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# FAIRY TALES IN GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE CAMPAIGNS

# LOS CUENTOS DE HADAS EN CAMPAÑAS DE VIOLENCIA DE GÉNERO

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**Abstract:** Fairy tales are not mere bedtime stories. Originally conceived to convey a moral, these folk narratives often transmit and perpetuate gender stereotypes. They even serve to promote and legitimize, at times, violence against women. Their pernicious effects on fostering and justifying all forms of abuse against women have resulted in their use in several campaigns aimed at raising awareness of violence against girls and women. Drawing from Julia Kristeva's key concept of "intertextuality", this article explores the uses and functions of fairy tales in a purpose-built corpus of 32 gender-based violence campaigns taken from 15 countries in the last two decades (2005-2025). Through the lens of Discourse Analysis, the study shows how these campaigns resort to these folkloric stories for subversive purposes to denounce all forms of abuse against women and to break with the "social mythologies" (Roland Barthes) surrounding notions of romantic love that largely stem from these narratives.

**Key words:** Fairy tales, Gender-based violence, Intertextuality, Gender-based violence campaigns, Patriarchal and rape culture

**Resumen**: Los cuentos de hadas no son simples historias a la hora de irse a la cama. Originalmente concebidas para transmitir una moraleja, estas narrativas populares a menudo transmiten y perpetúan estereotipos de género. Incluso sirven para promover y legitimar, a veces, la violencia sobre las mujeres. Debido a sus efectos perniciosos a la hora de fomentar y justificar todo tipo de abuso sobre las mujeres, numerosas campañas de violencia de género han recurrido a estos cuentos populares para concienciar sobre la violencia que se ejerce sobre niñas y mujeres. Usando el concepto clave de "intertextualidad" acuñado por Julia Kristeva, este artículo explora los usos y funciones de los cuentos de hadas en un corpus construido específicamente para este fin y compuesto por 32 campañas de violencia de género pertenecientes a 15 países en las dos últimas décadas (2005-2025). A través de la lente del Análisis del Discurso, el estudio demuestra cómo estas campañas recurren a estas historias folklóricas con un propósito subversivo para denunciar todas las formas de abuso sobre las mujeres y para romper con "las mitologías sociales" (Roland Barthes) que entretejen las ideas del amor romántico que por lo general emanan de estos cuentos de hadas.

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**Keywords:** Cuentos de hadas, Violencia de género, Intertextualidad, Campañas de violencia de género, Cultural patriarcal y de la violación

## 1. Introduction: gender-based violence and fairy tales

The United Nations (UN) defines gender-based violence (GBV) as "any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (WHO, 2025). Deeply rooted in unequal power dynamics between men and women, gender-based violence is a serious violation of human rights that affects 1 in 3 women worldwide (WHO, 2025). As a global problem, thus, it needs to be tackled from multiple interdisciplinary perspectives given its complex multifaceted nature encompassing social, cultural, educational, religious, and economic factors (Pandey, 2023).

Contemporary societies, to a greater or lesser extent, are inheritors of long-established patriarchal traditions that have shaped the cultural, educational, political, labor, medical, and legal systems in the world today. This male-controlled establishment manifests in disparities in education, family relations, social roles, access to the job market, gender pay gaps, sexist laws, religious discrimination, and even the normalization of violence against women (Rodríguez et al., 2024; Setyorini et al., 2024).

Along with institutional forces, cultural artefacts play a pivotal role in reinforcing and obscuring dominant patriarchal ideologies that foster and legitimize abuse against girls and women (Carter, 2015; Ferrer, 2025). In fact, there exists a stock of collective beliefs, representations and practices or, in Roland Barthes' words, "social mythologies" (1993, p. 10), surrounding notions of heterosexual romantic love that largely stem from fairy tales and that have been proven to have detrimental effects on women (Blythe & Gillmore, 2025; Burns, 2000, pp. 65-76; Cañaveras et al., 2024; Ferrer, 2025). From popular parlance—with expressions like "fairy tale romance", "prince charming", "knight in shining armor", "fairy godmother", "under a spell", or "live happily ever after", which refer to an ideal romantic relationship and its participants— to conceptions and behaviors surrounding heterosexual love that represent males as active, brave, and intelligent on the rescue of passive, helpless, naif women, fairy tales are an integral part of our cultural fabric (Boehm et al. ; Knyazyan, 2021; Mitchell, 2023). They have, indeed, helped shape the asymmetrical power dynamics between men and women in sexual-affective interactions, often promoting rape culture and including episodes of gender abuse that are somehow minimized and/or sanitized with the premise/promise of

"happily ever after"—the typical coda of these stories (Ferrer & Bosch, 2013; Mutmainna, 2015).

Fairy tales are not mere bedtime stories. Originally conceived to convey a moral, these folk narratives often transmit and perpetuate gender stereotypes (Gilbert & Gubar, 1986; Gilmore, 2023; Lieberman, 1972; Pawlowska, 2021; Tatar, 1993; 2003; Taylor et al., 2001). They even serve to promote and legitimize, at times, violence against women (Baldini & Mazzini, 2024; Lorenzo & Ramiro, 2022; Pratt, 2021; Ronderos & Berg, 2020). In *Beauty and the Beast*, the animalized prince employs isolation, food deprivation and coercion to control Belle, whose love acts as a catalyst for Beast's physical and personal transformation (Coates et al., 2019; Romero & Torrado, 2018). Jafar also imprisons Jasmine against her will and forces to marry her in *Aladdin* (Vdovychenko, 2020). Both Sleeping Beauty and Snow White are kissed, while unconscious, by unknown men whom they end up marrying (Dyah, 2021). Tiana is coerced into kissing a cursed prince in *The princess and the frog* (Charania & Simonds, 2010). In *Little Red Riding Hood*, the female protagonist is stalked, tricked, harassed, and, in some versions, devoured by the cunning wolf, a metaphor for a sexual predator (Dillon-Craig, 2024; Welsh-Burke, 2023).

In *Rumpelstiltskin*, the unnamed woman is forced into marriage to the man who threatens to chop off her head unless she spins straw into gold. Then she is controlled reproductively when obliged to get pregnant and haggle over her own child (Longstaff, 2015; Pass, 2025). Married to an abusive husband who has killed all his wives, Sherezade lives in constant fear as she tries to prolong her life by telling stories with cliffhangers in *One Thousand and one nights* (Shamma, 2017). Another violent spouse can be found in *Blue Beard*, where the premise is like the *One Thousand and one nights*, namely, a woman is married to a man who is known for murdering all his wives if they disobey him (Pratt, 2021). In *King Thrushbeard* the monarch establishes a manipulative relationship with his wife to destroy her self-esteem. He forces her to do chores and jobs for which she lacks experience just to ridicule and humiliate her, and to make her believe that she is incapable of living without him (Green, 2020). Isolation, manipulation, food deprivation, coercion, sexual predation, absolute control, physical, psychological, verbal, economic, sexual and reproductive abuse are present in these stories that have been passed down from generation to generation—first, orally; then, in print, and, more recently, through movie adaptations (Fanolla, 2024; Zippes, 1995).

