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## A Comparison of the Portrayal of Evil in Fairy Tales and Contemporary Fantasy Fiction

Donna Gwinnup  
*University of Northern Iowa*

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## A Comparison of the Portrayal of Evil in Fairy Tales and Contemporary Fantasy Fiction

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### Abstract

Writing and publishing literature for children and young adults has become a rhizomorphic entity. There are thousands of books published each year. When you compare that to the little over two hundred stories Perrault and the Grimm brothers recorded you can see how the market has substantially grown. With the use of literature as a teaching tool it is imperative we keep a close watch on trends. This study was designed to look at the changes from fairy tales to contemporary fiction in order to ascertain what changes have taken place in three particular areas: has the gender of the antagonist changed from female to male, has the presence changed from a physical to amorphous entity, has the scope of the goal or motivating factor changed?

A form of research called grounded theory was used in comparing the two timeframes of literature. Using open coding, categories and concepts emerged from the texts. Then using the categories and concepts the stories were then sorted looking at commonalities. During the stage of sorting, the results were recorded in an electronic journal and then in an organizational chart. The results between fairy tales and contemporary fiction were then compared. Twenty-six fairy tales by Perrault and Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm were analyzed along with twenty-five contemporary fiction books within the fantasy genre.

There was an assumption that the contemporary fiction has a predominance of male antagonists as opposed to female in the fairy tales. The research supported the gender change. The assumption that modern fiction contained more amorphous evil entities than physical ones was not supported. Although there were a few amorphous evil portrayals the majority were physical. The scope of the goals changing from personal to worldly was supported in that all of the fairy tales were personal and the majority of the contemporary goals were for world domination.

A Comparison of the Portrayal of Evil in Fairy Tales  
and Contemporary Fantasy Fiction

This Graduate Research Paper

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Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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In partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree

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By

Donna Gwinnup

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5/6/08

Date Approved

Barbara Safford

Graduate Faculty Reader

5/6/08

Date Approved

Yolanda Hood

Graduate Faculty Reader

5/6/08

Date Approved

May Herring

Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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## Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	1
Purpose.....	6
Research Questions.....	8
Significance.....	11
Chapter 2. Review of Related Literature.....	12
Summary.....	27
Chapter 3. Methodology.....	31
Chapter 4. Data Analysis.....	37
Chapter 5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.....	42
Summary.....	42
Conclusions.....	43
Recommendations.....	44
Reference List.....	47
Appendix A Titles Studied.....	50
Appendix B Sorting Journal and results.....	54
Appendix C Graphic Organizer.....	64

A Comparison of the Portrayal of Antagonists in Original Fairy Tales and Fantasy  
Fiction

**Chapter 1**

**Introduction**

But although the old woman pretended to be friendly, she was a wicked witch, who had her house built of gingerbread on purpose to entrap children. When once they were in her power, she would feed them well till they got fat, and then kill them and cook them for her dinner; and this she called her feast-day.

*Hansel and Grethel* (Grimm, p. 53)

The earliest folk tales for children were full of cruelty and gore. Society constantly develops and changes; literature intended for children changes along with society. Social research has shown that violence in media, of any form, leads to brutalized acceptance of violence (Arnold, 1969, p. 151). One might assume then, that today's literature would reflect a milder, more civilized reflection of life for today's child. To test that assumption this paper will investigate the portrayal of antagonists in original fairy tales and in contemporary stories for children.

***Early Children's Literature***

For centuries children's stories were only spoken. By the 1600s Perrault in France realized that stories handed down orally from generation to generation, were being lost. Research shows it was Perrault who began collecting the stories and recording them. According to Zipes the Brothers Grimm, in Germany, continued this

work in the 1700s and 1800s (2002, p. 27). The recorded stories are referred to as fairy tales or folk tales. A common theme in these early fairy tales was the struggle between good and evil. The purpose was didactic. Good is usually rewarded. Evil is punished.

### ***The Nature of Evil***

In order to take a close look at the evil in literature it is necessary to analyze what constitutes evil. Jobes describes evil as symbolized by a basilisk, a beautiful but repellent woman, black color, darkness, devil, dragon, drought, famine, gargoyle, hemlock, hyena, Lucifer, panther, poison, Satan, serpent, siren, spider, storm, thorn, vampire, winter wolf. Evil deities are those of darkness; death; night; scorching, drought-bringing sun; storm; underworld; winter (1961, p. 535). Keke states that a character can be considered evil if the harm caused by the evildoer is so serious that it interferes with the functioning of a person as a full-fledged agent and the evil character has to have to desire that significant harm (1990, p. 47-48).

Zucker agrees with Arendt that evil is a necessary element in mythic human drama. He says fables would be impotent and meaningless without it (2001, p. 391). Good characters were virtuous, kindhearted, industrious and moral. Evil characters were driven by greed, envy, gluttony, sloth, vanity and immorality and most commonly portrayed by women. Popular examples of good and evil female characters are Cinderella and her stepmother respectively.

### ***Role of Woman as Evil Antagonist***

In researching the fairy tales a gender pattern emerges. The majority of evil characters are portrayed by females--most commonly a stepmother, and secondly, a



witch. Tatar has found three categories of evil characters. The first is comprised of the animal-type beasts. This would also include the man-eating giants, beasts, and monsters. The second group is made up of the social deviants. These take human form and are usually robbers and highwaymen with cannibalistic tendencies. The third group, which easily outnumbers the first two groups, is composed of women (2003, p. 139). Tatar goes on to say folklorists would be hard pressed to find a single good stepmother; just having the title of stepmother pins the badge of iniquity on a figure (p. 141). Bettelheim theorizes that use of a the stepmother character fulfills the purpose of preserving the goodness of the mother figure in a child's life. When the child sees the splitting of the good mother (by the death of the mother in the fairy tale) into the evil stepmother, it allows for the child's negative feelings about his own mother to be safely dealt with (1976, p.151). This is called displacement.

Many Jungian psychoanalysts have looked at fairy tales and the motivation behind the evil stepmother. Von Franz states that in masculine psychology, the stepmother is the symbol of the unconscious in its destructive role. It is a disturbing and devouring character (1996, p. 120). Schectman, another Jungian theorist, suggests the approach to the stepmother is to interpret her as a power within the psyche, an archetypal force that the hero or heroine must confront (1993, p. xi).

In the original stories the female characters were often bloodthirsty. Grimm's fairy tales have come under heavy fire from modern parents and educators, for the tales are generally held to be gruesome and horrific (Tatar, 2003, p. 185). Cinderella's stepmother wanted her biological daughters' feet to fit into the slipper so badly she had them cut off their toes and heels, filling the slipper with blood. In Perrault's

*Little Red Riding Hood* or Grimm's version of *Little Red Cap*, the girl and the grandmother are devoured by the wolf then his bowels are cut open by the huntsman. After being rescued, Little Red Riding Hood ate the wolf and was soon seen wearing a new fur coat. Many times the stories were cannibalistic. The witch in *Hansel and Gretel* usually comes to mind first as an evil character wanting to consume the children. Snow White's stepmother wanted to eat Snow White's heart and liver. In *The Juniper Tree* the stepmother had her stepson stick his head in a trunk full of apples and chopped his head off. Wanting to cover up what she had done she cooked the boy in the stew and served it to her husband who ate it unknowingly. In *The Starving Children*, the mother continually threatens to kill and eat her daughters so she, herself, won't perish. There are many versions of *How Children Played Butcher with Each Other*. In each version, children are playing at being the town butcher, and chop up a sibling. One version seems to be totally dominated by death and violence. After the mother discovers that her child has chopped up a sibling, she grabs the knife and stabs the offender in the heart, goes on to find that her other child has drowned, and kills herself. Whenever a tale has a stepmother she is consistently the evil antagonist. When we closely scrutinize her reasons, or goals to attain by being evil, they are usually limited to only a few.

### ***Female Antagonist's Goals***

While other plot devices have changed from translation and retelling, the identity of the evil character and her goals remained constant. In Grimm's version of *Snow White* the prince's servants were carrying Snow White's glass coffin. One of the servants tripped and dropped his end of the coffin. When he dropped it the poison

apple chunk fell out of Snow White's mouth and she revived. When Disney created the movie of *Snow White* he changed the cause of the revival of Snow White to the prince kissing her. Even so, the antagonist in *Snow White* was always the jealous stepmother and her goal was, without deviation, to be the most beautiful. *Hansel and Gretel* may have returned home the final time by way of forest path or by riding on a duck across a pond, but the reason they were left in the forest was because of the wicked stepmother wanting to be rid of them. The witch in the gingerbread house was always female and wanted to eat the children. Cinderella may have escaped through the dovecote in one version, and ridden away in a transformed pumpkin in another version, but she was always the victim of her evil stepmother who wanted power and wealth.

Goals that could be attained, at the time of fairy tales, for females could fall under three categories: familial power, wealth, and beauty. Power was limited to familial because the imagination couldn't comprehend the prospect of broader domination. The extent of a woman's world might encompass a 50-mile radius. They might hear news from the next village.

