

***Hagenheim Series* By Melanie Dickerson: Creating Active Fairy Tale Heroines with the
Christian Feminist Voice**

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ABSTRACT

Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen, and the Brothers Grimm; these four men are the great authors and compilers of western canon fairy tales. They may have created the canon, but others have expanded it through multiple means, including adaptations. One current author is Melanie Dickerson with the *Hagenheim Series*. Her adaptations alter the setting, characters, and a few other elements, but the most critical part of her work is the addition of the Christian-feminist voice. In the traditional fairy tales, the female protagonists were more often than not passive and uninspiring, but in *Hagenheim*, they are active heroines because Christianity and feminist ideas work together. In developing this argument about the relationship between Christianity and feminism, the first step is to examine patriarchy, equality, and the purpose of fairy tales. The second chapter defines heroine and then adds the descriptions of active and Christian Feminist voices. Finally, the first four books are analyzed using the three basic concepts of independence, transformation, and concept of self in connection with what is established in previous chapters. These elements work together within the unique combination of Christianity and Feminism to create an unexpected addition to fairy tales. The task is completed by pulling from the works of Marie-Louise Von Franz, Rebecca C. Hains, Miriam Forman-Brunell, Beth Allison Barr, and quite a few other academics.

Key Words: Fairy Tales, Christian Feminist Voice, Active Heroines, *Hagenheim Series*,

Melanie Dickerson

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INTRODUCTION

“Fairy tales are another kind of Bible, for those who know how to read them.”

- Theodora Goss

“I want to be a woman who overcomes obstacles in faith rather than tiptoeing around them in fear, who worships in awe of Your goodness instead of worrying about the what if’s. I want to be a lioness rising up to protect Your children and boldly speaking truth wherever you call me.”

- Renee Swope

Fairy tale canon, in my experience, is challenging to define definitively. The canon continuously evolves between films, new authors, expanding series, and new stories; while scholars have done their best to keep track, no effort to stay up to date with an ever-changing canon is ever complete. Nevertheless, in theory, adaptations and new stories point in positive new directions. Adaptations are an opportunity for interpretations, the mixing and matching of genre(s), and multiple other techniques to be used, allowing more people to make intentional and unintentional connections, sometimes because of the unexpected plot points, characters, thematic subtext, etc. ¹For example, an adaptation can take feminist and Christian thoughts to create active heroines. Moreover, this has already happened. Melanie Dickerson writes a perfect example with the *Hagenheim Series*. My thesis will argue that Melanie Dickerson writes adaptations of fairy tales that take feminist and Christian thoughts to create active heroines in the *Hagenheim Series*. Traditionally stories often depict the female protagonists and not as heroines in active roles. I

¹ ¹ In the Preface of his book *The Irresistible Fairy Tale The Cultural And Social History Of a Genre* Jack Zipes write about these ideas. Before breaking down the chapters of the book he writes, “These studies have a bearing on how we understand the nature and history of the fairy tale. They have by and large reinforced my belief that we can never explain the inexplicable fairy tales, but we can learn to fathom how and why they evolved in oral and literary traditions and why we are impelled and compelled to use them to make meaning out of our lives,” (10).

will demonstrate how Dickerson's work takes a unique approach, allowing the "princess figures" to become strong, independent heroines because of their faith. ²And yet the characters still have their happily ever after as expected by the audience. Dickerson's series creates Christian feminist role models for her readers, using female fairy tale protagonists as sketches. Before I analyze in-depth how Dickerson creates Christian feminist role models in fairy tale princesses (in a series she is still writing in 2022), I will first explain my intervention in the academic conversation about fairytales.

It seems the academic conversation surrounding fairytales is continuously looking into the past for one reason or another. One result of this action is fairy tale adaptations being proven to reflect a culture and the time period by other scholars; however, what has not been fully explored and appreciated in the academic conversation surrounding fairy tales is the religious adaptations of fairy tales. It is in these intersections of Young Adult/Children's literature, religious (fictional) literature, and the feminist lens where unique heroines are found. They can be healers, warriors, spies as well as mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives. The name of the roles does not matter, for it is not the entirety of their identity. In these stories, audiences see the Christian-feminist voice illustrated by independence, transformation, and the concept of self.

² Scholars have been commenting on the traditional roles heroines have been written to fulfill including traditional female duties. Tricia Kuon and Heidi Weimar brought this into their argument in their paper *Wake Up Sleeping Beauty: Strong Heroines for Today's World*. They specifically write, "Interestingly, Parsons (2004) found that fairy tales, even newer adaptations, portray women in almost exclusively traditional roles. Heroines are often pictured cooking, cleaning, singing, tending to children, talking to animals, dancing and day dreaming primarily about what life will be like when a handsome prince arrives. Beauty is by far the most common and revered attribute of the fairy tale female but the traits of patience and passivity are also highly regarded (Lyons, 1978; Yolen, 1977; Stone, 1975)". My arguments look beyond physical beauty and actions of the heroines and towards the spiritual. Their spiritual lives help to give Dickerson's characters the purpose to be strong, independent heroines.

Even in secular fairy tales, spirituality can be found with similar characteristics and actions, but there is a lack of connection to specific principles and higher being(s).

Christian Feminist is not an official literary genre; however, it is a reading culture. According to a Statista Global Consumer Survey in 2019, LifeWay Christian Resources was the fifth most popular answer to the question “Where have you purchased printed books in the past 12 months (in-store or website)?” proving that there is an audience for Christian fiction (Statista). The unit sales of adult fiction books, specifically the genre of religion, in the first half of 2018 was 1.33 million out of 20.4 million units sold (Publishers). As reported by Ipsos in 2017, more than 60 percent of the United States adult population identifies as a feminist (someone who advocates and supports equal opportunities for women). These statistics prove there is a market for the Christian Feminist novel. The fact that as of January 2022 Melanie Dickerson has an average rating of 4.76 on GoodReads furthers the validity of the claim; however, I think it might be easier and more fruitful to illustrate how these statistics suggest a desire for characters with a Christian feminist voice (Melanie). There is currently an “unspoken” battle between what is considered traditional or outdated and modern or progressive. Perhaps, these statistics suggest audiences are searching for a way to see “old” and “new” ideas to be blended. What better place than adaptations of a constantly evolving literary genre? Furthermore, if a literary movement has even the tiniest foothold in society, should scholars not take notice?

The reading culture surrounding fairy tales is not as niche as Christian feminists. Fairy tales have seeped into almost every aspect of life, so much so that “they became the shorthand Americans use to talk to each other ... This diffusion of fairy tales throughout American popular culture allows them to act as a set of shared stories for people who are part of different communities based on national origin, race, religion, or class” (Koppy 35). Fairytales are a

binding agent for the members of society. This bonding agent is much more than a love of baseball, trying new coffees, and hating a reality tv star. Fairy tales are as Kate Christine Moore Koppo coins American secular scripture in her book *Fairy Tales in Contemporary American Culture: How We Hate to Love Them*. Koppo brings to her audience's attention that fairy tales cross boundaries and that the "value of fairy tales in contemporary American society intersect with arguments about how to raise children to be good adults, about the place of faith in society, about the false dichotomy between faith and science, about evangelical Christians' perception of persecution" (3).

Bruno Bettelheim identified a connection between Christianity and fairy tales before Koppo and myself; specifically, he states, "Except that God is central, many Bible stories can be recognized as very similar to fairy tales" (53). I take his claim a step further. Fairy tale characters like biblical figures are often meant to be examples for audiences to follow or learn from. Active characters are the examples that readers now thirst for. The fact that readers crave active characters might be seen in the evolution of the Disney princess, from Snow White to Moana. Readers thirst for obviously active characters, as evident by the evolution of the Disney Princesses. Dickerson creates active characters through faith; specifically, "...[w]omen [who] never stop fighting to do what they believe God has called them to do" (Barr 213). To be active through faith includes actions such as prayer, using their gifts, forgiveness, and even worrying. Other series have accomplished similar goals, but without direct links to the fairytales we have grown up with, such as Jody Hedlund's *An Uncertain Choice* and Jessica Day George's *The Princess of Westfalin*.

In the past, fairy tale authors and admirers have been viewed through a theological lens, but I do not believe young adult literature had the same place in society as it does today. Young

adult literature only gained prominence in the 1960s.³ It stands to reason that Christian Young Adult literature was not a recognized sub-category for several more years. Fairy tales have been viewed and adapted with the feminist viewpoint in mind. Adaptions by Anne Sexton, Angela Carter, and other authors are feminist because each “grapples with questions of female agency, or wrestles with systemic issues of misogyny, patriarchy, and oppression” (Bittner)⁴. Yet, it has to be remembered that the statement “feminist books have to be heavy” is not necessarily true (Bittner). In short, adaptions with the main purpose of reader enjoyment can add to serious conversations.

While I was working on my thesis, I had a brief electronic correspondence with Melanie Dickerson, and in response to the direction/intentions of my thesis, she stated:

“But I definitely have my audience of teen girls in mind when I write my books, including trying to show what kind of man is good to date and marry and what kind is not. I don't know that I try to make my heroines role models, but I do try to make them relatable, someone who has real struggles and real emotions and who ultimately does the

³ For further information and analysis Jack Zipes article, *The Changing Function of the Fairy Tale*, from 1988 can be consulted. On the same note the question of “What is Young Adult Literature?” is concisely answered by the Southern Connecticut State University at <https://libguides.southernct.edu/youngadulthoodliterature>

⁴ Jack Zipes notices this as well in his book *Relentless Progress: The Reconfiguration of Children's Literature, Fairy Tales, and Storytelling*. In the chapter *And Nobody Lived Happily Ever After: The Feminist Fairy Tale after Forty Years of Fighting for Survival* Zipes states “In my opinion, the two most significant books that brought about a thoughtful, sensitive, and radical approach to the long-entrenched tradition of patriarchal classical fairy tales were Anne Sexton’s *Transformations* (1971) and Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber and Other Tales* (1979). These two seminal works in poetry and prose— and there were others, including feminist criticism— changed and expanded the genre in the 1970s so that it soon flourished in unimaginable ways in the next three decades and continues to flourish, despite a harsh backlash against feminist causes and the rise of insidious religious fundamentalism of all kinds throughout the world” (121).

right thing and tries to deal with her problems in a positive way.”

Whether she meant to or not, Dickerson created stories with characters that are role models. The *Hagenheim Series* is an example of two seemingly conflicting ideologies (feminism and Christianity) reconciling, perhaps, succeeding in a time period viewed as oppressive and within a genre built upon tradition. ⁵

Melanie Dickerson is a self-proclaimed Christian author. On the “About Page” of Dickerson’s website, a section is dedicated to sharing her faith. Another section has her favorite Bible verses (About). In total, she has three fairy tale adaptation series, the *Hagenheim Series*, *A Medieval Romance*, and *The Dericott Tales*, in which I am sure this argument could be further proved and developed. I am focusing on the *Hagenheim Series* because it is the first and longest series. The *Hagenheim Series*, the focus of this thesis, takes place in Medieval Europe, following two families over multiple generations, though one more than the other. Each book focuses on one set of two characters, the “prince” and “princess” and their storyline. Each book is a specific retelling, and they are as follows: ⁶

1. *The Healer’s Apprentice* – Sleeping Beauty
2. *The Merchant’s Daughter* – Beauty and the Beast
3. *The Fairest Beauty* – Snow White
4. *The Captive Maiden* – Cinderella
5. *The Princess Spy* – Frog Prince
6. *The Golden Braid* – Rapunzel

⁵ For further context and the history between Feminism and Christianity refer to any of the sources in the bibliography.

