

THE WEARING AND SHEDDING OF ENCHANTED SHOES

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It is now accepted by most that women have played a large role in the transmission of fairytales. Research carried out by Marina Warner¹ and also by Ines Köhler-Zülch² are landmarks on the subject. However, the argument remains that, despite the strength of the female voice throughout women's renderings of traditional fairytales, it would somehow appear that the genre is inextricably bound with a patriarchal worldview and is, therefore, becoming more and more obsolete. Try as we may, the fairytale perishes with the dew of consciousness-raising. I know that I am not alone in mourning the passing of fairytales. Research into them is not unlike taking part in a wake. But while doing so, let me share with you – with the help of a handful of Portuguese versions – not the hope of bringing fairytales back to life, nor indeed the denial that they are outrageously patriarchal, but the suggestion that we can perhaps detect in them an old beat which is surprisingly modern and adequate. In order to do so, I have chosen the motif of women's shoes.

We are all aware of the rich cluster of sexual imagery that relates the shoe to the foot. We may call to mind Cinderella's classic glass shoes, a signal of the easily broken nature of virginity,³ and, in the happy outcome of the story, the couple's perfect union mirrored in the image of the shoe that perfectly matches the foot.⁴

It is less obvious, however, that shoes are paradoxical objects in that they constrict feet and yet free them to cover greater distances in space. In this sense shoes can be seen as an icon of the very concept of initiation, itself of course embedded in the structure of fairytales. Let us first see the contrast between male and female fairytale shoes in the light of this paradox.

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¹ Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairytales and their Tellers*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1994.

² Ines Köhler-Zülch, "Ostholsteins Erzählerinnen in der Sammlung Wilhelm Wissner: ihre Texte, seine Berichte", *Fabula* 32, 1991, pp.94-118, and "Who are the Tellers?", *Fabula* 38, 1997, pp. 199-209.

³ Paul Delarue, "From Perrault to Walt Disney: the slipper of Cinderella", in Alan Dundes, *Cinderella: A Casebook*, New York, Wildman Press, 1983, pp. 14-21. Also Diann D. Rusch-Feja, "Jungfrau, Jungfberschaft", *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, p. 785.

⁴ With regard to the connection between the foot and female genitals see, for instance, Miguel Garcí-Gómez, "La abadesa embargada por el pie", *RDTP* 44 (1989), pp. 7-26, and A. David Kossoff, "El pie desnudo: Cervantes y Lope de Vega", *Homenaje a William L. Fichter: Estudios sobre el teatro antiguo hispánico y otros ensayos*, ed. A. David Kossoff and José Amor y Vásquez, Madrid, Castalia, 1971, pp. 381-386, both quoted by Manuel da Costa Fontes, "Early Motifs and Metaphors in a Modern Traditional Poem: A Fonte do Salgueirinho", *Luso-Brazilian Review*, XXXV I 0024-7413/98/001, p. 19.

As male footwear goes, heroes wear seven league boots, or boots that take them wherever they wish, to be put on and taken off at the owner's pleasure.⁵ In other words, boots give them the freedom and mastery of space, and no constriction whatsoever. There is no paradox in shoes as worn by heroes, they are just extensions of male freedom in adventure.

Let us now examine how the paradox unfolds itself with heroines' shoes. In *The Monster as Bridegroom* stories (AT 425A) the heroine is required by her husband to wear out one (or a multiple) pair of iron shoes,⁶ and wander in a 'long and wearisome search'⁷ for him.

A version recently collected in the Algarve can be shortened as follows:

After having asked her father for a twig with a hundred blossoms, the youngest princess is compelled to go and live with the bear, in whose garden the twig was plucked by the king. Three daughters are born of the union, Faith, Hope and Charity. When she discloses the secret beauty of the bear, she is persuaded by the queen to burn the hide of the beast. Before abandoning her, her husband gives the princess a pair of iron boots, which she must wear for twenty years while searching for him, until they are worn off. She sets off wearing her boots and dressed as an old beggar, and taking along her three daughters. She wanders through the houses of the Sun, Moon and Wind, she is protected from their cannibalistic fierceness by the mother of each of them, and she is given as tokens a chestnut, an almond and a pomegranate in exchange for each of her daughters. Finally the wind takes her to the palace of her husband. Twenty years have passed and her boots are worn off. She meets some washerwomen who are trying, in vain, to wash away a blood spot on the shirt of her prince. He cannot marry his new bride unless the blood spot is washed away. As the girl steeps the shirt in the water, the blood spot disappears. In the three next days the girl breaks open the two nuts and the pomegranate, out of which beautiful musical instruments appear. Which she exchanges against three nights with the Prince. On the third night the Prince avoids the sleeping potion given him by the maids and can listen to the girl's pleas: "I have already lost our Faith, our Hope, our Charity, and I have lost you, I have worn out the boots you gave me, I have washed away the spot from your shirt, don't you remember me?" The story ends well, with the motif of the old and the new keys.⁸

