

Black-Winged Angels:

Theoretical Underpinnings

(A Short Story Collection and Exegesis)

by Angela Slatter

BA UQ, Graduate Diploma Creative Industries (Creative Writing) QUT

Creative Writing and Cultural Studies Discipline

Creative Industries Faculty

Queensland University of Technology

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters by

Research

2006

Key Words

Fairytales, Angela Carter, Emma Donoghue, Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault, Feminism, Gender roles, (Female) agency, Creative writing, Female collaboration, Female community, Thesis, Masters.

Abstract

The creative work, *Black-Winged Angels*, is a collection of nine re-written fairytales. The collection is divided into three sections: Maiden, Mother, Crone and the three stories in each section explore various aspects of these traditional periods in a woman's life. The tales are re-written, or 're-loaded', to offer alternative views of the tales of childhood, to examine other forces that may be at work inside the stories themselves, and the possible consequences of 'living' those tales differently.

The exegesis examines the colonisation and reclamation of a range of fairy tales. It traces the historical shift from oral to literary fairy tale traditions, and the ensuing patriarchal rewriting of those fairytales. The exegesis then considers the writing of Angela Carter and Emma Donoghue (specifically *The*

Bloody Chamber and *Kissing the Witch*, respectively), in terms of how their work in the fairytale genre has both succeeded in, and failed to, avoid a simple inversion of gender with their revisions of the colonised literary fairytales.

The exegetical work has grown, in large part, out of the process of critical reflexivity to which I have subjected my creative work. I chose Angela Carter's and Emma Donoghue's works of revisionist fairytales to act as 'bookends' for my own work; Carter as a starting point for fairytale reclamation and Donoghue as a more recent incarnation of the fairytale revisionist. In reflecting on my own work, I often looked back at what these two authors had done, to guide me in the eternal writers' struggle of what to leave in, what to leave out, and where to take the tale.

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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: _____

Angela Gaye Slatter

Date: _____

30 November, 2006

Acknowledgments

All my thanks to my supervisor, Dr Nike Bourke for her patience, guidance and extensive knowledge of commas (I will learn one day). Very special thanks to Ms Anita Bell, (finance AND fiction author extraordinaire) for having faith and giving me a start. Thanks also to the other two Horsewomen of the Apocalypse, Jaimie and Ms Kath, for all the Tarampa shenanigans. Big hugs and thanks to Azra for the writing therapy, encouragement and enormous amounts of feta cheese and calamari consumed.

To my dearest gang: Hydros and Marko, Miri B, Emmi-Lou and Reddy-Boy, K-bee, Morris, Charlie-bear and Fenchurch, Lisa Jane and Snowpea, and Kelly from Wisconsin – many thanks, it could not have been done without all your yelling and poking and prodding.

Last of all, but definitely not least, to my beloved family, who never ceased asking “Can we read it yet?” and offering support. To sister Shell for being proud of me no matter what (and that took some doing), to Dad for his love and the helpful cash gifts, to Matty for showing me that fairytales aren’t really for little kids, and to Mum for her ever-constant heart and for starting it all with the words “Once upon a time...”

Black-Winged Angels:

Theoretical Underpinnings

An Exegesis by Angela Slatter

Introduction

When I first began to plan this project, I contemplated how fairytales thread through our lives, how their influence starts in our earliest days. I cast my mind back to the tale that I remember most vividly from my own childhood, which is Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Match Girl* (Andersen, 1975, pp.193-195). The tale was read to me by my mother and the experience was traumatic for us both – for me because I could not understand why the Little Match Girl had to die (she'd done nothing wrong!), and for my mother because she had simply been trying to entertain her small daughter in the traditional manner of mothers since time immemorial.

With almost thirty years since that early trauma, I can analyse with a little more perspective what the tale was trying to do: to teach, to educate, to indoctrinate. Andersen's aim with his tales was to inculcate a Christian belief

that if you are good and sinless and innocent, God will save you in the next world. Unfortunately, you will probably have to put up with a lot of misfortune in your earthly life before this happens – but display the patience and virtue of Job and you will be rewarded. Needless to say, this did not appeal to my nine-year-old self (any more than it appeals to my thirty-nine-year-old self).

Andersen's work was written at the later end of the literary (written) fairytale spectrum, but once upon a time there were oral folk tales, which reflected the customs, beliefs and rituals of the 'tribe', and were stories told for adults as well as children (Zipes, 1992, p. xii). Zipes describes such tales as "marks that leave traces of the human struggle for immortality" (Zipes, 1992, p. xii), but they have also traditionally been a means of acculturation, which presents ways of learning behaviours, value systems, and consequences (Lieberman, 1986, p. 187). As such, they are useful tools for any person or group wishing to either teach or indoctrinate an audience.

When these tales were transcribed into written form in the sixteenth century, they were still not suitable for children – the collections of both Basile and Straparola are filled with illicit sex, bawdiness and amusements generally not meant for anyone but adults (Windling, 1997, p. 6). The literary fairytale became popular in the salons of seventeenth and eighteenth century France and, for a time, had an adult, upper-class audience – de Vos and Altman refer to this as a "fashionable renaissance" (de Vos and Altman, 2000,

p. 1752). Gradually, though, there was a shift that led to the fairytale being regarded as the province of children – Zipes points to a convergence of the budding middle class, an increase in literacy, and the nascent idea of children as “innocent and educable” (Blackwell, 2001, p. 163). By the mid-late eighteenth century tales were told almost exclusively to children in nurseries.

When fairytales were translated from oral to written form, male writers/transcribers such as Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm took these tales from a variety of women, old and young. They did not simply copy down tales verbatim, but rather changed them to suit their own purposes; tales were transformed, the voice colonised, and a patriarchal aesthetic imposed. These male transcribers constructed identities for themselves – Mother Goose and Gammer Grethel respectively – taking on the guise of old wives who told tales to children in nurseries. They hid behind the image of the old woman telling trivial tales, yet the stories these men colonised took hold in the popular imagination. The tales essentially became stories to teach children gender roles and were used to fulfil a controlling and socialising function. Girls were taught that being quiet and passive were virtues to which they should aspire; boys were taught that they were expected, indeed encouraged, to be noisy and active (Rowe, 1986, 220).

Blackwell describes the shift thus: “The wise women were happy to help them [by telling them their tales], but when the brothers wrote down the tales, they omitted some of the magic words, and they jumbled up parts

of the plots. They even left the wise women out of the stories they told, or changed them to be wicked, bossy, and ugly. Still, they left some of the magic in the stories" (Blackwell, 2001, p. 162).

With the advent of feminism, female writers began to reclaim the territory, which had once been owned by the 'old wives'. The works of Angela Carter and Emma Donoghue have helped to redeem the fairytale from patriarchal transcribers, by stripping away the male hegemonic layer imposed by the likes of Perrault and the Grimms, and infusing the tales with contemporary ideas about women and sexuality. However, do their tales offer a different mode of existence for female fairytale heroines or have they merely created an inversion, making women strong and independent and men weak and dependent? Simple inversion merely maintains a hierarchy based upon difference (Heath, 1978, p.53) – is it possible to address the problem of liberating the female character by giving her agency without removing it from her male counterpart?

This dissertation is concerned with examining the works of Carter and Donoghue (specifically *The Bloody Chamber* and *Kissing the Witch*, respectively), and analysing how their fairytale revisions have both succeeded in and failed to avoid a 'simple inversion' of colonised fairytales. Part One, the Literature Review, examines the effects of the patriarchal colonisation of the fairytale genre and the resultant idea of a woman's place in fairytales. Part Two considers Carter and Donoghue's works against the

yardstick of reclamation or inversion. Part Three is a reflective consideration of my own works as examples of Carter's concept of "new wine in old bottles" (Carter in Wandor, 1983, p. 69), and what I have tried to achieve in terms of avoiding a simple inversion by creating a pathway between patriarchy and feminism. I hope that I have achieved a path that both men and women can walk, a pathway of shared agency for revised fairytales.

As a creative practitioner, I found it necessary to conduct my research in a manner that enabled me to navigate a path between academic and creative praxis. My methodology, therefore, is that of critical reflexivity, which can be described as "subject[ing] to careful scrutiny all that we do as a way to improve our practice" (Mayher and Brause quoted by Stewart, 2003, p. 5). As a creative and academic writer and researcher, the process of research is a persistent negotiation between theoretical reading, writing and thinking, and practical or creative reading, writing and thinking. It is essential for me, as part of the process of reflecting between and on these methodologies, to examine the "I" who engages in the process of research and writing, to engage with and through critical reflexivity in order to find ways to begin to map the interaction between the theoretical landscape and research and the more mutable, personal, negotiated landscapes of my creative practice.



Part One – Literature Review

(i) The Patriarchal Colonisation of Fairytales

Fairytales, as previously stated, have functioned as a means of acculturation and control for some centuries – a kind of ‘Good Girls’ Guide to Behaving’.

What messages do women subconsciously take in through the medium of the fairy tale? Karen Rowe notes that “subconsciously women may transfer from fairytales into real life cultural norms which exalt passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice as a female’s cardinal virtues. In short, fairytales perpetuate the patriarchal *status quo* by making female subordination seem a romantically desirable, indeed an inescapable fate” (Rowe, 1986, p. 209).

Deszcz notes that the genre is aligned “with patriarchal cultural practices in Western societies” and that they help to “sustain gendered

perspectives" (Deszcz , 2004, p. 27). So, how did the fairy tale, which has traditionally been associated with women (Warner, 1995, p. 23), become a tool of oppression and subjugation?