Saturated with episodes of gender-based violence, fairy tales are often present in narratives of battered women (Blythe & Gilmore, 2025; Enander, 2010; Keeling & Fisher,


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2012; Lewis, 2005; Wood, 2001). Victims tend to self-identify with princesses— "he made me feel like a princess" (Pharasi, 2021) —when receiving attention and affection from their partners, who are consequently seen as "prince charming" (Chiose, 2023, p. 51). They also refer to the honeymoon phase characteristic of the cycle of abuse as "living in a fairy tale" (Orozco, 2011; Verbal abuse journals, 2023) and frame their hopes for changing their aggressor's behavior through stories of charming princes turned into beasts: "I know I could change him back into the prince I fell in love with if only I could love him enough" (Verbal abuse journals, 2023).[1] In like manner, popular folk tale motifs like the taming of the shrew and the guy turned into an animal have been identified in discourses of male batterers when trying to account for their violent actions (Borochowitz, 2008; Gancevici & Maftei, 2023; López-Rodríguez, 2024).

Therapies aimed at counseling battered women have also incorporated fairy tales to address trauma and abuse (Ruini et al., 2014; Ucko, 1991). The so-called "fairy tale model" (Greenwald, 2013), a model of trauma-informed psychotherapy, offers female victims a narrative lens that allows them to identify and address different forms of abuse in an indirect, less painful way than through a recollection of their real-life experiences. Its therapeutic value has been seen in their positive outcome on redefining gender roles, raising awareness of the cycle of abuse, increasing self-esteem, and breaking away from toxic relationships (Halpern; 2021).

Given the connection between fairy tales and gender abuse, educational projects based on these folk stories have been put in place to raise awareness of the sexist beliefs and stereotypes entrenched in these texts (Boehm et al., 2021; Cekiso, 2015). Aimed at students from kindergarten to grade 12, the European "Fairy Tales. Dream on…Read on…for equal opportunities" (Fairy Tales, 2014-2020), "Fair tales" (2020), "Tú, princesa rosa; yo, príncipe azul"[2] (2020), "Cuentos de hadas para el activismo"[3] (Sesé, 2023), "The Fairytale Genderology" (Erasmus+, 2024) and "Upside down fairy tale: a new equality education program" (2021) offer a wide repertoire of activities, lesson plans, dramatical performances, and workshops based on fairy tales in order to tackle the sexist stereotypes that may lead to violence against women. Similarly, the United Nations sought to promote gender equity through rewriting fairy tales in "Awake not

[1] The cycle of abuse typically involves 4 stages: the honeymoon phase, tension building, the explosion phase, and reconciliation. The hooneymoon stage is characterized by love and intimacy.

[2] English "You, pink princess: I, prince charming [literally blue prince]".

[3] English "Fairy tales for activism".


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sleeping: Reimagining fairy tales for a new generation" (Chighvinadze et al., 2021).[4] With "The fairy tale is not over" (Orozco, 2011), the White House gave voice to battered women in a series of workshops that attempted to make this social scourge more visible and teach young people to identify the red flags in any relationship.

Within this educational enterprise, numerous gender-based violence campaigns have been designed upon fairy tales' motifs worldwide. This article, thus, adopts a discourse analytic approach to explore the roles played by these folk stories in a purpose-built corpus of gender-based violence campaigns. The paper begins with an overview of the key concept of intertextuality, for it provides the methodological tool to analyze fairytale elements in the campaigns selected. The next section focuses on data collection. It details the steps followed for the compilation of the corpus. This is followed by a discussion of the results drawing from Discourse Analysis, Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, and Clinical research on gender-based violence. Finally, some conclusions are drawn regarding the uses and functions of fairy tales in gender-based violence campaigns.

## 2. Intertextuality: fairy tales as intertextual elements

Texts do not exist in a vacuum, but, rather, in a context that connects them with other voices or discourses produced prior to them. In fact, the etymology of "text", from Latin *textus*, meaning "thing woven" (*O.E.D.*), already conjures up the image of a woven fabric. Texts, thus, need to be understood as patchwork clothing, as a tissue made up of connections and/or associations.

Drawing from the Bakhtinian idea of the dialogic nature of language use (i.e., the notion that language is embedded in a social world rife with prior ideas), Julia Kristeva coined the concept of "intertextuality". Derived from the Latin *intertexto*, meaning to "mingle while weaving" (*O.E.D.*), it refers to the absorption and/or transformation of texts involved in text production (60). In Kristeva's view, "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations" (60), for text creation involves the appropriation, reanimation or

[4] Higher education has also witnessed a revival in the use of fairy tales to explore gender stereotypes, sexism, and violence against girls and women, as attested in "Finding ourselves in fairy tales" (Blackie, 2024), a graduate certificate offered by the Pacifica Graduate Institute; "Cuentos y Mujeres" [Fairy Tales and Women] (2021), the permanent seminar in the Spanish distance-learning university UNED, "Cultural change in the fairy tale" (Roe, 2024) in the University of the Arts in London or "#HerToo: When women reclaim fairy tales" (Tamas, 2025) at Rutgers University.


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re-elaboration of other texts. Consider, for example, the phrase *going down the rabbit whole*, which is synonymous with becoming distracted or deeply involved in something to the point of losing track of the time. This phrase is to be understood as one thread that leads to Lewis Carroll's *Alice adventures in Wonderland* (1866) and *Through the looking glass* (1871), when the protagonist follows the white rabbit and eventually ends up in Wonderland (Falguera-García, 2019). Likewise, the *Los Angeles Times* political cartoon characterizing US president Donald Trump as a huge egg sitting on a wall and proclaiming that he can say anything and mean anything for he is the master of all (Horsey, 2016) is irremediably reminiscent of Humpty Dumpty's discussion about semantics and pragmatics with Alice in *Through the looking glass*. The pro-anorexia group operating on the social platform Xanga "Alice in Hungerland" (Figueras, 2018) should be similarly understood considering the text *Alice in Wonderland*, for, aside from the play on words, some of the users' comments refer to their ideal world of starvation and thinness that they define as a "Wonderland". The same applies to the novel *A blade so black* (McKinney, 2018), which reimagines Alice as a black teenage girl from Atlanta whose Wonderland is rife with fears, nightmares and generational trauma, and to Taylor Swift's "Wonderland" (2014), which uses the imagery of falling down a rabbit hole and exploring a confusing world as a metaphor for a turbulent relationship (Cosby, 2024).

Intertextuality, thus, defines the connections—e.g.: direct quotations, allusions, imitations, parodies, etc. —that a text establishes with others (Hodges, 2015). The concept of "intertextuality", thus, blurs the boundaries of texts, making them an "illimitable tissue of connections and associations" (Barthes, 1977, p. 159).

