

## COVID-19— THE CONTEMPORARY POISONED APPLE: A REFLECTION ON CONTEMPORARY COLLECTIVENESS THROUGH THE SYMBOLIC MEANINGS IN *SNOW WHITE*

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the symbolic meanings of images presented in *Snow White* from the perspective of psychologist Carl Jung's analytical psychology. The context of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic was used to reveal the implications of collective unconscious for contemporary humankind. The paper first introduces the fundamental concepts of the psychological analysis of fairy tales and then discusses the qualities and four development stages corresponding to *yin* energy, anima, and *yang* energy, animus. The five *yin* archetypes—girl, maiden, mother, grandmother, and goddess—and five *yang* archetypes—boy, young man, father, grandfather, and god—are subsequently introduced. The symbolic meanings of 13 images presented in *Snow White*—biological mother of Snow White, king, stepmother, colors (red, white, and black), magic mirror, huntsman, forest, cottage, seven dwarfs, secret chamber, apple, transparent coffin, and marriage to the prince—are then discussed. According to the results, the connections between COVID-19 and *Snow White* reveal the possibility of individuals balancing and integrating their group identity and inner self. From the perspective of inner gender energy, COVID-19 is collectively generated by every individual, with localized outbreaks potentially reflecting the devouring of our inner self by anima or animus. Finally, through adopting the poisoned apple as a metaphor for COVID-19, the analysis highlighted how COVID-19 may confer a sense of peace on contemporary humankind, much like Snow White when lay in her coffin, encouraging people to integrate their gender energy, balance their inner selves, and reflect on the collective actions of humankind.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, analytical psychology, *Snow White*, fairy tale, symbolic meaning.

### INTRODUCTION

With coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) spreading around the world, Taiwan announced its nationwide Level 3 epidemic alert in May 2021. The contributions of first-line workers were self-evident, and much of the general Taiwanese population experienced great psychological pressure at this difficult time. Various images and articles that can assist people in adapting emotionally to the difficult situation have been offered on the Internet and in the media to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on people's health. The COVID-19 pandemic is not just a threat to people's physical well-being but also to their psychological and spiritual well-being. Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist Carl Jung's analytical psychology approach holds that people's inner self comprises both a personal unconscious and collective unconscious and that individuals and their collective settings may coincide with, contradict, and mutually influence each other. From the perspective of analytical psychology, the outbreak of COVID-19 was neither an accident nor entirely attributable to external factors. Throughout history, collective,

society-wide illnesses caused by plague were not uncommon. However, these diseases, viruses, and even pandemics offer individuals a chance to reflect on the external and internal implications of these collective events. Individuals may even become aware of their contributing role in such external events, their positions in a group, and the spiritual influence they have on that group. The present study analyzed the plots, characters, and images in the fairy tale *Snow White*, which Jung considered critical, and interpreted the symbolic meanings of these images. Through the analysis and interpretation, this study revealed the potential relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and the inner self of each individual, which may prompt readers to examine the life lessons learned through the pandemic through reading familiar fairy tales and thus to understand the importance of self-care inclusive of the physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of health.

### **Fairy Tales and Projections of Various Archetypal Themes**

Fairy tales are narrative texts often introduced to individuals during their childhood. Bettelheim [1] indicated that the same fairy tales often have numerous versions, because the content is altered when spread widely to different people; the versions may contain different characters, events, or objects, but the core concept remains unchanged. Fairy tales, despite having simple plots, reflect complex psychological characteristics; therefore, psychologists have developed an approach to analyzing fairy tales [7]. Jung referred to the contents of the collective unconscious as archetypes, which are thought patterns passed down through the generations. He believed that conscious personalities die, but unconscious archetypes live on [20]. The collective unconscious contains countless archetypes, which, although abstract, can be identified through reification. Archetypes are reproduced continually throughout history and as essential images of myths and a psychological aggregate of countless similar experiences [6, 17]. The following paragraphs focus on two contrasexual concepts, anima and animus; other archetypes include the Ego, Self, Persona, Shadow, Great Goddess, King, Queen, Warrior, Princess, Magician, Lover, Eternal Boy, and Sage [12]. Each archetype represents a life phenomenon. Without a sufficiently strong mental structure to infuse archetypal energy with an appropriate understanding and judgement of the inner self, a strong archetype can sometimes generate a self-lacking irrational chaos and mania within an individual [10]. No archetype is superior to another, and each archetype is dualistic. How an archetype influences an individual is dependent on the individual's awareness of the influence the archetype has on their inner self. When this influence is recognized and the individual is mindful of the archetype, the individual can capitalize on the positive power of the archetype; the possibility of the archetype's negative power growing and becoming unmanageable, which leads to self-confusion, can also be minimized.

