Wondrous Transformations:

Rereading and Rewriting Wonder in Contemporary Anglophone and Francophone Fairy Tales

Emeline Morin

Submitted in requirement for the fulfilment of the Degree of Ph.D.

Comparative Literature

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

College of Arts

University of Glasgow

August 2016

ABSTRACT

This thesis compares contemporary anglophone and francophone rewritings of traditional fairy tales for adults. Examining material dating from the 1990s to the present, including novels, novellas, short stories, comics, televisual and filmic adaptations, this thesis argues that while the revisions studied share similar themes and have comparable aims, the methods for inducing wonder (where wonder is defined as the effect produced by the text rather than simply its magical contents) are diametrically opposed, and it is this opposition that characterises the difference between the two types of rewriting.

While they all engage with the hybridity of the fairy-tale genre, the anglophone works studied tend to question traditional narratives by keeping the fantasy setting, while francophone works debunk the tales not only in relation to questions of content, but also aesthetics. Through theoretical, historical, and cultural contextualisation, along with close readings of the texts, this thesis aims to demonstrate the existence of this francophone/anglophone divide and to explain how and why the authors in each tradition tend to adopt such different views while rewriting similar material.

This division is the guiding thread of the thesis and also functions as a springboard to explore other concepts such as genre hybridity, reader-response, and feminism. The thesis is divided into two parts; the first three chapters work as an in-depth literature review: after examining, in chapters one and two, the historical and contemporary cultural field in which these works were created, chapter three examines theories of fantasy and genre hybridity. The second part of the thesis consists of textual studies and comparisons between francophone and anglophone material and is built on three different approaches. The first (chapter four) looks at selected texts in relation to questions of form, studying the process of world building and world creation enacted when authors combine and rewrite several fairy tales in a single narrative world. The second (chapter five) is a thematic approach which investigates the interactions between femininity, the monstrous, and the wondrous in contemporary tales of animal brides. Finally, chapter six compares rewritings of the tale of 'Bluebeard' with a comparison hinged on the representation of the forbidden room and its contents: Bluebeard's cabinet of wonder is one that he holds sacred, one where he sublimates his wives' corpses, and it is the catalyst of wonder, terror, and awe.

The three contextual chapters and the three text-based studies work towards tracing the tangible existence of the division postulated between francophone and anglophone texts, but also the similarities that exist between the two cultural fields and their roles in the renewal of the fairy-tale genre.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my supervisors, Laura Martin and Billy Grove, for their support and guidance throughout these years. I am immensely grateful and happy to have worked with you both. I am also very grateful to my examiners, Cristina Bacchilega and Alison Adams for their perceptive reading of my thesis and for the interesting discussion at the viva and after.

I am also indebted to Anna Kérchy for suggesting (during a conversation at the 2012 Fairy Tale Vanguard conference in Ghent) a comparison between *Truismes* and *Penelope*— suggestion which turned into a paper first and a chapter of this thesis later.

My experience at the University of Glasgow would not have been the same without my fellow postgraduates: to all of you, from the SMLC and beyond, past and present, thank you. I also wish to extend thanks to colleagues and students who made my years as a PhD student infinitely rich, rewarding, and asserted my love for both teaching and researching.

My gratitude also goes to all the friends who supported me and helped in any way over the years; I am lucky that you are too numerous to thank. In particular, however, I would like to thank Rachel for providing laughs, coffee, and a working environment over the summer before submission, Chloé for always understanding and being supportive no matter how far away, and Pauline for listening and being there during all highs and lows. Jon, for growing up with me, for understanding how much this meant to me, for keeping me sane, and for being there despite everything, thank you.

Finally, and above all, I wish to thank my mother and my stepfather. I could never have done this without you from start to finish. Thank you for providing the voracious reader I have always been with an endless flow of books, for encouraging me to be curious and do what I love instead of what is expected. For your unwavering belief in me, your support, and your love, *merci*.

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature

Printed name

Note on Translation

Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own and merely intended as an aid to understanding.

ABBREVIATIONS

ATU: refers to the Aarne-Thompson-Uther classification system of folktales. The system helps categorise tales through basic plot motifs. For instance, 'Cinderella' is categorised as ATU 510A: 'The persecuted heroine', and a tale such as 'Bluebeard' and its variants 'Fitcher's Bird' and 'Mr. Fox' can be categorised as ATU 312, 'Maiden-Killer'. To avoid repetition, if the name of a category is the same as the tale's title only the ATU number is provided.

INTRODUCTION

1. Universalism, Nationalism, and Authorship

In his preface to *Le Vaillant petit tailleur* (The Brave Little Tailor, 2003), French novelist Eric Chevillard explains that there were two reasons which pushed him to rewrite a fairy tale: firstly, because he believes the tale should finally have a proper author, and secondly—consequently—because 'The Brave Little Tailor' 'shall be the title known by all that [his] bibliography lacked until then'.[1] As the novel starts, the author blurs into the narrator and repeatedly interrupts the story by commenting on his wish for fame, while making derisory comments about folk imagination and the Grimm brothers. Right from the beginning and throughout his text, under cover of humour, Eric Chevillard raises crucial questions on the status of the fairy tale in relation to authorship and ownership: do fairy tales have an author? Do they need one? Do they belong to the people? Questions which Donald Haase also discusses in his article 'Yours, Mine or Ours? Perrault, the Brothers Grimm and the Ownership of Fairy Tales' (1993). Indeed, relations between authorship and fairy tales are ambiguous but present an opportunity for scholars to problematise the relationship in productive ways: as Haase notes, this relation is symptomatised by the fact that the Grimms aimed at collecting (rather than writing) specifically 'German' fairy tales, yet, we always call them 'Grimms' tales'.[2] Haase contends that '[w]hile folktales remain in the public domain because of their anonymous origin in the oral tradition (which accounts in part for their popularity among publishers), there has been a growing tendency to stress private ownership by individuals or even corporations'.[3]

In his article Haase implicitly points to the commonly accepted distinction between folk tales and literary fairy tales, which can be a complex issue, here summarised adeptly by Marina Warner:

> Scholars of fairy tales distinguish between genuine folk tales (*Märchen*) and literary or 'arty' fairy tales (*Kunstmärchen*); the first are customarily anonymous

---

[1] '*Le Vaillant petit tailleur* sera le titre connu de chacun qui manquait à ma bibliographie.' Eric Chevillard, *Le Vaillant petit tailleur* (Lonrai: Les Editions de Minuit, 2011 [2003]), p.17.
[2] Donald Haase, 'Yours, Mine or Ours? Perrault, the Brothers Grimm and the Ownership of Fairy Tales,' in *The Classic Fairy-Tale,* ed. by Maria Tatar (New York: Norton, 1999), pp.353-64 (p.361).
[3] Haase, p.361.

and undatable, the latter signed and dated, but the history of the stories' transmissions shows an inextricable and fruitful entanglement.[4]

As Haase argues, rewritings or retellings are often about 'making a traditional folktale [one's] own' and making 'an artistic claim'.[5] Chevillard's narrator keeps on commenting on the Grimm Brothers' work ethic and editing process, even addressing the collectors directly:

> Jamais vous n'avez prétendu être les auteurs de vos contes. Dès l'origine vous avez anéanti ce vaniteux personnage, l'auteur, vous l'avez dissous dans votre fraternelle association. [...] Je vais dévaluer votre œuvre généreuse pour justifier la mienne, ma laborieuse tentative d'appropriation.[6]

> You've never claimed to be the authors of your tales. Right from the beginning you wiped out the proud character that is the author, you dissolved it in your brotherly association. […] I am going to devaluate your generous work so as to justify mine, my laborious attempt at appropriation.

In the past few decades—especially in the wake of Bruno Bettelheim's Freudian study *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976)—psychological readings of fairy tales have been extremely popular. But in parallel, perhaps in less visible, more niche ways, a lot of research has also been undertaken towards the study of fairy tales in a historical and socio-geographical context. Universalising studies, such as psychoanalytical or structural readings of texts (such as Joseph Campbell's or Vladimir Propp's) that look for similarities rather than differences can be (and have been) fruitful, but the strong links between fairy tales and the local or the national should not be underestimated.

As Jack Zipes notes, the literary fairy tale, ambivalent at its core, 'has evolved from the stories of the oral tradition, piece by piece in a process of incremental adaptation, generation by generation in the different cultures of the people who cross-fertilized the oral tales and disseminated them'.[7] The fairy tales' capacity to spread beyond borders is an

---

[4] Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of Fairy Tale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.xvii.
[5] Haase, p.361.
[6] Chevillard, p.190.
[7] Jack Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p.3.

undeniable part of the genre's attractiveness and wealth,[8] but the complex relation between fairy tales and nationalism also has a crucial role to play in the genre's perpetual renewal and survival. After all, at a time when German principalities were occupied by Napoleon's troops, the famous Grimm Brothers collected tales with an aim to keep their cultural heritage safe. Similarly, the commodified and globalised Disney animated features are, as Zipes has argued many times, an embodiment of Walt Disney's vision of the American Dream.[9]

As this thesis aims at comparing anglophone and francophone rewritings of fairy tales, it might seem incongruous to use a tale which the author repeatedly claims as his own as symptomatic of francophone rewritings of fairy tales (no matter the tone of the text) —especially when the tale he has chosen is a Grimms' fairy tale. But, as we shall see, the other author selected, American Robert Coover, also uses a Grimms' fairy tale as basis for his rewriting and, while the two authors do not rewrite the same fairy tale, a comparison between the two is possible—and worthwhile—because the focus of their rewritings is not so much about a simple shift of plots, as it is about questioning the fairy-tale genre as a whole. A questioning which, I contend, is done through the lens of their individual points of view, but also greatly influenced by the cultural and literary context in which they evolve.

Thus, while the authorial, individual specificity of the tales is one that will be kept in mind, this introduction will (in section three) compare two examples which make a good starting point as a comparison of francophone and anglophone rewritings of fairy tales: Eric Chevillard's *Le Vaillant petit tailleur* and Robert Coover's *Briar Rose* (1996). While it is rather unusual to include a case study in an introduction, the reasons for this are twofold: not only do I believe that this comparison is an excellent way of grounding the thesis postulated in this work, but this discussion and the conclusions drawn from it will also serve as a point of reference throughout the subsequent chapters.

---

[8] While Warner traces an old version of Cinderella as far back as ninth-century China (*Once Upon a Time*, p.78), anthropologist August Nitschke believes that the oral roots of Cinderella originated towards the end of the Ice Age in a matrilineal society (Zipes discusses the claim in his article 'On the Use and Abuse of Folktales and Fairy Tales with children', 1978).

[9] See for instance, Zipes's discussion of Disney's *Puss-in-Boots* (1922) and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) in 'Breaking the Disney Spell' in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. by Maria Tatar, pp.332-52.

However, some initial clarifications must first be made, as of course, ascribing specificities to one culture and language can hardly ever be fully objective, and as Haase has argued one takes the risk of 'stereotyping national character'.[10] Conversely, discerning those national or local specificities, especially in our days of vast globalisation, can be a hazardous undertaking—and there will always be counter examples. Nonetheless, in this thesis, I wish to postulate that despite their recent Disneyfication and marketisation, francophone and anglophone rewritings of fairy tales *do* tend to be substantially different from one another, especially in terms of the use of the marvellous and the wondrous. In other words, I aim to show that fairy-tale rewritings still retain characteristics of their cultural origins, and that those origins and the current cultural and socio-historical context have a remarkable impact on the way tales are rewritten.

In his chapter devoted to the history of folk tales in *The Great Cat Massacre* (1984), Robert Darnton compares eighteenth-century French and German tales and writes:

> Where the German tales maintain a tone of terror and fantasy, the French strike with a note of humor and domesticity. Firebirds settle down into hen yards. Elves, genii, forest spirits, the whole Indo-European panoply of magical beings become reduced in France to two species, ogres and fairies. And those vestigial creatures acquire human foibles and generally let humans solve their problems by their own devices, that is, by cunning and 'Cartesianism'—a term that the French apply vulgarly to their propensity for craftiness and intrigue.[11]

The historian uses the example of Charles Perrault's 'Le Petit Poucet' (Tom Thumb) (ATU 700) as an illustration of a tale with a 'strong French flavor'[12] compared to its German counterpart, 'Hänsel und Gretel' (Hansel and Gretel) (ATU 327A): while the Grimms' version puts the emphasis on the mystery of the setting and its magic (which Darnton calls 'more fanciful and poetic touches'[13] — the forest, the gingerbread house) in the French version of the tale, the few magical allegories hide very real, everyday motifs, which always work towards delivering a *moralité.*

Darnton's analysis is not flawless, and as Zipes has commented might fail in terms

---

[10] Haase, p.357.
[11] Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009 [1984]), p.22.
[12] Darnton, p.21.
[13] Darnton, p.21.

of his knowledge of fairy tales and the context of their creation,[14] but it does draw attention to very tangible differences between the tales. In 'Fées et *Weise Frauen*', Cyrille François also compares tales by Perrault and the Grimms, and points to Perrault's systematic rationalisation of the supernatural in his tales. Specifically, François looks into the power of fairies in Perrault's 'La Belle au Bois Dormant' ('The Sleeping Beauty', 1697) and the Grimms' 'Dornröschen' (1812) (ATU 410). Through a detailed study of both texts, François demonstrates how Perrault's fairies play a small and secondary role in the tales: there are fewer supernatural elements in Perrault's tale than in the Grimms' and they are often questioned by the narrator: 'the narrative voice explains, gives reasons and justifies them with humour, while the German text presents them as self-evident.'[15]

As is the case with the fable,[16] the French tales belong to a literary tradition that is deeply marked by Cartesianism and rationalism, an era of symbolism and allegories. To François, this difference between the German and the French tales comes from both cultural and contextual reasons, Perrault's goal being to please the audience of a royal court, while the Grimms aim at celebrating the folklore of their country and countrymen. Thus, while the Grimm Brothers do not deem it necessary to account for supernatural powers in their tales, in Perrault's tales, the fairies are wise and think in ways that are comparable to that of the learned people in Louis XIV's salons.

And indeed, magic is almost completely absent from some of Perrault's tales: for example, 'La Barbe-Bleue' ('Bluebeard', 1697) (ATU 312, 'Maiden-Killer'), does not contain any supernatural element except for the blood-stained key and, arguably, the strange colour of the protagonist's beard. But while the tendency to rationalise magical elements could only be one of Perrault's own idiosyncrasies, I believe that the Cartesian tone present in his tales can still be traced in contemporary francophone rewritings of fairy tales.

---

[14] Zipes writes: 'Darnton's conclusions about the *German* characteristics in folk tales are of limited value because his scholarship lacks depth. He provides scant evidence that German raconteurs favored 'cruel' tales in the late Middle Ages and fails to make regional distinctions (this was a time, after all, when Germany did not exist as a nation-state)' in *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), p.77.
Haase also criticises Darnton's study for failing to avoid 'stereotyping national character', p.357.

[15] 'La voix narrative les explique, les motive et les justifie avec humour, là où le texte allemand les présente comme allant de soi.' Cyrille François, 'Les faiseuses de dons chez Perrault et les Grimm, du merveilleux rationalisé au merveilleux naturalisé', *Etudes de Lettres, Des* Fata *aux Fées*: *regards croisés de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, ed. by Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère and Véronique Dasen (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 2011), pp.259-78 (p.266).

[16] The most famous and influential representation in France are Jean de La Fontaine's *Fables* (1668-1694). A contemporary to Perrault, his fables are still widely taught in French schools today; many of them are animal fables with *moralités* inspired notably by Aesop.

2. Wonder

Fairy tales are also called 'Wonder tales': tales which, through an exploration of their world, invite readers and audiences to explore new possibilities. Jan Ziolkowski writes: 'Wonder is the effect [fairy] tales seek to achieve, while magic is the means they employ to attain this goal';[17] making wonder not an element within the tale itself, but its result. There is a tendency to think of or to define the fairy tale in terms of magic, forgetting at times that magic is never the central element of fairy tales and that its impact on the story is sometimes minimal. In traditional fairy tales, the main characters are usually ordinary human beings. They are rarely the ones who possess or master magic: magic is either an intruder or a gift, and is usually neither present at the start of the tale nor will it be at its end when order is restored. Opening and closing situations are often extreme and therefore might be unrealistic at times, but they are very rarely linked with the supernatural.

Defining the fairy tale in terms of its relationship to magic restricts it to the belief that supernatural elements are crucial to it and that the fairy tale is therefore inherently removed from the everyday world. I wish to shift this focus and argue that what is inherent to fairy tales and their rewritings is the wonder they create and induce rather than the magic within them. Traditional and modern fairy tales alike explore the everyday world, sometimes through magic and the supernatural, sometimes—and I would argue, more often—through wonder. Thus, magic could be defined as a rather straightforward element of the diegesis while wonder is a more complex, overarching, and intangible trait which can take on many different forms.

In her most recent study, *Fairy tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder* (2013), Cristina Bacchilega uses the image of a 'fairy-tale web'. This web, a network of multiple influences in modern adaptations of fairy tales, both filmic and literary, enables her to study how the fairy tale has evolved and is used nowadays. She contends 'that actively contesting an impoverished poetics of magic, a renewed, though hardly cohesive, poetics and politics of wonder are at work in the contemporary cultural production and reception of fairy tales'.[18] Starting from this statement, I would like to study how, indeed, what Bacchilega calls the poetics of magic

---

[17] Jan Ziolkowski, *Fairy Tales from Before Fairy Tales: The Medieval Latin Past of Beautiful Lies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), p.64.

[18] Cristina Bacchilega, *Fairy-tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), p.5.

has been impoverished (notably because of its negative contemporary associations with deception and disillusionment) and how what she calls a 'poetics and politics of wonder' is at work in contemporary rewritings.

The term wonder encapsulates various meanings, as Marina Warner writes in *From the Beast to the Blonde* (1994):

> The verb 'to wonder' communicates the receptive state of marvelling as well as the active desire to know, to inquire, and as such it defines very well at least two of the characteristics of the traditional fairy-tale: pleasure in the fantastic, curiosity about the real.[19]

Wonder being closely connected to eeriness, strangeness, secrecy, rarity, speculation, and curiosity, the flexible nature of the term provides rich and effective opportunities for text studies. In fact, to put it in more schematic terms for this thesis specifically to situate and examine the texts I wish to postulate a fairly straightforward (but rather encompassing) 'spectrum of wonder'. Starting from one end with the idea of inquiring and questioning it becomes, on the other side of the spectrum, synonymous with marvelling, surprising and enchanting. In between all the nuances of the term, we can find curiosity, a concept vacillating between inquiry and strangeness. It is fitting that curiosity remains a strong presence within the middle of the spectrum, as it is a recurrent theme within fairy tales. Curiosity represents a desire to learn and to know, it is one that propels the action ('Bluebeard' and 'The Boy Who Went Forth to Learn Fear' (ATU 326) for instance) and is central to the process of rewriting fairy tales. Wonder can therefore be studied in relation to narratives which question traditional genre prescriptions, show a will to make readers curious, to play with their expectations, as well as examine boundaries between the fictional, the magical, and the everyday.

Starting from this premise, I wish to argue that looking at contemporary tales within this definition of wonder enables us to shed a different light on them, one that is particularly fruitful for this thesis as it looks at the effect produced by tales that aim at re-enchanting and/or disenchanting the fairy tale in a contemporary context. Thus, at its most basic and schematic, this thesis argues that fairy tales have evolved in different ways in francophone and anglophone circles and that the type of wonder induced in francophone rewritings tends to work towards a questioning of traditional narratives and magic, while

---

[19] Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (London: Vintage, 1995[1994]), p.xvi.

anglophone rewritings aim more systematically at creating works which push their readers to marvel. Thus, the following case study offers a first overview of how this thesis aims to examine a wide range of concepts and ideas (fantasy and realism, parody and humour, world building, metamorphosis and transformation, feminism and embodiment, etc.) and study the ways in which they relate to the various facets of wonder as postulated above.

3. (Dis)enchanting the Fairy Tale: Eric Chevillard's *Le Vaillant petit tailleur* and Robert Coover's *Briar Rose*

Both Robert Coover and Eric Chevillard are usually categorised as postmodernists, Chevillard being largely associated with the leading contemporary experimental French writers, and Coover's experiments on the nature of fiction and cultural myths having had a great influence on American Postmodernism. Both authors have expressed their belief that traditional fictional modes are exhausted, and have attempted to initiate new narrative techniques, often through an important use of metafiction and the pastiche of various genres. The two authors share many similarities, both playing with the common portrayal of fairy tales and turning to ridicule the *naïveté* and happy endings often associated with those. In Coover's work the Prince Charming characters are driven by lust and hunger for fame and glory,[20] and according to Chevillard's narrator, the children of Hans in 'Hans Mein Igel' ('Hans my Hedgehog,' 1819) (ATU 441) might not have inherited their father's looks, but all have a tendency to eat mice, and hide under dead leaves when startled.[21]

Despite their constant debunking of the happy ending pattern, the two rewritings remain faithful to the original plot of the tales they parody. The little tailor's adventure—while constantly interrupted by the narrator's comments and digressions—follows the Grimms' version of the tale. *Briar Rose* is made of forty-two short sequences, constituted by the characters' thoughts and dreams, as the prince is coming through the briars, and the princess waits for the end of her enchantment, stuck in a single, never-ending instant. Because Coover's novella begins in *medias res* (and remains there) it cannot be described as actually staging the events of the 'Sleeping Beauty' tale, but it does respect the apparent course of events. Although they never appear as such in the text, the setting seems to infer that previous events happened as they do in the original tale. An old crone (who is also referred to as 'witch' or 'fairy' at times) takes care of the princess and gives her different

---

[20] A trait also shared by the princes who appear in Coover's later work, *Stepmother* (2004).
[21] Chevillard, p.17.

dreams to distract her—even if the princess seems to forget one dream after the other.[22] In both authors' retellings, this apparent faithfulness to traditional narratives is in fact used to stress the contrived structure of the fairy-tale genre: in Chevillard's and Coover's hands, the plots become mere backgrounds to play around with. Indeed, to bypass what they present as a very dull plot inexorability, the authors create and focus on events that could or should have happened, according to either narrators or characters. Thus, the inevitability of the tale is underlined by the multiplicity of hypothetical but impossible versions. These various versions are an opportunity for the authors to toy with their reader's expectations but also to display their knowledge of the fairy-tale genre.

