A Modernised Image of Women's Prototypes in Fairy Tales:
Anne Sexton's "Cinderella," a Feminist Perspective
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Abstract

This paper is a feminist study of Anne Sexton's poem, "Cinderella," published in *Transformations* (1971), and of the archetypal gender roles in fairy tales. The researcher focuses on the views of A. Dworkin and M. Lieberman, which complement each other. She traces, from a feminist point of view, the different prototypes of men and women. Those archetypes are the idiotic characters of the prince and the father on the one hand, and the sweet angel / princess and the transparent character of the fairy godmother, with her absolute kindness versus the bewitching power of the stepmother and the stepsisters, on the other. Sexton, the "middle-aged witch," (Sexton, "The Gold Key" 2), subverts the system of punishment and reward depicted in fairy tales. It is pre-known that the stepmother and her daughters should be punished for their apparently tyrannous plans. However, the researcher realises that the only sin of those women is that they are decision makers. Therefore, their active presence, which develops the events of the story, leads to their repulsion by the phallocratic power.

The two prototypes of men and women are ironically punished, when they follow the norms of masculine society, which advocate complete respect for the doctrine of phallicism. Moreover, in Sexton's feminist transformation of Cinderella's story, the actions of those male archetypes are degraded from any sense of nobility or kind heartedness and they turn to be selfish and foolish. Sexton, the wise witch, hopes that her mature readers will change their views, after reading her transformed fairy tales. Consequently, sexton criticises the phallocentric system of powers, which places man, at its top, as a narcissit patriarch whose role is to oppress women. However, Sexton's feminist discourse, which deconstructs indirectly, the masculine language of fairy tales, is an active step to replace the male domineering power of her society with thoughts of equality between men and women in the course of time.

صورة عصرية لأنماط النساء في قصص الحواري:
رؤية نسائية لقصيدة "سيندريلا" للشاعرة آن سيكستون
نيڤين ضياء الدين القصبي
الملخص

يتناول البحث بالنقد والتحليل قصص الحواري من منظور تيار الحركة النسائية. وتهدف الباحثة إلى هدم الأدوار النمطية الذكورية والأنثوية المتعارف عليها في تلك القصص. وتُعد الشاعرة الأمريكية آن سيكستون (١٩٢٨-١٩٧٤) واحدة من أشهر الشاعرات اللاتي قمن بتناول مجموعة من أشهر القصص الخرافية في ديوانها "تحولات" (١٩٧١). وتتحدث الشاعرة سيكستون في قصيدة "المفتاح الذهبي"، وهي القصيدة التمهيدية التي تفتتح بها ديوانها "تحولات"، بلسان حال الساحرة الحكيمة وذلك كمحاولة منها لقلب الرؤية الذكورية لأنماط الرجال والنساء الشائعة في قصص الحواري. وعلى الرغم من كثرة الآراء النقدية التي تنتمي لفكر المقاومة النسائية، إلا أن الباحثة قد ركزت على آراء كلٍ من الناقدتين أندريا دوركن ومارشيا ليبرمان وذلك لأنهما قد رسمتا خارطةً متكاملة لملامح وصفات كل نمط من أنماط الذكور والإناث، مما يمهد إلى هدمها. وهنا تخص الباحثة بالذكر قيام الشاعرة سيكستون بقلب نظام الثواب والعقاب في قصيدة "سيندريلا" وذلك كمحاولة تدريجية لتغيير تلك المعتقدات المتوارثة لاشعوريًا في مخزون اللاوعي الجماعي لدى القراء، والمرتبطة بمفاهيم المجتمع الذكوري. ولذلك فقد قامت الساحرة الحكيمة سيكستون بإعادة صياغة قصة سيندريلا في قصيدتها المعروفة بنفس الإسم، وذلك من خلال تضمين صوتها الأنثوي داخل النص الرئيسي المُصاغ بلغة ذكورية مما يعمل على هدم تلك اللغة.

وفي ضوء الآراء النقدية الخاصة بليبرمان ودوركن فقد تناولت الباحثة أنماط الرجال في قصيدة "سيندريلا" وهي كلٍ من نموذجي الأب أو الملك والأمير ووضحت المقارنة العكسية بينها وبين تلك الأنماط الخاصة بالنساء والتي تشتمل على سيندريلا أو الفتاة الحسناء والملائكية الخاضعة دومًا لسيطرة زوجة الأب، وهي تلك الساحرة الشريرة وبناتها. وهنا فقد كان للباحثة رؤى خاصة حول كل نموذج من تلك النماذج فقد قاربت بين نموذجي الأب والأمير ووضحت كيف أنهما لا يختلفان عن بعضهما البعض من حيث صفات الحماقة والأنانية. كما قاربت الباحثة بين وضع كلٍ من سيندريلا وأختيها غير الشقيقتين وزوجة أبيها من حيث الخضوع لمفاهيم وأعراف نفس المجتمع الذكوري الذي يفرض على المرأة ضرورة البحث عن زوج، مما يُفقدها هويتها ويُعاقبها أيضًا إذا صرحت بذلك كما هو الحال مع زوجة الأب وبناتها. وقد نجحت سيكستون في بناء ركيزة أساسية لهدم نظام القوى الذكوري الذي يُخضع المرأة تحت سيطرته من خلال إعادة صياغة قصة سيندريلا مما يُمهد القارئ لرفض تلك الأعراف الظالمة للمرأة ويفتح الباب أمام رؤى المساواة بين الرجل والمرأة مع مرور الوقت.

- **Epilogue**

In this paper the researcher attempts to consider a transformative, feminist version of the patriarchal, literary world of fairy tales. Though there are numerous writers and poets, who have subverted fairy tales, adopting a feminist approach, many of them tend, either to discard totally, or to make changes in the events of the addressed fairy tale in order to defend their views. Though Anne Sexton (1928 – 74), an American confessionalist poet, adopts a feminist standpoint, writing in a sharp critical and sarcastic tone many of the fairy tales, addressed in her volume, *Transformations* (1971), she does not change the main plot line and the events of each story. Therefore, Sexton's poem, "Cinderella," published in *Transformation*, is the subject of this research. The researcher chooses to trace the views of the two feminist critics, Marcia Lieberman and Andrea Dworkin because their ideas best represent Sexton's rewritten version of the story of Cinderella and her codifications of the ideas related to women's passivity and the stereotyped roles of both of women and men. Reviewing the ideas of a number of the researchers who have dealt with Sexton's poetry from a feminist overview; such as Philip McGowan, M. Martin González, and Shiho Fukuda, the researcher supports her views of Sexton's poem "Cinderella".

