

THE FAIRIES: SWINGING BETWEEN OPPRESSION AND FREEDOM*

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Date of submission: 2022-08-12

Abstract: This paper interprets the character of the fairy (*vila*) in Balkan folklore, and it is mainly focused on the fairy's potential for female liberation and emancipation. The paper is divided into three sections. The first one is focused on the three interpretative lines through which the characters of the fairies can be structured: the interpretation of their roles, characters and destiny in the frame of the male dominated, mainstream discourse as purely negative characters. This interpretation is focused on the fairies seen as the Others who challenge and tempt the order of man and therefore must be 'punished'. The second interpretative line approaches the fairies in a semi positive sense, as an object of fascination and seduction. The main roles of the acting are still male. The fairies appear as partners of the male characters in various struggles and in resistance to the broader society, like a form of helper, an inspiration, but are still kept in the shadow of legality. The third line analyzes the fairies who appear as autonomous actresses with all their capacities and integrities.

The second part of the paper is focused on explaining how, and through which symbols, the character of the fairy can be connected to that of the monster. It hunts the manners through which the symbols and the narrative techniques are combined to develop a paradoxical character that is simultaneously an ideally beautiful woman and a monster. The third part analyzes the fairies through the perspective of the gothic and the monstrous. It is mainly focused on the politics and the ideology "hidden" on the body of the creature that lived in the world beyond the regulation of society and how it performs important work for us as individuals and communities, policing our boundaries, defining our norms.

Keywords: fairies, emancipation, pedagogy, ideology, rebellion, monstrosity

* The paper is part of the project "Memory and ecosmos" which is financially supported by the Ministry of education and science (MES) of the Republic of North Macedonia. It was organized by the "Marko Cepenkov" Institute of Folklore in Skopje with MES's Decree no. 15-15533/2 from 03.11.2021 for financing scientific projects.

Fairies, through their physical characteristics and attitude, are an embodiment of the aspect of the feminine that could contaminate the picture of the obeying woman, the caring mother, and the obeying daughter and sister. But in that so called contamination lies the potential for female liberation and emancipation. Marie Louise von Franz writes about the concept of the subversion of female characters in fairy tales, saying that the bitterness that has accumulated, as a result of the rejection and insufficient respect experienced by countless women, led to a collective eruption of emancipation movements in the twentieth century, and that it was being nurtured in folk tales and fairy tales centuries before (Fon Franc 2017: 9). The fairies in the most popular Southern-Slavic (and in my context more particularly Macedonian) fairy tales are spirits – looking *almost like* women, who live in a constant state of enjoyment (Вражиновски 1999: 29) (both emotionally and physically and, along with it, sexually) and can produce offspring on their own (a concept close to the idea of single-motherhood that the patriarchal system before the 20 century tried strongly to represent as embarrassing and disgraceful). Being extraordinarily beautiful women, with long (usually fair) hair and transparent dresses, dancing during the nights, riding a horse or a stag (Благојевић 2012: 177) tied with three venomous snakes (Танасковски 2015: 12), and occasionally having wings like swans (Танасковски 2015: 11) are making fairies an object of lust and devotion as well as a symbol of freedom to live a life focused on one's own freedom and satisfaction.

I will structure the narratives about the fairies (coming from the predominant male approach to society and status of women) in three interpretative lines: the first interpretative line would be approaching the fairies, their existence and the interpretation of their roles, characters and destiny in the frame of the male dominated, mainstream discourse. According to this, and to Žižek, they are part of the Hegelian concept of the 'night of the world' or the 'law of night' as an obscene part of the law and society (Žižek 2009). This view legitimizes the violence towards them (kidnaping them, raping them, enslaving and impregnating them). They are the Others who challenge and tempt the order of man and therefore must be "punished". Of course there is a certain pleasure in all of this, a dark pleasure which is associated with making the community of man in vigor, and more alive (Žižek 2009).

This line has the longest historical tradition that can be connected to the culture of the "witch hunt" (a witch hunt in the sense of denigrating and persecuting women who, in some way, dared to refuse the role society threw upon them as negative. Showing them as dangerous, unnatural, abnormal, destructive, etc.) and it can be illustrated through the following couple of examples. In some places in the Western Balkans there is a belief that if a man made love to a fairy (the commonly used phrase is that the

fairy “entered”¹ the man, he becomes sick, possessed, detached and not able to have intercourse with women any more (Благојевић 2012: 182). Sometimes he even dies a couple of years after. In some places there was a superstition that if a man is impotent, that he had been taken by a fairy as a child (Благојевић 2012: 182). This superstition can be analyzed in two different lines.

