

Literature of Female Authorship in the Formation of Readers: The Fairy Tales of Angela Carter and Marina Colasanti /

Literatura de Autoria Feminina na Formação de Leitores: Os Contos de Fada de Angela Carter e Marina Colasanti

*Alyne Maria da Silva Melo**

Master's degree in the Postgraduate Program in Language and Teaching (PPGLE), Federal University of Campina Grande- Paraíba. Graduated in Letters-Portuguese Degree from the State University of Paraíba, Campus Guarabira.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0968-7174>

*Tássia Tavares de Oliveira***

PhD in Letters from the Federal University of Paraíba. Professor of Literature in the Academic Unit of Letters and in the Postgraduate Program in Language and Teaching of the Federal University of Campina Grande-Paraíba.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8705-1681>

Received in: 20 nov. 2024. **Approved in:** 23 nov. 2024.

How to cite this article:

MELO, A. M. da S.; OLIVEIRA, T. T. de. Literature of Female Authorship in the Formation of Readers: The Fairy Tales of Angela Carter and Marina Colasanti. *Revista Letras Raras*. Campina Grande, v. 13, n. 4, e4982, dez. 2024. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14542495>.

ABSTRACT

The literary sphere is constantly changing and it is possible to affirm that "literary work has the ability to intervene in the world, in different social structures and in existing literature." (Santos, 2007, p. 64) Therefore, the school, as a training environment and transmitter of culture, needs to encourage the reading of texts that highlight these transformations. Therefore, we emphasize in this research the importance of thinking about works written by women to work in the classroom, especially the fairy tales of Angela Carter (1940-1992) and Marina Colasanti (1937), given that the authors, through the readaptations and re-readings, can create a relationship with readers, since boys and

*

 alyne.maria@estudante.ufcg.edu.br

**

 tassia.tavares@professor.ufcg.edu.br

girls look in the books for characters who can identify themselves. Therefore, this paper aims to discuss the importance of a teaching of democratic literature, which bridges the themes of the text and the point of view of students. In addition, to discuss the role of fairy tales of Marina Colasanti and Angela Carter in the process of literary reading, in order to present the contributions of literature of female authorship to the formation of readers.

KEYWORDS: Women's Authorship; Fairy Tales; Angela Carter; Marina Colasanti; Readers training.

RESUMO

A esfera literária está em constante mudança e é possível afirmar que “a obra literária tem a capacidade de intervir no mundo, nas diferentes estruturas sociais e na literatura existente.” (Santos, 2007, p. 64), logo, a escola, como ambiente formador e transmissor de cultura, precisa incentivar a leitura de textos que evidenciam essas transformações. Logo, enfatizamos nesta pesquisa a importância de pensar em obras escritas por mulheres para trabalhar na sala de aula, em especial os contos de fadas de Angela Carter (1940-1992) e Marina Colasanti (1937), dado que as autoras, através das adaptações e releituras, conseguem criar uma relação com os leitores, posto que meninos e meninas procuram nos livros personagens que possam se identificar. Diante disso, o presente trabalho tem como objetivo discorrer acerca da importância de um ensino de literatura democrático, que faça ponte entre as temáticas do texto e o ponto de vista dos alunos. Além disso, dissertar acerca do papel dos contos de fadas de Marina Colasanti e Angela Carter no processo de leitura literária, com o intuito de apresentar as contribuições da literatura de autoria feminina para a formação de leitores.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Autoria Feminina; Contos de fadas; Angela Carter; Marina Colasanti; Formação de leitores.

1 Introduction

This text commences with an examination of the significance of literary pedagogy in higher education. Throughout our training as educators, it is imperative that we have the chance to examine and discuss the diverse methodologies of teaching literature. As learners, we are in the initial stages of engaging with literary texts, whereas as teachers, we must determine which approach to teaching will be the most effective and beneficial for our students and our work.

These different perspectives have been developed to accommodate a multiplicity of viewpoints, and it is only when we become conscious of the fact that pedagogical practices are intricate socio-historical phenomena that we can fully appreciate their nuances. Clermont Gauthier and Maurice Tardif (2010) provide a comprehensive account of these transformations, tracing their evolution from the classical Greek period to the Middle Ages and concluding with the pedagogical developments of the 20th century. According to the authors, these theories have undergone significant evolution over time, evolving from traditional pedagogical approaches to the contemporary pedagogical landscape. In this context, these transformations and developments also impact the teaching of literature and the development of readers. In Brazil, authors such as Bordini and Aguiar (1988) initiated a discourse on the role of the reader in the pedagogical context, drawing upon the German school of Aesthetics of Reception. They underscored the triadic relationship between author, reader, and work.

In light of this initial considerations, we advocate for literature written by women as a valuable resource in the field of reading education. As Susana Funck (1993, p. 26) notes, “any literary text can function to reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies, depending on how it is interpreted and received.” Accordingly, it is imperative to adopt a critical pedagogical approach when engaging with literature produced by women in a context historically marked by their marginalization.

In this paper, we argue for the importance of considering works written by women as potential classroom texts, with a particular focus on the fairy tales of Angela Carter (1940-1992) and Marina Colasanti (1937). These authors, through their readaptations and re-readings, establish a connection with their readers, as children seek characters in the books that they can identify with.

The literary sphere is in a state of constant flux. It can be argued that “the literary work has the capacity to intervene in the world, in the different social structures, and in existing literature.” (SANTOS, 2007, p. 64). Therefore, educational institutions, as environments that shape and transmit culture, must encourage the reading of texts that reflect these transformations. It is therefore essential to focus on the re-signification of images, ideas and characters in stories during the reading and learning process. In this context, the works *Uma Ideia Toda Azul*¹ (2006) (An All-Blue Idea) and *A Câmera Sangrenta* (2017)², by Marina Colasanti and Angela Carter, respectively, present themes that diverge from the conventional tropes of fairy tales.

