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Translation (Written Forms)

Karen Seago

In *Once Upon A Time*, Marina Warner uses a map metaphor to visualize the history of fairy tales, using famous collections as landmarks which chart and pinpoint the form's journey across the globe and across time (2014, xiii). The images of the map and journey capture a central feature of traditional fairy tales: stories marked by international dissemination. They have travelled along migration and trade routes in oral and print transmission to solidify eventually into print text collections with titles and authors (or collectors/editors), and a place and date of publication. At this last point of the trajectory we can start talking about translation – rendering an identifiable text from one language (and culture) to another. But the long history of fairy tales, their circulation through languages and cultures, across varying audiences and formats, are also processes of translation, even if it is impossible to trace any nuanced textual relations.

This chapter addresses historical and critical effects involving written fairy tales and translation, documenting well-known written collections. It tracks tales as stepping stones in a written dissemination process and explores how such effects as the interpretation of fairy tales as children's literature, the expurgation of material deemed offensive, and lack of linguistic and cultural parallels influence the textualization of fairy tales in various countries and times. Although films, TV shows, and serials offer creative interpretations for twentieth- and twenty-first-century audiences, and often involve movement from one language and culture to others, the processes of transcreation involved in adapting fairy tales to audiovisual formats of dissemination go beyond the scope of this chapter. For the early years, from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, the image is impressionistic; orally transmitted, popular tales appear only through the traces they leave in manuscripts and contemporary accounts. But even with print collections, it is impossible to capture the full extent of their

dissemination in translation. Research is patchy, only available in the libraries of the receiving cultures, or missing reception in many languages. The discussion is in chronological order of when the main collections were published, spanning the development from the fourteenth to the late nineteenth century.

The oldest written versions of fairy-tale type stories are from the fifth century Indian *Panchatantra*, also known in English as *The Fables of Bidpai* (Opie and Opie 1974, 23). Stories from this collection were translated into Persian in the late sixth century and via this text into Arabic in the late eighth century. It contains early variants of “Puss in Boots” (ATU 545B) and “The Three Wishes” (is this Foolish Wishes ATU 750A? or The Fool Whose Wishes All Came True ATU 675?) and by 1600 had been translated into many European languages including Greek, Spanish, Italian, German, and English (Opie and Opie 1974, 23). But the most widely recognized collection of Asian tales which shaped European storytelling is *The 1001 Nights*. The earliest written collection of these tales is a fourteenth century Syrian manuscript bringing together stories of varying antiquity and origin, from India, Iran, the Arab world, and the Mediterranean (Mahdi 1995, 7-9). This edition was translated by Antoine Galland in the eighteenth century as *Les mille et une nuits* (A thousand and one nights) and, as discussed below in more detail, exerted a profound influence on European traditions.

Sixteenth century Italy: Straparola

Footprints of these tales can be traced in Mediterranean tradition. Stories from this collection circulated in oral form (evidenced in Spain through translations of individual tales from the twelfth century) and influenced one of the first European collections, Giovanni Straparola’s *Le Piacevoli Notti* (1551-1553). Partly inspired by Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, it contains a mixture of material; its 73 tales were partly assembled from earlier collections of novellas, and partly from contemporary oral storytelling traditions, including

material from *The 1001 Nights* (Bottigheimer 2002, 9). Straparola's stories were lewd, rude, and told in Venetian dialect which limited their influence in England. Only one story was translated in William Painter's very popular *Palace of Pleasure* (1566-67) and then in nineteenth-century editions for adults.

But the collection was immensely popular in Italy. with 20 printings in its first 50 years, and immediate French translations of individual stories (Lyon 1553); Jean Louveau translated volume 1 in 1650, published by Guillaume Rouille, and volume 2 was translated by Jean de Larivey in ca 1570. Twelve further translations were published in Paris and Rouen between 1571 and 1589. Censorship from 1615 until the turn of the eighteenth century stopped publications of *Facetieuses nuites de Straparole*, but there were adaptations of Straparola's stories by, for example, Mme d'Aulnoy (Bottigheimer 2002, 123). The translation history into Spanish was similarly buoyant (translations in 1570s, 1578, 1580, 1581, 1582, 1583) with the last publication in 1611/12 before censorship. In Germany too, censorship led to an absence of translations in the seventeenth century, with three sixteenth-century translations (1575, 1582, 1590), one Austrian edition in 1791 published by Alberti as *Die Naechte des Straparola*, and an influential 1817 translation *Maerchen des Straparola*, published by Schmidt in Berlin as volume 1 of a fairy tale series, which served as the source text for a Danish translation in 1818 (Bottigheimer 2002, 123). The turn of the twentieth century saw W. G. Waters's (1894) accurate and Richard Burton's (1906) archaizing English translations.

