Modern Day Fairy Tales
A comparative study between Amy Plum's *Die for Me* and the Western Fairy Tale Tradition

Anna Persson Penzer
Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Beauty within, beauty without 6

Knowledge, relationship and rescue 12

Conclusion 18

Works Cited 22
Introduction

Traditionally, in the fantasy literature genre it is common to cast women in conventional female gender roles, describing them in terms of their emotions rather than their actions. Women in fantasy literature are often reduced to wives, widows, mothers or daughters, for example the widow-like Isabella Swan in New Moon who yearns for her lost love. These traditional gender roles are, according to American literature critic Lois Tyson, sexist because they are promoting the belief that women are inferior to men, which is based on the fact that men and women are biologically different: "Gender issues play a part in every aspect of human production and experience, including the production and experience of literature, whether we are consciously aware of these issues or not" (Tyson 92). Female characters have their status decided by their relationship with men and they have been seen as irrational and nurturing while male characters are rational and protective (Tyson 85). In more modern fantasy, authors frequently try to break away from these archetypical characters and in the dark fantasy genre it is common practise to have characters who question their own actions as well as the actions and behaviour of the people around them (Kavaney 214).

The fantasy genre is split into a number of subgenres, one of which is referred to as "dark fantasy" (Kavaney 214). The description of this genre is very broad, but one of the main concepts in dark fantasy is that the protagonists believe that the world they live in is mundane, but they learn otherwise through experience, either by meeting something or someone supernatural or by acquiring new knowledge and learning to live with it (Kavaney 218). This is what distinguishes a dark fantasy from a paranormal romance, as a novel set in the paranormal romance genre uses the relationship the protagonist has with
the supernatural being as a staging point for the plot and the main motive for the protagonist's actions (Kavaney 220). However, the two genres are very similar and dark fantasy is therefore also sometimes referred to as paranormal romance as it is often described as a love story between the forces of good and evil (Kaveney 214). In Amy Plum's debut novel *Die for Me*, which belongs to paranormal romance, the former is represented in the main character, Kate de Beaumont Mercier, whereas the evil is represented in the boy she loves, a supernatural being named Vincent Pierre Henri Delacroix. Much like other novels in the paranormal romance genre, such as Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* and Lauren Kate's *Fallen*, the main character is a teenage girl who falls in love with a boy who possesses some form of supernatural power.

Novels set within the paranormal romance genre tend to have main characters who appear to be very similar to those of classic Western fairy tales where the main character is a teenage girl, such as Snow-White, Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty\(^1\). These fairy tale characters are often moulded after the same form and as such tend to be quite similar in actions and behaviour. According to Tyson, these female main characters must have a pleasing appearance, that is they "must be beautiful, sweet, and young", in order to find someone who will love them (89). This is confirmed by Marija Nikolajeva, Professor of children's literature at Cambridge University, who writes that fairy tale characters are described by using standard traits and without any nuance in their behaviour. They are almost always described as beautiful (433) and this lack of individualisation make the characters easy to categorise as either good or bad as they are rather one-dimensional (442-443).

---

\(^1\) In this essay Snow-White, Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty refer to the names of the fairy tale princesses, whereas *Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs* refer to the titles of the fairy tales.
In *Die for Me* Kate moves from New York to Paris, together with her sister Georgia, soon after the death of their parents. The tragic accident has left Kate sad and depressed and she is told by her sister to go out because her lungs are "in need of Paris pollution" (Plum 9). A few days later Kate and her sister go on a late night stroll, where they end up seeing a girl jump off a bridge and people fighting with swords, but brush it off as a late night theatre practice and leave the scene (Plum 19). This is the first time that Kate, unknowingly, stumbles across something supernatural.