The works are composed of short narratives that feature a diverse array of creatures and characters, including animal women, vampires, tigers, and werewolves. These elements are presented from a female perspective, with women as the protagonists of their own stories. In this sense, the authors, through their characters, educate readers—and, by extension, the women and men they are becoming—that love, purity, and redemption do not have to be the sole interests of women. They also challenge the notion that girls must play only the roles of princess, wife, or mother. In light of these considerations, we consider that re-readings and adaptations represent a crucial element in the school environment, as they facilitate the advancement of reading education. Similarly, we regard literary reading as a vital and enriching process for the development of readers.

¹ Marina Colasanti's *Uma Ideia Toda Azul* was first published in 1979. However, for the purposes of the present analysis of her short stories and the proposed research, we have elected to utilize a more recent edition, published in 2006.

² Angela Carter's work was also originally published in 1979 under the title *The Bloody Chamber*. In Brazil, Rocco published a translated version in 1999, entitled *O Quarto do Barba-Azul*. In conducting our analysis of her short stories and research, we elected to utilize the edition published in 2017 by Tag, entitled *A Câmera Secreta* (the same title as in the original). This edition was curated by Marina Colasanti, and all production—including illustration, translation revision, and design—was completed by women.

With this in mind, this paper seeks to elucidate the significance of imparting literary education in a manner that is both democratic and conducive to fostering a deeper understanding of the underlying themes and their potential interpretations. Furthermore, this paper seeks to examine the function of Marina Colasanti's and Angela Carter's fairy tales in the process of literary reading, with the objective of elucidating the contributions of literature written by women to the development of readers.

2 Hooks, Freire and Pinheiro: Literature for all

In her 2017 book *Teaching to Transgress*, black intellectual bell hooks³ discusses the significance of Paulo Freire and describes how the Brazilian pedagogue's work influenced her decision to adopt a classroom approach that prioritizes the autonomy of social subjects. In her experience as an educator, she reflected on and practiced an educational approach that emphasized freedom and promoted dialogue. One of the key concepts discussed in *Teaching to Transgress* (2017) is engaged pedagogy. The author asserts that “engaged pedagogy is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy. Unlike both, it emphasizes well-being” (hooks, 2017, p. 28). In other words, she saw in Paulo Freire's approach education as a practice of freedom. This notion encouraged her to enter the classroom convinced that she and her students should be active participants in order to be able to build an education together from a critical perspective.

Thus, bell hooks underscores the necessity of recognizing students as integral human beings, rather than merely passive receptacles of knowledge and content. She asserts that this requires a perspective that extends beyond the confines of the classroom. Accordingly, the author asserts that for this “engaged education” to occur, the teacher must be the initial risk-taker, and thus, the students must do the same. They must perceive the educational environment as a space for construction rather than domination. In light of this, she describes the importance of this transformation of the teacher, noting that “the traditional notion of being in the classroom is of a teacher behind a desk or standing in front of a class, immobilized. This is reminiscent of the

³ Gloria Jean Watkins, better known as bell hooks after her mother and grandmother's surnames, was an American social activist, author, feminist and teacher. In addition to combining her surnames, she adopted the use of lowercase letters for her name as a political stance. According to the author herself, this choice was because “the most important thing in my books is the substance, not who I am” (hooks, 2009).

unchanging, immutable body of knowledge that represents the immutability of truth itself". (hooks, 2017, p. 184). Therefore, traditional education perpetuates the notion that the teacher is the exclusive repository of knowledge. In contrast, hooks advocates for a shift in emphasis, underscoring the significance of collective engagement.

In the author's words,

Despite the constraints inherent to the classroom setting, it continues to offer a fertile ground for exploration and growth. In this field of possibilities, we have the opportunity to work for freedom. This entails demanding of ourselves and our colleagues an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality while collectively imagining schemes for crossing borders and transgressing. This is an education that is a practice of freedom (HOOKS, 2017, p. 273).

In this way, education as a practice of freedom and Freire's engaged pedagogy, as described by hooks in her book, endeavors to transform the classroom into a genuinely collective space. This is done with the understanding that the school remains a political space. Such topics as decolonization and feminist critique—which hooks consistently advocated for educators to engage with in their classrooms—can also be discussed, as “the pleasure of teaching is an act of resistance that counters the pervasive boredom, disinterest, and apathy that characterize the attitudes of teachers and students toward learning and teaching, and the classroom experience.” (hooks, 201, p. 21). Teaching according to bell hooks entails recognizing the significance of amplifying historically marginalized issues within the academic sphere and acknowledging the pivotal role of educators in this endeavor.

In this context, Professor Hélder Pinheiro (2023) introduces the discussion of hooks and Freire to the teaching of literature. The author unravels the contributions of Freire's pedagogy to literary reading. In the first moment, Pinheiro describes his experience as a student of literature. Like hooks, the author was confronted with an academic environment characterized by a lack of openness to dialogue. This resulted in the perpetuation of an oppressor-oppressed dynamic, a concept frequently explored by Freire. The concept of “banking education”, which was also addressed and critiqued by hooks, is characterized by a unilateral approach. The construction and collectivity, as discussed in the preceding paragraphs, are not central to this “educational process.” In light of these observations, Professor Hélder Pinheiro underscores the significance of Paulo Freire's pedagogical approach in his own educational journey,

Freire's conceptualization of "culture" has been and continues to be of significant value to me. It was a significant source of personal affirmation to recognize that the theatrical productions we created were a form of cultural expression, and that the poetic traditions I had committed to memory were also a manifestation of cultural heritage. In other words, culture was not solely defined by great literature or artistic works. The accumulated knowledge of the daily lives of impoverished individuals and laborers constitutes a form of culture (PINHEIRO, 2023, pp. 246-247).

