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Mothers and Daughters in Fairy Tales and Feminism

Abstract: Fairy tales are ancient forms of narrative. To survive, these fairy tales had to be told over and over and they also migrate well because of their basic structure, the essential elements of the psychological behavior which belong to the human species in general and others which are culturally divergent. We can recognize not only most basic human behavior mirrored in tales, but at the same time to see the possible developments and solutions. That is why fairy tales are powerful magnets for feminist critique of misogynist order and retelling the tales in new transformative ways. The aim of this essay is to look at certain parts of the history of fairy tales in context of the psychological element of feminine principle and archetypes, and in similar vein to analyze some of the feminist revisions to find what is at the same time intrinsic and transformative. These are fluidity of archetypal feminine figures, and behavior between them which can be summarized as mother daughter bond or older and younger woman relationship. The second wave of feminism also brought forward consciousness-raising sessions and the famous slogan "The personal is political". What binds all of it together is that complex relationships are mirrored by sites of fissures in women's political movements of the 70s and the 90s. To verify the premises and to deduce the conclusions it was necessary to sieve relevant observations from a huge volume of fairy tales itself and literature about fairy tales, feminist fairy tales as well. The points discussed here are: evolution of fairy tales and feminine principle; feminism, femininity and fairy tales; female characters in fairy tales; the mother-daughter relationship and mirrors or mirroring issue in revisions. The technique used to derive an explanation and understanding of pattern and nature of human experiences, as well as cultural and social phenomena is the interpretive qualitative method by employing narrative analysis and orientational approach to interpret a feminist perspective.

Keywords:

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Introduction

Fairy tales are fascinating and scintillating genre, they are an important part of our common human history, they permeated our childhood. They are both seductive and maddening, creating wonder and hope and infuriating because of their embedded and fixed stereotypes. Fairy tales were and are attractive for feminist critique of misogynist order and retelling the tales in new transformative ways. Moreover, the second wave of feminism, especially radical feminism, brought forward consciousness-raising sessions and the famous slogan 'The personal is political'. It meant concentration of feminism upon women's experiences of femaleness. Consciousness raising was an essential process in politicizing the personal. It was intended to awaken women to the injustices of their subordinate social position, and to scrutinize their personal and emotional lives, their relations to their families, their partners, and their work. In other words, to transform what is experienced as personal into analysis in political terms, with emerging recognition that male power is exercised and reinforced through 'personal' institutions such as marriage, motherhood and sexual practices. That was an effective process in feminist politics because it put 'domestic' or 'private' issues in the public sphere of political intervention. It also meant that feminist activities were concentrated on grassroots mobilization, through exploration of such aspects of woman life like marriage, sexuality, childcare, health and work. Radical feminist intertwined group activities and tactics with theory, to help women to transform their lifestyles, at the same time to fight for social transformation. Every part of woman life previously accepted as normal and acceptable should be questioned and recreated anew (Whelehan, 1995, pp. 73–74). In a similar vein, fairy tales may be perceived as a form of creating liberatory, subversive spaces within patriarchal society, even if they do not alter social relations. However depoliticization of politics was criticized as discouraging feminist from dealing with issues of political authority and the structures of public space. This means that Feminism is subversive, but there is no unified stance on the kind of subversion needed (Phillips, 1998, pp. 4–5).

Yet the realm of fairy tales and consciousness practices may be recognized as politics via playful symbolism and performance to change socio-political realities. Additionally, both the fairy tales and radical feminist practices and tactics revolve around conflict and the projection of alternatives to the institutionalized socialization processes. Definitions of politics proliferate, but all agree that politics is human activity – human ability to live together – involving relationships with one or more of other people, and consequently collectivity or community. Politics involves use of power. However power may be separated into power based on force and coercion and power emerging from group consensus. Politics seen as performing action fits into consensual embodiment of power.

The assumption or proposed hypothesis this paper takes up is that fairy tales in general are mirroring our inner and outer experiences with a tendency to amplify the core with some motif. Mindful that I'm facing an immense mass of material, I tried to extract some common thread in both fairy tales and feminist revision, and the most meaningful and interesting motif in the context of femininity and women's roles. An occurring themes in fairy tales and in feminist revision are fluidity of archetypal feminine figures, and behavior between them which can be summarized as mother daughter bond or older and younger woman relationship. The additional premise was that the second wave feminist fairy tales may be perceived not only as subversion of patriarchal stereotypes but as mirroring sites of fissures in women's political movement of the 70s and the 90s. To verify my premises and to deduce the conclusions I had to (like Cinderella or Vasilisa) "pick out" relevant "grains" (facts) from a huge volume of fairy tales itself and literature about fairy tales, feminist fairy tales as well. In this paper I will use only some of the literature, making this endeavor a very subjective adventure and probably a little skewed on the selection side, but some tales are much better documented, and more linguistically accessible. The technique used to derive an explanation and understanding of pattern and nature of human experiences, as well as cultural and social phenomena is the interpretive qualitative method by employing narrative analysis and orientational approach to interpret a feminist perspective.

