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Cinderella Goes Cyborg: Post-human Re-Imagining of Fairy Tale in Marissa Meyer's *Cinder*¹

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ABSTRACT

In the last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21th, the fairy tale witnessed a remarkable dialectical development by the vast majority of fairy tale writers and critics who have contributed to the popularization of the genre. This study offers a discursive and historical analysis of the traditional fairy tale of *Cinderella* and its modern retelling in the cyberpunk science-fiction genre as seen in Marissa Meyer's *Cinder*, a novel in *The Lunar Chronicles* series. The traditional fairy tale usually regenerates social and cultural constructions, mainly those norms on gendering the female body. It is argued that contemporary posthuman critical theory has been fundamental in contributing to current debates and negotiating the traditional gendering issue, particularly in regard to the female and female cyborg body. Taking advantage of the contemporary posthuman critical theory, and the cyborg subject presented by Donna Haraway and promoted by Anne Balsamo's readings on the cyborg, the principal objective of this study is to investigate the main reasons and social constructions behind a female image model that lasted for many centuries and which is still active, and to scrutinize the traditional fairy tale of *Cinderella* under these lenses. The most obvious finding to emerge from the study is that cyborg technologies have been adopted by Haraway and her contemporaries, offering a chance to challenge all the biased sexual politics, gendering norms and other social practices that depict the female body in an exaggerated feminized way, and draw a faulty image of woman for the generations to come.

Key Words: Fairy tale, cyberpunk, posthuman, cyborg, female body, Cinderella, Cinder

Külkedisi Nasıl Siborg Oldu? Marissa Meyer'in *Cinder* Başlıklı Romanında Masalın İnsan-Ötesi Bağlamda Yeniden Tahayyülü

ÖZET

20. yüzyılın sonlarına doğru ve 21. yüzyılın başlarından itibaren, masal, türün popülerleşmesine katkıda bulunan yazarların ve eleştirmenlerinin büyük çoğunluğu tarafından dikkate değer bir diyalektik gelişmeye tanık olmuştur. Bu çalışma, geleneksel Sindirella (Külkedisi) masalının ve bu masalın siberpunk bilim kurgu türündeki modern yeniden anlatımı olan, Marissa Meyer'in *Lunar Chronicles* roman serisinin ilk kitabı olan *Cinder* romanı bağlamında söylemsel ve tarihsel bir analizini sunmaktadır. Geleneksel masal genellikle sosyal ve kültürel yapıları, özellikle kadın bedenini cinsiyetlendirme normlarını yeniden oluşturur. Çağdaş insanötesi kuramın, kadın ve özellikle kadın sayborg bedeniyle ilgili olarak, güncel tartışmalara katkıda bulunmada ve geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet meselelerini bu anlamda tartışmaya açmakta önemli rol üstlendiği savunulmaktadır. Bu bağlamda bu çalışmanın temel amacı, çağdaş insanötesi kuramı ve Donna Haraway tarafından ileri sürülen ve Anne Balsamo'nun yeniden okumaları tarafından geliştirilen siborg özne kavramından yararlanarak, kadın imgesi modelinin ardındaki temel nedenleri ve sosyal yapıları araştırmak, ve bu bulgular ışığında geleneksel Sinderella (Külkedisi) masalını incelemektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Masal, siberpunk, insanötesi, siborg, kadın bedeni, Sindirella, Cinder

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1. Introduction

This study aims to focus on the variable cultural and social structural elements of the retelling process of the traditional Cinderella fairy tale in comparison with its contemporary sci-fi novel, *Cinder: Book One of the Lunar Chronicles* novel series by Marissa Meyer. One of the knowledge gaps addressed is the female cyborg body depiction in literature throughout the ages, and how this female cyborg body is depicted in the latest fairy tale rewriting as seen in Meyer's posthuman novel series. Of interest is how she re-imagined the traditional Cinderella fairy tale into a posthuman cyborg, Cinder, as her protagonist. The fairy tale has been the subject of much modern research in cultural, feminist and gender studies for its important impact in creating and moulding personality since childhood. Its amalgamation with other literary genres, such the recent literary blending of science-fiction has become an increasingly imperative area in literary criticism to negotiate the long-standing, passive and patriarchal coding in representing the female image.

Additionally, this study analyses the conversion process of fairy-tale element such as magic, supernatural, sexual politics, cultural codes and gender into a cyberpunk posthuman world. It intends to argue against the enduring, traditional notations in literature and, particularly, science fiction narratives that encapsulate the female body between only two choices, either to present her as sexually alluring, seductive, innocent and restrained or smart, hyperactive, wicked and a monstrous, destructive female.

Fairy tale origins: the creation of Cinderella

As early humans contemplated and reflected upon the phenomena around them in concern and confusion, the fairy tale, among the oldest and earliest forms of literature that humans created, began to emerge. In the ancient world, fairy tales and legends migrated, were recreated, and disseminated around the globe, seemingly communicating without limits. The swift spread and dissemination of fairy tales around the globe was due to its oral form, and most fairy tales were called "folk tales" and often included elements of wonder and myth as a way of understanding these mysterious stories in the absence of scientific facts. Tracing the origin and history of the fairy tale is different from tracing the history of other genres, because these tales predate and lie well outside the tradition of the scientific revolution, which is above all based on observed evidence, and because fairy tales are rooted in oral traditions and not supported by written records of any kind. Ruth B. Bottigheimer explains in her book, *Fairy Tales: A New History* (2009) that the "history of fairy tales is not only built on a flimsy foundation; its very basis requires an absence of evidence" (p. 2). André Jolles, in *Simple Forms: Legend, Saga, Myth, Riddle, Saying, Case, Memorabile, Fairytale, Joke*—a 2017 translation of his 1929 original study—elaborates on the structural and narrative forms in literature and the related laws of the fairy tale and describes the form of the "simple narrative" as the cornerstone of storytelling. The simplicity of the narrative is the primary vehicle for touching the feelings and senses of the audience. In his 1928 book, *Morphology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp applies the structuralist approach to literature to define the basic structure of the fairy tale and claims that there is a "similarity of tales throughout the world," asserting that this leads to a unified global history of these tales (p.16). In the realm of fairy tales, the narrative is free from reality and relies more upon mysterious and imaginative adventures in which the narrator modifies real events and things that could happen, into wondrous events woven by his/her intellectual creativity and speculation. In addition to this, the characters in fairy tales are simplified and abstract regarding details in order to remain far from reality so as to be portrayed as

nearly empty from content. These characters live in an abstract, non-sensual world, where they fill their world with magic, wonders, and delinquency to symbolic meaning.

