The foregoing analysis establishes how Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter and Suniti Namjoshi in their short stories have rewritten traditional fairy tales from the female viewpoint thereby questioning patriarchal power structures that subsume the identity of women. Focussing on women, these writers attempt to shift them from object position or margins to the subject position or centre and in this way restore the displaced power of the powerless or muted half of humanity.

These women writers have exploited the close and natural association of women with fairy tales, and the universality of fairy tales, and have rewritten traditional fairy tales from a female perspective to give voice to the 'non-canonical' or 'other side of the story.' (Du Plessis 108) Feminist fairy tales aim
to highlight notions about power, violence, alienation, social-condition, child-raising and sex roles. As such, it is impossible to ignore the relation between the aesthetic elements of fairy tales and their historical function within a socialization process which helps to form tastes, mores, values and habits. Feminist fairy tales may prove highly effective in countering the destructive tendencies of male-dominated values and the present male-female arrangements. Most feminist critics tend to agree that the traditional fairy tales spread false notions about sex roles. Lieberman after making a close textual study of the traditional fairy tales reached the conclusion that they were indeed sexist: most of the heroines were passive, helpless and submissive and inculcate false notions about sex roles. These socially conditioned roles that the heroines take prepare females to become passive, self-denying, obedient and self-sacrificing as well as nurturing, caring and responsible. On the contrary heroes are portrayed as competitive, authoritarian and power-hungry, rational and abstract. Andrea Dworkin in her book *Woman Hating* shows us how fairy tales manipulate our notions about sex roles by analysing the traditional role models as the evil step-mother, the passive virgin, the active prince and the powerful king. Jack Zipes in his Introduction to *Don't Bet On The Prince* has rightly observed the traditional categorization of females who are poor girls or beautiful princesses will be rewarded only if “they demonstrate passivity, obedience and submissiveness” (6) The housewife is the best woman
and beauty the highest value for women. Step-mothers are generally evil. But
males should be aggressive and shrewd.

Derrida’s concept of opening up the weave of writing to enable other
meanings to come to the fore is a potentially empowering one for feminists.
Atwood, Carter and Namjoshi, like other women writers have found this re-
visionary process very effective as it affords them the scope to rewrite male-
written texts from a feminist perspective. Taking advantage of the arbitrary nature
of the sign that has no fixed meaning, its meaning being contextual, these writers
in their short stories have attempted revisionist myth-making, that enables the
reworking and fresh creation of myths. All of them in their short stories depict
women who are attempting to deconstruct the myth of male supremacy by coming
out of the margins to occupy the subject positions. They attempt to emphasize in
their stories that the old traditional myths about male and female, no longer prevail
and that the subject has been re-defined thus dismantling phallocentric structures.
They also tend to break the established patriarchal myths and indulge in woman-
identified myth-making by weaving in new images and situations and sifting
through the layerings of adverse patriarchal renderings from which women were
excluded, marginalised or depicted negatively to salvage and re-interpret as well
as discard. Through their short stories these writers question sexual politics,
challenging society’s gender arrangements and attempt to dethrone the myth of
femininity, the construct of patriarchy and thus re-order the world. Atwood,
Carter and Namjoshi in their re-telling of fairy tales have in diverse ways reworked the Blue Beard story, the beauty and the beast theme and the red riding hood and wolf stories in a number of their short stories where they have challenged the patriarchal assumptions of the female and have suggested alternative modes of perception and expression to the prevailing patriarchal ideology.

Carter in “The Bloody Chamber” (BC 7-41) Atwood in “Blue Beard’s Egg”, (BE 131-164) “Weight” (WT 177-194) and “Alien Territory” (BAM 103-16), and Namjoshi in “Blue Beard’s Way” (SF 98-101) and “A Room of His Own” (FF 64) have based their stories on this theme and re-written them from the female point of view. Being feminist writers they have been all the more attracted by this theme as Bluebeard symbolizes the ‘authoritarian, tyrannical husband’ usually seen in a patriarchal set-up. But in the reworkings by Atwood, Carter and Namjoshi the bride does not allow herself to be victimized by this tyrannical, Bluebeard. The brides on the contrary are powerful, strong and confident and outwit the imposing Bluebeards and highlight the “stripping away of all existing definitions of sexuality to reach a point of shared humanity, from which men and women can equally and collaboratively build anew” (Day 147).