Translations of Straparola were primarily aimed at an adult readership. Because Basile published his remarkable collection in a semi-archaic Neapolitan dialect, it had little impact until its translation into standard Italian in 1747, German in 1846, and English in 1848. Because of this late translation, Iona and Peter Opie argue that Perrault's *Histoires du temps passé, ou Contes de ma mère l'Oye* (1697) were not influenced by Basile, five

common versions appear (Opie and Opie 1974, 25).

Seventeenth century France: the vogue for fairy tales

Perrault's *contes* were part of the vogue for fairy tales in late seventeenth century literary salons and contributed to the debate over the merits of ancient versus modern literature. But he published under his son's name and claimed that the tales were aimed at children, unlike the sophisticated, elegant, and witty stories by the leading aristocratic authors Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, Véronique Bernard, Charlotte-Rose Caumont La Force, Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon, and Henriette Julie de Murat which were aimed at adults and argued for moral and literary renewal. Three fairy tales were published in 1695, two years before Perrault, by L'Heritier de Villandon in her *Oeuvres meslées* (Assorted works): "L'adroite princesse" (The discreet princess, or the Adventures of Finetta: an entertaining story for the amusement of young masters and misses, trsl. Robert Samber 1818) (ATU 510A), "Les enchantements de l'éloquence" (The enchantments of eloquence) (ATU 480), and "Marmoisan" (ATU 514**). A young woman disguised as a man is wooed by the Queen?] in her *Oeuvres meslées* (Assorted works). Madame d'Aulnoy's *Contes des fées* were published in three volumes in 1697-98 (and *Contes nouveaux, ou les fées à la mode* in 1698) and subsequently translated into English as *A Collection of Novels and Tales of the Fairies* (1699/1707); the English term "fairy tale" is traced to this publication.

In English translations, these elegant, ironic stories, expressive of seventeenth-century French cultural life, were adapted for children not only in style but also in content: the framing novellas and some of the stories were omitted, while other stories were included and erroneously attributed to her (Buczowski 2009, 60-61). Only in 1855 did a more accurate translation by James Robinson Planché come out which sought to render d'Aulnoy's distinctive style, figures of speech, and word play, but a 1892 translation by Annie Macdonell and Miss Lee, *The fairy tales of Madame d'Aulnoy, newly done into English*, notes on the

flyleaf that “the moralizing verses at the end of each story have been omitted.” Anne Thackeray Ritchie, in her long introduction, asserts that “many of Madame d’Aulnoy’s tales have been taken with scarce any variation from the *Pentamerone* of Basile and the *Nights of Straparola*” (1892, xx).

The *conteuses* decisively contributed to the formation of the literary fairy-tale canon, but Ritchie’s dismissive tone is typical of much of the reception of the *contes des fées*. The shift to children as the primary audience, signaled by Perrault’s homely storyteller scenario depicted in the famous frontispiece to the first edition, further contributed to the marginal international reception of the literary *contes des fées* in translation. From the late twentieth century, however, they have received critical attention with scholarly editions and translations (many for the first time) which paid tribute to their cultural, literary, political, and contemporary allusions in critical introductions and translations of selected tales (Zipes 1989, Warner 1996, Seifert & Stanton 2010).

Perrault’s 1697 *Contes* was first translated into English by Robert Samber in 1729 as *Histories, or Tales of Past Times* and advertised as “very entertaining and instructive for children” (Opie and Opie 1974, 30). In 1785, a new edition of this translation with added stories by d’Aulnoy came out in Brussels. In 1799, a translation by G. M. Gent, *Histories or Tales of Past Times, told by Mother Goose, with Morals* came out. It was taken to pre-date Samber’s translation by ten years until the Opies showed the 1719 date to be an error (1974, 30). In 1888, *Perrault’s Popular Tales* with an erudite introduction by Andrew Lang was published in Oxford with countless editions and translations since. Perrault was translated into German in 1790 by Friedrich Justin Bertuch as *Ammenmärchen* (Nurses’ tales), unambiguously placing it in the nursery, while *Märchen der Mutter Gans* (Tales of Mother Goose), picking up on the English title, was first used in 1825 and is still available today. A Spanish translation by Teodoro Baro came out in 1883 in Barcelona under the title *Cuentas*

de Mamá Oca.

