A Return to Once Upon a Time, Rewriting the Image of Traditional Womanhood in Contemporary Women's Writing

Vranić, Nikolina

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Student/ica:

Nikolina Vranić

Mentor/ica:

Doc. dr. sc. Vesna Ukić Košta

Zadar, 2023.

Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

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1. Introduction

The image of womanhood has always been under close scrutiny in society, so much so that numerous categories were conceived in order to portray different 'types' of women. Some of them were, of course, conditioned by expectations of men, and others were construed as a means of control. For centuries, women in literature were represented as passive and compliant, presumably in order to encourage their female readers to bring that picture to life. According to Sarah Kühl, the most prominent classifications are *angel in the house* – the perfect housewife of the Victorian era, submissive and loyal to her husband; *fallen woman* – a woman who engaged in the extramarital or premarital sexual affairs, making her *fall* from the society; and *new woman* – the feminist exemplar who destroyed the previously mentioned categories and forged her individual path (171). These can also be applied to fairy tales as for a long time they were used for educational purposes. Nowadays there are many authors bent on rewriting traditional fairy tales by subverting stereotypical representations of women. We can argue that these writers defy the foundations of destructive patriarchal tendencies demonstrated in many of these stories.

This paper will analyse the following collections of short stories: *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) and *Burning Your Boats: The Collected Short Stories* (1995) by Angela Carter, *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997) by Emma Donoghue, *Faery Tales* (2014) by Carol Ann Duffy, and one poetry collection, *The World's Wife* (1999) also written by Duffy. My analysis will concentrate on the selected texts which all rewrite many of well-known and beloved fairy tales, and thus offer a new perspective on the original tales.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the selected stories (and poems) by focusing on their representations of female characters and drawing comparisons between the original and rewritten texts. Furthermore, the emphasis will be put on the ways the rewritten stories and

poems redress the ramifications of men-centred ethos using the female/feminist perspective. Another aim is to analyse relationships between the female characters in the texts and how the contemporary authors change them. Moreover, it is important to mention and analyse male protagonists in these narratives as well – their role and behaviour – as their presence is inextricably intertwined with women characters.

2. Feminism and Fairy Tales

Fairy tale spaces have enticed the feminist movement to probe into the established representations of female characters that consequently impact the malleable attitudes of the most impressionable part of the population – children. Some heroines in these stories were commended, but more often than not, the stories were rebuked for their stereotypical portrayal of women. In, "Fairy Tale Liberation," Lurie Alison argues that the pervasiveness of strong female characters was "obscured by males who dominated the selection, editing, and publication of fairy tales" (qtd. in Haase 1). This inspired early feminist studies of fairy tales, which are still ongoing.

Lurie provides an example of Andrew Lang who selectively chose the stories for his *Blue Fairy Book* (1889), while omitting the parts deemed inappropriate, including that of "female initiative" (qtd. in Lieberman 383). However, although there are now more stories in which the active female is unsuppressed, the influence of previous censorship is undeniable. As Marcia R. Lieberman accentuates, only the most popular stories, and coincidentally the same ones which were publicized by Disney, remain embedded in children's minds (384). According to Kay Stone, 210 Grimm stories contain only 40 heroines, but the tales' translations include rarely over 25 stories (43). Thus, the very few notable stories with female protagonists are brought under the magnifying glass, as their behaviour is absorbed by little girls who consider

them their role models. This is what Lieberman refers to as "acculturation of women". It teaches young girls how to behave, what is expected of them and, thus, influences their growth. According to Jack Zipes, the fairy tales' written records benefited the hegemonic goals of the upper-class males (*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* xx).

As Stone states, the fairy tales taught children that kind women, as *Cinderella*, get a happy ending; that passive women are awakened by a prince, in *Sleeping Beauty*; and that ambitious women, in *The Little Goose Girl* and *Snow White*, bully the innocent protagonists (43). In this way, the girls are encouraged to be kind and passive, as their efforts will be rewarded, otherwise, they will face the consequences. In that regard, the ambition, which is usually assigned to villainesses, acquires a negative connotation. It teaches girls to be obedient. Additionally, the appearance occupies a leading role in these stories. The protagonists are almost always praised for their beauty, and if not, they transform from the ugly duckling to a beautiful swan by the end of the story. The beauty is treated as an achievement and is, therefore, rewarded. As accentuated by Lieberman, beautiful females are never overlooked (385). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar observe that this beauty enforces competition among women and, thus, obliterates any possible friendship between them (38). All the "qualities" which render the ideal female figure simultaneously please the patriarchal system and, thus, reinforce it. As Stone suggests, in order to become the heroine of Brothers Grimm's or Disney's tales, the girl needs to possess these attributes: beauty, submissiveness, patience, obedience, diligence and silence (44). The fairy tales, in that sense, started to embody the ideal womanhood in the patriarchal society. If they do not behave accordingly, they will not attract the prince. This is evident in *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White* who are kissed by a prince only if they sleep or are dead – the reason for which Andrea Dworkin asserts that "for a woman to be good, she must be dead, or as close to it as possible" (42). However, one of the most pervasive behavioural patterns is that the female protagonist never challenges the system or her role of the victim, but simply

endures it. After all, the system needs to be respected if it is to be in effect. In other words, as Karen E. Rowe expresses, “culture's very survival depends upon a woman's acceptance of roles which relegate her to motherhood and domesticity” (239).

Even so, women’s portrayal is not the only aspect that is targeted. Most fairy tales’ narratives are centred around or, at least, advanced by utilizing the element of romance. Additionally, as indicated by Rowe, it is, in general, coalesced with morality to depict the ideal relationship (237). However, what that affects is not only woman’s behaviour, but also her expectations and wishes. It is, thus, every girl’s dream to marry a prince, stay at home and raise a family. So, if that is paired with heroines’ feeble and dependent character, one might regard it as another strategic manoeuvre to manipulate women. According to William R. Bascom, folklore, on which these stories are grounded, was used to establish certain modes of behaviour that promote cultural conventions (349). It is one of the reasons why many feminist writers oppose and challenge them. Rowe explains that although the traumatic uncertainties during female development are acknowledged in fairy tales, women are still presented with a specified happy ending: acceptance of mother and wife roles (243).

