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### **CINDERELLA WANTS TO DECIDE: A FEMINIST STUDY OF SEVERAL VERSIONS OF THIS FAIRY TALE OVER THE YEARS**

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# Contents

<b>1.-Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1.-Fairy tales, feminism and the construction of gender identity.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.-Analysis of the Tales.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2.1.-"The Cat Cinderella" (1634), by Giambattista Basile.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.2.-"Cendrillon" or "The Little Glass Slipper" (1697), by Charles Perrault.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>2.3.-"Ashputtel" (1812-15), by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>2.4.-"Finette Cendron" (1697), by Madame d'Aulnoy.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>2.5.-"The Reason For Not Going To The Ball" (1996), by Tanith Lee.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>2.6.-"The Tale of the Shoe" (1997), by Emma Donoghue.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>3.-Conclusion.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>4.-Works Cited.....</b>	<b>54</b>

## **1.-Introduction**

Literature, as Pam Morris affirms, "constructs a representation of that already existing reality by means of words (1993: 7). Fairy tales, as part of the literary universe are, therefore, yet another representation of reality. The literary fairy tale, present along history since the Middle Ages, is a device that portrays the ideology, politics, values, and morals of a society. Apart from mirroring a particular reality to millions of people, they have also worked as an acculturation device for many centuries now. They have influenced masses of people, men, women, and children all over the world. The language used in these tales is a key element, for it is selected by the tale collector or the tale writer with a purpose.

People with power, men in the majority of cases, have articulated some specific discourse, have controlled, selected and organized it so that the language used in it has reproduced or, rather, created, a reality in which men are strong while women are weak, men are active while women are passive, men are the leaders while women are the followers, men are tough while women are delicate, just to mention a few dichotomies. Male collectors of fairy tales such as Basile, the brothers Grimm, and Charles Perrault have used their power as storytellers to reproduce a hierarchical structure of society, namely, patriarchy, in which men are at the top and women remain at home. Patriarchal society, as I mentioned before, is a society based on, and ruled by, misogynist assumptions on womanhood. These biased ideas on women, which the literary fairy tale has helped spread, have negatively affected the formation of gender identity in young people for a long time, since gender identity is socially constructed.

Feminist scholarship denounced this biased discourse in literary fairy tales, and has tried to subvert it in different ways. While some female authors, such as Emma Donoghue and Tanith Lee, have re-read traditional fairy tales and written their own versions, other feminist authors have created brand new fairy tales. In all of them, though, the female figure is portrayed in ways which widely differ from the representations that can be found in tales written or collected by male

authors. Generally speaking, female characters in female tales are, on the whole, rather more independent, determined, self-confident, sexually active, and assertive.

The literary fairy tale "Cinderella" is a clear example of how language influences the formation of gender identity and the assumptions that a young mind can elaborate from its reading. "Cinderella" is one of the most, if not the most, popular fairy tale ever. It has reached millions of homes and millions of children all over the world in its different versions for centuries now. It has changed along history, it has been retold and reshaped in hundreds of versions and, in each version, the author or collector has added, sometimes a little and sometimes a lot of himself or herself, in order to portray particular values and morals with a clear purpose on his or her mind: to mould people's minds and behaviour according to an ideology, the ideology that they considered to be the most appropriate.

As this Master thesis will try to show, fairy tales are not as innocent or inoffensive as one might think at first. They have been a political weapon used to reproduce and enforce a patriarchal society which leaves women in a position of weakness and dependence, under a powerful and controlling male figure. However, feminist scholarship, and by extension the feminist re-writing of traditional fairy tales, has denounced this phenomenon and has tried hard to fight it.

## 1.1.-Fairy tales, feminism and the construction of gender identity

When it comes to discussing fairy tales, it is very important to clarify which sort of tales we are taking into consideration. In this field, there is a clear distinction between the oral folk tale or fairy tale and the literary fairy tale. In this essay, I will analyse six literary fairy tales which, according to Jens Tismar's definition, are variants of the traditional and world-wide known tale "Cinderella", and were written by Western Europe and North American authors, who seem to share the same "literary tradition" (in Zipes, 2000: xvi). As this critic goes on to argue (xv), the literary fairy tale should be distinguished from the oral fairy tale, since it is not anonymous, but written by a known author; it is artificial and manufactured in comparison with the more natural/spontaneous way in which oral tales appeared; and it is linked to the oral folk tale, which it reshapes according to the author's ideas.

The last fifty years have seen the international institutionalization of folktale and fairy tale studies. According to Haase (2008: xxxiii), this is due to two events: first, the establishment of the International *Society for Folk Narrative Research* in 1959 under the leadership of German folklorist Kurt Ranke; and second, the founding of *Fabula*, an international *Journal of Folktale Studies* in German, French and English. As he affirms, the study of folk tales and fairy tales is a brand new field with a promising future.

I will first refer to the evolution of the genre in the past centuries, starting from the Middle Ages. Up to then, most fairy tales were spread through the oral tradition. However, it was in the Middle Ages that the written fairy tale began to develop. As Zipes explains (2000: xx), this was due to different causes: the spread of vernacular languages as official languages of the state; the invention of the printing press; the creation of an increasing audience who developed a taste for short narratives, such as fairy tales; and the wide acceptance of these tales among the educated classes. As a consequence, between 1450 and 1700 the literary fairy tale experimented some significant development and evolution.

One of the greatest misconceptions about folktales and fairy tales, according to Maria Nikolajeva (in Haase, 2008: 185-86), is that many people think that they were exclusively addressed to children. As it happens, though, in their original form, before being adapted for children by authors like Charles Perrault and the brothers Grimm, fairy tales were pretty inappropriate for young readers, since they included offensive elements, cruel scenes, and grotesque acts, which rendered them more suitable for an older audience. Moreover, as Zipes claims in his research on the evolution of the fairy tale (2000: xxi-xxiii), the literary fairy tale is, and was, a written text. Having in mind that most people at that time had no access to education and could not read, it is easy to conclude that the audience of these tales were mainly the higher classes, made up by adults who had had the privilege of learning how to read. It was in the 1690s that the fairy tale established itself as a genre. As this critics reminds us, some French female writers, the so-called *conteuses*, were the first ones to call them *contes de fées* or fairy tales, and these tales were not originally addressed to children. However, literary fairy tales for children also began to appear; these were mainly written by children's caretakers as didactic lessons. As Zipes states (2000: xxiii):

Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century numerous publishers in France, England, and Germany began serious production of books for children, and the genre of the fairy tale assumed a new dimension which now included concerns about how to socialize children and indoctrinate them through literary products that were appropriate for their age, mentality, and morals. The rise of 'bourgeois' children's literature meant that publishers would make the fairy-tale genre more comprehensive, but they would also -along with parents, educators, religious leaders, and writers- pay great attention to the potential of the fantastic and miraculous in the fairy tale to disturb and/or enlighten children's minds.

It is undeniable that, to quote Zipes's words again, "Oral tales have served to stabilize, conserve, or challenge the common beliefs, laws, values, and norms of a group" (2000: xix). Although the main concern of this Master thesis is the study of the written literary fairy tale, it is

clear that this concern is shared by both the oral fairy tale and the literary fairy tale. The only difference is that, whereas the oral tale evolves and changes constantly, the literary fairy tale remains always the same, thus portraying the values, morals, and norms of the group and socio-historical moment in which it was produced. This is the reason why it is so valuable, because it is like a little window onto a different time and a different society. For Bruno Bettelheim, "fairy tales reveal truths about mankind and oneself" (1976: 66). Many authors agree that fairy tales are a reflection of the society of the time in which they appear.

However, not only do fairy tales absorb and reflect the socio-historical background, morality and ideology of their time, they also help to reproduce and enforce it when they are retold. As Jack Zipes (1987: xi) points out, "the Victorian fairy-tale writers always had two ideal audiences in mind when they composed their tales -young middle-class readers whose minds and morals they wanted to influence, and adult middle-class readers whose ideas they wanted to challenge and reform". For this author fairy tales were, not only a means of influence, but also an instrument to mould the way people thought. He affirms that fairy tales have been used as tools for the "socialization and acculturation of listeners" (Zipes, 2000: xix). The process of acculturation through fairy tales is not as simple as one might think, though, since not all fairy tales influence and determine how children think with the same strength. In her article "Some Day My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tale", Marcia R. Lieberman affirms that "Only the best-known stories, those that everyone has read or heard, indeed, those that Disney has popularized, have affected masses of children in our culture" (1972: 383). Only those versions of fairy tales which are world-wide known by most people have the power to influence the way they perceive the world.

As to the question, how does exactly a fairy tale exert such influence on people, and on children in particular? the answer is: through language. As is well known, structural linguistics had its beginnings in 1916, in the posthumous publication of Ferdinand de Saussure *Course in General Linguistics*. Pam Morris (1993: 100) discusses Saussure's work and claims that his main aim was to

understand how language, as a systematic structure, produces meaning. According to Saussure, all signs have two components: a signifier, which is the visual or sound element, i.e. the sequence of graphemes or phonemes; and a signified, which is the concept or idea that comes to our minds when we hear or read this signifier. A key idea in Saussure's theory is that the relationship between signs and the objects they represent in the real world is absolutely arbitrary. If this were not the case, we would all use the same signifiers to refer to the same signifieds. What Morris (1993: 101-37) infers from Saussure's work is that there are two separate worlds, that of reality and that of language: it is not that reality gives meaning to language, but the other way around; it is language that gives meaning to reality, it is thanks to language that we can make sense of the world. Moreover, language or discourse do not reflect our idea of the world; instead, they shape our idea of it. Consequently, the language that authors decide to use in their adaptations of traditional fairy tales is not arbitrary, since it helps to transmit the ideas, values, and morals with which they want to imbue their audience. As Angela Carter claims, transforming the oral folktales or fairy tales into a written text, "inexorably changes" the story (1990: x).

Michel Foucault was deeply concerned with the concept of power and its relationship with discourse. In his seminal "The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language" Foucault affirms:

I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality. (1972: 216)

Language is, therefore, a device that can be used to influence the minds of people and make them believe in the same ideas that a group of society shares, and also to behave accordingly. Social structures and institutions such as education, employment, religion, the family, and the law



have often used language to perpetuate a patriarchal society and a distorted, unreal idea of women, and have also made the most of fairy tales as a medium for the reproduction of the power relations that they wanted to endorse, and for the transmission of the morals and values of the dominant group onto a wider public in order to perpetuate a male-controlled hierarchical society.

