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SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS
FAIRY TALES AND THE SHIFT IN IDENTITY POETICS
FROM MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM

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KEY WORDS: identity, fairy tales, history, modernism, postmodernism, deconstruction, shift of perspective, change.

Introduction

This is a comparative study of fairy tales at two different stages of what is known as “late modernity” - modernism and postmodernism – from the point of view of identity construction and the accompanying changes in poetics. We are setting out to provide arguments in favour of a historicized notion of identity and of discourse which is put to the test in the particular case of fairy tales, a generic form whose fictional universe is considered to lie outside of time. We are trying to prove that identity is a matter of social embodiment and perception, rather than of essence and substance, subject to shaping and controlling factors from the historical background and to the ideological agenda of the writing instance.

In the eighteenth century, which saw the birth of this genre, fairy tales were seen as the roots and the mirror of every people. They were thought by Herder, Goethe, Charles Perrault, the Grimm Brothers, or the British pre-romantics to nourish people’s spiritual hunger and carry the voices of the race down into the modern world, becoming thus a mark of identity. On the contrary, with the passage of time and the concomitant historical changes, in the postmodern period the perception of the fairy tale as a provider and keeper of any kind of identity or unity is lost, they becoming only a pattern to be re-symbolized, a fragment of a wider and different design, an excuse for something else, a stage on which other plays are performed, keeping up with change, with postmodernist ideas concerning their use and meaning.

The significance of the present study resides not only in the contextualized approach to fairy tales bespeaking the idea of identity characterising two different phases of late modernity, modernism and postmodernism, using relevant examples, but also in a comparative approach meant to highlight the shift in poetics.

The present project sets on stage five main concepts: fairy tales, modernism, postmodernism, history, identity, which, although picked up from different conceptual fields (genre theory, period terms and the vertical axis of change in politics/poetics along history), are revealed to be related in the passage from modernism to postmodernism. The stage metaphor we use for our interpretation is justified by our belief that concepts have a framing effect, that by employing a certain critical vocabulary we already place ourselves on a certain theoretical position in our study of fairy tales, folklore and their carving of identities in the

transition from modernism to postmodernism, with all the implications of the transformative process undergone by fairy tales to fit new contexts.

Our main objective is to show how important the aesthetics of the time is in the interpretation of fairy tales, in the way they are viewed, perceived, felt, and assimilated. In their turn, the philosophy of art and its signifying practices are often (always, according to Michel Foucault in his *Order of Discourse*, 1971) shaped by the historical context in a very broad sense, that is, including characteristic political ideas, movements, agendas, ideologies, power relationships, social theories, philosophical, aesthetic, or scientific ideas, actually the whole discursive field in which the literary work is embedded. This embedding of discourse in all forms of social activity is the effect of institutionalization. It is various institutions that “impose ritual forms” on discourse, that give it relevance and power (Foucault 1971: web)

Reimagining language was crucial for the imagining of modernity. Language is no longer perceived as a transparent medium for conveying the world. The ways of speaking and writing *construct* social classes, genders, races and nations making them seem real and enabling them to elicit feelings and justify relations of power.

In 1927 Martin Heidegger elaborated upon a distinction between *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time), which has had a powerful influence on the critical theories that have emerged since then. Time, as measured by the clock, knows of no difference. The self appears in something that makes itself known – a reified subjectivity which is inflected for space and time. Unlike temporality, which is irreversible, historicity means continuity:

Is it true that myths are just facts of language that are still being created in our times, for instance, by the fashionable industry or the consumerist culture (Roland Barthes: *Mythologies*, 1957) Do fairy tales written at various times display an immobile structure and timeless poetics, or are they written in keeping with changes in poetics/politics that can be traced across the canonical works of a cultural phase? Our research has led us to the conclusion that the latter is the case, significant changes occurring in the ideological agenda, the construction of characters, the trajectories of plots, etc. even within the century known as late modernity (modernism and postmodernism).

As the fairy tale was a genre created by Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy in the dawns of the Enlightenment, we went back to the manifold of ideas that accompanied its birth in order to look into the initial data or the ideological-aesthetic matrix out of which it has evolved and

which were modified in significant ways by subsequent exercises in rewriting the plots to meet the expectations of new generations of readers.

As pointed out by Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs (Bauman & Briggs 2003: 197) modernity developed through two distinct projects: 1. John Locke's project of a purified language, freed from relationships with society, relying solely on its rationality and intelligibility, and 2. J.G. Herder's project of nation states, which could be realised through the recognition and promotion of characteristic national features. He saw tradition as a source of social order and political strength, and language as something deeply embedded in the life of the social collectivity and defining for families, communities, regions and nations.