One of the leading proponents of literary fairytales was Charles Perrault. Operating in the salons of France in the mid-late seventeenth century – though by no means the only ‘recorder’ of tales; female authors vastly outnumbered the males working in the genre (Windling, 1997, p. 2) – it is his versions of fairytales that have survived and dominated the Western fairytale tradition. His contemporary female authors, such as Marie-Jeanne L’Heritier, Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy, Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve, and Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, all of whom championed the cause of independence for women in their written works, are largely forgotten (Warner, 1991, p. 22). Perrault, who also claimed to be supportive of women’s rights (at least for women of his own class, although neither he nor his female contemporaries were interested in a universal female suffrage), nevertheless managed to infuse his tales with patriarchal notions of how girls *should* behave.

Although Perrault claimed to be “a mere conduit of past wisdom” (Warner, 1990, p. 4), not creating stories but simply taking the tales from a “pristine source” (Warner, 1990, p. 4), (nurses, gouvernantes, grandmothers, random old female gossips), he did not leave the tales *virgo intacto*. He changed them, transformed them to suit his own purposes. Warner notes that

he “set aside aspects which struck him as crude” (Warner, 1995, 181) and Zipes, in relation to Perrault’s version of *Little Red Riding Hood*, points out that the author’s “[own] fear of women and his own sexual drives are incorporated into his *new* literary version, which also reflects general male attitudes about women portrayed as eager to be seduced or raped” (Zipes, 1986, p. 229).

Perrault’s tales became moralising stories, warning women and children that if they did not conform there would be consequences. His enduring popularity (Zipes, 1986, p. 227), at the expense of equally well-written and amusing tales by his contemporary female authors, suggests that the patriarchy found his versions useful, handy tools in the battle to keep women in their place.

The story of *Little Red Riding Hood* provides an excellent practical demonstration of the colonisation process to which fairytales were subjected by the pens of Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. Its reclamation by Angela Carter will be discussed in a later chapter. Traditional versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* were oral tales about a young girl’s initiation into womanhood (Zipes, 1986, p. 227). In the oral tales (often known as *The Path of Needles or Pins*) the heroine must choose one of two paths when she meets the wolf (or ‘bzou’) in the woods. There is no exact explanation of the difference between the Path of Needles and the Path of Pins, however, Yvonne Verdier, who studied manifold variations of the Little Red Riding Hood tale in France for

many years, believed the two paths were symbolic of two periods of growth in a young girl's life. When a girl was sent off to be apprenticed to a seamstress, this was the path of pins (learning a 'trade' as part of growing up (Windling, 2004, p. 3)), and is regarded by Verdier as the path of maidenhood, the path of change from child to young woman. The path of needles is the next stage and implies sexual maturity (Verdier cited in Windling, 2004, p. 4), the needle being emblematic of sexual penetration. Windling suggests that girls who choose the path of needles before the path of pins are trying to "grow up too soon" (Windling, 2004, p. 4).

Zipes refers to the original tales as having a "narrative perspective ... sympathetic to a young peasant girl ... who learns to cope with the world around her" (Zipes, 1986, p.229). The girl meets the wolf on the way to Granny's house, and discloses where she's going (but makes no wager). The wolf kills and eats Granny, takes her place in bed, and induces the girl to eat and drink Granny's flesh and blood, before climbing into bed with him. Recognising her danger, and with no one else to turn to, the girl uses her wits to save herself. Before she can be devoured, she claims she needs to 'go'; the wolf ties a rope to her leg, but when she gets outside she ties it to a plum tree and runs home safely.

The heroine in the oral tale eats her grandmother's flesh and drinks her blood. Gruesome though it is, this can also be seen as a metaphor for the revolution of the life-cycle. The young replace the old, the girl is coming into

the fullness of her womanhood, she is all “power in potentia” (Carter, 1995, p. 97); the grandmother is at the end of the cycle, she is no longer fertile, no longer desired, no longer agile and active. The mother still has a role to fulfil in the general scheme of things; for the moment she is safe – until her own granddaughter is ready to replace her.

Although the young girl has a traumatic experience (an education in the dangers of life), she has saved herself with no help from either a prince, woodsman, or any other male figure. Under the pens of Perrault and the Grimms, however, the tale becomes one of a girl’s rape and murder, for which she herself is blamed (Zipes, 1986, p. 227).

Perrault introduces into the literary tale the red cap/hood and the element of a wager between the wolf and Little Red Riding Hood. He also implies that she is somehow careless in taking her time to get to Granny’s house – that she is complicit in Granny’s death because she wants to lose the bet (Zipes, 1986, p. 229), and thus invites the wolf’s sexual advances (Johnson, 2003, p. 329). When she arrives at Granny’s house she is raped and eaten. Perrault even goes so far as to lay the blame very squarely on her shoulders (just in case anyone should miss the point):

From this story one learns that children,
Especially young lasses,
Pretty, courteous and well-bred,
Do very wrong to listen to strangers,

And it is not an unheard thing

If the Wolf is thereby provided with his dinner.

(cited in Zipes, 1986, p. 242)

Johnson has noted that Perrault's version of the tale reflects not only his assumption about gendered behaviour but also that of the society in which he lived – even in terms of how rape was regarded by the jurisprudence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Johnson argues that “Men are represented as naturally aggressive, and their ravishing of women is often eroticized” (Johnson, 2003, p. 326). In a society where sexual violence is viewed as ‘desire’, women were often blamed for inciting male sexual aggression by being objects of desire (*ibid*). Perrault's central message is that she was ‘asking for it’ and got what she deserved.

Warner notes Perrault's fusing of Granny with the wolf – the “crucial collapse of roles” (Warner, 1995, pp. 181-2) may show that he was associating Granny, as solitary old woman of the forest (the traditional place for witches, those with occult knowledge and therefore suspect) with the wolf, also a creature of the forest, natural, uncontrollable and an object of fear (*ibid*). Perrault implies, consciously or otherwise, that those who associate with nature and the uncivilised get what they deserve.

A century or so later, the Brothers Grimm gave the story a happy ending and removed the sexual bawdiness and overt violence. Little Red

Riding Hood is shown as a silly little girl who gets herself and her Granny into trouble by disobeying her mother, dawdling, and talking to hairy strangers. The wolf once again wins the race to Granny's house, where he eats the old woman and then her foolish granddaughter. Luckily, there is a woodsman, a representative of the patriarchy, to get them out of trouble. In this version, Little Red Riding Hood's warning from her mother is more explicit than in Perrault. Though she still ignores it, she and Granny are rescued nonetheless (Zipes, 1986, p. 230). Zipes interprets the message as "Only a strong male figure can rescue a girl from herself and her lustful desires" (Zipes, 1986, p. 230). Little Red Riding Hood who, in the oral tradition, was a brave, resourceful little girl, is no longer able to get herself out of trouble; the only virtues allowed her are passivity and dependency, and the hope that a big strong man will always be around to rescue her.



(ii) A Woman's Place in Fairytales

Fairytales, those most widely disseminated by contemporary children's fairytale collections and read at bedtime, show a picture of how good little girls should be. Fairytale heroines are, we are told, beautiful, silent and submissive. Good girls are rewarded with marriage, the bad girls (those who talk back, think independently and do not wait for the prince), are punished. Each facet of this image requires examination.

Lieberman notes the primacy of beauty in fairytales – children are taught that the beautiful girls are the best, the sweetest, the most interesting, the ones who will be rewarded (Lieberman, 1986, p. 188). The homely are in serious trouble: a good personality is no kind of saving grace for a girl. Boys can be as ordinary as can be and someone will always want to marry them¹. The upshot of being beautiful is the assumption that you *will* be chosen. As Lieberman observes “The beautiful girl does not have to *do* anything to merit being chosen; she does not have to show pluck, resourcefulness, or wit; she is chosen because she is beautiful” (Lieberman, 1986, p. 188).

With beauty comes passivity – Gilbert and Gubar make the wonderful observation that Snow White, as she lies in her glass coffin, for all purposes lifeless, has become “the chaste maiden in her passivity, they have made her precisely into the eternally beautiful, inanimate *objet d'art* patriarchal

¹ For example: *Hans My Hedgehog* (Grimm, n.d., Tale 108), *King Thrushbeard* (Grimm, n.d., Tale 52), *Dummling* (Grimm, 1884, Tale 64).

aesthetics want a girl to be” (Gilbert & Gubar, 1986, p. 204). In addition, judgments about activity are sex-linked – passivity is for girls, activity is for boys (Lieberman, 1986, p. 197) – and activity in females is frowned upon except in exceptional circumstances. The central message for a girl is: be beautiful and passive and someone will choose you.

The very rare ugly, active girl in fairytales has to work much harder: in *Tatterhood* (Ashliman, 2001) the title character is ugly, but resourceful and extremely brave and active, protecting and rescuing her passive, victimised (but beautiful) sister. Tatterhood acts as a male substitute – perhaps the message is that only by assuming the virtues of a male can she succeed in protecting the princess. Ultimately, she is rewarded with both beauty and a princely husband. It is one of the rare occasions when female usurpation of male power is acceptable – perhaps because, in the end, she reverts to being a ‘good’ wife, and resumes her proper place (now that she is sufficiently beautiful).

In *The Green Serpent* (Zipes, 1992, p.91-113) the main character, Laidronette, is also born ugly and is judged by her looks, not her sweet nature. When she displays an unseemly/unmaidenly curiosity instead of blindly obeying her husband, she is punished. In the end, she is rewarded with beauty and a handsome prince, once she has learned obedience.

