



THE FAIRY GODMOTHER IS IN LOVE WITH THE PRINCESS: LESBIAN DESIRE IN THE REWRITTEN FAIRY TALES OF EMMA DONOGHUE*

PERİ ANNE PRENSESE AŞIK: EMMA DONOGHUE'NUN
YENİDEN YAZILMIŞ MASALLARINDAKİ LEZBİYEN ARZU

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Abstract

Fairy tales once belonged to oral literature and later became part of the literary tradition, and the formal and thematic qualities have gone through various changes in time. By means of the changes it has gone through, the genre, which bears a great impact on cultural transmission, has always developed to adapt to its time. Especially, the classical European fairy tale is one of the major genres which reflects the cultural, social and gender characteristics of the nations. Because of the prevalent patriarchal discourse, female characters, although they are generally the protagonists, female characters are represented as secondary to the male characters and they are exposed to the sexist attitude of both male writers and fairy tale heroes. Having seen the discriminatory aspects of the fairy tale genre, twentieth century women writers took interest in the traditional tales in order to subvert the sexist ideology. Giving specific importance to the issues of lesbian desire, liberation and voice of women, Emma Donoghue, a twentieth-century Irish woman writer, in her *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997) rewrites various classical fairy tales. Specifically in "The Tale of the Hair" and "The Tale of the Shoe" as the rewritten versions of "Rapunzel" and "Cinderella," respectively she attempts to subvert the patriarchal ideology and to promote the female agency through parody in various aspects. By altering the entrenched elements of the fairy tales genre, she not only reads but also writes against the grain and by postmodern parody she sheds light upon the unquestioned issues with the aim of unearthing and restoring the hidden discriminative and sexist attitude. In doing this, Donoghue reimagines an alternative 'happily ever after' which offers a peaceful and egalitarian final state for the female characters.

Öz

Önceleri sözlü edebiyata dâhil olup daha sonra yazılı edebiyatın parçası haline gelen masallar zaman içerisinde hem biçimsel hem de içeriksel değişimler geçirmişlerdir. Geçirdiği değişimlerle de kültürel aktarımda büyük rol oynayan bu tür her zaman gelişerek zamanına adapte olabilmıştır. Özellikle klasik Avrupa masalları ulusların kültürel, sosyal ve toplumsal cinsiyet özelliklerini yansıtan başlıca türlerden biri olmuştur. Mevcut ataerkil söylemden ötürü masallardaki kadın karakterler, kahraman olmalarına rağmen, erkek karakterlere göre ikincil olarak temsil edilmiş, erkek yazarların ve karakterlerin cinsiyetçi tutumlarına maruz kalmışlardır. Masallardaki ayrımcı duruşun farkına varan yirminci yüzyıl feminist kadın yazarları, geleneksel metinlerin cinsiyetçi ideolojilerini sorgulamak için bu metinlere yönelmişlerdir. Lezbiyen arzu, cinsel özgürlük ve kadının sesi konularına özel ilgi gösteren yirminci yüzyıl İrlandalı kadın yazar Emma Donoghue, *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (Cadıyı Öpmek: Eski Hikayeler Yeni Bedenlerde)(1997) adlı eserinde çeşitli klasik masalları yeniden yazmıştır. Özellikle "Külkedisi"nin yeniden yazımı olan "Tale of the Shoe" (Ayakkabının Hikayesi) ve "Rapunzel'in" yeniden yazımı olan "Tale of the Hair" (Saçın Hikayesi) hikayelerinde ataerkil ideolojiyi alt üst etmek için, kadın eylemliliğini parodi yoluyla çeşitli yönlerden göz önüne sermiştir. Masalların kalıplaşmış unsurlarını değiştiren yazar eserleri postmodern parodiyle okumakla kalmayıp, sorgulanmamış konuları da gün yüzüne çıkartarak saklı cinsiyetçi ve ayrımcı tutumu da düzeltmeye çalışmıştır. Bu şekilde, Donoghue alternatif 'sonsuz kadar mutlu yaşadılar' senaryolarını hayal ederek kadın karakterlere daha barışçıl ve eşitlikçi bir son durum sunmuştur.

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Being one of the primordial elements of world literary history, the classical European fairy tale is one of the major genres which reflect the cultural, social and gender characteristics of the nations. Carrying these cultural unwavering codes throughout the ages, fairy tales have also reflected the prevalent sexual politics and roles that are attributed to the woman and man as they are represented through the characters and the plot. As a reaction to these roles, with the help of the postmodern movement in the twentieth century, feminist women writers took interest in the traditional fairy tales in order to question the sexist ideology and erase the traces of the established patriarchal system from the scope of the genre. Thus, in the light of this information this study analyses the postmodern revisitations of classical fairy tales through postmodern parody with a special emphasis on lesbian desire between the female characters in Emma Donoghue's two different tales entitled "The Tale of the Shoe" which is the rewriting of "Cinderella" and "The Tale of the Hair" rewriting of "Rapunzel" from her fairy tale collection *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skin*. Although there are a few scholarly studies on this work of Donoghue, such as the articles by Jennifer Orme, Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochere, Maria Micaela Coppola (see Works Cited), the short story collection can also be studied and analysed with the help of sources of fairy tale studies. As above mentioned, this study explores the place of lesbian relationship between the female characters in the rewritten fairy tales. However, the study of lesbian desire in Donoghue's tales are also combined with a reading of the rewriting process as both formally and thematically postmodern parody which both celebrates and subverts the qualities of the very genre.

