

## Snow White Tales

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## Outline

- Bettelheim on Snow White
- Afanas'ev: "The Magic Mirror"
- Aleksandr Pushkin: "The Tale of the Dead Princess and the Seven Knights"
- Disney
  - The Dwarfs at Work
  - The Death of the Wicked Stepmother

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## Bettelheim on Snow White 1

- Red/White (blood/snow) symbolism
  - Blood is a prerequisite for the birth of a child
  - Red and white apple: divided personality (id/superego)
- Oedipal conflict (projection of jealousy)
- How are Snow White and the Queen similar?
  - Narcissism
  - Sharing the apple
- Who is the voice in the mirror?
- Does the Queen want to kill Snow White?
  - Hunter: father substitute
  - Stay-laces (corset)

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## Bettelheim on Snow White 2

- Dwarfs: pre-oedipal existence
  - Work, work, work
  - Lack of ambition (unlike Snow White)
- Snow White and the dwarfs
  - Latency
  - Id/superego
  - Why does Snow White succumb to the Queen's overtures?
- Orality
  - Lungs and liver
  - Apple
- Sleep: gestation period (gap between physical maturity and readiness for marriage)
- Birds: owl (wisdom), raven (mature consciousness), dove (love)

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## “The Magic Mirror”

- Stepmother role shared with father, uncle, mean old woman, and general
- Father (merchant) alive throughout the tale
- Oedipal conflict displaced from father to uncle and general
  - Consistent emphasis on threats to the heroine's virtue
- Brother as merciful huntsman
- Suicidal (!) bogatyr as dwarfs
- “Mean old woman” as stepmother's agent
  - Heroine succumbs to enticements (ring, ribbon, hair) out of vanity
  - No apple
- Embedded tale (cf. “The Armless Maiden”)
- Mirror, glass coffin

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## Pushkin and Snow White

- Aleksandr Pushkin, 1799–1837
  - “Rusalka”
  - “The Tale of the Dead Princess and the Seven Knights”
  - More to come ...
- How is the Pushkin text similar to or different from the Grimm or Disney “Snow White” that you know (and the *Snow White: A Tale of Terror* film that we will watch next week)?

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### “The Tale of the Dead Princess ...”

- Verse: trochaic tetrameter, rhymed couplets
- Includes framing story of heroine’s (princess) birth (cf. Grimm)
- Prince Yelisei as major character from the beginning (seeks help from nature to find her)
- Sun, moon, and wind as helpers
- Chambermaid (Smudge) as huntsman
- Knights (who want to marry princess) as dwarfs
- Mirror, glass coffin

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### Disney’s *Snow White*

- *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
- Grimm version
- Walt Disney Studios
- 1937
- First full-length animated fairy tale film
- Oscar nominee, Best Musical Score, 1938

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### Snow White’s Stepmother



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### The Wicked Stepmother

- How does the queen threaten Snow White?  
When? Why? Why doesn't she simply kill her?
- Is the wicked stepmother ugly? Is evil ugly?

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### The Seven Dwarfs

- What do the dwarfs represent for Bettelheim  
...
  - In the Grimm tale (described in Bettelheim)?
  - In the Disney film?
  - In *Snow White: A Tale of Terror* (next week)?
- What does the dwarfs' labor suggest?
  - In the Disney film?
  - In *Snow White: A Tale of Terror*?

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