Herder saw a people's character rooted in landscape, in the geography of the space it inhabits, and reinforced by language, traditions, customs, etc.:

Herder's modernity peopled territories with national citizens and the globe with nation-states. The Grimm Brothers followed his agenda, publishing fairy tales reflective of the German spirit as well as studies in German mythology. They embraced Herder's nationalist project and provided it with a linguistic and textual base. Their published collections, including the one entitled *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* - perhaps the most famous "folk" texts of all times - are Herder's attempt to revitalise German literature. The Brothers Grimm assimilated provincialism and nationalism as their discursive foundation.

Thus, two divergent and influential models of language and modernity were available to writers and politicians in Europe. Both perspectives contributed to the shaping of social order and the blueprints to produce it.

One cannot fail to notice the relationship between the imperialist politics of the nineteenth century and the corresponding upsurge of nationalist movements, or the interest in the construction of a national identity among peoples fighting for independence (such as the ones at either end of the continent: the Irish and the Romanians).

On the contrary, the process of globalization in the postwar period, the massive migration and the emergence of new political concepts, such as imaginary community (one bounded not by language, common past, national literature, racial features and origin but by allegiance to the Constitution), political correctness, multicultural society, etc., have led to a different poetics in the treatment of the fairy tale as a generic form and as a carrier of ideology. The study of this phenomenon helps us understand something of the nature of the

relationship between art, politics and history, aesthetic change (which is not merely a question of taste), and generic change (using fairy tales as a case in point).

It is true that the rewriting of fairy tale plots in postmodernity is pretty predictable: they become narratives of the emancipation of the once marginalised groups of people: racial others, women, children, servants. Never the other way round (i.e. the affirmation of hierarchical relationships). Nevertheless, they are closest to what Gibbons understands by a moral frame for the self-reflexive projects of both individuals and communities.

No matter how odd it might sound, now, at the end of modernity, the way fairy tales have been rewritten, with a transformative ideological agenda in mind, has rendered them closer to a presumable return to realism.

By following this shift in identity poetics which links the two stages of late modernity, we set out on a path which links fairy tales to society and its civilizing process. We see fairy tales as a mark of unity, spirituality and an identity maker in the first stage of modernism, while shifting towards a more fluid identity in the second stage of late modernity – postmodernism - based on internationalism and multiculturalism.

In the chapter entitled **Casting the Roles and Setting the Stage for the “Actors” of Our Script: Fairy Tale, Modernism, History, Postmodernism, Identity**, we define the main concepts employed in our approach for a better understanding of our general line of argument.

The shared identity of modernism based on tradition, seen as a mark of unity (as seen in the analysis of Kirileanu and Yeats’ works in the present paper) was displaced as a source of identity in postmodernism where the individual’s existence becomes self-discovery, self-expression and self-actualisation (as seen in the analysis of Angela Carter, Ruth Ozeki and Ben Lerner’s writings).

Identity became a focus point for anthropologists beginning with the 1970’s social movements and ethnicity related issues reinforcing the dual relationship between individual and society – showing how the individual is affected by and at the same time contributes to the social context he inhabits. It gained ground becoming the core of debates concerning the identity politics of race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, that is, it took shape from the intersection of physical body, ideology and subjectivity.

Even those characters in fairy tales which have something of a prototypical character are seen as mere signifiers that can be assigned other meanings. Whereas, for the luminaries or for modernists, fairy tales guaranteed authentic representation of essential character, postmodernists engage in rewriting them in order to promote their own ideological agenda. We see here epistemology, ideology and the body of the world inextricably bounded up in a common process of cultural fabrication of meaning. It is this trinity – *body + ideology + subjectivity* – that Identity Studies focus upon.

Our bodies are discursive in the sense that they both reflect and express cultural ideals and ideologies. ‘Free’ choices are not as free as they may seem. Let’s take for example, the case of Muslim women entrapped between Muslim culture and ideology, and the emergence of women’s movements worldwide beginning in the 1970s, movements of activists who pushed for women’s rights and gender equity.

Muslim women’s body seems today to embody the tensions between modernity and anti-modernity, between traditional ideology, stereotypes and their strive to overcome the stereotypic thought about what others perceive as being a Muslim. Thus, the Muslim woman shapes her identity caught in-between the Islamic discourse and a tendency for redefinition in multicultural contexts becoming hybridized individuals in an exercise of constant revision and redefinition to break stereotypes and shift cultural mindset, as it is the case of many Muslim women who participate and have leading positions in different fields and professions.

Feminist philosophers such as Elizabeth Grosz have, as a response, sought to articulate a **corporeal feminism**, where the female body is placed centre stage and recognised in all its difference as something both material and social. Grosz draws on a number of different philosophical influences to theorise a notion of sexed embodiment using as a model the Möbius strip – an inverted three-dimensional figure of eight. With the Möbius strip, like the body, according to Grosz, there is no clear distinction between inside and outside and instead a unity in which there is an inflection of mind into body and body into mind.