Moreover, the overbearing presence of male characters is not to be overlooked. They are almost always blind to the injustice, and are never blamed for it. Instead, they are good kings, good fathers and good husbands. Madonna Kolbenschlag offers an interesting comparison of *Sleeping Beauty* and Wagner’s *Ring of the Nibelung* which she uses to suggest the patriarchal suppression of women:

> Wotan – the patriarch of the gods – casts a spell of “sleep” over his daughter, and surrounds her with a wall of fire until the destined hero penetrates it and awakens her with a kiss. [...] as she succumbs to the “sleep,” Wotan sings the refrain, “Thus the god takes away your godhead.” Significantly, when Siegfried (the destined hero) approaches

> the sleeping Brünhilde, he removes her magic armor – she awakens to his kiss as a mortal woman, no longer a "god," her strength and power diminished. (4)

On that account, the power of female independence, which was taken from Sleeping Beauty in this context, is unfavourable to the system. More and more critics have emerged, attempting to emancipate women from the pressurized roles. However, some have raised the question whether female and feminine elements are biologically or culturally conditioned.

3. Gender Theories

The attributes and behavioural patterns which are commonly intended for women in fairy tales call into question their origin and, thus, cross the threshold of gender theories. The gender, sex, class and race are often collaborative contributors to the discriminatory treatment – thus, they are mutually intersected (Schippers 88). The intersectionality of these elements often leads to the easier segregation of an individual and places him/her into the unfavourable position in the society. Throughout history, masculinity has found itself in the seat of power, emphasizing the female compliance. It is noticeable in most of the novels, poetry and even in the fairy tales.

One of the most notable philosophers to have explored the gender and sex issue is Judith Butler. She defines a distinct line between gender and sex, foregrounding that sex is immanent, while gender is socially constructed (11). Gender, in Butler's view, is nothing more than a performance (187). It is not something with which one is born, but something taught to the individual throughout his life – simply, a role to play. Thus, for example, one can also speak of spatial segregation when it comes to women, as their roles were often confined to specific spaces – such as a kitchen, or bedroom (Spain 140). This often limits women to their designated

role, and restricts them from trespassing into the men's domain. In that sense, their knowledge is limited to the spaces in which they dwell, while the masculine knowledge – such as in a workplace – is beyond their reach (Spain 140). Therefore, even the spaces become gendered.

Raewyn Connell offers a definition of masculinity, delineating it as "... simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices on bodily experience, personality and culture" (71). In that sense, womanhood is only defined in relation to masculinity, i.e. as its subordinate. Moreover, Connell indicates that these two are almost always defined through their differences from one another, manifesting a distinct line between them which is embodied in their heterosexual relation (mentioned in Schippers 90). Heterosexuality thus reinforces their differences and social ranking. Therefore, one may assume that the authors who engaged in rewriting stories and concurrently changed the sexual orientation of the characters were, in fact, fighting patriarchy and the heterosexually established differences. Authors like Suniti Namjoshi, Malinda Lo[1], and Emma Donoghue, whose book is going to be discussed later, come to mind.

4. Rewriting as feminist strategy

Konstantinos Malafantis and Athina Ntoulia define rewriting as the production of a new tale by altering the essential elements of a well-known fairy tale, experimenting with unique narrative techniques and maintaining the plot's central idea and protagonists (3). The technique of rewriting or retelling stories is, therefore, one of the feminists' strategies used to highlight

[1] Lesbian identity is a recurrent motif in Suniti Namjoshi's works (*The Jackass and the Lady* (1980), *Because of India: Selected Poems and Fables* (1989), *Sycorax: New Fables and Poems* (2006) and others). It is also present in Malinda Lo's two novels: *A Line in the Dark* (2017) and *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* (2021).

certain elements in the original stories and rewrite them from their perspective. As Rachel Blau DuPlessis suggests, rewriting a tale also entails a re-examination of a deep-rooted perspective adopted in childhood, as the tales contain social and political beliefs and outlooks (qtd. in Schanoes 15-16).

It is commonly known that the literary career was reserved only for the male population for a long period of time. It was presumed that women's occupation could not transcend that of the housework, and any such aspiration was considered "the downfall of civilized society" (LaGreca 1). Many feminists have taken this opportunity to counter the perpetual female stereotypes and rewrite the popular influential stories from another perspective. Liedeke Plate refers to it as "an act of re-membering" (3). This is because the rewriters have to consider the cultural identity of women. They dismantle the story and build it anew, making the readers remember the past from another point of view. "Contemporary women's rewriting partakes in the explosion, directly confronting questions of cultural memory from the perspective of women" (Plate 3). By reading books throughout history, women have learned the behavioural patterns that are expected of them. Therefore, one of the feminists' goals is "to unlearn submission" (Ostriker 87). The rewritings also suggest the rewriter's understanding of the original text – hence its modification. Therefore, according to Plate, it is a potent apparatus capable of moulding and reforming the collective memory (23).

There are many changes which are implemented using this technique. Sometimes, the silenced characters are gifted a voice, assigning importance to their feelings and opinions. One such example is, as provided by Plate, Mrs. Gulliver in *The Mistresses of Lilliput* (1999) written by Alison Fell (7). Another exemplification is Carol Ann Duffy's *The World's Wife*, which is going to be analysed later in the thesis. There are also examples where the acknowledged antagonists are given an opportunity to retell the story from their viewpoint – for example, Della Rowland's *The Wolf's Tale* (1991). Some authors even change the sexual orientation of the

characters in their stories, and even their sex. This can be seen, for instance, in Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1993).

5. Female archetypes

Throughout history, literature has known many female stereotypes. As suggested by Elaine Showalter, for a very long time, it had embraced the stereotype of a passive, obedient and submissive woman whose duty was to please her husband (340). Later, other categories have emerged, featuring women who had no desire to assuage the entrenched demands, and those who knew how to manoeuvre them. This part of the thesis will analyse some of the traditional female archetypes using the examples from the selected works of Emma Donoghue, Angela Carter and Carol Ann Duffy.