The next day Kate goes to an art museum and once again meets the gaze of the beautiful boy. He tells Kate that his name is Vincent Pierre Henri Delacroix and that he is a university student, but when she enquires further his answers become vague and distracting, and he turns the questions back to Kate. They decide to meet on the following Saturday, but when the date comes to an abrupt stop, Kate decides to follow Vincent and ends up seeing one of his companions jump in front of an oncoming train to save someone else (Plum 55). Kate screams, an act which forces Vincent to quickly regain his composure and take Kate with him from the scene. The death, and Vincent's cold detachment to the incident, makes Kate question what kind of person he really is and she decides that she does not want to see him anymore. Before she leaves Vincent tells her that "things aren't always as they appear" (Plum 64), but Kate decides that she does not want to know and walks away.

Weeks pass, and with them the summer holidays come to an end and Kate enrolls in the American School of Paris (Plum 70). One of her first assignments is in modern history and she is told to choose something of historic significance which took place in Paris during the twentieth century, and so Kate choses to write about riots set in 1968,
which started as a student protest at the University of Nanterre and soon led to a nationwide strike that almost brought down the French government (Lichfield). To acquire information from the time of the riots, Kate goes to the local library and ends up seeing Vincent's face, together with one of the companions, depicted as fire-fighters who lost their lives in the riots: and yet the individual in the photo is named Jaques Dupont (Plum 72). This makes Kate remember Vincent's words when she walked away, about how appearances can be deceptive, and she decides that she needs more information, so she goes over to his house. Once there, she finds Vincent lying dead on a bed and becomes hysterical, but Vincent's companions refuse to let her leave until she has calmed down so she is locked in a room in the mansion (Plum 86). Later that evening, the door is opened and Vincent's companions enter the room. Kate finds out that they refer to themselves as "revenants" (Plum 99), reanimated spirits or ghosts, and every time they die, their bodies heal and they come back to life, looking like they did at the time of their first death. Vincent also tells Kate about their evil counterparts, referred to as "numa", who live on by taking lives instead of saving them. This information makes Kate understand that Vincent is not a bad person and she wants to be with him, telling herself that she can handle the death that a relationship will bring.

However, she is wrong, as she finds out a few weeks later when one of Vincent's companions dies when trying to save a little girl in a boat accident. The incident reminds Kate all too well of her parents' death and she once again breaks up with Vincent, which leaves him heartbroken (Plum 180). Without Vincent, Kate returns to her sadness and even though Vincent's companions try to talk to her to make her come back, she stands her ground. It is first when the stern head of Vincent's household finds Kate and tells her
that he has never seen Vincent this sad that Kate starts to question if her decision to leave Vincent was really the right one, coming to the conclusion that it was the wrong decision and that she cannot be happy without him.

There is research evidence which contends that the female main characters in dark fantasy novels written for young adults are similar to traditional fairy tale characters. Australian feminist critic Fleur Diamond, for example, compares the protagonist of Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series, Isabella Swan, to Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*, and concludes that in terms of sexuality the two have similar views (48). American feminist critic Bonnie Gaarden goes one step further and compares *Twilight* to a classic fairy tale in terms of structure, characters and gender roles (206).

However, little is written on how fairy tale princesses differ from the main protagonists in dark fantasy novels. The aim of this thesis is thus to explore those differences with the help of comparisons between *Die for Me* and three classic Western fairy tales and argue that even though the characters may seem very similar at first glance, they are in fact different.

The fairy tales chosen for this thesis are the versions of *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs* which are all collected and re-written by the Brothers Grimm and which are contained in the translated version of *Grimm's Complete Fairy Tales* (first published in 2012). These versions have been chosen because they have all been cleaned up, by the Brothers Grimm, from their gruesome origin stories, which were first published in German in 1857 (Flood), and it will therefore make it easier to see general traits that the Princesses share.
The methodology which will be used in this thesis is a feminist critical approach of the main character in Amy Plum's *Die for Me* who is a 16-year old girl who tries to challenge traditional female gender roles. Feminist criticism by French feminist intellectuals Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray will be used primarily to establish these roles and secondarily as a discussion point for how they are challenged in dark fantasy novels. Irigaray's theory of how language can be used as a tool for power will also be applied, together with the concept of "the male gaze" (Tyson 102), which is how women see themselves in a patriarchal society. Tyson writes how when using feminist criticism in literature, we can examine how novels can reinforce or undermine "the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women" (83). In other words, we can learn to see the various ways in how men and women differ and how to counteract these differences.