⁶ See the appendix to see how the books are interconnected by a family tree of characters.

7. *The Silent Songbird* – Little Mermaid
8. *The Orphan's Wish* – Aladdin and the Magic Lamp
9. *The Warrior Maiden* – Mulan
10. *The Piper's Pursuit* – Pied Piper
11. *A Peasant's Dream* – Reverse Cinderella

According to Melanie Dickerson's website, the *Hagenheim Series* genre is a YA Fairy Tale Retellings. On GoodReads, the first book of the series, has been placed within multiple genres, including Historical Fiction, Romance, Young Adult, Fantasy, Christian Fiction, Fantasy-Fairy Tales, and Retellings. Besides a broad intended audience for the series, a wider than expected academic audience can be reached by the series, both the theological and secular academics as well as multiple humanities experts. Intersections in a genre such as the *Hagenheim Series* are a place where interests cross, but it is also where understanding can be met.

Understanding can be an extension of and extended by an author's intentions. In an interview in response to the question, "Christian themes are key to your book. How did you work them into this Beauty and the Beast tale?" Melanie Dickerson answered, "Christian themes just happen naturally. They evolve according to the characters' personalities and the story's premise. The 14th century created its own Christian themes because most people had never seen a Bible and couldn't read one if they had it. This factors greatly into my story" (Cracking).

In the *Hagenheim Series*, some might consider religion to replace magic and other supernatural elements. For this reason and the vast covering of genre, there is an accessibility to the series; a reader who is not a Christian could read this series and find enjoyment in the "Hallmark" or "LifeTime" stories. There is an emphasis on morality and Christian principles, but I would not categorize it as "preachy." These qualities explain why I chose the series to explore

the intersections and the additions I seek to identify and analyze. The *Hagenheim Series* is long, which is why I narrowed down the eleven books to the first four, as they are the “most classic” fairy tales. They correspond with the first four princess movies Disney made.

My decision was solidified after seeing how Joan Gould separated fairy tales in her book *Spinning Straw into Gold: What Fairy Tales Reveal About the Transformations in a Woman's Life*. In her book, Gould separates a woman's life as they relate to fairy tales into three categories, maiden, matron, and crone. Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast, Snow White, and Cinderella are placed in the maiden category. Gould sees them as the beginning of a cycle in the use of literature to understand the roles women have within society. I chose Gould's work rather than a more recent author because she has influenced so many others and is about a key active concept, transformation. The analysis of the first four books in line with the original Disney princess will create a solid base for further research.

In the traditional versions, the written ones that have been collected, of the fairytales, the female protagonists are not typically viewed as heroines. The term heroine suggests the character is going to be active.⁷ The term suggests that the female protagonist is going to fight for love.⁸ These two conclusions suggest that in a feminist fairytale, the term means she will fight to save herself and her loved ones. In a religious adaptation, specifically those based around Christianity, of a fairytale, the heroine is not only going to be fighting for a happily ever after, with her soul

⁷ For more information about the active role heroines refer to *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell and an article published by **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid..**

⁸ *Female Empowerment and Its Limits: The Conteuses' Active Heroines* by Lewis C. Seifert

mate, but she is also going to fight for her happily ever after.⁹ The *Hagenheim Series*, throughout the eleven books series, which also earned multiple Christy Award nominations and wins, combines these suggestions going beyond the stereotypical biblical womanhood thought of in the 21st century. Yet, the stereotypes are constantly being challenged as the recently published author Beth Allison Barr, with *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth*, reminds us multiple times: “Jesus sets women free”.

In short, religious adaptations of fairy tales are opportunities for the feminist lens to be employed in combination with multiple genres (Historical Fiction, Romance, Young Adult, Fantasy, Christian Fiction, Fantasy-Fairy Tales, and Retellings) to create three-dimensional female protagonists. The following chapters will illustrate how in the *Hagenheim Series*, fairytale adaptations are set in a Christian context that portrays the heroine as a feminist by showing them inactive rather than passive roles while working within the confines of the settings of the series. My first chapter will establish background and definitions for base concepts, including patriarchy, equality, and the purpose of fairy tales. Chapter Two will further establish what it means to have active heroines with a Christian feminist voice. The remaining four chapters will analyze the first four books of the series and their protagonists by looking at the following concepts relating to the Christian-feminist voice: independence, transformation, and the concept of self.

⁹ To fight for a person or people violence is not necessarily required. People such as Martin Luther King Jr and Mahatma Gandhi are remember for being great champions for their people and being opposed to violence. They were also very religious. While religion has been used in order to justify violence the act does not have a monopoly. In every case the presence of religion in a fight indicates the “fighter” is fighting for something or someone(s) other than themselves.

CHAPTER ONE: ASPIRATIONS OF FAIRY TALES, PATRIARCHY, and EQUALITY

In his article *The Meaning of Fairy Tale within the Evolution of Cult*, Jack Zipes has illuminated that “almost all endeavors by scholars to define the fairy tale as a genre have failed” (Meaning 222). If something cannot be defined, then its purpose(s) is also difficult to pinpoint; however, it has been found that fairy tales, with their humor, romances, battles, and endless possibilities are pure entertainment. Nevertheless, entertainment is not their only purpose. They teach lessons, spur imagination, and provide a base for further literary studies. Fairy tales also have the uncanny ability to reflect society, leading to compelling interpretations. This is mainly because of their versatility and ability to shift with cultures and cross-cultural boundaries. Interpretations have been archetypal, psychoanalytic, postmodern, and many others.¹⁰ The interpretations are an understanding of not only fairytales but also humanity¹¹. Recent criticism such as *Woke Cinderella: Twenty-First-Century Adaptations (Remakes, Reboots, and Adaptations)*, edited by Suzy Woltmann, examine the present. However, it should be noted that if critics forget the past, then the present and future have no context. Stemming from these understandings of fairy tales are the questions asked about the past, present, and future. Unfortunately, fairy tales' original purpose and interpretations did not necessarily question patriarchy and emphasize equality in society; however, adaptations can have the intentional and/or unintentional purpose(s) of doing so.

¹⁰ There are multiple journals with articles that reflect and analyze adaptations with these interpretations and criticisms as a base.

¹¹ Multiple works by Jack Zipes talk about this idea including the article “A fairy tale is more than just a fairy tale” and the book *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre*.

Christianity and Feminism can work together; however, the past often clouds the idea that they can. History cannot be ignored with a genre as old as fairy tales and as ancient as Christianity.¹² Despite their age, fairytales and their role in the building of societies and individuals have probably not received the recognition they deserve; at least they are misremembered. In short, fairytales, Christianity, and Feminism have been working together for a long time. My thesis aims to highlight this partnership by examining Melanie Dickerson's *Hagenheim Series*. For the objectives of this project, the aspirations of fairy tales, as these relate to the self, have to be the focus as they are the vehicle for the other two to connect. The aspirations or purpose of fairy tales, along with the charged terms of patriarchy and equality, will be examined in this chapter by utilizing the works of multiple academics.

Many of the traditional fairytales in their written format are short and to the point, yet they possess the ability to say much with those chosen few words. Marie Von Franz takes these aspects and describes fairytales as the “purest and simplest expression of collective unconsciousness psychic process” (1). Her work suggests that fairy tales can help the individual and society better understand the human mind because they illustrate the inner workings of the human mind(s). In her own words, “they represent the archetypes in their simplest, barest, and most concise form. In this pure form, the archetypal images afford us the best clues to understand the process going on in the collective psyche” (1). In short, fairy tales assist in understanding the human mind both the individual and collective, through basic or universal images, archetypes, symbols, and actions. The collective and individual psyche is a matrix built upon the past. Marina Warner writes, “the necessary presence of the past makes itself felt through combinations and recombination of familiar plots and characters, devices and images,” (Warner XVIII). In short, understanding fairytales is beyond the deceptive basic plot mountain.¹³

What needs to be mentioned again is that the individual does not just form the self, but by society and their creations, including fairy tales, so that self-realization would be difficult without fairy tales or something equivalent to them, such as myths, legends, and oral traditions. Dawn Coleman's article "The Spiritual Authority of Literature in a Secular Age" needs to be examined to continue the discussion of self. While the article does not explicitly speak to adaptations or fairy tales, Coleman does point out that "texts engage in these representations more or less prescriptively, with varying degrees of self-reflexivity and provisionality" (524). The fact that this claim is made in the context of spirituality and literature is vital for my arguments. Even when written from a secular perspective, fairy tales can still be spiritual. Also, the term provisionally proposes a lack of permanency in the adaptations that they will no longer work within society or for the individual. My argument(s) connect and extends Bettelheim's, Von Franz's, Coleman's, and Warner's arguments by noting, "In a fairy tale, internal processes are externalized and become comprehensible as represented by the figures of the story and its event" (Bettleheim25). The internal processes, including self-realization, are spiritual, and the external is dependent on how these processes are portrayed in the literature society desires.

Aspiration of Fairytales

Many of the original fairy tales were written by men, and that influence is apparent in their evolutions, but we cannot forget about early female fairy tale authors. Miriam Forman-Brunell and Rebecca C. Hains accomplish the task by highlighting the research of others. For example, they point out, "[Rebecca-Anne C.] Do Rozario examines the early origins of fairy tales written by women who, unlike later male authors, critiqued "...issues of beauty, marital commodification, and female agency" (Do Rozario, 254) (XX). Intentionally, feminist

adaptations of fairy tales are commentaries on the same subjects, but they also go beyond those questions and examine a woman's relationships with themselves and others.

Generally, off-the-cuff thoughts about literary adaptations are connected to movies and television. Those thoughts, if allowed, can be limiting. Adaptations are more than just a shift in medium, increased accessibility, or even additions of new understanding. They are also about questioning a genre as well as adding to a genre. Adaptations allow for a genre's formula to be altered, for authors to transliterate a story or "[a reformation of] the old stories, omitting some elements, emphasizing others, to make them part of her new and dangerous vision of the world" (Joyce 4). In other words, the audience's understanding of what a fairy tale is can be altered. For example, Susan Redington Bobby's examination of fairy tales suggests:

"happily ever after," should not be tied to winning the lottery, to going from rags to riches, to becoming the princess. Perhaps what we should be trying to attain is self-worth, a connection to others in our communities, a notion of our place, and a realization that happiness comes from achieving solidarity with others," (233).

Fairy tale adaptations have the opportunity to go beyond the stereotypical and unrealistic versions of happily ever after. ¹⁴Furthermore, the objective of fairy tale adaptations, especially feminist ones, is to see the stories differently, allowing for them to "reveal the powerful archetypal theses inherent in the tales and create a language that reflects their true depths" (Joyce 42). For example, the purpose of religious adaptations is to tell the stories with intentionally

¹⁴ It would be remiss if it was not acknowledged that in an interview in response to the final question, "And lastly, are you someone who believes in happily-ever-after?" Dickerson stated "Yeah, of course! I'm a big romantic person [laughs]. Romance is fun and exciting, and it's something that I enjoy. I feel like, as a Christian, we get a happily-ever-after, no matter what!" (Acree).

having religious characters, examining the “big questions” and asking audiences to look beyond their life on earth toward larger-than-life figures. While the traditional authors and compilers of fairy tales grew up in periods permeated by Christian culture, there is debate over whether or not the stories were created with religion in mind. As a result, multiple works have examined the connection between Christianity and fairy tales, including *The Owl, the Raven, and the Dove: The Religious Meaning of the Grimms' Magic Fairy Tales* by G. Ronald Murphy. They, however, have not discussed in-depth the role of Feminism. Besides adding to previous arguments, I question the claim that fairytales exclusively “offer the pleasures of imaginative entry into a world that does not have intellectual or religious authority” (Warner 2).

