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# Voicing Authenticities through Translation: Framing Strategies in the Multicultural Fairy Tale Collections of Andrew Lang and Angela Carter

Mayako Murai

## Abstract

This article discusses the question of authenticity and translation in two multicultural fairy tale collections in English, Andrew Lang's Fairy Books (1889-1910) and Angela Carter's two-volume *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1990-1992). Although they both deploy comparative folkloristic methods in editing their collections, they point in two opposite directions. On the one hand, Lang's collection homogenises stories from different cultures into a single framework, smoothing out cultural differences in the service of a supposed universalism whose cultural bias is made invisible through Lang's editorial strategies. On the other hand, Carter's collection re-presents multiple authenticities by allowing different storytellers and translators to speak in their own voices while explicitly contextualising the stories in the framework of a feminist story collection. This article concludes with a reflection on the implications of Carter's framing strategy for understanding the fairy tale and translation in a global context.

The notions of authenticity and translation have been crucial in the formation of folklore studies in Europe since the late eighteenth century. Romantic nationalists, inspired by the Grimms' German tale collection first published in 1812, turned to oral literature, which they saw as the authentic representation of the art and language of a people, in their attempt to find for national states an alternative cultural foundation to replace the elite culture of monarchies. Authenticity in this context is bound up with the notion of orality, which is seen as a proof of the actual presence of a group of people linked together by a shared cultural heritage. On the other hand, as I will argue below, the translation of these nationalistically motivated tale collections into English led to the establishment of the fairy tale as a new, *transnational* genre which allowed folklorists to compare stories from different cultures in the light of a system of knowledge recognisable to themselves, which was often taken for the universal norm.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, the aura of authenticity surrounding the folk and fairy tale began to fade as the problems inherent in the dichotomous distinction between oral (authentic) and literary (artificial) tales became apparent. The re-examination of the editorial process of the Grimms' collection by such scholars as Heintz Rölleke and John Ellis problematised the notion of authenticity by revealing the multilayered system of translation across languages, dialects, cultures, and media (from oral to printed) at work in the transmission and traditionalisation of fairy tales; contrary to their claim in the introduction that their stories were collected and faithfully transcribed from the speech of old peasants of German origin, research has shown that their main informants included middle- and upper-class women, some of whom had Huguenot ancestry, and that their collection had recourse not only to oral but also to written material originating in Germany as well as other European countries (Rölleke). It is true that their collection also had many non-middle-class contributions, but the majority of the tales which became canonised through the process of making selections and translations, such as "Snow White" and "Little Red Riding Hood," came from urban middle-class informants. While substantial work on tracing oral origins has been produced (the works by Jack Zipes and Marina Warner are representative examples), studies of fairy tales such as Ruth Bottigheimer's *Fairy Godfather: Straparola, Venice, and the Fairy Tale Tradition* (2002) and *Fairy Tales: A New History* (2009) have shown that what we regard as 'traditional' fairy tales have their origins in the literary versions of those tales published in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy and France. The question which fairy-tale scholarship faces today is not simply whether a certain story is authentic or not, but what counts as authenticity, for whom, and for what purpose.

This essay discusses the question of authenticity and translation in two multicultural fairy tale collections in English, Andrew Lang's Fairy Books in twelve volumes published in the years between 1889 and 1910 and Angela Carter's two-volume *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales*, whose first volume in 1990 was followed by the posthumous publication of the second volume in 1992. These two collections, about a hundred years apart, both deploy comparative folkloristic methods in collecting

stories from printed story collections from around the world. Putting together stories from different cultures in English, a language which has had a wide impact on the international reception and understanding of any given culture, may work in two opposite ways. On the one hand, Lang's collection homogenises stories from different cultures into a single framework, smoothing out cultural differences in the service of a supposed universalism whose cultural bias is made invisible through his editorial strategies. On the other hand, Carter's collection re-presents multiple authenticities by allowing different storytellers and translators to speak in their own voices while explicitly contextualising the stories in the framework of a feminist story collection.

