

Once Upon *Whose* Time? Rereading Remnant Colonialism in Global Fairy Tales

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Introduction

It has generally been assumed that fairy tales were first created for children and are largely the domain of children. But nothing could be further from the truth.¹

Language is power, life and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation.²

While recent scholarship has focused attention on the material aspects of globalisation that affect the world's literary production and consumption, little attention has been paid to applying these critiques to the field of fairy tales. This space requires special attention since fairy tales are typically introduced to children at an early age and thus play a critical role in shaping their early conceptions of global society. As such, the thesis that the 'world' represented by 'world fairy tale' anthologies (such as the *Virago Book of Fairy Tales*, or Andrew Lang's 'Colours' Fairy Tale series), is informed by remnant colonialism, *must* be addressed if scholarship hopes to move beyond a Eurocentric notion of 'world fairy tale' literature.³ There are many

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¹ Jack Zipes, 'Introduction', *Spells of Enchantment: The Wonderous Fairy Tales of Western Culture*, ed. Jack Zipes (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), p. xi.

² Angela Carter, 'Notes from the Front Line', *On Writing and Gender*, ed. Michelene Wandor (London: Pandora Press, 1983), p. 72.

³ Donald Haase, 'Decolonising Fairy Tale Studies', *Marvels and Tales: Journal of Fairy Tale Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2010), pp. 20-22; *Virago Book of Fairy Tales*, ed. Angela Carter (London: Virago, 1991); *The Blue Fairy Book*, ed. Andrew Lang (New York: Dover Publications, 1965).

questions that arise from the production and distribution of the world's folk and fairy tales, few of which have been given much academic attention. It is this gap in the literature that this article addresses. Using Angela Carter's *Book of Fairy Tales* as a case study for global anthologies of fairy tales, this article examines the nature of the fairy tale itself, seeking to establish whether or not the genre definition can be applied outside of the Western canon without implicitly decontextualising those non-European texts which it seeks to incorporate.⁴ In particular, this article employs a critical assessment of Jack Zipes' work, seminal in the study of Western fairy tales, to develop a broader understanding of the fairy tale genre as one that includes not only the Western canon but also the texts from around the globe. Consequently, this article details the ways in which fairy tales, contemporarily disadvantaged by their roots in an oral tradition, are presented in global society; aiming to uncover whose voices are prioritised and whose are overlooked, as well as the ways in which narrative is framed outside of its traditional culture or context. Through the interrogation of the fairy tale and its presentation in a global context, this article reveals imbalances in the supposedly equal presentation of the world's folk and fairy traditions.

Fairy Tales: Past and Present

Fairy tales are unique as a literary genre in that they do not cater exclusively to children or adults, but rather exist in a space of overlap between the two, revealing to each group the appropriate level of meaning.⁵ Jack Zipes, in attempting to uncover a history of fairy tales, suggests that the human need for fairy tales arises from the desire to humanise the "bestial and barbaric" natural forces of the world; primarily through the use of metaphor.⁶ This particular addendum—*through metaphor*—is especially poignant when considered in conjunction with Lisa Lowe's work on metaphor as the only

⁴ Angela Carter, *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales* (London: Virago, 2005). Hereafter referred to as *Tales*.

⁵ Zipes, 'Introduction', p. xi.

⁶ Zipes, 'Introduction', p. xi.

true facilitator of international discourse.⁷ The fairy tale is hence not only a facet of literature which itself is undergoing a process of globalisation, but also frequently a metaphor through which global concerns are addressed. Indeed, fairy tales are employed in the abstract analysis of topics as varied as international relations and the Australian school curriculum.⁸ In fact, fairy tales are even used as metaphor to discuss the study of the fairy tale itself.⁹ Zipes, for instance, speaks of the “magic spell” cast by fairy tales, while Donald Haase compares the fairy tale scholars’ situation in academia as that of “sleeping beauty” who need only wake up for the decolonialisation of fairy tales to commence.¹⁰ The fact that fairy tales are so frequently engaged to discuss international concerns only further emphasises the need for an analysis of the power systems which inform collections of world fairy tales.