One of the first types which comes to mind is the *angel in the house*. According to Siv Jansson, it was Coventry Patmore who coined the term with his poetry book under the same name (65). It could be explained as the popular Victorian formula for an ideal woman. It denotes a perfect housewife, diligent in her domestic chores, understanding and compliant with the established social norms of that time, and loyal to her husband. This is owing to the fact that during the Victorian period, it was, as Kühl accentuates, solidly accepted that woman's career could not transcend that of domestic boundaries, while a man was entrusted with finances and keeping the family safe (173). This behavioural pattern would be passed on to the young girls that would follow in mothers' footsteps. According to John Angell James, a woman is educated for her husband-to-be and her future home, and is, thus, well-aware of her future roles and the duties that come with them (202). As it pleased the man-dominated society, woman's position occupied the subordinate role. Moreover, since her career could not transcend the domestic territory, she was entrusted with the duty of a peace-keeper. As Josephn Ambrose Banks and

Olive Banks suggest, husband was there to protect the wife and scrutinize her errors – ascribing them to her frailty and carelessness (60).

Carol Ann Duffy partially shows this in her poem "Mrs Midas" where the wife is the one serving her husband. She describes the patriarchal arrangement in the house – wife's fear and servitude in the first half of the poem. In the same way, women were urged to be silent and submissive. These characteristics were crucial in order to bind women to their "masters". She was completely dependent on her husband and fully devoted to him and his children. As Nancy LaGreca mentions, "abnegation, and the denial of the self that inevitably followed, were key to preventing women from demanding rights and moving beyond their prescribed place, as a strong sense of self is necessary to inspire consciousness regarding one's oppression and to spark activism" (5).

Although men were permitted prenuptial exhibitions, the women who did the same were not met with the same affection. As Kühl suggests, it was societally prohibited for a woman to engage in premarital or extramarital activities, and such a woman would be shunned from the society – earning her the title of a *fallen woman* (176). This type of a woman would be banned not only from the society, but from her family as well. If she was ever to vindicate her name, she would have to earn her family's favour first. According to Linda Nochlin, the family had a very important function – it could prevent, but also stimulate rehabilitation (141). According to Nina Auerbach, the title of a *fallen woman* is a form of punishment for not conforming to the societal norms (31). Hence, it is another instrument of sustaining the established supremacy. Moreover, as mentioned by Kühl, if women were ostracized, they would have difficulty finding a job, thus, their only options would be: workhouse or prostitution (172). Therefore, many of them would still continue to serve the men, further reinforcing the patriarchal structure.

Nochlin discusses how the semantics behind the word *fallen* are gendered. The *fallen* man resembles a deceased one, alluding to the heroic deeds and military service, while a *fallen* woman is "understood as any sort of sexual activity on the part of women out of wedlock, whether or not for gain" (Nochlin 139). After all, as Annette Kuhn and Susannah Radstone state, women's (a)sexuality would always be their defining feature which would, amplified, confine them to categories (362).

A *fallen woman* appears in Angela Carter's story "The Loves of Lady Purple". In the story, the puppeteer performs his play *The Notorious Amours of Lady Purple, the Shameless Oriental Venus* with Lady Purple, his favourite puppet, in which she kills her foster parents and becomes a prostitute. However, after the play, the puppet comes to life and kills her master. The Professor, or the puppeteer, is feverishly obsessed with his marionette, so much so that he is constantly attending to her. The story is the perfect example of the objectification of women as Lady Purple, although addressed as a *lady*, is (in the beginning) nothing more than a puppet. She is an object carried and displayed for attention. Moreover, Carter, with this story, seems to hint at the treatment of the *fallen woman* in the past – as she would be both the object of sexual desire and the marginalized member of the society. However, when Lady Purple comes to life, Carter transcends the *fallen woman* trope and births a *new woman* who breaks the strings of control and achieves independence by killing her master.

A *new woman* is, unlike the previously mentioned *angel in the house* and *fallen woman*, independent in nature and a symbol of freedom. She is the embodiment of "female emancipation and suffrage" (Kühl 171). Thus, she epitomizes the feminist image of a woman who is constantly struggling to break free in the male-dominated world. To them, as Gail Cunningham suggests, the financial autonomy and individual satisfaction outshone marriage (2). Therefore, they demonstrated that women no longer had to be the fulfillers of men's desires, but, instead, they could finally focus on themselves. Moreover, according to Cunningham,

many feminists openly spoke against marriage, which had been previously seen as woman's highest desire and achievement (2). This is due to the fact that marriage began to be seen as a tool of confinement which imposed female dependence. "It perpetuates the old inveterate error, that it is the province of the female sex to depend upon man for support, and to attend merely to household cares, and the rearing of children" (Drysdale 355). Thus, a lot of them eagerly turned their focus to something which had been forbidden to them for a long time – knowledge and career. Moreover, this category did not instruct women's behaviour, it simply offered them a choice. In other words, they could choose for themselves. Therefore, although this category could be seen as the opposite of the *angel in the house*, it is also contrary to the *fallen woman* trope as it does not serve a function of punishment – quite the opposite, it is the liberation of male-constructed stereotypes. On account of that, as Cunningham mentions, she was seen as extremely threatening as she could not be categorized in the despised *fallen woman* trope (14).

All the selected authors demonstrate this type of woman in their writing. Donoghue's "The Tale of the Kiss" is the story of a barren woman who refuses the idea of marriage and, instead, isolates herself in a cave.

> There was no one to nurse, no one to feed, no one to listen to but my own self. I thought no one would ever bother me again and I could live out my life like a gull, like a weed, like a drop of water. What I found instead was power. I never sought it; it was left out for me to stumble over. ("The Tale of the Kiss" 209)

It also seems to be a critique of marriage, as the woman mentions caring only for herself which gives her power. Not following the conventions earns her a title of the witch and others begin to fear her. She is the *new woman* as she does not follow the traditional expectations of women, but instead forges her own path.