- **Anne Sexton: an Overview of Some of Her Works**

In *Anne Sexton and Middle Generation Poetry*, McGowan points to the relationship between Sexton's verse and that of confessional poetry. Being encouraged by her psychiatrist to write as a kind of self-expression, Sexton's feminist rewritings and some of the details in her taboo topics, (especially in the earlier volumes), can be related to that of hers. "Moreover, large swathes of her poetry deal with intensely personal subjects: relationships with parents and parental figures, relationships with children, lovers and even therapists" (McGowan, "Introduction" 2). However, since this research is devoted to Sexton's poem, "Cinderella," and her volume *Transformations*, this confessional approach is not overseen tremendously as compared to her earlier volumes. Being detached from her parents, experiencing a childhood conflict with a father who is suspected to be incestuous, though this is not confirmed, and

leading an unsuccessful marital life are some of the factors which drive her to write feminist, rebellious and confessional poetry. Hence, "[h]er poetry operates to deconstruct such forms of masculine language from within. The empowered positions within her writing are ultimately those of the female voicings realized through the codes and strategies of Sexton's concentrated poetic style" (McGowan, "Introduction" 2).

In "Uncovering the Female Voice in Anne Sexton" McGowan comments on Sexton's style in relation to the development of her poetic writings. *To Bedlam and Part Way Back* (1960) is Sexton's first volume of verse in which she charts the main textual framework, found in her later volumes. It is somehow related to the idea of intertextuality, in the sense that, Sexton builds a rebellious text; one that is written in a feminine voice within the predominant masculine one. The reader is supposed to find out the characteristics of this female identity and its language, being hidden inside the main text. In *All My Pretty Ones*, Sexton's second collection of verse, she raises two issues, which she has to choose between. She either has to agree to her parental way of thinking and style of life, or to break with them, defending her own unconventional ideas. She prefers the second choice, which becomes noticeable in her attempt to tackle taboo topics in her earlier poems. As a confessionalist, Sexton tends to relate instances in her life to that of the American political atmosphere, though this tendency fades later on. McGowan states that "Sexton specifically links her own birth and early years with the election of Hoover in 1928, the continuation of Prohibition that his 'dry' victory ensured, and the movements towards the second world war" ("Uncovering the Female Voice" 127). In *Live or Die* (1966), Sexton discusses the stereotyped gender roles of the patriarchal culture. She relates them to an inferred comparison between the model of feminine passivity, which represents all the women figures in her family, even that of herself, and her desired model of a self-dependent woman. The ideas of death in life and suicide, which fascinate Sexton, taking Plath as a model, until she finally puts an end to her life in 1974, haunt the poet throughout the volume. Death / suicide is the nightmarish situation which can help women to gain their freedom from the gender roles and the power of patriarchal

language and its culture. Hence, "Sexton's text transgresses against the male world of reason and its versions of patriarchy and phallocentrism; this is her original 'sin' in that she substitutes a non-gendered image of herself, [the witch], for the traditional Western icon of a male savior" (McGowan, "Uncovering the Female Voice" 131).

Death is the consequence to Sexton's feeling of self-estrangement and loss within the language of her American patriarchal culture, which does not represent women. These ideas which are discussed in *The Death Notebooks* (1974), are later developed into a form of self-duality, being a systematic feature of Sexton's verse. Therefore, in almost all of Sexton's verse volumes, there is a hidden female self, who is playing with and on the patriarchal language, which configures silence and submission of women. In her two volumes *45 Mercy Street* (1976) and *Words for Dr. Y* (1978), Sexton, as a confessionalist, attempts to assert a built-in relationship between the construction of herself, and her life incidents, which she has used to document.

As in her volume, *Transformations*, Sexton constructs two texts and thereby two languages, which are moving side by side. The first represents the voice of the predominant, phallocentric culture and the second is a subtext codified within the words of the first. The latter, which belongs to the subjective voice of the oppressed female identity, can be inferred through critical reading. Though the language of the female text is apparently suppressed, being hidden inside the first phallocentric context and its culture, Sexton is able to deconstruct the first one, through the existence of the second. Hence, the hidden female voice weakens the phallocentric language, and usurps its power as it exposes this state of women's oppression. This linguistic duality, which liberates the female identity from its submission, leads to diverse interpretations of each of Sexton's poems, as each reader and researcher can have a different understanding of the same context. However, in each poetic text, Sexton's common goal is "to give voice to the dominated female figure in America, and to liberate the female writer from the constraints of the tight, masculine surfaces of textualisations" (McGowan, "Uncovering the Female Voice" 139).

A Modernised Image of Women's Prototypes in Fairy Tales:
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- **Andrea Dworkin's *Woman Hating* (1974), and Introductory Information about the History of Feminism**

Before analysing what Dworkin considers as the stereotyped male / female characteristics and archetypes of fairy tales, she hints at some remarkable incidents in the history of feminism. Dworkin points to the fact that the two feminist manifestos, *Sexual Politics* and *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, mark the beginning of feminism as a movement. Early feminists defend their rights to have a voice in elections. Their calls meet with that of the revolutionist black liberationists such as Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman. Therefore, the two movements; Feminism and Black Liberation complement each other. *The Seneca Falls Declaration of Rights and Sentiments*, the famous agreement, which is the byproduct of the efforts of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, fuel the feminist movement in 1848. Feminists exert a lot of efforts, which mark the dawn of many mottos of the Civil Rights Movement. In 1920, women are finally allowed to have voice in elections as equal to that of men. Dworkin believes that the scheme of women's oppression and the phallocentric views, which dominate women's life, should be reshaped. Consequently, in "Part One: The Fairy Tales," Dworkin exposes those fixed models, as that of female passivity versus male chivalry and the definitions of men and women, which are imposed by the masculine society and its domineering power, so as to subvert them.

- **Negative Female Stereotypes Versus Positive Male Ones in the World of Fairy Tales**