The introductory chapter of this thesis presents an overview of the feminist theory which will be used in this essay, and the novel as well as provides the basis for the comparative fairy tale discussion. It is followed by a chapter which discusses beauty as a concept seen from both the fairy tale Princesses' and Kate's perspectives. A comparative discussion which contrasts the relationship between the fairy tale Princesses and their Princes and Kate and Vincent will then take place. A conclusion will summarise the thesis and present the main findings.

**Beauty within, beauty without**

A myriad of fairy tales exist today. Many of them are written with a specific goal in mind, perhaps to be a moral compass or a guide for the reader, whereas others are written purely to provide an escape from everyday life. Many of these fairy tales have been
rewritten countless times and the versions of *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs* used in this paper will therefore be briefly summarised in this section.

Cinderella goes through hardship after hardship, but never doubts herself. She accepts her role as a servant to her stepmother and sisters and it is first when she has finished all the tasks set for her that she does something she wants to do. Since Cinderella does not own a fancy dress, and her family is away, she decides to go and visit her mother's grave. Once there, a bird throws down a dress of gold and silver, together with a pair of slippers embroidered with silver and gold, which Cinderella puts on quickly before she walks to the ball (Grimm 76-77). When Cinderella enters the ball her family does not recognise her and they believe her to be a foreign Princess because she is described as "so beautiful in the golden dress" (Grimm 78). It is Cinderella's beauty that first piques the Prince's interest, and he therefore chooses to dance with her and no one else throughout the evening. This scenario is repeated twice and after Cinderella has run away from the ball for the third time, the Prince decides that he wants to marry her and tries to find the maiden on whose foot the golden slipper will fit (Grimm 79).

Sleeping Beauty is raised in a castle and at her birth twelve fairies are invited to bestow various virtues upon her, such as modesty and beauty. Eleven of these fairies present their gifts before a thirteenth slighted fairy arrives uninvited. This fairy curses Sleeping Beauty, and the King and Queen are told that their daughter will die at the age of fifteen, and that by pricking her finger on a spindle she will "fall down dead" (Grimm 648). The thirteenth fairy then leaves the castle. The twelfth fairy decides to do what she can to change Sleeping Beauty's fate and manages to turn the evil curse into "a deep sleep
of a hundred years” (Grimm 648). Throughout these hundred years of sleep, Sleeping Beauty does not change, she remains the same in appearance as she did the day she fell asleep.

An essential subject in *Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs* is beauty. The evil Queen of the tale is described as being very beautiful, but also very jealous and she cannot accept anyone who is considered more beautiful than she herself is. This is very obvious when the Queen speaks to her magic mirror; "Looking-glass, looking-glass, on the wall, / Who in this land is the fairest of all?” (Grimm 341). The mirror answers that the Queen is the fairest person in the land and the Queen is happy with this answer. It is not until the Queen is told that there is someone (Snow-White) who is more beautiful than she is that her jealousy reveals itself. She summons a huntsman to kill Snow-White and bring back her heart. However he tells Snow-White to flee into the forest instead, and tricks the Queen with the heart of a boar. Snow-White comes across a cabin and the dwarfs who live there take her in, allowing her to cook and clean for them (Grimm 343). Snow-White lives there happily for a while until the Queen, disguised as an old woman, knocks on the door and offers Snow-White a poisoned apple, which she accepts. When the dwarfs later find Snow-White dead they do not want to bury her because she is so beautiful and looks as if she is still alive, so they keep her in a coffin made of glass (Grimm 348). Snow-White is finally awakened from her sleep by a Prince whose servants carry her coffin over a tree-stump and stumble causing the piece of apple lodged in Snow-White's throat to come out.