So far, if we compare the use of shoes as worn by heroes and heroines, we can only frown at the obvious unfairness between the means of leading them to a happy ending. Whereas, for the heroine, the iron boots are an instrument for slowing down her progress, seven league boots are worn so as to quickly master space in order to achieve anything one wants.

Well, in two Portuguese versions of the same tale the heroine is also required

⁵ Motif D1521.1, "Seven league boots" as, in AT 328, *The boy steals the giant's treasure*.

⁶ In 12 of the 16 published Portuguese versions of AT425 we have in record, the heroine needs to wear iron shoes (bronze shoes in one) in her search. In 10 of those she is required to do so by her husband and in two she wears them of her own accord.

⁷ Quoted from the resumé in A. Anne & St. Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale*, 425A.

⁸ Untitled; informer, Salvina Batista, Vale Judeu, Loulé, Algarve, in Idália F. Custódio & Maria Aliete F. Galhoz, *Memória de Vale Judeu*, II, Loulé, Câmara Municipal de Loulé, 1998, pp. 104-117.

to wash off three blood spots found on her husband's shirt.⁹ Whose blood? What blood? We are not told, something is (supposed to be) left unsaid.¹⁰ Let me try one possible answer. In the tradition of AT 425A, the heroine is cursed away from her husband because she commits an indiscretion. She becomes aware of, or else she divulges or burns off, something connected with the hidden nature of her husband. Let us now consider, for the sake of argument, that there is a level in which the nature of the indiscretion concerns something in *her* hidden nature, so horrid that it could neither be seen or even stated, having therefore to appear projected onto something or someone else. What if, unstated, it is *the husband* who becomes aware of *her* state of rawness, which she tries to *cook* before the time is ripe? Her unmentionable bleeding, perhaps?¹¹ Woman's blood soils man (her husband's shirt), and it means disjunction, separation from man (the punishment of the iron shoes, reinforced by the wearing of rags, that is, the hyperbolically long time of rawness and waiting).¹² I have submitted elsewhere that bleeding as a cause of disjunction between the sexes is expressed in some tales as a state of (menstrual) bloodiness or rawness which can be reversed with the passing of time – a process by which all the blood disappears.¹³ The heroine alone can make an end of bloodiness by making the bloodstains vanish, at which point she becomes an available wife again.

Before they meet again, the blood has to disappear (from his shirt), the iron shoes have to be worn out. Unlike gold, iron is ugly. The iron boots signal that the heroine is unwanted. She can only see her husband again *after* the boots are done with, that is, not *while* she is wearing them. Shoes are then *her* heavy iron skin that needs to be shed, the curse that prolongs her state of unattractiveness and absence of a husband, of marital disjunction. Her final immobility – that is, absence of shoes – is therefore paradoxically connected with freedom from heavy ugliness, but the freedom to always be in a state of conjunction (and no blood on his shirt!).

The Portuguese versions of *The Danced - Out Shoes* (AT 306) tend to portray *one* princess mysteriously wearing out three or seven pairs of *iron* shoes every night.¹⁴

⁹ J. Leite de Vasconcellos, *Contos Populares e Lendas*, Coimbra, 1963, vol.I, 130-143; F. X. d'Athaide Oliveira, *Contos Tradicionaes do Algarve*, Tavira, 1905, nº 215. For English and (mention of) Scottish versions where this motif appears, see Neil Philip, *English Folktales*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1992, pp. 75 and 80-85.

¹⁰ The three blood drops can of course also be a memory of the three drops of wax or oil that the woman spills on the husband when she holds the candle to see him, a motif which is absent from these versions.

In fact, we see that the French catalogue offers both alternatives: the shirts can be stained either with blood or with wax (P. Delarue, M.-L. Ténèze, *Le Conte Populaire Français*, II, Paris, 1964, p.89).