It is not only the adult world which is exposed to the globalisation of fairy tales. Children, too, are important contributors to social dynamics and world systems. Consequently, the role of children in propagating these world systems deserves equal acknowledgement when attempting to dismantle some of the remnant colonial power structures at play in the discourse of global English.¹¹ As scholar Anne Trine Kjøholt has noted, “Children are social participants in societies and cultural life ... they reproduce and produce culture in everyday lives in different localities on a par with adults.”¹² What Kjøholt’s work advocates is the proper analysis of children’s consumption of world fairy tales, which does not dismiss or infantilise the child reader.

⁷ Lisa Lowe, ‘Metaphors for Globalisation’, in *Interdisciplinarity and Social Justice: Revisioning Academic Accountability*, eds Joe Parker, Ranu Samantrai, and Mary Romero (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), pp. 40-41.

⁸ See, for example, Ann Russell, Beata Batorowicz and Margaret Baguley, ‘Re-enchanting Education: Challenging the ‘Hidden’ Curriculum’, *Australian Art Education*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2017), or Kathryn Starnes, *Fairy Tales and International Relations: A Folklorist Reading of IR Textbooks* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁹ See, for example, Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth, Myth as Fairy Tale* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1994), pp. 72-73, or Haase, ‘Decolonising the Fairy Tale’, p. 19.

¹⁰ Haase, ‘Decolonising the Fairy Tale’, p. 19.

¹¹ Anne Trine Kjøholt, ‘Childhood as a Symbolic Space: Searching for Authentic Voices in the Era of Globalisation’, *Children’s Geographies*, vol. 5, no. 1-2 (February-May 2007), p. 30.

¹² Kjøholt, ‘Childhood as a Symbolic Space’, p. 30.

It must be acknowledged that to examine, contemporarily, children's consumption of fairy tales as Kjøholt suggests is impossible without reference to Walt Disney's oeuvre.¹³ Disney's work in sanitising and reshaping fairy tales from all over the world, which continued long after his death, is arguably one of the foremost forms of contemporary colonial practice.¹⁴ However, the popularity of Disney's presentation of these narratives is so great that it has led to a reshaping of the Western understanding of the genre itself. For many in the West, the fairy tale is one in Disney's image: from the 'once upon a time' all the way through to the 'happily ever after'.¹⁵ Consider then Disney's appropriation of tales originating outside of the West; of *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, or more recently, *Moana*.¹⁶ Each is an example of Disney's appropriation of an earlier oral, and later written, work. Disney's *Aladdin*, taken from a long tradition of the Western exploitation of this particular tale, overlooks the tale's setting in China in favour of an "explicitly racist" opening song, which firmly establishes the setting as a "barbaric" Arabic one.¹⁷ By being set firmly in this imagined Middle East, and not in a mystified 'otherwhere' as the original tale dictates, *Aladdin*, in its Westernised form, has been made to conform with Disney's own hegemonic iteration of the fairy tale. Furthermore, it has, in its own right, come to stand as a metaphor for the types of magic and form present in the tale itself. Indeed, Ulrich Marzolph has taken particular note

¹³ Michelle Anya Anjirbag, 'Mulan and Moana: Embedded Coloniality and the Search for Authenticity in Disney Animated Film', *Social Sciences*, vol. 7 (November 2018), p. 243.

¹⁴ Jack Zipes, 'Breaking the Disney Spell', *Fairy Tales as Myth; Myth as Fairy Tale*, pp. 72-73.

¹⁵ See, for example, Veronica Hefner, Rachel-Jean Firchau, Katie Norton and Gabriella Shevel, 'Happily Ever After? A Content Analysis of Romantic Ideals in Disney Princess Films', *Communication Studies*, vol. 68, no. 5 (September 2017), p. 512, or Alexandra Heatwole, 'Disney Girlhood: Princess Generations Once Upon a Time', *Studies in the Humanities*, vol. 43, no. 1-2 (December 2016), pp. 1-2.

¹⁶ Ron Clements and John Musker, dir. *Aladdin* (Burbank CA: Walt Disney Studios, 1992), DVD; Barry Cook and Tony Bancroft, dir. *Mulan* (Burbank CA: Walt Disney Studios, 1998), DVD; Ron Clements and John Musker, dir. *Moana* (Burbank CA: Walt Disney Studios, 2016), DVD.