1. Wonder tales

Once upon a time there was a storyteller who by night spun a tale from verbal memory. Some of the best Grimm Brothers stories were from a woman, whose "memory kept a firm grip on all the sagas. She herself knew that this gift was not granted to everyone, and that there were many who could remember nothing connectedly. She told her stories thoughtfully, accurately, with wonderful vividness, and evidently had delight in doing it" (Colum, 1975).

There are many narratives: myths, legends, and tales. Myths are a sacred, symbolic story, usually of unknown origin and usually involving divine or semi divine creatures, at least partly traditional, describing how the world came to be. They are not for entertainment, but for the spiritual welfare of individuals or communities. Legends are stories handed down by tradition from earlier times and popularly accepted as historical, and they are essentially tutorial. Tales are a pastime, stories told for interest and excitement. They are so elementary and structurally simple that they appeal to everybody, because we humans are hungry for a good story.

The cultural evolution of the fairy tale is contextual, which means that it is closely bound historically to different civilizing processes. There is a common

misconception that fairy tales are timeless phenomena with eternal events and they are mirroring some collective unconscious, but only the basic structure of the fairy tale is timeless. There is always the king, the prince, the wizard, the witch, the persecuted heroine, the fairy and the helpful animal, but the specific situation is put into specific context (von Franz, 1995, pp. 97–98). Moreover, the plot or the course of things is arranged in a way which corresponds to our instinctive judgment of what is good and just along with what we know is evil and punishable. The world of fairy tales has been built as a "counterworld to the reality of the storyteller by the storyteller and listeners" (Zipes, 2012, p. 14).

Fairy tales are rooted in oral traditions, and they are marvels of imagination and complications of plot. Most fairy tales begin with 'once upon a time' or 'a long time ago', and end with telling the reader that the characters 'lived happily ever after', 'no one knows where she has gone'. Prose is the usual tool of story, but at critical points little rhymes appear and there is often a lot of repetition which creates a certain rhythm to the story, and also helps people to remember and tell the story. It also helps to tell effective and relevant stories, because the tales obey the unconscious mechanisms of looking for allies, for approbation of listeners. "Language can thus be seen more as a means than as an end (…) our use of language makes for the construction of coalitions" (Dessalles, 2007, p. 355). Language is a form of cognition allowing humans to share experiences, so they created symbolic codes. "Given that the major function of language is to manipulate the attention of the other persons – that is, to induce them to take a certain perspective on a phenomenon" (Tomasello, 1999, p. 150).

Storytelling emanated in prehistory from sharing experiences, and today it is still true. The world is determined by genetics and culture, the words have to be adequate to be understood and conveyed. The discernible pattern of most fairy tales, myths and other oral stories is departure or expulsion from home, which becomes a quest to acquire whatever is needed to help her/him in conflict with another. Walter Burkert makes very insightful remarks about tales being a "sequence of motifemes" – a program of actions, including plans, reactions and experiences (Burkert, 1979, p. 2). They emerge from social and biological practices that precedes communication. The different kinds of tales are based on conflicts and actions taken that humans have experienced and keep on experiencing, through biological and social behavior. Some of them are: mating, procreation, child abuse or abandonment, raping or violating women, hunting, killing, planting, exchanging, casting spells are woven into fabric of tales for more compelling communication. Those stories that became relevant were passed through generation, and although different cultures, groups and societies use "many of the same sequences of events or patterns in the communication of the stories, but applications of the verbalization that included specific references to specific realities, customs, rituals, and beliefs led to various tale types, variants and differences" (Zipes, 2012, p. 8).

Pattern recognition comprises the chunk of our neural activity, the brain is a parallel system with billions of neurons working away at the same time, and that allows the brain to perform wonders of pattern recognition. We use this capability to recognize the situation as compatible with one stored in the brain, and then draw upon our previously considered conclusions (Kurzweil, 1999). Repetition creates patterns and human brains evolved to recognize patterns. It means that in a culture that includes repeated traditions, information may flow in compressed form creating pools of stories, predicted on human communication of shared experience.

To survive, these fairy tales had to be told over and over, and surprisingly they are recognizable millennia later, it need only retain its meaning and this grants tales a longevity that is governed more by their relevance, salience and vividness than their exact words. Fairy Tales also migrate well because of their basic structure, there are certain essential elements of the psychological behavior which belong to the human species in general and others which are culturally divergent. We can recognize not only most basic human behavior mirrored in tales, but at the same time to see the possible developments and solutions. Storytelling may remind the listeners that their problems are not unique and insoluble, the fairy tale is a potent and magical mixture of familiarity and novelty.

We think that fairy tales are for children, but until the seventeenth century they weren't. Wonder tales were told among grownups in the lower layers of the population, but fairy tales resonate with children, so we (children) look back to them with fond memories when we have to confront injustices, contradictions and conflicts of the actual world. Fairy tale magic lies in deep layers of our psyche/mind, connected to our desires, fears, ideals, characters and shadows. Playful, simple and unpretentious archetypes of fairy tales are heroines/heroes and villains and evils that have some instinctive familiar meanings, even if we aspire to be very sophisticated human beings.