### **Authenticity, translation, and national identity**

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, lexicographers, antiquarians, and philologists, compiled stories for their 1812 collection *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* as part of their project to demonstrate the cultural unity of the German people through its common traditions and language. Regarding popular culture as a rich source of the authentic German *Geist* that would enliven the rising middle class, they felt the need to 're-write' the stories they collected to make them acceptable to the middle-class nursery, rather than keeping the form in which the stories were actually delivered by their informants. This kind of re-writing can be understood as translation in a broader sense according to the idea developed by André Lefevere in *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. In this process of translation, they not only smoothed the language of their informants into a prose which came to define the standard fairy-tale style by changing grammar, vocabulary, phrasing, and other stylistic features but also 'translated' the popular oral tales into a literature suitable for the middle-class, Reformed Calvinist sensibility of the time by euphemising or deleting any words, descriptions, and episodes that might be found objectionable. For example, the way in which "Rapunzel" suggests the heroine's pregnancy when she complains about her dress getting tight was considered too sexually explicit by the editors and readers of the time and was duly removed from the second edition onwards by Wilhelm. "We have carefully eliminated every phrase not appropriate for children," says Wilhelm reassuringly in the foreword to the second edition (qtd. in Tatar 265).

While meticulously translating German into German at these various levels, the Grimms tried to remove the stories translated from other languages, especially from French, throughout their editorial process which lasted for nearly half a century until the publication of the seventh edition in 1857. The fact that several of their informants were of Huguenot ancestry and told tales originating in France, especially those written by Charles Perrault, did not make this easy. In his seminal essay "The 'Utterly Hessian' Fairy Tales by 'Old Marie': The End of a Myth," Rölleke proved that "Old Marie," credited for a large number of the stories in the first edition, was in fact not the old nursemaid of one of the Grimms' friends, as had been long believed by scholars, but Marie Hassenpflug, an educated young woman of Huguenot origin. Rölleke further revealed that, contrary to the Grimms' own belief that one of their main informants was an illiterate peasant of authentic German origin, Dorothea Viehmann was also literate and of Huguenot descent. Words of French origin such as "*Fée*" and "*Prinzessin*" used in the first publication of "Briar Rose" were later replaced with those of German origin by Wilhelm. By re-writing the tales they collected to suit an editorial purpose which gave their idea of authentic national identity priority over the authenticity of the informants' voices, the Grimms can be said to have, consciously or unconsciously, 'translated' French tales into German.

The Grimms' collection inspired their Romantic contemporaries in Europe, such as Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe in Norway (*Norwegian Popular Stories*, first instalment 1842-43), Alexander Nikolayevich Afanasyev in Russia (*Russian Fairy Tales*, 1855-63), John Francis Campbell in Scotland (*Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, 1860-62), and W. B. Yeats in Ireland (*Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, 1888), to compile similar nationalistically motivated tale collections. Their search within their respective national borders for culturally distinctive narrative traditions played a significant part in the development of folklore scholarship as a process of defining national characteristics; at the same time, the translations of these national story collections gave rise

to the formation of comparative folkloristics, which seeks to find transnational, therefore universal, motifs and plots among stories from different parts of the world. Throughout the nineteenth century, England formed the international centre of folklore translation and scholarship. In *The British Folklorists: A History*, Richard Dorson maintains that the historical development of folkloristics in Britain culminates in the work of the “Great Team” led by Andrew Lang and his fellow members of the Folk-Lore Society, founded in 1878.

### **Authenticity, universalism, and invisible translation**

Scottish folklorist, poet, novelist, and classicist, in 1889 Lang published *The Blue Fairy Book*, which instantly became a great success and was followed by a further eleven books each in a different-coloured cover. Eliza T. Dresang maintains that “[t]he irony of Lang’s life and work is that although he wrote for a profession —literary criticism; fiction; poems; books and articles on anthropology, mythology, history, and travel; original stories for children...he is best recognized for the works he did *not* write” (387; emphasis in original). Although Lang himself chose the stories, nearly all the translation and rewriting was done by others, mostly women, prime among them his wife Leonora Blanche Lang. In the preface to *The Lilac Fairy Book* (1910), the last book of the series, Lang, as a result of his increasing irritation at being repeatedly misunderstood by his readers as the ‘author’ of the stories in his Fairy Books, finally gives credit where credit is due while at the same time rendering the act of translation secondary to his editorial work:

The fairy books have been almost wholly the work of Mrs. Lang, who has translated and adapted them from the French, German, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, and other languages. My part has been that of Adam, according to Mark Twain, in the Garden of Eden. Eve worked, Adam superintended. I also superintend. I find out where the stories are, and advise, and, in short, superintend. (vi-vii)

It is true that the popularity of the Fairy Books among the parents and educators of the time owed much to the authority of the editor, who was one of the most prominent men of letters in Britain and whose name alone appeared under the title on the cover throughout the series. However, it is also true that his more than twenty collaborators played an essential role in the production of these twelve books which, as Andrew Levitt writes, “inspired Victorian England to recognise the importance of fairy tales in the reading experience of children” (338).

Lang’s claim that the stories belong not to any particular authors but to anonymous oral tradition further diminishes the role of his collaborators who both translated and rewrote the stories. In the preface to *The Crimson Fairy Book* (1903), he compares the tales he collected to objects found in nature:

A sense of literary honesty compels the Editor to keep repeating that he is the Editor, and not the author of the Fairy Tales, just as a distinguished man of science is only the Editor, not the Author of Nature. Like nature, popular tales are too vast to be the creation of a single modern mind. The Editor’s business is to hunt for collections of these stories told by peasant or savage grandmothers in many climes... (v)

In this analogy again, it is the Editor’s ‘hunting’ for stories, not the work of translating and re-writing them, that deserves distinction, not to mention the role of those “peasant or savage grandmothers” who were supposed to have told them in the first place.

Lang thus makes the presence of his team of translators almost “invisible,” as Gillian Lathey argues in *The Role of Translators in Children’s Literature: Invisible Storytellers*. These predominantly female translators included professional authors in their own right. Margaret Hunt, for example, translated the Grimms’ tales with all the notes included for the first time in 1884, published several satirical

novels, and argued in support of women's rights. Leonora Blanche Lang translated a book on Russian history from the French, wrote *Dissolving Views* (1884), a novel about a girl who wanted to become a "female Mezzofanti" (9) (referring to a nineteenth-century hyperpolyglot renowned for his command of thirty-nine languages), and published her own collections of stories whose covers at least acknowledge her contribution: "by Mrs Lang, edited by Andrew Lang." Lang, however, subdued these writers' voices in his own series so that his voice alone could be heard.

At first glance, Lang's purpose for collecting fairy tales from material published in different continents seems far from that of the Grimms and other nineteenth-century European folklorists insisting on the oral origins of their stories in order to establish authentic national identity. The stated purpose of Lang's collection was to produce a Victorian version of *Le Cabinet des Fées* (1785-89), the massive collection of French *literary* fairy tales in more than fifty volumes published at the end of the eighteenth century, just before the French Revolution. In his collection, Lang tried to include stories from as many different parts of the world as possible, which also seems directly opposite to the Romantic nationalists' attempt to exclude stories originating outside their homelands. As the series progressed, Lang began to move to some extent from mainly European sources towards lesser-known tales of African, Australian, Brazilian, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Native American, Persian, and Turkish origins. In "Collecting the Empire: Andrew Lang's Fairy Books (1889-1910)," Sara Hines points out that Lang's "minor emphasis on Native American, Australian, Indian, and African tales...could be viewed as metaphorically representing Britain's political empire" (50). Hines claims that Lang's Fairy Books:

may contain stories of other places, other peoples, and other cultures, but the stories have been collected, translated, and edited specifically so that white people will like them and are meant to be read from the safety and security of the British home. Like the girl in "The Glass Axe," the Fairy Books are no longer the exoticized Other, but instead have been transformed, brought home, and colonized. (54)

"The Glass Axe" in *The Yellow Fairy Book* (1894) tells of a black girl who, when disenchanting, turns into a "beautiful" —and, as the illustration confirms, white— girl (147). Lang himself makes clear the racial assumption of his collections in the preface to *The Brown Fairy Book* (1904): "Mrs. Lang, who does not give them exactly as they are told by all sorts of outlandish natives, but makes them up in the hope white people will like them, skipping the pieces which they will not like" (viii). The illustrations by Henry J. Ford, who illustrated all the twelve Fairy Books, render visible the collection's assumptions about racial and cultural hierarchy. Ford's Pre-Raphaelite illustrations, with their elegant curving lines decorating heroines with abundant hair wearing long, flowing dresses, are a visualisation of the single narrative voice which victorianises all the stories regardless of their cultural origins. In Lang's Fairy Book series, stories from different continents are collected, sanitised, and displayed in the Imperial Cabinet of Fairies.