On the whole, however, women in fairytales who are ugly are old, witches, ogresses, power-hungry, unnatural, unwomanly, active, wicked,

non-conforming, demanding, questioning and disobedient – in short, pushy. They are the wicked witches and evil stepmothers who want more than male society deems their due. These women have or want some kind of power and perhaps it is this which renders them ‘ugly’ in the eyes of the patriarchy. The only real exception to this established dichotomy is the fairy godmother – she is powerful and beautiful – but then, she is not *real* and cannot act as a realistic role model. A real girl cannot hope to become a fairy (Lieberman, 1986, p. 197); all she can aspire to is becoming a beautiful, passive, *chosen* girl who is helped by the semi-divine, imaginary fairy godmother.

Another key virtue for the girl who aspires to be a fairytale princess is, if not complete silence, then at least gentle speech. King Lear lauds his dead Cordelia with “Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman” (cited in Warner, 1995, p. 389). Warner notes that silence may have been a survival mechanism for women – saying nothing meant you offended no one (Warner, 1995, p. 395). However, this very silence played into the hands of the patriarchy – if you did not speak, did not dissent, then you were complicit in your own oppression. Regarding silence as a virtue to which women should aspire also meant a disinclination to dissent for fear of being thought ‘unwomanly’.

Ruth Bottigheimer conducted a quantitative survey on the speech patterns of women in the fairytales of the Brothers Grimm (Blackwell, 1986, p.164). The tales collected by the brothers came directly from the oral

tradition, from a variety of women whom they met on their travels around Germany (indeed, Wilhelm married one of his sources: Dortchen Wild). The Grimms' fairytale collections went through many editions between the early 1800s and 1856, and across these editions significant changes were made: 'good' girls speak less and less from edition to edition; silence as a task for men lasts up to three days, for women it is often seven years; the female's voice is frequently taken away from her, whereas the male willingly stops speaking to achieve a goal; girls speak when spoken to and generally do not ask questions unless invited; and, perhaps most tellingly, those who speak most are witches (bad women who do not conform) and boys (in whom activity and curiosity are lauded) (Blackwell, 2001, p. 164). The editing of female speech in fairytales by male authors/transcribers shows in a very real way how tales have been used as a means of training women how to behave in a socially (i.e. patriarchally) acceptable fashion.

In Germany, at least, Blackwell observes that the phenomenon of young mothers reading to their children from the new books of 'sanctioned' Grimms' tales replaced the oral tradition of tale telling in the evening. Old women – nurses and grandmothers – were suspect as tellers of tales; they were the kind of old wives who would change the tales, who would improvise, and who would not conform (Blackwell, 2001, p. 165). The mutability of old women's tales was due at least in part to the fact that many of them were illiterate, so the oral tradition was the only one open to them.

The power of the literary tale for the patriarchy lay in its static nature – the pattern did not change, the end did not change, girls stayed girls and boys, boys. If female tellers changed the stories, they were behaving independently and subverting the patriarchy (Blackwell, 2001, p. 165).

Blackwell makes the assessment that “authority is removed from the oral female voice to the male editor/author, but returned to her in a sanitized form, when she is the properly behaving dispenser of his tale” (Blackwell, 2001, p.165). The story ‘teller’ was no longer the old wife² but the nurturing figure of the mother. The voice of the mother was used to enforce ideas of sanctioned behaviour – girls are quiet, pretty, submissive and there to be rescued. The power of maternal voices enforced the edicts of the ruling order, and with the hand that rocked the cradle co-opted by the other side, mothers as models of, and conduits for, female behaviour were now complicit in the subjugation of their own daughters (Rowe, 1986, p. 214). Women told their children through the medium of static bedtime stories: I have no value beyond beauty, silence and fertility. My daughter, you are like me. My son, you are not like me, you are special!

Fairytales also teach girls about reward and punishment – those who conform are rewarded, those who do not are punished, ridiculed and subjugated, or worse, killed. The ultimate reward for good girls in fairytales is marriage: if a girl is beautiful, passive, submissive, silent, and helpless,

² The nurse, the servant, the *gouvernante*.

then, even if she is poor, she will get her man. Or rather, he will get her.

Marriage for fairytale girls also means a step up the social ladder and access to wealth (Rowe, 1986, p. 217). The chosen girl must cement her position by being fertile and producing heirs – women who do not do so do not live happily ever after.

Fairytales generally end with marriages – Lieberman states that fairytales are “preoccupied with marriage without portraying it; as a real condition, it is nearly always off-stage” (Lieberman, 1986, p. 199). Indeed, in the main the only marriages shown are bad ones, or sad ones, in which the queen suffers a cruel husband (*Bluebeard*) or is about to die (*Snow White*). Marriage in fairytales remains a kind of happily-never-after.

Those girls who refuse marriage are punished for being ‘unnatural’ – the princess in *The Yellow Dwarf* initially refuses all suitors, so her father marries her to a dwarf. She then falls in love with a young man whom the dwarf, in a fit of jealousy, kills. The princess herself dies of a broken heart (Lieberman, 1986, p. 198). Similarly, in *King Thrushbeard*, a proud princess rejects suitor after suitor until her father marries her to a pauper who proceeds to humiliate her at every opportunity, until he finally reveals himself as one of the original scorned suitors who felt it his duty to break her down and make her into a proper wife (Lieberman, 1986, p. 198). Having been humiliated and forced to conform, the implication is that the princess goes on to become a ‘good’ wife.

A further point should be noted, which is the lack in colonised fairytales of collaboration between women to achieve a goal. A study by Mendelson highlights this absence in the Grimms' fairytales. He notes that while men frequently band together in order to gain something (treasure, etc), women tend to be denied this option (Mendelson, 1997, p. 111).

While there are often one-on-one relationships for the heroine with fairy godmothers, faithful servants, the very rare helpful sister, or mother's ghost, on the whole any larger group of women is regarded as suspect – a coven of sorts (Mendelson, 1997, p. 115). Gilbert and Gulbar note that “female bonding is extraordinarily difficult in patriarchy; women almost invariably turn against women” (Gilbert and Gulbar, 1986, p. 203). Thus there is a distinct lack of women collaborating in groups to achieve a goal in fairytales. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is the fear men have of women in groups – “[female] collaboration is tantamount to corruption, devoutly to be feared as an agent of destruction rather than praised as a means of support and empowerment” (Mendelson, 1997, p. 118). Women in groups are viewed as a kind of fifth column, plotting to subvert the status quo.

Since the prize for a female is always a prince, always marriage – but there is a limited pool of wealthy, eligible princes – the competition for male attention and protection is set up in fairytales: “marriage is the only estate toward which women should aspire” (Rowe, 1986, p. 211). This is enough to cause a schism between women vying for the same prize. Safety and status

lie within the bounds of marriage. Not only that, marriage is upheld by society as the desired state of being, the much-lauded conformity for which women must strive. Within marriage lie sanctioned sexual relations, children (proof of a woman's fertility), and the protection of a male (Rowe, 1986, pp. 220-1).

Colonised fairytales have created an image to which girls, from the cradle, are taught to aspire. The ideal is to be beautiful, passive and silent. The prize is being chosen by the prince. Stepping outside the bounds of the sanctioned image will garner punishment for 'unnatural' women. These parameters not only help to form women's personalities, ideas and expectations, but also set limits as to what the patriarchy thinks women should (a) desire and (b) be able to achieve.



Part Two – Feminism and Fairytales: Reclamation or Simple Inversion?

(i) Angela Carter

She is an unbroken egg; she is a sealed vessel; she has inside her a magic space the entrance to which is shut tight with a plug of membrane; she is a closed system; she does not know how to shiver. She has her knife and she is afraid of nothing.

(Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 1995, p. 114)

Carter's seminal work, *The Bloody Chamber*, has been variously lauded, applauded and denigrated, by both feminists and traditionalists alike. It has been criticised for depicting woman as too sexual or sexual in the wrong way

(enjoying aspects of both sadism and masochism). There is, however, no question that the work was ground-breaking in a time when fairytales were still telling little girls to be pretty, good little princesses, patiently waiting for the prince to turn up. It is visceral, confrontational, highly sexual and beautifully written, and presents a new vision of what fairytales could be. Warner refers to the collection as “Carter’s answer to Perrault’s vision of better things” (Warner, 1995, p. 308).

The tales in *The Bloody Chamber* are reclaimed from the patriarchy and stretched out of their sanctioned shape – Carter has firmly placed herself on the side of the ‘old wives’ under whose hands tales were mutable and malleable. Warner says that Carter “deliberately [draws the tales] out of the separate space of ‘children’s stories’ or ‘folk art’ and into the world of change” (Warner, 1995, p. 308).

The positives of Carter’s reclamation work to be considered here are: the restoration of female agency; the heroine as intelligent/active/brave; and the heroine as a sexually active desiring object – in direct contrast to the ‘approved’ condition of literary fairytale heroines as passive, dependent and self-sacrificing.

The quote at the beginning of this section, from the tale *In the Company of Wolves*, is possibly the best summary of the strengths of Carter’s heroine: she is brave and independent (“a closed system”), she has the power of an intact virgin, she is fearless and ready to protect herself – no waiting around

for the woodsman for this girl. She can and will look after herself. She is confident and when she meets the wolf/woodsman on the path to Granny's house she is in no way intimidated. In fact, she decides "she's never seen such a fine fellow before, not among the rustic clowns of her native village" (Carter, 1995, p. 114); she will not settle for any old village boy.

They make a wager with a kiss the prize, and she happily dawdles so he may reach Granny's house first. When she arrives, Granny is a rattling bundle of bones wrapped in a napkin under the bed, and the wolf makes no real attempt to pretend to be the grandmother. Their exchange follows the traditional pattern. She undresses quite willingly, combs out her hair and stands "up on tiptoe and unbutton[s] the collar of his shirt." (Carter, 1995, p. 118). Upon hearing "All the better to eat you with" she laughs; "she knew she was nobody's meat. She laughed at him full in the face, she ripped off his shirt for him and flung it into the fire, in the fiery wake of her own discarded clothing" (Carter, 1995, p. 118). There is no fear of sex, or of male desire, or even a hint of *pudeur* about her desires.

