

# Letras Hispanas

## Volume 16

**TITLE:** Gender in Latin American Fairy Tale Parodies

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**ABSTRACT:** Numerous important Latin American writers have parodied traditional fairy tales such as “Snow White,” “Sleeping Beauty,” or “Little Red Riding Hood.” Based on Linda Hutcheon’s notion that intention is significant in adaptations, I posit that Latin American male and female writers exhibit different intentions in their use of fairy tale elements and enactment of fairy tale parodies. The three different types of intentions posited in this article are 1) re-semanticization of fairy tale elements, so that elements are reassigned to different characters or inverted, but the original gender ideology is maintained; 2) covert messaging through textual distraction, in which a message of ideological subversion is potentially present, but hidden or muted by the prominence of other textual themes; 3) explicit engagement and subversion of traditional gender ideology. Using examples from texts by Manuel Gutiérrez-Nájera, Manlio Argueta, Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Dulce Loynaz, Marcela Solá and Luisa Valenzuela, I illustrate how the male writers use re-semanticization and distraction, ultimately failing to engage with gender issues, while the female writers overtly subvert traditional gender ideology.

**KEYWORDS:** Gender, Fairy Tales, Parody, Ideology, Intentions

**RESUMEN:** Numerosos escritores latinoamericanos importantes han parodiado los cuentos de hada tradicionales como “Blancanieves” “Caperucita roja” y “La bella durmiente.” Basándome en la idea de Linda Hutcheon de que la intención es significativa en las adaptaciones, propongo que los escritores latinoamericanos tienen distintas intenciones en sus parodias según su género. El artículo propone tres intenciones distintas en este tipo de parodia: 1) la resignificación de los elementos del cuento de hada, de modo que los elementos originales se asignan a distintos personajes o se invierten, pero la ideología original de género se mantiene; 2) mensajes implícitos que resultan de un proceso de distracción textual, en que hay potencialmente un mensaje de subversión ideológica presente, pero se oculta o se atenúa a causa de otros temas textuales más sobresalientes; 3) una subversión explícita de la ideología de género de los cuentos de hada tradicionales. Empleando ejemplos de los textos de Manuel Gutiérrez-Nájera, Manlio Argueta, Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Dulce Loynaz, Marcela Solá and Luisa Valenzuela, muestro como los escritores utilizan la resignificación y la distracción, sin ocuparse de cuestiones de género, mientras que las escritoras abiertamente subvierten la ideología tradicional de género.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** género, cuentos de hadas, parodia, ideología, intenciones

**DATE RECEIVED:** 6/07/2019

**DATE PUBLISHED:** 03/11/2020

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## Gender in Latin American Fairy Tale Parodies

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Two separate literary trends, parody and the fairy tale genre, began to converge in Latin America in the late nineteenth century. Particularly in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, both male and female writers appropriated and re-wrote various traditional fairy tales in a parodic fashion. Numerous Latin American novels, short stories and even poems engage with classical fairy tales.<sup>1</sup> The connections between these works and tales by the Grimm brothers or Charles Perrault such as “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “Cinderella,” “Snow White,” and “Blue Beard,” range from simple allusions to full-blown parodies. Despite numerous articles on the subject,<sup>2</sup> some of the more interesting questions regarding the connection between Latin American literature and fairy tales have not yet been examined: For example, do male and female authors appropriate these tales differently? How does the employment of certain fairy tale motifs contribute to the literary message of the narrative? Can fairy tale allusions achieve the same ideological effects as fairy tale parodies or adaptations? These are three important issues that I aim to explore here through an examination of the following writers and works: Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera’s short story “La caperucita color de rosa” (published in *Cuentos completos*, 1958, date of the story unknown); Gabriel García Márquez’s “El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve” (1976); Carlos Fuentes’s “La bella durmiente” (published in *Inquieta compañía*, 2004); Manuel Argueta’s novel *Caperucita en la zona roja* (1977); Dulce Loynaz in *Jardín* (1954); María Luisa Bombal in “La historia de María

Griselda” (1946); Marcela Solá in her story “Bodas” (published in *Manual de situaciones imposibles*, 1990); and finally, the stories by Luisa Valenzuela from the section titled “Cuentos de Hades” from her book *Simetrías* (1993), as well as two short stories from *Cambio de armas*: “Cuarta version” and “Cambio de armas” (1982).<sup>3</sup> These works have been chosen both because they span a wide time period in Latin American narrative, ranging from the late 1800s (when Gutiérrez Nájera wrote) to the 2000s (when Fuentes published his parody of Sleeping Beauty). They were also selected because they represent a balance of male and female writers across various decades and all achieve parodies of fairy tales in their works.

Parody has been defined distinctly by critics such as Gérard Genette, Linda Hutcheon, and Margaret Rose. In *Palimpsests*, Genette defines parody as a subcategory of hypertextuality, which is the relationship between a text (hypertext) and a prior text (hypotext) upon which it is based. The second text either repeats words, actions or characters of the first in a new context or imitates its themes and style without necessarily citing it. Different types of textual transformation are identified based on the “mood” employed to transform the prior text. Genette limits parody to a playful transformation of the hypotext by the hypertext (Genette 5).

Linda Hutcheon defines parody as an ironic imitation of a prior text (34), while Margaret A. Rose (273-74) concentrates on the differences between past and contemporary parodies, emphasizing that postmodern

parody can be both metafictional and comical, whereas in the past, parody tended to be either one or the other. In other words, for Rose, parody is either meant to poke fun at or make a comment about a prior text.

According to another important critic, Noé Jitrik, the key element of parody is the “modification of the reading, but not only that of the base text, but of both texts: the change in reading text A, leads to reading text B in another way” (my translation), 15].<sup>4</sup> In other words, for Jitrik, a new version of a text must also oblige us to re-read the original text differently—hence implying an engagement with the ideology (understood as a belief system) behind the original text.

This quick overview illustrates that there is a lack of consensus regarding the definition of parody, but that critics agree that parody in some way imitates or transforms a prior text, although its intentions may vary (playful, ironic, comic, ideological). The question of what these intentions are leads us directly back to our initial question of how men and women writers have employed fairy tale elements, and how women have changed their parodic appropriation.<sup>5</sup>

I suggest that understanding how women writers have modified fairy tale parody requires an analysis of intention. In her book *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon emphasizes the importance of intention in any form of adaptation (of which parody is a subset). Hutcheon divides her book into the “who, what, when, where, and why” of adaptations, focusing on each one of these questions in a separate chapter. Hutcheon’s discussion of the “why” of adaptation is of particular interest for a study of the connections between fairy tales and Latin American literature. Hutcheon states:

It is obvious that adapters must have their own personal reasons for deciding first to do an adaptation and then choosing which adapted work and what medium to do it in. They not only interpret that work but in so doing they also take a position on

it. . . . There are all kinds of reasons for wanting to adapt . . . An adaptation can obviously be used to engage in a larger social or cultural critique . . . political and historical intentionality is now of great interest in academic circles, despite a half-century of critical dismissal of the relevance of artistic intention to interpretation by formalists, New Critics, structuralists and poststructuralists alike. (92-94)

I propose that three distinct intentions characterize Latin American fairy tale parody: 1) re-semanticization of fairy tale elements, which entails extracting elements from the original fairy tale and without changing them, employing them in a new context that gives them new meaning, usually by techniques such as inversion; 2) covert messaging caused by textual distraction that hides or obscures the central message to some degree, and 3) explicit subversion of gender stereotypes. I will examine the employment of each of these intentions in turn. Re-semanticization occurs when the essential ideology of the original fairy tale is maintained, but the various fairy tale elements are assigned to different protagonists or inverted, thus resulting in a change of meaning; In distraction, there is a narrative situation in which subversion of the fairy tale’s original gender ideology is present, but the message is obscured because of other textual elements or themes that take precedence in the narrative. Explicit gender engagement characterizes those stories whose main purpose is to deconstruct fairy tale gender ideology, and that do so overtly as the main point of the story.

