



FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

Feminist Rewriting of Folktales: Éilís Ní Dhuibhne and Carmen Blanco

Traballo de fin de grao

Andrea Martínez de la Iglesia

Directora: Manuela Palacios González

Curso 2018/2019



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A handwritten signature in blue ink, located to the right of the author's name. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'Carmen Blanco'.

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The aim of this essay is to explore the feminist rewriting of traditional folktales through the comparison of Irish and Galician literature. This will be done by analysing two contemporary authors: Carmen Blanco and Éilís Ní Dhuibhne; the books that are being considered for this dissertation are *Vermella con lobos* (2004) and *The Inland Ice* (1997), both of them compilations of rewritten popular tales from a feminist perspective.

Since traditional stories tend to be produced from a patriarchal point of view, the main objective of this dissertation is to analyse the mechanisms that these two authors use so as to make of the stories feminist tales and to identify the elements that change from the folk stories to the rewritten ones. The aim is to observe each writer's main features and to compare them in order to see if both use the same criteria or whether these criteria differ from one to another.

Structurally speaking, the body of this dissertation will be divided into three chapters, besides the Introduction and the Conclusions. The first chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of Carmen Blanco's book. It will be followed by the study of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's work, which will constitute the second chapter. Finally, there will be a third chapter with a comparison of the two authors.

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1. Introduction

This study explores the links between Galician and Irish literature through a comparison of the works by Carmen Blanco and Éilís Ní Dhuibhne. Galician nineteenth-century writers were the first to point out the cultural connections between Ireland and Galicia, as both cultural fields were influenced by the “common Celtic heritage” (Palacios and Lojo 13). The relations between these two nations are of various kinds. Their “Atlantic situation” implies that they share a similar landscape and weather, which could also have an influence on “the inhabitants’ world view” (Palacios and Lojo 14). According to Palacios and Lojo (2009), both communities were “bastions of Catholicism in Europe” and religion continues to be very influential and even “decisive in family and sexual politics” (15). Both in Ireland and Galicia there is a linguistic conflict, in which an external language (Spanish and English) has been introduced and adopted by a big part of the population as their own language and, consequently, Galician and Gaelic are losing speakers (Palacios and Lojo 16). Moreover, the agrarian economy of these communities, although “radically transformed” at present, provoked in the past massive emigration from Ireland and Galician with important consequences (Palacios and Lojo 19). In addition, it is curious that both literatures shared a boom of female writers during the 1980s and 1990s, favoured by a number of social and cultural changes in these decades. Apart from these similarities, Palacios and Lojo argue that what is done in one literature is relevant to the other (24), so the connections between the two cultures and literatures need not be just of similitude. In this essay I will try to identify these similarities, or differences, by comparing the work of Carmen Blanco and Éilís Ní Dhuibhne.

Carmen Blanco is a Galician professor at the University of Santiago de Compostela and a writer from Lugo. Her production is very diverse; she writes narrative, poetry, and essays. She has taken part in feminist activities for the liberation of women since 1970. Most of her production, literary or not, is about women, sex, the connections of power relations with culture, and literature. She is the coordinator, together with Claudio Rodríguez Fer, of the intercultural and libertarian *Unión Libre*.

Cadernos de Vida e Culturas. On the other hand, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne is an Irish author from Dublin. She writes novels and short stories, both in English and Gaelic. She likewise has scholarly articles and literary criticism. She studied Old and Middle English and Irish Folklore at University College Dublin and at the University of Copenhagen. She has worked as a curator in the National Library of Ireland for many years. She is an ambassador for the Irish Writers' Centre and the President of the Folklore of Ireland Society (An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann). We can notice that Carmen Blanco and Éilís Ní Dhuibhne are two writers from very different backgrounds and fields, but both are authors of short stories. They have works that belong to other genres, but I find it proper to analyse their short stories because, according to Manuela Palacios and Helena González (2008), until recently, there was not an institutional and popular appreciation of Galician female narrators. While the boom of female authors in Irish literature was associated to both narrative and poetry, in Galician literature female writers have been mainly poets, so there is a confluence of gender and genre (Palacios and González 21). For this reason, I find it relevant to include a Galician short story writer in this study so as to put the focus on a neglected genre.

The corpus used for this dissertation comprises two books: *Vermella con lobos* (2004), by Carmen Blanco, and *The Inland Ice* (1997), by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne. I chose them because they are compilations of short stories which contain rewritings of traditional tales from a feminist point of view, which will be the focus of attention in this essay. Carolina Fernández (1997) states:

En el terreno específico de la crítica feminista se ha dedicado una especial atención a los modos en los que las estructuras masculinas de poder son inscritas o codificadas en nuestra herencia literaria y las consecuencias de dicha codificación para las mujeres, tanto en su papel de personajes de ficción, como en el de lectoras o escritoras. (21)

According to Fernández, feminist rewriting of folktales is a decisive mechanism so as to uncover the representative systems of patriarchal oppression (21). In addition, the revisions work as an ideal weapon to reformulate and avoid the perpetuation of all these narratives in which women are totally depicted according to patriarchal canons and offered to young women as the ideal feminine prototype

(Fernández 21). In view of this, I will examine how Blanco and Ní Dhuibhne change their narrations so as to make them part of feminist literature. Indeed, the main purpose of this study is to find the mechanisms that both authors have used to modify the original stories and to explore the extent of their variations. This dissertation will identify the degree to which these changes affect the plot of the story, the resolution of problems, the construction of the character and the narrative voice, among other elements.

The analysis of the writers' strategies will be carried out by following one main critical apparatus around the notion of the archetype. This is very relevant when dealing with folktales because archetypes are recurrent motifs or characters in myths, folklore, religion, etc. (DiTerLi¹). Carolina Fernández, in her work *Las nuevas hijas de Eva* (1997), found seven archetypes when revising three different variants of the folktale "Bluebeard". These archetypes appear consistently in classic narratives: feminine curiosity, feminine passivity, relations among women, virginity and sex, marriage, the oppressor and the redeemer (Fernández 128). Although Fernández identified these archetypes in the analysis of "Bluebeard", we can extrapolate them to many other traditional tales that repeat the same type of characters, situations or endings with very similar characteristics. Fernández develops these archetypes by taking into account that they result from the representative values of patriarchy and have been consolidated through different versions of "Bluebeard" (128). By analysing both traditional versions and feminist rewritings of this tale, Fernández realises that the revisions made by female authors destroy the patriarchal images in the tale and rebuild woman's figure from a feminist perspective (128). In order to achieve this, it is often necessary to subvert these archetypes. Taking this into account, *Vermella con lobos* and *The Inland Ice*, being feminist revisions, are narratives that challenge the perpetuation of these archetypes.

¹ Diccionario de Termos Literarios Centro Ramón Piñeiro (See Works Cited).

This dissertation is divided into two parts. The first chapter analyses the work by Carmen Blanco, *Vermella con lobos*. It will contain a study of archetype by archetype so as to analyse how they are subverted in Blanco's narrative. The second one will provide an analysis of *The Inland Ice*, by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne through a similar approach; when needed, I will give a summary or explanation of some stories. Although the chapters will focus on the analysis of the dismantling of patriarchal archetypes, other complementary aspects, if relevant, will be commented on. Finally, the conclusion will bring together the results of both analyses in a comparative way.

2. Carmen Blanco's *Vermella con Lobos*

In *Vermella con lobos*, a collection of short stories published in 2004, Carmen Blanco reproduces typical popular folktales: “Little Red Riding Hood”, “Peter Pan”, “Arabian Nights”, “Little Mermaid”, “Goldilocks and the Three Bears”, “Snow White”, “Sleeping Beauty”, “Cinderella”, “Bluebeard” and “Alice in Wonderland”. She rewrites these narratives from a feminist perspective, which leads her to change many aspects present in the traditional versions. In the following sections, I will analyse these elements that are subverted or changed in Blanco's narrative so as to dismantle patriarchal archetypes.

2.1. Subversion of archetypes in *Vermella con Lobos*

2.1.1. Feminine curiosity

According to Fernández (1997), the origins of the archetype of femininity curiosity are in classic mythology, such as the story of Pandora or the myth of Adan and Eve (45). In both myths women's curiosity leads to chaos: Pandora opens the box which contains all the evil elements of the world, while Eve wants to taste the forbidden apple and, consequently, she and Adan are expelled from Paradise. There are many other narratives with several variations, but they have in common the fact that curiosity, apart from being assigned to women, is seen as something negative. Indeed, it is regarded as the triggering force that brings evil to the world. Moreover, apart from carrying negative repercussions, curiosity in women is considered to be uncontrollable (Fernández 46). This suggests the idea that female characters in traditional fiction are not powerful enough to control their curiosity. Another interesting point is the fact that women do not show curiosity in the sense of an aspiration to broaden their knowledge, but in the sense of intrusiveness. Therefore, women are represented as meddling rather than inquisitive.

In “Bluebeard” the notion of feminine curiosity as negative is quite clear and it even mirrors the myth of Adan and Eve. Bluebeard's wife ignores the prohibition established by her husband and penetrates the secret chamber where she discovers the deceased bodies of his previous spouses.

Because of this, he almost kills her. Although Bluebeard is an evil character, the story sends the message that due to her curiosity and her failure to control it, the woman could have died. The emphasis is not on the fact that he is a murderer and may kill her, but on the woman's disobedience to her partner. The responsibility, then, lies in the female character. In addition, Fernández (1997) gives another sense to this curiosity:

La clave para esta interpretación vendría dada por la llave impregnada de sangre. La llave en sí estaría asociada con el órgano sexual masculino, mientras que la habitación prohibida representaría un espacio marcado por la presencia femenina. La mujer de Barbazul tiene prohibido introducir la llave en la cerradura de ese gabinete en ausencia de su esposo, es decir, sobre ella recae la obligación de resistir toda tentación y serle fiel (fidelidad a sus órdenes y, en definitiva, a sí mismo), no por decisión propia, sino por obligación. (36)

Thus, curiosity will be likewise linked with sexuality in the sense of sexual curiosity. The desire to experiment passion would be seen as something wrong for women too. Indeed, Bruno Bettelheim also examines the sexual implications of this narrative: “‘Bluebeard’ is a tale about sexual temptation” (qtd. in Bacchilega 106). Sexuality will be analysed more profoundly in 2.1.4, when discussing the archetype of virginity and sexual relations.

As we have mentioned, in spite of the fact that Fernández applied her analysis of archetypes to “Bluebeard”, they can be identified in many other stories. They may not be so explicit as in this story, but they might be suggested. Although in many tales we do not see female curiosity as the reason for punishment, we do see feminine characters who lack curiosity. Commonly, they are the central characters of tales; the good women that are shown as an example of appropriate feminine behaviour, such as Snow White, Cinderella or Briar Rose. This is something that should be taken into account, since the absence of some attributes may also be a way of spreading moral values.

We said before that female characters are generally curious in the most pejorative sense; they are not presented as individuals who desire to increase their knowledge. Carmen Blanco in *Vermella con lobos*, presents curiosity as a quality of most of the female characters too, but she uses curiosity in a particular manner. She removes the negative idea of curiosity in female figures; she displays it as a

positive characteristic. Moreover (and maybe even more importantly), she changes the conception of curiosity; she goes beyond and turns her characters into women who think by themselves, who wish to discover new things and also themselves. Knowledge is a mighty weapon for women all over the book. In fact, it gives the impression that learning is a way of salvation for most of her protagonists, or, at least, something that brings positive things to them. One of the most representative short stories of this interpretation would be “Silva Rosa” (53-58), a retelling of the famous narrative “Briar Rose”. As Olga Novo points out in “Fada Revolucionaria” (2004), the original tale put the emphasis on the kiss of the prince to wake Briar Rose up, but Blanco deals with the dream and the wood (60). According to Novo:

Consciente da dificultade da realización da revolución social, a autora reflexiona sobre a revolución persoal, íntima e comunal [...].