What are the power relations that have been perpetuated by some variants of "Cinderella"? Those in which women are subordinated to men, those enforced by male writers in a patriarchal society. The roles of women and men have been unequally portrayed. As Morris points out (1993: 32), "to be heroic, plots tell us, men must embrace action, seeking to shape circumstances to their will, whereas for women heroism consists of accepting restrictions and disappointments with stoicism". Feminist criticism found out that the roles of women in fairy tales have been poorly portrayed, or else portrayed in a way that fosters male dominance and a patriarchal society in which men and women are not equals. Fairy tales have been consequently used to reproduce a patriarchal order in which the woman is subordinated to the man. In her article, Marcia R. Lieberman affirms that:

A close examination of the treatment of girls and women in fairy tales reveals certain patterns which are keenly interesting not only in themselves, but also as material which has undoubtedly played a major contribution in forming the sexual role concept of children, and in suggesting to them the limitations that are imposed by sex upon a person's chances of success in various endeavors. (1972: 384)

Lieberman agrees with Zipes that fairy tales have been used as a tool for an inadequate, even unreal, construction of gender identity for girls and women for a long time; and shares Morris's conviction that fairy tales disseminate a model of female "proper" behaviour which is mistaken, since it is based on old assumptions about biology and gender identity. The construction of gender has been the subject of discussion for many decades, but especially since the 1960s as a result of the development and expansion of several feminist theories.

The main division as regards the construction of gender identity revolves around whether gender is biologically determined or socially constructed. Pam Morris (1993: 2) claims that "what is natural or essential cannot be changed in the way that social attributes of character can, hence if biology were actually to render women more submissive and less adventurous than men, there would be little that anyone could do about it". She argues that this belief has prevailed in society for quite a long time, and has been systematically used to justify women's subordination to men. If nature cannot be changed, if biology has made women weaker, then there is nothing we can do, claimed the advocates of biologically determined gender. However, those in favour of the idea of gender as socially and culturally constructed strongly refuted this old notion about women.

Ruth B. Bottingheimer (2004: 38) decides to separate the idea of 'sex' from 'gender' and affirms that 'sex' is biologically provided and also physically visible, while she sees "gender as a socially constructed set of attributions that is recognizable as part of a highly elaborated semiotic system within communities". In this Master thesis, I shall focus on gender, not sex, since I agree to her assumption that sex and gender are two different concepts, and my main concern here is not women's physical body, but how women construct their identity in a given society at a specific historical moment.

The conception of gender as biologically determined prevailed for decades, one of its assumptions being that women must be in a heterosexual relationship if they are in any, and that they must be subordinated to the man. This concept of woman, however, is not as old as one might think. As Bottingheimer affirms (2004: 39-40), there was a time when women played an active role in the family unit: they had a job, they produced income. A relevant date for this critic as regards this is 1500. Up to this date, women were able to control their own fertility; could support themselves whether they were rich or poor, married, unmarried or widows; could participate in confraternities; could travel unaccompanied and earn their own money. They were both emotionally and economically independent. After 1500, again according to Bottingheimer, women were gradually secluded to the home. Women's participation in confraternities was forbidden, they were

not allowed to travel unaccompanied, medieval women's crafts became dominated by men, and women could not have the same rights and income as men. What is it that triggered off this significant change in the lives of women? Bottingheimer affirms that this major change was the outcome of two events: religious reformations and capitalism. Judging by this, it is clear that Bottingheimer adheres to Marxist feminists, whose principal idea is that women are mainly oppressed through systems of capitalism and private property. On the other hand, Lutheran, Calvinist and Catholic reformations also favoured the reclusion of women between 1500 and 1700, since they emphasized that women's place was the home. Chris Weedon argues that (2003: 32), since the establishment of Christianity as the dominant religion, God becomes male, and the powerful goddesses that existed before, who symbolized fertility and sexuality, disappeared on behalf of this new male figure that holds all the power. The only female figure that was sanctioned was that of the virgin mother, which represents a woman who is asexual and powerless. According to the Christian myth of creation, God created man first, and then created woman from the man's rib. Accordingly, the creator/giver of life is no longer a woman, but a man; in this case, God, which is widely accepted to be male.

As Lieberman sees it (1972: 386), there is a dichotomy in fairy tales between women who are "gentle, passive, and fair" and women who are "active, wicked and ugly". You can be either one thing or the other. Moreover, as this critic goes on to affirm, "women who are powerful and good are never human, those women who are human, and who have power or seek it, are nearly always portrayed as repulsive" (393). A gentle, powerful woman cannot be real, and a woman who is powerful is always mean. This is what most fairy tales imply, including the most popular versions of "Cinderella", the tale this essay will analyse. Many women have constructed their gender identity according to the biased discourse on male and female identities offered by fairy tales such as "Cinderella", written by male authors who wanted to perpetuate a patriarchal society in which women were bound to occupy an inferior position to men.

However, as Morris argues, "male control of the canon across every field of literary activity -criticism, reviewing, publishing and teaching- has been challenged in two major ways by feminist critics" (1993: 51). On the one hand, their agenda included the rereading of texts: not only literary masterpieces written by male authors, but also literary criticism written by both men and women, and literary history. On the other hand, they strove to build up a female writing tradition, which would include women's writings which had been so far rejected or ignored by male critics. The literary canon has not been constructed according to excellence criteria, but according to certain gender assumptions which imply that literature written by men is unquestionably better than that written by women.

Feminist fairy tale studies began in the 1970s, fostered by second-wave feminism (Haase, 2004: vii), a period of intense feminist action that took place in most Western countries between 1960s and 1980s. This movement encouraged women to understand that some aspects of their lives were deeply politicized, and to become aware of the existence of a sexist power structure ruled by men. As regards fairy tales, second-wave feminism put the emphasis on their social and historical value and on how women had been portrayed throughout history. Fairy tale criticism became part of the feminist questioning of the traditional canon of "great" literary texts (Morris, 1993: 37-44); these feminist critics began by rereading and questioning male "masterpieces", and then discovered interesting female works previously ignored by male editors. Up to then, writing by women was considered to be 'low-quality' if compared to men's writing. Happy and decent women were not supposed to be at all interested in writing; their concerns and priorities were of a very different nature. As Catherine Hamilton affirmed at the end of the nineteenth century:

Happy women, whose hearts are satisfied and full, have little need of utterance. Their lives are rounded and complete, they require nothing but the calm recurrence of those peaceful home duties in which domestic women rightly feel that their true vocation lies.  
(in Morris, 1993: 44)

This statement clearly shows how difficult the situation was for women writers. Women in general did not write, and if they did, this happened, it was thought, because their lives were not complete, because they were unhappy, because they were not satisfied with what they had, in other words, because there was something wrong with them. Women writers must have been seen by people like Catherine Hamilton as strange and different, and thus as dangerous creatures. Although, Weedon argues, in the late 1960s and 1970s different second-wave feminist branches showed different degrees of radicalism (2003: 19), they all identified patriarchy as the fundamental form of oppression for women, as the enemy to fight. As regards the storytelling tradition, Karen E. Rowe (1979: 237-257) claims that, by then, men had managed to steal women's traditional role as storytellers, which allowed them to control the art of storytelling, for so long attributed to women. Feminist critics tried to counter this by, on the one hand, analysing already existing folktales and fairy tales from a feminist perspective and, on the other, by writing new folktales and fairy tales from a radical feminist perspective.

As Lewis C. Seifert pointed out (1996:17), the *conteuses*, the French late-seventeenth-century female writers of fairy tales, were the first ones to revise some patriarchal fairy tales and retell them in such a way that they rejected the masculine and the feminine as two complementary items, they questioned male dominance, and also the definitions of women based on binary oppositions. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany, women such as Bettina von Arnim, Benedikte Naubert and Isolde Kurz, also offered critical perspectives on marriage, valued women's voices, and challenged men's rejection of a feminine tradition of fairy tale writing. The fairy tales that appeared at this time could be divided into two groups: tales written for children and tales written for adults. The tales for children were mainly revisions of old tales under new perspectives. Those written by Roald Dahl, Barbara Walker and Jay Williams could be given as examples; they employed different techniques, such as the reversal of gender roles, comic inversions, assertive female characters, etc. The tales for adult readers, such as those written by Angela Carter, Emma Donoghue, and Anne Sexton, vary in form and content. These authors came up with revisions of

old popular tales under a new light, and also wrote brand new tales where confident women played active roles.

Although different waves of feminism brought about different feminist critical branches, it is nonetheless important to establish their common ground. As Vera Mackie (1994) argues, in spite of all of their differences, they all demanded equal rights and opportunities for women, and claimed that women were oppressed simply on account of their female condition (para. 2). This being said, I want to make it clear that the two feminist critical branches that I will mainly use for the analysis of the six variants of "Cinderella" are radical feminism and lesbian feminism. As is well known, radical feminism basically rejects partnership with the state and the social order. It considers that women's oppression is caused by the male-controlled capitalist hierarchy in which they live. Hence, radical feminists believe that women can only be free if they are liberated from the patriarchal system, which consists of a power structure exclusively ruled by men. As Weedon (2003: 27) states, "Radical feminism theorizes patriarchy as an all-encompassing set of power relations aimed at securing male control of women's bodies: our sexuality, procreative power and labour". The aim of patriarchy is, therefore, to reproduce the already existing power relations, in which the institution of heterosexuality is the basis for controlling female sexuality and reproduction so that the male control of women is fully guaranteed, both in the public and private spheres.

Moreover, radical feminists have observed that the majority of strong female figures in the history of literature, such as witches, goddesses, healers, etc., are given a negative nature and pejorative names such as "hag", "spinster", and "harpie" by male writers (Weedon 2003: 30-46). They aim to revise and give these figures, who manage to escape patriarchal control, a positive image as strong, self-determined, and intuitive females. They even take a step further and claim that most literary theory and scholarship is also in the hands of men. As a consequence of this, many works by women have been excluded and obliterated, since they were not deemed valuable according to male standards. The final goal of radical feminism was, therefore, the abolishment of patriarchal societies. However, they never seemed to succeed in explaining how this could be done.

As regards lesbian feminism, this is a cultural movement and critical perspective which became highly relevant in the 1970s and 1980s in North America and Western Europe. The issue of lesbianism had been so far marginalized. Most heterosexual first-wave and second-wave feminists ignored the voices of lesbian activists fighting by their side. Lesbians were forced to have a hidden life or even to deny their own sexuality; they were considered by society to be depraved, unnatural, undecent, and a threat to other women and girls. As Weedon points out, "Inadequate femininity, it was suggested, would mean failure to gain male approval and love and to marry well and happily" (2003: 52). Lesbian sexuality was seen as dangerous, as a deviation from the norm, namely, heterosexuality.

One of the goals of lesbian feminists nowadays, as Weedon affirms (67), is the revision of literary texts. One of their first goals was to discover and create a lesbian tradition in literature. The establishment of a corpus of lesbian literary texts was regarded as absolutely necessary for critics to be able to analyze them and give them visibility. Recovering those lost lesbian writings and creating a positive image of the lesbian woman is a great task still to be achieved. Moreover, Weedon adds, "creating lesbian language and traditions where there was only silence and invisibility or negative images" (67) is a high responsibility. From its very beginnings, lesbian feminism has developed a new perspective in which women are at the centre, which could be seen as the true basis for a radical socio-political transformation.