Marie-Louise von Franz, a disciple of Jung, played a critical role in the promotion of fairy tale analysis. Following Jung, von Franz analyzed the concept of archetypes through fairy tales, providing more perspicuous explanations for the concepts of analytical psychology and enabling individuals to delve deeper into the self through fairy tales to explore solutions to their life challenges [16]. According to von Franz, all characters in a fairy tale—men or women, hero or villain—are considered different archetypes of an individual. Depending on the inner complexes or life experiences of an individual, images created in fairy tales may have different symbolic meanings specific to the individual. As such, the school of analytical psychology differs from the school of psychoanalysis in several respects. Sigmund Freud regarded sex as the primal driver of

human nature, and thus most of his arguments were based on sex. Jung included more diverse perspectives in image interpretation, including the inheritance of existing meanings in a collective sense and the life experiences unique to each individual. The fairy tale *Snow White* was selected for this study because of its familiarity to most people, and because the image of the “poisoned apple” marks a critical turning point in the plot. The poisoned apple, like COVID-19, is detrimental to individuals. However, Snow White’s eating of the apple, from the perspective of analytical psychology, is an inevitable step in the development of her inner self. Because Snow White is a woman, the following discussion focuses on how female individuals encounter and conflict with various inherent archetypes and on the connections of people’s relationship with COVID-19. The aim of this study was to encourage readers to engage in fairy tale analysis and to thus bridge the distance between their self and their psyche.

### **Yin and Yang Energies**

According to Jung, anima and animus denote men’s inherent *yin* archetype and women’s inherent *yang* archetype, respectively; individuals’ romantic partners are usually the projections of these archetypes [20]. However, contemporary scholars of analytical psychology have predominantly argued that every individual, regardless of sex, has one archetype of their own sex and one archetype of the opposite sex, and that in the process of learning about their own character, individuals can accept and incorporate the contrasexual energy within themselves [21]. This argument overturns the traditional binary gender theory, incorporates the idea of diversity, and is consistent with how gender theories have developed, that is, rejecting the assumption that everyone is heterosexual. Before discussing concepts of anima and animus, the qualities of *yin* and *yang* energies must be established. On the surface, these energies simply reflect gender stereotypes; however, the positive and negative aspects of these energies are present in everyone. Each individual, man or woman, must acknowledge that they are not divorced from any of the qualities, and these concepts must not be reduced to thinking based on binary biological sex.

### **Anima**

Anima is the *yin* archetype and contains various positive and negative qualities, including land, nourishment, intuition, experience, devouring, cunning, jealousy, reliance, darkness, stillness, emotionality, negativity, and passivity[2,10]. Jung maintained that complete anima development requires four stages, and, according to the paradigm of sex, personified the four stages according to four female figures, namely Eve, Helen, Mary, and Sophia. Sharp [4] detailed the four stages as follows:

Eve in the first stage of anima development is associated with the image of the mother and is characterized as a loyal woman who provides nourishment, security, and love. An individual’s anima development at this stage may be prone to control by women, impotence, or lack of sexual desire.

Helen in the second stage of anima development is a collective sexual image. Individuals obsessed with the Helen anima are unfaithful romantic partners and constantly engage in adventurous sex. That no actual person fits all projections of the Helen anima means that their romantic relationships are unstable and short-lived.

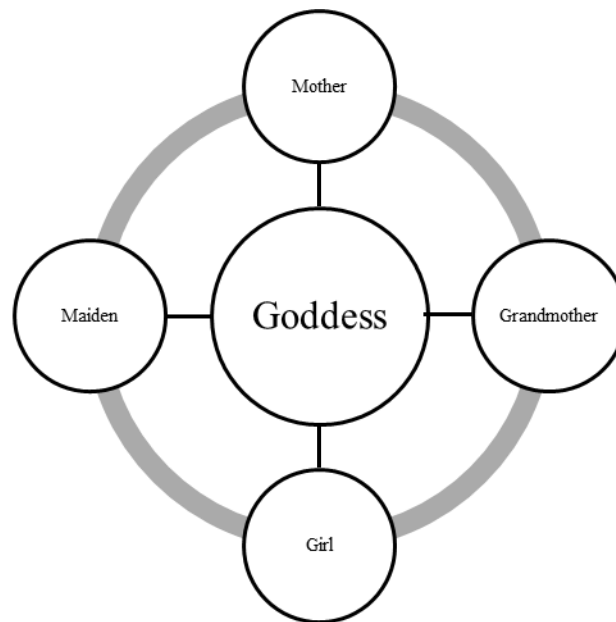
Mary in the third stage is manifested as religious sentiment and true friendships. At this stage, individuals are able to accept the qualities of others, to look beyond their own needs, to distinguish between love and desire, and to form long-term romantic relationships.

Sophia in the fourth stage provides guidance for individuals in their lives and connects the unconscious with the conscious in the pursuit of their life purpose. Sophia also corresponds with the Sage archetype and emphasizes an individual's spirituality.