The tale ends "See! sweet and sound she sleeps in Granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf" (Carter, 1995, p. 118). Carter's heroine has sex outside the bounds of the approved space of marriage, she *chooses* it for herself (it is not imposed upon her as a marriage duty or as an act of rape); she acts without deference to anyone, and with no thought for society's

sanctions. And there are no consequences for her actions, no societally enforced punishment for being a 'loose' woman.

Importantly, when she does break her "unbroken membrane", she does not become a broken or ruined 'thing'. Her virginity is not an asset, the removal of which devalues her. She retains the core of who she is; sex has merely added to her experience, not soiled her in any way – she has not 'lessened'.

Sex, desire, and independent female action, hinted at in the oral tradition, primly covered and clothed by the patriarchy, are all on glorious, rapturous, almost pornographic display in Carter's works. There is no room, for a while at least, for the 'good' girl in the revisionist fairytale.

In *The Tiger's Bride*, the heroine, raised on tales of what happened to girls who were not "good little girls" (Carter, 1995, p. 56), and who has been used as a pawn (indeed, a gambling chip) by her father, learns to be active rather than passive. While she agrees to be the price for her father's survival (in this version of *Beauty and the Beast*), she learns more about herself in the process, in particular that she refuses to be a 'good little girl'.

"I let out a raucous guffaw; no young lady laughs like that! My old nurse used to remonstrate. But I did" (Carter, 1995, p. 56). Through the story she grows into something not shaped by societal or patriarchal expectations. She is given a twin, an automaton who can be viewed as a reflection of what a good girl should be: passive, silent, obedient, dependent. This is the mirror

the heroine rejects. At the end of the tale, she dresses this twin up in her own clothes and sends it home to her father – the doll will provide him with the ‘good girl’ he feels his daughter should be.

The tiger in this tale wishes her to show off her skin, “a young lady’s skin that no man has seen before” (Carter, 1995, p. 61); after she does she notes that “I felt I was at liberty for the first time in my life” (Carter, 1995, p. 64). She then goes further, not merely showing off her skin but defying the “nursery fears made flesh and sinew; earliest and most archaic of fears, fears of devourment” (Carter, 1995, p. 67), and realises that the tiger (rather like the wolf) “was far more frightened of me than I was of him” (Carter, 1995, p. 64). When he does not smell fear on her, he licks away her skin, “skin after successive skin of a life in the world” (Carter, 1995, p. 64). She becomes an un-encultured self without fear of societal sanctions; in doing so she becomes more like the tiger: a natural being, unfettered by concerns of how she ‘should’ be as a fairytale heroine.

The heroine of *The Erl-King* loves the male protagonist (who is essentially an incarnation of the ‘bad boy’), but she will not be owned by him, nor made into a possession – “I had no wish to join the whistling congregation he kept in his cages, although he looked after them very affectionately” and notes that “in his innocence he never knew he might be the death of me, although I knew from the first moment I saw him how Erl-King would do me grievous harm” (Carter, 1995, p. 90). She knows that

becoming a possession will kill her spirit and, ultimately, her body. Even though he has no intention of harming her, forcing her into the shape of a good girl, a good wife, will kill her. In making her choice, she refuses to be self-sacrificing and decides that her life is worth as much, if not more, than his, and takes the ultimate step to save herself: "I shall take two huge handfuls of his rustling hair as he lies half dreaming, half waking, and wind them into ropes, very softly, so he will not wake up, and, softly, with hands as gentle as rain, I shall strangle him with them" (Carter, 1995, p. 91).

These girls have chosen to be other than 'good' girls. They have taken agency for themselves, they think and act independently, sex is not taboo for them and they choose their own partners rather than have a husband chosen for or imposed upon them. Carter's heroines in these instances are true heroines of reclamation.



Not all the tales in *The Bloody Chamber* maintain the positive traits of reclamation. In some of the tales, Carter has fallen into the traps that made the colonised tales such a problem. There is a serious lack of female collaboration and community: Carter's heroines stand alone. In making her heroines so very independent, male agency is often completely removed and a simple inversion is created. There is a maintenance, however, of the

primacy of men/male protection as 'the prize' for fairytale heroines (a remaining hallmark of dependency on the male).

The lack of female collaboration is on grotesque display in the shortest tale in the collection. A mere one page long, *The Snow Child*, is a story of intense female competition for male attention and protection. A Count and his wife go riding, the Count making his wish (à la Snow White's mother) for a girl (note: not a daughter), who's white as snow, red as blood and black as a bird's wing and his wished-for girl appears – "white skin, red mouth, black hair and stark naked; she was the child of his desire and the Countess hated her" (Carter, 1995, p. 92). All the Countess' possessions desert her for the girl – she is somehow dispossessed of her gloves, furs, jewellery and boots – and she plots ways to get rid of the child, on whom the Count is doting. All his love and will to protect have been transferred to the younger woman and the Countess fears being replaced, losing her position to youth. As the story is set in winter, a season when nothing grows, and the Count has to actively wish for a child, it is implied that the Countess is barren. The Countess' actions imply that she likes it that way. It should be noted that the Snow Child may stand not only in the place of the female rival, but also of a stepchild. Stepchildren, per Warner (Warner, 1991), could be not only economic burdens to second wives, but also competition for financial security, attention, and in the case where a stepmother had children of her own, a threat to her own children's inheritance.

The girl seems set to take the Countess' place until the thorn of a rose accomplishes what the Countess' overt hostility cannot: killing the girl. After a necrophiliac interlude during which the Count satisfies his unnatural desire for the girl, he returns to his wife – she seems to accept his straying (and his perversity), and is prepared to forgive him as long as her position as his wife remains unchanged (i.e. she has the sanction of marriage and his protection, and is unthreatened by any other female, whether daughter or mistress – both roles the Snow Child occupied). The Count hands her the rose that killed the Snow Child, and the rose, although a symbol of love, bears thorns: “‘It bites!’ she said” (Carter, 1995, p. 92). The Countess is pierced by her acceptance of his offering – while he has given back her position, and she has accepted, the implication is that she holds her place ‘only until the next time’. Sleeping Beauty, when pricked by a spindle, goes to sleep; the Countess, in her acquiescence to her husband's terms, is in many ways guilty of emotionally ‘sleeping’ in her marriage.

There is no concept of female community in this story, merely naked female aggression and jealousy, and fighting for a position that only one woman may hold. There is no maternal urge to protect evident in the Countess. There is no hint that perhaps the perfidious Count should be deserted in the cold forest while ‘mother’ and ‘child’ ride off together. There is only competition for the attention and protection of the male.

In the tale that gave the collection its name, *The Bloody Chamber*, a young virgin bride marries Carter's incarnation of Bluebeard. The heroine is innocent and naïve, unable to protect herself from her husband's thirst for revenge. She marries him, not able to recognise the kind of man he is – although her mother, whom she lauds as “My eagle-featured, indomitable mother ... [who had] outfaced a junkful of Chinese pirates, nursed a village through a visitation of the plague, shot a man-eating tiger with her own hand” (Carter, 1995, p. 7), surely should have known his kind. This woman asks her daughter if she is sure she loves him and the girl replies “I'm sure I want to marry him” (Carter, 1995, p. 7) – the implied reason is to escape their poverty. She is marrying for money, position and the perceived protection her husband offers.

The child-bride, corrupted by her husband's sexual tastes and finding herself a willing participant in his 'games', suffers both arousal and shame at the thought of sex; she is in no way the liberated heroine of either *The Company of Wolves* or *The Tiger's Bride*. She, like Psyche, Laidronette, and Pandora, disobeys her 'purchaser', takes the key to the forbidden chamber and opens it, finding his previous brides there, dead at his hand. Unlike the clever bride in the Grimms' *Fitcher's Bird* (Grimm, n.d, Tale 46) (whose symbolic item is an egg rather than a key), she does not keep the key safe and it is stained with blood that she cannot wash off. Her actions, her taking agency, result in her punishment for displaying curiosity, traditionally

viewed as an evil habit in a woman in colonised fairytales. This tale serves as a reflection/reinforcement of those 'morality' tales.

While her husband is away, she falls in love with the blind piano tuner – he is kind, gentle and incapable of defending her. In essence, as a 'hero' he has no agency; he is sweet, decorative, emasculated. He is a 'girl' in love with another girl, the stereotypical girl whose curiosity and disobedience (and quite possibly her secret enjoyment of being 'defiled') are enough to condemn her.

When her husband returns and decides to mete out her punishment, she is saved at the last minute, not by a man (not by her effeminate lover) but by her mother. Although the 'mother-as-rescuer' is certainly an advance for feminism, the ending is flawed by the heroine's sense of shame. With Bluebeard out of the way, our heroine retires to the outskirts of Paris to live with her blind piano tuner. On her forehead is the mark where her husband pressed the stained key to her skin, a mark that has never gone away; she wears it with shame, like a mark of Cain, as a sign of all her sins. She says "I am glad he cannot see it – not for fear of his revulsion, since I know he sees me clearly with his heart – but, because it spares my shame" (Carter, 1995, p. 41). She lives in shame on the outskirts of Paris, in an implied return to poverty; essentially she now lives 'beyond the pale'. This heroine has been punished for taking agency, for enjoying sex, and was unable to save herself by her own action – she is exactly the kind of fairytale heroine of whom

Perrault would have made an example. She is a direct riposte to her mother, who occupies a kind of 'über-mother' space – in fact, her mother is a version of the all-powerful fairy godmother who, as Lieberman has observed, does not really function as a role model (1986, p. 389). Perhaps this is why Bluebeard's wife has no hope of succeeding as a revised fairytale heroine.