Dworkin asserts that the models of men and women in fairy tales have been made by the patriarchal society. Persons and children take those values, whether consciously or unconsciously, as essential guidelines, that should be followed and believed in throughout the different steps of their lives. Consequently, "[w]omen live in fairy tale as magical figures, as beauty, danger, innocence, malice, and greed. In the personae of the fairy tale – the wicked witch, the beautiful princess, [and] the heroic prince …" (Dworkin 32), are the standardised stereotypes, performed by the two genders in life as well. Fairy tales preserve the male-centered conventions of each

society and teach children that women do not have independent identities. Women are assumed to be inactive and they cannot lead a life of their own. Therefore, they should wait for "the happy ending" (Dworkin 35), marriage, so as to be dependent on a man, the archetype of the rich, handsome prince, leading the same passive life, which introduce another common archetype of the mother / or the angelic wife, as in the case of the mothers of Snow White and Cinderella, who are dead. Man / the chivalrous prince is the only saviour of the angelic, inactive princess, who should play the role of her kind, dead mother, so as to be an idol. Giving birth to another pretty, negative princess, she is also doomed to live in a state of death in life, so as to be admired and loved. Hence, the prince should be always victorious, giving life to the dead or the almost dead princess. Dworkin states that "[w]e remember romantic paradigms: the heroic prince kisses Sleeping Beauty; the heroic prince searches his kingdom to find Cinderella; the heroic prince marries Snow-White" (35). Consequently, there are two main archetypes of women in the world of fairy tales and in life. A woman has, either to be kind, pretty, voiceless, dead and thoughtless, (the princess and her mother), or to be wicked, ugly, active, alive and controlling, (the queen / stepmother and the witch). This paradigm is the byproduct of the phallocentric culture, which merits a positive image of the patriarch as thoughtful and active. Dworkin takes the fairy tales of Snow-White, Cinderella, Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty and Hansel and Grethel as examples. If women play active roles, whether in fairy tales or in life, they start to be repulsive. In all of the fairy tales, the inactive, angelic princess is dominated by her unnatural mother. Being dehumanised, as a servant, by her active, wicked stepmother, she is forced to lead a still life and to be concerned with the household activities, until she is rescued by the patriarch / the prince in order to lead another still life. The second archetype of the almost angelic woman in the world of fairy tales is the fairy, who does miracles. Because she is given an ability to act, her magical power is transparent and she always fades. She is the opposite to the archetype of the wicked witch, who is active so as to practise black magic therefore, the fairy's strong presence is redeemed.

In contrast to the inactive, female archetype of the princess, the

active, male archetype of the prince reflects the standardised values of the phallocentric culture, which inferiorize the roles of women. However, Dworkin remarks that this chivalrous prince does not have a sense of intelligence. He is active only when his character is compared with his female counterpart / the princess. Dworkin also comments on the second male archetype, projected in fairy tales, which is "[t]he [h]usband, the [r]eal [f]ather" (44), or in short the king. The two characters of the prince and the king are connected to each other, being an echo to the male-centered views of the patriarchal culture, which idolises the image of the man. The king is a man of property, who has ironically kind intentions. Like his counterpart, the prince, he lacks intelligence, being unable to discover the villainous nature of his wife / the queen, and unable to take an action to stop her wicked intentions against his daughter. Consequently, he, as a man, though he is inactive, is a figure of absolute kindness or goodness and his active wife, as a woman, is a figure of absolute tyranny. As a man, he should not bear any responsibility or develop any emotional bonds, neither with his first angelic, dead wife nor with his second active, evil one. He should not be punished or criticised for all his faults, humiliation towards his family and negative deficiencies because they are just, in a sarcastic tone, signs of his absolute kindness.

In "Onceuponatime: the Moral of the Story," Dworkin asserts that fairy tales expose a series of opposed stereotypes, which delineate any presence of women. The latter should be punished if they start to take an action, while men should be perceived as active, only in comparison with their angelic wives and daughters, and even flittered for their faults. "Where he is erect, she is supine. Where he is awake, she is asleep. Where he is active, she is passive. Where she is erect, or awake, or active, she is evil and must be destroyed" (Dworkin 47-48). In order to be admired, a woman should live, as an angelic doll, otherwise, she will be rebuffed if she thinks or plans, (the archetype of the stepmother), because these qualities will be a threat to the character of her male counterpart. In the light of this phallocentric scheme of oppressive power, women and little girls are taught to live, as indecisive persons, and wait until they become good and silenced wives, so as to be loved. In short women should be owned and dominated by a patriarch, so as to be hailed.

- **Children's Journey Towards a Recognition of the System of Punishment and Reward in Fairy Tales: a Reading of M. Lieberman's "Some Day My Prince Will Come"**

In her essay, Lieberman rejects Alison Lurie's tendency to favour and hail the system of women's archetypes in fairy tales. In "'Fairy Tale Liberation'," Lurie assumes that women are given power and active roles, which are equal to their male counterparts. Lieberman disagrees with this inaccurate and conventional view. Instead she builds upon Dworkin's beliefs that fairy tales inferiorize women's roles and trivialise their identities. Therefore, Lieberman criticises the patriarchal world of fairy tales, which enforces unconsciously a system of its male-centered values, (male power versus female fragility), as dogmatic facts in the minds of children. She adds that a feminist reading of Andrew Lang's *The Blue Fairy Book* (1889), negates Lurie's assumption that women are given a chance to appear as decisive persons, who have played active roles. On the contrary, the fairy tales, chosen in this book maintain only a silenced presence of women and marginalise their roles.

The character sketch portrayed in the world of fairy tales, helps children to realise that the male gender has the power to dominate the presence of the female one. This fact becomes part of their collective unconscious, therefore, boys grow up, as repetitive pictures of this patriarch, while girls learn that they should be submissive and beautiful, in order to win the heart of a prince / the patriarch. Lieberman points out that beauty should be the only characteristic of any woman, so as to be loved and to fulfill the sexual desires of a man. Giving an example of Snow-White, beauty becomes a woman's characteristic.

It is the quality, which helps her to be chosen as a wife / a commodity by the prince and makes the male dwarves love her. It also leads to the climatic point of this fairy tale, as it arouses the jealousy of Snow-White's stepmother and drives her to decide to kill the girl. In the views of the patriarch, it does not matter, whether a woman is wise and intelligent or not. What is important is that she should be beautiful so as to be a woman. "The beauty contest is a constant and primary device in many of the stories. Where there are several daughters in a family, or several unrelated girls in a story, the

prettiest is invariably singled out and designated for reward, or first for punishment and later for reward" (Lieberman 187). Cinderella is first punished as a servant, but later she is rewarded being the winner in the rivalry between her and her stepsisters, only because she is the most beautiful.

Besides the contrastive and opposite roles, played by the male / female archetypes, there are stereotyped characteristics, associated with each one of them. A princess should be docile, and have all the physical features, that are determined by her patriarchal society, so as to be extraordinary beautiful. As for a prince, handsomeness is not an essential characteristic of his identity. What is more important for him, as a patriarch, is to be fortunate, adventurous and to have the physical abilities that can qualify him to rescue his princess, so as to be his future, submissive wife. Therefore, the most beautiful girl should be assured that she is the one, who is well qualified to find a chivalrous patriarch as a husband. Moreover, "[g]ood-temper and meekness are so regularly associated with beauty, and ill-temper with ugliness, that this in itself must influence children's expectations" (Lieberman 188). Ironically, marriage in fairy tales, is not a happy ending, but rather a commercialised deal. For instance, "([i]f the heroine or hero is already rich, she or he may marry someone of equal rank and wealth, as in 'The White Cat,' 'Trusty John', 'The Sleeping Beauty', etc; if poor, she or he marries someone richer)" (Lieberman 189). Lieberman also refers to the point that the prince is the one, who benefits more, because after marriage, he will be a monarch, who owns a doll-like, pretty wife. The researcher realises that marriage turns out to be a kind of monopoly, as the most beautiful girl, though she will be wealthy, is monopolised by a patriarch.