A fairy tale princess would inevitably fall into the good category, discussed by Nikolaijeva, with her pleasant demeanour and lovely personality, but the female character
in *Die for Me*, Kate de Beaumont Mericer, is not so easy to place. Since the reader is meant to sympathise with and relate to the main character, and since a lot of today's dark fantasy novels are written for teenagers the main characters tend to be less perfect than their classic fairy tale counterparts (Butler 225). Where Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella and Snow-White never doubt that they are pretty, Kate often finds herself feeling unworthy of attention, due to issues with her self-esteem and thoughts that she is not pretty enough to deserve the boy she loves, Vincent (Plum 47).

Furthermore, a common plot device in the classic fairy tale is to put the female character in some form of distress which she needs a male rescuer to save her from, whether it is being the victim of an evil curse (Sleeping Beauty) or being forced to toil day and night for others' pleasure (Cinderella). It does not occur to the fairy tale character that she herself could change her own situation (Tyson 89). The Princesses allow themselves to be victims and this gives them little room or opportunity to be anything else (Tyson 90). This form of acquiescence is ironically exemplified in the film *Shrek the Third*, where the main character Fiona is locked in a dungeon together with Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Snow-White. Fiona is a modern day Princess and tells the others that they have to find a way out of the dungeon. Snow-White agrees with Fiona and tells Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty to "assume the position" (Shrek), which results in Cinderella starting to dust the floor, Sleeping Beauty falling asleep and Snow-White lying down and puckering her lips. When their actions are questioned by Fiona Sleeping Beauty answers that they are "waiting to be rescued" (Shrek) and both Cinderella and Snow-White nod in agreement.

Here, Fiona represents a modern independent female character, much like Kate
is in *Die for Me*. The fairy tale Princesses simply wait for fate to change their luck, whereas Kate refuses to let anyone else dictate her fate. This lack of action is commented on by de Beauvoir who says that women are "inessential subjects" (18) because they fail to bring about their own change. Tyson expands on this and says that men are "essential subjects ( ... with free will), while women are ... beings controlled by circumstances" (96). In the case of *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs* the rescuer is a handsome Prince and they both end up living happily ever after. This type of plot device tells the female reader that to guarantee happiness, marrying the right man is essential (Tyson 89). In *Die for Me* it is Kate herself who finds happiness, but it is enhanced by the relationship with the boy, Vincent.

Unlike the fairy tale protagonists however, Kate is full of doubt. Following the death of both her parents in a tragic accident, she moves from New York to Paris together with her older sister to live with their grandparents. Kate carries the sadness of her parents' death with her and doubts her appearance by constantly comparing her own looks with those of the people around her, especially her sister, Georgia (Plum 6). Even when Kate is told that she is beautiful, she finds it hard to believe, and assumes that the speaker is simply trying to comfort her (Plum 208). As *Die for Me* is written in the first-person narrative form, the reader follows Kate's thoughts and ideas throughout the novel. It is therefore possible to see how Kate sees the world and the people around her, something which helps the reader understand her feelings of doubt when comparing herself to other people. An example of this sense of insecurity is when Kate and Vincent meet properly for the first time and Kate wonders if Vincent has been spying on her as he seems to know more about her than he should. Vincent answers that "Two cute girls move to the
area" (Plum 37), referring to Kate and her sister, and Kate's heart soars because she feels desirable. When she realises that Vincent uses girls in the plural sense her feelings of happiness disperse and she returns to her insecure state.