One perspective would be that it has a role as a warning against relationships with the dangerous, sinful, liberated, “unnatural” woman and against going beyond the borders of the system. Another perspective, which is more subtle and indirect, is that the fairy has the power to keep the man seduced and possessed for life. There is a poem titled “Angelina and the sea fairy” and it is about a sister who tries to cure her brother who has been possessed by a fairy for nine years (Миладиновци 1983: 17–18). Yet, because she didn’t smile in front of the fairy but cried out of fear, the enraged fairy killed the brother. (Here, the patriarchal system has a way to excuse a man by showing him as possessed and powerless and not an active agent in the relationship with the woman living beyond the borders of the allowed, while the woman is seductive, dangerous, lustful and revengeful)². There is a vile fairy who builds a fortress out of parts of human bodies (Миладиновци 1983: 17–18). There is a fairy, who, out of anger, shuts a stream and keeps the people thirsty, not caring whether they die (Миладиновци 1983: 17–18). She asks for the eyes of a man (Танасковски 2015: 13). Usually a man kills her and saves the village. There is a fairy who drowns a man because only if he is dead she would be able to kiss him. Or a fairy who shoots a man with an arrow and makes him blind. A fairy who takes a girl’s eyes because the girl worked on a Sunday. Also, there is a fairy that kills her son (by cutting him in two) after she decides to leave the forced marriage (Благојевић 2012: 185). There is a fairy who drinks the heart of a child, or the blood of a man. Or kills a man who marries another woman. One particular interesting case of a bad fairy is the *rusalka*, a dangerous female spirit, with long red or fair hair, very similar to the fairies and to the nymphs. According to the popular beliefs, the *rusalkas* are young women who committed suicide by drowning due to an unhappy marriage,

¹ The choice of the vocabulary is particularly interesting and significant. The patriarchal system of values promotes intercourse mainly as a mean for reproduction, a context in which it is the female body that is ‘entered’. It can be interpreted that, through the use of vocabulary, there is a subtle hint about changing the gender roles, which can be seen as a sort of sexual liberation beyond the border of the so called ‘normal’, possible only with the female that is not fully a woman. It is also a form of transformation of power in the establishment of a male/female contact.

² М. К. Цепенков. 1980. *Народни љриказни – волшебни љриказни*. Скопје: Македонска книга, Институт за фолклор.

women who died as brides before the wedding night, women who died before becoming mothers (Barber 1997: 14–18). In many stories they become un-dead fairy-like malevolent spirits who lure men with their beautiful voices, tickle them and drown them in a pond or a lake (Dynda 2017: 90–91). There are some hints that any woman who did not marry i.e. did not fulfil her life role, had the potential to become *rusalka* following her death (Moyle 1985: 224).

The second interpretative line approaches the fairies, in some individual cases, in a semi positive sense, as an object of fascination and seduction. But the main roles of the acting are still male. The fairies appear as partners of the male characters in various struggles and in resistance to the broader societies, like a form of a helper, an inspiration, but still kept in the shadow of the legality. In this context, there are stories about a man who gets his heroic strength after he had been breastfed by a fairy (Благојевић 2012: 185). Sometimes the fairy engages in a fight with a strong man. An interesting example is the story *Цар и ојевојка/The Czar and the girl* (SNP I,#155), where a human girl retreats to the woods to build a pagan church. When the Czar tries to retrieve her, she saddles her deer, bridles him with angry snakes, spurrs him with angrier snakes, captures the Czar, tears his eyes and leaves him blind to wander the forest (Jurić 2010). Sometimes, she invites the man for a dance. Sometimes she brings him back to life. She advises the hero or feeds him when he is left in the darkness. She takes care of the son of the passed away hero, or, in some cases, she inspires the hero to fight for his country. Sometimes she gives him strength or herbs to heal his wounds, or she slays the dragon (Krstić 1984: 498), or saves the groom from the dragon (Krstić 1984: 497)³. These variations are showing her as equal to men (even as a cause behind their success). This sort of equality is allowed or excused because of her supernatural origin, since this sort of equality is beyond the social codes, morals and values for the women at the time.