Part One: Fairy Tales and the Construction of Identity in Modernism argues that fairy tales serve as a mark of national identity for a specific culture in the context of the collapse of dynastic rules and the rise of independent nation states. The study of folklore coexisted with emergent romantic nationalistic movements in which scholars searched the folk traditions record not just in order to see how people had lived in by-gone

ages, but to discover historical precedents on which to model the present and build the future. Most modern fairy tales reveal a subject and the hierarchical structure of a society's representations and the positions held by the subject within that society, giving sway to ideologies that legitimate and maintain social practices and institutions, unveil contradictions, the unequal distribution of power and leave room for the conscious and unconscious drives, needs, desires, expectations...to be fulfilled. Sometimes individual desires merge into collective ideals shared by a whole community.

It also reveals the importance of fairy tales as a remedy for a society in distress: the great role they played as a mark of national identity in the period of Bessarabia's union with the Mother Country (Simion Teodorescu Kirileanu's *Povesti basarabene* recorded by the folklorist in March 1918) or as a mark of identity serving Ireland's independence (*Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* by W.B. Yeats). The two fairy tale collections, *Povesti basarabene* and *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, are related by their ideological agenda, each, in its culturally distinct context, marking the passage towards new developments in their nation's history.

The first case study: *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1983) by William Butler Yeats reveals W.B. Yeats as a major modernist poet and a researcher of folklore who responded to the intellectual and political crises of his times. Yeats came to believe that nationality and literature go hand in hand. Literature was seen as a device to be employed in order to advance the national cause, as national identity is rooted both in the land and in language perceived as culture. His aestheticized nationalism with its political dimension became a form of resistance pitting the cultural self-consciousness of the Irish people against colonial oppression.

We focus here on *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*, which combines two books of Irish folklore collected and edited by William Butler Yeats: *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* and *Irish Fairy Tales*. Fairy tales caught the very voice of the people, the very pulse of life, each giving what was most noticeable in his day. Yeats believed that art could both educate and form a sense of the Self.

Irish folklore and traditions had been shadowed, to the verge of extinction, by church doctrine and the British control of the educational system. Yeats used his writings to promote the Irish heritage and as a strategy for awakening Irish pride and nationalism. Apart from

being a collector and recorder of Irish folklore, he refurbished entire folktales in epic poems and plays, such as *The Wanderings of Oisín* and *The Death of Cúchulainn*, and used fragments of stories in shorter poems, such as *The Stolen Child*, which is cast into a parable of fairies luring a child away from his home, and *Cúchulainn's Fight with the Sea*, which presents a fragment from an epic where the Irish folk hero Cúchulainn battles his long-lost son. Most of his poems are rooted in symbols, topics, images, and themes from folklore. Most importantly, Yeats' poetry was about Irish culture.

Yeats' reliance on fairy tales, tradition, and heroic figures of the past to rewrite Irish cultural history and turn the tables upon the stereotyped and denigrating representation of the Irish character and culture as seen by the the British. As Seamus Deane in his *Celtic Revival Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880-1980*, mentions: “**Every virtue of the Celt was matched by a vice of the British** bourgeois;” (Deane 198: 25) Deane argues that the nineteenth-century Celtic studies advanced the Celts as an idealised form of subjectivity that was still organically attached to wild nature, and thus, “could cure anxious Europe of the woes inherent in Progress.” These can all be identified in Yeats' collection of fairy tales. He truly believed that what the Irish people needed to retrieve was repossession of their very Irishness.

The second case study - *Povesti Basarabene* by Simion Teodorescu–Kirileanu - reveals folklorist Simion Teodorescu–Kirileanu's concern with tradition and history which can be spotted out in his entire work, a special place being held by his collection of *Povesti Basarabene*, written during his journey through Bessarabia in March 1918, the *annus mirabilis* of this province's union with Romania. His fairy tales, which were as many metaphors of the human plight, support the nation-building project which fitted well into the nationalist politics that saw the collapse of European dynasties and the foundation of nation-states in the aftermath of World War I.

It is often at a time of crisis that people become aware of their nation and their connection with their cultural tradition which best reveals their identity.

In the last two centuries, this region was continuously disputed by Russia – or the Soviet Union – and the Romanian nation-state in the making, changing repeatedly its state affiliation, until 1991 when it emerged as an independent republic. A space of interruptions and displacement, oscillating between the language of the oppressor and the mother tongue in

a quest for roots, foundations and identity, Simion Teodorescu-Kirileanu's collection of *Povesti Basarabene* bears testimony thereof. It is the community's drive towards identity through language, seen as the locus of identity. The question of language and of language choice is a political, cultural and literary one, for a choice of language is a choice of identity. He collected the fairy tales at the very time of the Union, the year 1918, in the Romanian language, from different counties in Bessarabia, reflecting on Romanian spirituality and the desires and expectations emerging therefrom.