In contrast, the fairy tale Princesses are not allowed to speak in their own voices, rather the reader is lead by an omniscient narrator. This means that the knowledge given regarding the Princesses is bestowed upon the reader by a third person. The magic mirror is the character which decides that Snow-White is the most beautiful of all the women in the land. Cinderella's wicked stepmother and sisters are the ones who discuss her beauty when Cinderella enters the ball thrown by the Prince, who decides that she, due to her appearance, is the only one he will dance with (Grimm 78). Beauty is also one of the virtues bestowed upon Sleeping Beauty, so from the beginning the reader is told that she is a beautiful girl. This is confirmed when the Prince finds her as Sleeping Beauty is "so beautiful that he could not turn his eyes away" (Grimm 651).

The Princesses do not look in their mirrors while contemplating their appearances, whereas Kate, on several occasions, is put in front of a mirror, by her sister, and explicitly told that she is beautiful. In one particular scene, Kate's sister Georgia stands next to her and when seeing them both in the mirror Georgia tells Kate that she is gorgeous. However, Kate's insecurity does not allow her to believe Georgia and her thought is therefore not of joy, but "My sister... My only fan" (Plum 6), thus implying that Georgia is only being nice to make Kate feel better about her situation. Kate answers Georgia's comment: "Yeah, tell that to the crowd of boys lined up outside the door" (Plum 6), which suggests that due to the fact that there are no boys waiting for her outside, she cannot be as beautiful as her sister suggests. At the end of the novel Kate is, once again,
standing in front of a mirror together with her sister, but this time Kate dresses up for the boy she loves and therefore harbours no doubts regarding her appearance because she knows that he feels the same about her (Plum 334). By looking at her reflection in the mirror and thus considering her appearance according to whether or not she has a man by her side, Kate uses "the male gaze" (Tyson 102) in the sense that she sees herself the way a man would see her, and thus turns herself into an object. Media scholar John Fiske argues that this type of subjectivity "is a social construction, not a natural one" (1270) and compares it to how a member of the working class can have the same view of society as a member of the middle-class.

In this sense, Kate and the Princesses are similar, they are all reduced "to the state of material objects" (Tyson 99), something to be admired and looked at. They place themselves on pedestals which gives them little opportunity to be anything but pretty and where the only success is whether or not they have a man by their side. However, in the fairy tales, the beauty is observed by outsiders, while in Die for Me the reader knows Kate's feelings regarding the subject. The Princesses' beauty is therefore external, whereas Kate's is internal. It is up to Kate herself to understand and come to realise that she is a beautiful girl. Nikolajeva compares this kind of internal beauty to the teenage girl's view of her own body as she goes through puberty and compares her appearance to other women around her (439), much like Kate compares herself to her sister, Georgia.

**Knowledge, relationship and rescue**

It is clear that the Princesses are being saved from their terrible fates by their Princes: Cinderella is whisked away from her wicked family, Sleeping Beauty is awoken by a kiss and Snow-White is saved when the Prince insists that he cannot live without seeing her
beautiful face. They never question their fates, it does not occur to Sleeping Beauty, for example, to simply try and take charge of her destiny and thus avoid her curse, or for Cinderella to leave the house and possibly seek some form of employment elsewhere. Show-White follows the advice the huntsman gives her and flees into the woods, she stays with the dwarfs and then takes the apple that the Queen hands her without questioning why the old woman would appear at her doorstep. The Princesses use what French feminist critic Luce Irigaray refers to as "subjugation through language" (Tyson 101), which means that women living in a patriarchal society do not speak their own thoughts but rather echoes of "previously spoken ideas" (Tyson 101) uttered by men. As the head of the household, Cinderella's stepmother takes the role of the male patriarch and orders Cinderella to cook and clean, something which Cinderella does without questioning why she should not have the same rights as the stepmother's own daughters. Authority is represented in Kate's grandparents, but they never give her orders in the same way as Cinderella's stepmother does. The grandparents allow Kate to choose her own path, and do not try to influence her when she feels sad, rather they understand her pain and leave her to deal with it by herself.