Figure 1.

### Archetypes of *yin* energy.

Source: Developed by the author.



The author named the archetypes after roles that a woman typically plays throughout her life to highlight the qualities or challenges created by the inherent *yin* energy, as illustrated in Figure 1. The different qualities of each archetype are briefly described as follows:

- (1) Girl: desire for love and protection and fear of not being able to protect herself.
- (2) Maiden: also known as the Princess archetype; innocence, kindness, longing for positive things, imagination, creativity, childishness, and emotionality.
- (3) Mother: also known as the Queen archetype; maternal instinct, inclusivity, care for others, fertile and constructive creativity, controlling tendency, and jealousy.
- (4) Grandmother: also known as the Sage archetype; compared with a grandfather, in subjective interpersonal relationships a grandmother is steady, insightful, wise, affable, stubborn, and reluctant to change.
- (5) Goddess: highest spiritual level of *yin* energy; an individual at this level has fully integrated and implemented the four *yin* archetypes.

In analytical psychology, Jung asserted that the number “4” symbolizes completeness. In addition to the aforementioned four stages of anima development, Chung[20] noted that the

number “4” corresponds to the four cardinal directions of north, east, south, and west, which are the basic spatial divisions of a mandala. Accordingly, the spiritual-level goddess is reached if the inner anima successfully integrates the girl, maiden, mother, and grandmother archetypes into one self. For example, a maiden Snow White washing clothes, cooking, and cleaning the house for the dwarfs may be criticized at the gender level as representing the traditional expectation that women perform all of the house chores. Viewed from an archetype perspective, the maiden Snow White has begun to exhibit some qualities of the mother archetype, marking her proceeding to the next stage of anima development. Accordingly, anima is present not only in men but also in women.

## **Animus**

Animus, a *yang* archetype, features various positive and negative qualities including sky, order, logic, conscious, independence, rationality, development, control, positiveness, action, and exceptionality[2,10]. Like anima, animus has four stages of development. Sharp [4] detailed the features of each stage.

In the first stage, animus is the incarnation of physical strength and physical fitness, which serve to satisfy individuals’ physical needs and protect offspring.

The second stage of animus development centers on ambition and the capacity to execute plans, supporting individuals’ pursuit of independence and a career. When projecting this stage of animus onto their romantic partner, an individual may be easily attracted to those who exhibit family-related or homemaker traits. The main function of their partner is to provide shelter and support, and the partner may be expected to sacrifice their own interests in support of the individual’s ambition.

At the third stage, animus assumes the role of the inner authority who commands individuals to be respectful toward knowledge and understanding. At this stage, individuals’ relationships with their partners are constructed on the foundation that they are independent of each other.

Finally, similar to the fourth stage of anima, animus becomes the incarnation of spiritual meaning and supports individuals in connecting their conscious and unconscious (anima connects inner unconscious with the outer part of an individual, whereas animus connects the outer part with the inner unconscious), functioning as a guide for the individuals. The author named the archetypes after roles a man typically plays throughout his life to indicate the qualities or challenges associated with masculine energy, as presented in Figure 2. The qualities of each archetype are briefly introduced as follows:

- (1) Boy: desire for attention, strong curiosity, and fear of being abandoned and threatened.
- (2) Young man: also known as the Warrior archetype; hot-bloodedness, strong sense of justice, tendency to challenge conservative systems, activeness, recklessness, and thoughtlessness.
- (3) Father: also known as the King archetype; control over rules, foresight, clear boundaries, ability to weigh situations, toughness, loneliness, competitiveness, and authority.

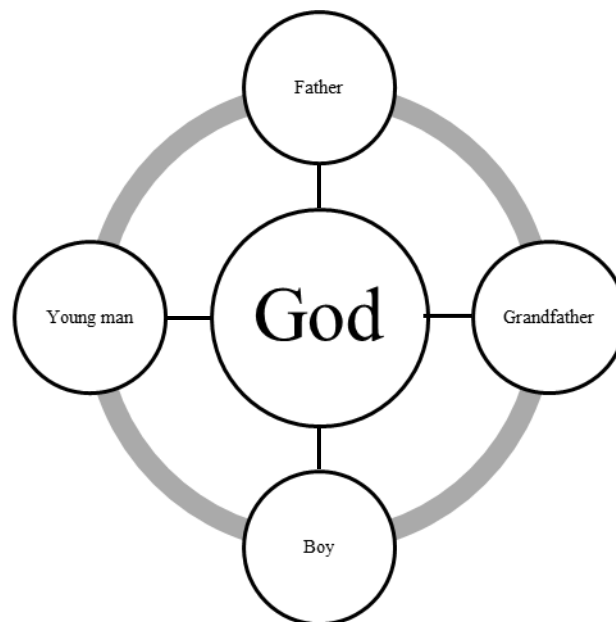
(4) Grandfather: also known as the Sage archetype; compared with a grandmother, a grandfather is steady in making objective judgements, insightful, wise, affable, stubborn, and reluctant to change.

