Universidad de Alcalá

From the Classic to the Subversive: a Feminist Approach to Disney's adaptations of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Sleeping Beauty and Beauty and the Beast*, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* and Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*

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Abstracts

Starting from the stories told from words of mouth by old female storytellers, until the blossoming of imprinted tales back in the 18th and 19th centuries, the genre of fairy tales has been highly influenced by different historical periods and social conventions. Canonical writers such as Charles Perrault or the Grimm Brothers sought to create original stories and reformulate previous tales to impose their own ideology about politics or gender. That rewriting strategy characterises the genre and it opens the path for its continuous reassessment. For that, along the 20th century, part of the Postmodern and feminist movements focus on revising the form and content of fairy tales. Following the postmodern key points about reviewing and revisiting all previous knowledge and the feminist approach to gender and female questions, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) and Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997) aim at reshaping the image of the female self and challenging patriarchal values embedded in classic tales. Meanwhile, fairy tales witnessed another radical renewal: in 1937, Walt Disney released its first animated fairy tale film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which laid the first stone for the prestigious name it has today. Other adaptations such as *Sleeping Beauty* (1945) or *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) are some of Disney's landmarks in the memory of many children and young adults. However, does Disney reconsider any ideology or traditional value in these adaptations as Carter and Donoghue do in their collections? Bearing this question in mind and following feminist postulates, the present dissertation delves into nine different works divided in three groups: Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Sleeping Beauty* and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991); Angela Carter's "The Snow Child", "The Lady of the House of Love" and "The Tiger's Bride"; and Emma Donoghue's "The Tale of the Apple", "The Tale of the Needle" and "The Tale of the Rose". It intends to compare and analyse the representation of traditional values and social assumptions regarding women, female objectification, passivity and female rivalry. Such analysis will allow to underscore Carter and Donoghue's feminist subversion in their collections and to expose Disney's patriarchal and old-fashioned values within their productions and how this has affected their main audiences: children.

Key words: Fairy tales – Feminism – Traditional values – Female objectification – Female rivalry

Desde las voces de las antiguas cuentacuentos, hasta el auge de los cuentos escritos durante los siglos XVIII y XIX, los diferentes momentos históricos y las convenciones sociales han causado un gran impacto en el género de los cuentos de hadas. Escritores canónicos como Charles Perrault o los Hermanos Grimm trataron de reformular antiguos cuentos y crear nuevas historias en las que reflejar su propia ideología política o de género. Esta estrategia de reescritura es característica del género y, además, abre paso a continuas revisiones del mismo. Por ello, durante el siglo XX parte de los movimientos postmodernistas y feministas replantean la forma y el contenido de los cuentos de hadas. Partiendo de los elementos clave del postmodernismo –reformular y replantear todos los conocimientos previos–, y de las teorías feministas sobre cuestiones de género, las obras *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) de Angela Carter y *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* de Emma Donoghue tratan de remodelar la imagen de la mujer y cuestionar los valores patriarcales normalizados en los cuentos. Al mismo tiempo, los cuentos han sido testigos de otros cambios radicales: en 1937 Walt Disney estrena su primera adaptación de un cuento en dibujos animados, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, lo que supuso el principio del imperio Disney. *Sleeping Beauty* (1945) o *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) son otros ejemplos icónicos de Disney que han marcado la infancia de muchas generaciones. Sin embargo, ¿ha reconsiderado Disney algún aspecto ideológico o valor tradicional en estas adaptaciones como hacen Carter o Donoghue en sus reescrituras? Teniendo en cuenta las cuestiones anteriores y los postulados feministas, esta investigación analiza nueve obras diferentes divididas en tres grupos: las películas de Disney *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Sleeping Beauty* y *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), los cuentos "The Snow Child", "The Lady of the House of Love" y "The Tiger's Bride" de Angela Carter y los de Emma Donoghue, "The Tale of the Apple", "The Tale of the Needle" y "The Tale of the Rose". Con ello se pretende comparar y analizar la representación de los valores tradicionales y las consideraciones sociales sobre la mujer, la cosificación femenina, la pasividad y la rivalidad entre estas. Dicho análisis permitirá tanto destacar la subversión feminista de las escritoras Donoghue y Carter, como revelar los valores patriarcales y anticuados que muestran las producciones de Disney y, así, demostrar cómo ello ha afectado a su principal audiencia: los niños.

Palabras clave: Cuentos de hadas – feminismo – cosificación – pasividad – rivalidad

Introduction and methodology

Whenever we try to recall our first contact with literature, it goes without saying that fairy tales would probably be our first memory. For thousands of generations, these tales have revolved around the adventures of beautiful princesses, heroic princes, caring queens, strong kings or evil witches. Besides, in its origins, such genre did not just focus on children, but it dealt with morals and values that were transmitted generation after generation, and which were imprinted in those tales. For that reason, many authors were well aware of the great possibilities that tales brought them. They introduced their own ideals and values in the tales, adapting them to their own standpoints and historical circumstances. There are famous tales by Giambattista Basile, Charles Perrault or the Grimm Brothers, which are part of the same myth, although there are some versions by these and other writers that became more popular than others. Therefore, fairy tales and the act of rewriting them are two concepts intrinsically related, which, together with each authors' historical circumstances, will address a certain ideology.

In this regard, postmodernism brought about substantial changes in fairy tales, whether in form or in meaning. Throughout the 20th century due to the revolution that film adaptations brought into the system, many fairy tales were made into really popular movies. All this renewal reached its heyday with the US company founded by Walt Disney, which in 1937 released *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* as the first coloured animated film. The adaptation trend paved the way for many more creations such as *Sleeping Beauty* (1957) in the 60s or *The Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast* in the 90s. All those classic tales became a global success and they gained worldwide recognition, which continues today. Their success is such that Disney films have become the "new" canon and are recognised by many as the essence of the traditional genre of the fairy tale or even as the most recognisable source of fairy tales. Nevertheless, in reality, all those films are just mere adaptations of those traditional stories that happen to accommodate the ideology and morals supported by Walt Disney.

Another change that the postmodern period brought about was a revision of all previous values and ideologies. Such reconsideration affected fairy tales, whose foundations and imagery responded to very traditional and old-fashioned assumptions. Following feminist postulates, some authors decided to rewrite traditional tales to produce, this way, more updated versions. Their aim was to provide a different image of

the female self and to challenge the pillars of patriarchy. That is the case of the British author Angela Carter, whose writings would be key to the feminist movement and to the exploration of new rewritings in fairy tales. She delves into female sexuality, transformation and subversion in the stories included in her collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979). Carter's work served many others as an inspiration, one of those being Emma Donoghue. This Irish-Canadian writer also stands out for the plurality of her writings, in which we can find novels, children's books, and essays, among others. Her collection *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* was published in 1991. In it, as Carter did, she rewrites several traditional tales by Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen, the Grimm Brothers, and some others. In her stories, she tackles different aspects like female liberation, lesbianism and sorority. Both works approach feminist rewritings from different perspectives, but with a common target, dismantling the foundations of patriarchy.

All these 20th-century confluent pieces, Disney films and Carter and Donoghue's collections, did not approach their rewritings and adaptations in the same manner. Whereas Donoghue and Carter produced clearly feminist and subversive reworkings of traditional tales, Disney's adaptations tended to keep the stories closer to the original, leaving the most traditional ideology and patriarchal values untouched. Bearing all this in mind and following feminist postulates, the present dissertation digs into nine different works, which are divided into three groups: Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Sleeping Beauty* and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991); Angela Carter's "The Snow Child", "The Lady of the House of Love" and "The Tiger's Bride"; and Emma Donoghue's "The Tale of the Apple", "The Tale of the Needle" and "The Tale of the Rose". It seeks to analyse and compare the representation of traditional values and social assumptions regarding women, female objectification, passivity and female rivalry. In order to do so, this paper will analyse a wide array of images and passages in order to foreground traditional patriarchal standpoints imposed on women, the impossibility of female control over their lives, and the exaltation of rivalry among women. In this vein, such analysis will allow to underscore Carter and Donoghue's feminist subversion in their collections and to expose Disney's patriarchal and old-fashioned values within their productions and how this has affected their main audiences: children.

Theoretical Framework

Fairy tales as a genre

The genre of fairy tales has been a complex and wide-ranging topic that many critics and scholars have tried to define and clarify. According to Elisabeth Waning Harries, the genre of fairy tales shares a series of characteristics that unify all those different writings under the same term:

> The tales are said to be "timeless" or "ageless" or "dateless"; they seem removed from history and change. They "offer insights into the oral traditions of different cultures" or have "the unadorned direct rhythm of the oral for in which they were first recorded" or "retain the feeling of oral literature"; they seem to give us access to a more primitive and more authentic oral culture. "Universal" and "classless," they "offer insight into universal human dilemmas that span differences of age, culture, and geography," and are told by "titled ladies in the salons of the aristocrats, by governesses in the nursery, and by peasant farmers around the hearth." (3)

In this regard, fairy tales encompass a series of traits such as timelessness and universality, which seem to be some of the key aspects that conform the genre the way it is. From this perspective, tales are framed within a unifying culture and history that addresses dilemmas that are not particular, but rather affect the whole humankind. This idea is what Susanna Barsotti approaches as "consensus", in which fairy tales have survived time and space because of their representation of individual problems in a symbolic way, turning them into everlasting universal problems (70). Thus, it seems that the moment and place in which tales were published, or even the author, are not especially decisive when compared to the dilemmas they tackle.

Fairy tales do not just rely on those aspects, but also on their transmission. These stories have passed on from generation to generation, channelling their morals and values along the course of history. In this vein, Barsotti also reflects upon that issue and highlights the purpose that fairy tales have always had: "The fairy tale goes through the space by keeping its character of transmission of information, knowledge, emotions, feelings, visions of the world: the mankind in general has used the fairy tale to express its wisdom and symbols and techniques to pass it, to make it immediately understandable, and to imprint it in the depth of our soul" (69). Thus, from this perspective, transmission

does not just play a role in its mere essence of connecting generations, but also in the ideology and messages that have been found in the stories. According to Jack Zipes, it is widely known that at the same time human beings started communicating, they also began to tell tales (2012: 2). This statement also points to another important aspect of fairy tales, which goes back to their origins, in which they were orally told through "words of mouth" (Barsotti 71). Therefore, fairy tales have existed and have put together different generations and societies through their symbols and values.

In this like vein, this literary genre has always had a clear didactic purpose, although the targets of its mores and values have varied along the years. It is commonly known that fairy tales are basically designed for children, as they can easily learn to read or to entertain themselves. Nevertheless, it is very relevant to dig into the reason why they are the ultimate objective. The so-called association between infants and tales is found in many dictionaries, such as the *Collins English Dictionary*[1] or the *Gran Diccionario de la Lengua Española*[2], which define fairy tale in relation to their ultimate addressee/s: children. However, this educational approach was part of an evolution of the genre rather than children being its initial and sole target. In *From Mouse to the Mermaids: Politics of Films, Gender, and Culture* (1995), Zipes discusses the multiple standpoints of fairy tales, observing that they were first published for adults as their symbolism and multiple layers could become dangerous if read from other perspectives. It was after the end of the 18th century and beginnings of the 19th that authors understood the need of filtering and editing their tales so as to achieve their goal of controlling children's imagination and preventing them from developing improper thoughts or ideas (24-25). Therefore, the relevance of shifting from a more adult to a younger audience is part of the domestication of children, and, in a way, of society.

Indeed, the didactic and moralistic aspects of tales play a crucial role in the understanding and evolution of the genre. Denise Escarpit makes clear that, from its early origins, tales intended to teach and entertain, which in a way means to make social structures and morality appealing: "It was a utilitarian moralism which taught how to 'act in a proper way', that is, to insert oneself into society docile, but astutely without

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[1] Fairy tale
(Literary & Literary Critical Terms) a story about fairies or other mythical or magical beings, esp. one of traditional origin told to children.
[2] Cuento *(Del lat*. computus, *cuenta.)*
Cuento de hadas LITERATURA: Narración fantástica, en especial la dedicada a los niños.

disrupting society and also without creating trouble for oneself.… It was this possibility of multiple manipulation which constituted the power of the tale" (qtd. by Zipes 1991: 13-14). This possibility, which allowed authors to introduce their ideology within their tales, placed them in a really favourable vantage point. In *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (1991), Zipes claims that writers, very astutely, turned folk tales into fairy tales, serving them to introduce a certain literary discourse based on the civilization of children according to their own social and historical context (3). Consequently, tales were marked by the different social conventions and the ongoing historical context in which authors published their works.