Cristina Bacchilega explores the relationship between fairy tales, their parodies, and gender ideology in her book *Postmodern Fairy Tales*. Bacchilega identifies three key elements that elucidate how fairy tales make their ideology seem “natural” rather than being a social construct: 1) the third-person narrator usually present in classic fairy tales, suggests that this narrative position and its ideology are “natural” and authoritative; 2) the

use of nature metaphors to assume a “natural” correspondence between women and nature; 3) the use of the mirror or mirroring process to conflate nature with ideology. These three concepts are key to an analysis of Latin American fairy tale transpositions since many parodies either enact or subvert them to respectively reinforce or reveal gender stereotypes present in classic fairy tales.

One of the earliest of the Latin American fairy tale parodies that illustrates my concept of re-semanticization is Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera’s “La caperucita color de rosa.” The story explicitly engages with “Little Red Riding Hood” by stating on its second page: “A la costumbre de usar ese tocado un poco extravagante debía el sobrenombre con que era conocida más bien que con su semejanza con la Caperucita encarnada que el malvado lobo encontró tan confiada como tierna y suculenta” (Gutiérrez Nájera 459). As Fernando Burgos Pérez notes, Charles Perrault’s classic version of “Little Red Riding Hood” is didactic and moralistic, teaching the danger of sexuality to innocent young girls (Burgos 80). Although this reference directly connects Gutiérrez Nájera’s version of “Little Red Riding Hood” to the original, it is hardly necessary for the reader to make this association. In Gutiérrez Nájera’s tale, Little Pink Riding Hood is portrayed as the antithesis of her predecessor. Instead of characterizing the protagonist as innocent and inexperienced, the third-person narrator tells us that she is: “Provocativa, voluntariosa, vanidosa, glotona, caprichosa, curiosa, e hipócrita” (459). Little Pink Riding Hood is portrayed as a gold digger whose aim in life is to become a rich baroness. She meets the young, handsome and naïve Avenant (who is really the equivalent of the original Little Red Riding Hood because of his innocence) and attempts to seduce him into marriage. She eventually learns that Avenant does not actually have any assets, and that they all belong to his father, the Baron. Little Pink Riding Hood quickly abandons Avenant in favor of his father, who dies before they can marry. At this point she

returns to marry Avenant, now owner of all the wealth, and is clearly marked by the narrator as the true wolf in the story: “Si no os habéis burlado de mi cuento, queridos y honrados lectores, ¡debéis convener conmigo en que los tiempos, las jóvenes y los hombres han cambiado mucho! Hoy ya no es un lobo quien se engulle a la chicuela; la chicuela es quien engulle al lobo” (469).

Gutiérrez Nájera subverts the stereotypes of the male as sexual predator and the female as innocent and naïve victim present in Perrault’s version of “Little Red Riding Hood, however, he does not subvert the fundamental ideology of the original text. Although the author negates the original stereotypes, he does not question the original story’s stereotypical portrayal of women, but rather merely replaces the old stereotypes with new ones through inversion: the young girl becomes the dangerous financial (rather than sexual) predator, and the young man becomes the innocent victim of her feminine wiles. Hence, stereotyping of women remains a fundamental tenet of story, as it was in the original fairy tale of “Little Red Riding Hood.”

Gutiérrez Nájera does not employ nature or mirror motifs common in fairy tales in his parody. However, he does make important use of his third-person narrator. As already noted, the third-person omniscient narrator has a “naturalizing” effect on story content—everything that is presented is dissociated from an individualistic perspective and gives the impression of absolute truth. This particular narrator conveys a critical note through his evident sarcasm. When he presents Little Pink Riding Hood as a series of negative adjectives as previously quoted, ending in “hypocritical,” he states: “Reunía, en suma, todas las cualidades que son necesarias a una joven hecha ya y derecha” (459). The generalizing implications of this comment and others joined with the naturalizing effect of third-person omniscient narration, communicates the idea that all young women are opportunistic and hypocritical—a veritable misogynist ideology confirmed by the

previously cited “moraleja” with which the story ends. By resemanticizing the same elements of “Little Red Riding Hood” (one cunning person and one naïve victim), within a new context, Gutiérrez Nájera ends up creating new stereotypes without engaging in an ideological questioning of the original fairy tale. He offers a complete semantic inversion, in which the same didactic principles exist in reverse, and men are the innocent ones who must beware of women. In both the original tale and Gutiérrez-Nájera’s rewriting of it, there is a fundamental reduction of the multidimensionality of women.

Manlio Argueta’s political novel *Caperucita en la zona roja* is another good example of re-semanticization because it transposes the characters and places present in “Little Red Riding Hood” into its narration. Argueta weaves together two plot lines—one romantic and one political—by tracing the narrator, Al’s romantic relationship with Genoviva (who is “Little Red Riding Hood”), principally in the odd-numbered chapters, with the political fight of a group of revolutionaries, of whom Al and Genoviva are members, primarily in the even-numbered chapters. The novel takes place in the 1960s, tracing the underground popular fight against the right-wing Salvadoran government, largely controlled by an oligarchy of fourteen rich landowning families. The novel intricately attempts to employ elements from “Little Red Riding Hood,” but ultimately fails to question the ideology behind the original fairy tale. Rather than imitate the story of “Little Red Riding Hood,” the novel uses its motifs: the district where the protagonist/narrator Al lives is “el bosque” (the forest); the police are “Los lobos” (the wolves) [as is alternately Al himself on the romantic plane] and his girlfriend Hormiga/Genoviva is “Caperucita” (Little Red Riding Hood). Eventually, Genoviva becomes pregnant and Al abandons her. Al’s revolutionary group is ultimately betrayed by Guillermo, the brother of one of the revolutionaries (Charrier), and the members end up dead or in prison. Fragments of the characters’ lives and political

adventures are narrated in a non-chronological order that is often confusing. The reader must piece together the details of their narrative adventure.

In the love story between Hormiga and Al, the characterization of Hormiga as Caperucita and Al as “el lobo” is a variation on the original story. Although Al frequently refers to Hormiga as Caperucita, and she to him as “un lobo,” these playful references reinforce to some degree the original ideology of the “Little Red Riding Hood” tale, because Al ends up being the negative male predator, like the wolf, who cheats on Hormiga and abandons her when she becomes pregnant. Moreover, the language employed in their dialogues reinforces the connection between women and nature:

—Que más querés, te llamás Caperucita, sos el bosque lleno de flores y conejos.

—Y vos el lobo.

—No soy lobo. . .

—Vieras que feo te ves, con unos grandes dientes y unos ojos de fuego y el pelaje gris y tus patas con grandes pezuñas listo a abalanzarte. . . .

—¿De quién es esta naricita tan grande?

—Tuya y es para olerte mejor

—Y estas orejas inmensas

—Son para oírte mejor. Y te vas con la cestita al hombro, entre lirios del campo (¡mirémoslos!) Con paso de qué lindo bocado. (15-163)

Hormiga/Caperucita is identified with the forest full of flowers and rabbits and goes off among the irises in the field. Although this association of women with nature is not proposed by a third-person omniscient narrator, it is not questioned by the narrative.<sup>6</sup> According to Bacchilega: “That long tradition of representing women both as nature and as concealed artifice contributes to the success and power of such images in the tale of magic . . . women are commonly identified as being closer to nature than to culture which in a patriarchal system makes them symbolic of

an inferior, intermediate order of being" (9). Thus, although Hormiga/Caperucita is given a narrative voice in *Caperucita en la zona roja*, it is not used to subvert traditional gender ideology.