The term "fairy tale" was used for the first time in 1697 by Madame d'Aulnoy in her collection of tales. In the late 17th Century, the aristocratic women and wealthy bourgeois women were disaffected by being trapped in the private sphere and prevented from attending universities and taking paid employment. Some of the remarkable women began holding salons in their homes, and storytelling played a great role in French Salons. Catherine d'Aulnoy was the most prolific and she became a prime figure in the rise of literary fairy tales. She was the one who named her tales *Contes de fées* (*Fairy Tales* or *Tales of the Fairies*). Interestingly, because the early French fairy-tale writers were women, these tales displayed a certain resistance toward male rational precepts and patriarchal realms by conceiving pagan worlds in which the resolution was determined by female powerful fairies. The fairy tale realm was the only space in which they had freedom to act upon projects and alternatives stemming from their desires and needs. The magic world was the place where they had a sense of agency (Zipes,

2012, p. 24). The women writers of fairy tales in the 17th Century are considered part of an early "feminist" movement of their times, experimenting with quietly subversive narratives (Haase, 2004; Zipes, 2012). However, the literary fairy tales might be seen as not genuine fairy tales, for they reveal a somewhat of a problem of the writer, as she or he is not able to disentangle from personal issues (von Franz, 1995, p. 99). Which I think is an insightful and pertinent point.

2. Some Musings about Feminism and Fairy Tales

Feminism is a multilayered and multifaceted theory and politics. Given the limits of this paper, the whole feminism research and writings cannot be discussed here. To read feminist history is to discover evidence of debates, schism and differing viewpoints. Further Feminism is evolving and expanding (also in geography) as a theory and/or practice that presenting feminist theory and politics in encapsulated form is to mangle them to meaningless form.[2]

Also, the writings about feminism and fairy tales are many and some of them are quite confusing. The feminist studies of fairy tales began in the 1970s and were spurred by the second wave in feminism. There is a continuing process of scholarly works on women, fairy tales and feminism producing a huge volume of variegated types (Haase, 2004). At least three of them may be recognized: Some authors try to rediscover older versions of fairy tales featuring strong female protagonists; others simply write new fairy tales to give new messages and different meanings; the third group is engaged in literary revisions to subvert stereotypes and appropriate old cultural myths.

Nevertheless I begin with Alison Lurie articles *Fairy Tale Liberation* and *Witches and Fairies* published sequentially in 1970 and 1971 in "The New York Review of Books" partly because it aroused lasting debate about women and fairy tales. Alison Lurie advanced that fairy tales actually may help the women's liberation movement because they portray strong, resourceful females and have only slightly veiled messages that women instinctively understand. That incited Marcia R. Lieberman to an angry response in *Some Day My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tale* (1972) that messages that young children receive about gender roles and the superficial values that they are taught even before they understand what it is that they are really learning, by the process of acculturation. That provided an underpinning for the further debate and scholarly studies of fairy tales. The gender-based research would have

[2] The vast field includes two or three waves of feminism, postfeminism with many different strands of feminism, the huge volume produced by Gender Studies, and feminism is not only a European or American phenomenon, there are expanding studies of feminist issues on a global scale.

to explore the content along with acceptance and "the institutional control of classical fairy tale collection" (Haase, 2004, p. 2).

In the 1970s feminist were engaged in critical assessment of fairy tale models as mirroring socio cultural myths and mechanisms that oppress women. Of course even earlier there was some interest in fairy tales (see Seifert, 2004) and Simone de Beauvoir demonstrated that tales can be reinterpreted in many different ways, that they can be rejected, and that they may even carry hidden messages that foster vice rather than virtues. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir made a point about the socializing effects of popular tales on young girls and women, anticipating the criticism of feminist folklorists by about twenty years (Kawan, 2002).

The second wave of feminism was also the source of a vehement examination of fairy tales, especially by American feminists: Andrea Dworkin attacked fairy tales in *Woman Hating* (Dworkin, 1974), Susan Brownmiller condemned the infantile innocence of *Little Red Riding Hood* in *Against Our Will* (Brownmiller, 1976), and Mary Daly exposed connections between fairy tales and 'gynocidal history' in Gyn/Ecology (Daly, 1978, p. 99). Mainly feminists are concerned with the correlation between beauty and passivity of the fairy-tale heroine, along with enchantment, and romanticization of marriage. The alluring fantasies mask the heroine's timid and dependent characteristics: reliance on external rescues, willing bondage to father and prince. The hidden trap is an identification with the heroine. Thus, subconsciously women may transfer from fairy tales into real life cultural norms. Passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice is perceived as a female's primary virtues. So, fairy tales maintain the patriarchal system by making female subordination seem romantically desirable and inescapable fate. However, the result for modern women is uneasy feelings of ambiguity and tension between enacting cultural change and succumbing to the gossamer trappings of fairy tales which still wield breathtaking power over the female psyche (Rowe, 1979).

Thus feminist scholars began to compile fairy tales featuring strong, independent and daring females. The role of women as sources and narrators was also scrutinized. Feminist scholars concentrated on female voices – heroines silenced or transformed into feeble maidens through male rewriting and reworking of collected folktales, as well as mature powerful women portrayed as shrilly evil witches. In the 1980s some feminist had a specific notion that fairy tales could be used to reinterpret and to transform women's lives, in other words to liberate themselves from limitations of patriarchy and to regain authority (Haase, 2004). The feminist analysis of fairy tales has not been immune to the criticism in similar vein to that what was happening in the whole movement. There were accusations about white dominance and privileged positions in academia and overlooking non-Western traditions and texts.