Chandra Rajan in, *The Pañcātāntra* (2006) explains that one of the oldest collections of fairy tales is found in India, the *Panchatantra* is a significant literary work that contains a large collection of fairy tales that are intended to entertain and teach moral lessons (Kindle Loc. 399-403). The transmission of these tales from one place to another was a natural custom in the old world just like exchanging commercial goods, jewellery, silk and ivory. The impact and influence of the *Panchatantra* left a remarkable trace on world literature, especially on Middle Eastern works such as *Alf Layla wa Layla* (*Thousand and One Nights* or *the Arabian Nights*), a literary masterpiece that was First translated in the Middle Ages into French by Antoine Galland, in the 15th century. The Indian *Panchatantra* was followed by many substantial collections of tales, while the study of Indian Sanskrit manuscripts showed the importance of another Indian anthology, Somadeva's *Katha Sarit Sagara*, also known as *The Ocean of Story* or *Ocean of Streams of Story*. This work is considered to be one of the earliest collections of tales by its sheer size to survive.

In his translation of Somadeva's *Katha Sarit Sagara* (1923), N. M Penzer explains that these works travelled from the Middle East to Istanbul and Venice and then on to Europe, where they influenced the works of Boccaccio, Chaucer and La Fontaine. These anthologies from India and the Middle East are clear evidence of the great debt owed by Western tales to the East (p. xii-xivi-xiv). In Italy, for example, Giovanni Francesco Straparola (1480-1557) was a writer and a fairy tale compiler; he collected his fairy tales from oral traditions as well as from written forms. About his tales, Straparola asserts that not one of them was his own but collected from a variety of different sources. Straparola's unique style helped him to introduce many fairy tales in his two-volume collection of tales titled *Le piacevoli notti* (usually translated as *The Pleasant Nights*) in 1550 and 1553. One of the important developments in the literature of the Renaissance period was the short narrative technique and the emerging of fairy tales as pioneered by Straparola and Basile, through which Italy influenced other European authors such as Charles Perrault, Madam D'Aulnoy and others from around the world. Many writers of the Renaissance wrote their fairy tales in order to be narrated aloud and listened to by all classes of people, not just by educated elite.

In his book *The Irresistible Fairy Tale* (2012), Jack Zipes discusses the development of the French fairy tale as it emerged between the years 1690-1710. Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy (1651-1705) created a new literary genre when she first used the term "*conte de fées*," which in English means "fairy tale," in the title of her 1697 work *Les conte de fees* (p. 23-25). The numerous observations made about this literary genre by Wilhelm Carl Grimm in 1786 provide a clear perception of how fairy tales were dealt with in the 18th century. The legacy of the Brothers Grimm endures to this day. Marina Warner suggests in her book *Once Upon a Time* (2014) that their writing has contributed to a bridge between the ordinary folk and the educated elite (p. 54-55).

First written in China in the 9th century, Cinderella is an internationally popular fairy tale which has been told millions of times over the centuries. But in spite of this retelling, the main plot structure of *Cinderella* remains intact. The story appears in a European text for the first time in 1558 in a collection titled *Les Nouvelles Recréations et joyeux devis* (*New Recreations and Joyous Games*) published by the French author Bonaventure des Périers. The tale appears again in Giambattista Basile's *Il Pentamerone* collection sometime around 1635 and, 60 years later, in Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (*Stories or Tales of Times Past*) published in 1697 in France.

The next appearance of Cinderella is in the Brothers Grimm's anthology *Kinder und Hausmdrchen* (*Children and Household Tales*) published in 1812-15. Finally, the author Joseph Jacobs retells the Scottish Cinderella in the two volumes: *English Fairy Tales* published in 1890 and *More English Fairy Tales* in 1894. As Maria Tatar explains in *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales* (2015), the most popular modern version is a combination of versions based on "an abstract plot that derives from the interaction between Perrault's and the Brothers Grimm's literary versions" (p. 150). Over time, the retellings of "Cinderella" produced numerous versions, often modified and rewritten to accommodate new cultures, yet the story saw no radical changes in the plot. However, three distinct versions of the Cinderella fairy tale—those by Basil, Perrault and the Brothers Grimm—have gained wide popularity on a global scale.

However, three distinct versions of the Cinderella fairy tale—those by Basil, Perrault and the Brothers Grimm—have gained wide popularity on a global scale. Leaving the plot intact, each author attempts to modify the plot of the tale to make it fit with the audience, which may completely change the story's tone, mood and other elements. For instance, Bottigheimer in her work *Fairy Tales: A New History* (2009) describes the main elements of Basil's version of "Cinderella," *The Cinderella Cat* (*La Gatta Cenerentola*) accordingly: after Cinderella's father is widowed, he marries a harridan for his new wife who torments Cinderella; in order to stop this misery, Cinderella protests to her governess, who then plots with Cinderella to get rid of her stepmother once and for all by dropping a trunk lid on her neck to kill her. Cinderella then begs her father to marry the governess, who will grant Cinderella everything she wants. From here the murderous Cinderella Cat begins her ascent to the throne (p. 67).