Fairy tales and history: their evolution

Bearing in mind all the prior concepts that shape this literary genre, it is impossible not to trace back to its origins, as well as to explore the way in which an array of different factors have marked its evolution. As it has been stated before, fairy tales originally had a tight connection with orality. Those stories were first part of the culture of pre-modern societies that used them as pastime activities and which, in many cases, turned out to be the only contact with literature that the population had. As it has been studied by Zipes, fairy tales are said to have their roots in oral folk tales, where storytellers tried to provide the community with a narration that explained natural happenings such as the seasons' shift or to celebrate any annual ritual. However, the invention of the printing press in the 15th century coincided with the upturn of literacy, which meant that the oral tradition underwent a great change. It is at this very moment that the concept of fairy tales appeared (1995: 22). In spite of that revolution and the renewal it brought about, it is very interesting to make clear that most of the tellers that were part of that preceding oral period were women. In this sense, Karen Rowe points to the relevance that female tellers had on the transmission of tales: "The lineage of women as tale-tellers in a history stretches from Philomela and Scheherazade to the raconteurs of French *veillées* and salons, to the English peasants, governesses and novelists, and to the German *Spinnerinnen* and the Brothers Grimm" (53-54). Even though the presence of women tellers in different spheres and contexts is clear, when it comes to approach fairy tales as a literary genre in capitals, women seem to disappear from the map. This fact is, of course, not casual, but it very clearly reveals the evolution of fairy tales from the oral to the written ground.

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As fairy tales evolved towards their written form, they also underwent a series of changes that will be crucial for the understanding of the future stories. One of them was the displacement of women in the very process of writing. Ironically, it was at the moment the genre was taken more seriously that male authors took over the stories and placed women's voices in the background. Many scholars like Jack Zipes, Karen Rowe or Marina Warner emphasized the hegemonic dominance that males had over the production and publication of fairy tales. The resulting stories would incur in stereotypical topics that involved women but from a male perspective, portraying an image and ideals for women based on their own male approaches (Warner 2015). However, there were some other exceptions that proved the rule, some female writers such as Madame D'Aulnoy or Mademoiselle de La Force, among others, were greatly acclaimed, even though their worth was always inferior in comparison with other male colleagues like Charles Perrault. Still, both male and female authors perpetuated an image of women and female values based on deeply traditional and patriarchal assumptions.

Apart from the authorship of fairy tales, their evolution in time and their dissemination across countries and cultures have marked this literary genre with different ideological tints and styles. Fairy tales have travelled across Europe in different historical moments, a fact that endowed them with different characteristics and views according to each social and cultural context. Starting in Italy back in the 15th and 16th centuries, the genre flourished there due to the country's strategic location in the European continent and because it was one of the most remarkable commercial centres, at the same time that it had a great cultural activity, influenced by their connection with foreign traditions (Zipes 2007: 11-12). Some Italian writers like Giovanni Francesco Straparola and Giambattista Basile set the path that other authors followed. Those stories written by the Italians arrived in France, which became the epicentre of the fairy tales' production in the 17th century.

France gathered some of the most relevant and notable fairy tales of the time. Influenced by the Italian tradition, French writers adopted the genre and made it their own. Their assimilation was such that when the writer Madame D'Aulnoy titled her collection of tales *Les contes des fées* (1697) (*Tales of the Fairies*), the term "*contes des fées*" was adopted to describe the genre (Haase 233).[3] In addition to that terminological

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[3] According to Haase, around the same time, the English adopted the term "fairy tales" to describe the genre (233).

evolution, French fairy tales had other peculiarities that made them the innovative genre they came to be. One of those ground-breaking transformations applied to the elevated type of audience that received and told those tales. Indeed, the environment that surrounded French fairy tales was of grandiose and luxurious salons. As Terri Windling points out, those salons where the tales were narrated formed part of "regular gatherings hosted by prominent aristocratic women, where women and men could gather together to discuss the issues of the day" (n.p.). As a result, the aesthetics, the language and the topics of those stories were directly associated to the upper-middle classes. Indeed, the representation of that part of society was the maxim of one of the genre's forefathers and, probably, the most eminent author in France at the time: Charles Perrault. He created a brand-new style, which departed from the previous oral accounts and his Italian predecessors. In relation to his representation of the French society, Zipes states that he tried to "establish the literary fairy tale as an innovative genre", which portrayed the excellence of what is called the French *civilité* (1995: 13). In this like vein, that French *civilité* embodied a specific ideology towards women, the *femme civilisée*, based on a representation of a patient, passive and virtuous woman. In *Fairy Tales and the Arts of Subversion*, Zipes adds:

> Perrault's fairy tales which "elevate" heroines reveal that he had a distinctly limited view of women. His ideal "femme civilise" of upper-class society, the composite female, is beautiful, polite, grateful, industrious, properly groomed, and knows how to control herself at all times.… The task confronted by Perrault's model female is to show reserve and patience, that is, she must be passive until the right man comes along to recognize her virtues and marry her. She lives only thorough the male and for marriage.… As we have seen the heroines of the tales are very pretty, loyal, dedicated to their household chores, modest and docile and sometimes a little stupid insofar as it is true that stupidity is almost a quality of women for Perrault. Intelligence could be dangerous. In his mind as in that of many men (and women) beauty is an attribute of women, just as intelligence is the attribute of men. (25)

Apart from this patriarchal understanding and representation of women, Perrault and his coetaneous also left another important legacy for the evolution of fairy tales. The renewal of the genre, the original approaches and the rewriting process are some of the traits of this French generation. In other words, as Cemre Mimoza Bartu notes, "French

writers had opened the doors of European fairy tales wide by feeding upon their precursors and also influencing the following writers" (41). Going across Europe, that so-called sense of renewal arrived in Germany along the 19th century. According to my prior project about fairy tales entitled *A Feminist Rewriting of Fairy Tales in Emma Donoghue's Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (2018), German authors followed classicist and Romantic tendencies that preserved the development of fairy tales, but they added a change in style and scope (7). The change affected the place and the elevated style that had been a landmark for the French. In this case, tellers and writers would gather "in coffee houses, rather than upper-class salons, to share their common cultural heritage of tales" (Bartu 41). Besides, it is within this German literary context that other pivotal figures for the genre appeared, Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm. The Grimm brothers, as they are known, established the genre naming it *märchen* with their collection *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*) in 1812. They did not just write about folk and fairy tales, but also about legends and myths that would be morally adapted for children (Haase 604). As for their style, as Zipes argues, the Grimms created a conventional style for fairy tales by mixing the greatness of simplicity and the logical prose of the middle class, turning their writings into a model for the rest of fairy tale writers (1986: 280).

Likewise, following the European expansion and the Grimms' popularity, fairy tales greatly influenced the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen, who added a different perspective to his writings. Alike his predecessors, Andersen could be said to be a real author, understanding this term as the actual creator of his fairy tales rather than an adaptor of older stories. In fact, Haase recalls that Andersen's worth does not only lie in the originality of his works, but also in his ability to depict the intricate "experiences of class, gender, and the role of the modern writer" (33). His intention when writing his tales is also worth mentioning, as he tried to clearly state the duality of his discourse: "I seize an idea for older people— and tell it to the young ones, while remembering that father and mother are listening and must have something to think about" (qtd. by Haase 33). In this regard, this statement enables us to see that one of his main interests was to teach children how to behave properly. As Zipes puts it, Andersen's tales are filled with notions about appropriate behaviour and political conventions with a clear didactic intention (1986: 72). So, considering some of the most referential authors of fairy tales and their different styles –the elevated Perrault, the influential Grimms and the original Andersen–

, moments –the 17th century French *civilité* and the 19th-century German and Denmark social period–, and tendencies, it is clear that from the beginning of the genre, fairy tales have served their authors to imprint their thoughts and social values on their writings.

The blossoming of postmodernism in the 20th century caused a great impact on all artistic disciplines, including literature and the fairy tales' tradition. From a broad perspective, the postmodern movement was highly influenced by the previous modernist trend, which sought to challenge and experiment with all previous artistic, literary or musical assumptions. Nonetheless, postmodernists took experimentation a step forward and led a much more radical movement, which aimed to dismantle all prior beliefs. Relating this notion of defiance to fairy tales could be controversial according to the traditional nature of the genre. However, as Bartu clarifies, postmodern writers recognised the need of renewal that such a traditional genre required, always marked by its conservative, biased essence together with its patriarchal and sexist foundations (46). For that reason, postmodern writers approached fairy tales from clearly subversive standpoints, leaving the door open for rewritings. Those reworkings or multiple versions of tales are framed by Cristina Bacchilega under the concept "frame" and the multiple "reflections" that this idea might bring to fairy tales:

> Postmodern fictions, then, hold mirrors to the magic mirror of the fairy tale, playing with its framed images out of a desire to multiply its refractions and to expose its artifices. Frames and images may vary, but gender is almost inevitably the privileged place for articulating these de-naturalizing strategies. And while this play of reflection, refraction, and framing might produce ideologically "destructive," "constructive" and "subversive" effects, the self-reflexive mirrors themselves are themselves questioned and transformed. (24)

The resulting product of this postmodern revision is a mixture of various transgressive and subversive strategies that did not just affect the naturalised structure of the tales, but also their representation of the female self and old-fashioned ideals. Consequently, authors like Angela Carter, Marina Warner, A.S. Byatt or Emma Donoghue have followed this trend, trying to dismantle these obsolete and backward images.

In order to unmask the reasons why some postmodern writers agreed that rewriting was necessary, it is a must to first conceptualize such strategy, which has been an underlying trait related to fairy tales. Rewriting has surrounded the whole revision of these stories, their origins and evolution, being an intrinsic characteristic of tales, but not always for the same reasons. As the word expresses, the act of rewriting involves reshaping a story from a narrative that is already given or created. Hence, rewriting can, in this sense, respond to different purposes. In that regard, Bacchilega highlights the importance of rewriting as the revision of a narrative that usually "raises questions that demand revising its naturalized artifice" (50). For that, a rewriting can be applied to any text in order to alter its traditional understanding.

In consonance with this, canonical authors such as Perrault, the Grimm Brothers or Andersen, based their tales on prior texts, which resulted in different versions of the same one, but filled with their own ideas. In Harries' words, those writers changed the stories rather than creating new ones: "The writers of fairy tales rarely attempt to uncover or rediscover the folk elements in a tale. Rather, they build on, revise, and change the story as it has come down to them, rereading it in their own ways, pouring new wine into the old bottle that they know from the written tradition" (8). As she claims, they introduced their own ideology by rewriting older versions of tales and placing the ideals of their particular historical context. For that reason, these canonical narratives are sustained on old morals and values. Nevertheless, what has historically remained as the most relevant dilemma about fairy tales and their rewritings is their didactic purpose and their impact on children's education. So, the underlaying implications in these stories play a crucial role, since tales have historically been the first contact with literature, morality and education for many young ones.

That didactic purpose of fairy tales, which was strongly sustained on traditional morality and codes of behavioural appropriateness, is the main reason why they have been exposed to a recurrent revaluation throughout history. After the publication of canonical stories, all those backward and old-fashioned standards present in them experienced a drastic reverse in the 20th century, mainly caused by the revisionist methodology that postmodern writers followed. Male and female postmodern authors pursued alternative strategies to subvert or transform tales: they tried to conceive distinctive plots, characters

or locations, they wrote prequels or sequels, or they even satirised some classics (Bartu 46). In addition to that, Bacchilega explains the plurality that postmodernism sought to achieve in this kind of stories:

> Postmodern revision is often two-fold, seeking to expose, make visible, the fairy tale's complicity with "exhausted" narrative and gender ideologies, and by working from the fairy tales' multiple versions, seeking to expose, bring out, what the institutionalization is such tales for children has forgotten or left unexploited. This kind of rereading does more than interpret anew or shake the genre's ground rules. It listens for the many "voices" of fairy takes as well. (50)

So, renewal meant to transform the representation of gender that had traditionally pervaded tales, providing this literary trend with a much more open and avantgarde ideology towards the idea of womanhood or gender issues.

The visions that classic authors such as Perrault or the Grimms had upon the female self were attached to a classic patriarchal representation of femininity. Alike Perrault and his previously discussed *femme civiliseé,* which placed women under the umbrella of passivity, beauty and stupidity, female characters in the tales by the German Brothers were based on similar assumptions. In his studies about the Grimm Brothers, Zipes claims that the greatness of their heroic female characters was based on an amalgam of adjectives such as "passive, obedient, self-sacrificing, hard-working, patient and straight-laced", in addition to their need of male protection (1991: 57). So, the resulting image that these canonical tales portray understands female happiness only in patriarchal terms. Adding this to the educational aspect results in children learning from male-oriented values and mores and, thereafter, the incidental reinforcement of social inequality and sexism. On behalf of dismantling those values, some modern and postmodern writers would transform those traditional patterns into more feminist representations.