Emma Donoghue, born in Dublin, is one of the expatriate Irish writers currently residing in Canada. Due to her Irish background and higher education at University College Dublin, English Department, she is predominantly associated with Irish literature and also with Irish lesbian fiction. Although she is of Irish origin, she does not include Irish nationalism and Irish history as subject matters of her works but, the tradition only affects her language and style (Donoghue, "Swings and Roundabouts..." 75). Apart from her interest in historical fiction, as a self-proclaimed lesbian, Donoghue predominantly makes use of lesbian issues about identity and lesbian feminist perspectives in her works. Moreover, she also tries to find an answer to the long term question she has been asking herself 'How is a woman who loves woman to live as an Irish woman?' via her works (Quinn 147). In the broader sense, as Smyth argues, she is preoccupied with "interrogat[ing] and expos[ing] the received narratives of the dominant culture" (qtd.

in Moloney and Thompson 169). Her being lesbian is an outlet for her discovery in her writing yet not the main urge for her penning the experiences of homosexual love and identity. Donoghue endeavours to reveal and take the lesbian identity out of the closet by means of her characters that are in search of their true sexual orientation but this act of writing is not a manifestation of her sexual political belief yet pure love of writing and creating stories. Drawing upon her own lesbian revelation, Donoghue underlines this issue as follows:

Discovery at the age of fourteen that I was a lesbian certainly gave me plenty to write about, and researching lesbian history has left me with a feeling of having so many unknown stories to tell, but sexuality is not a motive exactly; I write because I need and love to. All writing has a political impact, and I am aware that doing interviews, etc., is my form of lesbian activism, but the motive for writing is not propaganda: I just want to tell stories in a language as powerful as I can make it (“Ann Arbor District...”).

Her only revisited fairy tale collection *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* was published in 1997 and it made a great contribution to the fairy tale rewriting genre for its different approach. As the title of the work suggests, in her work Donoghue rewrites the classical European fairy tales of the famous writers such as Charles Perrault, Grimm Brothers and Hans Christian Andersen. Similar to Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber*, Emma Donoghue, too, makes use of revisioning, postmodern parody, and other intertextual methods in recasting fairy tales in order to create an alternative narrative from unconventional perspectives. According to Linda Hutcheon, postmodern parody means “rummaging through the reserves of the past” to redevelop a reprised representation (89). For Hutcheon, postmodern parody wants to draw attention to the rehandling of representation in a novel and critical way. This act of rehandling occurs through a double process of both “installing and ironizing” (89) the former representation in order to put forward a novel product, the parodic representation. Drawing materials from the past to create a new representation is called “double-coded politics” of postmodern parody for it both “legitimizes and subverts” the thing which it parodies (97). Hence, Donoghue’s reimagined versions of “Cinderella” and “Rapunzel” illustrate elements of postmodern parodic representation in their double codedness which underlines their connection with the fairy tale tradition and subversion of the generic and thematic conventions in her collection.

The collection comprises twelve rewritten versions of the classical European fairy tales and a final unprecedented “purely fictional” tale written by the writer (Donoghue, “Interview with Emma Donoghue” 106). With the self-referential title, Donoghue announces her aim in the collection by underlining that she puts the old tales in new skin through rewriting and postmodern parody. In parallel with Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber*, Donoghue’s collection is also an example of revisionary writing which is explained by the American feminist poet Adrienne Rich as an “... act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction ... an act of survival” (18). Therefore, so as to sustain the survival of these tales, Donoghue “adopts a postmodern perspective, advertising the fictionality of the motif by introducing” these classical tales both in structural and thematic parody (Palmer 30).

These twelve rewritten tales predominantly concentrate upon the tales of conventional ‘innocent persecuted heroines’ from renowned fairy tale writers/collectors such as Perrault, Grimm Brothers and Andersen. In the corpus of the fairy tale genre, heroines of this kind are quite typical and the subgenre classified as “The Innocent Persecuted Heroine Genre” recounts the tales of passive, beautiful but oppressed female figures. Steven Swann Jones categorises some separate episodes of a as follows: the heroine being victimized by the jealousy of her mother, stepmother, or stepsisters ... or being expelled from her parents’ home [or] ... the rivalry between the heroine and her antagonist who tries unsuccessfully to duplicate the heroine’s quest (16). There are many tales concerning the mentioned traits of a heroine that share a plot pattern specific to this subgenre, yet the most common ones include: “Rapunzel,” “The Sleeping Beauty,” “Rumpelstiltskin,” “Cinderella,” “Goose Maiden” and “Snow White”. Along with the episodes, Jones highlights the three major acts in the plot outline that the exemplar tales carry. “Act One” is mainly about her life at home before her departure where she is constantly bothered by the family members; “Act Two” concerns the heroine’s journey toward the desired union of her marriage; the last one, “Act Three” is primarily related to the troubles she has in her husband’s home, especially after giving birth to her children (16). Yet, it should be noted that not every tale in this subgenre covers all three acts, generally they represent at least two. In the tales of these writers, generally in the second act, these heroines always encounter a wicked plot or a scheme of the antagonists such as evil stepmother, wicked witch, ogre, rival sibling or evil queen. However, because of their passivity, good and naive nature, heroines fall prey to these pernicious traps and finally they are rescued by a helper

figure/object; like a fairy godmother, a magical token or the kiss of a prince. However, in Donoghue's revisioned versions of "Cinderella" and "Rapunzel" secondary female characters, fairy godmother and the Mother Gothel are the mutual point that the author deliberately brought to the fore to re-establish the mother-daughter relationship in the tales from a romantic-queer perspective. Since the 'happily ever after' endings of these tales are the most striking points where the heroine eventually reaches a final justice or happiness, secondary helper characters are not given much importance and solely used as tools either for carrying out misdoings or assisting the heroines on their way to happiness. Whereas, in *Kissing the Witch* the tales mainly progress through a lesbian relationship and sorority between the heroine and the female villain or the fairy godmother. By doing so, as Ann Martin indicates, Donoghue tries to criticise "the established norms of femininity and alters the traditional power structures within and surrounding the narration of the tales" (7).