While Perrault's version depicted the materialistic worries and values of his middle-class audience, the Brothers Grimm focus on the hardships of the life of farmers. Although the plot of both Perrault's and the Brothers Grimm's Cinderella is the same, the unique writing style of each author eventually leads to some modifications in the fairy tale. Basile's *Cinderella Cat* is a world away from the versions of Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, there are nevertheless minor differences between their versions. For example, the magical power that helps Cinderella overcome her hardship is handled differently. The Brothers Grimm depict this power as a magical tree growing close to her mother's grave, that "threw down to her a dress that was more splendid and magnificent than any she had yet had, and the slippers were of pure gold" (Murphy 2015: 57-58). In Perrault's version, this magical power appears in the form of a fairy godmother who supplied Cinderella with a marvellous gown, the little glass slippers and a carriage.

The traditional Cinderella was depicted as a charming belle - compassionate, patient, a tender-hearted nature lover, sexually attractive with her white skin and hands and small feet - and Zipes describes her as more beautiful than her stepsisters. In fact, she is described as the most attractive woman in the party. Drawing on a critique of the ideology transmitted in the best-known fairy tales as seen in Andrew Lang's *Blue Fairy Book* (1889) and Walt Disney's *Cinderella*, the celebrated animated film, Liberman's article may be feasible, especially in regard to the constructiveness of gender in cultural and biological aspects of the woman - like the body's sexual appeal in the traditional Cinderella and the retelling process (Jossen 2011: 51).

Fairy tales are sometimes interwoven with other literary genres to create significantly different works, like those of Straparola who for the first time included entire fairy tales in novella collections, like his widely popular *Le piacevoli notti* (*The Pleasant Nights*) (1550-3). This blending of fairy tales with other literary genres has become common since the 19th century. For example, fairy tales can be merged

with the fantasy genre, since both genres share common generic properties like the fantastic and the marvellous. In addition, fairy tales have helped inspire the development of other genres. In the 19th century, for example, female writers inspired by the fairy tale produced many works in the genre and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) paved the way for the new literary genre of science fiction. Zipes in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (2000) argues that the science fiction and the fairy tale genres are related and draws on the work of several critics in this field to clarify the boundaries between these two literary genres and their relationship to the element of "fantasia", in which supernatural events and creatures appear in an imaginary realm but which sometimes intersects with the real world.

Gendering the cyborg: some theorizations

In his *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (2003), Edward James describes science fiction as "less a genre—a body of writing from which one can expect certain plot elements and specific tropes—than an ongoing discussion" (p. 1) This narrative form is characterized by the ability of the author to create an unprecedented fictional world by basing that world on various scientific theories and hypotheses. The human curiosity of Bacon, Godwin, Holberg, and Voltaire, empowered by imagination, can challenge human logic; as Albert Einstein said, "Logic will get you from A to Z; imagination will get you everywhere". One of the features of science fiction, regardless of its literary genre, is a "sense of wonder," which lies at the heart of most works. David Nye describes this feeling as, "the appreciation of the sublime whether natural, such as the rings of Saturn, or technological: a space station or rocket ship" (James 2015: 3). Works of science fiction can often be interpreted in many ways, but their only limit is the limit of the universe. The literary critic Samuel R. Delany elaborates on the specific component that links these two genres, calling it "subjunctivity" as a common element between science fiction and the fairy tale. Sci-fi is based on experimentation and facts and a need for change that in turn requires the element of imagination. On the other hand, the fairy tale is fictitious, contrary to facts and does not require scientific verification but contains fantastic elements that stem from pure imagination and a human belief in magic and the supernatural. Both science fiction and the fairy tale share this characteristic of subjunctivity. It is therefore safe to say that the sci-fi genre is an updated form of fantasy derived from the fairy tale genre to suit the demands of contemporary scientific advancement, creating a vast body of literature that inhabits fantastical realms similar to the fantastical cities in the world of the fairy tale.

The first part of the 20th century witnessed a proliferation of works of science fiction, since this mode of writing allowed authors to communicate their ideas and address new social experiences and problems in this age of rapid change. One of the essential developments that inspired many works of science fiction in the early part of the 20th century was the growing dependence on machines in daily life. In a period of war, manufacturing developed more sophisticated and complex machinery, and literary works speculate on the man-machine concept in the field of posthuman after World War I. The posthuman condition, a concept that was later discussed by Clarke and Rossini, who dwell on the subject in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Posthuman* (2017), explain the objective of posthumanism as a discourse which promotes:

Neither the transcendence of the human nor the negation of humanism. Rather, critical posthumanisms engage with the humanist legacy to critique anthropocentric values and worldview. . . . Posthumanism questions how relations between humans and nonhumans operate within the environments where they are assembled. What forms of political

agency, what codes of ethics, but also what aesthetic principles would be needed to arrive at a posthumanist world? (Clarke and Rossini 2017: xiv).

The posthuman concept is a sort of response to the way the industrial revolution was changing human life and this response predicted the modern forms and future possibilities beyond being human. The 19th and the early 20th centuries witnessed the development of theories of human improvement and evolution beyond being simply human and explored the possibilities that would occur if the human being were the basis on which new races and creatures could be created. Cyberpunk, a sub-genre of science fiction, is mainly about “high-tech and low life,” generally presents a futuristic narrative about the conditions of society in big cities with highly developed cybernetics systems of automation and is distinguished by a culture of art and fashion called “the punk” thus giving a name to this type of fiction. Ironically enough, however, the cyberpunk’s futurist world is strongly influenced by the old fairy tale genre, which, in the beginning, was always a work of fantasy. Both the fairy tale and cyberpunk have their roots in fantastic and mythical cities. The emerging field of cyborg studies in cultural anthropology, women’s studies, philosophy, and critical theory paves the way to renegotiate stable human boundaries. Both posthuman and cyberpunk literature explores human identity beyond the human, most strikingly in themes and stories built around the Cyborg, a human-machine hybrid. Anne Balsamo, a well-known commentator on art, technology and society has written in her essay “Reading Cyborgs, Writing Feminism” (2000) that the cyborg is a:

human-machine coupling, most often a man-machine hybrid. Cyborgs are stock science fiction characters which are alternately labelled, “androids,” “replicants,” or “bionic” Whether cyborgs are considered the first citizens of an industrialized technocracy or the perfect companions for an anti-social, simulated society, their images pervade film and popular culture, as well as the world of consumer commodities (Kirkup 2000: 148-149).