¹¹ In "Sorrow and Love", an English / Gypsy version of AT425 (Neil Philip *op. cit.*, pp. 80-85) the blood that soils his shirt is explicitly hers, in a rendering that delicately suggests deflowering: "He [...] then bit off the end of her little finger. With it he made three blood stains on the front of his white shirt" after which he leaves her. They can only reunite when she washes away the blood stains.

¹² For the universal nature of menstrual blood tabus, there is an exhaustive Frazer-like study on the subject by Robert Briffault, *The Mothers*, 3 vols., London George, Allen & Unwin, 1927. The terms 'raw' and 'cooked' are borrowed from Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, London, Cape, 1970.

¹³ Isabel Cardigos, *In and out of Enchantment: Blood Gender and Symbolism in Portuguese Fairytales*, Helsinki, F.F. C., 1996, p. 202. The analysis developed in this study is an application of Chris Knight's thesis, *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the origins of culture*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1991.

The king promises the princess in marriage to the man who solves the mystery. Besides following the princess unseen to her due to a magic cape or hat, the hero also wears – in four out of nine versions – a pair of boots “as fast as thought”¹⁵ that take him wherever he wishes. After travelling through forests of bronze, silver and golden leaves, they reach a palace where the princess dances all night long with her ghostly partner(s). The invisible hero is later able to disclose the enigma by showing the leaves and the worn-out and discarded shoes as proofs, after which he is offered the reluctant bride in marriage. In one third of the Portuguese versions considered¹⁶ the story is combined with AT 307, *The Princess in the Shroud*: the maiden dies at the prospect of marrying the hero and he has to disenchant her once more, this time from being a cannibalistic corpse who eats up all the men who guard her tomb.

In AT 306 the shoes also bind the female protagonist, but this time to enchantment, to the realm of unreal partners. They are a riddle that needs to be solved before marriage can take place. This story takes us into a different perspective of disjunction from a husband. The owner of those shoes is clearly perceived as being enchanted and inaccessible, precisely because she moves to and fro, to companions of a different world and back to the real world. She is fiercely averse to the alternative of a proper marriage, which would pin her down to the same place. The task of the hero is to put an end to a freedom that *binds* her outside the sphere of marriage.

In both these tales (*The Search for the lost Husband* and *The Danced-Out Shoes*) shoes are, then, a means to mobility (walking, dancing) that, binding the feet, metonymically bind to singleness the woman who wears them. However, whereas in AT 425 that bondness appears as clearly negative, in *The Danced-Out Shoes* we are left in doubt. Although the princess seems to be really having a good time during her first enchantment, her wearing of iron shoes (in Portuguese versions) stresses the negative aspect of her enchantment, which, in some (namely in those followed by AT307), connects her clearly with the doom of hell.

In both tale types, the mobility related with the wearing of shoes is negatively connected with a state of marital disjunction. In both disjunction is heavily connoted with doom or enchantment, be it the painful separation from a husband (as in AT 425), or the dubious freedom of a connection with spell-bound partners (AT 306). In its turn, the shedding of the shoes brings, with the end of mobility, a state of firm – and unwilling in AT 306 plus 307 – conjunction with a husband.

¹⁴ I considered nine published versions, as follows: Consiglieri Pedroso, ‘The Seven Iron Slippers’, *Portuguese Folk-Tales*, London, 1882; F. X. d’Athaíde Oliveira, *op. cit.* 1900, I, nº 35 and II, nº 311; C. Martha & A. Pinto, *Folclore da Figueira da Foz*, Espozende, 1912, pp. 176-186; J. Leite de Vasconcellos, *op. cit.*, 1963, nºs 320, 321, 322 (vol. I); A. S. & P. C. Soromenho, *Contos Populares Portugueses (Inéditos)*, Lisbon, 1984, nº 237 (vol. I); G. Marreiros, *Um Algarve Outro Contado de Boca em Boca*, Lisbon, 1991, pp. 59-62.