To appreciate the innovations Donoghue introduced to the long established genre with her particular emphasis on the relationship between women, it is useful to examine the generic framework of the tales. Typically in the fairy tales the power relations are set upon the balance between the good and evil. The heroes and heroines are placed in between this power conflict where they are cursed by the villain and then assisted by the magical helper towards their salvation. These three categories of characters shape the quintessential fairy tale relations that are conventional to the genre. Since "heroes/heroines [are] balanced by villains on one side, and by magical helpers on the other, ... they form the triumvirate of fairy tale characters ... and create endless plot possibilities as they are juggled with other classic elements to form fairy tales" (Lane 20). Despite the typical happy endings of the tales, there needs to be a villain to destroy the formerly set up rules so as to reconcile the hero/heroine's bonds with goodness. According to Propp's detailed analysis of the folktales in his work *Morphology of the Folktale*, the villain whose function constitutes "villainy ... [and] a fight of or other forms of struggle with the hero," (79) is there to hamper the hero/heroine from reaching the desired end. In fairy tales, villains are particularly associated with female figures who are depicted as intelligent but evil spirited, malevolent characters. In particular, these characters are associated with alien female characters who do not have any blood relation with the hero/heroine. Being one of the most recurrent characters, the mother as a general character type bears various dimensions within. Regarding this point, Carl Gustav Jung states that the mother archetype "... appears under an almost infinite

variety of aspects,” therefore the symbols that have been ascribed to the character show a wide range of meanings (156). “All these symbols can have a positive, favorable meaning or a negative, evil meaning” and the mother figure can as well be divided into two as the evil and the good mother (139). The stepmother character is the appropriate example for the evil aspects of the mother archetype which “... may connote anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate” (139).

Not every fairy tale contains stepmothers due to their plot and contextual differences; yet whenever a stepmother enters into a tale, as a stock character, she is hardly ever characterised by her kind heart or goodness but by evil deeds and ulterior motives to mislead and abuse the hero/heroine. James Frazer describes the stepmother as a figure awaking “awe and dread” throughout the tale (161). In accordance with Frazer’s words female villains such as stepmothers, enchantresses, ogres, witches, sorceresses or hags are delineated as ugly and diabolic figures who are in search of villainy. As a stock type, the evil woman, be it a witch, stepmother or mother-in-law, generally lacks some elements that are conventionally associated with womanhood. These elements, which are the main reasons of the conflict in the tales, can easily be found in the female protagonist. Hence, jealousy and grudge are the chief motives of the stepmothers. Because of their vicious feelings, what they see deficient in themselves drags them into a competition with the heroine and the strife begins. For example, in “Rapunzel” the enchantress is childless and she grows rampions in her garden. Because of her desire for a child she exchanges the rampions with the unborn baby. Regarding the condition of the enchantress, Marina Warner emphasises the fact that in fairy tales, single, “unattached and ageing” woman can be a threat to society (From the Beast 229). Charles Perrault’s “Cinderella” can be exemplified in the same category since the downtrodden girl is mistreated by her father’s new wife and her two ugly daughters. Thus, in the tale the stepmother and the stepsisters are portrayed as the relentless figures as opposed to Cinderella’s benevolence and mild-heart.

His second wife was the proudest and haughtiest woman who had ever been seen. She had two daughters, and they were just the same; they resembled her in everything ... No sooner was the wedding over than the stepmother gave free rein to her bad temper. She could not endure the child’s good nature, which made her own daughters appear even more detestable. The worst of the household chores were

given to her stepdaughter: it was she who washed the dishes and scrubbed the stairs, she who cleaned out the mistress' bedroom, and the bedrooms of the young ladies her daughters (Perrault 130).

The good mother is at the other end of the general the mother archetype. The qualities associated with the good mother "... are maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility" (Jung 139). Other fairy tale scholars show similar approaches to the double identities that the mother archetype holds in one figure. Even though the stepmothers are the most prominent mother figures of the fairy tales, there is another type who is always invisible to the reader, yet her influence is felt: the absent mother. As one of the common occurrences of the genre, death of the mother is a poignant moment for the heroine that gives hints about the background of heroine's life. Hence, the second wife of the father figure is frequently associated with the evil stepmother qualities, whereas the deceased mother, who is the biological good mother of the protagonist, is associated with the magical helpers. Being the common denominator of these stock types, goodness is their motive to fight against all the unfairness and cruelty that will eventually be imposed upon the heroine. That is to say, the magical helper takes part in sustaining the balance between the good and evil in order to retain the continual strife. Despite the absence of the mothers in the course of the tales, the magical helpers, who support the hero/heroine, substitute the dead mother and they stand for the benignity and "symbolic representation of all that is good in the world" (Cashdan 41). According to Donald Haase "[a] magic helper is a character, whether supernatural, human, or animal, who renders an extraordinary kind of assistance to heroes or heroines in folktales and other related narrative forms" (596). Helpers do not need to be a human being, but they must be humane in manner. They may appear as animals or plants and supernatural beings like fairies, goblins, fairy godmothers when the protagonist is thoughtful and worried about him/herself to "offer advice and magical assistance" (Haase 638). Emergence of the magical helpers requires a problematic situation where the heroine is left alone helpless, expelled from home or the hero finds himself desperate about the solution of the journey he sets off. The perfect example of the magical helpers can be found in "Cinderella" since the fairy godmother, animal and plant helpers take part in different versions of the tale. In Charles Perrault's version, having been left alone by her stepmother and stepsisters, she cries on since she wants to go to the Prince's

ball, too. Then, the fairy godmother suddenly emerges to help her to go to the ball by turning the animals of the household into servants and a big pumpkin into a coach, finally making Cinderella unrecognizable with a sumptuous ball dress and glass slippers by a flick of her wand (133-134). However, as can be seen in the example, helpers stand for “assistance rather than leadership,” besides they are “supportive, their power is limited, and they do not demonstrate a broader view of the situation,” hence the result of the tale does not depend upon the magical helper’s power (Lundell 153).