A foundational element of virtually every culture, fairy tales provide universal themes and stock characters, granting them a malleability that has allowed creators to adapt, transform, and even subvert these narratives in a myriad of ways. From up-to-date versions of the classical stories to movie adaptations, passing through musicals, songs, poems, paintings, political cartoons, advertisements, and memes, fairy tales are, more than ever, present today. Their quasi-universal resonance makes them suitable vehicles to convey endless, sometimes even contradictory, messages that do not appeal exclusively to a children's audience.

The classical story of *Little Red Riding Hood* was turned into the song "Lil' Red Riding Hood" (1966) by Sam the Sham and The Pharaohs. Both the lyrics and the video represent a man as a sexual predator harassing a young woman on her way to her grandmother's house at nighttime. Playing with the wolf's lines of the original tale, the

song is full of sexual remarks— "What full lips you have/ They're sure to lure someone bad" —that seem to perpetuate rape culture (Cargill, 2024). Prior to this song, James Lapine produced the musical *Into the woods* (1986), which exposes rape (culture) through Perrault's folktale, with the wolf's insatiable sexual appetite made explicit in the song "Hello, little girl": "Think of that scrumptious carnality/ Twice in one day/ There's no possible way/ To describe what you feel/ When you're talking to your meal". Along the same lines, Gwen Strauss' poem "The waiting wolf" (1990) offers the wolf´s perspective on the sexual assault of a woman by blaming his victim: "She placed herself on my path/ Practically spilling her basket of breads and jams."

Roahl Dahl's poetic retelling, on the contrary, subverts the traditional narrative to empower the female protagonist, who is resourceful and fearless (Viñas, 1999, p. 234). In fact, in Roahl's version (1982), Little Red Riding Hood shoots the wolf to death, making a coat out of his fur to boast about her feat: "A few weeks later, in the wood, /I came across Miss Riding Hood. / But what a change! No cloak of red, / No silly hood upon her head. / She said, "Hello, and do please note/ My lovely furry wolfskin coat." The same powerful image appears in several advertising campaigns that feature Little Red Riding Hood after having domesticated (Campari, 2008; Channel no. 5, 1998), killed (GHD, 2011) and having the image of the wolf tattooed on her arm (Rush, 2006).

Other commercials resort to the folk tale in the fight against AIDS transmission (Saatchi & Saatchi, 2008) and meningitis prevention (Vandyk, 2007). Here the image of the wolf is used as a metaphor for deadly illnesses. In a more humorous tone, Burger King's "It's another story" (Miami Ad School, 2008) shows the wolf sharing a hamburger with Little Red's granny whereas a Wonderbra (2018) ad has Little Red at the foot of her grandmother's bed with the caption of "Oh Grandmother, what big…!", hinting at her breasts (Stevenson & Kusby, 2018).

As illustrated with "Little Red Riding Hood" and with "Alice in Wonderland" fairy tales lend themselves nicely to being incorporated into other texts. Their use—whether direct or veiled, pure, altered or subverted—certainly adds a new layer of meaning to any discourse. Furthermore, because fairy tales are widely known across cultures, they are likely to ring a bell to the audience that is exposed to any textual work that incorporates them. The purpose of integrating folktales into different texts, as has been seen, can vary significantly, since it will depend on the creator's intentions and context. This is why this article attempts to unveil the motivations behind the use of fairy tales in a repertoire of gender-based violence campaigns worldwide. The project, then, seeks to answer the following research questions:


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1) What are the most common fairy tales used in GBV campaigns?
2) How is the male batterer and the female victim represented through fairy tales in GBV campaigns?
3) What are the purposes of using fairy tales in GBV campaigns?

## 3. Corpus

Data for this study were collected through the Google search engine using a combination of key words relevant to the research questions. The terms selected, in English, Spanish, French, and Italian, were "fairy tales"/ "cuentos de hadas"/ "contes de fees"/ "fiaba", "favole"/ and "gender-based violence campaign" / "campaña de violencia de género" / "campagne contre la violence basée sur le genre" / "campagna contro la violenza di genere". As a corollary, a total of 32 campaigns from 15 countries were retrieved.

The campaigns compiled come from a wide variety of sources, which included (non-)governmental organizations, national and regional governments, the judicial system, police departments, trade unions, women's centers, activists, psychologists, and individual artists. The format of these campaigns was also varied: posters with(out) illustrations, videos, podcasts, social media posts, brochures, slogans and even tombstones. As for their impact, some of these campaigns achieved worldwide dissemination, making the headlines in the international press and being translated into several languages (e.g.: "Happy never after" or "No consent, no fairy tale"). Others, however, had a more limited circulation within a specific geographical location (e.g.: "Gender-based violence is not a fairy tale").

Despite the eclectic nature of the corpus, this article attempts to shed some light onto the uses and functions of fairy tales in gender-based violence campaigns. The table below shows the campaigns —organized chronologically—analyzed in this paper.

**Table 1. Fairy tales in gender-based violence campaigns**

| Campaign | Date | Country | Funding organization of the campaign | Link |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Prince charming. Stop violence against females | 2008 | France | Ministère du Travail, des Relations Sociales, de la famille et de Solidarité | https://shorturl.at/rStjJ |


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| Mom was reading me a tale till Daddy came back | 2009 | Chile | Amnesty International | https://shorturl.at/ihow4 |
| No veas. Sí que ha cambiado este. ¡Bájate del trono, príncipe! [You won't believe it! He has changed lots. Get off that throne, prince!] | 2011 | Spain | Proclade Bética | https://shorturl.at/sg3yY |
| Is your prince charming turning into prince harming? | 2013 | Canada | Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region | https://shorturl.at/h6s4D |
| Happy never after | 2014 | The Netherlands | Saint Hoax | https://shorturl.at/BNAbs |
| This is not happily ever after | 2014 | Ireland | Dublin Rape Crisis Center | https://shorturl.at/2DyEa |
| Life can be a fairy tale if you break the silence | 2015 | Australia | Alexandro Palombo | https://shorturl.at/UF5d6 |
| El príncipe azul no existe. El macho violento sí. Detéctalo antes que sea tarde. ¡Cuidado! El machismo mata [Prince charming does not exist. The violent macho does. Detect him before it is too late. Careful! Malechauvinism kills] | 2015 | Chile | Red Chilena contra la violencia hacia las mujeres | https://shorturl.at/F4xlh |
| Speak up, Cinderella! | 2015 | Egypt | UN Women and Egypt's National | https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/12/15/social-campaigns-standing- |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Council for Women | against-verbal-physical-sexual-violence/ |
| La violencia de género NO es un cuento [Gender-based violence is NOT a fairy tale] | 2016 | Spain | University of Valladolid | https://shorturl.at/Ju7Zg |
| Vivir junto a una Bestia no es siempre un cuento de hadas [Living with a Beast is not always a fairy tale] | 2017 | Ecuador | Policía del Ecuador | https://shorturl.at/ujHJi |
| No me trago ese sapo. Escribo mi propio cuento. [I won't swallow that toad. I write my own fairy tale] | 2017 | Spain | Comisiones Obreras | https://shorturl.at/Xbrfp |
| Mi no es tu no. ¿Carnavalero o bestia? [My no is your no. Carnival lover or beast?] | 2018 | Spain | Red Talento Consultoras, RedCO3 Comunicación & Vai Vai Mr. Can | https://shorturl.at/M4UcR |
| Cappuccetto rosso contro la violenza. Violence is not love. Let's not tell stories | 2018 | Italy | D.i.R.E. | https://shorturl.at/94X3g |
| Los monstruos existen. Uno vive en mi casa [Monsters exist. One lives in my house] | 2018 | Spain | Consejería de Ciudadanía de Granada | https://shorturl.at/gRWWo |
| No consent, no fairy tale | 2018 | USA | Amnisty International | https://shorturl.at/gCuiL |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Once Upon a Time's Up | 2018 | USA | #MeToo | https://shorturl.at/ntsZ7 |
| #Cambia el cuento. Caperucita dice no. [#Change the fairy tale. Little Red Riding Hood says no] | 2018 | Spain | Generalitat de Catalunya | https://shorturl.at/zr8mx |
| En la calle un príncipe en casa una bestia. Si deja de ser un cuento llama al 016 [On the street he's a prince. At home he's a beast. If it is no longer a fairy tale, call 016] | 2019 | Spain | Baldosas Amarillas | https://shorturl.at/WOCTK |
| La violencia de género no es un cuento. Podría estar muerta.[Gender-based violence is not a fairy tale. She could be dead] | 2021 | Spain | Junta de Extremadura | https://shorturl.at/POhIM |
| ¡No comamos perdices! Derribando mitos para noviazgos sin violencia [It's not happily ever after. Breaking myths to have violence-free relationships] | 2021 | Spain | FEMI (Fundación para estudio e investigación de la mujer) | https://shorturl.at/qyc8b |