Perrault's collection is taken as the moment when fairy tales became the province of children, and his treatment of some motifs found in popular French stories or in the Italian collections by Basile and Straparola demonstrates a child-appropriate expurgation of "gore, obscenity, and paganism" by, for example, removing Little Red Riding Hood drinking her grandmother's blood, her striptease, and her joining the wolf in bed (Ennis 2000, 237). In translation, Perrault's *contes* were received as "simple traditional stories" (Lang 1886, xvii). As was the case with the *contes des fées*, the textual, semantic complexity, the wit and cultural allusions were only rendered in twentieth century translations, among them Angela Carter's (DATE). The only French fairy-tale writer who expressly conceived her stories as children's literature with an explicit didactic intention was Mme Leprince de Beaumont. Her 1757 *Magasin des enfens* was written for her charges (she worked as a governess in England) and was translated into English as *The Young Misses Magazine* in 1761.

The 1001 Nights

Sanitizing or omitting topics perceived as sensitive or offensive has always been a feature of translation, not only in texts aimed at children. The translation history of the *1001 Nights* exemplifies widely varying approaches ranging from adaptation, compilation, and creative writing to scholarly rendering and redaction, to archaising and erotic orientalizing. It also demonstrates the extensive practice of relay or indirect translation where a text takes another translation as its source. Given the very different approaches outlined below, the relay translations via Galland conveyed a very specific, French eighteenth century interpretation of the *1001 Nights*.

Galland's *Les mille et une nuit*, in twelve volumes, 1704-1717, consisted of a melange: translations from the early Syrian and other manuscripts; stories from oral sources, and invented material, including the famous frame story (Makdisi and Nussbaum 2008, 13).

Galland's translation approach is characterized by omissions (for example removing poetic passages), amplifications, and reorganization as well as a toning down of the erotic, imposing a unity of style adapted to French expectations of literariness (for example by removing repetition and enumerations), and adding explanations on plot and cultural detail (Seifert 2000, 193). His translation was enormously influential, seen as providing a true image of the orient and generating a craze for oriental fairy stories in France and abroad. His version was the medium by which *The Arabian Nights* first entered the English-speaking world.

Anonymous translations of early volumes were published by Grub Street in 1706 as *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* and the entire twelve volumes in 1721; both translations were popular in chapbook format and frequently adapted as children's texts (France 2000, 150). Jonathan Scott's six volume translation in 1811 used Galland as its source text, but added translations from another manuscript and provided a critical introduction as well as numerous annotations explaining Muslim religion and customs (Ballaster 2013, 39). With Edward William Lane's 1838-1841 edition, a direct translation from the Arabic became available in English. (John Payne's 1820 direct translation was available in private circulation only.) Lane provided extensive footnotes, eventually published separately as *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages: Studies from the Thousand and One Nights*. The third English translation directly from the Arabic was Richard Burton's archaizing and eroticizing ten volume edition in 1885. As an in-depth review of all English translations noted: "The different versions...have each its proper destination – Galland for the nursery, Lane for the library, Payne for the study, and Burton for the sewers" (Reeve 1886, 184).

Indirect translation using French or English texts was also how *The Arabian Nights* arrived in other languages: into Russian by Alexey Filatov via Galland in 1763-1771, into Chinese by Guisheng Zhou via Burton in 1900, and into Japanese by Hideki Nagamine via Jonathan Scott (indirectly Galland) and Edward William Lane in 1875. Translation into

German tended to be direct: Gustav Weil in 1839-42 and Max Henning in 1895, except for August Ernst Zinserling in 1823 who used an 1804 French translation as source.

The Grimms and their impact: Asbjørnsen and Moe, Hans Christian Andersen

In 1812, Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm published the first volume of their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales), with another seven editions of the complete collection and ten editions of a selected collection of a continually revised corpus of tales over the next 45 years. The Grimms had first conceived a scholarly initiative, collecting stories from oral transmission to evidence a distinctive German cultural heritage, producing an extensive apparatus of notes on the tales' sources, variants, and "folk" storytellers. They claimed that the vernacular material had been noted without editorial (or writerly) intervention, although this was not the case. The impact of Grimms' tales has been extraordinary: its programmatic intention of collecting, noting, and documenting orally transmitted material sparked folkloric interest and collecting initiatives in many countries. In 1841, Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe published *Norske Folkeeventyr*, translated by George Webb Dasent into English as *Norwegian Folktales*, into German by Friedrich Breesemann in 1847 as *Norwegische Volksmärchen*, and into French by Eugène Beauvois as *Contes Populaires de la Norvege, de la Finlande et de la Bourgogne* in 1859.