Lang's purpose in compiling a multicultural fairy tale collection needs to be considered in relation to his anthropological assumptions. He espoused polygenesis, a hypothesis that similar cultural traits may arise independently in different parts of the world, whereas other influential scholars of his time such as the Grimms, Max Müller, and George Cox supported the monogenetic theory of origin. In the preface to *The Blue Fairy Book*, Lang clarifies his position: "Even a child (this preface is not for children) must recognise, as he turns the pages of *The Blue Fairy Book*, that the same adventures and something like the same plots meet him in the stories translated from different languages" (xi). He subscribed to the comparative anthropological method which, in Amiria Henare's words, "allowed anthropologists to collapse space and time by bringing the artefacts of temporally and geographically distant peoples together for the purpose of cross-cultural analysis" (215). His story collections can be understood as a proof of his idea of a universal truth which he finds in stories from all around the world, validating the universality of his Eurocentric assumptions.

Lang's equation of the fairy tale with childhood also reveals cultural assumptions which automatically place the British Empire at the top in the developmental stages of civilisation. In the preface to *The Green Fairy Book* (1892), he states: "These fairy tales are the oldest stories in the world, and as they were first made by men who were childlike for their own amusement, so they amuse children still, and also grown-up people who have not forgotten how they once were children" (x). Then in the preface to *The Brown Fairy Book*, the supposedly objective anthropologist unveils a colonist's ethnocentrism:

"The Bunyip" is known to even more uneducated little ones, running about with no clothes at all in the bush, in Australia... They have no lessons except in tracking and catching birds, beasts, fishes, lizards, and snakes, all of which they eat. But when they grow up to be big boys and girls, they are cruelly cut about with stone knives and frightened with sham bogies "all for their good" their parents say and I think they would rather go to school, if they had their choice... (viii)

This reductive account of Australian aborigines assumes that people living in remote places of the world remain in the childhood, as it were, of human history, and "would rather go to school, if they had their choice" so as to attain the sensibility of white colonists.

Although they were intended for children, Lang's Fairy Books also included literature for adults such as Greek myths, Madame d'Aulnoy's literary fairy tales, and *Gulliver's Travels*. Lang and his collaborators not only translated but also abridged and re-wrote literary works written for adults so that children could also enjoy them; in other words, the collection 'translated' adults' literature into children's stories. Lang explains his translation policies in the preface to *The Orange Fairy Book* (1906):

The stories are not literal, or word by word translations, but have been altered in many ways to make them suitable for children. Much has been left out in places, and the narrative has been broken up into conversations, the characters telling each other how matters stand, and speaking for themselves, as children, and some older people, prefer them to do. In many tales, fairly cruel and savage deeds are done, and these have been softened down as much as possible... (vi)

By thus transforming literary classics in terms of both style and content for young readers, his Fairy Book series played a significant part in the process of enriching the fairy-tale canon which came to constitute a central part of children's literature in Britain.

The immense popularity of Lang's series, especially as Christmas gift books, did much to revive interest in fairy tales in Britain, but, as we have seen, it also led to the colonisation of the genre as well as its confinement to the middle-class nursery. Nevertheless, Lang's passion for finding universal motifs across different cultures led to the significant expansion of the geographical and cultural scope of fairy tales in English-speaking countries far beyond the *Arabian Nights* so that his Fairy Book series continued to cultivate a taste for multicultural fairy tales in many English-speaking readers.