A estancia pracenteira no bosque condúcea á reflexión –ao soño de cen anos da Bela–, a un soño que non é letargo senón un libre deambular da mente para crear e vivir con plenitude. (61)

So, Blanco insists on the dream as a moment of remembrance and reflection. In the original tale, the dream is a punishment, a condemnation; the woman needs a kiss to solve this situation. However, here, our protagonist enjoys the dream because her mind can work peacefully. In fact, the story itself refers to the traditional “Briar Rose” version, and criticises the fact that it does not allow us to know what the princess and the other characters were dreaming or thinking of: “entrar nun soño que contiña incontables realidades e abría as portas a unha existencia múltiple. Porque o conto non contaba os soños da bela durmente e dos cabalos e dos cans durante o seu longo sono de 100 anos” (57).

Another case of the exaltation of knowledge in Blanco’s work would be “Novas noites nosas” (29-33). This narrative is based on the traditional tale “The Arabian Nights”, but as Novo points out, Blanco “constrúe nesta pequena xoia literaria –podemos dicir, poética– un impresionante canto coral de mulleres que manifestan a súa sabedoría [...]” (57). In this short story we can hear the speeches of diverse women, and many of them are representative of this distinctive curiosity related to the attraction to the power of wisdom. Indeed, Alicia, one of the voices, claims: “A verdade resplandece

como a lúa chea. Contemplámola ardendo. Curará os nosos ollos picados polo poder con alfinetes afiados” (31). The next woman, Mariña, admits: “Equivoqueime moitas veces. Pero pase o que pase aprendo, sempre saio gañando. [...] Madeira de sándalo é a sabedoría. Que riqueza”. The following voice, Luz, is depicted as “unha rapaza intelixente” (31) and Lupa is an archaeologist. Thus, this corresponds with what Novo says about truth and wisdom being the liberating object through which freedom can be obtained and oppression fought (57).

2.1.2. Feminine passivity

For Fernández (1997), female passivity is closely related to male activity (69). In this sense, this is connected with the archetype of the redeemer, because while women have to wait to be saved, male heroes are the ones who take action and rescue women. The male figure of the redeemer needs women to be passive.

As a general rule, female characters in Blanco’s narrative are not passive at all. There is only one example of passiveness in the retelling of “The Little Mermaid”, “Os meus ollos falaban ao corazón máis fondo que o fermoso canto das escravas” (35-40), when Mariña (Blanco’s Little Mermaid) is in love with someone who makes her a submissive individual who lives only for her lover. However, at the end she realises that she is giving up on herself for love and she is able to escape from this situation. Thus, although at the beginning she seems to fulfil a passive role, eventually she can get over this, leaving her passivity behind. In the retelling of “Bluebeard”, “O cuarto oculto” (81-87), the protagonist does not need her brothers to save her, as in the original tale. In fact, she is able to overcome her depression with medical help, but also by herself, by taking over her life again and forgetting the past love. Even though she suffers from a mental illness because of her ex-boyfriend’s stalking, she is never passive. From the beginning, we see that she remains faithful to her values. When Azul, Blanco’s Bluebeard, asks her to have an abortion, she refuses to do that even though she is aware that Azul will leave her: “a min parir o que xerara parecíame o máis natural [...]” (81). Despite being poor, alone

with her mother, and abandoned by her boyfriend, she is not going to be submissive and agree to abort. This strongly opposes the original tale in which Bluebeard's wife, who has not even got a name, is quite obedient to her husband, and when she is not, she is terribly punished. We can also identify something similar in "Vermella con lobos" (15-17), the retelling of "Little Red Riding Hood". The most traditional versions of Perrault and the Grimm Brothers function as tales of warning to girls, who teach them how they have to behave and obey their mothers and grandmothers. The tradition of "Little Red Riding Hood", among many other stories, shows the same idea of the ideal girl (or woman) who simply has to follow the rules. But Blanco's Vermella, her version of Little Red Riding Hood, is not the passive girl who limits herself to obeying her mother. The quotes chosen by Blanco at the beginning of "Vermella con lobos" denounce this concept, as in Rosalía de Castro's work: "Non cantes, non chores, non rías, non fales, nin entres nin sallas sin mo peguntare", which, according to Novo (2004), shows the resistance against the constraints of tradition, family, religion and society (54).

Bacchilega (1997) observes that there is a "narrative strategy that stands as one of the narrative rules for fairy tale production: an external or impersonal narrator whose straightforward statements carry no explicit mark of human perspective –gender, class, or individuality" (34). She mentions this in her analysis of "Snow White", but it is something that may be extrapolated to any folktale. Who is the narrator in Cinderella, Snow White or Briar Rose? We never come to know it. It is as if truth speaks by itself. There is no subjective narrator who is giving us its vision of the facts, but there is a voice who tells what it tells as irrevocable truth. This is a strong way of transmitting moral and social values. And it may be one of the main causes for the big impact and influence that fairy tales have on society. Carmen Blanco seems to be aware of that because her protagonists are the narrators of their own stories. So we can finally see the world as they experience it and not through an external voice. Blanco is giving a voice to all the silenced women in the history of folktales. The most representative narrative of this idea would be "Novas noites nosas" (29-33), in which many women's voices sing together for

liberation. Related to this is Bottigheimer's study (1987) of direct speech in "Cinderella", in which she concludes:

The prince, with eight direct statements, dominates the direct speech of this tale, while the stepmother's seven speeches mark her as a woman to beware of. The stepsisters appear as relatively undifferentiated; three of their utterances are expressed in common, while each has only a single statement of her own. Consistent with the general paternal ineffectuality one finds in Grimms' Tales two of Cinderella's father's statements are unspoken but directly rendered thoughts, while the third is a kindly question. Cinderella utters five incantations in addition to responding once to her father's question concerning what she would like him to bring her from his trip. (58)

We therefore see that not only are female protagonists not allowed to tell their own story through the narration, but neither are they allowed to express themselves through direct speech. In Blanco's narrative this is totally subverted, because there are barely examples of men speaking in the tales. She is empowering these women with direct speech so that they may control their own narratives.

2.1.3. Relations among women

According to Fernández (1997), in folktales, the relation between women is strongly conditioned by beauty contests, which try to find the most beautiful woman so that the prince can get married with her (77). This factor makes girls and women in traditional narratives, by nature, enemies. Every young and lovely woman may be a competitor in the attempt to get a husband which is, as will be seen in point 2.1.5., the essential goal for the protagonists. In fact, the only friend a woman can have in tales is the one who cannot compete against her in the search for a partner. Apart from being rivals, many secondary female characters are portrayed as evil, such as the stepmother in many tales. This leaves the heroine with negative relations with other women. The message sent by this is clear: you are alone, you cannot have female friends because they are competing with you. This is something that is easily visible outside literature, as society still delivers this message today. There are barely cases of female friendship in films, for instance.

Many examples of this bad relationship among women can be found in folktales. In “Snow White”, the main protagonist risks being killed by her own stepmother for being more appealing than her. Bacchilega (1997) affirms that one of the main themes in this tale is “female jealousy” (31). Indeed, when speaking about the mirror that evaluates the good looks of both characters Bacchilega says “it is a patriarchal frame that takes the two women’s beauty as the measure of their (self)worth, and thus defines their relationship as a rivalry” (34). In the case of “Cinderella” we also see the image of the evil stepmother, added to the two bad stepsisters. The struggle here is searching for a husband for the two stepsisters, who see Cinderella as a clear competitor.

What Blanco does in *Vermella con lobos* is to give female friends to her protagonists. They are no longer alone in a man’s world, nor do they see other women as rivals for the love of a husband. The short stories are full of delightful images of women together; sharing their knowledge, being allies, protecting each other... One of the most obvious examples of this would be, again, “Novas noites nosas” (29-33). In “Arabian Nights”, Sherezade is by herself telling stories to save her life, but Blanco’s version transforms the tale into a sort of poem (Novo 57) in which various voices of women sing together. This idea can be seen at the end, when we meet both Lia and Zulaica: Lia is Jewish, while Zulaica is Muslim. The fact that the religions of these women are mentioned may not be by chance, it may refer to the political struggle between these two social groups. What is really interesting here is that, despite their differences and the conflict, they are close to each other and chant together as equals, fighting for their freedom. In “Os meus ollos falaban ao corazón máis fondo que o fermoso canto das escravas” (35-40), there is also an example of women supporting women when the protagonist’s sisters try to help her to leave a toxic and abusive relationship with a man: “Toma o puñal, dirían elas, miñas irmás, pero a min non me importaba. El ou ti, insistirían, pero a min non me importaba” (38).

Besides presenting friendly relations among women in the tales, Blanco makes another significant change to subvert this archetype. In Ruth B. Bottigheimer’s *Grimm’s Bad Girls & Bold*

Boys (1987), the author discusses how the treatment of speech is important in tales and the fact that it has a gender differentiation (51-56, ch. 5). She points out that “implicit in most tales is the narrative, textual, and lexical silence of the biological mother”, giving the cases of “Snow White” and “Cinderella” (53). This is relevant because in traditional tales we barely come to meet the protagonist’s mother; instead, we have an evil stepmother. Blanco changes this in her narrative. Indeed, when retelling “Snow White” in “Branca coma a neve” (37-52), Blanco resurrects Snow White’s mother. Apart from that, the writer directly denounces the relation among women and the absence of a good mother present in the different versions of the original tale:

Son a nai morta, Branca. No conto, cando ti naces eu morro, porque o mundo en que foi creado non concibe que poidamos vivir xuntas. Eu morro e son substituída por outra que non te quere e así comeza o inferno para ti, pois a substituta ordena a túa propia morte. E, desta maneira, estamos na historia as dúas, unha morta e outra perseguida de morte. Mais hai outros contos en que a miña existencia foi borrada totalmente e no meu lugar aparece unha malísima nai celosa do amor que por ti sente o teu pai e que te abandona no bosque ou te escraviza facendo de ti algo aínda peor que unha cincenta. Todos son contos vellos. Moi vellos. (47)

This is how this short story begins. She is referring to different versions of the tale which have in common the presence of a mother figure who is jealous of her (step)daughter and wants to get rid of her. Apart from this accusation, Blanco fights this archetype by making the mother the narrator of the story. Thus, while in the original tale the mother is “silenced” (Bottigheimer 53), in Blanco’s version she appropriates the narration and can tell her story once and for all. Until now, she had never had the privilege to speak by herself, and we only came to know her through a narrator who scarcely mentioned her. This idea is treated by Novo in “Fada revolucionaria” (2004). For her, Blanco is giving back to women their formerly muted voice and thereby is creating the possibility of a favourable relationship between mother and girl (60).