The third group of the Feminist Fairy Tales is the literary revisions of fairy tales from the 1970s and 1990s, two decades of rising waves of feminist activism

and theorizing. The works of Anne Sexton, Olga Broumas and Angela Carter in the seventies inspired a new generation of revisionists in the nineties, such as Tanith Lee, Terri Windling, Kelly Link, Catherynne M. Valente and Emma Donoghue. A revision does not erase and replace the traditional fairy tales, but rather gives them new life, both embodying the old tale and rejuvenating it by providing new understandings and new meaning. This allows for thinking and rethinking the whole story. Revisions are conscious efforts to challenge and disrupt the myth of earlier stories, they require the reader's knowledge of the original tale, so the perpetuity of traditional fairy tales is necessary to achieve full effect of revisions. It would lose much of sense if read by someone who had never before heard of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Bluebeard*, or *Little Red Riding Hood*. This is an inherent (and bittersweet) paradox of feminist tales, because even if we must rewrite old stories in order to set us free, revisions need continuous popularity and familiarity of their origin-tales, and they help to refresh them again and again.

But there is another important issue of literary tales not being genuine fairy tales, for they may be a snapshot of past, present and future. Indeed, they are meant like that, the very act of revision is precondition for future revisions to more fully deliver new meanings and implications. In a more psychoanalytic way, the literary tales give us some glimpses into the writer's psyche and its shadows. Moreover, a common theme to the fairy tales revisions is a blurring of lines between self and other. This may be found in the relationships between mothers and daughters, along with doubling images reflected in mirrors (Schanoes, 2016, p. 2). The relationship between mother and daughter is much analyzed in feminist theory (also in feminist art). In many narratives, the mother comes out as a problematic character towards whom the author experiences contradictory feelings of closeness and distance. Feminist theorists often deny the view that close mother–daughter relationship must be unhealthy. The problem is the destruction of the mother's self by patriarchy, and consequently her inability to help the daughter to construct a secure sense of self. Mother is not only a person, she is also the symbol of a vital principle in life, and of internal dynamics or perspective through which we relate to life. In feminist literary revision of fairy tales mother-daughter relationship is pivotal and associated with storytelling and revision itself. On the other hand, revisions cherish the multiple selves conjured by mirrors, the multiplied self is seen as liberation, comfort and power, so the multiplicity of identities is not only relational but contextual as well. The identity becomes fluid. The literary feminist fairy tales from the 1970s are "feminine writings" and they are expressions of the same ideas and goals which were born in the second wave of feminism, not only with consciousness-raising sessions (and with the slogan "The personal is political"), but along with developments in the field of psychoanalysis. The revisions from the 1990s bloomed in time of so called crisis in feminism, the differentiation of feminism produced

so many 'strands' within the matrix of feminism that the very heterogeneity that was conducive to its great strength, was also bringing the inner tensions and struggles over ownership of feminism that threatened to tear the women's movement apart. Moreover in the 1990s there was visible evidence of a generation gap in feminism, which on one hand resulted in much attention being given in mass media to the 'new' wave writers such as Naomi Wolf and Katie Roiphe and their triumphant announcements about 'post-feminists', that is young successful and independent women ('daughters'), on the other side were women ('mothers') insisting on calling themselves feminists and portrayed as ugly bunch of "hags".

3. The Female Characters in Fairy Tale

When looking at femininity through fairy tale lenses we may see glimpses of the concept of identity which may be quite perplexing and paradoxical. The notion of female identity is important within those feminist influenced by psychoanalysis. In short, Freud maintained that the child gains a sense of identity through identification with the father, a process which leaves girls estranged from their mothers and identifying with a power which is not their own. French Feminists developed a concept of feminine identity which is fluid, amorphous and provisional. Moreover in French theories on psychoanalysis and feminism there is a view that the discovery of the unconscious in itself reveals the precariousness of identity in the forces of fantasy and desire. There also is a profound search for the multiplicity which characterizes femininity (as opposed to masculinity), which may be expressed in a language which itself attempts to capture the feminine. American feminists have perceived psychoanalysis as reproducing patriarchal inequalities. Nancy Chodorow emphasized the development of the self in relation to others, especially the relationship between mother and child. The female derives a sense of identity from the mother. Mother-image is a portrait of what the feminine represents for girls and girls are perceived by mother in terms of sameness and extensions of the self. Jean Baker Miller emphasizes women's attributes of relatedness, empathy and nurturance which are viewed as devalued in the male-dominated culture (1976).

Mary-Louise von Franz argued that "fairy tales express the creative fantasies of the rural and less educated layers of the population. They have the great advantage of being naive (not 'literary') and of having been worked out in collective groups, with the result that they contain purely archetypal material unobscured by personal problems" (von Franz, 1993, p. 1). When looking for feminine types of behavior in fairy tales, we face the problem that the feminine representatives might be shaped by man, so they depict man's femininity. Furthermore, there is a paradox "that feminine characters in fairy tales are neither the real woman

nor projected the inner feminine side of men, but both, because sometimes it is one, and sometimes another (…) accordingly to the sex of the last person who wrote down the story" (von Franz, 1993, p. 4). It means that feminine characters in fairy tales are ever changing and subjected to interpretation. Additionally, all figures in folktales are archetypal, schematic characters, this is because to identify with the heroine (or hero) we have to see the images in a transpersonal (abstract) pattern. Keeping that in mind we may peer at main female characters in fairy tales.