The reassessment of female images had its roots in the feminist movement, whose ultimate aim was to question all that previous knowledge about womanhood, in which fairy tales had performed a major role. The feminist movement has been traditionally articulated around "waves", and each of the four feminist waves has struggled to achieve equality in contexts where women had been historically displaced, mistreated or even forgotten. The first wave led by the Suffragist movement saw its birth at the end of the

19th century and beginning of the 20th. Emmeline Pankhurst and some more Suffragists actively claimed for the women's right to vote, which was achieved in Britain in 1918. Their sacrifice and restless struggles for the cause impacted all future feminist generations. The second wave is considered a much more complex movement, whose motto "the personal is political" aimed to bring forward female questions on birth control, equal payment and, in conclusion, social equality. The third and fourth waves are still not yet easily distinguished, and they are sometimes mixed into one same group. Both of them started during the 90s, which blurred the boundaries between them due to their simultaneousness and to the wide set of topics they discussed. However, they have brought out transversal and challenging issues about gender, race and class that second wave feminists had left unexplored. Still, feminism in all its waves and variants acts as a multidisciplinary, multicultural and radical movement that tries to overturn the patriarchal system imposed on society.

Feminism has revised society not only from a social and regulatory perspective, but it has also reassessed all disciplines that promoted a sexist and biased representation of women. As a consequence, most of the humanistic arts have also been open to a feminist update. There are many feminist critics who have contributed to the existence and persistence of feminist revisions. Some of them are Simone de Beauvoir, Angela Carter, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Helénè Cixous, Catherine Clément, Judith Butler or Gayatri Spivak, among many others. All of them have conducted their studies on different fields that female selves have endeavoured along the course of history, trying to overturn impositions and biased assumptions about women. Simone de Beauvoir was one of the pioneering feminist writers and her piece *The Second Sex* (1949) set the foundations for many of the movement's postulates. In it, she discusses the social construction of gender in a sentence that has become one of the greatest feminist slogans: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (295). She reflects upon the idea that women are constructed as the Other, as men's Other. Besides, she also discusses the unfair position that women have been forced to occupy in ancient stories in her chapter "Myths". Her studies on feminism are deeply rooted in many other feminists' works such as in Cixous, Clément or Butler. Helénè Cixous and Catherine Clément are part of what is known as the French feminist writers, who focused on language and the female representation. They devoted their studies to what they defined as *écriture feminine,* from which the female gender is unconsciously created through language and writing. Among the topics they discussed in

The Newly Born Woman (1975), Cixous and Clement examine the "patriarchal binary thought" making a list of opposed traits such as "Activity/Passivity, Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature", which define the opposition between men and women (115). Those opposed traits highlight the residual position women have held in society, always referred as the negative or the weak (Moi 102). On another note, in 1990, Judith Butler published *Gender Trouble*, where she reviewed de Beauvoir's theories and expanded on the idea of "performative gender", meaning that "the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established". Hence, the repetitive action of gender serves as a strategy to keep its binary construction intact (140). Therefore, their ground-breaking theories and their efforts to subvert patriarchy have influenced immensely the cultural and ideological side of society.

Another pivotal feminist figure that has stood out for her radical and revolutionary thoughts is Angela Carter. A theorist, translator, essayist, novelist and short story writer born in England in 1940, Carter has remained as one of the most determining feminist writers in history. Her vast contribution relates to her skillful and subversive revision of fairy tales. She positions herself on the revaluation and rewriting of fairy tales as a revulsive strategy to relocate patriarchal thought. Thus, her writings stress her essence, imprinted in some of her articles such as "Notes from the Front Line": "All for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode" (69). Very closely related to Cixous' idea about writing, "writing is precisely the very possibility of change" (879), Carter revised classic tales by Perrault or the Grimms and the ideas about women they introduced in their works. Her style has been defined in many ways, but the English critic Lorna Sage very accurately summarises her most characteristic traits:

> [Carter] produced her own haunting, mocking – sometimes tender – variations on some of the classic motifs of the genre … in retelling these tales she was deliberately drawing them out of their set shapes, out of the separate space of 'children's stories' or 'folk art' and into the world of change. It was yet another assault on Myth … done caressingly and seductively. The monsters and the princesses lose their places in the old script, and cross forbidden boundary lines. (1994: 42)

In *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), Carter created new tales that challenged and denounced women's traditional submission and passivity to new transgressive values and images.

That culture of revision and reassessment is deeply rooted in feminist theory, where many writers saw the positive points that redefining fairy tales might bring for feminism. What we could coin feminist rewriting comes from the need to modify inherited texts written mainly by male writers, from a conspicuous phallocentric vision. Indeed, it is particularly the genre of fairy tales the one that perpetuates very strict and distinctive gender roles. Such behaviour turns out to be very unfair for women, as Patricia Duncker supports, since fairy tales legitimize and strengthen stereotypical and limiting representations of women (182). In this vein, as Nancy Walker suggests:

> Appropriating a literary genre in order to revise or even reverse its assumptions, ideologies, or paradigms is one of several ways in which a writer may alter an inherited tradition, and such a method is by no means the exclusive property of women. Indeed, literary history—particularly the history of fiction—is frequently constructed by successive writers turning to their own purposes the patterns and materials created by other writers. And yet it is also true that women's relationship to such an inheritance has normally been fundamentally and dramatically different from that of men. (4)

Due to that male appropriation of fairy tales, the genre needs to be revaluated and its images changed. Thus, feminist revision enables women to take control and to recuperate their position. In relation to this idea, Adrienne Rich supports this strategy, as it is "re-vision —the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction— is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" (35). Bearing all that in mind, the British Angela Carter, Fay Weldon, Marina Warner or the Irish Edna O'Brien and Emma Donoghue, all of them deeply influenced by feminist theories, devoted some of their writings to reworking classic fairy tales.

As it has been stated above, Angela Carter has been one of the most influential rewriters, whose collections have strongly impacted on others. In this regard, Stephen Benson coined the "Angela Carter Generation", integrated by those writers who followed the bottles that Carter left open (2). Tanith Lee, A.S. Byatt or Emma Donoghue are some of the writers who sought to revise fairy tales to create new and gender-oriented stories.

In this case, Emma Donoghue is an Irish-Canadian writer, who appreciated and valued Carter's revolution. She has written novels, essays, children's books, film scripts and collections of fairy tales. She has always been interested in historical novels and recalling the past to shed light upon forgotten stories. Apart from that interest, she is an openly proclaimed lesbian, which together with her feminist standpoints, has resulted in a very rich literary production. As Marisol Morales points out, her collection *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997) can be considered the first Irish rewriting of fairy tales from both a lesbian and feminist perspective (207). Therefore, both authors, Carter and Donoghue, do not place their focus on basic repetitions of tales, but rather on a deconstructing and rewriting formula, which reveals the reader the inside of the genre, the importance of reading and interpretation.

Nevertheless, not all postmodern revisions of fairy tales have approached topics, forms or ideologies in the same way. To establish a distinction between contrary approaches, Zipes in his introduction to *Fairy Tale as a Myth/Myth as a Fairy Tale* coins two modern modalities: "duplicates" and "revisions". The former epitomises the continuation or repetition of the same norms and shapes that have been part of traditional stories without really questioning their internal message or structure. On the other hand, a revision entails an alteration of "the reader's views of traditional patterns, images, and codes" (8-9). Therefore, not all rewritings transform tales in the same way. This, together with the experimental exploration led by the modernisation of technologies endured conceptual changes in the form of expression of fairy tales. The genre, traditionally in written form evolves into a new discipline: cinematography. Still, the most common revision was, not surprisingly, in an imprinted book-like production. Many writers decided to revise tales producing new titles, as is the case of Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes* (1982), or Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997), among others. However, the filming industry also viewed the promising paths that retelling fairy tales might open. During the 90s, the cinematographic industry witnessed the emergence of Walt Disney, one of the greatest names and brands that has unprecedently unified both concepts of films and fairy tales.

Around the 90's cinematography, was at its peak due to different causes. One of them was that, by the beginning of the century, filmic adaptations were making their way over literary productions. Walter Benjamin, an expert on the field, explained how the new and modern techniques of mechanical reproduction of films impacted on society:

> The technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies of a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind. Both processes are intimately connected with the contemporary mass movements. Their most powerful agent is the film. Its social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage. (223)

In this case, reproductions in films could entail opposite possibilities, a very positive one, by keeping alive traditional heritage, and, at the same time, the contrary one. That idea, together with the huge audio-visual possibilities of the big screen, were crucial for Disney's success.

To understand the unprecedented impact that Disney has had on fairy tales, it is first necessary to delve into its development and growth throughout the years. The Walt Disney Company was founded by Walt Disney in 1923 in Los Angeles. From this moment, it has released more than one thousand films in its filmography, many of them fairy tales' adaptations. Its first blockbuster was a version of Snow White, entitled *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). In these movies, Disney put together the European tradition of tales and the US society at the service of a ground-breaking animated production. Hence, the global recognition has even led to a terminological displacement. Nowadays fairy tales are also recognised as Disney's tales, which actually reveals the monopoly that the company has over the genre. However, Disney films have also been heavily criticised because of the implications that usually underlie them. Some academics like Elisabeth Bell, Marina Warner, Amy Davis or Jack Zipes have tried to reveal the hidden messages about politics, domestication and gender underneath most Disney

movies. In this sense, Zipes, trying to "break the Disney spell", argues that Walt Disney has changed the way in which fairy tales are understood and he criticises the purpose of his films: "The great 'magic' of the Disney spell is that he animated the fairy tale only to transfix audiences and divert their potential utopian dreams and hopes through the false promises of the images he cast upon the screen" (1995: 22). In this like vein, Elisabeth Bell also challenges Disney's characterisation of women and femininity based on patriarchal and genderised cultural codes: "While Disney artists have captured the characterology of beautiful victims, active wickedness, and feminine goodness sketched in the tales of the Grimms, Perrault, and Andersen, they have also captured performative enactments of gender and cultural codes for feminine sexuality and agency" (1995: 120).

Taking all this into account, it seems that, although Angela Carter, Emma Donoghue and Walt Disney take part into the reconsideration of fairy tales, their individual work will touch upon certain aspects from a dissimilar perspective. In the case of Angela Carter, her incursions as one of the most influential and relevant figures of the feminist movement in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, entail a review of classics from a more radical and explosive attitude. The stories she includes in her collection feature strong female characters that stand up against stereotypes, whether to denounce female abuse or to give voice to female rivalry and male characters that use and have the complete control over women. As a result, these stories stand out for their subversive and challenging rewritings. Really close to Carter and influenced by her work, Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* creates an intertwined set of stories, where every protagonist acts as the narrator of the following tale in a web of shared female knowledge. By doing so, Donoghue goes back to the roots, to those women storytellers that originated fairy tales. Unlike Carter's strong and frontal images and style, Donoghue reassesses Perrault or Andersen's tales from subtler standpoints, though yet transgressive and subversive. In her tales, women retake control over their lives, they are able to break from the patriarchal yoke, they endure personal and intellectual growth helped by other women and, in some cases, their last realisation ends up in a lesbian relationship.

Compared to these two, Walt Disney's adaptations incur in a blatant perpetuation of patriarchal and traditional values, as their films do not defer much from classic fairy tales. In films like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* or *Sleeping Beauty*, female roles are still fixed and backward. Male characters have the complete control, evil figures are

female and there is not much evolution from patriarchal values. Although these are some of the company's first films, other later productions do not improve much in this respect. That is the case of *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), which once again perpetuates female sacrifice, sexist stereotypes and the idealisation of romantic love. Adding this to Disney's target audience –children–, reinforces the need of a feminist revision. For that reason, the present essay aims to analyse and compare these three groups of works to expose their different approaches to female questions, patriarchy and traditional thought in their fairy tales' rewritings and adaptations.