The hybrid cyborg creation in Western literature, films, and popular culture reflects provocative imagery that feminist critics contemplate in the field of humanities to understand the human in a possible futuristic society; the cyborg subject is an iconic figure science fiction and, perhaps, a prediction for a posthuman reality.

Stefano Franchi and Guven Guzeldere emphasizes the importance of the cyborg subject and its potentials to create significant changes in human life, arguing in *Mechanical Bodies, Computational Minds* (2005) that, “a discussion of cyborgs becomes relevant because cyborgs blur the boundaries between the fictional and the actual, the natural and the artificial, the human and the machine, and our perception of our own self and that of the other” (p. 109). This offers a new perspective on human-machine relations and a fascinating field for interdisciplinary scholarship in the humanities, exploring the hybrid condition of the human-machine in a posthumanist world.

In the 1980’s Haraway and other authors tried to build a practical political and ethical system for contemporary society using the cyborg to focus on solving the social and cultural problems of the time, especially that of gender inequality. Looking to advanced technologies for possible solutions, these works often centred on the problems that occur between the boundaries of gender and culture. Donna Haraway’s *Manifesto* was one such work. Through the cyborg, Haraway wants to create a utopic vision of the body transcendent, a “hybrid of machine and organism, a creature from social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (Clarke & Rossini 2017: 110).

Haraway seeks through the cyborg to create an opportunity to change the history and structure of society, to build a utopic world and tradition, and to imagine a world without gender. Long before the work of Haraway and her contemporaries, who used the cyborg to attack sexual stereotyping, the female cyborg had made her appearance in literature and the arts. Perhaps the earliest of these gendered female cyborgs was captured by an unknown painter in "The Mistress of Horology" (*L'Horlogère*) in 1740. As described by Jennifer González in "Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research" (2000), the painting describes:

Soft feminine shoulders descend into a tightly sculpted bust of metal. Clinched at the waist, her skirts flounce into a stiffly ornamental "montre emboeté" [embossed watch] which rests on dainty feet, toes curled up to create the base. . . . The body of the woman is not merely hidden inside the machine, nor is the organic body itself a mechanical replica. Rather the body and the machine are a singular entity. (Kirkup 2000: 541)

In *The Gendered Cyborg* (2000), González goes on to elaborate on this early image, arguing that it "is an example of a Cartesian view of the body as a mechanism, and very stereotypically, a clock. The female body is objectified and sexualized, with its breasts, narrow waist and large hips" (Kirkup 2000: 8-9). This image of a gendered cyborg presents the early notions of culture towards complex machines and cyborgs. This clock-woman is the "pre-industrial representation of . . . [The Mistress of Horology and] thus functions as an early prototype of later conceptual models of the cyborg" (Kirkup 2000:60). This pre-industrial cyborg model of a clock-woman embodies that century's ontological and cultural norms of how society sees a woman as a complicated being that can work like a machine and also be beautiful. Typically, the body of the female is greatly feminized in science fiction, which focuses on the attractions of her body and depicts women with a lack of knowledge and technology. The science, technology, and industrial production have always been associated with men as proactive and rational, while a more passive, natural, pure and fragile status has been associated with women. The woman/nature analogue is often expressed in terms such as "mother earth" or "mother nature" when describing a natural phenomenon or scenery to compare nature with the female.

These sexualized female machines in both literature and the cinema are entirely the consequence of male fantasies—the ideal woman is servable, obedient, and helpless. For example, one of the works that genders the female cyborg body is Anne McCaffrey's *The Ship Who Sang* (1969). In the novel, Helva, the protagonist, is a girl whose body is badly twisted from birth but whose brain is exceptionally strong. Her brain becomes "encapsulated" as the controlling centre of a space ship. One of her missions is to save life on an inhabited planet by transporting 100,000 embryos before the planet is destroyed by an unstable sun. This work explores one of the traditional aspects of sexuality, gendering a cyborgian spaceship to become like a mother, a typical task for a female to carry embryos. This division associates women with nature, emotion, and subjectivity, while men are associated with art, rationality, and objectivity according to these hierarchical patterns (Kirkup 2000: 4). This is one of the reasons why so much of western art, literature and cinema is filled with these cultural dualities.

In order to find a solution for the current patriarchal social and cultural system, one source of this system can be traced to the work of Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), a botanist, zoologist and physician known as the "father of modern taxonomy." In his system he deliberately associates rationality with male, as his term for the human race —"Homo sapiens" is Latin for a 'wise man'. As for women, he considers them as "lacking rationality," emphasizing the biological, rather than rational characteristic of the gender. Cyberpunk stories and scenarios may be narrated in diverse ways, but the gendering

and stereotypes can be easily distinguished; being a cyborg female does not free her from sexual and gender stereotypes. A decade before Haraway's *manifesto*, Alic Sheldon, writing under the pen name James Tiptree, Jr., published a cyberpunk novella titled *The Girl Who Was Plugged In* (1973). Deformed by disease, a young girl named P. Burke agrees to allow her brain to remotely control a soulless Replica body of a beautiful woman named Delphi, who was grown in an artificial womb without a brain. The beautiful, sexual but soulless Delphi becomes a celebrity but is submissive and totally without freedom to act. A rich young man falls in love with her, very much complicating her existence. As *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (2003) points out, "even the cyborg may become enmeshed in and diminished by a too-faithful performance of femininity" (James 2003: 133). P. Burke, of course falls in love with the young man who, upon discovering Delphi's true nature, destroys both her and Burke. Tiptree's novel is considered as proto-cyberpunk, presenting the topic of the cyborg within a futuristic fairy tale theme to provide a scenario of what may result from the association of a female's body with technology. Prior to Haraway's utopian vision in *A Manifesto for Cyborg* (1985), literary works that dealt with the cyborg had most of the embodiments in the posthuman, especially female body, subject to the same old patriarchal culture of males; they classified cyborg as masculine/feminine, or sexual. Whether a robot or cyborg, it made little difference in the world of cyberpunk until Haraway's critique embraced the idea of the cyborg as a means of *deconstructing* the legacy of systematic gendering.