6. Mother-daughter relationships

Although the fairy tales are generally criticized for the unfavourable representation of mothers and sisters, there are not a lot of stories that offer such depictions. According to Veronica L. Schanoes, there is a myriad of fairy godmothers, mother reincarnations and creature-helpers that act as surrogates in the tales (15). However, that raises a question: are only good mothers those that are either dead (and then reincarnated) and supernatural ones (those that do not exist)? Some rewriters mock this notion by including them in their stories. Carter shows a bird-mother in her "The Mutilated Girls", a ghost mother in "The Burned Child" and a dead mother in "Travelling Clothes". Similarly, Duffy's "Ashputtel" also includes a bird-mother who helps her daughter marry the prince. Carter satirizes this: "The turtle dove was mad for that, for her daughter to marry the prince. You might have thought her own experience of marriage might have taught her to be wary, but no, needs must, what else is a girl to do?" ("The Mutilated Girls" 393). It is, of course, the mother's mission to marry her daughter off.

Zipes comments on Charles Perrault's ideal woman who is expected to be "passive until the right man comes along to recognize her virtues and marry her. She lives only through the male and for marriage" (*Fairy Tales and the Arts of Subversion* 41). Likewise, Ashputtle in these stories patiently awaits her prince. Her mother is the one who makes her beautiful, well-dressed and attractive. However, as Carter argues, the story must also contain "the ritual humiliation" as well as "mutilation" of other women ("The Mutilated Girls" 393). Duffy, in "Ashputtle", produces the motif perfectly: during the bridal procession, the birds rush at the sisters and gouge their eyes, punishing them for "their cruelty and deceit" (212). After that, it is the daughter's turn to become the mother. Thus, in "Travelling Clothes", Cinderella puts on her mother's dress and steps into her mother's coffin because, as Lorna Sage argues, "the formula from the past is sprung like a trap" (62). In other words, the daughter is expected to behave like her mother and dedicate herself to marriage which, as a result, ingrains the

behavioural patterns convenient for patriarchy. Donoghue evades this cyclical pattern by omitting the mother in “The Tale of the Shoe” and, in that way, permits Cinderella to choose her own path. She also introduces a lesbian Cinderella who is not dependent on the prince. This independence is, as Jennifer Orme states, owing to the active resistance of “heteropatriarchal ideologies” (121). It is due to the mother’s omission that Donoghue’s Cinderella is able to proclaim love for her fairy godmother: “You're not my mother, I said. I'm old enough to know that” (“The Tale of the Shoe” 8).

Another insignificant role of the mother is observed in “Bluebeard”. Her only role is to marry off one of her daughters after which she is never mentioned again. Carter’s “The Bloody Chamber” changes that by giving her the role of the saviour and protector with daughter commenting: “You never saw such a wild thing as my mother, [...] one hand on the reins of the rearing horse while the other clasped my father's service revolver” (39-40). Donoghue accomplishes a similar result in “The Tale of the Cottage” by restoring the mother who is unwilling to part from her children – Hansel and Gretel. This way, she shows that mothers can also be worried about their children and are not indifferent as they were described.

The second-wave feminism adopted “a tradition of mother blaming and mother pathologizing from the surrounding culture” (Schanoes 16). In the words of Betty Friedan, she would always be found accountable for her child’s misfortune, whether it was “troubled child; alcoholic, suicidal, schizophrenic, psychopathic, neurotic adult; impotent, homosexual male; frigid, promiscuous female; ulcerous, asthmatic, and otherwise disturbed American” (180). In the same way, we can notice the wife-blaming in the fairy tales. In Perrault’s “Donkey-skin”, it is the wife’s fault for the king’s incestuous feelings for his daughter.[2] Likewise, according to Schanoes, Brothers Grimm’s previous editions of “Snow White” and “Hansel and Gretel” feature an evil mother, not a stepmother (17). In those versions, it is the mother who mistreats

[2] In the story, before dying, the wife asks her husband (the king) not to marry again unless he finds someone better than her. It is presumed he would not set his eyes on their daughter had the wife not made that request.

Snow White to satisfy her vanity and who convinces the husband to desert Hansel and Gretel in the forest. Schanoes explains that Brothers Grimm changed mothers into stepmothers in order to match the narrative with "nationalist and gender ideologies" (17). From then on, the stepmothers were known as notorious antagonists in fairy tales.

According to Cemre Mimoza Bartu, stepmothers, witches and mothers-in-law are, most often, described without some aspects of womanhood – aspects which the main female protagonist possesses (388). Therefore, the readers are presented with the polar-opposite characters where one is punished, and the other is rewarded. It promotes the idea that if women were to behave like the evil stepmothers, they would be treated as such. In Duffy's "Ashputtel", the stepmother displays a strong aversion to Cinderella because she poses a threat to her daughters as their potential rival. The same is seen in Carter's "Ashputtle or The Mother's Ghost: Three Versions of One Story". Furthermore, these stepmothers are more than willing to injure their own daughters in order to progress their role in the society. Thus, Duffy's stepmother encourages her daughters to cut their toe and heel off, saying to each of them: "Once you're Queen you won't have to bother with walking" ("Ashputtel" 209). In "The Mutilated Girls" version, the stepmother is the one who wounds them. This detail is very evocative of the old footbinding tradition which occurred in China. According to Dworkin, throughout its course, millions of daughters were crippled by their mothers in order to marry (112). It can be seen that the role of the stepmother, in these stories, is usually constrained to the bullying and hindering the protagonist.

Schanoes comments on the necessity of stepmothers, indicating that there would be no story without them (79). Donoghue shows that it does not have to be that way. Although she does not include a stepmother in "The Tale of the Shoe", she also shows that the story can progress without one. Generally, the stepmother also has an educational role in fairy tales. She is an ideal example of how not to behave. In Donoghue's version, Cinderella is not tormented

by a stepmother, but by her own thoughts. These thoughts replace the stepmother and represent the societal expectations. They tell her how to behave and what to do: “The shrill voices were all inside. Do this, do that, you lazy heap of dirt” (“The Tale of the Shoe” 2). However, unlike in other versions, Donoghue’s Cinderella does not conform to these notions. With this opposition, Donoghue indicates that women do not have to follow a certain path in order to be worthy – they can also carve their own one.