¹⁷ Ulrich Marzolph, 'Aladdin Almighty: Middle Eastern Magic in the Service of Western Consumer Culture', *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 132, no. 525 (Summer 2019), pp. 275-76.

of *Aladdin*'s use as a title for numerous businesses, each hoping to capitalise on the association of the name Aladdin with magic and wish-granting.¹⁸ Yet despite this exploitation, the question of whether these non-Western texts should be included in the Disney canon remains a valid one. In essence, it is a question that typifies the postcolonial paradox: exclusion from the canon is exclusion from the global discourses that fairy tales facilitate, yet to be included is also to conform, at least to a certain degree, to the norms and structures of the globally dominant traditions, in this instance, the Anglo-American West and Disney.

Must this inclusion still lack any significant departure from colonial ideologies of identity and otherness which inform the majority of Disney's canon? As scholar Michelle Anya Anjirbag notes, the discussion of Disney and its canon is often erroneously presented as static rather than fluid; influenced by the social and cultural demands of its context.¹⁹ In this way, the comparison of films such as *Aladdin* and *Mulan* with more recent releases such as *Moana* must reflect the changing social sensibilities which have elapsed over the eighteen years between these films. *Moana*, unlike *Aladdin* or *Mulan*, is an example of Disney's more recent attempts to incorporate the voices and editorial decisions of those peoples whose stories they are adapting.²⁰ However, again as Anjirbag has commented, even with the acknowledgement of Disney's change in approach over this time—from appropriation to collaboration—it is not enough for the corporation to simply include more diverse voices in their narrative, for the overarching power of the Disney label still eclipses much of the unique narratives which are being portrayed.²¹ Hence, *Moana*, although still subject to much academic criticism, does provide an intermediate step to a future where Disney further

¹⁸ Marzolph, 'Aladdin', pp. 280-82.

¹⁹ Anjirbag, 'Mulan and Moana', p. 243.

²⁰ I have decided here to follow in Anjirbag's footsteps here and refrain from commenting on *Pocahontas*, as unlike these other narratives, Pocahontas is derived from a retelling of an apocryphal historic narrative rather than an explicitly fictional tale.

²¹ Anjirbag, 'Mulan and Moana', p. 243.

eschews its colonial roots and moves toward a less Eurocentric storytelling practice.²²

Despite Disney's prominence in the global shaping of fairy tales, however, there are many other Western institutions which implement a fairy tale canon. School curriculums, for example, often count both the first and second *Virago Book of Fairy Tales* on their reading lists, as well as the *Reader's Digest's The World's Best Fairy Tales* and Andrew Lang's *Colours Fairy Books*.²³ However, none of these compendiums acknowledge the authors or translators of their stories, nor are they exempt from use as vehicles of ideology. On the contrary, these compilations are frequently edited to comment on problems in global social consciousness, from sexism to environmental degradation.²⁴ Carter's *Tales*, as an example, is a testimony to Angela Carter's work as a feminist author. Although not as overt as *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, which is an explicitly feminist reworking of folktales, Carter's *Tales* is nonetheless a collection carefully edited to illustrate the agency of women in traditional stories.²⁵ Even the chapters 'Clever Women, Resourceful Girls and Desperate Stratagems', 'Married Women', and 'Mothers and Daughters' are titled to reflect this framing of the empowered feminine.²⁶ In their role as villains, women are no more easily vanquished than their male counterparts.²⁷ The use of fairy tale to proselytise various ideologies is not unusual and nor should these tales be dismissed on this account. Rather, it is vital to note their employment in this way if we are to remove the colonial ideologies which have over time been canonised in the genre of fairy tale itself, just as it is vital to engage younger

²² Anjirbag, 'Mulan and Moana', p. 243.

²³ Manuela Pulimeno, Prisco Piscitelli, and Salvatore Colazzo, 'Children's literature to promote students' global development and wellbeing', *Health Promotion Perspectives*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2010), p. 15; *Virago Book of Fairy Tales*, ed. Angela Carter (London: Virago, 1991). See also *Reader's Digest's World's Best Fairy Tales*, ed. Belle Becker Sideman (New York: Readers Digest, 1967); *The Blue Fairy Book*, ed. Andrew Lang (New York: Dover Publications, 1965).

²⁴ Zipes, 'Introduction', p. xii.

²⁵ Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (London: Virago, 1979), pp. 42-43. See Carter, *Tales*, p. 24.