¹⁵ Marreiros, *ibidem*, p. 59. Also C. Pedroso, *op. cit.*, C. Martha, *op. cit.* and Soromenho, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Oliveira, *op. cit.*, nº 311; Martha, *op. cit.*; Marreiros, *op. cit.*, Soromenho, *op. cit.*

We can see the same connection – disjunction /wearing shoes and conjunction / freedom from shoes – if we turn to versions of *Snow-White* (AT 709), where the death-sleep of the heroine is caused, not by an apple, but by a pair of shoes, as in a story found in a Portuguese transcription from last century:

“The old woman insisted so much that the girl picked them [the shoes] up. She put one on and she closed one eye. She put the other one on and she closed the other eye. Then she fell dead. [...] The king’s son came, he saw her and found her very beautiful. Then he took one of her shoes off and she opened one eye. He took her other shoe off and she opened the other eye. And she came back to life. He then took her home and married her.”¹⁷

The enchanted shoes have here the same function as the apple stuck in the throat: they put the heroine in a state of total unavailability to a husband. Once he takes the shoes off, she wakes up and they can marry. Here the shoes bind the heroine even further and provide a very clear illustration of the statement underlying the function of shoes in the first tales. With the shoes on, she may be attractive, but she cannot marry, for the simple reason that she is dead.

The happy shoes of *Cinderella* (AT 510) are similar to the *danced-out shoes* in that they control the timing of feminine mobility. The heroine puts them on to go dancing with her prince *and*, (before midnight strikes and her time is up) to run away from him. They amplify the meaning of disjunction, which is now the enchanted freedom of moving between two realms: the arms of the prince (when in riches) and away from them (when in rags). As if, by shuttling back and forth, she obeys the hidden rules of the right and wrong times to be with her prince – as if her maidenhood gives her the right to be cyclical, to enjoy both the beauty of her ovular phase, and menstrual seclusion. Then, when one of the shoes that permits that freedom is lost and comes to the possession of the prince, she will be permanently attached to him as her husband. He will be in control of the freedom of her feet. As for the ugly sisters, shoes become the constriction that clearly spells unavailability and (explicitly) blood. When they put themselves forward as brides, they cut their toe or heel so as to fit the shoe, and the blood is spotted out by the doves, as is well remembered in Grimms’ rendering: “Roocoo, roocoo / There’s blood in the shoe / The foot’s too long, the foot’s too wide / That’s not the proper bride”.¹⁸ They are therefore doomed to the ultimate humiliation of bleeding at the wrong time, whilst riding to their wedding.

The movement back and forth between two worlds which is frowned upon in *The Danced-out Shoes* is looked on more positively in *Cinderella*. The girl simply obeys the rules dictated by her godmother: there is a time for merry-making with a prospective husband, and a time to be secluded among the ashes.

¹⁷ Adolfo Coelho, *Contos Populares Portugueses*, Lisbon, Dom Quixote, 1985, Nº XXXV, “Os Sapatos Encantados”, pp.186-187; my translation.

¹⁸ Grimm’s Tales for Young and Old, 1987, R. Mannheim (tr.), London, Gollancz, 1978, p.88.

These are all well-known traditional fairytales. Let us now see what Hans Christian Andersen made out of the motif of women's shoes, shoes danced to death, this time. This motif is not unknown in traditional fairytales when applied to the villain. In Grimms' *Snow White* the wicked stepmother "was forced to step into the red-hot shoes and dance till she fell to the floor dead".¹⁹ The paradox involving the function of shoes as binding instruments of freedom is pushed to its limits. Dancing is to walking what poetry is to prose, the distilled joy of movement for its own sake. Red hot iron shoes, danced to death, become a constriction that binds one to die outcast and in pure pain.

Although Andersen used a theme from the oral tradition²⁰, *The Red Shoes*²¹ is a literary tale. Karen, the heroine, is a young girl whose vanity takes the shape of an infatuation with a pair of red morocco shoes. This prevents her from developing the virtues a young girl should have, modesty, care for the elders and religious devotion. Cursed to roam the land dancing ceaselessly in her red shoes, she is outcast from human society, back to which she can only return when, at her desperate request, her feet are cut off by the village executioner. Utterly immobile, she finally has access to the ecstasy of devotion and, naturally, death. Without feet, Karen is fit for heaven, which means a premature death that excludes marriage.

Karen's shoes are red, an attractive red that is a signal of nubility. Yet, the first significant sin she commits is wearing the red shoes on the day of her confirmation. Beautiful though they may be, red shoes are considered unholy, unfit for a sacred place. It is well known that in a significant number of religions a woman is barred from sacred places when she has the menses. In his analysis of Andersen's tales, W. Lederer decodes Karen's red shoes as an emblem of the monarch when he compares them with the red shoes worn by Gerda, Andersen's contrasting heroine of *The Snow Queen*. Unlike with Karen, Gerda dons her new red shoes to the river before undertaking the journey in search of her childhood friend as a signal of the purity of her love for him.²² Nubility is a pendular state that must alternate between its red (unholy, menstrual) and white (holy, ovarian) phases. With Karen's punishment, the dancing shoes, the pendulum sticks in the permanent "red" of the phase of disjunction, not unlike the heroine in iron shoes, roaming as an old beggar in search of her husband. Karen is tabooed until she sacrifices, with her shoes, her feet – her sexuality. Then, only God can take her.

Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, the makers of the film *The Red Shoes* (1948), retold the story along the lines of a dilemma. Vicky, their heroine, wavers between two incompatible ideals: the quiet bliss of conjugal domesticity and the

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p.191.

²⁰ D. Ward (ed., tr.), *The German Legends of the Brothers Grimm I*, Philadelphia, I.S.H.I., 1981, pp. 196-197.

²¹ Hans Christian Andersen, *The Complete Fairy Tales and Stories*, E. K. Hausgaard (tr.), London, Gollancz, 1974, pp. 289-294.

²² Wolfgang Lederer, *The Kiss of the Snow Queen: Hans Christian Andersen and Man's Redemption by Woman*, Berkeley /Los Angeles / London, University of California Press, 1986, pp. 32-38.

art of dancing. The poles of the same dichotomy are personified by her husband and the manager of a dance company. Tragedy is inevitable, as each man refuses any kind of compromise. She is not allowed to switch from one to the other, to obey the clock of her two equally imperative vocations. Unable to choose, she leaps to her death under the train in which her husband is leaving, driven by the red dancing shoes of the fairytale's heroine, which she was about to perform. Conjugality's final victory takes a bitter shape ("Take off the red shoes" is her dying request to her husband). All might have been well if she had been allowed the autonomy of switching to and fro between the two poles, one dictated by the red shoes – the *animus* of creativity and marital disjunction – and the other by love – the reality of a husband, with its corollaries of conjugality and breeding. In other words, if she had been allowed the right to move according to the alternating phases of woman's cyclical nature, menstrual and ovular.

There are many stories that, covertly but still audibly enough, state that woman has two natures. Many of those stories are quick to add that she shouldn't have them, and that man should make sure she won't. Some split those two natures into two rival women, the good girl and the bad girl. Then they kill the bad girl and the prince marries the good one. Two phases in the same woman become two different women.²³ Shoes, in the stories we have surveyed, serve as a means to carry the one heroine from one phase to another instead of splitting her in two opposite images of the same. While she is wearing them and the foot is covered, she is, in many different ways not good for a husband. Once her foot is uncovered, she is (the sexual connotation of "foot" being here transparent). In tales type 425A, shoes are iron binds that both signal unattractiveness and marital abandonment under marital control. In Danish versions quoted by Linda Dégh, the menstrual nature of this abandonment is cast off in favour of a striking image for marital control: the parting husband ties an iron rod around his wife's pregnant womb, preventing the baby from being born until they meet again (seven years later) and, with a touch of his finger, he breaks the iron rod and delivers the baby – and the woman – from her bondage.²⁴ The allomotif of the shoes becomes a hyperbolic wedding ring that highlights the utter dependance of the wife toward her assigned man, under whose control she always is.

Instead of being understood along the lines of female dependence on marriage and a husband, the other tales are better heard as describing an alternation between states of disjunction and conjunction, ruled by the periodic nature of women.²⁵

It is time to round up my opening statement: Beneath the patriarchal imprint displayed in most of our cherished (but dying) fairytales, we can, then, detect

²³ Isabel Cardigos, "Da Fase à Face: Transmutações do Tempo nos Contos Femininos", *Estudos de Literatura Oral*, 2 (1996), pp. 67-78.

²⁴ "How do storytellers interpret the Snakeprince Tale", in Morten Nørgaard et al., *The Telling of Stories: Approaches to a Traditional Craft*, Odense, 1990, pp. 47-62.

²⁵ Knight, op. cit., pp.510-513.

a deeper imprint caused by “a fundamental category, that of periodicity, which modulates human existence [...] by establishing [...] the major physiological rhythms which have their seat in the female organism”.²⁶

If the surface meaning of fairytales may have little bearing for this day and age, it could also be argued that an understanding of such tales as variations on the reality of cyclical nature of woman has the value of a pre-historic curiosity. This is, however, along with phallic or fertility symbols, the biological ground for symbolic thought. If so, how can this thought be meaningful, nowadays?

