many functions, some of these being: didactic, identification, projection, and problem resolution. As the genre was becoming appropriated for children, fairy tales resonated with their new-found audience as the tales allowed for a child to make a personal meaning from the stories they read. Although the genre was not initially aimed toward children, it did find its place within children's literature where a child reading fairy tales was able to derive meaning from the tales. For a child to make a personal meaning from a fairy tale, not only does the tale have to 'speak' to the child, the child has to believe that they can be the protagonist within the tale. By using physical qualities instead of proper names, a fairy tale is able to transport the reader into the tale. This is especially evident when we consider that many adults affectionately refer to their children by such monikers as 'princess' or 'angel'. By refusing to give the protagonists familiar titles, the early adaptors of fairy tales were able to better serve their audience by allowing the transposition of the reader into the story, without any psychological confusion that the tale was indeed about an individual from history or even myth. This, Bettelheim (1976/1991, p. 40) argues, allows for the 'facilitating [of] projections and identifications'. If, as Bettelheim and other psychoanalysts believe, fairy tales serve a function as vehicles for universally encountered problems, then the projection of the reader into the tale requires a generic name for the protagonist. Indeed, there are publishing companies who market fairy tales for 'your child'. In this instance, a person's child can feature as the 'star' of the tale by supplanting the generic name of the protagonist with that of an individual child. Clearly, the fairy tale in question will be a *very* sanitised watered down version of the historic tale. Nonetheless, this is an extension of Bettelheim's projections notion whereby the reader projects themselves into the story replacing the generically named protagonist. Bettelheim (*ibid.*, p. 40) also asserts that 'in fairy stories nobody else has a name'. This lack of naming is not restricted to just the protagonists; parents, witches, antagonists and magical creatures are also named either in terms of their

role or position in relation to the protagonist, or they are given names which reflect their magical abilities. This is especially evident in contemporary animated retellings of fairy tales. The three good fairies in Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) are Fauna, Flora and Merryweather. These names attest to the earthly, Mother Nature, good and pure characters of the fairies. The same is true in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*; the enchanted household objects are named after their new found anthropomorphic function: Cogsworth, has a clock's body and the clock's hands serve as his moustache; Lumiere is the light bearer in the dark castle, and his hands and the top of his head are styled to resemble a candelabra. However, these two characters, and their new magical forms, also serve as plot devices in the breaking of the enchantment placed upon the Beast's household.

As fairy tales deal with problems that are common to all, regardless of age, and are peppered with cautionary warnings and moral decisions, the substitution of common names for physically determined titles permits the reader to use fairy tales as a mechanism for solving the problems that they may encounter. Conversely, if fairy tales did use popular names for their protagonists, then it is likely that a child reader would be less able to identify with the characters. Bound up with this is the manner in which the literary fairy tale positions its reader. By creating a tale that is set outside of time, and, as shall be explained later, anchoring the tale in an imagined non-reality world, the fairy tale frames its reader within the text as they view the text as someone who is required to accept that the story *could* be true, and that they could be the hero of the tale, thus allowing for a greater projection of themselves into the story. However, fantasy literature exists in a believable state, and this is due, in part, to its setting. Child readers today will know that they did not exist in 1911 (as in *Peter Pan*) and did not sample life in London during that time. Fairy tales, however, permit child readers to insert themselves into the story as there is no named place or time. Furthermore, they are able to identify with the hero of the tale as the hero is known by an anronym, something that a child reader could use either self-referentially, or be called by a parent.

As a unique category within literature, fairy tales are also characterised not just by their use of generic protagonists' names, but also by their non-specific settings. By contrast, fantasy literature provides a polarisation to fairy tale settings. Nikolajeva (2000, p. 152) argues that 'the initial setting of fantasy literature is reality', further adding that 'fairy tales take place in one magical world detached from our own'. It is perhaps here that the greatest distinction between fairy tales and adventure/fantasy texts can be seen. Consider Tolkien's *The Hobbit*

(1937) and *The Lord of the Rings*; it is within these books that the reader is introduced to Middle-earth. This is not just one town or village; instead, it is a whole planet that is similar to our earth during the Middle Ages. Each part of Middle-earth is named, and each region has other descriptions which further allude to the topography. To supplement these descriptions there are drawings of the landscape within the books. The same is true for Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* series of books. Here, Narnia is a whole world that is similar in scale and scope to Middle-earth, and, once again, features drawings of the land. Indeed, the settings of secondary worlds in these two collections of stories is a major narrative feature as the wars and struggles that feature throughout them ultimately has the capture of their respective lands as the cause for the quest narrative and the emergence of the protagonists as both heroes, and saviours of their respective worlds. The use of secondary worlds in fantasy literature further adds to their difference from fairy tales, as the fairy tale world is one that is unconnected to reality, and does not require the author to conjure up elaborate descriptions. By contrast, in fantasy fiction, secondary worlds can be close to our own, as in the case of the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, where Lyra's Oxford bears some semblance to Oxford as we know it. Further, as can be seen with *Peter Pan* the action begins in London, and then transfers to Neverland. The transferring of locations within fantasy literature is another defining characteristic of that genre and would serve in establishing a taxonomy of the fantasy corpus. Fairy tales are set in one world, one that is magical and non-specific, thereby allowing for the mapping of the story onto anywhere as the fairy tale world is nowhere, yet it could, indeed, be anywhere. Fantasy stories are, usually, set across two or more worlds where reality and fantasy intersect to nourish a tale that has many inherited aspects of fairy tales, but is not dependent upon these aspects to bring the tale to completion.

Moreover, fairy tales have an economy of language regarding their settings, and typically feature three main settings: woods/forest, castle, and palace. In fairy tales, this is also how the settings are described, in a non-specific fashion. Lüthi (1970, p. 50) attests that "“he entered a great forest” is a set phrase in the fairy tale". The forest is described with such brevity because a fuller description of the forest is unimportant and does not enhance the story; it is only when, and if, the individual nature of the forest is important to the narrative that fairy tales expand upon their initial descriptions of places. This is juxtaposed with the generic protagonists' names contained within the tales. Such economy of language further allows for the reader to identify with the story and project themselves into the tale. The woods in 'Snow

White' could be woods anywhere; the same is true of the castle in 'Beauty and the Beast'; it could be any castle. The child reader is allowed to imagine that the castle they see in the distance *could* contain a prince, or a beast, and that the cottage within the woods *does* have seven little men living there. It is the setting of the tale in an imagined world detached from reality that accounts for a tale as belonging to the fairy tale corpus. Of particular note are the forests/woods in fairy tales, which often have the motif of being places of danger for the tales' characters. In 'Little Red Riding Hood' the path to grandmother's house takes our protagonist through the forest where she encounters the Wolf who later plots to devour her; Snow White is taken into the woods to be executed by the huntsman; the house of the Witch in 'Hansel and Gretel' is deep within the woods. Fantasy literature has the reverse use of the woods/forests; in *The Lord of the Rings*, Fangorn Forest is home to the ancient 'ents', trees that are able to walk and talk, and who serve a redemptive role within the tale; the same is true of the woods in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* where the good natured fawn Mr. Tumnus befriends Lucy Pevensie. When the protagonists within these two tales first encounter these fantastic and supernatural beings, they are somewhat taken aback and startled by the possibility that such creatures exist. This is in opposition to similar encounters in the fairy tale realm: Red Riding Hood is unfazed by a wolf that can speak; Beauty's father is not terrified by a beast that can speak, but by the presence and form of the Beast; a giant at the top of the beanstalk is no surprise to Jack. Such magical events are taken as a necessary part of the story, owing to their magical setting in a world that is not our own.

By contrast, the use of magic in fantasy literature is often rooted in the pseudo-scientific and logical. In *The Lord of the Rings*, victory over Sauron can only be accomplished by throwing the One Ring back into the fire from where it was cast. This is a logical, magical element: Sauron's life and spirit are bound up with the ring; the ring needs to be melted by intense heat, and only Mount Doom, the domain of Sauron, is capable of providing the necessary fire to dissolve the ring. Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy also utilises scientific principles and theories when operating magic within the tales. As Wood (2006, p. 90) acknowledges 'it [His Dark Materials] mines religious thought from the Gnostics, philosophical concepts from Plato, and parallel universes from string theory and other cutting-edge scientific thought'. The use of such sophisticated fringe-science theories is something that would not be in keeping with the fairy tale 'style'. Certainly, the use of string theory to account for the multiple dimensions or worlds that Lyra and Will are able to travel to is something that is not

normalised by the protagonists. Even though the knife that makes possible inter-dimensional travel becomes an instrument for the completion of the quest narrative within the trilogy, it is still seen as something that is ‘other worldly’ and is in keeping with the setting of fantasy literature in secondary worlds. By contrast, the fairy tale world *does* normalise the magical within the tales. If we were to encounter a talking wolf in our own real world, we would view it as something magical and supernatural, and, more pertinently, impossible. However, in the fairy tale world, these occurrences are normalised and accepted without question.

The succinctness of language when describing fairy tale settings further focuses the tale, and its inherent motifs as being the defining characteristics of the story and to be the principal focal points for the reader. This is in contrast with fantasy literature which heavily features location as one of the principal motifs within the tale: Narnia, Middle-Earth, Neverland. These are locations that serve not just as tale settings, but also as essential ingredients to the quest narrative, and its successful completion.

Bound up within fantasy literature narratives is the idea of location being used as one of the key defining aspects of a particular tale. However, fairy tale literature is classified by its refusal to anchor the tale in a specific locale, or time. The concise use of language when dealing with settings within the fairy tale canon further points back to their archaic origins, and frames the tale in a magical world away from reality; fantasy literature approaches its own versions of reality by locating the tale initially in the real world. Thus the aforementioned *Peter Pan* commences in Edwardian London, and *The Lion The Witch and The Wardrobe* is initially set in mid-war London. The events that unfold in these fantastic narratives draw upon advances in the natural sciences that were popular during the inception of the genre during the nineteenth century. In this respect, fantasy literature is a relatively modern genre, which is perhaps more akin to science fiction² than it is to fairy tales. Zipes (2002, p. 125) foregrounds the idea of fantasy and science fiction being literary relations. However, he also injects fairy tales into the mix, and fuses the terms together as he labels the 1977 film *Star Wars* as ‘a science fiction film which relies basically on a fairy tale plot to satisfy the outer space fantasies of a general audience’. For a scholar of Zipes’ renown, I find it hard to believe that he classes *Star Wars* as evolving from a fairy tale plot, and that he labels it as a fairy tale film. Perhaps even more disturbing is the fact that Zipes does not refer back to his ‘general audience’ and instead focuses on the American public who have had their confidence in democracy rocked by various political scandals, scandals which he lays firmly

at the feet of capitalism, which, once again, is commensurate with other works by Zipes, as the majority of his works contain ‘a strong undercurrent of post-Marxist ideology’ (Orejuela, 2003, p. 498). If Zipes were to classify the fairy tale genre not only according to the three *key* narrative strands that I have previously discussed, but also according to other narrative devices when compared to other genres: brevity of language, non-specific settings, non-specific characters, and the once upon a time opening, then he would have arrived at the conclusion that *Star Wars* is a fantasy based science fiction film. It contains detailed secondary worlds; the characters are named and have certain personality traits that are unique to them; the film is concerned with aspects of modernity (namely the science aspect) and, finally, the film was envisioned as part of a six movie series. Fairy tales do not have prequels and sequels. They are complete stories in themselves (although Disney have made *Cinderella 2* and *3*, two *Beauty and the Beast* spin offs, and two *Aladdin* sequels, these are just extensions from their earlier literary translations, and exist as stand-alone tales).

To conclude on the economy of language within fairy tales, this is not just concerned with their descriptions of settings, or of the characters within the tales; rather it is the ‘fairy tale style, which, in a few well-chosen words, merely suggests the sequence of events, and which has a preference for action rather than lengthy descriptions’ (Lüthi, 1970, p. 28). Thus, the fairy tale cuts to the heart of the action and directs the reader to what is important – the central narratives. This is something that is to be expected of a genre that can trace its origins back to the oral telling of stories in local communities; a lengthy description of additional information would have been inappropriate and would have diminished the reception of the tales.

In addition to fairy tales being universally known for their ‘once upon a time’ opening, they are also known for their satisfying conclusion. “And they lived happily ever after” is the final stylistic device that sets the fairy tale apart from all other literary genres. Rarely does a fairy tale end unhappily; it is the completion of one of the three key narrative strands that are common to all tales within the canon that makes possible the happy ending. As the romance and quest narratives are often intertwined, the completion of one usually results in the completion of the other. Furthermore, as these two themes are inherent in the majority of fairy tales, it is only natural that a happy ending should ensue when they are resolved. By returning to their historic oral origins, a rebarbative ending would have had an effect on the longevity of the tale and such a tale may have faded into obscurity. Further, as a genre that

was sanitised and then appropriated for children, there needed to be a happy ending, especially if fairy tales were to serve a moralising purpose. However, the happy ending is often only reserved for the protagonist, and not for other characters within the story. For instance, the Grimms' version of 'Cinderella' concludes with doves pecking out the eyes of Cinderella's stepsisters; it is Perrault's version that has the more forgiving ending. As stories that are complete and, unlike lots of fantasy literature, are not in need of sequels, fairy tales need a resolution to the tale, and a satisfying conclusion where the protagonists find happiness and a completion of their quest. By comparison, tales based upon myths, including classical quest narratives, which, by their very nature, are based upon belief, often end tragically, as is the case of Achilles in *The Illiad*, and Lyra and Will's romance in *His Dark Materials*.

Within the fairy tale corpus, there are those tales which possess the majority, or even all of the prototypical characteristics that I have elucidated upon. However, there are also those tales which may only possess a few of the structures that define the fairy tale genre. Of particular note are the tales of Hans Christian Andersen. Andersen's tales are of interest as the majority of them do not end happily, nor do they begin with "once upon a time". However, they do adhere to some of the other elements that characterise fairy tales: the magical; a quest narrative; metamorphosis; non-specific settings; the use of aptronyms and an economic use of language. Granted, tales such as 'The Red Shoes' do begin "once upon a time", and 'The Snow Queen' does have a happy ending, but the majority of Andersen's tales do not feature these 'traditional' fairy tale structures. Due to the unconventional nature of his tales, it may be argued that Andersen's tales are perhaps more akin to folk tales than they are to fairy tales. They are often pessimistic and unforgiving in the treatment of the protagonists; they are located in barren landscapes, which are often reflective of the vast unpopulated areas of Scandinavia. They also feature elements of Norse mythology and folk culture, such as the occurrence of trolls. These are creatures that feature in one of the most popular stories for children in Scandinavia: the Moomin troll tales, and are a staple of folk literature based upon Norse mythology. Also, many of Andersen's tales eschew the use of magic, further moving them toward folk tale status.

Even though Andersen's tales do not feature all of the set structures that characterise the fairy tale genre, they are still classified as fairy tales; this points to a need for a greater understanding of how tales as diverse as 'Sleeping Beauty' and 'The Red Shoes' can both

belong to the same literary stable. It is here that I would suggest that fairy tales exist on a continuum. At one end of this continuum are tales by writers such as Andersen, whose tales may include certain of the prototypical characteristics of the genre. At the other are the more conventional fairy tales which encapsulate all of the structures, elements and conventions previously referred to. In between this are those tales which possess certain characteristics, but embellish others. One such example of a prototypical fairy tale is the Grimms' 'Little Red Cap'. The tale begins "once upon a time" (trans. Tatar, 1999, p. 13); the protagonist is given an aptronym which alludes to her appearance; there is the magical element of a talking wolf; Red Cap is on a quest to reach her grandmother's house; grandmother's house is through the woods; the Wolf figuratively changes into grandmother, fulfilling the metamorphosis aspect that is inherent in fairy tales; there is the completion of the quest, and Red Cap goes home cheerfully at the end. These elements within the story are *the* defining structures of a prototypical fairy tale. By contrast, Andersen's 'The Little Match Girl' opens with a description of the weather, a description which captures the harshness of winter. Other fairy tales do not feature such an evocative description of natural conditions, if, indeed, they do feature any reference at all. However, the story does feature other elements that are firmly rooted in the fairy tale canon: the match girl is not named, further signalling the tale's place within the fairy tale corpus; the setting of the tale is on an unnamed street in an unnamed town. This is in keeping with the deliberate vagueness of settings that are a feature within all fairy tales. The quest narrative that runs through the tale is one of survival against the harsh, bleak winter; through continually lighting matches, the little girl attempts to keep warm. However, her quest is unsuccessful and she is found dead in the morning. The death of the protagonist is a rare occurrence within fairy tales. However, it is a plot device that Andersen uses in this and other tales and does so in place of 'happily ever after'. Death in Andersen's tales usually involves the metamorphosis aspect of fairy tales, but in a spiritual guise. The replacement of pagan supernatural elements of magic by Christian spiritual ones is a common theme in European literary fairy tales, especially those by Andersen as they allow for some sense of hope at the end of the tales. Thus, the Little Match Girl ascends to heaven, as, too, does the heroine in 'The Little Mermaid'. However, the Mermaid's metamorphosis involves a period of waiting before entering heaven's kingdom as there are tasks that have to be fulfilled whilst in the spirit realm, the occurrence of which will either shorten or lengthen her time waiting³. The magic or enchanted aspect of 'The Little Match Girl' is incorporated with the appearing of the grandmother, although this is to facilitate the change that is needed for the

match girl to die and be transformed into a spirit, it is still a needed narrative device that allows for the quest completion. Added to this is the economic use of language which characterises Andersen's tales. Even though certain of Andersen's tales are quite lengthy compared to tales by other writers, they still retain an economic use of language in both their settings and descriptions of those settings; this further affords them a place within the fairy tale canon, and not within other literary genres.

The fairy tale continuum allows for the defining and delimiting of the genre. Furthermore, it provides a framework by which one is able to posit a definition of the canon, a definition that is not based upon theoretical approaches or biased psychoanalytic readings by which fairy tales can be neatly ascribed to categories according to their effects on readers. The continuum approach examines fairy tales according to both intrinsic features, such as aspects of style, recurrent motifs and narrative devices, as well as extrinsic features, such as their ability to 'speak to' the concerns of people in different historical and cultural settings. As can be seen, a fairy tale does not necessarily have to feature all of the elements that are found within prototypical fairy tales, such as 'Little Red Riding Hood'. However, it must retain the two key motifs of magic and metamorphosis and some of the conventions that are found within the tales. Of special note is the use of aptronyms and generic role names; this is a device that recurs throughout not just the French and Germanic classic tales, but also those by writers such as Andersen. Such is the association of aptronyms as a fairy tale convention that the myriad retellings that exist of any fairy tale always retain the use of aptronyms when describing the eponymous protagonist. However, certain of Andersen's tales, for example, 'The Snow Queen', do feature names of significant characters. This does not negate their place as fairy tales, it merely affords them a different place on the fairy tale continuum.

The nature of fairy tales is thus bound up with magic, transformation and an underlying quest narrative, all of which are framed by a relatively strict adherence to set conventions and structures. The characters and the method of enchantment may change. However, there will *always* be these three *key* strands to any fairy tale, and it is perhaps because of these three central elements that fairy tales are popular with, and speak to, both children and adults. Certainly, the popular reception of literary fairy tales since their inception in the seventeenth century up to their prominence in bookshops today, further attests to their longevity as a genre within children's literature. Bettelheim (1976/1990, p. 57) argues that 'the fairy tale has

a consistent structure with a definite beginning and a plot that moves toward a satisfying solution that is reached at the end'. I am in agreement here with Bettelheim, and would argue that this structure includes the following: an economic use of language; non-specific characters; non-specific settings, and the three *key* narrative strands previously referred to. Furthermore, there is also the 'once upon a time' opening, and the satisfying 'happily ever after' conclusion to the tale that are *the* defining characteristics of prototypical fairy tales, characteristics which set fairy tales apart from every other literary genre. This is true despite the fact that other genres may borrow *topoi* from fairy tales and use them as superficial plot devices. For fairy tales, these plot devices form the fabric of the tale and have allowed fairy tales to forge their own individual identity as distinct literary entities.