As explained above, stereotypical female characters as heroines and secondary figures have long preserved their double nature in their representations. Thus, what Donoghue aims is to break down the possible enmity and reconcile the female characters of the genre in her work. By giving voice and realistic features to the evil characters who are mostly older than the protagonists, Donoghue provides them with an opportunity to represent the “human and vulnerable” sides while she is symbolically “rehabilitating the witch” (Harries 130). Donoghue’s rehabilitation can also be interpreted as a parody of the characters in several ways in terms of her endeavour to break them free from long established stereotypical representations. Through this way, Donoghue employs postmodern parody as a means to claim the unknown or unimagined identity of the female characters in fairy tales. Firstly, Donoghue does not construct her secondary characters as pure evil or pure good- in the course of the tale they are represented as both disagreeable and helper figures. Putting it differently, these secondary characters are in fact the mentors of the heroines but during the tale, they display unhelpful attitudes towards the heroines so as to teach them how to stand on their own two feet. For that reason,

[O]lder female characters are shown to possess an understanding of themselves and the world that the younger characters lack and often reject, and the conflicts of the stories often revolve around the gaps between these perspectives, particularly where the protagonist cannot acknowledge the wisdom of the older woman. However, the potential mentor figures are less invested in teaching specific lessons and more interested in prompting the younger characters to experience difficulties and hardships for themselves, especially when it comes to finding love (Martin 7-8).

Secondly, the tales also present a possibility of uncovering the deviant and perverse versions of these classical tales in terms of the relationships portrayed. Since the classical fairy tales have long internalized heteronormative love and desire

for women, *Kissing the Witch* offers a challenge to the stereotypical elements “of gender roles and sexual desire and derail the straight path of female destiny encoded in the tales” (de la Rochere 14). Hence, the notion of conventional sexuality is turned upside down with the lesbian love between the heroine and the evil/helper figure through the parody of the thematic concerns of the classical fairy tales. Thereby, lesbian love, mother-daughter quasi-incestuous relationship and female agency supersede the heteronormative and patriarchal nature of the classical fairy tales. Moreover, Donoghue’s bestowal of voice and autonomy to the persecuted innocent heroines and their subsidiary figures render them as full-fledged characters who act according to their own wishes rather than types that lack depth and authenticity. Therefore, considering the definition of postmodernism that Lyotard asserted, the deliberate transformation of the conventions in Donoghue’s tales are the implements of postmodern parody which treat the metanarrative of fairy tale genre with incredulity as he suggests in his *The Postmodern Condition* (xxiv).

In addition to that, Donoghue also parodies the classical fairy tale form by making radical changes in the structure. Although fairy tales, as narratives, have a linear plot with no flashbacks or flash-forwards, *Kissing the Witch* shows a great difference in this aspect from the source tales in terms of its formal strategy. The collection with thirteen successive tales is structured in such a way that each tale becomes a prequel to the one which precedes it. In other words, with the innovative device, “a character in each tale becomes the narrator of the following tale” (Harries 131). Correspondingly, the secondary character/mentor becomes the narrator and the heroine of the following tale, telling her own story in first-person singular. Thus, linking the ending of a tale with the beginning of the following one through the device of asking the same question in each tale, Donoghue merges them and creates a new tale-telling system which reminds the reader of the female tale-telling tradition in the oral literature period. Reciting the tales of independence and sexual awakening to each other, female narrators also become the heroines of their own stories and they pass on the liberationist tales to the next generations rather than the classical tales of the male discourse. For example, the Beast in “The Tale of the Rose,” the third tale of the collection, becomes the narrative voice and the heroine of “The Tale of the Apple.” Moreover, on the page following the conclusion of the tale, the heroine asks the mentor character the basic question of “Who were you before?” and the mentor offers to tell her own story as follows:

Another summer in the rose garden,
 I asked,
 Who were you
 Before you chose a mask over a crown?
 And she said,
 Will I tell you my own story?
 It is a tale of an apple.(KTW 41).

Furthermore, the narrative voice also bears differences compared to the classical fairy tale narrative voice. In the classical tales, the conventional mode of narration is always the third person singular, where the reader and the narrator have limited knowledge about the subject they read or narrate. This mode also reduces the individuality of the narration into a single and apathetic voice. Yet, Donoghue employs the first person singular narration in thirteen tales each in a particular voice. The heroines of the tales tell their own story from their own perspectives and this strategy enables them to control their own narratives while revealing their “autonomous agency” (Aktari 272). What is more, Jennifer Orme asserts that:

In the recounting of her tale, each protagonist discovers and reveals her own desires. Not all of these desires are sexual, but each in their own way is disruptive of the ideologies and normative behavioural codes embedded within their pre-texts. In speaking their desires, these characters reveal the normative and therefore usually invisible, restrictive behavioural codes at the intersecting points of gender, sexuality, class, and/or cognitive ability (124).

Another structural innovation is the titles of the tales in which Donoghue makes use of the symbolic objects or things that the original tales can be represented with. So as to imply the bonds between the rewritten version and the original tale, titles play a significant part in parodic alterations. For example, the first tale “The Tale of the Shoe” is a rewritten version of Perrault’s “Cinderella,” whose both thematic and structural features are all parodied. However, the word “Shoe” is the key signifier in the title alluding to “Cinderella.” Since Cinderella drops one of her magical glass shoes on the stairs while trying to reach her home before midnight, the very shoe becomes one of the symbolic objects that evince the original tale. Therefore, the last words of the titles in *Kissing the Witch* carry the metonymic

value through which the original tales are comprehended. In the same fashion, the other tales are entitled according to the symbolic objects as the examples below: “The Tale of the Handkerchief” is the revised version of “The Goose Girl” by Grimm Brothers, “The Tale of the Cottage” is parody of Grimm Brothers’ “Hansel and Gretel.”

Through their symbolic meanings, emblematic objects can be associated with the particular awakenings that the heroines experience to reach their desires. As Orme underlines above, the tales of the collection intend to discover the autonomous desires and wishes of the female protagonists in their own story. Shaking off the stereotypical plots and aims of the original tales, Donoghue gives them a voice and will of their own to articulate and strive for their desires. These desires do not only concentrate upon the sexuality of the protagonist, but they vary from gender liberation to economic issues, sibling devotion and life experiences.