In *The Lady of the House of Love*, the heroine is a vampire countess who pines for love. By all rights, she should be a powerful creature but her strength is sapped by her desire not to be as she is: "Everything about this beautiful and ghastly lady is as it should be, queen of the night, queen of terror – except her horrible reluctance for the role" (Carter, 1995, p. 95). Her beauty is a curse, so perfect that it is unreal. When she entertains young men, it is invariably fatal for them – the Countess' desires are unnatural and overwhelming, her appetites voracious. She shares some traits with the powerful, wicked sorceresses of colonised fairytales, but she is set apart from them by her reluctance to embrace her power, to take agency. As a vampire she usurps the male preserve of penetration – she is a sort of reverse coloniser. Even though she does not revel in her power/her unintentional usurpation, she will be punished for it.

The young man who is ultimately her downfall is endowed, not so much with active agency, as with "the special quality of virginity, most and least ambiguous of states: ignorance, yet at the same time, power in potentia, and furthermore unknowingness, which is not the same as ignorance"

(Carter, 1995, p. 97). His power is similar to that of the virgin girl who waits to be rescued, the girl who is passive. He is the simple inversion.

In her way, the Countess Nosferatu is the female mirror of Bluebeard – she is corruption personified. This, in a female, is unacceptable and, in traditional fairytale form, she must be destroyed as any sexually non-conforming female must be. She is destroyed by the young man's purity, by "the unacknowledged pentacle of his virginity" (Carter, 1995, p. 99). He refuses her advances, retains his purity and she, by reason of his refusal, is destroyed; just as male antagonists have been destroyed by the maintenance of female virtue in fairytales for centuries.³

In *Wolf-Alice*, a girl who is raised by wolves and thinks of herself as nothing more than a wolf, is sent to live in the castle of the Duke. The Duke is a necrophage, an exile, and not quite human – "he passed through the mirror and now, henceforward, lives as if upon the other side of things" (Carter, 1995, p. 121). He is no prize as a hero, and, with no reflection, appears to be a kind of vampire/devourer.

Alice, having no knowledge of herself as human, does have a reflection in the mirror and sees there a companion; though she does not recognise this double as herself. Indeed, Alice remains unaware of herself as an individual; instead she continues in her belief in herself as a wolf, and

³ Examples include *The Subtle Princess* (L'Heritier in Warner, 2004, p.65), *The Wild Swans* (Andersen, 1838), even the female saints such as Catherine and Dymphna (see Warner, 1995).

thus as needing to live with her 'pack' – as constituted by the Duke. Because she knows no better, he is acceptable as a mate.

Alice rescues the Duke after he is wounded on one of his nightly excursions to the graveyard, and tends to his wounds. By doing this she 'saves' him – "As she continued her ministrations, this glass, with infinite slowness, yielded to the reflexive strength of its own material construction ... Little by little, there appeared within it, like the image on photographic paper that emerges ... as if brought into being by her soft, moist, gentle tongue, finally, the face of the Duke" (Carter, 1995, p. 126). She is no Wonderland Alice who goes through the looking glass – she brings her mate back from the other side. The love of the female redeems the male but it is questionable what Alice gets out of this. At the end, it seems, the heroine must love and redeem the male, any male, no matter how awful or unworthy he is. As in *King Thrushbeard* (Grimm, n.d., Tale 52), the princess must finally accept the husband she is dealt. The point of the story is not that Wolf-Alice finds herself, but that she (wearing the Duke's mother's wedding dress) finds a mate.

Unfortunately, these revisionist tales retain traces of the colonised tales: women such as Bluebeard's bride and Countess Nosferatu are still punished for taking agency and/or having power; collaboration between women is non-existent – the competition for male protection still exercises too strong a hold on female emotions, and it seems any man will do. Male

agency is removed by a simple inversion – as with Countess Nosferatu's vanquisher. Like the colonised fairytale heroines, he only need be passive and pure to be chosen/have an effect.



(ii) Emma Donoghue

'I had got the story all wrong. How could I not have noticed that she was beautiful?'

(Donoghue, *Kissing the Witch*, 1997, p. 7)

Donoghue's collection, *Kissing the Witch*, contains thirteen re-written, nested fairytales. Each tale begins with the heroine and her journey through the story. By the end of the tale, another character – often the antagonist, be she wicked stepmother, rival, or fairy godmother – is invited to tell or offers her own story; this leads to the next tale. For example, the first tale is a re-working of *Cinderella*;

at the end of the story, the fairy godmother figure is asked how she came to be who she is and she replies with “Will I tell you my own story? It is a tale of a bird” (Donoghue, 1997, p. 9). That tale is a re-working of *Bluebeard* in which she tells her story as an over-protected wife. The collection follows this formula right until the last tale, which breaks the frame (partially by being a new story rather than one based on a traditional fairytale), and sends the stories back to the traditional oral form with the words “This is the story you asked for. I leave it in your mouth” (Donoghue, 1997, p. 228).

Donoghue’s tales are carefully framed and she examines and uses traditional fairytale motifs to question and highlight “the possible links between the best-known tales and the system of gender relations that they reveal” (Harries, 2003, p. 130). Each tale is linked by a ‘who are/were you’ question and the answer takes the form of the next tale – according to Coppola “These refrains retrospectively connect the stories of the protagonists, creating a single story and a single female genealogy” (Coppola, 2001, pp. 8-9). In these tales, the heroines are often redeemed not by the rescuing prince but by the love of another woman (Harries, 2003, p. 130) – this well and truly stretches the tales out of their sanctioned shape and addresses many of the same problems as Carter, using different strategies.

The positives of Donoghue's reclamation work are essentially the same as those considered for Carter: restoration of female agency; the heroine as intelligent/active/brave; and the heroine as sexually active – once again, in direct contrast to the 'approved' condition of fairytale heroines as passive, dependent and self-sacrificing.

In terms of female agency, many of Donoghue's characters suffer low self-esteem – they have either been taught to be self-effacing ("Keep your horizons narrow, your expectations low, and you will never be unduly disappointed", *The Tale of the Bird*, p. 15), began with no self-esteem ("nobody scolded me, nobody punished me but me", *The Tale of the Shoe*, p. 3), or have a lack forced upon them ("The little one's no earthly use not right in the head", *The Tale of the Cottage*, p. 134; "I would be a stain on my husband's line, I knew that without her telling", *The Tale of the Bird*, p. 17). But the lessons of their own lives (and those of the other women they meet), teach them self-reliance and a determination not to let another decide their fate. In *The Tale of the Bird*, the heroine decides to leave her over-protective (but in no way brutal) husband: "I would be hurt and I would be fearful, but I would never be locked up again" (pp. 23-24); in *The Tale of the Handkerchief* the heroine (the former maid who has switched places with the princess in this version of *The Goose Girl* (Grimm, n.d., Tale 89)) states "I thought of how both of us had refused to follow the paths mapped out for us by our

mothers and their mothers before them, but had perversely gone our own ways instead, and I wondered whether this would bring us more or less happiness in the end" (p. 80). The heroine of *The Tale of the Brother* begins with "I have never been content to be nothing but a girl" (p. 103); she bitterly resents being made to stay inside when her brother is allowed to go out whenever he pleases.

One of the most interesting aspects of the restoration of female agency in *Kissing the Witch* is Donoghue's interest in "rehabilitating the witch" (Harries, 2003, p. 130). The witches in these tales are powerful but all too human; they suffer just as the heroines do, and, perhaps most importantly, we are given their stories. In traditional tales, the back-stories of the witches, the wicked stepmothers, the bad fairies, are hidden away – the blank space has led us to believe that these women are simply evil/bad women who refuse to conform, who are greedy and want more than that to which society (patriarchy) deems them entitled. Donoghue fills in the blanks: these women are not simply bad; they have led lives of trial and suffering, so if they have chosen to live 'outside' or have been exiled it is not necessarily as a result of their own faults.

The Beast in *The Tale of the Rose* chose exile because none of the men who sought her hand could see "her true face" (p. 40) and because she "[refused] to do the things queens are supposed to do" (pp. 39-40). The heroine of *The Tale of the Skin* walks away from her handsome prince because he fails to recognise her

under her covering of dirt – he did not “Make me beautiful in [his] beholding” (p. 161) as she had expected/needed him to do; she needed to know that he would see her with his heart and not his eyes.

The narrator of *The Tale of the Kiss* is wise and powerful because she is perceptive enough to recognise that the fear people feel for her as a witch *gives her power over them*. She left her home knowing she was a barren woman, she could not fulfil the role of fertile wife to which colonised tales say women should aspire; she chose exile in a cave on a cliff-top. She thought she would be left alone but “What I found instead was power. I never sought it; it was left out for me to stumble over” (p. 209). She learns to use her power by divining what supplicants want and often they seem to want punishment for their sins: the woman who is a harridan gets a tongue lashing; the man who abused his daughter is told to sell his finest possessions to make amends through providing a dowry for the daughter; the man whose list of sins is so long it takes a night to tell is treated to silence and a glance that sends him leaping over the cliff (pp. 212-213). The last is an interesting use of silence, which is normally a virtue in fairytale females, a task set for them, or a means of staying safe by not drawing attention to oneself. The witch’s power comes “not from my own thin body or my own taut mind, but was invested in me by a village” (p. 213). It is rather like the scene in *The Tale of the Apple*, when Snow White, in refusing to answer her

stepmother, uses the power of silence to expose her stepmother's fear and insecurity (p. 51).