Wealth could include land ownership or money. At the time of fairy tale retellings society was mainly patriarchal. Therefore many times wealth would have to be attained by marrying. According to Fisher and Silber, Cinderella's evil stepmother's reason for wickedness was to become closer to the power figure. She wanted to trick the prince into marrying a biological daughter so she, herself, would become near royalty (2000, p. 127).

Wanting to be the most beautiful is the third type of goal. The obsession to be the most beautiful in the land caused Snow White's stepmother to order the huntsman to take Snow White into the woods and kill her, then carve her up and bring back pieces. Not only do goals of the evil character form patterns, but physical traits of good and evil characters are recognizable by looking at the various archetypes.

### ***Good and Evil Archetypes***

Sloan, among others, has looked at patterns in mythology and discusses their thematic archetypes. Among the archetypes for evil are: wicked stepmothers, wicked stepsisters, witches, and temptresses, along with false fathers and wizards. Images include: darkness, wasteland, water, wilderness, floods, and fiery swords (1984, p. 32),

Another common strand in fairy tales is that antagonists always had a physical presence. No matter what form they took, be it wolf, ogre, or human, they took a flesh and blood form. There was not a foreboding, overhanging, amorphous presence in the background that might appear from vapor. The cause of fear was physical, not psychological.

### ***The Purpose***

The purpose of this study was to compare the antagonistic characters in fairy tales and contemporary fiction. The author examined the changes in the character, specifically looking at gender, goals, and physical characteristics. The author accomplished this by examining fairy tales recorded by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, and selected contemporary fiction.

Looking at fairy tales recorded by certain people can be an elusive challenge. There is controversy as to where some fairy tales originated, what their original forms were, and who was the first to retell or record them. Joseph Jacobs, in the famous English language collection of folk tales, described the confusion of origination by saying his version of the story of *Cinderella* is an English version of an Italian adaptation of a Spanish translation of a Latin version of a Hebrew translation of an Arabic translation of an Indian original (Yolen, 1977, p. 21). The author will attempt to stay as close as possible to the most agreed upon facts relating to originality. Fairy tales have evolved over time and continue to do so. Zipes points out that, even though Perrault and the Brothers Grimm were trying to record the tales to preserve them, they changed them. Because the tales became written text and allowed the middle-class access to them, the tales were made didactic. Sometimes the tales were changed radically because of the criticism they received (Zipes, 2002, p. 145).

Since the written recording of oral folklore, new or original children's stories have continued to be written. Thousands are published every year. Now there are many genres for stories besides the fairy tale. The contemporary genre that comes the closest to resembling fairy tales is fantasy. Imaginative fantasies, especially those written for young people over the past four decades, often contain the most serious of underlying themes. Such themes as the conflict between good and evil, the struggle to preserve joy and hope in a cruel and frightening world, and the acceptance of the inevitability of death have led some critics to suggest that fantasies may portray a truer version of reality than many or most realistic novels (Lynn, 2005, xvi). In the popular Harry Potter series Harry battles Lord Voldemort. Voldemort is an

amorphous being throughout most of the series. His goal is to overpower Harry so he can be omnipotent. This example of a modern fantasy story keeps to the good versus evil format even if it has an amorphous form of evil. The desire to achieve world dominance is a different pattern, characterization or goal than in the early fairy tales.

Stories, oral and written, are an excellent vehicle for investigating morality; therefore, literature continues to be an effective and significant tool in education. Given the changes in the times and in stories for children, we can assume that themes and characters have changed as well. The author has compared the literature from two timeframes and documented the differences, if any, in the portrayal of the antagonistic character

### ***Research questions***

The objective of this study is to compare fairy tales and modern literature for Children and young adults and:

1. Compare the archetypes of evil in fairy tales and contemporary fiction to determine if the majority of the antagonists are still portrayed by females;
2. Determine if the antagonists' goals are still for personal gain of wealth or beauty;
3. Determine the antagonists physical characteristics; physical or amorphous

### ***Definitions:***

**amor-phous** Pronunciation: \ə-'mŌ'r-fəs\

Function: *adjective*

Etymology: Greek *amorphos*, from *a-* + *morphē* form

Date: circa 1731

**1 a:** having no definite form : **shapeless** <an *amorphous* cloud mass> **b:** being without definite character or nature : **unclassifiable** <an *amorphous* segment of

society> **c:** lacking organization or unity <an *amorphous* style of writing>  
**2:** having no real or apparent crystalline form (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate

Dictionary, 2004, P. 41)

**an·tag·o·nist** Pronunciation:\-nist\ Function: *noun* Date:1575

**1:** one that contends with or opposes another : adversary, opponent

**2:** an agent of physiological antagonism: as **a:** a muscle that contracts with and limits the action of an agonist with which it is paired —called also *antagonistic muscle* **b:** a chemical that acts within the body to reduce the physiological activity of another chemical substance (as an opiate); *especially* : one that opposes the action on the nervous system of a drug or a substance occurring naturally in the body by combining with and blocking its nervous receptor — compare agonist 2b (p. 51)

**ar·che·type** Pronunciation:\är-ki-,tīp\ Function: *noun*

Etymology: Latin *archetypum*, from Greek *archetypon*, from neuter of *archetypos* archetypal, from *archein* + *typos* type

Date:1545

**1:** the original pattern or model of which all things of the same type are representations or copies : prototype; *also* : a perfect example

**2:** idea 1a

**3:** an inherited idea or mode of thought in the psychology of C. G. Jung that is derived from the experience of the race and is present in the unconscious of the individual (p. 65)

**di·dac·tic** Pronunciation:\dī-'dak-tik, də-\ Function: *adjective*

Etymology: Greek *didaktikos*, from *didaskein* to teach Date:1658

**1 a:** designed or intended to teach **b:** intended to convey instruction and information as well as pleasure and entertainment <*didactic* poetry>

**2:** making moral observations (p. 347)

**fairy tale** Function: *noun* Date: 1749

**1 a:** a story (as for children) involving fantastic forces and beings (as fairies, wizards, and goblins) —called also *fairy story* **b:** a story in which improbable events lead to a happy ending

**2:** a made-up story usually designed to mislead (p. 450)

**folk-tale** Pronunciation: \ˈfɒk-ˌtāl\ Function: *noun* Date: 1852

: a characteristically anonymous, timeless, and placeless tale circulated orally among a people (p. 486)

***Assumption:***

Contemporary fiction still includes good and evil with clearly identified evil antagonists who can be analyzed and compared.

***Limitations:***

This research will only look at contemporary fantasy fiction for young people that has been reviewed in a comprehensive fantasy literature guide of award winning and outstanding books (Lynn, 2005). Only selected books that have been published



since 1990 and 2005 will be included. Although the effects of the gender and evil intent change would have an effect on children, that aspect will not be covered in this research. It is not the author's intent to discover the implications or impetus of the changes.

### ***Significance***

The content of children's education constantly comes under close scrutiny. Content areas and their standards are all based on research. It is important, in order to present the best education possible to our children, to constantly evaluate what they are reading. It has been established that fiction can be a didactic tool. Fairy tales have been closely scrutinized for their educational value. There is a vast amount of literature on the lessons of fairy tales. Modern fiction has not come under the same microscope. The sole fact that any literature is used as a didactic tool merits research. We need to continue our vigilance in overseeing the educational opportunities afforded by children's literature. If, indeed, there has been a shift in the portrayal of an adversarial entity in modern literature, we should be aware of it.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Related Literature

“Hunter, I want you to get rid of that child. Take her out into the wood, and if you bring me some proofs that she is dead, I will reward you handsomely. Never let her appear before my eyes again.”

*Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Grimm, p. 189)

The purpose of this study is to determine if there has been a change in the portrayal of evil in stories for children. The author has examined Perrault’s and Grimm’s fairy tales and a selected group of contemporary fantasy focusing on gender, physical description, and the motivation and ultimate goal of the antagonist. The related research falls under these three categories: archetypes of evil, gender, and motivation.

#### *Archetypes of Evil*

In 1973 St. John looked at the portrayal of evil in children’s books from 1945-1972 in order to analyze the conflict between good and evil and also to compare the nature of evil in fantasy and realism. She was also concerned with the morals and values transmitted to the young; and she wanted to find out if children’s literature still contained a didactic element (p.1). Besides examining the literature, she also surveyed 40 literature experts by having them fill out questionnaires relating their concepts of evil and the role it plays in children’s fiction (p. 20). Her experts were authors, teachers of children’s literature, and those who review children’s literature (p.22). The

books she examined were the Newbery books for each year and the honor books from alternate years. The books were further sorted as fantasy or realistic fiction. She chose those genres because she felt they would best represent the conflict of good and evil. The books were also chosen to be appropriate for the 8-12 year old range and novels rather than short stories (p. 21). While reading the books St. John categorized the evil by human, animal, natural, social or symbolic force. The clarity of delineation of the evil force was categorized by direct statement by author or characters as to the existence of evil in the story, inferential statement by the author or characters as the existence of evil in the story, inferences drawn from the behavior of the characters or inferences drawn from the mood established in the story, message intended as judged by the investigator (p.27).