The first tale of *Kissing the Witch*, “The Tale of the Shoe” explores the theme of lesbian love in Donoghue’s version of Charles Perrault’s “Cinderella” which was published in his first fairy tale collection in 1697. The original tale, as Bettelheim underlines, is “the best-known fairy tale and probably the best-liked” which is also mainly about “the agonies and hopes which form the essential content of sibling rivalry; and about the degraded heroine winning over her siblings who abused her” (236). However, Donoghue’s “The Tale of the Shoe” is a retrospective tale which happened in the past and now is told by the heroine as an anecdote. Donoghue’s version has two main characters: Cinderella and the fairy godmother. Different from the source tale, godmother tries not only to deliver Cinderella to the ball but also teaches her to listen to her own voice. Although Cinderella goes to the ball and attracts the attention of the prince, she eventually realizes her lesbian tendencies and her love for the fairy godmother in the end. As a coming-out-of-the-closet tale, Cinderella’s former prize of marriage is juxtaposed with ascertaining her own voice in the end. As it is evident from the first sentence of the tale, the heroine states that “Till she came it was all cold” and then begins telling her story (*Kissing the Witch* 1). Starting at the same condition with “Cinderella,” upon the loss of her mother, the heroine is very much grieved with her mother’s absence and goes through a melancholic phase in her life. Feeling abandoned and depressed she explains the futility of her life after her mother’s death as follows:

Ever since my mother died the feather bed felt hard as a stone floor. Every word that came out of my mouth limped away like a toad. Whatever I put on my back now turned to sackcloth and chafed my skin. I heard a knocking in my skull, and kept running to the door, but there was never anyone there. The days passed like dust brushes from my fingers (1).

Not being able to cope the grief of her mother's death, Cinderella seems to be going through a major depression and she cannot replace the absence of her mother. Donoghue's version does not comprise the passive father, evil stepmother and jealous stepsisters as the antagonistic characters. The heroine lives alone and experiences her melancholia at the utmost level. Since she is severely afflicted with the loss, in order to ease the pain she devotes herself to the household chores by raking out the hearth with her fingernails, scouring the floor until her knees bleed, counting the rice and beans (*KTW** 2). Nevertheless, different from the source tale, these drudgeries are not assigned to her by the cruel stepmother or the sisters. Donoghue's Cinderella is doing these chores not because they are obligatory, but because her inner voice tells her to do so. She underlines the echoes of the self-inflicted punishment as such: "Nobody made me do the things I did, nobody scolded me, nobody punished me but me. The shrill voices were all inside. Do this, do that, you lazy heap of dirt. They knew every question and answer, the voices in my head" (2). Donoghue emphasises her parody by equipping Cinderella both with the traditional helpless representation and the features of the hostile stepmother. Commanding Cinderella to do all the housework, the stepmother, in the classical tale, tries to "disempower the heroine from creating her own destiny" and confining her in the boundaries of the male-dominated system (Gladwin 65). However, in Donoghue's version Cinderella becomes her own stepmother which is associated with misdeeds and cruelty that she inflicts upon the persecuted heroine in the source tales.

One day, when the heroine is in her sorrowful mood, a stranger appears behind her. She takes her into the garden and shows her a hazel tree which her deceased mother loved so much. Being similar to "Cinderella," this figure emerges as the fairy-godmother of the heroine. Seeking to restore the bonds between the mother figure and the heroine, the fairy godmother enters the story as a close friend of her mother. Along with the fairy godmother, transformations of the heroine start

* *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* will be abbreviated as *KTW* in parenthetical references.

at once foreshadowing the real significance of the character. For her drastic change the heroine expresses her feelings as follows: “How can I begin to describe the transformations? My old dusty self was spun new. This woman sheathed my limbs in blue velvet. I was dancing on points of clear glass” (*KTW* 3). The transformation she goes through is the greatest clue of the thematic parody in the tale. In the classical version, Cinderella experiences the real transformation when her identity is revealed the moment prince and his men see that the glass shoe fits her foot. However, as the heroine expresses, she has already begun her transformation on meeting the fairy godmother. Rehabilitated by her, Cinderella wants to go to the prince’s ball but she still asks that “Isn’t that what girls are meant to ask for?” sarcastically and consciously by touching upon the conventional roles of woman in the fairy tales.

Thus, it is evident that the heroine is a self-conscious character because she knows that she is a fairy tale character and feels obliged to obey the rules of the fairy tale tradition. When she goes to the ball, she complies with the tenets of the fairy tale heroine by not eating anything in order not to gain weight, dancing with different men, speaking without meaning anything. Thus, as she also reflects she plays a game in which she should keep up the appearance of a young beautiful Cinderella. Yet, at midnight she is picked up by her godmother. Feeling confused, she examines her role as “a girl with ... fortune to make” and her godmother’s role as a woman who is old enough to be her mother and eventually decides to go the ball again next night (*KTW* 4). At the end of the second night, godmother asks “Had enough?”. Yet knowing that in the end she will have a future with the prince, Cinderella puts herself to the same test once again and wants to go to the ball next night (*KTW* 4). Unlike in the source tale, the fairy godmother and Cinderella develops a relationship based on affection that accentuates their human sides. Because of the fact that the fairy godmother cares for her, she makes the heroine laugh, feeds her with a silver spoon, she simply devotes herself to the heroine. However, their relationship carries the overtones more of an emotional one and no longer a mother-daughter bonds of love. Another interpretation explains the parodic side of the text, as it can be the foreshadowings of a lesbian love instead of a naïve friendship between the fairy godmother and the heroine. Hence the fairy godmother’s interest can be interpreted as the outlet of an intimate relationship that reshapes the sorority between female fairy tale characters.