### **Framing (as) translation**

About a century after the publication of *The Blue Fairy Book*, Angela Carter, whose re-writings of traditional fairy tales in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) played an essential role in the liberation of the fairy tale from its confinement to the nursery, embarked on a project of further emancipating the genre by compiling a multicultural feminist fairy tale collection modelled on Lang's Fairy Book series, which she had enjoyed reading as a child. While acknowledging that Lang's Fairy Books gave generations of children an enjoyable introduction to a wide range of stories from across the globe, Carter is aware that her collection, which relies mostly on English translations, also shares the form of cultural imperialism exercised by Lang's collection: "This selection has also been mainly confined to material available in English, due to my shortcomings as a linguist. This exercises its own form of cultural imperialism upon the collection" (*Virago* xviii). Despite this linguistic constraint,

however, I will argue that Carter's collection through its editorial strategies serves to decolonise, rather than colonise, the fairy tale.

Carter uses Lang's idea of comparative anthropology not in order to find the same elements among different cultures as Lang intended to do but to underline differences within the same, to show the diversity of representations of women's lives:

I haven't put this collection together from such heterogeneous sources to show that we are all sisters under the skin.... Rather, I wanted to demonstrate the extraordinary richness and diversity of responses to the same common predicament—being alive—and the richness and diversity with which femininity, in practice, is represented in “unofficial” culture: its strategies, its plots, its hard work. (*Virago* xiv)

By reprinting stories taken from multiple tale collections without any textual alterations instead of re-writing these pre-existing English versions to give them a unified voice, Carter allows different storytellers and translators to speak in their own voices:

I've tried, as far as possible, to avoid stories that have been conspicuously “improved” by collectors, or rendered “literary,” and I haven't rewritten any myself, however great the temptation, or collated two versions, or even cut anything, because I wanted to *keep a sense of many different voices*. (xvii; emphasis added)

Unlike Lang, who sought to prove the authenticity of universal human truths by projecting his theories of them onto other cultures, Carter tries to tune in to each ‘unofficial’ voice, however unfamiliar or out of tune it may sound according to her own poetics.

The “sense of many different voices” intended by Carter, however, may be felt as detrimental by those who expect aesthetic integrity in a story collection. In her review of Carter's fairy tale collection, Elizabeth Lowry makes a distinction between the oral folk tale and the literary fairy tale using the analogy of cooking:

Frequent handling has given the motifs in these tales [the oral folk tales] a high polish, but it is the polish that results when all individuality has been rubbed away: the stories have an impersonal, communal authority. They are not written but told. Carter is quite right: these tales are not literature; they are what literature, in the right hands, is made of. In the end, reading this collection is rather like eating a very large bag of plain flour: sustaining enough, but you would much rather it had been a cake. (4)

Lowry's analogy recalls Claude Lévi-Strauss's distinction between the raw and the cooked, i.e., what is found in nature and what is a product of human culture. I would argue, however, that Carter's collection is not simply a mixture of uncooked ingredients; without making any textual alterations, she ‘cooks’ stories in a postmodern, “bricolage”-like manner—to use a term of Lévi-Strauss again—which consists of the following four editorial strategies: 1) making clear in the introduction the editor's interpretation of storytelling traditions and her political purpose in compiling the collection, 2) selecting a certain version in a certain translation among similar stories to make a political point, 3) organising multicultural stories according to chapter headings suggesting how they should be interpreted, and 4) providing notes which re-contextualise each story in the light of the purpose of the collection and which interweave the stories of her own experience of the storytelling tradition with the stories in the body of the collection. Through this transformative framing, which can be seen as a form of cultural translation, Carter's fairy tale collection reverberates with a complex layering of different voices arising from intra- as well as inter-textual sources.

It is misleading, therefore, to consider Carter's collection of fairy tales as lacking any political intentions only because the editor has not altered the stories, as Lowry seems to do in her review: “As a compiler of fairy tales working some two centuries after the Grimm brothers, Angela Carter was admirably guiltless of any such nationalist or ideological intentions... But this, paradoxically, is a

problem in itself.” Carter herself acknowledges that her project is similar in spirit to the Grimms’ and other Romantic folklorists’ quest for national identity and independence: “That I and many other women should go looking through the books for fairy-tale heroines is a version of the same process—a wish to validate my claim to a fair share of the future by staking my claim to my share of the past” (xvi). The difference, however, lies in the fact that Carter’s fairy tale collection, rather than trying to merge different voices into a single voice of authority, creates a network of multiple authenticities where the notion of authenticity is challenged and re-appropriated for a political purpose.