1.2 Linking chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis

This thesis is concerned with two interrelated areas: establishing a definition of fairy tales and then using this definition to provide a close reading of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* as a direct response to the comments levelled at the film by fairy tale scholar and critic Jack Zipes. At first glance, there may not appear to be such a close link between these two areas. However, in order to fully respond to Zipes' polemic stance toward Disney's film, there has to be a clear understanding of the reasons why Zipes castigates *Snow White* and, indeed, all of Disney's fairy tale films. Furthermore, it is good academic practice to define the object that one is working with and, as I shall be working with *Snow White* throughout chapter two, it is imperative that I have a clear understanding of the genre that the film belongs to. Moreover, the positing of a clear definition of the genre is something that has been missing from academic studies within this field and previous attempts by scholars such as Zipes and Crago have failed to distance themselves from their respective ideological viewpoint, thereby resulting in either a socio-historicist or a psychoanalytic based definition.

Zipes is an admirer of Germanic literary fairy tales, most notably the works of the Grimms. Furthermore, Zipes affords the Grimms such a privileged place within the fairy tale canon that attempts by other tellers to add their own inflection to the tales as they provide their own versions of well-known fairy tales often leads to Zipes excoriating their efforts. Such is the case with Disney's *Snow White*; Zipes' myopic stance and partial reading of the film centres upon deviance from the literary tale. In Zipes' reading of the film, comparisons are made

against the Grimms' tale, and how 'the changes made by Disney endowed the film with an entirely different meaning' (Zipes, 2002, p. 127). Moreover, Zipes comments that Disney's fairy tale adaptations 'smash the aura of heritage' (Zipes, 1999, p. 342). This heritage, Zipes argues, is fixed in the literary tales and any attempt to provide an alternative retelling of the tales, especially by Disney, is almost sacrilegious.

Zipes approaches his reading of Disney's films from a fidelity perspective; he is concerned with how unfaithful the films are when compared to the literary text which he, incorrectly, assumes is the *sole* inspiration for Disney's film version of a given tale. A fidelity criticism approach blinkers Zipes to any merits that films, such as *Snow White*, may possess. Nonetheless, it is this approach to the films that Zipes engages in and, in so doing, has led to him, when discussing *Cinderella*, commenting that the [Disney] Corporation has 'Americanised' the Grimms' tale (Zipes, 1988, p. 24). Zipes also takes his criticism further when he argues that Disney's films are a 'violation' of literary fairy tales (Zipes, 1999, p. 353). Such comments would lead me to conclude that Zipes does not regard Disney's fairy tale films as fairy tales. Instead, Zipes has reduced Disney's fairy tale adaptations to little more than a 'bastard offspring' of the genre.

However, does *Americanising* a literary fairy tale make it any less of a fairy tale? Zipes certainly believes so and his arguments concerning *Snow White* seek to confer on the film a place that lies outside of the fairy tale canon. In order to fully answer this, there needs to be a clear understanding of the elements that coincide to class a tale as a fairy tale, regardless of its method of transmission. Chapter one of this thesis has established that there are three key elements that all fairy tales possess: a quest narrative, often in a romantic form; the recurring motif of magic; finally, the use of metamorphosis as a plot device. In addition, there are other set conventions that coincide to further designate a tale as a fairy tale. These conventions are: an economy of language; the use of aptronyms for the characters; formulaic openings and satisfying endings; non-specific settings and a lack of mimesis. Although I have argued that not all fairy tales possess every one of these characteristics, they will still contain some of them. It is here that Disney's *Snow White* finds its place within the fairy tale genre: it is a tale which possesses the three key elements previously mentioned, and it also contains the additional elements that characterise prototypical fairy tales. Regardless of the embellishments, extensions and truncations that Disney included in his film when comparing

fidelity to the Grimms' text, *Snow White* is rightly classed as a fairy tale, irrespective of Zipes' reading of the tale.

If *Snow White* does indeed possess the characteristics that permit it to be classified as a fairy tale, then Zipes' reading of the tale as an aberration of the genre can be responded to by approaching Disney's film from the same perspective as one would approach any other version of a fairy tale: by judging the film on its own merits as a *version* of a literary tale, something that chapter two engages with.

It is by approaching *Snow White* as a fairy tale, and understanding the structures that coincide to classify a tale as a fairy tale that the link between chapters one and two of this thesis are to be found. Chapter one posited a clear taxonomy of the fairy tale genre, a taxonomy which delimits the genre, and is, largely, free from an ideological perspective, such as the commodity-driven, post-Marxist perspective adopted by Zipes. Furthermore, some of Zipes' comments regarding *Snow White* began to be presented during this chapter and are responded to when providing a definition of fairy tales, and the place that Disney's fairy tale films can occupy within the genre.

Chapter two provides a close reading of *Snow White* and continues to respond to comments made by Zipes concerning the film's meaning and the intentions of both Disney the man, and the Disney Corporation when producing the film. The close reading of the film looks at the merits of Disney's *Snow White* and elucidates upon the production processes, innovative use of technology, adoption of new animation techniques, and the multimodal nature of the film and its ability to utilise cognitive processes to render meaning and produce pleasure. Also within this chapter, the source of Disney's inspiration for his version of the Snow White tale is explored; such an exploration is needed to further respond to Zipes' comments in chapter one regarding the changes that Disney made to the Grimms' tale.

To conclude, responding to the comments of Jack Zipes permeate this thesis and provide the link between the two sections. Chapter one responds to Zipes' homogenisation of Disney's fairy tale films and his apparent exclusion of *Snow White* from the fairy tale corpus owing to its lack of fidelity to the Grimms' text. Furthermore, Zipes' socio-historicist definition of fairy tales is responded to by my positing of a new, content-focused definition which approaches the genre by the structures that comprise the tales. Finally, chapter two, as a close reading, directly responds to Zipes' arguments concerning *Snow White* and provides an

alternative, more nuanced reading of the film, one which focuses on the merits of *Snow White*, its fidelity to the set conventions that characterise the genre as outlined in chapter one, and its ability to induce feelings of pleasure and wonder in the viewer, despite Zipes regarding them as little more than passive dupes.

End notes

1. Although the title of this work alludes to folk tales, and not to fairy tales, Propp (1968/2005, p. 19) states that ‘this work is dedicated to the study of fairy tales’.
2. Science fiction is akin to fantasy literature as both genres possess similar *topoi*, such as detailed secondary worlds, the use of magical devices and the supernatural, such as *Star Wars*’ the Force. As science fiction demonstrates the use of science in a futuristic sense, so fantasy literature, as commented on, uses a form of pseudo-science to assist in achieving the completion of the narrative.
3. The waiting to enter heaven by the Mermaid is akin to the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory; a state whereby souls must wait and ‘purify’ themselves before they are deemed holy enough to enter heaven.

2. Reading *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*

2.1 Zipes' comments and the production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*

Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) has attracted a plethora of literary criticism since its release. However, the majority of criticism has been less than favourable towards what was an august moment in animation and film. Criticism has ranged from the psychosexual motifs contained within the narrative, as popularised by psychoanalysts, of whom Bettelheim is widely regarded to be the most influential, to post-Marxist commentary by critics such as Zipes. However, there has been a dearth of criticism which has sought to provide a multimodal textual analysis of the narrative whilst locating the tale within the social milieu which helped to construct the narrative that Disney was proud to label as *Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. It is my intention to provide a close reading of the film and to approach it with a focus on the zeitgeist which allowed Walt Disney to fashion the tale to appeal to the American public. It is also my intention to engage in applying the area of cognitive poetics to my reading of the film. Furthermore, I shall also address the production merits of the film, as being the herald of a sea-change in animation production, with a focus on the narrative form of the film as a multimodal production. Finally, the overwhelming majority of criticism of the tale has sought to denigrate Disney (both man and corporation) and the film itself as being reinforcers of a patriarchal order and, more pertinently, as focusing on the cross-pollination of merchandise at the expense of narrative form and characterisation. However, I shall be arguing that such dismissive criticism does not do justice to the film's merits, and that *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is capable of transcending the myopic reading that Zipes affords all of Disney's animated fairy tales. Moreover, Zipes' comment that Disney films are simply 'commodities' (Zipes, 1999, p. 353) is unfounded with respect to this particular feature, however true it may or may not appear to be when one applies a post-Marxist reading to more contemporary Disney productions.

As perhaps the best known and most prolific critic of fairy tales, Jack Zipes is rightly acknowledged for furthering an understanding into the academic nature and historical contextualising of the fairy tale genre. His books have ranged from topics such as the works of the Grimms, the fairy tale industry and theoretical approaches to fairy tales. However, even though his work has been spread across numerous areas within this literary genre, there is one constant that remains pervasive through all of his works: his denigration of Disney's

animated fairy tale adaptations. So persuasive is Zipes' condemnation of these films that his thinking and views have successfully been carried forward by other critics who continue to perpetuate Zipes' ideological stance. This stance is one that is based upon both post-modern and post-Marxist theory. Thus, Orejuela (2003, p. 498) avers that within Zipes' works there is 'a strong undercurrent of Marxist ideology'. It is Zipes' refusal to shift from this stance that has led to his failure to look at each Disney film as a separate entity and, instead, he has homogenised all of the fairy tale animations produced by the company and declares that 'all Disney fairy tale films are alike' (Zipes 1997, p. 90). Furthermore, so strong is Zipes' post-Marxist stance that he labels the films as 'commodities' (Zipes, 1999, p. 353). However, as I shall propose, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is far from a 'capitalist commodity' production, as Zipes would have us believe, and, instead, was a vehicle for Disney to showcase what animation could be like and that any financial association was to further the medium of animation, and not to simply accrue wealth. Furthermore, Disney's productions, as I shall expand upon, appeal to the 'working man' of American society. As Brode (2004, p. 28) notes: 'the wide range of Disney films strongly appeals to the Jungian myth pool of our collective unconscious and speaks directly to the post-Marxist proletariat'.

Zipes does not ever concede any merits to these film adaptations of fairy tales by Disney; he castigates Disney himself for using his name as forming part of the title of those films that he was directly responsible for overseeing and takes him to task for the characterisation that occurs in the films. However, Zipes has only presented one side of an argument regarding Disney films, and, in particular, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. It is now my intention to directly answer Zipes' comments and to provide a much-needed alternative reading of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, a reading which will further study and discussion in this academic field through offering up a more nuanced view of a film which has been heralded as 'a significant screen innovation which has charmed millions and pioneered a great new entertainment field for the motion picture cartoon' (Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 1938).

The source material for Walt Disney's version of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was the Grimms' version of the tale, a fact that Disney acknowledges during the opening credits of the film. However, the marketing campaign for the film utilised the title of *Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The purpose behind this was twofold. Firstly, Walt Disney productions were well known in America and had received both popular and

commercial acclaim, thanks to the success of the 1930s *Silly Symphonies* range of cartoon shorts. Some of the latter were based upon more traditional folk and fairy tales, including ‘The Three Little Pigs’; ‘Little Red Riding Hood’; ‘The Tortoise and the Hare’, and *Mother Goose Melodies*. The success of these musical animations enabled Disney to build upon an already existing fan base gleaned thanks to the blossoming popularity of Mickey Mouse. By ensuring that the Disney name was permeated through all of the advertising and marketing of the film, he was able to maximise potential income from the film through a product placement strategy, with Walt Disney himself as the product. The early 1930s had seen Disney emerge as both storyteller and animator, able to enchant audiences with his short cartoons based upon such popular tales as *Puss in Boots* (1922) and *The Three Little Pigs* (1933). Of particular note is *The Three Little Pigs*; the release of this film was at a time when the ‘big bad wolf’ of corporate America was rearing its ugly head with the Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression claiming both jobs and lives. The idea that the wolf, as symbolic of both unemployment and greedy fat cats within the financial world, being out to get the average man as displayed by the helpless pigs, resonated with a country that was in the midst of an economic crisis. The pigs were also suitably attired to represent the average American worker, one was in a police/military type uniform, another was a manual labourer dressed in overalls, and the third wears a chef’s hat. In *The Big Bad Wolf* (1934) the viewers are introduced to Little Red Riding Hood. In this tale, the three little pigs are also featured and they encounter Red Riding Hood and promise to save her from “the big bad wolf”. This intertextuality appealed to a public already familiar with both the tale of the pigs and Red Riding Hood herself.

The need to protect the young and innocent from the pitfalls of a crumbling financial system could be seen as an attempt by Disney to lambast the capitalist nature of 1930s America, and instead to promote an alternative, an alternative which *Snow White* was to later capture and portray. However, it would be remiss of me to ignore the fact that Disney and his studio were part of the capitalist system, and it may be argued that the images and messages contained within the *Silly Symphonies* cartoons were an appeal to populism and constituted little more than a sales pitch. Whilst this may have some truth to it, owing to the implication of Disney within the capitalist system, there is no denying that the messages contained within these cartoons were decidedly anti-capitalist and attacked corporate America and her values. Conversely, Zipes’ rhetoric firmly accuses Disney, both as an individual, and together with

his company, as being not just advocates of capitalism, but staunch perpetrators of capitalist ideology and thinking. An uncritical adherence to a capitalist ideology would have been at odds with Disney's status as the son of a working class immigrant. Disney's father, Elias, was a working man, both as a prospective gold seeker, and later as a farmer. The plight of the common working class man was a theme to feature heavily in Disney's early productions, due, in part, to Disney's firsthand experience of life in an often impoverished household. Brode (2004, p. 28) comments on Elias being a socialist and that he advised his son about the dangers of pursuing money as an end in itself, and as something to be worshipped. He suggested instead that it was better to make money to survive than to chase after it to excess. Brode (*ibid.*, p. 28) further adds that '[Walt Disney] despised America's money culture and the mindless conformity it engendered'. With this in mind, Disney was firmly against endorsing capitalism in *Snow White* and his earlier productions. Indeed, he often mocks the pursuit of capitalism through clever narrative and dialogue, a theme that is also, somewhat ironically, portrayed through contemporary Disney films such as *Wall-E* (2008). By visually representing the plight of the average American, Disney was allying himself with the majority of the population, something which he had already done by rising from poor beginnings to become both successful and moderately wealthy, thereby encapsulating the American Dream, albeit in a limited form prior to *Snow White*. By continuing the trend of labelling his productions under his own name, Disney ensured his special place in the hearts of Middle Americans, as he sought to promote himself as a man who was *of* the people and that his productions were *for* the people. However, merely catering to the needs of the people was not the sole reason for the messages and images that dominated Disney's cartoons, such a strategy made good commercial sense too, something which is still in evidence today as the very name 'Disney' predicates that any associated products are 'safe' for all, especially children, and are devoid of any sexual or overtly realistic violent characteristics.

By drawing upon his name as a marketing tool, Walt Disney was actively trying to ensure that his three year mammoth undertaking in creating the world's first full length animated feature was going to be commercially successful upon its release. This is not a business tactic that is attributable to Disney productions alone; it is a strategy used by all film makers and production companies to generate interest in a new product by evoking feelings of nostalgia for past productions. However, Zipes (1999, p. 342) does not accept this reading, and, instead, criticises Disney for using his image, which 'totally dominates the screen'. Zipes

goes even further and accuses Disney of using the image of his name to ‘smash the aura of heritage’. Problematically, Zipes does not fully engage with what he means by ‘heritage’. If he is referring to the earlier literary versions of the tales, such as the Grimms’ version of ‘Snow White’, then he ignores the fact that their version was an amalgamation of tales told orally to them, juxtaposed with their numerous versions of a tale which they had to sanitise and reshape to suit both their and Germany’s need to establish a cultural historical identity. The same is true of Perrault’s tales, which were continually refined to sit better with bourgeois readers in French salons. If it is true that Walt Disney did set out to smash the ‘aura of heritage’ then it is counterproductive to give credit during the opening segments of *Snow White* to the Grimms’ tale as being the source material, a theme that is repeated with the acknowledgement of Perrault’s tale as the source for the Disney version of *Cinderella*, something that escapes Zipes as he comments that the [Disney] Corporation has ‘Americanised’ the Grimms’ tale (Zipes, 1988, p. 24). This is a rather alarming error on Zipes’ part and casts doubt on his reading of Disney’s production of *Perrault’s* tale. Disney, once again, draws upon the Grimms for his version of *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), and, once more, acknowledges their literary tale during the opening credits. With this evidence, it is hard to establish quite how Disney, and Walt Disney as auteur during the production of these three fairy tale adaptations, has tried to ‘smash the aura of heritage’. I would argue that Zipes has been somewhat unduly critical in dismissing Disney’s marketing strategy and personal pride in his creation of a new feature-length medium as a deliberate ploy to supplant the literary writers of fairy tales and to foreground himself as the ‘creator’ of the tales. Furthermore, by adding his name to a tale, such as ‘Snow White’, is Disney not just replicating what writers such as the Grimms, Straparola and Perrault did years before?

By using his own name in all of the marketing and production work for the film, Disney became a logo, a logo which was later, and even today, is used to evoke feelings of pastiche and nostalgia:

A logo is something like the synthesis of an advertising image and a brand name; better still, it is a brand name which has been transformed into an image, a sign or emblem which carries the memory of a whole tradition of earlier advertisements within itself in a well-nigh intertextual way.

(Jameson, 1991, p. 85)

The logo of Walt Disney, which still pervades all Disney merchandise and films today, was one that sought to carry through the memory of the *Silly Symphonies* cartoons into this new production that Disney had spent three years working on. Viewers were already familiar with Disney productions and, by using his name as a logo, it was likely that Disney was able to ‘tap’ into an already established market of cinema goers. This, in turn, assisted with the probability of the film becoming a financial success, something it was, as it grossed over \$8 million at the American box office. Ensuring that the film was commercially successful was paramount in Disney’s strategy for developing his studio and being financially able to develop other tales for transmission as feature-length animations. However, there is no doubt that, today, the Disney name is used by the company as part of a marketing strategy, and a powerful one it is, too. Disney, as a company, is the largest entertainment conglomerate in the world and its merchandise is cross-pollinated to areas as diverse as ice cream and pizzas in supermarkets, to computer games and singing toothbrushes, but Disney did not seek to diffuse his name across these consumer driven areas. He was simply interested in making a production that would revolutionise the world’s idea of what animation could be. I agree with Jameson’s comments that brand names are used in an ‘intertextual way’ (*ibid.*, p. 85) and that this intertextuality can be disseminated across a myriad of product outputs, but I do not believe that it was Disney’s desire to use his name as an intertextual marketing ploy. The 1930s were times of economic thrift, and the availability of funds for parents to spend on toys and movie tie-in merchandise, would have been seen as frivolous in such times. Furthermore, the consumer market was markedly different in the 1930s than it is today. There were tie-ins and products available for purchase in connection with *Snow White*, but these were [mainly] limited to figures, dolls (made by both Disney and other companies, such as Chad Valley for the UK market), games, such as bagatelle, and other usable merchandise, like painted cups. Disney movie-themed merchandise today is aimed at both lower end consumers and high end collectors. Along with these two different strata are the types of products that are available for purchase: books, clothes, confectionary, timepieces, key-rings, make-up, toiletries, toys, games, dolls, figurines, movie cells, posters, and the list goes on. The market conditions of the 1930s were not the same as the ones that prevail in the post-modern capitalist society that we live in today. Indeed, the revenue generated from merchandise today accounts for a large proportion of a film’s potential return from the initial investment on its production. However, with *Snow White*, Disney had to be sure that the film itself was commercially successful, irrespective of any accompanying tie-ins. If the film were to ‘sink’ at the box office, it would

spell the end of the feature-length animated film market and Disney would have been left with crippling debts that would have, no doubt, shut his animation studio down, and have prevented any future investors from being prepared to invest in a medium that, despite being carefully planned, crafted and developed, had fallen at the first hurdle. However, the unmediated pursuit of capitalism was far removed from Disney's ideology regarding money as he declared:

...money is something I understand only vaguely, and think about it only when I do not have enough to finance my current enthusiasm, whatever it may be... I have little respect for money as such; I regard it as a medium for financing new ideas.