(5) God: highest spiritual level of *yang* energy; an individual at this level has fully integrated and implemented the four *yang* archetypes.

Figure 2.

### Archetypes of *yang* energy

Source: Developed by the author.



In contrast to anima, the learning of *yang* energy equips individuals with measured judgement of objects and situations in the external and phenomenal realms. With the need to develop her inner animus as a woman, Snow White meets seven male dwarfs in the forest, encounters the prince, and—after successfully integrating her *yang* energy—saves the captive king from her stepmother. In the narrative, the king should have been a role model from which Snow White learns about *yang* energy. However, the king's influence on Snow White is almost imperceptible in the most familiar version of the tale, and the king is later imprisoned by Snow White's stepmother. Therefore, Snow White has no one to assist her in developing her *yang* energy as a child. Only when she encounters challenges and discontinues her conscious development does she enter her unconscious (i.e., the forest), where she generates her inner *yang* energy, grows through interacting with the dwarfs, who symbolize immaturity, and finally encounters the prince, who reflects the maturity she has attained in her anima development. This is a typical example of how an individual develops their inner *yang* energy.

In summary, if an individual fails to perceive the possible influences of archetypes, whether anima or animus, on them, their current romantic partner is likely a mere projection of the corresponding stage of their archetype development, or they might have become a projection of

their partner. The parties in such a relationship are concurrently each other's victimizer and victim. From the perspective of the author's five-archetype model, each stage of anima or animus contains wisdom and function that enables an individual to retrieve their conscious; the individual's ability to achieve this depends on their opportunities or motivation to practice being mindful of their archetype in the five-archetype model. The *yin* and *yang* energies at different stages can have positive or negative contributions to individual development. The following describes the symbolic meanings of the images of different archetypes based on the characters, events, and objects in *Snow White*.

## IMAGES AND THEIR SYMBOLIC MEANINGS IN SNOW WHITE

### Family Energy: Biological Mother, King, and Stepmother

The princess Snow White loses her biological mother at the beginning of the tale and is thus destined to miss the positive *yin* energy and care from and protection of her mother. Therefore, the princess is mostly in a passive position throughout the tale, being abandoned, saved, lied to, and poisoned, and lacking skills to protect herself. Her witch stepmother symbolizes negative *yin* energy; she is sneaky, cunning, and jealous and eagers to destroy the princess. The king father is under the stepmother's control and fails to demonstrate the *yang* qualities of toughness and boundaries, similar to how the King of Hearts is subordinate to the power of the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*. Wu and Huang[11] maintained that the king or father and queen or mother of a country or family represent the inner *yang* and *yin* energies, respectively, of an individual. Snow White therefore endures a difficult childhood and upbringing and has not been provided with any positive principles to guide her.

### Colors: Red, White, and Black

White symbolizes innocence and purity. Because she is a kind and innocent woman, Snow White is offered the guidance of the animals and protection of the dwarfs after she enters the forest. However, this suggests that she lacks the wisdom for self-protection and survival almost to the point of foolishness, which leads to her being tricked into eating the poisoned apple by her stepmother.

Red symbolizes passion and vitality (e.g., as symbolized by blood). Snow White spends much of her early life living in a castle and is curious about the outside world. In the negative sense, red implies injury and destruction. The red poisoned apple passes her red lips, causing her to fall into a curse-induced "sleeping death."

Black, an achromatic color with the lowest level of lightness, confers a compelling sense of mystery and calmness, although these qualities are not evident in Snow White. In Jung's language, these missing qualities in the princess' Persona are instead present in her Shadow, contributing to her desire and pursuit for mystery and calmness. She finds a mysterious house in the forest and quickly falls sound asleep within; with this development, the tale integrates these missing qualities into the inner self of the princess, and the second half of the story thereafter unfolds. The meanings of colors and how they connect different parts of the tale is discussed in the analysis of the image of the apple.

## Magic Mirror

Mirrors reflect the self and are symbols of reflecting on the self and facing the truth about one's self. The "truth" quality is emphasized in the tale. From the stepmother's perspective, the magic mirror reveals the inner truth that she is not "the fairest of them all." This truth challenges her Persona's desire to be recognized, praised, and celebrated. The inner self never lies. Regardless of how physically beautiful a person may be, their inner self knows that they can never be the most superlative person in the world. Nevertheless, many people, like the stepmother, refuse to accept the truth presented by the self and overly identify with their Persona's pursuit of fame and fortune, which ultimately leads them down the incorrect path. According to Tang [13], the magic mirror symbolizes the uncertainty an individual faces in the development of their self-identity; experiencing such uncertainty, an individual requires others' affirmation to form their self-identity. Tang also explained how women are restricted by the norms of "beauty" and the expectations of others and society. This idea is later elaborated in the context of COVID-19.