Due to the fact that her questionnaire was open ended and subject to individual perception, she found it difficult to draw specific conclusions. The majority of the responses from experts felt that the definition of evil needed to include a deliberate action and a conflict with the values and ethics of society. That creates a situation where only individuals or society can be responsible for acts of evil. (p. 50) Therefore the one who is responsible for evil is able to accept the consequences of his or her actions.

Upon reflection St. John felt she should have asked which evil the child is able to identify with, fantasy or realistic fiction. Perception of evil by children depends on individual experiences. According to her study the symbolic evils, which she found only in fantasy, seem to represent an attempt by authors to personify the concept of evilness in a specific form (p. 52). Without being able to determine if the evil action

was a result of conscious effort, she still thought it seemed reasonable to assume the character would still be evil. St. John feels that the evil in some novels is stereotypical. The descriptions are obvious without deviation. The reader knows the evil character without having to infer. Some evil does require making inferential connections. It does not contain the archetypal representation of evil. We don't normally think of kindly grandmothers as being capable of evil.

St. John concludes that the analysis sheet should be revised to include only data that were pertinent to the primary purpose of the study. Only the questions dealing with the types of evil portrayed and the resolution of the conflict were necessary. Also, the content analysis is highly interpretive, involving individual perception. She suggests that in order to be more reliable several studies would have to repeat the same analysis procedures. The limited number of books made the results more suggestive rather than generalizable. Her overall consensus is that books published between 1945-1972 still have a didactic, moralizing element when it comes to good versus evil (p. 54).

In 1983 Safford did a literary study of the archetypes present in children's fantasy literature. She also looked at literature published after 1945. Using features of Northrup Frye's theories she looked for archetypal patterns to determine literary meaning in high fantasy (p.1). Her purpose was to establish credibility for high fantasy and to come to some conclusion as to its nature, or meaning (p. 3). Safford's books were chosen using the following criteria: book-length stories, written in English, widely available through libraries, found in standard bibliographies of children's literature, found under the heading of fantastic fiction or fantasy, and first

published for children (p. 2). Her hypotheses were: plot structure is based on dialectic and cyclic patterns, the hero is of the romantic literary mode, fantasy is contained within the romantic phase of fiction with some going beyond to epic, the patterns in the literature echo those of man's search for his identity and synthesizing the archetypes can provide a basis for identifying the literary characteristics of the genre (pp. 3-4). Her methodology was to read each book to analyze and chart the archetypal patterns on an analysis form created from Frye's theoretical framework. She looked at expressions, symbols, themes, and cycles (p. 2). She further noted the information included is an analysis on quest, hero, dialectic symbol, cyclic symbol, and the resolution of plot (p. 5).

Safford created charts displaying archetypal dialectic symbols for: sky world, human world, sensory world, animal world, plant world, and mineral world. She also created extensive book summary charts that included: pattern of the quest, dialectic imagery (broken down into good and evil), nature of the hero, plot structure (mythos), death struggle, rebirth or exultation, cyclic imagery.

Safford concluded the hypotheses were sustained with one exception. While looking at her first hypothesis she found the plot development and resolution were determined by cyclical imagery. It was the dialectic symbols of good and evil that created the tension and moved the story towards conclusion. Examples of these symbols are the use of the color black, thunder, wind or long, sharp fingernails to exemplify evil. Clouds, the color white, butterflies or singing would exemplify good. The symbols are what make the contrast between the forces of good and evil. Thus good and evil are important in contemporary fantasy literature for children.

In her summation she states high fantasy is a romantic fiction peopled by a hero with magical supporting characters who leads all mankind into reconciliation with nature and its forces and powers by the hero's guidance (p. 175-176).

While St. John's and Safford's studies were analytical Trousdale (1989) looked at fairy tales from a psychological aspect. She looked at the effect of evil in fairy tales on children. She based her theory on Jung's theories that archetypes are a collective unconscious present in all human beings. The danger or threatening forces may not represent only danger that comes to us from without, but also danger or evil from within (p. 71).

Trousdale analyzed contemporary American children's response to the evil in fairy tales presented through oral retellings, reading aloud, and television. She collected data using audiotaped sessions with children, interviews with their parents, and field notes. The children were chosen on the basis of having the same age, gender, and socioeconomic status. She hoped to control differences in response due to these factors. She first had them tell her what they knew of the chosen stories. Secondly she read Grimm's version of *Snow White* and *The Sleeping Beauty* to the children. One week later the children related to Trousdale what they remembered of the story read to them. They then watched the Faerie Tale Theater version on television. One week later they again retold what they remembered of the story (p. 74).

By analyzing the responses of the children, Trousdale found that the representation of evil, or the archetypes used, had an effect on the children. In the video the evil fairy, Henbane, in *The Sleeping Beauty* became a monstrous giant. The transformation

from a fairy to a monster created tension according to Trousdale's observations. The children seemed to be drawn to the powerful, manipulative, and vindictive Henbane until the fairy's desire for revenge got out of hand and turned her into an evil monster. When the evil became uncontrollable, the children were frightened and relieved when the evil Henbane was destroyed. More importantly Trousdale explored whether or not the conflict was resolved by eliminating the evil character and if this would create more of an effect on the children. If there wasn't a resolution that eliminated the possibility of the danger reoccurring, the children had a noted negative reaction (p. 74). Because the evil was not banished, the child's inner struggles Jung refers to is not satisfied.

Another study that attempted to investigate effects of good and evil in stories for children was done by Robbins (1998). He looked specifically at the representations of characters in the story *Cinderella*. Her purpose was to look at the grotesque and anti-grotesque qualities of the evil stepsisters and the good Cinderella respectively. She compared three versions of the story: Perrault's, the Brothers Grimm, and Disney's. She also looked at the effect that the stereotypical representation of the Cinderella character has on the female child.

According to Robbins, the archetype of the good character is physical flawlessness; in other words, anti-grotesque. Robbins states that Cinderella is a fantastical archetype exhibiting relatively no grotesque traits (p. 105). In Disney's movie version, Cinderella is cleavage-less, her feet are without lines, wrinkles, or even toes. Her glass slipper is the size of the Grand Duke's index finger. She has a Barbie size waist, a barely-there nose, and baby-soft complexion, while the stepsisters have

large feet, large buttocks, large noses, and large waists (p. 104). Disney uses the exaggerated grotesque characteristics to stress the wickedness of the stepsisters. One wipes her nose with her finger and later she is seen scratching her buttocks. The other can be heard snoring loudly. Cinderella, in the mean time, awakes singing (p. 112).

Robbins also looks at the demeanor of the good and evil archetypes. Cinderella is passive and subservient. Disney reinforces this passivity by changing Cinderella into, according to Robbins, a girl who hardly exhibits signs of a brain capacity larger than that of a rutabaga (p. 103). The stepmother and stepsisters are assertive. The stepsisters' constant bouts of sibling rivalry make them appear as hideous monsters. The assertiveness of the stepmother over her husband is a wicked and decidedly undesirable trait (p. 112),

In conclusion, Robbins compares the archetype of the good, Cinderella, with the evil, the stepsisters. She says the materiality of the stepsisters' bodies cannot be disguised, as their bodily fluid, their lifeblood, betrays the passivity of their chaste-white facades (p. 113). Cinderella, on the other hand, embodies the archetypal image of good.

Buckhouse (2005) studied mother figures in children's literature. She focused on whether the character fulfilled a helpful mentoring, or an evil menacing role. Her methodology was to choose certain fairy tales (which she refers to as traditional literature) and contemporary literature, and look at the caretaker's role. She had two criteria in her choice of books: they had to include a mother figure, and they had to be interpretable using Jungian theory. The Jungian theory of individuation proposes that the conscious self and the unconscious self must reconcile for an individual to



experience 'oneness.' The individual must recognize, accept, and even embrace the shadow or unconscious self, thus making the unconscious conscious (p. 1). By looking at the literature from two timeframes and comparing the mother character to the Jungian Great Mother archetype she hoped to determine if the character was a mentoring or menacing figure. By using the Jungian archetypal model to determine the characteristics of a good, or mentoring, mother figure or a menacing, or evil, mother figure, she categorizes the characters in her selected books. Typically, a mentoring mother would be the giver of life, a symbol of inspiration and wisdom, a mentor as well as a muse. A menacing mother figure would be one who signifies sickness, death, and madness. She devours, rejects, and dismembers. She is a witch, an evil temptress (p.10).

The queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is deeply split; she is the shadow of the protagonist. She once held the beauty, esteem, and promise of youth the protagonist now holds. She is consumed by the "Negative Mother" complex. She is the embodiment of unconscious negative thoughts and desires. An example of the negative mother complex would be her inability to recognize or accept her own vanity and jealousy, and therefore is unable to reconcile her conscious and her unconscious self (p. 12).

Buckhouse continues her research by looking at contemporary fiction, particularly *Skylark* and *A Little Princess*. Miss Minchen represents the menacing mother figure. She is described as tall and dull, respectable and ugly. She has large, cold, fishy eyes and a large, cold, fishy smile. She appears to be the embodiment of respectability, but that outward appearance is merely a façade hiding her true

malicious nature. She is greedy, jealous, controlling, and often cruel and destructive to the girls (p. 19).