It is Kate’s sadness and emotional display which brings her to the attention of the revenant, Vincent. They live in the same neighbourhood and her actions of going outside and then rushing straight back in makes her stand out from the other people in the area (Plum 4). Her sadness also makes it hard for her to maintain friendships and Kate prefers to sit and read quietly at a café rather than being social with other people. Kate is very insecure and does not have a lot of faith in herself or her own abilities, but as she becomes more involved with Vincent she gains more confidence (Plum 232).
Nikolajeva compares this moment, when the heroine meets the one who will change her life, with Joseph Campbell’s section of “Meeting the Goddess” in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. According to Campbell, the male hero in children's fairy tales will meet a supernatural woman, a goddess, who will change the hero’s life (97). Where Campbell argues that this is the final challenge the male hero has to face, Nikolajeva puts forth the idea of the goddess as someone of the opposite sex whose presence in the protagonist’s life initiates a beginning of something new, a turning point of sorts (Campbell 99, Nikolajeva 432). In *Die for Me* the goddess is Vincent and Kate’s turning point arrives when he decides that he wants to get to know Kate better and asks her out (Plum 35). Kate ends up entangled in Vincent's life of death and rebirth and sees first-hand the secret battle between the revenants and the numa which both sides are trying to keep hidden from prying eyes.

*Die for Me* is a form of allegory as it provides a moral message of happily ever after once the main character finds her true love, much like the traditional fairy tale. Although, unlike the fairy tales, Vincent's part in Kate's life is not an obvious, instantaneous choice on his part, whereas the Princes' make their decisions as soon as they see the Princesses. Sleeping Beauty's Prince hears that there is a Princess sleeping in the tower and wants to see for himself if the rumours are true. The Prince finds that the rumours are indeed true and wakes Sleeping Beauty up with a kiss, ending the fairy tale with a wedding and a happily ever after (Grimm 651). Snow-White's Prince sees a beautiful Princess sleeping in a glass-coffin on a hill and decides that Snow-White is so beautiful that he must have her close to him for the rest of his life (Grimm 348). Cinderella's Prince sees her at the ball and decides that he wants her and that no one else
will do (Grimm 78-79). In contrast, Vincent sees Kate and becomes curious about her since she is a new face in his neighbourhood. Despite this, Vincent does not decide that he wants to spend the rest of his life together with Kate the first time he sees her. As such, the characters meet several times before it is clearly established that they like each other. Further into the relationship it is also mentioned on several occasions that Kate feels incomplete without the boy she loves and that she reverts back to her old, sad self when he is somewhere else (Plum 66, 184). This also suggests that Kate did not live her life to the fullest before she met Vincent, which appears to give the message that no matter how independent the modern female teenager is, she is still waiting for her knight in shining armour to come and rescue her from her distress.

This knight in shining armour is similar to the goddess in the sense that he initiates change in the life of the protagonist. Regarding meeting the goddess, Campbell writes that the woman is omniscient and that the adventurer is the one who finds knowledge, but also states that the woman can never be more than the protagonist (106). If we reverse this theory and apply it to Kate, we find that the female protagonist is the adventurer and that her love interest is the one who shows her a new path. Vincent has knowledge from several decades of living, but can still learn something new from the young woman and in that sense the male character does not know more than the female protagonist (Plum 214). This idea of knowledge and power is something which has been denied women when looking at the traditional gender roles in fantasy literature. In order to keep the innocence of the female character there has to be something or someone (usually a man) else who can provide her with knowledge when it is deemed necessary for her to know (Nikolajeva 435).
In contrast, the evil female characters in fairy tales often have a vast amount of knowledge and they also have the means to seek out new information by themselves. This is applicable to both the fairy tale Princesses and to Kate. Snow-White receives information from the huntsman and the dwarfs whereas the evil Queen has the means necessary to find her own information. Sleeping Beauty receives information from her parents and Cinderella from her stepmother. Kate is fortunate enough to have access to modern technology and thus has the opportunity to use a library to find information and knowledge (Plum 72-73). In Kate's case, she takes charge of her own knowledge and does not wait for someone else to provide it for her. When she speaks to Vincent she tells him that, "I want unlimited access ... To information" (Plum 123). When Kate becomes curious, she will attempt to find the information which will answer her questions, whether it is using the library for research or browsing the Internet with her own computer.