For instance, in Coover's rewriting, the princess keeps on awakening to strange events: one time a prince undresses her in front of the whole court before turning away, another time it is a monkey who wakes her up by searching through her dress, once it is a whole group of bandits who abuse her. Some of these dreams are direct references to various versions of 'The Sleeping Beauty': in one of them the princess is impregnated in her sleep and gives birth to twins[23] as she does in Giambattista Basile's version 'Sole, Luna, e Talia'[24] ('The Sun, The Moon, and Thalia', 1634-1636). In fact, it seems that, as she expects a happy ending (as told by Disney in 1959), the beliefs and assumptions of the princess reflect those of the implied modern-day reader. She repeatedly intervenes in the telling of the story, asking the crone to change it when she does not like it or when it does not fit with her expectations. The crone always accepts to tell another version of her awakening, but it is rarely one less gruesome or disturbing.

Chevillard's narrator claims that he wants to go against what he calls the traditional fairy-tale plot's 'exasperating fatality':[25]

> L'imagination populaire est intarissable. Comment en irait-il autrement d'une source de glu? Quelques personnages archétypaux piégés là dans des postures

---

[22] Perrault already suggested that the fairy created dreams for the princess: 'car il y a apparence, (l'Histoire n'en dit pourtant rien) que la bonne Fée pendant un si long sommeil, luy avoit procuré le plaisir des songes agréables.' Charles Perrault, *Contes en vers: fac-similé de l'édition originale de 1695-1697* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1980), p.27.

[23] Robert Coover, *Briar Rose* (London: Penguin Classics, 2011 [1996]), p.39.

[24] In 'Sole, Luna, e Talia', the beauty waiting to be awoken is impregnated in her sleep by a passing prince. She only wakes up when one of the twins she gives birth to sucks the splinter of flax out of her finger. Although adapted, it is undeniable that Basile's story was also a basis for Perrault's 'La Belle au bois dormant'. In Basile's version, the King's wife discovers that her husband had an affair with Talia (Beauty) and asks the cook to feed the children to her husband to avenge herself, but the cook saves the children by serving two young lambs instead. In Perrault's tale, the Prince's mother is an ogress who wants to eat the children but the castle's cook hides and saves them from her.

[25] Chevillard, p.28.

grotesques mais conformes à ce que l'on attend d'eux entretiennent les uns avec les autres des rapports prévisibles, limités en vérité par le jeu restreint des combinaisons et des échanges possibles dans cette colle épaisse, agglutinante. [26]

Folk imagination is inexhaustible. What else could we expect from something that creates such a sticking point after all? A few archetypal characters stuck in postures which meet our expectations despite their grotesque nature, and who maintain predictable relations with each other, as they are in fact playing with the limited sets of combinations and possible exchanges in this thick clumping stickiness.

The narrator deplores the fact that there is as much chance of departing from the tale and its pre-set pattern as finding oneself in a sunny poppy-field when slipping on soap in the bathroom. Frustrated with the plot, Chevillard's narrator keeps on interrupting the narration, suggesting for instance that the woman who sells marmalade could take another road, meaning that the tailor would not hear her, not buy marmalade, which would then not attract flies. And if the tailor does not kill seven flies, then there is no story to tell: 'It is not too late to stop it all.'[27] Alas, to the apparent dismay of the narrator (who also tries to kill the marmalade lady by throwing her down the stairs), nothing can impede the unravelling of the plot.

By keeping the original plots as background, and introducing new, previously unavailable versions the two authors (paradoxically) question and deconstruct the very structure of the fairy tale: while the building of the discourse and the fairy-tale structure are seen as inflexible, the diegesis appears as something malleable and of small importance. When Coover plays with various versions of his tale, Chevillard's narrator reminds his reader repeatedly that he could easily have chosen another tale to tell.[28]

In the two novels, the traditional naming of fairy-tale characters according to their function is also pushed to extremes:[29] despite lengthening the tale, the tailor's name is never revealed, and neither are the princes', crones', or kings'. 'Princess', 'Sleeping Beauty', or 'Beauty' are constantly used as substitutes to the princess's actual name, Rose.

---

[26] Chevillard, pp.8-9.
[27] Chevillard, p.25.
[28] Chevillard, p.2 and p.11.
[29] Coover plays with the concept of names to an even greater extent in his novella *Stepmother* (2004): in even more direct ways, the characters of *Stepmother* are caught up in an inflexible pattern from which they cannot escape. The eponymous character, Stepmother is the type of all stepmothers. Throughout the narrative she tries to escape and fight her fate but she ultimately fails because her name defines her, and she will always be trapped in her set role of 'evil stepmother'.

On the one hand, these names are very specific because they define her, but they are also extremely vague and rob her of the identity and individuality an actual name provides. Thus, the princess's names are nothing but a definition of what she represents and stands for as a character—a beautiful, stereotypical princess locked in a castle, waiting for a prince to come and rescue her. Her name(s) trigger the unfolding of the story and she cannot escape her fate; as the old crone repeatedly tells her in an attempt to reassure her: 'You are Briar Rose, your prince will come.'[30] And similarly, the prince himself undertakes his quest for the princess because he wants to 'make his name'.[31]

While they follow a comparable logic, parodying similar aspects of fairy tales through similar means, there are significant differences between the two authors' tales. The main one relates to the universe in which the characters evolve—or maybe more accurately, stagnate. In *Le Vaillant petit tailleur* the narratorial intrusions, commenting on the unlikelihood of the events reported, are constant, and they always act as a reminder of the contrived nature of the fairy-tale genre. The narrator openly mocks the supernatural, relating sarcastically, for instance, how Tom Thumb crawled for the night in 'a closed-down snail shell which required, however, a few contortions'. He comments with irony: 'a spark of realism is enough to validate the most improbable fantasy, I love literature.'[32] Similarly, as the tailor walks through a village: 'houses move aside as he passes by. Scared, they press themselves against their neighbouring houses, forming two narrow rows on both sides of his inflexible trajectory; some facades crack. His reputation precedes him. They know who they're dealing with.'[33] The ironic tone of the narrator hints that everything magical only happens in the tailor's mind, who deforms reality through the lens of his growing ego. Finally faced with the elation of his main character, the narrator decides to warn him directly: 'You're losing track of reality again, little tailor'.[34] This type of narratorial intrusion keeps the reader on his toes and completely impedes the suspension of

---

[30] Many fairy-tale rewritings, as they develop and lengthen the prose of the tale, provide the reader with characters' names, for instance, the Prince Charming in Donald Barthelme's *Snow White* (1967) is called Paul, and Beauty in Thierry Jonquet's *La Bête et la Belle* (1985) is named Irène. Leaving them out in a longer prose strikes one as awkward and purposeful.

[31] Coover, p.9 and p.36.

[32] 'Tom Pouce s'est glissé pour la nuit dans une coquille d'escargot désaffectée, au prix tout de même de quelques contorsions' ; 'Un soupçon de réalisme suffit pour accréditer la plus improbable fantaisie, j'adore la littérature.' Chevillard, p.163.

[33] 'Les maisons s'écartent sur son passage et se pressent craintivement contre leurs voisines, formant deux rangs serrés de part et d'autre de sa trajectoire inflexible, certaines façades se lézardent. Sa réputation l'a précédé…On sait à qui l'on a affaire.' Chevillard, p.47.

[34] 'La réalité t'échappe encore, petit tailleur,' Chevillard, p.55.

disbelief. Everything is debunked, and with a lot of wit and humour, the reader is brought back to a rational, contemporary world scale.

Thus, the French novelist rewrites the Grimms' tale by suppressing all its magic; it simply seems that the story happened a long time ago, and that the magical elements were a mere fantasy of what his narrator describes as bored (or crazy) old widows the Grimm brothers heard the stories from. The narrator refers many times to the German tale collectors but also to literary theories on fairy tales; at one point characters read Bruno Bettelheim's *Uses of Enchantment* (1976) in order to understand their next moves.

These aspects are all the more striking when, in a chapter on Eric Chevillard's work, Warren Motte describes the author's fictional worlds as 'exceedingly quirky ones, governed by curious logic, animated by outlandish events, and peopled with strange characters,' before concluding that 'they would seem to have very little to do with our own world'.[35] Chevillard is known for novels with little—if any—plot line, and a taste for language experimentation. It is therefore striking that, when rewriting the tailor's tale, the author repeatedly insists on its roots in an actual world; despite the narrator's lengthy digressions, his fairy-tale novel is extremely well structured in comparison with his other work. It is almost as if, in a desire to deny the fairy-tale form its own magic, Chevillard resolved to restrict any manifestation of the impossible to his other works: where his experimental writing is highly illogical, Cartesian irony reigns over the writer's fairy-tale narrative.

Chevillard's narrator also repeatedly deplores the necessity of staying close to the plot and consequently, of having to retain some mystical or magical creatures within the story. These intrusions of the fantastic are justified through modern, distorted rational arguments reminiscent of syllogisms, which, in effect, annihilate themselves. For instance, a series of fallacies is created to explain the existence of unicorns: the narrator, who always makes a point of analysing fiction through the lens of the real world, argues that horses are the true mystical—and non-existent—creatures. According to him, some unscrupulous people cut off unicorns' horns to create horses and then used those horns to make us believe that 'ridiculous' creatures such as the narwhal exist.[36]

---

[35] Warren Motte, *Fables of the Novel, French Fiction Since 1990* (Normal, Ill.: Dalkey Archive Press, 2003), p.31.

[36] Chevillard, pp.149-151.

The narrator and his rational contemporary world slowly infiltrate the diegesis and emphasise the eccentricity and improbability of the fictional world and fantasy. As no one ever mentioned she-giants or young giants, the narrator wonders how they could have reproduced and thus how one could reintroduce the species in its natural habitat. He parallels this reflection with the reintroduction of wolves and bears in France, which had raised controversy in French media at the time the novel was written.[37] He also explains how the figure of the ogre is necessary in fairy tales to regulate the demographic rise created by the happy-ending formula which implies the birth of many offspring. Thus, in many ways, Chevillard writes with the 'Gallic touch' Darnton notices in Perrault; his tale is very down to earth, full of wit and domesticity.

This deconstruction of magical motifs, however, does not mean that Chevillard cannot 're-enchant' the tale or induce wonder. As Chevillard openly derides the traditional tale, he constantly brings surprising and unexpected versions and images to the fore. Thus, while magic is mocked and the marvellous suppressed, by constantly questioning his own narration, Chevillard creates a different type of wonder, and one that we could equate with (to borrow Frank Kermode's phrase) 'pleasure and change'.[38] Taking the example of the rainbow, Philip Fisher ponders whether once explained scientifically the pleasure that human beings experience at the sight of the phenomenon is traded for knowledge, and whether intelligibility replaces wonder.[39] Undeniably, however, there is satisfaction in intelligibility, if a different type of pleasure, similar to what one experiences when understanding a joke or solving a mathematical problem. While Chevillard seems to be rejecting magic, he is not rejecting wonder as such—his narrator hints at it himself: 'Being unlikely is not enough to be enchanting.'[40] Despite his apparent rejection of the fairy tale, Chevillard reuses it and through humour, attempts at inducing a different type of wonder for his readers, one that arises from the deconstruction of the traditional tale and a systematic rationalisation and inception of the everyday.

---

[37] Chevillard, p.59.

[38] Kermode's use of the terms differs slightly from mine here, however; he examines the process of canon formation through the two related notions of pleasure and change. Kermode looks into the role aesthetic pleasure plays in informing what we find valuable, and the ways in which this perception changes with time. Frank Kermode, *Pleasure and Change: The Aesthetics of Canon* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

[39] Philip Fisher, *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), p.7.

[40] 'il ne suffit pas d'être invraisemblable pour être féerique', Chevillard, p.17.

Coover's treatment of his chosen fairy tale is very different on this point. While he also mocks the disneyfication of fairy tales and what he calls the 'forever-aftering',[41] his novella remains rooted in fantasy. Despite references to very rational elements—such as how the old crone needs to tend to Beauty's bodily functions—the fantastic and the fairy-tale realm are still very much present. It is interesting that Cyrille François's comparison between the Grimms and Perrault could be applied respectively to Coover and Chevillard:

> La comparaison montre ainsi que les Grimm exploitent le merveilleux en plaçant l'action dans un monde gouverné par le surnaturel et la magie, alors que Perrault situe le récit dans un monde plus réaliste où les interventions des fées sont réduites à des occasions ponctuelles.[42]

> The comparison therefore shows that the Grimms use the marvellous by setting the action in a world ruled by magic and the supernatural, when Perrault sets his story in a more realistic world where fairies' interventions are limited and occasional.

In *Briar Rose*, despite the ironic tone and the development of characters' desires and motives, magic is not suppressed: characters certainly become more human and fallible, but in the world in which they evolve, magic is a normal thing that the reader accepts as such. Coover's crone, for instance, embodies several type characters that clash with one another: by being both the good and the bad fairy, she acquires an ambivalent status not present in traditional, extremely Manichean fairy tales. Her magical powers are not infinite and might not be as awe-inspiring as those of witches or fairies from other tales, but they are real within the narrative world and their existence is never questioned.

By creating a many layered tale, Coover does instil doubt about what is real and what is not—could it be that the outside world is also part of Rose's fantasies, thus making the whole narrative a dream? Do the Prince and the crone even exist? Is Rose truly in a castle protected by thorns and briars?—but those interrogations always remain tacit and within the fictional world. While the reader is led to ponder, the structure of the fantasy world itself is never put into question. When Chevillard integrates his different versions through the comments and musings of an external, omniscient narrator, Coover makes them part of the characters' dreams and fantasies. He reworks the narrative from within,

---

[41] Coover, p.9.
[42] Cyrille François, 'Fées et *Weise Frauen*', p.269.

and despite the obvious commentary on the fairy-tale genre and its restrictions, his characters still evolve in a misty and mysterious dream-world.

Coover's slow modification of his characters' expectations mirrors that of the reader. Despite the fact that Rose seems to forget dream after dream, the crone's stories have an impact on her vision of the world. As she repeatedly rejects the crone's unhappy endings claiming that 'it doesn't sound right. It's not like a real story',[43] she also slowly starts to question her own frame of ideas, and distrust happy endings that seem too perfect, exclaiming in her sleep 'but that's *terrible*! […] I *hate* this story!'[44] In Coover's work revealing the happy ending as a delusion does not constitute an ending, but rather a means of demonstrating that there are other available possibilities: the reader is left with an open-ended tale, and characters, weary of the weight of their destinies, start doubting the meaning of their fates. What if the Prince decides that he does not want to marry the princess? What if the princess herself starts to hesitate? This lack of closure can be read as an opening for new possibilities and creation. Thus, contrary to Chevillard, whose different versions of the tale and digressions show the impossibility of modifying the plot and—paradoxically—the necessity to change it, Coover's multiplicity of versions (multiplicity which has always, in fact, existed, thus making my own use of the term 'traditional', I am aware, imperfect) shows that there is no need for a single version. While Chevillard presents the fairy tale as a form that is exhausted and can only be entertaining, Coover shows that the happy ending is but a small part of the fairy tale, a part of the imagination that has been contained by globalisation and Disney, and that by challenging our assumptions, the fairy tale can still be a significant and relevant force in our lives.

Since both Coover and Chevillard raise similar questions regarding the fairy-tale genre, could this major difference be explained by a different perception of magic and fantasy in francophone and anglophone literature? In most francophone rewritings, if aimed at adults, the fairy tale is not used for its imaginary qualities but to show the dangers of imagination, to be didactic and teach a lesson, no matter how distorted the lesson might be. The fairy tale is used as a warning against itself, it becomes an exemplification of the way the term 'fairy tale' has come to be used in the vernacular: nonsense, foolish stories, unworthy of attention.

---

[43] Coover, p.39, p.50, p.59, and p.63.
[44] Coover, p.79.

That is not to say of course that American or English fairy-tale rewritings are complete utopias, as Coover's novella shows. After all, trying to style one's life after a utopian fairy-tale pattern can only end in disappointment at the best of times. However, most of them do provide the idea of another world, which, far from being perfect, remains dreamy and magical. It seems that these rewritings fit more closely with Marina Warner's definition of the fairy tale:

> Fairy tales report from imaginary territory—a magical elsewhere of possibility; a hero or a heroine or sometimes both together are faced with ordeals, terrors, and disaster in a world that, while it bears some resemblance to the ordinary conditions of human existence, mostly diverges from it in the way it works, taking the protagonists—and us, the story's readers or listeners—to another place where wonders are commonplace and desires are fulfilled.[45]

For instance, Angela Carter's rewriting of 'Beauty and the Beast' (ATU 425C), 'The Tiger's Bride' (1979), in which a beauty becomes beast herself, might not be the idea of a perfect fairy-tale ending: it is dark and subversive, but it remains eerie and poetic. Stephen Benson describes Carter's work as both 'aesthetically constructive and ideologically deconstructive.'[46] In most anglophone works, complete fantasies of a happy ending cannot be trusted, but, even if magical creatures and characters are multi-faceted and flawed, they still exist, as does magic. One could argue that wonder comes from the fact that magic arises and survives through parody and deconstruction. The authors are still aesthetically constructive in their uses of a fantasy world and the establishment of a new form within which to tell their tale. Perfection is not attainable and the fairy-tale genre is used to lead the reader to question the objectivity of the medium itself while providing new possibilities. On the contrary, in francophone literature it seems that the fairy tale is thoroughly deconstructed, both aesthetically and ideologically, because of a paradoxical belief that the fairy tale is not a medium that should be trusted and appropriated by readers in such a way that it influences their lives; adult readers should not be fed with delusions, even imperfect ones.

---

[45] Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time*, pp.xxii-xxiii.

[46] Stephen Benson, *Cycles of Influence, Fiction, Folktale, Theory* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), p.229.

4. Outline

The present study's selection of readings are intended to be suggestive rather than exhaustive and do not aim at creating a strict, rigid definition of either national literature or mind, as there are and there will always be exceptions. This thesis aims at comparing and contrasting the means of inducing wonder in rewritings for adults of well-known fairy-tales. This approach argues, that, just as Coover and Chevillard, anglophone and francophone writers tend to use different strategies to do so. Fairy-tale rewritings work as a good basis for comparison because they are highly recognisable, rely on and play with readers' knowledge and expectations, and the same narratives are known and re-used in both anglophone and francophone circles.

This thesis consists of two main movements which are reflected in its structure: a first section, which is made up of three (sister) chapters focuses on the theoretical, contextual, and historical background of the texts evaluated critically in the second section. Much attention is devoted to these in an attempt to situate the texts and the genre of the fairy tale within their field of cultural production.[47] Thus, before looking at empirical examples *per se,* the first three chapters look into the history of the genre, the current field of production (publishers, academies, journals, prizes, the place of authors within this field etc.) and the impact these might have on the texts themselves. Chapter one examines problems of definition of the contemporary fairy tale and the place of imaginative fiction in francophone and anglophone circles nowadays. Chapter two aims to render visible certain traits or characteristics of the fairy tale and related genres that could explain the division postulated between francophone and anglophone rewritings. The chapter intends to bring these to light by tracing them back to their genesis from problematic fields of production, offering an overview of the developmental evolution of the genre, notably through the literary *querelle* which occurred at the end of the seventeenth century in France, and later European romantic movements. As fairy-tale rewritings often mingle several genres, the third chapter examines theories of fantasy, the idea of genre within imaginative fiction, and the evolution of the fairy-tale genre.

---

[47] Corresponding largely to Pierre Bourdieu's definition of the cultural field which looks at artistic works within the conditions of their production, circulation, and consumption, by examining not only the author or artist, but also the broader social and cultural context such as academies, critics, publishers. As Bourdieu writes, 'the literary field is itself defined by its position in the hierarchy of the arts which varies from one period and one country to another. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993).

The second section of this thesis is made up of case studies, each of which will compare francophone and anglophone works, all hinged on the concept of wonder as defined above and its uses in relation to different thematics and realistic and magical occurences. Three different approaches (formal, thematic, one tale-based) have been undertaken in order to widen the scope of this study: chapter four focuses on world creation in works that rewrite and reuse several tales at the same time. All these works have been selected because of their distinctive construction of the world of fiction, a construction which is deeply referential, resting on an intricate weaving of narration, characterisation, landscape, and reader response. By using possible-worlds theory, the chapter aims to show that both despite of and because of the transgression of the common rules of fiction, wonder is still a crucial aspect and goal of these rewritings and adaptations but one that is used differently in francophone and anglophone tales, especially in terms of narrative framing.

Chapter five looks at tales of animal brides in recent retellings. While metamorphosis is an important component of traditional fairy tales, female transformation is uncommon, and raises important questions linked with societal and contextual representations of monstrosity and femininity. The chapter reviews several anglophone and francophone tales of animal brides before focusing on two specific works: Mark Palanski's film *Penelope* (2006) and Marie Darrieussecq's novel *Truismes* (1996) in which the heroines take the appearance of pigs. If metamorphosis and shapeshifting would seem to be intrinsically supernatural traits, their use within the narratives studied and their link to the magical differ widely. The chapter therefore looks at the association of femininity and fairy tale with wonder in everyday contemporary settings.

The sixth and final chapter focuses on retellings of the specific tale of 'Bluebeard'. 'Bluebeard' is a tale in which curiosity is central and is a trigger for the unfolding of the story, but it is also traditionally almost devoid of magic. It is a tale which is originally French but which has become common in anglophone rewritings notably because of Angela Carter's famous rewriting of the tale in 'The Bloody Chamber' (1979). The comparison between anglophone and francophone works hinges on the representation of the forbidden room and its contents specifically which enables yet another consideration of the concept of wonder and its uses. Bluebeard's 'cabinet of wonder' is one that he holds sacred, one where he sublimates his wives' corpses, the catalyst of awe and terror. As this chapter will demonstrate, francophone works tend to situate their rewritings in

contemporary, rational settings while anglophone works are more likely to offer reworkings of more magical variants of the tale such as the Grimms' 'Fitcher's Bird'.