Gender roles are standardised in fairy tales. A beautiful girl is a saint, who is by nature weak and is dehumanised. She needs to be protected by a male figure who searches for her, because this is the role which he should play. "So many of the heroines of fairy stories, including the well-known Rapunzel, are locked up in towers, locked into a magic sleep, imprisoned by giants, or otherwise enslaved …" (Lieberman 192). Consequently, she lives as a dead person, before the arrival of her chivalrous patriarch, and continues to lead the same

death in life state after her marriage. Hence, the role or the character sketch of the sweet, angelic girl, who deserves love is fixed. She should be always actionless, though she is in crisis or jailed and subjected to a number of tyrannous plans, hardships and struggles. Lieberman enumerates examples of this submissive, female archetype, from a number of fairy tales. It becomes part of children's, (a girl's), collective unconscious, that they should perform the same limited domains of this female character. This is done in order to win love and to be respected in a phallocentric society, which gives the power of leadership only to man / the patriarch:

> Because victimized girls like Felicia, the Goose-girl, and Cinderella are invariably rescued and rewarded, indeed glorified, children learn that suffering goodness can afford to remain meek, and need not and perhaps should not strive to defend itself, for if it did so perhaps the fairy godmother would not turn up for once, to set things right at the end (Lieberman 193).

Consequently, the prince undertakes the responsibility of all decisions, determines the future fate of his *Princess Bride*, and can, ironically, offer her a future prosperous life.

Lieberman also disapproves of Lurie's claim that wiser, female characters are given power of control, even more than their male counterparts. This is untrue, because the angelic archetype of the non-human fairy, (the female prototype of absolute kindness), has power to do miracles, but submission is inferred to be part of her nature. Moreover, the second, wicked archetypes of those human and non-human female figures, who are given power of action to practise black magic or to carry on tyrannous plans, against the sweet angel, (princess), are doomed to be hated. This is because their deeds and actions are degraded from any sense of morality. In order to silence a woman's call to have an independent identity, it is always shown that a woman, who has power of action is always rebuked for that, does all the disgustful deeds and her character is mean. Therefore, this unwelcomed archetype of those decision-making women always aspires to win the estimation and to reach the elevated status, given

by the patriarchal society to their opposite counterparts of the sweet and lovely angels. Lieberman comments on this observation of the phallocentric standards of fairy tales. In her viewpoint "[t]hey establish a dichotomy between those women who are gentle, passive, and faire, and those who are active, wicked, and ugly" (Lieberman 197). Sexton ridicules the dream of each fairy tale's couple to live "happily ever after" (101), in her poem "Cinderella". This is because it means only that a woman will continue to be silenced after marriage, so as to be consistent with the male-centered ideals of her society.

- **"The Gold Key," a Poem Which Opens the Gate for Sexton's Feminist Subversion of Fairy Tales**

Sexton's transformed fairy tales are not meant to manipulate the naïve minds of children with ideas about the stereotyped gender roles, as it is the case with Grimm brothers' fairy tales. Instead, they address the grown up readers and researchers, who can recognise the feminist discourse, that is hidden inside in the body of the male-centered language of each story. In *"Sexton's Transformations,"* McGowan refers to this idea, confirming that "[t]wo of the ages of these adults are given, twenty-two and fifty-six, Sexton hereby dislocating the world of the fairy tale as the province of children only" (75). Consequently, Sexton's "The Gold Key" introduces the researcher to a feminist rereading of fairy tales, which can be, in some cases, related to confessional poetry. This is because some of the incidents, that form up the plot of a number of the fairy tales, Sleeping Beauty, as a key example, can be related to Sexton's life as well. The existence of a secondary, feminist, discourse within all of Sexton's transformed fairy tales, constitutes what McGowan refers to as "metatales" ("*Sexton's Transformations*" 75). McGowan stresses that in all of the subverted fairy tales of *Transformations*, "Sexton's metatales, [are] acknowledging once more her deployment of an oppositional structure which sets one language or literary register against another…" (*"Sexton's Transformations"* 75). Hence, the verse context of "The Gold Key" is a subject for further analysis:

"THE GOLD KEY"
The speaker in this case
is a middle-aged witch, me —
tangled on my two great arms,
my face in a book
and my mouth wide,
ready to tell you a story or two.
I have come to remind you,
all of you:
Alice, Samuel, Kurt, Eleanor,
Jane, Brian, Maryel,
all of you draw near.
Alice,
at fifty-six do you remember?
Do you remember when you
were read to as a child?
Samuel,
at twenty-two have you forgotten?
Forgotten the ten P.M. dreams
where the wicked king
went up in smoke?
Are you comatose?
Are you undersea? **(Sexton 1-22)**

In the opening lines of the poem, Sexton takes the role of a witch, who rehearses a written version of Grimm brothers' fairy tales in a feminist discourse. A male-centered vision of the two prototypes of women are discussed before, in the views of Dworkin and Lieberman. They are mainly the silenced and angelic princess, the decisive but repulsive witch or stepmother and the fairy godmother, who is doomed to have an invisible presence because she is given some power of action. By speaking in the voice of what is stereotyped as a villainous witch, Sexton subverts the female archetypes of fairy tales, which are the byproduct of her phallocentric culture.

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Anne Sexton's "Cinderella," a Feminist Perspective

The established relationship between feminist resistance and the presence of a witch, is discussed in some research papers. In "The Witch as Self-representation in the Poetry of Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, and Eavan Boland," Shaymaa Al-Wattar, an Arab researcher, discusses the interrelated relationship between a poet's manipulation of a witch and that of feminist studies. She states that "[a]n outstanding, yet very unconventional, one is the feminist poets self-fashioning as a Witch, which becomes a substantial part of the international second-wave women's movement that started in the late 1960s" (Al-Wattar 142). In a study of selected verse, written by the previously mentioned three poets, Al-Wattar points to the use of the witch's female voice of resistance against the prototype of silenced women. In relation to the views of Al-Wattar, Sexton takes the role of a witch, who is used to be despised, because she has power of decision and this is unwelcomed in a phallocentric culture. In "The Gold Key," Sexton turns this negative depiction of the evil power, that is enforced upon this witch, by the male-centered views into a positive one. Consequently, in *Transformations*, the witch, (Sexton), uses her magic / "a gold key" ("The Gold Key" 33), to revolt against the stereotypes of gender roles, that are observed in the phallocentric culture and in fairy tales.