At the ball, this time fully aware of her situation, the heroine rejects courtly etiquette rules she is meant to obey, and eats everything she is offered and throws up, dances like a “clockwork ballerina” to the same old music played over and over again and smiles “till her face twist[s]” (KWT 6). Tired of the same old plot for the third time, Donoghue’s Cinderella figures out that she cannot be a fairy tale heroine within the tradition. However, at that point the Prince comes to propose. Regarding the setting, the heroine asserts that it is “all fairy-tale,” thus with this sentence, she, as a character, refers to the constructed and unnatural features of the tale and her alien situation in the system (6). While the Prince is proposing to her, she cannot hear him but the shrieking patriarchal voices commanding her to say yes. The voices which were ordering her to do all the drudgery at the beginning of the tale are the same ones which now order her to accept the marriage proposal. Identified with the patriarchal ideology, these voices try to confine her into a life where she is ruled by domestic toil and male domination. Yet, she determines her future life with the silent answer she gives:

I opened my teeth but no sound came out. There was no harm in this man; what he proposed was white and soft, comfortable as fog. There was nothing to be afraid of. But just then the midnight bell began to toll out the long procession of years, palatial day by moonless night. And I leapt backward down the steps, leaving one shoe behind (KWT 7).

While running, she tears off her dress and loses one pair of her shoes. When she is back at home she finds her godmother on the lawn. Then, in an epiphanic moment she starts hearing her real voice which tells the fault and the truth about herself: “I had got the story all wrong. How could I not have noticed she was beautiful? I must have dropped all my words in the bushes. I reached out” (7). The woman asks her about the shoe, which symbolises marriage in “Cinderella”, and she answers that it was digging into her heel indicating that the shoe which can help her gain a wealthy future through the marriage is only an obstacle for her. After that, the woman asks about the prince and the heroine answers “He’ll find someone to fit, if he looks long enough” (8). In the final scene of the tale the godmother asks the third and the last question as follows:

What about me? she asked very low.

I’m old enough to be your mother.

Her finger was spelling on the back of my neck.

You're not my mother, I said. I'm old enough to know that.
 I threw the other shoe into the brambles, where it hung,
 glinting.
 So then she took me home, or I took her home, or we were
 both somehow taken to the closest thing (KTW 7-8).

With a very symbolic move of throwing the glass shoe into the brambles, Donoghue's Cinderella repudiates the last chance of being prince's wife and writes her own tale. As it is indicated above, the tale provides a new kind of happily ever after which gives importance to real love and same sex desires rather than fairy tale conventions and heteronormativity. Hence, while the "queer moments" (Orme 123) of the tale are magnified by means of the love and the relationship between the heroine and the godmother, the source tale is parodied both thematically and formally. Thematic parody is based upon the shattering of patriarchal and heteronormative ideology through the sexual and emotional affair, whereas formal parody is structured by means of self-consciousness of the character. In relation to parody and the sexual revelation Maria Micaela Coppola suggests that:

Cinderella gradually understands she cannot fit into the story prescribed and repeated by the voices. Consequently, she starts ignoring them and rewrites her story. This new tale has been, she realizes, already written; the new ending of the story (which she perceives, now, as completely and truly her own) has always been at her disposal, needing only to be re-read. The only thing that Donoghue's Cinderella (and with her, the reader) has to do is to read the signs in a different way. Only then can she consciously interpret her self-narrative and, consequently, deviate from its pre-established, hidden designs (135).

Hence, re-reading the details and listening to the inner voices, Donoghue's Cinderella recovers herself of being only a stereotype of her own story. With the collaboration of fairy godmother, she overcomes the entrenched rules as both fairy tale character and also writer of their tale which can be changed through re-interpreting. The fact that the tale is both structurally and thematically recast, the new version does not affect the promise of happy ending of traditional fairy tales. By reimagining the source tale, Donoghue provides the characters with independent voices and freedom of choice that make them act differently from the stereotypical characters. Therefore, with their alternative characteristics and stories, female

figures write their own tales in accordance with their orientations and expectations from their lives.

Another tale of Donoghue revolving around the same theme is “The Tale of the Hair,” the sixth tale of the collection, which is also a rewriting of Grimm Brother’s “Rapunzel.” Consistent with the prevalent narrative strategy of the collection, Rapunzel is both the heroine and the narrator of the tale. However, the tale of Donoghue’s Rapunzel has some major differences from the source plot. Donoghue reimagines the awakening desire and the love relationship of the heroine by giving a subversive twist to the elements in the traditional tale. Hence, in “The Tale of the Hair,” too Donoghue’s parody functions to foreground lesbian identity and the sexual awakening of the heroine.

The source tale tells the story of the heroine’s secluded life in the tower which was built by an enchantress. Yet, in the revised version, the Rapunzel is a blind girl who leads a dependent life to the Mother Gothel. Her impending adolescence and obscure background perplex the girl regarding her stand point, about which she keeps questioning the Mother Gothel. Upon hearing voice of a man one day, she makes plans to elope with him. Yet, later on he turns out to be the Mother Gothel who transformed herself into a man. With a tragic scene in the end, the Mother Gothel and Rapunzel come to a realization that they have no one other than themselves for each other and this point becomes the beginning of their relationship with lesbian overtones.

Secluded by the Mother Gothel, the heroine knows nothing about life except the things she has learnt from the enchantress. Since the heroine is “blind as a mole,” she defines her foster mother as her “cache of wisdom,” she trusts in the enchantress as the source of knowledge since she is the only human being that she trusts her life upon (KTW 84-85). By this change Donoghue tries to stress the heroine’s ignorance of life. Moreover, she makes the heroine twice gullible and naïve both by shutting her into the tower and shutting her eyes to the reality that surrounds her. Knowing that she is not her biological mother, the heroine asks questions about the beginning of their relationship and each time she is replied with a different scenario that tallies with the source tale: “Sometimes she would say that she had found me growing in a clump of wild garlic; other times, that she had won me in a bet; other times, that she had bought me for a handful of radishes. Once she claimed that she had saved me, without saying from what” (KTW 84). Since in the source tale the Mother Gothel gives radishes to Rapunzel’s craving