Analysis

This dissertation will be articulated around three specific pieces per each source and author, which will be analysed and put in common with the rest to clarify my object of study. These nine works are part of three classic stories that have been rewritten along history by several storytellers, but which each of these authors/producers – Carter, Donoghue and Disney – have reshaped for their own purposes. In the case of Walt Disney, the films that will be examined are *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Beauty and the Beast*. The former two are part of Disney's earliest productions and the initiators of the company's success. In this regard, each of them are an adaptation of a classic tale: *Schneewittchen* (1854)[4] by the Grimm Brothers is the origin of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*; *Sleeping Beauty* was influenced by different tales like Perrault's *La Belle au bois dormant* (1697) or the Grimms' *Dornröschen* (1812)[5]; and the last one is quite reminiscent of Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's *La Belle et la Bête* (1756), whose title was translated and used by Disney. In this respect, Carter and Donoghue take the same original stories and they rewrite them under different titles. In the same order, Carter entitles her revision of those classics as "The Snow Child", "The Lady of the House of Love" and "The Tiger's Bride". As for Donoghue's collection, she names all her stories following the same pattern: "The Tale of the Apple", "The Tale of the Needle" and "The Tale of the Rose". Both writers take the Grimm Brothers' version of "Snow White", Perrault's version of "Sleeping Beauty in the Woods" and Jeanne-Marie Leprince de

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[4] Known as "Snow White" in English.
[5] Perrault's tale was commonly recognised under the name "The Sleeping Beauty in the Woods" and the Grimms' as "Little Briar Rose".

Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast" as a reference for their tales. Albeit, they turn the tales upside-down and create a set of greatly innovative fairy tales.

Traditional values and society

One trait that all fairy tales have shared relates to the representation of certain values that societies seek to keep and transmit to other generations. However, as it has been previously suggested, those traditional values that fairy tales conveyed were part of a patriarchal culture that relegated female characters to two main roles: passive princesses or evil witches. These assumptions inevitably led to build up an image of womanhood based on beauty, "proper behaviour" and also, a culture that placed marriage as the ultimate –and only– goal for women. Postmodern writers such as Carter and Donoghue have tried to subvert and challenge all those sexist and patriarchal features that were hidden in tales. Yet, Disney's films did not live up to those feminist reconsiderations and they present female characters whose most remarkable features are still their beauty and whose behaviour fits in what is considered "appropriate".

Going deeper into Disney's first productions, the company followed the topic of the *femme civiliseé* by Perrault or the appropriate female manners described by the Grimms. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the protagonist, Snow White, puts together several traditional traits that the film manages to successfully represent. Right from the beginning, a fairy tales' book is opened, and the narrator reads: "Once upon a time there was a little princess called Snow White. Her evil stepmother, the Queen, feared that one day Snow White would be prettier than her. For that she dressed the princess with rags, and she was her maid" (00:01:31). This first statement already advances the issues around which the whole movie will gravitate: the importance of beauty, the rivalry between the Queen and Snow White and Snow White's position within the plot as a maid. Nevertheless, what triggers the action in the film is the unquestioned importance that physical appearance has for the princess and the Queen. Indeed, whenever this film appears in any discussion, there are frequent allusions to one of the wicked Queen's most iconic lines: "'Magic Mirror, who is the fairest one of all?'" (00:02:01). As a result, the essence of this film is substantially related to appearance, to very specific beauty canons that preserve the patriarchal ideology. In this regard, Amy M. Davis analyses the images Disney portrays in his films and how these princesses embody a strategic and specific stereotypical representation: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs is characterised very much by the sounds of Hollywood's golden era, and the look, while very much in keeping

with the influences of various European children's book illustrators, nonetheless possess touches which are unmistakably from 1930s Hollywood (ch.4). As a result, the symbolism of the film is no other than depicting a beautiful princess, whose major problem is to be prettier than another woman who hates her for that reason.

Following this exact same tendency, *Sleeping Beauty* reaffirms some of those prior female characteristics. In this case, when princess Aurora is born, she is gifted by the fairies with several virtues: beauty and singing skills. Both notions clearly embody traditional female values. As a matter of fact, Aurora's physical representation in the film epitomises Christian Dior's canon of beauty with her small waist and her long dress (Davis ch.4). Such representation of beauty and femininity is not innocent, but it recalls male superiority. According to this, de Beauvoir examines how important it is that the creators of fairy tales in the past were men, because this triggers representations of women that incarnate their "dreamed girl": "She is the wished-for intermediary between nature, the stranger to man, and the fellow being who is too closely identical" (172). In this case, Disney's visions of beauty are imposed on Aurora, Snow White and the rest. These princesses share also similar personalities in which kindness, grace, musicality and innocence stand out (Davis ch.4). Aurora plays the role of this graceful young girl, who loves singing and who is willing to do everything that she is told, who dreams with the moment she would find her prince:

> Briar Rose: Why, Flora and Fauna and Merryweather. They never want me to meet anyone. [to the animals] But you know something? I fooled 'em. I have met someone!
>
> Owl: Who? Who? Who? [the animals get more and more excited as she tells the story]
>
> Briar Rose: Oh, a prince. Well, he's tall and handsome and ... and so romantic. Oh, we walked together, and talked together, and just before we say goodbye, he takes me in his arms, and then ... I wake up. (00:26:58)

As a result, Disney produces an image of female young girls, which responds to Hollywood-like stereotypes, sweetness and kindness, what in Coventry Patmore's poem is known as "The Angel in the House". These values are transmitted to a young audience, which eventually interiorises that women are just beautiful bodies that have to behave properly and according to certain norms of "decorum".

Likewise, both films share another pivotal aspect that traditional fairy tales have maintained throughout history. Traditionally, marriage has been considered the ultimate realisation for a woman, a sort of triumph. In both films, the ending involves the union between the princesses and the princes who saved them from the evil witches. Moreover, in the case of Aurora, she did not have any other option than marrying prince Philip, since they had been betrothed when she was born and he was a toddler. In *Snow White*, they end up marrying, which turns out to be the utter fulfilment of the character's dream of her life,

> Snow white: I wish– I wish
> Queen: that's it. Go on. Go on.
> Snow white: ...and that he will carry me away to his castle... Where we will live happily ever after. (01:14:32)

Disney does not only enhance the idea of the "happily ever after" in both films, but also the idealization of romantic love as the termination of any previous dilemma. The previous passages support a traditional message that is subliminally conveyed through an animated film for children.

Even though these two films belong to the early Disney productions, following princess-like films will not transgress all traditional values. Even though *Beauty and the Beast* was released in the 90s, female characters in the movie are still exposed to most of the stereotypes that have been explained so far. The closing passage involves a marital ceremony between Belle and the Beast, now turned into a human prince. Although this film perpetuates the same ending as the other two, the journey that Belle has to go through to be loved by the Beast is more complex than the one by Aurora and Snow White, who were completely at the expense of their male companions and families. That evolution in Disney's repertoire has been discussed by Warner, who dismantles that allegedly transformation and clarifies the reality of this renewal. Warner also states that this film entailed a much more advanced vision of sexual politics than any other before due to "an audience of mothers who grew up with Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinern, who had daughters who listened to Madonna and Sinead O'Connor" (Warner 2015). So, the production team needed to create a heroine who will do things to her own tastes. In spite of that and the partial reshaping of several topics that the original tale contained, "the film placed before the 1990s audience Hollywood's cunning domestication of feminism itself"

(Warner 2015). So, the film that could have been a turning point in Disney's production, failed to transgress the boundaries of tradition.

In the same line with marriage, *Beauty and the Beast* aims to subvert assumptions related to female beauty, but it seems to fail as well. Initially, the film opens with the transformation of a prince into the Beast by a magic godmother. The narrator speaks:

> Once upon a time, in a faraway land, a young prince lived in a shining castle. Although he had everything his heart desired, the prince was spoiled, selfish and unkind. But then, one winter's night an old beggar woman went to the castle and offered him a single rose   in return for shelter from the bitter cold. Repulsed by her haggard appearance the prince sneered at the gift and turn the old woman away. But she warned him not to be deceived by appearances, for beauty is found within. And when he dismissed her again the old woman's ugliness melted away to reveal a beautiful enchantress. (00:01:18)

The idea of beauty is taken to a more abstract sense, as it is a trait that is not just an external or physical quality. Such idea is reinforced along the entire film, as Belle falls in love with the Beast when he was still an animal creature. By doing so, Belle is able to overcome the threshold of outward appearance. Disney's approach to the classic fairy tale aims to dismantle their previous idealisation of beauty as the only valuable female trait. In fact, there are some other female characters, the Bimbettes, who could respond to those female stereotypes. They are three sisters of approximately the same age as Belle and whose major goal is to draw the attention of Gaston, himself a caricature of the classic macho. Still, the movie presents a character that repeats the same physical appearance of Snow White or Aurora. She still embodies that Hollywood and fashionable beauty canons that are, in many cases, unattainable.

Another archetypical trait that Belle embodies and shares with Aurora and Snow White relates to their perfectly appropriate behaviour within their domestic sphere. The three of them are perfect epitomes of the good daughter. Davis describes them as, "(usually) a young woman who, out of loyalty to her good but naïve father, finds herself in a potentially threatening situation and must use all her personal resources to survive, an exercise which usually ends in personal triumph for the heroine (ch.6). They live up to their role as good, kind and generous girls, who accept their situations, no matter if that means to sacrifice part of their own selves. In the case of Belle, she knows that her father

is a man that needs her protection, because he does not have his wife to take care of him. In *Sleeping Beauty*, Aurora accepts her life with the three fairies without questioning. For Snow White, this is even a harder reality, as she has lost both her parents and she is under the Queen's commands, which relegates her to be a maid of the castle. Thus, the three princesses are eventually pushed to the repetition of the same traditional pattern.

Such repetition is imprinted in a society that also plays a crucial role in these adaptations. In the case of *Beauty and the Beast*, it is true that in social terms, there is a change of scope. As it has been stated before, this film's aim of subversion can be observed in the depiction of Belle as a bookworm and as a "different girl". Society mercilessly exposes that anomalous behaviour and they label her the strange one. She symbolises a new type of woman that challenges society's ideal of womanhood: "What a puzzle to the rest of us is Belle!" (00:05:42). Although society pinpoints her atypical personality, she does not change her will and she does not really pay attention to what they say. In comparison with the other two, their societies belong to a completely traditional ideology, which do not even participate actively in the plot, as it is understood that everyone agrees with the values that are portrayed. In this way, it is more than noticeable that *Beauty and the Beast* supports a female character whose particularities do not really fit in and whose behaviour is not exactly what society would expect from a woman. Still, she behaves according to other stereotypical and patriarchal notions that Disney has not yet challenged.

As opposed to the lack of feminist undertones in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Sleeping Beauty* and the insufficient attempts in *Beauty and the Beast*, Angela Carter positions herself as the radical fracture between fairy tales and their obsolete values. In *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, she includes a revision of the Grimm's tale "Little Briar Rose" under the title "The Snow Child". Although the tale is a fairly short one, its powerful message and images convey a very straightforward idea. In this tale, under the gothic setting of Midwinter, a couple of Counts encounter the magical presence of a young girl. This young girl with black hair, fair skin and red lips represents the Count's image of desire: "'I wish I had a girl as white as snow,' says the Count.… He says: 'I wish I had a girl as red as blood.' … 'I wish I had a girl as black as that bird's feather'" (115). This image seems to materialise de Beauvoir's theory about men creating women to their own desires. In this case, Carter transmits this idea by means of building up a traditional protagonist as Snow White through the Count's desires. She epitomises

what traditional fairy tales' writers have done to female protagonists, that is, to design them to their own benefits. Indeed, this male superiority is taken to the extreme as the Count rapes the young girl once she was killed by the Countess in a repulsive act of necrophilia. Therefore, Carter's intention addresses a double criticism towards male superiority both in fairy tales and in society.

Carter's re-interpretation of Perrault's canonical tale, "The Sleeping Beauty in the Woods", was entitled "The Lady of the House of Love" and, in it, she demonstrates her dexterity to rewrite and provide tales with completely opposed perspectives without missing details that echoed the classic. The tale narrates the story of a vampire Countess who lives in an isolated castle, where every man that dares to come closer is seduced and devoured by the mistress, except the hero of the tale, who manages to break the magic spell and turns the Countess into her most desired creature: a human. From that brief description, the tale introduces different subversive points that allow Carter to reshape and redefine the original story. According to the traditional canon of fairy tales, female protagonists are always secluded within the domestic realm. Carter uses this same location, but she places it apart from society as her protagonist is so powerful that society considers her dangerous. Besides, Carter refers to fairy tales from a double perspective: she recognises the female storytelling tradition and the relevant role that fairy tales have played in the patriarchal system of repetitions: "Her voice is filled with distant sonorities, like reverberations in a cave: now you are at the place of annihilation, now you are at the place of annihilation. And she is herself a cave full of echoes, she is a system of repetitions, she is a closed circuit" (118). In consonance with that, Carter also makes clear that the hero in the story is masculine, although the plot deals with the story of the Countess: "Had he been a cat, he would have bounced backwards from her hands on four fear-stiffened legs, but he is not a cat: he is a hero" (130). Therefore, both tales address an ironic and hard criticism towards the traditional tale, at the same time that Carter, in this case, introduces subversive elements that drastically question prior conceptions.