Another way in which traditional gender ideology is maintained in Argueta's novel is through his employment of the mirror motif. We noted earlier that Bacchilega suggests that the mirror motif is used in traditional fairy tales as a means to conflate nature with an anti-feminist ideology. Although *Little Red Riding Hood in the Red-Light District* parodies "Little Red Riding Hood," the mirror motif is most associated with the fairy tale of "Snow White." According to Bacchilega, Snow White's birth mirrors elements found in nature: her skin is white as the snow and her lips as red as the blood that appears on her mother's finger when she pricks it on the sewing needle. Bacchilega reflects on mirrors and the mirroring process thus:

What are the effects of this mirroring process? . . . Of course, the mirroring is overt when the (step)mother interrogates her magic glass and the beautiful Snow White appears before her instead of her own waning beauty. On one level, in typical fairy-tale style the mirror simply externalizes the natural process of life and change . . . On another level, though, the tale's magic trick is to conflate once again the natural with the ideological, thus presenting the mirror's judgment as unquestionably authoritative. . . . No matter whose voice we hear, its judgment has power and credibility because seeing is believing; we forget that the mirror's reflected or refracted image is framed. (33)

For Bacchilega, the mirror naturalizes the judgments and values of patriarchal society. This aspect of the mirror is confirmed by the two episodes in which Hormiga/Caperucita views herself in the mirror. The first time she sees her reflection in the mirror, Hormiga states: "Siempre estás en el espejo

donde me miro, me haces caras feas mientras yo pego gritos de loba porque me asusta tu figura metida en el espejo" (34). The second time she comments: "yo en esta habitación mirándome al espejo, esperando que aparezcas tocándome los hombros, acariciando mi panza . . . Soy una tonta recién bajada del volcán . . . esas muchachitas analfabetas que ignoran lo que es estar detrás de un espejo mirándome un letrero de despedida desde el anochecer hasta el alba" 86). What Hormiga sees in the first instance and wants to see in the second, is not her own image but that of Al. In other words, the man controls the image in the mirror—woman's identity is that bestowed upon her by patriarchal society, and she cannot see her real self or exist without him. Despite this suggestive use of the mirror image, the character Hormiga does not display awareness or protest her subservience to patriarchal society. She rather longs for the return of her lover, without whom she lacks an identity.

Argueta also introduces a political analogy to the "Little Red Riding Hood" story, by evoking its story elements within the context of police brutality and the police raid on the house where the rebels print an underground newspaper. Perhaps the section that best illustrates this use of the fairy tale is the one that creates a parallel between the wolf's invasion of the grandmother's house in "Little Red Riding Hood," and the police raid on the Manuel's house. Chapter Two, section eleven which re-narrates the wolf's presence at the grandmother's house in "Little Red Riding Hood," prefigures the police raid in section 12:

El sol enredado, en el pelo de Caperucita . . . Veo la casa de la abuelita . . . con la enferma que está la pobre. . . . Güenos días, agüelita, aquí le traigo naranjas para que las chupe. "Ay, mijita, para que se anda sacrificando con lo peligroso que es el bosque—piensa que piensa la agüelita. Que din-don suena la campanita eléctrica cuando puya el timbre de la puerta. ¿Quién

es? Una voz ronca como tempestad de pescador en Yoro, aunque ella piensa que quizás la abuela está enferma de la garganta. Yo abuela ábrame que tengo frío—y el lobo feroz se pone las pantuflas para darse aires de abuela . . . Rico bocadito el que me voy a comer piensa el lobo cara de bandido y tocando la pistola en su cintura, por si las moscas. “Voy mijita.” El muy cabrón. (66)

Compare this passage to the description of the police raid in section 12:

Naranjas agrias de la noche . . . Nosotros no nos imaginábamos que la Guardia Nacional iba a caer . . . Yo vivo con mi abuelita, pero me agarró la noche y por eso me quedé a dormir aquí en casa de estos compañeros de estudio . . . y no nos estés engañando con esto de tu abuelita en Cojute, pues vos siempre has vivido aquí en El Bosque. Manuel es tu marido . . . No sé cuánto tiempo estuve presa. Al fin me sacaron libre A Pichón y Feliciano nunca los volví a ver, desaparecieron. (67)

The repetition of the elements of the oranges, the grandmother, and the forest in the second passage suggest a parallel with the Little Red Riding story narrated in the previous section, as does the intromission of the element of the pistol in section 11, which conversely introduces the police element into the original fairy tale. By transposing the story elements to a political plane, Argueta recontextualizes the ideology of the original story: now the innocent victim is not Little Red Riding Hood but the leftist rebels, while the evil wolf are the National Guard members and the forest is the neighborhood where the protagonists live. The elements taken from “Little Red Riding Hood” do not question the gender ideology of the original tale, but rather, like Gutiérrez Najera’s *La caperucita color de rosa*, resemanticize these elements within a new context.

Some critics, such as Mayrse Renaud, have seen García Márquez’s “El rastro de tu

sangre en la nieve” as an attempt to subvert the fairy tale myth of the beautiful princess who is rescued by her prince and lives happily ever after,<sup>7</sup> but I believe it is an excellent example of my second category of intentions, distraction. The title of García Márquez’s story evokes both Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, although it is mainly an “imitation” of the latter. In García Márquez’s tale, the wealthy and beautiful Nina Daconte marries the equally handsome and wealthy Billy Sánchez. During their honeymoon in France, Nina pricks her finger on a bouquet of roses. Billy eventually gets her to a hospital, but she has already lost too much blood and dies. The fact Nina’s “prince” did not save her and there is no happily ever after, may suggest to some that García Márquez is attempting to subvert the fairy tale myth of women’s necessary dependence on men for a happy and safe life. However, is this really the main point of García Márquez’s story? A deeper analysis reveals other concepts and intentions behind “El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve.”

The most incisive analysis of “El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve” is Arnold M. Penuel’s “A Contemporary Fairy Tale: García Márquez’s “El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve.” Penuel correctly points out that the author’s main focus in the story is to explore:

the cultural origins of individual psychology and culturally conditioned modes of being . . . The novelist explores three modes of being: that of Billy Sánchez, that of Nena Daconte, and that of the French. Billy dramatizes the Hispanic mode of being, and Nena, who has attended a Swiss school, exemplifies a synthesis of cultures. Billy’s cultural shock in France throws in relief certain fundamental values of French culture. Billy’s inability to rise above his instincts, to order them through reason and foresight is culturally conditioned. (Penuel 242)

In other words, Billy Sánchez represents Latin American irrationality; French culture, full of

rules and restrictions (such as not allowing Billy to see Nena at the hospital for a week) represents excessive rationality; and Nena is a fusion of the two.

Penuef's interpretation of the story, which I believe to be correct, indicates a completely different intention behind the tale than that of traditional gender ideology subversion. The focus of García Márquez's story is cultural clash and culturally conditioned differences. Indeed, Nena Daconte, the female protagonist, disappears (when she is interned in the hospital) after the first few pages of the story, and the rest of the tale follows Billy's unsuccessful attempts to visit his wife in the hospital because of French rules and regulations and his failure to find out what has happened to her. The story focuses almost exclusively on a male protagonist. Within this context, the fact that Nena Daconte pricks her finger and falls asleep in the car (and eventually forever in death), seems more like an isolated fairy tale motif, rather than a transposition or parody of the original tale.

Once again, García Márquez, like Gutiérrez Nájera, does not employ the mirror and nature motifs, but he does employ the third-person omniscient narrator.<sup>8</sup> The author is famous for his use of a very neutral-sounding, matter-of-fact third-person omniscient narration, that is responsible for having the reader accept magical events as "natural" in many of his narratives. According to Ricardo Gullón, García Márquez's narrators report events "as a reporter would—calm and untouched, without comment and without passing moral judgments on what has happened" (27). This same type of narrator makes the reader accept cultural stereotypes (the irrational Hispanic, the rational Frenchman) as natural and true. The only possible subversion of traditional gender ideology occurs in Nena Daconte's association with high culture as a saxophone player and polyglot. Since fairy tale-women are normally associated with nature and thus considered inferior, Nena Daconte's link to culture thus breaks with the stereotype of the fairy tale-heroine, as well as the fact that

Nena is clearly intellectually superior to Billy in the story.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to see any other engagement with the gender ideology behind "Sleeping Beauty" in "El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve." If Billy Sánchez is a failed prince, he is a failed prince not because there is a flaw in the gender ideology presented in *Sleeping Beauty*, but rather there is a flaw in his cultural upbringing in Latin America. Moreover, the entire second half of the story (from the time Nena is interned in the hospital) is focalized through Billy's viewpoint, shifting the emphasis of the story to a purely male perspective on the events. Although gender stereotypes do arise in the story, they are never overtly questioned or subverted by the protagonists. For example, Nena Daconte falls in love with her would-be rapist (she and Billy fall in love after he breaks into the locker room at the beach club wielding a weapon and as part of a gang). This is an example of what Michele Barrett has identified as the technique of "compensation." According to Barrett, "compensation" is an element of ideological portrayal that stereotypes women by representing them as morally superior (108).<sup>9</sup> In this case, Nena Daconte's moral fiber is exaggerated because she is able to forgive her would-be rapist and marry him. Often, when female writers appropriate this technique, they invert or question it in some manner. For example, in Isabel Allende's story "La venganza," Dulce Rosa falls in love with her rapist, but rather than marry him, she commits suicide and condemns him to a life of guilt. In this way, Allende's story punishes the rapist and overturns the stereotype that the woman is actually morally superior and capable of totally forgiving her rapist (Weldt-Basson, *Subversive Silences*, 129). Moreover, in "El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve," Nena fails to challenge Billy's gender stereotypes. After Billy has been driving for hours Nena is afraid to even suggest that she replace him at the wheel: "Nena Daconte hubiera querido ayudar a su marido en el volante, pero ni siquiera se atrevió a insinuarlo, porque él le



había advertido desde la primera vez en que salieron juntos que no hay humillación más grande para un hombre que dejarse conducir por su mujer” (161).