(Smith, 2001, p. 70)

If Disney himself viewed money as a necessary factor only to further his pursuit of pushing the envelope in animation, and of fostering his own passions within the medium, I find it hard to understand how one could reach such a homogenising conclusion that Disney's films are capitalist tales. If Disney did indeed have such a disdain for money and the pursuit of financial gains in themselves, then surely, as auteur, his productions would be reflective of his own beliefs.

Of course, it is entirely likely that Zipes would argue that Walt's use of his name as the logo for the film, and himself becoming the 'product' would be indicative of the capitalist nature of Disney, and that Walt Disney would be seeking to control consumer tastes and embed a consumer ideology into child audiences to create a generation of consumers who could all worship at the shrine of Disney. Indeed, Zipes does aver that Disney's fairy tale films care little about narrative or form, but are the result of 'wanting to control children's aesthetic interests and consumer tastes' (Zipes, 1997, p. 91). This is extremely myopic of Zipes: the complete homogenisation and reduction of an entire catalogue of productions, numerous of which have been honoured with Academy Awards and other notable critical acclaim, is something that a critic like Zipes should not be so quick to engage in. It is true that the Disney Corporation, as a megalithic producer of popular culture, are unrivalled in western society and that they do influence societal trends, even controlling them to some degree, but to argue that Disney's fairy tale films were made for the 'sake of promoting the Disney label' (*ibid.*, p. 92) is to deny the films their right as works of art and as indicators of the social zeitgeist,

something that Perrault and the Grimms sought to identify with when they wrote their *versions* of fairy tales. Of particular note are the comments of Bell, Haas and Sells (1995, p. 5) who argue against the complete homogenising and denigration of Disney films by claiming that ‘when all Disney texts are read as political, intentional and hegemonic, cultural critics totalize and, ultimately reify Disney’s corporate acumen and ingenious ability to keep a finger on the pulse of America’. Of course, it is possible that Zipes may argue that the ability to ‘keep a finger on the pulse of America’ is just what Disney was seeking to do to further his own controlling desires and commodity driven corporate strategy. However, Bell, Haas and Sells (*ibid.*, p. 5) further add that such ‘reification robs Disney texts of their very material relations and political realities of their production’. It is with ‘political realities of their production’ that Zipes’ readings of the films are somewhat ignorant; he does not acknowledge that Disney films reflect cultural trends or even societal wishes and desires. Sartre (1948/1993, p. 53) counters this by claiming that ‘by choosing his reader, the author chooses his subject’. By choosing *Snow White*, Walt Disney was able to choose a tale that best reflected the zeitgeist during the economic crisis of the 1930s. This is at odds with Zipes’ comments regarding how Disney films are only concerned with ‘controlling consumer tastes’ (Zipes, 1997, p. 91). Indeed, as shall be seen, Disney (both Walt Disney and the corporation) ably demonstrate their acumen at providing tales which are not only representative of cultural concerns, but of producing tales that ‘speak’ to their audience.

There can be no doubt that fairy tales follow a set pattern and are composed of similar elements, as outlined by Propp and his structuralist approach to the genre, and that Disney’s fairy tale films continue the set pattern of the literary tales upon which they are based, but there are changes in ideology, stance and cultural perspective in the films, and these changes are clearly evident when comparing them chronologically.

In addition, Zipes (2002, p. 20) declares that ‘the manipulation of fairy tale images and plots [through the mass-mediated fairy tale when compared to oral narratives] should not be considered as some kind of a sinister conspiracy on the part of big business and government’. This appears to be in opposition to his earlier claim that the Corporation are ‘wanting to control consumer tastes’ (Zipes, 1997, p. 91) The polarised treatment which Zipes directs towards Disney when he castigates their productions compared with the softer, almost apologetic tone that he assumes when looking at the early writers of fairy tales is indeed reductive and does not advance any cogent discussion on the relative merits of Disney’s fairy

tale adaptations, nor does he deal with the ‘artistic licence’ employed by the early bourgeois writers of fairy tales when they embellished, modified and sanitised the oral tales to suit their purpose in the same manner as he does with the Corporation.

It would be remiss of me to ignore the fact that Walt Disney did utilise merchandise to further the profitability of the film. However, this was only one aspect of what he was attempting to achieve with *Snow White*, and it is certainly far removed from Zipes’ comments referring back to the early Disney film adaptations when he posits that:

There was very little difference in emphasis then, as now, between a Disney plate, watch, t-shirt, cap or amusement park filled with other commodities and rides and the fairy tales that he adapted for film.

(Zipes, 1997, p. 92)

Such are Zipes’ attacks on this issue that he has failed to recognise that *his* name sells books on fairy tale criticism, and that his name is also proudly emblazoned across these books, much the same as Disney’s. Furthermore, such is the monopoly that Zipes has on fairy tale criticism that *he* has somewhat succeeded in ‘smashing the heritage’ of previous scholarly research in this field and has dominated current and future thought on fairy tales. With this in mind, is it not possible that Jack Zipes is not too distant from Walt Disney in his approach to the reappropriation of the fairy tale and criticism of this literary genre?

Unlike Disney productions today, which are the work of various teams of artists, technicians, script writers, animators, computer programmers, song writers, conductors and set designers who ultimately converge to produce the narrative form of the finished product which is then marketed and globally disseminated, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was predominately the work of one man: Walt Disney. However, as Brode (2004, xvii) observes ‘a quick check of any one picture’s opening credits reveals that he [Walt Disney] didn’t write, direct, animate, or even produce the vast majority of movies bearing his name’. If this is true, and the credits certainly attest to these facts, what was Walt Disney’s role in these films that are proudly marketed as ‘Walt Disney’s...? Prior to *Snow White*, cartoon animation was significantly different, not just in length and *mise en scène*, but in the production processes employed. Walt Disney sought to radically transform the production process by adopting a factory approach where every person in the factory would play their part in producing the film. The industrialisation of animation was started by Disney and it established a move away

from earlier animation processes where either an individual animator or a small team would collectively sketch, colour, animate and film the animations. As Cartmell and Whelehan (1999, p. 207) note, Disney moved animation on with ‘an approach where director, animator, designer, in-betweener, colourist, writer, cinematographer and so on became individual roles within a hierarchical quasi-Fordist mode of production’. Through an industrial revolution of the animation industry, Disney was able to select the best people for their individual specialised roles. However, this does not mean that he stood idly by and simply lent his name to the production as the ‘paymaster general’. Rather, Disney was involved in every aspect of the production process. He fulfilled the role of auteur, one who had his hand in every facet of *his* production. It is true that Disney did not complete any film on his own; however, his role was an over-arching one and his eye was always watching.

To facilitate the completion of his dream of producing the world’s first feature-length animated film, Walt Disney assembled a team of over six hundred workers who were charged with bringing to life a story that resonated with its audience, a story which was able to enthrall and entertain like no other animation had ever done previously. Amongst these employees were nine men who went on to forge loyal ties to both Walt Disney and the Disney studio. These nine, Les Clark, Ward Kimball, Milt Kahl, Eric Larson, Wolfgang Reitherman, Frank Thomas, Ollie Johnston, Marc Davis, and John Lounsbery, all featured prominently in the production of *Snow White*, albeit in varying capacities and with differing responsibilities. As their contribution to animation and Disney productions continued, they eventually came to be known as ‘Walt Disney’s Nine Old Men’. Each one was tasked with areas such as animation of the protagonists, animating the animals for the woodland and house cleaning scenes, crafting the animation for the technically demanding scenes, such as those that involve changes in perspective and shadow, and also creating those scenes which tell of the dwarfs’ sorrow and grief at Snow White’s apparent demise. Each of the nine was technically gifted in some facet of animation, and their ability to convey the ideas of Walt Disney contributed to the overall ‘feel’ of the film. However, ‘there was also a “tenth Old Man”, and that was Walt Disney himself. He was the lodestar and inspiration for the nine’ (Canemaker, 2001, p. 7). Walt Disney was, however, more than just an inspiration; he was a task master who had to approve every element of what would be known as *his* film, even if he did not feature in the credits. As auteur, Walt Disney was able to oversee every aspect of the animation process. His ‘driving leadership’ (*ibid.*, p. 16) led to his team of animators to seek out his approval for

all that they did. Moreover, the team (including the ‘Nine Old Men’) were not seeking Disney’s approval purely for work related financial reasons; there was a pride that was to be had in being the best animator and in having your work featured in what many felt was to become a new era in animation. Disney’s handling of his workers and the relationships that were forged between Walt Disney and his employees have been detailed explicitly by Canemaker in his 2001 publication *Walt Disney: Disney’s Nine Old Men and the Art of Animation*. Throughout this volume, the ‘Nine Old Men’ of the title recount their time spent working with Disney and how they sought his approval for every scene and creation. The overriding theme that emerges is that Disney’s approval was vital in the successful execution of *Snow White* and that this was down to his visionary ideas and strict quality control. He had much riding on the success of the film, and, as auteur, his approval and exacting standards had to be met. Walt Disney was a man who, as the head of his eponymous studio, fulfilled the criteria worthy of the label ‘an auteur’: ‘a director who, by virtue of a uniquely personal artistic style and the will to impose it creatively, could be viewed as the unifying force behind a cinematic *oeuvre*.’ (Vest, 2002, p. 110). Walt Disney *was* that unifying force, he was able to share his dream for *Snow White* with his team, and then he unified them in following his dream, whilst always adding his individual style to the film, conveyed through the giving of his approval to the animators, score writers and script writers.

2.2 Theories of authorship with regard to Disney’s films, including *Snow White*

Disney’s wish to be known as an auteur and the author of his productions does, however, raise the question of authorship in films and also invites discussion regarding Disney’s status as an auteur. Definitions of what makes someone an auteur always mention an auteur as being, amongst other things, a director. However, it would be remiss of me to ignore the fact that Disney did not direct his films, including *Snow White*. What he did do was *direct* his staff to produce films in the manner and style that he wished them to be. Watson (2007, p. 430) comments that the term auteur refers to ‘directors who infuse their films with their distinctive personal vision through the salient manipulation of film technique’. Disney’s films were infused with his signature style and he repeatedly conveyed his vision for the films, especially *Snow White*, to his staff at various briefings, meetings and enactments of how he wished them to be. Nonetheless, even though Disney’s vision and style permeates through

those films he had a direct involvement with, and also those films produced after his death in 1966, whichever definition of auteur one works from, there is no escaping the fact that auteurs are almost always responsible for directing. Where, then, can Disney fit into such a defining term? Watson (*ibid.*, p. 430) does concede that auteurism is ‘to study film as if it were the creative expression of a single individual, usually held to be the director’. Disney’s role was one which, as the head of his studio, permitted him to instruct and direct (in a non-credited directorial role) the entire process, story, script, design and overall style of those films he was involved with, lending them his creative *style*.

The style for Disney’s films was in the tradition of classic cinema, which Bordwell (2008, p. 152) avers is composed of a ‘narrative form which motivates cinematic representation’. With regard to *Snow White*, the film’s narrative form represents Disney’s ideas and his desire to replicate the silent movie of the Snow White story that he saw in his youth. Bordwell (*ibid.*, p. 153) further remarks that ‘classical cinema contains cause-effect logic and narrative parallelism which generate a narrative which projects its actions through psychologically defined goal oriented characters’. In Disney’s film, Snow White is a goal oriented character; the goal being the fulfillment of the love quest narrative within the tale. This is made evident from the opening scene by the well where the use of diegetic singing reveals her innermost desire.

As an artist, both cinematic and animating, Walt Disney lent his artistic style to his movies, both in the narrative and in the visual style of the characters and landscapes. Bordwell (*ibid.*, p. 25) comments that ‘often it’s useful to conceive the artist’s purpose in terms of problems and solutions. At a mundane level, a filmmaker wants to achieve some pattern or effect. Something blocks this so the filmmaker contrives a way to achieve the effect he or she wants’. Disney frequently encountered problems when making his movies. However, owing to his industriousness, he sought out new and innovative technologies and new animation techniques to overcome the problems that existed between his vision for a film, the practices employed, and the resources currently available to convey his desires and bring a film to fruition. For *Snow White*, Disney invented the multiplane camera to lend greater depth to each scene and render a three-dimensional feel to the film. *Snow White* also incorporated the use of new animation techniques, such as the squash and stretch style of animating characters. Furthermore, the use of realism in the animated characters, achieved through live-action modelling by actors, gymnasts and dancers, was a revolution in animated production.

Regarding the work of film production, Bordwell and Thompson (1979, p. 10) label Walt Disney as a 'solitary filmmaker [who] acts as his own producer'. They further establish that the role of the producer is largely a financial one and that their role is to obtain financial backing, arrange for a schedule to be drawn up and for personnel to work on the film. Notwithstanding that Disney did indeed do all of the aforementioned things, his role was more than just this. I have previously commented that Disney fulfilled the role of auteur, albeit, without being credited as a director for his films. However, using Bordwell and Thompson's classification of roles and their associated responsibilities within the production of a film (*ibid.*, pp. 10-15) one can see that Disney, as director, albeit a non-credited one, 'coordinated how all of the various elements of the film medium put the prepared material on film. Thus, the director has extensive control over the look and sound of the film'. Furthermore, with reference to the various units of production labour which need to be organised and managed during a film's production, Bordwell and Thompson (*ibid.*, p. 13) assert that 'the solitary filmmaker may perform all of the roles personally'. Certainly, records from Disney's archive, including transcripts of meetings, attest to Disney's personal involvement with every aspect of the film and speak of his own vision frequently being reinforced to his employees during the film's production.

Walt Disney fulfilled both producing and directing roles for *Snow White*, it was *his* film, *his* ideas and he knew how *he* wanted the film to look. To ensure that the film was the way he wanted it, he had to be involved in every facet of its production, from the initial storyboard to animating, producing, technological innovation and, finally, to directing. Such an involvement in the film would lead to the film being marketed as *Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, thereby replicating what literary authors of fairy tales, such as the Grimms and Perrault, would frequently do when releasing collections of their tales. This would seem to indicate that Disney may have been interested in assuming not just the role of an auteur, but that of author.

Turning to theories of authorship, Bordwell and Thompson (1979, p. 18) have asked the question of 'who is the author', is it the artist responsible for the film'? As previously discussed, Disney was an artist inasmuch as the films which he had direct involvement with contain his signature artistic style, and even latter day, post-Walt Disney (those films released after Disney's death in 1966) traditional cel animation movies released by the studio, such as *Beauty and the Beast*, still portray the classic Disney style. The notion of control and decision

making are two factors which Bordwell and Thompson (*ibid.*, p. 18) cite as being indicative of authorship of a film. Certainly, Disney was well-known for his strict control over all production processes of *Snow White*, and his rejection of anything which did not accord with his vision for the film and its integrity in relation to what he wanted for an audience. However, Bordwell and Thompson (*ibid.*, p. 18) concede that ‘in recent years the most commonly accepted solution has been to regard the director as the “author” of most studio films’. Once again, as with an auteur, a film’s author is generally assumed to be the director. However, Wells (2002, p. 83), looking at comments made by Disney animators during the 1940s, refers to Disney himself becoming ‘the text, in the sense that he is operating in what may be regarded as a more traditional directorial role’. Wells (*ibid.*, p.83) further remarks that ‘Disney’s assurance about the film *he* is in principle making enables him to make authorial decisions and corrections on behalf of others, drawing the fullest potential from his artists in the execution of *his* vision’. Disney’s stance in assuming complete creative control over his films, especially *Snow White*, thus lends him an editor’s role. Indeed, Allan (1999, p. 1) declares that ‘until the mid-fifties Walt Disney remained personally involved in all stages of production, and in particular during the collectively creative period when stories and ideas were being thrashed out in committee; it can be said that he was, if not the “auteur”, then the controlling editor’. Certainly, control of his films was one of the defining characteristics of Disney’s involvement in those films that bear his name. Disney’s refusal to accept anything other than his own vision to be carried forward to the finished film leads Wells (2002, p. 90) to aver that ‘Walt Disney is an auteur by virtue of fundamentally denying inscription to anyone else, and creating a mode of representation which, despite cultural criticism, market variations, and changing social trends, transcends the vicissitudes of contemporary America’. Watson (2007, pp. 106-107) agrees with Wells and labels Disney as a ‘supra-auteur’ who ‘denied authorial inscription to anyone else and created an identity and mode of representation’. Such a denying of anyone else’s imprint upon films such as *Snow White* would deny Walt Disney his own desires in creating films that *he* wanted to see and believed that others would also want to see.

Affording Disney the title of auteur and as the ‘author’ of those films that bear his name, Bordwell and Thompson (1979, p. 319) affirm that ‘an auteur managed to stamp his or her personality on genre and studio products, transcending the constraints of a mass-production system’. For animation, the ‘Disney style’ of feature-length animated film is still going strong

and these films still bear the signature and stamp of the Walt Disney's... brand. Indeed, recent Disney movies, such as *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) are still marketed under the Walt Disney label. However, *Tangled* (2010) does not fall under the same label, and was released under the wider-ranging Disney label. Clearly, there are those films produced by the Disney Corporation which still permeate with Walt Disney's style and vision, and the Corporation is proud to label them as such.

To conclude on the notion of authorship and Walt Disney's role as auteur within those films that he was personally involved with, Wells (2002, p. 84) posits that: 'Disney's authorial claims may be evaluated in their most obvious way. He may be seen as a person who offers direct statements and explanations about the artistic and thematic intentions of a film, within an evolving narrative about the film-maker from work to work, which constitutes a personal vision'. Walt Disney was indeed both an auteur and author; he lent his own personal vision and stamp to his films and was involved in every facet of production, regardless of whether he was credited for each of those roles. He imagined how a film would look, what would be in it, how it would be portrayed and, after ensuring that his vision was carried through, lent his name to it as his production, something only an author or auteur can truly do.

2.3 The adoption and innovation of new technology

One major area that has been overlooked by Zipes and other critics of Disney's fairy tale adaptations is that of the multimodal pleasures that Disney's animated films offer, and, more specifically, the affective meaning which these films produce. Criticism of Disney's films, and in particular *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, has centred on a comparative analysis with textual versions of the story. In Zipes' readings, comparisons are made against the Grimms' tale, and how 'the changes made by Disney endowed the film with an entirely different meaning' (Zipes, 2002, p. 127). Whilst this approach may be useful in charting changes in text, implied audience, reception and modes of presentation, it offers only a partial approach to Disney's films and fails to provide a nuanced, objective and multimodal critical reading of the films. Indeed, Zipes' creedal statements about Disney's films, which are firmly rooted in his post-Marxist reading of the films, fail to appreciate them as anything other than mass-market products which are only concerned with the generation of capital.

While one can draw comparisons with various versions of the 'Snow White' story, and critique their individual slants, Zipes does not engage with other versions of the story, and, instead, exclusively attacks Disney's film. Zipes' attacks are centred not just through his homogenising of Disney films, but he assumes that because Walt Disney altered, extended and sanitised certain aspects of the Grimms' version of the story, somehow the Disney version is less 'worthy' as an alternative retelling of 'Snow White'. Zipes dogmatically insists that because of the commercial nature of the Disney Corporation, and their dominance of the entertainment industry, that all of the ideas for their films are money driven, and that their fairy tale films solely seek to transform the earlier fairy tales upon which they are based into films which are focused on 'selling the American dream of a free and democratic society' (Zipes, 2002, p. 125). In addition, Zipes argues that Disney's *Snow White* is analogous to a drug induced hypnotic state, and one in which the audience members are little more than dupes who have allowed themselves to be carried away to 'never-never land with remarkable and dazzling technical tricks and absorbing images which make us forget that we have our own unfulfilled dreams' (*ibid.*, p. 125).

It is here that I find Zipes is almost on the cusp of acknowledging some respect or critical praise for the works of Disney, or even looking past his own ideology and reading Disney films as they *can* be read, not as commercial travesties of a once revered literary genre, but as *alternative* versions of stories within the fairy tale corpus, utilising pioneering technology capable of transporting audiences into the *faërie* realm, much like the literary versions sought to do through their text-based narrative. Indeed, Zipes is able to recognise and give credit to Disney for his use of animation techniques and technology which allow for the viewer to be enchanted and absorbed.