The heroines of Donoghue's tales must battle against the shape into which their parents try to force them; this 'shaping' is generally done not for the sake of cruelty but to save them from the grief of being different: "if I have trodden you under foot it was to wash out the dirt. If I have trampled you, it was to mesh your fibres into something useful" (*The Tale of the Spinster*, p. 120). The parents of the red-haired girl in *The Tale of the Kiss* each want their daughter to conform in a different way (they do not want her 'restlessness' to get in the way of their desires) – the mother wants to know the girl will stay with her in her old age; the father wants her to marry his friend, who has offered half his fishing boats as bride-price. The parents in *The Tale of the Needle* are over-protective and try to prevent their daughter from all manner of pain, be it cat scratches or the sight of the old and infirm. She perceives their efforts as "magicking me into a shape that was not my own" (p. 171). She notes that "The only lesson I had to learn was the list of my virtues" (p. 169).

Donoghue's heroines overcome the obstacles put in front of them through their own intelligence and bravery. Even the heroine of *The Tale of the Cottage*, Donoghue's Gretel, who "once had brother that mother say we were pair of hands one fast one slow" (p. 133), saves her brother when the witch intends to

kill him (after he has tried to rape the witch), and chooses to stay with the witch after Hansel has gone. In the next tale, *The Tale of the Spinster*, Gretel becomes the clever Rumpelstilzkin character who makes a fortune for the self-centred heroine of the tale. She is smart enough to make a deal that sees her gain a position not only as trusted (but not appreciated) helper, but also as foster-mother to the child the heroine does not want.

Another 'virtue' of the heroine of colonised fairytales that Donoghue's girls often refuse is that of self-sacrifice. The heroine of *The Tale of the Bird* plots to escape (and presumably does so) whether her child is with her or not: "I would get away somehow, sometime, with or without this child" (p. 23). A 'good' mother in the Grimms' tales would only leave her child if she was dead but this heroine will have her freedom rather than stay behind to be locked up. The heroine of *The Tale of the Spinster* places more value on being a business woman than on being a mother (she does, in effect, become a version of her own mother, whose obsession with business coloured her dealings with/treatment of her daughter), to the extent that she willingly gives the right to the child to the female Rumpelstilzkin character ("I cut the cord myself I was in such a hurry. He's all yours, I said, trying to laugh", p. 126). The heroine of *The Tale of the Skin* refuses (quite rightly) to sacrifice herself on the altar of her father's mad desire – with the help of the flower-woman she manages to avoid his advances for some

months, until he agrees to her final demand, the slaughter of his favourite pet. As she observes “He could skin me like he has skinned his beloved beast, and who could stop him?” (p. 154).

The sexual activity in *Kissing the Witch* is more subtle than that in *The Bloody Chamber* – it is hinted at rather than described in detail. The other main difference is that the sex is often between women, so not only is it not ‘sanctioned’ by marriage as in colonised fairytales, it is not procreative sex. In engaging in sexual activity which is both outside of marriage and does not lead to children (and thus become proof of the virtue of fertility), Donoghue’s heroines refuse to become commodities. They refuse to be wives and mothers; they refuse to pass from the hand of father to husband; they refuse to be items of exchange; and they refuse to bear children who are conduits for the passage of economic gains – if there are no heirs, then property cannot remain in a family. They refuse, in short, to be part of what Harries refers to as “the gender economy” of fairytales (2003, p. 138). Sex which does not produce children is the ultimate rejection of the colonised fairytale ‘state of grace’.

Nevertheless, sex is there and it is on display, liberated from the bounds of the sanctioned space. Cinderella refuses the prince and says “I had got the story all wrong. How could I not have noticed she was beautiful?” (*The Tale of the Shoe*, p. 7). “I reached out. I could hear surprise on her breath” (p. 7); “Her

finger was spelling on the back of my neck" (p. 8) and the tale ends with "So then she took me home, or I took her home, or we were both somehow taken to the closest thing" (p.8). Love is not confined to the traditional male-female 'happily ever after' of colonised tales. What does this offer a heterosexual reader? At the very least, an example of women who choose not to be commodified; a lesson that the choice for women, heterosexual or lesbian, is not simply to become a wife and mother with all the economic weighting those positions carry; and that in choosing not to accept those roles, you are in no way less worthy, or devalued as a woman.

In *The Tale of the Hair*, Rapunzel is blind and cared for by an older woman. Rapunzel is visited by what she supposes is the prince, with whom she promises to run away (for the price of a gold ring); the next day her keeper reveals that she is in fact the 'prince' with whom Rapunzel has spent her passionate nights (pp. 95-96). In the end, Rapunzel returns to the woman, who has been blinded by thorns, and "we lay there, waiting to see what we would see" (p. 99). In *The Tale of the Brother*, a version of *The Snow Queen*, the Gerda character wails and demands of the Snow Queen "Why him? ... Why him and not me?" In *The Tale of the Rose*, Beauty learns to love another woman and the tales that are told are "of two beauties, and others, of two beasts" (p. 40), which

may be a reference either to the idea of being reconciled to the animal nature inside, or to the idea that queer love is considered unnatural, somehow 'beastly'.

Snow White, in *The Tale of the Apple*, is seduced by her young and equally beautiful stepmother; initially they are antagonists, competing for the father/husband's affection, first position in the castle and the power that goes with it. After the death of the king and Snow White's flight to the cottage, her thoughts are not of her father but of her stepmother: "I was haunted by the image of my stepmother. My father was only a tiny picture in my mind, shut away like miniature in a locket" (p. 53). The stepmother finds her in the forest ("I knew my stepmother would find me. The thread between us was stretched thin ... but never broken", p. 54) and starts to visit her there. These visits are not for the purpose of injuring Snow White but for things that leave her in a stupor, "my breath came so quick and shallow" (p. 55); to ask her to come home (p. 56); and finally to bring her the first new apple from the orchard, as her father had always done – "Stepmother, yes, that was the word, but there was nothing of the mother about her" (p. 57). Snow White does choke on the apple but there is no intent on the stepmother's behalf to do her ill; it is all about accepting that she is in love not with the prince, but with a woman. When Snow White comes to, she returns home to her stepmother and they move on to the next tale.

The witch in *The Tale of the Kiss* (the final tale and the only one with no traditional ancestor), finds herself in love with the red-headed girl and this ruins her sense of self-possession. Prior to meeting the girl, she was “complete” (p. 215). The girl is the one who makes her aware of the lack of love in her life: “You are wise, you are the witch. How can you look at everything and know everything without love?” (p. 221). Finally, the witch realises that she loves the girl – “The girl came back one day. I hadn’t realised it was her I was waiting for” (p. 224). The witch demands a kiss as the price of her services and finds it is a dangerous thing, not only for the kisser but also for the witch, for “What simpler way is there than a kiss to give power a way into your heart?” (p. 226). She needs “that girl like meat needs salt” (p. 227) and decides that she will “give her my heart in a bag and let her do with it what she pleased” (p. 227).

Kissing the Witch offers another model of restoration of female agency and Donoghue’s heroines learn self-reliance and achieve through their own efforts, intelligence and bravery – and they *choose* to achieve this way. As with Carter’s most successful revisions, women are not punished for choosing sexual relations outside marriage or even outside heterosexual sex – sexual choices are liberated from traditional societal fairytale sanctions. Women choose not to become commodities to be exchanged for property or gold or favours – they learn to value themselves beyond the economic framework of colonised fairytales.



Kissing the Witch, for all its hallmarks of reclamation and heroines who refuse to conform, still suffers some of the same failings as *The Bloody Chamber*. While there is a greater sense of female community, the female community that is created is essentially restricted to lesbian heroines – for the most part, these women avoid the ‘ever-after’ traps of the colonised fairytale by refusing to become wives to men, by refusing marriage. This does not offer a ‘middle path’ for heterosexual women readers/fairytale heroines – on the whole, the straight women end up single and only the lesbian heroines end up in good, balanced relationships.

Male agency is somewhat lacking; male characters are very much minor characters in *Kissing the Witch*. In general, they are not bad men, merely either over-protective, ineffectual, or simply incidental: the princes are variously “like an actor on a creaking stage” (p. 6); “my pale fiancé” (p. 73); “this good man [who] had sworn to protect me” (p. 21). In *The Tale of the Spinster*, the heroine will not tell the father of her child about the pregnancy not because of any problem with him, but because of her own pride (p. 125); Sleeping Beauty’s father is merely over-protective, “they’ve tried to stop me teaching any of the

things I know. Now they are trying to prevent you from learning all the things you do not" (p. 178); the man loved by the Little Mermaid character cannot know what she wants because she never asks for anything, "How could I blame him? How could he know what mattered to me?" (p. 201).

Even the bad men are ciphers: the Hansel character in *The Tale of the Cottage* tries (quite predictably) to rape the witch when he grows a beard, and the 'huntman' may not even be the children's father; the king in *The Tale of the Skin*, is simply mad when he wishes to marry his daughter; Bluebeard is ridiculously over-protective. There are no hidden depths to any of them – they are, in effect, the wallpaper that female characters are in colonised fairytales – this is the effect of a simple inversion.