In summary, “El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve,” is an indirect negation of the myth of Prince Charming and male superiority, but this possible message is largely overshadowed by the story’s focus on cultural conditioning and stereotypes, which serves as what Radner and Lanser call a textual “distraction” from a feminist message. In their article “Strategies of Coding in Women’s Cultures,” the two feminist critics define distraction as the creation of a textual “noise” that obscures the intended feminist message (414). It is one of six coding strategies defined by Radner and Lanser that are traditionally employed by women writers (especially in earlier centuries) who needed to soften their criticism to make it more acceptable to a male-dominated public. Ultimately, García Márquez’s use of distraction attenuates any feminist ideological deconstruction that may lie behind his appropriation of “Sleeping Beauty.”

Carlos Fuentes’s “La bella durmiente” is another good example of the technique of distraction. Fuentes presents a somewhat different take on the fairy tale parody by venturing into the genres of horror and the fantastic but does so by grounding his tale in world history. There are two sets of protagonists. First, there is the German Emil Baur, who emigrated to Mexico after WWI, and the Mennonite woman whom he marries at age 55, Alberta Simmons. The second pair of protagonists is the couple Baur brings back from Germany in 1945. The couple is not alive but are the corpses of a Mennonite woman (also called Alberta Simmons) and her lover, the German officer Georg Richter. Richter is the real identity of the doctor Jorge Caballero, who is called to Baur’s house, allegedly to cure his narcoleptic wife. What Caballero discovers upon arrival is that the wife, whose body is totally cold, revives at his touch and comes alive when they make love. In this sense, Alberta Simmons (the corpse brought

from Germany) is the “sleeping beauty” of Fuentes’s tale. Baur slowly relates the background story to Caballero/Richter of how he brought Caballero/Richter’s and Alberta Simmons’ dead bodies to Mexico at the end of World War II. Caballero/Richter was previously unaware of his own true identity. At the tale’s end, it is revealed that the narrator of the story is Baur’s Mennonite wife, who states:

Emil, ¿crees que salvas tu responsabilidad resucitando una y otra vez a Georg y a Alberta? ¿No te das cuenta que yo misma estoy siempre a tu lado? No me importa que nunca me mires o me dirijas la palabra. Soy tu mujer. . . . Me has despojado de nombre, me has vuelto invisible . . . Un día tendrás que verme a la cara. Yo sé que solo me usas para darle voz a tus espectros. Él no me miró. Nunca me mira. No admite mi presencia. Pero yo sé porque estoy en esta casa embrujada. Estoy para contar. (210)

At first glance, it appears that Fuentes’s version of “Sleeping Beauty” is historical and political: his “sleeping beauty” is a victim of the Nazis, and her lover, a Nazi himself, is killed by his compatriots because he attempts to save his Mennonite lover by listing her as already dead so she will not have to return to the camps after serving in his house. Baur, who had returned to Germany in 1945 as a double spy, recovers their bodies, which were found embraced while in a truck en route to being buried in a mass grave. Although Baur alleges that the reason for his salvation of the pair is that their love has somehow touched him, the long descriptions of Baur’s political affiliations and machinations suggest that something more is at work in Baur’s resuscitation of the pair. At the beginning of the story, Baur is clearly identified as being politically aligned with the Kaiser during WWI, and as fomenting pro-German sentiment among the Mexicans:

De nuevo, Baur explotó con habilidad el sentimiento pro alemán de

los mexicanos, en abierta contradicción con la política antifascistas del presidente Lázaro Cárdenas. Baur, con orgullo, señalaba la existencia de grupos de choque nazis en México, los “camisas Doradas” que invocaban como santo patrón nada menos que al general Pancho Villa.” (166-67)

Similarly, we are told that Baur proudly displays a portrait of Hitler in his domicile, and that Dr. Caballero finds his political leanings abhorrent. Thus, when Alberta, Baur’s wife, rhetorically asks “¿crees que salvas tu responsabilidad resucitando una y otra vez a Georg y Alberta?” her comment suggests that Baur’s actions to some degree are an expiation of his identification with Nazi crimes. This focus initially appears to separate Fuentes’s version of “Sleeping Beauty” from any connection to questioning or reaffirming traditional gender ideology. However, at the end of the story, Fuentes surprises the reader by revealing that the narrator is not a third-person omniscient narrator, but rather Baur’s mysterious wife, who was only briefly mentioned in passing earlier in the story, and whose identity seems to be fused with that of the Mennonite whose corpse was brought to Mexico. The “real” Alberta Simmons, the Mennonite from the Mexican colony, accuses Baur of ignoring and denying her presence and existence, relegating her to the role of the narrator of his specters.

Alberta’s narrative voice is undoubtedly the key to unlocking the meaning of Fuentes’s story. Without denying the political/historical dimension of the tale, Alberta’s voice at the end creates a parallel between herself and the revived corpse, because they share the same name and are both lifeless—one literally, and the other metaphorically. The fact that the two women share the same name speaks to their lack of identity in Baur’s eyes: as women, they are conflated, all the same, without individuation. Similarly, we are told in the story that Baur controls the thoughts and actions of Georg Richter/Jorge Caballero. Caballero states that Baur was: “un demonio

que manipulaba mis palabras y dirigía mis actos hacia el lecho de Alberta y mis manos hacia el brazo desnudo de Alberta” (195). Thus, if Baur/Alberta can be said to be the doubles of Georg/Alberta, then the significance of Alberta’s narration at the story’s end becomes clear: She demands recognition of her own identity from Baur, to be more than a body, an instrument of his desires and obsessions. In this sense, Fuentes succeeds in engaging with the original gender ideology of “Sleeping Beauty,” that reinforces the passivity and lack of self-identity of the female. Nonetheless, his emphasis on the historical and political dimension of the Georg/Alberta love affair serves as a distraction from the story’s gender message that is similar to the distraction used by García Márquez.

In contrast, women writers’ engagement with fairy tales has been more extensive and overt than that of male writers, constituting my third category of intention, explicit engagement with and subversion of traditional gender ideology. The tales that I will examine here can be divided into two groups: those that explicitly parody fairy tales, and those that employ fairy tale elements or simply allude to fairy tales but do not strictly adhere to the definition of parody. From the group of explicit parodies I will analyze *Jardín* by Dulce Loynaz; “No se detiene el progreso” and “Avatares” by Luisa Valenzuela (from “Cuentos de Hades”), and “Bodas” by Marcela Solá.<sup>10</sup> As examples of stories with significant fairy tale allusions, I will examine “La historia de María Griselda” by María Luisa Bombal, and “Cuarta versión” and “Cambio de armas,” both from Luisa Valenzuela’s *Cambio de armas*.

The early twentieth-century Cuban writer Dulce Loynaz loosely parodies the tale of “Sleeping Beauty” in her novel *Jardín*, written in 1935 but unpublished until 1954. The novel traces the life of Bárbara, a young woman who lives alone in a house by the sea surrounded by a garden. She finds letters written to her great grandmother by her lover and reads them to occupy her time. Eventually, a captain is shipwrecked on the beach

near her home and they fall in love. She leaves her childhood home to marry the captain and together they have a family. They live in a big city and Bárbara becomes somewhat overwhelmed by the modern, busy atmosphere. Toward the end of the novel, Bárbara desires to return to her original house. Her husband accompanies her on the journey, but only she disembarks from the ship. Bárbara finds everything changed, because now a large town has been built up around her home. She encounters a fisherman who offers to guide her. A large wall crumbles and falls, killing Bárbara at the novel's end.