²⁶ Carter, *Tales*, pp. ix-x.

²⁷ For example, see 'The Chinese Princess' in Carter, *Tales*, p. 149.

audiences in the discussion of these critical opinions, and not assume their role to be a naturally passive one.²⁸

The Eurocentrism of Canon

There are many titles that are used interchangeably in the field of fabulism: fairy tales, folktales, and the wonder tale. It is difficult to trace a clear genealogy in such a nebulous field. Jack Zipes, as the most prominent scholar in the field, has suggested that one possible demarcation between folktales and fairy tales is the presence of a distinct author who has shaped the tale.²⁹ The Brothers Grimm, or Hans Christian Andersen, are thus by Zipes' logic the authors of true fairy tales, while narratives not attributed to a single author remain folktales, irrespective of their inclusion in fairy tale anthologies. Yet Zipes' distinction becomes problematic when applied to tales outside the Western tradition. Of the texts included in world fairy tale collections, it is those from outside the Western canon which lack attribution to a specified author, translator, or transcriber. In essence, they are not 'fairy tales' as Zipes describes them at all. Zipes himself would argue that this distinction is because the fairy tale does not exist outside of the Western canon; that it is only the conflation of folk and fairy tale which leads to these anthologies mistakenly including folk tales in their works. Yet despite Zipes' efforts to differentiate this distinction from an *evaluative* approach, it is difficult to ignore the intrinsic elitism in his claim that only academics have the capacity to distinguish folktales from fairy tales.³⁰ More so for the fact that Zipes' definition further hinges on the divide between oral and written text; a divide which is increasingly recognised as a hallmark of colonial notions of literature and civilisation.³¹

²⁸ Yakov M. Rabkin, 'Fairy Tales and Globalisation: Bringing Up the Young in the Values and Virtues of Great Civilisations', Executive Summary, Dialogue of Civilisations Research Institute (October 2016), p. 1.

²⁹ Zipes, *The Wonderous Fairy Tales of Western Culture*, p. xi.

³⁰ Jack Zipes, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, ed. Jack Zipes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. xv.

³¹ Caroline Levine, 'The Great Unwritten: World Literature and the Effacement of Orality', *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 74, no. 2 (June 2013), p. 223.

It is possible to argue, of course, that there is a canonical tradition of fairy tales outside of Europe and the West, and that it is only the imbalanced dialogue of coloniser and colonised which leads to the erasure of non-European authors from texts. However, this argument, while valid, lies on a flawed foundation: for it still functions on the premise that the ‘best’ method of storytelling is a Western, literary one which stands unsurpassed by orality. In this way, such arguments could even be considered a form of neo-colonial discourse, again subjugating oral narratives under the supremacy of written language, and the largely Anglophonic publishing industry. Yet it seems illogical that what the Western canon has identified as ‘the fairy tale’ should not exist in other global contexts.

Certainly, world fairy tale collections have found no shortage of texts which can be classified by the European definitions of fairy tale form.³² The Burmese tale ‘The Promise’, for example, featured in Carter’s *Tales*, is one which conforms to many of the accepted conditions of fairy tale literature. ‘The Promise’ adheres to many Proppian structures: it opens with a bestowed quest, progresses along an encounter with three bestial challengers, and ends with the survival and enhanced wisdom of the protagonist.³³ Yet ‘The Promise’ not only conforms to the foundational scholarship on folklore, but also to other observed structures of fairy tales specifically. ‘The Promise’ can also be seen as a form of what Ruth B. Bottigheimer terms a “restoration” tale, as the protagonist, as the daughter of a wealthy man, must regain her honour by fulfilling her youthful promise to a Prince.³⁴ Zipes’ claim, then, requires considerable adjustment to be feasibly applied in postcolonial studies of world fairy tales.

This problem of definition extends deeper than simply crediting authors for their work. If the nature of the fairy tale is one formed from an explicitly European context, then how can the narratives included in this

³² See, for example, Michael Foreman, *Michael Foreman’s World of Fairy Tales* (London: Arcade, 1990).

³³ Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folktale*, ed. Louis A. Wagner, trans. Laurence Scott (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), pp. 26-36.