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| La violencia amor NO es. No existen los cuentos de hadas [Violence is NOT love. Fairy tales do not exist] | 2021 | El Salvador | Corte Suprema de Justicia de El Salvador | https://shorturl.at/o1rlY |
| #ClassifyConsent | 2022 | Australia | NGO Consent Labs | https://shorturl.at/ll4vi |
| No hay príncipe azul, así que ponte la armadura y sálvate tú [There is no prince charming, so put on your armor and save yourself] | 2022 | Spain | Fundación Violeta | https://shorturl.at/puZLW |
| Déjate de cuentos. La sumisión química es violencia [Stop telling fairy tales. Chemical submission is violence] | 2023 | Spain | Ayuntamiento de Santa Pola | https://shorturl.at/y2Iix |
| Just because she can't say "no" doesn't mean you can kiss her. Don't be that guy | 2023 | Canada | Saskatoon Police Services | https://shorturl.at/aA9Yw |
| La violencia de género no es un cuento. Reescribamos la historia.[Gender-based violence is not a fairy tale. Let's rewrite the story] | 2023 | Spain | Diputación de Segovia | https://shorturl.at/yX1q0 |
| Caperucita, le hemos puesto | 2024 | Spain | Cabildo de la Palma | https://shorturl.at/2gAd2 |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| una orden de alejamiento al lobo feroz [Little Red Riding Hood, we have imposed a restraining order on the big bad wolf] | | | | |
| A veces el monstruo está cerca [Sometimes the Monster is close] | 2024 | Spain | Gobierno de Canarias | https://shorturl.at/l1h1S |
| Hundreds of years of fairy tales have harmed women | 2025 | USA | Jane Gilmore | https://shorturl.at/fzWDm |
| The monster who came to tea | 2025 | UK | Women's Aid | https://shorturl.at/fzxGc |
| El amor no es un cuento de hadas [Love is not a fairy tale] | 2025 | Colombia | Gobernación del Atlántico | https://shorturl.at/ZAAy4 |

## 4. Analysis

According to the corpus, 10 campaigns use the fairy tale genre to draw attention to the detrimental and even lethal consequences that these stories can have on the promotion, legitimization, and sanitization of gender-based violence in the real world.

With virtually the same slogan, campaigns (1) through (5) draw a clear-cut line between reality and fiction to caution women of the dangers of folk narratives that normalize toxic relationships while encouraging women to tolerate their partner's abusive behaviors with the promise of a happy ending. All of them use the negative adverbial "not" (*no*) when formulating the fictional equation that traditionally identifies fairy tales with love, as seen with the juxtaposition of the terms "love" (*amor*) and "fairy tales" (*cuentos de hadas*) in (1) and (2). They even solve the problematic folk tale formula by identifying gender abuse in these narratives, as observed in the explicit reference to "gender-based violence" (*violencia de género*) in campaigns (3), (4) and (5).

(1) El amor no es un cuento de hadas [Love is not a fairy tale] (Colombia, 2025)

(2) La violencia amor NO es. No existen los cuentos de hadas [Violence is NOT love. Fairy tales do not exist] (El Salvador, 2021)
(3) La violencia de género no es un cuento [Gender-based violence is not a fairy tale] (Spain, 2016)
(4) La violencia de género no es un cuento. Reescribamos la historia [Gender-based violence is not a fairy tale. Let's rewrite the story] (Spain, 2023)
(5) La violencia de género no es un cuento. Podría estar muerta [Gender-based violence is not a fairy tale. She could be dead] (Spain, 2021)

In addition, the polysemy of the word "cuento", which in Spanish can mean "fairy tale", but also "something fake or invented" and even "a lie" (*R.A.E.*), reinforces the message of these campaigns that attempt to break with the false, idealized—yet violent—romances presented in these stories. This is further supported by the visual elements of the campaigns. Except for 1, limited to text, the video of (2) contrasts the romantic elements of fairy tales with the violent realities of victims of gender-based violence (figure 1). In (4) the classical story of "La ratita presumida" (i.e., The conceited little mouse) similarly serves to reflect upon the false promises made by men and the harsh realities of women that suffer abuse (figure 2). This campaign even addresses feminicide by focusing on and blaming the cat (i.e., the killer) instead of his victim (i.e., the female mouse), subverting in this way the moral of the original tale, which makes the mouse responsible for her own death due to her vanity.