And, finally, the third line, in which I will focus most of my attention, are the fairy tales in which the fairies appear in an autonomous role, as emerging, as becoming (in the Deridian sense). These are situations, narratives in which women are autonomous actresses with all their capacities and integrities. There is a particularly important plot about three sister-fairies dancing while a shepherd watches them (Благојевић 2012: 181). He then steals their shirts and blackmails them, saying that he wouldn't give the shirts back to them unless one of them accept to become

³ This is a very important example of a transformation of the position of power. In almost every culture there are stories about a hero saving a woman from the dragon. This is a rare and very important example that turns the position of power upside down and it is the female spirit that saves the man from the dragon.

his wife. Crucially, their magic power lies within the shirts. In some of the story's variants, the sisters choose one of them (usually the youngest one) and she becomes his wife, and they have a child together. After many years she manipulates him into giving the shirt back and then she flies away (in some versions she sometimes takes their child away). Usually the story finishes like this, with the liberation of the fairy. But sometimes the story goes on with the shepherd getting the fairy back, after her sisters tell him to finally burn her shirt.

It is interesting to analyze particular aspects of this story that led me to the conclusion about the emancipatory potential in the character of the fairy.

First of all, the dance symbolizes freedom, i.e. not having responsibility, living in the moment, enjoyment, even recklessness. The beautiful woman dancing for the sake of her own pleasure (there is not a man for whom she dances) has a powerful, erotically elusive energy that must have felt very empowering for a woman of the time whose sexuality was connected mainly to reproduction and whose domain was the house. But the fairy is also alluring and there is a man that is seduced. Her charm is confirmed by the man (the patriarchal figure of power). He watches and becomes obsessed, aggressive and violent. The shepherd forcing the fairies to choose which one will become his wife is the voice of the patriarchy that turns women against each other (Gilbert & Gubar 1979). In trying to save themselves, they choose one of them to be victimized.

I believe it is right to conclude that the allusion of stealing the shirt, keeping a woman naked, and forcing her into marriage that produces a child is also, in a subtle manner, a story about sexual violence. Here, the manner in which the story is written, usually in a neutral tone towards the man, almost like he has a natural right to react violently and get one of the fairies, shares a subtle message that the woman's freedom to live freely with no responsibility can and will be punished, or that, at the least, it comes with a high price.

But, what is really interesting is the ending. After a couple of years the fairy manipulates her husband to give her the shirt (that she needs for a dance) and then she flies away. She seduces him once again through the dance (the way she seduced him before without even knowing). Here she is transforming what made her vulnerable before into her power to liberate herself. And in this moment the positions of power get transformed. The fairy found a way of resistance within the innately female range of action (seduction) and she transformed from a victim into a heroine. Or more generally, resistance draws its means of struggle, from the existing system of power (Foucault 1978: 95).

The fairy, even after losing her shirt and becoming a wife and mother, remains subversive towards the patriarchal system because she doesn't

allow to be subjectified into an obeying wife and responsible mother. And only like that, by keeping that sparkle for freedom, does she finally liberate herself. So, she gets what a woman before the twentieth century got extremely rarely, a way out of an abusive marriage. And that is a message that remained and kept a seed of resistance in women and girls long after they heard the story. That is the power of the story that Marie Louise von Franz speaks. The potential to plant and keep alive the seed for resistance.

In some variants of this story, as the fairy flies away she takes the child (usually a son) with her. There are many different stories in which the single-motherhood of the fairies who can also become pregnant by dancing above raindrops in the morning (Танасковски 2015: 9) is presented as a motive parallel to the main course of the story. So, the fairies can produce offspring on their own (a concept close to the idea of the single-motherhood that the patriarchal system before the twentieth century strongly tried to represent as embarrassing and disgraceful).

These important features of the fairies represent the idea of the feminine as independent, strong, and self-fulfilling on its own, capable and powerful without the shadow of the male protector. This feature is more strongly emphasized through the narrative of female collaboration and solidarity. There are examples in which the fairy gives back the girls taken virginity (Krstić 1984: 498), or she gives the girl back her arms that were cut away (Krstić 1984: 497) or returns her sight (Krstić 1984: 497). In some stories she takes care of the baby while the mother works in the field (Krstić 1984: 497).

What is also important in considering the potential for identification with the fairy is that, although she is not a real woman, she really resembles one. She is much more anthropomorphous than other mythical and folkloric characters, like dragons. As such, she is almost like a woman, indeed very much like a woman. By being able to become part of humans' system she is reachable. It is possible to imagine living "like a fairy". Being open for identification, the fairies show a variant of life that is almost possible. Here also lies the potential for emancipation. There is not a possibility for a change without being able to imagine the different system, to "imagine and experiment with alternate forms of organization" (Žižek 2012). They are showing the steps for liberation and an image of a different life.