³⁴ Ruth B. Bottigheimer, ‘Fairy-Tale Origins, Fairy-Tale Dissemination, and Folk Narrative Theory’, *Fabula*, vol. 47, no. 3-4 (December 2006), p. 212.

form be presented without the biases of colonial knowledge systems? To distinguish the fairy tale from the folk tale in the way Zipes has suggested predicates a subliminal disparity in the presentation of European and non-European tales. European tales are credited to a single writer's retelling, while tales from outside Europe remain "authorless," thus essentially erasing the diversity of non-European individuals, in favour of a falsified community of minority, of which all participants are implicitly expected to look, talk and think the same.³⁵ This approach discredits the narrative presented in the text itself, inherently suggesting that the Western, individualised approach to story-telling is more valuable than the larger oral one. As Caroline Levine observes, "it is not that oral traditions have never been transcribed into writing, only that once they appear in written form, scholars are all too ready to forget their lives as oral texts."³⁶ This concern is ever present in the field of fairy tales. In fact, it is this very problem which sits at the heart of Zipes' definition: that fairy tales have an oral history cannot be ignored. The fact that Zipes hangs his distinction on the fairy tale's movement away from its oral history places him in the unfortunate position of reiterating the false dichotomy of a 'backward', oral past with a literate, 'civilised' present.³⁷

While there are a growing number of fairy tale volumes which present stories from one particular tradition, there are still many texts which offer an ostensibly complete overview of the world's fairy tales. It is this misleading offer of a supposedly unbiased, equal presentation of these international stories which necessitates a closer inspection of the world systems which inform the production and distribution of fairy tales. In our current neoliberal global society, it is still the West which largely controls the publishing industry, and in particular it is English which dominates linguistically; acting not only as a facilitator for international discourse but also, in its role as a "pivot language," lending texts a gravity in their translated form which then

³⁵ Barbara Christian, 'The Race for Theory', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Spring 1988), pp. 72, 74-75.

³⁶ Levine, 'The Great Unwritten', p. 219.

³⁷ Levine, 'The Great Unwritten', pp. 219, 223.

encourages their translation into multiple languages.³⁸ That productions of world fairy tale anthologies are consumed by a predominantly Western audience is perhaps the reason that there remains a largely unexamined exotification of non-European narratives in the curation and publication of these volumes. Even the titling of world fairy tales implies a specific and enticing ‘Other’ to be discovered: a strange parallel to the imperial notions of discovery which played out in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³⁹ Of the stories in the ‘Unhappy Families’ chapter of Carter’s *Tales*, only one is European in origin.⁴⁰ Yet the stories within this chapter do not contain ‘unhappy’ endings for the protagonists; certainly not more than in any of the other chapters. It appears that it is only the ‘illogical’ otherness of these families which sets them apart in the book. It is even possible to see elements of this exotification in relation to European fairy tales, which themselves originated in an oral storytelling tradition.⁴¹ These texts are ‘rough’ and ‘wild,’ presenting a natural past of Western civilisation which is subtextually equated with the present and living traditions of colonised countries. The ‘pagan’ nature of European folktales places them firmly in a nostalgic past, which is compared directly, in its placement in this anthology, with the narrative traditions of other largely oral societies. Orality in this instance is again equated to a backward or past form of storytelling, presented as inferior to the written word.⁴²

Transcribing Oral Traditions: Some Problems

If we are to establish a truly informed presentation of oral works in the form of fairy tales, it is not only the acknowledgement of the author which must be addressed. It is well-established that both translators and transcribers play

³⁸ David Bellos, *Is that a fish in your ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything* (New York: Penguin, 2011), p. 113.

³⁹ David Arnold, *The Age of Discovery, 1400-1600* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 1-5.

⁴⁰ Carter, *Tales*, p. 190.

⁴¹ Pulimeno, Piscitelli and Colazzo, ‘Children’s literature to promote students’ global development and wellbeing’, p. 13.