Unfortunately, Zipes does not take his murmuring of adulation any further and he steadfastly refuses to move from his post-Marxist stance and, instead, continues with his analysis of *Snow White* on exclusively ideological grounds, with specific reference to the narrative structure and motifs which have shaped all aspects of the film's conception, creation and distribution within a capitalist order. Sadly, Zipes has missed out on approaching Disney's fairy tale films with a view to celebrating their multimodal pleasures and the affective dimension which their nature as animated features enables them to produce. For instance, Zipes could have argued for the ability of the films to utilise music as one method of expanding upon and contributing to the narrative, but he is decidedly silent on this.

Furthermore, after acknowledging that Disney is able to provide ‘absorbing images’ (Zipes, *ibid.*, p. 125) one might expect Zipes to elucidate upon how Walt Disney assembled a team of animators who were able to utilise their abilities as graphic artists to create an animated tale rich with life and realism, and then for him to provide an exposition on the technical achievements that Disney should be credited with; disappointingly, this is not the case.

Manovich (2001, p. 333) avers that ‘animation comes to challenge live cinema’. The ability of animated characters and imaginary landscapes to challenge live cinema has only been made possible by the skill and direction of an animating team, much like the previously mentioned team known as ‘Walt Disney’s Nine Old Men’. For Disney, the ability of *Snow White* to provide a realistic cinematic experience was one of the reasons for his assembling a team of gifted animators and then embarking upon his Fordesque method of production for the film. Schickel (1986, p. 176) comments that ‘Disney wanted more and more imitative realism in the movements of his characters, more and more detail in the backgrounds, greater and greater fidelity to nature in special effects ranging from lightening to the fall of raindrops’. The quest for realism and the associated techniques that Disney and his studio developed are not to be underplayed, or ignored. Certainly, animation, as an art form, owes a great deal of debt to the painstaking and fastidious work that Disney and his team were engaged in, and which came most fully to fruition with *Snow White*. Wells (1998, p. 22) comments that ‘Disney himself became more preoccupied with the development of animation as an industry, and most specifically in the development of new technologies’. He was not content to continue producing animated shorts which followed the form and surrealism of earlier animators, such as the Fleischer brothers. He wanted to lead the way in achieving realism and authenticity through animation. Wells (*ibid.*, p. 23) remarks that Disney ‘wanted animated figures to move like real figures’, further adding that ‘Disney’s animators undertook programmes of training in the skills and techniques of fine art in the constant drive towards ever greater notions of realism’. Also praising Disney is the work of Wright (1997, p. 98) who argues that ‘pioneering techniques in animation enhanced Disney’s equally innovative interpretation of the Grimms’ story’.

The ‘pioneering techniques’ (*ibid.*, p. 98) that Wright refers to includes both the development of new technology that was utilised extensively in *Snow White* and the creation of a new paradigm for animation: that of realism. However, even before *Snow White* was released to such commercial and critical acclaim, Walt Disney was already demonstrating his ability to

further the medium of animation through the creation of new technologies and the adoption of emerging ones; for example, he was the first animator to produce a cartoon with synchronised sound. Combining animation with a fully synchronised soundtrack was something that many¹ in the film industry thought was a passing fad. However, Disney did not subscribe to their views and, instead, saw synchronised sound as something which would greatly add to animation's repertoire. As the first animated production to feature a fully synchronised soundtrack, *Steamboat Willie* (1928) became a success, firstly with cinema-goers at the Coney Theatre in New York and, subsequently, in other theatres across the USA. Pleasingly, positive reviews in the press gave Disney the critical acclaim that he felt was justified for the production. Nonetheless, the process of producing an animated short with a synchronised soundtrack was fraught with problems, both technical and logistical. The initial resistance to talking pictures or 'talkies', those movies which attempted to move away from their silent predecessors and introduce voice-overs and recoded dialogue, came from the majority of the major film studios, albeit with one notable exception: Warner Brothers². It was during a time of austerity for the studio that one of the four Warner brothers, Sam, proposed the use of sound in their productions, and so the studio set about hiring writers to create a story which would become the world's first 'talkie'.

After several months of pre-production and recasting, filming was finally complete and *The Jazz Singer* (1927) debuted in New York City. The film's critical reception and successful box-office receipts finally dispelled opposition to 'talkies' and the other major studios, seeing the success of *The Jazz Singer*, rushed to capitalize on the emerging sound technology by producing 'talking' pictures. Disney, as befits his entrepreneurial nature, was also quick to assess the opportunities that sound would provide for his own productions and sought to produce a feature which would bring sound to Mickey and Minnie Mouse, his latest creations.

As a fairly 'closed' system of film production, that is a system which is unaffected by environmental conditions, including live human interaction, the medium of animation was ideally suited to the incorporation of sound. Indeed:

...it is possible that The Mouse would have had a life no longer than many of his competitors if a technological revolution had not occurred and presented Disney with an opportunity that was particularly suited to his gifts

and interests and that he seized with an alacrity shared by few in Hollywood.

(Schickel, 1968, p. 118)

The ‘revolution’ that Schickel refers to is implicitly in relation to sound synchronisation, and he, quite rightly, credits Disney as being suited to this new technology as his was a gift for imagination and innovation in his field. Indeed, Schickel (1968, p. 364) further remarks upon Disney’s ability to combine technology and imagination when he notes that, upon being asked to run for Mayor of Los Angeles, Disney was the only person with ‘enough technological imagination to rationalize the sprawling mess the metropolis had become’.

Unlike live-action films, which simultaneously recorded sound and action and required the newly-developed sound cameras to be placed on the set in such a way that their own mechanical operational noise was not detected by the microphones trying to record dialogue between the actors thus rendering them fairly immobile, animation was able to utilise a two-stage process. The first would require the filming of the animated cels using existing processes. These processes for cartoon animation or, as Wells (1998, p. 7) defines it, ‘traditional cel animation in the style of Disney or Warner Brothers’, involves an animating artist directly painting images onto celluloid sheets, photographing these sheets and then replacing the sheets with new ones which show minute changes in the characters’ actions and the background. Once all of the sheets have been photographed, they are combined to produce one continuous animated film. The second stage is the adding of the audio elements. Fortunately, adding rhythms, beats, melodies, sound-effects and speech to animation is not as problematic as with live-action film as these sounds can be matched to the animated characters’ movements.

After producing two silent animated shorts featuring Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Disney decided that the third outing for the two mice, *Steamboat Willie*, should include sound, and he began to experiment with this new direction for [celluloid] animated film. The production process for *Steamboat Willie* was not without its problems and companies such as RCA who, along with Western Electric, owned the patents and rights to the new sound camera technology, did not share Disney’s enthusiasm for the further development of animation through the synchronisation of sound. Disney, therefore, had to approach others whom, he hoped, could be persuaded to see the merits of synchronised sound in animation. After

experimenting with various orchestral set-ups, staff and sound-effects, Disney finally achieved what he set out to achieve: the first synchronised sound cartoon.

The next technological development for Disney was the introduction of Technicolor in 1932 in *Flowers and Trees*, one of his many Silly Symphony cartoons, a cartoon which was also recognised with an Academy Award for Animated Short Film, just one of many that Walt Disney himself, and, later, the Disney Corporation, would receive and are still receiving. Technicolor utilised a three colour system which provided a richer assortment of colours than the limiting red-green palette that was used for the filming of animation before its inception in 1929. Through an exclusivity deal with the Technicolor Corporation, Disney was able to produce films which were more saturated with colour than his rivals, thus furthering his market dominance as these new, aesthetically appealing colour-rich cartoons proved more popular with audiences than rivals' productions. Such was the commercial and critical popularity of Disney's animated shorts at this time that his use of Technicolor furthered the desire of movie studios to shoot colour films and so began a move away from black and white films completely. Even though Disney had not created Technicolor, it was his vision for animation, and his desire to further advances within the medium that led him to take a pioneering role in the adoption of colour, and the use of a colour spectrum that went far beyond what had previously been seen in animated features.

Perhaps the greatest technological contribution that Disney made to animation in his early films was the development of the multi-plane camera³, an idea born from the 'school of self-improvement' which Disney had set up within his studio to encourage creativity amongst his employees. Prior to *Snow White*, animation cel images were photographed with a stationary single-plane camera. This consisted of a cel image, such as a character, being placed on a painted background which was moved just a fraction of an inch with every new picture taken. Taking *Snow White* as an example, had the film been shot using a single-plane camera, whenever the heroine leaves a scene all that would remain would be a flat two-dimensional background with no sense of depth. By contrast, the still frame (see Appendix A), shot using a multi-plane camera, demonstrates the depth within the scene and how the use of the multi-plane camera has created a scene that has a three-dimensional depth of focus to it. To create the scene, Snow White is animated on a separate plane to the crocodile-esque uprooted tree to her left; the low branch in the foreground is also shot on a separate plane; finally, the hills in the background are shot on yet another plane. All of these planes collectively work together

in this scene to lend a depth of focus. Moving on to another still frame (Appendix B), we can see that once Snow White has left the scene, unlike a scene filmed using a single-plane camera, which would leave a flat two-dimensional background, the scene itself, though devoid of an animated character, still has a three-dimensional depth to it. The impression of depth within the scene is due to the multi-plane camera being able to place the protagonist on glass planes further and further from the camera, whilst the background images remain placed on planes which have not moved either towards or away from the camera since their first introduction into the scene, thus fixing their dimensions while Snow White alone changes in size.

To compare the level of depth that Disney achieved through using the multi-plane camera, a comparison with an earlier animated cartoon filmed using a single-plane camera is necessary. Looking at another still frame (Appendix C), the impression of perspective in the scene is due to the technical ability of the artists who utilise a range of animation techniques to create the illusion of perspective. Within this scene, all of the elements are filmed on a single plane of glass; the bridge, fence, trees in the distance and the meandering river are all flat two-dimensional images. It is the artist's skill that renders any sense of depth to the scene. However, the multi-plane camera's use in animation did not necessitate such skilful animation techniques to be utilised as the camera's design allowed for depth and three-dimensional image creation.

The still frames (Appendices D, E, F, G, H, and I), taken from the scene when the Huntsman tells Snow White to "Run, run away, hide, in the woods, anywhere, never come back, now go", and the camera tracks her movements deeper into the trees, she becomes smaller; the trees and sky do not change in size, thereby creating the impression that she is actually vanishing into the forest. Using a two-dimensional single-plane camera, the appearance of the scene would have changed dramatically. For example, when Snow White becomes smaller, so, too, would the trees and all of the other objects within the scene. However, the multi-plane camera allows for Snow White alone to change in size. Similarly, when the camera zooms in on Snow White as she approaches for a close-up shot, such as when she is seen coming up over a hill picking wildflowers (Appendices J, K and L), a single-plane camera would have had to enlarge all aspects of the scene, not just her face or body. However, a multi-plane camera permits the retaining of the size of the hill, the trees in the foreground and background, the Huntsman and his horse, and the flowers on the ground; the only thing that

changes in size is Snow White, who becomes larger. The multi-plane camera makes it possible to retain relative size to the background whilst giving perspective to moving characters and objects. To work, the multi-plane camera places the various elements that are contained within a scene on different glass frames or planes, hence the relevance of the phrase multi-plane.

Furthermore:

...the Multiplane [sic] camera used two-dimensional elements for each plane within the background. Artwork of different planes was held in individual light boxes, separated from other artwork by some distance. This made the various foreground and background planes spatially distinct. A greater illusion of depth was achieved by moving the camera down toward the background elements.

(Langer, 1992, p. 343-344)

The illusion of depth, coupled with animation which was more realistic, allowed Disney to produce films which were ever closer to his goal of using animation to mimic live-action film's realism. The multi-plane camera furthered the ability to do this through adding a three-dimensional perspective to the filming of scenes. Wells (1998, p. 25) terms Disney's style of realism as 'hyper-realism' and notes that it 'aspires to the creation of a realistic image system which echoes the "realism" of the live-action film'. Wells here is referring to the physical laws that govern live-action film, the use of diegetic conventions and the movement of the characters' bodies. Moreover, Wells (*ibid.*, p. 25) avers that an animated film may be 'defined as non-realist or abstract the more it deviates from the model of "hyper-realism" located in the Disney film, and principally a full-length feature'. Hollis and Sibley (1981, p. 30) comment that for *Snow White*, Walt Disney wanted to create a 'realistic mood'; this mood would be greatly enhanced by the use of depth and perspective within the scenes and that 'an illusion of depth was eventually achieved...by the huge but extremely versatile multiplane [sic] camera'.

As an example, taking the Queen's final scene in the film (Appendices M and N) when she is pursued to the top of a cliff by the dwarfs, the multi-plane camera would feature the various elements of the scene on different frames. For example, the moonlit sky would be on the frame furthest from the camera, then the trees, then the rocks, then the characters (dwarfs and

Queen). Finally, any objects which were in the foreground, such as leaves on the rocks by the dwarfs' feet, would be placed on the frame nearest to the camera. By utilising the multi-plane camera, which allows for the breaking down of the elements within a scene through multiple planes, Disney made it possible to control each individual frame and how quickly or slowly any given element within the frame moves toward or away from the camera.

The multi-plane camera was first used in *The Old Mill* (1937), another Silly Symphony cartoon (see Appendix O), but it 'found its most advanced and persuasive use in...*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*' (Wells, 1998, pp. 23-24). The opening scenes of *The Old Mill* feature a series of zoom shots which demonstrate the ability of Disney's new invention to retain size and depth for certain elements within a scene while zooming in on one specific feature. Indeed, such was the impact of the multi-plane camera upon animation that 'the studio also won a special Academy Award for "scientific achievement" for developing the multiplane [sic]' (Schickel, 1968, p. 197). Disney himself, original host of the popular and enduring *Disneyland* television series, stressed within a 1957 episode of the series, entitled '*tricks of our trade*,' that the idea of the multi-plane camera is to "make cartoons more realistic and enjoyable" (*Disneyland*, 1957). It was, in part, Disney's quest for realism in his cartoons that motivated him to develop technology which would provide a means of making animated characters appear more akin to real life, at least in terms of their movements. Schickel (1968, p. 198) comments that 'an audience demands the greatest possible likeness to reality in the movies, and it therefore prefers three-dimensional film to flat, colour to black and white, talkie to silent'. For Disney, the quest for realism involved taking the technological developments of three-dimensional images, colour, and sound and incorporating them into his animated productions. Schickel (*ibid.*, p. 198) argues that 'every step that brings film closer to real life creates a sensation. Each new sensation means full houses. Hence the avid interest of the film industry in these technological developments'. Unlike other film studios, who saw full houses as a gratifying return on a financial investment, Disney viewed full houses as providing the opportunity to continue with his passion, that of making movies and furthering animation, not the pursuit of wealth as a goal in itself. Indeed, Disney himself declared that: 'I neither wish nor intend to amass a personal fortune. Money-or rather lack of it to carry out my ideas-may worry me, but it doesn't excite me, *ideas* excite me' (cited in Smith, 2001, p.70). These ideas included the development and adoption of technology, such as the multi-plane camera and Technicolor.

Away from technological developments, Disney instigated a sea-change in the technical practices found within animation. *Snow White* contains characters that are markedly different from those found in earlier animated productions. Disney wished to move animation on, not just through the creation of a feature-length film, but through characters that were able to move in a realistic and fluid way. Disney achieved this through the painstaking use of live subjects, from which the artists were instructed to attempt to replicate the movements of the human form through their drawings, and the development of the 'hyper-realism' style.

It is these techniques which would allow Walt to 'flesh out' and re-imagine the Grimms' tale. Furthermore, Wright (1997, p. 98) is correct when he argues that Disney's version was an interpretation of the Snow White story; as an interpretation, the film should be judged on its own merits, rather than in relation to the Grimms' version. Wright (*ibid.*, p. 99) later adds that criticism of Walt Disney's fairy tale films is 'largely negative and seems to lack insight into Disney's personality and production methods, as well as his interest in the popular culture of his time'.

Zipes is complicit in the largely negative criticism that has been directed towards Disney since the 1970s, owing, not just to his post-Marxist stance, but his failure to appreciate the production methods that Disney developed for his films. Sadly, Zipes has also failed to appreciate Disney's pioneering movement to further the development of animation as an art form and swiftly glosses over Disney's 'dazzling technical tricks' (Zipes, 2002, p. 125). Conversely, Schickel (1986, p. 23) firmly applauds Disney for having 'not as is commonly supposed a "genius" for artistic expression; if he had any genius at all it was for the exploitation of technological innovation'.

Without the methods and techniques developed during the formative years of the Disney studio, animation may never have evolved into the global form that it is today. However, Zipes is quick to ignore the place that Disney holds as a pioneer of the animated form. Nor does he laud the technological achievements that Disney made whilst creating *Snow White*, and those he further achieved in the following years. These achievements include receiving a special 1937 Academy Award for the creation of the previously mentioned multi-plane camera, a device that allows for the filming of any elements, such as the back or foregrounds, that are not in motion during the filming of an animated scene. In addition, Disney was also the first animator to use Technicolor, and to create 'the first synchronised sound cartoon'

(Wells, 1998, p. 23). The use of Technicolor was of special note as its use in the 1931 *Silly Symphony* story *Flowers and Trees* won Disney his first Academy Award for best cartoon. Zipes' reluctance to credit Disney's technological achievements in advancing the field is, at best, strange, especially when he is particularly praiseworthy for the work of Eliza Dresang (1999) which focuses on the technological advances of the mass media. Zipes comments that the [technological] mass media:

...allow[s] for greater activity and exchange of ideas on the part of the young and radical experimentation in children's literature. Writers and artists have responded to the new technologies and demands by using graphics in new formats, creating new levels of synergy with words and pictures, providing multiple layers of meaning in nonlinear and nonsequential organization of texts, allowing for more interactive possibilities for the reader/viewer through works that have multiple perspectives.

(Zipes, 2002, p. 213)

If Zipes is able to celebrate the opportunities that recent technological developments in children's literature have allowed, why is he so reticent to do the same for the works of Walt Disney? As polysemous, interactive productions, Disney's fairy tales have been amongst *the* most radical developments in children's fiction. Indeed, the multimodal nature of the films allows for them to interact with their audience in ways that are not possible with a literary text, but Zipes does not acknowledge this, nor does he engage in a semiotic analysis of the films, or the ability of technology to produce affective meaning. However, he does rhetorically ask:

How are cognitive processes affected by exposure to flashing images, words and sounds and multi-dimensional texts? Are the young being configured in radical ways so that they will become plugged in and more radical consumers? There are no definitive answers at this point.

(Zipes, *ibid.*, p. 215)

As a staunch post-Marxist, and homogeniser of Disney's films as being little more than commercially driven creations, Zipes' failure to answer his own question seems rather bizarre,

especially when he lambasts Disney for ‘wanting to control children’s aesthetic interests and consumer tastes’ (Zipes, 1997, p. 91). It would seem that Zipes is happy to argue against Disney, and their technological innovations for transforming the landscape of children’s culture, yet he does not subject other purveyors of technology aimed at children to the same negative critique. Walt Disney’s commitment to developing new techniques and innovations in animation accords with Sartre’s (1948/1993) notion that ‘the new requirements of the social and the metaphysical involve the artist in finding a new language and new techniques’. For Disney, his pursuit of animation as an art form necessitated his artistic desire to respond according to social demands by finding a new animation language through his pursuit of subject realism by utilising live models as subjects for his team of animators to study, and then to capture intricate articulations and movement patterns, as exhibited by the models, in their animations as evidenced through *Snow White*, and by his development of new techniques, such as the invention and use of the multi-plane camera.