Patriarchy

Fairytales are an opportunity for a glimpse at society's core elements and ideologies at any time. Subsequently, understanding a conversation between Feminism, religions, fairy tales, and adaptations requires context, and understanding the historical requires understanding the setting. The traditional fairy tales were not written in or for the 21st century. They were written in a time when inequality on all levels of society.¹⁵ Feminist and religious adaptations are an

¹⁵ As the values of a culture shift, so does the value of people as perceived by society. Women's value is often, if not the most effected with a decrease in value. One factor of their value is physical attributes. The observation is not a new addition to the conversation about details. Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz bring these observations to the conversation about fairy tales. On physical beauty they write “The social importance of the feminine beauty ideal lies in its ability and to reproduce gender inequality (Bartky 1990; Currie 1997; Freedman 1986; Wolf 1991). The feminine beauty ideal can be seen as a normative means control whereby social control is accomplished through the internalization of values and norms that serve to restrict women's lives (Fox 1977). In this internalize norms and adopt behaviors that reflect and reinforce their relative powerlessness, making external forces less necessary. Value constructs girl or "feminine beauty" operate as normative restrictions by limiting personal freedom and laying the "groundwork for a circumscription potential for power and control in the world”

opportunity for it to be questioned. Christian Feminist adaptations question the intentions and expectations of cultures. Feminism and patriarchy are inseparable; therefore, if one has a presence in a fairytale, so will the other, even if it is buried. In Zipes' book *The Irresistible Fairy Tale The Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, there is a chapter titled *The Tales of Innocent Persecuted Heroines Neglected Female Storytellers and Collectors*. In the chapter, Zipes writes:

In fact, beautiful innocent maidens may be more important, but in the hands of male tellers, writers, and collectors, they tend to be depicted as helpless, if not passive. To be good, they must be obedient and industrious. The overwhelming number of oral and literary fairy tales up through the nineteenth century usually stereotype the young heroine, but this is not due to the demonization of women as deviants, as discussed in the last chapter. It is because of a more general patriarchal view of women as domestics and breeders, born to serve the interests of men. Yet as we have seen in early tales about women as witches and fairies, there were certainly thousands of stories that women told to one another, and that were never collected or written down, in which heroines were assertive, confident, and courageous— in short, nobody's slave. (83)

Then Zipes goes on to define the persecuted heroine and explain how it is a term not universal in the history of fairytales. Patriarchy if allowed, can create an unfair perception; however, that does not mean there have not been stories forgotten by the time that question the status quo. There is a separation between oral and recorded history. Persecuted heroines were the expectation and the norm. Today, active heroines have taken their place.

(712). In short, Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz are pointing how a heroine's voice is silenced. My thesis illustrates a way their voices can be strong and heard.

Not every society has been patriarchal; however, the societal origins of fairy tales, the audience of Dickerson's adaptations, and the setting of Dickerson's series are and were labeled as patriarchal. That being said, just because society has a theme of patriarchy does not mean there are not the beginnings of equality within its foundations and history. In her recent book *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth*, Beth Allison Barr asks, "What if patriarchy isn't divinely ordained but is a result of human sin? What if patriarchy slithered into creation only after the fall instead of being divinely created? What if the reason that the fruit of patriarchy is so corrupt, even within the Christian church, is because patriarchy has always been a corrupted system" (25). Barr is calling the attention of her audience to the belief that ideologies, religions, and many other institutions are man-made. Her observations and questions lead to questioning hierarchy as related to religion and faith. One specific question is, "What if the hierarchy is directly linked to sin?"

Hierarchy and patriarchy are crucial to understanding the Middle Ages, the setting of the *Hagenheim Series*. The stereotypes associated with the Middle Ages are often dependent upon the fear those on the lower tiers have of the higher tiers and their power. However, the exceptions to the rule are rarely highlighted. Barr looks at these exceptions in her previously mentioned book. In chapters three through five, Barr dives deep into the topic of bringing Medieval women such as Margery Kemp and Christine De Pizan into the discussion. Women like them were not quiet, meek, and subservient. Instead, they clung to their faith and used it to lead the life they knew they were meant to. More concisely, the influencing setting for the *Hagenheim Series* had more roots within equality than usually thought. Zipes' and Barr's works illustrate this along with the notion that patriarchy might not be the best term to use to analyze the *Hagenheim Series*.

Equality

Typically, a divide in education is one of the central pillars holding up the separation(s) between any set of groups. The Middle Ages illustrates the divides in class, gender, and other cultural aspects. During this period in western history, education was not widespread, especially opportunities for women. Also, religion and education were inseparable. It was during those years that the Bible was manipulated to keep an unequal status quo. For example, the words of Paul, known for his progressive commentary on women and their roles in society, were not seen as a gateway to equality. John Bristow, Barr's predecessor, explains that "Paul's desire that women be educated in the faith was both radical in thought and difficult in execution" (70); however, middle and high schoolers can glean such interpretation of Paul was not taught in medieval churches. After centuries of patriarchal traditions and other factors stemming from even before the Middle Ages, religion and equality to this day are not seen as institutions that work well together. It is an "unspoken" societal truth. However, scholars on both sides of the argument still voice and support their respective stances.

Questions concerning equality between the sexes as it relates to Biblical understanding have been debated for a long time and are complicated. Narrowing down the views to two main ones has been done: complementarian and egalitarian. Rather than providing my long definitions of the two views, I will refer you to the brief and well-written explanations found in *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* by Gregory A. Boyd and Paul Rhodes Eddy². Based on these definitions in *Hagenheim*, I would argue that Dickerson's characters take

² Here are two brief passages from *Across the Spectrum* defining the two views:

on elements of the complementarian view and egalitarian view pertaining to equality between the sexes and lead to their activeness; however, a theological debate is not the focus. Again the focus of my arguments is the creation of active heroines. The arguments made in later chapters will touch upon the equality of the personal relationships between characters, emphasizing the romantic between the “prince” and “princess” figures. It must be noted that the term “equal” does not mean “perfect.” And perfect does not mean “happily ever after.” That being said, the Christian perspective on marriage reflects what is perfect.¹⁶ Bristow talks about this in his book and further explains it. In a nutshell, all this is to say that the Christian perspective on romantic relationships lacks a hyper-focus on equality between partners; rather, the focus is on having Christ as the anchor or center of the relationship. And the typical belief is that when He is at the center, the closest version of the perfect romantic relationship is achieved, and neither party plays a passive or inactive role.

Complementarian View – “The view that women are complementary “helpers” of men (Gen 2:18). Men and women are indeed created equal, but their functions as prescribed by God differ. Most significantly, leadership roles in the church and the family are reserved for males,” Pg. 329

Egalitarian View – “The belief that women and men are, in principle, fully equal in regard to authority in all aspects of Christian life, including leadership in the church and the family. This view is grounded in Galatians 3:28, in regards to public life, and Ephesians 5:21, in regards to family life. This view maintains that gender is irrelevant in regards to spiritual authority,” Pg. 330.

¹⁶ In *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* Lois Tyson discusses fairy tales and their relationship with feminist criticism. In that discussion she talks about the role of marriage in plot. In relation to Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Sleeping Beauty, and Cinderella Tyson specifically states; “The plot thus implies that marriage to the right man is a guarantee of happiness and the proper reward for a right-minded young woman. In all three tales, the main female characters are stereotyped as either “good girls” (gentle, submissive, virginal, angelic) or “bad girls” (violent, aggressive, worldly, monstrous). These characterizations imply that if a woman does not accept her patriarchal gender role, then the only role left her is that of a monster” (Tyson 89). Dickerson’s stories blow the theory out of the water with female protagonists that are also active heroines.

A Few More Thoughts

In the last few decades, princess culture has been synonymous with Disney. And Disney, like fairy tales, is perpetually linked with childhood; it is just a more modern addition. Disney princesses officially began with Snow White and the most recent addition is Moana. As Disney has evolved with the times, “princess power” has become an essential formulaic element (Forman-Brunell XII). As seen in this chapter, the examination of equality, overcoming patriarchy, and the purpose of fairy tales has illustrated that for a female protagonist to be a “heroine of their own lives” is to go beyond gaining a physical kingdom and finding their own status quo (Forman-Brunell XII). Dickerson introduces a new set of voices. The first step was taking the characters beyond the stereotypes (just enough) for there to be a complete (three-dimensional) character.¹⁷ Full or well-rounded characters are active. To be an active princess is to take the “ideals, beliefs, and behaviors encoded in the iconic princess, generations of playful girls and young women have played a princess to maneuver between gendered and expectations and more daring identities” (Forman-Brunell XII). The next chapter will examine step two, which takes the concepts further by examining what it means to be an active heroine with a Christian feminist voice.

¹⁷ The differences between men and women has been the topic of conversation for almost forever. Gender stereotypes have been a part of the conversation for almost as long. Current research includes *The Multiple Dimensions of Gender Stereotypes: A Current Look at Men's and Women's Characterizations of Others and Themselves* by Tanja Hentschel, Madeline E. Heilman, and Claudia V. Peus. There is also current research on the topic of looking past stereotypes such as *Corrigendum: Beyond Stereotypes: Analyzing Gender and Cultural Differences in Nonverbal Rapport* by Gary Bente, Eric Novotny, Daniel Roth, and Ahmad Al-Issa.

CHAPTER TWO: ACTIVE HEROINES WITH A CHRISTIAN FEMINIST VOICE

In the late 1950s, a woman walked into the Amazon Jungle towards the home of the people who killed her husband less than three years before. She did not go in anger but with the mission to live with them and share the Gospel, her faith. A decade before that, she had taken another curious path by attending Wheaton College to study classical Greek with the dream of translating the Bible. Over the course of her life, that same woman endured further trials and achieved even more extraordinary feats. The woman being described is Elisabeth Eliot. Eliot is one of those flesh and blood heroines with a story a person wishes they knew about sooner. When Eliot's story and works come across, heads turn because of her unique voice. That voice is never more evident than in lines like “The fact that I’m a woman doesn’t make me a different kind of Christian, but the fact that I’m a Christian does make me a different kind of woman,” from her book *Let Me Be a Woman: Notes to My Daughter on the Meaning of Womanhood* (Eliot). This quote is a solid example of what makes Eliot an active heroine with a powerful Christian feminist voice.

Restricted to the fictional written page, there might not be many outright comparable women to Elisabeth Eliot. Maybe Marmee March or Orleanna Price, but the comparison is only apparent with specific details. Similarly, when bringing the *Hagenheim Series* into the conversation, the main female characters are not mirrored images of Elisabeth Eliot, but they are cut from the same cloth. The *Hagenheim Series* does not take place in the Amazon Jungle, but each main female protagonist goes on an adventure and can be characterized as active heroines with a powerful Christian feminist voice. To truly grasp the series, the characters, and the arguments being established in this paper, definitions for the active heroine and Christian

Feminist voice need to be identified as well as explored in the context of fairy tales.