Furthermore, Blanco has other weapons to fight against this image of women’s jealousy and rivalry. In fact, Branca’s mother speaks about the stepmother who is also in the tale. Novo (2004) gives us a description of how this character is presented:

Por outra banda, aludiamos anteriormente á posibilidade dos lazos solidarios entre mulleres apuntados pola autora no relato. Neste sentido, a imaxe da madrasta asasina de Brancaneves aparece liberada na figuración de Carmen Blanco das súas calidades malélicas e convertida nunha compañeira e amiga, amante do pai e mestre nos praceres sexuais para Branca. (60)

We see that the competition for the love of a man is no longer the central theme or what will condition the relationship between women, even when the type of love is the same (romantic or sexual for both mother and stepmother). This is something totally original and revolutionary in a tale like “Snow White”, because Blanco changes not only the relation between mother and daughter into a happy one, but she includes a third element (the stepmother) in this family / relation, which does not alter the happiness. She is also giving an alternative to the typical family model that tales show. Moreover, Branca’s mother seems to admire how the stepmother teaches new things to her daughter:

“Ensinoute a ti a te arranxar o pelo, a pintarte e saber gozar do tacto e as formas da roupa interior. [...] e ensinoute a comer mazás sensualmente. E cando fuches maior falábache de sexo e de amor dunha maneira moi diferente a como o faciamos pai ou eu. Tiveches unha enorme sorte en tela como amiga, igual que nos ocorreu a nós.” (49-51)

Here, the figure of the stepmother is related to the one of a teacher. We can connect this with what we saw in the archetype of female curiosity. We said that this curiosity in Blanco was more connected with wisdom and intelligence, and now we can see how knowledge can be obtained from a woman. In this case, it is sexual knowledge the one that Branca’s stepmother gives her. Female characters are one source of wisdom for Blanco’s protagonist, something that we cannot see in traditional narrations. Moreover, it is important to point out the reference to the apple (“comer mazás sensualmente”), which can be also a critique of the traditional tale, in which the stepmother poisons the fruit so as to kill Snow White (Novo 60).

2.1.4. Virginity and sexual relations

According to L. Hutcheon “los cuentos tradicionales facilitan la transmisión del ‘conocimiento’ colectivo recibido del pasado y, por consiguiente, reflejan los mitos sexuales contruidos bajo el patriarcado” (qtd. in Fernández 1997). In “Fertility Control and the Birth of the Modern European Fairy-Tale Heroine” (2004), Bottigheimer declares:

Human physiology has determined that in heterosexual sexual relations, a man penetrates the body of his female partner. Anatomical penetration was long understood as active and male, while being penetrated represented passivity and femaleness. That was both the customary and the normative vocabulary of sex and gender theory from 1700 onward, and it remained an unstated principle throughout most of the twentieth century (R. Davis 52, 744-45, 189). I would argue, however, that in historical terms it was not penetration in and of itself that defined passivity and femaleness but the real world consequences of that penetration. It was and is the impregnating potential of genital penetration that made it logical to equate penetration with passivity and to further equate passivity with femaleness and femininity. (39)

We can see how the author relates the construction of femininity with sex. When Fernández develops this archetype in her book (1997), she is aware of the absence of explicit allusions to sex in folktales, but, according to her, these narratives reflect sexual relations indirectly, presenting constantly a masculine superiority (86), a conclusion which coincides with Bottigheimer’s idea.

We will follow Fernández’s view of the treatment of sex as taboo in folktales (86). This is interesting because it has an impact on the representation of female characters, who have no erotic desire and are not interested in consummating relations. In addition, the only physical relation is a kiss and it is always with a man. So we can see that carnal relationships are avoided. As a result, the protagonists are presented as ideal women, who have to be sexually innocent and heterosexual, since romantic relations are always between a man and a woman. This can be linked to the first archetype (female curiosity) too, because sexual curiosity is unthinkable as a characteristic of female protagonists.

What we observe in Blanco’s revisions is quite the opposite. Her female protagonists want to experiment with their sexuality; they are interested in it and they even show non-conventional

relations. For instance, in “Novas noites nosas” Morgana says directly “a liberdade é bicar un mariñeiro nun porto sen saber quen é” (32). Sexual freedom is one of the things that this chorus of women sings for.

In “Vermella con lobos” (13-17), the experimentation of female sensuality is strongly suggested. The two major traditional versions, Grimm Brothers’ and Perrault’s, have in common that both portray the wolf as the enemy and the danger a woman has to avoid. However, in Blanco’s versions, the wolf is the representation of the lover (Novo 55). In fact, Vermella is a woman-wolf (Novo 55) and she is no longer afraid of him. It is her grandmother who facilitates the contact between the woman and the wolf. So here, Vermella gets rid of moral assumptions and social conventions and can enjoy her sexuality with the lover-wolf freely. One of the most representative phrases is that which describes Vermella as “un corpo desexante” (16), as Novo points out (55).

The enjoyment of sexuality can likewise be seen in “Branca coma a Neve” (47-52), mainly in the figure of the stepmother. According to Novo (2004), the stepmother is the teacher of Branca in sexual pleasures (60). So again, we can see explicit references to the sexual activity of women. Moreover, the mother talks about the seven dwarfs as seven good men who were involved with Branca (Novo 60). She was able to experiment with all of them, and not necessarily one by one. Blanco is showing another type of romantic relationship apart from the monogamist one.

However, there is more besides the enjoyment of sexuality and the rejection of perfect virgin feminine models. Sexuality is strongly linked to pregnancy. Since folktales rarely deal with sexual relationships, we cannot determine their effects. Nevertheless, there are examples of pregnancy in some works. In “Snow White”, the mother of the protagonist dies when her daughter is born; thus, the act of giving birth is connected to pain and death. However, in Blanco’s retelling the mother enjoys the moment of giving birth to her daughter, it is a pleasurable moment of happiness, which differs so much from the one of the original tale (Novo 60). The description of the delivery (49) is full of words

with positive overtones, such as “docemente”, “sorriámonos” or “pracer”. Elements like blood, which have always had negative connotations for women, are here related with joy and celebration. This story connects sexuality and delivery in another dimension, in which women can enjoy both situations.

2.1.5. Marriage

For Fernández (1997), marriage is the only possibility for women to have a happy ending in folktale tradition (97). The effect of this archetype according to K.E. Rowe is the transmission of a prophecy according to which marriage is an enchantment which will protect young women and guarantee an eternal happiness (qtd. in Fernández 97). Obviously, this union has to be heterosexual. If marriage is the goal, what are the conditions to achieve it? Women have to be youthful and beautiful if they want to get a man. We likewise notice here a relation with the archetype of passivity, since women are absolutely passive in the process of getting a partner: it is the husband who chooses the wife according to her physical appearance (Fernández 96).

Marriage is closely related to the concept of the one and only eternal love which can be detected in most fairy tales. Blanco’s retelling breaks with this idea of romantic love. One of her tools to reverse the position of women is to reveal the crude reality of the relations of her characters. For instance, in “Os seus ollos falaban ao corazón máis fondo que o fermoso canto das escravas” (35-40), Blanco’s mermaid is trapped in a harmful relationship, in which in order to love him she has to negate her own identity, her own “herself” (Novo 58). We notice that the love Blanco presents here is no longer the ideal emotion of traditional narratives, but a very dangerous one in which the woman has a very passive and submissive role: “non me ameí nada a min mesma” (35); “soportaría a dor máis grande por amor” (37); “[...] e aínda que o meu delicado corpo sangraba por dentro e todos se daban de conta, eu seguiría con el ata que se vían as nubes flotando baixó nós [...]” (38). What Blanco does here, or rather, what she does not do, is to portray the sacrifice as something romantic. We can observe that Mariña is suffering as a consequence of this love; and more importantly, we can see how she cannot perceive it

and wishes to keep going until the end. Thankfully, this Little Mermaid is lucky and powerful enough to save herself from this condition, but the message is quite strong. In fact, Mariña claims at the beginning that “mais o que non serei nunca, seguía pensando, é a sereíña de Andersen” (37). First, she is referring directly to the sacrifice of the Little Mermaid in Andersen’s version. Moreover, we can see that any woman could be this little mermaid and fall in a toxic love like hers, even if she is aware of its repercussions.

In “O cuarto oculto” (81-87), Blanco portrays another victim of love. This time it is love between a woman and a man of different age and social status. The problem arises when the protagonist gets pregnant and her lover wants her to get rid of the baby. She refuses to do so and he abandons her, so she has to take care of her child on her own. However, years after that Azul calls her. This is the first of a series of calls, which will be followed by graffiti and other types of harassment. She becomes the victim of stalking, which leads her to suffer from a strong depression. Again, Blanco is showing us the aftermaths of obsessive love instead of portraying the ones we encounter in folktales.

There are more examples all over the book, as in “Branca coma a neve” (47-52), which depicts patterns of open relationships, as the one between Branca’s parents. Moreover, it also avoids the idea of the one and only eternal love by giving Branca many men in her romantic and sexual life.

2.1.6. Oppressor

M.K. Lieberman observes that women in fairy tales are not just passive, but they are often victims too (qtd. in Fernández 107). If we think about the protagonist of the most famous stories, we can detect that they all pass through a state of suffering: Cinderella is verbally abused by her family, Sherezade tries to save herself from capital death, Snow White escapes to the forest because she is going to be murdered and Bluebeard’s wife is almost killed by her own husband. As Fernández indicates, this situation is necessary to introduce the figures of the oppressor and redeemer in tales (108): the former

would be the one who causes the trouble and the latter the one who saves the woman. For Fernández, both archetypes submit the female in folktales, since the redeemer forces her to wait passively for him and the oppressor also submits her, but in a more explicit way (108). We will focus now on the figure of the oppressor, since the redeemer is our next and last archetype.

In traditional narratives, the oppressor is represented as an aggressive man, dominant and authoritarian, who submits the woman through brute strength (Fernández 108). In her analysis of “Bluebeard”, Bacchilega (1997) describes the figure of the oppressor, in this case Bluebeard himself, as: “inevitable presented as Other, belonging to a different class, land, or world altogether. He may be an ogre, a vampire-like creature, a cannibal, or even the Devil himself. Certainly a stranger, he is likewise a mysterious being who frequently presents himself as rich man with a beard, be it blue or green, or a silver nose in an Italian version, as the visible clue of this otherness” (109-110). But what do we understand as the Other? The other is “anyone who is separate from one’s self. The existence of others is crucial in defining what is ‘normal’ and in locating one’s own place in the world” (Ashcroft et al. 169). So, the oppressive figure in folktales has the qualities of someone who is strange, in the sense that he does not follow the conventions of society. He is not a normal and civilised² human being.

How does Carmen Blanco deal with the portrayal of this archetype? In some of her retellings she totally alters the constructed portrait of the abusive man. While in popular tales we are used to seeing that ugly, crazy and dominant man as the bad guy of the film, in *Vermella con lobos* we do not have this. This image depicted in folktales clearly suits the one we have in our minds of the rapist in the alley who may be imagined a poor crazy man dressing badly and looking dirty. However, we are increasingly aware that sexual offenders can be any type of man, so this archetype is losing its power, especially from a feminist point of view. What Blanco does is related to this. If we take as an example

² Normal and civilized in the sense of behaving according to occidental social rules and values. The term *Other* is usually used in Postcolonial Studies since it characterises the colonized subject (Ashcroft et al. 169).

“O cuarto oculto” (81-87), we see that the stalker is a rich man, married to a woman, with children and dedicated to politics: “sabía que a túa vida pública seguía o seu curso normal: casaras cunha muller da túa clase, tiveras dous fillos e continuabas as túas actividades políticas contestatarias”. Thus, it is possible that Blanco, by removing some attributes of the Other in the oppressor, suggests the idea that any man can be an abuser, despite his social and economic status.