Although contemporary critics such as Elzbieta Sklodowska, Clementina R. Adams, Elena M. de Jongh, and Verity Smith agree that Loynaz's novel is feminist,<sup>11</sup> interpretations of the novel have varied greatly, and only Smith's article "Eva sin paraíso" engages extensively with the novel's use of "Sleeping Beauty." According to Smith:

En *Jardín* . . . Loynaz muestra una actitud ambivalente hacia el cuento de "La Bella Durmiente . . ." Por una parte Dulce María presenta una crítica o glosa feminista del cuento (la mujer debe esperar el beso del hombre para salir de su sueño) pero también lo usa para expresar su hostilidad ante el ritmo demasiado acelerado de la vida urbana (de sello masculino) . . . El cuento de hadas sirve para recordar el tiempo mítico, indispensable, según esta escritora, para el bienestar psíquico. (267)

Smith does an excellent job of analyzing how Loynaz debunks the traditional role of the mirror in fairy tales, (an element of patriarchal control) because in *Jardín* "el espejo no le devuelve su imagen [a Bárbara] (264)." Mirrors are frequently described as "empañados" (cloudy) and therefore unable to reflect one's image. Nonetheless, I think that Loynaz's *Jardín* is much more of a parody of "Sleeping Beauty" than has been heretofore recognized. Although Smith and others acknowledge that

Bárbara is the "sleeping beauty" who is awakened by the ship captain who is shipwrecked on the shore of her house and who brings her to the city, thus also awakening her from her quiet life in the country surrounded by nature, she takes the parallel/parody this far, without examining what Loynaz does to the ending of the fairy tale. This ending contains the key to Loynaz's intentions upon appropriating "Sleeping Beauty" in her novel.

In *Jardín*, Barbara's garden is generally described as a devouring prison that impedes Bárbara from attaining freedom (represented by the traditional image of the sea) and experiencing life. It is alternately referred to as "el jardín negro" (49), "el jardín malo" (51) and "el jardín de la muerte" (51). It is simultaneously identified with the man who writes the letters to the other Bárbara (her great-grandmother) that the protagonist finds in a pavilion located on her property "Jardín, jardín, también es él," p. 131). Finally, in her dreams, she is separated from the captain, the man she loves because "el jardín crecía y crecía, levantando una muralla verde, infranqueable entre los dos" (175). Before departing with the captain, Bárbara attacks the garden, pulling out all the roots of the plants, destroying its power.

These descriptions of the garden lead the reader to believe that the garden is Bárbara's enemy, the force impeding her search for identity. However, the novel's ending seemingly contradicts this idea. Before examining this conclusion, it is important to trace Bárbara's life in the city and with her husband, the captain.

Bárbara's husband is portrayed as a domineering man. We are told that he enjoyed her dependence upon him: "El hecho de que ella dependiera de él en una cosa tan pequeña le satisfacía como un afianzamiento de su dominio" (194). A page later we are told that she "belonged to him" ("le pertenecía, p. 195) and that he felt he had the right to "conformarla a su gusto" (mold her as he pleased, p. 195). Later on, he is also described as "un poco despótico" (219). Perhaps the most telling ci-

tation is that Bárbara “creíase feliz” (believed herself to be happy, implying that she mistakenly thought this). Finally, in an important scene on the boat when Bárbara is returning to the place of her infancy, Bárbara wishes to retire into the cabin behind the curtain with her husband, but he does not allow her to do so. The narrator states: “Pensó que detrás de esa cortina estaba el Sereno, El Dominador, el Amable por excelencia . . . Pensó que sólo había entre los dos una tela flotante y ligerísima. ¿Y siempre no había estado entre ellos esa finura inconsútil, esa seda impalpable?” (232). In other words, right before her return to the garden, Bárbara realizes that her relationship with her husband has been false; that there has always been a separation between them; that they have not been equal partners. It is this realization that leads her to disobey the captain and go ashore that night instead of waiting until morning as he had indicated. When Bárbara finally returns to the garden, it is no longer portrayed as a stifling adversary, but as a peaceful place, the source of her identity: “Allí estaban su casa y su jardín donde las varias luces terrenales nunca habían osado penetrar. Allí podría dormir siquiera un poco . . . Qué buen sueño se dormiría allí. Dormir, volver; reintegrarse al vientre tibio de la sombra sin nacer todavía, sin saber de las luces de los hombres” (236). Indeed, in the first part of the novel, the narrator states that Bárbara is the garden, a concept that is difficult to accept when the garden was being portrayed as a negative force. Perhaps the fact that the garden is first portrayed as destructive and violent, and then later portrayed as peaceful and authentic, suggests the multidimensionality of women which breaks with the traditional patriarchal stereotype that conflates nature and women as a manifestation of passivity and inferiority. However, after having lived the life of the awakened “sleeping beauty,” Bárbara discovers that her true identity and happiness were in her solitary youth, thus negating the “Sleeping Beauty” myth of the need for a Prince Charming to rescue the woman from her sleep. When Bárbara returns to the

garden, she meets a fisherman who is allegedly leading her to the village that has grown up around her old house and garden. As she follows him, a wall falls on her and kills her. The fisherman is a Christ-like figure who leads Bárbara to her final rest. At the end, Bárbara represents the eternal situation of women imprisoned in society, held behind its iron bars: “Bárbara, por detrás, por arriba, por abajo, por siempre, . . . pega su cara pálida a los barrotes de hierro” (247).

Another key point about this “sleeping beauty” tale is that it begins and ends with the same words. The first page states: “Bárbara pegó su cara pálida a los barrotes de hierro y miró a través de ellos” (11). Thus, it is clear that the situation of women in society has not changed throughout Bárbara’s story—she ends up in the same spot in which she began. Furthermore, the moon motif present on the first page is taken up again at the novel’s conclusion. On the first page, the moon falls from the sky and Bárbara catches it, burying it in the garden. The moon is a feminine symbol, and in this way, the garden becomes equated with both Bárbara and women in general. On the last page of the novel, Bárbara watches as one of the male construction workers “ha encontrado un disco de hojalata recortado en la mas perfecta circunferencia” (247). The man who finds the moon buried by Bárbara, after considering the possible utilitarian value of the object, “la arroja luego con gesto desdeñoso” (later throws it away with a disdainful gesture). In other words, the moon, symbol of woman, is only valued for what use she can be to man and is ultimately tossed away like a valueless object. In the end of Loynaz’s *Jardín*, the sleeping princess would have been better off remaining asleep instead of going off with her “prince charming.” Thus, Dulce Loynaz’s relationship to the fairy tale is clearly one of gender engagement in which she debunks the ideology behind the original fairy tale.

Marcela Solá, an Argentine writer born in Buenos Aires in 1936, presents a very interesting version of “Snow White” in her collection of stories titled *Manuel de situaciones*

*imposibles* (1990). The opening story, “Bodas” presents Snow White about to marry the woodsman who saved her life. However, unlike the fairy tale that presents Snow White marrying her prince and living happily ever after, Solás’s Snow White refuses to enter the church and proceed with the ceremony. The story reveals that she has spent a fortune in charity, prayers, and donations in the hope that God would provide her with guidance and a way out of her forthcoming marriage: “Agotados por lo tanto mis fondos monetarios, y también los sacrificios, ofrendas y rogativas aprendidos en los misales, libros de piedad, estampas y hasta en los manuales de sabiduría atesorados en la biblioteca del reino, no me quedo otro camino que arrojarme al matrimonio (13). Snow White’s ultimate refusal to marry undermines the traditional gender ideology of the fairy tale in which a woman can only be happy by marrying a man who will protect and take care of her. Snow White asserts her independence at the end of the tale by asking: ¿Qué otra ceremonia me aguarda, en la que ya no habrá flores, ni obispo, ni luz tan siquiera? ¿Qué otra ceremonia para la que solamente mi persona es necesaria?” (16).