3.1. Fairy Godmothers and Wise Old Woman

In many stories the mother has to die at the beginning of a fairy tale like *The Snow White* or *Vasilisa*, leaving behind an orphan daughter alone and exposed to all the dangers of the world. Death of the mother symbolically means that the daughter realizes that she can no longer be identical with the mother, but the positive side of the relationship remains. The daughter has to find her own femininity which requires going through adversities. When the mother dies the archaic mother–daughter identity is damaged, and women need to identify with their own sex. There is a positive aspect of femininity represented in "good" fairy godmothers – they are personifications of the process of formation of individuality, they temporarily assume a protective, guiding role for the protagonist. The "wise old woman" is another symbol of positive feminine. She shows up at the right time to save the heroine (or hero) in distress and to temporarily take care of her/him until she/he is ready to continue the journey. She is the keeper of ancient knowledge, the voice of nature, independent and quirky, intuitive and instinctive. At times she is benevolent while at other times she appears detached, enigmatic and even cruel. She gives justice to those who are found by her to be unworthy. The similar witchlike and powerful older women like her are in folktales all over the world. Some can be vicious if not evil, but for the most part, they are a vague "mature" goddess who tests the character of young women and often helps them to become autonomous.

There is also the darker side of feminine principle, the "forgotten godmother", the angry, the scorned, the revengeful – she is the personification of hurt feelings or resentment. The evil godmother (yes, the one who cursed the child – in *Briar Rose* / *Sleeping Beauty*), represents the aspect of the mother goddess forgotten in our civilization but which exists in many primitive societies and antiquity, that is a personification of revenge. Revenge (and punishment) are not brought only by humans but also by nature. In most primitive mythologies there is a feminine goddess of nature known as Revenge (Nemesis). She is a personification of strong feelings and reacts with the emotional intensity of something more akin to anger, even rage. Nemesis is emanation of vengeance towards the object of her

wrathful indignation, both in the form of blame, as well as retribution which will surely follow as a consequence. "Women (…) react against what they do not like with nastiness, more like nature, as it were" (…) Nastiness, which is a kind of overflowing mood and it is not always unjustified (…) "The functioning of this feminine rule is not recognized in our patriarchal civilization" (von Franz, 1993, pp. 39–40).

But folktale is a collective story, thus we should look into some aspects of the mother goddess, of feminine nature which has been consciously repressed in Western/Christian culture. The most evident is sex. The Christian world has been permeated by fear of sex, it is said to be dangerous and evil and it should be brought under control by the law and be permitted only in marriage. Consequently in the West alone women have been feared and hated because of their sexuality and the slow process of pushing women away from the male world into a separate world of their own. This brings loneliness and a pressing need to scold and scorn other women in general, but in the second wave of feminist movement sectarian fissures built up to critical state. One of the things that women tend to be most intolerant about is the sexuality of other women. It springs, like all other prejudice, from fear and insecurity. It is usually and understandably true across generations: mothers despair of daughters who seem to desert the principles which were accepted by them. Daughters disdain their mothers' attitudes (whatever they are). This legacy which is handed from one generation to the other. The only way out is to take the responsibility for what one is, and to make a huge effort to break the chain of attitudes which goes from one generation to another. In collective context this would be a situation where the feminine principle has disappeared in its positive form and has turned evil.

3.2. Sorceress, Witch and Baba Yaga

The word and concept of "witch" are rooted in pagan cultural tradition that dates back to ancient times. "The witch" undergone multi stage transformation: from goddesses that were worshiped because they had extraordinary powers to make people and environment fertile, later associated with healers and midwives, who might help with almost anything, they could bring amazing transformations, they were protecting and guiding people, they used magic and made divinations, granted wishes, predict the future. They could be good or bad, they did many beneficial things, but wronged, could bring revenge and calamities. Witches were very ancient divinities or goddesses of fertility, who as so frequently has happened, became connected with the underworld and the dead. Pagan goddesses beget Greco-Roman goddesses and fates, who spawned fairies, nymphs, mermaids, sirens, pixies and other magical creatures. The ancient Deity and Great Mother transformed not only into witches, but they were predecessors of fairies (Zipes, 2012, p. 57). In Slavic fairy tales there is a figure of the great

witch called Baba Yaga, who is a potent fusion of deities, sorcery along with shamanism and fairy lore. She is sometimes described as an ugly old woman who wreaks havoc and devours children, other times she is a nice old woman, who is quite helpful. She lives in the depths of the forest in a hut standing on chicken legs. She is flying around in a mortar, wielding a pestle along with the broom to sweep away the track behind her (Johns, 2004; Propp, 2012). Historically, she probably is the remains of Greek Hekate, she was originally a goddess of the wilderness and childbirth, later with the underworld, and who, over time, became associated with the practice of sorcery.