CHAPTER ONE

The Contemporary Fairy Tale in Context

1. The Twenty-First-Century Fairy Tale

1.1. A Predictable Structure, a Happy End—and Some Insipid Princesses?

It seems that the fairy tale, familiar to all, should be easy to describe and define. The most widely held conception is that fairy tales are short and concise stories which culminate in a happy ending; tales which contain supernatural elements but no historical or geographical information ('Once upon a time, in a land far far away…'). Fairy-tale characters are mostly types, heroes who go through a predictable narrative before achieving a naive fairy-tale happy ending.

But in truth, the very term 'fairy tale' is problematic, and just like the above definition, very reductive, since most of the time fairy tales are not tales about fairies—the name comes from a translation of Mme d'Aulnoy's *Contes de Fées* published in the late seventeenth century (1698). As Jack Zipes remarks in his introduction to *The Oxford Companion to Fairy-Tales* (2000): 'Fairy tales have been defined in so many ways that it boggles the mind to think that they can be categorised as a genre.'[1] In his book devoted to the history of fairy tales, *Fairy Tales and After* (1978), Roger Sale notes that while the term 'fairy tale' is only 'a convenience,' '[e]veryone seems instinctively agreed on what the term includes and excludes, even though fairy tales blend easily into related kinds, like myths, legends, romances, realistic folk fables and cautionary tales'.[2]

Wondrous and eerie by nature, the fairy tale is difficult to pin down. In his essay 'On Fairy-stories' (1947), J.R.R Tolkien defines fairy tales neither by their content or length, but rather by the world in which they are set:

---

[1] Jack Zipes, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.xv.
[2] Roger Sale, *Fairy-Tales and After: From Snow White to E.B. White* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.23.

> The definition of a fairy story—what it is, or what it should be—does not, then, depend on any definition or historical account of elf or fairy, but upon the nature of Faërie: the Perilous Realm itself, and the air that blows in that country.[3]

In the same essay, Tolkien deplores the exclusive association of fairy tales with childhood and claims that 'Fairy stories banished in this way [to the nursery], cut off from a full adult art, would in the end be ruined'.[4] And indeed, the slow commodification, globalisation, and recent Disneyfication of its motifs have reduced for many the fairy tale to naive, shallow stories. The genre has come to be seen as belonging to children's literature only, with cute sanitised images culminating in a happy ending, where beauty, love and kindness succeed in fulfilling utopian visions—and putting the children to sleep. In the vernacular, the fact that the phrase 'fairy tale' is synonymous with lies and nonsense certainly does not help dispel these notions. This has not always been the case, however, and a great number of fairy tales have been written, and are still written, with deeper intents, and for an adult audience. In November 2014, Jack Zipes published a translation of the first edition of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*, 1812), claiming that it was 'time for parents and publishers to stop dumbing down the Grimms' tales for children'.[5] As the Grimm Brothers—especially Wilhelm—edited the tales they had collected over decades, many elements were changed: the evil mother, believed to be too frightening, became the infamous stepmother, and many sexual innuendoes were suppressed. For instance, Zipes edition contains often little-known episodes which had disappeared in subsequent editions, such as Rapunzel's pregnancy.[6]

With the recent increase in fairy tale-based narratives in mainstream anglophone culture in particular, the often forgotten sexual and violent aspects of many traditional fairy tales have led to various disagreements as to the 'true' nature of the fairy tale, for these changes, whether one considers them to be good or bad ones, have become an integral part of the fairy tale and its history as a genre. As many authors and film directors have claimed to go back to the roots of fairy tales, commentators online or in the press (often unaware of

---

[3] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories', *Tree and Leaf* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), p.16.

[4] Tolkien, p.35.

[5] Alison Flood, 'Grimm Brothers' fairytales have blood and horror restored in new translation', *The Guardian*, 12 November 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/nov/12/grimm-brothers-fairytales-horror-new-translation> [accessed July 2015]

[6] In early versions of the Grimms' tale 'Rapunzel', the visits of the Prince are betrayed by the princess's clothes getting tighter, thus letting the witch deduce that the girl is pregnant. This was changed in subsequent editions in which Rapunzel simply carelessly lets it slip that the prince has been visiting her.

older versions) have commented on the idea of 'betraying' fairy-tale narratives. While some claim that using dark motives and trying to darken the narrative is spoiling the fairy tale as we know it (that is, in mainstream culture) others believe it to be an innovative (ground-breaking almost) idea. Finally, some see the recent surge in fairy-tale narratives (notably in film and TV) as finally reclaiming the fairy tale and going back to its roots, endowing it with meaning again.[7]

A lot of recent anglophone revisions attempt to fulfil audiences' expectations both of a more 'adult', darker fairy tale, but also, of child-like, light-hearted enchantment. There are many examples of this, such as *Jack the Giant Slayer* (2013), *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012), *Mirror Mirror* (2012) and the TV series *Once Upon a Time* (2011-ongoing) and *Grimm* (2011-ongoing). Disney Studios' recent features *Maleficent* (2014) and *Cinderella* (2015) epitomise this tendency. The two films are reboots of previous features: *Maleficent* was heavily marketed as the film that would finally give its audience an insight into the infamous witch of Disney's very own 1959 *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Cinderella* is almost shot for shot a reproduction of the 1950 film.

Maleficent, who claimed a cult status for being so distinctively evil, was undeniably a good choice; she is a strong character who yields powerful magic, is terrifying-looking, and can turn into a giant fire-breathing dragon. The first teaser for the eponymous film, out in November 2013, lasts one and a half minutes, showing only dark scenes—both in terms of photography and theme—portraying Maleficent (Angelina Jolie) as a looming, cunning, threatening figure. But strikingly, the movie itself could not be further from its marketed image: it is extremely colourful and surprisingly light-hearted, aiming at having the audience empathise and laugh with a touchingly human Maleficent. Maleficent (despite her name) is a fairy who reigns over and protects a wild land of magic and benevolent magical creatures. Her wickedness is very short-lived: betrayed and emotionally and physically maimed by Princess Aurora's father (Sharlto Copley), she curses the girl (Elle Fanning) in a fit of rage, and spends the rest of the film trying to make amends. The villain's motives are explained at length, and while the dragon still makes an appearance, it is her (male) servant who is turned into the fire-breathing creature. The

---

[7] A point also discussed by Pauline Greenhill and Jill Terry Rudy in their introduction to *Channeling Wonder* (2014), pp.2-3. See for instance: Becca Rothfeld's 'The New Fairy Tale is Trying to Escape its Past', *New Republic*, 23 September 2014. Rothfeld's article is typical of a confused approach to fairy tales, one where tradition is in turn complex, dark and primal, and at others 'sugar-coated'.
<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/119548/fairy-tales-are-trying-escape-their-pasts> [accessed 30 November 2014]

princess herself, while not the main focus of the film anymore, is incredibly naive and insipid. The real villain, the king and father, is defeated, peace is restored by Maleficent and Aurora and the film ends in a colourful happy ending. Thus, while the subjugation of the evil patriarch works as testimony to the writers' awareness of the material they are working with, they seem oblivious on many issues, notably the paradox of presenting a scene which is a clear allegory of rape (in which Maleficent is drugged to sleep and her wings cut off from her body) but making, less than an hour later, a humourous scene in which the fairies push the prince to kiss the princess in her sleep.

The reboot of *Cinderella* presented similar issues. While the main focus of *Cinderella* is not the stepmother, there are also attempts at creating more rounded characters, notably by explaining some of her motives in the film. But despite the director's (Kenneth Branagh) claims that the film is feminist,[8] the heroine wins the prince because she does as her mother advised her: 'Have courage and be kind'. As many have noticed, being (literally) surreally thin[9] seemed to be another requirement towards her happy ending, as the heroine does not show much agency or brains. The visuals of the film and its magical elements are undeniably enchanting and, in many ways, it is similar to *Maleficent* as the two films encapsulate the new tendency in big budget fairy-tale reboots: the producers try to appeal to audiences by promising darker material and/or multi-faceted heroines, but still portray insipid princesses and fulfil the wish for a dreamy atmosphere and a happy ending.

In fact, many of Disney's features have emerged directly from the canonical fairy tales written between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries and the values advocated by their authors. As could be expected, these are mostly patriarchal ones: virtue, beauty, modesty. As Zipes comments:

> For the most part, the writers of the French vogue prepared the way for a social institutionalization of the fairy tale and stamped the very unreflective and uncritical manner in which we read and receive fairy tales to the present.[10]

---

[8] Kathryn Shattuck, '"Cinderella" Has a Dusting of "Downton Abbey"', *The New York Times*, 5 March 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/08/movies/cinderella-has-a-dusting-of-downton-abbey.html> [accessed July 2015]

[9] Many have argued that despite Disney Studios' denial, Cinderella's waist had been altered through CGI: <http://www.etonline.com/movies/159748_did_disney_digitally_alter_cinderella_waist/> [accessed July 2015]

[10] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: the Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.34.

The role the Disney franchise has played in globalising certain fairy-tale traits and narratives cannot be ignored or overstated; Walt Disney's features have been widely distributed across the globe for decades now and Disney has claimed ownership and control over traditional (sometimes anonymous) stories. But while it is part of the fairy tale, this specific vision is only one facet of the genre; often unbeknownst to the wider public, the last few decades have witnessed an incredible number of rewritings, adaptations, and subversions of fairy tales.

French fairy tale films have been numerous over the years; as Anne E. Duggan writes: 'The French have been making fairy-tale films since the birth of cinema.'[11] The most emblematic examples being of course Georges Méliès's films (such as *Cendrillon* (*Cinderella*, 1899), 'Barbe bleue' ('Bluebeard', 1901) and 'Le Petit chaperon rouge ('Little Red Riding Hood', 1901)), Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*, 1946) and Jacques Demy's *Peau d'âne* (*Donkey Skin*, 1970).

Most recently, Christophe Gans directed a new *La Belle et la bête* film (*Beauty and the Beast*, 2014). The Franco-German production was shot in French, but most likely in a will to appeal to an international audience, its two main actors (Vincent Cassel and Léa Seydoux) have been Hollywood's 'French darlings' for some time now. The look of the film is extremely thought-through and the plot follows closely the original version of the tale while also introducing new developments—such as dream sequences explaining the reasons for the prince's curse. Despite clear nods to Cocteau's version, however, the film loses the subversiveness of the original[12] and certainly falls within the recent (rather bland) mainstream anglophone fairy-tale trend. Many scenes for instance are strikingly reminiscent of Catherine Hardwicke's *Red Riding Hood* (2011) where the blond dishevelled romantic heroine is draped in large red garments running against a snowy backdrop. All the films' efforts seem to be focused on the creation of a visually striking environment but do not bring much to the genre or the tales they are based upon.

---

[11] Anne E. Duggan, 'The Fairy-Tale Film in France; Postwar Reimaginings' in *Fairy Tale Films Beyond Disney: International Perspectives*, ed. by Jack Zipes, Pauline Greenhill and Kendra Magnus-Johnston (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp.64-79 (p.64).

[12] The film is often described as a queer and subversive fairy tale film, notably because Jean Marais, who played the beast, was Jean Cocteau's longtime partner. See Duggan, p.69 ; Daniel Fischlin's 'Queer Margins: Cocteau, La Belle et la Bête, and the Jewish Differend', *Textual Practice* 12.1 (1998), 69-88 ; Irène Eynat-Confino, 'Cocteau and his Monster', in *On the Uses of the Fantastic in Modern Theatre; Cocteau, Oedipus and the Monster* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp.93-110.

1.2. Tales of Sexuality, Violence, and Empowerment

In parallel to big franchise movies, a great number of fairy-tale adaptations from anglophone and non-anglophone countries have recently appeared both in theatres and on television. Often overlooked but extremely numerous (Jack Zipes's *The Enchanted Screen* from 2011 offers an excellent historical overview of the use of the fairy tale in cinema),[13] these other adaptations also participate in the history and constant evolution of the genre.

While neither anglophone nor francophone—but certainly international—[14] two recent films which are especially notable since Zipes's publication are Pablo Berger's *Blancanieves* (2013) and Matteo Garrone's *Il Racconto dei racconti* (*The Tale of Tales*, 2015). *Blancanieves* is a particularly striking example of the adaptability of the 'Snow White' tale (ATU 709), as it is set in a romanticised vision of Spain in the 1920s where the heroine is a female toreador. Far from being childish, the film is a black and white, silent version, with an extremely thought-through look and careful photography. In the making-of the director explains that his aesthetic choices were his own way of making his audience time travel. Stricken with amnesia, Berger's Snow White does not need a Prince to rescue her, but rather goes on a quest of self-discovery, which does not end happily. The film renews the tale not only by transposing it to an unexpected setting, but also by developing the characters in interesting, meaningful (and at times humorous) ways: the dwarfs showing potential both as evil characters and as lovers, and the stepmother enjoying sado-masochist sexual relationships.

The Tale of Tales is adapted from and inspired by the often little-known collection of the same title, *Lo Cunto de li cunti* (*The Tale of Tales*, 1634-1636) also known as *Il Pentamerone* (*The Pentameron*) by Giambattista Basile. The adaptation, which opened the 2015 68th Cannes festival draws from this often overlooked (but crucial to the development of the literary fairy tale)[15] Italian tradition[16] believed to have been initiated by Giovanni

---

[13] Also particularly noteworthy are Pauline Greenhill and Sidney Eve Matrix's collection of essays *Fairy Tale Films: Visions of Ambiguity* (2010), Pauline Greenhill and Jill Terry Rudy's *Channeling Wonder: Fairy Tales on Television* (2014), and most recently *Fairy-Tale Films Beyond Disney: International Perspectives* (2016), edited by Jack Zipes, Pauline Greenhill, and Kendra Magnus-Johnston.

[14] *Blancanieves* is a Spanish silent film which was nominated for and awarded numerous international prizes ; and *The Tale of Tales* is an Italian film, shot in English with a well-known international cast: Salma Hayek, Vincent Cassel, Toby Jones, John C. Reilly.

[15] Many of the seventeenth-century French tales by Perrault, d'Aulnoy or Mme de Murat mentioned further down were inspired by Basile's and Straparola's tales.

[16] See Jack Zipes's *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm: Texts, Criticism* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2001).

Francesco Straparola[17] (*Le piacevoli notti, The Facetious Nights*, 1550-1553). Far from the sanitised vision of fairy tales, the film lives up to the grotesque, dark, bawdy, and gruesome style of Basile: made of three interwoven tales, the film tells of a queen who would do anything to be able to conceive, of a lustful king who is attracted to an old crone (having mistakenly assumed that her singing was a reflection of her beauty), and of a king who is obsessed by a gigantic pet flea and gives his daughter away to an ogre. Not only does the film focus on largely unknown (and yet pivotal) tales, it also offers a meaningful and strong focus on female characters, in particular their desire for, quest for, and requirement of beauty and youth.

In a 1979 article, Karen Rowe claimed that, notably because of the way it had come to portray women, the fairy tale had lost its relevance and potency.[18] Published the very same year, Angela Carter's *Bloody Chamber* (1979) gave women in fairy tales a voice, motives, and desires. As Donald Haase explains in the preface of *Fairy Tales and Feminism* (2004): 'fairy-tale studies has developed into a coherent discipline that has been profoundly influenced by feminism'.[19] Thus, while big budget movies still often struggle with the portrayal of women in fairy tales, there is a very strong feminist branch of anglophone fairy-tale rewritings. Kate Bernheimer, herself a fairy-tale scholar and a writer, has edited two anthologies dedicated to fairy-tale rewritings and their writers. First, *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall* (1998) which is an anthology of essays by female writers on fairy tales, and then *Brothers and Beasts* (2007), which this time gives voice to male writers and is part fictional, part autobiographical, part critical. The two collections give an excellent insight into the influence the feminism now associated with fairy tales has had on both male and female writers.

More recently, Bernheimer has edited an anthology of fairy-tale rewritings, *My Mother She Killed Me, My Father He Ate Me* (2010). This time, the retellings bring together writers from around the world who rewrite the tales from different contexts and in different genres. Bernheimer is also the editor of *The Fairy Tale Review,* a journal founded in 2005, which publishes fairy tale-inspired stories. Edited by Ellen Datlow and Terry Windling, the *Snow White, Blood Red* anthologies are another notable series of fairy-tale

---

[17] Ruth Bottigheimer devotes a monograph to the Italian author: *Fairy Godfather: Straparola, Venice, and the Fairy Tale* (2002). Her belief in his crucial role has sometimes been criticised, notably by Jack Zipes and anthropologist Francisco Vaz da Silva (in "The Invention of Fairy Tales," *Journal of American Folklore,* 123: 398-425, 2010).

[18] Karen Rowe, 'Feminism and Fairy Tales', *Women's Studies: An Inter-Disciplinary Journal*, 6:3 (1979), 237-59.

[19] Donald Haase, *Fairy Tales and Feminism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), p. xiii.

rewritings, of which six volumes were published between 1993 and 2000 and have acquired a cult status among fairy-tale lovers online. These stories mostly rewrite fairy tales and transpose them to different genres such as fantasy or science fiction. Windling also created 'the Fairy Tale Series', a body of eight novels by various authors who rewrite fairy tales published by Tor Books.[20]

Because of its apparent structural simplicity, stock characters, and well-known motifs the fairy tale's uses are extremely varied and it is close to impossible to account for the number of fairy-tale rewritings published every year. The assumed reader's familiarity with fairy-tale narratives make it a particularly apt subject for parodies:[21] in Chris Pilbeam's *The Asbo Fairy Tales* (2008), Snow White appears on a TV show as she tries to determine by means of a DNA test which dwarf is the father of her child. James Finn Garner's *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* (1994) caricatures the censorship used nowadays in children's literature by turning traditional tales into quirky stories. In *Alice in Tumblr-land* (2013), Tim Manley transposes fairy-tale characters to twenty-first century America and the unpleasantness of the (online) dating world. Other writers use the tales as a way to approach darker issues, for instance Francesca Lia Block's collection *The Rose and the Beast* (2000)*,* tells tales of violence and abuse in a drug-ridden LA, and Robin McKinley's *Deerskin* (1993) rewrites 'Donkeyskin' (ATU 510B 'unnatural love') with an emphasis on the impact of the king's incestuous drives on his daughter's life.

Part of the paradox (and also confirmation) of this thesis as a whole is that there are very few rewritings of fairy tales for adults in French. As Lewis C. Seifert writes in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (2000): 'when contrasted with literatures in English especially, it is striking that late 20th-century French and Francophone literatures have produced so few literary fairy tales written primarily for adults.'[22] To my knowledge, there has not been any anthology of rewritings published or journals devoted to fairy tales. This study is therefore inherently and (admittedly) unequal because the texts in English had to be selected more drastically (based on relevance, content, and quality) than the ones in

---

[20] One of them is studied in chapter 6: *Fitcher's Brides* by Gregory Frost. The others are Steven Brust's *The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars* (1987), Kara Dalkey's *The Nightingale* (1988), Jane Yolen's *Briar Rose* (1988), Patricia C. Wrede's *Snow White and Rose Red* (1989), Pamela Dean's *Tam Lin* (1991), Charles de Lint's *Jack of Kinrowan* (1995), and Tanith Lee's *White as Snow* (2000).

[21] Because they also reuse stock characters and subvert easily recognisable motifs, erotic fairy tales are very common—if often lacking in quality—a simple search of 'fairy tale' in the kindle books section for instance is telling. One of the most famous ones is Anne Rice's *The Claiming of Sleeping Beauty* (1983).

[22] Lewis C. Seifert, 'Fairy Tales in France', in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, ed. by Jack Zipes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.186-87.

French which were very much limited to what I could find and had been written in the past three decades or so.

Published in 1984, *Les métamorphoses de la reine,* by Pierrette Fleutiaux is a notable collection of seven feminist tale rewritings. Fleutiaux's rewritings are humorous, extremely self-referential, and anchored in a 1980s French context. Similarly to parodies which use the fairy tale's well-known motifs, characters, and its expected outcomes for comic intents, fairy-tale subtexts are not uncommon in francophone crime novels and thrillers. This is the case of Thierry Jonquet's *La Bête et la Belle* (1985), most of the stories in Pierre Dubois's collections *Les contes de crimes* (2000) and *Comptines assassines* (2011), and Jean-Christophe Duchon-Doris's *Les nuits blanches du Chat botté* (2000). If, for lack of space, these tales are not studied further in this thesis, the latter is especially noteworthy as it follows a series of murders perpetuated during the time of Perrault (who also appears as a character) and the motifs from the tales are used by the killer as clues. Duchon-Doris writes a historical thriller which shows his interest in the tales as well as in the mystery surrounding the publication of Perrault's collection.[23] These types of retellings often use the fairy tale as generic conventions, usually revealing towards the end (in ways similar to what Conan Doyle does in many Sherlock Holmes narratives) that, similarly to most francophone rewritings, there is a rational explanation and no magic.[24]

1.3. Fairy-Tale Scholarship

The revival of interest in both mainstream and more obscure literary works, and the fairy tale's complex history, has led to the emergence and development of various branches of fairy-tale scholarship. In the twentieth century, many structuralist theories attempted to provide a more sophisticated critical interpretation, the most famous being, of course, Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), which identifies functions that form the model narrative of traditional Russian and Eastern European folktales. Propp's formalist approach described a pattern applicable to other tales, one which has initiated a

---

[23] The tales were first published under the name of Perrault's son, Pierre Darmancourt who had also been accused of murder. For a detailed account, cf. Marc Soriano's *Les contes de Perrault* (1968).