It was one of the first collections of Bessarabean fairy tales, collected by a Romanian from the other side of the Prut River, in order to prove that, on both sides of the river, inhabitants thought and felt alike, this spiritual and cultural likeness being the foundation on which the political union was to be edified.

These fairy tales are a truthful reflection of the common Romanian spirit, and functioned as a certificate of legitimacy granted by "the people".

Read and interpreted at a symbolic level, these folk tales uncover psychological aspects and moral values, speaking about common human experience and creating a counter-reality which, however, borrows different aspects from their storytellers, the audiences, and the social norms of the nation. The collection of *Povesti basarabene* relies on and reinforces the social norms of its community. The context in which they were narrated, the identity of the narrator - as the folklorist always mentions the source at the end of his narrative –lend them an air of authenticity similar to that surrounding archives and chronicles.

With the passage of time, the concept of identity has changed being confronted with a set of extraordinary challenges arising from external political and social transformations which led to inner shifts of perspective and to theoretical attempts to make sense of those social developments.

As society develops and information explodes, one paradigm replaces another generating cultural transformations. Borderlines, diasporas, migration, refugees, a crisis of values, etc. bring the issue of identity, or rather, lack of it, to the front. It calls for a re-invention of the Self in the context of the new realities and it turns our attention to the second part of this thesis: **Fairy Tales and Postmodernist Deconstructionist Poetics**

It is in postmodernism, more than ever before, that an awareness of physical and psychological control has challenged the concept of *identity*. While in modernism there was the *nation* to serve as an identitarian landmark, postmodernists are obsessing with a *body* written over by cultural narratives, a body therefore which has never been simply one's own. Thus, a limitless fear of self-nomination: "Who am I?" lends itself to a continuous search of identity.

Nowadays the dynamics of *identity* is set between national and international, unity and diversity, losses and gains, games of power and globalization. Identity becomes an open-work, a work in progress of which we are all part of.

The second part of this paper, highlights the shift in poetics from modernism to postmodernism and that using the process of deconstruction writers adapted fairy tales to the present needs of the society. This is done by analyzing Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and Cezar Baltag's poetry as study cases.

The first case study in this part of the thesis focuses on **Angela Carter's Revisionary Use of the Fairy Tale .**

The fairy tales she refurbishes are no longer innocent lessons for children, but richly fantastical, often satirical, comments on sexual power and psychology, a shifter of the mind, stories about fairy stories.

Leading examples of such stereotype-breakings narratives are Angela Carter's fairy tales collected in *The Bloody Chamber* (1979).

Postmodern fairy tales set apart from their traditional versions on what narrative strategies are concerned: deconstructive and reconstructive, and also on subject representations: self-contradictory versions of the self. Postmodern re-tellings, re-interpretations of fairy tales are not only an artistic, but also a social action which leads further to cultural transformations by questioning traditional ideologies and re-creating the guidelines of narrative production to naturalize subjectivity and gender.

Angela Carter uses the pattern of old fairy tales which can easily be recognized by the readers' imagination, creating an easy-going, familiar framework for the readers whom she surprises with a different content, one of feminist implications attuned to the present time, making us aware of radical changes having taken place in our society.

Her fairy tales also stands for life's resistance to any single interpretation: a freedom of infinite invention and reinvention, the fact that reality is provisional, lacking eternal truths, being rather a construct, an artefact, lead to a crisis of identity, lack of stability, fluidity in postmodernism.

Angela Carter used fairy tales as a place where binary oppositions are viewed as unstable basis for meaning and exactly where the values and hidden ideologies of the text reside. Since binary oppositions are viewed as a hierarchic structure with one part privileged over the other, she deconstructed and subverted such hierarchy, the conscious intention of the narrative, to demask the hidden ideology and subvert it: "Her own passion was for disordering things, exploding categories, undermining divisions."(Gordon 2016: 392)

In her narrative constructions, the very notion of *identity (identities)* is challenged. Being a *mise en abîme* of the traditional fairy tales, her daring retellings get us out of our comfort zone and produce a sense of logical uneasiness and narrative discomfort, arousing our suspicion regarding our common beliefs, they undermine them. Her fairy tales project possible worlds, worlds-within-worlds, which break the boundaries (of the traditional ones), creating a modified transworld identity in which the individual subject is dissolved into linguistic structures and ensembles of relations. Her characters are expressions of a crisis, that of identity, and in their attempt to construct one they become a rhizome of interrelations.

Her *Bloody Chamber* fairy tales are narratives which express multiple subjectivities in a deliberate way so as to reject the appearance of objectivity and neutrality embedded in master narratives. Her fairy tales viewed as identity counter-narratives, present alternative values which are not contained in the traditional fairy tales.