**Figure 1**

*La violencia amor NO es. No existen los cuentos de hadas [Violence is NOT love. Fairy tales do not exist]* [5]

5 The captions read as follows in English: Since our childhood, society teaches us that heterosexual love is like a fairy tale, with princesses and charming princes and happy endings. But, in real life, this is not the case and, unfortunately, many women suffer violence in their relationships


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**Figure 2**

*La violencia de género no es un cuento. Reescribamos la historia [Gender-based violence is not a fairy tale. Let's rewrite the story]* [6]

6 The video script is as follows in English: "Fairy tales tell stories. What is the reality behind those stories? I have remembered a tale that I was told when I was little. The conceited little mouse. Once upon a time there was a little mouse that lived in a town far away. The little mouse was conceited and dreamy. She wanted to get to know people and visit places. The little mouse was sleeping at her front door when she found a golden coin. She soon started thinking about what she could buy. She bought herself a pink top. While she was leaning out the window, a donkey came by. –Hello, little mouse. —Hello. –You look amazing tonight. –Thanks. If you married me, I would sing a song to you every single day of my life. —Oh, really? Which song? No, no, no! I´m sorry, but I´m not interested in you. After him, came a mouse, a dog and, finally, a cat.—Little mouse, I would spend every single day of my life with you. Our nights would be sweet and tender. The cat made her feel unique, special, different from any other mouse. They celebrated a big wedding. When they arrived home, taking advantage of the fact that the little mouse was distracted, looking at herself in the mirror with her new top on, the cat pounced on the little mouse, pushed her into the pot and ate her. And that was how for being conceited the little mouse died. Only the pink top was left. What happened at the end of the story? Well, because she was conceited, she died, so sometimes we get tricked. We trust appearances and we are conquered by those words that we want to listen to, but we do not pay attention to the risks we can run. Because…whose fault is it? At the end, it is the cat's. He ate her up. And, what does that mean? He has killed her. The little mouse has died. Has she died by herself? Not, she was killed. And despite this society judges her for having made a bad choice or for being conceited."

Analogously, campaigns (3) and (5) expose the most extreme case of gender-based violence: feminicide. Yet, whereas (5) resorts to the aesthetics of fairy tales presenting a woman that is lying down on the grass as though she were sleeping or dead (figure 3 3), campaign (3) uses tombstones that reflect the names of real women who have died at the hands of their (ex)partners (figure 4).

**Figure 3**

*La violencia de género no es un cuento. Podría estar muerta [Gender-based violence is not a fairy tale. She could be dead]*


**Figure 4**

*La violencia de género no es un cuento [Gender-based violence is not a fairy tale]*


Three campaigns exploit catchphrases associated with fairy tales to subvert the pernicious romantic myths embedded in these narratives. Instead of the traditional beginning "Once upon a time", the US campaign adds "is up" ("Once upon a time's up") to highlight the end of these folk stories that promote violence against women, as seen in its video where Snow White states that the seven dwarfs were sexually aroused when a prince kissed her without her consent while she was asleep (figure 5).

**Figure 5**

*Once upon a time's up*


In like manner, the Spanish campaigns "It's not happily ever after. Breaking myths to have violence-free relationships"[7] (Spain, 2017) and "I won't swallow that toad. I

[7] The origianl campaign in Spanish is "¡No comamos perdices! Derribando mitos para noviazgos sin violencia".


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write my own fairy tale"[8] (Spain, 2017) play with the traditional fairy tale ending "and they lived happily ever after" (Spanish *comer* perdices) and the recurrent motif of kissing a toad to turn him into a prince, respectively. The former explicitly connects romantic myths in fairy tales with violence against women (figure 6). The latter also exploits the idiomatic expression "no tragarse un sapo" (literally to swallow a toad), which refers to one's refusal to accept a situation that is wrong or unfair (figure 7), and, instead, invites women to envision their own real love story.

**Figure 6**

*¡No comamos perdices! Derribando mitos para noviazgos sin violencia [It's not happily ever after. Breaking myths to have violence-free relationships]*


**Figure 7**

*No me trago ese sapo. Escribo mi propio cuento [I won't swallow that toad. I write my own fairy tale]*


[8] The original campaign in Spanish is "No me trago ese sapo. Escribo mi propio cuento".

In like manner, "#Change the story. Little Red Riding Hood says no"[9] (Spain, 2018) offers a feminist twist to these sexist narratives that promote rape (culture) by depicting the wolf as a sexual predator and Little Red as his victim. The video illustrates some recurring rape myths—e.g.: the girl was wearing sexy clothes; she was walking alone; she was looking for it—that permeate society and empowers Little Red, who refuses to partake in these narratives (figure 8).

**Figure 8**

*#Cambia el cuento. Caperucita dice no [#Change the fairy tale. Little Red Riding Hood says no]*[10]


Finally, "Speak up, Cinderella!" (Egypt, 2015) gives voice to the female protagonist of the fairy tale. The slogan encourages women to denounce her situations of abuse.

Data analysis shows that 21 campaigns resort to fairy tales in the representation of the male batterer as either prince charming (12) or beast (9). Despite being antagonistic in folk narratives, both male characters are used to expose the violent behavior of the abuser. Whereas the image of the beast immediately evokes notions of peril, predation, harm, and even death (i.e., blatant violence), the idyllic figure of prince charming is

[9] The original campaign in Spanish is "#Cambia el cuento. Caperucita dice no".

[10] The video script reads as follows in English: "Wolf: What are you doing alone here in my forest? Wow! You're wearing a red cloak to catch my attention. Little Red: I am leaving this fairy tale. No means No. Narrator: Who is to blame if the wolf eats Little Red Riding Hood? Little Red Riding Hood does nothing for the wolf to eat her".


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subverted to show the hidden side of gender-based violence, which usually takes place behind closed doors (i.e., hidden violence).

The campaigns "Just because she can't say 'no' doesn't mean you can kiss her. Don't be that guy" (Canada, 2023), "#ClassifyConsent" (Australia, 2022), "No consent, no fairy tale" (USA, 2018 and "This is not happily ever after" (Ireland, 2014) tackle sexual consent, sexual assault, abuse, and rape through *Sleeping Beauty*. Borrowing the Disney movie scene in which the prince is about to kiss Sleeping Beauty, who is lying unconscious in her bed, these campaigns place explicit sexual consent at the center of any relationship. The Canadian campaign directly addresses men ("Don't be that guy"), urging them not to make any sexual move without a woman's approval (image 9). The Australian one, whose goal is to help people identify overt and covert instances where consent has been omitted on the screen (Elias, 2022), explicitly adds the caption "if someone is asleep or unconscious, they can never give consent" (figure 10). In a video format, the third one retells the story of Sleeping Beauty with a final twist based on a woman's consent. In fact, just when the prince is going to kiss the princess, an owl throws a stone at him, to which he replies, "what the fuck!" (figure 11). Following a conversation between a rational bird and an irrational man, the latter ends up admitting that he did not have explicit consent from the woman. The classical ending "and they lived happily ever after" from the original tale is replaced here by "no consent, no fairy tale" (figure 11). Although also based on the same narrative sequence, the Irish campaign makes sexual violence more explicit by presenting an angry prince raising his hand as though he were to slap Beauty, who is wide awake, looks scared and is covering herself with a blanket—implying that she refuses to have any sexual relationship with a man who just kissed her without her consent (figure 12).