Briefly said, fairy tales started as short texts addressed to adults, to then change into writings for children. In both cases, they were used to influence people and children's behaviour, especially as regards the construction of gender identity and socialization. Since the canon formation of this literary field was male-controlled, the majority of literary fairy tales reproduced a patriarchal society in which women were dominated by men and played a passive role in the plots. Feminist literary criticism reacted against this, and began to revise old traditional tales and to create a canon of female-authored forgotten fairy tales and new tales under a new light.

Nowadays, it seems that the big issues feminists fought for in previous decades have been achieved. However, according to journalist Kimberley Reader (2012), statistics tell us that the situation is anything but ideal. Just to give a few examples, a survey in 2012 over a thousand Londoners found that 43% of women between 18-34 had experienced sexual harassment in public spaces within the last year; according to the National Crime Records Bureau, there were 24,923 rape cases reported in India in 2013, of which 24,470 were committed by a relative or a neighbour; according to the United States Department of Labour, the five leading occupations for employed women were, in order: elementary and middle school teachers, secretaries and administrative assistants, registered nurses, psychiatric and home health aids, and customer service representatives. In all of these jobs, women's weekly earnings were lower than men's. It may seem that women have the same access to education and the same job opportunities, but the truth is that they do not earn the same amount of money for the same job, and that the kind of jobs they are offered have nothing to do with men's. Although the situation of women has undoubtedly improved, mainly thanks to the work carried out by feminist activists of all kinds, there is still a long way to go till we can actually talk about real equality between men and women. The fairy tales that will be later discussed clearly contribute to bringing this fact to the fore and to make their readers question the society they live in.



## **2.-Analysis of the Tales**

I intend to analyse six versions of the popular fairy tale "Cinderella" from a feminist perspective. In order to make this selection, I have taken into consideration three aspects: location, historical time and relevance. As regards their location, they are all European versions collected or authored by editors or writers who share the same literary and cultural tradition. Taking this common ground as a point of departure, I will then pay attention to their differences, which will allow me to draw some conclusions. Although there is also a Chinese version of the tale which appeared in the ninth century (it is therefore the oldest written version of this tale) I decided to discard it on account of the rather different cultural background from which it emerged. As far as chronology is concerned, the selected versions of "Cinderella" date from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century. These are Basile's, Perrault's and the brothers Grimm's versions, still widely popular and offering similar negative female role models. Madame d'Aulnoy's, Tanith Lee's and Emma Donoghue's tales can be said to counter the aforementioned versions. I have thus selected a period of four centuries in which major changes have occurred within this literary genre. As to their relevance, they are the most representative and popular of their time, and somehow encapsulate the dominant ideas of their societies, while also pointing to emergent feminist movements which widely contributed to bringing the women's cause to light.

## 2.1.-"The Cat Cinderella" (1634), by Giambattista Basile

Giambattista Basile (1575-1632) was an Italian writer widely known for his remarkable book of fairy tales the *Pentamerone*, the first compilation of literary fairy tales in Western Europe. According to Donald Haase, "it signaled the start of the new narrative paradigm of the literary fairy tale" (2008: 99). Basile both transcribed and re-elaborated the oral versions he heard on his travels, including "Cinderella". He titled it "La Gatta Cenerentola", which was translated into English as "The Cat Cinderella".

The protagonist of this variant is Zezolla, a girl whose father is a Prince, a widower who remarries "an evil, malicious, bad-tempered woman" (5), who hates her step-daughter. Zezolla has a governess who is kind to her and who persuades her to kill her step-mother, which she does by slamming a chest's lid on her neck. Then, Zezolla convinces her father to marry the governess. At first, the governess is caring and nice to Zezolla, but she quickly forgets what Zezolla has done for her, mistreats her and brings home six other daughters she had hidden. Zezolla, now "Cat Cinderella", is forgotten by her father and abused by her new step-mother and step-sisters. On one of his journeys, his father, the Prince, asks his six step-daughters what he should bring them; they ask for gowns, head-dresses, cosmetics, etc (6). Finally, he asks Zezolla what he should bring her and she asks for nothing; she only wants him to commend her to the dove of the fairies to bring her something. On his trip, he forgets about Zezolla's present and, in some mysterious way, his vessel cannot sail. Soon he realizes that it is because he has forgotten his daughter's present, and resolves to bring Zezolla a date tree, a spade and a golden can (7) that a young girl gives him in a cave. Zezolla plants the tree, and it soon grows tall. A fairy comes out of it and tells the girl that she should ask the tree to provide anything she wants. One feast-day, Zezolla's step-sisters go away, all dressed up in their best garments. Zezolla asks the date tree for help, and suddenly she is dressed like a queen and goes where her sisters had gone. They do not recognize her. However, they "felt their mouths water at the beauty of this lovely dove" (8). It so happens that the King comes to this same place and is charmed by Zezolla's "loveliness" (8). He orders one of his servants to follow

Zezenia and find out where she lives, but the girl throws some coins to the floor and runs away while the servant is distracted picking up the money. The king is furious and warns him not to miss her the next time.

When the next feast-day comes, the six step-sisters go away again, leaving Zezenia behind. Once more, the girl goes to the date tree and several maidens appear to dress her up and do her hair. She goes by coach to the same place where she met the king, who now has "flames in the breast" (8). This time Zezenia manages to escape from the king's servant by throwing some pearls and jewels at the floor. The king is mad at his servant. On the next and last-described feast-day, the same happens: the step-sisters leave the house and Zezenia asks for the help of the date tree, which provides her with a beautiful dress and, ironically enough, with "a golden coach with so many attendants around it that it looked as if she were a courtesan arrested in the public promenade and surrounded by police agents" (9). This time, Zezenia loses a shoe pattern while trying to escape from the king's servant. This poor man grabs it and gives it to the king, who decides to prepare a banquet for all the ladies in order to find its owner. However, this shoe does not fit any guests. The king asks everyone not to leave any woman at home, for the next day he will prepare another feast. The Prince, Zezenia's father, brings her to the feast this time and, as soon as the king sees her, he knows it is this girl whom he wants. The shoe pattern fits her foot perfectly and the king makes Zezenia his queen (10).

The first thing that comes to mind when analysing the plot is that there are two step-mothers instead of one. This is relevant, since it is Cinderella who murders her first step-mother and goes unpunished. This act of evil has no other consequence than her own unhappiness, since she does not get a caring step-mother after all. Nevertheless, although this is an act of evil, it is an act, which means that this female character is active, and does what she needs in order to get what she wants. Although she is being manipulated, she shows some kind of energy. She also shows a similar active attitude when she dares to speak and ask her father to commend her to the dove of the fairies so that they can send her some kind of present. Consequently, the Cat Cinderella is by no means a

passive female figure, nor is the governess, who manages to induce Zezolla into killing her step-mother instead of doing it herself and getting the blame.

If this tale is carefully read, it is clear that some of the features that are attributed to women can disclose interesting information as to what was expected from them in seventeenth-century Europe. At the beginning of the tale, it is said that the Prince loves her daughter so much that he tries to give her everything he can, including "an excellent teacher of sewing, who taught her chainwork, openwork, fringes and hems" (5), which means that sewing was the best thing a girl could possibly learn how to do.

Also, Basile makes the six step-sisters look superficial and featherbrained. As Barbara Walker (1996: ix) claims, the function of the women depicted in these patriarchal tales is mainly decorative. The girls ask the Prince to bring them from his trip items such as a gown, a head-dress, cosmetics, and "games to pass the time" (6). It seems that a woman at that time had nothing better to do than dressing well, looking pretty and killing time until something 'happened' to them. When a woman is kind and active, she is non-human, a fairy; on the other hand, when a real woman is active, she is mean and dangerous. This is the dichotomy that Lieberman (1972: 393) explains in her article: gentle, powerful women are unreal, whereas powerful women are mean. If a woman is powerful, this means that she is a bad person and has acquired her power by doing some kind of wrong. The governess acquires power by convincing Cinderella to kill her step-mother, and the little caring that Cinderella gets is also the punishment/consequence of this.

Of course, a marriage is celebrated at the end of the tale. The King falls in love with Zezolla, "betwitched by the extraordinary loveliness of Zezolla" (8), a "fair creature" (8). Nothing is said about the girl's feelings and opinion; it is the man who chooses a partner for wife and decides to marry her. It seems that marrying the King is what she wants, what all girls want, or should want for that matter. What else could a girl wish for? Marriage is depicted as the perfect reward for all the suffering she has been through. At least, that is what this tale seems to suggest, that a girl's utter

and deepest wish was to marry and, if possible, marry well so that she could improve her social status.

This is how women were portrayed by Giambattista Basile in the seventeenth century. These are the female figures and role models that got spread and reached a considerable amount of people, including children, in the seventeenth century. Women and girls learnt how they were supposed to behave and act in order to get a husband, whereas men knew what they could expect from a good wife. Fairy tales were a means of acculturation and socialization for children, powerful means to indoctrinate men and women, to imbue them with the 'right' kind of beliefs and attitudes, to help them build their own 'appropriate' gender identity.

## **2.2.-"Cendrillon" or "The Little Glass Slipper" (1697), by Charles Perrault**

Charles Perrault (1628-1703) was a French bourgeois writer. He was contemporary to king Louis XIV and "believed that France and Christianity could progress only if they incorporated pagan beliefs and folklore and developed a culture of enlightenment" (in Zipes, 2000: 379), an idea contrary to those upheld by Nicolas Boileau, a literary critic of the time, and Jean Racine, a dramatist, who defended the classics. The battle ended with Louis XIV favouring Boileau and Racine. However, this did not prevent Perrault from incorporating some of his ideas into his works.

Perrault, as Zipes (2000: 397) highlights, frequented the literary salons of French women writers, such as Madame d'Aulnoy, to the point that he became another fairy tale writer among them. Perrault began his fairy tale adventure in 1696, with a project in which he collected and transformed several folk tales full of superstitions into tales with moral values under the title *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (1697), or *Tales of Mother Goose*. As Neil Philip affirms, Perrault "was not concerned to record or protect them. He used them as raw material for his own talent" (1989: 9). Perrault's compilation included new literary versions of "Sleeping Beauty", "Little Red Riding Hood", "Bluebeard", and "Cinderella", among others. As Zipes (2000: 380) argues, all of these tales had their source in the oral tradition which had become so popular in seventeenth-century France. Perrault edited and changed them in order to discuss social and political matters of his time, as well as the values and morals of the upper classes. Perrault was consequently using the literary fairy tale to criticize and influence the society of his time. His tales were mainly addressed to adults, since literature for children did not exist as such at that moment. Once again, the oral fairy tale was collected and transformed at the author's will in order to influence readers.