pregnant mother from her garden in exchange for the expected baby, in the rewritten one, the Mother Gothel gives reference to the source tale thinking that she has saved her from her poor parent who were not able to afford buying radishes. Living in an indifferent universe where nobody is aware of their existence, the Mother Gothel assumes herself as the creator of the heroine. By providing everything she wants, she tries to establish a symbiotic relationship where the heroine is incapable of doing anything independently. As the other side of this relation, the enchantress is fed by the existence of the heroine. Regarding the Mother Gothel's protective nature Sheldon Cashdan remarks that "...[W]itches, despite their wicked nature, have maternal longings. They are, after all the other side of the good mother. As such, they harbour the same maternal feelings. This can be seen in the witch's promise to cherish and protect the child" (157). Although the mentor female character is an enchantress, unlike the other similar figures in classical fairy tales such as witches and sorceresses, she does not hold malignant intentions towards the girl. Her only fault is her obsession with the girl and this excessively possessive attitude brings her downfall.

As the years pass by, the heroine grows up and she feels the change in her body and spirit. Along with her physical development, her sexual awareness comes to prominence. Owing to the fact that she has never seen a man before, the heroine cannot notice her sexual development. However, her sexual maturation is symbolically represented through her hair. As Marina Warner emphasises "[m]aidenhair can symbolize maidenhead- and its loss too, and the flux of sexual energy that this releases" (*From the Beast* 374). Therefore, both in the source and rewritten tale, her magnificently long hair corresponds to the greatness of premature sexual development she goes through at the age of twelve. Moreover, her wish of living in a tower can be referred as another clue of her sexual development. In Freudian psychology, the high and vertical objects, such as towers, are described as phallic objects and they are associated with the phallus. Hence the heroine, with her extremely long hair and wish of living in a tower, is represented as the figure who is in search of separation from her foster mother because of the sexual urges she has. Furthermore, when the tower is built, she wants to measure the girth of the tower by stretching her arms around however she unwittingly embraces the gigantic phallic object saying that "it was just what [she] needed" (*KTW* 87).

On the day of her first bleeding, the heroine has a nightmare of a hunt and she dreams that:

The wood was full of men who were also stags and also the dogs that chased them. My hair was caught in a tangle of hedge, my clothes shredded by the thorns. There was no safety. There was no cover. There was no door to the tower, when in my dream I stumbled through the thorn bushes and found it at last, clubbing my fists on the stone walls to be let in (KTW 88).

Although she is soothed by the enchantress at that night, she cannot get over her nightmare and develops a fear of the forest. Due to her secluded life and blind eyes, she leads a very limited and intact life within the tower. Having dreamt a rather violent and threatening nightmare, she grows afraid of the outer forces that can destroy their peculiar system. However when the enchantress learns that Rapunzel is afraid of the forest, she, as the protector of the girl, wants her to trust her: “Do you think I’d let you be hurt? ... Trust my ears to hear the horn, and my fire to scare the wolves, and my arms to keep out the wind” (89). Nonetheless the heroine does not trust anything except the stone walls of the tower. So she wants the enchantress to block up all the windows except the one on the top. In Grimm Brother’s “Rapunzel” the Mother Gothel locks up the girl in the tower; yet ironically in Donoghue’s version the heroine wants to be confined in the tower in order to make sure that she is secure and away from the impending threats.

As she is leading her enclosed life, one day she sings a song about “the moon and a prince and a ring” to amuse herself (KTW 90). Since the heroine was raised in a highly isolated space where the patriarchal values and culture are absent, hearing the song, the enchantress wants to learn where she has heard it and she answers:

In the stories.

What stories? she said. I never told you such stories.

Who’s been telling you stories?

I must have heard them in the time before.

She said, You have never even seen a man.

No, I answered, but I can imagine (KTW 91).

Ignorant of the real meaning of her songs, she keeps singing them in order to please herself and also to annoy her foster mother, and one day an answer from a prince comes for her songs. Due to the fact that she is still afraid of any outer figure

that is alien to her life, on the first visit of the prince, she cannot shake off the fear, thus she remains without any reaction. Yet, the next night she has the courage to talk to him and in the end of their conversation the prince climbs up to the tower by means of a rope. Even though the heroine is blind, she makes herself believe that the prince is all she has ever imagined. Trying to figure out how he is, she describes the prince as follows: "His hand grasping mine at the window was strong as a willow; his neck smelt of lavender, and the shirt on his back as clean as water. His voice was rough, but musical, and his lips against my cheek were soft as rabbits' whiskers" (KTW 93). In the end of their conversation, they kiss each other and make an elopement plan to get married soon.

However, as the biggest twist of the tale, the prince is the enchantress in disguise. In the morning, when the enchantress sees Rapunzel's smiling face she asks the reason of her happiness and the heroine answers in an impertinent way: "Nothing you need to know, or maybe something you never will" (KTW 94). The enchantress, who is totally aware of everything that has happened the night before, yells at the heroine: "There is nothing I do not know...Everything you think you know you have learned from me ...Yet you have deceived me" (94-95). The harsh reaction of the enchantress starts an ardent quarrel between the heroine and the enchantress. Yet, the quarrel comes to an end when the heroine declares that she will run away with the prince when she hears his horn that night. Upon her foster daughter's declaration, the enchantress also confesses that the horn belongs to her and she imitates the voice of the prince showing that she is the prince that the heroine wants to elope with. This time the heroine gets enraged with the enchantress since she has played with her feelings by fooling her. Thus, in equal terms, both the enchantress and the heroine reveal the treacherous plots they schemed for each other and also they notice the deception they live in. Concerning the mutual betrayal, Ann Martin describes the situation between them as follows:

At the crisis, they both realize the deceptions they have practiced upon each other: while Rapunzel has been deceived, she has also betrayed as trust, and neither has been true. The roles that both have accepted and assumed thus shift the critique from a condemnation of the patriarchal order to a questioning of the individual's capitulation to that system (18).