## Huntsman

Unlike the captive king, the huntsman, who is commanded to kill the princess but cannot bear to do so, symbolizes positive *yang* energy and masculine qualities that are the opposite of the negative energy qualities of the king; the princess has never experienced these positive masculine qualities before. In her encounter with the huntsman, the princess responds to life-threatening people, events, and objects by fleeing. The huntsman begs the princess to flee as soon as possible; to avoid people, events, and objects of potential harm to her; and to learn to protect herself. Fleeing is the first response of most animals to threats to their survival. Compared with fighting, fleeing is a more favorable choice to avoid physical injury. The huntsman's positive paternal principles teach the princess to safeguard her own life and stop obeying others blindly, thereby encouraging her to balance the weak and foolish qualities of her inner self. Furthermore, the huntsman, representing a *yang* energy unfamiliar to the princess, prompts her to enter her unconscious (the forest) and embark on the "hero's journey."

## Forest and Cottage

In fairy tales and myths, forests and the sea often symbolize individuals' vast unconscious. Progressing from the conscious toward the unknown unconscious is a critical stage in the transformative process toward individuation. Although unfamiliarity with the unconscious can generate feelings of fear and discomfort in individuals, the unconscious is usually where the required qualities or transformative key is hidden and from where it must be retrieved. Even though Snow White enters the forest with the huntsman because of her stepmother's deceitful plan, from the perspective of analytical psychology, the princess' inner Shadow prompts her to do so. Directing the conscious toward dimensions that are often ignored and suppressed is a technique used by the Shadow to integrate the conscious and unconscious aspects of the inner self. This idea is explored further in the context of COVID-19 later in the study. Why do houses, which are manmade structures and thus belong to the conscious mind, appear in the unconscious? Materials that are understandable to the conscious mind often appear in the unconscious (e.g., dreams) to assist individuals in becoming familiar with unconscious information. The cottage may serve the same functions in the fairy tale, being a manmade



structure with which the princess—an unsophisticated young woman who grew up isolated in a castle—is familiar while being in unfamiliar surroundings and thus facilitates her learning about the forest (unconscious). The conscious and unconscious of the inner self ideally become integrated rather than act against each another. The parts of the tale where the princess finds the cottage in the forest and learns about the forest through this cottage (and through living with the dwarfs) reflect the process of the integration of her conscious and unconscious minds.

### Seven Male Dwarfs

The number “7” in the *Bible* is the number of days in which God created the world, symbolizing the cycle of change and carrying the sacred meaning of completion. In analytical psychology, pursuing the completeness and sacredness of *svabhāva* (i.e., own-being) is considered by Jung to be the ultimate goal of individuation. Toward the end of the tale, the seven dwarfs surround the princess’ coffin for protection, forming a complete circle with the princess at the center, which implies that the princess has undergone a complete cycle (which is why she is in a death-like state). The princess is then revived through her encounter with the prince and enters the next cycle.

The family in which the princess is raised lacks positive *yin* energy, exhibits negative *yin* energy, and contains *yang* energy that cannot function (the king is imprisoned by the stepmother). With the huntsman being the only, and brief, source of *yang* energy she encounters, the princess has little possibility to integrate her inner *yang* energy. The seven male dwarfs are the stepping stones that assist the princess in developing her inner *yang* energy in the course of her individuation. However, the power of these dwarfs is inadequate in that they fail to protect the princess, but their *yang* energy sufficiently supports the princess’ growth, enabling her to match the *yang* energy she later encounters in the prince.

The underdeveloped dwarfs can be seen as a symbol of underdeveloped *yang* energy. However, as discussed in the preceding paragraph, the princess transforms from a completely dependent individual into a mature individual who understands that she must provide labor in exchange for resources that satisfy her basic needs (eating and housing). These are all challenges necessary to transform into an independent person.

### Secret Chamber

The dark secret chamber is where the stepmother makes the poisoned apple using black magic and where the king is held captive. The secret chamber is thus a symbol of the place where the inner Shadow is hidden. Unlike the vast conscious and unconscious realms, the Shadow is confined to this small and dark secret chamber. When the princess completely integrates her *yang* and *yin* energies to become a powerful individual toward the end of the tale, she returns to the castle, enters the secret chamber, and rescues the king; when the daylight shines into the chamber and she walks in, the fort of the Shadow is obliterated. Notably, the stepmother does not die but instead flees, indicating that the Shadow is never truly gone and may return whenever an individual loses their inner balance.