The potential for emancipation lies also in the transformation of power in the establishment of male/female contact. Whereas it was considered improper for women to even think to approach a man, the fairy often approaches the man she likes (a shepherd in the field, or a woodcutter in the forest... etc.), and even explicitly shows him that she wants to have intercourse with him (Благојевић 2012: 183). So, from being passive, she transforms into a very active subject which is in the foundation of the transformation of power. Sometimes, she approaches him in the field while

he works. Then they make love. Sometimes she strictly forbids a man to tell anyone that he has any sort of relationship with her (Вражиновски 1999: 23).

As I mentioned in the introduction, the fairy can produce offspring on their own (a concept close to the idea of the single-motherhood) and sometimes when she leaves the husband, she takes the child with her. There are other interesting details like stories when she comes back daily to take care of the kids, and greets the husband, yet does not live within the family; or she arranges the ex-husband to take the child to the forest for her to breastfeed her. Sometimes, she even comes back to negotiate who will take the children. They put the children on the doorstep. The one that goes in the house remains with the father, and the one that goes out goes away with the mother-fairy (Благојевић 2012: 184–185). All these details from stories from very long ago resemble the modern procedure of divorce. Anyway, in these examples, it is obvious that the female has the power of privilege to choose to move on on her own and to leave the marriage.

There are some psychoanalytical interpretations according to which the fairies represent men's fear of beautiful women and being powerless to keep a beautiful woman for oneself, or even a fear that a beautiful woman will run away and leave him to take care of the children (Благојевић 2012: 188).

The fairies became an embodiment of an aspect of the erotic (freedom, satisfaction, enjoyment, free choice) that the patriarchal system had detached from women. As Audre Lorde writes, to sustain itself, any oppression (the patriarchal oppression in this context) must corrupt or distort those various sources of power in the culture of the oppressed that can generate energy for change. For women, this meant suppressing the erotic as a possible source of power and knowledge from our lives (Lorde 2000).

The erotic offers a well of replenishing and provocative force to the woman who does not fear its revelation, nor succumb to the belief that sensation is enough. The erotic has often been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the plasticized sensation. For this reason, we have often turned away from the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power and information

(Lorde 2000).

The mentioned erotic potential (as a source for power and knowledge), through the attractiveness of the fairies' freedom and agency, becomes interesting and accessible for the female recipients of these stories. It becomes attractive for reflection, for (re)consideration of the notion of freedom, for different experience of the erotic (much different than in its' very limited aspect – like a means for reproduction). For the women, the

erotic, in this sense, can be seen as a realization and fulfilment of the physical integrity and relation towards their own body. Not only like an instrument for manipulation, pressure, revenge, or for pure hedonistic pleasure, but as a means towards women's self-realization and self-determination.

One common characteristic in all three interpretations is that the fairies are always out of the Symbolic order of the positivity. They show the rupture in the Order, its' inconsistency. Being completely out, semi positive (semi involved) or revolutionary emancipatory, they, anyway, remain out, showing not only the incoherence of the positive symbolic order, but also other possible worlds, other possible communities between the subjects and the Others. Communities which are not defined by the rude law of exclusion/inclusion, but of solidarity, singularity, inoperativeness.

Fluid identity – An idealized woman and a monster

But here it is necessary to explain how, and mostly through which symbols, the character of the fairy can be connected to that of the monster. To analyze the manners through which the symbols and the narrative techniques are combined to develop a paradoxical character that is simultaneously an ideally beautiful woman and a monster.

A significant symbol, often present on the fairy's body, is the goat's leg (Вражиновски 1999). Marjanić in her essay dedicated to the "animalistic" on the fairy, writes that the hoof refers to the aspect of the fairy that belongs "on the other side" (Marjanić 2004: 238). According to her interpretation, when the fairies have one hoof, they are sharing a detail of the iconography of the limping devil, meaning that the "fairies" theriomorphism could (but not necessarily) be rooted in the Christianised imaginarium of the demonic physical monstrosity" (Marjanić 2004: 238).

Aside from this interpretation, there are other explanations for the presence of the theriomorphic leg or hoof. According to one, the fairies have been "proud of their appearance. Because they have always been dressed up God cursed them and turns their legs into horse's hooves. Ashamed, they ran into the deep forest, where they are hiding since" (Nodilo 1981: 484–485 according to Kukuljević Sakcinski 1851: 90). But God left them their youthfulness and they hide their leg "under a long white dress" (Nodilo 1981: 485).