Another supportive case study for the second part of this paper is entitled **Fairy Tale Patterns in the Poetry of Cezar Baltag**, relying on a lyric universe in which the mystical bonds between the material and the spiritual worlds needs to be retied. The poet considers that it is necessary to follow his ancestors, to return to the roots, to folklore in order to re-create the broken bonds. Depicting the rural and its realm fairy tales become cultural documents he takes account of in his poetry. With the help of fairy tales he projected another world in his poems, one of psychological depthness, the only one in which he could set himself free of all constraints, including political ones. A deconstruction of the world, of reality, into fairy tales and into his poems.

He turns to folklore, investigating thus the collective subconscious, using what he calls “pattern de basm” creating his own fairy tales. With “pattern de basm” as a title or subtitle for some of his poems collected in the volume *Unicorn în oglindă*, he indicates from the very beginning the way the poem should be approached, as a fairy tale - which is a specific way for our people, and not only, to understand the world, its essence. Lost in the reflections of the mirror and of the poetry, the poet looks for identity, for his true, inner self caught in a conflicting world, aware of its faults and also of the passage of time, he becomes a stranger in the outer world where he finds no answers to his questions, thus, he moves his quest inwards.

His poetry poses no finality, but a wandering for answers, a quest for true identity, no closure at all, but a continuous becoming. He has a postmodern approach of re-use and collage, of recycling elements of tradition in his poetry.

As seen, both Cezar Baltag and Angela Carter used fairy tales and folklore to enrich and give a distinctive flavour to their writings. Much used and abused, fairy tales remain a rich soil to be exploited.

The third chapter of this thesis presents **A Change in/with Time: A Comparative Approach** meant to highlight the change from one cultural phase to another, in parallel to changes in the epistemology of the age.

The epistemology of uncertainty, the deconstruction of the Cartesian self, of metaphysics and of history, undertaken by Nietzsche and his intellectual heritage (Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida), influenced the concept of identity as well, postmodernism leaving behind notions of heroic selves and grand adventures and descending in the historical world of class, gender or race troubles. Anticipating postmodernism, Flann O’Brien depicted the decay of contemporary Ireland through parodies of the Irish folk tradition.

On the contrary, canonical postmodernists, such as Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson a.o., hailed the collapse of male heroic stereotypes, using fairy tales for their agenda of women’s emancipation from patriarchal conventions.

According to Paul Ricoeur, we possess the intellectual power to reimagine scenarios so that we make our disjointed lives coherent; thus, when we remember and reimagine, we identify ourselves in the stories we tell. Our evolving narratives, our identity narratives help us to understand our lives. Under the constant flux of changes, these narratives are

continuously being rewritten, as well as our identities. Changing with each telling/reading, to each person, the story emerges into new understanding and its elements are displaced and replaced.

The subchapter **Fairy Tales and the Poetics of Identity: a Shift of Perspective from Modernism to Postmodernism** analyses how, having a central theme, a united vision, its own “rules” to follow and a moral to teach, in modernism, fairy tales stand as a mark of identity, having their own recipe. They embed beneath their surface the profound truths of experience and life, they shed light upon them. As nothing stands still, with the passage of time, fairy tales change to embed, express and interpret changes making us aware of them. Moving towards postmodernism, fairy tales are reluctant to a pre-given set of beliefs, norms, unity, for they have to express a different world, ambiguous, fragmented, unfinished, becoming, thus, an “open” work. They creatively work with bits of the past and present images that seem relevant from our standpoint in the present like in a game of hide and seek, in a constant interplay of past and present. With each reading we have a new understanding steaming from a weaving of emotional and intellectual information, a reinterpretation of the past from our standing point in the present.

With a comparative agenda in mind, we turned to Angela Carter’s postmodern fairy tales in *The Bloody Chamber* as opposed to their traditional counter narratives so as to shed light upon the transformations suffered by the fairy tale in time. Transformations greatly influenced by the outer changes in society, brought about by the second wave feminist movement (1970’s), inspired many attempts at rewriting fairy tales, such as Jack Zipes’s collection *Don’t Bet on The Prince* (1986) and *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (1993), along with Carter’s collection entitled *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). The agenda underwriting them all was to subvert their patriarchal originals by bringing to the foreground the underlying misogyny of the old versions and reclaiming women’s position according to new realities. As an example thereof, we turned our attention to a very atypical fairy tale - *Little Red Riding Hood* (AT333) - for it is the only one in the entire original collection (of Perrault) lacking a happy ending. It is a tale transformed into a word of warning, actually, providing the proper model of behaviour for girls. By presenting a negative example in the persona of Little Red Riding Hood, who draws an unhappy ending upon herself and her grandmother, Perrault sermonizes the reader on how a good, well-mannered girl should be like: never talk to strangers or let herself go. Because of her disobedience and

refusal to keep under control her natural impulses she is harshly punished in the end. The girl pays dearly for her transgressions: she talks to the wolf, she discloses her grandmother's whereabouts and wastes time in the forest forgetting about her duties. Thus, her transgression of the rules of good conduct brings about her downfall, and not only, her grandmother's also. So...be warned!