## Apple

The apple has a unique symbolic meaning in Western culture. The forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden is commonly believed to be an apple and symbolizes desire and sex but also wisdom. Initially, Snow White is foolish and ignorant and is easily tricked into eating the poisoned apple by her stepmother. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit and are later banished from the Garden by God. Through this action, they create original sin but gain wisdom. The princess eats the poisoned apple out of foolishness and then falls into the sleeping death, similar to being “banished” from the living realm. Although she does not die, this death-like experience is necessary for her to enter her unconscious and be reborn as a wiser individual.

The red peel, white pulp, and black seeds correspond to the red lips, white skin, and black hair of Snow White. All of these symbols have positive and negative sides to their meaning, which can be explained through comparing the apple and the princess. The princess’ red lips and the red peel have the first contact (when she puts the apple in her mouth), and the pulp is swallowed into her body (white pulp and white skin); the black seeds at the core of the apple symbolize reproductive seed and rebirth of the self. The color black symbolizes calmness, which the princess pursues; hair, with its growth and proximity to the brain, symbolizes wisdom, and wisdom usually precedes calmness. The princess, as the maiden archetype, is the opposite of the grandmother archetype, which has the traits of wisdom and calmness.

## Transparent Coffin

The princess falls into the sleeping death after eating the poisoned apple. This, in the words of psychology, represents an individual or collective life being suspended in stillness but not devoured by the Great Goddess (land). This is because the immature *yang* energy (the male dwarves) of the princess is working to counteract the out-of-control *yin* energy at play and to develop into more mature *yang* energy for complete energy integration of the princess. The transparent coffin implies that the princess acknowledges her vulnerability. This stands in contrast to the stepmother’s act of breaking the magic mirror, which symbolizes truth, in that the princess acknowledges her weaknesses and awaits the coming of a new power, whereas the stepmother overly identifies with one side of her energy and refuses to acknowledge the other side. Because the coffin is transparent, the prince is able to see the woman of his dreams and decides to take her out of the forest and back to the castle. Transparency also represents the opportunity to face something; the princess is able to face her death-like experience without fear. The words written in gold on the coffin symbolize *yang* qualities. Most of the tale describes how the princess activates different levels of her *yang* energy.

## Marriage to the Prince

The prince symbolizes well-developed *yang* energy. The princess practices developing *yang* energy in the forest and finally proceeds to the next stage of her animus development in her encounter with the prince. The prince kisses the princess, which marks the complete integration of the princess’ *yang* and *yin* energies as well as her escape from stillness, rebirth, and transformation into a more powerful self. In 1936, Jung referred to the integration of anima and

animus as “syzygy.” He argued that marriage is the convergence and integration of inner *yin* and *yang* energies [3,5] and reflects a deeper commitment than implied when the couple first met. This sacred agreement with deeper commitment enhances an individual’s belief in their power to protect and develop themselves, because they can now utilize both their *yang* and *yin* qualities. Snow White’s marriage to the prince means that the kingdom is now ruled over by the couple, with the old *yang* energy (king) disappearing with the role of the king and the *yin* energy (stepmother) departing in the form of the Shadow. The kingdom and forest reflect the conscious and unconscious, respectively. The couple integrate what they have learned in the unconscious with their conscious. Accordingly, regardless of how much an individual longs to understand their unconscious self, they must ultimately transfer their unconscious understanding back to their conscious mind to bridge their self with the outside world and to proceed to the next chapter of their lives rather than indulging in their own sea or forest, which is viewed as unfavorable in analytical psychology.

### **COVID-19 AND SNOW WHITE** **Balancing And Integrating The Self And The Group**

How does the COVID-19 pandemic relate to *Snow White*? In 2020, large-scale COVID-19 outbreaks occurred in cities across various countries. In Taiwan, local infections also began in large cities such as New Taipei City and Taipei City. A city symbolizes mainstream values; various values of beauty, such as fashion and brand cultures, begin in cities and spread outward to other areas. When the stepmother asks the magic mirror the famous question, “Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?”, she realizes that Snow White is her greatest obstacle to being the most beautiful person in the world. This act of comparison and jealousy originates from her close adherence to the mainstream value of beauty, which leads to her use of the poisoned apple. COVID-19, with its outbreaks in cities across the world, is an image of negative *yin* energy, and behind the seemingly out-of-control energy, the possibility of recovering balance is implied. The pandemic and the resultant local infections have forced businesses to close temporarily and reduced people’s contact with mainstream cultures, which promoted people to return to a relatively simple life; staying at home, they have more time to reflect on their inner self.

Although pursuing values consistent with mainstream cultures is not incorrect, the author encourages readers to review their actions to determine if they resulted from unconsciously and blindly following mainstream trends. Struggling between society’s collectivist values and their true selves, individuals may wonder whether the self has the power to strike a balance between them. In the face of her stepmother’s bid to kill her, which symbolizes mainstream values, the princess enters the forest, which symbolizes the unconscious, to meet the dwarfs and prince, through which she develops *yang* energy that counteracts and concurrently integrates with her *yin* energy. She then returns to the castle, which symbolizes the conscious, triumphs in her struggle against the out-of-control negative energy and recovers her own balance. She is no longer a dependent, unsophisticated maiden tethered to mainstream life in the castle.