Sara, in *Skylark*, represents the mentoring mother figure. She instantly has a close relationship with the animals on the Witting's farm. This association with nature suggests Sara is part of the natural world (p.56-57). Sara gives the children comfort and security. She is able to reconcile her conscious self with her shadow or unconscious self, represented by her dislike of the harsh prairie, and become whole.

By using Jung's archetypal representations of a positive or negative maternal force, Buckhouse was able to determine if the mother figures in the 2 books and 9 fairy tales were indeed a mentoring or menacing force.

Another aspect of research is what implications are made by the fact that the portrayal of evil is mostly represented by females.

### ***Gender Implications***

The archetypal representations of the female characters in these studies are closely related to the issue of gender representation. Fisher and Silber (2000) studied gender lessons through fairy tales by looking at them using a feminist theory. Their purpose was to offer teachers alternative perspectives and tools for teaching fairy tales that invite authentic questioning and conversations about the many variations of the tales and the gender roles within them. They believe that through a new, woman-centered socio- psychological understanding of the tales, accomplished through the lens of multicultural feminist theory, we can begin to transform our expectations for ourselves and for our daughters (p. 133). Their methodology was to study Freud's theory of the role of women and then compare it to the female characters in fairy tales.

According to them, classical fairy tales recount true female experience under patriarchy: a world in which innocent young women are set against their sisters and mothers in rivalry for the prince's favor. They also assert that fairy tales exert a noticeable influence on cultural ideals of goodness, images of evil, models of manhood and womanhood, and fantasies about true love. It is impossible to read these stories to children of an impressionable age without reinforcing the limiting sex role stereotypes and conservative ways of thinking about family (p. 121).

After comparing Freud's theory and fairy tales, they felt the patriarchally molded fairy tales depicted the mother figure as a wholly depriving (even castrating) figure, with no recognition of the healthy emotional attachment and comfort that girls can experience in a close relationship with their mothers. In fairy tales, the innocent, virtuous female protagonist must reject identification with, or empathy for, her depraved maternal nemesis. Good girls' rejection of the women who mother them is natural. This rejection sets up the need for princesses to seek the romantic relationship with the patriarchal designee: a rich and handsome prince. Heroines having an evil, threatening mother figure serve as a main cultural purpose of conserving the traditional gender roles in a patriarchal state and family (p. 125).

According to their study women figures, in order to be considered good, need to remain silent. Cinderella, even though suffering abuses and injustices, never complained. If a woman was vociferous she was considered evil. If the strong female character acts as her own agent, she is labeled the hated witch (p.126). In order to gain any power or control in the patriarchal society women needed to be deceptive. Women who show a desire for control and status must attempt to secure their standing

by misleading others. They can find agency only through fraud and manipulation. Fisher and Silber feel the reason they are deceptive isn't necessarily to gain power for themselves, but to move closer to the male figure of power. They use Hansel and Gretel's stepmother as an example. She connives to rid herself of her husband's children so she will have him and his resources to herself (p. 127).

In conclusion, the authors felt the female characters in fairy tales, good and evil, were in accord with Freud's theory. Within a patriarchal society, good is represented by silence and subservience. Evil is represented by being strong, vociferous, and independent.

Fisher and Silber's statement that women are wanting to move closer to the power figure is an example of motivation.

### ***Motivation***

Calder (2003) analyzed what constitutes evil characters and the motivation behind their acts. He studied different evil acts throughout history, and their perpetrators. From this study he determined the traits, in his opinion, necessary to be considered evil, and what the evildoers' motivations are.

He contends that certain desires are often fundamental to evil (p. 364). These desires must have a more malignant character. The level of someone else's harm must be crucial, quite serious, or significant. The harm must have a weightiness which comes from the magnitude of the harm desired. Calder explains the deadening of moral sensibilities necessary to perform evil acts as: the perpetrator does not refrain from acting by the apprehension that her act will be extremely harmful to others. An

evil act is not motivated by understandable conditions, but by a morally reprehensible or foul character (p. 365).

According to Calder, in order to do evil we must either have an effective desire for someone else's significant harm for an unworthy goal, or else have an effective desire for some unworthy object or state of affairs which is inconsistent with someone else's being spared serious harm. He calls these desires e-desire sets (p. 366). He also states that in order for an act to be considered evil it must be intentional and cause someone else to get hurt (p.367). Evil character is mostly just a matter of having a consistent propensity for e-desire sets (p. 373).

Calder distinguishes between two types of evil characters; moral monsters and moral idiots. Moral monsters have a consistent propensity to desire other people's harm for their own unworthy goal. Moral idiots can be defined the same, along with the fact that they believe their goal is worthwhile when it, in fact, is not.

After his study, Calder concludes that there are certain traits that need to be in place in order for a character to qualify as evil: there is a desire for harm, the harm caused must be intentional, and they must have a consistent desire for harm. He also concludes that the motivation or goal behind an evil act needs to be unworthy of the amount of harm caused (p. 373).

Benn (1985) looked at one kind of evil in human beings which he called wickedness (p. 795). He found that wicked people have a capacity for rational action and judgment, but do evil acts with evil intent (p. 796). He breaks wickedness down into three areas of motivation: selfish wickedness, conscientious wickedness, and malignancy.

A person who fits into the selfish wickedness category is someone who is interested in promoting only himself to the point of ruthless unconcern as to whether other people are harmed. He recognizes that his own wellbeing is good, and acts for the sake of it (p.797). The motive is self-love. Selfishness is wicked, not on account of its end, but for what it excludes, for it consists in closing one's eyes and one's heart to any good but a self-centered good (p. 798).

Conscientious wickedness differs in that the motivation is not personal or internal but something external. For instance, a Nazi may have executed Jews not for personal gain but because it was, even though a monstrous error, good for the nation. It is considered wickedness because, again, the perpetrator is ruthless to the point of harming others in order to achieve his goal (p. 800). Conscientious wickedness is often a case of single-minded pursuit of an object which can reasonably be seen as good, but at the cost of a callous insensitivity to the evil done (p. 801).

The third type of wickedness is malignity. This is a motiveless form of wickedness. The first two forms of wickedness had a motive, even though it was perverse. Malignity is doing evil just for the sake of doing evil. Whereas a selfish person's wickedness consists of his indifference to others suffering, a person with malignant wickedness takes pleasure from it (p. 805-806). The intensity of will can reach the point of extraordinary wickedness with excessive inward misery, eternal unrest, and incurable pain; the perpetrator seeks to mitigate his own suffering by the sight of the suffering of others, which at the same time he recognizes as an expression of power (p. 806).

Haybron (1999) also studied what constitutes an evil character and their motivation. In his opinion there are two types of evil characters: the *purely* evil character, and the merely or deeply *corrupt* one. In the former case an individual possesses one or more of the evil-constitutive traits to the fullest possible extent and is indeed a paradigm of evil. The latter sort of extreme does not have those traits as thoroughly as possible (p. 131). According to Haybron the corrupt one is the more deplorable of the two. To illustrate his depiction of the two types he uses characters from novels. The purely evil character is represented by Claggart in Melville's *Billy Bud*. Claggart feels extreme pleasure in seeing harm come to Billy Bud. An example of the corrupt, or merely evil character, is demonstrated by Wilde's *Dorian Gray*. Gray feels extreme pleasure from people suffering at the hands of each other without any involvement on his part.

Before demonstrating the characters types of evil Haybron looks at two theories of evil-constitutive traits. The indirect theory states that to have an evil character one is disposed to do evil on a regular basis. Such accounts only identify the evil character by the consequences of the character traits. The direct theory of evil character consists in being disposed to feel pleasure at the pain of others, also referred to as anti-sympathetic (p. 132).

Claggart qualifies as anti-sympathetic within the direct theory. He finds it pleasant to see great harm come to someone. This convinces us that he is a truly evil hearted man. Not only does this type of evil character have anti-sympathetic traits but they must also lack a fully active conscience. Haybron's definition of an active conscience would be one that recognizes what is right and good and to act on this recognition and

to have appropriate reactive attitudes toward one's moral failings such as guilt or shame (p. 134). He believes another word for poverty of conscience is malice. A person who is malicious is deeply hostile toward other people wishing them great misfortune. He is full of ill will and bad intentions (p. 136).

A key discriminating factor between the purely evil character and the corrupt character is that the purely evil one had no choice in being that way. The flaw could be hereditary or it could be a result of an extremely abusive childhood. The purely evil person is not culpable for his condition. The example he uses is an Aesop fable. A kindly old woman finds a deadly snake that is badly injured. She takes the snake home and nurses it to health. Upon taking the recovered snake back to where she found it the snake turns and strikes her. Mortally wounded the woman asks the snake why he bit her. The snake's response was, "What did you expect? You knew I was a snake" (p. 138). The purely evil character could be considered mentally defective. His lack of moral instincts is as if a part of his brain were missing. He lacks any motivation or knowledge of the possibility of doing something other than evil (p. 139).