Carter in her story “The Bloody Camber” (BC 7-41) adopts a woman-centred approach to the Bluebeard story with emphasis on female power and
possibilities of change. Sexual violence which is a pre-requisite of the Blue beard theme is presented in vivid detail in Carter’s version which is disturbing to critics who condemn it as pornography. But Carter’s writing is an artist’s expression of the erotic prompted by her intense desire for female autonomy. Atwood’s “Blue beard’s Egg” (BE 131-164) is not an exact re-telling of the original Bluebeard story but it is used only as an inter-text. The story is narrated from Sally’s viewpoint. Suniti Namjoshi’s version of the Bluebeard theme in “Blue beard’s Way’ (SF 98-101) and “A Room of His Own” (FF 64) is in fact a satire on the status of women as objects in a phallocratic society.

Variants of the popular ‘Beauty and the Beast’ tale have also been handled by Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi in their reworked tales. Carter in “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” (41-50), and “The Tiger’s Bride” does not attempt to point out what is wrong with conventional representations but suggests alternate paradigms. Carter in “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” sees the tale as a male conspiracy to deny women the chance to attain autonomous adulthood, and she highlights the position of the female in a patriarchal set up, where she is regarded as an object in an economic system of exchange. On the other hand, “The Tiger’s Bride” (BC 51-67) seeks to alter the image. Carter here attempts to abolish a cultural definition of the female as passive victim and envisages “an animal equality between the sexes” (Day 144) Atwood in her story “Weight” (WT 177-
194) brings in an allusion to the ‘Beauty and the Beast” tale, where Molly, the smart female advocate is able to transform any man into a prince with her kiss. Namjoshi in her fable “A Moral Tale” (FF 21) presents a radical feminist view of the beast as a woman.

Carter and Namjoshi have also re-worked the wolf stories. Carter in her “Werewolf” (BC 108-109) and “The Company of Wolves” (110-118), based on “Little Red Riding Hood” has depicted Red Riding Hood as a very bold girl unafraid of wolves and ready to fight them and also prepared to sleep with them, altering the stereotype of the traditional woman. Here Carter offers the radical shocking notion that the girl might be as savage as the wolf by the power of her own sexuality and erotic wolfishness. In “Wolf- Alice” (119-126) and “Peter and the Wolf” (BV 79-87), Carter presents tales of girls being carried away by wolves and therefore free of all the structuring identity that comes with human socialisation. She also identifies an animal dimension to human beings generally suppressed beneath social representations of that animality. Like Carter, Namjoshi too identifies an animal dimension in human beings, which is illustrated in her “Wolf” (SF 62-63), based on the folk tales relating to children being carried away and brought up by wolves. Unlike, Carter and Namjoshi, Atwood in her short stories has not written explicitly on wolves, but the animal dimensions in human beings particularly in the males in their extra-marital sexual relations has been
taken up in stories like “Hairball” (WT 39-56), “The Bogman” (85-106) and “Bluebeard’s Egg” (BE 131-164).

Parody has been employed by Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi in their re-tellings to give emphasis to the message embodied in them, as ridicule is the most effective way of correction. These writers have attempted to parody the stereotyped image of woman in a malist culture.

Gothic elements have also been employed in the re-tellings of Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi. Erotic descriptions and sexual connotations are found in abundance in their re-tellings, particularly in Carter where it almost borders on pornography. In Carter’s view pornography is harmless as the erotic is moulded by desire for female autonomy and is potentially liberating for women. Unlike Carter, Atwood refrains from making explicit sexual references. Atwood only makes indirect references and refrains from Carter’s way of erotic descriptions. The re-workings of these writers are neither moralistic nor do they help children in solving their oedipal conflicts and hence they are rightly intended for an adult readership.