As regards his version of "Cinderella", titled "Cendrillon" or "The Little Glass Slipper", and published in 1697 in his collection of tales, it could be said that this version is, on the whole, the most popular, since it was Perrault's version that Walt Disney used in order to produce his

cartoon film in 1950, which became a box office hit that reached millions of homes and children. In this tale, a man, who is a widower and the father of a young girl, marries a woman with two daughters. The second wife and her children abuse the widower's daughter and envy her. The daughter, Cinderella, is made to do all the housework. One day, the prince gives a ball and all the upper-class people are invited. Her step-sisters attend the ball. As regards Cinderella, she has nothing to wear, so she starts to weep. It is then that her fairy godmother appears. She turns a pumpkin into a coach, six mice into six horses, a rat into a coachman, six lizards into six lackeys, and an ugly dress into a beautiful ball gown, with a pair of matching glass slippers. Her godmother warns her not to stay after midnight, otherwise her coach would again become a pumpkin, the horses mice, her clothes rags, etc. When Cinderella arrives at the ball she looks so stunning that everyone remains speechless, including the prince, who falls for her immediately. When she hears the chimes of the clock she suddenly leaves the ball and goes home. The next day she goes to the ball again, since the prince invited her to come back before she left. This time, she forgets about the time and has to rush home, but loses one of her glass slippers as she tries to disappear. The prince grabs it, and later tries this slipper on every single girl in order to find out his beloved. When he reaches the house where Cinderella lives, he tries the slipper on her step-sisters first, without success, then Cinderella speaks and asks him to try the shoe on her foot. While he is proceeding, he realizes how beautiful she actually is, in spite of her shabby clothes. The shoe fits her foot perfectly, and then the godmother appears and turns her rags into a beautiful dress again. Her step-sisters beg for her pardon, and Cinderella agrees to forgive them. Once she marries the prince, she arranges her step-sisters' weddings to two gentlemen from the court. At the end of the tale, one clear conclusion can be reached: graciousness and having a godfather or godmother is what matters most.

Five women appear in this tale. The way in which they and their behaviour are described can give relevant information as regards seventeenth-century France vision of women and women's roles. As far as Cinderella's mother is concerned, Perrault describes her as "the nicest person in the world" (55). She is not a relevant character and Perrault's description does not give enough

information to carry out an in-depth analysis of it. Cinderella's step-mother is, on the other hand, an interesting figure in the tale. She is described as the "haughtiest, proudest woman that had ever been seen" (55). The adjective 'proud', however, acquires different connotations depending on whether it is attributed to men or women. In the case of men, the adjective acquires positive connotations; it is a synonym of 'independent', 'dignified'. When 'proud' is used to refer to the step-mother, the fact that it appears in combination with 'haughty' undoubtedly gives the word a different meaning; it becomes a synonym of 'arrogant', 'insolent', 'pompous'. The same word means two different things, offers two different versions when applied to men or women. It is good to be proud for a man, but it is wrong for a woman. That is what Perrault's tale implies: a woman should never be proud, she should be nice and caring instead. Pride is not a good quality in a woman. Therefore, Perrault, echoing the dominant ideology of the society he lived in, believed that men and women should be judged according to different criteria and moral standards.

The step-sisters are depicted as being materialistic girls; they have "rooms with parquet flooring, and beds of the most fashionable style" (55). When they are invited to the ball, they decide to wear the best items they have: "I shall wear my dress of red velvet, with the Honiton lace" (56), says one of the step-sisters. "I shall wear my cloak with the golden flowers and my necklace of diamonds, which are not so bad" (56), says the other. They even request the aid of a hairdresser (56). They are superficial, they have mirrors in their bedrooms "in which they could see themselves from top to toe" (55-56). When they were invited to the ball "the question of what clothes and what mode of dressing the hair would become them best took up all their time" (56). They also worried about their figure: "for nearly two days they ate nothing. They broke more than a dozen laces through drawing their stays tight in order to make their waists more slender, and they were perpetually in front of a mirror" (57). At the end, nothing is said about their true feelings towards Cinderella, only that they "threw themselves at her feet, begging her pardon for all the ill-treatment she had suffered at their hands" (64). She forgives them and demands that they should treat her well in the future. The step-sisters are Perrault's ironic representation of upper-class



women in seventeenth-century France. They pretend to have a social position higher than the one they actually have by wearing the best outfits they have in public gatherings, like the ball. Their major concern is to impress other people.

The central character of the tale is Cinderella. She is described as being "sweet and gentle" natured (55); as having "excellent qualities" (55) that made her step-mother and step-sisters envy and hate her; as a patient person who patiently endures all the ill-treatment she is inflicted upon; she is so "beautiful" (56) that everyone at the ball fell silent when she arrived (59); last but not least, she is "good-natured" (57), "charming" (60), "good" (64), and forgiving, since in the end she forgives her step-sisters for their abuse (64). On the other hand, the way she behaves can lead to some confusion. The tale emphasizes her kindness and benevolence, her good manners and charm, her beauty. However, it seems that all of this is not enough to be loved by the prince. Cinderella needs spectacular and higher-status clothes in order to catch the prince's attention: "her clothes were changed into garments of gold and silver cloth, bedecked with jewels. After that her godmother gave her a pair of glass slippers, the prettiest in the world" (59). Besides, she arrives at the ball on a magnificent coach, with a coachman, six horses, and six lackeys, which makes everybody believe she is a most wealthy woman. When the equerry tries the glass slipper on Cinderella's foot, everybody realizes that it fits perfectly. Although her beauty is once again emphasized and brought to the fore, it is now that Cinderella's fairy godmother appears and turns her clothes into a "dress even more magnificent than her previous ones" (64). In other words, it seems that being beautiful is not enough; she must also dress appropriately. Besides, her step-sisters only show respect towards her when she is pompously dressed at the ball and when she actually marries the prince.

Perrault's tale's emphasis on material wealth over a decent personality as a key element to acquire a higher social status or be accepted by the upper class could be regarded as a subtle critique against seventeenth-century society's beliefs and standards. Cinderella shows that she is not self-confident, since she somehow needs to 'disguise' herself. As the tale seems to suggest, having

luxurious dresses, looking pretty, and being well connected are more important and more rewarding than being true to oneself. In a way, it could be concluded that the prince falls in love with a fake Cinderella, not with the kind and good-hearted Cinderella who cleans the house and is dressed in rags all day. In short, Perrault's tale shows that, if a woman wanted to succeed in seventeenth-century society, being kind and decent was not enough; they also had to be wealthy and in possession of good connections and a high social status. On the other hand, as Lieberman (1972: 386) argues, it is also clear that Cinderella is chosen by the prince mainly on account of her beauty. Women are to adopt a passive attitude until a male character pays attention to them. Marriage is the final reward, and with marriage comes wealth, for "the reward basis in fairy and folk tales is overwhelmingly mercenary" (1972: 386). This is the lesson that young girls are to learn: if a girl is beautiful, she will have more chances to acquire wealth than a girl who is not. Wealth should come easily to a girl who is pretty. To quote Barbara Walker's words, "girls without beauty are automatically also without virtue, happiness, luck, or love. [...] Your looks are your only asset. Whatever else you might be or do doesn't count. Female ugliness is a crime deserving the death penalty" (1996: ix). Consequently, the step-sisters, who happen to be rather ugly, are not worthy to have the attentions of the prince, who only has eyes for the most beautiful girl, Cinderella.

"The classical attributes of "femininity" found in these stories are in fact imprinted in children and reinforced by the stories themselves" (Lieberman 1972: 194). Children constitute a fragile readership that can be easily influenced by literature. "Cinderella" has deeply affected the way girls build up their identity as women, and also their assumptions as to how and why they are going to be appreciated by men, and how they can get their attention. A girl's self-esteem might be at risk when these tales are deeply rooted in society, and subsequently printed in her mind and heart. Beauty is given an importance that should in no way be given, for this undermines the self-confidence of young girls who are building up their own identities as women.

The fairy godmother's role has been analysed by many fairy tale critics. Some of them consider it to be the magical substitute for a mother who is dead, and who advises Cinderella and helps her to get

what she wants. Other authors, such as Marina Warner (2014: 21-3), interpret the fairy godmother's role within the socio-historical context in which Charles Perrault was writing, and link the figure of the fairy godmother to that of the mother-in-law, who would usually live at her son's house and become some kind of assistant. In this case, the fairy godmother offers the magical help that Cinderella needs to succeed completely. She gives her what she lacks in order to catch the prince's attention, namely, fake wealth and an upper-class appearance. As the moral goes, no matter how kind, beautiful, and charming you may be, since "for success, they may well be in vain, if, as a final gift, one has not the blessing of a godfather or godmother" (Perrault, 2004: 65). Jack Zipes (in Haase, 2004: 15), has also analysed the figure of the fairy godmother, and has seen in this variant of the tale old traces of a former matriarchal society. Although many literary fairy tales underwent a number of transformations so that they could encapsulate the evolution from matriarchal to patriarchal societies, some of them still contained elements that pointed to an old matriarchal tradition. Cinderella and her step-sisters' behaviour and gender attributes may be typical of women in a seventeenth-century patriarchal society, but the powerful figure of the fairy godmother could be seen as a trace of an antique matriarchal society.

If I had followed these tales' chronological order of publication, I would now have to analyse Madame d'Aulnoy's tale "Finette Cendron", published in France in 1698. However, due to the reasons I explained before (versions collected and modified by male authors vs. versions retold and adapted by female authors), the next tale that will be discussed is the brothers Grimm's version, published in 1812.

### **2.3.-"Ashputtel" (1812-15), by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm**

The brothers Grimm, Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859), published a world-wide known collection of tales under the title *Children's and Household Tales* (1812-15), which soon became highly popular in Germany, and was, according to Zipes (2000: 218), the inception for the study of German literature and culture. They belonged to a family of Calvinist pastors, which deeply affected their values and morals, and clearly shows in their tales.

Heinz Rölleke has carried out extense research on the brothers Grimm's collections of tales and on how they "shaped the content and ideology of their tales through their methods of collecting, selecting, and editing" (in Haase, 2008: xxxvii). According to Haase (2004: 10), in the 1970s many critics and pedagogues criticized the brothers Grimm for including repressive nineteenth-century values in their tales. Feminist scholars, on the other hand, noticed that they had revised the traditional oral tales and changed them into new tales that mirrored their society's cultural values. Jack Zipes (in Haase, 2004: 10) in his essay titled "Who's Afraid of the Brothers Grimm? Socialization and Politi(ci)zation through Fairy Tales", showed that the brothers Grimm had modified tales in order to foster bourgeois values typical of a patriarchal society. The fairy tales had been used by the brothers Grimm as a device for the socialization of children, as a means to teach them how to properly behave and build up their gender identity. Angela Carter agrees with Haase and Zipes and she states that their work "involved a certain degree of editorial censorship" (1990: xvi).