Dorian Gray, on the other hand, fits into the indirect theory in that his heart's desire is to see people suffer at each other's and their own hands, without any involvement on his part. His pleasures are essentially passive. He lacks any inclination to harm anyone. His motivation is to observe others' misery. Though he may never bring about any evils, it would still be considered a morally grotesque trait (pp. 133-134). Haybron feels that this type of character is the more deplorable of the two. His reasoning is that of the two characters this one is capable of doing good but consciously motivated not to. He has allowed wickedness to predominate whereas the



purely evil character had no choice. The culpably wicked person has the capacity for evil but could have chosen otherwise. He bears responsibility for his vices. His moral corruption is self-made and is actually an affront to moral integrity not just a departure from it (p. 141). What Dorian Gray's character shows us is how one might descend into the foulest corruption largely through the conscience; one might morally disintegrate, that is, by torpedoing one's conscience, or fail to pay it much heed.

In conclusion Haybron feels the purely evil individual is unquestionably vile, but he lacks an important fault; he does not give himself freely to evil, but is delivered to it. Claggart could not help but be a cruel man, just as the snake could not help being a snake. That is just the way he was. Dorian Gray's cruelty is entirely of his own making. While his character is not thoroughly vicious, like Claggart's, he deserves the greatest condemnation because he disappoints our reasonable expectations in ways that Claggart cannot (p. 143).

### ***Summary***

In conclusion, St. John (1973) categorized evil by: human, animal, natural, social, or symbolic force. Safford (1985), by using dialectic and cyclic imagery archetypes, did the same thing. They both analyzed children's fiction from the post World War II era with Safford's being much more comprehensive. While Safford demonstrated that high fantasy was a sub-genre of fantasy, St. John found that modern fantasy still has a didactic element. St. John's statement that the authors of fantasy used stereotypical symbols for their personification of evil agrees with Safford's archetypes of evil. Along with St. John and Safford, Trousdale (1989), Robbins (1998) and Buckhouse (2005) also looked at archetypes in literature. There was general

consensus among the authors as to what constitutes the portrayal of evil. Trousdale's dark or threatening forces, Safford's dialectic imagery of dark/experience/hell, Robbins grotesque qualities and Buckhouse's menacing mother figure all represented evil. Fisher and Silber's (2000) castrating mother figure and Buckhouse's menacing mother figure appear to be from the same mold. Although Trousdale's study, based on Jung's theories, looked at only two fairy tales, her observations showed that the transformation from a little fairy to a monstrous giant created tension in her child participants. Her second discovery was the need, by the participants, for closure. The evil character needed to be eliminated in order for the child to absolve the inner struggle they were experiencing. Robbins study of criteria for grotesque traits in evil characters supports the archetypes previously mentioned. As with Trousdale, Robbins study was limited. She looked only at Cinderella. Within her examination of the fairy tale she discovered many instances of grotesque references to evil and many non-grotesque instances of good. Buckhouse also recognizes the archetypes of good and evil in her nurturing and menacing figures. By comparing her descriptions to the other studies that looked evil at characterization hers follows suit. But again the literature represented in the study was limited to just a few stories. A concern of this author's is St. John and Safford's studies were 34 and 22 years ago respectively. Trousdale and Robbins studies were on a small scale and looked at only the fairy tales. Buckhouse's study looked at five fairy tales and nine contemporary novels but the stories chosen looked at mother figures only

Calder (2003) and Benn (1985) focused on motivation. Benn labeled his categories selfish wickedness, conscientious wickedness and malignity. He further

explains that the first two have motives while the last has no motive other than the enjoyment of watching others suffer. Calder's e-desire sets consist of the evil character desiring someone else's harm for an unworthy goal or having a desire of something that is inconsistent with someone else being spared harm. These could be considered selfish wickedness using Benn's definition.

While Calder and Benn looked at motivation they also studied what constitutes evil. According to the respective authors in order for the character to be considered truly evil the malice had to be intentional. St. John's survey of children's literature experts agreed with this. Along with Calder and Benn, Haybron (1999) further reports that the purely evil character has to be unconscious of the choice between good and evil. Whereas the merely evil or corrupt character knows he has a choice and opts for evil. Calder's evil entity must have a deadening of sensibilities. While these authors don't refer to archetypes of evil many of the characteristics they studied could fit into Frye's framework. We know that the portrayal of evil in fairy tales matches the descriptions by Calder, Benn and Haybron. The queen in *Snow White* fits Calder's e-desire sets along with Benn's selfish wickedness.

Fisher and Silber, using a multicultural feminist theory, looked at the traits of the female characters in patriarchal societies in fairy tales. They discovered that for a character to be considered good they needed to be silent. They suffer without complaining. If a woman was assertive or stood up for herself they were considered evil. They compared the fairy tales to Freud's theory of the role of women. Their findings were the mother figure was wholly depriving with no recognition of the healthy emotional and comfort that girls can experience in a close relationship with

their mothers. This sounds remarkably like Buckhouse's menacing mother figure. Using Jungian theory Buckhouse concluded that the menacing figure had not embraced the shadow or unconscious self therefore could not commit to a healthy relationship. Earlier in this paper the author referred to Tatar's statistic that evil characters in fairy tales are mostly represented by women. The fact that there aren't any evil stepfathers or evil male characters to speak of supports this.

. There is a lack of recent research looking at the representation of evil in contemporary stories on a larger scale. What we don't know is what the trend is in modern fantasy as far as the gender of the evil character. We don't know if the archetypes are still used or if there has been a change in the representation of evil. We don't know if the antagonist is a physical source of evil or an amorphous, psychological source of evil. We don't know what the motivation is for the evil acts. We don't know if contemporary literature follows the same pattern. We don't know if the trend in modern children's literature is different.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

As the children were thus amusing themselves, and chasing each other about merrily, the stepmother looked out the window, and, when she saw them so happy, wicked envy rose in her heart, and in her spite she used her power of witchcraft, and changed them both; the boy into a fish, and the girl into a lamb.

It happened, not long after, that the stepmother had visitors at her house, and she thought it would be a nice opportunity to get rid of the children. So she called the cook, and told her to fetch the lamb from the meadow, and the fish from the pond, and kill them, to be cooked and eaten at the feast.

*The Lamb and the Fish* (Grimm, pl. 438)

The literature review shows there have been a few studies looking at the archetypes of evil characters in fairy tales. Some looked at the motivation of evil characters, and some studied the role of women in fairy tales. The author's intention in this current study was to look at the fairy tales of Perrault and the Brothers Grimm and compare contemporary fiction in the fantasy genre to see if the portrayal of evil has changed. It has been established by previous studies that there has been usage of common archetypes to depict evil in fairy tales. It has been established that fairy tales' evil characters are predominantly women. It has been established that the motive is predominantly personal or self-serving. We know these things about fairy tales. We don't know them about contemporary fiction. A popular contemporary question asked is, "Parents, do you know what your children are doing?" The author

feels it is important to ask, “Parents, do you know what your children are reading?”

This question should also be asked of educators.

To accomplish this study, the author used to do a form of qualitative data analysis. Grounded theory, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), is identifying categories and concepts that emerge from text (p. 278). In a process called open coding, the investigator identifies potential themes by pulling together real examples from the text. As coding categories emerge, the investigator links them together in theoretical models. One technique is to compare and contrast themes and concepts (p. 279). Coding is the heart and soul of *whole-text analysis*. Coding forces the researcher to make judgments about the meanings of text. The fundamental tasks associated with coding are: sampling, identifying themes, building codebooks, constructing models (relationships among codes), and testing these models against empirical data. According to Goulding (2002), another fundamental aspect of grounded theory is constant comparison (p. 68). This process helps facilitate the identification of concepts (or constructs). By comparing where the facts are similar or different, we can generate properties of categories that increase the categories’ generality and explanatory powers (p. 69).

Sampling is identifying a corpus of texts and then selecting units of analysis within the text. Selection can be either random or purposive. For this research the author chose 25 fairy tales recorded by Perrault or the Brothers Grimm. A criterion for the choice of a story was that it has an evil character. Not all fairy tales contain evil. For example, another common theme is a man with three inept sons. Once the stories with an evil character were identified the author randomly chose 25

contemporary stories published from 1990 to the present by using Lynn's (2005) *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults: A Comprehensive Guide*. The timeframe chosen was to insure that there were enough books within the framework of the criteria so that books could be randomly chosen. Again the criteria was that titles contain an evil character.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) describe the next step in grounded theory as looking for thematic constructs before, during, and after data collection. This is accomplished by careful line-by-line reading of the text, while looking for processes, actions, assumptions, and consequences. They suggest starting with some general themes derived from reading the literature and adding more themes, and possibly sub-themes, as the research continues (p. 275). Basing findings on the themes, the researcher then builds codebooks. These should include a detailed description of each code, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and exemplars of real text for each theme. Good codebooks are developed and refined as the research progresses. A coding category for the suggested research might be physical characteristics of the antagonist, or what forms the attempts for domination take. While researching the literature, Gould suggests using memos (p. 143). Memos or journals are notes written while collecting data, as a means of documenting the impressions of the researcher and describing the situation. Memos can be used with the data to provide a bank of ideas to revisit. This can also be accomplished by making notes on the backs of the index cards that are used to put the codes in a category. While revisiting the codes and memos, the cards are sorted and resorted creating themes and sub-themes. There comes a point where the cards can no longer be sorted. This is referred to as the

saturation point. Saturation is achieved through staying in the field until no new evidence emerges which can inform or underpin the development of a theoretical point (p. 70). Because the codes are being developed and the memos are being written as the literature is being read, the data collection and the analysis occur at the same time. The results were recorded on cards that could be easily sorted and resorted.