[24] Rewritings for children are, however, fairly common, and illustrators Rebecca Dautremer and Benjamin Lacombe are both popular and prolific in the field. Written by Philippe Lauchermeier and illustrated by Dautremer *Le Journal secret du Petit Poucet* (*Tom Thumb's Secret Diary*, 2009) expands the short tale over 200 pages and mingles text and illustrations. Particularly noticeable is Lacombe's pop-up book, *Il Etait une fois* (*Once Upon a Time,* 2010) which does not contain any text (apart from its title) and devotes a double page to each of the eight tales retold in the book. The book is very cleverly crafted, as each page retells a tale by intermingling several recognisable elements and creating a specific atmosphere.

very useful framework for folklorists everywhere. His work has, however, also been criticised for its lack of sensitivity to the stories' contexts and the subtleties of the tales. The same criticism has been raised against the method of the Finnish school, notably Antii Aarne's tale-type index—revised by Stith Thompson in the 1920s and in the 60s, and again by Uther in 2000 (abbreviated throughout this thesis as ATU)—which helps identify and classify recurring motifs and patterns of traditional folktales in a historico-geographical context. While both are useful tools for the folklorist, they have limitations when it comes to analysing texts as literary creations, as they do not take text specificities into account, the indexes listing attributes only, leaving no or little room for interpretation and differences between texts.

This does not mean, however, that the structure of fairy tales is not important; it often remains one of their most striking features. Jessica Tiffin's book title, *Marvelous Geometry* (2009), refers to the fairy tale's 'highly encoded and recognizable qualities of structure and pattern and [to] its deliberate and self-conscious distancing of itself from realistic representation, whether in logic and detail or in its operation as magic narrative'.[25] While Tiffin also studies contemporary works, in contrast to this thesis, she concentrates on texts which are specifically written as traditional fairy tales. As she focuses on the genre's structural patterns, her criteria for selecting her corpus is to exclude texts that only use fairy-tale motifs and not fairy-tale structure. Tiffin takes the example of Margaret Atwood's 'Bluebeard's Egg' (1983), which 'refers to fairy tale, and looks to fairy-tale structures for some elements of shape, but is not in itself a fairy tale'.[26]

Tiffin's definition of fairy tales' traditional structure (coherently) rests on canonical fairy tales: short forms as developed by canonical writers and collectors such as Perrault and the Grimm Brothers. But fairy tales were not always written within the structure we now give them. Discussed below because of its relation to seventeenth-century French fairy tales, Elizabeth Wanning Harries's study *Twice Upon A Time* (2001) makes a useful distinction between what she calls 'complex tales' and 'compact tales'. She argues that the 'compact' form that we are most familiar with—as developed by Perrault and the Grimms—has overshadowed the more sophisticated 'complex' form of the tales which is an equally rich tradition.

---

[25] Jessica Tiffin, *Marvelous Geometry, Narrative and Metafiction in Modern Fairy Tale* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009), p.8.
[26] Tiffin, p.27.

Many scholars today have come to focus on the specificity of distinctive fairy-tale texts, their literary value and the socio-historical context in which they originated. As this research consists of a cross-cultural study of literary texts this approach is crucial to my understanding of the texts. Jack Zipes's highly influential sociohistorical approach is one of those. Zipes has developed theories on the genre's production and reception, and established a critical framework to begin mapping a social history of the fairy tale in the Western world. Several of Jack Zipes's studies focus on fairy-tale retellings and adaptations, often from a feminist perspective, notably *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England* (1986), *Why Fairy Tales Stick? The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (2006), and most recently in *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre* (2013).

While Maria Tatar focuses mostly on children's literature, in her work, (notably *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales,* 1987 and *Off With Their Heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood,* 1993) the scholar also discusses the social context in which the tales have been written and asserts her belief that to be viable tools for children's education, the tales need to be adapted and revisited, so as to overcome the view presented in famous versions of tales—such as 'Snow White' or 'Cinderella' where the heroines win handsome princes thanks to good looks and housekeeping skills.

Also focusing on modern revisions of fairy tales, both Susan Remington Bobby's *Fairy-Tales Reimagined: Essays on New Retellings* (2009) and Anna Kérchy's *Postmodern Reinterpretations of Fairy Tales* (2011) compile numerous essays on contemporary western retellings. Other notable studies focusing on different aspects of intertextuality in contemporary fairy tales are Kevin Paul Smith's *The Postmodern Fairy Tale: Folkloric Intertexts in Contemporary Fiction* (2007) and Vanessa Joosen's *Critical and Creative Perspectives on Fairy Tales: An Intertextual Dialogue Between Fairy-tale Scholarship and Postmodern Retellings* (2011). Smith postulates eight types of intertextuality based on Gérard Genette's work while Joosen examines the interplay between fairy tale and meta-textual production in English, Dutch, and German revisions and illustrations of fairy tales. As she studies issues of gender, adaptation, genre, and wonder, Cristina Bacchilega's studies *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* (1999), and her recent *Fairy-tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder* (2013) have also been an important influence on this research.

Logically, and because of the small number of fairy tales rewritten in French, the production of scholarly works on fairy tales written in French is small and these studies are often historical. This is the case for instance of Catherine Velay-Vallantin's *L'histoire des contes* (1992) and many others focus exclusively on seventeenth-century French salon fairy tales: Jacques Barchilon's *Le conte merveilleux français de 1690 à 1790* (1975) and Marc Soriano, *Les contes de Perrault* (1968). Pierre Péju devotes a study to traditional French tales in *La Petite fille dans la forêt des contes* (1981) in which he reviews Bettelheim's psychoanalytical approach but also offers his own interpretations of traditional tales.

Finally, most notable for breaching the gap between anglophone and francophone fairy-tale scholarship are the works of Ute Heidmann (often in collaboration with Jean-Michel Adam) and Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère. Heidmann and Adam have written several articles and edited books (in French and in English) on theories of comparative literature and texts, often devoted to French seventeenth-century tales and Angela Carter's rewritings. Heidmann and Dutheil have also worked together on an article on the role of translation of Perrault's tale in Carter's subsequent rewritings, which Dutheil developed in her most recent study *Reading, Translating, Rewriting. Angela Carter's Translational Poetics* (2013) and to which we will come back in chapter six.

2. Fairy Tales and Imaginative Fiction: Anglophone Genres?

2.1. Comparative Literature: On 'National Literatures' and Globalisation

From this brief overview of the contemporary fairy tale, it appears clear that there is a discrepancy between its use in literature (and cinema) in francophone and anglophone circles. Part of the undertaking of this thesis is to try to account for the discrepancy between francophone and anglophone literatures, which are close, do interact with one another (through translation and geographical and cultural spheres) and yet tend to have such a different treatment of imaginative fiction. While they have been used frequently until now, it is necessary to clarify my meaning of anglophone and francophone and the idea of 'literature' and 'national literature'.

In his study *An Ecology of World Literature* (2015) Alexander Beecroft examines the meanings of (and differences between) terms such as 'literature', 'a literature', and

'national literatures', asking for instance: 'does French literature include all literature composed in France or only that produced in the Republic of France or that produced by its citizens?'[27] These are legitimate questions which account for my decision to use the terms 'anglophone' and 'francophone' (instead of 'English' and 'French' for instance) as I do not restrict my study of rewritings of fairy tales to either English or American works nor do I exclude Belgian authors from this study. My use of terminology is therefore quite loose and could be said to stem mainly from the language used (despite this thesis not being a linguistic one)[28] but also, by extension, to the literary circles themselves. Beecroft's example of Canadian Literature illustrates well my meaning: because of its bilingual characteristics, it is split into two entities: an anglophone branch and a francophone one which are more in contact with texts written in the same language than with one another.[29]

For instance, two authors studied in this thesis are Belgian authors Pierre Dubois and Amélie Nothomb, who are both published in France and have a French readership. Nothomb is an especially important figure of the French literary scene, being one of the most prominent authors published every *rentrée littéraire*[30] since 1992.[31] If globalisation has increased text accessibility and is still changing the way we encounter and consume texts, contextual tendencies remain influenced by the general literary scene, academies, editor's choices of which texts to translate and publish etc. Beecroft writes:

> Literatures […] are techniques or practises of reading texts and specifically of
> linking texts together, through a series of relationships that usually begins with

---

[27] Alexander Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature* (London: Verso, 2015), p.12.

[28] A linguistic study could be fruitful, notably one that would look for instance at linguistic relativity suggested by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. The hypothesis brings forward the idea that language might influence thought and that each language involves a particular interpretation of the world, instead of a common universal one.

[29] Beecroft, p.19.

[30] *La rentrée littéraire* is mostly a creation of French publishers and booksellers. It occurs between the end of August and the start of November. During this period a great number of books are published, often in time for the works to be considered for the main literary prizes such as the Goncourt, the Prix Renaudot and Femina. *Le Figaro* predicts 589 novels to be published during that period in 2015. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/livres/2015/06/25/03005-20150625ARTFIG00265-rentree-litteraire-589-romans-prevus-pour-2015.php> [accessed 9 July 2015]

[31] In 2012, 200,000 copies of her novel *Barbe bleue* (studied in Chapter 6) were printed and 15,000 sold in four days.
Lucie Cauwe, 'Champagne pour Amélie et ses 21 romans en 20 ans', *Le Soir*, 31 august 2012. <http://www.lesoir.be/archives?url=/culture/livres/2012-08-31/champagne-pour-amelie-et-ses-21-romans-en-20-ans-935129.php> [accessed 9 July 2015]
'15 000 exemplaires de Barbe bleue vendus en quatre jours', *L'Express*, 6 September 2012. <http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/15-000-exemplaires-de-barbe-bleue-vendus-en-quatre-jours_1157175.html> [accessed 9 July 2015]

language and/or the polity, but which also include questions of genre and influence, among other criteria.[32]

Under 'other criteria' Beecroft includes, for instance, literary criticism, theory, and paratexts.[33] The fact that the works included in this corpus are fairy-tale rewritings make Beecroft's point particularly relevant to this study, and it does so for the following reasons: first, all of the texts studied are extremely referential and (as Vanessa Joosen studies in *Critical and Creative Perspectives on Fairy Tales,* 2011) the interaction between retellings of fairy tales and fairy-tale criticism, especially in modern rewritings, is undeniable. It seems therefore legitimate to take into account both the texts that the authors read and/or that might directly or indirectly influence them, and the role played by the readership for which they write. Thus, rather than looking at texts as pure intertextual products, this thesis aims at considering them in relation to their field of cultural production as well.[34] Secondly, throughout this thesis, I emphasise the role of the reader, being persuaded that it is crucial to the construction of meaning; a role central in any type of literature, but which is heightened in the specific case of rewritings: authors expect their readership to know the original tales they rewrite and while the reader's lack of knowledge might not completely impede his understanding of the texts, it certainly diminishes some of its impact and accessibility.

This study therefore does not aim at 'classifying' rewritings of fairy tales but rather at providing a critical examination of similarities and differences between francophone and anglophone tales in relation to the evolutionary development of the fairy tale and the cultural context in which rewritings were created. In this I also use Ute Heidmann's theories of comparative literature and her claim that too often the focus remains on common features without studying the differences between texts.[35] Her view of comparative literature proposes to use what she calls a 'comparaison différentielle'

---

[32] Beecroft, p.16.

[33] Beecroft, p.16.

[34] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 33. Bourdieu criticises formalists (notably Todorov) for their refusal to consider anything else than the system of intertextuality. A criticism also raised by Lubomír Doležel in *Heterocosmica* as he sees Barthes's 'absolute' intertextuality as too restrictive (see pp.199-202).

[35] Notably in her articles: 'Comparatisme et analyse de discours. La comparaison différentielle comme méthode', in *Sciences du texte et analyse de discours. Enjeux d'une interdisciplinarité*, Jean-Michel Adam and Ute Heidmann eds, *Etudes de Lettres*, 1-2 (Genève: Slatkine, 2005), p. 99-118; and 'Enjeux d'une comparaison *différentielle* et *discursive*, L'exemple de l'analyse des contes', in *Les nouvelles voies du comparatisme,* Hubert Roland et Stéphanie Vanasten eds, *Cahiers voor literaturwetenschap*, 2 (2010), 27-40.

(differential comparison) instead of a 'comparaison universalisante' (universalising comparison) so as to tackle not only what is similar between texts but also what their main differences are, while creating an axis of comparison which does not favour one text over the other.

2.2. Imaginative Fiction: Anglophone Genres?

Of course, debates around the worth of imaginative fiction and fantasy are neither a new tendency (as we will see in more detail in Chapter 2), nor limited to francophone circles. But certainly, the sheer amount of imaginative fiction written over the last few decades in English—in all its variety of content, quality, intended audience, and approachability—and the increasing sophistication of academic works in the field, demonstrates the extent to which it is slowly overcoming its reputation as a minor and insipid genre.

Universities in the UK offer a wide range of choice and curriculum linked to fantasy, as demonstrated for instance by the launch of Chichester's University's *Sussex Centre for Folklore, Fairy Tales, and Fantasy* which organises events regularly and publishes bi-annually the journal *Gramarye*. While courses on fantasy or science fiction have long been available in the UK, it is also notable that a Masters in Science fiction opened in 2014 in Dundee[36] and that, starting in September 2015, Glasgow University launches the first Masters degree in fantasy in the world.[37]

On the other hand, and as Geoffroy Brunson shows in an article devoted to the place of fantasy in French academia, the study of fantasy and what he calls the 'metatextual production' of fantasy are still close to non-existent there. His thorough article examines scholarly works from the 1970s until 2011 in France, and their approach to and relationship with the genre. For instance, until the 1990s: 'The space devoted to fantasy at University is anecdotal, limited to Tolkien's works, and does not stir any response within the scholarly fields which could have judiciously shed light upon it.'[38] Brunson points out

---

[36]See, University of Dundee's website. <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/humanities/news/2014/article/exciting-new-masters-degrees-planned-for-2014.php> [accessed 30 July 2015]

[37] Teddy Jamieson, 'Glasgow embarks on the world's first fantasy literature degree', *The Herald Scotland*, 27 June 2015 <http://www.heraldscotland.com/books-poetry/interviews/glasgow-embarks-on-the-worlds-first-fantasy-literature-degree.129597041> [accessed July 2015]

[38] 'la place de la *Fantasy* à l'Université est anecdotique, limitée à Tolkien, et ne connait quasiment aucun écho au sein des champs de recherche qui auraient pu l'éclairer judicieusement', Geoffroy Brunson, 'Fantasy: La France et les critiques', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 15:2 (March 2011) 181-90 (p.183).

that the study of fantasy is often taken up by medievalists,[39] thus limiting the possible range of study of the genre. Brunson explains:

> S'il est relativement courant de faire référence aux œuvres de *Fantasy* comme à des textes fantastiques, les spécialistes du genre homonyme se penchent rarement sur cette production d'Outre-manche, comme l'indique un examen des volumes classiques de Todorov (1970)—sans doute publié trop tôt—Steinmetz (1990), ou Bozetto (1998). L'ouvrage de Pelosato (1998, 51-75) constitue dans ce paysage une exception, qui dans un chapitre consacre à Tolkien un triptyque—idéologie, écologie, psychoanalyse—instructif mais inégal. La recherche sur les littératures populaires, pourtant prompte à considérer la sphère anglo-saxonne, ne prête guère plus d'attention à la *Fantasy*. Ainsi, les articles de Nathan (1990) ne s'en approchent jamais, tandis que Bleton (1995), dans sa bibliographie, propose une section « science-fiction et *Fantasy* » comportant...deux livres dédiés à la science-fiction. *Le Roman d'aventures* (Tadié 1982), constitué principalement de monographies, ne jette lui non plus aucun pont vers la *Fantasy*.[40]

> If it has now become common to refer to Fantasy works as fantastic texts, the specialists of the eponymous genre rarely focus their efforts on this production from the other side of the Channel, as classical studies such as Todorov's (1970)—probably published too early—and Steinmetz's (1990) and Bozetto's (1998) show. Pelosato's work (1998, 51-75) is an exception, as he devotes a chapter to Tolkien presented as a triptych: ideology, ecology, psychoanalysis—the result being informative but uneven. Research devoted to popular literature, while usually ready to focus on the anglophone sphere, does not pay much attention to Fantasy either. Thus, Nathan's articles (1990) never approach it and Bleton (1995) provides a section in his bibliography entitled 'Science fiction and fantasy' which lists…two books on science fiction. *Le Roman d'aventure* (*The Adventure Novel*) (Tadie, 1982) principally constituted of monographs, does not attempt to create any bridge towards fantasy either.

It would be easy to see science fiction and fantasy as symbols of an anglophone globalisation of culture. Millions of *Harry Potter* readers identified with an eminently British boarding school and the British cultural characteristics represented in them.[41] Similarly, Walt Disney's features are one of the most blatant examples of Americanisation of the West. Conversely, as these images are spreading, several studies (such as Jacques Baudou's *Que sais-je: Fantasy*, 2005) offer a geographical approach to the fantasy genre which very clearly opposes anglophone literature to that of the rest of the world.

---

[39] Brunson, p.184.
[40] Brunson, p.182.
[41] A simple and striking example is the introduction of British food culture: Bertie Bott's Every Flavour Beans, treacle fudge, and mince pies at Christmas time.

Undeniably, the type of imaginative fiction and fantasy popular in France mostly stems from bestsellers and blockbuster movies such as *The Lord of The Rings* (1954-1955), *Harry Potter* (1997-2007)*,* and in the specific case of fairy tales, the wide distribution (and dubbing) of movies such as *Enchanted* (*Il était une fois*, 2007)*, Mirror, Mirror* (*Blanche-Neige*, 2012)*, Snow White and the Huntsman* (*Blanche-neige et le chasseur*, 2012), *Maleficent (Maléfique*, 2014) and most recently *Cinderella* (*Cendrillon*, 2015)*.*

It is not simply fairy tales but imaginative fiction in general which is rarely written in French (or in a very small proportion compared to anglophone circles) and most importantly, hardly ever for an adult readership. Genre literature is popular and read widely, but mostly in translation. For instance, Bragelonne[42] is a French publishing house founded in 2000 and is one of the rare and biggest French publishers to focus only on fantasy, science fiction, and horror. To begin with, their creators were planning on publishing solely translated anglophone authors before starting to publish francophone ones too.[43] To this day, over 70% of the publishing house's authors are anglophone (American, Canadian, British, Australian etc.) with only about 20% of francophone authors (French, Belgian, French Canadian) and a small selection of authors from Germany and Scandinavia.[44] In his article on the place of fantastic genres in France, Patrick Marcel also acknowledges French authors' difficulties to get published faced with a 'crushing Anglo-Saxon majority'.[45]

Apart from children's literature, the only medium in which fantasy is widely published in French is *bande dessinée* (Francophone graphic novel). Heroic Fantasy is a very popular style, as are science fiction and other types of imaginative fiction (published mostly by Soleil, Les Humanoïdes Associés, and Clair de Lune). Despite (or because of) their popularity, these are largely dismissed by intellectual circles, even a lot of the time by comics scholars themselves. Francis Berthelot, a French science fiction author (published by Bragelonne too), criticises this crushing hegemony of 'LA littérature'[46] and compares francophone and anglophone writers, evoking cultural and historical differences: 'Because

---

[42] Some of the other publishing houses that publish imaginative fiction are Terre de brume, Phébus, l'Oxymore, Mnémos, Nestiveqnen.

[43] Luigi Brosse, Interview d'Alain Névant, *Elbakin.net*, 10 avril 2002. <http://www.elbakin.net/interview/exclusive/Alain-Nevant-en-exclusivite/> [accessed November 2014]

[44] Bragelonne Website <http://www.bragelonne.fr/auteurs> [accessed July 2015]

[45] Patrick Marcel, 'Le fantastique aujourd'hui: catalogue des masques' in *Fantastique, fantasy, science fiction: Mondes imaginaires, étranges réalités*, ed. by Léa Silhol and Estelle Valls de Gomis (Paris: Autrement, 2005)

[46] Francis Berthelot, *Bibliothèque de l'entre-mondes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), p. 15.

Anglo-Saxons are less Cartesian than we are, they have always shown a great open-mindedness towards imagination. The fantastic and the marvellous are an integral part of their culture.'[47] Similarly, in 1999, Marc Petit, a French novelist and essayist, wrote an article in *Le Monde* entitled 'Le Refus de l'imaginaire' ('Rejecting imagination', 1999). In this article he evaluates the attitudes towards imagination and the marvellous in French literary circles and describes it as follows:

> On aime, en France, dans la presse comme à l'université, les journaux intimes, la correspondance, les petits côtés des grands hommes, les petits faits vrais. Inversement, nous n'avons jamais fait grand cas de nos génies baroques, d'Aubigné, du Bartas, ni, quoi qu'on ait pu en dire, de nos romantiques ou de nos symbolistes et encore moins des surréalistes. Tout ce qui, dans l'art et dans la littérature, se rapporte aux Mythes, aux contes et légendes, au merveilleux, au fantastique et, plus généralement, à 'l'espace du dedans' est, chez nous, systématiquement déprécié au profit du 'réalisme'.[48]

> In France, in newspapers or academia, people like diaries, letters, the intimate sides of famous men, the details of real facts. On the other hand, however, we have never made much of our baroque geniuses, d'Aubigné, du Bartas, nor even, despite what might have been claimed, of our romantics, our symbolists, and even less our surrealists. In our country, everything related to myths, tales or legends, the marvellous, the fantastic, and more generally the 'inner worlds' in art or literature is systematically discredited in favour of 'realism'.

Petit is one of the very few French intellectuals to recognise and see this situation as a problem: contemporary French authors tend to write in a minimalistic, stark fashion, what could be called 'real stories'. The production of fantasy literature is quasi-non-existent or limited to the spheres of young adult fiction and *bande-dessinée*, both of which media largely disregarded or dismissed by intellectual spheres.