**Figure 9**
*Just because she can't say 'no' doesn't mean you can kiss her. Don't be that guy*

**Figure 10**
*#ClassifyConsent*


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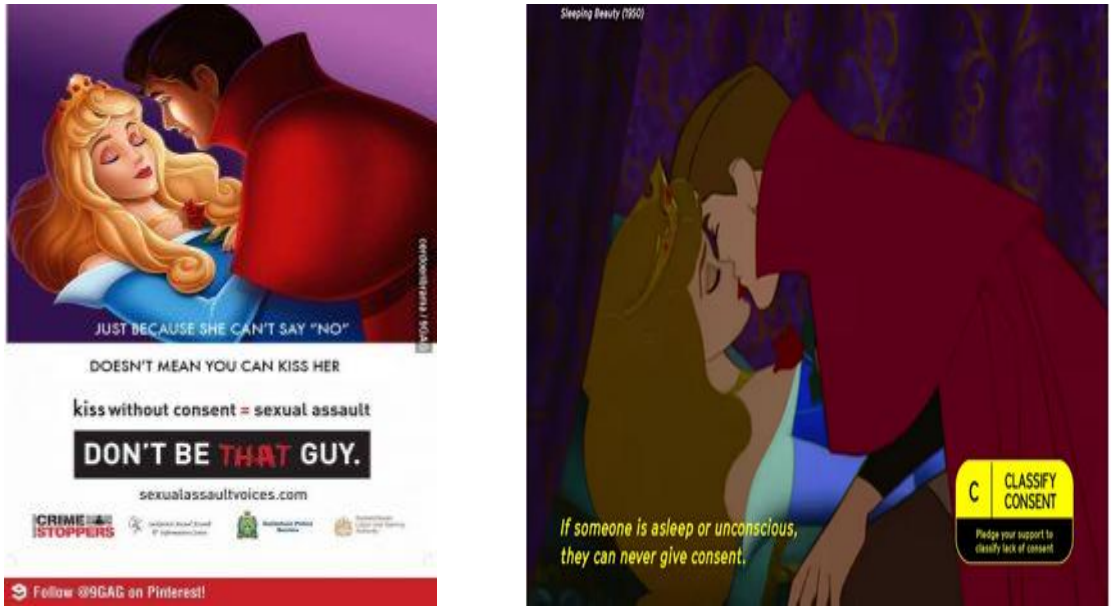



**Figure 11**

*No consent, no fairy tale*

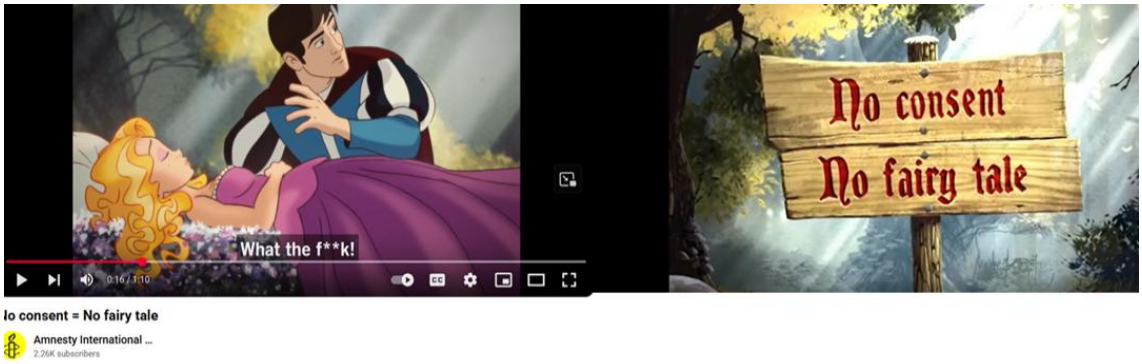
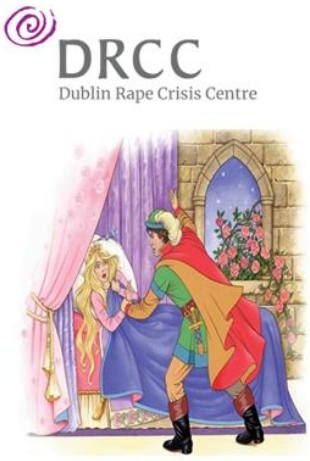



**Figure 12**

*This is not happily ever after*



The folk tale is, indeed, derived from a 17th-century Italian story called *Sun, Moon, and Talia*, in which the sleeping princess is raped and impregnated by a passing king to whom she gets married and with whom she has twins (Barzilai, 2014; Merritt, 2017; Newbon, 2018). The more popular and sanitized version that replaces the sexual assault with a non-consensual kiss used in these campaigns still conveys the key idea of male violence and male entitlement to female bodies. By employing the kiss scene in the fairy tale, these campaigns not only bring to the fore explicit sexual consent but also contribute to unpacking narratives—fictional and non-fictional—that have sustained rape culture throughout history (Dorsi, 2017; Ruiz-Repullo, 2022).

From a clinical perspective, these campaigns might unveil "the sleeping beauty syndrome", called "somnophilia" in the medical jargon. A disorder whereby an individual is sexually aroused and/or interested in having sex with a person who is sleeping and/or unconscious, and/or defenseless (Deehan & Bartels, 2021; Oeverland, 2018), this rare paraphilia has been (mis)used in trials to defend sexual abusers and rapists (Das, 2024). Reality, however, shows that very few men suffer from this disorder (Deehan & Bartels, 2023) and that drug-facilitated sexual assault, by contrast, is on the increase, particularly in youth nightlife and university contexts where so-called "date rape drugs" are not uncommon (Prego-Meleiro et al., 2024; Recalde-Esnoz, 2024). Drug-facilitated sexual assaults that have made the headlines recently include the Stanford dumpster and the Gisèle Pelicot cases. The former revolved around university student Brock Turner, convicted of assaulting an unconscious woman behind a garbage dumpster after a party and of having photographed and shared a picture of her breasts while attempting to penetrate her with an object (Levin, 2016; Sanchez, 2016). The latter, which initiated a second wave of the #MeTooMovement in France (Hervieux, 2024), exposed how Pelicot's husband had drugged his wife for over two decades to orchestrate—and sometimes filmed—her rapes by dozens of men who took advantage of a woman that laid unconscious in her own bedroom. Hence, issues of power and control underlying the abuse of unconscious and/or drugged women are, somehow, highlighted in the campaigns that use the kiss scene from *Sleeping Beauty*.

The princes from *Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, *Aladdin*, *The little mermaid* and *The Little Prince* are used in 4 campaigns that address physical and psychological violence. Reproducing the very same scene from *Sleeping Beauty* mentioned before, the French campaign (figure 13) establishes a direct link between women's acculturation through fairy tales and domestic violence with the slogan "When you were little, you probably dreamed of a Prince Charming, not a man who hits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you when you come home in the evening". Through the crafting of *The little prince*, campaign (14) portrays the male batterer as an evil prince holding a rope tightly to control his female partner. The physical location of man and woman on the poster—high up sitting on a throne and on a different planet versus lower down on the Earth, respectively—as well as their body language—relaxed and grinning while exerting control versus tense, sad, and anxious while subjugated—mirror the asymmetrical power dynamics and gender roles characteristic of an abusive relationship. In addition, this campaign somehow coveys a similar message to the French one regarding the detrimental effect of fairy tales on women's romantic aspirations and their stark abusive realities with their male perpetrators.