Another example of an evil stepmother is seen in “Snow White”. Duffy’s “Snow White” follows the preordained pattern of evil stepmothers. Just as suggested by Bartu, the stepmother is guided by jealousy and resentment towards the female protagonist (388). Duffy’s stepmother is also described as “proud” and “vain” (“Snow White” 293). Marina Warner argues that the huntsman, who also appears in Duffy’s version, serves as a comparison to the stepmother as he is too kind to kill Snow White (220). This seems to emphasize the stepmother’s wickedness, especially when compared to an innocent male character. Donoghue offers a different representation of the stepmother in “The Tale of the Apple”. The stepmother is very similar to Snow White in terms of age and beauty. Their rivalry stems from a desire for power. However, unlike Duffy’s version, Donoghue’s stepmother does not seek Snow White’s death, but her friendship. This change of character promotes the friendship between women, contrary to what was traditionally shown in fairy tales. Lastly, Carter, in “The Snow Child”, replaces the stepmother with Count’s wife and Cinderella with Count’s mistress. In doing so, she justifies wife’s hostility towards the young girl.

The stepmother, alongside the mother-in-law and the biological mother, represents a maternal figure. One may wonder why it carries such a negative connotation. Perhaps its purpose is to promote affection towards children, even if one is not related to them biologically. Rich indicates that women do not have to feel guilty about disliking children nor do they have to give up their lives for them because these actions reinforce the maternal subjugation

(mentioned in Schanoes 23). This is why the absence of maternal affection can also be seen as the feminists' resistance to patriarchy. It is seen in Donoghue's "The Tale of the Spinster" in which a woman shows indifference towards her biological child because she herself was hated by her own mother as a child. Additionally, it can also be seen in Carter's "The Werewolf", in which the mother easily sends off her daughter into a possibly dangerous situation, departing from her with words: "Here, take your father's hunting knife; you know how to use it" (109). A similar example is seen in Duffy's "Bluebeard" where the mother is never mentioned worrying about her daughter's safety or happiness.

However, all children are inherently and existentially reliant on their mother. She is presumably the person with whom the children spend most of their time. Sheldon Cashdan elaborates that during the uncomfortable events of upbringing, the child creates a dual image of the mother, "splitting" her into a good and a bad mother (27). This is why there are so many black-and-white instances of female characters in the tales.

Another character closely associated with fairy tales is the witch and she is so evil that she must die. According to Cashdan, she represents "a victory of virtue over vice, a sign that positive forces in the self have prevailed" (36). Her demise is therefore closely attached to protagonist's "happy ever after". Her death can be observed in the rewritten versions as well, specifically in Duffy's tales. For example, "Snow White", "Rapunzel" and "Hansel and Gretel" all show the standard murdering and torturing of the witch or the evil stepmother. This is because fairy tales' intent is to set an example by making the witch burn "agonizingly to death" ("Hansel and Gretel" 188). Moreover, according to Cashdan, it also serves to purge the reader of corrupt feelings and thoughts (36). The killing of witches is reminiscent of the witch hunts in the past. Dworkin accentuates that this particular "gynocide" was proclaimed "a capital crime" as the witches were "alleged" (126). Perhaps the same can be said for the witches in the fairy tales. In "The Tale of the Cottage", Donoghue shows precisely that type of the witch. She

is not described as an evil old crone like in Duffy's "Hansel and Gretel", but as a young woman. Gretel mentions Hansel sneaking into the woman's bed at night and expressing his loneliness. He even tries to lift up her skirt, after which she puts a knife to his chin. Thus, he is the one who turns the woman into a witch. Most of the well-known fairy tales were compiled and written by men. This also means that they were limited to their perspective.

According to Stone, the heroines are not allowed imperfections – they are by default flawless (45). They have to be passive and resemble the Victorian *angel in the house*. Thus, the fairy tales teach girls to behave like the heroines they read about in order to find a perfect prince and marry. In Donoghue's "The Tale of the Apple", hunters are frustrated when Snow White stops cleaning and cooking; the heroine in Duffy's "Ashputtel" constantly cleans and performs domestic chores; and Carter's heroine in "The Bloody Chamber" is too afraid of her husband. As Zipes writes, even though marriage is not the subject matter in the tales, it is the final goal (*Fairy Tales and the Arts of Subversion* 147).

All heroines desire marriage. It can be seen in Duffy's tales "Ashputtel", "Snow White" and "Bluebeard". Even after experiencing domestic violence, the heroine still remarries in "Bluebeard". Duffy satirizes this by stating that the "clean-shaven gentleman [...] soon made her forget the dark time she had spent with Blue Beard" ("Bluebeard" 10). However, while the heroine and her sister get married, the brothers get commissioned as captains. Why is it so? The answer lies in the patriarchal power-structure. As Athena Bellas elaborates, a woman can only gain power (i.e. financial and social security) "by being incorporated into a 'man's world'" (164). Thus, while men thrive professionally, women are limited to domestic space. They are also, as Bellas suggests, seen arguing and conspiring against other women trying to raise their influence (164). It is seen in Duffy's representation of sisters in "Ashputtel" and "Beauty and the Beast" – all are begrudging and jealous of the protagonist.

In contrast, Carter and Donoghue for the most part present characters that embody the *new woman*. In Donoghue's stories Snow White (in "The Tale of the Apple") leaves the hunters and returns to the queen; Gretel (in "The Tale of the Cottage") remains with the witch; Cinderella (in "The Tale of the Shoe") falls in love with the fairy godmother; and heroine from "The Tale of the Skin" refuses to marry. Carter's heroine in "The Bloody Chamber" does not remarry – she falls in love with the blind piano tuner[3]; Little Red Riding Hood does not show affection for her grandmother in "The Werewolf" and gives herself freely to the wolf in "The Company of Wolves"; lastly, in "The Tiger's Bride", Beauty becomes a monster like the Beast. However, although rarely seen in her collection *Faery Tales,* Duffy often features *new woman* characters in *The World's Wife* poems – for example "Little Red-Cap" and "Mrs Beast". Duffy's poem "Little Red-Cap" is very interesting as it defies the *damsel in distress* trope. The girl is the one who kills the wolf: "I filled his old belly with stones. I stitched him up/ Out of the forest I come with my flowers, singing, all alone" ("Little Red-Cap 4).

In the traditional fairy tales, heroine is always separated from the rest. She is always the most beautiful, passive and well-behaved out of all the other women. Christy Williams indicates that any act of singling out an individual only reinforces the patriarchal ideas in the tales as the woman is then presented "as an exception to standard feminine behaviour" (101). Carter's heroine in "The Company of Wolves" gives herself freely to the wolf, which is suggestive of giving reigns to the patriarchal authority.