Geoffroy Brunson and Anne Besson concur to say that the two main reasons which explain French intellectuals' lack of interest in fantasy are its popularity (often linked with role players and teenagers) and its association with the magical which is often seen as belonging to the realms of childhood.[49] François Comba also argues that 'in France it is believed that if a book sells, it is because it is bad: a prejudice which [...] has no basis in

---

[47] 'Les anglo-saxons, moins cartésiens que nous, ont toujours témoigné d'une grande ouverture à l'imaginaire. Le fantastique et le merveilleux font partie intégrante de leur culture.' Berthelot, p.79.

[48] Marc Petit, 'Le refus de l'imaginaire', *Le Monde,* 4 February 1999.

[49] Brunson, 'Fantasy: La France et les critiques', p.183 and Anne Besson, *La fantasy* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2007), p.9.

reality.'[50] A point which Bourdieu discusses too as he looks into the relation which exists between the success of a novel in term of critical praise and economic profit: '[a] negative relationship which, […] is established between symbolic profit and economic profit, whereby *discredit* increases as the audience grows and its specific competence declines, together with the value of the recognition implied by the act of consumption.'[51] Anne Besson also observes that French scholarship has taken time to catch up on science fiction, and is now behind on research on fantasy,[52] which might explain, in a more practical sense, why librarians and booksellers in France seem to label all imaginative fiction 'science fiction': it is common to find authors as diverse as J.R.R. Tolkien, H.P. Lovecraft ('The Call of Cthulhu', *At the Mountains of Madness*), Edgar Alan Poe ('The Fall of the House of Usher', 'The Raven'), Stefanie Meyer (*Twilight*) George R.R. Martin (*A Song of Ice and Fire*) and Frank Herbert (*Dune*) all under one subsection.[53]

This view is most obvious in the scholarship written on the history of French literature; looking at general studies is telling. Sarah Kay's *A Short History of French Literature* (2003)*,* Alison Finch's *French Literature: a Cultural History* (2010), and Dominique Viart's *La Littérature française au présent: héritage, modernité, mutations* (2005) reflect this view: none of them even mentions fantasy, let alone fantastic tales — despite their prominence during the nineteenth century[54]—no mention either of Charles Perrault and the *conteuses'* fairy tales despite their importance in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The very few authors mentioned who use supernatural elements are writers such as Eric Chevillard and Marie Darrieussecq—authors who (as I have shown in the introduction and will demonstrate in chapter five), make very specific use of the supernatural: none of their works which use fantastic material truly invite the reader to step into a marvellous world. In their cases, the supernatural is either linked with uneasiness or playfulness. Similarly, the anglophone study, *Redefining the Real: the Fantastic in Contemporary French and Francophone Women's Writing* (2009) looks at the francophone fantastic *specifically* in relation to reality and the everyday world.

---

[50] 'Surtout en France, où il est dit que si un ouvrage se vend, c'est parce qu'il est mauvais: un préjugé qui ne repose, à mon sens, sur aucune réalité.' François Comba, 'Harry Potter est un batard', *Le Nouvel Obs,* 21 September 2013. <http://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/actualites/20130920.OBS7871/harry-potter-est-un-batard.html> [accessed June 2015]

[51] Pierre Bourdieu, trans. by Richard Nice, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p.48. See also, Bourdieu, *La Distinction* (1979) in which Bourdieu talks about 'taste' where social classes (notably *bourgeoisie*) distinguish themselves through cultural taste, creating divisions between high and low culture.

[52] Besson, p.9.

[53] In the UK, divisions tend to be more diverse but also reflect some prejudices between 'literature', 'fiction', 'science fiction', and 'fantasy'.

[54] See Chapter 2, 4.

Reciprocally, the few French scholars writing on fantasy as a genre write on anglophone works, and works that are not, by anglophone standards, new ones: for instance Irène Fernandez, writes in French, what she calls a *Défense et illustration de la féerie*, (2012) (a title not only reminiscent of Du Bellay's essay[55] but also of Ann Swinfen's *In Defence of Fantasy* published almost thirty years earlier, in 1984). The very title alludes to the context in which it is written; fantasy (or *féerie*) still *needs* defending. Two of Fernandez's chapter titles epitomise the common questions raised in relation to fantasy: 'Mauvais genre?' ('A bad genre?') and 'Sérieux de la féerie?' ('Can fantasy be serious?'). In her introduction, Fernandez states that she aims at shattering the prejudices the intellectual elite might have regarding the fours 'sagas' her book focuses on: J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954-1055), C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956), J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) and Stefanie Meyer's *Twilight* (2005-2008)—none of the texts discussed by Fernandez are francophone.[56] Moreover, by British or American standards, works such as *Narnia* or *The Lord of the Rings* do not need defending; they have been discussed to such an extent, and integrated within the canon that Fernandez's justification to a French audience almost seems incongruous. (Nor does her work mention less mainstream anglophone works).

To this day, Pierre Pével, whose work is briefly studied in chapter four, is one of the rare French fantasy authors to have been translated into English. Most strikingly, Alain Lescart's article devoted to the writer's work is developed around the argument that the type of fantasy Pével writes is specifically French: a 'fantasy à la française'.[57] Lescart here plays with the ambiguity of studying elements which he believes to be distinctively French, such as the use of *uchronie*,[58] while using the untranslatable term 'fantasy'.

Faced with a lack of French equivalent, the word 'fantasy' has been mostly introduced in France by fans of the genre, either readers of Tolkien or gamers

---

[55] Where Du Bellay's *Defense et Illustration de la langue française* (original spelling: *La Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Francoyse*) (1549) advocates the use of French in education and literature, defending it as being equal to Latin and Greek, Fernandez intends to show that fantasy is a genre worthy of other, more 'serious' literary ones.

[56] All of these works are also well known to French audiences in translation. *The Chronicles of Narnia* probably took the longest time to achieve mainstream status, being neither widely read or known before the movie franchise (2005-). Tolkien has been read (and studied) since the publication of translations of his works in the late 1960s and early 70s, and the *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* series were translated and became popular almost as soon as they were published in English.

[57] Alain Lescart, '"Fantasy à la Française": The Case of Pierre Pével', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 15:2 (2011), 241-248.

[58] Defined by Lescart as 'a rewriting of the past based on a precise point that diverges from the normal course of history. Sometimes called "alternative history" or *counter-factual* history' (Author's emphasis), Lescart, p.241.

(*Warhammers*) and the use of the English word has persisted. Fernandez also points to this problem: 'Fantastic literature remains marginal and calling it by its contemporary name "fantasy" does not improve things.'[59] It is, according to her, French intellectuals' lack of interest—if not outright scorn—that has led to the use of the word *fantasy*: 'we have to resort to using frenglish to name it'.[60] Moreover, as she notes, and as will be discussed below, the use of 'littérature fantastique' in French is often ambiguous as it tends to refer to Todorov's use of the term: the intrusion of the bizarre and apparently supernatural within the everyday world which triggers the famous 'reader's hesitation'.[61] Fernandez opts for *Féerie* or *Littérature Féerique*—which could be defined as: that which is associated with fairies and/or fairyland. While acknowledging the similarities between the different terms,[62] Léa Silhol and Estelle Valls de Gomis draw a distinction in the title of their study: *Fantastique, fantasy, science-fiction* (2005). Finally, while some writers use the historical (and slightly out-dated) term 'merveilleux' (such as Jean-Bruno Renard who titles his study *Le Merveilleux*, 2011) others use them conjointly (and therefore as separate entities) such as Jacques Goimard in his *Critique du merveilleux et de la fantasy* (2003).

Finally, francophone literary prizes which reward imaginative fiction are neither as numerous nor as prestigious as anglophone ones (such as the Hugo and Nebula Awards or the Arthur C. Clarke award). In fact, it is baffling that the 'Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire', which has existed since 1974, acknowledges the bias against what it aims at honouring on the very presentation of its website.[63] When specifying the kind of fiction the prize rewards, one can read:

> Le terme 'Imaginaire' recouvre l'ensemble de ces *'mauvais genres'* que sont la science-fiction, la fantasy, le fantastique, de même que diverses fusions de ces genres et encore les 'transfictions' où, par exemple, quelques éléments 'non-mimétiques' se glissent insidieusement au sein d'une littérature dite 'générale'.[64]

> 'The word 'imaginary' covers the entirety of these *'bad genres'*, that are science fiction, fantasy, the fantastic, as well as various hybrids of these genres and

---

[59] 'La littérature fantastique demeure marginale, et les choses ne s'arrangent pas lorsqu'on lui donne son nom contemporain de "fantasy".' Irène Fernandez, *Défense et illustration de la féerie* (Paris: Phillipe Rey, 2012), p.37.

[60] 'on est réduit au franglais pour la nommer', Fernandez, p.41.

[61] See chapter 3, 2.

[62] Léa Silhol and Estelle Valls de Gomis, *Fantastique, fantasy, science fiction: Mondes imaginaires, étranges réalités* (Paris: Autrement, 2005), pp.6-8.

[63] Others prizes are the Prix Imaginales (created in 2002) and Le Prix Bob Morane (created in 1999).

[64] Website of 'Le Prix Imaginaire' <http://gpi.noosfere.org/> [accessed July 2015]

'transfictions', where, for example several 'non-mimetic' elements are insidiously introduced within what is called 'general' literature. (My emphasis)

2.3 Debating the Role of Fiction and the Imagination

In 1977, philosopher Gilles Deleuze offered a critical analysis of the difference between anglophone and francophone literature in an article with a rather provocative title: 'De la supériorité de la littérature anglaise-américaine' ('On the superiority of Anglo-American literature', 1975). Deleuze criticises French literature for its elitism and for the tendency of wanting to write only about and for oneself, and to strive for acknowledgement rather than true creation.[65] Written over twenty years before Marc Petit's article, Deleuze makes similar points when comparing American to French literature:

> La littérature américaine opère d'après des lignes géographiques: la fuite vers l'Ouest, la découverte que le véritable Est est à l'Ouest, le sens des frontières comme quelque chose à franchir, à repousser, à dépasser. Le devenir est géographique. On n'a pas l'équivalent en France. Les Français sont trop humains, trop historiques, trop soucieux d'avenir et de passé. Ils passent leur temps à faire le point. Ils ne savent pas devenir, ils pensent en termes de passé et d'avenir historiques.[66]

> American literature operates along geographical lines: the flight to the West, the discovery that true East is West, the meaning of borders as something that needs to be crossed, pushed back, overcome. Becoming is geographical. There is no equivalent in France. The French are too human, too historical, too worried about future and past. They spend their time evaluating the situation they are in. They do not know how to become, they think in terms of historical past and future.

Thus, to Deleuze, French writers limit the scope of their work by adopting an attitude towards the self which he believes explains the form taken by French literature:

> C'est pourquoi la littérature française abonde en manifestes, en idéologies, en théories de l'écriture, en même temps qu'en querelles de personnes, en mises au point de mises au point, en complaisances névrotiques, en tribunaux narcissiques.[67]

---

[65] Gilles Deleuze, 'De la supériorité de la littérature anglaise-américaine', *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), p.56.

[66] Deleuze, p.48.

[67] Deleuze, p.61.

> This is why French literature is full of manifestoes, ideological stances, theories of writing, along with people's quarrels, clarifications of clarifications, neurotic complacencies, narcissistic courts.

While made almost four decades ago, Deleuze's point is more relevant than ever as the two recent instances studied below illustrate.

2.3.1 Christophe Donner's *Contre l'imagination* ('Against Imagination', 1998) v. Marc Petit's *Eloge de la fiction* ('In Praise of Fiction', 1999)

The first case, extreme, but certainly symptomatic of the views often held on imagination in France, is writer Christophe Donner's pamphlet provocatively entitled *Contre l'imagination* ('Against Imagination', 1998). Donner is a prolific, decorated writer who has especially written for children, but surprisingly, in 120 pages, Donner aims to show that imagination is a poison that plagues literature. To him, imagination is nefarious because it is against reality, the good, and the beautiful, and it has given birth to the novel—which he calls literature's 'crutch'.[68] For Donner, literature and art in general should inform their readers and audience about reality, and writers should write about their true selves only. Interestingly, Donner advocates exactly what Deleuze lamented:[69] indeed, according to him, the only reality a writer can truly understand and should render is himself. Donner goes as far as criticising nineteenth-century Realist writers, who, in his opinion, because they use the unworthy form that is the novel, do not allow themselves to talk about 'the only reality which they might have had a real and deep knowledge of: themselves'[70]—a restrictive notion which implies an invariance and solipsistic view of the self. For Donner, people who commend imagination are scared of reality and do not understand it. He believes that imagination stems from ignorance: he derides psychoanalysis repeatedly and undermines myths and mythology, which for him are simply products and evidence of this very ignorance: stories human beings use to explain a reality they cannot comprehend.[71] Any work of literature that does not comply with his views falls within what he scornfully calls 'old wives' tales' and *divertissement*—in the

---

[68] Christophe Donner, *Contre l'imagination* (Paris: Fayard, 1998), p.34.
[69] Donner criticises Deleuze and scholars in general at length, pp.63-74.
[70] 'la seule réalité dont ils auraient pu avoir une connaissance véritable et profonde: eux-mêmes.' Donner, pp.19-20.
[71] Donner, p.17.

Pascalian sense, that is, entertainment, but also diversion. Many French journalists share his opinion and openly criticise fantasy literature; for instance Anna Topaloff, in an article for *Marianne* on 'geeks', derided the fantasy genre and argued that *The Lord of The Rings* was only good for 'stuffing teenagers' brains with obsolete values'.[72]

Marc Petit (quoted earlier) wrote an answer to Donner's pamphlet called *Eloge de la fiction* (1999). Petit criticises the view that the 'real' is what should be captured by words. Petit claims that people tend to mix 'reality' and 'truth', 'meaning' and 'experience'. He argues that words cannot *tell* the real:

> Rien de tout cela […] appelons cela un monde, la vie ou le réel, peu importe—n'est dicible, entendons par là épuisable par le langage; ni même, si l'on y songe, nommable, car aucun mot ne saurait dire ou seulement désigner du doigt sa propre absence, faire sentir à quoi ressemblait le monde avant les mots. C'est très étrange, car ce monde sans mots, c'est notre monde, à chaque instant c'est ce réel-là, hors les mots, qui nous frappe de plein fouet.[73]

> None of this, […] let's call it a world, life, or reality—it does not matter—is expressible in the sense that language cannot exhaust it, or even, when we think about it, name it, because no word could even point to its own absence, create the feeling of what the world was before words. It is a very strange thing because this world without words is our world, at every single moment it is this reality, outside the realm of words which hits us with full force.

Crucially, for Petit, the fact that words cannot represent or express the real does not mean that they are false or better than reality, given that words, for him, 'only lie if they pretend to be true'.[74] According to Petit, words paradoxically do not represent reality nor express it, but rather keep it at bay, pushing it away as soon as they attempt to designate something. To him, fiction's goal and power reside therefore in its ability to use these words to put reality into question, to question what people take for granted as being real and true, and rewriting myths is a means of making sense of things when there seems to be no meaning.

Petit also takes this essay as an opportunity to define the movement of the 'Nouvelle Fiction' to which he belongs. The movement advocates a type of fiction that is extremely self-referential by repeatedly presenting itself as such. Thus, Petit defines

---

[72] Anna Topaloff, 'Va te faire voir chez les geeks', *Marianne*, 2 February 2008.
[73] Marc Petit, *Eloge de la fiction* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), p.15.
[74] Petit, p.17.

Nouvelle Fiction as a 'surfiction': a work of 'the imagination'.[75] This *surfiction* does not advocate the creation of a fictional world but rather champions self-reflexive fiction, similar to what one encounters in Chevillard's *Le Vaillant petit tailleur*. La Nouvelle Fiction is imaginative to the extent that it is unpredictable, improbable, and quirky. In this view, imagination belongs to the realm of probability; or rather, it is that which we can only predict with a degree of uncertainty.

Thus, the movement advocated by Petit is, once again, not fantasy, it is a fiction that surprises, and importantly, one that can induce wonder—without depicting magical instances. For instance, in his novel, *Le Nain géant* (*The Giant Dwarf*, 1995), Marc Petit creates what could be called a fable, but one that does not involve magic: his narrator is looking for a mysterious automaton called the Giant Dwarf, that his late father, a toy maker, left him as inheritance to find. During the narration, Petit frequently references tales ('Snow White', 'Tom Thumb', 'Bluebeard', 'Cinderella') various myths and legends (most importantly, the 'giant dwarf' is a rational manifestation of the Jewish golem), and the novel is very self-consciously built like a nineteenth-century instalment novel, in which the narrator points out to his reader times when, for the good progression of the story, he cannot either reveal crucial clues or die.

In an epilogue to the 2011 republication of the novel, Petit quotes Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel's analysis of his novel: 'The genuine oxymoron, the ultimate "giant dwarf" means that with each sentence the novel is both subject and object of itself […] In this way, the oxymoron in this work has no other purpose but to tell the oxymoron that the work itself is.'[76] She adds: 'For Marc Petit, contradiction expresses the structure of all works of art since the giant dwarf is the work of art itself as it is both a representation of the world and an exhibit of itself.'[77] The novel is therefore in itself a *mise en scène* of La Nouvelle Fiction, it is a work which is surprising because unexpectedly self-referential, but one which also remains very Cartesian and rational.

---

[75] Petit, p.108.

[76] 'l'oxymore véritable, l'ultime "nain géant" signifie qu'à chaque phrase le roman est à la fois sujet et objet de lui-même (…) En ce sens, l'oxymore dans l'œuvre n'avait pour autre but que de dire l'oxymore qu'est l'oeuvre,' Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel, *Concept et lieu*, as quoted by Marc Petit in the epilogue of *Le Nain Géant*, p.403.

[77] 'Pour Marc Petit, la contradiction dit la structure de toute œuvre, puisque le Nain Géant est l'œuvre elle-même en tant qu'elle est tout à la fois représentation du monde et exposition d'elle-même'. Thomas-Fogiel, p.403.

2.3.2 Marcella Iacub's *Belle et Bête* (2013) v. Christine Angot's *Peau d'âne* (*Donkeyskin,* 2003)

The second example is the debate triggered by the publication of Marcela Iacub's *Belle et Bête*[78] at the start of 2013. In this novella—published in conjunction with her 'interview choc' in the newspaper *Le Nouvel Observateur*—[79] the writer and scholar[80] relates her affair with politician and former head of IMF Dominic Strauss Kahn. While Iacub claims that everything in the book is true, the politician turns into a pig in all the sex scenes of the book. The choice of the pig is not anodyne of course: the word *cochon* in French being associated with the idea of filth and deviant sexuality (a trope studied in further depth in Chapter 5). Depicting the sexual life of a political figure such as DSK by turning him into a pig was of course enough to start a debate around the book, but it is Iacub's explanation of her choice which sparked the most interesting reactions within literary circles. Iacub describes the sex-scenes in which the politician turns into a pig as pure fantasies, explaining that resorting to the marvellous 'enabled [her] to tell events which would have been otherwise too sordid or petty to tell as they truly happened,' she adds: 'sometimes you have to lie to tell the truth: the truth is not the reality.[81]

While her work was praised by some,[82] other authors, most notably Christine Angot, were infuriated by her views: to her detractors, she used literature and the marvellous to hide the truth rather than reveal it. Angot is famous for writing about her experience of sexual abuse as a child by her father. In *Peau d'âne* (2003), she rewrites the tale of 'Donkeyskin'[83] to relate the impact her father's behaviour had on her life. Angot's text is a clear rewriting of the tale but is completely devoid of magic; she bestows a highly symbolic role on the donkey skin: it becomes an image for the burden that has been

---

[78] The title plays on a pun and double meaning, it is a clear reference to the tale 'La Belle et la Bête' ('Beauty and the Beast') and can therefore be translated as 'Beauty and Beast' but without the articles, both words can also be read as adjectives therefore meaning 'Beautiful and stupid', referring to the narrator's/author's affair.

[79] Marcela Iacub, 'Interview: Mon histoire avec DSK', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 21-27 February 2013, 80-83.

[80] Iacub has notably written on issues of sexuality (*Qu'avez-vous fait de la révolution sexuelle?*, 2002) and vegetarianism (*Confessions d'une mangeuse de viande*, 2011).

[81] 'le recours au merveilleux, au fantastique, m'a permis de raconter des événements qu'il aurait été sordide ou mesquin de rapporter tels qu'ils ont eu lieu. Parfois il faut mentir pour dire la vérité: la vérité n'est pas la réalité.' Marcela Iacub, 'Interview', p.82.

[82] In the same issue of the newspaper Jérôme Garcin anticipates the backlash Iacub's book is going to create while praising her novel as true 'art' and saying that moving from a simple scholar Iacub has truly become a writer. Jérôme Garcin, 'Tendance', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 21-27 February 2013, p.80.

[83] Perrault's 'Donkeyskin' tells of a King who has sworn to his dying wife that he would only remarry a woman whose beauty equals hers. When it becomes clear that the only adequate candidate is his daughter he decides to wed the princess. She escapes her father hidden beneath a donkey skin and flees to another kingdom where she will find her prince.

imposed upon her by her father's abuse. Her heroine cannot get rid of it, it sticks to her own human skin, changing her, needing to be hidden under clothes, and carried as a burden. The skin, first a symbol and sign of her physical pain, becomes a reflection of her inner, psychological pain, but also of her true subsequent metamorphosis: she eventually has to get rid of it so she can transform again, becoming both who she really is under the skin but also who she has become in consequence of wearing it.