Moreover, when Kate goes to the library to find information for her school assignment in modern history, she finds what she is looking for, but she also comes across Vincent's face in one of the newspaper clips. Since the newspaper is from forty years earlier, Kate grows more curious and tries to find out more information regarding why a teenage boy she knows would have his picture in a forty year old newspaper (Plum 72). Although, there are examples of information being kept from her, for example when Kate asks Vincent about his first death and he refuses to tell her, saying that she may ask him any question she likes as long as it is not about the person he was before he became a revenant (Plum 126). Once Kate realises what kind of supernatural being Vincent really is, she tries to deal with it, but when the death comes close Kate realises that the wound
from her parents' death is still all too fresh in her heart and she decides to break up her relationship with Vincent (Plum 180). Without Vincent, Kate is described as miserable and sad, once again portraying the idea that she cannot find happiness without a man (Plum 66, 184). By extension, this is what leads to her rescue as Kate herself is the one who decides what will make her happy, rather than someone else deciding for her.

This is another important difference between Kate and the fairy tale Princesses, as Kate finds her own happiness, whereas the Princesses accept that the Princes want to marry them and do not raise any objections to the arrangement. This idea of independence and compliance is described by Tyson as "patriarchal programming" (87), a way to make women see themselves from a male perspective. According to Tyson there are predominantly two ways in which women have been portrayed over the years, good girls and bad girls (89). If a woman obeys her husband or father she is following the rules and is considered to be a good girl, but when she breaks these rules and indicates a will of her own she is referred to as a bad girl. In the same sense, a woman who breaks the rules to find more information could be considered a bad girl, whereas the girl who stays put and does as she is told will be a good girl.

Consequently, the fairy tale Princesses are all described as good and they all follow the orders of their superiors. Cinderella does not go to the ball until she has finished all her chores ordered by her stepmother, Sleeping Beauty does not leave the castle, and Snow-White stays in the cabin because the dwarfs tell her to. Therefore, in a traditional fairy tale, Kate would be a bad girl as she refuses to accept that some information is out of her grasp and she constantly questions that which she does not understand. However, in dark fantasy/paranormal romance this is a desired trait for a
heroine and it is considered acceptable for Kate to be curious and wanting to learn more. She is therefore not a bad girl, but rather a good girl in the sense that her actions seek self improvement and that is, broadly speaking, a desirable trait in teenage fiction (Nikolajeva 440).

It is Kate's sadness which initially catches the attention of Vincent, in this she is different from the fairy tale Princesses where physical beauty is what draws the attention of the Princes. Vincent wants to protect Kate and see her smile, but he is also curious about what could cause her such sadness and pain (Plum 64). In *Die for Me* Kate is also allowed to serve as a rescuer for Vincent, much in the same way he rescues her. Kate decides that she cannot handle Vincent's life and immortality so she ends her relationship with him. The decision leaves Vincent heartbroken and the head of his clan finds Kate in order to tell her that "you must come back. Vincent needs you. He is inconsolable" (Plum 214). Through this Kate is told that she is the only one who will be able to comfort Vincent, and in a sense, the only one who can save him. This is a major difference compared to the fairy tales, as the Princes' lives are described as perfect even without the Princesses. It is therefore only the Princesses who are saved and the Princes can therefore be described as classic Western fairy tale Princes who arrive in the nick of time to save the damsel in distress and whisk her away into the sunset on his white steed.