Ruth B. Bottingheimer accomplished pioneering research on the Grimm's fairy tales to conclude, in a series of articles published between 1980 and 1985, that the Grimm's process of editing had "weakened once-strong female characters, demonized female power, imposed male perspective on stories voicing women's discontents, and rendered heroines powerless by depriving them of speech, all in accord with the social values of their time (in Haase, 2004: 11). The analysis of the brothers Grimm's version of "Cinderella", titled "Ashputtel", will prove this statement.

The story begins in the usual way: a rich man has a wife and a daughter, and the wife gets sick and dies. In this particular case, though, there is an interesting difference: there is a strong bond between mother and daughter. When the mother is about to die, she calls her only daughter by her side and tells her that she will always look after her. This powerful connection has been highlighted by some scholars, such as Jack Zipes and Louise Bernikow, as a trace of old matriarchal societies (see Zipes 1991: 30-41). Some time ago, this tale seems to suggest, there were societies in which women played an important and valuable role in their communities. Ashputtel's mother is buried in the garden and the girl goes to her grave everyday to cry. This shows once again this strong mother-daughter connection, which reinforces the belief in the former existence of a matriarchal society.

The father marries another woman, who has two daughters of her own, "fair in face, but foul at heart" (168). When the father goes to the fair, he asks his step-daughters what he should bring them; one answers "fine clothes" and the other asks for "pearls and diamonds" (168). As in the previous versions, Ashputtel's step-sisters are materialistic, superficial girls, only worried about their physical appearance and status. Ashputtel asks for "the first sprig, dear father, that rubs against your hat on your way home" (168). When Ashputtel receives the hazel sprig, she plants it by her mother's grave and waters it with her own tears, till it grows and becomes a tree, where a bird nests. The bird talks to Ashputtel and brings her whatever she wishes for. In this version, there is no fairy godmother, it is the birds that help Ashputtel, birds that live in the tree which has grown on her mother's grave, so there is a strong connection between the birds and Ashputtel's mother, who is helping her through them. Again, this reminds us of the aforementioned powerful link between mother and daughter and, therefore, could be seen as yet another reminiscence of former matriarchal societies that got erased in other versions.

To go on with the story, the king gives a feast that lasts three days and, during those days, his son, the prince, is "to choose a bride" (169). The prince will select one, among all the girls at the ball, in order to make her his wife. Once again, the man chooses and the woman is chosen. The male character is active, whereas the female character is passive. He decides which woman he wants to

marry, while the woman decides nothing. The brothers Grimm's tale conveys a similar patriarchal message: the attributes given to female characters are passivity and helplessness. They modified previous versions and constructed a female identity based on subordination, which corroborates their Protestant values and contributes to spreading them through a massive means of communication, the fairy tale.

Of course, the step-sisters and Ashputtel want to go to the ball. Ashputtel begs her step-mother to let her go. She first refuses to give her permission but, when Ashputtel keeps asking, she sets an impossible task to her: if she can sort out the good grain, she will be able to go. Once her step-mother is gone, she goes into the garden and sings a little chant, and soon she gets the help of the birds, which do all the job in no time. When Ashputtel presents the dish to her step-mother, she is surprised but still says no. Ashputtel keeps begging and her step-mother sets her another task. Ashputtel goes to the garden and the birds once again help her so that she can accomplish the task. However, the step-mother doesn't let her go to the ball on the excuse that: "you have no clothes, and cannot dance, and you would only put us to shame" (170). Once again, the importance given to social status and appearances is brought to the fore. Women systematically pretend to be wealthier than they actually are in order to attract the best possible potential suitors.

Ashputtel goes to the garden where her mother's tree is and sings a little chant: "Shake, shake, hazel-tree, gold and silver over me!" (171). Then, a bird brings her a dress and a pair of slippers for the ball, and Ashputtel goes to the ball after all. Once there, her step-mother and step-sisters cannot recognize her. The prince soon starts to dance with her and wants to have her for himself all night, since every time anyone asks the prince to let her dance with them he says "This lady is dancing with me" (171), or "This lady is my partner" (173). There is no mention of any guest asking Ashputtel if she wants to dance with him, nor of Ashputtel saying anything on this matter. This moment, which might seem quite irrelevant for readers who simply look for some entertainment, is quite significant from a feminist point of view, since Ashputtel, the woman, says nothing at all, and it is the man who does all the talking and choosing, never bothering to ask for

Ashputtel's opinion. To put it simply, it is the man who decides for the woman. This was the behaviour that the brothers Grimm wanted to transmit and spread through this fairy tale. The young girls who read this tale and were constructing their gender identity as women would absorb the idea that it is the man who is in charge of making things happen, who decides for them, who chooses, whereas the woman accepts his decisions passively and obediently.

In this tale there is no time restriction, and at some point Ashputtel wants to go back home. The prince wants to take her home so that he can see where she lives (171), or perhaps he wants to make out which social status she has by looking at the house she lives in. She manages to escape and go back home by the ashes before anyone arrives. The next day the same happens: her family goes to the ball and Ashputtel approaches the hazel tree and gets the help of the bird, which gives her "a still finer dress than the one she had worn the day before" (172). Everyone at the ball is amazed by her beauty (172), and the prince dances with her all night again, rejecting other suitors on her behalf. Again, when Ashputtel decides it is time to leave, she manages to arrive at her house before anybody else notices her departure, the prince included. The third and last night Ashputtel does what she did the two previous nights: she asks the tree for help and the bird brings her "a dress still finer than the former one, and slippers which were all of gold" (172). The prince doesn't allow anyone to dance with her but him, and prevents other guests from approaching her. This time he is determined not to lose her when she decides to go home. However, she once again manages to escape, leaving one of her slippers behind. The prince takes it and tells his father, the king, "I will take for my wife the lady that this golden slipper fits" (173). The eldest step-sister tries the slipper on first, but her toe is too big, so her mother urges her to cut it off because "when you are a queen you will not care about your toes, you will not want to go on foot" (173). This is the price you have to pay to go up in the social scale. The mother, a powerful woman, consequently acts in a cruel but mercenary way. The poor girl obeys her mother and the slipper fits. The prince takes her as his bride and rides away with her. However, as they pass by the hazel tree that Ashputtel planted, a dove warns the prince: "Back again! Back again! Look to the shoe! The shoe is too small, and not made for you! Prince! Prince!"

Look again for thy bride, for she's not the true one that sits by thy side!" (173). The prince realizes his mistake and goes back to Ashputtel's house. There, the other step-sister tries the shoe on, but her heel doesn't fit. Her mother squeezes it into the shoe until it bleeds. Again, the prince takes her as his bride and goes away with her, until they reach the hazel tree, where the bird warns him again. He looks down at the girl's foot and sees the blood, so he goes back to Ashputtel's home, where he asks if there is any other daughter in the house. This time Ashputtel tries on the shoe and it fits, the prince looks at her face attentively, recognizes her, and finally takes her with him.

It must be noted that the prince behaves differently towards Ashputtel in this part of the tale. Since the step-sisters wear nice clothes, he doesn't bother to look at them with attention; he just takes them with him as his brides. In other words, if it had not been for the bird, he would have married the wrong girl. However, when Ashputtel tries on the shoe, she is dressed in dirty clothes, and this time he looks closer to make sure she is the right girl. In contrast with his former reactions towards the step-sisters, he distrusts Cinderella because she is dressed in rags. This misjudgement shows how important appearances were at that time. In this tale, the prince falls in love with Ashputtel on account of her beauty and status; there is no word to refer to her kindness, charm, benevolence, etc., as was the case of the other tales. Only her beauty and clothes are praised. The values that this tale transmits as regards the construction of gender identity are very harmful, both for women and children. It portrays a kind of woman who is passive and waits for things to happen to her; a woman who never expresses her ideas and opinions and lets the man decide for her; a woman who is subordinated to the man; a woman who marries in order to improve her status, since nothing is said about her feelings towards the prince. This is the kind of woman described by the brothers Grimm in their tale "Ashputtel", the ideal of woman they wanted to uphold in the German patriarchal society of their time.

I have so far revised from a feminist point of view three versions of the tale "Cinderella" collected and rewritten by male authors. Although they are different, they share some key features. In the three versions, male dominance is advocated and enforced, while the female characters are



subordinated to men. The Cat Cinderella in Basile's tale, Cendrillon in Perrault's tale, and Ashputtel in the brothers Grimm's version surrender to the prince's will, obey him and do as he says without uttering a word. They accept his authority and comply with their inferior position. They don't complain when their father pays no attention to them and treats them wrong while he spoils their step-sisters; they accept his abuse, and nothing is said about this man being a cruel father. The writers decided not to pronounce themselves on the cold-blooded behaviour of the father towards his own daughter, perhaps because they saw nothing wrong in his behaviour; after all, a girl must always obey her father and never complain. In the three versions, the female protagonist improves her social status through marriage, and she catches the prince's attention mainly thanks to her beauty and fine clothes. The step-sisters' main concerns are clothes, hairstyle, and jewels. They are superficial, materialistic girls with no interests in life other than appearances and status. They are depicted as mean, greedy girls who do not succeed in getting the prince so that Cinderella can. The step-mother is described as a powerful, proud, greedy woman who takes advantage of her husband to obtain commodities and wealth for her and her daughters. This woman is negatively described by using attributes that in a man would be regarded as positive. A man can be proud and ambitious, but a woman who behaves similarly is rendered unnatural and evil. The only powerful and honorable female character that appears in two of these versions is that of the fairy godmother, which is not human. Consequently, either powerful women are greedy and nasty or they simply don't exist. Due to the influence of these male tales, girls and women were taught to construct their gender identity on wrong assumptions about womanhood. These versions were written in patriarchal societies with a rigid hierarchical structure with a man at the top. Women were supposed to be unequal, inferior. The reading of these tales indoctrinated girls into internalizing a sense of inferiority, of weakness, of subordination towards men. The ultimate aim of these fairy tales as acculturation devices was to perpetuate a power structure that made sure that women were subordinate, silenced, controlled and repressed by men, that they only worried about superficial matters, such as their physical appearance or clothing.

#### 2.4.-"Finette Cendron" (1697), by Madame d'Aulnoy

Marie Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville (1650-1705), Countess of Aulnoy, published *Les Contes de Fées* (Tales of the Fairies) in 1697, which included the tale "Finette Cendron", almost at the same time as Perrault's "Cendrillon" was published. According to Duggan (in Haase, 2008: 79), she was one of the most relevant female writers of seventeenth-century France, and her stories were addressed to adult readers. As Seifert (1996:17) affirms, the *conteuses* were the first to revise some patriarchal tales and portray powerful women, thus defying dominant male authority. Moreover, as this critic goes on to argue, this was an extraordinary literary movement "dominated by women writers (approximately two-thirds of the seventeenth-century *contes de fées* were written by the *conteuses*)" (in Haase, 2004: 54). However, in spite of the fact that women wrote a greater number of tales than men during this period, it is the men's tales and names, such as Perrault's, that became world-wide known, mainly because the cannon formation depended on male critics who would ignore texts written by female authors.