Besides the re-working of traditional fairy tales from a feminist perspective, Atwood, Carter and Namjoshi have in their short stories highlighted feminist themes, giving voice to the ‘muted’ and bringing women to the fore to express
female power. All these writers unanimously agree that gender is a cultural construct rather than a natural one. These gender differences and the subordination of the female by the male is a patriarchal construct. All of them have portrayed different kinds of women - the good and the bad, the angel and the monster, the docile and the powerful, but in all these cases it is culture that determines what they become. The majority of female characters depicted in their short stories are independent, active and enterprising unlike the traditional patriarchal concept of woman as basically dependant, passive and docile.

Victimization of women in a phallocratic society is a significant feminist issue dealt with in the short stories of Atwood, Carter and Namjoshi. The female victims in these stories are not the traditional passive victims, who undergo the sufferings, the cruelties and injustices meted out to them meekly but are resourceful enough to overcome their sufferings and find ways and means to overpower the victors. All the three writers have adopted the final two basic victim positions of the four outlined by Atwood in her Survival – namely to reject victimization by fighting against it – repudiating victimization and becoming a creative non-victim.

Atwood’s focus in her short stories is mainly on women characters - strong, resourceful and individual in their own right. Her female characters are women who are divided into separate personae – one half defined by the role that a
phallocratic society has imposed upon them and the other half the real self, attempting to liberate itself out of this imposed role and achieve absolute autonomy. Though Atwood attacks patriarchal power structures, she does not acknowledge radical feminism like Namjoshi. Atwood firmly believes that harmony may prevail only through the interdependence of the male and female. She does not advocate the replacing of the patriarchal order with a matriarchal one, like Namjoshi’s novella *The Mothers of Maya Diip* but an order of both the male and female, with the marginal brought to the centre to create a harmonious sense of interdependence.

Unlike Atwood who believes in the interdependence of man and woman for a harmonious existence, Carter in her writings advocates absolute equality for women with men and stressing the fact that women ought not to allow themselves to be exploited by patriarchal structures. At the same time, she highlights the destructive effect of patriarchal culture on human beings.

Objectification of the female body by the male is dealt with by Carter in her short stories. Namjoshi in her fables deals with the aspects of women’s lives that have been erased, ignored, demeaned and mystified. Through these fables she interrogates the marginalization of women in a patriarchal society and inspires them to struggle for self-identity and autonomy. She also attempts to analyze the social and psychic mechanisms that construct gender inequality and like Atwood
and Carter, arrives at the conclusion that the inequality between men and women is not the result of biological necessity but is produced by the cultural construction of gender difference. Through her fables she inspires women to overcome feelings of isolation and inadequacy resulting from the domination of patriarchal structures and have firm faith in their own potential to remake their lives. Namjoshi too portrays very strong and powerful female characters. Unlike Atwood and Carter, Namjoshi is a radical feminist who also takes up the theme of lesbianism in several of her fables.

These three writers in several of their short stories have strongly protested against the prevailing concepts of gender which are mainly cultural constructs generated by the patriarchal biases. Being male-centred and organized in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains – familial, religious, political, economic, social and artistic, they focus on the inequality and inferior treatment extended to women in a phallocratic society. Despite subtle differences in their views on feminist ideas, Atwood, Carter and Namjoshi in their short stories have unanimously attempted to define the role of the new Woman as an active, independent and strong character.