Active Heroine

Like any other word, the definition and perception of heroine shifts with the times. According to *Britannica*, there are two definitions for a heroine “a woman who is admired for great or brave acts or fine qualities” and “the chief female character in a story, play, movie, etc.” (Heroine). With the creation of heroines, grounding, in reality, is important. They need to seem real. They cannot just have one moment of action. There are several examples where the main female protagonist performs one great act in the name of love, but that does not create an active character, just as one act of cowardice does not make a coward.

The two highlighted definitions from *Britannica* are almost opposites, yet one cannot exist without the other. The first describes an active character. On the other hand, the second only states they are a character, but it does not mean they are active. To be an active heroine is more than being an active female protagonist. There is no clarification for whether the character should be active to be considered a heroine. If anything, we could surmise that a heroine is a step above a female protagonist. Laura Ashley Price talked about the differences in her thesis where he called upon the work of Marcia Lieberman and her essay *‘Some Day My Prince Will Come’*: *Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tale*. Price points out that “labeling a female character as passive, while then identifying her as a ‘heroine,’ effectively perpetuates the stereotype that women are, indeed, waiting and in need of rescue” (4). In short, the heroine does need to be a superhero. There are multiple ways to be a heroine. While “modern adaptations, female characters are given obvious agency,” that does not mean an adaptation cannot have an active heroine with traditional qualities (4). As long as a heroine does not embrace the stereotypical

female character Simone De Beauvoir highlights in her book *The Second Sex*,¹⁸ then they can be active characters and, better yet, an active heroine.

Like other abstract ideas, defining the term “independence” is complex and can rarely be done justice with one sentence. In an article published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health Care*, I found a brief, but well-thought-out description of the term “independence”. It reads as follows,

Independence is a fundamental value in our society. Although it has many definitions, we define it as choosing how to live one's own life within one's inherent capacities and means and consistent with one's personal values and preferences. Independence, thus, is synonymous with freedom of choice, self-determination, and autonomy from outside interference (1). Independence is the converse of being obliged to live one's life as others want that life to be lived. (Turnbull 108)

The description above gives validity to the statement that independence is a crucial ingredient for Feminism and for its goal of equality. Fictional works are able to facilitate the relationship between independence and Feminism. Fairy tales have been a facilitator for many years. Fairy tales do not always have a positive influence. In his book *Relentless Progress: The Reconfiguration of Children's Literature, Fairy Tales, and Storytelling*, Jack Zipes directs attention to how. For the most part, the fairy tale has become commercialized in America, and most of the fairy tales produced for children and adults pay lip service to feminism by showing how necessary it is for young and older women alike to become independent without challenging

¹⁸ “She learns that to be happy, she has to be loved; to be loved, she has to await love. Woman is Sleeping Beauty, Donkey Skin, Cinderella, Snow White, the one who receives and endures. In songs and tales, the young man sets off to seek the woman; he fights against dragons, he combats giants; she is locked up in a tower, a palace, a garden, a cave, chained to a rock, captive, put to sleep: she is waiting.” Pg. 352

the structural embodiment of women in all the institutions that support the present socio-economic system. (129). Working within the time period is a topic previously mentioned in my argument, but Turnbull and Zipes' separate commentaries on the concept of independence, when placed together, add to what it means to be an active heroine. Independence or fighting for independence is necessary for an active heroine to be active; however, she also must work within their setting political, social and economic. Therefore, independence does not fall under just one aspect of life, but all.

To be an active Christian heroine is not much different from being a typical active character. The main difference is a definitive choice in lifestyle, which includes taking the ability to look beyond the self towards the Christian God and biblical truths. However, there is more to understand about the definition of active heroine. Joan Gould, Maria Tatar, and Miriam Forman-Brunell as well as Rebecca C. Hains lend a hand in furthering our understanding of the term active heroine. In her book *Spinning Straw into Gold: What Fairy Tales Reveal About the Transformations in a Woman's Life*, Gould describes a heroine as a "shapeshifter" "living a life of transformation in a body that passes through inevitable metamorphoses" (XVII). The metamorphosis of transformations described by Gould is a cycle made of three: maiden, matron, and crone.¹⁹ Metamorphoses as a concept indicate change and change is active. These three

¹⁹ Listed below are the key concepts along with brief explanation of what each of the three transformations are about according to Gould.

- Maiden: Leaving Home, Puberty/Sexuality, Biological Transformation
 - "A fertile maiden wants to become a lover or wife. She many change her partner later on, but not the step she has taken, which has carried her from level of existence to another." Pg. XVII
- Matron: Social Transformation, Reasons for Marriage
 - "A wife wants the big belly that carries her future child. A new mother expects her breasts to become fountains of milk." Pg. XVII

stages are associated with the triple goddesses in neopaganism.

While mentioning the idea of the triple goddesses in neopaganism could be seen as counter to the paper's purpose, their illustration representing earthly desires is important (For more information, see the previous footnote). When a heroine becomes obsessed with earthly desires, looking for something more, not with a higher being or within the self, they are dependent on the earthly. When a character only identifies with what their body can and is supposed to do, they will never be satisfied. When a woman's life is spent waiting for these shifts to happen, they are not active. Only waiting indicates a lack of agency. When a woman shapeshifts only based around others, they prove and perpetuate inequality: "The more patriarchal and stratified a society, the more clearly the heroine is expected to rely on the hero to save her" (Gould XX). A character's desires and destiny cannot be reached without action unless they do not want either to be truly fulfilled by themselves. Relying on another does not make one weak, but when agency is not embraced, becoming a heroine is difficult. A passive heroine watches destiny happen and follows these metamorphoses perfectly. An active heroine makes destiny happen, and maybe she does go through all the metamorphoses, but they are completed on her terms.

In the chapters about the first four books, transformations will be connected to growing up and becoming an adult woman. In each case, the transformation will result from a character's agency. It will also illustrate how each main female protagonist becomes more active as they embrace and use their voice. Adaptations besides the Hagenheim Series have used voice to

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- Crone: No longer the center, can see what was missed
 - "But the crone, past her child-feeding years, becomes flat and barren as a prepubescent girl again." Pg. XVII

create active heroines. D.S. Nanda explains, “Although many female characters in fairy tales are passive figures, such as Snow White, there are others who challenge the passivity by their transformative power of speech. In 'Rapunzel', 'The Robber Bridegroom' and 'Scheherazade', the female protagonists are not passive or silent. They are women who begin as objects of desire, but who strive to find their voice and through means of speech transform their social ambitions” (247). However, my arguments do not agree with every claim made about feminist adaptations, agency, and transformation. Another English Master’s student in their thesis wrote

“An effective feminist revisionist must understand that giving a female character agency means more than unexpected actions or deviations from the original plot for the sake of girl power. Agency means that the protagonist has the ability to analyze the world and make effective choices that will lead her closer to her own personal goals or desires, and the female protagonist must have agency in order to be considered a feminist representation”. (Fox 15-16)

My thesis does not entirely agree with hers because of three unanswered questions: Can female characters transform into a person greater than the stereotypes associated with them and yet still be a wife and mother? For example, can a young female protagonist be an active heroine when she becomes a stay-at-home mom at the end of the story? It is possible Fox did not answer these questions because her thesis was about *Wicked* and how it is Feminist Fairy-Tale Revision and not the relationship between Christianity, Feminism, and fairy tales. I believe it also to be pertinent to give Fox credit for leading me to Crowley’s and Pennington’s claim that “[p]owerful feminist fairy tales, ones that are descriptive and self-reflexive, do not seek to simply subvert stereotypes – replace the old with the new; rather, they rattle the foundational cages of the tale where the power structures reside” (304). In short, I am claiming that typically active heroines go

against the status quo; however, with Christianity being entrenched in the traditional, characters that are Christian feminists do not necessarily go entirely against stereotypes. Instead, in their transformation, they make the stereotypes their own.

Previously, the work of Forman-Brunell and Hains was utilized within this project regarding the topic of identity. I call upon them again to expand the understanding of what makes an active heroine as it relates to identity. One of their first points that stood out was about how reality is about more than just desire, and the “inconvenient fact disappears in the rhetoric of fantasy and empowerment, where merely ‘being yourself’ – a self which is automatically special because it exists – promises ultimate success. Small wonder that millennial children loved Disney Princesses, whose essential specialness is unfailing rewarded” (7). Irrefutable and innate specialness does not mean an easy life. By itself, specialness is not a complete identity. Even if a character’s destiny manifests over time rather than being already constructed, obstacles will still stand in their way. In that case, active status or agency is taken away as soon as identity is manifested rather than constructed. It is true that “[i]ntrinsic nature determines desire, and desire, for good or ill, determines destiny” (10); however, free will is still necessary. While the argument does not require a discussion about free will, I cannot help at this point in the argument but ask, “Is free will (agency) necessary for a female protagonist to be a true active heroine?”.

Not everyone can be a hero, but anyone can be a hero. A cliché statement this might be, but when discussing fairy tales, clichés cannot be avoided. Tartar gives specificity to the cliché when she writes, “In fairy tales the world over, the least likely to succeed paradoxically becomes the most likely to succeed” (97). The active heroines of the *Hagenheim Series* are not like the “most iconic fairy-tale princess of all [who] deserves and receives her glorious transformation simply by being her natural self” (Forman-Brunell 14). At the end of their story, *Hagenheim’s*

active heroines are joyously content, full of gratitude, and saying prayers of thanksgiving. They are for several reasons. The most important is because they truly believe the words of an Esther depiction: "I will not be afraid. I will not run and hide. For there is nothing I can't face. When God is at my side" (Heinecke).

Christian Feminist Voice

The Christian Feminist voice is not a new addition to the world. Besides Elisabeth Eliot, there is also Corrie Ten Boom. Corrie Ten Boom saved hundreds of lives during the Holocaust without ever resorting to violence. Arguably her greatest weapon was prayer. She is quoted with asking, "Is prayer your steering wheel or your flat tire?" (Beth). Ten Boom is brought into the conversation because she is another example of a woman with a Christian Feminist Voice. This section will illustrate how a Christian Feminist voice is two voices or parts of the Self coming together to illustrate a Self and the beliefs of the Self.

The openings of Disney's fairy tale adaptations, especially the first ones, remind audiences of storybooks filled with calligraphy, intricate drawings, and hidden details. The audience knows the story's voice but not that of the female protagonist. The original stories were too short to give much to convey the voice of any character; however, there are instances in which the female protagonist takes action. While the female protagonists may talk, cook, and complete the everyday task required for basic living, they also lack agency, a sense of self, and an ounce of fortitude. Perhaps an active character does not need these three elements, although it would also mean they did not have a distinct voice or control over it.²⁰

²⁰ In her article "The Most Beautiful of All: A Quantitative Approach to Fairy-Tale" Femininity Jeana Jorgensen highlights how the voice of a female protagonist can be measured. While

One's mind is the greatest friend and enemy a person will ever have. Fairy tales illustrate this to be true, especially adaptations. Each character works to hear, listen to, and embrace the many voices that create the Self. If it is true that the "Self, which is the psychic totality of an individual and also, paradoxically, the regulation center of the collective unconscious," then how does a woman claim that Self (Franz 2)? If a woman does not claim Herself, it would not be remiss to say she would be static. She would go against the claim made by Franz that "An archetypal image is not to be thought of as merely a static image," which has been proven to be correct multiple times (Franz 2). None of this changes when one of the voices creating the Self is religious and another is feminist because two voices can become one when opinions are shared through various means, including literature. The act of sharing thoughts through written words means the various voices or parts of the Self have the opportunity to slow down, find the bridging connections, and create a unique voice.