Another turning point in history was the 1812 version *Rotkäppchen* of the brothers Grimm from their collection *Kinder und Hausmärchen*. So, a passage from Perrault's version and French culture to Grimm's version, which has its roots in the French version, but also in German culture. In an attempt to revitalise German literature, fairy tales were a way to educate children and help give them an imagination without fear. This approach to fairy tales continues today.

Although the two versions, Perrault's and the brothers Grimms', are set apart from each other, they are quite similar in presenting gender ideologies. They present women as passive, helpless, and promote a victim mentality in their female readers.

Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* tales published in 1979 reveal new cultural realities in which free will in women replaces the stress on traditional morality and innocence of the traditional fairy tale. Her fairy tales, viewed as identity counter-narratives, present alternative values which are not contained in the traditional fairy tales.

In 'The Werewolf', one of her fairy tales from the Bloody Chamber Collection she subverts the traditional version of Little Red Riding Hood so as to expose the outdated, fixed gender ideologies embedded in the classic versions. She spins out a different story, bringing Little Red Riding Hood into the 21st century to make her chime better with our sensibilities. Carter's intention was to keep the frame and play with the content of previous versions.

Movie versions of fairy tales, such as the Disney movies, become a standard package of values and dreams, dwelling on children's expectations and form our response to the stereotypes embedded in these narratives. The disenchantment of the traditional fairy tales stressed by Jack Zipes in *Breaking the Magic Spell* (1979), *Spells of Enchantment* (1992), *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale* (1994) also outline the changing social function of the genre.

To better exemplify the multidimensional concept of identity, we also turned our attention to **Flann O'Brien**, a forerunner of postmodernism, and his writings which reveal

identity as interplay of masks, a play of puzzle “solved” in discourse – discourse that is constructive of social relationships.

Written in a postcolonial context, his works challenge the position of dominant groups. He is a bi-lingual author, commuting from some undecided location, suspended “in-between” languages, so as to allow his books, half-English, half-Irish, neither one nor the other, to come up with ironic and parodic versions of national and linguistic identity, to turn the tables upon the stereotypes of identity in the colonial context. He refuses restricting forms of identity subverting them, in a context of an on-going process of incomplete decolonization, making the passage from modernist Yeats, who saw folklore as a mark of identity (he even collected “Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry”) to postmodernist deconstruction of fixed identities, mocking the construction of identity through appeal to folklore, to idealized peasants. Where others saw substantial Irishness, he saw clichés, stereotypes, not forms of being but of impersonating, of acting out.

Postmodernism refracted reality into endless language games with authors such as Flann O’Brien appearing in the fictional universe of their novel blurring the line between fiction and reality, playing with, acting out, mocking norms and conventions.

At Swim-Two-Birds is a novel about the writing of another novel, which becomes a theory about novel writing, his implied poetics of fiction paving the way to postmodernism.

His first novel, *At Swim-Two-Birds*, becomes a *fictive fiction* about the creation of fiction, a *bricolage*, challenging notions of time, space, matter, identity, etc. as presented in conventional narratives, highlighting the fact that all narratives are in the end, a fictional product. Thus, as a *fictional product* of the postcolonial stage, his novel makes its readership question the construction of identity as contained in literary fiction, pressing home the idea of fiction’s incapacity to generate secure meaning.

To bring into question two of his best works: *At Swim- Two- Birds* and *An Beal Bocht*, we must bring into question the writer’s bilingualism, his duality, his positioning *in-between* English and Irish, modernism and postmodernism, so as to shed light on his notion of identity.

His use of pseudonyms during his literary career is the symptom of his refusal to identify himself with a name. For him the question of identity represented a far more complicated issue. The postmodern concept of human identity – however it may be theorized – maximizes the flexibility, variability and plasticity of human behaviour, so that the individual can be and do many different things, in many different situations, without any necessary requirement of continuity between different “acts” in space and time. As soon as

the self is viewed as a performance, masking becomes an intrinsic aspect of the self, since there still exists an “I” which directs the performance and which therefore simultaneously “reveals and conceals” itself. The writer conceives his “persona” from within the story: he conceives of himself from within. The effect is the assimilation of himself to another, to his characters, to his nameless narrator as it is the case in his *At Swim-Two-Birds*.