With grounded theory there are issues that need to be addressed that could cause the theory to lose substance. It is necessary to keep an open mind and look at all dimensions of a story. A danger is reaching the saturation point, or closure, prematurely. There are no set rules for when saturation occurs. According to Goulding (2002), it is important to acknowledge variations and issues that do not fit neatly. Because of using a large number of stories or books from each timeframe, there is a high probability the author will find instances that do not fit neatly in codes or categories. She states there is also a need to make clear that the theory is only one frame of understanding, drawn from many possibilities. Theories generated from grounded theory are interpretations made from given perspectives, and are therefore fallible (p.70).

The method of grounded theory was chosen for this research based on the fact that the intent was to carefully read and analyze the chosen form of children's literature, looking for archetypal symbols, gender patterns and goals in contemporary literature that have been defined in fairy tales in previous studies.

Twenty-six fairy tales and twenty-five contemporary novels were chosen for this research. The first step in selecting the fairy tales was to read *The Complete Brothers*



*Grimm Fairy Tales* and *The Complete Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault*. There are several common themes in fairy tales. One theme is the three brothers. Usually two of the brothers are somewhat normal while the youngest one is a simpleton. This type of story was eliminated for not having an evil character. Stories that contained ogres, trolls or animals as evil characters were also eliminated. The remaining titles contained a human antagonist. The titles were written on pieces of paper and put into a hat. Twenty-six stories were drawn out.

The contemporary stories were books reviewed in *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults*. The copyright date had to be within the 1990-2005 timeframe. Then the following categories were eliminated: allegorical, animal, humorous, ghost, and toy fantasy. The purpose was to attempt to stay within the same criteria as with fairy tales, therefore reducing the possibility of having animals or toys as antagonists. Humorous fantasy is written more for children than young adult, therefore it was eliminated to stay within the target audience. Ghost fantasy was eliminated due to the fact the author felt it would unfairly skew the physical/amorphous data. The remaining categories were high fantasy, magic adventure and witchcraft and sorcery. Many fantasy stories do not contain evil antagonists. The plot may revolve around wish-granting firecrackers or a cake that turns a little boy helpful and polite. In order to stay close to the fairy tale criteria the reviews had to contain an evil antagonist. The titles that remained were written on pieces of paper and twenty-five were drawn out of the hat. As the fairy tales and contemporary stories were read, information relating to gender, goal, and archetypal description was recorded on the analysis form (appendix A).

Upon completion of reading and recording, the forms were then separated by fairy tale and modern fiction in order to compare. The research questions were the first three sortings. While trying to ascertain an answer to each research question, each book or story form was reviewed and the related answer was recorded in an electronic journal.

The journal is appendix B. From that document an organizational graphic chart (appendix C) was created.

## Chapter 4

### *Data Analysis*

“I must have that apron, Mother.” “Keep quiet, my child,” said her mother; “you shall have it. Your stepsister ought to have been dead long ago. To-night, while she is asleep, I will go into her room and cut her head off.”

*The Shepard's Flower* (Grimm, p. 206)

The purpose of this study was to determine if there has been a change in the portrayal of evil in stories for children. The author examined Perrault's and Grimm's fairy tales and a selected group of contemporary fantasy focusing on gender, physical description, and the motivation or ultimate goal of the antagonist.

The purpose of the first sorting was to answer the first research question: are the majority of archetypes of evil in contemporary fiction still portrayed by females as they were in fairy tales, or has the trend changed to male antagonists? A few of the fairy tales and contemporary stories had multiple antagonists. For example *The Six Swans* had two. *The Amulet of Samarkind* also had two. When this situation arose, both antagonists were counted therefore the total of the characters may exceed the number of stories read. If the form showed the antagonist as being a female, an F was recorded in the journal. If the antagonist was a male, an M was recorded. After recording the fairy tales and the contemporary fiction the M's and the F's were counted. According to the results of the twenty-six fairy tales there were twenty-seven evil female antagonists and 2 male antagonists. The female antagonists were mainly stepmothers with a few unrelated witches. That statistic corroborates previous

research stating the prevalence of female antagonists in fairy tales. Of the twenty-five contemporary fiction stories twenty-four antagonists were male and three were female. There were very few that actually had a relationship to the protagonist. In other words, there was not an established familial tie as there was with the fairy tales. The question of whether the archetypes of evil in contemporary fiction has changed to male, is supported.

Sort two looks at whether the archetypal presence of the character has changed from a physical to an amorphous one. In the journal and the chart amorphous was represented by an A and physical was represented by a P. The total number of evil characters in the fairy tales came to twenty-nine. The results showed the fairy tales all contained an actual physical presence. In the contemporary stories there were a few situations, Voldemort for example, where the character was an amorphous entity but entered a physical being to have substance. In these cases the entity was counted as being amorphous due to the fact this was the antagonist's true form. In contemporary fiction there were twenty-seven evil characters. Of those twenty-seven twenty-one were physical and only six were amorphous. The assumption was the archetypal presence had changed from a physical to mostly amorphous one in recent fiction. According to the results that is not true. There is a higher incidence of evil characters taking a physical form in contemporary fantasy fiction.

Sort three is the last of the pre-determined sorts based on the original assumptions. The focus was the motivation or goal to be attained. The goal is considered to be the motivating factor. The categories that fall within the personal

goal range are beauty, power and wealth. The worldly goal is omnipotence or total power and control. While performing the research it became apparent there is a fine line between personal and worldly goals. To gain world power could also be a personal goal. A better description of the difference between personal goals and the desire for world dominance would be to say the scope of the goal has changed over time. For recording purposes beauty was represented by a B, power by a P, wealth by a W, and omnipotence by an O. The fairy tale goals were for beauty, familial power, or wealth, with the exception of *The Twelve Brothers*, in which the father figure wanted personal power for his daughter rather than for himself. Due to the fact that his wish is for her to have familial power, it is still considered a personal power rather than a worldly power. The results showed those who wanted beauty were three, power was eight, wealth was eight, and omnipotence was zero. There was a high incidence of the goal not being explained. There were thirteen stories that did not describe a goal. When the fantasy books of the present were reviewed, they showed far fewer personal goals and more worldly ones. There were zero characters having the goal of beauty, seven characters wanted personal power, five characters wanted personal wealth, and eighteen characters wanted world power or omnipotence. There was one story, *Midnight for Charlie Bone*, that did not describe a goal. This large majority of worldly goals support the assumption that the scope of the goals of the antagonists in contemporary fiction has indeed changed to a worldly one.

While sorting for the three answers to the research questions, other categories of sorting became obvious. Was the evil character aided by magic? In many

instances the stories, fairy tale and contemporary, contained magic, but the evil character might or might not have used magic to attain their goal. The journal and chart show a Y for yes and an N for no. Of the fairy tales examined, sixteen characters used magic and thirteen did not. Of the contemporary stories twenty-one characters used magic and six did not. The results show the evil characters in both sets of stories used magic, with contemporary fiction having a higher number with magic being used. A possible reason for this might be the categories of modern fantasy used. Fairy tales are not broken down into genres of fantasy as contemporary fiction is. As explained earlier, high fantasy, magical fantasy, and fantasy that contained witchcraft and sorcery were the genres of modern fiction.

Another category for sorting was whether an archetypal description for the character was supplied in the story. Again, the answer was recorded as a Y for yes and an N for no. Upon examination of the results it was found that only nine fairy tales contained descriptions of the characters while twenty of them did not. All twenty-seven evil characters in the contemporary stories were given detailed archetypal descriptions. It is unknown if the reason for the difference between the two sets is because contemporary fiction stories were novel length and fairy tale stories were at most a few pages, or if the difference is because of evolving writing styles.

The last category for sorting pertains to the gender of the author. Female authors were recorded as F and male authors were recorded as M. Due to the fact that the fairy tales used in this study were Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm's and Charles Perrault's, all twenty-six stories were authored or recorded by males. The

contemporary books were written by fourteen males and twelve females. *Peter and the Starcatchers* was authored collaboratively by two males.

In summation of the findings, the evil antagonist in modern fantasy books reviewed has changed from the fairy tale preponderance of females to a preponderance of males. The question of the character taking a physical form to a mostly amorphous one was unfounded. Although the fairy tales did not contain any amorphous characters and the contemporary did contain some, the assumption that the majority of the modern books have amorphous entities was unsubstantiated. The third question of the changing of the goals, or the scope of the goals, was substantiated. None of the fairy tale characters wished for ultimate and complete world power, while that was the goal for eighteen of the characters from recent fantasy books.

## Chapter 5

### *Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations*

“My son will you have an apple?” and she looked at him wickedly

Writing and publishing literature for children and young adults has become a rhizomorphic entity. There are now thousands of books published each year. When you compare that to the little over two hundred stories Perrault and the Grimm brothers recorded it is easy to see how the market has substantially grown and continues to grow. With the use of literature as a teaching tool it is imperative we keep a close watch on trends. This study was designed to look at the changes from fairy tales to contemporary fiction in order to ascertain what changes have taken place in three particular areas: has the gender of the evil antagonist changed from female to male? has the presence changed from a physical to amorphous entity? has the scope of the goal or motivating factor changed?