Carter’s anthology juxtaposes multifarious voices of storytellers and translators organised according to such ‘universal’ headings resonating with feminist irony as “Clever Women, Resourceful Girls and Desperate Stratagems” and “Good Girls and Where It Gets Them.” This framing strategy adds another layer of voice, that of a late-twentieth-century feminist editor. A different kind of irony, humour, or sympathy may arise when a story is framed and put together with stories told in different voices but seeming to share similar experiences and feelings. As Carter claims in the introduction, “the context changes everything” (xv).

Carter’s foregrounding of editorial authority paradoxically serves to give autonomy to the tales themselves, allowing them to voice different authenticities. In *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*, Cristina Bacchilega contrasts the editorial policy of Carter’s *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* with that of Italo Calvino’s *Italian Folktales* (1956):

When Calvino wishes to become a “link in the anonymous chain” of transmission by modifying tales as all tellers do, his goal is to embellish the tale according to clearly literary standards of narrative style. Carter overtly participates in the chain of transmission by explicitly marking her selection of tales on the basis of specific class and gender considerations. Having made her choices, however, she re-presents a variety of styles and voices without making any textual changes herself. If Calvino’s collection presents a somewhat essentialized metaphoric Italian fairy tale, animated by “a continuous quiver of love,” then Carter’s book precipitates a conversation with and among different kinds of tales and female protagonists—jokes as well as romantic and moral tales; “sillies,” clever women, brave and good ones. In spite of his well-documented notes, Calvino’s shaping of the tales remains in the background. Carter’s positioning is there, tongue-in-cheek, in the chapter headings and in the two titles of the collection (*The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* in England and *The Old Wives’ Fairy Tales Book* in the United States) but not evident in the tales themselves—a strategy designed to maximize the entertaining dialogue among fairy tales and to multiply the performative effects of their “domestic art.” (21)

The title of the American version quoted above renders explicit the subversive intent of this feminist story collection; Carter defines old wives’ tales in the introduction as “worthless stories, untruths, trivial gossip, a derisive label that allots the art of storytelling to women at the exact same time as it takes all value from it” (xi). <sup>1</sup>Carter’s strategy here is to assume the old wives’ position in order to subvert the stereotype from within. In discussing the authorship of fairy tales, she also uses the metaphor of cooking, a domestic art traditionally associated with women just as storytelling is:

Ours is a highly individualized culture, with a great faith in the work of art as a unique one-off, and the artist as an original, a godlike and inspired creator of unique one-offs. But fairy tales are not like that, nor are their makers. Who first invented meatballs? In what country? Is there a definitive recipe for potato soup? Think in terms of the domestic arts. “This is how *I* make potato soup.” (x; emphasis in original)

What is re-evaluated in the traditional stories reprinted in the collection is the individual authenticity of each voice narrating female experience, which Carter believes can translate across languages, cultures, and times. Carter, therefore, tries to recuperate the ‘unofficial’ voices carefully erased by Victorian editors and translators of fairy tales:

Removing “coarse” expressions was a common nineteenth-century pastime, part of the project of turning the universal entertainment of the poor into the refined pastime of the middle classes, and especially of

the middle-class nursery. The excision of references to sexual and excremental functions, the toning down of sexual situations and the reluctance to include “indelicate” material—that is, dirty jokes—helped to denaturize the fairy tale and, indeed, helped to denaturize its vision of everyday life. (xvii)

Consequently, *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* is full of stories referring to sexual and excremental functions typified by the opening story titled “Sermerssuaq,” whose eponymous heroine is a powerful woman proud of her clitoris, which is “so big that the skin of a fox would not fully cover it” (1). Carter also attempts to re-present well-known stories in their less gentrified versions. For “Bluebeard,” for example, she chooses its English variant entitled “Mr Fox.” As the chapter heading “Brave, Bold and Wilful” indicates, the heroine of “Mr Fox” does not flinch when she discovers her fiancé’s bloody chamber but takes home a lady’s hand which he has cut off with his sword. On their wedding day, she declares the truth in front of her family and friends: “‘But it is so, and it was so. Here’s hand and ring I have to show,’ and pulled out the lady’s hand from her dress, and pointed it straight at Mr Fox” (10). Unlike Perrault’s “Bluebeard,” a moral warning against the danger of female curiosity, this story celebrates the girl’s boldness and her storytelling skill that eventually save her life.