Culture is the understanding of the student's reality, which is the most important element in teaching literature, as he argues in his article. Hélder Pinheiro, like Freire and hooks, writes about rescuing a vision that prioritizes the student, the work of the teacher in the educational field and their influence on their student's literary reading. According to the author,

It can be argued that the task of the literature scholar interested in a pedagogy of literary reading is to identify elements that contribute to a particular experience with the literary text, thereby facilitating the development of readers—of the word and of the world—through immersion in the thought of an important pedagogue. It is not sufficient to merely identify a singular method or prescribed approach that can address all potential challenges. While there are instances when the guidance of established models can be beneficial, it is not a universal panacea. (PINHEIRO, 2023, p. 244)

Therefore, Hélder Pinheiro reflects that in addition to exploring alternative methodologies to enhance pedagogical practice, educators must recognize the significance of adopting approaches that facilitate the development of reading proficiency. The author identifies literary teaching as a potential avenue for fostering human connection and inclusivity, thereby creating avenues for discourse and the development of a democratic literary culture within the classroom.

From this perspective, Professor Tássia Tavares de Oliveira (2022) advances the discussion into the domain of literature produced by women. In her article, she posits the potential for engaging with feminist perspectives through literary reading and elucidates the political role of educators in the context of literature instruction. The author asserts that, based on her reading of bell hooks, it is essential to "commit to the practice of a theory that fulfills its potential to dialogue with our discomforts, our pains—once again, the personal is political" (OLIVEIRA, 2022, p. 106), in other words, the question of the students' protagonism and the choice of literary text that reflects these concerns is discussed. As the author herself states,

In addition to these theoretical-critical formulations, we may also consider a feminist perspective, particularly with regard to the prominent role assumed by women in literary history. The consideration of gender in the context of teaching can serve as a motivating factor in identifying and delineating teaching positions that address the fundamental question of why and why not teach literature by women. We read women and teach their literature because we are interested in formulating challenges to the state of male domination. Our objective is to create spaces of feminist resistance through the teaching of literature. This is a political-theoretical position. (OLIVEIRA, 2022, p. 108)

In this way, Oliveira (2022) views the teaching of literature as a means of fostering identifications and experiences through engagement with new works. In the school environment, students have greater exposure to the canon—or, as Pinheiro described it, to “great literature” and “great artistic works.” However, this canon is predominantly composed of works by men, who have been historically prioritized and positioned as the norm. Moreover, the professor advocates for the enjoyment and enthusiasm associated with reading and the significance of addressing the role of women in the educational context. This approach enables the integration of personal experiences, everyday challenges, and socio-political discourse through literature, aligning with the perspectives of Pinheiro, hooks, and Freire.

The author also adds that the classroom is a space for contestation, a quality inherent to literature itself. This aspect offers a potential avenue for addressing female protagonism in the school environment. “There is no distinction between the theoretical discourse on literature's transformative potential and the practical application of feminist theory as a political stance” (Oliveira, 2022, p. 108), in other words, she assumes a relationship between literature and the capacity for transformation, asserting that there is no separation between texts and positions. Consequently, engaging with literature is an enriching process. In this regard, Oliveira (2022) underscores the value of examining works created by women.

It is in this sense, of teaching literature that contributes to the development of critical and engaged readers and of literary reading beyond the canon, that we present below the possible contributions of the fairy tales of Angela Carter (1940-1992), a British author, and Marina Colasanti (1937), a Brazilian author, to the classroom and to the students.

3 Angela Carter e Marina Colasanti: Um mundo para descobrir

Fairy tales, the established classics of children's literature, originated in France during the 17th century with the work of Charles Perrault. Born into the French bourgeoisie, Perrault is

regarded as a pioneering figure in the development of children's literature in the Western world. It was through his work that the stories we now know, including “Little Red Riding Hood” (1697), “Cinderella” (1697), and “Puss in Boots” (1697), gained widespread recognition. However, at first, his aim with the oral revival of Popular Literature was not to write for children, but to “value *modern* (French) *genius* in relation to *ancient genius* (of the Greeks and Romans), which was then consecrated by official European culture as a superior model” (COELHO, 2012, p. 81, highlights by the author). As a member of the bourgeoisie, Perrault advocated for national and Christian ideals and eschewed any reference to Greek-Latin pagan mythology.

In other words, children's tales emerged within a context of conservatism and moralism, a period during which the concept of the family was taking shape and children were regarded as potential adults. Accordingly, as Anete Abramowicz (1997, p. 26) asserts, the familial structures depicted in Perrault's works exhibited a hierarchical order, with the father occupying the highest position, followed by the mother, children (boys), and finally, girls. This is an illustration of the patriarchal family structure that has remained unaltered and has been consistently reinforced and emphasized. Consequently, the French author depicted princesses, wives, and mothers in his tales, whose sole purpose was to provide support for the continuation of a male narrative or to endure suffering in the name of love and marriage.

In this context, fairy tales emerged from popular culture and folklore, exerting a pervasive influence on the civilizing process. This encompasses the propagation of norms of behavior, not only in 17th- and 18th-century France, but also in 19th-century Germany and England, and subsequently across the globe in the 20th and 21st centuries. According to Jack Zipes (2023), the educated writers of the time transformed folk tales into a form of literary discourse on customs, values, and good manners. This was done with the intention of civilizing children and adults according to the prevailing social code of the time (ZIPES, 2023, p. 4). Oral narratives were thus transformed into literary tales with the aim of shaping the children of the nobility and bourgeoisie.