## COVID-19 As Created By All Individuals

From the perspective of inner gender energy, the world has been dominated and controlled by *yang* energy for too long. From the witch hunts in the Middle Ages, to Scientific Revolution in the 16th and 17th centuries and the emphasis on specifications, logic, and uniformity in the Industrial Revolution, the establishment of collectivist orders in today's cultures is attributable to boundaries created on the basis of *yang* energy. Currently, *yin* energy must grow and be revisited. Why do so many fairy tales feature female protagonists? Fairy tales have often been criticized by feminists for objectifying or weakening women, with princesses simply waiting to be rescued by princes [8,9,15]. However, a deeper analysis of fairy tales reveals that those with female protagonists contain imagery of newness, nourishment, and inevitability, because all encounters in the plots contribute to protagonists' incorporation of the other side of themselves or to the recognition of the archetypes that they have long ignored, to form a new, more powerful self.

Snow White is blessed by her biological mother with fair skin, black hair, and red lips. Her beautiful appearance means that she must endure the jealousy of and mocking by others. The jealous stepmother in the tale manifests the negativity of the general "group." In real life, individuals who have completed the socialization process hide their darkness and jealousy from others. The stepmother is the aggregate of the projections of society as a whole, attempting to kill the kind and beautiful yet ignorant young princess by using the poisoned apple. The princess completes her journey only when she faces the problems that she had not acknowledged, encounters her opposite manifestation (the jealous stepmother), and identifies the *yang* qualities that she had long ignored.

What the poisoned apple is to the princess is a metaphor for what COVID-19 is to humans. Humans are blessed by Mother Nature with natural resources and the intelligence to develop a civilized society and medical technologies that extend the human lifespan. These are evidence of how humankind's collective conscious has developed and how the development, growth, and progression of *yang* qualities enhance the convenience of human society. However, the negative side of these *yang* qualities can surface. An example of out-of-control negative *yang* energy, COVID-19, is a creation of humans through their advancements in technology as well as through the counterbalances and conflicts among ethnic groups and countries. People originate from the land but have lost their connection with the land, climbing stairs and flying through the air instead of standing firmly and remaining grounded on the land. Therefore, as the poisoned apple created by humans, COVID-19 brought human society to a halt, similar to how Snow White lies in the glass coffin waiting to gain and integrate mature *yang* energy. With the ongoing pandemic, humans are still learning how to incorporate mature *yin* energy to counterweigh the currently out-of-control *yang* energy.

### Strong-willed women and weak-willed men: The self devoured by energy

In the balancing of *yin* and *yang* and positive and negative energy, an individual who is not sufficiently aware of their archetypes is susceptible to control by one of the archetypes and may thus engage in seemingly balanced behavior that is in fact relatively unbalanced. The dominance of *yang* energy in the world has led to the establishment of various norms, frameworks, and

values aimed at assisting individuals in climbing the social status ladder (a representation of *yang* qualities). In the current era, the progress of gender equality efforts can be determined using the proportion of positions of power held by women. Nevertheless, aloof women in positions of power are often described as “strong-willed” in a negative sense. Women are prone to the loss of their inner *yang*, and if it is not recovered, they shift their focus to the men around them, which increases the difficulty of recovering their power. A strong-willed woman may appear to have control over her *yang* energy, but she may actually be controlled by her animus, which manifests as making demands, pursuing growth, and being aggressive. This reflects that she is only halfway through her inner *yin-yang* integration.

In *Snow White*, the stepmother imprisons the king and elevates herself to become the most powerful person in the kingdom. The stepmother, as a person in power, fails to utilize her power, which is exemplified by her killing of the huntsman to silence him. She resembles a workplace supervisor who is controlled by *yang* energy, annoying their subordinates, generating fear, and silencing them. A woman may also fail to remain grounded.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how “weak-willed men” can be controlled by their anima. Taiwan’s spread of local infections began at *a-gong dien* (meaning “old men’s shop”), a type of adult entertainment business in Taiwan, in Wanhua District. The following discussion does not focus on the COVID-19 infections resulting from activities at *a-gong dien* but instead analyzes the possible symbolic meanings of *a-gong dien* through the lens of Jung. Here, “weak-willed men” refers to men who are nonmainstream, poor, of low a social status, or senile. These men linger in the outside world, constantly looking outward for the anima they project and failing to learn about their ability to activate their inner *yin* energy and incorporate anima archetypes in their inner self. COVID-19 is the poisoned apple for these men, releasing them from being controlled by their anima.