Contrary to Iacub's work in which the narrative of magic is used as a screen to hide something, Angot uses the fairy-tale narrative with the completely opposite intention: her narrative points to and strengthens the sordid. When journalists started comparing her work with Iacub's, Angot wrote a vehement response in *Le Monde* explaining why she refused to be compared to her:

> Quand vous êtes dans la vie, non dans 'l'expérience', vous n'écrivez pas 'pourquoi' quelqu'un viole, assassine, extermine, vit, est ce qu'il est et fait ce qu'il fait, mais 'comment', vous ne vous placez ni au-dessus ni en dessous, ni par-delà le bien et le mal ni en deçà, mais dans l'univers du 'comment' et c'est ça qui vous demande tous vos efforts, car existe-t-il des mots pour dire comment se passe ce qui se passe, et suis-je capable de les remplir de sens et de vie autant que le réel en est rempli ? La littérature montre comment le réel tient. […] La littérature ce n'est pas ça. C'est donner une forme même à ce qui est vide dans la tête, sans rien substituer à ce vide, en recréant l'état de vacance totale de l'esprit pendant que le corps est touché par un autre. Le fantastique, il n'y a qu'à prendre les images qui vous viennent. L'expérience, elle ne donne naissance qu'à des raisonnements, à des théorèmes. Chercher les mots qui correspondent au réel et se débrouiller pour que ces mots soient visibles c'est une autre affaire.[84]

> When you are in life, not in 'experience', you do not write 'why' someone rapes, kills, exterminates, lives, is what he is and does what he does, but 'how', you do not put yourself above or below it, nor beyond or within the good and the evil, but in the universe of the 'how', and this is what requires every effort from you, because are there even words to tell how what is happening is happening, and am I able to fill them with meaning and life in the way the real is filled with them? Literature shows how the real holds together. […] This [Iacub's work] is not what literature is. Literature is giving shape even to what is empty in the mind, without substituting anything for this emptiness, by recreating the state of complete vacancy in the mind while the body is touched by another. With the fantastic, all you have to do is use the images that come into your mind. Experience only gives

---

[84] Christine Angot, 'Non, non, non, et non', *Le Monde*, 23 February 2013.
<http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2013/02/23/non-non-non-et-non_1837772_3232.html> [accessed July 2015]

birth to reasoning and theorems. To look for words which match reality and handle things so that those words are visible is another business entirely.

Thus, even when Angot advocates the use of fantastical motifs, she prescribes an application which exclusively works as a force towards a representation of reality. It is a good example (to go back to the spectrum of wonder postulated in the introduction) of the use of the supernatural with an aim at questioning and subverting rather than as an invitation to dream. Clearly, while the two authors disagree as to their use of the fantastic, neither of them gives imaginative fiction a status or value *as such*, but both agree that it has to serve a pragmatic purpose, one used primarily, or even exclusively, to 'access' and understand reality better.

3. Conclusions

The fairy tale has an important presence in contemporary popular culture, one that is also significant in anglophone literary spheres but still minimal in francophone ones. This can be partly explained by the attitude towards fantasy and the magical in francophone literary circles that focus not only on realistic but also 'real' stories. It would be wrong, however, to assume that these debates are limited to francophone literary circles. While a lot more common, the use of fantasy is also questioned in anglophone literature. For instance, Philip Pullman, mainly known for his trilogy *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000) offers a view of fantasy which is, to say the least, ambiguous. He seems both reluctant to discuss taxonomies and inconsistent as to whether classifying his work as fantasy is correct or not. Marek Oziewicz and Daniel Hade compiled telling excerpts from some of Pullman's interviews:

> '*Northern Lights* is not a fantasy. It's a work of stark realism.'
> (Pullman, 'Talking to Philip Pullman,' interview 1999)
> 'I suppose it's fantasy—*Northern Lights* and *The Subtle Knife*, and *The Amber Spyglass.*'
> (Pullman, 'Lexicon Interview,' 2000)
> '[T]here is […] a fine tradition of […] fantasy […] which is where I find myself I suppose.'
> (Pullman, 'Faith and Fantasy,' interview, 2002)
> 'I'm uneasy to think I write fantasy.'

(Pullman, 'Pullman's progress,' interview, 2004) [85]

Pullman also insists that contrary to other works classified as fantasy (referring specifically to Tolkien's, Lewis's, and Rowling's) his work is not escapist but rather realistic and dealing with 'important' subject matters, apparently being persuaded that having the 'fantasy' label conferred upon his work would devalue it. This is a fear apparently shared by Kazuo Ishiguro when he published *The Buried Giant* (2015). The Booker Prize laureate's novel, the first in twelve years, was much awaited; set in a post-Arthurian England, the book follows the fate of characters who discover that they have lost their memories due to the enchanted breath of a sleeping dragon. In a plot that also includes ogres, pixies, and wizards, the two main elderly protagonists deal with their lost memories, their love for each other, their quest for truth. Ishiguro expressed doubts and fears about the reception of the novel:

> 'I don't know what's going to happen,' he said. 'Will readers follow me into this? Will they understand what I'm trying to do, or will they be prejudiced against the surface elements? Are they going to say this is fantasy?'[86]

Some reviewers (such as Michiko Kakutani[87]) were confused by the use of these fantasy elements, while distinguished fantasy and science fiction author Ursula K. Le Guin wrote a heated response to Ishiguro: 'No writer can successfully use the 'surface elements' of a literary genre—far less its profound capacities—for a serious purpose, while despising it to the point of fearing identification with it.'[88]

This prejudice against fantasy and its origins will be studied in further depth in the next two chapters. Chapter two will attempt to trace the historical origins of literary fairy tales, focusing on the role of specific instants and literary figures which could explain both the bias against imaginative fiction and the division postulated between francophone and

---

[85] Marek Oziewicz and Daniel Hade, 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell? Philip Pullman, C.S. Lewis and the Fantasy Tradition', *Mythlore* 109/110, (2010), 39-54 (p.39).

[86] Alexandra Alter, 'For Kazuo Ishiguro, "The Buried Giant" Is a Departure', *The New York Times*, 19 February 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/20/books/for-kazuo-ishiguro-the-buried-giant-is-a-departure.html> [accessed August 2015]

[87] Michiko Kakutani, 'Review: In 'The Buried Giant,' Ishiguro Revisits Memory and Denial', *The New York Times*, 23 February 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/books/review-in-the-buried-giant-ishiguro-revisits-memory-and-denial.html> [accessed August 2015]

[88] Ursula K. Le Guin, 'Are They Going to Say this is Fantasy?', *Book View Café*, 2 March 2015. <http://bookviewcafe.com/blog/2015/03/02/are-they-going-to-say-this-is-fantasy/>[accessed August 2015]

anglophone rewritings, while the third chapter will look more specifically at theories of fantasy literature and its role in relation to the fairy-tale genre and its evolution.

CHAPTER TWO

A Short History of Fairy Tale and Fantasy

1. Introduction

In their discussion in *The New Statesman*, novelists Neil Gaiman and Kazuo Ishiguro argue that the classification of fantasy as a genre strictly separated from mainstream and literary fiction stems in part from the commercial success of *The Lord of the Rings* in the 1960s and the production it created: 'by the time fantasy had its own area in the bookshop, it was deemed inferior to mimetic, realistic fiction'.[1] The commercial success of fantasy, which then triggered the creation and proliferation of numerous works of questionable literary value, or that were at least extremely derivative, certainly did not help its reputation. Ursula K. Le Guin has frequently discussed the dangers of the commodification and commercial abuses of the fantasy genre and imaginative fiction in general,[2] a trait which Terry Brooks, author of the *Sword of Shannara* (1977), has acknowledged of his own work.[3] Similarly, if even more strikingly, most of the fantasy written in French tends to be extremely derivative, being often pale copies of Tolkien's work and having thus been associated in francophone circles with childhood—as argued above.

But in fact, the question of worth which still gravitates around fantasy is neither new nor surprising; at its most basic level, fantasy can be described as non-realistic fiction, and realism is often, as discussed in chapter 1, seen as a token of worth. The novel as a form did not appear until the eighteenth century and even then, its authors (Defoe, Richardson, Fielding) had to justify their use of the form. As Ian Watt argues in *The Rise of*

---

[1] Neil Gaiman and Kazua Ishiguro, '"Let's talk about genre": Neil Gaiman and Kazuo Ishiguro in conversation', *The New Statesman*, 4 June 2015, p.53.

[2] Ursula K. Le Guin writes: 'Supply meets demand. Fantasy becomes a commodity, an industry. Commodified fantasy takes no risks; it invents nothing, but imitates and trivializes. It proceeds by depriving the old stories of their intellectual and ethical complexity, turning their action to violence, their actors to dolls, and their truth-telling to sentimental platitude. Heroes brandish their swords, lasers, wands, as mechanically as combine harvesters, reaping profits. Profoundly disturbing moral choices are sanitized, made cute, made safe. The passionately conceived ideas of the great story-tellers are copied . . . advertised, sold, broken, junked, replaceable, interchangeable.' Ursula K. Le Guin, *Tales from Earthsea: Short Stories* (London: Orion, 2001), p.xiii–xiv.

[3] Terry Brooks, *Sometimes the Magic Works: Lessons From a Writing Life* (New York: Del Rey, 2003), p.181.

the Novel (1957) the novel developed as a form that was specifically defended as being different from other cheap entertainment published at the time by striving for realism and didacticism.[4] Similarly, Richard A. Barney devotes a study to the interaction between the development of the novel and the rise of educational writing[5] —an idea which carried onto the Victorian era with the idea of edifying literature which also called for literature to have an educating purpose—but one which, interestingly, did not always scorn fantasy as such, at least for children.

The eternal and pragmatic questions which hover over imaginative fiction (Should escapism be discouraged? If a story is a lie, is it relevant to our lives? Can it still teach us anything?) also find a new echo in our capitalist world: in a context in which that which has no monetary value is seen as having little or no value at all, what is the point of a story, especially if it is not true? This is, according to Alain Nadaud, a problem especially prevalent in the francophone literary field: in his essay *Malaise dans la littérature* (1993), Nadaud criticises the tendency for francophone writers to turn themselves into celebrities so as to sell books, and for the competition created by the market between authors which leads them to try and shock their readership with scandalous stories rather than write novels of quality (a prime example being Iacub's novella discussed in chapter one).[6]

But one could argue that, in fact, since the dawn of literature, fiction and especially what falls within the vague, all-encompassing, realm of 'imaginative fiction' has been mostly seen in a negative light. As Mark Edmundson writes in his defence of poetry, *Literature against Philosophy* (1995): 'Literary criticism in the West begins with the wish that literature disappear'.[7] Fiction has been at the heart of intellectual debates for centuries; through the ages, the act of creating a world through words has been probed in relation to its links with lies, reality and illusions, morals, didactics, and religion, among others.

Some of these questions were already being explored in antiquity when Plato described poets and artists as liars. To the philosopher, the world that we perceive is

---

[4] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel, Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding,* 6th impression 1974 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957)

[5] Richard A. Barney, *Plots of Enlightenment, Education and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999)

[6] Nadaud's essay is developed over 36 points in which he discusses the commercialisation of literature. Focusing specifically on French literature he criticises the 'rentrée littéraire' (see Chapter 1, footnote 30, p.42) which turns authors into celebrities who sell themselves as merchandise, and other celebrities who sell books about their own lives (Nadaud, p.41-42). He also mentions the common use of the 'scandale' (Nadaud, p.49).

[7] Mark Edmundson, *Literature against Philosophy, Plato to Derrida: a Defence of Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.i.

already a copy of an ideal world, and the poet is only making copies of copies of an ideal reality. The poet's work is therefore 'twice removed from the truth'. The artist's creation is less valuable than reality because it is only an imitation, a single, limited perspective of the object it aims at representing: he is an imitator who can see appearances only. Poets have no place in Plato's *Republic*, for they cannot truly impart knowledge.

That this dismissive attitude towards imagination among literary circles persists might come as surprising, its severity in French intellectual circles especially, when one thinks of the history of French literature: the importance of chivalric romance, its role in the canonisation of fairy tales, and the eminent place of the *conte fantastique* during the nineteenth century supported by Tzvetan Todorov's famous *Introduction à la Littérature fantastique* in 1970. This chapter therefore aims at examining historical and cultural elements such as the *Querelle littéraire* (literary quarrel)[8] and the development of romanticism in Europe which were pivotal to the development of imaginative fiction and the fairy-tale genre.

2. *La Querelle*: *Vraisemblance,* the Marvellous, and the Fairy Tale in Seventeenth-Century France

Most famous for its occurrence in France and in Italy, the literary *querelle* is, Alexander Beecroft argues, a common and defining turning point towards the formation of national literatures (Beecroft even studies its equivalent in modern Chinese literature).[9] To him, the quarrel is symptomatic of the negotiation of literary history and an attempt at establishing a national literature; an artificial endeavour which occurs usually with the rise of vernacular languages and their establishment as the literary language (instead of Latin for instance).

La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes grew from a will to establish the rules that should be respected when belonging to the *Académie Française*—the literary elite. On the one side, led by Charles Perrault,[10] were the supporters of a more modern approach to literature, authors convinced that progress in the arts is always a positive advancement on the past. Through the term *moderne*, these authors referred to their contemporary

---

[8] If the use of the French term is more common, several scholars have taken to employ its English equivalent Alexander Beecroft in *An Ecology of World Literature* among them.

[9] Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, Chapter 5 'National Literature', pp.195-241.

[10] See Perrault's four volume work *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes* (1688-1697).

productions and the idea that limits created in the past should be, if not completely dismissed, at least questioned. On the other side, led by the poet and philosopher Nicolas Boileau and dramatist Jean Racine, the *Anciens* advocated the imitation of classical authors, who, to them, represented the artistic and aesthetic perfection that one should always be striving for. Zipes comments:

> Perrault took the side of modernism and believed that France and Christianity […] could only make great progress and become like the great Greek and Roman Empires of the past if the French writers and artists incorporated pagan beliefs and folklore into their sophisticated works and developed a culture of enlightenment. The point was not to imitate Greek and Roman culture but to become different if not unique.[11]

Thus, one of the main objects for debate revolved around the use of the marvellous in literature[12] as linked with the concept of *vraisemblance* (verisimilitude or plausibility),[13] a debate which Lewis Carl Seifert calls specifically the *Querelle du Merveilleux* (The Quarrel of the Marvellous).[14] Should authors use the classic pagan myths (*merveilleux païen*) or the Christian marvellous style (*merveilleux chrétien*)? Supporters of the pagan marvellous argued that the aesthetics of mythological models should still be applied to literature and were a token of good morals. To the modernists, in favour of the *merveilleux chrétien,* the use of classical myths, because they were culture-specific, were not necessary. Seifert comments:

> In several respects, the marvellous employed by the *contes de fées* resembles that proposed by theoreticians of the *merveilleux chrétien*. Like the Christian epics, the vogue of fairy tales is a recognition and exploitation of a culturally specific type of marvelous that arises from indigenous French traditions (as opposed to the purported universality of the mythological *merveilleux*). The association of folkloric marvelous with the lowest classes was an important maneuver that

---

[11] Jack Zipes, *When Dreams Came True* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp.38-39.

[12] A full discussion of the *querelle* is simply impossible within the context of this thesis which will focus on aspects of the marvelous only. The confrontation was indeed extremely complex and multi faceted—Jean de La Fontaine, for instance, most famous for his animal fables, is a perfect example of how blurred the line truly was between *anciens* and *modernes*. While declaring his allegiance to the side of the *anciens*, in his *Epitre à Huet* (1687), he also clearly asserted his creative independence: 'mon imitation n'est pas un esclavage', a point notably discussed by Anna Jaubert in her article 'La Fontaine, l'Ancien et le Moderne'. See also, Anne Sancier-Château's 'Modernité de La Fontaine', Marc Fumaroli's *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* and Anne-Marie Lecoq's *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes: XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle*.

[13] The full implications of the aesthetic principle of *vraisemblance* are detailed by Lewis Carl Seifert in his study *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender in France 1690-1715, Nostalgic Utopias* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.26-31.

[14] Seifert, p.29.

afforded a self-affirmation for *mondain* writers and readers, as well as a defense of the 'modernist' cause in the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*.

After the official conclusion of the quarrel—Louis XIV ending it in favour of Boileau—Perrault kept on promoting his ideas and ideals in his work. Particularly relevant in this case are his fairy tales of course. He first wrote three verse tales: 'Griséldis' (1691), 'Les Souhaits ridicules' ('The Foolish Wishes', 1693) and 'Peau d'âne' ('Donkeyskin', 1694) before publishing in 1697, his famous collection *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (*Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals*), subtitled *Les Contes de la mère l'oie* (*Tales of Mother Goose*) which consisted of tales such as 'Le Petit chaperon rouge' ('Little Red Riding Hood'), 'Cendrillon' ('Cinderella'), 'Le Chat botté' ('Puss in Boots') and 'La Belle au bois dormant' ('The Sleeping Beauty'). To create those literary versions, Perrault used older or contemporary literary versions but also popular folk tales, with the aim of turning them into moralistic tales which would address social and political issues. Perrault's tales are always rationalised, didactic, working towards a moral and provoking his readers to reflect on the stories, sometimes in very ambiguous, sarcastic ways.

Perrault was not the only one writing tales at the time as intellectual French *salon* ladies also took it upon themselves to polish and glamorise folk narratives. Mme d'Aulnoy (who coined the term *conte de fées*—and its English equivalent, 'fairy tale') was one of them (*Les Contes des fées*, 1697-98),[15] along with Melle Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier (*Oeuvres Meslées*, 1695), and Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont (*Magasin des Enfants*, 1757— includes the now famous 'La Belle et la Bête') among others. Warner points to the crucial role of these *conteuses,* who sided with the *modernes* but were generally dismissed as writers and excluded from the intellectual elite of the Academy:

> Fairy tales were taken up most enthusiastically by defenders of the *'modernes'* (French, local, demotic) against the *'anciens'* (classical, universal, latinate)— chiefly independent-minded women of courtly, élite society, *conteuses, salonnières*, and bluestockings who embroidered and expanded the generic plotlines and characters, adding rococo ornament to biting satire about domestic cruelty and political tyranny.[16]

Although very literary, (most of the *précieuses*' relatively long fairy tales contain many descriptions, metaphors, and witty comments) through their work, the tales retain

---

[15] Her most famous tales are 'La Chatte blanche', 'Finette Cendron', and 'Gracieuse et Percinet' all published in *Contes nouveaux ou Les Fées à la mode*, 1698.

[16] Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time*, p.46.

some of their oral qualities, as they were read and told for entertainment in the salons. As mentioned in chapter one, Elizabeth Wanning Harries's study *Twice Upon A Time* (2001) makes a useful distinction between what she calls 'complex tales' and 'compact tales': she argues that the 'compact' form that we are most familiar with—as developed by Perrault and the Grimms—has overshadowed the more sophisticated 'complex' form of the tales which is an equally rich tradition.[17]

Lewis C. Seifert argues that in fact, because many of the fairy tales written by the female writers at the time often employ both pagan and Christian forms of the marvellous, they never truly fit within the type of marvellous advocated by either the *modernes* or the *anciens*, and that this ambiguity played a key role in their marginalisation.[18] As Dearbhla McGrath adds:

> critics expressed disdain at over-use of the marvellous and, especially, at forcing Christian figures to fit into Greek and Roman models. This *invraisemblance* became a crucial factor in the way the *contes de fées* were viewed during that time.[19]

As Zipes notes in *The Irresistible Fairy Tale* (2012), because they were considered as a trivial genre, unworthy of attention, the tales endowed female writers (whom he calls the 'neglected female storytellers and collectors')[20] with great freedom. Unfortunately, as Jack Zipes writes, the role of the *précieuses* is often overshadowed by male collectors, especially Perrault:

> Perrault's own contribution to the development of the literary fairy tale for children is an unusual one, because he is often given credit for creating the vogue when it was really the talented female writers who founded the genre and played a more dynamic role in establishing the fairy tale to subvert more classical genres.[21]

Marina Warner compares the *conteuses*' and Perrault's tales:

---

[17] Elizabeth Wanning Harries, *Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003 [2001])
[18] Seifert, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender in France 1690-1715*, p.33.
[19] Dearbhla McGrath, 'Weaving Words: A Diachronic Analysis of the Representation of Gender, Sexuality and Otherness in Women's (Re)Writings of La Belle et la Bête' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Dublin City University, 2013), p.19.
[20] Zipes, Chapter 5: 'The Tales of Innocent Persecuted Heroines and their Neglected Female Storytellers and Collectors', *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: the Cultural and Social History of a Genre* (Princeton, N.J. and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp.80-108.
[21] Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion,* p.32.

> The women fairytale writers were often loquacious, whereas Perrault is laconic; they were embattled, while he gives more of a Gallic shrug at the misdeeds of fairytale characters. Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier, Henriette-Julie de Murat. Charlotte-Rose de La Force, and Marguerite de Lubert likewise adopted the conventions of the fairy tale to depict the virtues, the sufferings—and the hopes—of their sex; they speak out against arranged marriages and the double standard, which allowed men to enjoy love affairs and punished women for adultery, which gave men education and denied women the freedom that followed knowledge; their heightened and sardonic flights of fancy about wealth and luxury also point to the excesses of the royal and princely courts. […] Several of these women suffered legal penalties—prison, house arrest, exile—for their views, even though they had hidden their messages in apparent frippery.[22]

Perrault's situation as an already-acknowledged male writer and member of the *Académie Française* means that his tales (and his way of rewriting folk narratives) were more easily accepted, especially in France. It is often forgotten that he took part in the literary salons of female fairy-tale writers such as d'Aulnoy's or his niece Melle Lhéritier's. But as this quote shows, his stance toward the tales written by the *conteuses* is ambiguous:

> J'aurois pu rendre mes Contes plus agreables en y meslant certaines choses un peu libres dont on a accoûtumé de les égayer; mais le désir de plaire ne m'a jamais assez tenté pour violer une loy que je me suis imposée de ne rien écrire qui pust blesser ou la pudeur ou la bien-seance.[23]

> I could have made my tales more agreeable by mixing in some free elements which people are in the habit of adding to them. However, the will to please has never been enough of a temptation for me to break a rule I imposed upon myself, which is to never write anything that could go against either decency or decorum.

As he speaks of his will to write didactic tales, Perrault criticises the 'lighter' tales, that is the tales which were mainly written to entertain, mostly by and for women. Angela Carter comments on Perrault's position rather humorously in her essay 'The Better to Eat You With' (1976): 'Charles Perrault, academician, folklorist, pedant, but clearly neither nutter nor regressive, takes a healthily abrasive attitude to his material. Cut the crap about richly nurturing the imagination. *This* world is all that is to the point.'[24]

---

[22] Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time*, p.47.