Apart from erasing the Other from the oppressor, Blanco does something more. In “Vermella con lobos” (13-17) we can see the representation of the Other in the wolf, but it has not negative overtones. As Novo (2004) points out:

O lobo amante adopta agora as facianas tamén múltiples do outro, na esculca da identidade plural e infinda dos seres (amados), e as características negativas para a tradición recuperar o seu fermoso sentido orixinario, sen pecado verbal, sen culpa social: a diferenza física –a Besta, o Tigre–, a diferenza racial –o Xitano–, a diferenza cultural –o Viaxante, o Estranxeiro–, isto é, “o Outro” [...]. (55)

Thus, we can observe that Blanco, apart from eliminating the otherness in the figure of the oppressor, changes also the role of the Other in the fiction. The Other is no longer the scary and dangerous individual who will hurt young ladies, but is her friend, her ally and her lover. Blanco’s Other, instead of provoking rejection, is actually attractive:

Ámovos, Besta. Todo en ti é mellor. Meu amigo. Meu inimigo. Monstro meu. Os grandes brazos ríos e abrazos, as pernas pedregais de correr e percorrer, as mans para coller enormes. Ti. O dos Dentes Aguzados. Morde. Fociñado. Boca Grande. Boca Rachada. Para comerte. Si. Boca negra. Miña. Non miña. Boca de lobo. Devórame, Bicho, Xitano, Viaxante. Que eu xa te devoro. Ven, Bon Amigo, Compañeiro, Sabio dos Montes. Alimentémonos de noite. E de lume. Tigre. Ti es Aquel. O Outro. Ti es eu. E todo. A loucura. Meu estranxeiro. Meu Sangue. Meu Doce Lobo. Mátame Feroz. Para que nunca morra. (16-17)

We see how Blanco transforms the fragment of the traditional tale by giving different and positive connotations to the characteristics of the wolf that, in Grimm’s version, were a signal of danger. But for Vermella they are the characteristics of pleasure, of enjoyment. Rather than feeling repelled, she feels attracted to them.

In conclusion, we can see that the oppressor in Blanco's narrative differs totally from the one portrayed in folktales. It is no longer the figure of the wolf, the monster, the evil man; but it can be any man, from any place and from any social background.

2.1.7. Redeemer

According to Fernández (1997), the brave hero who appears at the end, at the exact moment, so as to save the lady is a recurrent character in folktales (115). As we have said before, although he helps women, this does not mean that he is not an oppressive figure for her. Indeed, he does save the woman from the upcoming danger, but he does this knowing that he will have a recompense: the lady. So he considers the woman as a prize (Fernández 115). This image is present in many tales, such as the prince who kisses princesses to awake them. Nevertheless, this figure is avoided by Blanco in her narrative. In *Vermella con lobos*, there are no saving princes women have to wait for. The author seems to be aware of the fact that the role of the redeemer also affects women because it makes them passive. In fact, the archetype of female passivity is the opposite of male action, which characterises the role of the redeemer.

In "O cuarto oculto" (81-87), we do not see the woman's brothers helping her to get over her situation. She, by herself, is the one who is strong enough to solve her problems and avoids waiting passively for someone to appear. So we can say that she is the redeemer herself, her own saviour. Another striking thing Blanco does in this short story is to relate the archetypes of the oppressor and the redeemer by portraying the first as the second. That is, when we first know the oppressor, he is not characterized as a bad person, as is common in traditional tales. In fact, he refers to himself as "Príncipe Azul" (81). This is a direct reference to the character of Prince Charming in traditional stories who corresponds totally to the archetype of the redeemer. However, there is already an allusion to the fact that he is going to be an oppressor because after "Príncipe Azul", he calls himself "Barba Azul" (81). We can notice that the roles of redeemer and oppressor are mixed in this "Príncipe Azul"; Blanco

might be suggesting here that these two archetypes that have always been considered as opposites are not so different at the end.

In Grimms' and Perrault's versions of "Little Red Riding Hood", the figure of the oppressor is the wolf, linked with danger, while (in Grimm's version) the redeemer is the male hunter who protects both girl and grandmother from the wolf. Nevertheless, this is not what we find in "Vermella con Lobos" (13-17). As we have already seen, the wolf is not the oppressor, but the lover and friend of the protagonist. What Blanco does here is a reversal of the roles of wolf and hunter, because while the wolf is closer to the figure of the redeemer, the hunter is clearly the oppressor if we understand that in the following quote "fera" refers to the wolf of the traditional tale: "a fera e o cazador eran o mesmo. Carapuchiña caera na trampa do cazador" (15). As Novo indicates in her article about the book (2004), Vermella is conscious of male dominance over the world (54) and she relates this authority to the figure of the redeemer: "había un principio, un principal e un príncipe. Eran un e múltiples. Cambiantes e ubicuos. O construtor e o destrutor. O protector e o conquistador. O Salvador. O liberador sempre. Sempre o dono." (14) We see that Blanco uses the word "príncipe", "Salvador" and "liberador" (commonly related to the figure of the redeemer) close together with words such as "destrutor", or "conquistador", more connected with the archetype of the oppressor. So it is conceivable that we have again a union between both figures as in "O cuarto oculto" (81-87).

We can see the image of the wolf in "Vermella con lobos" (13-17) as a redeemer, but not as the typical redeemer who saves the passive woman, because Vermella is the contrary of passive. The wolf is more a redeemer who is a partner, with which Vermella can experience and enjoy her sexuality. The animal becomes an element that connects women with nature. In this sense, natural elements could be a substitute for the figure of the redeemer, since they are a force of liberation for female characters. This interpretation would be reinforced with "Silva Rosa" (53-59), in which nature clearly replaces the archetype of the redeemer:

A ela agora bicábaa unha indirecta luz do sol e sentíase eufórica respirando o forte recendo silvestre da carballeira, erguíase e acercábase ás silveiras, pousaba delicadamente os dedos nos pequenos pétalos das flores e imaxinaba infinitos bosques de mulleres, cada muller un bosque rodeado de olorosas roseiras salvaxes que agrandaban as súas espiñas retadoras [...]. (55)

There is an explicit reference to the kiss of the redeemer in the traditional version of “Briar Rose”, in which the prince is the one who saves her from her eternal sleep. However, here the kiss is given by “unha indirecta luz do sol”. So the figure of the prince as the redeemer is no longer necessary in Blanco’s narrative.

Nature, then, is a substitute for the redeemer. This approach to nature implies something more. Bottigheimer, in her chapter “Towers, Forests and Trees” (1987), analyses space in folktales and she points out:

Max Lüthi defined isolation as a central stylistic principle in fairy tales, yet to date no attempt has been made to analyze and characterize social isolation as it occurs narratively in the corpus of Grimm’s Tales. The isolating trees and forests among which young girls are squirreled away differ radically from the home-grown trees that willingly bend to serve their mistress [...]. Instead of linking a girl to natural powers whose visible sign is gleaming gold, these trees form part of a forest, a dark locus separatus. (103)

She also gives examples of this fact: “fairy tale heroines enter or remain in forests with remarkable frequency and great unwillingness. Snow White is taken there to be murdered [...]” (103). We see that, traditionally, the woods are a threatening place for women and the message sent by many narratives is that it is better for women to remain safe at home. However, Blanco’s protagonists are not going to obey these dictates; they are not conformist and they enjoy nature and being outdoors. We can see this especially in “Vermella con lobos” (13-17) and in “Silva Rosa” (53-59), in which both Vermella and Silva Rosa penetrate the profound forest. Nevertheless, this forest is not dark and full of dangers, but a place in which they can enjoy their independence, without the assistance of the redeemer.

3. Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's *The Inland Ice and Other Stories*

I allude to old stories. I counterpoint my own stories, set in the now, with oral stories, set in the past, or more accurately, set in the never, never or the always, always. I feel, and I hope that this enhances my ordinary stories, gives them a mythic quality which, on their own, they would find it hard to achieve. It puts it in a larger context –not only an Irish context since the first thing one learns about oral narrative is its international nature. (Ní Dhuibhne 2006, qtd. in D'Hoker 185)

The previous quote by Ní Dhuibhne in an interview with St. Peters shows how folklore and oral tradition is so important for her literature and for her life. *The Inland Ice and Other Stories* is a compilation of short stories, but it differs slightly from *Vermella con lobos*. According to Anne Forgarty (2009), this oeuvre is very peculiar because of its structure, since “fourteen highly formulaic instalments of traditional Irish folktale, “The Search for the Lost Husband”, are interwoven with thirteen postmodern stories” (70). In the next sections, we will see the folkloric elements of Ní Dhuibhne's stories and how she transforms the old narratives into feminist literature.

3.1. Introduction to the stories

3.1.1. “The Search for the Lost Husband”

“The Search for the Lost Husband” is a rewriting of “The Story of the Little White Goat”, a traditional Irish story and, as D'Hoker points out (2016), it could be classified into the first type of rewriting that Susan Sellers distinguishes (183): “The first involves the transfiguration of a well-known tale in which the author depicts its familiar ingredients in an unfamiliar manner, so that the reader is forced to consider their negative aspects and perhaps reject them” (qtd. in D'Hoker 183). In the original folktale, a woman falls in love with a goat who visits her every day. However, as time goes by the goat stops visiting her, so she runs in its search. She finally finds it and it confesses he is a man and asks her whether she prefers him to be a man during the night or during the day. She wants him to be a human at nights. Over time, she gets pregnant, and the goat warns her that whatever happens to the kid, she cannot cry because if she does so, he is going to abandon her. The child is born, but after a year he disappears; nevertheless, the woman does not cry. The same takes place with the next baby. However,

when this happens again for the third time she is not able to hold her tears and the man-goat abandons her, but she decided to go again in his search. The man-goat warns her many times that she should go back, but she refuses. She meets the Scabby Crow and begs her to arrange a reunion with the goat in exchange for magic objects. In order to do so, the Scabby Crow has to go to her mother, the witch who created the magic spell that transformed the man into a goat. The witch allows the meeting, but the two occasions the lovers are going to see each other she gives the goat a sleep dart, and he falls asleep. In the third encounter, they plan how to break the magic spell, and in the end, the woman and the goat are able to kill the witch and thereby destroy the witch's enchantment.

In "The Search for the Lost Husband", although following quite faithfully the traditional tale, Ní Dhuibhne totally changes the end. The way of telling the story, in fourteen instalments, is interpreted by Christina Hunt Mahoney as "replicating the performance and experience of a 'nightly storytelling' and giving 'an authentically folkloric ring to this tale'" (qtd. in Fulmer 81). She also begins the tale with a "formulaic opening" (Fulmer 82): "Long long ago there was a farmer..." (Ní Dhuibhne 1), and uses other recognisable structures in fairy and folk tales. The "punctuating phrases", the "generic setting", the "magic" and "the reactions of the characters to the situation" are familiar for a reader who was once in touch with some traditional tale (Fulmer 82). Also, according to Fulmer (2007), "the rhythm and syntax of the voices sound like the Hiberno-English of Irish folk tales (...)" (83). So, as an expert in folklore and familiar with the constituents of a fiction from the oral tradition, Ní Dhuibhne is not taking just the plot of the story, but all the elements that compose the narrative of a folktale. On the basis of this, she constructs her own story and makes it hers by modifying the end. Once everything occurs as in "The Little White Goat" and the animal and its relatives are recovered from the magic spell, the protagonist rejects him. She does not want to go back with him since he was abusive and did not care about her being sad or in danger. Because of that, she decides to pick up her children and leave him and marry another different man. This totally differs from the classical ending, which is a happy one in which the man-goat and the woman remain together in spite of everything that

has happened. In this sense, the story corresponds exactly with Sellers' first type, because it changes a clue moment in the story which serves to point out the "negative aspects" (qtd. in D'Hoker 183). When we read "The Little White Goat" we are not aware of the toxicity of the animal and the abusive manner in which he treats his wife, being very possessive and authoritarian. When the tale ends, this remains hidden. However, Ní Dhuibhne, by changing the end and making the woman refuse her lover, highlights what is wrong with the story and relation between the protagonists. She makes us reconsider the old story and question our minds, since we are not usually conscious of this type of sexist patterns in heterosexual relations portrayed in tales.