2.4 The source material for Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*

Just as the growth of the printed word, and an increase in literacy rates led to the birth of the literary fairy tale as a separate genre from the oral folk tale, so, too, the birth of animation as a medium of storytelling brought with it a new approach to how a tale *could* be told. As previously mentioned, Zipes has based his reading of Disney’s fairy tale films upon the narrative structure and motifs contained within the films and, more specifically, on how the narrative is different from earlier literary versions of the tales, primarily European and principally Germanic versions of the tales as these best fit Zipes’ own interests as a retired professor of German and Germanic studies. However, even the more popular European writers of fairy tales did not invent the tales that were promoted as their own; they embellished aspects of oral tales that they had heard and collected. The same is true of Disney’s *Snow White* as Walt Disney heard and collected the ideas for his version of the story from a number of sources and then created the world’s first full-length animated feature. Zipes is also remiss in assuming that Disney based his version of *Snow White* solely upon the Grimms’ tale. Whilst I have previously mentioned that Disney does indeed give credit to the Grimms’ story as a source text, this does not mean that their version of the tale was the only one from which Disney was able to construct his own version.

There are contrasting reports as to which version of the 'Snow White' story Disney principally worked from, with Zipes firmly believing that the Grimms' tale was the inspiration for Disney's film. However, deeper probing reveals that there may be other influences involved in shaping Disney's film, with Merrit (1988, p. 106) claiming that 'Disney's tale is an adaptation of a 1912 children's play'. This play, produced by Winthrop Ames, and still performed today, fixes Disney's efforts not on a European fairy tale, written by bourgeois writers in nineteenth century salons, but on an American theatre tradition that would have revised its own source material to adapt the tale for the stage. Merrit so persuasively argues that she is accurate in her locating of Disney's source material that she provides a chronological history of how the play came to fruition, being based upon a Germanic version of the tale, but not the Grimms' tale; instead, the American play was based upon a German play, *Schneewitchen*, written by Karl August Heniger during the nineteenth century. Merrit (1988, p. 107) declares that 'for the adapters [of fairy tales] like their successors, the source material provides, even in the Grimms' expansive later editions, no more than a brief, though event filled, narrative'. This briefness of narrative does lend weight to Merrit's argument that the Grimms' tale was not the sole inspiration for the Disney version. Merrit concludes that it was a silent movie version of the play in January 1917 that Walt Disney saw during his adolescence that was to leave such a lasting impression as to eventually lead him to create his 'masterpiece'. However, Merrit (1988, p. 111), rather ironically, concedes that the film was not the source for the ideas of Disney's film; rather it was 'to the text of the play itself that Disney turned for ideas about characterisations and solutions to the problems of dramatising the fairy tale'.

Of one concord with Merrit are the works of Wright (1997) Bauer (1937) and Thomas (1991) who all attest to the occasion of viewing the silent movie version of Ames' play as being the main inspiration for Disney's decision to create an animated version of the 'Snow White' story. Bauer (1937, p. 18) records that 'in a 1937 interview for *Photoplay Studies*, Disney stated that he had seen the play 'Snow White' when he was a boy. He said that he had enjoyed it so much that he had wanted to see it again and again'. The only sure way for the young Walt Disney being able to see 'again and again' a film that had such a profound effect on him was to create his own version, something that was later to drive his industriousness and pursuit of technical innovation throughout the early 1930s. However, if the thesis of Merrit *et al* is correct, Zipes' understanding of the origins of Disney's version is, at best,

incomplete. Moreover, this would cast further doubt upon Zipes' reading of the Disney film as being based solely on the Grimms' story. Several of these critics draw upon archived transcripts of meetings concerning *Snow White* to lend weight to their arguments concerning the source for Disney's film. These transcripts chronicle the overarching influence that the silent movie had on Disney, and how this, juxtaposed with the text of the play, rather than the Grimms' tale, was *the* source for his animated film.

Richard Schickel also attests to the effect that the silent movie version of *Snow White* had on Walt Disney. However, he argues that it was not just the story itself, but rather the technological methods employed with its screening:

It was an accident of technology more than the story line that caused the picture to catch in his mind. The film was shown in a large auditorium with a four sided screen set up in the centre and the audience grouped in a circle around it. Disney was seated, by chance, at a point where he could see two of the screens. The projectors were not perfectly synchronized, and so he had the odd experience of seeing the film twice, but with the time lapse between screenings reduced to a matter of seconds - instant *déjà vu*. He could not forget the story because he could not forget the oddity of projection.

(Schickel, 1986, p.60)

Schickel's comments perhaps also explain why Disney became so preoccupied with pioneering innovative technical effects in animation, and spent countless hours and the best part of the 1930s in developing technologies and techniques which were to revolutionise the industry.

Acknowledging that the Grimms' tale was not the source material for Disney's film adaptation casts significant doubt on Zipes' intertextual reading of Disney's film. His axiomatic rhetoric regarding Disney's 'violation' of literary fairy tales (Zipes, 1999, p. 353) can also be called into question when looking at *Snow White*, as it would appear that it was not Walt Disney who embellished the Grimms' tale, but a German playwright who was able to take the 'Snow White' story and reconstruct it as a play. Furthermore, this play was then 'Americanised' by the American Children's Theatre Movement. It was through exposure to this already-adapted version that young Walt Disney first gave thought to imprinting the story

with his own stamp. Nonetheless, the Grimms' story is most likely the source of Heninger's *Schneewitchen*. As popular conveyers of an artificial, yet purported as 'authentic', Germanic life, the Grimms' version of the tale would have been the source for Heninger; thus we have Disney acknowledging their version as the basis for his film simply because all of the versions that influenced him stem from that version, albeit with sanitisations and revisions with each new transmission, beginning with the Grimms' own revisions of the tale.

2.5 The adaptation of 'Snow White' into a feature-length animated film

Adaptation from one medium to another is rarely a direct word for word, scene for scene process, nowhere is this perhaps more evident than in Disney's adaptations of literary fairy tales into feature-length animated films. Indeed, as previously discussed, although Disney does credit the Grimms' version of 'Snow White' as being the source for his film, deeper probing has revealed how Disney amalgamated a children's play, a silent movie and the script for the children's play to collectively form his *Snow White*. To remain somewhat faithful to all versions of the Snow White tale that he was familiar with, Disney had to retain the key elements within the tale, these being: Snow White's physical appearance, the wicked Queen's jealousy of Snow White's beauty, the encounter with the dwarfs, the enchanted sleep, the breaking of the enchantment and, finally, punishment for the Queen. The retaining of these central narrative elements allowed Disney to produce a tale that audiences would, in some form, already be familiar with as a version of the Snow White story.

Chatman (1980, p. 53) labels the main plot details of a story, such as those mentioned above as 'kernels'. These are the main details that are vital to a story and Chatman (*ibid.*, p. 53) further adds that these kernels are 'part of the hermeneutic code; [they] advance the plot by raising and satisfying questions'. When producing *Snow White*, Walt Disney kept these kernels and embellished other minor plot details, referred to by Chatman (*ibid.*, p. 54) as 'satellites', which are those plot details that are not so consequential on the overall plot of a story. Furthermore, Chatman (*ibid.*, p. 54) argues that 'a minor plot event-a satellite-is not crucial...It can be deleted without disturbing the logic of the plot'. For example, in Disney's film, the wicked Queen falls from a cliff to her doom; in the Grimms' tale, she is punished by having to dance in red hot iron shoes until she dropped down dead. What matters here is not the form of her punishment, or her death, what the viewer wants is there to be some

punishment for the wicked acts committed by the Queen. By retaining the 'kernel' of punishment as a central plot detail, the 'satellite' of the nature of the punishment is largely irrelevant. Whelehan (1999, p. 7) also picks up this theme and argues that 'certain features of novelistic expression must be retained in order to guarantee a "successful" adaptation'.

Using Chatman's notions, which in themselves are based upon the work of Barthes, one can see that Disney's film successfully adapted the Grimms' literary tale as the kernels were retained, and the satellites were altered to 'flesh out' the tale to make it suitable for a feature-length animation, whilst also adding the dwarfs as a comedic element designed to further reinforce the affective ability of the film.

When adapting a literary text into a film version, whether it is live-action or animation, the adapted product is often approached by critics by way of fidelity criticism. Hayward (2006, p. 13) comments that 'fidelity criticism, which makes up a great deal of literary adaptation criticism, focuses on the notion of equivalence. This is a fairly limited approach, however, since it fails to take into account other levels of meaning'. When discussing Disney's *Snow White*, Jack Zipes has engaged in this kind of criticism. He has failed to look at the film as anything other than an adaptation of a literary text and how closely the film remains faithful to the Grimms' tale. As discussed throughout chapter two of my thesis, Disney's film is a multimodal polysemous tale which contains levels of meaning that a literary tale cannot replicate. To adopt a stance which refuses to move from a fidelity criticism perspective does not advance any future understanding of how Disney's *Snow White* fits into the fairy tale corpus as an adaptation of the Grimms' tale and not simply just a retelling of the tale. Indeed, Hayward (*ibid.*, p. 12) declares that 'a literary adaptation creates a new story; it is not the same as the original, but takes on a new life, as indeed do the characters'. Disney's *Snow White* is a new story; the characters are more fleshed out and the prominence of the dwarfs breathes new life into the Grimms' comparably short tale.

Furthermore, the adaptation of a subject from one medium to another, such as from text to film, requires certain considerations that may be more pronounced in a film version than in a textual version. One such consideration is highlighted by Hayward (*ibid.*, p. 13) who argues that 'films are more marked by economic considerations than the novel and this constitutes a major reason why the adaptation is not like the novel'. Walt Disney had the livelihood of his studio firmly fixed in the success or failure of *Snow White*. As such, he understood the

economic implications if the film was not successful, which goes some way to accounting why he developed new techniques and technologies for the film and incorporated such an extensive use of music and song. Also, such a risk may explain why Disney adopted such a dictator-like role during the film's production.

Later in this thesis, I shall be arguing that the use of multimodality in *Snow White* affords the film greater meaning-making potential than a literary version of the story, such as the Grimms' version, and the affective pleasures that the film can render are beyond those of the single mode of presentation that literary texts possess. Wells (1999, p. 213) also concurs with this and declares that 'above all film-making practices, therefore, animation transfigures and transubstantiates the reader/viewer's imagination into a visual mode that ultimately speaks louder than the words that inspired it'. Disney's adaptations of literary fairy tales, including *Sleeping Beauty* and *Beauty and the Beast*, have been so successful in 'speaking' to their audiences because of the nature of animation. It is a medium that is rich with visual cues, ranging from the animation techniques used, use of colour, incorporation of dancing juxtaposed with music, and the freedom to realise imaginative concepts when designing characters and landscapes. Long before computer generated animation and images became the norm for portraying fantastical elements and features, animators were able to visually adapt any literary text and bring it to life. Disney knew this and, with *Snow White*, was able to adapt a text into a tale that resonated with its audience, and resonates still today.

To conclude on adaptation, the nature of adapting a text into a film, especially an animated film, is a process that is subject to considerations that may not be encountered when producing a literary text. These considerations include economic interests, the ability of a film to fit into the current zeitgeist, and, as Whelehan (1999, p. 3) notes 'the demands of authenticity and fidelity'. In adapting the Snow White story, Disney did remain faithful to the core details of all of the versions that he drew inspiration from. Granted, there was a lack of absolute fidelity to the Grimms' story, especially with reference to the dwarfs who are little more than a passing feature in the literary tale and are not named. However, the characterisation of the dwarfs was a necessary factor for the animated tale. They provide sanctuary for Snow White and enable her to operate in her role as a domestic mother; they provide character identification for the audience as each possesses a markedly different personality, referred to by the use of aptronyms. Finally, they facilitate the use of humour in the film, most notably Dopey with his clumsy nature. Even with the expansion of the role of

the dwarfs, the kernels of the story were retained. If this were not so, then Disney's film would have been unrecognisable as a version of Snow White. Moreover, Disney's *Snow White* embellished the satellites of the story to perform certain functions within the film, be they to induce humour, reveal inner desires, or to enable a multimodal element. This last point is especially pertinent in Disney's animated adaptation as Wells (1999, p. 210) posits that 'the act of adaptation in animation, therefore, is not predicated on the determinants of narrative events as described in a literary text but on the stimulants of function and purpose—not the fact that something happens, but the *way* it happens'. For *Snow White*, the *way* that things happen in the film add to the overall affective properties the film contains, and the multimodal nature of the film permits a greater unfolding of the narrative and the myriad ways in which events can happen.

2.6 The multimodal nature of *Snow White* and its ability to utilise cognitive processes to render meaning and produce pleasure

As literary stories, fairy tales, by tellers such as the Grimms, rely upon a diegetic approach to telling their tale. By contrast, animated fairy tales are able to utilise all of the various modes that are employed within their creation in order to tell their version of a tale. Literary texts are unable to offer these creative, multimodal elements to their readers, thus rendering animated texts differently placed to serve the desires of their audience. These desires stem from an emotional, cognitive interaction with the text, which then enables the text to actively communicate with the reader. Stockwell (2002, p. 172) remarks that 'emotion is regarded as a cognitive phenomenon', and further adds that 'the text is seen as responsible for emotional cues'. Understanding how texts affect our emotions and our cognitive functioning is something that needs to be explored, especially in relation to Disney's animated films. Stockwell (*ibid.*, p. 173) argues that the need for such an understanding of the interaction between text and reader lies in 'having a cognitive poetic approach to emotional engagement that is not coldly rational, but that seems to match more satisfactorily our sense of why we read and enjoy happy, passionate, serious or even sad, frightening, or angry literature', and this can also be applied to film adaptations of literary texts. An understanding of the mechanisms by which texts/films are able to engage with, and affect, their audience is especially pertinent when we consider that one of the reasons for the popularity of fairy tales

is their universal ability to ‘speak’ to the reader/viewer. Sartre (1948/2003, p.43) avers that ‘the writer, like all other artists, aims at giving his reader a certain feeling that is customarily called aesthetic pleasure’. For literary writers, this pleasure, or joy, is facilitated by the internal cognitive processes that are engaged upon reading; for the film-goer, this aesthetic pleasure is derived from the multimodal elements on offer. By having a range of modalities available to their audience, animated tales are able to ‘speak’ in more varied ways to the internal desires, needs, interests and wishes of their intended audience. Bettelheim (1976/1999, p. 5) argues that fairy tales are important and needed stories as ‘nothing can be as enriching and satisfying to child and adult alike as the folk fairy tale’, and that children are able to derive ‘meaning from fairy tales’; how much more meaning is then able to be derived when the meaning is conveyed in multimodal ways, as is the case with fairy tale films.

Owing to Zipes’ unswervingly committed anti-Disney stance, and his repeatedly negative reading of Disney films, there is a vacuum that exists whereby the merits of Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* as a multimodal text, and not just as a literary adaptation, can be explored and evaluated. It is to fill this void that I aim to provide a more nuanced reading of Disney’s *Snow White* which acknowledges the importance of the medium of film and the techniques of animation as central to its production of affect.

It is a truism that reading requires an act of negotiation between text and reader, and that this relationship requires the reader’s interaction with the text by using their imagination to bring the story to life. This relationship, through which the reader infers meanings produced by a range of modalities, is referred to as cognitive poetics. Verdonk (2001, p. 231) describes this as something ‘which has embraced the cognitive linguistic theory that any act of language [such as animation] use can potentially be related to some underpinning mental faculty, for example, memory, perception, imagination and emotion’. Surely Disney’s animated films must be included here: they evoke memories, facilitated by a nostalgic yearning; they require perception of the roles of the protagonists and the decoding of morals contained within the tale; they promote emotional responses. Finally, they permit the use of imagination through identification with the central protagonists. These cognitive elements are amongst the prototypical affective qualities of animation, especially feature-length animation as the extra duration of the feature allows for a full musical score; an abundance of songs, often with specifically written lyrics to complement the narrative; a larger budget which, in turn, may allow for the adoption of more sophisticated technological innovations which often leads to

an increase in the multimodal affect. To deny the power that animation has, in the light of cognitive poetics, is to do a disservice to the creations of Walt Disney and his team.

Sartre (1948/1993, p. 33) avers that ‘reading is directed creation’. This creation enables the reader to imagine the characters, landscapes and story settings as they wish. When looking at the popular fairy tale setting of a forest, one might imagine a multi-shaded green forest with tall spruces full of snow, yet another as a dark and barren, branch-filled, leaf-less collection of trees. Literary tales offer freedom for readers, as they are allowed to create and imagine in accordance with past experiences, recollections and idealised images of how they think things *should* be. Granted, there is always a degree of denotation in literature, something which Barthes (1977, p. 17) labels as the ‘analogical’ message. The Grimms’ character, Snow White, is characterised as ‘white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony’ (Tatar, 1999, p. 83). This brief figurative description of the protagonist further allows readers to create their own characterisation of Snow White, for example, her actual body size and shape is never referred to. Yet, given that she is a young princess, the reader is most likely to imagine her as an elegant, well proportioned, slender character. Certainly, princesses in both literature and film are usually graceful, beautiful, charming and good. By contrast, an animated film does not offer the same degree of freedom for its audience; it directs the viewer by explicitly defining characters and locations. Owing to such a global imprint of his Snow White, coupled with the lack of a truly successful and widely appealing non-animated film version⁴, Disney’s characterisation of Snow White is likely to be *the* one that most people are able to imaginatively recollect. However, such an explicit defining of characters and locations, as provided by film, could be viewed as a limitation from a cognitive poetics point of view as imagination for certain elements within a film becomes unnecessary. In the case of Snow White, the viewer can certainly use their imagination to imagine how she *may* look as a princess; however, this is dispelled by the film’s end when she is presented in her signature attire and the viewer sees her as a princess. Nonetheless, this one cognitive process is offset by the other varying modalities that animated films utilise, something which literary texts are unable to provide.

Animation is a medium which not only contains visual representation, but elements of music, dance and song; it is a mode of storytelling that is able to ‘tap into’ the affective domain and, as such, is able to elicit responses from its audience that literary texts are unable to produce. These responses are based upon the multimodal spectacle that animation is able to express.

Firstly, before I am able to elucidate upon the multimodal nature of Disney's *Snow White* and the pleasures that it offers the viewer, a clear understanding of the nature of multimodality itself must be established, and why fairy tale adaptations, such as *Snow White* merit a multimodal analysis. Literary texts have one mode of operating for the reader: that of the written word, which is then processed through a range of cognitive functions which elicit meaning and pleasure for the reader. Verdonk (2001, p. 235) includes 'thinking, experience, imagination, learning, memory, perception, attention, emotion, reasoning and problem solving' as cognitive processes which readers employ when decoding a text. Accordingly, viewers watching a feature-length animation are also able to incorporate and use these cognitive processes when decoding the narrative. However, animation is further able to use a range of modes, such as music, dance, and physical expressions, which are then all able to produce pleasure in viewers. Animation thus invites the need for multimodal analysis due to its diverse range of elements that all contribute to the *mise en scène*⁵.

Zipes' reading of Disney's *Snow White* has, as previously mentioned, focused on a textual, comparative analysis with the Grimms' story, but this narrow literary method of reading the film does not fully do it justice; neither does it advance and invite discussion in the field. Stockwell (2002, p. 168), in his groundbreaking work on cognitive poetics, comments that 'if we focus on the text as object, we are doing linguistics. If we focus on the reader alone, we are doing psychology. Neither of these fields have anything in themselves to say about literary reading'. The same can be applied to readings of animated adaptations of literary texts. In light of this, Zipes has approached Disney's films, especially *Snow White*, from a linguistic stance, and his reading of this tale from a purely linguistic perspective has led to him homogenising all Disney's films, and, I believe is the most likely explanation for his argument concerning Disney's 'violation' of literary fairy tales (Zipes, 1999, p. 353). Furthermore, solely applying a stylistic reading to Disney's story has led to Zipes not placing any emphasis on the interaction between the text/film and the reader/viewer. His separation of the film from its involvement with the audience has, once again, failed to further any understanding of Disney's contributions to the fairy tale genre, and has drawn criticism from Marina Warner (2002, p. 414) who insists that 'it is simply lazy and unthinking to denounce all the works of [Walt] Disney and his legacy'.