In "The Hesitancy of A "Middle-Aged Witch: Anne Sexton's Transformations," Shiho Fukuda locates the character of the witch in the feminist mainstream. However, observing a neutral function of this archetype in Sexton's poetry, weakens the sense of a feminist revolution. This is because, in Fukuda's views, throughout *Transformations*, Sexton / the witch sometimes seems to be consistent with the norms of her patriarchal culture and in other cases, she is against them. "As a result, male perspectives still held sway in the process of deconstructing the patriarchal tales written by the Grimm Brothers to the point that she projected an old-fashioned male view of life from time to time" (Fukuda 32). In poems such as "Snow White" and "Cinderella" Sexton / the witch seems to have an apparent feminist standpoint. Though in some instances inside each poem, she seems to retreat backwards, conforming again to the patriarchal views. In some other poems such as "The Frog Prince" and "God Father Death," Sexton / the witch appears to be a

conservative woman, who conforms to the idea of male dominance. Fukuda gives some reasons for this *hesitancy* in the feminist standpoint of the witch. By keeping a reluctant standpoint, Sexton / the witch may want to prove that both men and women have to perform certain traditional stereotypes already defined for them by their phallocentric culture. "What the "middle-aged witch" succeeds in revealing through her witchcraft is the fact that males are also prisoners of the patriarchal system" (Fukuda 38). Fukuda mentions this point as a reason that does not help the witch to put an end to the roots of the male-centered views of Grimm Brothers' fairy tales. Sexton has had a conservative marriage. Therefore, her confessional poetry reflects a personal vision in the traditional relationship between man and woman. Finally, this indefinite stance of the witch's feminist voice can be traced back, in Fukuda's views, to one of the economic conditions in the history of the American society. At once, women are called upon to participate in the market place and in the work field of men, but after a while, they withdraw from the scene. "During World War II when American industry suffered from a shortage of workers, women were urged to join the work force as a patriotic duty. When the men came back from the front, however, women were released from the labor market to return to their proper place at home" (Fukuda 41). Though these points can be considered as factors, that affect negatively Sexton's feminist stance, the witch in "The Gold Key" confirms that her goal is to write transformed versions of fairy tales, from a feminist point of view.

The witch in "The Gold Key" negates any belief of deficiency in her feminist views. Therefore, both the reader and researcher conform to the point that, the "sixteen" (Sexton 26), years old boy of "The Gold Key" is a representative of Sexton herself, as she has stated, who will be an eyewitness to the subversion of the male / female archetypes of fairy tales. In the second part of "The Gold Key," the witch, whose female gender and voice now overpower that of the male boy, states directly that she is here to rewrite Grimm Brothers' fairy tales. Consequently, the following lines of verse from "The Gold Key" reflect the persona's feminist project:

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> Attention,
> my dears,
> let me present to you this boy.
> He is sixteen and he wants some answers.
> He is each of us.
> I mean you.
> I mean me.
> It is not enough to read Hesse
> and drink clam chowder
> we must have the answers.
> The boy has found a gold key
> and he is looking for what it will open.
> This boy!
> Upon finding a nickel
> he would look for a wallet.
> This boy!
> Upon finding a string
> he would look for a harp.
> Therefore he holds the key tightly.
> Its secrets whimper
> like a dog in heat.
> He turns the key.
> Presto!
> It opens this book of odd tales
> which transform the Brothers Grimm.
> Transform?
> As if an enlarged paper clip
> could be a piece of sculpture.
> (And it could.) **(Sexton 23-51)**

Sexton determines that the gender of this eyewitness is a male, a boy, so as to be a representative of the world of men and those male-centered views, which enforce power over women. The witch stresses that this boy is "sixteen" (Sexton, "The Gold Key" 26), years old, so as to infer that he is no longer a naïve child. As a young man, he will not be brainwashed as those innocent children. In this case, it is hopefully that, he will not be a copy of that patriarch, who follows the norms of male-dominance. McGowan comments on the

union between the sixteen years old of the boy and the witch's feminist project of retelling sixteen fairy tales. "The speaker proclaims that the youth is "each of us" (*T*, 2): corresponding exactly, [in his age], with the number of tales in the book, the youth is both fact and fiction, a personification of fairy tale fantasies and the embodiment of human realities" (McGowan, "Sexton's *Transformations*" 75). Hence, the male / female archetypes of fairy tales are the same in life. This can be related to Lieberman's belief that children are got used, even unconsciously, to a model of the phallocentric norms. Consequently, the witch / Sexton is determinant to write a feminist subtext, which exists in the plot of each fairy tale, so as to deconstruct its male-centered language. In order to give a reality-based nature to the world of fairy tales, Sexton hints to some instances, either in her life or in the American history, in the course of her feminist rewritings. According to McGowan, "[c]omic asides, allusions to contemporary U.S. cultural and political life, and references to more global events are sprinkled throughout these pieces in a poetic blend of past and present, European and American, the humorous and the horrific" (*"Sexton's Transformations"* 74). The second part of this research is devoted to a feminist analysis of Sexton's poem, "Cinderella," based on the views of Dworkin and Lieberman. Thus, the transformed archetype of the witch, who has been considered as repulsive in the past, is now a wise and a reliable rhetorician. Therefore, she speaks in a sarcastic tone about the female / male model of roles and archetypes in "Cinderella".

- **The *Ever After* Happiness of Cinderella; a Sweet Angel in the House of Bewitching Women and a *Princess Bride's* Dream to Be Possessed by a Patriarch**

   Sexton opens "Cinderella" with short accounts of stories about people who have been poor, but then all of a sudden have become rich. As mentioned before, in *Transformations*, Sexton is no longer a confessionalist. Now she rather adopts, what Matilde González refers to, in her essay "Fairy Tales Revisited and Transformed," as "the precept of "writing as-re-vision" formulated by Adrienne Rich in her now canonical and well-known essay" (9). In "Cinderella" the witch forms out a sarcastic, comic framework, through her retelling of the four stories of "the plumber" (Sexton 2), "the nursemaid"

(Sexton 6), "a milkman" (Sexton 11), and "the charwoman" (Sexton 17). They are deliberately narrated, so as to introduce the archetype of the distressed lady, Cinderella, and to foretell that her fate will be the same. She concludes three of her short narrative episodes in "Cinderella" with the refrain "[t]hat story" (Sexton 5-21), to convince the readers of fairy tales that these stories are standardised and that they just reinforce the archetypal roles of men and women. In other words, the witch maintains a feminist mockery of phallicism, the main doctrine, that should be respected by women. She mocks the unified theme of almost each fairy tale, which transposes the status of the poor and the beloved girl, so as to become a rich lady or a woman of leisure. González remarks that "[t]he prologues and interpolations added to the tales are worth highlighting since they represent an authorial voice [of criticism] which expects a given response from the reader, and which clearly evinces the narrator's involvement" (13).