3.1.2. "Summer Pudding" and "How Lovely the Slopes Are"

"The Search for the Lost Husband" is not the only rewritten story that we find in *The Inland Ice*. According to Sellers, there is a type of rewriting which consists in "the fusion of 'classic' configurations with contemporary settings and alternative plotlines" (qtd. in D'Hoker 183). Taking this into account, D'Hoker classifies "How Lovely the Slopes Are" (238-258) and "Summer Pudding" (44-60) along this second type of revision, since both narratives "juxtapose or interweave folk tales with contemporary stories" (184).

"How Lovely the Slopes Are" "borrows scenes from Iceland's *Njal's Saga*" (Moloney qtd. in D'Hoker 184). It is impossible to summarise briefly what the whole saga is about due to its length, but we can focus on the aspects that are relevant for the rewritten version. The story presents a "picture of Icelandic life in the heroic age and has a wide range of complex characters" (*Encyclopædia Britannica*). The main protagonists are Njal and Gunnar. Gunnar is married to Hallgerd, who, when a neighbour does not give them food, sends a servant to rob him and burn his residence without informing her husband. This generates a series of deaths because of retribution. When Gunnar finds out, he slaps Hallgerd in presence of everyone. At one point of the narrative, Gunnar is exiled, but he refuses to leave, which makes him an outcast, authorising any man to kill him. Different men try to

murder him and during an attack, the cord of Gunnar's arch breaks. He asks Hallgerd to lend him a hair so he can replace the string with it, but she refuses, looking back to the day when he slapped her. These are the episodes that we see in Ní Dhuibhe's narration. "How Lovely the Slopes Are" is a story about Bronwyn, an Irish woman who is married to Erik, a Swedish man. The narrative is set in Sweden, the couple is there because they are visiting Erik's mother. What we can see during the narration is that Bronwyn is not happy with her marriage. They go to an Ikea shop but they end up having a strong argument, which results in Erik deciding that they should get the divorce. This is something that relieves Bronwyn, who feels strange but happy. In the story, she abhors Erik, but once they decide to separate, she starts to appreciate him, his goodness and his intellect. There are many allusions to *Njal's Saga*. We know that Erik is "one of the world's great experts on *Njal's Saga*" (252) and we see that he "laughs one of those grim Icelandic laughs and shakes his head" (256). Then, we have a direct reference to the Saga:

"Yes", says Bronwyn. She is thinking of Gunnar, in *Njal's Saga*, who asks his wife, Hallgerdur, to lend him a hair for his bow, to save his life. And she refuses him, reminding him of the time he slapped her face. "You will not be asked again!" Gunnar says, in his grim, heroic, Icelandic voice. It is one of two lines in *Njal's Saga* that Bronwyn still remembers. "I'm sorry", Bronwyn adds. "But it's the only thing to do". (255)

Finally, at the end of the story we find a fragment taken directly from *Njal's Saga*:

They rode down to the Markar river, on their way to the ship. Gunnar's horse stumbled, and he had to dismount. He glanced up the hill to his home.

"How lovely the slopes are!" he said. "More lovely than they have ever appeared to me before-Golden cornfields and new-mown hay. I am going back home, and I will not go away." (258)

This is the moment in which Gunnar, although he was expatriated, chooses to remain at home. We see here that Ní Dhuibhne took the title of the story from this moment of the saga: "How Lovely the Slopes Are". Apart from these examples, we know the protagonist is not Hallgerdur because her name is Bronwyn. However, she may be a contemporary version of her, because, as we will see in the next chapters, there are parallelisms between the two characters.

Regarding “Summer Pudding”, it is a sort of rewriting of “the old Deirdre story located in ‘The Exile of the Sons of Uslui’” (Moloney qtd. in D’Hoker 183). In the original story, which can be found in *Irish Sagas and Folk-Tales* (1993), when Deirdre is born, the druid makes the prophecy that she will have a marvellous charm and men will fight against each other for her affection, causing great ruin. To prevent this, the King decides to take her and keep her hidden so as no one can see her, and eventually turns her into his wife. With the passage of time, Deirdre remains captive in the mountains and she is only allowed to meet a nurse, a professor and a poetess, apart from the King. One day, talking with the poetess, she hears about Naoise and his beauty. Since Deirdre wants to know him, the poetess manages to arrange a meeting. When they meet, Deirdre falls instantly in love with Naoise, and so does he, who, admired by her beauty, realises who she is. Since Deirdre will get married to the King, they escape together with Naoise’s two brothers and a group of people to serve another king. When the King finds out, he sends Fergus to notify them that they could return “in peace and safety” (91). When the message reaches them, the three brothers trust him and are joyful because they can go back home. However, Deirdre warns them that this could be a trick of the king. Finally, when they arrive home, the three sons of Usnach are killed, and Deirdre, desolated when watching her lover dead, kills herself. “Summer Pudding” is a very particular story, but according to Moloney (2009) it “does not set up simple parallels or influences with legend, but suggests a pattern more consistent with Homi Bhabha’s idea that ‘the archaic emerges in the midst or margins of modernity as a result of some psychic ambivalence’” (105). Ní Dhuibhne’s story is set in Ireland, after the Great Famine, which forces the protagonist and her sister go to Wales in exile (Moloney 106), since all their family is dead because of this tragic event. There, they meet a group of tinkers and stay with them for some time. Afterwards, the sister gets themselves a job in another place because she did not like these people. While they are staying with the tinkers the protagonist begins to get close to a man called Naoise. One day they kiss, and at the end of the story they are back together, ready to go back to Ireland. We do not get to know the name of the heroine, but it clearly resembles the Deirdre of the old story in her

character. In addition, the male with whom she has a romantic relationship is called Naoise, as the one in the traditional story.

3.1.3. Other stories

Besides these three narratives, we have to take into account that “almost all of Ní Dhuibhne’s stories contain intertextual allusions to other stories, whether taken from Irish or international folklore or from Western literature at large. [...] Ní Dhuibhne allows her new stories to interact with the existing ones: undermining, affirming or questioning them” (D’Hoker 184-185). In this sense, the rest of the narratives are likewise relevant in the analysis of Ní Dhuibhne’s rewritings, although they are not based on other stories as the ones mentioned before. According to D’Hoker (2016), “apart from enlarging the breadth of the stories, the intertextual allusions to existing stories also set up a comparative structure” (185). Many times we can identify parallelisms between the rewritten stories and the other narratives that are not based on older stories, such as the repetition of patterns of behaviour, situations, endings, characters, etc. Indeed “the reader of the stories too is invited to take up the role of a comparatist, teasing out similarities and differences between Ní Dhuibhne’s ‘new’ story and the ‘older’ ones alluded to” (D’Hoker 185).

3.2. Subversion of archetypes in *The Inland Ice*

Despite what we have already said as to the way the new story follows quite faithfully the original tale, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne introduces some changes in “The Search for the Lost Husband” which transform the tale into a feminist narrative. The major change is at the resolution of the story, which completely differs from the one in “The Story of the Little White Goat”. It is indeed at the end where we are able to see the strategies the author uses. *Vermella con lobos* was analysed by paying attention to the subversion of feminine archetypes mentioned by Carolina Fernández (1997), and some can be perceived in “The Search for the Lost Husband”. Moreover, this subversion is reinforced by the other stories, so we will analyse the dismantling of patriarchal archetypes in “The Search for the Lost

Husband” and examine how some of them may be seen in the other short stories too, because according to Fogarty (2009):

The repetition of scenarios not alone suggests a continuity and quintessential kinship between these contemporary women and the archetypal heroine in “The Search for the Lost Husband”, but also indicates the gendered patterns of behaviour, which enforce and license male dominance and female subservience, are inculcated by social laws and cultural dictates that cannot easily be extirpated or altered. (80)

3.2.1. Female passivity

First, and maybe the most obvious change, is the elimination of the passiveness of the female protagonist. In the original version, the young woman falls immediately in love with the goat and moves with him (1226). When she gets pregnant and has a child, the goat warns her that in case something happens to the kid, she cannot weep because he will abandon her: “They stayed together for a while. In a year she had a son. And he told her not to cry or shed a tear if anything happened to that child, because if she shed a tear, that she would not have him, that he would have to leave her” (1226). Eventually, the infant is taken away and the woman “became a bit upset. But she remembered that she had no business shedding tear [...]” (1226). Even though she feels sad and wants to cry, she does not do that because she is afraid of losing her partner. The same takes place with the next two kids, and she continues to restrain herself because she is afraid of losing the man-goat. The woman in the old narrative is very passive accepting her partner’s commands. She only violates the order of her husband unintentionally, since she is incapable of holding her tears any longer with the loss of the third kid. When the man-goat leaves her, the woman goes in his search, although the animal tells her not to do so. However, the woman is willing to do it and does not give up. This might seem a rupture with the passiveness of the woman, if we pay attention to her determination, but on a more profound level we can see that she only does that because she does not want to lose her partner. Despite the fact that the woman is not obeying her husband, she is not confronting him for her own freedom, but because she wishes to get the man-goat back. So, even when the woman is taking an active role, we cannot say

she stops being passive. In “The Search for the Lost Husband”, the woman acts passively like the one in the old narrative. What Ní Dhuibhne does to subvert this archetype is changing the attitude of the young woman at the very end of the story:

“And now”, said the handsome young man, who had been the little white goat, “we can get married, and live happily ever after”.

The girl looked at him. “I don’t think I want to,” she said. “You have led me a merry dance, up hill and down dale, and through briars and brambles and bracken and thorns, through rivers and lakes and ditches and puddles, through thick and through thin and in and out. And I think I have had enough of you”. (261)

In Ní Dhuibhne’s version, the woman reacts against all that the man-goat did to her; she realises that it was unfair and she does not want to have a relationship with him: “I’ve had enough of you. I’m tired, running around in circles, chasing you to the ends of the earth” (261). Once she recognises the abusiveness of the relationship and the authority of the man-goat, she takes an active role: she decides for herself that she will finish the relationship. In the original story, the woman does not even answer whether she wants to marry him. This is something that does not surprise the readers, who read the tale and understand the ending as normal. However, Ní Dhuibhne changes the woman’s reaction (or more accurately, allows her protagonist to have a reaction) and gives the readers the opportunity to recognise the woman’s passiveness during the whole story until, at the end, she is able to reaffirm herself and take control of her life.

The suppression of passivity may be also seen in the title. The original title is “The Story of the Little White Goat”, suggesting that the main figure in the story will be the man-goat. However, according to Fogarty (2009), by changing the title, Ní Dhuibhne “foregrounds the determination and resourcefulness of the young woman. A female quest now becomes the key focus of the narrative. The redesignation of the white goat as a lost husband in the title further reconfigures the central concerns of the story and allows it to acquire a modern purchase and resonance” (74). Now, it is her tale, not one about the little white goat.

As we have said before, the other stories can be understood as complements of “The Search for the Lost Husband”, the central story in the book. In them, we see the same plots, characters or scenarios, thereby helping to reinforce the message of the story of the woman and the goat. According to Fogarty (2009), the protagonists of “Gweedore Girl” and “Love, Hate and Friendship” would resemble the one in “The Search for the Lost Husband” (80). For instance, in “Gweedore Girl” the protagonist is a woman who is deceived by the man she loves because he is already married and just wants to take her money. But she “refuses to accept the role of victim” (Fogarty 78) and makes him pay for what he has done:

They wrote about me in the paper:

GWEEDORE GIRL DECEIVED AND RUINED.