In *The Poor Mouth*, the second novel approached here, he brings on stage Irish identity, with language as a key factor and satirizes the school-based revival policy of the Free State government which made it compulsory for students to take Irish at the primary and secondary levels – an enforcement that turned many people against their mother tongue. He deconstructs, what was perceived in the postcolonial context as the icons of authentic Irishness: the Gaelic peasant and the Irish language presented and promoted as markers and makers of nationalism. The author criticizes the romantic presentation of poverty and peasantry advocated by autobiographies. Placed in-between English-speaking rich and Irish-speaking poor, the post-colonial individual is shredded into pieces and in an on-going search for a lost identity. His characters’ attempts to locate themselves, to find their roots is set against the description of the formal colonial educational system devoid of meaning, a form without substance, he makes clear that the Irish speaking poor peasantry will never find in it a means for their self-development, to stress their displacement in the new modern Irish state.

Another author chosen to present this shift in poetics in postmodernism is **Ruth Ozeki** and her novel *A Tale for the Time Being*. It approaches the concept of identity from two overlapping perspectives: an ever-shifting world – the dynamics of social, historical, political, economic evolution and the effect of these changes on individuals, who need to redefine themselves in the new frames of identity. The characters reveal themselves in the postmodern context of fragmentation, rootlessness, alienation, multiculturalism, no sense of belonging of a globalised society. Identities are not biologically determined, but shaped by the environment and lived experience which can be turned eventually into shared experience.

The author introduces a world full of interconnections in which time and identity are related to a transient reality, perpetually in flux, making it impossible to give a complete and definite answer about the nature of a time being, about being and unbeing in time. As its title suggests, the novel is a tale for the time being, it appears to speak to the present, to what we might think of as the “now” metamodern moment.

Caught amidst the problems of a globalised world (global warming, climate change, immigration, terrorism, to name just a few) the individuals are forced to reconsider identity in

a social and moral sense. The search for new patterns to mould identity after the new world order, to make sense of it and in the absence of grand societal narratives, the search can only be a reflexive one (as it is the search of Ozeki's characters caught amidst the problems and consequences of a globalised world).

The shift of identity poetics in postmodernism requires **A Reskilling for New Contexts**, which is the fourth subchapter of our last part of the paper and focuses attention upon rethinking and a reskilling of the nature of modernity; the dynamism of modern institutions and their global impact; a radical change of our most personal experience and day-to-day social life; the emergence of new mechanisms of self-identity, which are shaped, yet also shape our modern institutions; it also implies reflexivity, a reorganisation of time and space, a freedom of social relation, unchained from the prison of specific locales; modes of behaviour become unsettled, flexible and 'open'; a post-traditional order which implies: "Reskilling'- the reacquisition of knowledge and skills – whether in respect of intimacies of personal life or wider social involvements, is a pervasive reaction to the expropriating effects of abstract systems." (Giddens 1991: 7). Also, *reflexivity* in Giddens' theory becomes a key concept of personal and social identity. It implies a renegotiation of individuals' relation to other, to social institutions and structures in the light of a continuous influx of information.

Nowadays caught between information systems, written texts, visual and electronic media and advertising, no one can deny or fail to observe how the world we live in as well as our lives are influenced and guided by signs and texts. The word and image have displaced reality leading to a need to rematerialize the word, to show the processes needed to make meaning and values. To adjust and learn how to make meaning entrapped in a world of simulation and fabrication.

In Lerner' words (**Ben Lerner's novel 10.04**), we find "the world rearranging itself."

Acting out at the edges of postmodernism, with embedded stories, blurring the ontological borders between facts, reality and fiction, showing the fragmentation of life and of the individual's, Lerner's novel turns out to be an *autofiction* that goes beyond postmodern games to present the sociological and phenomenological dimensions of human life, presenting the individual caught in a web of interrelations, trying to face or evade reality. Thus, it goes beyond postmodernism, extending into a literature that engages seriously with real-world, contemporary problems: the very complex, deep and ever-shifting crises of the present: social

inequity, capitalism, climate change, the lost sense of security, stability and belonging, the search for identity and how to cope with them.

Identity becomes a construct in the process of living one's life, according to one's environment and interests, the self becomes context specific, fragmented, dynamic and fluid to fit the 'liquid modernity' it inhabits. The boundaries of new possible identities are quickly expanding to keep pace with the outer world.

In the ever changing nature of our contemporary landscape, especially an urban landscape as described in the novel, whose 'reality' will materialize itself in the future the writer/narrator of the novel tries to piece up identity according to new rules, new patterns, changing contexts, caught in-between stories, captive between a potential dissolution of identity in an environment corroded by simulation and conformity and the need to redefine, reshape identity to keep up with the pace of changes, writing a new story of creation, one based on relationality, one that integrates humanity into the process of evolution, humanity making its own history.

Since History does not have a full stop, there will always be a search for labels to fit new contexts, new actualisations for the estranged and splintered individuality of our contemporary world and the writers' engagement with it. With postmodernism being considered outdated, new names, labels have been searched to replace it (starting with 1990) such as: post-postmodernism, coined by the architect Tom Turner against the 'anything goes' of the postmodernism, trans-postmodernism, post-millennialism, digimodernism, or altermodernism, performatism, hypermodernism, metamodernism...all in a search to make sense of the world we inhabit. In the following, there is a brief description of these new labels so eagerly waiting to replace postmodernism.