To have a feminist voice as an active heroine, they need to be more than a damsel in distress, but an example of confidence. In the section above, it was stated that to be an active heroine is to have the ability to look beyond the self; however, to have a fully developed voice, a person needs to look within the Self and understand. The Christian Feminist Voice is not about voicing that you are a Christian Feminist. The Christian Feminist voice is about understanding the self as related to womanhood and one's faith, specifically, Christianity. Furthermore, it is about taking actions that reflect the voice. A character can transform, and their voice(s) can

Jorgensen's focus is the woman's body she does write "In fairy-tale studies, early quantitative studies relied on simple metrics such as counting and comparing character attributes. Bottigheimer hints at a quantitative approach in her essay "Silenced Women in the Grimms' Tales," listing tales in which female characters lose their voices and counting the distribution of the word "speak," noting that it "appears more often in conjunction with authority figures" (1986:126) (39).

evolve.

Multiple women in the Bible did not sit at home waiting for life to happen. They took to heart what is written in the Psalms.²¹ They used their voices to achieve autonomy:

“Autonomous people exercise a repertoire of skills to engage in self-discovery, self-definition, and self-direction, and ... the authentic self is the evolving collocation of attributes that emerges in this ongoing process of reflection, deliberation, and action” (Meyer 49).

Examples of women from the Bible who take charge of their authentic Selves and portray a Christian feminist voice include figures from the Old and New Testaments: Ruth, Deborah, Miriam, Mary of Bethany, Tabitha Dorcas, Priscilla, and Phoebe. Their stories illustrate that being a Christian does not mean being passive and not having a voice. They also illustrate the necessity of transformation and independence. A deep look into their stories would ultimately provide examples of characteristics and actions connecting them with the female protagonists and heroines of fairy tales; however, such an analysis is not the focus of this thesis.

There is no one way to be a Christian, just as there is no one way to be a feminist. As a result, to be an active heroine is not about following the story the way we believe it should be written. Concepts such as femininity can “run the gamut from traditional to more transgressive interpretations” (XVII).²²In the *Hagenheim Series*, these characters do not take upon the role of

²¹ **Psalm 116:1-2 NIV** - I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.

Psalm 130:1-2 NIV - Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

²² About ten years before writing *Princess Cultures: Mediating Girls' Imaginations and Identities* Rebecca Hains wrote an article titled “The Problematics of Reclaiming the Girlish: The Powerpuff Girls and Girl Power”. The article adds several components to the conversation about

their male counterparts. Instead, they expand upon the expected roles of fairy tale female protagonists and female heroines. They illustrate that it is possible to be an active heroine who embraces womanhood and follows their heart even when the story ends with an expected wedding and happily ever after. There is a reason 1 Corinthians 13:4-8²³ is more often than not spoken at weddings. Love is not a passive emotion. And a great love story, fiction or non-fiction, cannot be without both protagonists willing to cultivate, fight, and accept, which is precisely seen in *The Healer's Apprentice*, *The Merchant's Daughter*, *The Fairest Beauty*, and *The Captive Maiden*. Each character's voice is distinct, and so is every facet. Each character may have a Christian Feminist Voice, but each manifests with unique actions. The Christian Feminist voices of the characters in the *Hagenheim Series* are illustrated through independence,

fairy tales and topics covered in the thesis. One leads to questioning the difference and similarities between Main Stream Femininity and Fairy Tale Femininity as they relate to power.

The specific passage is found on page three and reads as follows:

“Girl power's discourse on femininity and strength is problematic and complicated. Women have always been strong, enduring childbirth and a variety of burdens and hardships. However, girl power discourse does not attempt to reclaim or raise awareness of such strength. Girl power instead claims the mental toughness and physical strength into which males have been socialized^ abnegating the learned weakness detailed by Colette Dowling, who points out that the idea of girls' innate frailty is a falsehood. From infancy^ girls "are taught to project a physical presence that speaks of latent vulnerability" (51), which historically has permitted men "to disempower and subordinate women, use their labor, influence their thoughts, and secure their cooperation mainly because of the power they have held over women's bodies" (195). By denaturalizing girls' weakness, girl power discourse frees girls and women from this pattern of disempowerment and subordination” (3). The second relates to the consistent problem of needing to work within setting, but retaining identity. Hains writes, “Girl power offers girls and women a space to resist, on an individual level, patriarchal ideals of passive, accommodating femininity and the idea that females are inferior to males. But without collective political action, not much can change for girls and women; economic, material, legal, and social inequalities persist,” (10).

²³ ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

– NIV

transformation, and the concept of self.

CHAPTER THREE: THE HEALER'S APPRENTICE

“She picked up the spindle, but no sooner did she touch it, than she pricked herself with it and
then fell down into a deep sleep.”

- *Little Briar-Rose* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

“I walked with you once upon a dream.”

- Briar Rose in Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*

Sleep is not always restful. The main reason for the phenomenon could be one of the numerous causes: Uncontrollable dreams, restless legs, or an uncomfortable bed. Therefore, I can find it difficult to believe sleep is a passive or inactive action. Nevertheless, *Sleeping Beauty* is considered to be one of if not the most passive of fairy tale female protagonists. The argument for this belief about *Sleeping Beauty* not portraying agency or even decision-making capabilities has been seen in adaptations; however, such a widespread notion does not always have to be the norm, as has also been previously proven. *The Healer's Apprentice's* Rose is an active heroine because the story is not just about her going to sleep a girl ²⁴or being the epitome of superficial goodness. The story is also about her embracing opportunities for independence, transforming into a strong, confident woman, and accepting Herself with the assistance of a Christian-Feminist voice.

Before accomplishing the task of supporting the argument realizing Dickerson did not write Rose's story without pure intentions is relevant. Dickerson's inspiration for the story was grounded in a desire for realistic characters to be the conduits of the story. In the final pages of my edition of *The Healer's Apprentice* in the Interview section, Dickerson states,

²⁴ Chapter title in Joan Gould's book *Spinning Straw into Gold: What fairy tales reveal about the transformations in a woman's life*.

...and I thought, the prince's reaction to meeting Rose was very unrealistic. Most men value other people's respect, and I started thinking, What if someone wrote this story and made it more realistic? What if the prince believed strongly in duty and carrying out his responsibilities? What if he fell in love with a peasant girl when he was already betrothed? How would he deal with that?

In other words, Dickerson wanted to write a story that was not about a girl that things happened to a good portion due to the actions of a cardboard cutout of a Prince. She wanted to write a story where the female protagonist fell in love with a male protagonist worthy of her and not just because he "saved" her.

Rose has two main viable love interests in *The Healer's Apprentice*: Lord Wilhelm Hamlin and his brother Rupert. These two men's interests in her are as different as night and day. Rupert sees her outward beauty, but Wilhelm sees Rose. Regardless of the interest of two powerful and wealthy men, if Rose loved and/or chose neither, her story would not end in poverty and complete despair. As the book's title states, Rose is the apprentice of her home's healer. With the job comes secure economic and social standing(s) without needing a husband. Rose would be able to live a self-reliant life. In the original stories, *Sleeping Beauty* is "the one truly passive heroine in fairy tales, amoral and erotic" because her life is dependent on being saved by another (Gould 97). For Rose, this is not true. For example, Rose saves herself when she was emotionally and physically harassed by the man whom her adoptive mother wanted her to marry; not only did "[d]esperation and a compulsion to fight back [swell] inside her," she acted by "twist[ing] her body as violently as she could, catching him off guard. Then she slammed her elbow into his throat," (Healer's 108-9). What sets *Hagenheim's* Rose apart is her independent spirit which comes from relying on the wisdom of God through prayer. Throughout

the book, Rose is constantly praying. In a book, prayer is an act where a direct look at the character's Christian-Feminist voice is possible, yet Rose cannot pray when she is fighting for her life after being forcibly placed in a sleep plagued by demons. Wilhelm knows he cannot save her by himself. He does pray to God to help save her and places a kiss of true love on her lips, but Rose also has to be strong enough to fight the battle within her own mind.

At the beginning of the story, Rose is shown to be moving forward as an apprentice, but between the lines, the audience(s) can notice a desire for more than she has planned or can foresee, but she lacks confidence. Readers are made privy to the lack quickly when in the first few chapters, she is afraid of letting people down multiple times, but as the story progresses, Rose becomes a woman who has the strength to save a man from a death he did not deserve. It is true. She did not wield a sword or truly have the power to save the man by herself. She did go to the person she knew could, though not after boldly confronting the Duke. She transformed from someone who could not ask for help and worried about letting people down to a woman confident in her abilities and God's plan. ²⁵

Becoming an adult, specifically, a godly woman, does not mean taking the easy road. Feminist works portray the struggles. Often feminist works accomplish by placing feminist ideals in conversation with going against the patriarchy; however, being a feminist is also about a woman respecting herself and the one she loves: The renowned feminist bell hooks is credited with two thoughts illustrating the point, "Love is a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect and trust," and "To love well is the task in all meaningful

²⁵ In *The Healer's Apprentice* as far as chapter nine Rose does not believe she is confident. For example, when Rupert describes her as "enchanted, clever, confident" her responding thought is "Me? Confident" (Healer's 90).

relationships, not just romantic bonds,” (Communion; All). Rose and Lord Hamlin illustrate the love hook describes in both quotes. The exemplification comes to a head when Lord Hamlin is shown to love Rose to such a degree that he is willing to give up his position and break his betrothal, which has been set since her birth. Rose declines. After telling Wilhelm, she knows how much duty, honor, and respect mean to him; she tells him, “Your resentment would hurt me too much” (222). As Rose and Wilhelm have their discussion about their future, Rose’s instinct is to once again pray and believe God has a plan, a theme that will be seen in the analysis of the following three books.

Rose believes an interictal part of Herself is faith, as evident by the process she goes through to reach each decision she has to make. Even what Rose decides to write her short stories about is guided by her faith. Besides such a detail creating a more three-dimensional character, it also indicates Rose knows who she is. In addition, like other authors, her stories are a reflection of who she is. One humorous story readers are made privy to is about how constantly complaining is not a virtue (Healer’s 87-88). When Rose looks in the mirror, she does not only see herself. She sees a child of God. Towards the end of the book, when Rose is afraid and in the dark, after quoting Psalms 23:4, she thinks to herself, “No one is in the room but herself, and God was with her” (Healer’s 227). Another way to view this is that Rose looks beyond Herself to find Herself. The example is a pure vocalization of her faith. The feminist voice is not apparent in this particular example, but in other parts of the story, there are examples such as not accepting Rupert’s proposal to be his mistress. She bluntly says, “You stay away from me ... Don’t ever come near me again. Do you hear me?” (Healer’s 280). Rose stands up for herself as a woman who deserves the love described by hook.