According to Kim Snowden, there are some critics who would render Carter's works antifeminist (169). However, critics like Jordan and Makinen argue that she discusses the complex issues in the patriarchal setting (qtd. in Armitt 89). Schanoes also shows support for Carter, highlighting the way she restores mother-daughter connection in "The Bloody

[3] He could be the representation of a weaker man, due to the fact that he is blind and could not protect the protagonist, which is in a way mocking the patriarchy. Moreover, his piano-tuning skill compliments the protagonist's hobby of piano playing – suggesting that he values and supports her interests.

Chamber" (21). Donoghue accomplishes a similar task by focusing on female homosexual relationships[4]. This is due to the fact that homosexual heroines oppose heteropatriarchy. Donoghue's Cinderella (in "The Tale of the Shoe") chooses a woman, over a man; a fairy, over a prince; an older lady, over a young man, and by doing that, she shows that men are not essential in female lives. On the other hand, Duffy replicates the traditional tales in *Faery Tales*[5] and completely changes them in *The World's Wife*. Namely, her feminist beliefs are more discernible in the latter. However, although all three selected authors have their own ways of tackling the complexities of being a female in the patriarchal society, they emphasize the problems present in the traditional tales and attempt to correct them. Thus, witches do not die in Donoghue's tales, Duffy's poems feature dominant females and Carter introduces self-serving ones. They return the maternal affections to mothers and self-sufficiency to heroines that are missing in the traditional versions.

7. Fathers, princes and monsters

Fairy tales are full of heroic princes, good fathers and scary beasts. Next to all of them stands a passive and submissive heroine. She suffers bullying and neglect, yet, as Katie Mancino suggests, her father is never there to help her (15). Dworkin criticizes not only the father's unaccountability, but also his unawareness of heroine's torments (44). In Duffy's

[4] Homosexuality is an integral part of Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997). Although not explicitly stated, the motif is present in most of her stories as her heroines refuse to follow the traditional path laid out for them (i.e. getting married). Some of the stories that display it more overtly are "The Tale of the Shoe", "The Tale of the Rose", and "The Tale of the Kiss".

[5] There are some examples of Duffy using a satirical tone to emphasize her abnegation or opposition. For example in "Bluebeard" when the heroine remarries a man who made her forget about everything or in "Beauty and the Beast" where she describes Beauty's ungrateful sisters who "whine and whinge about the loss of their fine frocks and fancy friends" (21). Although she kept the traditional plot in her tales, sometimes she used satire to express her opinion.

"Ashputtel", the father is a mere spectator of the bullying towards his daughter. Moreover, he even tries to dissuade the prince from offering the shoe to Cinderella by calling her "a dirty little kitchen maid" who "can't possibly be the bride" ("Ashputtel" 210). However, the blame is transferred to the stepmother and the father is not mentioned again.

Mancino differentiates three roles of fathers, grouped according to their presence, or lack thereof. Therefore, she differentiates between the father who is absent in "Snow White" – allocating the dreadful events to his absentness; the father who is unhelpful in "Sleeping Beauty"; and the father who exists, but is absent from the story in "Cinderella" – in which the magic functions as his replacement (16-17). Feminist rewriters have their own ways of blaming the father. Carter highlights father's absentness in "The Mutilated Girls" and satirically emphasizes that "the entire drama concerns only women" (390). In Duffy's "Snow White" the father is non-existent. He marries a beautiful woman, who turns out to be a terrible stepmother, after which he disappears. However, he is either completely unaware that his wife is trying to kill his daughter or he simply does not care.

Carter, in "The Snow Child", rewrites him as a Count and Cinderella as his mistress. He disposes of her to appease the Countess and save his marriage. This way, Carter creates a situation where the man cannot feign unawareness. Additionally, she demonstrates what the man is willing to do in an act of desperation. Donoghue, in "The Tale of the Apple", gives the father the role of the mirror. He compares his wife and daughter, trying to decide who the fairest one is. According to Gilbert and Gubar, this encourages competition which puts women at odds with each other (38). There are even instances of fathers who endanger their daughters. In the traditional tale "Beauty and the Beast", the father is the one who trades his daughter to the Beast as an atonement for his crime. Carter accentuates this in "The Tiger's Bride" where the father is a gambler. Belle expresses her disappointment in the story, saying: "My father said he loved me yet he staked his daughter on a hand of cards. [...] he had the anguish of a man in the last

stages of debauchery" ("The Tiger's Bride" 54). On the other hand, Donoghue in "The Tale of the Rose" shows an apologetic father who is aware of his sin. Not only is he apologetic, but he also feels terribly guilty. After the night spent in delirium, he wakes up and grips Belle's wrist saying: "Daughter, I have sold you" ("The Tale of the Rose" 30).

However, in traditional fairy tales, the father is never guilty. Dworkin adds that the guilt is usually reserved for his wife (45). It is seen in Duffy's "Hansel and Gretel" where the wife pesters "the poor, heartsore woodcutter" until he agrees to abandon the children in the forest (175). Similarly, in Perrault's "Donkey-skin", the father almost resorts to incest. All the blame is attributed to his deceased wife who asks him not to remarry unless he finds someone better than her. He, of course, cannot find anyone except his daughter. Donoghue defends the wives in "The Tale of the Cottage", where the father is the one who insists on abandoning Hansel and Gretel, and in "The Tale of the Skin", in which the king's incestuous tendencies are justified by his derangement after his wife's death. However, Dworkin argues that in the traditional fairy tales, the father remains innocent as he is "beyond moral law" (45).

Aside from a good father, there is almost always a perfect prince as well. According to Lieberman, he is always very handsome and richer than the heroine (386). Even by his title of the prince he appears to be of elevated status. However, just like the father, he is very oblivious to the events around him. Dworkin says that he is "not very bright" as he is not able to recognize the heroine like Cinderella with whom he danced the whole evening (43-44). He requires a shoe for that. Carter best portrays his indifference in "The Mutilated Girls": he puts the shoe on one of the stepsisters' mutilated foot and does not notice any blood. For him it was just "one shoe off, one shoe on" ("The Mutilated Girls" 394).