The story retold in the film *The Red Shoes* voices the beginning of an answer, decoding the structure in a more audible message: Vicky, the heroine, should be allowed to wear the red shoes and dance. She should also be allowed to love her man and receive his love. Such would be the freedom of the dancing princesses, if only they could move from their world of enchantment to the arms of a husband, or the freedom of Cinderella if her shoe had not been lost. The freedom that belongs to all, not to be stuck in one rigid mould – the human right to be faithful to one's seasonal self.

²⁶ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Origins of Table Manners*, London, Cape, 1978, p. 506.

ABSTRACT

The paradox involved in the concept of shoes – a constriction that allows one to move easily – is reflected in fairy tales in a variety of ways. Whereas the second term of the paradox (shoes as tools to help one move faster) serves mainly male protagonists, the first term is richly developed when the shoes are worn by women. A bird's eye view of Portuguese versions of tales such as *The Monster as Bridegroom* and *The Danced Out Shoes* looking for footwear allows for an analysis of the function of shoes across other tales such as *Cinderella* and *Snowwhite*.

It is argued that heroines' shoes are icons of a state of marital disjunction. This, in turn, is related to a state of enchantment that can only be broken when the shoes are either worn off or fall into the hands of a (future) husband. Wearing the shoes may appear under euphoric or disphoric registers, but the final immobility of the heroine (without the shoes) is always paradoxically connected with freedom or deliverance – most often under marital conjunction.

A literary tale, Hans Ch. Andersen's *The Red Shoes*, and its retelling in M. Powell and E. Pressburger's film of the same name, will be used as confirmation of the conclusions to which we were drawn.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Paradoxon, das mit dem Konzept des Schuhs verbunden ist – Beengtheit, die leichte Bewegung erlaubt – spiegelt sich in Märchen auf vielfältige Weise wider. Während die zweite Kategorie des Paradoxons (Schuhe als Mittel schnellerer Fortbewegung) charakteristisch für männliche Protagonisten ist, so ist die beengende Eigenschaft von Schuhen reich entwickelt, wenn die Eigentümerin eine Frau ist. Eine Übersicht dieses Motiv in Märchen mit weiblichen Protagonisten wie "Aschenputtel", "Die Suche nach dem verschwundenen Ehemann", "Die Zertanzten Schuhe" ermöglicht eine Analyse des Paradigmas einschließlich der Funktion der Schuhe innerhalb unterschiedlicher Erzählungen.

Gezeigt wird, daß die Schuhe der Helden symbole eines Zustandes ehelicher Trennung sind. Dieser wiederum ist unveränderlich verknüpft mit einem Zustand der Verzauberung, die nur durchbrochen werden kann, wenn die Schuhe abgetragen sind oder ausgezogen werden. Je nach Märchen kann das tragen der Schuhe euphorische Empfindungen oder das Gegenteil davon hervorrufen, doch die letztendliche Immobilität der Helden (ohne Schuhe) ist verkehrterweise immer mit Freiheit verbunden - meistens der Freiheit einer ehelichen Verbindungen.

Zur Stützung der gezogenen Schlußfolgerungen wird ein literarisches Märchen – Hans Christians Andersens "Die Roten Schuhe" – und seine Verfilmung durch Michael Powell herangezogen.

RESUMO

O paradoxo inerente ao conceito de “sapato” – uma constrição que permite andar mais e mais depressa – reflecte-se de várias formas nos contos maravilhosos. Enquanto o segundo termo do paradoxo (instrumentos que facilitam o andar) se aplica sobretudo a protagonistas masculinos, o primeiro termo desdobra-se de muitas formas quando o sapato é duma personagem feminina. Partimos de versões portuguesas de *O Noivo Animal* (AT 425A) e *Os Sapatos Estragados* (AT 306), para daí considerar a função do sapato feminino, alargando-a a outros contos.

Os sapatos femininos serão ícones de um estado de disjunção marital, por sua vez relacionado com um encantamento que só pode ser quebrado quando os sapatos estiverem ou estragados ou na posse do (futuro) marido. Usar os sapatos pode aparecer num registo eufórico ou disfórico; contudo, a imobilidade final da heroína (sem sapato ou sapatos) aparece sempre paradoxalmente relacionada com liberdade ou libertação – na maioria das vezes conducente a um estado de conjunção marital.

Um conto literário de Andersen e a sua reformulação no filme Michael Powell e E. Pressburger, *Os Sapatos Vermelhos*, permitem confirmar e iluminar as conclusões a que a análise nos conduziu.