That was not right. I was deceived, but not ruined (by which they meant, up the pole).

I had got my two pounds back, and had another job by then, not as a general, but in a shop, which was much better [...]. (28)

So, she is not accepting what happened to her and becomes active. She could be passive and even try to hide what had taken place because of shame, but she seeks justice. We also have the example of “Lily Marlene”, in which the protagonist is being abused by one of her co-workers, who is much older than her. At first, she allows him to do it, although she does not like it (*allow* meaning that she is not struggling against him, not that she is consenting); but at the end, she stops being passive: “[...] after that I did not want to be with Bertie. I did not want him to sing ‘Lily Marlene’, or anything, any more” (100). Both women of the stories, as many others throughout the book, are versions of the one in “The Search for the Lost Husband”, because most of them, although initially passive, end up taking action to achieve what they want or to put an end to something they hate. And more significantly, they do that without the help of a redeemer which, as we have seen, is the one who takes action and protects women in traditional folktales.

In “Summer Pudding” and “How Lovely the Slopes Are” the archetype is subverted in a different way. If we pay attention to the protagonist of the old stories by which the new ones are

inspired, we see that they are not what we would understand as passive. In “The Sons of Usnach”, Deirdre abandons her king and future husband to be with her love, and she does not trust Fergus when he comes with the message from the king. She has her own opinion, and she even becomes active and tries to warn Naoise and his brothers. In *Njal’s Saga*, Hallgerdur tries to take revenge on her own, and at the end, she refuses to help her companion. Taking this into account, we cannot say that they respond to the archetype of female passivity, but this does not mean that they are not sexist portrayals. First, Deirdre just leaves the king to go with a different man, so maybe she is leaving one oppressor to be with another. Moreover, her act caused the death of the three brothers. Indeed, at the beginning of the story, it is said that “great ruin and evil would come to Ulster on her account”. Something similar happens in *Njal’s Saga*, because, after Hallgerdur sends the servant to burn a neighbour’s house, a series of acts of retribution takes place, causing a considerable blood bath. In this sense, female actions would be seen as bad decisions that cause great catastrophes.

“Summer Pudding” and “How Lovely the Slopes Are” are quite different stories from the tales by which they are inspired. However, in both of them, we can make comparisons with the protagonists in the legends. First, in “Summer Pudding” the heroine adopts an active role, and this is reinforced through the contrast with her sister. It is as if they were opposites because the protagonist can adapt to their new environment and do the assigned tasks, while her relative hates being there and just dreams of working in a residence and being somebody’s servant. In the end, the sister gets them a job in a house and she is absolutely happy with that, but the heroine is not, as she misses being outside and more on her own. Moreover, much like Deirdre with regard to Fergus in the old Irish story, the protagonist in “Summer Pudding” does not trust Father Toban. Toban is based on George Borrow, a man who “admitted to masquerading as a Catholic priest for Irish famine refugees in Wales” (Moloney 106). In fact, according to Moloney (2009) “Father Toban functions as a false friend to the refugees and suggests the character of Fergus in the Deirdre story” (107). This makes sense if we take into account that in “Summer Pudding”, the heroine does not trust Father Toban the same way Deirdre does

not trust Fergus in “The Sons of Usnach”. Furthermore, in both stories the character of Naoise trusts both Father Toban (in the retelling) and Fergus (in the old legend). One significant passage in which we can find the determination of the heroine in the modern narration is at the end, when Father Toban asks them to kneel down and she does not do so: “I would not kneel for him” (59). So, we see that rather than subverting Deirdre’s activeness, the new heroine is emphasizing her own active role, as in a sort of vindication.

In “How Lovely the Slopes Are” we see something different from what we observe in *Njal’s Saga*. In the Nordic saga, Hallgerdur is not a passive woman and becomes active when it is needed, but Bronwyn is quite the opposite in “How Lovely the Slopes Are”. Bronwyn does not feel fulfilled with her marriage with Erik, but she remains married to him. Even when he continually asks her if she loves him she is incapable of telling him the truth. What would be the point presenting a heroine like this from a feminist perspective? While in *Njal’s Saga* it is Hallgerdur’s determination that is seen as something bad, in Ní Dhuibhne’s story, it is Bronwyn’s passiveness that is causing pain both for her and her partner. Ní Dhuibhne’s rewriting is a subversion to the extent that instead of making Hallgerdur’s activeness something positive, makes of Bronwyn’s passiveness the cause of her sadness. Indeed, Bronwyn takes an active role when she comes clean with her husband, getting inspired by Hallgerdur:

“Yes”, says Bronwyn. She is thinking of Gunnar, in *Njal’s Saga*, who asks his wife, Hallgerdur, to lend him a hair for his bow, to save his life. And she refuses him, reminding him of the time he slapped her face. “You will not be asked again!” Gunnar says, in his grim, heroic, Icelandic voice. It is one of two lines in *Njal’s Saga* that Bronwyn still remembers. “I’m sorry”, Bronwyn adds. “But it’s the only thing to do”. (255)

Although we cannot get to know if Bronwyn is a modern version of Hallgerdur or just a different character, we can see that through Ní Dhuibhne’s character the figure of Hallgerdur is being exalted.

3.2.2. Sex and virginity

Regarding the archetype of sex and virginity (Fernández 1997), we have already seen that in most folktales there are no explicit references to sex, and especially women seem to lack sexual desire. In “The Story of the Little White Goat” there are no allusions to sex, apart from the fact that the woman gets pregnant three times, from which we can infer there have been sexual relations. In addition, the woman does not show sexual appetite and her search seems to be for love rather than for eroticism. This changes in Ní Dhuibhne’s rewriting because the woman shows sexual passion. In the folktale, it may be suggested that she has sexual appetite because she wants to spend the night with the man-goat, but he always falls asleep because of the sleeping dart the witch uses with him. In Ní Dhuibhne’s story, the same happens the first night, but the protagonist is aware of what has occurred and she does not allow it to happen again. So, the following night he does not drop asleep. This could be also related to the archetype of passivity because Ní Dhuibhne’s heroine takes action at the moment. In fact, the next night they have sex and it is explicitly presented in the narration: “The girl was waiting for him with open arms. And he fell into her arms and they went to bed together. And this time he did not fall asleep. They made love all night long and they had a blissful time” (Ní Dhuibhne 236). While in the folktale the sexual consummation is only indicated by the pregnancies and the woman’s sexual desire by her inclination to spend the night with him, in “The Search for the Lost Husband” the erotic relation is explicit, as well as the woman’s passion.

Something similar happens in “Summer Pudding”. In the traditional story, Deirdre falls in love with Naoise, but there is no sexual reference; in fact, they do not even kiss. In Ní Dhuibhne’s narration, there are no intimate relations either, but there are other elements. We can see that the heroine feels attracted to Naoise: “Naoise looked different from the others. All the other men looked the same to me [...]. Naoise had tidy hair, and his skin was clean and glossy [...].” (52). Moreover, apart from having sexual appetite, Ní Dhuibhne’s heroine is the one who takes the initiative in their relation: “[...] when I stood up he was right in front of me, his face close to my face, his stomach to my stomach. I put my

free hand on his face and caressed it. I couldn't stop my hand going up to his face, he was so close to me, it was dark and silent in the middle of the mountains, so that I felt everything in the world had stopped moving. We kissed" (53). She enjoys this moment with him and will remember it during the narrative. Again, as in "The Search for the Lost Husband", we see that the protagonist is allowed to feel sexual passion.

In "Lily Marlene" the protagonist's co-worker, Bernie, abuses her. We get the idea that the young woman had never had erotic relations and that this abuse is her first sexual experience. When Bertie asks her to go to him, she goes, but it does not seem that she desires that relationship:

"I didn't want to, but I sat on Bertie's knee, as I had been doing for some time. He rubbed my breasts and other parts of me, under my clothes, and scratched my neck with his walrus whiskers. And what did it matter? What did it matter, I thought? It was just skin. It was just a body, my body [...]. Bertie caressed me, and nobody had caressed me before". (100)

First, we have to take into account that folktales avoid the depiction of rapes, but Ní Dhuibhne is presenting us one here. Also, we notice that the protagonist could be the prototypical virgin girl of the tales, who had no experience with sexuality or erotic desire. In fact, although it is abuse, she tries to convince herself that it is okay because he is a good man. This may be due to her lack of sexual experience and the consideration of sex as a taboo (both in folktale tradition and in real life). Indeed, she ends up meeting someone for whom she seems to feel attracted. We do not know if there are intimate relations but we do see her sexual desire because once she starts dating the boy, she puts an end to the abuses: "But the boy with the limp changed my attitude to Bertie" (100).

The rest of the tales continue to dismantle this archetype of sex and virginity, by presenting protagonists who want to enjoy sex, as the hero in "The Search for the Lost Husband". However, it is crucial to take into account that this archetype implies something else than lack of sexuality and passion. The majority of women portrayed in traditional tales are young, beautiful and virgin women. It is as if virginity were something positive that makes them pure. Nevertheless, in most of the stories in *The Inland Ice* the protagonist is not a young woman, but a much older person who is married and

has kids. This is also a way of subverting these archetypes. In fact, at the beginning of “The Search for the Lost Husband”, the heroine portrays the typical role of the young and innocent woman. However, at the end of the story, she has already three children, and seems wiser than before. She is closer to the other women in the modern stories of the book.

3.1.3. Marriage

We can also observe a destruction of the archetype of marriage which, according to Fernández (1997), is the only possible final ending in folktale tradition, at least for women (96). In “The Story of the Little White Goat”, we see that this idea fits perfectly in the resolution, because after the magic spell is broken, they “lived happily ever after that, and in comfort” (1232), together with their children. In order to be a joyful ending, they even marry the Scabby Crow to a servant: “he gave the Scabby Crow in marriage to one of the servant boys and made them a present of the castle and all the reassures that were in it [...]” (1232). Again, the notion of marriage as the fulfilment of bliss is repeated. As we have already said in the first chapter, marriage is related to the notion of everlasting love in the sense that both love and marriage are eternal and unbreakable. The folktale suggests this idea as well because the woman has to endure many things and fight for her lover, no matter how he treats her. But this is totally changed in Ní Dhuibhne’s short story. Although she goes in the search for the man-goat as in the original narrative, at the end she changes her attitude and refuses the proposal of marriage, saying: “I’ve had enough of you. I’m tired, running around in circles, chasing you to the ends of the earth”, “I am weary of ardent ways. Passion is so time consuming, and it makes me so unhappy” (261). In fact, she explicitly rejects the prototypical type of love that is considered normal, and also the belief that there is one and only true love: “Because it’s time for me to try another kind of love. I’m tired of all that fairytale stuff” (262). This line is very relevant; here the woman is addressing the toxicity of their relationship and assumes that there is not necessarily just one kind of love. Moreover, and even more curious, she is directly alluding to folktales when she says “I am tired of all that fairytale stuff” (262). The protagonist knows that marriage is considered to be the only possible happy ending for her. But

we do not detect in Ní Dhuibhne's story the typical "and they lived happily ever after that" (1232), as in the traditional story, indeed, it seems that the "I am tired of all that fairytale stuff" suggests the fact that she realises marriage is not the synonym of happiness.