The poisoned apple that is COVID-19 may seem irrelevant to people who do not visit *a-gong dien* but, from the perspective of analytical psychology, COVID-19 was a collective result of the actions of all individuals. *A-gong dien* are visibly camouflaged and inconspicuous because of the clientele’s collective fear or suppression of sex and affectionate relationships. Because these old men have never integrated their inner selves, their collective fear drives their need for sex and affection into the Shadow, which is reflected in the location of *a-gong dien* activities in dark alleys. However, the Shadow is eager to be seen by the self, and its desire is demonstrated in different, sometimes extreme, forms. Ye and Lin[18] highlighted that an individual must acknowledge their inner instinct and accept the Shadow, because the more they suppress their instinct and Shadow, the stronger pressure they feel from these forces attempting to surface. Taiwan’s local COVID-19 outbreak occurred at a *a-gong dien*. COVID-19 places individuals in a metaphorical transparent coffin, forcing them to face death and the collective conscious that suppresses sex and affection. Breaking traditional restraints enables the inner *yin* and *yang* to meet and achieve a balance. In this manner, COVID-19 outbreaks caused by men too embarrassed to admit their visits to *a-gong dien* would be prevented.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Throughout history, the collective unconscious has contributed to the development of countless archetypes. Individuals must learn to be mindful of how archetypes influence them to avoid being controlled by these archetypes. Each of the archetypes has positive and negative qualities. Snow White, as a symbol of the negative side of the maiden archetype, must learn to accept the progressive stages of anima development for self-growth and to become aware and cope with the negative *yin* energy concomitant with anima development. Lacking opportunities to develop her *yang* energy, the princess gradually develops her *yang* energy through her encounters with the huntsman, dwarfs, and prince and integrates the energy into her inner self, avoiding being controlled by her *yang* energy, as was the case for her powerful but murderous stepmother.

The author uses the poisoned apple as a metaphor for COVID-19 to enhance individuals' awareness that external events originate within us, that a group is a collective formation of individuals, and that external events are responses to individuals' inner processes or complexities. Humans have overly developed their *yang* energy in the hope of controlling nature and the environment, which ultimately leads to the opposing *yin* energy being ignored. Similar to the jarring event following the stepmother making the poisoned apple, COVID-19 forces individuals to remain at home, to halt their activities, to face death, and then to calmly reflect on their inner selves. The unconscious pursuit of mainstream cultures and the *yang* values that drive people to always set lofty goals and be at the top cause people to ignore the importance of standing barefoot and firmly on the ground and connecting with *yin* energy. The lesson derived from the poisoned apple metaphor is related to the overly uniform idea of the need for sex and affection; many people refuse to accept that this need exists in diverse forms and drive those with needs different from mainstream values into the Shadow. Under these circumstances, men and women in *a-gong dien* remained silent to prevent being unreasonably criticized or being mocking for their atypical intimate activities. This is also a result of the emphasis on the external, phenomenal, and visible "evidence" and "indicators" in the pursuit of equality and the failure to address the feeling-focused and experience-focused balance of the inner self and inner energies. This lack of balance leads to strong-willed women who are controlled by their animus and who may despise other women for their lack of power and to men who are dominated by *yin* energy, such as those driven by their anima to seek connections with others at *a-gong dien*. These men, unaware of their inner *yin* energy and scared of being condemned and ridiculed, became the cause of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The hero's journey of Snow White enables her inner anima and animus to integrate, after which she could enter into a sacred marriage with the prince. The princess returns to her home, the castle. She is now a more complete version of herself, ready to face her life and world again. The fear of and worry about COVID-19 are ongoing; the author proposed that individuals who reflect on their inner selves, identify their life purposes, and understanding their influences on the world can assist in overcoming the collective fear of the virus. Chuang[14] dissected the term COVID-19 and provided a new interpretation of the letter as follows. The "CO" indicates togetherness and collaboration; the "V" stands for "vividly" and symbolizes liveliness; the "I" stands for "indigenous" and refers to that the natural and grounded wisdom of indigenous peoples encourage individuals to be mindful of Mother Nature and their *yin* energy; and the "D" stands for "dwelling" and symbolizes humans dwelling on Earth, which, when contemplated, can draw

people back to their inner selves. The number “19,” which is often associated with the concept of enduring until the end[19], indicates that people must develop new wisdom, which must be integrated with the wisdom inherited from their ancestors and the collective unconscious, to prepare for a postpandemic future.

Finally, the author recommends that readers reread *Snow White* and determine which character, plot, event, or object they identify with the most, without the need for a scholarly perspective. Readers should attempt to identify the interpretations of images in the tale most fitting to the state of their inner selves. The tale may provide a new perspective with which to view their inner self and the world, assisting readers in continuing to integrate their inner self in their search for the most sacred, complete archetype—the path toward *svabhava*. An individual begins to influence the group when the individual begins to work toward individuation. As citizens of the Earth, individuals must continue addressing their inner conflicts to promote peace within themselves and across the world.

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