There is still competition for male attention/protection. The conflict between Snow White and her stepmother is due in the main to competition for the king's attention: "There was room for only one queen" (p. 45) and yet "I know now that I would have liked her if we could have met as girls" (p.46). The heroine in *The Tale of the Voice* gives up her voice willingly to become mistress to her handsome boy in the hope of marriage and protection but finds that the price has cost her the ability to ask for what she most wants – "Perhaps we get, not what we deserve, but what we demand" (p. 200). In *The Tale of the Cottage*, the mother gives up her children on the insistence of her husband (who may not

be their father), with little more than a whimper (p. 134); and the witch in this tale is still an angry woman, having been let down by her prince long ago (having failed to win marriage and male protection) – “Once I was a stupid girl; now I am an angry woman” (p. 145). The heroine of *The Tale of the Handkerchief* sees her future in terms of male protection – she swaps places with the real princess and believes she will be safe once she is married and with child (safely entrenched in the colonised fairytale’s ‘ever-after’). The reader learns from the previous tale (*The Tale of the Apple*), that this is her second attempt at gaining male protection – but, once again, her inability to produce an heir ruins her plans – “He [the prince] was all I needed. Perhaps I would even grow to love him in the end, once I was safe ... Once I had the crown settled on my head and a baby or two on my lap, who knew what kind of woman I might turn out to be?” (p. 79).

Finally, in *The Tale of the Kiss*, the witch throws aside her pride and self-containment to follow the red-headed girl. We (and she) do not know if the red-headed girl is interested in the witch in any romantic sense. The witch becomes the inversion, the questing knight seeking the princess. In doing this, she reinforces the stereotype of the pretty girl who will be chosen simply because of her looks – the red-headed girl has done nothing to win the witch. She is in the role of the princess in the tower with whom the knight falls in love as he passes

by, but who knows nothing about her, or her value as a person. The witch is chasing youth and beauty (she has lost her own), which reinforces the idea that if you are pretty you will be chosen for no other reason.

As with Carter, Donoghue's tales also retains the contamination of colonised tales. Male characters are ciphers, they do not really *do* anything – apart from let women down in a passive, fairly unknowing way. Women are still competing for male attention in some of the tales, still showing a tendency to believe that their future lies under the wing of a protective male, and that any woman who stands in the way of this need is in some way competition to be gotten out of the way. The new issue that Donoghue's tales introduce is that collaboration and community are only offered to women who choose a same sex lifestyle; heterosexual women who refuse marriage are still on the outside of the fairytale fence – in fact, in a collection of thirteen tales, only one of the 'hetero-heroines' goes on to a good marriage (*The Tale of the Voice*).



Part Three – New Wine in Old Bottles: A Meditation on Writing

Most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts. I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the bottles explode.

(Carter, "Notes from the Front Line", *On Gender and Writing*, 1983,

p. 69)

My writing is an act of absolute fear.

Perhaps this is why I write of fearful things: first fears, primal fears. Fear of the dark, of things we do not know, of being abandoned, of not being loved, of not being smart/beautiful/brave enough; fear of not knowing the rules.

I grew up thinking there were rules and right answers for everything – I just had to *find* them. I had to find the key to the casket, I had to guess the wicked little man's name, I had to stay silent for the right amount of time, I had to be beautiful in a certain way. If I could do this, if I could know the answers and follow the rules, life would be infinitely easier.

The eventual realisation that my beliefs were incorrect led me to take the only action I could: I wrote, and I rewrote. I write to right things that seem wrong to me. I write to take the sting out of my fears. I write to transform my fears into a new form. That is how I cope: I change, I modify, I rewrite what scares me because it is the only power I have over my fears. I try to overcome my child's fears even now that I am grown.

As a child, I retold stories in my head and fairytales were the first stories I had access to, courtesy of the maternal voice. What I remember are tales at my mother's knee. I remember the delight of hearing her voice, that her voice could make my imagination fly – in many ways my mother was a giver of freedoms. I may never have gone beyond making retellings in my head had it not been for *The Little Match Girl*.

Here is my mother's voice and mine (or an approximation – there would have been more whining and wheedling on my part):

Me: One more story, Mum. Pleeeeeaaaaasse.

My Mother: One last one and that's it! Which one do you want?

Me: The one I do not know yet. That one.

My Mother: The Little Match Girl. *It was so terribly cold; it snowed, and it was almost dark; it was also the last evening of the year – New Year's Eve. In the cold and darkness a poor little girl, with bare head and naked feet, went along the streets ...*

Needless to say it all ended in tears. Here was a little girl, my own age, left on the streets in the cold to die, because no one loved her enough to care. I remember clinging to my mother, even as I blamed her for telling me the story, for making me cry. I suspect she felt the same way about me. What made this tale so hard to hear? Identification. Empathy. The Little Match Girl was who I feared to be.

Here are my first fears: loss, abandonment, being loveless and unloved, needs left unmet, and death. These are my first fears and, coincidentally, they are also my last. Writing is how I cope.

The writing itself, however, holds its own terrors. What if the words will not come? What if I stare at the blank screen and my only friend is the backspace key? Worse, what if there are no words to use the backspace key on? If I cannot write, then I cannot rewrite what scares me and my only defence against things that go bump in the night will be gone. I sit at the keyboard in the hope that the words will come, in faith that the words will come.

The process, when it works, is a *flow*. If I can get that first phrase, the first sentence, everything hangs from those words. The idea can rattle around in my head for days, I may have the entire story in my head but if I do not have those first words then I am mute. In the final draft I may end up not keeping the first words I write – the process of editing may render them unnecessary or unfit for the path the story takes – but they are the spark that starts it all off. I do not know what I'm looking for until it comes to me – an interesting irony for someone whose early concern was *knowing* the rules and right answers.

Alas, inspiration never occurs at the desk – that's where the work part happens. Inspiration occurs on the bus, in the shower, doing the shopping, in the space between sleep and wakefulness, between drunken dreams and a hangover. Then there's the mad scramble for a piece of paper, for a cocktail napkin, a coffee-stained envelope, the tiny moleskin that hides in the bottom of

my handbag, or, on one very desperate and unsuccessful occasion, the steam fogging the mirror in the bathroom.

When I write, when I rewrite my fears, I'm sending them back out into the world refracted. I hold them up to a light and turn things ever so slightly – I suppose I learned at one point that it is all about *how* you look at things in life.

Colonised fairytales offer us, women and men, a particular mode of living and interacting. If you do not fit this mould, then you are doomed; you can only be an ugly stepsister or a wicked stepmother, or one of the princesses who do not win the prince because you do not follow the rules. What do I do with fairytales? When I rewrite them I try to offer a different view, a different mode of being, a path of shared equality, not merely a simple inversion. When I rewrite I hope I'm following Carter's line about old wine in new bottles – and if the new wine makes the old bottle explode, then so much the better for *me* because I've managed to explode my fears.

The fears I suffer are, in all likelihood, a reflection of the fears inculcated by colonised fairytales – loss, abandonment, barrenness, being alone, not being chosen. These fears have been passed on to women via the pedagogic function of fairytales as vehicles to teach us *how to be*. In wanting to unlearn these fears, to unteach them, I rewrite the fairytales that carry those fears, hopefully unravelling the fairytale DNA strand and modifying the particle that carries the

fear gene. Margaret Atwood, in her excellent *Negotiating with the Dead*, links the idea of writing with the journey to the underworld – to going into dark places and, hopefully, bringing illumination as well as something else back out of the darkness: “possibly, then, writing has to do with darkness, and a desire or perhaps a compulsion to enter it, and, with luck, to illuminate it, and to bring something back out to the light” (Atwood, 2005, p. xxii). I like to think of my writing as part of this illumination process: helping to strip fearful things of their power and enabling women to re-learn lessons about life and living without the fear passed on in the messages of traditional fairytales.

Black-Winged Angels, my creative work, is divided into three sections: Maiden, Mother, Crone. I’ve chosen to discuss the writing of one story from each section to illustrate how I’ve refracted traditional tales to manage my fears, and the fears inherent in the original tales.

The opening tale in “Maiden” is, appropriately enough, *The Little Match Girl*. The fear inspired by Anderson’s version is that of abandonment, of helplessness, of being left to a fate not of one’s own choosing. When I rewrote the story, I turned it ever so slightly on its axis: my Little Match Girl remained someone stripped of any helpers or carers, of people who loved her and protected her; she remained a woman who was abandoned and, had the tale run its original course, she would have remained a victim of a fate not of her own

choosing. Her fate in my version is not ideal, certainly, but the important point for me when I refracted this tale was that she take agency, make a choice about how she would live or die. She chose not to live under someone else's rules, and she chose not to let the Judge be the one to destroy her: she chose her own end. This was crucial for me because my own fear is being a victim of the whims of others, of having no control. My Little Match Girl chose an end that I would have chosen: fate on my own terms. I also liked the image of choosing fire as her end – fire is a means of phoenix-like transformation, of becoming other than you are, of escape from the fate you are *told* you will have. My version of this tale continues the positive work done by both Carter and Donoghue in the area of female agency, of brave, intelligent heroines, rather than passive creatures hurled about at the whim of villains and heroes.

In the "Mother" section, *The Juniper Tree* echoes the themes of Marina Warner's article *The Absent Mother* (1991), in which she traces the development of the idea of the wicked stepmother back to the phenomenon of women dying in childbirth. The main cause of female mortality during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was childbirth, and children who survived birth often found themselves without a mother. The production of children was inextricably linked with economics – they continued a family's legacy, inherited great estates, kept the family name going, and cared for aged parents. Widowers seldom

remained single and quickly brought new wives into their homes. These women bore children of their own and sometimes (although less frequently) brought children from previous marriages with them. A woman's security lay in her ability to produce her own children – another woman's offspring were viewed as threats to a stepmother's future and to her own children's chances of inheritance. From this socio-economic situation has sprung the depiction of stepmothers in fairytales as voracious, greedy, vituperative harpies who will do their stepchildren harm as soon as look at them (Warner, 1991).