According to Marjanić, "the iconography of fairies' hooves may symbolise animalistic (in the sense of liberated) eroticism" (Marjanić 2004: 241). Here her interpretation is in line with George Devereux who connects this image to the character of the Onoskelis, who had one leg of a donkey (Lukijan, Vera historia 2.46) and Empousa who was believed to possess one leg made of copper, and the other of cow's excrement (Aristofan, *Žabe* 294) and concludes that female monsters have always been phallic (Devereux

1990: 131). The motif of fairy's hoofed legs can be associated with a series of "myths and fairy tales on the trail of the motif of walking disorders, from Oedipus' swollen feet to Cinderella's lost shoe", and their origin lies in the same mythical core from which they originate (...) the ecstatic phenomena: a journey into the world of the deceased. (...) Every deviation from the symmetry of the human form opens the door to the predisposition to transcend human boundaries, and to contact with other worlds" (Čiča 2002: 5).

The Southern Slavic hoof legged fairy can be also connected to the character of Baba Yaga, whose one leg is osseous, one of the symbols that connect her to the realm of the dead (Ипон 2013: 85). The same interpretative line is followed by Marjanić when she writes that the limb of an animal refers to both natures of the character who possess it, but the ideosphere of the interpretations depends on the religious background (Marjanić 2004: 244). Aigremont, in his study *Symbolism and Eroticism of Feet and Shoes* (1909), suggests that a deity and a demon who possess an animal leg in their earlier forms, had been a deity or demon of fertility and the principles of fertilization. He adds that in German superstition, the devil appears with a horse's foot, and in Czech superstition a horse's foot is given to a witch. Especially for goat-legged women, he points out that in their beginnings, they were inscribed as fertility goddesses, and mentions a goat-legged figure of a white woman – die weisse Frau (cf. Aigremont 1909: 21–22), which invokes the iconography of the Southern Slavic vila.

The opposition of the upper half of the body (long fair hair and wings) to the lower half (the hoofed leg, the diabolic limping) can be interpreted, according to Marjanić (2002: 248) as a construction of the fairy (the vila) as a „bipolar astral feminine phenomenon: the fairy as a figure of the 'inner woman' (positive form of anima) and the fairy as a 'negative' aspect of the 'destructive illusion' (liberated eroticism of Nature)". But here it is fair to emphasize that Marjanić's tendency to interpret the liberated eroticism as a "negative" aspect (that is, in her academic interpretation of the folklore to apply the anachronous patriarchal moral judgement which rejects free eroticism as "negative") is, in its essence, the same as the centuries-old attempts of the patriarchal systems and the conservative lines of psychoanalysis, to interpret folklore in a manner to build an image of a positive woman (which is thereafter "locked" in the house and the nursery), and to diabolize all aspects of life that emerge out of that frame as negative, or as forms of pathologies. Marjanić fails to feel and understand Audrey Lord's idea that free eroticism could have the potential for liberation, that is, to understand it as "sources of power in the culture of the oppressed that can generate energy for change" but Marjanić uses it as another weapon against various aspects of a woman's subversive attitude towards the patriarchal pressure.

The braided mane

There is an archetypal image of a fairy braiding her horse's mane. It is strictly forbidden to unraid the braids (Marjanić 2004: 245). According to a superstition written in Croatia, the fairy came, played with the horse and plaited its mane in 12 braids. The horse had been very cheerful. If anyone unplaited the braids they will plait on their own (Ivanišević 1905: 202). According to Marjanić (2004: 246) the braids can be interpreted as “a flickering interdependency between two mortal creatures”. She adds that, similarly to the image of the witch whose astral vehicle is the broom, the fairy, „like a nocturnal rider has chosen a hypomorphic astral vehicle through which she effectuates a technique of ecstasies” (Marjanić 2004: 247). Mirca Elijade (1985: 342) on the other hand, sees the braiding of the mane as a symbol of taming the masculine living strength, the free erotism of the unplaited mane.

The fairies not so implicit sexuality had been, by the patriarchal system, once again demonised by connecting it to sexual violence. There are legends considering “the riding” in which the fairy takes the role of an incubus, while the shepherd is in the role of the passive (succubus) in a state of trance (Marjanić 2004: 247).

Sometimes a fairy would tame a sleeping shepherd (...) would ride him through meadows. He would not be aware of it, because during the raiding he remains in a deep sleep

(Lovrenčević 1969–1971: 77).