Carter is aware that the printed texts from which she derives stories are already a mixture of more than two voices, of a storyteller, a collector, a translator, and an editor: “though the stories in this book were, almost all of them, noted down from living mouths, collectors themselves can rarely refrain from tinkering with them, editing, collating, putting two texts together to make a better one” (xvii). In the notes, therefore, she often contextualises the stories by identifying who told them in what kind of situations, who collected them for what kind of purposes, and who translated them in what kind of styles. According to her note, for example, “Sermerssuaq” is taken from *A Kayak Full of Ghosts* (1987), a collection of Eskimo tales “gathered and retold” by Lawrence Millman, a contemporary famous adventure travel writer, who explains in his note that the story was “told as a joke at a birthday party” in Arctic Canada (140). This story, which could be interpreted as a misogynistic joke when told in a male-dominated situation, is re-contextualised in a feminist story collection so that it takes on a new significance as a monument of women’s physical and creative power and their subversive storytelling tradition. “Parsley-girl,” probably the most ‘authentic’ fairy tale in this collection in terms of the editor’s proximity to the oral source, is accompanied by the note confirming the existence of the female storytelling tradition as experienced by Carter herself: “Collected by Daniela Almansi, aged six, from her babysitter, in Cortona, near Arezzo, Tuscany, Italy, and contributed to the editor by Daniela’s mother, Claude Beguin” (236).

Moreover, Carter adds another layer of voice to the collection by telling stories of her own childhood in the notes. In the note to Perrault’s “The Little Red Riding Hood,” the only story in the collection translated by Carter herself, she gives an account of how she heard it from her grandmother when she was little: “my maternal grandmother used to say, ‘Lift up the latch and walk in,’ when she told it me when I was a child; and at the conclusion, when the wolf jumps on Little Red Riding Hood and gobbles her up, my grandmother used to pretend to eat me, which made me squeak and gibber with excited pleasure (240). By foregrounding the physical pleasure experienced by the girl listening to her grandmother recounting the violent version of the ending, this note re-claims “Little Red Riding Hood” from the nineteenth-century gentrification of the story based on Grimm’s version where the heroine and her grandmother are rescued from the wolf’s belly, so that this well-known fairy tale is re-connected to the female storytelling tradition before its denaturalisation. In the note, Carter goes on to quote in full the oral version of the tale called “Story of the Grandmother,” in which the girl herself eats the grandmother and escapes the wolf’s attack with courage and resourcefulness.

Carter’s collection also decolonises the fairy tale visually. Corinna Sargood, who illustrated the two volumes of *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales*, states in an interview that, while working on the collection, she kept receiving masses of illustrations and pictures from Carter, “a huge variety, from abstract African patterns to Japanese tattoos, wood carvings, anything that intrigued her or amused

her” (Bacchilega, “In the Eye” 228). In Sargood’s folk-art-influenced illustrations, women, animals, and trees intermingle with each other in a culturally hybrid manner, resonating with the culturally diverse and multi-layered network of voices of the stories themselves.

In a contemporary global context, such multi-voiced, multicultural fairy tale collections in English translation can serve to counteract the global homogenisation of fairy tales, notably through Disney animations promoting their ‘official’ princesses. Rather than making the processes of inter- as well as intra-lingual translation invisible in order to validate a claim of either national or universal authenticity, Carter’s collection renders explicit its framing strategies in order to give voice to the full multiplicity of women’s experiences. It is significant that in this case, unless the reader is a Mezzofanti-like hyperpolyglot, culturally divergent voices can be made more audible through translation. In this sense, Carter’s decolonising framing strategy in her multicultural story collection calls forth an understanding of translation as a re-naturalising practice which would restore different kinds of authenticities to individual cultures to counteract the supposed authenticity of the univocal, normalising narrative endorsed by the re-colonisation of the fairy tale taking place in the current global market.

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<sup>1</sup> In Britain, where Virago Press is based and where it has been more widely known as a feminist publisher, the title *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* itself has a similar revelatory effect to the American title in the context of the United States.

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