In "The Tiger's Bride", Carter rewrites the story of de Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast". She reconstructs the tale so that female characters are eventually empowered. However, she still maintains traditional motifs and ideas from the classic tale to criticise and expose them. Indeed, according to Bacchilega, this tale challenges morality by revising the family: "In Carter's story, the father's hypocrisy and weakness underscore for the daughter and ourselves the rottenness of a social order that trades (female) bodies to

sustain some privileged souls" (97). Carter keeps the traditional transaction between father and husband, where the female protagonist is completely dispossessed of any control over herself. Nevertheless, she oversteps her lack of control by her dominance of sexuality, becoming the tiger's wife. In addition, along there are some occasions in which some characters refer to the concept of honour about the female protagonist: "'Oh, no,' said the valet, fixing upon me wide and suddenly melancholy eyes. 'Oh, no, you will not. You are a woman of honour'" (71) or "'I'll run away, I'll ride to the city.' 'Oh, no,' he said. 'Are you not a woman of honour?'" (74). Carter addresses this traditional value that is always inextricably attached to women and she breaks this stereotype by creating a female protagonist who reaffirms herself in her sexuality and who challenges that traditional honour that has been a necessary –though imposed– value for women.

Those three examples found in Carter's collection uncover some parts of the backward morality and principles that fairy tales have traditionally conveyed. She unmasks female abuse by male figures, as is the case of the Count in "The Snow Child" or the father in "The Tiger's Bride". She also brings to light conservative and repressive concepts that are associated to womanhood such as innocence or honourability. Those are condemned in the three tales through different images like the raping act in "The Snow Child" where a young girl is abused by an older man; in "The Lady of the House of Love", through the representation of a female vampire, who in order to quench her thirst, bewitches all male visitors; or, in the case of "The Tiger's Bride", in which Carter introduces a female protagonist who retakes control and actively makes use of her sexuality, no matter the honour that she is reminded to keep on several occasions. With these aspects in mind, it is quite obvious that Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* can be considered a "revision" in Zipes' terms, as it is clear that she aims to alter all previous traditional patterns that those classic tales transmitted in a veiled and subliminal way.

Similarly to Carter's revisionist attitude, Emma Donoghue also introduces some other transgressive elements that seek to dismantle sexist and patriarchal images, in order to produce much more feminist and egalitarian fairy tales. The fourth tale of *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* is entitled "The Tale of the Apple". In it, she revises the story of Snow White to provide the tale with a much more liberating and revolutionary edge. Donoghue recreates the protagonist following the traditional image that Snow White has been traditionally associated with: "My mother said to her maid, The daughter

I carry will have hair as black as ebony, lips as red as blood, skin as white as snow" (44). Like the classic story, beauty turns out to be one of the major factors in this rewriting, as it drives the protagonist and her stepmother to fight. Still, Donoghue turns their female historical conflict for their beauty into love and acceptance. This transformation is the result of evolution and growth, as the protagonist is first prey of imposed values about the relationship among female characters, in particular between stepdaughter and stepmother: "I knew from the songs that a stepmother's smile is like a snake's, so I shut my mind to her from that very first day when I was rigid with the letting of first blood" (46). Despite that, the protagonist liberates herself from social restrains and traditional impositions and allows herself to reconsider her misconceptions about her stepmother. As Morales states, the protagonist revolts against the classic ending or against being rescued by the prince and she goes back to the castle where her stepmother lives (212). Therefore, Donoghue turns around the concepts of beauty and female confrontation to transmit a message of conciliation and acceptance.

In her rewriting of "Sleeping Beauty", Donoghue does not only challenge the idealisation of beauty and female ignorance, but also the immutable understanding of fairy tales. "The Tale of the Needle" narrates the story of a young girl, whose unique purpose in life has been to learn the list of her virtues, which embodied a clear patriarchal insight, as they were all attached to the traditional image of a "good girl": "The only lesson I had to learn was the list of my virtues: how my face was the fairest, my wit the sharpest, my heart the most angelic, my singing the most comparable to a lark's in all the land. Everyone who set eyes on me fell in love with me, I was told" (169). In this regard, the protagonist as a child was taught by her parents to fit in the classic canon for women. Their ambition to keep their daughter within the tight boundaries of patriarchy led her to be completely ignorant about anything apart from what her parents told her: "Whenever I asked a question that began with why, I would be told that things were done just as they had always been done for a hundred years before . What reason could there be to change?" (170). Interestingly, this quote reveals the unchanging and invariable aspect of fairy tales that Donoghue attempts to challenge in the whole collection (Fernández 14). Likewise, it resembles the immutability of women's position in history, where traditions and values should always remain intact for the sake of preserving men's control. Donoghue's daring rewriting also defies tradition in that she rebuilds the image of evil old women. In this tale, an old woman is the protagonist's saviour, she acts as the liberating force rather than

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an adversary. For all these, the resulting tale traces a hopeful evolution for a young girl who seemed to be initially caught in her own naivety.

Donoghue's reinterpretation of "Beauty and the Beast", entitled "The Tale of the Rose", deals with female evolution towards freedom in a society that is marked by stereotypical roles and beliefs based on tradition. Once again, the story begins with a beautiful protagonist, but in this case, she understands that this trait is not really crucial: "I was beautiful, or so my father told me. My oval mirror showed me a face with nothing written on it. I had suitors aplenty but wanted none of them: their doggish devotion seemed too easily won" (27). As this quote reveals, her personality is also original, as she does not place her ultimate desires on finding a man that will just like her for her physical appearance. In consonance with that, when she encounters the Beast, she is also haunted by her preconceived ideas based on traditional assumptions, as she seems unable to identify the real essence of the Beast: "'Taking leave on the steps,' the beast said, 'I must tell you before you go: I am not a man.' I knew it. Every tale I had ever heard of trolls, ogres, goblins, rose to my lips. The beast said, 'You do not understand.' But I was riding away" (37). Donoghue frees the protagonist from those restrains and she evolves to understand the hidden identity of the Beast. She makes use of one of the most famous essays by Virginia Woolf, "A Room of One's Own" and finds a room of her own within the Beast's castle: "I had a room of my own, and time and treasures at my command. I had everything I could want except the key to the story" (34). The ending of the tale is another point of divergence, as the protagonist discovers the femaleness of the Beast and both of them remain together in the castle. Giving voice to lesbian relationships in fairy tales is another pivotal trait to Donoghue's writings and tales. Hence, the tale transgresses the boundaries of tradition and opens the path for new endings and new beginnings.

Considering all the above mentioned about Donoghue, it is more than obvious how the author rewrites and revises traditional notions in the tales with a clear purpose of dismantling sexism and patriarchy. In her tales, Donoghue leaves the door open for subversion and evolution from classic restrains imposed by society and old-fashioned mores. Nevertheless, Donoghue maintains the essence of the fairy tale by keeping its aestheticism and rhetoric. This idea is supported by other scholars like Harries, who points out that Donoghue "retains the apparently timeless settings and simple language that we associate with tales" (130). *Kissing the Witch* acts as a reassessing collection for fairy

tales whose protagonists are released from the social and gender yoke that has been repeatedly imposed on women.

Putting together the works of Disney, Carter and Donoghue makes clear the adverse ideology they convey. Just by considering their images of female characters, Disney praises a clearly traditional depiction, as all the protagonists fit in the beauty canon of the time when the films were released. Furthermore, it is not just that they are part of that canon, but that they also follow classic morality about "proper behaviour", naivety and goodness. On the other hand, Carter and Donoghue depict female protagonists that completely subvert those manners and values that classic fairy tales permeate. Their protagonists make use of their power, sexuality and personal growth to transgress and rearrange their stories. In that same regard, neither Carter nor Donoghue rely on the final happy wedding, as their tales try to question the patriarchal assumption that the ultimate realisation of a woman and the end of her problems comes down to marrying their prince-saviour. On the contrary, the three Disney films end up with this moment as a symbol of their conservative ideology and their almost exact copy to classic fairy tales.

Female objectification: passivity

When the terms "female" and "fairy tales" are placed together, it goes without saying that they relate female figures to an image of submission and docility that classic tellers have imbued in their writings. Those values were part of the popular assumptions that society used to define the female-self. Women, whether in society or in fiction, have been depicted as passive figures who are unable to break away from the control of male figures, who, at the same time, used them as mere goods that could be bought, sold, traded or exchanged. Such male behaviour forced women to survive in a society where they lacked all type of authority over their lives. With this in mind, fairy tale writers adopted that behaviour and they introduced that message into their pieces, becoming one of the most important sources of gender discrimination towards women. However, the feminist reshaping that fairy tales withstood along the 20th century and afterwards, aimed to overturn the unfair treatment women had undergone in these stories. For that, Donoghue and Carter sought to include women that are not run by their parents, that try to challenge passive roles imposed on them or that reach independence from old restrains through a learning process or individual growth. Yet, not all the new adaptations, like Walt

Disney's, achieved to strip their work from unequal representation of women, eventually strengthening female mistreatment.

In Disney's filmography, there are some examples supporting that patriarchal behaviour that relegated women to be just possessions. *Sleeping Beauty* or *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* are two of those instances that build up female figures from a completely motionless perspective whose lives are driven by male choices. In *Sleeping Beauty*, Aurora's lack of control over her life is driven by her royalty and her womanhood. As it has been previously discussed, she has been betrothed since she was a baby. So, she has been disposed of any type of control from the beginning of her life. This displacement emanates from her female nature and her role as a princess, where parents have the complete control over her future. Right from the opening of the film, we can clearly observe this behavioural pattern: "Fondly had these monarchs dreamed one day their kingdoms to unite. Thus today would they announce that Phillip, Hubert's son and heir to Stefan's child would be betrothed. And so to her his gift he brought, and looked, unknowing, on his future bride" (00:04:31). This arranged marriage symbolises the peak of female objectification. As a woman, Aurora is the exchange coin for her father to unify kingdoms with a different family. Therefore, her worth emanates from her treatment as a property by her father and in-laws.

Notwithstanding, Aurora's arranged marriage just represents a tiny bit of the female underrepresentation that this film conveys. As the title itself indicates, this is the story of a beautiful princess who falls into a deep death-like sleep because of Maleficent's curse. That slumber represents the culmination of female passivity, as she is incidentally pushed into a completely inactive state. In opposition to that, the active role in the film is just played out by male characters, as it happened with her father, and now with her fiancé, Prince Phillip, who wakes Aurora from her sleep with a kiss. Once again, in de Beauvoir's studies about fairy tales and female passivity, she notes the role that women played in them:

> She [the young girl] learns that in order to be happy she must be loved; in order to be loved, she has to wait for love. Woman is Sleeping Beauty, Cap O'Rushes, Cinderella, Snow White, the one who receives and endures. In songs and tales you see a young man departing adventurously to seek the woman; he slays dragons, he fights against giants; she is confined in a tower, a castle, a garden, a cavern, chained to a rock, captive, sleeping: she is waiting. *One day my prince will come*.

> *Some day he'll come along, the man I love*, the popular choruses in still her dreams
> of patience and hope. Woman's supreme necessity is to charm the male heart; they
> may be intrepid, adventurous, this is, however, the reward all heroines are striving
> for; and most often the only virtue. (306)

So, the resulting image that Disney reproduces in *Sleeping Beauty* is of a female protagonist who is never in charge of her own destiny and whose role is completely dependent, because of the patriarchal society that constrains her.

In relation to this idea, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* falls into the same association of women with passivity and powerlessness. Like in the case of Aurora, Snow White also falls into a deep sleep that puts her in a glass coffin until the arrival of her saving Prince Charming. These opposed roles of female and male characters support Helénè Cixous's theory about the "patriarchal binary thought", where the pair "Activity/Passivity" refers to male actors and female passives (115). That male and female division forces women to be passive or to disappear from the narrative (Wilhelmsson 3). Consequently, Snow White has to behave according to her role in the narrative: the inactive princess, whose fate is in the Prince's hands. Both Snow White and Aurora act according to the patriarchal thought that pressed them to hope nothing else than the love of a wonderful prince, who might save her like a damsel in distress. Their education in a system of female oppression and sexist behaviour relegates them to their inactive conduct. According to Harries, that female behaviour portrayed in tales reinforced submission and resignation:

> The "sleep" of Sleeping Beauty or of Snow White in her glass coffin, the
> uncomplaining self-abnegation of Cinderella, the patience and silence of the
> sisters who work to save their seven or twelve brothers, the princesses who must
> be rescued from towers or briar hedges or forests or servitude—all these seem to
> provide the patterns for feminine passivity and martyrdom. (13)

Thus, female passivity does not only permeate most classic tales, but also Disney's versions. The roles and the performance of women in these two films do not challenge previous tales in any aspect.