It is once again interesting to interpret the politics and pedagogy behind the message about the state of conscience of the actors in the legend. The man is allowed to be “raided” only when he is passive, or (semi)conscious. Otherwise, the position of the man as a dominant actor in the story (and with it, in the society that retells and learns from these stories) will be structurally and thoroughly subverted. So, the man, as the embodiment of the position of power, must not willingly leave that position to her. But, since she manages to subvert the positions of power, this subversion must be ethically and morally condemned as wrong, so it gets connected to violence. She is also demonised – by taking advantage of the unconscious state of the man, and cunningly places herself as a dominant character who doesn't face the man but outwits him.⁴ The folk narrator felt what Audrey Lorde was thinking, writing that free eroticism could be a potential vehicle for liberation and “sources of power in the culture of the oppressed that can generate energy for change” and therefore decided, with

⁴ The recipient of the story is supposed to assume that the conscious and rational man will refuse the fairy.

a pedagogical goal, to diminish the power of such liberated sexuality by demonising it and presenting it as morally wrong and violent.⁵ These symbols, far beyond the domain of the human, are putting the fairies in the domain of the idealised and divine, while at the same time (through the symbols of the goat's/horse's hoof, the diabolic limping, the violent sexuality) in the domain of the monstrous.

The fairies analyzed through the perspective of the gothic and the monstrous

The gothic has its roots in fairy tales in many aspects, but in this context, the similarity is in the placing of the action outside of the context of the known and regulated (village and city), and in the distancing from the familiar (the well-known, the normal) and stepping into the realm of the unknown, the unregulated, or regulated in a manner that didn't have in mind humans and their politics. What is interesting here is the tendency to distance oneself from the familiar, placing the action in a chronotope distanced from everyday experience, and then, through that distance, to thematize contemporary political and social issues.

Just as the Gothic cemetery or the ruined castle is beyond the known (far from the city and the sense of security within the civilization and its regulations), so is the space where fairies live and dance – the space of the Otherness, the Liminal, the Marginal. Where there is no strict regulation of what is allowed or forbidden, under the guise of shadows and darkness, contemporary political themes are crystallized, but also questioned or rejected. The departure from the regulated context leaves the impression that questioning its principles and values does not pose a risk to the system, that subversive topics are still kept at bay of the system, at the level of an idea and do not pose a risk to society, or at least not a direct risk. Still, the subversive potential of these stories laid in their capacity to plant seeds for change, to form an idea or a wish and in the case of fairies, to show a story in which different lives, relations, roles and systems are possible.

The three almost naked and very tempting fairies can dance alone, focused on their own pleasure from the dance, possible only in a context distanced from the regulated society. Otherwise, the act would be considered sacrilege for the image of the woman and will be immediately stopped and severely punished. In the shadow of the forest, or at the bay of a faraway lake, a fairy can directly tell a woodcutter that she wants to have intercourse with him, or a shepherd can steal a fairy's shirt and claim the

⁵ The most famous condemnation of the woman who refused to lie under the man is the condemnation of Lilith, Adam's first wife, who refused to accept Adam's dominance. The interpretation of the South Slavic fairies as "lilithian characters" (Tamara Jurišić Sviben) will follow in the sequel of this paper.

fairy as his own. The story that in a subtle manner thematizes a contemporary taboo like sexual violence can be set only at the edge, or beyond the system of regulations.

This is also similar with the fairy who is the helper of the hero, someone who engages in a fight with him, or invites him for a dance. She (almost like a real woman) can appear as equal to a man, only in a context far away from the patriarchal system of gender regulations where men and women are not equal. The subversion in the fairy tales originating from the conservative and patriarchal cultures is possible mainly in a context beyond the regulation.

Ellen Moers (1977) considers the gothic “a coded expression of women’s fears of entrapment within the domestic and within the female body”. The fairy’s entrapment into a marriage she didn’t want and from which she cannot escape (without her magical shirt) and the obligation to produce children, had been the destiny of many women over the course of centuries in the places where these tales had been known and shared. Without any doubt, this tale can be seen as an obvious example of the women’s fears of entrapment within the domestic. Additionally, it tells the story of an entrapment within the female body destined to reproduce and, significantly more than men, to be stuck in the domain of the house. However, the fact that the fairy finally runs away, keeping the seed of liberation from entrapment into the domestic sphere and into the sexuality, is strongly bonded to the reproduction. This is a message that remained and kept a seed of resistance in women and girls long after they have heard the story.

This fairy first appears as a victim and later transforms into a heroine that saves herself. Moers states that this narrative (that she first notes in Ann Radcliffe’s novels) in which a female protagonist who is a heroine and a victim at the same time would later become one of the typical characteristics of the Female Gothic. This fairy tale shows once again that some aspects of the Gothic (like this one and many more) had been influenced by fairy tales (Moers 1977).