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Solás’s story is her use of the mirror motif. The protagonist who narrates her own story (another sign of subversion of the traditional fairy tale), states: “Tanto rezaba yo, que la reina preguntaba intrigada al espejo: ¿espejito, espejito, por que reza tanto mi hija,?” “De puro piadosa que es” contestaba el espejito, servil y queriendo complacerla aun a costa de la verdad” (13). Snow White indicates that the mirror, traditional sign of patriarchal authority and values in the fairy tale, blatantly lies to the queen, thus undermining the traditional function of the mirror. Similarly, the mirror’s authority is undermined when the stepmother asks the mirror: “espejito, espejito, dónde está Dios” y el desdichado adminículo reflejaba un cielo inmaculadamente azul, sin nubes, en el que brillaba para siempre el sol y decía: allí está.” El espejito, me doy cuenta, también él

confundido por los absurdos diálogos mantenidos con la reina madrastra, que le preguntaba cosas ajenas a su jurisdicción” (15). We are told that the mirror is confused, and anything but an absolute authority since there are things that are “outside its jurisdiction.”

Solás’s story, like all the other texts written by women writers, whether they are parodies or simply employ various fairy tale elements, directly engages with the gender ideology that characterizes traditional fairy tales such as “Snow White,” “Cinderella,” “Little Red Riding Hood,” and “Blue Beard.” In contrast, the male writers studied here either fail to engage with fairy tale gender ideology, taking the fairy tale elements in a completely different direction (Gutiérrez Nájera, Manlio Argueta), or, when engaging with the gender ideology, do so indirectly by creating textual “distractions” that somewhat obscure the story’s gender message (García Márquez, Fuentes). The effect produced by such distractions is to mitigate the subversive aspect of the story with regard to deconstructing traditional gender ideology. In these cases, frequently the fairy tale elements do not relate to or enhance the main theme of the story and thus appear extraneous to the narratives, more like a decorative motif than a substantive component of the text.

Luisa Valenzuela is the writer who undoubtedly has challenged fairy tale gender ideology the most. Many of her stories from “Cuentos de Hades,” such as “Si esto es la vida, yo soy Caperucita” and “La llave,” have already been extensively analyzed by such critics as Fernando Burgos Pérez, Leopoldo Brizuela, and Z. Nelly Martínez,<sup>12</sup> so I will limit myself to the discussion of two of the lesser commented tales that are sufficiently representative of the type of employment that Valenzuela makes of fairy tales in her work: “No se detiene el progreso” and “Avatares.” “No se detiene el progreso” is a parody of “Sleeping Beauty,” while “Avatares” combines parodies of both “Cinderella” and “Snow White.”

“No se detiene el progreso” is one of the few tales by Valenzuela that is not narrated in

the first-person by a female protagonist, but rather contains the traditional third-person omniscient narration. However, there is a distinct ironic tone to this third-person narration that establishes an immediate connection to the undermining of fairy tale ideology. In the very first paragraph, we are told by that narrator that Brhada (whose name is a combination of bruja and hada, witch and fairy): “Era sin embargo el hada más sensata de la comarca, cualidad no demasiado bien vista en aquellos tiempos por demás atrabilarios. Nadie parecía apreciarla, a pesar de no ser competencia para hembra alguna” (71). The sarcasm inherent in the statement that Brhada was disliked despite her ugliness which made her no competition for beautiful women, already suggests a questioning of the ideology behind tales like Snow White based on the competition between beautiful women. In addition, Valenzuela clearly brings the fairy tale into the contemporary era, by positing that Brhada was not invited to the party for Sleeping Beauty because of racial prejudice: “Pero en toda la comarca corrieron rumores de omisión culpera . . . por prejuicios raciales ya que ella era bastante oscura” (71).

However, it is the story’s ending that most effectively achieves the ideological deconstruction of the original tale. The narrator not only signals the outmodedness of the original representation of women, but also undermines the passivity of the beautiful protagonist in the following passage:

El príncipe azul solo atina a cambiarle el ajuar. Es así como la quiere: con ideas de antes y la moda de su tiempo . . . El mundo no le ha pasado por encima porque el mundo con todo su horror y destemplanza, no concierne a las damas. Ella toca el laúd como un ángel, sabe cantar y bordar y hacer bolillo, es a mas no poder hermosa, y si de vez en cuando su cuerpo desprende un cierto olor a moho y su vello púbico se hace como de liquen, al príncipe no le importa. Ella no se preocupa por esas nimiedades y el

príncipe la quiere tal cual, inocente de todo cuestionamiento vano.

La ama así y no le importa mientras ella no intente abandonar sus aposentos o enterarse de las cosas de la corte. . . . La ama mientras de sus gráciles brazos van creciendo poco a poco unos zarcillos viscosos que lo atrapan. (75)

Note that Valenzuela employs the conventional woman/nature association in a not so conventional way. As Bacchilega notes, women’s identification with nature is part of the patriarchal ideological apparatus that views women as passive and inferior. However, at the end of the story, Sleeping Beauty is converted into a sticky plant tendril that traps the prince within its vines. This image suggests just the opposite of the traditional link between women and nature: at the end of Valenzuela’s story, Sleeping Beauty is powerful and takes control of the prince. The traditional nature trope is subverted, and as the title indicates, despite being asleep for 100 years, “you can’t stop progress”: the progress of women gaining control and subverting patriarchy.

Valenzuela’s story “Avatares” similarly subverts the traditional patriarchal meaning of the nature/woman association. The story is a fusion of “Snow White” and “Cinderella.” The King of the North is a widower with a beautiful daughter (like Snow White), who then marries a beautiful woman (like the evil stepmother). The King of the South, also a widower, marries a widow with three daughters, and has a daughter whom they all treat like a servant (Cinderella). What is unique about Valenzuela’s appropriation of the tale is the ending in which Cinderella ascends to the sky and fuses with the sun, while Snow White fuses with the earth, descending into the silver mines. Moreover, the two women meld together to become “Blancacienta y Cenicientas” respectively. The nature metaphor is no longer that of patriarchal discourse, because, as the third-person narrator informs us:

Las dos niñas, que ya no son más niñas, que a partir de este momento empezaran a narrar sus respectivos cuentos, los mismos que tanta infinidad de veces han sido cantado por otros: Somos Blancacienta y Cenicientas. Un príncipe vendrá si quiere, el otro volverá si vuelve. Y si no, se la pierden. Nosotras igual vomitaremos el veneno, pisaremos esta tierra con paso bien calzado y seguro. (91)

Blancacienta and Cenicientas are incarnations (avatars) of the sun and earth, but their association with nature is powerful, a sign of creating themselves (self-narration) and of independence, as reflected in their new names. Valenzuela uses the very tools of patriarchal discourse (the nature/woman association) subversively, to challenge the traditional gender ideology of the fairy tale.

As Francisca Nogueroles has pointed out, “Avatares” “[pone] en tela de juicio . . . símbolos como el espejo de Blancanieves. El azogue, que calibra el valor de la mujer a partir de la belleza física, es puesto en tela de juicio . . . en “Avatares” (403). Nogueroles signals the passage in which the King of the North states:

Yo trato de distraerme azuzándola a mi Gumersinda. Y ella me interroga cuando no puede más: “Espejo, Espejo me llama, porque mi esposa debe mantenerme el respeto y dirigirse a mí por mi nombre de familia . . . y después me pregunta ¿Quién es la más bella entre las bellas?” Yo naturalmente contestóle siempre “Mi Nieves, mi Blanquita” Esta respuesta . . . tiene el añadido mérito de enloquecerla de furia y a mí me divierte.” (89)

Valenzuela deconstructs the use of the mirror as a patriarchal instrument of authority and truth, by identifying the King with the mirror and illustrating how he employs it to gain power and control over his wife.

Two “precursors” of Valenzuela’s “Cuentos de Hades” are the stories “Cuarta versión”

and “Cambio de armas” from *Cambio de armas* (1982). These two stories are technically not fairy tale parodies. However, both contain significant allusions to fairy tales and engagement with their ideology. Sharon Magnarelli has pointed out this association in her book on Valenzuela titled *Reflections/Refractions: Reading Luisa Valenzuela*. Magnarelli states:

Perhaps the most eloquent yet dangerous facet of “Cuarta versión” is its relationship to the fairy tale, for, as noted in Chapter 1, “Cuarta versión” can also be viewed as a modern-day rendering of the fairy tale, “Sleeping Beauty . . . In Valenzuela’s tale, however, the progress of the metaphoric Sleeping Beauty is reversed, for she revives from her lethargy to become an activist—a paradoxical resurrection which leads only to her death, this time physical rather than spiritual. (178)

Although Magnarelli indicates that Valenzuela has stated that the story’s relationship to the fairy tale was unconscious, it seems like more than a coincidence that the protagonist’s name is Bella (la bella durmiente is sleeping beauty in Spanish). Moreover, the story employs numerous explicit fairy tale motifs and allusions that I trace below.