In the other stories, "dreaming of all-consuming love and passion, Ní Dhuibhne's characters believe in the happy-ever-after promised by marriage in fairy tales" (D'Hoker 187). According to D'Hoker (2016), this can be seen in "Estonia": "She felt if she were married, all the other problems would fade into significance [...] Roads, green and juicy with promise, rainbow ended, would open before her" (Ní Dhuibhne 186). Also, in "How Lovely the Slopes Are", Bronwyn dreams with a romance based in the Icelandic saga (186). The narratives are full of references to fairy tales, as in "Lily Marlene", when she says she feels "like a Cinderella" (D'Hoker 187). However, we only see this belief at the beginning, because, in the end, most of these stories repeat the message sent by "The Search for the Lost Husband": marriage is not a synonym of happiness. Women initially believed in the promise of "happily ever after" (1232) but at the end, they realise that marriage does not fulfil them, and it put limits to them. In fact, in "Lily Marlene" we see the negation of the idea of eternal love associated with marriage: "People can have a great, passionate love. I have. Probably you have. But it doesn't seem to survive. One way or another it gets done in, either because you stay together or you don't" (102).

Ní Dhuibhne's tales show us what fairy tales always suppress, that is, what happens after the *and they all lived happily ever*. We see that marriage is not the most fulfilling ending for women and it is not necessarily linked with everlasting love and passion. "The juxtaposition of contemporary stories and fairy tales highlights, on the one hand, the continuing hold of fairy tales on the dreams and desires of contemporary women. On the other hand, the juxtaposition also reveals the necessary gap between fairy tales and reality –a gap which is evaluated in different ways throughout the stories" (D'Hoker 187).

3.2.4. The oppressor and the redeemer

We have already seen in the previous chapter that both the figure of the oppressor and the redeemer oppress women in folk tales, although each differently (Fernández 108). In the case of “The Story of the Little White Goat” we do not clearly see these two figures. We could say that the goat is the redeemer, but this archetype involves a brave hero who saves the woman (Fernández 115), something that the animal does not do in the traditional tale. He is not portrayed as the typical oppressor because although he is dominant, his oppression over the woman is not explicit in the tale. So, if he is neither a redeemer nor an oppressor, these archetypes cannot be dismantled in the new version. However, even though he is not specifically an oppressor because he does not follow the conventions expected from this role, he is oppressive indeed. What Ní Dhuibhne does in her narrative is to clarify that he is not Prince Charming, or the ideal lover, but an oppressive husband. Nevertheless, the fact that he is not explicitly represented as the oppressor in the original story could be explained by the motif of the animal groom (Fogarty 73). According to Bettelheim (1991), the animal groom would be the sexual partner who is first an animal (282). One of the best-known tales in which we can see this is “Beauty and the Beast”, which has numerous versions (Bettelheim 283). “The Story of the Little White Goat” would be one of them (Fogarty 72). Bettelheim (1991) establishes three common characteristics that are found in the stories of the animal-groom:

There are three typical features to the stories of the animal-groom cycle. First, it remains unknown how and why the groom was changed into an animal; and this although most fairy tales provide such information. Second, it is a sorceress who did this deed; but she is not punished for her evil doings. Third, it is the father who causes the heroine to join the Beast; she does it because of her love for or obedience to her father; overtly the mother plays no significant role. (283)

The first feature appears in “The Story of the Little White Goat” because, at the beginning, we do not know why the man-goat has the appearance of the goat. But we cannot find the two other features because the evil woman who provokes the spell is killed and the father of the woman does not send her to the goat. However, we could understand this narrative as a variant of the typical animal groom

story if we take into account some aspects. First, it is true that the witch receives a punishment. However, it is not out of revenge, but because it is the only way the man, his sisters, and his children can be saved. Moreover, although the father does not send his daughter to the man-goat, there are many references to him and none to the mother. In fact, when the woman is in search for the goat, the latter says to her: “go home to your father” (1227). This is interesting because Bettelheim (1991), when analysing “The Beauty and the Beast”, states that the love of the woman for her father is transferred to the beast (284). In this sense, we could see something similar here in the opposition goat-father. The woman answers the goat: “Ah, I’ve no business going home to my father, but to come looking for you, and I will follow you” (1227). Loving the man-goat implies leaving her father, because she says that now she has him she has nothing to do with her parent. It does not mean that she no longer loves her dad, but that her love’s “main object” changes (Bettelheim 284). This is remarkable because in Ní Dhuibhne’s version, the woman goes back with her father: “I’m going home to my father and my mother” (262). The woman in the new version decides to return not only with her father but with her mother. This last aspect is something new, because, as Bettelheim says when describing the animal groom story (1991), the mother is not important in this type of narrative. But Ní Dhuibhne introduces the mother figure, and although she does not play an important role, we could understand it as part of the woman’s rebellion. That is, the goat tells her that she should go back to her father in Ní Dhuibhne’s version too (104); he never mentions the mother as in the traditional tale. However, the woman mentions her mother, it is as if she was giving the same importance to her as to her father. In the stories of the animal groom, the father is the figure that has more relevance (Bettelheim 283), but by equalling both her parents, the woman is departing from the animal groom tale tradition.

But, why is Ní Dhuibhne not following the animal groom prototypical tale? We could say that it is because she is rewriting the story. But another question arises: why cannot Ní Dhuibhne follow the prototypical animal groom tale if she wants to rewrite the story from a feminist perspective? If we pay attention to Bettelheim’s analysis of “Beauty and the Beast” (1991) as an animal groom tale, we

see that the beast is always transformed into a handsome man thanks to the woman's perseverance (284). When explaining the message for children of both "Bluebeard" and "Beauty and the Beast", he says this type of stories show that "although females and males look very different, they are a perfect match when they are the right partners so far as their personalities are concerned, and if they are tied together with love" (306). This is a very positive message if we understand that differences regarding personality, race, economy or social class can be overcome if the couple love each other and fight for their love. However, it may also have a negative meaning, especially for women, because the message could be that you should keep fighting to be with the beloved, no matter if he is abusive, as the beast or the goat, in this case. Moreover, this is related to the idea that a good woman can change a bad man, which at the end means that women have to bear with men despite their mistreatment and authoritativeness. This message is clear in "The Story of the Little White Goat", and it could be the reason why Ní Dhuibhne changes the end in her new narrative. Although in the resolution he is transformed into a very handsome man, she rejects him because she does not want to be one of those women in fairy tales. Indeed, when she says that she is tired of "all that fairy tale stuff" (1232) she may be referring to this typical situation in which women transform bad men and make them good, represented in animal groom stories with the change of the physical appearance. Although she has gone through many problems so as to find the man-goat, she is experiencing a moment of illumination in the end, realising that it is not worthy to fight for the love of a bad man. However, it is possible that her search is not for the lost husband, but for their children because, once she recovers them, she abandons her lover. Be that as it may, the variations Ní Dhuibhne introduces in the woman's attitude at the end destroy the motif of the "animal groom", removing all the sexist connotations that it implies.

"The Search for the Lost Husband" is the only story in which we identify the motif of the animal groom. But although we do not find beasts or animals like the goat in other stories, we do see males with analogous characteristics in the lovers of the protagonists. According to Fogarty (2009):

Beastliness, in its modern forms, is seen as part of human nature and not something that is clearly demarcated or comes from without. In similar fashion, Ní Dhuibhne's protagonists are forced to admit their affinity with their beastly lovers. They also find themselves caught in several interlocking patterns. Despite their modernity, they are drawn into atavistic gender divisions in which oppressive roles are foisted upon them, and with which they compulsively and disturbingly collude. (Fogarty 84)

For instance, in "Love, Hate and Friendship", Edward, Fiona's lover, "like the white goat and many of the male figures in other stories, is typified by his initial forcefulness and mastery" (Fogarty 79). In fact, we can see this in the majority of the stories. These characteristics are mostly applied to the figure of the lover, rather than the one of the husband.

Indeed, in many of the tales, we see an opposition between the husband and the lover. The husband would be the oppressor, in the sense that although he provides women with stability, at the same time imposes limits on her (sexually, professionally or personally). In these narrations we can see what happens after the happy ending in folktales. The husband becomes someone who oppresses the woman in very different ways and makes her miserable because they do not feel passion and love. We can see this in "Estonia", "How Lovely the Slopes Are" or "Swiss Cheese". In the case of the lover, he would play the role of the redeemer, because "when marriage fails [...], the characters turn to an affair to realize their dreams" (D'Hoker 186). The lover gives them something their husbands cannot. In this sense, he would be saving the woman from a marriage that does not make her happy. However, Ní Dhuibhne makes it clear in the stories that the lover (or redeemer) is not your saviour, but is going to make you suffer as well. This idea can be seen in "Hot Earth": "There is a scale in the affairs of men. At first you are worth your weight in gold, the balance is tipped entirely in your favour. But as time progresses you lose ballast, little by little by little, until finally you are swinging, high and dry, worthless as a bubble" (Ní Dhuibhne 113). In this sense, the figure of the redeemer and the oppressor, as Fernández explains (1997), are not so different, and we could also see their characteristics in both the husbands and lovers of *The Inland Ice*. Because at the end, the message sent by this story seems to be that no man is going to save you and make your dreams come true. No redeemer or animal

groom is going to change thanks to your love. The women themselves realise that and are the ones who save themselves.

3.1. Disrupting storyness, foregrounding narration and literary self-referentiality

According to D'Hoker (2016), Ní Dhuibhne's writing is full of postmodernist techniques, which "clearly serve a feminist project, geared towards the deconstruction of the accepted norms, roles, stories and histories that shape women's lives in contemporary society" (178). Specifically, D'Hoker mentions three strategies: disrupting storyness, foregrounding narration and literary self-referentiality (179). Hereunder we are going to see if we can identify these techniques in *The Inland Ice* and how they may be used as feminist mechanisms for rewriting.

First, postmodern stories can be written without following a conventional pattern, that is, we can identify a "postmodernist preference for fragmentation and juxtaposition over casualty and storyness" (D'Hoker 179). Relating to this, Fogarty (2009) describes Ní Dhuibhne's tales as "plotless stories that delve into the complexities of female desire, but necessarily leave things vague, unresolved, or deliberately suspended" (82). Indeed, she gives the examples of "Estonia", in which Emily finds out that her extramarital lover has died, but the story "seems deliberately to evade this recognition and its repercussions and affective aftermath" (82). We can observe something similar in "How Lovely the Slopes Are", which ends with a passage taken from *Njal's Saga*, without telling us what happens after the protagonists decide to divorce. It is as if things remain unresolved (Fogarty 84). It is not clear whether this technique serves a feminist purpose, but, according to Fogarty, "understatement and gaps within the narrative, like reticence and lack of psychologisation of the oral tale, become a means of outlining the mysterious and abysmal depths of human behaviour" (83). In this sense, this way of narrating may give profundity to the characters. We could relate this to the fact that, usually, characters in folktales are not very complex, especially women. Stephen Benson writes that "characters in contemporary fairy tales are necessarily more complex than their folktale counterparts" (qtd. in Jorgensen 280). This could be closely connected with the subversion of archetypes because they

portray characters conventionally, following the particular roles assigned to women. So, by making the structure of her short stories complex, Ní Dhuibhne is making her female characters complex too. In fact, they are full of contradictions, they think differently throughout the book and they do not act as they used to do in the past.