What I found particularly interesting, in the process of analyzing the role of the fairies who, in many aspects, “perform important work for us as individuals and communities, policing our boundaries, defining our norms” (Mittman and Hensel 2018: x), are the similarities they have with the politics and contemporary techniques behind the construction of the bodies and characters of monsters. The fairies and the monsters are part of the realm beyond the regulations of the so-called civilized world. Anthropomorphous and attractive (the fairies) or an embodiment of fear and disgust (different monsters like dragons, vampires etc.), they both show where the boundaries between the civilized and the Otherness are placed. But the anthropomorphism of fairies and their occasional interfering with

humans show that this border can be quite porous. With it they are showing the impermanence and the actual fragility of the culturally imposed roles. Once again, very similarly to the concept and role of the monsters:

the political-cultural monster, the embodiment of radical difference, paradoxically threatens to erase differences in the world of its creators, to demonstrate the potential for the system to differ from its own difference, in other words not to be different at all, to cease to exist as a system... The difference that exists outside the system is terrifying because it reveals the truth of the system, its relativity, its fragility and its mortality... Despite what is said around us persecutors are never obsessed with difference but rather by its unutterable contrary, the lack of difference

(Girard 1986: 33).

Girard's claim about the embodiment of difference threatening to erase the difference and to reveal the relativity and the fragility of the system is evident in the interpretation of the fairy as an embodiment of the female aspects that the patriarchal system condemned as bad and wrong. Through being the embodiment of freedom and living in a state of physical and emotional satisfaction, while at the same time being able to interfere in the humans' society, and, finally to reach her happy ending (liberation from the forced marriage), she is able to surpass the boundaries between the regulated system and the Otherness, and with it, to subtly send a message that the strongly imposed norms and roles are not natural, but socially and politically constructed and contextualized, and as such can be changed.

Although she writes about the „technologies“ and the politics behind the formation of the monstrous bodies (bodies whose main purpose is to scare and disgust which is the opposite of the tempting and idealized body of the fairy) Judith Halberstam (2006: 2) claims that the „gothic tradition has everything to do with the changing technology of subjectivity that Foucault describes. Gothic fiction is a technology of subjectivity, one that produces the deviant subjectivities opposite which the normal, the healthy and pure can be known“. The life that the fairies live combined with the supposedly righteous punishment which is especially emphasized in the stories where, after flying away, the fairy is caught once again, in collaboration with her sisters who advise her husband that the shirt must be burned in order to keep his wife forever, are an example of a freedom that is wrong, a way of life that shouldn't be lived, or it comes with, so considered, righteous punishment. Therefore the fairies who dance at the lake, or those who directly tell the shepherds that they want to have intercourse with them, and the fairies who leave their marriages and children, are the deviant subjectivities that oppose the idea of the normal life that a decent and respectful woman should live.

What is particularly interesting to me about the gothic, and its possible relation to these fairy tales, is the treatment of sexuality, through which, once again, a political and pedagogical message is being sent. Halberstam (2006: 17), writing about the figure of the vampire in the gothic (which is also applicable in the analyses of the fairies) claims that the production of sexuality as identity and as a version of identity (perversion – turning away from identity) in Gothic novels consolidates normal sexuality by defining it in contrast to its monstrous manifestations. The fairies are an example of a female sexuality in its monstrous manifestations, mainly because they dared to practice it as a sort of enjoyment (her priority is her own pleasure) detached from the purpose of reproduction. This attitude is shown as wrong throughout different presentations of the fairies. Sometimes it is punished with forced marriage (marriage as the only context in which sexuality can be performed) or the fairies that live in this way are portrayed as negative and dangerous figures (ones that make the man go mad or impotent, or they kill the sister who tried to save her brother who ‘lost his mind’ after nine years with a fairy). The man is portrayed as mad, or as someone who is not able to make a decision, and the whole responsibility for this sort of monstrous behavior lies on the fairy (on the woman who dared to enjoy beyond the border of the allowed).

According to Halberstam, the Gothic inspires fear and desire at the same time – fear of and desire for the other:

fear and desire for the possible latent perversity lurking within the reader herself. But the fear and desire within the same body produce a disciplinary effect. Gothic gives readers the thrill of reading about so called perverse activities while identifying aberrant sexualities as a condition of otherness and as an essential trait of foreign bodies. The monster, of course, marks the distance between the perverse and the supposedly disciplined sexuality of the reader. Also, the signifiers of ‘normal’ sexuality maintain a kind of hegemonic power by remaining invisible

(Halberstam 2006: 13).