In the Information Age a new type of identity emerges labelled by Scott Bukatman as "terminal identity" referring mainly to the end of the subject and the emergence of a new type of subjectivity constructed at the computer or TV screen according to new technological modes of being in the world, challenging the conventional systems of meaning, for, at the intersection of technology with the human subject new patterns of functionality come into existence constructing a new subject-position fit for the Information Age.

The present thesis ends with **Conclusions** which follow logically from its entire corpus enforcing the idea of this very thesis: that there is a shift of Identity poetics following

the two stages of late-modernity: modernism and postmodernism. After embarking on a comparative study of fairy tales in two stages: modernism and postmodernism, in order to show the shift in poetics using some specific study cases, the following conclusions might be drawn:

The opposite epistemological standpoints, the modern and the postmodern one, led to different socio-cultural conditions with different perspectives for identity formation.

Modernity took an essentialist approach to identity understood as being determined by heredity, tradition, biological traits, geography as we can infer from the study of Bessarabian and Irish fairy tales reflective of these peoples' fight for independence from the British rule, in the case of Ireland and union with Romania, in the case of Bessarabia, while the postmodern approach to identity unfolds a different story; it becomes a cultural construct in light of which our personhood is shaped by the education, reading, ideas and information we are exposed to, or, to put it otherwise, it is just a matter of language, of the discourse about us. Angela Carter with her fairy tales writes a different woman into being: emancipated, educated, courageous, no longer subject to patriarchal values.

Emerging in the second part of the 20th century as a consequence of World War II postmodernism led to the collapse of big ideologies that were supposed to lead to the utopia of rationality, invented during Enlightenment period which further led to the rejection of grand narratives: fulfilment of utopia and triumph of rationality (Hegel, Marx etc.) approach generating at its turn scepticism and irony.

Postmodernism grew out of modern society with its metanarratives of reason, progress, absolute truth, order, stability, turning the tables on them, writing them wrong into small, mini- narratives with no claim to absolute truth, reason or stability, always subject to change, provisional and temporary into a rejection of fixed norms and tradition.

Kirby's "the world has changed and theory must change with it." (Kirby 2009:32) holds true, for we must adapt and face the changes, chameleon-like, at will.

Such a shift of perspective regarding gender identity resides in Angela Carter's revisionary use of fairy tales, for it is in fairy tales (or their Disneyfied versions viewed as entertainment for children) that we are taught from childhood till adolescence, how to perceive and internalize gender representations at a subconscious level, leading to certain behavioral patterns, thus, such narratives of identity may also be viewed as a form of social

control. In adulthood, when the learning of gender is finished, the focus changes to maintaining the gender order, through conventions and ideology, mostly of a patriarchal social order, which Carter wanted to subvert so as to reflect the changes in society. Appealing to both adults and children, fairytales are important in their non-restrictive representation of gender (as Carter's fairy tales) so that people identify with multidimensional characters, not forced to appropriate certain fixed, stereotypic patterns (as in old versions of the fairy tales or their Disney versions) in order to be accepted in society.

The body in postmodernism, as well as the nation in modernism, has always been the site of political contention. Postmodernism has intensified the debate, people becoming more and more conscious about the physical and psychological control. In the discourse of high technology and techno-utopians appears a fixation, an obsession with immortality in a belief that one can transcend one's body through technological accomplishments. Impinging to its very limits, postmodernism can be seen according to Ihab Hassan as a continuous exercise in self-definition.

If in modernism one's identity could be attached to membership into categories such as: class, race, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc., in postmodernism identity becomes fluid, chameleon-like and fixed categorization is rejected.

The shared identity of modernism based on tradition, seen as a mark of unity (as seen in the analysis of Kirileanu and Yeats' works in the present paper) was displaced as a source of identity in postmodernism where the individual's existence becomes self-discovery, self-expression and self-actualisation (as seen in the analysis of Angela Carter, Ruth Ozeki and Ben Lerner's writings).

The reflexivity of postmodernism as noticed by Giddens leads to self-observation and self-generated issues such as identity crisis and the construction of identity. Just because postmodern identity is blurred, escapes definitions and clear-cut patterns due to modernity's liquidity, we might also refer to the so called obsession of identity. Due to its cameleon-like character, postmodern identity was called by Robert Jay Lifton *the Protean self* (from the Greek god Proteus that changed his form).

The Protean Self had become a global phenomenon by the end of the 20th century, and it is thriving at the beginning of the 21st. It implies the disintegration of the self correlated with dislocation: there are no limits, no territory, no authorities to tell people what to do. Each person becomes the bricoleur of his/her own identity in-the-making.

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