Mme. D'Aulnoy's tale has nothing to do with the versions written by the male authors discussed before. The main difference has to do with the formation of gender identity. Male and female characters do not occupy fixed positions of dominance and subordination respectively. Mme. D'Aulnoy tells the story of a king and a queen who end up losing all their wealth and material possessions. The king asks his wife what they should do to earn their living, and she reaches the conclusion that they should make nets and hunt birds and fish, since she is "very clever" at it (para. 1). The fact that the king asking his wife for counsel is very important, since it places the woman in a position of authority; it is she who decides what to do. She also suggests that they should send their daughters away as they cannot spoil them as before. When the king hears this, he weeps, "for he was a kind father" (para. 2). The male figure shows weakness, a feature that was only attributed to female characters in the male-authored versions. In spite of his sadness, the king agrees with his wife, because she is "mistress" (para. 2). D'Aulnoy provides the mother's character

with authority again by using this word to refer to her. She is a firm, strong, intelligent woman in Mme. d'Aulnoy's version.

As it happens, their youngest daughter, princess Finette, eavesdrops their conversation and runs to the cave where her fairy godmother lives. She gets tired on the way to the cave, her feet are torn, so she stops and begins to cry. At that moment, a jennet adorned with diamonds appears by her side. Finette asks the jennet if it can take her to her godmother's cave, and the creature does, since it has been sent by the fairy godmother for that purpose. At the cave, Finette tells her godmother her worries about her parents wanting to get rid of her (para. 5). The fairy godmother gives her a ball of thread to fasten to the door so she can find the way back. The next day, the queen convinces her daughters to go for a walk to see her sister, and off the four of them go, leaving the king at home. Again, another sign of authority on the mother's side, since it is her who takes the hard decision, in this case, that of getting rid of their daughters. At some point, when the mother realizes that they will no longer be able to find their way back home, she tells them to stop and go to sleep, which the girls do. Then, the mother leaves them alone in the woods. However, Finette is not asleep, and she awakens her sisters and tells them the story. Even though Finette's sisters are mean to her, "they beat me and scratch me till the blood comes" (para. 7), and try to bribe her "they would give her lovely dolls, and their little silver dolls' house, and their other toys, and their sugar-plums" (para. 7), Finette decides to help them anyway. This Cinderella is also kind, in spite of her sisters' cruelty, as was also the case in Basile's, Perrault's and the brothers Grimm's versions. They all manage to go back home together thanks to Finette's thread.

When they are at the door, they hear their father say to their mother that he is very sad, that he will miss Finette, since he doesn't care for the other two, who "care for nobody" (para. 8). At that moment the girls knock at the door. The king is very happy to see Finette. The queen "pretended she was very glad to see them" (para. 8) and made up an excuse for having left them in the woods. Once in their bedroom, the sisters beat Finette for being their father's favourite. The girl hears that her mother plans to get rid of them the next day and, without making a noise, goes to see

her godmother again. This time she gives her a bag full of ashes to throw in front of her as she walks, so that she will only have to follow her footsteps to go back home. However, this time, the fairy godmother warns her, she will have to leave her sisters behind, otherwise she won't receive her anymore. The next day, the queen makes up another excuse to go to the woods with her daughters. As they walk, Finette shakes the bag of ashes so that she can come back. When the girls fall asleep, the queen abandons them and returns home. Finette, who "was the kindest girl in the whole world" (para. 12), takes her sisters back home with her, even though she knows she might not see her godmother again. When they return home, the king and the queen are shocked and think of another plan to get rid of them. Since Finette doesn't dare to go back to her godmother's cave for counsel, her sisters decide to take peas in their pockets and throw them along the way. Finette takes with her the bag with clothes and the box of diamonds that her godmother gave her when she visited her. When they are very far, the queen leaves them and returns home, "very glad not to have the cares of such a large household on her shoulders" (para. 14). The queen clearly has some negative qualities which had been attributed to the figure of the father in the previous tales by male authors: she is authoritarian, cold-blooded, and uncaring. Mme. D'Aulnoy portrays a woman totally different from those described in previous male tales. The hierarchical structure has been subverted here: the queen is the leader, and the king is the follower.

When the girls are far away from home, they find a castle. Finette's sisters rob her of her bag while she is asleep, get dressed with the fine clothes she hid, and cover themselves with diamonds. When Finette realizes what has happened, she feels really upset, but is threatened by her sisters: "if you speak another word, they said, we shall kill you, and bury you, and nobody will know anything about it" (para. 17). The three of them approach the castle, Fleur d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit in front, and Finette behind them, as if she were a servant. However, there is no prince waiting for them, but an ogre and his wife, who lock them in a cellar so that they can eat them up. Somehow, Finette manages to fool the big ogre and pushes him into the oven, where he gets burnt. The ogress lets Finette and her sisters comb her hair. As they are doing so, Finette grabs

a hatchet and cuts off the ogress's head. The girls are rich now. However, they lack something: "we want husbands" (para. 23). Consequently, they attend a ball where they meet the king's son. Poor Finette feels deeply unhappy, but doesn't dare to complain in case her sisters beat her up again.

The next day, when her sisters are gone, she finds a golden key which opens a chest. This chest is full of dresses, diamonds, etc. She dresses herself "in such a way that she was more beautiful than the sun or the moon" (para. 25). She goes to the ball as well, but her sisters cannot recognize her. She awakens admiration and jealousy, and calls herself Cendrion. Mme. D'Aulnoy describes Finette as follows: "to look at her you would have said she was born to rule" (para 26), not to marry a prince, not to exist passively, but to rule. Here we have a strong, human, strong female character, a most strange thing in the history of fairy tales. Quite understandably, this tale never became as popular or widespread as Perrault's. In seventeenth-century France, strong women were not appreciated by men, who wanted to be the leaders, the ones who ruled. In the twenty-first century, this tale has finally been appreciated, although only within a few feminist circles.

To put an end to the story, one day Finette loses one of her slippers on her way home. The next day, Prince Chéri finds the slipper and falls in love with it, as if it were a fetish, and decides he will marry its owner, even though he has never seen her. Hearing this, Finette decides to go and try the slipper on. On her way she meets her sisters, who recognize her, but this time she tells them "Your highnesses, Cinderella despises you as much as you deserve" (para. 32), and rides past them. The slipper fits her foot perfectly and the prince is "enchanted" (para. 33). As for Finette, "she thought him handsome and full of wit as he poured compliments upon her" (para. 33). Furthermore, "The king, the queen, and the prince begged Cendrion to give her consent to the marriage" (para. 34). Mme. d'Aulnoy is the first author who allowed Cinderella to express her feelings towards the prince. None of the previous authors wrote anything about them; it was him who had a voice and who decided to marry Cinderella. She was just chosen, but didn't say a word, until now. Cinderella was silenced by male collectors and writers of tales for a long time. Her opinion was not relevant, until now. In this tale women are depicted as strong, enduring, assertive, self-confident, and with

something to say about their own destiny. Finette decides to marry the prince because she likes him, not because he chooses her. Besides, Finette wants him to know her true story. It turns out that it was the prince's family who had conquered her father's kingdom, so she refuses to marry the prince until they give the kingdom back to her father, which they do. Finette marries the prince and forgives her sisters, who return home and become queens as well.

The characters in this tale are not archetypal and one-dimensional, as in the previous tales; they are complex characters that cannot adjust to dichotomies of the kind good vs. bad, right vs. wrong, strong vs. weak, silly vs. smart. As Seifert affirms (in Haase, 2004: 57), the male characters in the *contes de fées*, such as the father in this tale, are ambiguous. While in male-authored texts the father is dominant and powerful, in Mme. d'Aulnoy's tale he is portrayed as lacking these particularly male attributes. Female characters and femininity are even more ambiguous, since they are good and bad at the same time. The binarisms that are so common in fairy tales written by male authors get blurred in Mme. d'Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron".

This marriage ending, according to Seifert (in Haase, 2004: 66-68), was widely popular among the *conteuses'* tales. This could be seen as being somehow contradictory: on the one hand these tales are rather subversive, as they advocate the figure of a powerful, assertive woman; on the other hand, they deliberately reproduce a literary convention, such as the marriage closure. The *conteuses'* fairy tales that end up like this can be seen as being halfway between subversion and compliance with the norms of a patriarchal society. It is a closure that satisfies both female writers like the *conteuses* and patriarchy, since it is the female protagonist's actions and tenacity that lead her to marry the man she wants. However, thanks to the marriage ending, this unconventional female character is inserted back in a conventional society.

On the whole, if this tale is analysed from a structuralist perspective, as Seifert has done (1996: 12), it is obvious that it is an example of a moment of tension between what this author calls 'nostalgia' and 'utopia'. Nostalgia dominates the marriage ending, since this is a traditional

convention that is also found in previous and contemporary versions of Cinderella, such as Basile's and Perrault's, which undoubtedly follow a patriarchal plot. However, this tale also seeks utopia, especially as regards sexuality and gender identity: this version tries to question the society out of which it emerged, that of seventeenth-century France. Utopia takes the upper hand in the powerful roles of women, in the fact that woman is the central character of the tale, and most important of all in the diminished role of the male characters, which are somehow silenced by the female ones. As Seifert puts it, these fairy tales "embody moments of both revolt and accomodation" (1996: 12).

## 2.5.-"The Reason For Not Going To The Ball" (1996), by Tanith Lee

Tanith Lee (1947- ) is an English writer whose contributions to the literary fairy tale genre include, according to John Stephens (in Zipes, 2000: 291): parodic stories for a young audience, retellings of classical fairy tales in a new context or under a new perspective, addressed to adult readers, and fairy tales transported to the fantasy genre.

In this Master thesis I shall focus on her transgressive version for adults of the traditional tale "Cinderella", which Lee titled "The Reason for Not Going to the Ball", and published in 1996. This radical feminist version widely differs from the ones revised before. In this case, the tale takes the form of a letter written to Cinderella by her step-mother, in which she explains her behaviour towards her and why she is writing now, long time after her wedding to the Prince. The tale begins with a desperate attempt on the step-mother's side to convince Cinderella to read the whole letter in spite of all the damage she caused her (para. 1). She is aided by one of Cinderella's best servants, a girl who has helped the step-mother and who, in addition, "has been a friend also to me" (para. 1). There are strong bonds between women in this tale. When two people establish a strong bond between themselves, suddenly these two people become stronger; and the bigger the group, the stronger they get. This is what men wanted to avoid in patriarchal societies, actually, as Ruth B. Bottingheimer affirms (in Haase, 2004: 43): "women's participation in lay female confraternities came to be forbidden" in the 1500s.