The cyborg is not a feminist invention, but it was adopted by Haraway in her manifesto as a feminist symbol. She presented it as a political irony since it was first released for the purpose of "blurring, transgression and deliberate confusion of boundaries of the self, a concern with what makes us human and how we define humanity. [. . .] The cyborg is to be a creature of a post-gendered world" (Kirkup 2000: 283). Haraway's cyborg theory suggests an approach using a hybrid cyborg to "de-gender" the female body. Haraway argues that the cyborg is a futuristic creature borne in the future; not linked to or having a past, the cyborg (wo)man does not look at his/her past because it has none. Thus, she chooses the artificial cyborg over the nature-based goddess when she states in her manifesto, "I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess" (Haraway 2016: 181).

One of the influential critics that adopted the cyborg critique and applied it to real, social contemporary life is by Aihwa Ong. Ong is an anthropologist who explores the working conditions of women in the Southeast Asia. She considers these women workers in the U.S. and Japan's electronic factories as cyborgs, because as she states, they are "actively rewriting the texts of their bodies and societies" (Haraway 2016: 59). One of the things that might have driven and inspired Haraway to adapt the cyborg in her critique is the Western fascination with mechanical bodies. Jennifer González comments on the issue of cyborgs found by her colleague, Elena Tajima Creef, in *Silent Möbius* (1991) a Japanese comic book. González argues that "...in Western imaginary, this body is all about revealing its internal mechanism." (Kirkup 2000: 70). For instance, take Hollywood films such as *The Terminator* and *RoboCop* when they try to fix their wounds; they reveal their internal components and the wirings beneath their "skin" to show their hybrid body nature. In addition to the fascination and satisfaction in seeing the cyborg's mechanical internals, the strength of the cyborg is another factor behind Haraway's adaptation of the cyborg body as the subject of her critique. For instance, Kiddy, a young female character and the protagonist in *Silent Möbius*, in a decisive moment in the story, reveals her true identity beneath her skin to her lover when she says, "this is my body Ralph ... Seventy percent of my body is bionic, covered with synth-flesh. Three years ago, after being cut to pieces, I was barely saved by a cyber-graft operation. But I had it changed to a combat graft." Why? Ralph asks. "So, I

could become as strong as Wire, the thing that destroyed my life" (Kirkup 2000: 68-9). She reveals her cyborg body and her motives to become stronger than her old self. Despite the fact that the ideal cyborg, Kiddy, is gendered and sexualized in the comic book as beautiful, with big coloured eyes and a disappearing nose and mouth - typical Euro-American comic-book standards - with her chocolate brown skin, there is an apparent reference to her as a "hybrid".

Lynda K. Bundtzen in *The Gendered Cyborg*, tries to deconstruct sci-fi films by applying the feminist lens of the gender / technoscience confluence; for instance, in the 1986 *Aliens*, Ripley, the protagonist, during an attempt to fight off an alien queen, "reinforces her cultural coding and becomes a cyborg by climbing inside a huge robotic casing, demonstrated (necessarily) earlier in the film as a powerful twenty-first-century fork-lift truck. Then she fights the alien with enhanced technological strength and the signifier of excessive biological motherhood is apparently overcome" (Kirkup 2000: 94). In the final scene of the film, when Ripley fights and tries to overcome the huge alien monster, Ripley uses advanced technology and becomes a strong cyborg in order to match the power of the monster and defeat it. Both Ripley and the alien queen are biological females. However, Ripley overcomes this when she became a techno-cyborg during her confrontation. In this scene, cyborg Ripley is not gendered or sexualized. This is what Haraway tries to create in her manifesto when she uses her "cyborg imagery" to argue against the cultural coding that sees women as unwise and incompetent with technology.

A decade after Haraway's discourse, in the 1990's, in her book *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* (1996), Anne Balsamo in her book explores the "discourse of body" and the combination of practices and relationships that structures the body in society. Balsamo investigates Michel Foucault's works in this field, focusing on the connection between body, society and culture in order to chart the aspects of body. In his genealogical project of discursive, political and social practices, Foucault considers them as "facts" about human bodies. He describes the apparatus that produces body marks and "body knowledge" in his book, *The History of Sexuality* (1976). He enumerates constructions of traditional and scientific biopower as follows: "(1) the hysterization of the female body; (2) the construction of homosexuality; (3) the creation of distinction among infant, child, and adolescent sexualities; and (4) the establishment of a discourse of perversion" (Balsamo, p. 20). These devices of the human body (for instance, "the hysterization of the female body") are used by the scientific biopower to establish in psychology, science and later practices in the capitalist family the justification of the "medicalization of the female body," This social construction of the female body has been common in the discursive practices of science, medicine, social institutions and most other related fields. Therefore, Foucault calls the process of connections that produces a "true effect" on the human body as an apparatus or technology.