A form of research called grounded theory was used in comparing the two timeframes of literature. Using open coding, categories and concepts emerged from the texts. Then using the categories and concepts the stories were then sorted looking at commonalities. During the stage of sorting the results were recorded in an electronic journal and then in an organizational chart. The results between fairy tales and contemporary fiction were then compared. Twenty-six fairy tales by Perrault and Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm were analyzed along with twenty-five contemporary fiction books within the fantasy genre.



## *Conclusions*

There was a question as to whether there had been a shift in gender in the evil antagonist figure from the overwhelming majority of female antagonists in the fairy tales. The research found a dramatic gender change. The antagonist is always the one who is challenging a power figure. The power figure may be male, as in a fairy tale king, or it may be female, as in Snow White being the most beautiful. But, in a majority of fairy tales the antagonist or challenger was the vociferous female. For instance, Snow White's stepmother is a vociferous, female antagonist. Now the challenger, or antagonist, in the majority of contemporary fantasy stories is a male. Hedge from *Abhorsen* is a good example. Throughout the novel he is pursuing Lirael in hopes of destroying her. The author speculates the reason for the change has to do with societal evolution. There is the possibility that males have increased in power. Or the growth of their power could be due to the change from a familial power or, on the largest scale possible in fairy tale times, kingdom over a realm to present day world power.

The question about modern fiction containing more amorphous evil entities than physical ones was not supported. From the time the first Harry Potter book was published in 1990 there has been an explosion of fantasy books written. Although there were a few amorphous evil characters, like Voldemort, the majority still took a physical form. Throughout the Harry Potter series Voldemort took many forms but for the most part he was vapor and mist or a feeling that would come over Harry. In *The Amulet of Samarkind* one of the two evil characters was an amorphous entity. Which exploded up through the floor as vapor and mirage like shifting light. These

create a psychological fear. These portrayals of evil did not exist in fairy tales. The portrayal of evil was always a physical presence. The findings revealed that there has not been a shift from the to physical to amorphous. The evil entities still, for the most part, are a physical presence.

The scope of the goals changing from personal to worldly was found in that all of the fairy tales were personal and the majority of the contemporary goals were for world domination. The scope of the goals in present day literature were on a much larger scale. Whereas the female antagonists of fairy tales wanted to be the most beautiful, or possibly be in control of the family wealth or power, the contemporary fiction antagonists wanted to control everyone in the world or many worlds. Moonfist in *The Ropemaker* wanted the ring of power from Tilja so he would be the most powerful magician in the world. He could then control everyone. The possibilities for world domination were limited by proximity when the fairy tales were told. The author feels the change in the goals is due to having world knowledge that was previously unavailable.

### ***Recommendations for Further Studies***

Throughout the process of the research more questions arose. These questions would support further studies. Is there a difference in the portrayal of evil dependent on the gender of the author? It would be interesting to compare the modern literature authored by males to the ones authored by females. Which gender most often uses female villains? Which most often uses male villains?

Has the number of incidences of violence changed over time? Fairy tales for the most part are a few pages long. Within those few pages there is a lot of gore and

violence. Contemporary fantasy fiction is usually several hundred pages long. Has the number of violent acts increased at the same rate? Have the acts of violence increased in proportion with the number of pages? The degree of violence could also be measured. Were the fairy tale acts of violence against one or a few people and the violence in modern stories catastrophic?

What are the bases for the changes? Is it because world domination is considered a male aspiration more than female? Therefore is the gender of the challenger changing dependent on the scope of the goal changing? In the time of fairy tales it was a patriarchal society. If women wanted to gain power they had to challenge a male. Why are more males than females challenging for world domination?

Has technology had an effect on the portrayal of evil? What changes, if any, have occurred since the explosion of technology in our society?

My strongest concern upon completion of this study and its findings is the effect the male antagonist has on the readers. What are the implications of the changes? What effects do these changes have on children? It has been established by several studies that the incidence of female antagonists in fairy tales is high. She is an archetypal force to be overcome. We carry that perception of the evil stepmother with us and it has an effect on the way we look at females. What effect will the male antagonist have on the way we perceive males?

Today's society is fast paced. It is hard keeping up with the changes. But when it comes to what our children and young adults are reading we should be vigilant in keeping tabs on the changes. We should constantly assess what affect

present day literature has on our children. Films are monitored for content and given ratings according to what we are exposing our children to. Parents and educators need to be just as vigilant when it comes to literature. We need to be aware of what our children are reading and of the possible effects of what they read.

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## **Appendix A**

**Titles of Fairy Tales and**

**Contemporary Fantasy Fiction**

**Studied**



## List of Titles

### **Grimm's and Perrault's Fairy Tales:**

1. The Almond Tree
2. The Ass's Skin
3. Birdie and Her Friend
4. The Blue Light
5. Cinderella (Perrault)
6. The Crystal Ball
7. The Drummer
8. The Enchanted Stag
9. The Enchanted Tree
10. The False Bride
11. Florinda and Yoringal
12. The Lamb and the Fish
13. The Old Witch
14. One Eye, Two Eye, Three Eyes
15. The Riddle
16. The Six Servants
17. The Six Swans
18. The Shepard's Flower

19. The Sleeping Beauty (Perrault)
20. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
21. The Three Birds
22. The Three Little Men in the Wood
23. The Three Tasks
24. The Twelve Brothers
25. White and Black
26. The Wonderful Plant

**Contemporary Fiction Titles:**

- |                                 |                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Abhorsen                     | Garth Nix                   |
| 2. Amulet of Samarkind, The     | Jonathan Stroud             |
| 3. Charmed                      | Marilyn Singer              |
| 4. Dream of the Stone, The      | Christina Askounis          |
| 5. Goblin Wood, The             | Hilari Bell                 |
| 6. Gregor the Overlander        | Suzanne Collins             |
| 7. Kingdom of the Golden Dragon | Isabel Allende              |
| 8. Lirael                       | Garth Nix                   |
| 9. Midnight for Charlie Bone    | Jenny Nimmo                 |
| 10. Pendragon                   | P. J. MacHale               |
| 11. Peter and the Starcatchers  | Dave Barry & Ridley Pearson |
| 12. Rope Trick                  | Lloyd Alexander             |
| 13. Sabriel                     | Garth Nix                   |
| 14. Sea of Trolls, The          | Nancy Farmer                |

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| 15. Singer of all Songs                   | Kate Constable      |
| 16. Sorcerers of the Nightwing            | Geoffrey Huntington |
| 17. Spellfall                             | Katherine Roberts   |
| 18. Tithe                                 | Holly Black         |
| 19. Wizard's Hall                         | Jane Yolen          |
| 20. Shadowmancer                          | G. P. Taylor        |
| 21. Eragon                                | Christopher Paolini |
| 22. Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone | J.K. Rowling        |
| 23. Beyond the Door                       | Gary L. Blackwood   |
| 24. The Doomspell                         | Cliff McNish        |
| 25. Rope Maker                            | Peter Dickinson     |

## **Appendix B**

Sorting journal and results

## Journal

Sorting journal: Symbols in parenthesis represent one person

1<sup>st</sup> sort

Fairy tale M (ale) F (emale)

SW F

Cind F

Sleeping F

6 Servants F

3 Birds F F

Almond Tree F

1 Eye F

Blue Light F

Old Witch F

Crystal Ball (2 evil characters) F & M

Ass's F

6 Swans F F

3 tasks F

Birdie F

Florinda F

Wonderful F

Drummer F

False Bride F

Enchanted F

12 Brothers M

3 Little men F

Lamb F

White and Black F

Riddle F

Shepard's F

Enchanted Tree F

27 F 2M

Cont. Fic.

Sabriel M

Gregor M

Amulet M and M

Spellfall M

Tithe F

Lirael M

Rope Trick M  
 Midnight M  
 Wizard's M  
 Kingdom M  
 Peter M  
 Sea F  
 Shadowmancer M  
 Abhorsen M  
 Ropemaker M  
 Dream/stone M M  
 Harry Potter M  
 Pendragon M  
 Charmed M  
 Sorcerer's M  
 Goblin M  
 Doomspell F  
 Beyond/door M  
 Singer/songs M  
 Eragon M

24 M 3 F

---

2<sup>nd</sup> sort:

presence: P (hysical) A (morphous)

SW P  
 Cind P  
 Sleeping P  
 6 Ser P  
 3 Birds P P  
 Almond P  
 2 Eye P  
 Blue light P  
 Old Witch P  
 Crystal Ball P P  
 Ass's P  
 6 Swans P P  
 3Tasks P  
 Birdie P  
 Florinda P  
 Wonderful P  
 Drummer P  
 False Bride P  
 Enchanted P

12 Brothers P  
 3 Little men P  
 Lamb P  
 White and Black P  
 Riddle P  
 Shepards P  
 Enchanted Tree P

29P, 0A

Cont. fiction:

Sabriel A  
 Gregor P  
 Amulet P and A  
 Spellfall P  
 Tithe P  
 Lirael P  
 Rope Trick P  
 Midnight P  
 Wizard's P  
 Kingdom P  
 Peter P  
 Sea P  
 Shadowmancer P  
 Abhorsen A  
 Ropemaker P  
 Dream/Stone P A  
 Harry Potter A  
 Pendragon P  
 Charmed P  
 Sorcerer's A  
 Goblin Wood P  
 Doomspell P  
 Beyond/Door P  
 Singer/songs P  
 Eragon P

21P 6A

---

Goal: Was the goal a personal one of beauty, power or wealth or was it a worldly goal of omnipotence?