The relationship between Rapunzel, the Mother Gothel and the prince in the classical fairy tale is parodied by the same kind of relationship existing between the heroine and the enchantress in Donoghue's version. In Grimm Brothers' "Rapunzel" the enchantress' love for the girl is a selfish one. She does not want to share Rapunzel with anyone that is why she locks her inside the tower. Yet when she discovers the fact that Rapunzel wants to share her love with someone else the enchantress cannot help damaging the possible happy ending between the prince and Rapunzel. About the same issue Bettelheim emphasises that "[t]o love so selfishly and foolishly is wrong, but not evil. The sorceress does not destroy the prince; all she does is gloat when he becomes deprived of Rapunzel as *she is*" (149).

However, in Donoghue's version the enchantress' love for the girl is not a selfish but a protective one. Unlike the Mother Gothel, the enchantress does not aim to keep the girl away from sexuality, but from the patriarchal order. Since neither of the two is familiar with the patriarchal order, the enchantress does not want to risk their private system in the forest for the sake of an outsider. Parodying the conservative atmosphere and the Mother Gothel of the Grimm's tale, Donoghue sets a new plot with the same elements but in her tale the heroine herself wants to be secluded from the outer world and she brings her own downfall with her faults. The enchantress is aware of the fact that the heroine is in search of love and sexuality and by means of her disguise as the prince, she tries to release her foster daughter's desires by introducing an imitation of a heterosexual love to her. Away from the patriarchal values and system, all she can provide for the heroine is her own love and lesbian desire. Unlike the source tale, the enchantress does not direct her anger and jealousy towards the sexual curiosity and desire of the heroine rather she is angry with the girl just because she has tried to fool her.

After the mutual revelation of their betrayal, Donoghue's Rapunzel, all alone in the tower, cuts off her long hair since she feels that it is her only possession. In "Rapunzel" the Mother Gothel cuts Rapunzel's hair off in order to punish her for she let the prince climbing up to her room in the tower. Yet, in "The Tale of the Hair" the heroine makes use of her plaits as a tool to run away from the enchantress and the tower, creating an opportunity towards her own liberation. Since she is blind, she cannot go further into the forest. Still close to the tower at night, the heroine hears the voice of the enchantress sobbing and calling her to let down her hair at the base of the tower. As she cannot have an answer from the tower she begins climbing up. The heroine cannot see but hears the voices she

makes: "I heard the puffs of breath as she began to climb. When she got to the top and looked in at the empty room, there was a wail like an animal in a trap, and then a sound like a hollow tree falling in the first storm of the winter" (KTW 98).

Upon finding the room empty, the enchantress prefers death to life without Rapunzel and she lets jumps off the tower. However, she does not die but gets blinded by the thorns when the heroine finds her lying on the ground. Depicting the same scene in the source tale, the heroine embraces the enchantress and picks up the thorns from her eyelids. Nevertheless, Donoghue shifts the prince figure with the enchantress and establishes a new bond with lesbian undertones by destroying the former foster mother- daughter relationship. At the end of the tale, both are blind, Donoghue's Rapunzel starts to cry: "I took her head on my chest and wept over her, salt in her wounded eyes. It was the only way I knew to clean them. I didn't know whether they would heal, or whether she would have to learn the world from me now. We lay there, waiting to see what we would see" (KTW 99). Although the finishing moment of the tale is rather bleak in terms of the atmosphere, after the revelation of their mutual betrayal and tragic double blindness, the Mother Gothel and Rapunzel now can come to terms with each other and their mutual loss becomes an outlet for their mutual love. They were already quite remote to the outer world and now with the the total loss of sight the Mother Gothel and Rapunzel figuratively find their own insights about each other. In the end they seem to accept the fact that, no matter what ill-plans they had for each other, they are the only source of remedy for each other.

Correspondingly, reimagining the evil Mother Gothel as a fallible human with over-protective and obsessed behaviours and Rapunzel with blind eyes with credulous disposition, the writer again unearths the possible relationships that the characters can have. In the rewriting of the Grimm Brothers' "Rapunzel," Donoghue challenges the patriarchal and incontestable values of the fairy tales by celebrating the female agency and unity through the revised female figures. In her parody, Donoghue creates another version of the tale where the protector-protected relation is transformed into a lesbian romantic relationship. Although the heroine of the tale is not aware of her lesbian identity, the enchantress takes over the role of mentor to guide and reveal her hidden desires. Since the tale ends with a rather sad resolution, Donoghue redefines and reconstructs the happy endings of fairy tales by introducing an unhappy moment but a promising future at the end. Even though they are blind, the fact that they are together and eliminate their lies and betrayals

show the final state of their relationship where they can 'look' at the future with hope and enjoy their existence in a different romantic phase. Thus parodying the stepmother-daughter enmity and typical happily ever after ending, Donoghue spins old straw into gold with an optimistic sight and homosexual awareness.

To conclude, with thematic and formal parody Emma Donoghue first reformulates the boundaries of classical fairy tales and then with a careful approach she reveals the ignored and problematic issues of fairy tales such as sexuality and gender. Thus, by changing the tale, she does not underestimate the significance of the old traditional texts; on the contrary, she shows her gratitude to the genre by her rewritten tales which consist of their own idiosyncratic style and the traditional joyful mood of the classical tales. The fact that the tales are both structurally and thematically recast, the new versions do not affect the promise of happy ending of traditional fairy tales. By reimagining the source tale, Donoghue provide the characters with independent voices and freedom of choice that make them act differently from the stereotypical characters. Therefore, with their alternative characteristics and stories, female figures write their own tale in accordance with their orientations and expectations from their lives. Though the tales do not end with the marriage of the heroine and a prince or a promise of a wealthy future of a princess or a well-established poetic justice, the heroines write their own stories by shrugging off the sexist, anthropocentric and patriarchal limitations. Therefore, Emma Donoghue gives the chance to the long muted and suppressed female characters of fairy tales to liberate themselves in sexual, social and literary realms.

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