Both film as a medium and animation as a filmic technique are multimodal in nature. It is slightly odd, then, that there has been a dearth of multimodal readings of Disney's films,

especially when the late twentieth century saw a growth of the Disney Corporation's commercialisation of the multimodal aspects of their feature films. Amongst other things, this expansion has included music from the films being released in their original film format, and, later on, these songs have been re-recorded by contemporary artists and released under the successful 'Disney Mania' series of albums. Furthermore, such is the marketing ingenuity of Disney that it has produced multigenred versions of their songs incorporating music styles such as country, acoustic, reggae, and punk.

Multimodality has, at its heart, the assumption that the science of semiotics is not simply restricted to the written or spoken text, but that the various elements which collectively work together to produce a finished product all contribute to the meaning-making from which audiences are able to derive pleasure. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 39) argue that 'language, whether in speech or writing, has always existed as just one mode in the totality of modes involved in the production of any text, spoken or written'. With reference to visual media, such as animated film, these modes include the aural and a range of devices for manipulating point of view. Kress and van Leeuwen (*ibid.*, p. 39) further comment on how 'a spoken text is not just verbal, but also visual, combining with non-verbal modes of communication'. When we apply this to animation, we are able to realise that, owing to the wide scope of elements which are contained within the medium, there exists an opportunity for multimodal analysis which is unlikely to be found in any other medium. The coincidence of speech, animation techniques, music, song, dance, colour and shading, voice-over, written text and associated merchandise all contribute to a film form that is ripe for multimodal analysis.

Chaug (2006, p. 374), building upon a schema first posited by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), stresses that there are four theoretical points, or conclusions, which can be drawn when attempting to devise a framework which takes account of the functions of multimodality within any work. These include the fact 'that different modes have different meaning potentials and materiality, which are not always available or overly comprehended by the audience'. This is especially true when we consider the dual or even triple address of animation. Modern animated films, such as DreamWorks' *Shrek* (2001), present rich sources of meaning-making potential to their audience. *Shrek* is a film that is targeted towards children, yet the ironic humour contained within both the animation effects and characters' speech is clearly targeted toward an older, more adult audience. Coupled with this are the

frequent and often complex intertextual allusions to Disney films and other literary works, something that requires a certain type of audience in order to fully comprehend and infer meaning, an audience who are familiar with Disney's animated fairy tales, and, quite possibly, literary versions of those tales.

Chaung (2006, p. 374) goes on to point out that 'all modes have specific social evaluations and demands, so meaning potentials of modes depends [*sic*] on the practical requirements of different communities and on different social contexts'. For an auteur, such as Walt Disney, the egalitarian nature of many of his creations, including *Snow White*, was relevant to the social situation of 1930s America. There was a need for solidarity and camaraderie amongst the labour force. The lyrics of songs such as 'Heigh-ho' resonated with the growing socialist movement, a movement which was a backlash against an already failing capitalist system. Frith (1988, p. 106) argues that '[song] lyrics reflected the emotional needs of their time', further adding that 'from the 1920s to 1940s, songs reflected the disillusion, the quiet despair of the Depression'. The nature of the Dwarfs' working song typifies the state of 1930s America, and fully supports Chaung's comment above. Furthermore, this was an era which held significant interest for Walt Disney and would later serve as a reference point when designing and promoting his theme parks. As Shortsleeve (2004, p. 12) observes 'Disney, it would seem, has an interest in promoting the 1930s as something wonderful'. This period was a time of great success for Disney: his company had come through financial struggles; he had to continue making animation shorts to fund his company while his focus and passion were directed toward *Snow White*. Finally, *Snow White* gave him the critical and commercial acclaim and success that he felt such a work truly deserved.

According to Chaung (2006, p. 174), 'all modes produce meaning through their intersection with each other and interweaving in the communicative context'. For animation, the sheer variety of modes available ensures that there is a myriad of meanings which are able to be transmitted to the viewer, which will resonate differently with different members of the audience, depending upon their different life experiences. For Disney, this is perhaps best seen by the cross-pollination of merchandise which accompanies all Disney productions. Of particular note is the popularity of soundtrack music. Music accounts for a large percentage of Disney's revenue, not just from films, but also from popular television shows and artists marketed under the Disney label. Nowhere is this more evident than with the soundtracks and spin-off albums from the *High School Musical* (2006-2008) series of films. These films (three

at the time of writing, although a further film is planned for 2011 or 2012) were a surprise hit, mainly due to the music and dance routines contained within them, and the subsequent strong showing of the soundtrack on music charts around the Western world, including being the best-selling album of 2006 in, amongst others, Australia and America, thus achieving global sales in excess of seven million copies. Manovich (2001, p. 71) comments that cinema includes 'spectator activity'; for Disney, this 'spectator activity' includes singing the songs to its features, either in isolation or during a viewing. In addition, Disney also includes karaoke versions of its film songs when they are released onto DVD and Blu-ray, further enhancing the multimodal experience for their audience.

Chaug (2006, p. 374) further claims that 'all modes are shaped, created and transformed in response to the need of social semiotic processes, so they are not static, but fluid'. This implies that the same text, or film, will be viewed differently in different periods, thus *Snow White* seems relatively reactionary to contemporary audiences in terms of its gender politics and reinforcing of male dominance and female fragility, whereas this is not likely to have been the case upon the film's release in 1937. Inge (2004, p. 140) comments that '*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* accurately reflected the general public attitude toward the place of women in society and continued a long tradition in Western culture of portraying women as passive vessels of innocence and virtue'. As gender roles and zeitgeist changed throughout the twentieth century, so, too, did Disney's films. For Disney's animated fairy tales, there is a constant, dynamic, fluid shift from *Snow White* through to later tales, such as *Beauty and the Beast*. These changes are ideological, technical and graphical, all of which speak of the changing nature of animation as a mode that is ideally placed to serve the needs of the current social situation. Just as Walt Disney changed animation from crudely rendered images and scenes to a more realistic, fluid and vivid depiction of an altered reality, so, too, have the Disney Corporation, along with the once separate, but now under the Disney umbrella, Pixar Studios, met the needs of contemporary society through developing films created solely by computer generated images (CGI). The first of these, *Toy Story* (1995) heralded a change in animation as the older method of hand-drawing images gave way to CGI. Other companies, such as DreamWorks, were to follow Disney's lead and also produce films using this new method of animation. Through the development of technology, animation is able to offer modes of meaning-making which have been shaped by the needs of fluid social semiotic processes. Thus Chuang's work sets out an apposite framework of multimodality which can

be applied to all art forms, not just animation or written text. This framework, coupled with the work of Kress and van Leeuwen, amongst others, will serve as the basis for my analysis of the multimodal pleasures of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

Snow White can be viewed as analogous to a theatre production of the story as both would feature a visual spectacle incorporating elements of music and dance which are brought out by the narrative. As befits staged productions, the aesthetic elements within the production promote an affective response from the audience. Hillman (2003, p. 207) argues that 'pleasure is indelibly linked to a communal, affective response to the aesthetically staged event'. Early film-going audiences experienced a greater communal event than contemporary film viewers who may watch films at home through their television, or more increasingly, on mobile entertainment devices such as [smart] telephones, iPods and iPads. Viewing a film in this way is often an individual event. However, this does not mean that individual viewing somehow detracts from the pleasure that may be had. Rather, it is a personal pleasure which is not initially communal in nature, although later discussions with others who have seen the same film are also likely to bring about a shared communal pleasure. When *Snow White* was screened firstly during the 1930s and then throughout the 1940s and 1950s as subsequent re-releases, before home television and home video became popular, it was a communal event. Nonetheless, the film's longevity and enjoyment by contemporary viewers who have never seen the film in a cinema attest to the pleasure that may be gleaned from viewing the film, whether as part of a communal staging, or an individual viewing. This pleasure is derived from the spectacle of the music and dance which are used to bring the story to life. The written text cannot evoke the same response as it is not a staged event. However, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that at the inception of the literary fairy tale, the tales were often read as part of a communal experience within bourgeois salons, although the nature of the shared experience was markedly different from the transmission of oral folk tales, as, too, was the reception of the tales. As previously mentioned, reading is a cognitive act which relies upon prior experiences and exposure to certain social schemata in order to allow for the creation of mental images of the text. Animation, and staged events have no need for such a relationship between the viewer and the audience; their relationship is based upon the explicit staging of the event through visual and audio elements. I would argue that it is the diegetic and non-diegetic soundtrack of *Snow White* that is one of the film's greatest multimodal pleasures, and it is here that my multimodal reading begins.

Music is universally acknowledged as an instrument to effect pleasure, but this is not restricted to just contemporary society or to those societies that have flourished over the last two to three hundred years. Music has provided inspiration, relief, joy and pleasure since man first began to sing and make melodies. Indeed, Frith (1988, p. 123) posits that ‘the pleasure of pop is that we can “feel” tunes’. Unlike other animated productions, such as the *Silly Symphonies* cartoon shorts, *Snow White* allowed for a full integration of both instrumental music and song within a film; indeed, the music of the film constitutes one of the main plot drivers. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* incorporates both a diegetic and a non-diegetic soundtrack, and moves between the two at various points in the film. This can be seen from the onset as the use of non-diegetic music begins during the title sequence with an instrumental version of the song ‘I’m Wishing/One Song’. Following the title sequence, the non-diegetic soundtrack continues with an instrumental version of ‘Someday My Prince Will Come’ as the audience are shown a storybook sequence providing background information regarding Snow White’s current predicament. In addition, the use of a storybook further alludes to the tale’s origin as a literary work. Indeed, the use of bold lettering and decorative artwork on the storybook are further designed to evoke memories of collections of fairy tales, such as Andrew Lang’s coloured fairy tale books. When the audience are first introduced to the protagonist, the soundtrack becomes diegetic as Snow White is singing ‘Someday My Prince Will Come’. This song provides the audience with meaning-making opportunities as the lyrics allude to refer to Snow White’s desire to find her prince and to leave her life as a servant. This scene is complemented by the Prince’s appearance as he sings ‘I’m Wishing/One Song’. Unlike the instrumental version of the song, which had no diegetic function, when this song is sung by the Prince it becomes diegetic, as the audience are introduced to the idea that the Prince, too, is wishing for love and that Snow White has become the object of his affection. To reciprocate her feelings, Snow White enters into a duet with the Prince as they both sing parts of ‘I’m Wishing/One Song’. During the rendition of the song, Snow White has managed to go inside her home and reappear on the balcony whilst the Prince is down below. The staging of this scene is designed to evoke intertextual memories of Act 2, scene 2, of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (the iconic balcony scene). As a multimodal source of pleasure, this particular scene in the film is able to induce in the viewer a sense of foreboding that these lovers are also likely to be star-crossed, especially if they have read or seen Shakespeare’s play. Furthermore, the use of doves, which are exchanged between Snow White and the Prince, also carry connotations of a pure love and a

possible forthcoming marriage, due the association of doves with wedding ceremonies. This is a scene which does not feature in the Grimms' version of the tale. However, it is a scene which allows the audience to receive their first experience of the multimodal pleasures that the medium of film can offer.

In the scene, the music is light, playful and romantic in nature; it is also interspersed with birds singing when Snow White reaches high notes. This is in contrast to the gloomy, bass-heavy, rumbling, single key score which accompanies the scene where the evil Queen commands the Huntsman to "take her far into the forest, find some secluded glade where she can pick wildflowers, and there, my faithful huntsman, you will kill her". The next scene then switches back to Snow White who is nursing an injured bird. Once again, the music changes to complement the 'good' nature of Snow White; it is only once she has released the bird and the shadow of the Huntsman comes into view, that the music switches to its previous dark and brooding tone. Chung (2006, p. 374) argues that 'in multimodal communication, modes work individually and collectively at the same time'. For *Snow White*, it is no accident that the music clearly changes at key moments, usually as an indicative sign of some miasma or impending doom, or the converse, for some form of elation or romance. The music accompanies the narrative to further tell the story through the employment of this additional modality. Kress *et al* (2001, p. 14) observe that 'modes produce meaning in themselves and through their intersection with each other'. As a multimodal film, *Snow White* is able to transcend the confines of the written word and to offer an aesthetic experience to its audience based upon its simultaneous appeal to their visual and aural senses. Dewey (1980, p. 145) mentions features such as 'tension, conservation, anticipation and fulfilment' as formal features of an aesthetic experience. Music in the film features to further add meaning to those scenes where there is tension, such as when the Huntsman approaches Snow White to kill her; anticipation, when the viewer is unsure as to the Huntsman's intentions; and fulfilment when Snow White meets the Prince. This aesthetic experience draws upon the multimodal nature of film by providing both music and the moving visual image in order to elicit affective responses and meaning. However, for the experience to be truly effective, it has to be what Regelski (1996, p. 36) labels 'good time'. By this, we can infer that the affective domain is reliant upon a connection with things which we perceive as being good or pleasurable. Snow White's verbal wishing and the joyous music clearly fall into this category

as the viewer, understanding that Snow White is being unfairly treated, would perceive that her wishing for a better life is a wish with which they can empathise.

The scene firmly incorporates music and singing, two elements which are at the heart of animated fairy tale films, and are used in this scene to introduce the protagonist as someone who is lonely and wishing for a life away from her current solitude and drudgery. This back-story differentiates the film from the Grimms' tale, as no mention is made of Snow White's life as a scullery maid, wishing for a more elevated existence, only that the Queen 'hated Snow White' (Tatar, 1999, p. 84). Disney's use of music and lyrics to make explicit the desires of Snow White allow the audience a greater insight into her character and links her intertextually with that other oppressed fairy tale heroine, Cinderella. By extending the opening of the story, the audience are able to empathise with Snow White's plight. Barthes (1977, p. 39) argues that 'the text helps to identify purely and simply the elements of the scene and the scene itself; it is a matter of a denoted description of the image (a description which is often incomplete)'. For film and animated adaptations, the image describes *all* of the scene; the viewer is not left bereft of anything within the scene, thereby sharing the same experience as all of the other viewers at the same time, and lending greater currency to the affective, communal aspect of film. When viewing this opening scene, members of the audience are able to see Snow White, a princess by birth, engaged in menial tasks that are more fitting of a maid, and certainly not someone of her social position. However, in the Grimms' tale, there is no description of Snow White's life under the Queen; it is left to Disney to use his opening scene to further illustrate the state of affairs within the castle. Not only does this offer the viewer multimodal pleasures through the music, but the viewer is now afforded a greater understanding of the history between the two female protagonists, something that is missing in the Grimms' tale. By elucidating upon Snow White's life through this one scene, Disney greatly expands the tale and provides a reason as to why Snow White is desperate to leave the castle. In the Grimms' tale, the text comments that the Queen was "arrogant, proud" and "green with envy" (Tatar, 1999, pp. 83-84). However, the text does not make explicit what life was like for Snow White. It would take an adult reader, who could better understand the emotions and actions that result from intergenerational envy and jealousy, to imagine what life could have been like. Naturally, if the reader were also familiar with 'Cinderella', they would have a better insight into Snow White's life as both

protagonists suffer from having a deceased mother and have gained an evil stepmother who cares little for them. Disney's version makes this implicit intertextuality more explicit.

For a child reader, coupled with their preconceptions of what a princess should look and act like, Disney's film is able to resonate far more than the Grimms' tale. Their Snow White is not explicitly described, whilst Disney's heroine is visually portrayed on screen. Moreover, thanks to saturated marketing campaigns and its global reach, Disney's portrayal of Snow White is likely to be the ideal constructed image of how a princess *should* appear. Indeed, hair colour aside, Snow White, along with Belle (*from Beauty and the Beast*), Cinderella, Ariel (*from The Little Mermaid*) and Aurora (*from Sleeping Beauty*) comprise the five Disney princesses who are an ever-present feature throughout the Disney corpus and are a major merchandising tool at Disney theme parks and stand-alone shops. However, this does not mean that children are just fed on a diet of Disney ideologies which dictate that a princess *has* to look like one of the previously mentioned Disney princesses. Rather, it is parental influence (or submission to the 'pestering' power of children) through the use of monikers, clothing choices, non-Disney dolls, television programmes, *and* Disney films which all conspire to create a shared ideology of the quintessential princess.

Zipes does not take into account the child-centric address of Disney's version of the story; nor does he concede that the Grimms' version is somewhat biased toward an adult addressee, as opposed to the dual address of Disney's filmic adaptation. Instead, Zipes uncritically endorses the Grimms' story:

If we take some of the folk tales gathered by the Grimm Brothers such as ... "Snow White"... we can readily see that each narrative begins with a seemingly hopeless situation and that the narrative perspective is sympathetic to the exploited protagonist of the tale.

(Zipes, 2002, p. 9)

On the contrary, I find that the Grimms' narrative does not portray Snow White as being exploited and of being in a 'seemingly hopeless situation' (Zipes, *ibid.*, p. 9). Indeed, she is barely mentioned in the opening to the Grimms' tale, and, after her initial description, is not mentioned until "the huntsman obeyed and took her out into the woods" (Tatar, 1999, p. 84). By contrast, Disney uses music and song to allow the viewer an insight into Snow White's 'exploitation'. The lyrics to the song during this opening scene allude to Snow White's need

to escape from her life as a slave. Indeed, the scene begins with Snow White remarking to the doves that she is standing by a wishing well and that “making a wish is all you have to do/and if you hear it echoing/your wish will soon come true”. In accordance with the wish fulfilment nature of fairy tales, Snow White’s voice does echo, and she proceeds to “wish for the one I love”. The Prince, hearing the singing, quickly locates the source, Snow White, and then begins his monologue, professing his love for this stranger. The Prince serves not only to fulfil the romantic element that is found within most fairy tales, but he also fulfils the quest narrative that is prevalent in all fairy tales, the quest here being Snow White’s freedom from the clutches of the Queen. Moreover, the visual techniques used in these first scenes with Snow White and the witch/crone/stepmother further mark Snow White out as someone who is being exploited. The magic mirror comments that “rags cannot hide her [Snow White’s] gentle grace” and when the viewer first glimpses Snow White, she is in rags and engaged in chores. The colouring of her attire further suggests the drabness of her existence as she is dressed in earthy, dull coloured hues. This is in stark contrast to the colouring that accompanies princesses in other animated tales, such as Sleeping Beauty, who, at the close of the film, is repeatedly converted from blue to pink by Flora, Fauna and Merryweather, her three guardian godmothers. Indeed, the evil Queen in *Snow White* is dressed in a more regal blue, has a long, flowing cape and wears a crown. It is only when Snow White is away from the castle, and the constant demands of the Queen, that she is able to dress in her signature yellow skirt, blue top, black cape and red bow, and to be the princess that she was born to be. However, it requires the existence of a medium that is able to utilise multimodal elements to convey this to the audience. Owing to the nature of text and the economy of language, the Grimms’ version of the tale is unable to offer this character insight to its readers.

Frith (1998, p. 120) argues that ‘singers use non-verbal as well as verbal devices to make their points – emphases, sighs, hesitations, changes in tone’ and that ‘song words work as speech and speech acts, bearing meaning’. For Snow White, her opening song is one which renders accessible her inner thoughts: she is wishing for someone to love and for that someone to rescue her from her current life. As stated previously, the Grimms’ story does not feature this opening scene, but it is a crucial one for understanding the life that Snow White has. To fully articulate her desires, Snow White does indeed use a combination of verbal and non-verbal cues, and devices to convey her longing. Through the use of a facial close-up shot, the viewer sees her sighing as she is washing the stairs shortly before she launches into song.

This one aspect of the scene allows the viewer a deeper understanding into Snow White's dissatisfaction with her life as a servant in the castle. The use of different camera angles allows for a manipulation of audience sympathies as the audience can see Snow White's tired and weary expressions and they are invited to sympathise with her plight. The multimodal elements used here permit a richer production of meaning and are in line with Chaung's (2006, p. 374) conclusions when he states that 'all modes produce meaning through their intersection with each other and interweaving in the communicative context'. Snow White, a princess by birth, but here seen behaving like a servant, communicates to the viewer, through her sighing and subsequent song, that she does not wish to remain like this and that hers is indeed a life that is not how it should be. Continuing with non-verbal signs, Snow White is seen smiling at the doves around the well shortly before she reveals her secret longing for someone to love. This signals to the viewer that even though hers is a life of chores and exclusion from her rightful position, she is still capable of taking pleasure in the natural world. This connects with the wish fulfilment nature of fairy tales, especially as the wish is made and almost instantly her prince arrives. The interweaving of animation techniques, song lyrics, camera angles which show facial expressions and paralinguistic elements, such as sighing, all combine to produce meaning and, as such, communicate with the viewer something that literary versions of the tale are unable to do. The Grimms' version is not explicit in what Snow White's life is like and why she is wishing for relief, but a multimodal version of the story makes possible this meaning and so enriches the viewer's experience and understanding of the story.