⁴² Levine, ‘The Great Unwritten’, p. 223.

equally significant roles in shaping how the text is presented to audience.⁴³ Indeed, these roles are even more significant in the instance of fairy tales, where oftentimes the audience has no previous knowledge of the narrative canon that informs the text they encounter. It is this lack of context that forms a critical point in the mistranslation or misreading of a text's narrative features. Of the four Sudanese Dinka stories included in Carter's *Tales*, 'Diirawic and her Incestuous Brother', 'Achol and her Wild Mother', Duang and his Wild Wife', and 'Achol and her Adoptive-Lioness Mother', three include the image of a lion to symbolise the wilderness in human nature, two of which use the beating of animals and puppies to further symbolise the taming of this bestial form of humanity.⁴⁴ To an uninitiated, likely Western reader, there is no contextual precedent for the use of this symbolism and imagery. To these readers, then, the animistic transformations of the protagonists lack meaning and thus frequently are automatically read according to a normative Western practice as savage and brutalistic. Yet even if it is necessary to provide some background for readers outside the cultural context of the text, the assumption of where this responsibility lies is often informed by the power structures of colonialism. Non-Western stories are generally taken at face value in the absence of an immediately available explanation, and the onus is placed on non-Westerners to justify their traditions as acceptably sophisticated and non-savage.

Although some may argue that it is premature to discuss the invisibility of translators when even the authors of many tales remain uncredited, this argument loses sight of the potential authorial voices which emerge when oral stories are translated into textual form. Problems of translation when it comes to fairy tales are in many ways unique: it is not only the constraints of vocabulary which limit the texts conversion, but additionally the alteration of themes and ideas specific to cultural groups. This twofold translation is especially true when it pertains to the translation of texts from indigenous language traditions: as the translation is not only

⁴³ Jan van Coillie, "“Oh, how hard it is to play the translator's game”: Translating Orality in the Grimms' “Rumpelstiltskin”", *Marvels and Tales*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2014), pp. 361-62.

⁴⁴ Carter, *Tales*, pp. 338, 473-474, 745.

one of raw language, but also of colonial power dynamic. For many indigenous narratives the adaptation to a written text is one informed almost exclusively by colonial norms. As such, these translations become damaging not only because they take a ‘living,’ fluid method of storytelling and make it static, but also because in this static form, traditional indigenous narratives must be delineated as specific *kind* of story: a genre to which the indigenous narrative itself frequently does not conform.⁴⁵ Representing certain indigenous narratives as ‘fairy tales’ can in many instances code these stories in ways which exhaust their spiritual or historiographic contents. As scholar Joanna Hearne notes, “North American popular discourses around the traditional storytelling classifications of ‘myth’ and ‘fairy tale’ genre terms are used to indicate lying.”⁴⁶ Hence, as they relate to colonially proscribed genres, indigenous narratives face a kind of double-bind, presenting their stories in form which undermines their traditional authority even as they need these forms in order to “authenticate a national identity” in a broader colonial setting.⁴⁷

For this reason, then, it is important that as the field of global fairy tales strives to be more inclusive, it nevertheless remains selective in its insertion of various indigenous narratives to its canon. It is not enough to adopt indigenous stories into global anthologies and consider the canon decentred from the West. Quite the contrary; a great deal of research is needed. in order to uncover those narratives which may be most conducive to a global fairy tale canon. In the interim, however, as Hearn underscores, narratives are greatly aided when they are articulated with a sense of indigenous difference in genre forms.⁴⁸ When indigenous difference is in this manner articulated, it remains possible for indigenous narratives to be like enough to Western fairy tales to not alienate a broader audience, but also to distinguish themselves enough that they may continue to incorporate the various and at times sacred meanings of indigenous storytelling.

⁴⁵ Joanna Hearne, “‘I am Not a Fairy Tale’: Indigenous Storytelling on Canadian Television”, *Marvels and Tales*, vol. 31, no. 1 (2017), p. 131.

⁴⁶ Hearne, ‘Not a Fairy Tale’, pp. 129-30.

⁴⁷ Hearne, ‘Not a Fairy Tale’, pp. 129-30.

⁴⁸ Hearne, ‘Not a Fairy Tale’, p. 131.

Of course, faced with a project so ostensibly based on narrowing the pedagogical limits of fairy tales, the suggestion arises that it could be better to accept the fairy tale itself as a Western genre, rather than to make the necessary inclusions which problematise the academic understanding of the fairy tale.⁴⁹ This argument is in many ways appealing; primarily because it reaches for a genre ‘outside’ bias into which indigenous narratives can be safely grouped. However, it is erroneous precisely for the same reason—that such an unbiased grouping simply cannot exist, at least in the contemporary academic setting. By incorporating a more diverse selection of texts in the global canon, the fairy tale genre itself is able to accommodate for the global understanding of fairy tales, rather than to continue to uphold an academic conception of the genre which is asynchronous with the ways fairy tales are globally lived and traded.