Out of all the main female protagonists in the *Hagenheim Series*, Rose is the most like a “passive” or stereotypical classic fairytale heroine; however, judging a book by its cover leads to unsubstantiated conclusions. Dickerson's adaptation illustrates the claim. For example, while Rose is a victim of Moncore's acts, she does not claim or sink into victimhood.²⁶ Rose earns her happily ever after. Donald Haase brought to my attention that “... if the Sleeping Beauty tale type is a love story about birth, death, and re-birth in a context of fantasy and enchantment, then it is also a story that is necessarily occupied with acts of creation and re-creation, the power of enchantment and imagination, kissing and telling” (294). Taking Hasse's claim as accurate, then it is not far-fetched to say Rose's story was not just about finding her true love. It was also about transforming into whom she was meant to be. As Rose's story is fictional and the available facts about her life are limited, saying exactly whom she was meant to be is difficult; however, it is safe to say she was meant to be a strong woman who knows great love. In summary, it is in Rose's actions throughout her journey to a happy ending that the Christian Feminist Voice can be found. Rose's actions were not fogged by the lens of patriarchal servitude or oppression. They were made with the intention of creating the best life she could have as a strong woman of faith,

²⁶ In an international magazine I found article titled “Women's Voice and Images in Folk Tales and Fairy Tales.” There was one passage that lends itself to this chapter of my thesis. The passage reads; “Women writers strongly assert that women's images and voices challenged the male-dominated authority when they devoted their effort to expose their femininity whether through passive-beauty characterization or through their kindness and charity. In most of this storytelling, women try to replace the image of weak fairytale heroine with a self-independent and brave one. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), and *Cinderella* (1950), present woman's image in a most brave and influential figure who transforms the fatal end into fruitful days. On the other hand, Andrea Dworkin (1946-2005), asserts in her book *Woman Hating* (1974), that these tales have a passive effect on women because they depict women as wicked, weak, and shallow. Similarly, Susan Brownmiller in her book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975), clarifies that tales like Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White emphasize the idea of woman's victimization (3), and the unawareness from the destructive part of these tales” (2).

an active heroine.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER

She quickly fetched some water and poured it over him without stopping.

- *The Summer and Winter Garden* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

"And for once it might be grand to have someone understand I want so much more than they've got planned."

- Belle in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*

The desire for any kind of knowledge can be a powerful motivator. As a result, epistemic motivation can be an unforeseen guide for a person. The type of knowledge the female protagonist of *Beauty and the Beast* desire varies, but in any case, it leads to the expected ending. An element that sets Annabel, the female protagonist of *The Merchant's Daughter*, apart is that she did not know she wanted to know true love. On that note, it has been claimed that "In every Beauty-and-Beast story, the heroine encounters sexual passions for the first time, inside herself as well as outside in the form of a beast. Her consciousness changes. Mind meets body." and while this statement is accurate it does not fully take into considerations the spiritual element of life (Gould 152). Annabel's happily ever after was borne on the back of desire²⁷, but it was not grounded in sexual desire. The desire was built by faith. In the Author's Note of *The Merchant's Daughter*, Dickerson writes,

I also wanted to explore how it would feel to desperately desire to read the Bible, and to finally get the opportunity to read it for the first time. I explored concepts of discrimination, unfair treatment based on a person's appearance, and the interesting

²⁷ Chapter title in Joan Gould's book *Spinning Straw into Gold: What fairy tales reveal about the transformations in a woman's life*.

concept of owing respect and honor to an earthly lord, as well as a heavenly lord
(Merchant 269)

Goodness means nothing if it is internalized and no actions are completed as a result of that goodness. In short, goodness cannot be a part of a passive character if it is to do good. *The Merchant's Daughter* Annabel is an active heroine because the story is not just about her only thinking of her own desires, but at the same time not being the epitome of superficial goodness. The story is also about Annabel embracing opportunities for independence, transforming into a confident woman, and accepting Herself with the assistance of a Christian-Feminist voice.

The Merchant's Daughter is a version of Beauty and the Beast where “Beauty” has a family; a mother and two brothers; however, they are a prideful, selfish family. She also has a village, but her family’s attitude has made her an outcast. As a result, Annabel has to be independent. In the midst of her actions in the pursuit of independence, Annabel thinks, “She must show that she was strong and capable, not a girl mourning the loss of her home, comfort, and security” (Merchant’s 32). In other words, Annabel has to be strong: “She had no choice. She had to go – but she also had to find a way to protect herself” (Merchant’s 30). One way Annabel protects herself is through her voice, her Christian-Feminist voice.

Annabel’s Christian-Feminist voice can be hidden by her self-reliance. Throughout a good portion of the story, Annabel has to be self-reliant, a characteristic of an active character. Sometimes, a character has no choice but to be actively and persistently self-reliant to survive; if that characteristic becomes the only discernable thing about them, they become stagnant active characters. Similarly, when a female character becomes wholly committed to obtaining and keeping a man, they become stagnant. Unlike in other stories, Annabel is not “a woman [who] devotes herself to a man without seeing who she is, she runs the risk of being devoured” (Gould

176).

Instead, Annabel transforms into a confident, strong woman. Often, the focus in relation to transformation is the beast within the story and how a “woman’s love socializes a male, turning a Beast into a ‘charming Prince’ an outcast into a husband and father, who will have to accept the harness of domestic life from now on”; however, in *The Merchant’s Daughter*, beauty and beast transform together (Gould 185). They transform together because Annabel listens to her Christian feminist voice. Their transformation is most evident in their nightly Bible readings that become studies. In those studies, they learn about the Word of God and how to trust someone else. Other examples of Annabel listening to herself occur in times of great stress and turmoil. Annabel’s response is often wanting “to read the Holy Scripture more than anything in the world” (194). The moment her transformation is complete happens when she stands apart from the crowd and protects Ranulf. Annabel stops the angry crowd by shouting “in her loudest voice, “Desist! I have something to say!” (Merchant’s 252). Maybe thirty seconds later, after some more calls for attention, Annabel prays, “God, help me. What shall I say now?” (Merchant’s 253). At that pivotal moment of being an active heroine, Annabel’s feminist and Christian voices become one.

Annabel sees herself as an outcast in her family and community at the story's beginning. When she is walking and sees a community member, she does not want to be seen. She directly prays, “Let her not notice me” (12). Annabel’s loneliness and desire to read the Bible are the factors for her aspiration to join a convent. Annabel could have become a respectable nun if she had gone to the convent, but she would not have reached her potential. She almost goes to a convent, but she decides to save and stand beside Ranulf. She has faith. Annabel’s faith does not seem as consistently as evident as Rose’s, but He is consistently in her mind. She wonders about

His plans. Annabel prays when she fights for her dignity. For example, she prays when Bailiff Tom corners her after clawing at his arm, attempting to bite his hand, and trying to scream. In many ways, this moment is preparation for the pivotal moment mentioned before.

In her thesis, *Changing the Nature of the Beast: An Analysis of Significant Variations From Madame De Beaumont's La Belle Et La Bête In Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, Heather Stevens calls attention to the hurtful paradox of Disney's version of Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*. Stevens writes;

By presenting Belle as a different kind of Disney Princess, one who reads, is strong-willed, and has a strong desire for independence, yet by limiting her character to that of a plot device rendered important only because of what she means for the Beast and his servants, Disney actually commits the worst kind of crime against feminism: Disney presents children with a supposedly positive, progressive role model that is, in fact, regressive. (24)

How Anabelle is presented is not centered on her importance to Ranulf and his servants. Instead, Anabel's story and happy ending are about becoming the best version of herself and not being afraid (Merchant 257). Annabelle is an active character who does not regress; she grows. Her growth is about embracing opportunities for independence, transforming into a confident woman, and accepting Herself with the assistance of a Christian-Feminist voice. Dickerson makes this clear to her readers when she "pray[s] this work of fiction not only entertains you but makes you think – especially, about the nature of true love and true beauty" (Merchant 270). In summary, like with Rose, it is in Annabel's actions throughout her journey to a happy ending that the Christian Feminist Voice can be found. Anabel's actions were not made fogged by the

lens of patriarchal servitude or oppression. They were made with the intention of creating the best life she could have as a strong woman of faith, an active heroine.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE FAIREST BEAUTY

“Snow-White lay there in the coffin a long, long time, and she did not decay. She was still as white as snow and as red as blood, and if she had been able to open her eyes, they still would have been as black as ebony wood. She lay there as if she were asleep.”

– *Little Snow White* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

“... and then he will carry me away to his castle, where we will live happily ever after.”

– Snow White from Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*

Free is a state of being many fairy tale princesses have a desire for. In fact, it is not bound to the genre or a specific group of people. Everyone wants freedom from something or someone. In fairy tales, a character’s freedom is often bound to a person. For Sophie, the main character of *The Fairest Beauty*, her freedom is bound by her stepmother. Sophie keeps moving forward despite the odds, even when all hope seems lost. She keeps having hope, faith, and determination. Sophie is an active character who listens to her Christian Feminist voice. In other words, If Sleeping Beauty is the quintessential passive heroine, then Snow White is second in line. However, like Rose, Sophie takes the idea and throws it out the window. The first step was breaking away from mother ²⁸and, along the way, holding onto goodness. Another way to word this claim is to say *The Fairest Beauty*’s Sophie is an active heroine because the story is not just about her inner beauty or being the epitome of superficial goodness. The story is also about Sophie embracing opportunities for independence, transforming into a confident woman, and accepting Herself with the assistance of Her Christian-Feminist voice.

²⁸ Chapter title in Joan Gould’s book *Spinning Straw into Gold: What fairy tales reveal about the transformations in a woman’s life*.

The pictures of Snow White biting into an apple, lying in a bed “sleeping,” and others illustrate women as objects and subjects. The purpose of objects and subjects is usually about some sort of gain. Furthermore, since objects and subjects are things, freedom is never considered to be an issue. This view of women is not new. Who controls women as subjects or objects often have the goal to take away their sense of self and their ability to know themselves. Concerning fairy tales, specifically Snow White, Joan Gould points out, “How and when, do women get to know themselves as self-willed sexual beings, distinct from their families? By looking in a mirror ...” (6). Along with the other main characters of the *Hagenheim Series*, Sophie does not have a focus on the sexual part of their identity.; however, the essence of the observation holds. The essence is the desire for independence, being able to be their own person, and finding out who that person is.

Early in life, Sophie decides to be independent and isolate herself to protect others from the queen's wrath. Early on, Sophie learned “she was unprotected in this cruel world, and the way to survive was to be suspicious of everyone’s motives and intentions until proven otherwise, especially if they had more power and freedom than she had” (*Fairest* 29-30). The causes and effects of Sophie’s isolation will be further unpacked in a moment as they have to do with transformation; however, without her stepmother’s influence, Sophie’s independent streak would not have formed, and she would not have escaped with the help of Gabe (though she first had to come to trust him), and multiple subsequent actions. While Sophie’s independent streak drives her to be an active character, she never forgets Whom she will always need. Sophie prays even in the climactic moment when the Evil Queen tries to kill her with an apple. Her prayer, however, is not just to be saved by someone. Instead, Sophie prays, “God, please help me! Send someone or something to me help me or show me what to do,” (*Fairest* 256). In short, the essence mentioned

previously for Sophie is deeply rooted in her faith. She does not wait for a man to save her, but she also does not go through challenging situations alone. Sophie's Christian Feminist voice shines through in multiple other instances.

The moniker Snow White describes someone that "is innocence, virginity, purity, light without heat, a window into the future, but white by itself is sterile. Something more than snow is required to produce life (Gould 9). In other words, to live up to the meaning of her name, any portrayal of Snow White has to be grounded in passivity; there is no other way for a human character to be utterly good without sin. Another way to look at the moniker is as a clean slate, someone who can be molded. As a result, "the heroine, in turn, has to be on guard. The trick for a woman is to progress from being Snow White without turning into the wicked Queen/stepmother, watching our daughter with jealous eyes" (Gould 38). Sophie easily could have become jaded and bitter, becoming blind to kindness; however, she did not because she listened to her Christian Feminist voice. For example, when she meets the men of the Cottage of Seven, she trusts her gut. At that moment, "She sensed in her heart that these seven were good men ... Tears of relief and gratitude pricked her eyelids. *Thank you, God*" (Fairest 168). Sophie spent many years being on guard, alone, but she was broken. Her brokenness is where her transformation originates and becomes complete when she is not only free from her stepmother but also the part of Herself that holds her back.