Dworkin also writes about the prince's necrophiliac fantasies[6] (44). According to her, he can only look better next to a dead or an evil woman (44). This is also why he usually searches for a girl of an inferior status or a damsel in distress. In Duffy's *Faery Tales*, he is akin to the prince in the traditional fairy tales. He is the one who saves Cinderella from poverty and abusive family (in "Ashputtel"), and the one who resurrects Snow White with a kiss (in "Snow White"). In these stories, the heroine resembles more of an object to be obtained than a love interest. In "Ashputtel", the prince refuses to dance with any other girl because there is no one as gorgeous as Cinderella. The ball is essentially, according to Lieberman, "a beauty contest" that Cinderella wins (386). She is only noticed for her beauty and refined outfit. He does not even remember her face. In Donoghue's story, "The Tale of the Shoe", the heroine is unimpressed with the prince. She describes his words as "white and soft", but nonetheless unattractive to her ("The Tale of the Shoe" 7). She prefers her fairy godmother. In "The Tale of the Skin", the prince becomes smitten with the heroine when he sees her dressed elegantly. However, once in dirty rags, she becomes practically invisible to him. The heroine indicates that her "features had not changed since yesterday" and yet, despite that, the prince remains blind ("The Tale of the Skin" 161). The disappointed *new woman* heroine leaves the castle, unwilling to degrade herself further.

Other male characters, such as the huntsman or the dwarves also appear in the rewritten fairy tales. All of them are essentially in some way helping the heroine. In Duffy's "Snow White" the huntsman spares her life and the dwarves take her in. In the traditional fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood", the hunter saves the heroine from the wolf. The heroine is always in the need of help. Sometimes, she has to repay their kindness by cooking and cleaning for them – like in "Snow White". In Duffy's tale "Snow White", the dwarves are very worried when they

[6] Dworkin refers to most of the heroines as corpses due to their passivity and compliance. She mentions "Sleeping Beauty" as the best example of that. As she suggests, when the heroine "is good, she is so passive in life that death must be only more of the same" (41).

see the heroine laying on the floor. Donoghue's "The Tale of the Apple" features woodsmen instead of dwarves who are more concerned about the messy state of their home than the unconscious heroine. They appear so annoyed with the stepmother who "put such poison of idleness" in the heroine's head ("The Tale of the Apple" 56). However, in some of the rewritten stories, there is no hunter at all: Carter's "Snow Child", "The Werewolf" and "The Company of Wolves" tales and Duffy's poem "Little Red-Cap". This way, they also avoid the infamous damsel in distress.

Another interesting character is Gretel's brother, Hansel. Even in the traditional tale, he is the one being saved by his sister. Donoghue's version, "The Tale of the Cottage", shows Hansel in a different light. Instead of the witch, Hansel is the one who demonstrates patterns of predatory behaviour[7]. Donoghue seems to suggest that the title of "the witch" is the consequence of refusing the patriarchy. Thus, it can be seen that the patriarchal tendencies are carefully woven into the stories. They are not only present in the influential figures of the father and the prince, but also in the minor and less-discussed characters.

Lastly, the fairy tales are also the home of beasts. They usually appear in two different ways – either as the prey to the man or as the prince in disguise. In "Little Red Riding Hood", the wolf is a threat to the girl and her grandmother, yet a prey for the hunter. Thus, he represents the difference between women and men. Moreover, by killing the wolf, the hunter demonstrates his prowess and necessity. As Dworkin suggests, the man can only be powerful next to a weak girl (44). Duffy's poem "Little Red-Cap" opposes this. Unlike in the traditional tale, the girl does not act as the damsel in distress. She is very observant and clever as she can predict the imminent danger. She describes her love for the wolf: "I clung till dawn to his thrashing fur, for / what little girl doesn't dearly love a wolf?" ("Little Red-Cap" 3). By using the term "little girl", the poet implies aging and development. In other words, only little girls like wolves.

[7] In "The Tale of the Cottage", Hansel gropes the woman (the witch) and earns her wrath.

Therefore, as the girl matures, she subverts the wolf's power and finally kills him. Duffy seems to imply that women do not need hunters to protect them, they can do so themselves. Carter enhances the story in "The Werewolf" by merging the grandmother and the wolf. At the end of the tale, the grandmother is killed and the girl inhabits her house and prospers. By making the wolf's gender female, Carter seems to imply the peril of other women. In other words, sometimes even women can prove to be the greatest enemies. Nevertheless, this tale, once again, proves that the woodsman is not needed as the women can protect themselves.

In contrast, Carter's other version "The Company of Wolves", does not kill the wolf in the end. This story also involves a shapeshifter – woodsman. It contains a lot of sexual tension as it is primarily centred around the relationship between the girl and the werewolf, which is similar to Duffy's poem "Little Red-Cap". The wolf is described as "carnivore incarnate and he's as cunning as he is ferocious" ("The Company of Wolves" 110). With no way to escape, the girl starts to disrobe and submits to the wolf. By showing eagerness, she becomes his equal.

According to Warner, metamorphosis is one the defining elements of fairy tales (xx). It is seen in tales like "Puss in Boots" as well as "Beauty and the Beast". The latter is the best example for the prince in disguise category. As is the tradition, only a woman is able to change the Beast, usually by accepting him as her partner. Carter follows this pattern in her version "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon". The Beast still manipulates Belle into marriage: "Since you left me, I have been sick [...] but I shall die happy because you have come to say goodbye to me" ("The Courtship of Mr. Lyon" 50). However, her story presents a change for both Belle and the Beast. Carter's Beauty matches the Beast, which is evident in them becoming Mr. and Mrs. Lyon. Both of them undergo a transformation: she becomes sexually aware and he turns into a human. However, in spite of his metamorphosis, she still continues to acknowledge him as the beast, implying that she holds power over him. In "The Tiger's Bride", Carter shows Belle's transformation. In the story, the Beast asks to see her nude, which would demonstrate Belle's

submissiveness. However, she is willing to do so only after he shows himself first. After he does, she falls in love with him and transforms into a beast herself, indicating that "the tiger will never lie down with the lamb; [...] The lamb must learn to run with the tigers" ("The Tiger's Bride" 64). With this, Carter probably hinted at the women's adaptation in the male-dominated society.