The witch attempts to revolt against, even if this is inferred, the cultural ideals, that are implemented in the collective unconscious of men and women. In each transformed fairy tale, the witch's feminist critique is meant to urge those silenced women, (e.g Cinderella and Snow White), to give up their silence and the somewhat independent ones, (the stepmother and her daughters), to be more independent. Therefore, the woman of each archetype should build a life that is not based on dependency upon a man and put an end to what can be perceived as a status of men's egomania. Moreover, the witch deconstructs the two archetypes of men, the prince, who lives in a state of fake heroism and the meek father-figure, the king, who pretends to be victimised by his second, tyrannous wife, though in reality, the situation is reversed. This is because the stepmother is the one, whose plans adhere to her husband's laws. Writing in a feminist language, that is codified in the verse lines, Sexton turns the two prototypes of men into idiotic figures, who cheat themselves and the readers and behave foolishly. The main motif conveyed through the witch's feminist discourse, is that marriage can be considered a happy ending, only if a woman is chosen for her distinguished identity, and not for her beauty and submission. It is inferred that women should be equal to men, so as the two will experience an identity development. Consequently, a feminist study of Cinderella's verse-text is the researcher's matter of concern:

"CINDERELLA"
You always read about it:
the plumber with twelve children
who wins the Irish Sweepstakes.
From toilets to riches.
That story.
Or the nursemaid,
some luscious sweet from Denmark
who captures the oldest son's heart.
From diapers to Dior.
That story.
Or a milkman who serves the wealthy,
eggs, cream, butter, yogurt, milk,
the white truck like an ambulance
who goes into real estate
and makes a pile.
From homogenized to martinis at lunch.
Or the charwoman
who is on the bus when it cracks up
and collects enough from the insurance.
From mops to Bonwit Teller.
That Story.
Once.
The wife of a rich man was on her deathbed
and she said to her daughter Cinderella:
Be devout. Be good. Then I will smile
down from heaven in the seam of a cloud.
The man took another wife who had
two daughters, pretty enough
but with hearts like blackjacks.
Cinderella was their maid.
She slept on the sooty hearth each night
and walked around looking like Al Jolson.
Her father brought presents home from town,
jewels and gowns for the other women
but the twig of a tree for Cinderella.
She planted that twig on her mother's grave

and it grew to a tree where a white dove sat.
whenever she wished for anything the dove
would drop it like an egg upon the ground.
The bird is important, my dears, so heed him.
Next came the ball, as you all know.
It was a marriage market.
The prince was looking for a wife.
All but Cinderella were preparing
and gussying up for the big event.
Cinderella begged to go too.
Her stepmother threw a dish of lentils
into the cinders and said: Pick them
up in an hour and you shall go.
The white dove brought all his friends;
all the warm wings of the fatherland came,
and picked up the lentils in a jiffy.
No, Cinderella, said the stepmother,
you have no clothes and cannot dance.
That's the way with stepmothers.
Cinderella went to the tree at the grave
and cried forth like a gospel singer:
Mama! Mama! My turtledove,
send me to the prince's ball!
The bird dropped down a golden dress
and delicate little gold slippers.
Rather a large package for a simple bird.
So she went. Which is no surprise.
Her stepmother and sisters didn't
recognize her without her cinder face
and the prince took her hand on the spot
and danced with no other the whole day.
As nightfall came she thought she'd better
get home. The prince walked her home
and she disappeared into the pigeon house
and although the prince took an axe and broke
it open she was gone. Back to her cinders.
These events repeated themselves for three days.

However on the third day the prince
covered the palace steps with cobbler's wax
and Cinderella's gold shoe stuck upon it.
Now he would find whom the shoe fit
and find his strange dancing girl for keeps.
He went to their house and the two sisters
were delighted because they had lovely feet.
The eldest went into a room to try the slipper on
but her big toe got in the way to she simply
sliced it off and put on the slipper.
The prince rode away with her until the white dove
told him to look at the blood pouring forth.
That is the way with amputations.
They don't just heal up like a wish.
The other sister cut off her heel
but the blood told as blood will.
The prince was getting tired.
He began to feel like a shoe salesman.
But he gave it one last try.
This time Cinderella fit into the shoe
like a love letter into its envelope.
At the wedding ceremony
the two sisters came to curry favor
and the white dove pecked their eyes out.
Two hollow spots were left
like soup spoons.
Cinderella and the prince
lived, they say, happily ever after,
like two dolls in a museum case
never bothered by diapers or dust,
never arguing over the timing of an egg,
never telling the same story twice,
never getting a middle-aged spread,
their darling smiles pasted on for eternity.
Regular Bobbsey Twins.
That story. **(Sexton 1-109)**

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As pointed out in the theoretical part, Dworkin discusses the archetypes of men and women in fairy tales, which are the same as those in life, being the byproduct of a male-centered knowledge. Dworkin's feminist views foreshadow the world of Sexton's "Cinderella". After the short prologue, the opening lines of Cinderella's story, set in contrast two archetypes of women; one who is so benevolent and helpless, while the second is cynical, envious and domineering. Therefore, in "Cinderella" the biological mother advises her daughter that she should "[b]e devout. Be good. …" (Sexton 25), and in this case, as an angel, whose daughter must be alike, she "will smile down from heaven in the seam of a cloud" (Sexton 25-26). Sexton, who speaks ironically through the mouth of a good witch, confess that the mother asks her daughter to lose her identity. She teaches her daughter the lessons of her patriarchal culture, which guarantee that Cinderella will be a dream of any man / patriarch and eligible enough for marriage, as an obedient wife. Cinderella, the submissive angel, chooses to obey her mother's advice, in order to maintain an opportunity for herself as a future bride. According to Dworkin "[d]espite ourselves, sometimes unknowing, sometimes knowing, unwilling, unable to do otherwise, we act out the roles we were taught" (33).