Through its use of multimodal elements, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is able to elicit cognitive processes in its audience which literary texts are unable to replicate. The coincidence of music, song, dance, animation techniques, technological innovations, a shared communal experience and associated merchandise all contributed to produce a fairy tale which was markedly different from the literary versions that preceded it. However, Zipes' homogenising of Disney's fairy tale corpus based, in part, upon the way in which Walt Disney altered his source material for *Snow White* which, as I have elucidated upon, was not solely the Grimms' version of the tale, is to deny the film its place as a multimodal retelling of the story which still captivates children today, and is able to render pleasure to audiences, both young and old, through the multimodal elements that the film contains.

2.7 Film poetics and *Snow White*

Bordwell (1989a, p. 371) comments that ‘the poetics of any medium studies the finished work as the result of a process of construction—a process which includes a craft component (e.g., rules of thumb), the more general principles according to which the work is composed, and its functions, effects, and uses’. Some of the earliest poetics were applied to literature and linguistics. However, using Bordwell’s definition, poetics can exist within all mediums of representation, including contemporary modes, such as film and animation. Poetics, in a traditional sense, Bordwell (*ibid.*, p. 375) argues, ‘distinguishes among three objects of study’. These three objects are: thematics, which includes areas such as representation of both characters and societal values and norms; constructional form, which features narrative analysis. Finally, there is stylistics, which Bordwell (*ibid.*, p. 375) argues ‘deals with the materials and patterning of the film medium as components of the constructive process’.

Looking at *Snow White*, thematically, the film represents Snow White as being representative of 1930s America. During this time, women were very much subject to a more domestic existence within a patriarchal order, a role which Snow White assumes when she is found in the dwarfs’ cottage. This reflection of societal values of the 1930s would place the protagonist as both stay-at-home wife and mother figure and also as a more passive character. By contrast, the dwarfs are the workers, going out to earn their living, while Snow White is seen completing domestic chores. Bordwell (*ibid.*, p. 375) also argues that ‘thematics would study motifs’ and that ‘several scholars have revealed how genres present recurring imagery, myths and themes’. With regard to *Snow White*, and, indeed, all fairy tales, the use of magic is a recurring motif as *Snow White* contains a magic mirror, an enchanted apple and the film also features a magical transformation of the Witch/Stepmother/Crone. I have also previously commented on the three central elements which all fairy tales possess: a quest narrative, the use of magic as a motif, and metamorphosis as a plot device. Applying Bordwell’s notion of constructional form to *Snow White*, one may wish to look at how the characters have been created, how the narrative has been developed to represent Snow White’s deep longing for love or, how the central tale is not the protagonist’s, but rather the wicked Queen’s tale concerning the passing of time and the fading of beauty. Finally, stylistics could here apply to the technological innovations that Disney developed to enable the film’s construction, such as the multiplane camera. It could also apply to the use of realism in the animating of the characters.

With reference to Disney's films, and especially *Snow White*, poetics, as an approach to the films, may centre on one central theme: what are the reasons for their popular reception and enduring longevity? Within this thesis, I have commented on the animation techniques employed by Disney and his animating team to lend their films a given style, including an overt use of anthropomorphism and the representation of characters by utilising what Nelmes (2007, p. 199) labels a 'hyper-realism' style. In addition to this, there is the coincidence of music and song used within their films. Furthermore, I have approached *Snow White* from a cognitive poetics stance; a stance that allows for the understanding of how and why the film is so enduring and how it is able to appeal to a wide demograph since its initial release over seventy years ago. Moreover, Bordwell (1989b, p. 269) argues that 'certainly, a poetics of cinema should recognise something like pleasure as an effect to be explained'. Within this thesis, I have elucidated on how Walt Disney made films, such as *Snow White*, in such a way as to impact upon the audience by producing affect. That is, that the films' have an affective character about them, whether it was the creation of nostalgia, pleasurable emotions, or character identification. The films are able to 'speak' to their audience and so resonate with them.

Disney's motivation for making films was never rooted in the financial rewards that success would bring. Instead, he wished to make movies that people, including himself, would want to watch. In order to achieve this, Disney understood that one of the central principles of film-making for his movies had to be that they affected his audience. This accords with Bordwell (2008, p. 54) who declares that 'the central question of film poetics posed as a methodological point of departure, can be understood in this way: how are films made in order to elicit certain effects'? Disney was able to utilise animation techniques, technological innovations, effective scripts which combined humour with romance and action, beloved characters (both human and anthropomorphic), music, dance and song in order to produce films that did elicit certain effects, chief of which was the production of affect.

To apply the concept of a poetics of film to Disney's *Snow White* would be to study the film as an object in itself, something that Bordwell (1989b, p. 268) posits is fundamental to poetics as 'poetics could benefit from a pun of its own: it focuses on the *work*-the film as an object, but also the regulated effort that produces and uses it'. Throughout this thesis, I have looked at *Snow White* as the object of my study, both as a constructive process by Walt Disney in how he produced the film and then how the film has been used by audiences to

elicit meaning-making through the film's multimodal aspects juxtaposed with the field of cognitive poetics.

To conclude on film poetics, Bordwell (1989a, p. 376) postulates that 'film poetics has its "semantics", the study of how meaning is produced. It has its "syntactics", the study of rules for selecting and combining units... And poetics has its "pragmatics", the study of how relations between viewer and text develop in the process of the film's unfolding'. Utilising these three linguistically derived areas, applying a poetics of film to Disney's fairy tale films is something which I have engaged in throughout this study, and it is the coincidence of these three areas that account for *Snow White's* popular reception and enduring longevity. Walt Disney, whether he was aware of it or not, utilised a poetics of film: he selected units and modes of representation which would produce meaning to develop an enduring relationship between his films and their audience.

End notes

1. The majority of the major film companies viewed synchronised sound in animation as a gimmick and something that would soon pass. They did not think it worthy to invest substantial amounts of money into such a development. Disney alone saw the potential of synchronised sound and would later utilise it to great success and acclaim.
2. Warner Brothers had experienced success in 1926 with the release of *Don Juan*, a film which had utilised a pre-recorded soundtrack which could be synchronised with a movie projector. The success of *Don Juan*, and its use of sound was to be one of the drivers that would result in *The Jazz Singer* becoming the world's first 'talkie'. It would take the success of *The Jazz Singer* to finally convince the other film studios that 'talkies' were the way forward for film.
3. Although Disney was granted the patent for the multi-plane camera in 1940, other animators and studios, such as Lotte Reiniger and Fleischer Studios, had also worked with similar devices which utilised a tabletop approach to filming animation cels, albeit ones not as advanced or as sophisticated as Disney's. Nonetheless, these earlier versions were in use

before Disney's multi-plane camera. However, it was Disney who took the tabletop camera idea and fully developed it into the multi-plane camera, for which he is credited as the inventor.

4. There have been numerous versions of the 'Snow White' story made into film; amongst these are *Snow White: A Tale of Terror* (1997), *Snow White: The Fairest of Them All* (2001) and the forthcoming 2012 release *Snow White and the Huntsman*. However, these other versions of the story have received very little critical or commercial success, due, quite possibly, to the longevity and cultural imprint of Disney's film and the comparisons that may be drawn with Disney's version.

5. *Mise en scene* is a phrase derived from film theory and is used to describe everything that is captured within a scene. This would include lighting, set design, actors/characters, costumes and everything that contributes to the visual environment that a viewer would see. However, the term can be taken further and be used to also include camera angle and sound usage as these both contribute to the framing of a scene and are thereby experienced by the viewer.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been twofold: firstly, to establish a new paradigm for the fairy tale genre in arriving at a clear taxonomy of fairy tales and culminating in the positing of a definition of what a fairy tale is, something that has previously been missing from discussion in this field. Secondly, the aim has been to respond to the post-Marxist readings of Disney's fairy tale films, with specific focus on the work of noted fairy tale scholar Jack Zipes. In answering some of Zipes' arguments regarding Disney's animated fairy tales, my aim was to provide an alternative, more nuanced reading of these films, one which was not ideologically driven and, instead, focused on the merits of the films and their ability to induce feelings of pleasure and wonder in the viewer.

Owing to the diverse and manifold fairy tales that exist, arriving at a definition of what constitutes a fairy tale is something that is often not easily resolved. Scholars, such as Zipes, Opie, Crago and Propp have all attempted to define what makes a fairy tale; however, I have found these definitions too evasive and far from conclusive, largely due to the stances and viewpoints that each author has inflected into his or her readings of the fairy tale canon. These viewpoints have ranged from a structural analysis, with a focus on the functions of characters within the tales, to a historicist reading of the tales and their place within a given *milieu*. Indeed, Crago entitled a 2003 article as 'What are Fairy Tales?' However, as previously mentioned, this article failed to arrive at an answer to the question and, instead, provided a psychoanalytic reading of the nature of fairy tales, very much in the tradition of Bruno Bettelheim. The evasiveness of Crago *et al.* leaves the question still remaining as to what a fairy tale is and which tales should rightly be classed as such. Naturally, like all forms of literature, fairy tales share traits with other genres; however, they [fairy tales] *must* have their own set of core characteristics and motifs which allow for a tale to be firmly placed within this corpus. Feminist fairy tale scholar Marina Warner has argued that shape-shifting and metamorphosis are two such motifs which have to feature in all fairy tales to enable them to be classed as such. Certainly, the more popular and well-known fairy tales, such as 'Cinderella', 'Beauty and the Beast', and 'Little Red Riding Hood' feature metamorphosis. Unfortunately, so, too, do the fantasy works of C.S. Lewis and his *Narnia* series of books. There remains then other criteria which have to be established by which a tale can be labelled a fairy tale.

In order to delimit the fairy tale corpus and firmly establish its place as a unique genre within literature, one must first ascertain what the common characteristics of fairy tales are, and then how these characteristics are unique to the fairy tale canon, even though other genres may possess some of these *topoi*. Fantasy literature is one such genre which, on the surface, may be seen to be close to fairy tales: both possess an element of the magical, both are perceived as unreal and not indicative of reality, and both feature characters who are mythical, such as trolls and dragons. However, with analysis, one is able to see that fantasy literature is structurally different from fairy tales and that even though some scholars, such as Tolkien, may have conflated the two genres, they are distinctive from one another. Fantasy narratives are based upon mimesis, either through real events, such as Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* which has as its roots the fight against the Nazi regime during World War Two, or through subversion of the real world and the creation of a similar world to ours, but with notable exceptions, such as Pullman's *His Dark Materials* and his creation of an alternative Oxford. By contrast, fairy tales have no fixed, named world; they do not purport to be our world, or a secondary world. They just occupy a place somewhere, a somewhere that is never referred to by name. Added to this are the characters within fairy tales: it could be argued that they are flat and sometimes lifeless and that they are never fully 'fleshed' out in the way that characters in fantasy literature are, although this may be due to the economy of language in fairy tales. The characters are also known for their physical characteristics rather than their personalities and do not display the wit and logic that fantasy characters often possess, instead relying upon good fortune or a magical intervention to assist them.

The distinctive nature of a fairy tale depends upon its adherence to a succession of definable characteristics that set it apart from other tales, including folk tales and fantasy literature. However, within the fairy tale genre, I have argued that there has to be a strict adherence to three underlying narrative devices through which all of the other characteristics and conventions operate. These three devices are, as previously mentioned, integral to *all* fairy tales and they are the three narrative devices of the magical, metamorphoses and the [identity] quest narrative, through which the first two narrative devices are realised as the quest is fulfilled. It is the coincidence of these three strands, coupled with other set conventions, that characterise the literary fairy tale, and both live-action and animated adaptations of these tales.

Fairy tales have their own unique conventions that are not found in such abundance within other genres of literature. Certainly, there may be traces of these conventions within certain genres, but these other genres do not possess or make frequent use of them like fairy tales are able to. This thesis has argued that fairy tales possess the following conventions, and in so doing are defined by adherence to these conventions: a brevity and economy of language throughout the narrative, whether it is describing the characters, locations or actions of characters; the use of aptronyms when referring to characters (something which is especially pronounced with Disney's adaptation of *Snow White* and the characterization of the dwarfs); formulaic openings, as characterised by 'once upon a time', an opening seen in both Perrault's 'Little Red Riding Hood', and 'Donkeyskin', De Beaumont's 'Beauty and the Beast', and also in The brothers Grimms' 'Snow White' and in Disney's animated version of the tale. However, this phrase is often substituted for 'there was a time', or 'it happened once'. These openings immediately signal that a fairy tale is going to be told, such is the ubiquity of these phrases. Juxtaposed with the formulaic openings are the satisfying conclusions for which fairy tales are known: 'they lived happily ever after' being the mainstay of the fairy tale genre is something which is unsurprising when one considers that during its inception in the seventeenth century the genre was aimed firmly at children due to the socialising function to which the tales were put. Other conventions include the dichotic nature of the characters who are either good or bad, with no middle ground in between. Furthermore, fairy tales feature a lack of mimesis, which is in contrast to fantasy literature. Indeed, fairy tales often operate in a nostalgic sense through the creation of a simulacrum, something that Zipes (2002, p. 139) implies Disney has exploited through harnessing people's utopian longings through the medium of cinema as they are brought together 'so they can make their own history'. Zipes, here, would argue that it is a 'Disney history', and that audiences are passive dupes who are being led along a capitalist path by Walt himself. The last two conventions that permeate through fairy tales are, firstly, the non-specific settings which typically involve just three locations: the woods/forest, a castle or a palace. Granted, there may be exceptions to this, such as many of the works by Andersen which feature villages and towns, churches, and, for 'The Little Mermaid', the underwater world, something rare in fairy tales. However, the more popular tales all feature these three aforementioned locations. Finally, fairy tales normalise the magic within them: an enchanted mirror is accepted as normal; a talking wolf is again normalised, as is a bird in a tree tossing a gold and silver dress to Cinderella.

It is with these conventions that fairy tales have their being and are delimited. Moreover, it is the three *key* narrative devices which pervade all fairy tales and combine with a number of the given conventions that actually compose a fairy tale and so allow for a tale to be rightly classed as a fairy tale. The three narrative devices *have* to be mapped onto the other conventions in order to be definitively classed as a fairy tale as they add the complex nature that fairy tales possess in their construction. Having a concrete set of criteria for delimiting those tales within the fairy tale corpus makes it possible for me to answer the question that Crago *et al* have failed to answer, that of what is a fairy tale? It is my hope that positing such a definition will both further advance study in this academic field and will also promote discussion concerning the delimiting of other genres which may have become conflated. Thus, a fairy tale is a tale which features an identity quest narrative as the main plot device, but which features, or relies upon, metamorphoses and magic in order to fulfil the quest. Also coupled with this is an adherence to most or all of the following conventions: an economy of language; the use of aptronyms for the characters; formulaic openings and satisfying endings; non-specific settings and a lack of mimesis.

Furthermore, I postulate that fairy tales are able to exist on a continuum, whereby at one end are the prototypical fairy tales, such as ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ and ‘Beauty and the Beast’, which encompass all of the conventions that are common to fairy tales. At the other end are those tales which incorporate the three *key* narrative devices but which may not feature all of the other conventions associated with the majority of tales within the genre. Examples of this are the tales by Hans Christian Andersen; these tales are often bleak and lack a satisfying ending. They also take place away from the three main non-specific locations and may not possess a formulaic opening. Using my definition, does this then suggest that Andersen’s tales are not fairy tales? I would argue that they are indeed fairy tales. Taking ‘The Little Mermaid’ as one such example of Andersen’s work, it is clear that the tale omits the following conventions: a formulaic opening; indeed, the tale opens with “far out at sea, the water’s as blue as the petals of the loveliest cornflower, and as clear as the purest glass; but it’s very deep, deeper than any anchor can reach”. Regarding an economy of language, the story is perhaps more akin to a short story in its use of language as it is both descriptive and detailed. Finally, the tale does not end on a satisfying note; rather it ends with the Little Mermaid having to survive in a purgatory-esque state for three hundred years. However, the tale does adhere to some of the other conventions: it uses aptronyms for the characters: kings

have no name save King; the same applies to princesses and the little mermaid herself has no name (it is only in the Disney version that she is given the name Ariel). The tale also has a lack of mimesis as it is clearly not based upon actual events. Finally, the settings, although unconventional compared to other fairy tales, are non-specific: the sea is never named, nor its location alluded to.

Using the continuum approach, it is clear that at one end of the continuum are the prototypical tales, such as 'Little Red Riding Hood', and perhaps at the other end of the continuum are tales, such as 'The Little Mermaid'. Both are fairy tales as they adhere to the three key narrative devices and both incorporate some or all of the conventions common to fairy tales. Using the same approach, a literary work such as *The Lord of the Rings* could not be classified as a fairy tale for the following reasons: the location is fixed on Middle Earth, a specific and detailed fictional secondary world; aptronyms are not used and the key protagonists have names, often first and surnames; the story is mimetic in that it mimics the struggle between good and evil, with a heavy focus on World War Two and the fight against the evil Nazi regime; the story does not have a formulaic opening as it begins with the recounting of the origins of 'the one ring'; the story most certainly does not have an economy or brevity of language. Indeed, it exists as one story but in three volumes and each volume is detailed, rich and creates the secondary world of Middle Earth and assists in framing the narrative. Finally, there is one convention that *The Lord of the Rings* does include, and that is the satisfying ending. However, this is one convention that, whilst being an element common to the majority of fairy tales, is not one that is exclusive to this genre. Indeed, a satisfying conclusion to a tale is a recurring theme throughout most genres of literature aimed at children.

Jack Zipes stands alone as the most recognisable name in fairy tale criticism, and his contributions to the academic discipline of scholarly fairy tale study are not to be underplayed, or dismissed. One area of fairy tale criticism where Zipes is particularly vocal is with his, often vitriolic and steadfastly resolute, reading of Disney's animated fairy tale films. Zipes has approached Disney's films from a post-Marxist perspective and, as such, has applied a historicist reading to them as operating in a socio-economic context, unlike the tales' early writers who, Zipes implies, wrote without any financial incentive. In his writings on Disney, Zipes (1997, p. 90) declares that 'all Disney fairy tale films are alike'. By homogenising all of Disney's fairy tale films, Zipes has focused solely on their place within a

capitalist order, regarding them as little more than ‘commodities’ and commercial travesties of a genre that has been somehow violated by the mass-market appeal and longevity of Disney’s productions. Moreover, I have argued that Zipes has also downplayed the multi-modal pleasures of these works of popular fiction. Zipes’ comments further reveal an unwillingness to acknowledge the place that Disney’s productions may hold within the fairy tale corpus. However, I have sought to provide an alternative, more nuanced and less homogenised reading of Disney’s fairy tale films and to establish their place as *versions* of popular fairy tale stories, stories which should be judged on their own merits and not discounted due to their popularity and difference from the historic literary versions of fairy tales.

Disney’s animated fairy tale films have attracted polemical criticism from the outset. There are those critics who laud the ability that the films and their production processes possess to further advances within the medium of animation and film itself through technological development and innovations, such as the development of ‘hyper-realist’ animation and the multi-plane camera. Similarly, there are those, such as Zipes, who deride Disney for, what they perceive, as the commercial focus of the films, which pays little attention to either narrative or meaning. Added to this are the myriad readings which have been applied to the films and which range from the socio-historic, to the feminist. *Snow White*, although a commercial and critical success at the time, has suffered from a plethora of later work which has sought to denigrate the film for its reinforcement of gender stereotypes which see the protagonist becoming a servant to the child-like dwarfs and thus functioning in a patriarchal order whereby her only role is one of domesticity. Even though the Grimms’ tale also has the eponymous heroine framed within a male order of servitude, criticism has centred upon Disney’s perpetuation of patriarchal stereotypes and of Snow White’s servitude to the dwarfs. This criticism seems unfair and evades tackling the similarities that both versions of the tale possess. Moreover, such a myopic reading does not advance an understanding of Disney’s tale, nor does it provide a robust analysis when applying a socio-historic reading to both the Grimms’ and Disney’s tales.