The first and perhaps most significant of these motifs is the constant allusion to the mirror as a source of truth and identity. As early as the third paragraph of the story, the narrator who is telling Bella’s story states: “Yo soy Bella, soy ella, alguien que ni cara tiene porque ¿qué puede saber una del propio rostro? Un vistazo fugaz ante el espejo, un mirarse y des-reconocerse, un tratar de navegar todas las aguas en busca de una misma cosa que no significa en absoluto encontrarse en los reflejos” (4). This initial reference to the mirror subverts the traditional trope, which Bacchilega previously defined as a sign of patriarchal authority and truth. Here, one does not recognize oneself in the mirror, one cannot find oneself among the reflections. Thus,

the mirror becomes a site not of self-identification, but of self-interrogation. A second allusion to the mirror is directly connected to Bella's evolution as an activist, her self-questioning, and becoming her own person:

La escena se repitió al revés en la vida de Bella, ese juego de espejos desfasados. Esta vez no estaba ella limándose las uñas o afilando arma alguna. Entregada a la introspección, estaba tratando de recomponerse interiormente sabiendo que todo es un recomienzo sin mirar hacia atrás, alisando los pliegues. Acariciando la duda. Y sí, quien diría, acariciando dudas Bella, la segura de sí, la íntegra. (54)

Bella has evolved from a superficial character concerned with polishing her fingernails to someone who is completely sure of herself and her political mission. Her identity is not fixed, but a play of "out of date mirrors," as she keeps changing and evolving. Thus, identity is not fixed in the mirror by patriarchal authority as is often the case in the traditional fairy tale.

Numerous additional fairy tale references shore up the connection between "Cuarta versión" and fairy tales. The story includes references to Hansel and Gretel (15), the wolf from "Little Red Riding Hood" (20), and Cinderella (27). Moreover, an air of magic is cast over the story by the constant references to Tío Ramón (who appears to be a code name or fictional incarnation of the ambassador):

El Tío Ramón, los amuletos varios, las magias de las gentes, de su pueblo y esa sutil red de encantamiento que Pedro fue tejiendo alrededor de Bella durante aquella tarde se prolongó hasta muy avanzada la noche . . . cuenta mi Tío Ramón que el sapo estaba mirando con fascinación a una luciérnaga largo rato . . . hasta que de golpe le saltó encima y la pisó. ¿Por qué me pisas oyó mi tío Ramón . . . y tú, le preguntó a su vez el sapo, ¿por qué retuerces? Crac. (43)

All these references contribute to the fairy-tale like atmosphere of the story and suggest that Valenzuela's characterization of Bella is aimed at a deconstruction of the passive female characters presented in "Sleeping Beauty" and other fairy tales. Indeed, as I have elsewhere discussed, the story is sufficiently ambiguous as to suggest that perhaps Bella is the one who awakens the ambassador to the need for political asylum in a complete inversion of the "Sleeping Beauty" tale through such comments as "Bella creyó en todo momento—o nos hace creer—que lo único importante para ella era alcanzar una intimidad con el embajador" (27) [Weldt-Basson "Una nota" 49].

"Cambio de armas," much like "Cuarta versión" suggests various connections to fairy tales without constituting an actual parody. Francisca Nogueral points out two main associations: one to the tale of Blue Beard through the plastic keys that are left by the door as a temptation for Laura to attempt to escape from the apartment where Roque holds her prisoner, and a second connection to "Sleeping Beauty," suggested by Roque awakening Laura from her dream at the story's end, by revealing the truth of his and her own identity to her (Nogueral 389). These associations are cemented by the use of the mirror motif.

Once again, as we have seen in the works of other female writers, the mirror motif, rather than a sign of patriarchal authority and truthful judgment, is an emblem of self-interrogation and fractured identity. Laura does not feel like herself—indeed, she does not remember her real identity, so she turns to the mirror in the hope that it will reflect who she really is. However, the mirror raises more questions than it answers:

Extraña es como se siente. Extranjera, distinta. ¿Distinta de quiénes? ¿De las demás mujeres, de sí misma? Por eso corre de vuelta al dormitorio a mirarse en el gran espejo del ropero. Allí está, de cabo a rabo . . . en general muy pocas redondeces y esa larga, inexplicable cicatriz que le cruza la espalda y que solo alcanza a ver en el espejo." (118)



Laura's image in the mirror does not reveal the truth of who she is to her. It rather stimulates more questions and doubts, especially surrounding the origins of the scar on her back. Similarly, when Roque makes love to her, and their lovemaking is reflected in the large mirror on the ceiling, the mirror is split into a reflection of their physical actions and a reflection of Laura's emotional response and subconscious memory of the past. In this split, Laura's protest against what is happening to her is captured by the sensation that the mirror is shattering, which represents Laura's rebellion against patriarchal and political control:

Todo un estremecimiento deleitoso . . . que ella quisiera hacer durar apretando bien los párpados y entonces él grita ¡Abrí los ojos, puta! Y es como si la destrozara . . . ese grito como si el le estuviera retorciendo el brazo hasta rompérselo . . . Abrí los ojos, cantá, decime quien te manda, quién dio la orden, y ella grita un no tan intenso, tan profundo que no resuena para nada en el ámbito donde se encuentra . . . un no que parece hacer estallar el espejo en el lecho, que . . . destroza la imagen de él . . . (122-23)

Although the mirror does not actually shatter, the mirror is a site of conflict rather than affirmation of patriarchal judgments and values, as it traditionally appears in fairy tales.

Both Bella of "Cuarta versión" and Laura of "Cambio de armas" subvert fairy tales because they appear within the nightmarish context of the political reality of the Dirty War in Argentina. Both women are activists who controvert the notion of the passive female princess, and thus traditional fairy tale gender ideology.

A final example of subversion of traditional gender ideology is found in Bombal's "La historia de María Griselda," which like these last two stories by Valenzuela, is not a parody but employs fairy tale elements. The story is a tale of beauty-related jealousy,

similar to that of "Snow White." Just as Snow White's stepmother is intensely jealous of her beauty, so is Fred's wife, Silvia, jealous of her sister-in-law María Griselda. The two elements that clearly link Bombal's story to "Snow White" are the mirror motif and the explicit questioning of who is the fairest. Silvia's obsession with observing herself in the mirror, parallels that of the queen in "Snow White":

Cuando entró, luego de haber golpeado varias veces sin obtener respuesta, Silvia estaba sentada frente al espejo, envuelta en un fantástico peinador de gas.

—¿Cómo estas, Silvia? Pero la muchacha, a quien, no pareció sorprenderle su intempestiva llegada, apenas la saludó, tan abstraída se encontraba en la contemplación de su propia imagen. (171)

In another section, we are told that when Silvia sees María Griselda, "no le gustaban ya sus propios ojos, azules, límpidos y abiertos como estrellas. Y ¿por qué le parecía inútil haberse arreglado durante horas frente al espejo?" (172). Silvia's fear that her husband Fred is in love with María Griselda culminates when she asks him who is fairer:

Sin embargo, ¿qué cree usted que él me contesta cuando le pregunto quién es más linda, si María Griselda o yo?

—Te dirá que tú eres la más linda, naturalmente.

—No. Me contesta: ¡son tan distintas! (171-72)

Unlike the original "Snow White" tale, in which Snow White lives happily ever after with the Prince, and the queen dies as punishment for her envy, there is no happily ever after for the beautiful María Griselda in Bombal's story. Beauty is not presented in the story as an asset to be rewarded, but rather as burden to be borne because it causes jealousy and hate:

No se acuerda bien en qué términos María Griselda había empezado a quejarse de su belleza, como de una enfermedad, como de una tara. “Siempre, siempre había sido así—le decía. Desde muy niña hubo de sufrir por culpa de su bella. Su hermana no la quería y sus padres, como para compensarle a su hermana toda la belleza que le habían entregado a ella, dedicaron siempre a esta su cariño y su fervor. (182)

Thus, although Bombal’s story is not a full-blown parody, it debunks the traditional gender ideology behind “Snow White”: that women should be valued solely for their physical beauty because beauty does not bring happiness, and jealousy is its own punishment in Bombal’s version of the classic story.