It is evident that fairy tales have a long history, spanning millennia and embedded in the collective popular imagination. They offer readers a kaleidoscope of fantastical scenarios, evoking a sense of enchantment and wonder, while simultaneously prompting introspection and prompting readers to reflect on their own experiences and identities. It is evident that adaptations have played a pivotal role in the enduring success of fairy tales. This is exemplified by the works of Perrault and

the Brothers Grimm⁴, who adapted traditional folk tales, as well as Walt Disney's contemporary film adaptations. In the 20th century, however, there was a notable shift in the re-signification of these tales, with a greater focus on female authors and protagonists. This resulted in the emergence of works by Angela Carter and Marina Colasanti.

The authors were among the principal figures responsible for the contemporary revision of fairy tales, addressing a range of themes that diverged from those present in traditional versions. For them, the act of writing re-readings represented a means of challenging the conventional role of women in these stories and offering them a new perspective. Carter's most celebrated work in the field of fairy tales is the storybook *A Câmara Sangrenta* (2017)⁵. In this collection of texts, she endeavors to demythologize the gender arrangement that has been naturalized by the classics. In this work, Carter introduces new interpretations of characters that have been previously established in popular culture, including Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood, and Belle. Additionally, she incorporates elements of vampire, tiger, and werewolf narratives into her own narrative. In this context, the production played a pivotal role in disseminating a novel interpretation of the characters, thus,

For years and years, we've heard the fairy tales in which the woman, after a long journey of submission, is finally presented with a prince, who is a grace granted to her, and a marriage, so that only from then on can she be happy. It seems that we are moving forward, when in reality there is a "hook" in the past. These are models of society that are imposed with a traditional image of the family and the promise of a home, with values, forms of conduct, happiness and the promise of the future, just one: marriage for women and wealth. Many children hear this story, some girls wait anxiously for this future to happen to them, others are enchanted by the magic of reading and narration, others strive to look like the models proposed. (ABRAMOWICZ, 1997, p. 33 - highlights by the author)

In this way, Angela Carter's reinterpretations of fairy tales offer readers a novel perspective and contribute to the education of girls and boys. Additionally, Marina Colasanti plays a significant role in the adaptation of these narratives. In 1973, the author made her debut in the field of children's literature with the publication of a reinterpretation of the classic fairy tale "Sleeping

⁴ Nineteenth-century authors who popularized fairy tales in Germany and wrote tales such as "Snow White" (1812), "Little Red Riding Hood" (1812).

⁵ Version of *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) translated by Adriana Lisboa. The production consists of the stories: "The Bloody Chamber", "The Courtship of Mr Lyon", "The Tiger's Bride", "Puss in Boots", "The Erl-King", "The Snow Child", "The Lady of the House of Love", "The Werewolf", "The Company of Wolves", "Wolf-Alice".

Beauty”, titled “Seven Years and Seven More” (*Sete Anos e Mais Sete*), which was released by Caderno Infantil I. This reimagining led to Colasanti's inaugural book in the children's genre, the anthology *Uma Ideia Toda Azul* (1979)⁶ (*An all-blue idea*).

In light of this, Colasanti reimagines the roles assigned to female characters in her fantastical narratives. This is evident in “[...] her construction of characters that portray women in their condition, in their struggle to impose themselves and live their desires even if this means breaking some rule imposed by society [...]” (SANTANA, 2015, p. 17). In this way, it was through the medium of storytelling that women's voices were first heard and the possibility of making decisions in accordance with their own wishes was first presented. This in turn opened the way for the male domain to become an additional character in the reconstruction of these stories.

In this context, with the classroom in mind, we will undertake a comparative analysis of the short stories “The Snow Child” by Angela Carter and “Seven Years and Seven More” by Marina Colasanti. Our aim is to identify similarities and differences between these stories and those considered “traditional,” as well as to suggest potential themes that could be addressed and explored in an educational setting.

3.1 E ela morde: A Filha da Neve de Angela Carter

Based on the popular tale “Snow White” (1812) by the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Angela Carter's “The Snow Child” is one of the shortest stories in the aforementioned author's oeuvre, and for this reason it carries different meanings throughout the narrative, as well as contributing to the possibility of collective reading in the classroom. So, from here on out, we'll comment on Carter's tale, how it contrasts with the Grimm story, and which of the themes presented could be addressed in the classroom.

The author begins the plot of “The Snow Child” by narrating the desire of the Count - the main character - to have a girl, and the way he describes this feeling shows that he didn't want a daughter, but another “companion”. It was winter, fresh snow was falling, and the protagonist was riding with his wife when he began to enunciate in detail the characteristics he dreamed of. “I wish

⁶ The book consists of short stories: “O último rei” (The Last King), “Além do bastidor” (Beyond the Rack), “Por duas asas de veludo” (For Two Velvet Wings), “Um espinho de marfim” (An Ivory Thorn), “Uma ideia toda azul” (An All-Blue Idea), which gives the book its title, “Entre as folhas verdes O” (Among the Green Leaves O), “Fio após fio” (Thread by thread), “A primeira só” (The First Alone), “Sete anos e mais sete” (Seven years and seven more) and “As notícias e o mel” (The News and the Honey).

I had a girl as white as snow”. (CARTER, 2017, p. 159), “I wish I had a girl as red as blood.” (Carter, 2017, p. 159), “I wish I had a girl as black as that bird’s feathers.” (Carter, 2017, p. 159). Then, as soon as the Count finishes his description, the character appears by the side of the road, with white skin, a red mouth, black hair, and completely naked, Carter writes, “She was the child of his desire, and the Countess hated her.” (CARTER, 2017, p. 159).