**Conclusion**

A fairy tale presents ideal female characters who tend to be one-dimensional and either virtuous and good, or evil and destructive. As ideals, they present desired traits for characters, and by extension people, to possess. This thesis has made three major comparisons between fairy tale Princesses and a modern heroine. The first distinction is
that the fairy tale Princesses follow the orders of their superiors and the men around them, whereas Kate constantly questions why she should do so. Even though the fairy tales are timeless, the Princesses are behaving according to what would be considered appropriate for their time. In comparison, Kate can be compared to a modern teenage girl and as such, she is allowed to experience a range of emotions which the fairy tale Princesses are denied. If Kate would have been the female protagonist in a Western fairy tale and possess the traits which are considered acceptable for a teenage girl to have, such as a curiosity for the unknown and a lust for knowledge (Nikolajeva 440), it is possible that she would have been an evil character. Kate is capable of gathering her own information and consider her own actions, much like the evil characters in the fairy tales. If she finds that something is being kept from her, Kate tries to understand why and asks questions to ascertain information. In contrast, if the fairy tale Princesses would be the main characters in a modern paranormal romance story they could be considered to be weak characters without personalities and their actions would serve as examples of how not to behave and almost become comical in their inability to act on their own, as exemplified with Princess Fiona's reaction to the Princesses in Shrek.

The second difference is in terms of beauty and the Princesses are all described by an omniscient narrator as very beautiful; in Snow-White's case so much so that she has to die for her beauty. Kate speaks with her own voice and even though she might consider herself to be pretty, she constantly questions her own opinion on her appearance and as such, the opinions of others around her. Kate uses Irigaray's concept of "the male gaze" (Tyson 102) and reduces herself to an object. It is first when she realises her feelings for Vincent, and knows that he feels the same way, that Kate truly understands her own
appearance and can consider herself beautiful. Much like the Princesses, Kate sees herself through a patriarchal society where only true success and beauty can come first when she has a man by her side, but unlike the Princesses Kate is allowed to grow through the story and come to terms with herself and her feelings, whereas the Princesses remain static throughout the texts.

The third and final difference is regarding how the Princesses and Kate are rescued from their distress, because, as Tyson writes, there has to be some form of distress (89). The rescue, and in turn the change of the situation, is discussed in this thesis with the help of Campbell and Nikolajeva who say that the appearance of someone of the opposite sex will bring forth a change in the protagonist's life (Campbell 99, Nikolajeva 432). A Prince is the one who finally rescues the Princess in all three fairy tales, but in Die for Me the characters rescue each other. Vincent is able to break through the wall of sadness that Kate has created for herself after the death of her parents, while Kate is able to show Vincent something new and make him feel a love so strong that it transcends everything. Kate can therefore be said to rescue Vincent by reaching out to him and Vincent in turn rescues Kate from herself. Their relationship is the driving force in Die for Me and this is a difference between Kate and the fairy tale Princesses, since it can be assumed that the Princesses' lives would have stayed the same even if the Princes had not arrived when they did, because ultimately, the Princesses never initiate change and they can therefore be considered "inessential subjects" (de Beauvoir 18). This is another significant difference between Kate and the fairy tale Princesses, the initiation of change and the unwillingness to accept that some things simply are the way they are.

The conclusion of this thesis is therefore that Kate de Beaumont Mercier is not as
similar to the fairy tale Princesses as it may seem. In fact, she is more similar to the wicked characters in fairy tales than to the heroines, and her Prince is flawed and allowed to show emotions, such as sadness when Kate decides to leave him. Kate's Prince, Vincent Pierre Henri Delacroix, does not whisk her away in the same way the fairy tale Princes do, expecting the Princesses to agree without question, but rather Kate walks away with him hand in hand as a mutual decision to continue their lives together.
Works Cited


*Shrek the Third.* Dir. Chris Miller. DreamWorks 2007. DVD.