Unlike in these two films, in *Beauty and the Beast*, Disney gives a glimmer of hope in the midst of that previous "female sleep". Characters like Gaston or the Bimbettes expose the transformation that Disney aimed to achieve with this film. Gaston, the ironic

representation of the macho, acts like the brutish, sexist and controlling male, who just seeks to put Belle under his domain. His behaviour fits perfectly into the traditional profile of the dominant man, as he himself expresses in this conversation with his fellow squire Lefou:

> Lefou: Huh. No beast alive stands a chance against you…and no girl for that matter!
>
> Gaston: It's true, Lefou, and I've got my sights set on that one! (pointing to Belle)
>
> Lefou: The inventor's daughter?
>
> Gaston: She's the one! The lucky girl I'm going to marry.
>
> Lefou: But she's--
>
> Gaston: The most beautiful girl in town. (00:06:45)

Some critics, such as Marina Warner or Susan Jeffords, agree that Gaston embodies the most beast-like characteristics within society. Jeffords points out that Gaston "is, clearly, the external social version of the prince's flaw. At large in the world, Gaston seeks to gratify only his own interests and epitomizes the quality of selfishness" (169). On the other hand, the Bimbettes play Gaston's role, but on the female side. Their behaviour exaggerates female passivity and objectification. They are not able to understand Gaston's patriarchal codes and they appear as submissive and excessively sexualised characters. Therefore, *Beauty and the Beast* depicts some points differently from *Sleeping Beauty* or *Snow White*, as an attempt to change the scope, still those apparent transformations do not achieve a real subversion whether of sexism or conservative conducts as they fail in other points also key to the issue.

In that line, *Beauty and the Beast* fails at other points that again impel Disney to perpetuate an old-fashioned vision of female characters. Disney uses Belle's father as the excuse for her arrival to the Beast's castle. She gets there to save her father and decides to give her life in exchange for his. Though her father's mourning and resistance, she becomes the Beast's prisoner. By doing so, Belle's decision is the perfect example of female martyrdom that Harries described, she gives her own life to another man, the Beast. According to Davis, this first sacrifice and the ending of the film, where Belle saves the Beast by accepting her love for him, thus, breaking the spell that kept him as a monster, epitomises the idea of female sacrifice and unselfishness, whereas an "act by a man improves nothing" (ch.6). In this regard, Belle's role is much more active than

Aurora's or Snow White's, but still, she is underrated and marked by her female nature, where sacrifice and redemption is intrinsic to her condition.

Disney's conservative and biased representation of female actions diverges radically from Carter's disruptive and ground-breaking challenge to female passivity. In her stories, Carter reveals the negative effects and the extremely destructive consequences that female lack of ownership brings about to their lives. In "The Lady of the House of Love" and in "The Snow Child", she describes women's complete subjugation. In the former, Carter depicts a dangerous female vampire Countess, who seems to terrorize her castle. In spite of her menacing and dangerous essence, she cannot change her future. As this quote reveals, she usually plays Tarot cards that always foretell the same fortune:

> All claws and teeth, she strikes, she gorges; but nothing can console her for the ghastliness of her condition, nothing. She resorts to the magic comfort of the Tarot pack and shuffles the cards, lays them out, reads them, gathers them up with a sigh, shuffles them again, constantly constructing hypotheses about a future which is irreversible. (120)

In this trailer for her future, she always is advocated to remain the same for all her life, despite her powerful self. Indeed, that "irreversibleness of her future" resembles the difficult path that women had gone through until subversion and feminism. Besides, Carter draws another detail that helps to convey that feeling of passivity and lack of freedom: she uses the Countess' caged lark to symbolise her entrapment and impossibility to learn something different from what she had known before. Still, the arrival of the masculine hero triggers her instincts to change and to liberate herself: "And could love free me from the shadows? Can a bird sing only the song it knows, or can it learn a new song?… One kiss, however, and only one, woke up the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood" (130). Regardless of her liberation from her vampire permanent state, it is the hero that eventually saves her.

Similarly to that strategy about keeping male dominance, Carter conceives "The Snow Child" as a way to denounce the complete suppression of women under men's authority. Differing from "The Lady of the House of Love", in this story there are two women protagonists, the Countess and the Snow Child, and one man, the Count. Even though there are more female characters, the plot is dominated by the Count's desires. As it has been explained before, he creates the girl following his dream-type. All this process

exemplifies the culmination of female objectification, as she is, first, a de-humanised creation, and second, a possession. Carter does not only present a character that has no say whatsoever in the narrative to highlight her paralysed state, but also she describes how the Count satisfies his desire with her dead body. So, not even in death has she any sort of power over herself. According to Bacchilega, the necrophiliac event does not bring any resurrection to the Child, "as the Count satisfies his desire, the girl, whose living flesh never really was, melts back into her post-initiation symbolic ingredients—no snow, but a (black) feather, a bloodstain, and a rose" (38). In this regard, it seems as though the Snow Child were never alive. On the contrary, the other female character, the Countess, has more power than the child, but still she is also another possession of the Count. In short, he has the complete control over both characters.

So, are both stories enhancing male superiority and supporting female passivity in the same way Disney's adaptations do? The answer is obvious. In her tales, Carter explores the excesses of lifeless womanhood and abusive men to denounce that ongoing historical association in fairy tales. She confronts this patriarchal behaviour by putting them in front of their own mirror, where the same interiorised sexism makes, in Carter's words, the bottles explode. In this vein, Lorna Sage upholds Carter's command of irony and sharpness to transform the concept of the ideal woman. In a way, she is the master that could "see the wood for the trees" (1998: 55). Additionally, Carter also enables women to empower themselves in sexual terms, of course, not in the case of the Snow Child, but definitely in the vampire Countess. She uses her sexuality as a mechanism for self-empowerment. Therefore, it is easy to state that the answer to the question is no, Carter openly declares her desire of transgression and subversion of the historical female passivity.

Sexuality is a recurrent issue that Carter addresses to overcome this female inaction and to challenge false myths about female innocence and "appropriate behaviour". One example of this reassessment of sexuality appears in "The Tiger's Bride". The protagonist takes over a life that has been controlled by her father, using her sexual power to reaffirm herself, becoming a tiger. This passage where the protagonist argues about the soft requirement that the Beast has asked her to do captures the essence of her untameable and challenging nature:

Take off my clothes for you, like a ballet girl? Is that all you want of me? 'The sight of a young lady's skin that no man has seen before—' stammered the valet.

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I wished I'd rolled in the hay with every lad on my father's farm, to disqualify myself from this humiliating bargain. That he should want so little was the reason why I could not give it; I did not need to speak for The Beast to understand me. (73)

The protagonist overcomes the inactivity that she had been forced to interiorize and turns it into power and fierceness. Her transformation into a tiger does not just symbolise her subversion, but it also brings closer both male and female characters. In this sense, Bacchilega remarks the idea of reconciliation between both tigers and their male and female self: "It lets a female protagonist reject a self-effacing subjectivity, and embrace—literally—an exuberant and undomesticated one. It turns the war of the sexes into a fleshly encounter based on a reciprocal, male and female pact of life" (99). For those reasons, Carter strips the story of any previous female martyrs and innocents present in older rewritings to build up her own from a feminist and radical rearrangement of female sexuality and freedom.

Following Carter's provocative reshaping of the female self, Donoghue puts her retellings at the service of female liberation and emancipation from male dominance. One of the clearest examples of female independence appears in "The Tale of the Needle". This rewriting articulates the process of a girl's release from parental overprotection through her own personal and intellectual growth. As Morales suggests, her overcontrolling parents wanted to leave her empty, quoting Donoghue: "as black as a page" (213). Her evolution comes about due to her adolescence awakening and her need to discover new things different from the vacuous and patriarchal indoctrination that her parents gave her. Indeed, this growing process is initially strange to her, "the worms of discontent had got into my veins somehow" (173). However, as she finds a source of knowledge in an old woman in a tower of her castle, her world moves rapidly towards freedom. Donoghue encapsulates the girl's blossoming through another traditional element, the spinning wheel, which emerges as the symbol of knowledge, , as all that wisdom that she had been denied and that has nothing to do with knitting skills. Contrary to Perrault's tale or Disney's adaptation, Donoghue places a woman as the agent that passes knowledge onto another woman, not a man that takes the lead and saves the princess. Therefore, this tale deconstructs the association of passivity and femininity, subverting the traditional categorisation of women under male control.

In "The Tale of the Apple", Donoghue pursues the same revisionist strategy to dismantle masculine domination over women and to restore female empowerment. The narration introduces two main female characters, the protagonist and her stepmother; and one main male character, the king, who is in control of both women. In the case of his wife, he forces her to give him an heir by all means, without questioning the nature of their problems to have a boy-child:

> He questioned every doctor who passed through the mountains. He made his young wife drink cow's blood, to strengthen her, though it turned her stomach. Finally he forbade her to go walking in the orchard with me, or lift a hand, or do anything except lie on her back and wait to find herself with child, the child who would be his longed-for son. (48-49)

His void of self-reflexion epitomises the unquestioning of all those patriarchal ideals that removed autonomy from women. Indeed, he tries to bring both women face to face, as if they were his own personal fighting animals. By doing so, his behaviour reveals sexism and dominance. However, both the protagonist and the stepmother go through a cathartic process that liberate both from their own female passivity. Through a healing process, they, as stepdaughter and stepmother, reach forgiveness and acceptance, as these final lines describe: "I made them set me down, and I got out of the box, deaf to their clamor. I stared around me till I could see the castle, tiny against the flame-colored forest, away up the hill. I turned my face toward it, and started walking" (58). Donoghue's words transgress initial male dominance and control, turning it into another step towards women's growth.

Another story where Donoghue denounces the unfair treatment women have endured, leads her again to open the doors for female characters that have gone through that dreadful abuse. "The Tale of the Rose" keeps the historically repeated pattern in which the father of the protagonist gives his daughter away to the Beast, as it happens in Carter's "The Tiger's Bride". Yet, here, the father had sold her to the Beast: "He gripped my wrist and said, Daughter, I have sold you" (30). Although this already makes clear the power that fathers had over women, Donoghue goes one step further. She changes the masculine essence of the traditional Beast into a queen in disguise. Obviously, that is not casual. In doing so, Donoghue builds up the character of the Beast-Queen as a symbol that represents the excesses of patriarchal authority. The queen was forced to that monstrosity or Otherness, since she had refused to follow the socially accepted behaviour

for a queen and a woman. Indeed, she explains the reason why she is captured in that situation to the protagonist, in order to strip her of all previous assumptions:

> I was a slow learner but a stubborn one. It took me days to learn that there was nothing monstrous about this woman who had lived alone in a castle, setting all her suitors riddles they could make no sense of, refusing to do the things queens are supposed to do, until the day when, knowing no one who could see her true face, she made a mask and from then on showed her face to no one . It took me weeks to understand why the faceless mask and the name of a beast might be chosen over all the great world had to offer. (39-40)

In this regard, Morales concludes that the queen was punished for defending her autonomy and for rejecting all the norms that vertebrate patriarchy (210). In this like vein and recovering another pivotal feminist theory, Donoghue recalls the essence of the "Other", studied by Simone de Beauvoir.[6] She identifies a double "Otherness" in the queen: she is the "Other" as a woman and the "Other" to the protagonist and to the rest of female characters. Donoghue's rewriting revises all previous impositions and oppression endured by women at the hands of a deeply conservative and sexist society.

Accordingly, these three stories rewritten by Donoghue capture female evolution from initial patriarchal dominance. In the tales, the three protagonists experience, first, the traditional common-shared inactivity that young girls have been always exposed to. Donoghue places them within the household of controlling parents, where their chances to grow are very limited. This is because they are trapped within a patriarchal system that just seeks to keep them away from any source of power over themselves. Nevertheless, Donoghue sparks their inner strength in different actions that break the magic spell of passivity. In the case of "The Tale of the Needle", the protagonist subverts her "blankness" through a learning process and intellectual growth guided by an older woman. The protagonist of "The Tale of the Apple" transforms her "fate" when she leaves behind her conservative ideas about female rivalry. Evolution is also the key to "The Tale of the Rose", where the protagonist defies society and learns to release herself ideologically and sexually from another woman. As a result, Donoghue builds up a series

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[6] de Beauvoir states in *The Second Sex*: "Since the earliest days of the patriarchy they [men] have thought best to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes of law have been set up against her; and thus she has been definitely established as the Other" (171).

of stories in which evolution and sorority are the two essential mechanisms to dismantle patriarchal impositions.