The rewriting of myth is a re-visionary process that is critical of existing culture and values. The woman writer through this re-visionary process effects a narrative displacement, by breaking the sentence and offering the possibility of
speech to the female giving voice to the muted, as well as a narrative
delegitimation by breaking the sequence and effecting a re-alignment that reverses
the established order that ‘always ruptured conventional morality, politics and
narrative.’ (Du Plessis 108) This strategy enables the woman writer to evolve the
new sentence that comes from the ‘other side’ of everything and thereby articulate
things ‘not noticed before or if noticed guiltily suppressed’. (108)

Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi in their rewritten fairy tales and other
feminist stories generally adopt the strategy of ‘writing beyond the ending’ which
according to Du Plessis ‘severs the narrative from formerly conventional
structures of fiction and consciousness about women.’ (x) This involves two acts
namely breaking the sentence, which ‘severs dominant authority and ideology’
and breaking the sequence- ‘a critique of narrative restructuring its orders and
priorities precisely by attention to specific issues of female identity and its
characteristic oscillations’. (Du Plessis x) These writers have with varying
degrees of success experimented this strategy in their short stories giving voice to
the voiceless and highlighting the muted position by bringing their women
characters to the forefront. In their stories these writers have employed the
techniques of fantasy, intertextuality, subversion, writing the body and open-
endings.
The technique of fantasy is effectively employed by Carter and Namjoshi and to a certain extent by Atwood. They find this an ideal technique to explore freely the interiors of a woman's mind that remains fettered in a phallocratic world. Angela Carter has employed fantasy in her short stories to explore feminist issues and to investigate the material conditions of reality. It is also a means of exploring aspects of sexuality not generally permitted in the dominant patriarchal ideology. Atwood does not make use of fantasy in her short stories to the extent that Carter and Namjoshi employ in theirs. But her stories do bear evidence of the fantastical elements as in "Rape Fantasies" (DG 92-104) and "When it Happens" (DG 125-137). Namjoshi too makes use of fantasy to explore feminist issues and offer an alternative system to the prevailing patriarchal ideology. Namjoshi chooses to employ this technique in the form of animal fantasy.

Atwood, Carter and Namjoshi particularly have adopted the technique of inter-textuality as the use of inter texts, quotations or allusions from other texts to demonstrate social and cultural change. Their employment of this technique has not been merely to imitate or copy but to create something unique and original.

Women have realized their real worth and are aware of the fact that gender is neither natural nor immutable as it is the creation of patriarchy. Women are no longer prepared to accept the patriarchal definitions attributed to them and have attempted to re-define themselves. Atwood, Carter and Namjoshi in their short
stories have invariably attempted to free women from the patriarchal stereotyped representation of women by adopting the narrative technique of subversion.

Feminist assertion of the female body as a female estate or the feminist rejection of man's ownership of the female body is a crucial strategy adopted by women writers. By writing the body, Atwood, Carter and Namjoshi attempt to reject the male supremacy over the female body focussing on the female body as a site for feminist struggle for autonomy.

Women writers, like Atwood, Carter and Namjoshi being generally dissatisfied with the male discourse have experimented more imaginatively with fiction by disrupting literary fashion and traditional conventions. They have also exploited the gothic, the grotesque, folk tales and fairy tales to give voice to their protest of male dominance. Moreover, they have adapted traditional imagery, techniques and other established conventions for different ends in innovative ways to redesign their experience and 'make literature more expressive of their own experiences both as women and artists.

Atwood, Carter and Namjoshi, from different parts of the globe, have voiced the same protest against the patriarchal dictum of woman as object and not subject. In their short stories as the foregoing analysis reveals they have reworked familiar fairy tales from the female point of view, thereby raising the status of
women in a phallocratic society. They have highlighted crucial feminist issues in their stories and have attempted to offer an alternative paradigm empowering women. Kathleen Wheeler's comment in *Modernist Women Writers and Narrative Art* is a fine summing up of these three writers' contribution:

No convention of society or of fiction was left unexamined. Stock-in-trade devices involving stereotyped imagery, worn-out 'dead' metaphors, character types, notions of the role of plot, dialogue and descriptive styles of language, and formal structures or modes or organization were boldly exploited for new ends. Language and form were pulled, stretched, distorted, parodied and disrupted in innumerable ways into innovative and witty transformations, which embodied new conceptions of life and art while questioning prevailing values. (4)