The researcher realises that Cinderella now becomes a doll, so as to belong to the archetype of those women who represent ultimate goodness. Women of this first archetype have only one dream, which they realise, that is to be transported, as a commodity, from the house of an uncaring father to the house of another narcisstic and cold-hearted husband. Cinderella's predetermined decision to be enslaved by the socially unwelcomed archetype of the oppressive women, is shown to be just a mask, which she wears. The wise witch, who judges the events and places her feminist criticism within the verse lines of the story, has to define Cinderella's two stepsisters. Thus, the two stepsisters of "Cinderella" are defined as "two daughters, [who are], pretty enough / but with hearts like blackjacks" (Sexton 28-29). The witch has an apparent conservative vision regarding her definition of women, because she writes in a masculine language, which is meant to be twisted. She states, indirectly, that the two archetypes of the meek women, (Cinderella), and the witch-

like ones, (the stepmother and her daughters), are victimised by the same man-made ideals. It is implied that Cinderella is not that good, because she has the same plan of her stepsisters, which is how to be the one, who is chosen for marriage by a fortunate husband / the prince. The only difference between Cinderella and them is that she fights silently and unconsciously, to realise this plan and this goes with the socially-based notions of women. In addition to their physical torture, the stepsisters have lost their beauty as a kind of an extra-punishment. Being despised, therefore, their "feet" (Sexton, "Cinderella" 80), are bigger than that of Cinderella and their beauty does not match with the ideal standards of the male dominant society.

The witch subverts the convention that the prototype of the silenced women is the one, that wins the prince at the end, while the opposite one of those courageous women, should be only exposed to physical torture. Sexton believes that the stepsisters are distorted by the phallocentric culture / a male dove, because they follow its beliefs. The stepsisters are silenced, because they declare that, in this contest of marriage, their intentions revolve around how one of them can be the prince's future wife. Therefore, the witch in "Cinderella" points out that "[a]t the wedding ceremony / the two sisters came to curry favor / and the white dove pecked their eyes out" (Sexton 95-97). The witch proclaims that the two doll-like prototypes of women are punished and distorted, because they live only to sustain men's egocentricity. Consequently, Cinderella's marriage reinforces the hollowness of her soul and identity.

Lieberman discusses one of the well acknowledged principles of the phallocentric culture, that is the most beautiful and the fairest girl / princess is the one, whom a prince / a man chooses for marriage. "Since the heroines are chosen for their beauty (*en soi*), not for anything they do (*pour soi*), they seem to exist passively until they are seen by the hero, or described to him. They wait, are chosen and are rewarded" (Lieberman 189). The witch mocks this belief, when she describes Cinderella as a girl, whose face is discoloured by the ashes. Though she loses her assumable beauty and even her physical depiction becomes different from the criteria, which qualify her for marriage, she marries that prince. In the verse lines of

"Cinderella" Sexton states that "[h]er stepmother and sisters didn't / recognize her without her cinder face" (64-65). Cinderella's acceptance to live in silence, respecting the norms, is the element behind her illusory beauty. Thus, she is disguised in rugs and plays the role of a servant, so as to carry on her secret plan to marry the prince. At the same time, this hints to a subversion of the norms, that are enforced upon Cinderella, whose submission puts an end to her beauty. Her archetypal image as the fairest girl is changed into a lady, whose beauty is normal, like her stepsisters. Even Sexton equates between her status and that of her stepsisters, when the prince attempts to know to which one of them the shoe belongs. In "Cinderella" the witch narrates that "[h]e [the prince] went to their house and the two sisters / were delighted because they had lovely feet" (Sexton 79-80). It is only when the turn comes to the suffragist / "Cinderella" "[t]his time [she] fit[s] into the shoe" (Sexton 93). Being exposed to a sort of an ethnic dehumanisation, the phallocratic power punishes Cinderella / the black girl.

Lieberman remarks that in Cinderella's fairy tale "[t]he step-mother is proud and haughty, and her two daughters by her former husband are like her, so that their ill-temper appears to be genetic, or at least transmitted by the mother" (196). In a society, which advocates phallicism, women are urged to get married, but at the same time, they should not seek marriage. The two stepsisters, who are not as silent as Cinderella, distort parts of their feet, which can be taken as a kind of silence, that is inflected upon them by the phallocractic power. The witch does not change the main events of the story, because she points out, in the subtextual discourse, that women are victimised, whether if they follow the norms of their society, or if they go beyond them.

The stepmother, who is motivated by the principles of the males, is aware that a woman should be subjugated by a man. However, she is courageous enough to declare her ideas and to take actions to realise the scheme of secured marriage for one of her daughters. Dworkin adds that "[h]er goal was upward mobility, and her ruthlessness was consonant with the values of the market place. She loved her daughters the way Nixon loves the freedom of the Indochinese, and with much the same result" (39). She wants one of

her daughters to satisfy the sexual desires of a patriarch, even though, this will be at the expense of their freedom of choice. She is straightforward in what she aspires, therefore, the world of men distorts both her identity and that of her daughters, being portrayed as mean and scheming.

Cinderella carries on silently, her scheme of being a servant to her stepmother and stepsisters. She has nothing to do in this life except to wait for a suitor, who will appear all of a sudden and find her by chance. Though she appears to be an angel- like figure, she acts like her stepmother and stepsisters, but unlike them, she does not declare her intentions. She is aware that she has to accept the role of the suffragist, who has a benign nature, in order to be a prince's wife. Cinderella's role in this life is to fall under the power and authority of a man, who will, ridiculously, sustain her ability to act. Therefore, Sexton / the witch-type in the story of "Cinderella" points out that "[w]henever she wished for anything the dove" (38), will realise it. The dove is a male, which is ironically meant as an embodiment of the supposed hero, whom each woman should wait for. In this way, for "Cinderella" "[t]he bird is important, my dears, so heed him" (Sexton 40). The witch directs her feminist criticism against Cinderella and her dream prince. Sexton states that for the sake of "Cinderella" "[t]he white dove brought all his friends; / all the warm wings of the fatherland came" (50-51). In other words, Cinderella always needs help from a man, a father figure, even though, it is just a dove, that will support her to attend the marriage ball.

The witch ridicules the character of this prince, comparing his power to that of a meek dove. She also subverts all the meekness, that is always associated with the female gender of the fairy godmother, who is originally responsible for doing miracles, to man's identity. As a dove, he lacks intelligence, therefore, he will not secure a prosperous life for Cinderella. Dworkin comments on this lack of intelligence on the part of the prince. "For instance, he cannot distinguish Cinderella from her two sisters though he danced with her and presumably conversed with her" (Dworkin 44). Cinderella is not the only one, who is depicted as indecisive and fragile, being unable to change her fate, but also the prince shares

with her this sense of disability. This is because he is not smart enough to choose his wife. The witch degrades the prince from his nobility at the moment of his marriage from Cinderella, who pretends to be black like the American comedian actor Al Jolson. In "Cinderella" the hero is, neither a prince, nor a lover, who searches for his beloved as "[h]e began to feel like a shoe salesman" (Sexton 91).