Once again, the fairies had the potential and a role in the story similar to that of the monster. Only the fairies are not a manifestation of the monstrous body but can be interpreted as monsters in (a very aesthetically idealized and tempting) disguise. Here, in the relationship between desire and fear, there is a similarity between the fairy tales and the gothic plot. This relation (fear-desire) is as old as storytelling itself. The image of extraordinarily beautiful women, with long fair hair and transparent dresses, dancing during the night (the time when these stories were retold frequently, and what is more important, were partially believed, had been told at a time that insisted that women be dressed modestly and their sexuality was considered a taboo and meant to be invisible from the public eye), is

producing a feeling of lust and desire, while at the same time it is producing a fear, and it is a fear on a couple of levels that has a strong pedagogical background. First, it is the fear of the fairy herself who has the power to make the man sick, possessed, detached and impotent, while also, on another level, the fear of the effect that the relationship with the fairy will have on his position in the group where he belongs – the society. Then, there is the fear of the reasons for the appearance of the particular desire, making the man concerned about his own normality as a member of the group of the normal. For women, the desire is assumed to be the desire to live the life of freedom and pleasure, liberated from the burden of the norms of patriarchy. On the other hand there is, similarly to the case of the man, the fear of the effects that this kind of life may have on her position within the society which can be punished much more severely than in the case of the man. The effects of the realization of the desire to step beyond the field of a normal, accepted, productive (in the sense of creating offspring) relationship, the throwing away of the role that the patriarchy insists upon, can be punished by casting away the transgressor. And being cast away, or killed, produces the fear of the desire itself, even before considering its realization.

So, similarly to the Gothic, the stories about fairies produce the above-mentioned thrill of reading about so called perverse activities, while identifying aberrant sexualities as a condition of otherness. The fairy, similar to the monster, in one of her aspects becomes a symbol of perverse sexuality. Her sexuality is perverse because it is somehow, through the dance and her physical appearance, alluded to publicly and because it is focused on pleasure and not reproduction) and on the supposedly disciplined sexuality of the reader (who will be tempted but will refuse to go beyond the border of the allowed out of fear).

However, as I mentioned before, the fairies represent the idea of the feminine as independent, strong, and self-fulfilling on its own, capable and powerful without the shadow of the male protector. Simultaneously, in their resemblance to women (they are almost like women) and their openness for identification, they show a variant of life that is almost possible. Here also lies the potential for emancipation.

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САМОВИЛИТЕ: НИШАЈКИ СЕ МЕЃУ УГНЕТУВАЊЕТО И СЛОБОДАТА*

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Резиме

Во овој труд се анализира ликот на самовилата во балканскиот фолклор со посебен фокус на неговиот потенцијал за еманципација и ослободување. Трудот е поделен на три дела. Првиот дел е фокусиран на трите интерпретативни линии преку кои можат да се структурираат ликовите на самовилите. Првата интерпретативна линија ги образложува нивните улоги, ликови и судбина во рамката на машкидоминираниот мејнстрим дискурс како чисто негативни ликови. Оваа интерпретација е фокусирана на самовилите претставени како Другите, кои го предизвикуваат и искушуваат поредокот на човекот поради што мора да бидат „казнети“. Втората интерпретативна линија им приоѓа на самовилите во полупозитивна смисла, како предмет на фасцинација. Главните улоги сè уште се машки. Самовилите се појавуваат како партнери на машките ликови во различни борби и во отпорот кон поширокото општество, како форма на помошник, инспирација, но сепак се држат во сенка. Третата интерпретативна линија ги анализира самовилите како автономни ликови во нивниот полн интегритет и потенцијал.

Вториот дел од трудот е фокусиран на анализа како и преку кои симболи, ликот на самовилата, може да се поврзе со оној на чудовиштето. Ги анализира начините преку кои се комбинираат симболите и наративните техники за да се развие парадоксален лик, кој, истовремено, е идеалноубава жена и чудовиште.

Третиот дел ги анализира самовилите низ перспективата на готското и на монструозното. Тој најмногу е фокусиран на политиката и на идеологијата „скриена“ на телото на суштеството, кое живее во светот надвор од регулацијата на системот и како телото „врши важна работа за нас, како поединци и како заедница, – ги потенцира нашите граници, ги дефинира нашите норми“ (Mittman и Hensel 2018: x).

* Трудот претставува дел од проектот „Меморија и екокосмос“ кој е финансиски поддржан од Министерството за образование и наука на РС Македонија (2021 – 2023), а организиран од Институтот за фолклор „Марко Цепенков“ – Скопје со Одлука за финансирање на научноистражувачки проекти бр. 12-15533/2 од 03.11.2021 г.