In Germany and in translation, the *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* were primarily received as children's literature, and editorial intervention and polishing produced the "Gattung Grimm," a recognizable fairy-tale style which greatly shaped expectations of the form. The first translation was into Danish in 1816 by Adam Oehlenschläger, followed by another nine translations by Johan Frederik Lindencrone Lindencrone (1821/1823, 1844) and Christian Molbech (1832, 35, 38, 39, 40 and 43) in the nineteenth century alone (Dollerup 1995, 100). The Grimm translations produced an interest in folk stories in Denmark as well; in this context Hans Christian Andersen produced his fairy tales in 1836: part literary, part inspired

by folk motifs, part traditional stories. Andersen's *Fairy Tales* were translated into Swedish and German in 1844, English and Dutch in 1846, and French in 1848. An 1869 French translation presented Andersen "as the Scandinavian Perrault" (Cyrille 2014, 180).

The first English translation of the Grimms was a selection by Edgar Taylor and Francis Jardine in 1823 as *German Popular Stories*. This edition's success inspired Wilhelm Grimm to put together the "Kleine Ausgabe" of 1825, a selection of the most popular tales for a "small edition" framed as a children's book. In every decade of the nineteenth century new translations and varying selections appeared, always aimed at children; sensitive topics, uncouth language, inappropriate religious references were omitted or amended and the style and narrative perspective adjusted to suit the emerging conventions of children's literature as instruction and entertainment. Some introduced a storyteller and framing device similar to Boccaccio, Basile, Straparola, and the *1001 Nights*, and motifs or titles and names from Perrault found their way in as well. Margaret Hunt's scholarly translation in 1882 made a complete edition of all tales and the scholarly apparatus available in English.

The first French translation, *Vieux contes pour l'amusement des grands et des petits enfants*, in 1824, was a quite literal relay translation of Taylor's *German Popular Stories*, except for "Brier Rose" which followed the Perrault version of "Sleeping Beauty." Another five French translations appeared in the nineteenth century of varying selections, with one scholarly version in 1869. On the one hand, French translations were at pains to establish the differences between Grimm and Perrault, framing the Grimm stories as popular tales in contrast to Perrault's more literary tales, stressing the Grimms' scholarly intention as opposed to Perrault's entertaining one, and avoiding stories where the German and French versions were very similar. On the other hand, translators domesticated the German titles by explaining the "Fitcher's Vogel" as "the German Bluebeard", and used a fairy-tale vocabulary established in the *Contes des fées* rather than lexis in general use: "cabinet"

instead of “chambre” for room, “marâtre” rather than “belle-mère” for stepmother (Seifert and Stanton 2010, 44).

Critical issues: Translation effects

Didactic, moral, and educational considerations have always governed the acceptability of children’s reading, and translations of children’s texts demonstrably conform to the receiving culture’s norms and expectations. These shape the selection of tales and their textual realisation in the target language. In the didactic and morally charged context of English reception, key features which influence the selection of Grimms’ fairy tales are moral constraints, respect for authority figures, profanity, Christian religious characters acting in a non-religious context and being duped, and conformity to the fairy tale format. Concern over profanity in the German collection is explicitly addressed in most prefaces. Stories about divine characters are either not translated at all or references to God and the devil omitted or altered. Particular areas of concern were matters of profanity, morality, depiction of the body and bodily functions, violence, and the maintaining of class markers.

In his 1823 translation, Taylor variously translated the devil as a giant, evil spirit, or diabolical agency. A consistent strategy transposed Christian references to classical or Nordic myth, rendering the devil as Pluto and his grandmother as Hecate, while God becomes Jupiter, the archangel is Mercury, and heaven is Olympus; hell has been translated as the Scandinavian hell or even a cave. Sensitivities manifest not only to explicit irreverence religious topics or characters, but also to more general motifs which could be interpreted as blasphemy. So, for example, the dead Snow White’s re-awakening at the end of the story could be seen as a resurrection which should only be performed by God or Jesus. Consequently, some translations add reassurances that the girl is not in fact dead, or edit out passages which marvel at the fact that her body does not decay.

Moral objections lead to overt sexuality and references to conception, birth, and even

death, being omitted or paraphrased. In fact, most aspects relating to the body, its fluids, or its parts are censored in some way. Sleeping Beauty pricking her finger on the spindle, or Snow White coughing up the poisoned apple from her throat, are sometimes omitted. However, not all translations have a problem with the disenchanting kiss in Sleeping Beauty; quite a few texts eroticize the sleeping girl. Bodily functions including scatological matters are highly problematic. When not absolutely essential to the narrative any such references are omitted; if they are a central motif, they are paraphrased, often leading to narrative inconsistency. Sensitivities around the body's natural processes go so far that the "pisspot" in which a couple live in one story has only been translated in the twentieth century, and even here with stylistic shift as a "chamber pot". In the nineteenth century, the pisspot is rendered as hut, hovel, ditch, or lowly chamber. Even a heap of dung is translated as a pile of hay or straw. While bird-droppings become falling leaves or hail. References to dirt, lice, fleas, or personal grooming are omitted or paraphrased. In "Sleeping Beauty," the association of crab with crab lice--sexual disease--are apparently so strong that the queen hears the prophecy of her pregnancy from a little fish.