This point can be related to Lieberman's words about the distinction between Cinderella and Cinderald. Commenting upon Cinderald, Lieberman states that "[h]is brothers may ridicule and despise him, but … [a]ll the while, he knows that he is the cleverest of the three, and eventually he leaves the fireside and wins a princess and half a kingdom by undertaking some adventure or winning a contest" (192). Sexton subverts this image of Cinderald, the adventurous and independent prince, who acts as if he were a character in a mock heroic epic. He is confident enough to realise his desires in life, however, the witch shows that his image does not differ too much from that of Cinderella. As a woman, who has to be a passionate flower, "Cinderella is no Horatio Alger; her name is partly synonymous with female martyrdom. Ultimately, her loneliness and her suffering are sentimentalized and become an integral part of the glamor" (Lieberman 194). In order to deconstruct this archetype of angelic women, which Sexton and Lieberman attack, the witch inflects a kind of disability upon the prince. Now this transformed prince is lost, searching for a lady, whom he does not know, until Cinderella, as a woman, appears and helps him to realise that the shoe is hers. As Cinderella searches, with her stepsisters, for a rich man to become his obedient wife and in turn, the rich prince looks for any pretty woman to control, the witch prophecies that the factitious happiness of this marriage will not go beyond the borderlines of narration. Hence, in the transformed story of "Cinderella" this marriage will bring about the death of the couple who will act as "[R]egular Bobbsey Twins" (Sexton 108), and play fixed, archetypal roles.

The second male prototype is Cinderella's intuitive father, whom the witch inflects the same sense of meekness upon his identity. The two prototypes of the father and the stepmother are set in contrast to each other. Unlike this apparently kindhearted man, who has a benign nature and should not be blamed for his deeds, the

stepmother should always be criticised and distorted as a witch-like woman. This is inspite of the fact that, all her plans are born out of the man made norms of her society, which put an end to her separate identity as a woman. The witch introduces Cinderella's father as a man, who has a ghost-like presence. Therefore, he no longer differs from his daughter, being unable to change or develop the events of the story. In the verse lines of "Cinderella" Sexton states that "[h]er father brought presents home from town, / jewels and gowns for the other women / but the twig of a tree for Cinderella" (33-35). In order to distort the archetypal role of the father, as an innocent man, his character is related to that of the prince, whom he shares with the same lack of intelligence. This is because he acts as an idiot, who is unaware of his wife's witch-like plans. At this moment, he turns into a narcissist, who humiliates his daughter and spoils the daughters of the second wife in order to use her as a medium, that will satisfy his sexual needs. Thus, the witch ridicules his archetype, being a man, who, neither caries about his family, nor have true emotions towards them. Sexton's sarcastic language reflects Dworkin's statements that "Cinderella's father saw her every day. He saw her picking lentils out of the ashes, dressed in rags, degraded, insulted. [However,] [h]e was a good man" (45). Through Sexton's feminist discourse, the researcher understands that all the characters of this fairy tale, even though, the thoughtful stepmother, perform a pre-known story, whose events reflect the morals of phallocentrism.

Dworkin ridicules the assumption of marriage as a "happy ending" (49), in fairy tales. According to her "[t]he moral of the story is the *happy ending*. It tells us that happiness for a woman is to be passive, victimized, destroyed, or asleep" (Dworkin 49). The witch inflects a spell upon the male / female prototypes, whose characters are now quiet similar. After their marriage Cinderella and the prince share the same loss of identity, leading a meaningless life. Thus, in the transformed text of "Cinderella" the wise witch prophecies, in a sarcastic tone, that "Cinderella and the prince / lived, they say, happily ever after, / like two dolls in a museum case" (Sexton 100-102). Consequently, the prince experiences the same psychological distortion, which the female prototypes have been exposed to. By the end of "Cinderella," the couple will be reborn again, if "[t]hat story" (Sexton 109), of the prototypes of men and women comes to an end.

- **Conclusion**

Since the cinematic presentation of the Grimm brothers' fairy tales in the world of Disney, the study of myths has become a modern concern of researchers. This paper is a feminist research, which tackles Anne Sexton's poem, "Cinderella," published in *Transformations* (1971). It is based on the views of a number of critics, who are concerned with Sexton's poetry, life and the field of fairy tales, from a feminist perspective. Therefore, in order to expound a feminist critique of the standardised prototypes of men and women in fairy tales, the researcher relates her point of view to the thoughts of two of the feminist critics of fairy tales namely; A. Dworkin and M. Lieberman. The implicit, female voice, in almost all of the fairy tales, becomes the main tool of Sexton, "the middle-aged witch" (2), in "The Gold Key," whose aim is to destabilise the phallocratic power, norms and discourse.

Dworkin believes that there are two contrastive prototypes of women in fairy tales. The first is the lovely heroine, whose identity is so weak and sweet, like a lump of sugar, (Cinderella), and the second is represented by those women, (the stepmother and her daughters), who are resented by the society of men. This is because the latter attempt to shatter the silenced situation of women and to play crucial roles in the events of the story. Hence, in the phallocentric culture, women should live in complete submission to men. Ridiculously, if a good woman / the fairy godmother acts, her identity should be unseen or marked by an angelic transparency and her role should be subsumed by men.

The researcher discusses how the two prototypes of women are punished, as a result of their complete respect for the doctrine of phallicism. Moreover, she equates between the two male archetypes of the prince and the father – figure, / the king, who turn to have thoughtless minds. Therefore, their meekness and indecisive nature are, in a way, similar to that of Cinderella. Dworkin stresses that "[t]he nuclear family, as we find it delineated in fairy tales, is a paradigm of male being – in – the – world, female evil, and female victimization. It is a crystalization of sexist culture – the nuclear structure of that culture" (46). As for Lieberman, the researcher

observes that she focuses more on the physical and the psychological characteristics of the two prototypes of women. Hence, the secret behind the so called remarkable beauty of the first prototype of the dove-like girl is her silence. Therefore, Cinderella is possessed by the prince, as a commodity, shown in a market or the marriage ball. This image is set in contrast to the second prototype of women, whose repulsion is the result of their assumable, black heartedness.

The researcher has another point of view. Neither Cinderella, the unclean, black servant, nor her stepsisters, whose feet are bigger than hers, are distinguished by outstanding beauty. Both Cinderella / the suffragist and her witch-like stepsisters have the same plan, which is to marry the prince. The only difference between the two is that the evil women are straightforward in their intentions. Therefore, they are spelled to lose their beauty, by the male dominative power, which they respect, being keen on marriage, so as to win a privileged status in society. The researcher believes that the two prototypes of women, who share some similarities are punished in order to be reborn as independent persons.

Lieberman believes that in contrast to Cinderella, the prince is always shown as an extraordinarily powerful man, who has an adventurous nature. However, the researcher changes this image, and proves that the prince has a deficient identity. As the male / female prototypes perform mimetic roles, they are equal and no one is better than another. Each one of them has his / her own defects, and share some others, therefore, Sexton / the witch deconstructs all their archetypal roles, writing, in her female voice, transformed versions of fairy tales.

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