3<sup>rd</sup> sort B (eauty) P (ower) W (ealth) O (mnipotence)

SW B  
 Cind W  
 Sleeping P  
 6 Ser P  
 3 Birds none none  
 Almond Tree W  
 1 Eye W  
 Blue light W  
 Old Witch none  
 Crystal Ball P and none  
 Ass's P  
 6 Swans none and none  
 3 tasks none  
 Birdie none  
 Florinda none  
 Wonderful (P W)  
 Drummer W  
 False Bride W  
 Enchanted P  
 12 Brothers P (external)  
 3 Little men (B and P)  
 Lamb none  
 White and Black (B W)  
 Riddle none  
 Shepard's none  
 Enchanted none

B=3 P=8 W=8 O=0 none=13

Cont. fiction:

Sabriel O  
 Gregor P  
 Amulet O O  
 Spellfall O  
 Tithe O  
 Lirael O  
 Rope Trick (P W)  
 Midnight none  
 Wizard's P  
 Kingdom W  
 Peter (P W)  
 Sea (P W)  
 Shadowmancer O  
 Abhorsen O



Ropemaker O  
 Dream/Stone O O  
 Harry Potter O  
 Pendragon O  
 Charmed O  
 Sorcerers (P W)  
 Goblin O  
 Doomspell P  
 Beyond/door O  
 Singer/songs O  
 Eragon O

B=0 P=7 W=5 O=18 none=1

---

4<sup>th</sup> sort

Was the evil character aided by magic? Y(es) N(o)

SW Y  
 Cind N  
 Sleeping Y  
 6 Ser Y  
 3 Birds N N  
 Almond Tree N  
 1 Eye N  
 Blue light N  
 Old Witch Y  
 Crystall Ball Y Y  
 Ass's Y  
 6 Swans Y N  
 3 tasks N  
 Birdie N  
 Florinda Y  
 Wonderful Y  
 Drummer Y  
 False Bride N  
 Enchanted Y  
 12 Brothers N  
 3 Little men N  
 Lamb Y  
 White and Black Y  
 Riddle N  
 Shepard's Y  
 Enchanted Tree Y

Y=16 N=13

Cont. Fic.

Sabriel Y  
 Gregor N  
 Amulet Y Y  
 Spellfall Y  
 Tithe Y  
 Lirael Y  
 Rope Trick N  
 Midnight Y  
 Wizard's Y  
 Kingdom N  
 Peter N  
 Sea Y  
 Shadowmancer Y  
 Abhorsen Y  
 Ropemaker Y  
 Dream/stone N N  
 Harry Potter Y  
 Pendragon Y  
 Charmed Y  
 Sorcerer's Y  
 Goblin Y  
 Doomspell Y  
 Beyond/door Y  
 Singer/songs Y  
 Eragon Y

Y=21 N=6

---

5<sup>th</sup> sorting

Was a description (archetype) of the evil character supplied? Y (es) N (o)

SW Y  
 Cind Y  
 Sleeping N  
 6 Ser N  
 3 Birds Y Y  
 Almond Tree N

1 Eye N  
 Blue light N  
 Old Witch N  
 Crystal Ball N N  
 Ass's N  
 6 Swans Y N  
 3 Tasks N  
 Birdie N  
 Florinda Y  
 Wonderful Y  
 Drummer Y  
 False Bride N  
 Enchanted N  
 12 Brothers N  
 3 Little men N  
 Lamb N  
 White and Black Y  
 Riddle N  
 Shepard's N  
 Enchanted Tree N

Y=9 N=20

Cont. Fic.

Sabriel Y  
 Gregor Y  
 Amulet Y Y  
 Spellfall Y  
 Tithe Y  
 Lirael Y  
 Rope Trick Y  
 Midnight Y  
 Wizard's Y  
 Kingdom Y  
 Peter Y  
 Sea Y  
 Shadowmancer Y  
 Abhorsen Y  
 Ropemaker Y  
 Dream/Stone Y Y  
 Harry Potter Y  
 Pendragon Y  
 Charmed Y  
 Sorcerer's Y

Goblin Y  
 Doomspell Y  
 Beyond/door Y  
 Singer/songs Y  
 Eragon Y

Y=27 N=0

6<sup>th</sup> sorting

Was the author male or female?

M (ale) F (emale)

SW M  
 Cind M  
 Sleeping M  
 6 Ser M  
 3 Birds M  
 Almond Tree M  
 1 Eye M  
 Blue light M  
 Old Witch M  
 Crystal Ball M  
 Ass's M  
 6 Swans M  
 3 Tasks M  
 Birdie M  
 Florinda M  
 Wonderful M  
 Drummer M  
 False Bride M  
 Enchanted M  
 12 Brothers M  
 3 Little men M  
 Lamb M  
 White and Black M  
 Riddle M  
 Shepard's M  
 Enchanted Tree M

M=26 F=0

Cont. Fic.

Sabriel M  
Gregor F  
Amulet M  
Spellfall F  
Tithe F  
Lirael M  
Rope Trick M  
Midnight F  
Wizard's F  
Kingdom F  
Peter M M  
Sea F  
Shadowmancer M  
Abhorsen M  
Ropemaker M  
Dream/Stone F  
Harry Potter F  
Pendragon M  
Charmed F  
Sorcerer's M  
Goblin F  
Doomspell M  
Beyond/door M  
Singer/songs F  
Eragon M

M=14 F=12

## **Appendix C**

Graphic organizer

### Organizational Chart

Title	Sort #1 Character gender	Sort #2 Presence	Sort #3 Goal	Sort #4 Magic	Sort #5 Archetype supplied	Sort #6 Author gender
Snow White	F	P	B	Y	Y	M
Cinderella	F	P	W	N	Y	M
Sleeping Beauty	F	P	P	Y	N	M
6 Servants	F	P	P	Y	N	M
3 Birds	F F	P P	NONE NONE	N N	Y Y	M
Almond Tree	F	P	W	N	N	M
1 Eye	F	P	W	N	N	M
Blue Light	F	P	W	N	N	M
Old Witch	F	P	NONE	Y	N	M
Crystal Ball	F & M	P P	P NONE	Y Y	N N	M
Ass's skin	F	P	P	Y	N	M
6 Swans	F F	P P	NONE NONE	Y N	Y N	M
3 Tasks	F	P	NONE	N	N	M
Birdie	F	P	NONE	N	N	M
Florinda	F	P	NONE	Y	Y	M
Wonderful	F	P	(PW)	Y	Y	M
Drummer	F	P	W	Y	Y	M
False Bride	F	P	W	N	N	M
Enchanted	F	P	P	Y	N	M
12 Brothers	M	P	P (EXTERNAL)	N	N	M
3 Little Men	F	P	(BP)	N	N	M
Lamb	F	P	NONE	Y	N	M
White/black	F	P	(BW)	Y	Y	M
Riddle	F	P	NONE	N	N	M
Shepard's	F	P	NONE	Y	N	M
Enchanted Tree	F	P	NONE	Y	N	M
	27F, 2M	29P, 0A	3B, 8P, 8W, 0O, 13 NONE	16Y, 13N	9Y, 20N	26M, 0F
Sabriel	M	A	O	Y	Y	M
Gregor	M	P	P	N	Y	F
Amulet	M M	A P	O O	Y Y	Y Y	M

Spellfall	M	P	O	Y	Y	F
Tithe	F	P	O	Y	Y	F
Lirael	M	P	O	Y	Y	M
Rope Trick	M	P	(PW)	N	Y	M
Midnight	M	P	NONE	Y	Y	F
Wizard's	M	P	P	Y	Y	F
Kingdom	M	P	W	N	Y	F
Peter	M	P	(PW)	N	Y	M M
Sea	F	P	(PW)	Y	Y	F
Shadowmancer	M	P	O	Y	Y	M
Abhorsen	M	A	O	Y	Y	M
Ropemaker	M	P	O	Y	Y	M
Dream/stone	M M	A P	O O	N N	Y Y	F
Harry Potter	M	A	O	Y	Y	F
Pendragon	M	P	O	Y	Y	M
Charmed	M	P	O	Y	Y	F
Sorcerer's	M	A	(PW)	Y	Y	M
Goblin	M	P	O	Y	Y	F
Doomspell	F	P	P	Y	Y	M
Beyond/door	M	P	O	Y	Y	M
Singer/songs	M	P	O	Y	Y	F
Eragon	M	P	O	Y	Y	M
	24M, 3F	21P, 6A	0B, 7P, 5W,18O, 1 NONE	21Y, 6N	27Y, 0N	14M, 12F