

Stith Thompson - The Folktale - p 123-124

The banished girl in our European folktales is frequently a young maiden, like Snow White.⁽³³⁾ The motivation in this story (Type 709)⁽³⁴⁾ is the jealousy of the stepmother who learns from her speaking mirror that Snow White is even more beautiful than she. The hunter who has been ordered to kill her substitutes an animal's heart and lets her go.⁽³⁵⁾ Or sometimes she is sent directly to the house of dwarfs or robbers where the stepmother expects her to be killed. She is kindly received by the dwarfs, who adopt her as a sister. The stepmother learns Snow White's whereabouts from her magic mirror and succeeds, often after several trials, in poisoning the girl. Sometimes this is by means of poisoned lace and a poisoned comb; finally, after the dwarfs have revived her from her first two poisonings, the stepmother succeeds by means of an apple. The dwarfs lay the maiden out in a glass coffin. A prince sees her and orders his men to carry the coffin. They stumble and thus dislodge the apple, so that the girl revives. She marries the prince, who sees to it that the stepmother is given a horrible punishment.

The version just outlined is essentially that given by Grimm. The tale appears without great variation over a considerable area—from Ireland to Asia Minor and well down into central Africa. Except for one Portuguese version in Brazil, it does not seem to have come to America. The story appears in two variations in Basile's *Pentamerone*, and it is likely that the oral tradition has been greatly influenced by this literary treatment. Böklen also shows that there has been extraordinary borrowing from other tales with similar motifs. There are also many resemblances to older mythical stories, but how significant these are in the actual history of the tale may be doubted. In spite of Böklen's detailed analysis of the stories, he has made little attempt to reach conclusions about its origin and history.

In the last few years this story has come to the attention of millions of children and adults through the remarkable treatment in the cinema version of Walt Disney. This was based directly upon the Grimm text.

(33). Aside from Snow White and The Maiden Without Hands, we shall find Cap o' Rushes and others of the Cinderella cycle being cast out, See also Motif S301 with all its references.

(34). Ser Böklen, Sneewittchenstudien.

(35). The compassionate executioner appears in a number of stories from the time of Joseph on down; see Motif K512 with all its subdivisions. We have already met it in the tale of The Three Languages (Type 671).