In summary, since the nineteenth century, fairy tales have been appropriated by Latin American writers and employed for different purposes in their works. Recent literary criticism, has tended to focus exclusively on female writers with the exception of a few articles on “El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve”<sup>13</sup> and the article by Adriana Gordillo that focuses on the works by García Márquez and Fuentes. For example, Patricia Anne Odber de Baubeta in her book chapter “The Fairy-Tale Intertext in Iberian and Latin American Women’s Writing” discusses the use of fairy tale elements by Spanish Peninsular and Latin American women writers, focusing mainly on Spain, Brazil and on original fairy tales written in Latin America, rather than parodies. In contrast, this study has taken into account the employment of fairy tale elements by both male and female writers and focused more on the concept of parody within these texts, with the goal of ascertaining whether the texts of male and female writers exhibit different intentions in their appropriation of fairy tales.

From this analysis, it is clear that although male and female writers employ the same generic fairy tale elements when parodying tales like “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Sleeping Beauty” and the like, the signifi-

cance of what John Frow calls “the actions portrayed and the actors who perform them” (82) is clearly different. Only the female writers studied here directly and overtly engage with gender stereotypes, whether it be in full-blown parodies or simply through fairy tale allusions. The texts by the male writers either do not subvert gender stereotypes or only do so indirectly, granting more importance and emphasis to other themes in the narratives.

This study identified three categories of usage of fairy tale elements: resemanticization, distraction, and clear gender ideology engagement. These three categories may be thought of as engaging with the gender ideology of fairy tales in ascending order: resemanticization, as seen in the works by Gutiérrez-Nájera and Manlio Argueta, recontextualizes fairy tale elements and even creates new meanings, but without actually subverting the gender ideology of the original fairy tale in any way. In other words, these texts adhere to gender stereotyping but either create new stereotypes (e.g., the woman as the golddigger in “Caperucita color de rosa”) or repeat old ones in a new context (e.g., Hormiga as a representation of nature or as dependent on patriarchal vision through the mirror in *Caperucita en la zona roja*). A second level of gender ideology engagement is found in texts that debunk gender stereotypes but hide this intention behind other themes that create a “noise” or “distraction” from this purpose. We observed this tendency in García Márquez’s “El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve,” where cultural stereotyping (France as rational, Billy Sánchez and Latin America as irrational), create a distraction from the gender message. Similarly, in Fuentes’s “La bella durmiente,” the focus on Nazi Germany provides a distraction from the potential gender questioning found in Alberta Simmons’ narration at the end of the story. Finally, the third level of gender engagement is that of explicit subversion which was found in the texts by the women writers studied here. Bombal, Loynaz, Solá, and Valenzuela represent a pronounced tendency in contemporary women’s writing to expose gender

stereotypes and the patriarchal ideology inherent in traditional fairy tales. There are many other texts in addition to the ones studied here, notably Rosario Ferré's short story "La bella durmiente," and Silvina Ocampo's "Jardín de infierno," just to mention a couple excluded here that are markedly feminist and that have been written about extensively by other contemporary critics. Thus, women writers have modified fairy tale parodies by enacting an overt subversion of gender stereotypes which has significantly altered the contemporary nature of parody and fairy tale adaptation.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>See the following studies: Fiona Mackintosh, "Babes in the Bosque;" Patricia Anne Odber de Baubeta, "The Fairy-Tale Intertext;" Verity Smith, "Dwarfed by Snow White."

<sup>2</sup>In addition to the articles mentioned in note # 1, see: Hiram Aldarondo, "Embestida a la burguesía;" Aída Apter-Cragolino, "El cuento de hadas y la Bildungsroman: Modelo y subversión en La bella durmiente de Rosario Ferré;" José María Areta, "La máscara del lenguaje en Cuentos de Hades;" Leopoldo Brizuela, "Las voces bárbaras;" Fernando Burgos Pérez, "The Re(Naissance) of Texts: Parody and Rewriting in the Works of Luisa Valenzuela;" Kathleen Glenn, "Text and Countertext;" Adriana Gordillo, "La bella durmiente: Cuento de hadas;" Francisca Noguero, "Luisa Valenzuela: relatos integrados en el infierno de la escritura;" Arnold M. Penuel "A Contemporary Fairy Tale: García Márquez's 'El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve.'"

<sup>3</sup>There are many stories and novels by women writers that employ fairy tale parodies or elements. I have chosen to discuss here some of the less studied texts in order to avoid repeating what has already been said on the topic. Some of the important ones omitted here but studied extensively elsewhere are Rosario Ferré, "La bella durmiente" and Silvina Ocampo "Jardín de infierno." Other fairy tale-related texts are the Dominican narratives *Alótopos* by Angela Hernández Núñez and *He olvidado tu nombre* by Martha Rivera-Garrido. In addition, the Argentine writer Marcela Solá, studied here, has a novel titled "Jugo de naranja" that also deals with fairy tales.

<sup>4</sup>This translation and all others in this article are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>5</sup>See the following: Fiona Mackintosh, "Babes in the Bosque;" Patricia Anne Odber de Baubeta, "The Fairy-Tale Intertext;" Verity Smith, "Dwarfed by Snow White" for the influence of women writers on the genre.

<sup>6</sup>Roy C. Boland sees much of the repartee between Hormiga and Al as farcical, burlesque and humorous. However, even if Al's association of Hormiga with nature is tongue in cheek here, the character is associated with nature by always wearing a flowered dress. Consequently, the dialogue still reinforces a stereotyped image of women.

<sup>7</sup>Such is Mayrse Renaud's interpretation in her article "El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve: ¿cuento de hadas sombrío o canción kitsch?" According to Renaud: "Cómo no percibir aquí, más allá de las consensuales figuras del Príncipe azul y su bella princesa, una crítica de las pautas que rigen la todavía patriarcal sociedad caribeña moderna? . . . A diferencia de la visión idealizadora transmitida por el cuento de hadas, "El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve" nos confronta brutalmente con la realidad de las relaciones entre hombres y mujeres. Fuerza es reconocer que Si Nena Daconte es capaz de socorrer con eficacia a su enamorado, de cuidarlo cuando se encuentra con la mano medio rota. . . . Billy Sánchez, en cambio, con todo su amor, resulta incapaz de tomar la medida de lo que está sucediendo" (n.p.). As I show here, this possible interpretation is largely obscured by the "noise" or "distraction" García Márquez creates with other themes in the story.

<sup>8</sup>Technically, the narrator is a first-person narrator, because he once states "pude comprobar." However, no identity is bestowed upon him, and he seems to be able to penetrate the thoughts of Nena and Billy, thus essentially functioning as a third-person omniscient narrator in the story.

<sup>9</sup>Also see Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn, "Feminist Scholarship and the Social Construction of Women," where they discuss compensation and other patriarchal ideological strategies.

<sup>10</sup>See Mackintosh's article "Babes in the Bosque" for a brief discussion of Solá's text.

<sup>11</sup>See the following articles: Clementina R. Adams, "El paisaje en Jardín;" Elena M. de Jongh, "Intertextuality and the Quest for Identity;" Elzbieta Sklodowska, "En mi jardín no pastan los héroes," and Verity Smith, "Eva sin paraíso."

<sup>12</sup>See Fernando Burgos Pérez, "The (Re)Naisance of Texts," Gwendolyn Diaz, "Las voces bárbaras" and Z. Nelly Martínez, "Luisa Valenzuela: lectura descolonizada del cuento de hadas tradicional."

<sup>13</sup>See Oscar R. López Castaño, "El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve": tres viajes" and Adelaida López-Mejía, "Women Who Bleed to Death: Gabriel García Márquez's 'sense of an ending,'" in addition to the aforementioned articles by Gordillo and Penuel.

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