Before Donoghue, Carter pursued the same goal to challenge conservative ideas to give power back to women. Similarly to Donoghue, Carter depicts how women were silenced, ostracised and run by backward men, who had the complete control over their past, present and future. However, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* dismantles passivity from a much more radical and critical perspective. Contrary to Donoghue, not all the tales end up in a moment of release. Carter captures the evils of patriarchal dominance to expose and punish it. She uses sexuality as female power in "The Lady of the House of Love" and "The Tiger's Bride", even though each story finishes quite differently: the former dies punished for her excesses and her powerful and dangerous stance, and the latter achieves transformation into a powerful creature. In "The Snow Child", the English writer narrates the extreme subjugation and objectification of women by male figures. For that reason, Carter and Donoghue's collections reassess and recall female passivity and objectification through diverse strategies, but, again, with the same target.

In their own personal styles and strategies, both authors revise the classic stories to give them other possibilities and to overthrow patriarchal discrimination. They get rid of Prince Charming, saving kisses, self-sacrificing princesses and the romanticising of female resignation. In their stories, they claim the relocation and readdressing of female will, power and the decision to dismantle the notions that tellers like the Grimms or Perrault imposed on women. As Maria Micaela Coppola states, both authors challenge old motifs and, at the same time, they involve the reader in their process of creating new meanings and dismantling old ones:

> Carter and Donoghue do not merely recombine traditional motifs, but they re-create and, at the same time, undo the link with tradition and with the literary canon; in doing so, hey make this link visible to the reader. Starting from their experience as informed and gendered readers, the writers assume the role of performers of new meanings. They use and manipulate the material at their disposal, and invite the reader to do so. The literary canon is deconstructed by these acts of re-reading and re-writing that show its limits and blind spots. The reader, in turn, is made to observe these blanks, and redefine these limits. Thus, Carter's and Donoghue's texts, while preserving a continuous confrontation with

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tradition, are new, original and displacing for the reader, also in the way they accomplish their performative function. (134)

Comparing Carter and Donoghue's approach in their rewritings with the characteristics that Disney portrays in the abovementioned adaptations about female passivity and objectification, it is easy to conclude that it still perpetuates deeply conservative and anachronic notions. In these films, female protagonists seem to be paralyzed in a plot that is driven by others. Aurora and Snow White are put into a long-lasting sleep, which symbolises their role throughout the entire plot: passivity. In Belle's case, her activity is rewarded with redemption and sacrifice. In addition, Disney romanticises their motionless behaviour as their key to success: they all end up finding the love of their lives reaching their ultimate lifegoal. On an opposite note, Carter and Donoghue try to debunk all those unquestioned assumptions in order to find success in female liberation. In this regard, both writers intend to create more feminist tales, where female characters are in control over their own future.

Female rivalry

When analysing fairy tales in depth, it apparently seems as though there were many different female characters who play their role in the plot, usually as protagonists or, if not, as relevant characters. According to this, in fairy tales, princesses, queens, stepmothers, witches, fairies or maids are usually involved in the main plot of the story. This plurality of female characters could result in tales based on women helping each other, on a kind of sisterhood in which they would unite against the evil forces that menace them. However, classic tellers used that female presence to portray a reality that has haunted women along the course of history: their rivalry against each other. The result of this is the recurrent representation of women as opponents and adversaries they need to defeat. In addition, women are relegated to belong to two contrary worlds: the world of goodness, innocence and kindness or the world of evil, witchcraft and obscurity. Such behavioural pattern that female characters embodied was reinforced by patriarchy, which took this woman rivalry as the key to success. For that reason, postmodern feminist revisionists explored this aspect to reassess and replace those destructive relationships among women with more positive and healthy ones, even creating a sense of female bonding and sorority. In spite of this, not all the works produced during this revisionist

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period will transgress the barrier of rivalry, acting again as enhancers of patriarchal impositions.

As one of the greatest defenders of fairy tales, Walt Disney's films were also responsible for the continuation of the ill-relationship between women and their clear-cut classification between good women and evil witches. Films like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Sleeping Beauty* stand out for the pure innocence of their princess-protagonists and the opposed evil and coldness of their maleficent villains. Accordingly, these two films have been included in what Jeanine Basinger and Lucy Fischer coined as "female double films", which is considered a subgenre that belongs to the category of Women's Film and it is characterised by the representation of two women who are usually sisters or almost identical in appearance where one is represented as good and the other one as evil (qtd. by Davis ch.4). Such an opposition emphasises the distance that women need to impose on each other, at the same time that it reinforces the menace that female beings play on each other. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Snow White is the antithesis of the Queen, whose looks are almost identical, both beautiful, but one symbolising the ideal innocent young girl and the other the attractiveness of an obscure powerful woman. That beauty that is contained in their two particular personalities divides women and transmits the idea that women who seem very alike can either be extremely inoffensive and passive or malevolent and dangerous. Disney does not just strengthen such discrimination, but it also pinpoints the intrinsic inner evil that exists between women. Although both characters could have united themselves to live in peace as step-relatives, Disney splits them as two rivals, whose confrontation leads them even to kill one another. Indeed, there are different characters in the film who develop a relationship with each woman –the Dwarfs and Prince Charming with Snow White or the Huntsman with the Queen– and they all have something in common: they are all men who help and even save them. As it is, men are again adopting a role that places them as good and comprehensive, whereas women are Machiavellian and contriving. For that reason, this cinematographic adaptation does not subvert any previous texts, which also support an image of female beings as adversaries and perpetuate the same assumptions.

In *Sleeping Beauty*, Aurora and Maleficent follow the same pattern as Snow White and the Queen. Similar in appearance, both beautiful and normative, they fight against each other due to Maleficent's innate mischievousness, which sees Aurora as the target of her tyrannical attitude. In addition, in this film there are other female figures who also

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fight Maleficent back, yet they are not powerful enough to stop her. That plurality of women, invisible in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, does not open new paths or opportunities for female relations, but rather enhances the same notion about rivalry. It is true that, in this case, Disney gives voice to other type of female connections such as the protective and mother-like behaviour embodied by the Fairies or the daughter relationship that Aurora establishes with them. Nevertheless, the evil force that threatens the equilibrium remains female. Maleficent is still moved by her greed and her instincts which collides with the joyful and peaceful society where Aurora's parents reign:

> Many sad and lonely years passed by for King Stefan and his people. But as the time for the princesses sixteenth birthday drew near, the entire kingdom began to rejoice. For everyone knew that as long as Maleficent's domain, the forbidden mountains, thundered with her wrath and frustration, her evil prophecy had not yet been fulfilled. (00:15:15)

Thus, in both adaptations Disney supports that opposition between women because of the nature of their acts. The repetition of this pattern relates to Butler's theory about "performative gender" in which "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeal in time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33). As a result, female characters emerge as the menace that represents an inevitable and recurrent pattern that forces them to turn their face to the darkest side, transforming women into monsters that will always keep a rivalry among them.

On a different note about Snow White and her relationship with the Queen, Disney includes their daughter-stepmother relationship, retaking another traditional motif in fairy tales. Disney keeps the hostile relationship between both characters, showing once again a very distorted and negative image of women. Traditionally, fairy tales have turned to the stepmother as the opponent to the caring mother, making this woman the source of all new problems in the family and as the usurper of any previous mother figure. Indeed, they are usually depicted as the person who comes to steal all that is not hers: first the father and, then, all the rest. Disney states this idea right from the beginning of the film, where both characters are presented. According to Harries, "the wicked stepmothers, witches, and fairies have come to represent the dangers older, powerful women seem to pose in our culture" (13). Indeed, in the case of Aurora and Maleficent, even though they do not exemplify this stepmother-daughter relationship, the latter represents all that is

opposed to what a woman should be: she is wise, powerful and independent. All those attributes are opposed to the idea of a "proper woman" embodied in Aurora's mother, the queen, whose behaviour very much epitomises that of the perfect lady. That contraposition emphasises the female binarism and it highlights the difference between a "fallen woman" and a "proper" one.

Contrary to the images of female villains and their rivalry with the protagonists that Disney presented in these two films, *Beauty and the Beast* portrays a more abstract reflection of this behavioural pattern. In this film, Belle does not face any aggressive or problematic woman who tries to kill her or disrupt her ideal life. However, she is still haunted by society, which acts as the personification of an appropriately feminine behaviour. Belle has to struggle in a village where her behaviour is understood as strange and unfemale. In this case, she embodies the negative essence, becoming the monster, witch, and the society and their precepts, the princess in need. Still, it is true that in this film Disney does not introduce a female villain, but neither did the classic tale. Despite that, the opening scene refers also to a magical mysterious woman who condemns the Prince to become a Beast. She does not act due to her anger or evil against another woman, but she is depicted as powerful, and, therefore, dangerous. Of course, there is not a sombre witch or stepmother that menaces Belle, but the story keeps punishing a woman because she is different to the rest and her behaviour could be very likely to challenge patriarchal thought. In addition to that, Belle's transgression is limited: her likes and ideals seem more unusual, but she still keeps performing her duties and she is willing to sacrifice herself for her father and the Beast, as it has been discussed in the section "Female objectification: passivity". Indeed, she acts within the boundaries of female appropriateness, but she is still punished either way: she is blamed for being a challenge to society and for being a woman. Hence, regardless of portraying a setting where women are not rivals or where society does not blame a woman for her behaviour, this Disney film does not just elude any type of reassessment, but it keeps punishing these female characters simply for the sake of being women.

The representation of wicked witches or evil stepmothers is not exclusive from Disney, Angela Carter also used these characters to denounce their dreadful treatment as female and to expose the traditional female rivalry, one of the pillars of patriarchy. The best example is found in "The Snow Child", where the evil Countess avoids helping the girl and she punishes her for being a sinful creature that has stolen her man. Carter depicts a coldblooded woman, the Countess, whose behaviour responds better to the traditional

symbol of the *femme fatale*. Nevertheless, Carter gives a different tint to this character and includes some traits that allows the writer to trespass the typical image embraced by classic tellers. Bacchilega states that this relation is that way due to the setting, as the sole relationship that could exist between these women is of rivalry "to survive at the other woman's expense", for that, there is no space for human growth nor transformation (38). Although this is the relationship existing between these two female protagonists, it is the Count who carries out the most dreadful actions: he rapes the dead body of the girl. Still, while doing so, Carter describes his actions as if they were driven by sadness and the Countess' behaviour as the real harmful act, as this quote exemplifies: "Weeping, the Count got off his horse, unfastened his breeches and thrust his virile member into the dead girl. The Countess reined in her stamping mare and watched him narrowly; he was soon finished" (116). However, it is the Count that is actually perpetrating the crime, but it feels as though it were the Countess' fault. Undoubtedly, her behaviour is punishable, but Carter's rewriting raises a question in the reader where there is a clear responsible for the atrocity: the Count. Additionally, the Countess also displays features that are forbidden for women: she is sexy, dangerous and provocative: "The Count and his wife go riding, he on a grey mare and she on a black one, she wrapped in the glittering pelts of black foxes; and she wore high, black, shining boots with scarlet heels, and spurs" (115). In conclusion, Carter includes the figure of the female villain who is empty of empathy and humanity and is doubly punished: due to her female nature and her husband's crimes, although what happens in the story is triggered by a man.

In "The Lady of the House of Love" and "The Tiger's Bride", the English writer avoids including a type of female villain who threatens the life and happiness of the protagonist, but she also incorporates transgressive elements that aim at dismantling traditional patterns of rivalry between women. In the former, there are two characters that take part in the plot, the vampire Countess and her maid. In this relationship there is a woman that is over the other in terms of power, one is the mistress and the other is her servant. However, although this could have led Carter to portray a woman superior to the other or even jealous of each other, there is no reference to any kind of connection between the two. Contrary to Disney's version of this tale, where the importance of Maleficent and her evil spirit against Aurora plays the main role, Carter deletes that figure and decides to belittle female disputes to stress other aspects without criticising all female characters.

That strategy to avoid this matter or to give it less importance is followed in "The Tiger's Bride", where ill-relationships among women are practically non-existent or if present, they are subversive. In this case, the tale makes reference to a woman who is despised by other women and mocked due to her supposed ugliness. She is the mother of the Beast, who is not just punished with the birth of a lion, but also, with the scorn of the rest of society, including other women. The protagonist hears about this gossip, which also serves as a lesson about women condemning others:

> In our lost farmyard, where the giggling nursemaids initiated me into the mysteries of what the bull did to the cows, I heard about the waggoner's daughter. Hush, hush, don't let on to your nursie we said so; the waggoner's lass, hare-lipped, squint-eyed, ugly as sin, who would have taken her? Yet, to her shame, her belly swelled amid the cruel mockery of the ostlers and her son was born of a bear, they whispered. Born with a full pelt and teeth; that proved it. (67)

This mockery points to female separation and competition rather than union, in addition to the repetitive acknowledgment of gender where female beings learn to hate and to question each other. Therefore, Carter discards the need of a female villain, even though she takes the chance of subverting and questioning that women must be adversaries.