[23] Charles Perrault, 'Préface', *Contes en vers*: *fac-similé de l'édition originale de 1695-1697* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1980) (no page numbers).

[24] Angela Carter, 'The Better to Eat You With', *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings* (London: Vintage, 1998 [1976]), pp.451-55 (pp.452-53).

Harries argues that our restricted view of what the fairy tale is (or should be) gives us an erroneous understanding of what some recent, postmodern writers achieve through their retellings (which she calls revisions): 'Because we have ignored or forgotten other moments in the history of fairy tales, we fail to see the continuities that run through it.'[25] Knowing and understanding the history of the tale is crucial to studying its rewritings, and as Harries writes, playing with and critique of the form has always been central to the genre. In parallel, and to go back to questions raised in chapter one regarding the essential characteristics of the fairy tale, in an article on the *Antimärchen*, Laura Martin shows how the concept of the anti tale is not as new as it seems, as there has never been a 'pure' fairy tale and the anti tale has always functioned as 'a shadow type of the genre'.[26]

About a century later, between 1785 and 1789, Charles-Joseph Mayer published the 40-volume *Cabinet des fées ou Collection choisie des contes de fées et autres contes merveilleux,* a collection which brought together fairy tales written and published in France over a period of a hundred years. This collection is believed to have greatly helped disseminating the tales over Europe. Marina Warner remarks upon the crucial role both French salon tales and the Grimm brothers (to which we now turn) had in shaping the genre:

> The late seventeenth and early eighteenth century marks the start of the modern fairy tale as we know it, and Perrault and Galland are the key exponents who, in the history of readership and reception, established as literature 'the Fairy way of writing'. Collectors and writers like Perrault and later, the Grimm Brothers, formed a corpus, even a canon, of fairy tales, and their printed versions established standard elements. When new storytellers later tackled 'Hansel and Gretel', they were consequently aware of a template in ways that a medieval storyteller might not have been.[27]

Antoine Galland, whom Warner refers to here translated and published *Les Mille et une nuits* (1704-1717) (*The Thousand and One Nights*). While the subject of *The Arabian Nights* is only brushed upon in this thesis (as links have been drawn for instance between Sheherazade and the heroine in 'Bluebeard') Galland's collection helped disseminate oriental fairy tales and their format and style have influenced numerous authors over the

---

[25] Harries, p.16.

[26] Laura Martin, 'The German Enlightenment and Romantic *Märchen* as *Antimärchen*', in *Anti-Tales: The Uses of Disenchantment*, ed. by Catriona McAra and David Calvin (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp.18-36 (p.23).

[27] Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time*, p.50.

years).[28] As Anne Duggan notes in her article on postwar French fairy-tale cinema, film adaptations *The Arabian Nights* have been numerous[29] linked of course with Galland's translation of the tales, but also France's colonial history and relationship with North Africa.

3. Romanticism and Fairy Tales

At the start of the nineteenth century, Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm set out to search for traditional stories and collected tales which were published in the now world-renowned collection *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*, 1812-57). They edited and refined their tales until Wilhelm's death and produced seven different editions in their lifetime, the number of tales growing from 86 to 210 by 1857. Until the 1970s, it was widely believed that the Grimm Brothers had gathered folk tales from German peasants. However, a lot of their tales were collected from educated middle classes or bourgeoisie who had themselves often been in contact with both oral and literary fairy tales, such as the ones produced during the late seventeenth, early eighteenth-century French fairy-tale vogue. Moreover, the Grimms did not simply collect tales, but as their own notes attest, they did an important work of selection, edition, and expansion on the tales—Wilhelm in particular edited and refined the tales for years—creating and shaping the fairy tale as we know it.

At a time when German principalities were occupied by Napoleonic troops, the brothers worked towards giving their nation a united image, and save its rich cultural heritage. They aimed at asserting their own cultural distinctiveness and wealth becoming part of a movement to record the German spirit, a trend integral to the German Romantic movement itself. As Fabian Lampart notes: 'One salient feature of German Romanticism is the importance of '*Volksdichtung*' or '*Volksliteratur*' (folk literature). By this term the Romantics understood literature that has its origins in the collective memory of the people or even one specific nation.'[30] The Grimm Brothers were neither the only ones nor the first to collect and publish folk material. Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim undertook a

---

[28] See Robert Irwin's *The Arabian Nights, A Companion* (1994), Marina Warner's *Stranger Magic* (2011), and Andrei Codrescu's *Whatever Gets you Through the Night* (2011).

[29] Duggan mentions among others Jacques Becker's *Ali Baba et les quarantes voleurs* (*Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,* 1954), Pierre Gaspard-Huit's *Shéhérazade* (1963), Philippe de Broca's *1001 Nuits* (*1001* Nights, 1990), and Pierre Aknine's *Ali Baba et les quarantes voleurs* (*Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,* 2007).

[30] Fabian Lampart, 'The Turn to History and the *Volk:* Brentano, Arnim, and the Grimm Brothers', in *The Literature of German Romanticism,* ed. by Dennis F. Mahoney, pp.171-89 (p.171).

similar endeavour a few years earlier, collecting folk songs and poems in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn: Alte deutsche Lieder* (*The Boy's Magic Horn: Old German Songs*, 1805-1808) and Brentano especially incited the Grimms to collect stories.[31]

While published in a context where many tales were collected and written, the Grimms' fairy tales stand out from similar endeavours at the time, mostly because of their intended audience. Jack Zipes explains:

> The fairy tales of Musäus, Wieland, Goethe, and the Romantics give rise to a bourgeois literary institution which has a distinctly new and more autonomous function than the courtly fairy tales and peasant folk tales. Instead of writing their literary fairy tales for courtly audiences or telling them orally, German writers directed their tales to a middle-class reading public in the process of forming itself and the free market.[32]
>
> […]
>
> More than Goethe, Novalis, Wackenroder, Tieck, Eichendorff, Brentano, and Hoffman, whose complex, symbolical tales were not easily accessible for a large public—nor were they widely distributed—the Grimms were able to collect and compose tales that spoke to readers of all classes and age groups. They themselves had already been influenced by Goethe, the early romantics, and Brentano and Arnim, and their work is the culmination of a folk tradition and bourgeois appropriation of the folk tale.[33]

The impact of the Grimms' work on the fairy-tale genre is remarkable and their tales have exercised a profound influence on our Western societies. To Zipes, the Grimms' body of tales is 'the first major equilibrium of the literary genre.'[34] He explains:

> It is from this equilibrium that we can look back to see what constituted the literary genre of the fairy tale and look forward to 'punctuated' equilibriums, genres that have branched off from the Grimms' model or retellings of the Grimms' tales that have brought about changes in the species.[35]

---

[31] For a detailed account, see Jack Zipes's introduction to *The Complete First Edition of The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014)

[32] Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* (New York and London: Routledge 1989 [1988]), p.82.

[33] Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm*, p.84.

[34] Zipes, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition*, p.xii.

[35] Zipes, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition,* p.xii.

In her study *Romanticisms in Perspective* (1969), Lilian L. Furst points to the main characteristics of the romantic movements: 'the imaginative apprehension of experience, the primacy of feeling, the cult of the individual, specially the artist, the new attitude to nature, the exploration of the unconscious and the fascination of the supernatural, the greater freedom of expression, etc.'[36], while also acknowledging that the primacy of all these elements varied from one romantic movement to another. Indeed, if categorising romanticism as a single heterogeneous movement is convenient in many respects, it is also restrictive. In his article, 'On the Discrimination of Romanticisms' (1924), A.O. Lovejoy reaches the conclusion that because the word 'romantic' has so many different meanings, it has come to mean nothing. Lovejoy pleads for a systematic differentiation between romanticisms, arguing for the recognition of a plurality of romanticisms, between different countries but also between different time periods. [37] Looking at scholarship on romanticism, it becomes quickly evident that the French movement stands apart: it is often excluded from studies as scholars believe it is too remote from its English and German counterparts. For instance, in his preface to *The Creative Imagination* (1981), James Engell remarks that:

> It is inevitable that this book center on Britain and Germany […] France […] faced a different set of circumstances. Its literature and criticism, while in the highest sense imaginative, did not originate or develop the idea of imagination in the same fashion nor to the same extent as that of England, Scotland, and Germany.[38]

As Furst explains, while in England imagination came to be seen as a respected path towards accessing 'the Truth', it never gained primacy on the other side of the channel: 'In France, under the guise of fantasy, [imagination] was eyed with some distrust and subordinated to the pursuit of truth and naturalness'.[39]

Margery Sabin compares the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and William Wordsworth, who were both extremely influential within the romantic movements, but also adopted very different views, notably concerning imagination. Most strikingly, Wordsworth describes imagination as the 'absolute power' when Rousseau underlines the

---

[36] Lilian R. Furst, *Romanticism in Perspective*: *A Comparative Study of Aspects of the Romantic Movements in England, France and Germany* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p.15.

[37] Arthur O. Lovejoy, 'On the Discrimination of Romanticisms', *Modern Language Association*, 39:2 (June 1924), 229-253.

[38] James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), p.ix-x.

[39] Furst, p.126.

necessity to limit it: 'The real world has limits, the imaginary world is infinite, facing the impossibility of widening one, we should narrow the other.'[40] In *Emile ou de l'Education* (1762) he also declares that one must protect children from a desire for 'un monde imaginaire'. As Sabin concludes:

> The idea of the 'transcendental imagination' never takes hold in French Romanticism as it does in English. Wordsworth's heroic ideal of the marriage between mind and nature in a universe enlivened by eternal spirit does not inform the writings of Rousseau, Hugo, Baudelaire or Flaubert. It even seems alien to their common preoccupation with the isolated human spirit, thrown back on its own human resources of feeling, conscience or faith.[41]

Victor Hugo's preface to *Cromwell* (1827) has now become more famous than the play it was written for, and while the play presents a very thorough application of the principles Hugo seeks to establish, the preface has become one of the crucial founding texts of French romanticism. In it, Hugo claims that rules restrict genius[42] and calls for an equal use of 'Le sublime et le grotesque, le beau et l'horrible'[43] putting into question the precepts established for tragedy, which date back from antiquity, such as the rule of unities. His plays such as *Cromwell* (1827), *Hernani* (1830) and *Ruy Blas* (1838) use the new rules Hugo establishes by multiplying characters and places and intermingling prose and verse. His influence can be found in other plays such as Alfred de Musset's *Lorenzaccio* (1834) and *On ne badine pas avec l'amour* (1834). These work towards explaining why, in France, romanticism is often associated with the picturesque, the grotesque, and freedom rather than the more common themes of imagination and the otherworldly.

It is also telling that in anthologies of romantic self-definitions the parts on imagination are very rarely written by French Romantics. In Lilian R. Furst's anthology *European Romanticism* (1980)*,* the part entitled 'The Creative Imagination' only has one French author out of ten (Hugo) (others include Blake, Shelley, Wordsworth, Novalis and Schlegel). And in fact, French romantics themselves seem confused as to how to define romanticism: Alfred De Musset ponders and ironises on the twelve years 'of suffering' he had to go through to finally understand what the term meant, pointing to the inherently

---

[40] 'Le monde réel a ses bornes, le monde imaginaire est infini, ne pouvant élargir l'un, retrécissons l'autre.' Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile ou de l'Education*, in *Oeuvres complètes IV*, ed. by Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1969), p.305.

[41] Margery Sabin, *English Romanticism and the French Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1976), p.ix.

[42] Victor Hugo, 'Preface', *Cromwell* (Paris: Motteroz, 1881), p.25.

[43] Hugo, p.43.

foreign nature of the movement: 'Until 1830 we believed that Romanticism consisted in imitating the Germans to whom we added, upon advice, the English.'[44] Musset's ironic and almost comical tone in this comment highlights the desire to distance himself from these imposed rules, and indeed Furst notes the 'French reluctance, indeed fear, to import foreign ideas which seemed an insult and a menace to French cultural dominance.'[45] Similarly, German authors wanted to break away from the French influence and the post-Napoleonic invasion, going back to their roots as a nation (the way the Grimm brothers did) collecting tales that would reflect the Germanic way of life.

Another major historical event which impacted cultural production was the French Revolution. Of course, the Revolution itself has often been linked with romanticism, and signs of its impact and resonance can be found in many pieces of romantic literature. It did, however, put the creation of literature on hold for a while: authors in France, often part of the upper classes and French nobility, became wary of concepts of freedom and imagination, some of them having had to flee their lands or take care of their possessions rather than write. In fact, partly because of the French Revolution, between 1790 and 1820, French romanticism lagged behind its European counterparts.

The clear contextual and cultural differences between French Salon tales and the Grimms appear rather clearly in the tales themselves. Some have been mentioned already (cf. introduction). One of the main differences resides in the goal of the tales and their intended audience. While seventeenth-century French tales were extremely didactic, and usually ended with a moral, it was an element which the Grimms did not believe to be central to the genre. Zipes notes:

> Though mindful of the educational value of their collection, the Grimms shied away from making their tales moralistic or overly didactic. They viewed the morality in their tales as naïve and organic, and readers, young and old could intuit lessons from them spontaneously because of their essential poetry.[46]

As argued above, many of the tales which the Grimms appropriated came in fact from the French salon tradition. While they did not include a moral (the way Perrault would) the brothers became extremely mindful of the suitability of their tales, tuning down all the

---

[44] 'Nous crûmes, jusqu'en 1830, que le romantisme était l'imitation des Allemands, et nous y ajoutâmes les Anglais sur le conseil qu'on nous donna', De Musset, *Lettres de Dupuis et Coronet, Oeuvres Completes*, vol III, pp.820-828.

[45] Furst, p.41.

[46] Jack Zipes, *The Complete First Edition of the Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, p.xxx.

sexual motifs that could be found in some of the stories they collected.[47] For instance while Perrault's 'Le Petit Chaperon rouge' ('Little Red Riding Hood', 1697) is a clear warning against a male sexual predator, the Grimms' version 'Rotkäppchen' (1812) does not include all the erotic innuendoes present in Perrault's tale and introduces two versions of the ending. In one of them the wolf is punished and killed before he can harm the girl. In the most famous one, however, after eating up the girl and her grandmother whole, the sleeping wolf is cut open with scissors by the huntsman. The woman and girl escape the wolf's belly safely and the wolf dies.[48] In fact, this deletion of the sexual connotations, by deconstructing the image of the wolf as a specifically sexual predator re-establishes the marvellous; Perrault's rationalised marvellous is replaced by a much lighter type of marvellous which does not rely on the realm of the possible and the allegorical.

4. The Roots of Fantasy Literature

In his article 'Gothic versus Romantic: a Revaluation of the Gothic Novel', Robert D. Hume studies the gothic in relation to the romantic literature of the same period. To him, while the Gothic as a genre has often been dismissed by literary critics, it is a crucial part of the literature of the later eighteenth century which 'attempts to rouse the reader's imaginative sympathies'. Indeed, Hume links the two genres through their goals:

> The realistic novel, the novel of manners, and neoclassical poetry generally lead the reader to contemplate the exterior actions of the life around him. In sharp contradistinction, Gothic and romantic writing usually lead the reader to consider internal mental processes and reactions.[49]

He adds: 'the particular device employed toward this end by the Gothic novel writers is terror.'[50] Alain Pozzuoli links the two movements even more directly than Hume: 'the gothic springs from romanticism, this literary movement born in Germany and steeped in

---

[47] Many current versions exclude violent episodes present in tales. For instance in the Grimms' 'Cinderella' the sisters cut parts of their feet to fit them in the glass slipper, and get their eyes pecked out by birds as punishment for their malevolence, in 'Snow White' the evil stepmother is made to dance in red-hot shoes until she dies. This editing was done progressively, as mentioned above, in early versions of 'Rapunzel' for instance, the visits of the Prince are betrayed by the princess's clothes getting tighter, thus letting the witch deduce that she is pregnant. This was changed in subsequent editions in which Rapunzel simply carelessly lets it slip that the prince has been visiting her.

[48] When discovering that 'Red Riding Hood' ('Le Petit chaperon rouge') was a French tale, they proceeded to suppress it completely in a later editions.

[49] Robert D. Hume, 'Gothic versus Romantic: a Revaluation of the Gothic Novel', *Language*, 84:2 (2012), 282–90 (p.288).

[50] Robert D. Hume, p.282.

the knightly spirit of the Middle ages.'[51] Pozzuoli believes the real initiator of the gothic movement to be E.T.A. Hoffmann whose tales—especially 'Der Sandmann' ('The Sandman', 1816)—would become a model to his successors. But in England, the Gothic had already become extremely popular with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), followed by a second, belated wave and the famous Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1816) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). In America, the movement also found its equivalent in Edgar Allan Poe and his tales (most famous among them, 'The Black Cat', 1843) and authors such as H.P. Lovecraft ('The Call of Cthulhu', 1928), who, while writing much later, also belong to the tradition. Widely influential, the movement was also extremely popular in France with works such as Guy de Maupassant's *Le Horla* (1886), Gérard de Nerval's *Aurélia* (1853), Theophile Gautier's 'La morte amoureuse' (1836) and Prosper Mérimée's *La vénus d'Ille* (1837).

While all these tales use supernatural elements, modern fantasy is often considered to have truly developed during the second half of the nineteenth century in Victorian England. The works of authors such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), followed shortly after by *Through the Looking Glass* (1871), George MacDonald (*The Princess and the Goblin*, 1872; *The Princess and Curdie*, 1883), William Morris (*News From Nowhere,* 1890; *The Wood Beyond the World,* 1894) Charles Kingsley (*The Water Babies*, 1863)[52] and later on, Edith Nesbit (*Five Children and It*, 1902) Kenneth Graham (*The Wind in the Willows*, 1908), James Barrie (*Peter and Wendy*, 1911), David Lindsey (with the hard to classify *Voyage to Arcturus*, 1920) all participated towards the creation of modern fantasy.

For a long time, as Anne Besson notes, both within, but more especially outside the anglophone world, the publication of Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* in 1954, completely overshadowed other works (such as E.R. Eddisson's *The Worm Ourobouros*, 1922), leading him to be seen as the only true fantasy master, as the example to follow, leading to many books very clearly inspired by his work. The extent of Tolkien's world-creation was of course unprecedented, but his popularity, especially in the United States,

---

[51] 'Le gothique trouve sa source dans le romantisme, courant littéraire né outre-Rhin, imprégné de l'esprit chevaleresque du Moyen Age.' Alain Pozzuoli, 'Au commencement était le gothique', in *Fantastique, fantasy, science-fiction*, p.17.
[52] While Kingsley is not as well known as his contemporary Lewis Carroll, references to his work are numerous in fantasy culture, for instance, in Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) Alice's father is called Charles Kingsley.

somehow uprooted him from a context where fantasy had been in the making for years. This explains for instance why, until the movie franchise starting in 2005, books such as C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* were almost completely unknown to French audiences. Similarly, in the United States, with a will to create 'an American Fairy Tale', Frank L. Baum wrote the Oz series, with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), first of a series of fourteen books which is known to a French audience thanks to the 1939 movie of the same name.

In the late 1990s and 2000s, the *Harry Potter* series and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Material*s enabled the spread of fantasy. But while read widely, they were mostly aimed at children. Fantasy was especially enabled and spread in France by the popular media *par excellence*, cinema. While it is not the object of this study, cinema's role in the development and spread of fantasy is pivotal: many of the books mentioned above would not have been widely known in France without adaptations. This is the case of Roald Dahl's works, and more recently *Narnia* for instance. Disney also played a crucial role by adapting and exporting works such as P.L. Travers's *Mary Poppins* (1934), T. H. White's *The Sword and the Stone* (1938) and, of course, a very Americanised version of fairy tales.

5. Conclusions

This chapter aimed at examining the fairy tale's history and focused on some critical points in its evolution which determined its future—and therefore current—form. Some of the historical pressures presented are common to both the anglophone and the francophone tradition such as the romantic movement, a movement especially associated with the imagination and the fairy tale, but which developed in very different ways in France, Germany, and England. It is difficult to assess exactly what creates and sustains differences in terms of literary production from one country to another. Some of the evidence presented in this chapter suggested that francophone fairy tales have become what they are partially as a result of a will to preserve national characteristics, but also because of its possible isolation at points in history, isolation which is dwindling with globalisation. The (almost systematic) rationalisation of magic could be due to francophone authors' familiarity with Perrault's tales, but also be a means both of going back to the roots of typically French fairy tales and placing themselves within a specific cultural tradition.

CHAPTER THREE

Fantasy Genre and Theories of Genre: The Hybridity of the Fairy Tale

1. Introduction

There is a persistent prejudice that if an author uses fantasy for non-didactic purposes, he has failed. In *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961), C.S. Lewis, best known for the *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56), laments:

> There are earnest people who recommend realistic reading for everyone because, they say it prepares us for real life, and who would, if they could, forbid fairy-tales for children and romances for adults because these 'give a false picture of life'—in other words, deceive the reader.[1]

He answers this charge:

> But without some degree of realism in content—a degree proportional to the reader's intelligence—no deception will occur at all. No one can deceive you unless he makes you think he is telling the truth. The unblushingly romantic has far less power to deceive than the apparently realistic. Admitted fantasy is precisely the kind of literature which never deceives at all. Children are not deceived by fairy-tales; they are often and gravely deceived by school-stories. Adults are not deceived by science-fiction; they can be deceived by the stories in the women's magazines. […] To be sure, no novel will deceive the best type of reader.[2]

And indeed, it is surprising that deception is so often ascribed to non-realistic works; after all, whether mimetic[3] or not, fiction always is a creation. As Linda Hutcheon notes: 'For the reader it is not easier to create and believe in the well-documented world of Zola than it is for him to imagine hobbits or elves; the imaginative leap into the novel's world of time

---

[1] C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p.67.
[2] C.S. Lewis, pp.67-68.
[3] I use the term 'mimetic' to widely refer to works which aim to represent and imitate 'reality' in fiction and/or art. See Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003 [1946]).

and space must be made in both cases'.[4] As C.S. Lewis argues, this process of deception itself could be deemed easier: because the narrative world re-presents the 'real', everyday world, presenting fictional narratives as real in mimetic fiction is in theory easier.