There is a great reluctance in the translations to deal with intense emotion or base instincts: great joy, rage, envy, revenge, pride or vanity are all tempered or even omitted. Great care is taken to show authority figures in non-compromising situations. For example, most translations exonerate the king in "Sleeping Beauty" from any carelessness in looking after his child; the blame is shifted onto servants or his actions presented in the passive voice or in an impersonal, abstract manner so that he cannot be identified as the responsible agent. The sanctity of the family is protected by obscuring characters' kin connections, as when the evil stepmother in "Snow White" is referred to only as the Queen.

Gender norms and family roles are also inflected by cultural norms in the English translations. Many choices represent women as noticeably more flighty, irresponsible, and

childish than in the German, while male authority and rational decision making is reinforced even where the German source text suggests emotional insecurity and paternal errors of judgment. Violence is usually edited out or reduced; for example, the cook caught boxing the kitchen boy's ear in "Sleeping Beauty" reaches instead for a spice box. By contrast, translations into Danish render or even increase the depicted violence, especially during periods of German political aggression. Translations in the 1940s noticeably select more stories with violent incidents and cruel punishments for translation than in the nineteenth century and later in the twentieth century; they visually foreground this "German cruelty" by including illustrations of these violent episodes (Dollerup 1999, 245-47).

Translation of the highly literary, complex tales of the seventeenth-century French *conteuses* pose quite different challenges involving social, cultural, and literary norms and ideals. Terms such as *agréable*, *bienséance*, *galant*, *négligence*, and *tendresse* are annotated in translators' footnotes in an attempt to provide nuanced context without disrupting the narrative. *Honnêteté* is singled out as an almost undefinable and untranslatable polysemous notion of "an ideal in seventeenth-century France that encompasses the social and the ethical, in varying combinations according to the inclinations of the user" (Seifert and Stanton 2010, 44). While names on the whole did not pose major challenges, they were usually translated if descriptive, in d'Aulnoy's "La princesse Carpillon" Prince Boffu is rendered as Prince Hunchback, but maintained if proper names, Isidore in "Don Gabriel." The difference between the two grammatical genders in French and biological gender in English posed problems in the use of the personal pronoun. For example in a tale where a rosebush turns into a prince, in French, both are masculine, but in English a decision is required at what point the rosebush as "it" is replaced by (Prince) Rosebush as "he."

All these issues complicate the fact that the fairy tale is "nomadic" (Warner 1994, xvii) and perceived as universal communal property (Haase 1993, 384), yet appropriated by

each culture with little awareness of the differences between a story in translation and its source version in Arabic, French, Danish, or German. The fact that Basile's Italian sleeping beauty Talia is raped by a married king, woken from her deathly sleep by the children she bears, and persecuted by his outraged wife; the French Belle is awakened by the adoring presence of the Prince and is then persecuted by his mother who turns out to be an ogre; and the German Dornröschen is kissed awake by her prince and they live happily ever after, does not change the perception of an enduring notion or relevance of the "Sleeping Beauty." Differences in translation are perhaps less dramatic and yet they produce quite distinct nationally- and culturally-specific versions, a problem further exacerbated by relay translations which convey a story at two, sometimes three removes multiplying the reinterpretation of features across a range of cultural and language traditions. The impact of translation strategies on texts is an issue only rarely addressed in the literature on fairy tales in international reception. Many books on fairy-tale traditions do not mention translation in their index or do not address it beyond noting dates and sometimes publishers, often not even the translators. Pirated translations, in the nineteenth century in particular, produced collections with material from different cultural traditions, often using established titles associated with Grimm, Perrault, or Andersen. Titles of stories also migrate across culturally distinct versions hiding national tradition as source: the French Little Red Riding Hood is gobbled up by the wolf, the German is rescued by a woodsman.

Translation is a step in the continuum of fairy tale mediations but it has also produced an international canon of the fairy tale which represents a small, and distinctly edited, selection of the many, many different models, versions, and voices of the rich tale traditions of Europe and the world. Research is needed to address this; we need more studies of the international reception of tale traditions, like Gillian Lathey and Vanessa Joosen's exemplary *Grimms Tales around the Globe* (2014), which consider the inflections of a story in its varied

translated shapes.

Related topics: children's literature

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