Balsamo investigates many feminist writers in the field of contemporary feminist works in body discourse, especially "corporeal feminism," a branch of sexual difference theory developed by Elizabeth Grosz and Moira Gatien. The corporeal reference is for "an understanding of corporeality that is compatible with feminist struggles to undermine patriarchal structures and to form self-defined terms and representations" (Balsamo 1996: 157). Balsamo believes that new body technologies, such as machinery and cyborgs, help alter the body politics by reshaping the *material* body, using advanced technological equipment. Balsamo repositions the female body agency from passive to active using the new technologies. Balsamo finds a way to argue against prevailing gender stereotypes by using female cyborg images to encounter the machine/human opposition since females are coded as incompatible with technology and science, unlike the "rational males." Therefore, the gendered female

cyborg or android backfires on traditional gender stereotypes. For instance, Rachel in the *Blade Runner* film (1982) is a gendered female cyborg (replica) coded as sexually alluring and emotional, yet she is a technological creation; and her constitution challenges cultural conventions (Kirkup 2000: 98).

Balsamo uses the cyborg techno-body to argue that the conventional link between nature and body can be undermined by the unnatural *artificial* body of the cyborg, since the body is the site of natural identity, while the cyborg is a hybrid combination of bionic machine and organic materials. Therefore, it questions traditional body knowledge. Katherine N. Hayles in her book, *How We Become Posthuman* (1999), reviews the effects and impact of the cyborg concept on many stable constructions such as the dualities of animate/inanimate, human/animal, human/machine, fantasy/reality and metaphor/fact. The cyborg violates all these structures and boundaries; it disrupts and erases some of them and blur others. Hayles also pointed to body boundaries and shows how Haraway uses the cyborg to talk about the body sexuality of the cyborg to transgress boundaries of class, ethnics and cultural differences. She calls it “pleasurably tight coupling between parts that are not supposed to touch” (Hayles 1999: 84-5). Electrical engineering, biology, psychology and many scientific branches are derived from cybernetics and scientific information that configure the body. The cyborg stems from cybernetics; therefore, it has the potential to remap these intellectual fields; for instance, the female cyborg Rachel from *Blade Runner*.

The cyborg becomes a reality; in fact, approximately 10% of the population in the United States are technically cyborgs. The term may be applied to people with bionic joints or limbs, artificial implantations such as a heart, iris, skin, hearing aids and, in military, the “intelligent cockpit” pilot system. Included are artillery soldiers guided by smart aiming computer and even the virtual video games of kids and many other prototypes waiting approval from the “FDA”, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The connection between discourse and science is decisive (Hayles 1999: 114-19). Moreover, R.L. Rutsky elaborated on the topic of “imagining a Nonhuman Posthuman” in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Posthuman*, in which she suggested an intermediary posthuman identity for Haraway’s posthuman cyborg and Hayles’ posthuman collectivity – a rather “non-humanist posthuman” that challenges the “assumption of an original or essential humanity to which technology necessarily serves as a prosthesis or supplement” (Clarke and Rossini, p. 192). The collective, technologically-networked hive like the individual *Borg Queen* from *Star Trek: First Contact* (1996) or the humanoid Cylons in the reimagined *Battlestar Galactica* (2004– 09), these non-humanist posthuman figures have been cast as threats to humanity because they represent an identity that is entirely different from the traditional human one.

Re-imagining Cinder(ella) : Marissa Meyer’s Cinder

Meyer presents the frame of the narrative in a cyberpunk setting, and she also tempers the contemporary theory of the posthuman in her series to criticize traditional fairy tales. The fairy tales in her recent literary writings are blended with many contemporary theories. Dallas J Baker, in his paper “Monstrous Fairytales: Towards an Écriture Queer” investigates how authors are rewriting such narratives in queer theory. Baker’s analysis of the writing methods and strategies of queer writers working in the field of fairy tale fiction remarks that fairy tales always end with punishing or destroying the queer monster. Baker’s main concern is how these queer writers are taking a positive act in rewriting queer monster figures and how critical queer theory informs it. Similarly, fairy tale narratives are rewritten and blended with other contemporary theories such as the Posthuman Theory concerned with the sci-fi genre and futurology. An analysis is undertaken to reflect on the new

concepts and the creative writing practices of posthuman writers within the fairy-tale genre. Fairy tales usually feature traditional and cultural codes of the patriarch where girls are assimilated to accept codes of conventional femininity. One of the main objectives of this study is to investigate how Meyer reworks the female body of Cinderella, the protagonist, in her retelling of the *Cinderella* tale and how this reworked female body became a *cyborg* female as reflected in Meyer's cyberpunk novel series. Furthermore, this study also looks at how Meyer converts the fairy tale elements into sci-fi (magic, fantastic elements and a universal lesson) in her work.

Pauline Palmer notes that many fairy tales were traditionally “employed to acculturate young girls into accepting codes of conventional femininity” and that the fairy-tale heroine was “frequently relegated to the conventional heteropatriarchal role of trophy and object of exchange” (Baker 2010: 2). Fairy tales in many ways reflect the female character as passive, submissive and culturally coded, as well as gendered and sexualized. Exaggerated emotionally and in terms of femininity fairy tales are concerned with promoting patriarchal stereotypes of gender, masculinizing male bodies and sexualizing female bodies. In this context, this study will describe and consider methods for a positive (re)writing of the fairy tale in the light of posthuman theory that could be employed by authors of literature, notably writers of sci-fi fairy stories. One striking phenomenon of contemporary anglophone fiction is the renewed interest in fairy tales appropriated and subverted through rewriting, parody and other intertextual modes. Modern authors tap the extraordinary wealth of narrative forms, plots, motifs and images of the fairy tale tradition as they reinvent its familiar stories after their own fashion since, as Angela Carter well knew, fairy tales “can be remade again and again by every person who tells them” (Bobby, Loc. 221). Emma Donoghue, have refashioned some of the most popular tales in recent years, creates a rich and complex dialogue with Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen in *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997). Donoghue's retellings of Cinderella, Snow White, Rapunzel and Thumbelina, to name but a few, exemplify Adrienne Rich's definition of revisionary writing as an “act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction” (Bobby, Loc. 219-226). Meyer's novel series in its main intertexts aligns with a literary tradition that subverts the dominant myth of sexuality, love and happiness of the *Cinderella* story (as a cultural stereotype). She replaces the traditional Cinderella as a stereotypical character and as Zipes describes it, “importunes her sexually” as a crucial element in the tale (Zipes 2012: 97).