The step-mother starts explaining her behaviour by making continuous references to the traditional fairy tale, and showing that her behaviour, which might seem to us, who are more familiarized with the traditional story by Perrault, Basile and the brothers Grimm, to be cruel and mean had, in fact, a noble purpose. These frequent references highlight the intertextual character of Lee's tale, and are a tool for the deconstruction of a patriarchal text. The step-mother begins with her early adolescence, a time in which she was beautiful and her father sold her to a man who married her and raped her until she was pregnant with two daughters (para. 3). She explains why



she thinks her daughters might be so ugly: “four days it took me, it took them, to free ourselves from each other. I almost died, and so did they. Probably from this cause they were so ugly. Or else, it was from their father, a hideous man like a gigantic goblin” (para. 3). She confesses to Cinderella that she poisoned her husband when she was twenty-seven because he had started beating her and her daughters. She affirms that “his estate passed to a brother and I was left with very little” (para. 6). It was frequent in a patriarchal society that a man’s belongings and wealth should pass on to the closest male relative. In the absence of sons, his possessions were handed over to a brother. In this way, men assured the economical dependence of women. In this story, the wife is left with nothing.

It was then that she met Cinderella’s father, “a dream-being, so handsome, so wealthy, so softly spoken and gracious” (para. 9). She also met Cinderella. At first, they got along very well, the little girl was beautiful, nice and confident, and the step-mother and her daughters were kind to her. It was when the step-mother told stories to Cinderella that the little girl turned from her. These were stories in which the kings were not kind and honorable, and men were not to be trusted. Why would she tell her these stories? Because she knew something about her father (para. 16):

But I had heard, I had heard and I had learned. How your mother had been privately dressed, and I was privately dressed, as a very young girl. How he liked it best when we whispered girlish rhymes to him, and pretended surprise, even alarm, as he unlaced himself. That is no matter. There is nothing bad in that. But he had bastard daughters too. He had abused them all. There were three, and none a virgin, for each had had to endure him. He did not like them too young, that was the only saving grace. About fourteen, that was the age he relished the most. He had married me in truth not so much because I would play his games and in candlelight looked younger than I was, but since I must be grateful and, while I might please him until you were ready, would never blab once he had begun on you.

Cinderella, as the little child she was, knew nothing about this awful truth about her father, and assumed that her step-mother was mean to her because she was cruel and selfish and wanted

her father's fortune and status for herself and her daughters. Since the step-mother's first attempt to separate the girl from her father did not succeed, she explained to Cinderella her second plan, which was to make her father believe that the little girl was turning against him (para. 20). This is how Cinderella ended up in the kitchen, dressed in rags. The step-mother's goal was to make her look disgusting so he wouldn't go after her. She explains why she didn't need to worry about her own daughters "Obviously, being so ugly, they had nothing to fear. I could let them walk about the upper house in the finest raiment" (para. 23).

She also explains in her letter why she would let her daughters go to the ball and not Cinderella. It was because they were eighteen and Cinderella was only sixteen (para. 23). Also, the step-mother explains that she didn't trust the prince either and had him investigated. She found out that "The prince was another of a kind. Well, do I need to tell you now? You have, so the servant girl has whispered to me, the marks of his whip engraved upon your back, and where they cut the ring from your finger, after he had broken the bone, there is now another ring of white" (para. 29). As she explains, there was always a good reason for her behaviour; she was trying to save her from the life she had to live herself. A life in which she would be controlled and abused by men, her own father, her own husband, causing her a damage hard to escape and recover from.

However, Cinderella ended up going to the ball with the assistance of her godmother, who, as the step-mother affirms (para. 34), only wanted to obtain a substantial benefit from the alliance. She even attributes the godmother the idea of leaving "a small glass brooch shaped like a dancing slipper. I imagine that was also her idea. The shoe of a woman is the symbol of her sexual part. That into which one may slip and be a perfect fit" (para. 35). As Bottingheimer (in Haase, 2004: 39) affirms:

Human physiology has determined that in heterosexual relations, a man penetrates the body of his female partner. Anatomical penetration was long understood as active and male, while being penetrated represented passivity and femaleness. That was both the

customary and the normative vocabulary of sex and gender theory from 1700 onward, and it remained an unstated principle throughout most of the twentieth century.

Lee uses the symbolism of the shoe to demonstrate the true character of the prince, a dominant, misogynist and abusive man. However, Cinderella married him, and “The rest is well known about the kingdom. That he sought you, claimed you. That he wedded you” (para. 36). The words that Lee uses to explain the marriage show a one-directional relationship, in which it is the prince, the male character, who does all the action; he seeks, he claims and weds Cinderella, whereas she is sought, claimed and wedded. She acts passively and her actions bring her consequences, none of which is good. The step-mother affirms that she knows the prince beat and abused her from their wedding night onwards, that she is miserable (para. 38). She offers Cinderella a way to escape the prince and a house she has bought for her, since she is in a good situation due to the money she inherited from Cinderella’s father after his death. Her daughters, Cinderella’s step-sisters, are also well settled with two nice men. With this offering, the step-mother ends the letter and hopes the girl has read it and decides to free herself.

The characters in this tale are also complex, they show many facets, and their behaviour responds to reasons which were hidden in the traditional tales by male authors. Lee helps us to see the female characters under a new perspective. The step-mother is resilient, confident, kind, and strong. The godmother is ambitious and has some power. Cinderella is reserved, has endured difficult situations, and has behaved passively all along the story. Her step-mother gives her the opportunity to be assertive and determined, to escape from a fate she was led to in order to start a new life of her own choosing. Most of the male characters are despicable, cruel and abusive: the step-mother’s father and husband, Cinderella’s father, and the prince. They are an exaggerated representation of authoritative men in a patriarchal society. However, not all the male characters in Lee’s version are bad. The groom that helps the step-mother on some occasions is a kind man. He helps her murder her abusive husband (para. 5), supports her when she decides to turn the beautiful Cinderella into a disgusting creature so that her own father wouldn’t develop a sexual desire for her

(para. 20), finds information about the true character of the prince, loves a woman for what she is, even though she is older than him, and is not after the step-mother's money (para. 28).

Another interesting element in Lee's tale is that she uses a first-person narration to tell the story. It is as if the step-mother herself narrated her own life to the reader through the letter she sends Cinderella. What Lee achieves by using this literary tool is closeness to the reader; she makes the reader identify with the narrator, the step-mother in this case, with her feelings, her opinions. In this way, the reader becomes closer to her and is able to understand her behaviour and forgive her for what she has done to the poor Cinderella. The reader finds it easier to perceive her intentions and become supportive of her.

This brutal fairy tale that Lee has deconstructed and reconstructed, and which is deeply charged with bitterness, abuse and violence suggests, according to Zipes (1986: 24-25), that the path towards equality between men and women, the path towards the utopia that was advocated by seventeenth-century *conteuses* like Mme. D'Aulnoy is a very harsh one. Women have been undervalued for centuries, their works have been ignored, and their voices silenced. Although the situation has undoubtedly improved in many places, it will still take women longer to achieve the much-desired equality and the place that many of them deserve in society.

## 2.6.-"The Tale of the Shoe" (1997), by Emma Donoghue

Emma Donoghue (1969- ) published in 1997 a collection of fairy tales for adults under the title *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*, which included variants of traditional fairy tales under a new perspective. In one of those tales, she reshapes the popular "Cinderella" from a lesbian feminist point of view and creates a tale titled "The Tale of the Shoe", in which Donoghue offers a positive portrait of the lesbian woman. As Elizabeth Wanning Harries (1996: 100-115) affirms, this Irish novelist rejects heterosexual desire as the norm in traditional fairy tales and replaces it with lesbian attraction; as a consequence, she also questions traditional ideas characteristic of a patriarchal society.

"The Tale of the Shoe" begins in first-person narration, as in Lee's version. In this way, Donoghue achieves a high level of closeness between the reader and the narrator, in this case, Cinderella herself, who tells her own story creating a very intimate atmosphere. Like Lee, Donoghue manages to awake the readers' sympathy and comprehension towards the main character thanks to this literary device. Slowly, she creates a positive image of a lesbian woman with the help of the audience's empathy.

This Cinderella is miserable, dumb, but she does not blame her step-mother, nor her step-sisters, nor even her father. Actually, none of these characters appear in Donoghue's version. There is something else that makes her feel alienated, she claims: "I heard a knocking in my skull, and kept running to the door, but there was never anyone there" (1). Nobody makes her do the household chores but some voices inside her head (2). One day, a woman appears in the house, "her eyes had flames" (3). With this sentence, Donoghue expresses desire on the part of this woman towards Cinderella, the kind of sexual attraction that was outcast by patriarchal society. Donoghue portrays women as sexual beings, which was inconceivable in patriarchal societies or by the male authors that edited the most traditional tales before. As soon as Cinderella meets this mysterious woman, who knew her own mother, she begins to undergo some transformation (3).

Cinderella asks her and the woman takes the girl to the ball, because, "Isn't that what girls are meant to ask for?" (3) This question that Cinderella asks herself is Donoghue's ironic remark on traditional gender identity and on the assumptions about female and male roles learned by girls who had read the most traditional versions of this tale, such as Basile's, Perrault's or the brothers Grimm's. Isn't this what girls in a patriarchal society are meant to ask for? She then describes stereotyped female behaviour in a patriarchal society, "I knew just how I was meant to behave" (4), which includes smiling prettily, not eating much to stay thin, dancing and answering short sentences such as "Indeed and Oh yes and Do you think so?" (4). This Cinderella knows perfectly well how society expects her to behave, according to her patriarchal condition of woman, and she tries hard to fit, so hard that she has become numb, at least, until this woman appears in her life.

After the ball, the woman asks Cinderella "Had enough?" (4), the girl is confused and she decides that she wants to come back the following night. When the woman appears again to take her to the ball, they share a few moments: the woman feeds Cinderella with a spoon, and teaches her how to waltz and draw pictures in the ashes (5). They become closer. That night at the ball Cinderella dances with the prince. She recalls that "He asked me my name, and for a moment I couldn't remember it" (5). This shows that her transformation is well under way; a new self is emerging and replacing her old self. When it is almost midnight, the woman comes for Cinderella and asks the same question, "Had enough?" (5), but Cinderella knows a little better this time. However, she still wants to come back one more time.

The last night at the ball, Cinderella's transformation is complete, "That night my new skin was red silk, shivering in the breeze" (6). She is a new person, she leaves behind all the traditional notions of woman that she acquired through her gradual socialization within a patriarchal community, and finds and embraces her true self. The prince proposes to her in a scene which, as Cinderella acknowledges, is "all very fairy-tale" (6). The girl foresees her future with him in her imagination, and some voices in her head, voices which represent patriarchal society, tell her to accept the proposal: "Yes yes yes say yes before you lose your chance you bag of nothingness" (7).