Unlike the Grimm story - in which the mother expresses her desire – in “The Snow Child” it is described the personification of a male ambition, not a female one. We note that at no point does the Count refer to the girl as his daughter; Carter describes her as the character's “child of desire,” in which she is already “born” a woman, completely naked and with the characteristics described by the man. Another point worth commenting on is the non-consent of the Countess; in “Snow White,” the mother figure is present only at the beginning of the narrative and presents an almost immaculate image. It is her desire to be a mother, to give birth to a perfect and, above all, beautiful daughter, that gives the story its name, while in the British author's story this “maternal desire” encouraged in 19th-century fairy tales disappears.

To deepen this comparison, Grimm's Snow White is a character from Germany in 1812, born precisely at a time of the rise of the bourgeoisie, while Carter's Snow Child appears in 20th century England, taking notes from the author herself in relation to the struggle for feminist issues. Thus, notions like these can be used to contextualize readers in the classroom, raising hypotheses about the different actions or desires of the characters based on knowledge of the circumstances in which the stories were published.

According to Regina Zilberman (2008), bringing the text into the reality of the students stimulates interest, and we dare to add that it also benefits the comparative process, helping to discuss the similarities or differences between the characters/plots/themes. For this reason, thinking about the topics that could be worked on in this first moment, we could raise questions about the different forms of representation - Snow White and Snow Child, Countess and Stepmother, Prince and Count - or even the differences between stories written by men in the 19th century and stories written by women in the 20th and 21st centuries; understanding the motivations and inspirations for literary texts: the social context.

Fairy tales are a significant aspect of the collective memory of children and adolescents. Therefore, exploring parallels between Carter's narrative and those of the Brothers Grimm may facilitate a deeper connection with the subject matter and its contemporary context. This

reinterpretation of traditional narratives and pedagogical approaches is crucial for fostering engagement and understanding in the classroom because

It is not about rejecting the path taken, but rather about adapting it to the changing times, as history does not stand still. On the other hand, it is about reaffirming the fundamental premises and assumptions that will enable the desired goals to be achieved. These include improvements in teaching conditions through the achievement of positive results in the classroom, the valorization of the teacher, and the progressive democratization of knowledge in contemporary Brazilian society. (ZILBERMAN, 2008, p. 16)

Thus, the idea of addressing contemporary issues regarding the various ways in which fairy tales are characterized emerges from the need to create a space that reflects reality and encourages critical thinking, as proposed by bell hooks (2017) in the section above. Therefore, we propose that an effective approach to these comparisons would be to present the three characters in question: one named according to her role, and the other two named based on the personification of another's desire. Furthermore, we suggest that an examination of the female characters' relationships with the different situations in the narratives would be beneficial. For example, in the Brothers Grimm version of Snow White, the character cleans, irons, and cooks because she desires to do so, thereby perpetuating nineteenth-century ideals of how a "good" woman should behave. In contrast, in Angela Carter's story, the Countess and the Snow Child are in uncomfortable situations that are orchestrated by the Count. The former experiences a sense of entrapment within the confines of her marital bond, while the latter is constrained by the dictate of another individual. Both women evince a palpable unease. Consequently, in contrast to the Brothers Grimm, the British author introduces protagonists from the twentieth century who deviate from the norms of their reality and express discontent.

Subsequently, after the character's personification, the narrative continues with the Countess' attempts to get rid of the girl — all vetoed by the Count — by dropping gloves in the snow for her to pick up and throwing her diamond brooch into the frozen lake for her to dive into. However, these attempts were ultimately unsuccessful and, in the end, it was the Countess herself who ended up naked, because with each new proposal from the character her clothes ended up on the girl. "Now the Countess was bare as a bone and the girl furred and booted" (CARTER, 2017, p. 160). An analysis of the discomfort experienced by both characters reveals that while the girl was deprived of both voice and choice, the Countess was able to express her desires, yet none of them were fulfilled.

In view of this, the romantization of concepts such as motherhood, purity, and kindness, which are pervasive in fairy tales, is supplanted by a one-sided rivalry, as both are ultimately subject to the Count's whims. This inversion differs from the most well-known stories and characters in that a role is expected of the Countess and a response from the girl is anticipated due to...

Evil female figures parade through the most classic and beloved fairy tales: in this world, they are wicked stepmothers and ugly sisters; in the enchanted kingdom, they are evil fairies, sorceresses, and ogresses. In the most famous stories, monsters in female form outnumber the giants and demons of "Tom Thumb," "Puss in Boots," or "Rumpelstiltskin," and certainly surpass them in vividness and prolonged dominance of the imagination: children are more impressed than repulsed by the wolf who swallows Little Red Riding Hood, while they feel aversion to the witch who fattens up Hansel and Gretel to eat him. He seduces the beast, and she falls into the flames of the oven, provoking sighs of relief or even cries of joy. (WARNER, 1999, p. 234)

Nevertheless, it is the Count, and not the "stepmother," who is the malevolent figure in Carter's narrative. He has a violent desire, and it is incumbent upon the Countess to accept the new situation without question. The narrative thus becomes increasingly harsh in its portrayal of the characters when the ending is revealed. The girl is assigned the task of picking roses. Upon picking up a rose, "so the girl picks a rose; pricks her finger on the thorn; bleeds; screams; falls." (Carter, 2017, p. 160) and "Weeping, the Count got off his horse, unfastened his breeches and thrust his virile member into the dead girl. The Countess reined in her stamping mare and watched him narrowly; he was soon finished." (CARTER, 2017, p. 160).