Warner explains that “feminists grasped this role of the fairy tale: sexual education in the broadest sense became the aim of their subversions.” (Warner 2014: 136). She describes the utopian dreams/wishful thinking of contemporary writers as follows: “every scriptwriter and director takes up a passive Cinderella and turns her into a champion freedom fighter” (Warner, P. 173). For instance, Meyer rewrites the character of Cinderella into a new posthuman form, and body. The new Cinder(ella) is a cyborg teenager; she looks like a “a stick-straight figure”, too angular with a boyish body. In fact, Cinder has a remarkable artificial leg and arm. Cinder's body was ruined by doctors due to a cyborg operation, and 36% percent of her body is not human. It ruins her femininity. In this cyborg depiction, Meyer echoes what has been previously presented by Haraway's utopic vision of body transcendence as a “hybrid of machine and organism, a creature from social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (Clarke and Rossini 2017: 110). Through the Cyborg subject, Haraway seeks an opportunity to change the history and structure of society.

Meyer's retelling of *Cinder* invites the readers to reconsider the traditional fairy tale text through a posthuman re-imagining. Among the elements that Meyer invents is the crowded New Beijing

Megacity, where the tall buildings are built close such that they become endless stretches of concrete and glass. The streets are noisy with robots and advertisement screens that cover every wall; the chatter of advertisements, reports and news fills the air. While the traditional *Cinderella* heroine lives in a fairy world, surrounded with beautiful, calm nature and friendly animals in the woods, she is domesticated, contained and forced to live in rags. This image of Cinderella is juxtaposed to nature/animal elements, a clear indication of a traditional patriarchal norm as mentioned earlier on Carl Linnaeus' classification. The traditional Cinderella was depicted as a charming belle - compassionate, patient, a tender-hearted nature lover, sexually attractive with her white skin and hands and small feet - and Zipes describes her as more beautiful than her stepsisters. In fact, she is described as the most attractive woman in the party.

Meyer's depiction of Cinder is a walking disaster with her messy hair and wrinkled gown: it was "wrinkled as an old man's face". In fact, Cinder becomes a mockery to her aunt, Queen Levana. Meyer desexualizes Cinder's body such that the "passionate" character of Cinderella becomes transformed in *Cinder*. Meyer even describes Cinder in the novel as incapable of crying or blushing, due to her missing tear ducts. Dr. Erland explains to her that she doesn't have tear ducts and elaborates on her incapability of blushing due to her brain monitors that prevent her system from overheating.⁴ In Meyer's retelling of *Cinderella*, as stated, the setting of the *Cinder* novel is a cyberpunk world of "high-tech low life", where earth is plagued by a deadly virus and Cinder, the long missing (Princess Selene), has to fight her way up to reclaim what is hers as the rightful heir of the Luna crown and eventually live happily. It is similar to the traditional Cinderella fairy tale where the heroine begins in rags and ends with riches except that Cinderella is assisted by a fantastic magic agency, while Cinder is empowered with knowledge and the power of advance technology. Cinderella waits desperately for someone to rescue her from her dismay, while Cinder's active and independent persona prompts her quest to uncover her lost identity, the only thing hindering her. After learning from Dr. Erland, she starts her rebellion.

In the conversion process of the traditional *Cinderella* tale into the posthuman image of *Cinder*, Meyer converts the condensed short narrative fairy tale text and symbols into an elaborative detailed novel in order to explore the psyche of the character of Cinder, the heroine. Her cyborg body is one of the main changes in the retelling or rewriting the new ideal woman that Meyer wants to create is the posthuman woman, desexualized with superior strength and knowledge. The posthuman female image that Meyer re-imagines is superior compared to the delicate female image of the traditional Cinderella. Liberman's article may be feasible, especially in regard to the constructiveness of gender in cultural and biological aspects of the woman -- like the body's sexual appeal in the traditional *Cinderella* and the retelling process. The constructions can be debated; for instance, Meyer alters these images in *Cinder* by targeting the adolescent audience to create positive ideological impact in contrast to the passive effect of the traditional fairy tale because it, "has affected masses of children in our culture". Since the reading process has a significant effect on children's identity formation, popular fairy tales have worked as a concealed educator for quite long time now. Liberman explicitly states that:

A close examination of the treatment of girls and women in fairy tales reveals certain patterns which are keenly interesting not only in themselves, but also as material which has undoubtedly played a major contribution in forming the sexual role concept of

children [. . .] Millions of women must surly have formed their psych-sexual self-concepts, and their ideas of what they could or could not accomplish, what sort of behavior would be rewarded, and the nature of reward itself, in part from their favorite fairy tales. (Joosen 2011: 51)

In her retelling of *Cinderella*, Meyer's selection of her adolescent audience is not arbitrary. To direct her novel series, starting with *Cinder*, the heroine is a teenager to better appeal to this significant group in society, especially females, and to provide an alternative choice and role model of what Cinder(ella) might become as a grown woman. For instance, similar to these two mythic images is the one in the traditional fairy tale of *Cinderella* of the *angel* woman - pure, sympathetic, confined and limited - while the posthuman image of *Cinder* that Meyer offers is a cyborg version, a monster woman, according to the patriarchal description of the active, unfeminine and aggressive female.

However, against the biased standards of this patriarchal ideology, the image of cyborg Cinder in the novel series is a balanced image of the female body model that Meyer presents for her adolescent audience. This image of a female cyborg is different from the female images that other feminist authors tried to create to avoid patriarchal ideology. For instance, Meyer associates Cinder with technology and being expert in it, an image against the grain of the sci-fi female trend of the patriarchy that almost always depicts woman characters as incompatible with technology. Moreover, Meyer depicts Cinder as being an outcast cyborg and *monster*, because monsters are always defying the boundaries in the Western culture.