Donoghue firmly criticizes the patriarchal misconception that a woman without a man is worthless, that marrying a man is the only chance for a woman to be someone. Cinderella does not want that future with the prince, and runs away. She even accepts her mistake, "I had got the story all wrong" (7). She realizes that she does not want a heterosexual relationship, that she wouldn't be happy with the prince, even though this is what most girls would wish for. She desires the woman, her mother's friend, "How could I not have noticed she was beautiful?" (7).

There are several references to traditional tales, especially to that by the brothers Grimm, which show the intertextual character of the text: Cinderella's duties at home, "I counted grains of rice and divided brown beans from black" (2); the date tree in the garden, "She took me into the garden and showed me a hazel tree I had never seen before [...]. She said that was my mother's tree" (3); the time she has to come back home from the ball, before twelve; and the lost shoe. Donoghue also writes ironically about some elements that appear in the traditional tales by giving them some sexual connotations. Cinderella's dress can be given as an example. The woman shows her "how wide my skirt could spread" (5), and she also "claimed her little finger was a magic wand, it could do spectacular things" (6). Introducing these sexual allusions, Donoghue parodies traditional tales and subverts them; she takes away from them the solemnity and seriousness they had been given by patriarchal male writers, while making it clear that the very notion of sexuality has always been subject to constant interrogation and alteration so that it could fully comply with the rules set up by those holding power. As Rosalind Coward explains by referring to Foucault and his study on discourse and sexuality:

He argues that sexuality has never been 'repressed' as such but has been the object of a variety of discourses for several centuries. In the past these discourses were frequently directed towards a control or negation of certain sexual practices, as with the medical and educational discourses in the Victorian period: they nevertheless had sexuality as their object. In Catholic countries, he suggests that the practice of the church confessional was taken over into scientific and social discourses, where once again sexuality became an

object to be interrogated, spoken about, controlled. [...] Foucault sees within this concern with sexuality the workings of power; the identity of the subject is found through discourses which multiply areas of pleasure and attention only to control, classify, subject (Coward, 2011: 201-202).

It is therefore interesting to note that sexuality has been the subject of different discourses along history. It is the kind of discourse which is employed that matters, not sexuality itself, since it is discourse that has the power to influence how people think. Sexuality itself has never changed, what has changed are the discourses on it. A woman is always a woman; it is the discourse on her and what she stands for that has changed and, consequently, society's idea of woman. These six fairy tales deploy six different discourses, and thus six different ideas of sexuality and women. The discourse used by Donoghue in her version of "Cinderella" widely differs from those used by the male authors previously mentioned and, as a result, the identity of the characters also differs, in this case, for the better.

Donoghue's tale is a "Cinderella" version told from a lesbian feminist perspective. As I previously said, one of the goals of lesbian feminism is to create positive images of the lesbian woman and revise the literary canon, looking for tales to subvert. This interesting tale by Donoghue achieves all of these goals; this lesbian Cinderella is depicted as someone who is a bit lost at the beginning, since she knows there is something inside her that she is denying or hiding because she tries to live according to society's expectations (Joosen, in Haase, 2008: 203). Once she lets it go out, she shines and finds happiness. This tale illustrates the process of 'coming out', that is, the realization of the lesbian identity on Cinderella's part. In this process the girl notices that she is sexually attracted by her godmother, another woman, not by the prince, which corroborates Catherine Stimpson's (1981: 364) definition of lesbianism, whereby carnal desire is a must in a lesbian relationship, since it is this sexual attraction that distinguishes the lesbian relationship from sheer friendship between women.



Moreover, it is also clear that the tale encapsulates certain conventions of lesbian literature. I will rely on Elaine Marks's description of some of these conventions and apply them to the interpretation of the tale under analysis:

The younger woman [Cinderella] [...] is always passionate [...] The older woman [godmother] as object of the younger woman's desire is restrained and admirable, beautiful and cultivated [...] the exchanges between the older and the younger woman are reminiscent of a mother-daughter relationship. The mother of the younger is either dead or in some explicit way inadequate [...] The denouement [...] is often brought about by a public event [the ball] during which private passions explode. (1993: 274)

Until recently, as Cowards (2011: 202) explains, many religious official discourses established a close relation between sexuality and the disgusting side of carnality, to the point that the sexual act was merely regarded as the biological process whose only decent and acceptable purpose was the production of children. Women were exclusively regarded as mothers, never as sexual subjects with physical desires, least of all desires towards other women. However, this traditional and reactionary image of woman, against which different branches of feminism have been fighting, can no longer be sustained. In particular, this new Cinderella stands for the positive image of a lesbian woman that lesbian critics have so strongly tried to advocate.

### 3.-Conclusion

The literary fairy tale is a valuable source of information as regards the formation of gender identity. According to Haase (2008: xxxiii), the past fifty years have been crucial for the development of a literary fairy tale genre and scholarship, and it seems that its future is also promising. The fairy tale in the oral tradition has existed for a very long time now. However, the literary fairy tale did not appear until the Middle Ages, when the proper circumstances fostered the collection of tales in the written form. Since most of the people at that time could neither read nor write, the literary fairy tale was mainly addressed to the high classes, i.e. the educated classes. As Maria Nikolajeva (in Haase, 2008: 185-86) explains, these tales were not addressed to children, since most of them were grotesque and profoundly improper for a young audience. Instead, they were addressed to adults. French female writers, the *conteuses*, were the first ones to use the term *conte de fées* in the eighteenth century. At the end of this century, the literary fairy tale changed its nature and became a text suitable for children.

As Zipes states (2000: xix-xxiii), fairy tales mirror the socio-historical moment in which they appear; they depict the morals, institutions and ideology of their time. However, they also influence readers and their beliefs, their morals, their values, and also their assumptions about gender identity. The literary fairy tales have been used by many authors as an acculturation device for children, whose minds are easy to influence and mould. However, according to Marcia R. Lieberman (1972: 383), this device will only work if the text reaches a considerable amount of people so that those ideas, morals, and assumptions can widely spread in society. How can an author have such a strong influence on his/her readers? The answer is: thanks to language. Pam Morris (1993: 100-137), in her analysis of structuralism, claims that if the relationship between signs and signifiers is arbitrary, then there are two worlds, the world of reality and the world of language, and it is language that gives meaning to reality; it is through language that we can make sense of the world. She affirms that language does not reflect what the world actually is like, but rather our idea of it; therefore, it is always biased.

Judging from this, we can conclude that the language used in fairy tales is not arbitrary either, but carefully chosen so that it can transmit a set of values, ideas, morals, etc. to the reader. Fairy tales have been used by institutions such as education, religion, and the family to perpetuate a specific kind of society. And what is the kind of society that the literary fairy tale titled "Cinderella" has been promoting since the seventeenth century? The answer is: a hierarchical society in which women are subordinated to men. Authors such as Basile, Perrault and the brothers Grimm have written their versions of "Cinderella" with a purpose on their minds. This purpose was to influence the mind of a young readership in order to reproduce a patriarchal model. Basile, Perrault and the brothers Grimm have portrayed in their versions of "Cinderella" a woman who is weak, passive, inferior to her mate, subordinate, worried only about her physical appearance; or either way, a woman who is powerful, evil, greedy, and cold-blooded. When children read these tales, they will draw their own conclusions, but always guided by the texts' implied author. When building their gender identity as men and women, they will conclude that a woman only needs to be pretty to get a husband and improve her social status; they will conclude that, as men, they can control women and women must obey them because they are inferior creatures. These biased roles of men and women as portrayed by the male authors analyzed here have influenced children for a long time, since the most popular versions of the tale are still Perrault's and the brothers Grimm's. The construction of gender has been a key subject of discussion for many decades. Gender is socially and culturally constructed. Children learn to behave in one way or another depending on whether they are male or female individuals. They learn from a variety of sources: family, school, TV programmes, but also through literature.

As Haase (2004: vii) claims, feminist fairy tale studies began in the 1970s, fostered by second-wave feminism, which denounced the existence of a sexist power structure ruled by men. As regards the fairy tale, this movement made emphasis on the social and historical value of fairy tales and the role of women that they have enforced along history. Fairy tale criticism, according to Morris (1993: 37-44), began in the 1960s with the rereading and questioning of male works and

the discovery of female works so far ignored by male editors. It was then that the tales by the *conteuses* were rediscovered. As Seifert (1996: 17) affirms, women like Mme. d'Aulnoy were the first ones to revise some of the patriarchal fairy tales written by male authors, and to reshape them into new versions which rejected patriarchal values and ideas on women. More recently, authors such as Emma Donoghue and Tanith Lee have also revised these traditional fairy tales in order to create new versions which differ greatly from those written or collected by men.

In the "Cinderella" versions of d'Aulnoy, Lee and Donoghue, we observe women who have nothing to do with the women depicted in the previous male authors' tales. These women are determined, strong, assertive, confident, they make decisions, they are not dependent on men. In the most radical tales by Lee and Donoghue, women are sexual individuals, and what is more, they control their own sexuality, reject patriarchy and the power relations that this tries to reproduce, and above all reject male control over women. The language they use to describe women is not pejorative, but on the contrary offers a positive concept of woman.

Lesbian feminism became highly relevant in the 1970s and 1980s in North America and Western Europe. Up to then the issue of lesbianism was considered to be a deviation, and was ignored or even marginalized. As Weedon (2003: 52-67) affirms, improper behaviour in a woman would mean failure to obtain a husband. She affirms that one of the goals of lesbian feminism nowadays is the revision of traditional texts. This is the case of Emma Donoghue. Her version of "Cinderella" leaves aside heterosexual love in order to give priority to lesbian love. Cinderella abandons the prince and runs away with a woman, but in this case it is not her godmother, but her mother's friend, and she is not a fairy, but a real woman.

It may seem that feminist ideas have gone a long way. In North America and the West, many women are economically independent, have a job, are not dependent on men, can remain single, can vote, can have access to education, etc. It seems that we live in a society which is

completely different from that oppressive patriarchal society of the seventeenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth century. But, is this the case really?

In spite of all the progress that the women's cause has made since the years of first-wave feminism, we are still far away from a society in which men and women are completely, one hundred per cent, equal. Why is that? Fairy tales give us the answer. In spite of how much the literary fairy tale has evolved since the Middle Ages, in spite of the versions of Tanith Lee and Emma Donoghue, to mention but two, the "Cinderella" versions that the majority of children read are the ones by Basile, Perrault and the brothers Grimm. Children know and retell the versions which became popular in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the versions which reproduce a traditional and patriarchal society with female characters that embody passive, subordinated women, economically dependent on men. The tales by Lee and Donoghue can certainly reach a number of readers, mainly female adults, but these cannot possibly compare to the masses that the others reach. Therefore, if fairy tales are a reflection of society at its deepest, most primary level, it all indicates that, much to our regret, we are still stuck in the past.

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