In addition to a multitude of different stories about witches and fairies which were popular in the Middle Ages, there were documents which contained stories about witchcraft and scholarly studies of sorcery. Although witch-hunts were known in Europe in the Middle Ages, the most intensive witch scare and pogrom were spurred by the publication of *Malleus Maleficarum*, written in 1486. The book was a witch-hunter's guide on how to identify, track and interrogate witches, and in the sixteenth century an official strategy of persecution against witchcraft, with any woman classified as odd becoming vulnerable to torture and death. The dark side of Great Mother got projected into women, which gave rise to the killing of witches, and the figure of mother became split into the positive mother and calamitous witch. Mary Daly described this period as a crime against women who lived outside of patriarchal control such as spinsters and widows (Daly, 1976, pp. 120–140). Today however, the term lost much of its dark connotations. The practice of "wicca thealogy" which profess to uphold the principle of feminine power is accepted (feminist wicca), and in the feminist theory, too the witch has become brave figure of female revolt: „the role of sorceress, of hysteric, is ambiguous, antiestablishment, and conservative at the same time. Antiestablishment because the symptoms – the attacks – revolt and shake up the public, the group, the men, and the others to whom they are exhibited. The sorceress heals, against the Church's canon (…) converts the unlivable space of a stifling Christianity" (Cixous, Clément, 1975, p. 5).

The figure of the Baba Yaga is the personification of nature itself, the cruelty and destruction along with beauty and life. We see this pattern in the myth of Demeter and Persephone. Demeter represents fertility, she helps with childbirth and harvest, but when her daughter Persephone disappears Demeter becomes goddess of revenge and sorrow. This ever changing aspect of life and death. Persephone is the personification of Spring, a new crop/Self which needs to develop and to grow, even in adverse circumstances/weather.

There is another ancient tale about Eros and Psyche. Being jealous due to men's admiration for Psyche, goddess Aphrodite asked her son, Eros, to poison men's souls in order to kill off their desire for Psyche. The Aphrodite is jealous because Psyche is said to be more beautiful, as in *Snow White*. This is an interesting example of the contradictory attitude of the goddess toward a more

human incarnation of herself, she would like to see her embodiment – perhaps "a daughter" – but then she is resentful. It personifies the elemental emotional reactions, "the mother goddess always behaved like that (…) There was infinite fertility and generosity, unstinted charity, infinite jealousy and vanity, and so on" (von Franz, 1993, p. 26). Now we should focus on another equally important character – the innocent maiden.

3.3. Beautiful, Innocent and Young

The leading figure in many (the most popular) fairy tales is a young girl who is depicted as a naïve and helpless girl, who depends on: magic by dead mother, fairies, animals; male characters such as seven dwarfs, hunter, and of course the prince. She is good, obedient and industrious and they are persecuted and abused by wicked stepmother and stepsisters. The reward for all this suffering and being good is a marriage with the prince. Another important designation is physical beauty. The girl is featured with red lips like a rose, black hair like ebony, and white skin like snow. Beauty is highly admired in fairy tales being associated with kindness, worthiness and virtue and for example we find many references in the Grimm's fairy tales. In *Little Briar-Rose* the heroine is described as "so beautiful that he could not turn his eyes away" (Grimm Brothers, 1975, p. 241). Another persecuted maiden called Snow White is "as beautiful as the day" (p. 250).

Physical attractiveness has important social consequences. It has long been noted that there exists a 'What is beautiful is good' stereotype (Dion et al., 1972; Langlois et al., 2000), it means that attractive individuals are perceived to possess a variety of positive personality attributions. Goodness and Beauty are also associated with industriousness and there are always rewards (or happy endings), like in Cinderella's case. Beauty as well may be a source of tribulations, due to jealousy of stepmother, but in some instances because of danger of incest. There is a story *Allerleirauh* about "King who had a wife with golden hair, and she was so beautiful that her equal was not to be found on earth". They had a daughter "who was as beautiful as her dead mother, and had the same golden hair (…) King looked at her one day (…) and suddenly felt a violent love for her. (Grimm Brothers, 1975, pp. 326–327). The incestuous father is not punished. The obvious (feminist) observation would be that patriarchal order must be left intact, and that incest is a form of exercising power over women and children in a sexualized way. Nevertheless, we can look at persecuted maiden's stories as a mirror that reflect and refract young women's images. The mirror is a temporal narrative and socializing norm, metaphorically representing problems a young woman typically encounters when growing up and maturing (Jones, 1993). In

other words, the tales are mirroring archetypal formation of the individual Self in a way which fits a governing moral and social behavior.

Meaning of passivity of the persecuted maiden is perhaps even better seen in another tale about the girl without hands, which has many parallel versions (not only by Grimm Brothers, so the motif of heroine not having hand is quite a popular one). It is about a good pious girl who has to endure prolonged suffering. Her father trades her off to the Devil, then he cuts off her hands, and the Devil tries to trick her mother-in-law into killing her and her newborn son (Grimm Brothers, 1975, p. 160). The girl represents the type of woman who has to be submissive because of dangers of leaving the frame of compliance and when she marries the problem will return and she is helpless and others take advantage of her. However at the end of the story she has the hands restored in silver (in other versions the hands are healed). She gets healed by the process of growth, of maturing and changes in personality.