In this scenario, we can also address misogyny, violence and control, recurring situations and the reality of many women, so we can relate the themes present in Carter's story to real-life issues. For Susana Funck (2016),

If traditional fairy tales transform women into icons of femininity through idealized and naturalized male constructions, Carter's version "literalizes" the male fantasy creation. The snow girl exists only to satisfy the count's pleasure and become the objectification of the countess's envy. Her disappearance at the end of the narrative points not to the death of the woman, but rather to the destruction of male representations of the object of desire. (FUNCK, 2016, p. 304)

The story ends with the girl turning into a rose and even after the violence she tries to resist, "The Count picked up the rose, bowed and handed it to his wife; when she touched it, she

dropped it. “It bites!” she said.” (CARTER, 2017, p. 160). In summary, as previously discussed, Angela Carter addresses significant issues in her fairy tales, subverting traditional themes, emphasizing female characters, and challenging the normalization of situations in narratives that are commonly regarded as original. Consequently, the comparison of characters and plots across different narratives can facilitate the exploration of new avenues and introduce students to female authorship in a literary genre traditionally dominated by male authors.

In this context, in the next topic we will discuss Colasanti's story from a comparative perspective, presenting some aspects that we consider similarities and differences, as well as raising which issues addressed in the narrative could be worked on in the classroom.

3.2 Dreaming is believing: Seven years and seven More by Marina Colasanti

Similarly, Marina Colasanti is renowned for writing fairy tales and for her unique perspective on female protagonism in her literary works. With the story “Seven years and seven More” it could not be different, it was initially published separately by Colasanti and subsequently incorporated into her 1979 collection, *Uma Ideia Toda Azul*. Presenting similarities to “Sleeping Beauty in the Woods” by Charles Perrault and “Sleeping Beauty” by the Brothers Grimm, however, yet it offers a novel perspective and a hint of fantasy. “Seven years and seven More” is also a short text, once again facilitating collective reading in the classroom. It narrates the tale of a princess, the sole daughter, who falls in love with a prince from a neighboring kingdom. The father, hitherto the sole object of his daughter's affection, upon becoming aware of the characters' love and intention of marriage, provides the princess with a magic potion.

With the assistance of a fairy godmother, she falls into a deep sleep. Upon learning of this development, the prince decides to sleep, without any potion or help, only with the desire to find his beloved again. The monarch's objective was for the princess to experience a dream in which she was engaged with another individual or presented with an alternative perspective, thereby facilitating her forgetting of the prince. However, Seven years and seven More pass and the two characters continue to sleep deeply and dream of marriage. A detailed analysis of this aspect will be provided below. However, at first glance, one point to be highlighted is this fantasy universe that both Colasanti and Carter immerse the reader in. In this regard, Marina Colasanti herself makes the following observation:

This is a book of fairy tales, with swans, unicorns, princesses. And before anyone is surprised by the theme, in a world of advanced space technology, I think it is important to clarify that my interest and my search are focused on that timeless thing called the unconscious. [...] External reality changes. But our inner reality, composed of fears and fantasies, remains unaltered. And it is through this that the fairies engage in a symbolic dialogue, interacting with one another at any age and in all times. (COLASANTI, 1979, p. 2)

In other words, through these fantasy narratives, the author is able to access a different space with the readers through the use of fantasy narratives. As previously stated, the reinterpretation of fairy tales known from the imagination of children and young people can create a stronger emotional connection with readers and reach a greater emotional depth than a single story. From this, we highlight how “Seven years and seven More” begins with an important description of the protagonist’s thoughts, “The princess also loved her father very much, more than anyone else, until the day the prince arrived. Then she loved the prince more than anyone else.” (COLASANTI, 2006, p. 52), a thought to which the father immediately retorts,

The father, who had no one else to like, immediately decided that the prince was no good. He ordered an investigation and discovered that the young man had not finished his studies, had no position and his kingdom was poor. He was a good boy, they said, but in short, he was not an ideal husband for his daughter, whom the father liked more than anyone else. (COLASANTI, 2006, p. 52)

And with that, the princess’s father and fairy godmother give her the magic beverage to help her sleep. It is intriguing to consider the ways in which Perrault’s *Belle* and the Brothers Grimm provide inspiration, but also how Colasanti’s narrative takes different directions. Here, the “villain” ends up being the controlling father and not a forgetful/evil godmother, the deep sleep is caused by a potion and not a curse, the princess has no name and she is described based on her title. Such elements can be compared at the time of reading, instigating attention to characters — Belle, stepmother — and definitions — witch, princess — that are well-known in the imagination, not only in the literary world, but also in cinema. The story continues,

They laid the girl on a huge bed in a huge room, inside another huge room, which was reached by a huge corridor. Seven huge doors hid the small entrance to the huge corridor. They dug seven moats around the castle. They planted seven climbing plants in the seven corners of the castle. And they posted seven guards. (COLASANTI, 2006, p. 52-53)

In considering interpretations that extend beyond the text itself, it is notable that the number seven features prominently in both the title and the narrative. Upon discovering his beloved's situation, the prince orders the construction of “a castle with seven moats and seven palms. [...] which was reached through an enormous corridor disguised by seven enormous doors [...]” (Colasanti, 2006, p. 53). According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant (2001), the number seven is regarded as a divine number, representing the ideal cyclical process, dynamic perfection, a transition following a cycle, and positive renewal. Consequently, these symbols can prompt students to engage in a more profound interpretation of the material, potentially prompting the exploration of perspectives that might otherwise remain unconsidered. This is precisely the fantasy that Marina Colasanti herself refers to in her work.