Comparing Carter's short stories and Disney's films, their contrary approach in their reshaping of female connections is quite visible. In the case of Disney's filmography, some women appear to be the communal feature that challenge the happiness and peace in both *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. They are presented as the source of evil and danger through characters like witches and stepmothers. Besides, in the case of *Beauty and the Beast*, where the character of the evil woman is not obviously present, there are still situations in which this female rivalry is more than noticeable. On the contrary, Carter turns the tables by exaggerating the image of the evil woman in "The Snow Child". This tale portrays the stepmother as a deeply harmful individual, who uses sexuality and malice to puzzle both the protagonist and the reader. Nevertheless, through this character, Carter exposes that dreadful behaviour that has been traditionally associated with women. In this line, she follows that same pattern in the following tales without including a character that epitomises all these characteristics, but still challenging this patriarchal value. As a result, Disney's versions are constantly echoing those classic tales where women fight and, in doing so, they provide patriarchy with one of the

strongest allies: themselves. On the other hand, Carter's rewritings target at this structural consideration of womanhood to dismantle and to question its foundations.

Where Carter sees the need to mistrust and to break, Donoghue bets on a reassessment that results in sorority and love. Donoghue recreates her stories unifying women to regain the strength that patriarchal tales have removed. In "The Tale of the Apple", she keeps the two female characters that appear in the traditional tale and in Disney's version. Their story starts parallel to the classic, the protagonist's mother passed away and her figure is replaced by another woman who falls in love with the king. As it seems, the beginning resembles Disney's film, but regardless of this, Donoghue radically subverts their essence as stepmother and daughter. As it has been previously stated, both protagonists get over traditional beliefs, which according to their familiar conditions should lead them to be as adversaries. Against all the established, Donoghue gives the protagonist and her stepmother the liberating and individualistic tools to learn and to evolve from their initial tensions:

> The apple was half ripe. One side was green, the other red. She bit into the green side and swallowed and smiled. I took the apple from her without a word, bit into the red side, and began to choke. Fear and excitement locked in struggle in my throat, and blackness seeped across my eyes. I fell to the ground. … I bit down, and juice ran to the corners of my lips. It was not poisoned. It was the first apple of the year from my father's orchard. I chewed till it was eaten up and I knew what to do. (57-58)

Besides this evolution towards (self)acceptance, the writer introduces how this female rivalry has been traditionally supported and instigated by some men. The king, here the link between the two women and a powerful figure, is prone to put them against each other, as he explicitly states in this quote: "He put his head back and laughed to see us. Two such fair ladies, he remarked, have never been seen on one bed. But which of you is the fairest of them all?" (47). Donoghue does not only challenge traditional female connections, but also their supporters, who also upheld patriarchal ideology and female repression.

Another clear reassessment of female relations takes place in Donoghue's rewriting of Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty in the Woods". "The Tale of the Needle" is a perfect example of the whole rewriting strategy followed by Donoghue. In addition to the writer's rebuilding and reshaping of the tale, she gives voice, as she does in "The Tale of

the Apple", to a type of female character that has been traditionally ostracised: an old woman spinning in the castle's tower. Against almost everything classic tellers have written, Donoghue brings this character closer to discover a wise woman, whose duty involves educating and liberating the young protagonist. The protagonist, who symbolically acts as an experienced fairy tales' reader fearing the old woman, finally finds out the real nature of this character. Indeed, this woman does not act as a caring granny, which was the role traditionally attributed to these characters, she introduces herself and her tasks in her own words: "Her face was merry no longer. She put one foot on her stool and leaned closer. Listen, girl, she said, they've tried to stop me teaching any of the things I know. Now they're trying to prevent you from learning all the things you don't. But gifts can only be delayed" (178). In this story, Donoghue depicts a relation of sorority, where an old and wise woman teaches a young girl to stand up against her ignorance and to break away from her overprotective parents and patriarchal values. The outcome of such a process does not only give answer to a matter that has relegated women in general, but particularly those who challenge aspects like youth, beauty or knowledge.

In these two tales, the Irish-Canadian writer retakes the figure of the stepmother and the old woman, but there is another female character that saw herself involved in this long-standing rivalry: the female monster. This is the last element that Donoghue includes in "The Tale of the Rose". As it has been discussed in the previous point about female objectification and passivity, Donoghue claims a new type of Beast: female and Queen. This character is cursed with this monstrous appearance just because she did not want nor live up to social and gender expectations. Nevertheless, apart from society she develops her character in a harmless way. That scenario is discovered by the protagonist, who "breaking the patriarchal spell" falls in love with the Queen. Morales describes this as an obvious deconstruction of the beauty and the beast's roles, which leads the story to both characters' fusion into one unique identity (210). It is the last lines of the tale that clearly capture the transgressive and renovating nature of the tale: "And as the years flowed by, some villagers told travellers of a beast and a beauty who lived in the castle and could be seen walking on the battlements, and others told of two beauties, and others, of two beasts" (40). In this tale, Donoghue is not only subverting the representation of women as rivals, but also introducing a lesbian relationship. In this regard, she comments on an issue that has remained unspoken in fairy tales to trespass traditional boundaries. Indeed, she includes how each person would see that relationship between the two: as beauties,

usually people who believe in equality, or as beasts, referring to those with a narrow mind. For all this, Donoghue builds up her re-interpretation of fairy tales on positive relations between women, which in some cases can end up in freedom whether of thought or love.

But what would have happened if Disney had taken some of Donoghue's tales to adapt them to their own imagery? Taking its adaptations as a reference, the company would not probably have taken them that further. While Disney rooted in villains that turned womanhood into a binary opposition between good and evil, where their acts seem to be moved by pure malice, Donoghue responds with a radically contrary message: old women, stepmothers and beasts are liberating rather than oppressing. Her characters do not need to fight other women, they have already released themselves from that patriarchal burden and they have merged in a world where evil is no longer associated to the female gender. Indeed, Donoghue's particular style naturalises topics as controversial as homosexuality in such a conservative genre, contributing to the creation of a more tolerant imagery.

The works of Donoghue and Carter have given the genre of fairy tales a completely new and updated perspective in form, but also, and more importantly, in scope. This includes their reconsideration of the traditional relationships between women. While classic tellers reproduced an obsolete and backward pattern, where females competed against each other, both writers used their rewritings to depart from such a patriarchal pattern. However, other adaptations like Disney's, reproduced the same patterns of female evilness without any kind of question or reassessment. Adding this to the underlying spirit of Disney's films, their viewers received a message that was still sustained on the patriarchal thought that relegated women to the villain side.

Conclusion

Coming to a final conclusion, the postmodern representation of fairy tales has served as a new recovery of a genre whose origins were based on Perrault or the Grimms' repertoire. Following the foundations of postmodernism about reassessing, rebuilding and readapting and together with the advances postulated by the feminist movement seeking to question patriarchy and its advocates, writers such as Angela Carter or Emma Donoghue are landmarks in feminist revision and rewriting of fairy tales. Their collections, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) and *Kissing the With: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997), depict a new type of fairy tales aiming at reshaping the female

self and challenging the sexist and unequal treatment that female figures have endured throughout the history of the genre. Although their goal was common, each writer decided to give voice to different scenarios and to retake the stories from different perspectives. In the case of Carter, influenced by the Second Wave Feminism and being herself an acclaimed feminist activist, her stories are surrounded by a gothic spirit and harsh settings, where characters subvert the classic stories through an open exploration of female sexuality and radical ruptures of innocence and joyfulness. Her works are full of bloody and terrific passages that try to transgress all the traditional canons and ideologies. As for Donoghue, also highly influenced by the Feminist movement and by Carter herself, her rewritings stand out not just for her expertise to empower women through female liberation and sorority, but also for introducing lesbianism in a discourse that completely relied on male and heterosexual foundations.

Short time before these two writers published their collections, fairy tales witnessed another change: the stories were adapted to the big screen, mainly and most prominently by Walt Disney Studios. Realising the potential that fairy tales could have in a cinematographic production, Disney decided to adapt classic tales. Films like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* or *Sleeping Beauty* turned out to be the key to a new form of transmitting values and the key to reach its target: children. Those values that Disney introduced in its films were not far from the ones that pervaded the classic stories: Disney kept characters, values and ideology untouched, emerging as a defender of patriarchal notions. However, Disney films were also influenced by society, being themselves the viewers. As a result, films such as *Beauty and the Beast*, released in the 90s in an attempt to appeal the public, supposedly introduced changes about the female self.

Comparing Carter and Donoghue's rewritings with Disney's adaptations, clearly evinces the dissimilar strategy they followed when tackling patriarchal values and notions in their own productions. Where Carter and Donoghue see a radical need to subvert and transgress, Disney just reproduces the same without really questioning the bases of such ideas. One aspect that both writers wanted to reconsider as it placed women in an inferior and belittling position is the representation of traditional values in tales. Those values legitimize a certain image of women, where beauty is the only valuable asset, they relegate women to achieve happiness only through marriage, in the same way that they impose a certain behaviour understood as "proper" for the female gender. Despite that unfair and sexist treatment, Disney conveys the exact same ideology in its films: Snow

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White, Aurora and Belle are beautiful and they fit in the beauty canons of that moment, all of them end up marrying the prince or hero of the film and they are all regarded as the perfect maids, daughters and wives. Contrary to this, Carter transforms that beauty into a more obscure trait that could also hide dangerous secrets, as it happens with the female vampire Countess in "The Lady of the House of Love". The English writer abandons any idea of appropriateness and draws female characters who own and use their sexuality as the protagonist in "The Tiger's Bride". Donoghue, in her own style, does away with all those values that support patriarchy to free women from restrains. She does not conclude any of her stories with marriage, but with freedom. The protagonists of "The Tale of the Needle" and "The Tale of the Apple" learn from their journey and liberate themselves from patriarchal values; in "The Tale of the Rose" the protagonist learns to dismantle prejudices and she recognises the Beast for what she really is: a Queen.

In that same line, both Carter and Donoghue examine more backward issues like female objectification and female rivalry. Carter redirects her rewritings to punish or to dismantle female passivity and to expose female confrontation. In "The Snow Child", the protagonist is forced into a revolting crime that brings out the excesses of female passivity and its outcomes. The evil Countess that leads the tale embodies all negative characteristics associated to women and she becomes the perpetrator of all crimes, when in reality, it was her husband's crime. She also exposes the traditional power that fathers had over daughters in "The Tiger's Bride", but, according to her subverting nature, she alters her state and becomes a feline creature. In the case of Donoghue, her protagonists liberate themselves through a learning process that leads them to their realisation and to love each other in a healing process. As it follows, the protagonist of "The Tale of the Needle" learns to knit and all those things that her parents wanted to prevent her from, she is taught by an old woman in a tower, which is also another subversive aspect; in "The Tale of the Apple", the protagonist learns that stepmothers can also be good; and the girl in "The Tale of the Rose" frees herself from traditional expectations and learns to love another woman in a revealing ending that enhances open same-sex relationships. Opposed to this reassessment, Disney reproduces the same idea classic tellers claimed in their works. The protagonists, Aurora and Snow White, are still frozen in glass coffins until the arrival of their saving princes. If not, they learn to sacrifice themselves in exchange of the other's benefit, as it happens to Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*. Adding this to Disney's veiled perpetuation of ill-relationships among women and the villainization of

feminine characters, results in a set of films that do not aim at dismantling the pillars of patriarchal ideology, but rather help as an ally.

Therefore, the difference between Donoghue, Carter and Disney lies on a radical opposed understanding of rewritings and adaptations. While on the authors' side, their rewritings seek to re-examine, expose and transform sexism and passivity, Disney's adaptations retake the tradition imprinted in old tales. Indeed, the dilemma that Disney propels does not only involve the way they approach topics, but most importantly, the receivers of those messages. Children learn from these films that women are either beautiful and passive princesses or evil villains, who act out of their pure malice, that women are not able to fulfil themselves without a man or that after marriage everything is "happily ever after". For that, works such as the ones by Angela Carter and Emma Donoghue are necessary to contest an ideology that still roots in patriarchal beliefs and assumptions, because pursuing a feminist relocation will help to the creation of a more equal society.

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