4. "Let's pretend"

One of the more interesting symbolic bonds from Fairy Tales and feminist texts is the mother–daughter relationship. From the psychological angle they are archetypal figures, archetypal motifs and conflicts. In fairy tales mothers-figures are dead/missing. They are often replaced by doll (*Vasilisa the Beautiful*), by tree (*Cinderella*). This is an old, general motif that after the death of (good) mother, something magical and otherworldly persists. It symbolically means that the daughter (Vasilisa) began her process of formation of individuality. The archaic bond is broken off and daughter (Vasilisa) has to find her own identity and early relationship with the doll carries the initial projections of the Self (von Franz, 1993, p. 169). "In a woman's psychology, the Self is represented by an older or a younger woman (…) The image of the eternally old or the eternally young woman probably has to do with timelessness of the Self (…) Insofar I discover the Self within and let it enter completely naturally into my life, it is my daughter" (p. 170).

The vivid picture of mother-figure in most popular fairy tales is of evil, malicious and murderous mothers. It may be seen as a tribulation and difficulties of first stages of developing the individuality, inwardly it is painful and outwardly it is usually irritating. A woman who gets first glimpses of her individual identity is "attacked not only by stepmother outside, but from within by inner stepmother, that is, the inertia of the old collective pattern of femininity" (von Franz, p. 172). Maybe it can be perceived as a remnant of the complex image of Hekate and her mixed connections with the earth, the underworld and the moon. Hecate's multifaceted personality was understandably complex leading to her later magical associations. The coupling or blending of identities may be seen as well,

the earth and the underworld (Great Mother), the moon connected with Persephone or Kore Soteira (the savior maiden). There are famous words of Shakespeare: "all world is a stage, and all men and women are merely players", so the kaleidoscope of faces of ancient goddess can be seen as a cast of characters which represents deepest needs, conflicts and longings that lie within us.

The complicated mother–daughter relationship in fairy tales apparently has been fertile ground for feminist writers. The examination and revision of familiar and influential stories of childhood is empowering. The mother–daughter relationship was of great interest for both 1970s and 1990s feminist fairy tales writers. Tales as *Rapunzel* and *Snow White* were used not only for exploring such bonds, but for mending as well. What's more they put mother–daughter relationships into tales that did not originally have them, as in *Bloody Chamber* Angela Carter's revision of Bluebeard. In second wave white feminist narratives, the mother appears as a controversial figure, toward whom the author experiences at best uneasy feelings, mostly blaming for every imaginable unhappiness. It was a popular theme in the middle of the 20th century. Nonetheless, there were some books which had a slightly different perspective of mothers, motherhood, and mother – daughter relationship, such as *The Reproduction of Mothering* by Nancy Chodorow (1978) or *Of Woman Born* by Adrienne Rich (1976). The dynamics of relationship between mother and daughter as defined in these works can be found in feminist revisions of fairy tales (Schanoes, 2016, p. 16). It was a site of contention too, because black feminists were theorizing about their situation and were strongly arguing against the notion that white feminist experiences could represent circumstances for women as a whole.

The Bloody Chamber (Carter, 1979) is a story about a submissive young female, but there is a secondary character, the protagonist's mother, a striking and empowered figure. In this story, the mother fights against the male authority to save her daughter, and the mother knows that her daughter is in danger because of her "maternal telepathy" (1979, p. 41). However, the protagonist's mother is both nurturing and loving, as well as violent and protective. The story depicts not only rescue by psychic joining, but also the process of daughter first cutting off rebelliously from mother figure, then a metempsychosis of a mother in the daughter, and in the end a reunion based on psychic fluidity between mother and daughter.

Wolf-Alice (1979, p. 119) is another of Carter's stories, and borrows themes from *Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and Lewis Carroll's two Alice books. Alice-Wolf is not fully human nor fully werewolf, but she has the same (like her namesake) curiosity; Alice goes through the looking glass just by wondering what is on the other side. Similarly, Wolf-Alice's final understanding comes from not only recognizing her own reflection, but her own identity too, because in time her relation with the mirror changes, she realizes that she saw herself within it, moreover she remembers and replay scenes of her adoption by

wolf-mother as well as that mother's death. Her perspective shifts to human subjectivity, she tries on dress, and she understands the nature of mirrors and now can create a self-image. In the same moment when she became human she had to take care of injured beings, the Duke who is another human/beast figure. "(…) she was pitiful as her gaunt grey mother; she leapt upon his bed to lick, without hesitation (…) The lucidity of the moonlight lit the mirror propped against the red wall; the rational glass, the master of the visible, impartially recorded the crooning girl. 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, first, a formless web of tracery (…) then in firmer yet still shadowed outline until at last as vivid as real life itself, as if brought into being by her soft, moist, gentle tongue, finally, the face of the Duke" (pp. 227–228).

Revisions may be perceived as nested stories (like Matryoshka Doll) because instead of being a single subjective version of a tale, each of them open space for further revisions. It is an ever-changing process of transformation from girlhood to womanhood, and motherhood. Emma Donoghue's way of spinning familiar fairy tales into linked permutations of young and old women. Each story leads into the next, so that women who sometimes played only minor roles or evil roles in the original versions of fairy tales have a chance to tell their stories.