Donoghue rewrites the Beast as female, in "The Tale of the Rose", and, with the motifs of lesbianism, challenges the notion of patriarchal marriage. Duffy does a similar thing in her poem "Mrs Beast" by featuring a female beast who dominates her husband. Mrs Beast suggests to every woman to choose a beast over a prince as "they're bastards when they're Princes" ("Mrs Beast" 72). This also conveys the subversion of patriarchy, as the beast is surely lesser than human, which is demonstrated by the power dynamic that works in her favour. Warner states that shape-shifting is one of many wonders in fairy tales (xx). If that is considered, why is it that the witches are never permitted this? Why are they from the beginning sentenced to death? Why can the beast be forgiven, yet a witch cannot? As Stone suggests, heroines are not permitted to make mistakes (45), and a witch is there to remind them of that. Dworkin also reminds us that a "bad woman must be killed, or punished" (48). It seems that women are never allowed forgiveness. Of course, some male characters like Bluebeard or the wolf are also killed, but there are also characters like Beast who can change. However, the same cannot be said for witches. As Cashdan says, if there is to be a happy ending, she must die (26). This could be the reason why some of the authors who rewrote the stories concealed a woman as a beast. Perhaps her only way to survive was if the world thought of her as a man.

8. Conclusion

Fairy tales used to teach children how to behave properly, to be humble and good, to nurture their virtues as those would always be rewarded. Due to their instructive messages and

interesting storylines, they are often chosen as the favourite bedtime stories. However, even the fairy tales are not immune to the harmful patriarchal ideologies that are woven into our society. Thus, they have attracted special attention from the feminist movement which seeks to raise awareness of the misogynous content. Many authors who decided to rewrite fairy tales come forward to fight back these notions and correct their damaging effects. Their focus varied from absolving women of blame to restoring maternal feelings and individual voices to them.

The heroines in the traditional tales are almost always passive and obedient, even when forced to suffer abuse. They are always patiently waiting for their prince to save them. The damsel in distress trope is vastly implemented in these stories and imposes presumed virtues on the female audience. They are shown rewards and punishments that come with (dis)respecting them. The characters that show initiative, pride and defiance, like witches and stepmothers, are always killed or punished. On the other hand, obedient heroines become princesses and gain power through their marriage with the prince. Moreover, men are often portrayed as victims of the female ploy, unaware of their surroundings and, thus, easily manipulated. The rewriters change this. They present the perfect love story and marriage as a mousetrap. In their stories, heroines do not rely on their prince-saviour, they express their opinions, and some of them even avoid heterosexual relationships altogether.

The selected authors, therefore, use their own techniques to subvert the original tales. Most of them rely on the change of the narrative, some introduce new personalities, and others even tinker with gender roles and sex. In Emma Donoghue's rewritings, we are frequently shown *new woman* characters who escape the traditional plot and carve their own paths. Her tales are also bustling with homosexual relationships, as seen in lesbian Cinderella or Belle. Carol Ann Duffy often reproduces the traditional stories in a humorous way. Using satire, she emphasizes the underlying problems in the tales. Similar elements can be seen in Angela Carter's stories as well – for example "Ashputtle or The Mother's Ghost: Three Versions of

One Story". However, Duffy also introduces strong and intelligent female characters in her poems. For example, the poem "Mrs Beast" shows dominance over her husband and the subversion of power. Carter tackles many problems in her stories. Most of the time, her heroines show defiance to any powerful figure, be it male or female, in the constraints of the patriarchal society. They achieve equality in different ways: by uniting with the male figure, as seen in "The Company of Wolves" or by killing them, like in "The Bloody Chamber". Other times, Carter's weak heroines fall victim to the patriarchy, presumably to entice their defiance.

In conclusion, although most of the fairy tales are adored amongst people, they permeate with ideas that could be considered toxic, especially to women. By providing distinct stories in unusual ways, the authors of the rewritten stories bring attention to some of their original setbacks – portraying men as victims, shifting the blame onto women, and treating them as objects are just some of the problems. After all, even they taught us that the most beautifully served apple could indeed contain a poison.

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10. A RETURN TO ‘ONCE UPON A TIME’ – REWRITING THE IMAGE OF TRADITIONAL WOMANHOOD IN CONTEMPORARY WOMEN’S WRITING: summary and key words

This MA paper sets out to analyse ways in which well-known female heroines are represented in the selection of fairy tales rewritten by three contemporary authors. The stories and poems from Angel Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) and *Burning Your Boats: The Collected Short Stories* (1995), Emma Donoghue’s *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997), and Carol Ann Duffy’s *Faery Tales* (2014) and *The World's Wife* (1999) are under discussion in the paper. The paper argues that the selected authors openly defy the traditional plot and conventional representations of protagonists, especially the female ones. By offering a reimagined narrative and subverting gender stereotypes so typical for fairy tales, they show how the stories originally created by male writers could be approached from the female point of view.

Key words: fairy tales, feminism, women’s writing, rewriting, Angela Carter, Carol Ann Duffy, Emma Donoghue

11. POVRATAK U ‘BILO JEDNOM DAVNO’ – PREPISIVANJE SLIKE TRADICIONALNE ŽENE U SUVREMENIM ŽENSKIM SPISIMA: sažetak i ključne riječi

Cilj ovog diplomskog rada je analizirati načine na koje su poznate junakinje prezentirane u bajkama koje su preradile tri suvremene autorice. Analizirat će se priče i pjesme iz *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) i *Burning Your Boats: The Collected Short Stories* (1995) od Angele Carter, *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997) od Emme Donoghue te *Faery Tales* (2014) i *The World's Wife* (1999) od Carol Ann Duffy. U radu je istaknuto da odabrane autorice otvoreno prkose tradicionalnom zapletu i konvencionalnim prikazima protagonista, osobito ženskih likova. Time što su ispričale novu priču i oborile rodne stereotipe, tako tipične za bajke, pokazale su kako se pričama, koje su izvorno napisali muški pisci, može pristupiti sa ženskog stajališta.

Ključne riječi: bajke, feminizam, žensko pisanje, prepisivanje, Angela Carter, Carol Ann Duffy, Emma Donoghue