In addition, far from acknowledging Disney’s Ford-esque method of animation production, detractors of Disney have sought to portray Walt as a megalomaniac with an iron-tight fist ruling his studio like a dictator. The opposing viewpoint to this is that Disney sought to encourage creativity amongst his employees while retaining his auteur status as head of the

studio and overseer of all facets of production on *Snow White*. I would argue that Disney was a man who had a vision that became his sole focus for the five years of *Snow White*'s production, and that this vision was so consuming, and the consequences of the film's failure so great, that Disney *had* to adopt a more controlling persona to ensure that his vision was realised. Schickel (1968, p. 175) records an account by a Disney employee where the employee remembers that 'Disney acted out the entire story of *Snow White*, playing all the parts in a performance that required several hours to complete and was to serve as the basic guide to the studio'. Disney's envisioning of the tale, from adapting the Grimms' version and the silent movie version he saw, firmly located the tale as Walt Disney's tale, hence his pride in including his name in the film's title.

The severest critic of Disney's animated fairy tale films is undoubtedly Jack Zipes. Zipes does not like Disney's films; he cares little for their production methods; he reluctantly nods his head at the technological developments made through the films and he pauses only to further deride their deviance from the 'original' text of the films' source material. Zipes is a critic whose work on Disney has perpetuated his post-Marxist reading of the tales as complicit in the commodification of childhood through to other scholars within this academic field. Indeed, as the leading fairy tale critic, by volume of published books, Zipes' works continually appear to demonstrate the immunity that he possesses to the charm that Disney's films have offered and continue to offer to millions of people around the globe, both children and adults alike. Furthermore, Zipes is resistant to alternative methods of reading Disney's films and, instead, never deviates from his socio-historicist stance when approaching the films. This blinkered approach has led to stasis within the field, nor does it allow for Zipes to foster new criticism which may approach the subject of Disney's fairy tale films from a new perspective. From reading Zipes' criticism of Disney's fairy tales, I find that he is guilty of an endless return to the same, paradoxically something of which he accuses Disney. Zipes' return to the same is the same homogenising, the same deviance from historic literary writers' versions of the tales, the same placing of the tales in a socio-economic perspective and the same lambasting of Disney because of the commercial success which has accompanied the tales.

One of my aims throughout this thesis has been to respond to the comments made by Zipes in his reading of Disney's films and to provide a response which is based upon a close reading of the films, paying specific attention to *Snow White*. I hope that I have been able to fully

answer Zipes' comments and give a more balanced reading of Disney's fairy tale films, free from a narrowly psychoanalytic, socio-historic, or post-Marxist viewpoint.

Zipes is resolute in his condemnation of Disney's films, and even, to a degree, Disney himself. Zipes accuses Disney of adopting an apathetic attitude toward the content of fairy tales, abandoning progressive messages encoded within the tale in favour of superficial glitz and glamour created through animation techniques. By accusing Disney of shifting the focus away from the narrative to the technical accomplishments, Zipes does viewers a disservice, rendering them as dupes who have allowed themselves to be seduced by an empty tale which comprises little more than a series of pretty pictures. If this were the case, then tales such as *Snow White* would have not endured in popularity as each new advancement in animation techniques would have rendered previous offerings obsolete and they would be expunged from society's consciousness. However, the Disney Corporation continues to market what it terms its 'classics' through each new medium of home entertainment, often releasing 'diamond' and 'platinum' editions of the same tale on the same format with only minor additions, both of which have met with commercial success. Of course, it is possible that a child viewer in the 1930s and 1940s would have been 'wowed' by the artistry and animation techniques, but to imply that today's viewing public would be captivated by the animation techniques of 1930s cinema is a misreading. This is especially true when we consider that computer generated imagery (CGI) has been put to critical and commercial success by the Disney owned Pixar Studios and that other animation companies, such as DreamWorks, use CGI to produce their animated films. There has to be something else operating which makes the films appealing to both child and adult viewers of contemporary society. It is with this in mind that my research led me to the field of cognitive poetics, an area that has been overlooked by Zipes. Juxtaposed with this is the area of multimodality, a field of study that complements an analysis of Disney's fairy tales.

My research and study has led me to conclude that Disney's prolonged success is not down to his business acumen, or those in charge with his Corporation's marketing and commercial division, or the company's ability to operate within most conceivable areas of commodity, although these may have helped shape Disney's path and certainly bring in revenue streams. I believe that to fully appreciate Disney's fairy tale films one has to look at the films' success from a viewer's perspective, not from a commercial one. Such an approach is devoid of any political ideology and instead focuses on the films themselves and how they interact with

their audience, not on their generated revenue or associated merchandising. The use of sophisticated animation techniques, the development of new technology, the carefully conceived narrative and the coincidence of these three factors have combined to produce tales which function in realms that Zipes has overlooked or quickly dismissed.

As a staunch post-Marxist, when reading Disney's films Zipes is guilty of separating the human, emotional aspect of Disney's films from their commercial success and subsequently ignoring the former. This is ironic when Zipes' literary training began not with English, or some aspect of literature, but with political science, which was then followed by scholarship in English and comparative literature. Such a background and political slant should, one would imagine, have led Zipes to praise the choices and views of the masses and their collective voice throughout the last seventy years in singling out Disney's animated tales as praiseworthy versions of fairy tales. However, Zipes' background and post-Marxist stance when approaching fairy tales, and more specifically, Disney's animated fairy tales is myopic and has led to him dismissing the masses in their appreciation and pleasure of Disney's fairy tales. Commenting against such a dismissal is Adorno (1991, p. 159) who remarks that 'theatrical art, in particular, cannot be separated from audience reaction'. Nonetheless, Zipes *has* approached his reading of Disney's films from a separatist stance, whereby the effects of the films upon their audience has been completely overlooked in favour of a focus which only looks at the commercial focus of the films in a capitalist order. Furthermore, by such a dismissal and a narrow approach, Zipes has been blinkered to a key area in which fairy tales operate: the nostalgic appeal of the films as foregrounded by a cognitive poetic approach.

Like all literature, fairy tales, whether literary, film or dramatic versions, operate in the cognitive realm. Audiences make use of the material they are given and then cognitively process the information. I previously argued that understanding how texts affect our emotions and our cognitive functioning is something that needed to be explored, especially in relation to Disney's animated films. Moreover, such an understanding was vital in establishing why people are drawn to Disney's films and why the 'classic' Disney fairy tale films are still so popular with both children and older audiences. These 'classic' Disney animated fairy tales include, but are not limited to, the early films produced when Walt was assuming his auteur role within the studios. Films, such as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Pinocchio*, *Cinderella*, and, of course, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* are labelled as 'classics' and they have survived in popularity ever since their initial release. There is a sense of nostalgia that viewers experience

when watching these films and it is this nostalgia which accounts for the investment that people in contemporary society place in Disney's films. These 'classics' exist in the social consciousness because of their dual audience address. They are marketed toward children. However, as they age, these children still retain an appreciation and longing for the films as they mature toward and reach adulthood and then reconnect with them with their own children. Adults seldom return to literary fairy tales, as they are seen as texts solely for children; they are not crossover fiction, they are firmly fixed as children's literature. More than this, they are examples of children's literature for younger child readers, and a genre that is not revisited once a child has matured past a given age.

Zipes, neglecting to give any attention to this area of Disney's films, also ignores the cognitive processes that audiences engage with when they watch the films. Such a nostalgic investment is responsible for the longevity of Disney's fairy tale films and affords them the 'classic' status as they are ever-popular with new audiences of subsequent generations. I would argue that such nostalgia clearly demonstrates the place that Disney's fairy tale films hold within society, and how audiences have engaged with the films on an affective level. By contrast, Zipes, unable to separate commodity from human pleasure and meaning-making, has missed reading the films from such a perspective and has, instead, provided a historicist reading ignoring the viewer and, instead, excoriates Disney during his reading for, amongst other things, 'smash[ing]the aura of heritage' (Zipes, 1999, p. 342). Such an approach does nothing to further advances in the field, nor does it provide a platform for other scholars to engage with.

Cognitive poetics makes clear that all interactions with texts require negotiation between reader/viewer and the [textual] material being presented to them. This negotiation and relationship allows the viewer to produce meaning from this material. The use of various modalities further adds to the meaning-making ability of the material. Adorno (1991, p. 164) argues that 'mass media [such as Disney's fairy tale films] also consist of various layers of meanings superimposed on one another which all contribute to the effect'. The 'effect' that Adorno refers to is the effect upon the viewer. As multimodal productions which include aspects of song, dance, spoken word, animation techniques and music, Disney's films are able to 'speak' to the viewer in a myriad of ways and so offer them an opportunity to make meaning from a range of modalities, unlike literary texts which rely on the printed word and may further be devoid of illustrations to accompany the text, thereby necessitating greater

imagination to visualise the narrative. Referring back to the work of Verdonk (2001, p. 231) who argues that ‘any act of language [such as animation] use can potentially be related to some underpinning mental faculty, for example, memory, perception, imagination and emotion’, it becomes evident that Disney’s fairy tale films are not simply anodyne confections, as Zipes would lead us to believe, but are, I would argue, carefully concocted creations that are designed to induce in the viewer feelings that cannot readily be experienced by other mediums. Furthermore, I would suggest that these films are designed so as to engage with their audience in such a way that they facilitate the use of cognitive processes, not by accident or as an aside, but that they were crafted to appeal to human emotions, to produce affective pleasures, like nostalgia and open up our imaginations. To dismiss this, as Zipes so resolutely does, is to deny the films their rightful place in the pantheon of fairy tales.

Furthermore, Zipes ignores the films’ audience and how the films operate on their audience. To further increase the impact and effect upon audiences, Disney became concerned with technological innovations and the implementation of emerging technology to create a more realistic experience for the viewing public. Such developments earned Disney critical acclaim and laid the ground for other studios, such as Warner Brothers, to take up Disney’s developments and utilise them in their own animated films. Unfortunately, Zipes also makes only a passing reference to these developments and refuses to acknowledge the impact that such developments had, primarily on *Snow White*, but also on future films. Moreover, the impact was directly linked to movie-goers during the 1930s and 1940s, something that Zipes has also overlooked as his historicist focus ignores the social *milieu* and gender norms of those decades and Disney’s framing of Snow White’s character within that time. Instead, Zipes, confusingly, castigates Disney for his framing of the protagonist in a patriarchal order and ignores Disney’s concession that Snow White is a girl of the 1930s, while still staying faithful to ideologies which were dominant in the seventeenth century, when literary versions of the tale first appeared. Furthermore, Disney crafted her character and personality to reflect societal norms. Zipes’ historicist focus only serves to reinforce his own notions of how far removed from the Grimms’ tale Disney’s version is, and his focus is not one which is fixed on appreciating the tale within 1930s zeitgeist. Moreover, this focus excludes the film’s affective pleasures for a 1930s audience experiencing an august moment in both animation and cinema.

Snow White exists in a patriarchal society and her domestic nature is a reflection of women in western society at that time: they were engaged in domestic tasks while their husbands worked. Zipes (2002, p. 128) does initially deride Snow White for her 'virginal housewife' passivity and need for a 'male savior to order herself and become whole'. Later, Zipes, ironically, affords Snow White her place within the prevailing ideology in 1930s America as she 'symbolizes the basic goodness of the American socio-economic system'. Such criticism confounds Zipes' reading of the film as it appears that he is able to both acknowledge the creation of a heroine in line with the dominant social ideology, whilst lambasting the character for displaying characteristics that are in keeping with women functioning under such a system in the 1930s. A reading, such as Zipes', which is able to both applaud and lambast the same historicist framing within a narrative is puzzling for scholars within the field and serves, I would argue, to only underline Zipes' unswerving anti-Disney viewpoint, even in the face of evidence which supports Disney's characterising of Snow White as a woman of the 1930s. Certainly, the 1930s could be seen as a time which constrained women and did 'tie' them to a more domestic life. By contrast, more contemporary Disney fairy tale films are more progressive and shift gender representation. One such example is *Beauty and the Beast*, which features Belle as a heroine who refuses to be tied to a life of domesticity with Gaston, who is offered as a caricature of conventional masculinity. However, Zipes, writing in the late 1990s, has, once again, ignored this and, instead, sticks to his homogenising of Disney's films, characters and narrative when he brands them 'all alike' (Zipes, 1997, p. 90).

Zipes' refusal to acknowledge the place that affective pleasures, including nostalgia, have in shaping the reception and longevity of Disney's fairy tales implies that either Zipes is not interested in looking at these two areas, something which I doubt given Zipes' exhaustive publications on fairy tales or, that a focus on these would not 'fit' with his narrow ideological reading of the films. It would seem that Zipes does not wish to engage in any reading which may reset his compass when discussing Disney, thereby leaving a vacuum which I feel has been filled by my arguments within this thesis regarding the multimodal nature of Disney's films, and in particular *Snow White*.

To conclude, Disney's fairy tale films are more than just commercially driven, anodyne confections that serve to provide a transient form of entertainment that is without meaning or purpose. Classic Disney films, especially the critically and commercially successful *Snow*

White, survive in the public's consciousness and experience longevity owing to the polymorphic meanings that the films provide for their audience. These meanings are derived from the multimodal nature of the films and the carefully crafted narratives that are expressed throughout. Jack Zipes has provided a reading of Disney's fairy tale films, a reading which has explored just one avenue of these popular films and, in so doing, has homogenised Disney's entire output. Throughout this thesis I have sought to provide alternative readings of Disney's films and to answer Zipes' objections. To further develop this area of literary criticism, I would have explored *Beauty and the Beast*, with a focus on the following: Disney's adaptation of the tale in comparison to other literary versions; the shifting of gender representations throughout Disney's films up to *Beauty and the Beast*, and how this film provides a modern-day heroine who, like Snow White, is very much 'of her time'. My aim would have been to show that the films are much more heterogeneous than Zipes would have us believe.

In closing, Disney's fairy tale films have appealed and continue to appeal to all generations through the interplay of their narratives, animation techniques and multimodal sources of meaning-making, even if Zipes argues that they are identical, and are a 'violation' (Zipes, 1999, p. 353) of the fairy tale genre. After arguing against Zipes' comments, I firmly believe that I have opened the way for a new understanding of Disney as a producer of versions of fairy tales. However, even after such refuting of Zipes' arguments, Warner's (2002, p. 414) comments perhaps best express why I first embarked upon this academic path: 'it is simply lazy and unthinking to denounce all the works of [Walt] Disney and his legacy'.

Word count: 43,601.

Appendix A



The above frame, shot using a multi-plane camera, demonstrates the depth within the scene and how the use of the multi-plane camera has created a scene that has a three-dimensional depth of focus to it. Snow White is animated on a separate plane to the crocodile-esque uprooted tree to her left; the low branch in the foreground is also shot on a separate plane. Finally, the hills in the background are shot on yet another plane. All of these planes collectively work together in this scene to lend a depth of focus.

If we were to compare the above frame to the one in Appendix B, we can see that even without Snow White, the scene still retains a three-dimensional depth. This is in contrast to a scene filmed using a single-plane camera which would leave a flat two-dimensional background whenever an animated character left the scene.

Appendix B



The depth of focus in the above frame, which was shot using a multi-plane camera is in contrast to the flat two- dimensional images produced by a single-plane camera. Further evidence of this can be seen by comparing this image with the one in Appendix C.

Appendix C



The impression of perspective in the above frame, which was shot using a single-plane camera, is down to the technical ability of the artists who utilise a range of animation techniques to create the illusion of perspective. The invention of the multi-plane camera allowed for a greater amount of depth and perspective to be added to each frame, regardless of the presence of any animated characters, through the use of multiple planes of glass.

Appendix D



The frame above shows a scene just after the Huntsman has told Snow White to “Run, run away, hide, in the woods, anywhere, never come back, now go”. In this frame, Snow White dominates the far right of the screen; the remainder of the scenery is filled with various trees and branches.

Appendix E



The frame above shows the same scene as the one in Appendix D, just a few frames on. As can be seen when comparing the frame above with the one in Appendix D, Snow White has clearly become smaller in size. However, everything else in the scene has remained the same size. The impression of depth within the scene is due to the multi-plane camera being able to place the protagonist on glass planes further and further from the camera, whilst the background images remain placed on planes furthest from the camera, thus fixing their dimensions while Snow White alone changes in size.

Appendix F



The frame above continues with the same scene first captured in Appendix D. Once again, Snow White has decreased in size while the rest of the features within the scene have stayed the same size.

Appendix G



Continuing with the theme established in Appendix D and carried on through to Appendix F, once again, the viewer is able to see only Snow White become increasingly smaller as she goes deeper into the forest. As previously stated, the other elements within the scene have not changed in size. Had the previously mentioned frames been filmed using a single-plane camera, all of the elements within the scene would have become smaller along with Snow White to create the illusion of going deeper into the forest.

Appendix H



To further illustrate the ability of the multi-plane camera to provide the ability to add depth to a single aspect of a scene, such as a character, by comparing the frames featured in both this appendix and Appendix I, we can clearly see that it is indeed only Snow White that has changed in size, and not any other elements within the scene. These two frames dramatically illustrate the ability of the multi-plane camera to capture depth whilst fixing the dimensions of certain elements within a scene.

Appendix I



In the frame above, it is clear that it is only Snow White who has changed in size when compared to the frame in Appendix H.

Appendix J



The frame above shows Snow White climbing up a hill picking wildflowers as she goes along. This frame, and the ones in the two appendices following, demonstrate how the multi-plane camera is able to both zoom in on an object as well as allow an object to fade, as also seen in previous appendices.

Appendix K



The frame above shows Snow White moving toward the camera, thus appearing larger in size, whilst the rest of the features within the scene, including the Huntsman and his horse and the flowers in the foreground, do not change in size.

Appendix L



The image above continues the scene featured in appendices J and K. Once more, it is only Snow White who, as she moves further up the hill and into the foreground, becomes larger in size. The Huntsman and his horse have neither moved nor changed in size.

Appendix M



In the frame above, the dwarfs are on a separate plane to the large angular rock behind them; this rock is also on a separate plane to the dark sky in the background. This frame and the frames contained within appendices N and O demonstrate the ability of the multi-plane camera to add depth to a scene, owing to the placing of separate elements within a scene on different planes, thereby rendering a three-dimensional image.

Appendix N



The frame above further illustrates how the use of separate planes gives the scene a three-dimensional quality. If we then contrast this with the frame in Appendix P, which is taken from the 1934 Silly Symphony cartoon *The Big Bad Wolf* which was filmed using a single-plane camera, we can see that the scene is a two-dimensional one; there is a lack of depth and perspective and the elements within the scene are either in the foreground or the background, there are no other layers for them to exist in.

Appendix O



The frame above shows a scene from *The Old Mill* (1937), the first film shot using the multi-plane camera. The scene clearly demonstrates the use of multiple planes to create the illusion of depth and perspective. For example, the bulls at the back are on the frame furthest from the camera, whilst the ducks are on a plane nearer to the camera and the flowers to the right of the frame are nearer still. This scene continues with a zooming in toward the open door. The speed of zoom is a fairly fast one. However, the scene still retains fixed dimensions for the ducks and the bulls.

Appendix P



The illusion of perspective in this frame is created by the artists' technical ability to add perspective through the use of diminishing size, colour changes and sharpness of image. However, if we compare this frame to the ones in appendices M and N, these two frames demonstrate a greater depth of focus. Furthermore, they also present a true three-dimensional image, as oppose to the flat two-dimensional scene in the frame above. This greater depth of focus was only made possible by using the multi-plane camera.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy, at the University of Bedfordshire.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

Name of candidate: Paul Syer

Signature:

Date: 23/11/2011