The fluid kaleidoscopic array of feminine identities is apparent in two different revisions: Toni Morrison (1987) and Tanith Lee (2000). First offers a harrowing look at slavery and its lasting impact as well as the obsessive need of mother (Sethe) to unite with her dead daughter (Beloved). The second novel depicts a similar blend of selves when the mother (Arpazia), mad, cold and consumed by hatred. The daughter (Coira) grows into womanhood alone, and then her mother sees her, and Arpazia mistakes Coira with memory of her own youthful reflection. The sad and mingled dance of mother–daughter relationships is played out from rivalry through love to possessiveness. They confuse and fuse the role of mother and daughter. Their volatile identities merge into one "The Goddess three-in-one, who might be Coira the Maiden, or Demetra-Arpazia the Woman, or Persapheh (or Granny) the Crone" (Lee 2000, p. 247). But there is a happy end (in a way), because Coira is able to revise her mother's story, since she chose a different path from her mother's. The power of mother–daughter bond should not be underestimated, for it is not the past, it is a living present within each of us – daughters.

There is another motif in fairy tales and revisions as well which is quite interesting and relevant – the mirror (or the looking-glass). In fairy tales it makes some spectacular appearances. The magic mirror in *Little Snow White* (Grimm Brothers, 1975, p. 249) is probably the best known example, because the story revolves around the wicked Queen asking the Magic Mirror about her beauty; in the Japanese fairy tale *The Mirror of Matsuyama* (Ozaki, 1908, No. 10), the dying

mother gives her daughter a beautiful mirror and tells her to look in the mirror whenever she misses her and she will see her mother's face. After her death, the daughter discovers it to be true and believes that her mother's soul is in the mirror, but years later does she realize that she's seeing her own face in the mirror, which has grown into the spitting image of her mother; the Beast gives Beauty a magic mirror so she can see what's happening back at the castle.

Mirrors play a role in several feminist revisions of fairy tales and they are usually a magical mechanism for the plot of the story. "In the revisions (…) the mirror reflects women's fantasies, experiences, and desires under conditions often hostile to their expression (Schanoes, 2016, p. 85). It means that the looking-glass is a vehicle of transformation too.

I can take it further and say a little like Alice that when you look into the looking-glass everything is just the same, "only things go the other way", "but that may be only pretence (…) let's pretend that glass has got all soft like gauze, so that we can get through (…) what fun it'll be, when they see me through the glass, and can't get at me!" (Carroll, 1994, pp. 18–21).

Fairy tales mirror collective unconscious material (von Franz, 1995, p. 137) and discussed here feminist revisions may be perceived as looking at one's own shadow, fears and emotions lurking there and helping to better be protected from one's dark side. Then the spring will come and with it the transformation.

Conclusions

Fairy tales for most people are classical ones as *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Rapunzel*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Vasilisa the Beautiful*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Puss in Boots*, and so on. The fairy tales live happily forever because of the universal archetypal nature of this genre. Magical and supernatural motifs travel from one person to another, always adapting themselves to a new place and time. It is as diverse as authors' imagination, and imagination knows no rules. That is why modern, newly written fairy tales, especially those that are innovative and radical are not only hard to define, but they are somewhat artificial and strange since they do not follow the patterns set by traditional fairy tales. The revisions of fairy tales are startling concoction combining discontent, dissonance but hope and fantastic changes as well. Both old stories and new fuse truth and illusion, leading to the place beyond dualities, but fairy tales are not naive stories, they are profound dives into the collective set up at a certain time, but most importantly they are a charade. The feminist re-creation of fairy tales may be perceived as mirroring the immense engagement of second wave feminism with the issue of identity. Lastly, the motif of mother–daughter relationship is not only subverting and disturbing patriarchal notions, depicting deep and ancient mysterious bonds, but also mirroring the bitter sweet

generational conflicts in feminist movement itself. The fairy tales, feminist revisions and radical feminist practices are imaginary, playful, creative collaborative spaces of politics.

There are some consequences of exploration of collective action and collective identity. It introduces new cognitive input derived from the action itself and from observation of its processes and effects. Too much empathy and we lose the distance, too much distance and it may be beyond comprehension of "spect-actors".[3] It also means that the observer and the observed exist in relation to each other. This entangled complex relationship is ever evolving and producing emotions, and at the same time how we interpret those things that happen to us.

Finally, we need to peek into these things with certain caution – some things are better left alone. There is a German fairy tale called *Waldminchen* about an unruly little girl. One day a green old woman comes out from the woods and takes the girl to the forest, to teach her how to behave. But the little girl is not learning, so the old woman (Waldminchen) throws her into the mill and she is ground to the pieces and comes out the other end as a very old gnarled woman. "What is old becomes young and what is young becomes old" – says Waldminchen. When the girl sees herself in the mirror she is miserable, but she has to stay in this form for some time to learn a lesson, then she is put through the mill backward, and she is young again. This motif is seen also in other tales, in *Frau Trude* (Grimm Brothers, 1975, p. 208) foolish and nasty curiosity is shattered completely, in *Waldminchen* the disobedience is disciplined, in *Vasilisa The Beautiful* the not asking too much question is rewarded, because "too much knowledge made people old" (*Russian Fairy Tales*, 1973, pp. 439–446).

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[3] The word was borrowed from Augusto Boal (2002) *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*.

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