**Figure 13**
*Prince Charming. Stop violence against women*


**Figure 14**
*No veas. Sí que ha cambiado este. ¡Bájate del trono príncipe! [You won't believe it! He has changed lots. Get off that throne, prince!]*


"Happy never after" (The Netherlands, 2014) and "Life can be a fairy tale if you break the silence" (Australia, 2015) more vividly recreate physical violence through illustrations of fairy tale princesses that display evident signs of abuse on their faces. Along with the battered princesses, the Australian campaign juxtaposes photographs

of female celebrities whose make-up reproduces the bloodily bruised faces of their fictional counterparts in order to highlight the reality of gender-based violence and how it affects women regardless of their economic status and social strata. Although both campaigns cast the male batterer as a prince, the Dutch one does so implicitly on questioning the female victim—"When did he stop treating you like a princess?"(figure 15) —whereas the Australian one explicitly shows a picture of the prince —with the word "coward" written in capital letters—which is being held by his victim (figure 16).

**Figure 15**

*Happy never after*

**Figure 16**

*Life can be a fairy tale if your break the silence*


A total rupture from the unrealistic romanticized image of prince charming conveyed through fairy tales provides the bedrock for "Hundreds of years of fairy tales have harmed women" (USA, 2015), "There is no prince charming, so put on your armor and save yourself"[11] (Spain, 2022), "Is your prince charming turning into prince harming?" (Canada, 2013), and "Prince charming does not exist. The violent macho does. Detect him before it is too late"[12] (Chile, 2015), where the male batterer is rendered as a real, ordinary man that abuses women. Campaign (17) underscores the stereotypical gender roles imbued in fairy tales, where the damsel is relegated to the domestic sphere once she marries a charming prince. As shown in its poster (figure 17), the woman's dreamed prince is crossed out when envisioning her life around the house doing chores.

**Figure 17**

*Hundreds of years of fairy tales have harmed women*

[11] Spanish "No hay príncipe azul, así que ponte la armadura y sálvate tú".

[12] Spanish "El príncipe azul no existe. El macho violento sí. Detéctalo antes que sea tarde".


Despite using an illustration that seems to be taken from a folk tale with the prototypical dragon figure included, (18) subverts the stereotypical gender roles of fairy texts by casting women as brave knights that need to protect themselves from male abusers. Aside from the obvious pun on the words "charming" and "harming" in its slogan, (19) displays two photographs of the same young man to differentiate between abusive and non-abusive relationships.

**Figure 18**
*No hay príncipe azul, así que ponte la armadura y sálvate tú*
*[There is no prince charming, So put on your armor and save yourself]*

**Figure 19**
*Is your prince charming turning into prince harming?*


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In the same line, the campaign "Prince charming does not exist. The violent macho does. Detect him before it is too late. Careful! Malechauvinism kills"[13] (figure 20) draws a clear boundary between reality and fiction by relegating the construct of "prince charming" to the fantastic realm and underscoring the existence of sexist violent men that can kill women.

**Figure 20**

*El príncipe azul no existe. El macho violento sí. Detéctalo antes que sea tarde. ¡Cuidado! El machismo mata [Prince charming does not exist. The violent macho does. Detect him before it is too late. Careful! Malechauvinism kills]*


10 campaigns draw from the bestial creatures that inhabit the fairy tale world to represent male batterers. The character of Beast, with his dual antithetical nature of prince charming and atrocious animal, is at the core of "On the Street, prince

[13] The origianl campaign in Spanish is "El príncipe azul no existe. El macho violento sí. Detéctalo antes que sea tarde. ¡Cuidado! El machismo mata".

charming. At home, Beast. If it is no longer a fairy tale, call 016"[14] (Spain, 2019) and "Living with a Beast is not always a fairy tale"[15] (Ecuador, 2017). Both campaigns bring to light the inhumane acts that male abusers tend to hide under their facade of ideal or ordinary men by casting abuser and victim as Beast and Belle, respectively. Unlike (21), where violence is implicit through the figure of a woman that is hiding from her Beast/aggressor (figure 21), (22) explicitly shows physical harm by altering the Disney movie poster starred by Emma Watson. The actress is, indeed, seen with a purple eye and a broken nose with her back towards Beast (figure 22).

**Figure 21**

*En la calle un príncipe.*
En casa una bestia. Si deja de ser un cuento, Llama al 016 [On the street, prince charming. At home, Beast. If it is no longer a fairy tale, call 016]


**Figure 22**

*Vivir junto a una Bestia no*
es siempre un cuento de hadas
[Living with a Beast is not always a fairy tale]


With the motto "My no is your no. Carnival lover o beast?"[16] (Spain, 2018), campaign (23) addresses the frequent sexual aggressions against women that often take place during the Carnival festivities in Spain (Lorenzo, 2018). It represents the male

[14] The origianl campaign in Spanish is "En la calle un príncipe. En casa una bestia. Si deja de ser un cuento llama al 016".

[15] The origianl campaign in Spanish is "Vivir junto a una Bestia no es siempre un cuento de hadas".

[16] The origianl campaign in Spanish is "Mi no es tu no. ¿Carnavalero o bestia?".

abuser as a beast with long horns, hinting at the uncontrollable sexual urges that characterize animals but not humans (figure 23).

**Figure 23**

*Mi no es tu no. ¿Carnavalero o bestia? [My no is your no. Carnival lover or beast?]*


The figure par excellence associated with cunningness, deceit, predation, and harm, the wolf stands for the male abuser in campaigns 24-27. Seen from a child's perspective, "Mom was reading me a tale till Daddy came back" (Chile, 2009) centers on how children often witness and suffer gender-based violence. Whereas the slogan gives voice to a child that projects the violent narrative of *Little Red* onto his/her violent life story, the poster shows the physical damage caused to his/her mom— as observed in the scratches on the woman's cheek caused by the wolf's claws (figure 24). In "Stop telling fairy tales. Chemical submission is violence[17]" (Spain, 2019), a wolf with big paws and pointed claws stands behind a woman in a red cloak, suggesting sexual stalking and/or harassment. The parallelisms with the fairy tale include the wolf's hoax to take advantage of an innocent girl, which translates into the drugs used to facilitate sexual assault in the campaign (figure 25). This image of the predatory wolf as a metaphor for a sexual predator, abuser and even rapist informs narratives of sexual violence and rape (culture) (López-Rodríguez, 2025) where heterosexual relationships are framed in terms of a male predator hunting his female prey (Bock & Burkley, 2019).

**Figure 24**

[17] The origianl campaign in Spanish is "Déjate de cuentos. La sumisión química es violencia."