The Grimm's *The Juniper Tree* (Grimm, n.d., Tale 47) deals with the plight of a little boy in just such a situation. It involves the fear of not being loved, of being helpless against an adult who should be a caregiver (and of having a father who does not notice the danger he has brought into the house). When I began to write my version, I thought I was writing about these themes, too – but as the work progressed I realised that although I was dealing on one level with those issues, I was also examining more closely the stepmother's own fears. Second Wife found herself in a position where her child was not fully accepted. By extension, nor was she: she felt insecure in her new household. Historically, security was the key to survival and a woman had to fight to ensure the safety of her own. The idea of a universal female love for all children is entirely misplaced – the family home was the location of a turf war.

The child, Simah, is essentially a cipher in my version of the tale, a dispossessed, helpless child. I had become more concerned with the plight of Second Wife. Her jealousy and fear drive her to an unconscionable act – and that jealousy and fear derive from the precarious position her place in society affords her. I was also concerned that even though she had done this awful thing, she should be redeemed in some way (redeemed in a humanist, not a Christian, sense); that she regretted her action and recognised it as wrong. In giving birth to Simah's second incarnation, Second Wife becomes the mother she could/should have been when she first came to live in the house – this is her redemption. In writing this story, I recognised that another of my fears is irredeemable, unforgivable actions; the things you do or say that you cannot take back or repair or, indeed, repent – the actions that cause fractures that cannot be sealed. I think in *The Juniper Tree* I retold the story to reassure myself that even the worst action has the possibility of redemption. I think in this way the punishment of female agency inherent in some of Carter's tales is modified. While the tale acknowledges the history of the story – and the blood debt Second Wife owes – it also offers change and growth in the tale, and a message that there can be redemption, not simply punishment, for women who step outside the sanctioned space of colonised tales.

There is also a hint at a shift in the traditional need for male protection at the expense of female collaboration. Although *Second Wife* is very traditional in her need for, and active defence of her right to, male protection, the relationship between Simah and Marlechina shows, I hope, a possibility for female collaboration. Even though they are stepsisters, they have a bond and can rely on each other; Marlechina didn't treat her stepsister as something less than she herself was even though they didn't share a blood bond, and indeed, she does try to protect Simah from *Second Wife*.

For "Crone", I chose as my final story the tale of Vasilissa the Fair (Heiner, 2005), renaming it *The Bone Mother* (one of the traditional names for Baba Yaga). I wanted to show the figure of Baba Yaga in a different light. In Russian literature she is invariably shown as a malign figure, as fearful old age, someone who is hurtful and frightening purely because of her malicious nature. She is depicted as a bitter old woman, beyond any usefulness as a life-giver, who has chosen to become a death-bringer. I wanted to rehabilitate her and re-value her.

I had been thinking a lot about my sole remaining grandmother, and how, after a certain age, women are often thrown aside as dried-up old husks with no further use. My grandmother has been, and continues to be, much loved and appreciated by her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren – her

position as our wise woman and matriarch is assured. In contrast, I watched unloved old women shuffle along the street and was torn by the difference. It made me wonder about whether or not we, as women, accept the roles imposed on us: do we choose to be crones, do we think of ourselves as wasted, useless vessels when we can no longer bear children, or do some of us choose another path, another incarnation?

I wanted my Baba Yaga to be more than a husk; she must be wise, strong, determined, she must stand outside what society thinks of her, she must stand alone proudly. I also wanted her to be tall and unbowed, for her face to be the map of her life that Vasilissa contemplates. I wanted Baba Yaga to be the antithesis of what I find terrifying: the discarding of old women because they are deemed to have no further use, and, worse, older women accepting this judgment, even colluding in it. When she despaired, I needed her daughter (Shura) and granddaughter (Vasilissa) to save her by loving her for her own sake, for acknowledging her value, her wisdom and her strength.

I also especially like this story as the final tale of the collection because it gathers the three phases of a woman's life together and examines them side by side. Another important aspect of rewriting my fears is showing that the cycle continues; that no one is useless. When you step aside for death another will fill your shoes. You will be followed by those you leave behind.

I particularly wanted to use this story to rehabilitate the lack of female collaboration that Carter and Donoghue often allow to infect their versions. With *The Bone Mother* I wanted to create an atmosphere of female cooperation and support, one which replaces the idea of 'necessary' male protection (and competition for it), with a support structure that is based on a caring, familial love, rather than economic necessity. Shura has lived by the ideal of having male protection, and her successor, Ludmilla, is cut from a similar cloth; Baba Yaga, however, lives outside this domestic economy, as does Vasilissa – the hope in the tale is that, as she grows, Vasilissa will choose her grandmother's way of living, not her mother's.

When I started this project my aim was to (a) write good stories, and (b) offer a path of shared agency to female and male characters, rather than offering a simple inversion. I have criticised Carter and Donoghue for failing to avoid a simple inversion in their revised fairytales, which begs the question: have I succeeded where they did not?

Carter's and Donoghue's male characters are generally ciphers or male wallpaper. Carter's are either outright comic-book evil (Bluebeard), or ineffectual submissive men (the piano tuner). In Donoghue's work, the dominance of female agency extends so far that it sometimes completely eradicates any hint of male agency – the only worthy partner for a fairytale

heroine is another woman. So, in theory, being aware of this problem should have meant that I was able to avoid it – but did I?

The answer must be, depressingly enough, “no”.

I *wanted* to give my characters paths of shared agency; I wanted neither women nor men in my tales to dominate, for neither to be smarter than the other; I wanted genuine partnerships for my heroines and the men they loved. Unfortunately, the tension between the politics of the story (what you *think* you should be saying), and the needs of the narrative (what the *story* needs you to say), makes it very difficult to strike a balance.

In *The Little Match Girl* all the male characters are either weak or malign – but they needed to be for the story to work. A ‘good’ man would have taken much of the power out of the story. In *Light as Mist, Heavy as Hope*, the king who marries Alice is, in the end, a good man, but he’s not someone she feels she can turn to in her need (perhaps because she fears his judgment or because the men she’s encountered in her life have been flawed and of no help to her). In *Pressina’s Daughters* Melusine’s husband, Raimond, is sweet and a bit dim, but his pride and inability to have faith in his wife lead him to betray her with terrible consequences; Melior is so at a loss for a good man that she changes into a bird so she can have the faithful sparrowhawk as her mate. In *The Juniper Tree* the miller’s weakness leads to his wife’s death and his daughter’s maiming. Kai

in *The Danger of Warmth* is, like Raimond, sweet but a bit dim, definitely not an equal for the powerful (but lovelorn) Snow Queen. Davide in *The Lives of Saints* is both dangerous and weak, failing his mistress and her daughter and leaving them to his own mother's terrible designs. In *The Bone Mother* the only man in evidence is the woodsman whose mother dies and who seeks to murder Baba Yaga and Vasilissa to assuage his grief.

The tension between the critical and the creative impulses is immense: how to make a story a 'good read' and transmit a message without being didactic? In this context (i.e. revising fairytales), perhaps in order to unlearn the lessons transmitted by colonised fairytales, revised fairytale heroines *must* be dominant. And in writing these stories, if the message I was trying to embed in the text overwhelmed the primacy of the aesthetic, then the message, I must confess, was what suffered, either watered down or cut altogether. The creative impulse won and, I suspect, will continue to do so.

In rewriting/refracting/modifying traditional fairytales, I recognise that I'm working in a tradition that has belonged to women storytellers, from the grannies in the forests, to the old women in the nurseries, from the *conteuses* of the French salons, to Angela Carter and Emma Donoghue. I will always write to manage my fears; perhaps that's what women have been doing for a very long time. I have tried to take my tales outside the frame of the colonised fairytale. In

doing so I hope I have recognised and reflected the communal nature of the fairytale, and of authorship, over time and in different contexts, and that as a result I can lay claim to the traditional story ending of the old wives: “This is my story, I’ve told it, and in your hands I leave it” (Warner, 1995, p. xxv).



Appendix A – Tales and Concordance for Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber*

New Tale	Traditional Tale
The Bloody Chamber	Bluebeard
The Courtship of Mr Lyon	Beauty and the Beast
The Tiger’s Bride	Beauty and the Beast
Puss-in-Boots	Puss-in-Boots
The Erl-King	The Erl-King
The Snow Child	Snow White
The Lady of the House of Love	---
The Werewolf	Little Red Riding Hood
The Company of Wolves	Little Red Riding Hood
Wolf-Alice	Little Red Riding Hood

Appendix B – Tales and Concordance for Emma Donoghue’s *Kissing the Witch*

New Tale	Traditional Tale
The Tale of the Shoe	Cinderella
The Tale of the Bird	Bluebeard
The Tale of the Rose	Beauty and the Beast
The Tale of the Apple	Snow White
The Tale of the Handkerchief	The Goose Girl
The Tale of the Hair	Rapunzel
The Tale of the Brother	The Snow Queen
The Tale of the Spinster	Rumplestilzkin
The Tale of the Cottage	Hansel and Gretel
The Tale of the Skin	Donkeyskin
The Tale of the Needle	Sleeping Beauty
The Tale of the Voice	The Little Mermaid
The Tale of the Kiss	---

Appendix C – Tales and Concordance Angela Slatter’s *Black-Winged Angels*

New Tale	Traditional Tale
The Little Match Girl	The Little Match Girl
Red Yarn	Little Red Riding Hood
The Girl with No Hands	The Armless Maiden
Light as Mist, Heavy as Hope	Rumplestilzkin
Pressina’s Daughters	Le Roman de Melusine
The Juniper Tree	The Juniper Tree
The Danger of Warmth	The Snow Queen
The Lives of Saints	Bluebeard
The Bone Mother	Vasilissa the Fair

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