Edited by Susan Redington Bobby with a foreword by Kate Bernheimer, *Fairy Tales Reimagined: Essays on New Retellings* (2009), a collection of essays puts under the microscope the voices of many scholars and artists whose reflections on certain topics embedded in fairy tales throughout the ages and can now be interpreted clearly. The role of "gender and sexuality" are redefined. The literary technique of rewriting and the inherent different intertextual modes bring the traditional fairy tale into a new realm. Meyer retells the literary tradition to subvert the dominant myth of sexuality, love and happiness supposedly perpetuated by the Cinderella story (as a cultural stereotype). She changes the association of the female body with nature by making Cinder, the protagonist, the embodiment of an artificial female cyborg. This conversion creates unprecedented changes in the protagonist that challenges the entire equation, especially the stereotypical depictions of the female sexual image and the gender roles encoded in the fairy tale. As a result, Meyer links the techno-body of the cyborg to Cinder's knowledge of a highly-advanced technology.

Windling emphasizes the crucial gender role patterns that have been deeply engraved in the literary genre of the fairy tale and how altering the character's gender and characteristics can change the flow of the narrative into the traditional happy ending, as in the case of Carter's retelling of the Bluebeard legend in "The Bloody Chamber". In *Cinder*, Meyer alters the female body of Cinder(ella) with an enhanced cyborg body having far superior abilities than normal humans. In doing so, she effectively transforms the gender role of the tale's female character which changes the scope of events and the typical happy ending. Instead of the typical female character of Cinder waiting for the man (the prince) to rescue her from her misery, she, instead, rescues him and becomes the hero. In her article "Inventions and Transformations: Imagining New Worlds in the stories of Neil Gaiman", Mathilda Slabbert explains that contemporary reinventions of traditional fairy tales have "always been a female genre," like recent recreations by female authors, Jeanette Winterson, Margaret Atwood, A.S. Byatt, Anne Sexton and Angela Carter. Mathilda mentions that since the traditional fairy tale contains adult

content and while parents tell it to their children, much of the content is transformed such that “little morals” are injected in the text about gender roles, especially how woman should look seductive and behave sexually in a patriarchal society. For instance, at the ball every woman in the kingdom has to be extremely beautiful to impress the prince; on the other hand, in the *Cinder* novel, Meyer chooses not to sexualize Cinder. Instead, she desexualizes her with a wrinkled dress and stiff cyborg body, which makes her not only unpleasant but also not feminine and sexually alluring either.

Conclusion

Among the crucial social and cultural values that fairytales regenerate is the reproduction of the social, cultural politics of the society it addresses. The social hierarchies of gender roles, gender inequality, male domination and power monopoly, as well as gendering norms of the female body have been common notions in the discursive practices of science, medicine, social institutions and most related fields. The gendering of the female body is particularly explicit in fairytales. The negative impact it instigates has been insidious, affecting the female body image throughout the ages, not to mention its effect on masses of children as a role model during the character creation process. The influence of industrialization and the new social constructions on the representation of the female body image in literature from the First Industrial Revolution to the present time is explicit in sci-fi works. Using the element of imagination and fantasia, the sci-fi genre explores human futuristic possibilities using the scientific lens to impart a logical sense. Newer examples reflect the social and cultural constructions of a cyberpunk society, and the gendering of the female cyborg body is as complex as a machine and sexually alluring.

Technologically advanced robots and hybrid cyborgs were bound by a patriarchal social coding that turned these techno-beings into feminized and masculinized gendered bodies. By the late of 20th century, the affective work of Haraway proposed a solution to the gendering issue by using a hybrid cyborg as the ultimate or alternative form of the female body. Haraway used the cyborg as a literary device to deal with gender and sexuality within the context of women's studies. The cyborg subject was adopted by many contemporary literary critics and writers such as Anne Balsamo, Aihwa Ong, N. Katherine Hayles and many others because of the European fascination with the cyborg culture. As a cyborg, a female character has excessive power that literally and hypothetically enables and encourages her to do miraculous deeds and access knowledge in fields such as information technology, among many others. The relevance of this embodiment is clearly supported by the findings of this study. Meyer's posthuman image of the cyborg Cinder(ella) character is an improvement over the traditional Cinderella in various aspects; i.e., cyborg Cinder is not gendered, sexualized or confined to herself. To the contrary, despite being a cyborg, she has the normal body of a teenager; she is active and open minded with the will and determination to change her destiny unlike the restrained character of the traditional Cinderella.

Important to this study is the fact that the sci-fi genre bases its fictional world on scientific theories that appeal to the reader logically. This study has presented the influence of the patriarchal social system on the female body image, using both the fairytale and science fiction as a tool to trace changes in female status and body image depiction in literature. The famous traditional Cinderella character and its contemporary retelling as Cinder in *The Lunar Chronicles* have served markers to review these changes and their impact on the present-day female. Covering a vast ground, this study aims to provide deeper insight into female body representation in the majority of literary works, especially fairytales and sci-fi texts that comply with the patriarchal coding that sees women as sexualized,

passive, gendered, wicked and incompatible with technology and science. It attempts to thoroughly examine and compare traditional and posthuman female body image depiction using Meyer's work.

An analysis of female cyborg body depiction since its early appearance in literature and art – as early as 1740 dated engraving "The Mistress of Horology" (*L'Horlogère*) – up to present has provided a clear judgment of the gendering issue. The scope of this study was limited to female body image representation and highlights the main sources of the social codes and rules that led to gendering the female cyborg. It further provides a solution to the old patriarchal laws, using a loophole to de-gender the female cyborg body (as seen in cyborg Cinder) by allowing the subject to escape them. Future studies of the retelling of fairytales in science fiction from a posthuman prospective can provide valuable insight on gender and sexuality in the context of women's studies as regards the regeneration of patriarchal gender laws and norms in literary texts with the goal of eradicating them.

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