*Mom was reading me a tale till Daddy came back*


**Figure 25**

*Déjate de cuentos. La sumisión química es violencia [Stop telling fairy tales. Chemical submission is violence]*


Although sexual predation and violence permeate *Little Red Riding Hood*, campaigns (26) and (27) re-elaborate the folk tale and urge women to denounce their aggressors to get legal protection. The Little Red in the "Capuccetto rosso" video (Italy, 2018) abandons her grandmother's house on a motorbike as soon as she sees the wolf at her grandmother's house and seeks shelter and help in one of the anti-violence centers established by D.i.Re. in Italy (figure 26). In "Little Red Riding Hood, we have imposed a restraining order on the big bad wolf[18]" (Spain, 2024) it is the wolf that has

[18] The origianl campaign in Spanish is "Caperucita, le hemos puesto una orden de alejamiento al lobo feroz".

been imposed a restraining order from Little Red, who is seen walking alone and safe in the forest after having reported to the police (figure 27). Both campaigns ultimately show the protection network established socially to protect female victims of gender-based violence.

**Figure 26**

*Capuccetto rosso [Little Red Riding* Hood]


**Figure 27**

*Caperucita, le hemos puesto una orden de alejamiento al lobo feroz [Little Red Riding Hood, we have imposed a restraining order on the big bad wolf]*


The monster, which usually scares and hurts infants in dark, hidden, and secluded places, becomes a metaphor for the male abuser in three campaigns (28-30) that look at violence against women through the eyes of a child. "Monsters exist. One lives in my house"[19] subverts the typical reassuring words adults say to children when scared of imaginary evil creatures while displaying a white and black photograph of a frightened girl who is holding onto her baby doll tightly (figure 28). Although the abusive father is physically absent from the poster, the long-lasting fear he leaves on his child is evoked through the girl's body language and the absence of colors typically associated with childhood.

**Figure 28**

*Los monstruos existen. Uno vive en mi casa. [Monsters exist. One lives in my house]*

[19] The origianl campaign in Spanish is "Los monstruos existen uno vive en mi casa".


"Sometimes the monster is close"[20] visually recreates the monster-like figure of the abusive father. The campaign purposefully modifies a traditional family photograph where the father is characterized as a monstruous creature of considerable size, and massive hands with long claws that hold the family members together—all of whom look scared and serious (figure 29). Their lack of smiles as expected in a family picture captures the terrifying experiences of those mothers and children that live in a violent home environment.

**Figure 29**

*A veces el monstruo está cerca [Sometimes the monster is close]*


[20] The origianl campaign in Spanish is "A veces el monstruo está cerca".


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Following the structure of the classic children's tale *The tiger who came to tea* (Kerr, 1968), "The monster who came to tea" (UK, 2025) narrates the harrowing story of a mother and daughter who experience domestic abuse. The campaign video replaces the tiger of the original story with a violent monster that stands for the male batterer. This vivid graphic representation of the monstruous husband and father vertebrates a narrative where daily routines like making spaghetti for dinner are rife with episodes of violence against mother and daughter.

**Figure 30**

*The Monster who came to tea*

Through the figure of the monstruous husband and father, the three campaigns include the often-neglected victims of gender-based violence: children (Montserrat et al., 2022). Besides, they incorporate the children's perspective by using the aesthetics and language that minors frequently use when recalling experiences with their abusive fathers. As research has shown (Buckley, H. et al., 2007; UNICEF, 2021), children who have witnessed and/or suffered violence at home tend to describe their fathers and/or mother's partners as some sort of monster— "my dad is a monster" (Buckley et al., 2007), "papá es un monstruo" (Hernández, 2021, p. 1) —, even including drawings and making up stories of monstruous creatures to describe them (Sobero, 2021).

## 5. Conclusions

Part and parcel of our cultural fabric, fairy tales fill up our imagination with romantic—yet often sexist and violent—stories since early childhood. Despite their normalization and sanitization—mainly through literary adaptations and Disney movies (Zipes, 1995)—, these folk texts saturated with episodes of abuse against girls and women pave the way for gendered discourses and practices. Their pernicious effects, not limited to the imaginary realm, permeate (pre)conceptions and behaviors regarding people's notions of sex and love in real life. They, indeed, feed real narratives of battered women and their male abusive partners. As mentioned, female victims often resort to the fairy tale world when trying to come to terms with their traumatic experiences. They tend to self-identify with princesses when receiving attention and affection from their partners, who are often described as "prince charming". They similarly refer to the honeymoon period characteristic of the cycle of abuse as "living in a fairy tale" whereas their hopes for changing their partner's aggressive behavior are channeled through stories of a charming prince turned into a beast that will change with their unconditional love. In like manner, male perpetrators tend to justify their violent actions through fairy tale motifs like the taming of the shrew and the prince turned into an animal.

Due to their resonance in people's collective imagination, fairy tales become suitable vehicles to raise awareness of sexism and violence against girls and women in gender-based violence campaigns. As this paper has tried to show, many gender-based violence campaigns from places that are distant geographically and culturally speaking employ fairy tales to break with well-entreched romantic myths that foster and perpetuate patriarchal (and rape) cultures that blame the female victim while exonerating the male perpetrator (Ferrer et al., 2016). For example, "Gender-based violence is not a fairy tale. Let's rewrite the story" uses the tale of "The conceited little mouse" to draw attention to how society puts the blame on women for making the wrong choices regarding their partners or for dressing in a certain way despite their femicides. "Change the fairy tale. Little Red Riding Hood says no" criticizes the wolf's sexist comments regarding Little Red's outfit and her presence alone in the forest, commonly used to justify sexual abuse and rape. Other campaigns similarly bring to the fore lack of sexual consent through the stories of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty—e.g.: "Just because she can't say ´no´doesn´t mean you can kiss her. Don´t be that guy", "#Classify Consent", "No consent, no fairy tale", "This is not happily ever after" and "Once upon a time's up" —and drug-facilitated sexual assault—"Stop telling fairy tales. Chemical submission is violence".


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Fairy tales also allow for the representation of the assymetrical power relationships between men and women—e.g.: "Hundreds of years of fairy tales have harmed women" —and for the visual recreation of physical and psychological violence in several campaigns—e.g.: " Happy never after", "Life can be a fairy tale if your break the silence", "Living with a Beast is not always a fairy tale", "On the street, a prince. At home, a beast. If it is no longer a fairy tale, call 016".

In addition to breaking with the stereotypical gendered figures of "prince charming" and "princess in distress"—e.g.: "Prince Charming. Stop violence against women", "You won't believe it! He has changed lots. Get off that throne, prince!", "Is your prince charming turning into prince harming?", "There is no prince charming, so put on your armor and save yourself"—a number of campaigns exploit the monstruous creatures populating the fairy tale world to depict abusive partners and fathers. "Monsters exist. One lives in my house", "Sometimes the monster is close" and "The Monster who came to tea" expose the often neglected victims of gender-based violence: children. Finally, encouraging women to report incidents of abuse, some campaigns show the social and legal measures put in place to protect victims of gender-based violence, namely, women's shelters— "Little Red Riding Hood"— and restraining orders— "Little Red Riding Hood, we have imposed a restraining order on the big bad wolf".

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(*) This article is dedicated to my daughter, Helena. Thanks for being in my life.