The story ends with both dreaming of their wedding “And they dreamed that they had many children and that they were very happy for the rest of their lives.” (Colasanti, 2006, p. 55). In addition to the comparison with the narrative and the characters of “Sleeping Beauty,” the following issues could be addressed: paternal rape and marital choice. The male figure is a prominent presence in the most well-known fairy tales, often taking the form of a father, brother, or companion. He is the one who saves, kisses, and transforms a simple girl into a princess. However, it is often this same figure who violates, oppresses, and forces the female characters. This pattern is also evident in the story of Sleeping Beauty, in which the character is raped while asleep. It can therefore be argued that there is a connection between the prince in Perrault's story and the father in Colasanti's narrative, in that both represent instances of male domination and rape occurring in different ways.

The choice of marriage appears in the story exactly as we understand it: a choice. In contrast to Sleeping Beauty, who wakes up in a relationship without consent, Marina Colasanti's princess falls in love with the prince and decides to get married. The emotional and physical desire for this moment is so strong that even in her dream, the character finds a way to get around the situation her father has put her in. There is no kiss or rape on the part of the male protagonist; the encounter between the two is akin to a cosmic event. This is evidenced by the presence of seven keys, seven guards, seven doors, seven years, and seven additional years. Therefore, Colasanti develops her own interpretation, potentially influenced by Perrault the Grimm brothers, with a significantly altered interpretation of the concept of being asleep.

In summary, as Susana Funck (2016) asserts, Marina Colasanti's narratives interweave and unravel the female characters of fairy tales, appropriating established structural and plot elements while modifying their constituent parts and meanings. As previously discussed, the

Brazilian author presents a number of issues in her works that could be explored in the classroom, allowing students to construct or identify new meanings through the lens of their own interpretations.

In conclusion, we will present the relationship between the reconstruction of female characters in fairy tales and the importance of including female authors, such as Angela Carter and Marina Colasanti, in reading education and in the school environment.

4 Reconstructing and reconfiguring fairies: The development of readers through Carter and Colasanti

As previously stated in section 3, an analysis of the most renowned protagonists and antagonists in fairy tales reveals two key figures: the princess, characterized by her youthful beauty and patience in awaiting a prince or king; and the stepmother, depicted as an elderly, envious and malevolent figure. These characteristics become evident when we consider the observations made by Simone de Beauvoir (2008)

The woman is Sleeping Beauty, Donkey Skin, Cinderella, Snow White, the one who receives and endures. In songs and tales, the young man sets out in search of the woman, fights dragons, battles giants; she is locked in a tower, in a palace, in a garden, in a cave, chained to a rock, captive, asleep: she remains waiting. (BEAUVOIR, 2008, p. 389)

In this way, *Uma Ideia Toda Azul* and *A Câmara Sangrenta* present readers with a universe in which brutality and motherhood are not the inevitable fate of women, as illustrated by the characters in the narratives. Thus, these representations are important in the reading process, because young people like to read and “rehearse possible lives and imagine a woman's life as important - because they want to be attractive and powerful and significant, someone whose life is worth writing about, whose world revolves around her and makes the way she is meaningful” (BROWNSTEIN, 1982, p. 24 *apud* PINHEIRO, 2013, p.106), that is, through contact with new literary works, readers can incorporate the conceptions and question the themes presented there.

From this perspective, it is important to note that the presentation of readings by female authors in the classroom is a valuable pedagogical practice. The fostering of gender⁷ concepts in

⁷ “[...] gender represents not an individual but a social relation; in other words, it represents an individual through a class” (Lauretis, 1994, p. 211).

fairy tales can be discussed through contact with new literary texts. Consequently, in a similar manner to the impact that fairy tales had on the ideals of the 17th century, which influenced children and adults for many years, new versions of these stories can also result in the questioning of these same values.

In light of the aforementioned, the classroom represents a setting in which readers engage with literature for a significant portion of their lives. Given its enduring nature, it is imperative that the literary works selected for study within this context facilitate growth and encourage the new, the plural, the diverse, because the act of reading is “like a socialization process responsible for the acquisition, representation, habits and values capable of engendering in readers their own imaginary” (CUNHA, 1998, p. 100). In their work, Colasanti and Carter present a reimagining of the female protagonist in fairy tales. Furthermore, the authors encourage a critical and questioning approach to reading, utilizing elements such as metamorphosis and mysticism to prompt reflection and engagement with the text.

In this context, in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the BNCC (National Common Curricular Base), one of the guiding documents for teaching in our country, access to rereadings and readaptations also facilitates the process of identification, as “it is about [...] expanding and diversifying practices related to reading, understanding, enjoyment and sharing of artistic-literary manifestations, representative of cultural, linguistic and semiotic diversity” (BRASIL, 2018, p. 156). Therefore, in addition to access to classic narratives, teaching literature through fairy tales can provide the literary reading process with contact with new productions and present works written by women.

It is therefore important to encourage the expansion of the repertoire of female authors in schools and in literary education, with a particular focus on the concepts and themes presented in their works. The selected works presented in this paper facilitate the formation of a worldview and identification that extends beyond the familiar realms of fairy tales. These attributes are pivotal in the process of literary reading, because

When we are able to inspire a love for ideas, especially transgressive ideas, we overcome a major teaching challenge. And the analytical category of gender can help us along this path. Reading literature from a gender-sensitive perspective helps us to remove literary texts from a stagnant place, under a traditional and repetitive teaching methodology, and places them in the dynamic of thinking about issues closely related to the ways of life of our students regarding issues of identity and sexuality. (OLIVEIRA, 2022, p. 105)

It can therefore be argued that access to narratives which reconstruct the characteristics of female characters provides a new meaning to the image of women for boys and girls. since “[...] literary productions, of all types and all levels, satisfy basic human needs, especially through this incorporation, which enriches our perception and our vision of the world.” (CANDIDO, 1995, p. 248-249). It is thus essential to comprehend the significance and impact of these literary works on the reading process and the development of readers. The educational field should be regarded as a transformative environment, with literature serving as a pivotal component in this process of engagement with the social environment.