At first glance, Sophie's transformation into a confident, strong woman seems redundant. Readers are first introduced to Sophie and the Evil Queen when the latter is scolding her for sneaking food to another servant who was thrown in the dungeon as well as out of pure jealous anger. As the queen scolded her, Sophie's thoughts were "rebellious" yet were of someone who did not like to take things lying down, but knows how to survive. She thought, "Oh, God, please,

please, please let it be enough. Let my confession be enough to appease her. And let me appear meek before her” (Fairest 10). These actions and thoughts are deceptive. Sophie, deep down, is afraid, angry, and wants to believe what Gabe is telling her truth about the King. The idea of being “wanted, to belong to someone, to be betrothed ... it filled her chest with the most delightful warmth and light,” but it also made her think, “And to be proven a fool will only lead to coldness and pain” (59). Sophie’s Christian-Feminist voice is strong, but it is fighting for control.

For a long time, Sophie had to be patient, waiting for the opportunity that would allow for her to fight for her happy ending. Like other characters in the *Hagenheim Series*, Sophie had to work within God’s time, not their own. Sophie could have been angry but turning the other cheek and moving forward is often more challenging. Still, with such a past, Sophie has many wounds and scars. For this reason, the primary transformation Sophie had to go through was one of healing. She had to allow time and God to heal her. She had to remind herself of this, often through prayers and hopes such as “*Thank you, God. If only he could give her direction, peace of mind, and a mended heart so easily*” (Fairest 197).

Gabe, her Prince, spurred her transformation. Gabe opened her heart. Emotional and psychological healing usually requires love, and like Rose and Annabel (and Gisela), Sophie spent much of her life feeling unloved. A stereotypical feminist response is that a woman does not need a man; however, everyone needs help, and with fairy tales, there has to be a love interest. Why not have the prince do something much more complex than slaying a dragon? Why not have him help with a much deeper problem? Without Gabe, she would not have been able to escape or find her father, but it was Sophie who was an active character and chose to fight for freedom. If Sophie did not transform from an abused stepdaughter to a strong, confident woman

by allowing herself to heal and listening to her Christian-Feminist Voice, then she would have never reached her happy ending.

Sophie is an active heroine. I would argue that for a good portion of the story, Sophie does not see herself as one, mainly because of her stepmother. It is an accepted fact that “A child’s first mirror is her mother’s eyes, which determine what reflections she’ll see for the rest of her life” (Gould 7). It takes years for a person to know Themselves, and sometimes that is not enough time, especially when the person’s childhood is fraught with negative refutations from one of the figures who should love them unconditionally. Therefore, there is a reason for Sophie’s sense of Self being clouded. Sophie’s understanding and acceptance of Herself is a long process because of multiple factors, including listening to her Christian Feminist voice. Without that voice, she would have become someone similar to her stepmother, unable to find and accept love.

Sophie spends many years waiting for the moments or miracles that would lead to her happy ending. Sophie’s wait was grounded in love. Her wait was powered by love on several fronts, and in the end, Sophie was able to grasp her miracle. Sophie almost could not believe it “The man she loved, loved her too, and love was the greatest miracle of all” (Fairest 320). However, Sophie’s miracle did not fall into her lap. It was not a coincidence. Sophie had to be an active character, take control of her life and listen to the voices in her head. In summary, as with Rose and Anabel, it is in Sophie’s actions throughout her journey to a happy ending that the Christian Feminist Voice can be found. Anabel’s actions were not made fogged by the lens of patriarchal servitude or oppression. They were made with the intention of creating the best life she could have as a strong woman of faith, an active heroine.

CHAPTER SIX: THE CAPTIVE MAIDEN

“Cinderella was glad that it had not been worse. She returned home, lit her simple oil lamp, hung it in the chimney, and lay down in the ashes.”

– *Cinderella* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

“Well, there's one thing: they cannot order me to stop dreaming.”

– Cinderella from Disney's *Cinderella*

Many young girls dream of having a Cinderella moment; however, the glamour can cast a shadow over the tangible magic, the accomplishment of letting go of the past and taking back what was lost. Cinderella could have psychic died instead of watchfully waiting for the opportunity that would spur the last leg of her journey towards a happy ending, but in multiple adaptations, she does not. Adaptations highlight how Cinderella's life starts as a “Garden of Eden” or childhood with the rose-colored glasses of innocence and then becomes a mock paradise of tragedy and cruelty, and finally becomes what she has always dreamed about. Adaptations also illustrate a fight for those dreams. *The Captive Maiden*'s Gisela is an active heroine because the story is not just about her surviving adolescence ²⁹ or being the epitome of superficial goodness. The story is also about Gisela embracing opportunities for independence, transforming into a confident woman, and accepting Herself with the assistance of a Christian-Feminist voice.

Cinderella Complex is a term introduced by Collette Dowling in 1981 in her book of the same name, *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence*. Basically, the theory is that women have an unconscious desire to be taken care of by others, fear being

²⁹ Chapter title in Joan Gould's book *Spinning Straw into Gold: What fairy tales reveal about the transformations in a woman's life*.

independent, and do not have the ability to change their situation without help (usually from a man). Gisela flips this complex on its head. She does not fear independence; she uses it, keeping people, especially men, at a distance. For example, when a man bullies her in the street, she slaps him after her usual act of “spitting fire and giving [him] the evil eye” did not drive him away (Captive 25). This is an example of her feminist voice. Gisela stands on her own two feet. Many of the instances where Gisela’s feminist voice is heard are grounded in survival. Gisela, like the other characters, spent many years without much kindness. Gisela’s independence, however, is tainted by being able to “remember how it felt to be cared about” (Captive 49). Even when Valten comes into Gisela’s life and wants to fight for her, she is still independent, though now she is fighting for two instead of one. All that being said about Gisela’s Feminist voice, her Christian voice is more difficult to find. Her faith is not as evident as the first three, at least in the first hundred or so pages. There are some passing comments, but Gisela’s relationship with God is not well established.

Like the first three active heroines, Gisela’s Christian and Christian Feminist voices are found within her prayers. Despite this comparison, the strength of Gisela’s independent spirit is so powerful that it could have overpowered every other voice. Even three-quarters of the way through the story, Gisela would think about how “A person who didn’t love you could use knowledge of your love against you” (Captive 203). Knowing the predicament she was in such a thought is understandable; however, it leads to the most pertinent transformation she has to undergo. Gisela has to learn to trust in God. Gisela does pray, but her trust is still in question for much of the story. For example, she asks, “Oh, God am I destined for pain? God, what will happen to me when Ruexner gets here? I’d rather be nobody than married to him” (Captive 132). In short, Gisela has to allow God and other (good) people to get close. This transformation does

happen quickly or instantly after her questioning God, as indicated by her prayer, “I believe you will rescue me, God. But even if I don’t escape, please let Valten escape. He has a family who loves him.” If her transformation happened without struggle, the story would be as quick as the original Cinderella stories.

Transformation is suffering. The physical transformations from Maiden to Matron to Crone are painful such as going through puberty, losing one’s virginity, childbirth, and the body shutting down from old age. It could easily be argued that the emotional, spiritual, and psychological transformations associated with life stages require much greater suffering. Towards the beginning of Chapter Five of the novel *Cross Roads*, William P. Young wrote, “Transformation without work and pain, without suffering, without a sense of loss is just an illusion of true change.” Gisela’s story is about transforming from a woman so independent that her connections to others are almost non-existent to someone who has the faith she is worthy of love. Perhaps this could be why Gisela’s relationship with God is not being made clear from the get-go. The first prominent piece of evidence is over forty pages in.

Cinderella is often associated with a magical transformation scene with her fairy godmother. The transformation is physical; her rags are replaced by a gorgeous gown. The physical transformation allows her to go to the ball; however, the true purpose of transformation is as follows “The aim is to arrive before the end at what we were meant to be from the beginning. Uncertainties can come later, in adult life, after the fairy tale is over” (Gould 41).³⁰ In

³⁰ In her study, *Cinderella’s Transformation: From Patriarchal to 21st Century Expressions of Femininity*, Linda Parson touches upon these concepts. In one instance she specifically states, “Cinderella endures her servitude in silence and in solitude, and community among women is nonexistent as they compete for the prince’s attention. Women are obsessed with beauty, which establishes their worth and secures their futures through advantageous marriages. Furthermore,

other words, Gisela needs to listen to her Christian Feminist voice and purposefully take hold of the faith she had as a child and not let go, an act a passive heroine could never hope to do as it requires making difficult conscious decisions.

Gisela is an active heroine, but that does not mean she was always confident or sure of herself. She had difficulty believing in dreams and hopes, especially her own, like marrying Valten one day. Furthermore, since Gisela was unable to do that, she did and could not know Herself. As a result, she was unable to accept the good things that came in her life or leave before her stepfamily betrayed her. However, as the story progresses, Gisela gains the ability to see Herself as a beloved Child of God. One turning point was at the ball, where Gisela felt “alive,” “pretty,” and “accepted” (Captive 89). By the end of the story, Gisela felt that she was “the most blessed girl in the world” (Captive 279). Gisela was finally able to see Herself, and it was because she finally listened to her Christian-Feminist voice.

Gisela is not a one or two-dimensional character. I would not hesitate to say Valten would not have given her a second glance if she were. She does possess the same grace as the Rose or other iterations of Cinderella. Nevertheless, Gisela has the exact source of unwavering strength as Rose, Annabel, and Sophie. And it is that strength that allows Gisela to overcome her past. It was also “...the never ending task of inner transformation that [gave her] the strength to go on living,” not just surviving (Gould 83). She was able to save herself. In summary, like with the other three characters, it is in Gisela’s actions throughout her journey to a happy ending that

the good/evil woman binary is evident in the contrast between the submissive Cinderella and her more powerful stepmother and stepsisters. Cinderella is objectified, and her rescue and redemption require a fairy godmother’s magical help, fashionable gowns, and beauty rather than personal agency. Issues of social justice and a world beyond Cinderella’s servitude and the prince’s infatuation are not evident in this classic tale” (100).

the Christian Feminist Voice can be found. Gisela's actions were not made fogged by the lens of patriarchal servitude or oppression. They were made with the intention of creating the best life she could have as a strong woman of faith, an active heroine.

CONCLUSION

“You have always had the power my dear; you just had to learn it for yourself.”

- Glinda the Good Witch, *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum

“Whatever comes," she said, "cannot alter one thing. If I am a princess in rags and tatters, I can be a princess inside. It would be easy to be a princess if I were dressed in cloth of gold, but it is a great deal more of a triumph to be one all the time when no one knows it.”