In this accommodation of global fairy tales, however, the process of translation becomes only increasingly important. Fairy tales, owing largely to the genre’s roots in orality, face many of the same problems as the translation of poetry. It is only by knowing the translator that the audience can appreciate the world systems through which they receive the text. This relationship is particularly important when the narrative is making the shift from the context of the colonised to the coloniser. The two recurring concerns of translating thus arise; how can authenticity *and* beauty be simultaneously preserved in these oral, dynamic stories?⁵⁰ It is worth noting that these two ‘essential’ elements of translation have been oft-critiqued in scholarly discourse, as they limit the scope of analysis when examining the role of the translator.⁵¹ However, despite this limitation, there have yet to be any viable alternatives offered by which to measure the standard of international translation, and thus they remain a steady benchmark for the quality of the translation. The popular solution for the problem of inauthentic translation is one which cannot be easily accommodated in published works

⁴⁹ See, for example, Zipes, ‘Introduction’, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, p. xv.

⁵⁰ Lori Chamberlain, ‘Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation’, *Signs*, vol. 13, no. 3 (April 1988), p. 455.

⁵¹ Chamberlain, ‘Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation’, p. 455.

of fairy tales. To offer a variety of translated works, so that alternative translations and styles are themselves present to the readership, is incompatible with the format of the fairy tale compendium, which already contends with the tight restraints of deciding which works will be included in the edition.

It is not only the written story which informs our understanding of the fairy tale. Rather, there are a large number of editorial decisions which also dictate our reception of certain tales, and the traditions from which they originate. Carter's *Tales*' framing of each of its texts with a geographic location, for example, is one such way that readers are implicitly influenced in their evaluation of text.⁵² On closer inspection, it is particularly interesting that Carter's work is actually quite inconsistent its approach: while many texts are marked by their national-state boundaries, those which do not originate from a clear, nationally-defined location are given a cultural or linguistic grouping in its place. However, there is no uniformity in the classification of those traditions which defy nationalised narrative origins. This is a practice common among fairy tale compilations, which is unfortunate given that it effectively negates the authority of the text.⁵³ By refusing the texts which originate in these contested states of the world, these compilations are also refusing them the legitimacy afforded to the other 'established' producers of fairy tales: nations.

Narratives of national importance are equally deeply affected by the production of fairy tales. Fairy tales offer a way for intercultural and international dialogue. Fairy tales function as a metaphor for the fundamental principle of globalisation: the ability to share stories. They do so in a way which is more accessible than the exchange of more contemporary literature, because it is an exchange which does not rely on the reader's literacy.⁵⁴ In this way, it is not only the upper and middle classes who are able engage in the globalisation of the worlds literature: it is all those who have the intrinsic

⁵² Carter, *Tales*, pp. 252, 308.

⁵³ For example, see Andrew Lang, *Blue Fairy Book*, ed. Brian Alderson (Harmondsworth: Kestral Books, 1975), p. 66.

⁵⁴ Levine, 'The Great Unwritten', p. 220.

human ability to share stories.⁵⁵ Without a context for the wide variance of cultures represented in such far-reaching compilations of tales, those which originate from a contexts outside the main canon are often not afforded the understanding afforded to those in the Western tradition. Thus, while texts of the Western tradition are often supported by the international dominance of European language and culture—however uncomfortable the historic reasons for this dominance may be—similar widespread understanding is simply absent for those countries which have historically been colonised. The long-reaching effects of colonisation on the fairy tale genre is not one which can be solved by the introduction of some small contextual material. Yet a brief prefacing paragraph of context, or a number of well-placed footnotes, would still be greatly preferable than the current lack of contextual framing in these works. This is particularly true given that such material would thus be accessible for younger audiences of the work: a demographic which, as James Pope and Julia Round observe, is often excluded from critical analysis, despite being discerning readers themselves.⁵⁶

A Trans-Indigenous Approach to the Global Fairy Tale?