Apart from disrupting storyness, we need to consider the device of foregrounding narration, the aim of which, according to D'Hoker:

[...] is no longer to vouch for the integrity of the narrator and the truth of the story told. To the contrary, the emphasis on narration seeks to highlight the constructed nature of the story and subjectivity (even unreliability) of every story teller. (...) A hallmark of Ní Dhuibhne's stories is the use of an overt third-person narrator who is given to intrusive comments about the stories and the characters, while also being privy to their innermost feelings and thoughts. In *The Inland Ice and Other Stories* (1997), these comments typically appear between brackets and interrupt the indirect rendering of a character's flow of thoughts. (180)

D'Hoker exemplifies this with a fragment of "The Inland Ice": "Nobody ever helped. Frank didn't help her to make decisions. Never seemed to care about her in that deep way that mattered. (What she means is, he let her truckle along with her job as an executive in a public service office, a job which meant something to some people, but not to her)" (201) (D'Hoker 180). In addition, we have further examples throughout the book, as in "Estonia", when Emily is window-shopping: "Life can be measured in skirts of satin, as well as in years of work, as well as in examinations passed and books read, or husbands married or children offered to the world. (Emily tends to philosophise while she shops. Maybe that's why she likes lunch time so much)" (181). Also in "Swiss Cheese": "She did not believe that people, young college people like them, ever did such wild, senseless things (there she was wrong)" (154). There are more illustrations of this intrusion by the narrator, mainly in the stories that are not rewritings.

But in what ways is this useful for a feminist narrative? When analysing *Vermella con lobos* we saw that in most tales there is "an external or impersonal narrator whose straightforward statements carry no explicit mark of human perspective –gender, class, or individuality" (Bacchilega 34). Carmen

Blanco breaks with this by making the protagonists the narrators of their own story, but Ní Dhuibhne does something more. She foregrounds the act of narration and, by doing that, she is also destroying the typical narrator we find in folktales, who tells the stories as facts that cannot be said in another different way. However, through these interventions between the brackets, the narrators are giving their own opinion, clarifying that there is subjectivity in the narration and that what we are reading is a story told by a narrator. In this sense, whatever statement we see there, we know it can be questioned since it is emphasised that it is a point of view and the story is just a story.

Regarding literary self-referentiality, D'Hoker identifies this strategy at the end of "The Search for the Lost Husband" (182): "That is my story. And if there is a lie in it, it was not I who made it up. All I got for my story was butter boots and paper hats. And a white dog came and ate the boots and tore the hats. But what matter? What matters but the good of the story?" (262). These lines are crucially important because "they echo rhetorical disclaimers found in traditional folk tales" (D'Hoker 182). We identify a critique of the way women are portrayed in folktale tradition, as there is a big amount of popular tales in which the suffering or the submission of the woman is not perceived. But through this self-referentiality the protagonist makes the narrative her own. In this sense, the two notions of foregrounding narration and self-referentiality are closely related, because they both break with the omniscient narrator who just tells the facts as if they were unquestionable, without the possibility of them being wrong.

We have to take into account that these three techniques are also a way of subverting the archetypes previously mentioned. However, they were not explained earlier because they do not break simply with individual archetypes but modify them jointly. Making variations in the narration of a story can imply big changes in the message spread by the text, and of course, in its reliability. These strategies change some basic features in the structure of the tale and totally transform the new narration.

4. Conclusion

We can identify many similarities between the works of Carmen Blanco and Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, but also some important differences. Both Blanco and Ní Dhuibhne challenge in their new narratives the perpetuation of patriarchal archetypes. However, in the case of Ní Dhuibhne we see that not all of them are dismantled. This is simply because in the original tales they do not appear. In fact, if we analyse Carmen Blanco's stories one by one, we can observe that she does not subvert all of them in each story either.

One of the most obvious differences between both authors is the language used for their respective narrations. Galician literature is “creative writing expressed only in Galician”, according to the philological criterion currently used to define this national literature (Palacios and Lojo 17). This is the case of Carmen Blanco, who uses Galician. Nevertheless, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne writes *The Inland Ice* in English, although she has other works in Gaelic. Ní Dhuibhne may use this language because the situation of Gaelic is worse than that of Galician, and Irish literature is mostly written in English. Irish writers do not feel that their national identity is at stake due to language choice and are aware of the restrictions that the use of Gaelic could have (Palacios and Lojo 17). However, there is a further reason, as shown by Fulmer (2007): “African American and Irish authors have both, over time, demonstrated expertise in using the language of a conquering Anglo society to manipulate readers from that dominant group into entering new ideas, especially ideas that cast doubt on the wisdom of dominating others” (12). In this way, Ní Dhuibhne would be using the English language the same way she and Carmen Blanco are using the form of the traditional tale. Both authors are rewriting stories with the purpose of criticising or changing elements that they consider oppressing to women. In order to do that, they borrow traditional narratives. It is a sort of appropriation of an instrument that was used by some people as a means of oppression, but these two writers employ it for their own purposes so as to spread new values and opinions. Indeed, if we conceive the tale as a type of short story the use of this form could be related to the fact that “the short story has acted at various times as a resource for

writers to contest the dominant beliefs in social progress and formal cohesion” (March Rusell qtd. in Sacido and Lojo 3). According to Sacido and Lojo (2018), “despite its seemingly fragile status, the strength and continuity of short story is partly attributed to its capacity to respond critically to surrounding circumstances in a more immediate, unyielding and engaging manner than a longer narrative” (3). In this sense, the choice of the genre could be also motivated by this reason.

One characteristic that can be seen in the narration of both authors is the realism of their stories. Traditional fairy tales and folk tales are full of magical elements, such as magical spells, enchantments, magic, transformations, etc. Although in Ní Dhuibhne’s “The Search for the Lost Husband” we also identify some magical items, the reaction of the woman is more authentic than in the original story. The setting contributes to make their stories more realistic. Traditional stories are frequently set in places that we are unable to identify. However, these narratives are placed in real places of Galicia, in the case of Carmen Blanco, and predominantly in Ireland and other countries, such as Sweden, in Ní Dhuibhne’s stories. Moreover, they even include a historical background to their stories, since we can see references to the Spanish Civil War, the Great Famine of Ireland or emigration.

A further point is the fact that both writers modify the title of their stories. This could be just because their narratives are new and different from the originals. Nevertheless, the change of name implies something more. We have seen in Chapter 3 that the transition of title from “The Story of the Little White Goat” to “The Search for the Lost Husband” suggests a change in the focus of attention, since the highlighted element is no longer the story about the goat, but the woman’s adventure (Fogarty 74). In *Vermella con lobos*, the titles are also changed. However, while the original versions are unidentifiable in Ní Dhuibhne’s titles, in *Vermella con lobos* we can guess the tale by which the new tale is inspired. Titles as “Vermella con lobos”, “Silva Rosa” or “Novas noites nosas” play with the relation between the new story and the old one, because there are parts that suggest the title of the folktale. Ní Dhuibhne changes completely the titles in order to break with the old stories. Blanco creates her titles by mixing elements from the old story and new ones, thus forging a link between the

old and the new narration, but at the same time clarifying that there will be variations. These differences in the naming of stories could be related to the fact that the narratives selected by both writers are not the same. Carmen Blanco chooses universally known stories, tales that are recognised by everyone in western culture and have been told for centuries, which allows her to make an allusion to them that everyone can understand. But Ní Dhuibhne selects stories that are part of Irish folklore and Nordic legends. They are not stories known by everybody, and, in most cases, it is not enough to be part of the culture, but you need to be an expert in folklore, to recognise them. Because of this, she cannot play with titles as Blanco does, since most of the readers might not get the reference if they do not search for the sources of tales. It is possible that this difference has to do with each author's culture, since, although they share common folklore, it is more probable for an Irish writer to be in contact with Nordic sagas than for a Galician writer such as Carmen Blanco.

Furthermore, the revisions written by each author are not the same type of rewriting. In the second chapter, we saw that Sellers identifies two kinds of rewritings: those which maintain the plot of the original story, but change some aspects, and those which are entirely transformed (qtd. in D'Hoker 183). In the case of *The Inland Ice*, we find stories of both types, although the main story of the book is identified as the first type. All the stories in *Vermella con lobos* are totally reconstructed, they are new narrations which only contain some elements of the folk tale, such as a character, a situation, a name, etc.

It is interesting to see how both authors are aware of the relevance of narration: who is the narrator and what type of narration it is. According to Joosen (2011), "the voice of the women in this society can be only accessed through stories written down by men" (282). Not only are stories created by men but also, and most importantly, they transport patriarchal values and ideas through the figure of the narrator who, as we have seen, is typically an external narrator who tells the facts as if they were unquestionable (Bacchilega 34). What both authors do is to allow their protagonists to tell their own

stories in most of the narrations. They also introduce the female characters' complex subjectivity, which allows us access to their minds for the first time, what they actually feel and think.

We have also seen how the characters of both writers are not flat characters. First of all, they do not follow the stereotypes expected for women in traditional tales. Moreover, their characters are not perfect heroines. In fact, they are very complex, have contradictions, make mistakes, change their attitudes and opinions and grow up and develop as individuals. By making the characters complex and imperfect, they are getting closer to reality and showing a model with whom readers can identify. This could be also related to the influence that Catholicism has both in Ireland and in Galicia. We should be careful with this because we are not in a position to determine whether they are attacking the influence of Christianity on women or not, but it is true that their female protagonists do not adhere to the traditional role expected from women. For instance, they get divorced, have open relations, enjoy their sexuality, do not get married, have extramarital sexual relations, etc. However, we can find a difference between the protagonists of both authors. Carmen Blanco's heroines are usually young women, like the ones in the original stories. However, Ní Dhuibhne's protagonists are older women who have children already and are married. So the construction of their characters is not the same. Moreover, since her women characters are older, Ní Dhuibhne seems to concentrate their narratives on women's reflections after years of unhappy marriage, which develops into a rejection of marital love. Nevertheless, women in *Vermella con lobos* are younger in the majority of the stories, and the focus of attention may be on their evolution as human beings without following social conventions.

It is very curious that although the types of stories that they modify are diverse, there are elements that are present in both authors, which could suggest that, in spite of cultural differences, the same patterns are repeated in most traditional tales. For instance, we can see in their stories the motif of the animal groom, in "The Search for the Lost Husband" by Ní Dhuibhne and in "Vermella con lobos" by Blanco. Both authors identify this figure as something oppressive for women in tales. However, the way they deal with the animal groom is different. Ní Dhuibhne does not modify anything

in the animal lover, but the criticism of this figure is made through the woman's rejection. Blanco's heroine accepts him, but Blanco's wolf is not the archetypal animal groom. She uses the figure of the animal groom to make an approach to nature and to the woods, while in the original story Little Red Riding Hood is told to avoid both the wood and the creature. Moreover, the motif of the animal groom can be identified in other tales by both authors if we relate it to the figure of the abusive boyfriend. Although they are not animals, they behave as the prototypical animal groom. Indeed, in most of the stories both authors deal with romantic relationships as problematic to women, something that may suggest that the representation of romantic relations is one of the most important means of spreading patriarchal values in folktales.

It is reasonable to conclude that there are many similitudes between the work of the two authors because of the links between Galician and Irish literature, although there are also differences which highlight the fact that, despite the connection between these two nations, each of them has its own identity and culture. This paper only deals with two books by two authors, but the results could be improved by the comparison of other feminist rewritings by more Galician and Irish writers. This study has shown that, in the revisions by Carmen Blanco and Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, the dismantling of patriarchal archetypes is the key element in feminist rewriting. The critical apparatus around the archetype is one possible approach to the analysis of feminist narratives, but there are many other possibilities. The findings presented here provide a starting point for further examination by applying other theoretical frameworks, which, due to the scope of this dissertation, cannot be treated here.

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