5 Final Considerations

The approach to teaching literature with a focus on female authors in the classroom has evolved over time. In the present era, it is widely acknowledged that the presentation of literary works and readings in an educational setting should facilitate a sense of identification among the student population. In this context, fairy tales have constituted an integral part of literary history for many years and represent an ideal starting point for the literary reading process, situated as they are at the beginning of the reading journey. Consequently, when considering the educational environment, these narratives can be adapted and explored in various ways, including through rereadings and reinterpretations.

In this context, Angela Carter and Marina Colasanti emerge as key figures, facilitating the expansion of horizons in the classroom and in the formation of readers. The authors educate their male and female students, and consequently the women and men they are becoming, through their characters. They demonstrate that love, purity and redemption are not the only interests that matter, and that girls do not need to play the role of princess, wife or mother only. The teaching of literature plays an important role in the literary reading process. The representations present in Carter’s and Colasanti’s stories can assist in the discussion of significant issues in the classroom.

In short, we consider literature written by women and reinterpretations of fairy tales are pivotal elements within the school environment, as they can facilitate the growth of readers. Furthermore, we perceive reading as a process through which readers gain insight into and engage with ideas and values, thereby developing their own perspectives and beliefs.

CRedit
Acknowledgement: Not applicable.
Financing: Not applicable.
Conflicts of interest: The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in relation to the manuscript.
Ethical Approval: Not applicable.
Contributor Roles: Alyne Maria da Silva Melo. Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Visualization, Resources, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. Tássia Tavares de Oliveira. Supervision, Validation, Resources, Writing – review & editing.

Referências

- ABRAMOWICZ, Anete (1997). *Contos de Perrault, imagens de mulheres*. Tese (Doutorado em Educação)- Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Faculdade de Educação, Campinas.
- BRASIL, Ministério da Educação (2018). *Base Nacional Comum Curricular: Educação é a Base*. Brasília: Ministério da Educação.
- BEAUVOIR, Simone de (2008). *O segundo sexo*. Tradução Sérgio Milliet. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira.
- BORDINI, Maria da Glória; AGUIAR, Vera Teixeira de (1988). *Literatura: a formação do leitor, alternativas metodológicas*. Porto Alegre: Mercado Aberto.
- CANDIDO, a (1995). *O direito à literatura*. in: vários escritos. 3.ed. São Paulo: duas cidades.
- CARTER, Angela (2017). *A Câmara Sangrenta*. Título original: The Bloody Chamber. Tradução: Adriana Lisboa.
- CHEVALIER, Jean; GHEERBRANT, Alain (2008). *Dicionário de símbolos*. Vários tradutores. 22. ed. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio.
- COLASANTI, M (2006). *Uma ideia toda azul*. 23. ed. São Paulo: Global.
- COELHO, Nelly Novaes (2012). *O Conto de Fadas: Símbolo – Mitos – Arquétipos*. 4ª ed. São Paulo: Paulinas.
- CUNHA, M. T. S. (1998). *Mulheres e Romances: uma intimidade radical*. Cadernos do CEDES (UNICAMP) , Campinas, v. 45, p. 100-107.

FUNCK, Susana Bornéo (1993). *Feminismo e Utopia*. Revista Estudos Feministas, [S. l.], v. 1, n. 1, p. 33.

_____. (2016). *Crítica Literária Feminista*. Florianópolis: Insular, 432p.

GAUTHIER, Clermont; TARDIF, Maurice (2010). *A Pedagogia*. Editora Vozes: Petrópolis.

HOOKS, bell (2017). *Ensinando a transgredir: a educação como prática da liberdade*. Tradução de Marcelo Brandão Cipolla. 2ed. São Paulo: Editora WMF Martins Fontes.

_____. (2005). *Alisando o nosso cabelo*. Pele negra. 18 maio 2009. Publicado originalmente em: Revista Gazeta de Cuba – Unión de escritores y Artista de Cuba, jan./fev. Tradução do espanhol: Lia Maria dos Santos.

LAURETIS, Tereza de. (1994). Tecnologias do gênero. In: HOLLANDA, Heloísa Buarque de. (Org.) *Tendências e impasses: o feminismo como crítica da cultura*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco. p. 206-241.

OLIVEIRA, Tássia Tavares (2022). *Leia como uma feminista: lendo mulheres negras na formação de professores de literatura*. Leia Escola, v. 22, p. 101-114.

PINHEIRO, Hélder (2023). *A pedagogia de Paulo Freire e o ensino de literatura*. SCRIPTA, v. 27, p. 240-265.

PINHEIRO, Renata Kabke (2013). *Literatura, discurso e questões de gênero: considerações sobre dois best-sellers do século XXI, suas protagonistas e seus reflexos sobre as leitoras*. Revista Língua & Literatura (Impresso), v. 15, p. 101-126.

SANTANA, K.C.S.F. (2015). *Uma ideia toda azul, de Marina Colasanti: Para muito além dos contos de fadas*. Dissertação (Mestrado em Estudos Literários) - Universidade do Estado de Mato Grosso. Tangará da Serra, p. 87.

ZILBERMAN, Regina (2008). *O papel da literatura na escola*. Dossiê: Literatura e Literariedade no universo da criança e do adolescente. São Paulo, v.n.14 p. 11-22, dez.

ZIPES, Jack (2023). *Os contos de fada e a arte da subversão: o gênero clássico para crianças e o processo civilizador*. Tradução Camila Werner – 1 ed. – São Paulo: Perspectiva.

WARNER, Marina (1999). *Da fera à loira: sobre contos de fadas e seus narradores*. Tradução Thelma Médici Nóbrega. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.