To date, attempts at decentring the study of fairy tale have largely addressed the current European definition and establishment in the field. This approach, although in many ways necessary, risks perpetuating a postcolonial discourse governed entirely by European standards, even if only by attempts to move away from them. A better approach, therefore, is proposed by Chadwick Allen, who formulates a theory of comparative analysis in which would suggest Indigenous tales to be examined in conversation with one another.⁵⁷

To use Allen's method, tales such as the Arab-Palestinian 'The Seven Levenings' should not be compared to Vladimir Propp's archetypes of folklore, nor Zipes' definition of the literary fairy tale, but instead be placed in conversation with other texts outside the centre of fairy tale discourse.

⁵⁵ Levine, 'The Great Unwritten', p. 220.

⁵⁶ James Pope and Julia Round, 'Children's Responses to Heroism in Roald Dahl's *Matilda*', *Children's Literature in Education*, vol. 46 (October 2014), p. 257.

⁵⁷ Chadwick Allen, *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. xiii-xiv.

Consider ‘The Seven Levenings’ in comparison with the West African tale ‘The Girl Who Stayed in the Fork in the Tree’.⁵⁸ Both tales have strong female protagonists who are maternal figures, guiding younger women with wisdom that is presented as an almost innate women’s knowledge. Both women protect their younger protégées from the trials of the world, though they cannot make decisions for the younger women. These trials usually come in the form of patriarchal power which the women cannot contravene. The old woman from ‘The Seven Levenings’, for example, despite being presented as having some form of magical power, does not save the younger women through magical or mysterious means, but instead uses her wits to trick or outsmart her male counterparts.⁵⁹ That she cannot change the behavior of men, nor indeed of women, in the societies she encounters, does not deter her from going out into the world and shaping it as she sees fit.

The mother in ‘The Girl Who Stayed in the Fork in the Tree’, plays a similar role of protection, although her protection is more directly expressed through motherhood. In the tale, she repeatedly comes to rescue her daughter, using a form of magic to protect her from the enemies presented by neighboring villagers, who want the daughter to marry a king. Like the old woman in ‘The Seven Levenings’, she cannot control the society in which she and her daughter operate, but she works to protect her daughter from those who would harm her, and her ultimate success in doing so, like the success of the old woman in her adventures, underscores notions of a shared feminine agency. In examining each of these texts in relation to one another, rather than in relation to tales from the European canon, a more level and nuanced reading of these stories, and the cultures from which they originate, is able to be gleaned from the text. In conversation with each other, neither text is situated in the context of the Western ‘norm’ and thus, the discussion of these texts’ degrees of ‘otherness’ is not a prerequisite for this analysis.

⁵⁸ Carter, *Tales*, pp. 15-17.

⁵⁹ Carter, *Tales*, pp. 402-5.

Conclusion

There is still a great deal to be done in ascertaining an unbiased method of discussing global fairy tales, for the genre, as this article establishes, certainly *does* exist in the global literary marketplace. Through reading Angela Carter's *Tales* as an example of a global fairy tale anthology, it is evident that the editorial decisions surrounding the presentation of such tales is an important point of discussion in this field, as are considerations of translation and transcription. In the presentation of the global fairy tale, context is key: tantamount to a de-Eurocentric presentation of the fairy tale. However, academic discussions of global fairy tales have an equally important role in shaping the field. Fairy tales play a highly significant role in global society, not only for their role as an introduction to the concept different cultures and people, but also for in their use as metaphor to facilitate global discussion. It is pressing, then, that the academic community for folklore and fairy tales find a definition which incorporates not only the Western-centric perspectives of scholars like Jack Zipes, but a new shaping of the 'fairy tale' which speaks to the term as wonder tales all over the world.

This article suggests that editorial decisions to frame the narratives in world fairy tale compendia could allow for a less Eurocentric reading of fairy tales, especially in a younger audience who lack the capacity for critical enquiry. This framing, alongside the proper attribution of authors, translators, and transcribers, would allow readers of any age to see the languages and cultures the text may have been modulated through. By consistently comparing the oral traditions from around the world to the European fairy tale, academia risks committing a re-colonisation of the fairy tale, as is frequently seen through the work of Walt Disney. Instead, this article suggests that by using methods such as Chadwick Allen's inter-indigenous narrative comparison, the genre may move away from the Eurocentric ideas of the fairy tale.