- Sara Crewe, *A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett

J.R.R Tolkien, G.K. Chesterton, and Hans Christian Andersen have offered words that indicate the conception and idea of fairy tales as something more than just stories or calls to action or examples of a great life. These three men can be categorized as feminists. They grew up in a time when relating ideas barely existed, and their work is built upon the creations of women who still have not received their due credit in the public sphere. Despite their shortcomings, these three authors, with their work, also manifest an important conclusion--that fairy tales are a way God allows magic into the world and how He reminds His creation that magic exists.³¹ Yes, the magic could be one of dragons, glass slippers, and spells as seen

³¹ Examples of J.R.R Tolkien’s, G.K. Chesterton’s, and Hans Christian Andersen’s words illustrating this point:

“...the gospels contain a fairy story or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories. They contain many marvels—peculiarly artistic, beautiful, and moving: ‘mythical’ in their perfect, self-contained significance; and among the marvels is the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe ... This story begins and ends in joy. It has pre-eminently the ‘inner consistency of reality’ ... for the art of it has the supremely convincing tone of primary art, that is, of creation. To reject it leads either to sadness or to wrath.” - J.R.R Tolkien

“...What fairy tales give the child is his first clear idea of the possible defeat of bogey ... Exactly what the fairy tale does is this: it accustoms him for a series of clear pictures to the idea that these limitless terrors had a limit, that these shapeless enemies have enemies in the knights of

throughout their retellings, but what if the magic being alluded to is one of pure joy? For some, such an interpretation is sappy or sentimental, but that does not mean there is a lack of possibility. A Christian or at least a Theist interpretation of fairy tales means there is more to the story than the hero saving a damsel and definitely something more than a happily ever after. These interpretations do not inherently lead to thoughts of feminist ideology; however, when religion is the reason for the traditionally inactive female protagonist becoming active, Feminism is a key component of the story. As seen in these quotes from classics such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *A Little Princess*, even secular fairy tales and princess stories point to something “more than”. The difference between secular and religious adaptations is where the “more than” is found. With the secular, it is found within the self or only because of the self (the self being either an individual or collective). In religious adaptations of fairy tales, the self is important; however, the self in these stories is not enough. This thesis has not had the purpose of preaching on topics such as the meaning of life and personal beliefs. The project intends to direct attention to unexplored literary scholarship, but these topics are central to the stories. Towards the beginning of this endeavor, princess culture was discussed in the context of Disney; however, the movement is much more than cute sidekicks, “I want” songs and overwhelming goodness. Princess culture can be about reaching one’s fullest potential, especially when the feminist approach is added to the creation and reading of fairy tales. When necessary additional elements

God, that there is something in the universe more mystical than darkness, and stronger than strong fear.” - G.K. Chesterton

“Every person's life is a fairy tale written by God's fingers.” - Hans Christian Andersen

“Life itself is the most wonderful fairy tale.” - Hans Christian Andersen

are added to the feminist approach, and a fairy tale's potential is expanded. The "unthinkable" can be achieved when the unexpected is added. The example this thesis explored was how the Christian feminist voice proved to be one of empowerment for female protagonists in Melanie Dickerson's *Hagenheim Series*.³²

Childhood would not be complete without fairytales. To put it simply, fairytales teach us how to read, to love literature, and provide examples of the most basic life lessons. Fairy tales perform their tasks with a formula, and as a result audiences have set expectations. Those expectations seem to shift with cultures and time; however, the formula is not so easily altered, and intentions do not always meet expectations. Fairy tale adaptations possess the ability to break the formula, create new intentions, and meet unexpected expectations. To be more specific, with fairy tale adaptations, there is an opportunity for unanticipated additions to literature. The addition I have been highlighting are adaptations in which Christianity and feminist ideas come together and alter the status quo in the fairy tale formula by creating active heroines.

Fairy tale adaptations have already been proven to reflect a culture and the time period by other scholars; however, what has not been fully explored and appreciated is the religious adaptations of fairy tales. Unique heroines are found in these intersections of Young Adult and Children's literature, religious (fictional) literature, and the feminist lens. They can be healers, warriors, spies as well as mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives. The name of the roles does not matter, for it is not the entirety of their identity. In these stories, audiences see the Christian-

³² *The Laugh of the Medusa* - "Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement" (Cixous 875).

feminist voice illustrated by independence, transformation, and the concept of self. Even in secular fairy tales, spirituality can be found with similar characteristics and actions. Typically, the main difference is a lack of connection to specific principles and higher being(s).

When this project was only an inkling, I was pulled forward by the notion of happy endings. What seems to be a firm truth is that the canon literature read in academic settings is filled with unhappily ever afters, and when there are happily ever afters, they are too perfect and far away from reality. As a result, I had to ask myself, “Why is it that?”. As I thought about the question (after I decided I was not the one to take up the challenge of finding an answer), I thought about the stories I had read with happy endings. There is the obvious; children’s books, chick-lit, and the stories beginning with “once upon a time”. My tangled web of a thought process answering what it means to be a princess and what kind of ever after I should want; eventually came to the *Hagenheim Series*. It is difficult to imagine the *Hagenheim Series* gaining mainstream popularity and the heroines with the notoriety of Disney princesses; however, that does not mean they do not add to the fairy tale genre and princess culture as well as relating conversations.

Each main female protagonist was proven to be an active heroine with a Christian-Feminist voice, as illustrated by their drive for independence, consistent transformation, and embracing Themselves. Rose, Annabel, Sophia, and Gisela are relatable to audiences. They become confident women in their abilities and God’s plan. The women of Hagenheim saved themselves. They fought for what they most desired, love, both romantic and familial. They found their happy ending.

At their core, I do not believe fairytales have to be read through a heart molded by ideology, societal rules, or sinister intentions. For this reason, I can continue to find the joy I do today within each line. Perhaps the reason I wrote my thesis on fairytales is that I wanted to illustrate that fairy tales have possibilities with continuous adaptations and are transcendent. Fairy tales evolve with

the culture and time. Adaptations can illustrate ideologies, societal rules, and sinister intentions; however, more individuals can find some joy as they are told and retold. In my opinion, the main intent of Melanie Dickerson and the *Hagenheim Series*. In an interview, when asked, “If you could choose one thing for your readers to take away from your stories, what would that be?” she answered, “That God loves you and He has a good plan for your life,” (Holman). I end this endeavor with one last thought ... Happily ever after can be every day if we continue moving forward towards something more.

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APPENDIX

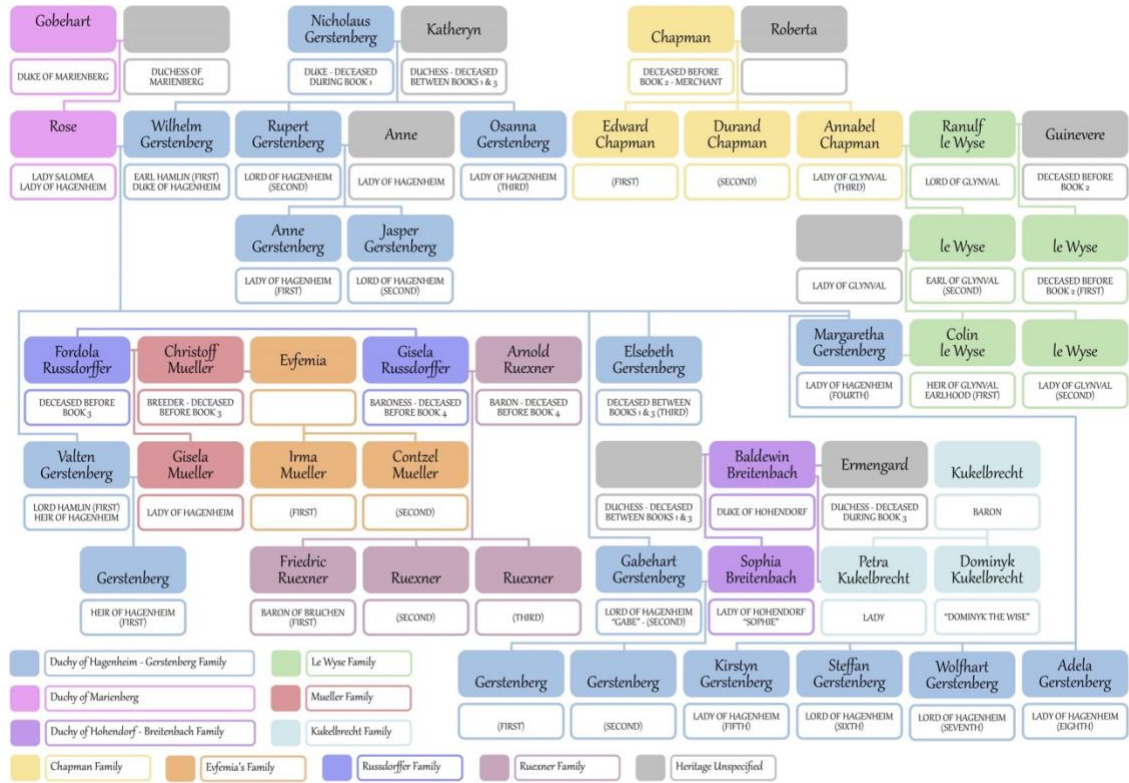


Figure One. [Hagenheim] Family tree created by Talitha Suter

Source: Melanie Dickerson Website

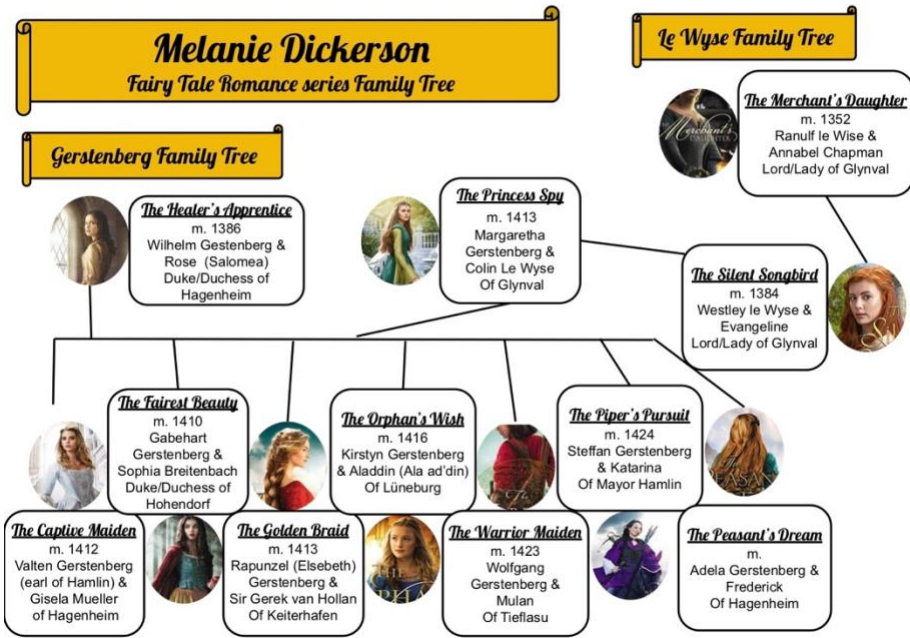


Figure Two. [Hagenheim] Family tree created by Charli Sutton

Source: Melanie Dickerson Website

VITA

Skylar Blankenship grew up in Upstate New York. After high school, she attended Hudson Valley Community College, earning a Liberal Arts after completing their honors program. She went on to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from SUNY Albany, where she also completed her honors thesis, “An Evangelical Christian Reading of *Little Women* and *The Red Tent*”. Before graduating with her undergraduate degree, she knew she wanted to attend graduate school. She chose to attend the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, to pursue a Master’s degree in English with a concentration in Literature. Her literary interests include children’s and YA literature, religious (fictional) literature, Feminist Criticism, and the intersection of all three. She is incredibly grateful for all the support from her family and friends throughout her education and career choices.