For instance, Ian McEwan, who sets his stories in a historical or contemporary, extremely well-documented, realistic Britain, plays repeatedly with the blurred boundaries between reality and fiction. His novel, *Enduring Love* (1997) set in 1990s London, tells the story of a man suffering from De Clérambault syndrome. In the appendix the reader is presented with what seems to be a genuine article published in *The British Review of Psychology* (complete with references and a bibliography) which, it seems, informed the plot. Several reviewers and psychoanalysts praised the article when the book was first published, discovering only later that it was a spoof: the names of the doctors who wrote the article form an anagram of Ian McEwan (Doctors Wenn and Camia).[5] The journal does not exist but the references and bibliography do. This is a good example of a type of deception which could not have happened in a fantasy novel.

One of the real issues with differentiating realism and fantasy through aesthetic value comes down to the very inadequacy of the term 'deception'. The aesthetic and stylistic differences do not change the fact that readers are aware of reading a work of fiction and, no matter the ontological principles involved, a work of fiction for which they actively participate in what Coleridge has famously called 'the willing suspension of disbelief'. Literature is made up of words, as such it is an art, it is artificial and is only a representation. Even if authors strive to represent 'reality', this reality is always mediated through the lens of their own world-view, through the ordering of words and ideas. Reality is chaos, and literature is a means of ordering, especially fiction and the act of narration. Linda Hutcheon describes the act of putting things into stories as 'narrativization', which she considers 'a central form of human comprehension, of imposition of meaning and formal coherence on the chaos of events.'[6] Thus, writing goes hand in hand with creation but also with omission; it is always a selective process. It is impossible to imitate without making choices—conscious or not—impossible not to put one's own style through the writing. Who better than Dickens to illustrate this point: his realistic novels are written in

---

[4] Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, 2nd ed. (New York: Methuen, 1984), p.78.
[5] Burkeman, Oliver, 'Fooled you', *The Guardian*, 16 August 1996 <http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/1999/aug/16/features11.g24> [accessed July 2015]
[6] Linda Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), p.121.

an eminently recognisable style, populated with characteristic quirky descriptions ascribing living qualities to inanimate objects while comparing characters to things.

From the onset of his work *Heterocosmica* (1998)*, Lubomír Doležel is very critical of purely mimetic reading:

> This book reserves its strongest criticism for the ancient but persistent doctrine of mimesis, a theory of fictionality that claims that fictions are imitations or representations of the actual world, of real life. Mimetic doctrine is behind a very popular mode of reading that converts fictional persons into live people, imaginary settings into actual places, invented stories into real-life happenings. Mimetic reading, practised by naive readers and reinforced by journalist critics, is one of the most reductive operations of which the human mind is capable: the vast, open and inviting fictional universe is shrunk to the model of one single world, actual human experience.[7]

Doležel is a pioneer in applying possible-worlds theory to literature.[8] As he writes: 'if fiction creates possible worlds, literature is not confined to imitating the actual world.'[9] He adds:

> Fictional worlds are not constrained by requirements of verisimilitude, truthfulness, or plausibility; they are shaped by historically changing aesthetic factors, such as artistic aims, typological and generic norms, period and individual styles. The history of fictional worlds of literature is the history of an art.[10]

As J.R.R. Tolkien writes: 'If men really could not distinguish between frogs and men, fairy-stories about frog-kings would not have arisen.'[11] Supernatural elements, although more disengaged from our everyday 'reality' at first glance do themselves spring from it, and could be said to contribute towards another interpretation of it. A writer's material is based on the actual world to some extent; other examples of this are mythical creatures such as fauns, mermaids and centaurs, so obviously created from existing animals and human beings. Centaurs are supernatural because an interbreeding of horses and humans is impossible, but both body parts and characteristics exist in our world. The

---

[7] Lubomír Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, p.x.

[8] Possible-world theory was first born in mathematics and logics. Discussing its origins, Marie-Laure Ryan notes (in conjunction with Thomas Pavel) that: 'the main legacy of possible world theory to textual semiotics is an interest in the problem of truth in fiction and in the relations between semantic domains and reality', Marie-Laura Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p.3.

[9] Doležel, p.19.

[10] Doležel, p.19.

[11] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories', p.72.

description of new creatures will always be made from our own points of reference, described by an addition or a lack of something that is familiar and normal to us. Fairies often look like tiny human beings, dragons like giant winged lizards. But obviously, as Doležel underlines, these materials have to undergo a 'substantial transformation at the world boundary': 'actual-world entities have to be converted into non-actual possibles'[12] and this is true of all writing. For this reason, the theorist warns of the dangers of mixing theories between 'real' and 'fictional'. Doležel draws an important distinction between actual people and places and their fictional counterparts: whether it is Tolstoy's Napoleon or Dickens' London, they all are representations.[13] Doležel sees the possible worlds as 'semiotic objects' which give the reader the possibility of gaining access to non-possible elements. This does not mean that the links between the actual world and the fictional one are completely severed:

> The assertion that fictional texts have a special truth-conditional status does not mean that they are less actual than imaging texts of science, journalism, or everyday conversation. Fictional texts are composed by actual authors (storytellers, writers) using resources from an actual human language and destined for actual readers.[14]

But most importantly, as Doležel argues, it means that:

> Fictional worlds do not have to conform to the structures of the actual world, just as the world of non-Euclidean geometry does not conform to the world where Euclidean geometry is valid. There is no justification for two semantics of fictionality, one designed for 'realistic' fiction, the other for 'fantasy.'[15]

Doležel's claim does not mean that the study of realistic fiction has to be the same as the one of fantasy, indeed he acknowledges that texts can be very different, but rather that one should not be seen as having precedence over the other, or more value than the other. Doležel is close to reader response theory too, he talks of a 'contract between *actual* persons and *fictional* worlds':[16] 'possible-worlds semantics insists that the world is constructed by its author and the reader's role is to reconstruct it.'[17]

---

[12] Doležel, p.21.
[13] Doležel, p.19.
[14] Doležel, p.28.
[15] Doležel, p.19.
[16] Doležel, p.20.
[17] Doležel, p.21.

In fact, as Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle state 'literature is uncanny' because like all arts, literature has the capacity to transform the familiar, the everyday into something else and,

> the uncanny has to do with a sense of strangeness, mystery or eeriness. More particularly it concerns a sense of unfamiliarity which appears at the very heart of the familiar or else a sense of familiarity which appears at the very heart of the unfamiliar.[18]

Claiming that mimetic or realistic fiction and fantasy should not be hierarchised and distinguished through aesthetic value does not mean that there cannot be different theories to study them, but rather that each fictional world needs to be considered for its own ontological principle with equal value. Many rewritings of fairy tales, as they modify and extend the plot and the narrative world mingle several genres. Thus, the rest of this chapter will look into francophone and anglophone theories of fantasy and genre, tools which will prove important when we come to analyse the texts in the second part of this thesis.

2. Fantasy Literature in Theory

J.R.R. Tolkien's foundational essay 'On Fairy Stories,' first published in 1947, focuses on the creation of what he calls a 'secondary world,' and aims at defending fantasy. Specifically, Tolkien does not use the word 'fantasy' to designate a genre (Fantasy or High Fantasy now often used to refer to the genre he instigated himself with *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955)). Fantasy, in Tolkien's essay, refers to the very act of fantasising. The scholar and writer upholds it as 'a natural human activity', which means that rather than rejecting the common association of fantasy with escapism, he asserts it: to him, fantasy *is* escapist,

> and that is its glory […] If a soldier is imprisoned by the enemy, don't we consider it his duty to escape? [...] if we value the freedom of mind and soul, if we're partisans of liberty, then it's our plain duty to escape, and to take as many people with us as we can![19]

Tolkien also refutes the common assumption that fantasising is the opposite of rationality:

---

[18] Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (Harlow: Longman, 2009 [1995]), p.34.
[19] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories', p.72.

> It certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor obscure the perception of, scientific verity. On the contrary. The keener and the clearer the reason, the better fantasy will it make. [...] For creative Fantasy is founded upon the hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun; on a recognition of fact, but not a slavery to it.[20]

Unsurprisingly, the man behind Middle Earth asserts that the building of a 'secondary world' is essential: in his novels the world itself arguably rivals the plot for prominence, in fact as if the stories were mere excuses to put the world on display, presenting the extent to which he constructed Middle Earth, giving it a history, a precise geography, and various languages. Clute and Grant claim that Tolkien's affirmation of an autonomous world 'marked the end of apology'. As they argue:

> No longer was it necessary for fantasy writers to feel any lingering need to 'normalize' their secondary world by framing them as Traveller's Tales, or Dreams (entered via Portals) which prove exiguous at dawn, or Timeslip tales, or as Beast Fables.[21]

To Tolkien, true fairy stories 'cannot tolerate any frame or machinery suggesting that the whole story in which they occur is a figment or illusion.'[22] He gives the (counter) example of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), which to him is not a fairy tale because of the dream framing. Tolkien's definition of 'fairy stories' corresponds closely to what Tzvetan Todorov later called the 'marvellous'.

While Tolkien emphasises the feeling of joy that both creator and reader encounter in fantasy literature, Bruno Bettelheim, a Freudian psychoanalyst, presents fantasy as an essential tool to reach maturity. In *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976) which probably still remains one of the most famous studies on fairy tales, Bettelheim aims to demonstrate how the form of the fairy tale and the hardships it presents through amplification and symbols are necessary for children's development. Although his work can be—and has been

---

[20] Tolkien, p.73.
[21] Clute and Grant, 'Secondary World', *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*
       <http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/fe.php?nm=secondary_world> [accessed July 2015]
[22] Tolkien, p.75.

frequently—contradicted,[23] his influence is without contest. He believes that the violent elements present in the tales help children face their fears and prepare them for 'real' life.

Similarly, Rosemary Jackson, also heavily influenced by Freudian theory, underlines the cathartic value of fantasy. In *Fantasy, The Literature of Subversion* (1981) she calls fantasy the 'literature of desire': according to her, because of its subversive nature, fantasy literature becomes the outlet for repressed desires and thoughts, bringing release to both author and reader. As a Marxist, Jackson also advocates a consideration of fantasy literature in its social and political context, which is what she believes Tzvetan Todorov's theory of the fantastic, published a decade earlier, lacks. Jackson therefore sees the fantastic as important because it disrupts class and patriarchal systems and criticises fantasy and the marvellous (such as Tolkien's or Charles Kingsley's) for falling into nostalgia[24] and not subverting social order—a stance which both Jonathan Langford and Brian Attebery criticise as originating from and being limited to her own political agenda.[25]

Tzvetan Todorov's *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (1970)[26] is still one of the most influential studies of fantasy literature. Todorov mostly focuses on the relationship between reader and text and the famous 'Todorovian ambiguity'. Todorov situates the fantastic at the crossroad between two genres: the uncanny and the marvellous. The fantastic, which is the main focus of Todorov's study, relies upon the reader's hesitation when faced with the supernatural. Todorov mostly uses examples from nineteenth-century horror tales such as those of Guy de Maupassant, Theophile Gauthier or Vivier de L'Isle Adam. For Todorov, the fantastic can evaporate at any moment depending on how supernatural elements are presented, thus fading into either the uncanny (where natural explanations are found) or the marvellous (which requires a supernatural explanation). Thus, the uncanny refers to a text in which the reader is given a rational explanation for seemingly supernatural events as is the case for instance in many of

---

[23] Jack Zipes devotes his article 'On the Use and Abuse of Folktales and Fairy Tales with children' to Bettelheim's book, in which he criticises Bettelheim's imposing of meaning on the tales and misinterpretation of Freudian theory. In turn, in *The Great Cat Massacre*, Robert Darnton deplores Bettelheim's universalisation process which takes the tales completely out of their historical and cultural context (p.13); Donald Haase also criticises Bettelheim (in 'Mine, Yours or Ours') for his universalization and moralizing view of the tales (pp.359-360).

[24] Rosemary Jackson, *The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), p.9.

[25] Jonathan D. Langford, 'Why the Academy Is Afraid of Dragons: The Suppression of the Marvelous in Theories of the Fantastic', in *Science Fiction, Canonization, Marginalization and the Academy*, ed. by Gary Westfahl and George Slusser (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 2002), p.56 and Brian Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p.21.

[26] Todorov's study was published in English under the title: *The Fantastic; A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre,* the translator and/or editors choosing to clearly put the emphasis on the development of a taxonomy.

Sherlock Holmes' adventures.[27] The marvellous, by opposition, describes texts in which the supernatural occurs indisputably. Often, the supernatural is unambiguous from the outset of the narrative which is why Todorov uses the example of fairy tales; to him their opening formula determines the boundaries between everyday and magical worlds right from the outset.

Todorov's structural development has been used by many as a starting point for the study of imaginative fiction but has often been expanded to include works that do not fit within his proposed categories. His tripartite structure leaves out many works that lack ambiguity[28] and/or were created after the 1970s. A prime example is magical realism, which is at the crossroads between marvellous and uncanny. There is no hesitation as to whether fantastic elements occurred or not; they are both real and unreal. As Amaryll Beatrice Chanady argues, magical realism is built on:

> two conflicting, but autonomously coherent, perspectives, one based on an 'enlightened' and rational view of reality, and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality. [...] The supernatural is never presented as something problematic. The reader should not at any point react to the supernatural in the text as if it were antinomical with/to our conventional view of reality.[29]

French theorists often split imaginative fiction (usually referred to as '*les littératures de l'imaginaire*') into three major genres that adapt but follow closely Todorov's study: *le merveilleux*, *le fantastique* and *la science fiction*. This is the case, for instance, of three French theorists, André-François Ruaud (*Cartographie du merveilleux*, 2001), Patrick Marcel (*Atlas des brumes et des ombres*, 2002), and Francis Valéry (*Passeport pour les étoiles*, 2000). In his article 'Why the Academy is Afraid of Dragons; The Suppression of the Marvelous in Theories of the Fantastic' (2002), Jonathan D. Langford argues that Todorov's study, which should have 'finally created a solid theoretical base for criticism of fantasy' has in fact, because it focuses solely on ambiguity, worked to 'perpetuate the exclusion of certain types of the fantastic.'[30] Langford shows

---

[27] See for instance Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902). For most of the novel, the reader, along with Dr. Watson, cannot seem to be able to explain the events at hand except through curses and a spectral hound, until Holmes finds a rational explanation.

[28] The most famous example of an occurrence of the fantastic which strictly follows Todorov's taxonomy is Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) which lacks resolution and remains ambiguous.

[29] Amaryll Beatrice Chanady, *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy* (New York: Garland, 1985), pp.21-22.

[30] Langford, p.51.

how Todorov's definition has led many critics to 'use definitions that valorize the disturbing cognitive effects of the fantastic',[31] thus either excluding or presenting as minor the marvellous—a category within which both fantasy and fairy tales fall.

Thus, while his study has been widely influential, Todorov's use of the term 'fantastic' is very specific to his work and refers to a genre grounded in ambivalence. Over the years, the term 'fantastic' has been used less and less to refer to a genre and slowly replaced by the term 'fantasy' while fantastic is mostly used as an adjective.

This is the case in Eric Rabkin's study. While undeniably influenced by Todorov, in his study *The Fantastic in Literature* (1976) Rabkin uses the term 'fantastic' not to refer to a genre, but to the introduction of a supernatural element in a narrative. He bases his theory of the supernatural on perspective: to him, the fantastic occurs when the dominant notion of reality of the actual world is disrupted. These ground rules are built on a complex network of conventional perspectives which take into account the historical context in which the book was written, as author and reader can differ with regards to what can acceptably be considered as real, especially if they are from a different place and time, and have different beliefs. In this, his definition is reminiscent of Arthur C. Clarke's famous statement that 'any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic'.[32] What might have been seen as 'impossible' only a few decades ago (smartphones, the internet, etc.) now belongs to our everyday reality and normality—an idea to which we shall come back in chapter 4.

But what makes Rabkin's work especially distinctive is his claim that perspective and the ground rules of the fictional world are actually central to the emergence of the fantastic: 'Every work of art sets up its own ground rules.'[33] According to him, '[o]ne of the key distinguishing marks of the fantastic is that the perspectives enforced by the ground rules of the narrative world must be diametrically contradicted'.[34] He takes the example of *Alice in Wonderland* in which Alice is surprised many times by the events that happen around her. She is astonished that flowers can talk because it contradicts her expectations of what can and cannot happen. For Rabkin, it is not the fact that they can talk

---

[31] Langford, p.51.

[32] Arthur C. Clarke, *Profiles of the Future: An Enquiry into the Limits of the Possible* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973 [1962]), p.21.

[33] Eric S. Rabkin, *The Fantastic in Literature,* 2nd printing (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p.4.

[34] Rabkin, p.8.

that is fantastic as such but the fact that Alice is surprised and has to modify her own expectations of what can or cannot happen in the world in which she finds herself:

> *Unexpected*, literally, means *not-expected*. We enter a narrative world with the preconceptions of our armchair world intact, and these preconceptions only change as the narrative reconfigures them. In our world, and in Wonderland, the dead do not speak. Their speaking is unexpected in the sense of *anti-expected*. When the anti-expected happens, we are in the presence of the fantastic.[35]

Rabkin's definition is difficult to apply to texts as it is based on the reader's shifting perspectives and seems to imply that there are shifting rules outside the text which give meaning to the disruptions within it. Moreover, I concur with Langford in saying that Rabkin's basic definition does not really work in terms of taking into consideration the marvellous as the effect of narratives such as fairy tales 'is not linked to a destabilizing of our perceptions about the "real" world.'[36]

The very same year, William Robert Irwin published *The Game of the Impossible: a Rhetoric of Fantasy* (1976). In his study Irwin draws a distinction between 'fantasy' and 'fantastic'. 'Fantastic' refers to a type of material, not a literary form. To him, '[a] narrative is a fantasy if it presents the persuasive establishment and development of an impossibility, an arbitrary construct of the mind with all under the control of logic and rhetoric.'[37] While Tolkien focuses on the joy that fantasy can bring, to Irwin, the goal of fantasy is not to induce wonder: he views fantasy as an intellectual exercise. While different from Tolkien's, his view explains his focus on detail and consistency as it is the creation of the world which allows the reader to believe in it. The focus on 'impossibility' is a common one: Gary K. Wolfe remarks that 'whatever we are to call fantasy must first and foremost deal with the impossible.'[38] Schlobin defines it as 'that corpus in which the impossible is primary in its quantity or centrality'[39] and C.N. Manlove 'another order of reality from that in which we exist and form our notions of possibility.'[40]

---

[35] Rabkin, p.10.
[36] Langford, p.54.
[37] William Robert Irwin, *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p.9.
[38] Gary K. Wolfe, *The Literature of Fantasy* (New York: Garland, 1979), p.xxv.
[39] Roger Schlobin, ed., *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art* (Brighton: Harvester: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), p.xxvi.
[40] C.N. Manlove, *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.3.

The 1980s take a different turn with critics such as Katherine Hume (*Fantasy and Mimesis*, 1984) and Ann Swinfen (*In Defence of Fantasy*, 1984) both defending fantasy as one of the main impulses of literature by creating a very large and inclusive definition of fantasy literature. To Hume 'fantasy *is an element* in nearly all kinds of literature'[41] and not a separate genre. As she refuses to restrict fantasy to what she calls 'exclusive definitions'[42] and to limit it to notions of genre, she affirms that fantasy and mimesis are the two main impulses that define literature. She defines mimesis as the desire to imitate, and fantasy as the desire to alter reality in some way. Hume's idea that fantasy is not a separate genre but can be found across all types of literature is an appealing one, but her definition can sometimes prove to be too loose and too inclusive. If it has been argued above that the two should not be differentiated in terms of value, and (even if she warns against it) Hume's definition falls easily into the pit of calling fantasy everything that does not seem 'realistic'. There are many ways of departing from verisimilitude and one should not consider texts that are simply un-realistic (such as pornography for instance) as texts in which the fantastic occurs. Thus, while I believe that mimetic and fantastic texts should not be hierarchised, the only issue with Hume's study is taxonomical: if one can study them aside, for practical reasons, a line should be drawn between realistic, un-realistic, and fantastic.

To Ann Swinfen, fantasy *is* mimesis, as it is simply a different interpretation of the everyday world. Because she believes that fantasy and realism achieve the same goals if the created world is convincing enough, she often limits her study of fantasy to other worlds creations—close to Tolkien's concept of 'Faerie'. This is reminiscent of possible world theory mentioned above, which admit that all created worlds are fictional. While I agree that to a certain extent all fiction is fantasy, for practical reasons, in this study, the term fantasy refers to the occurrence of something supernatural and is rarely used to define a genre. As such it is close to C.S. Lewis's own definition as he explains that literary fantasy can be 'very heterogeneous in spirit and purpose' and that sometimes 'the only thing common to them is the fantastic.'[43]

In *Stories about Stories, Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* (2014), Brian Attebery talks about the fantastic as 'creative and disruptive play with representations of the real

---

[41] Kathryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (New York and London: Methuen, 1984), p.xii.

[42] Hume, p.8.

[43] C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, p.50.

world [which] can be found in any genres of oral and written storytelling'.[44] To Attebery defining fantasy should be simple:

> [as it] claims no authority nor exerts hegemony. It denies its own validity: the one characteristic shared by all fantasy narratives is their non factuality. The fundamental premise of fantasy is that the things it tells not only did not happen but *could* not have happened. In that literal untruth is freedom to tell many symbolic truths without forcing a choice among them.[45]

Also an advocate for the freedom fantasy provides, Francis Berthelot, a French writer and scholar, studies what he calls 'les transfictions' in *Bibliothèques de l'entre-mondes* (2005). Berthelot is interested in narratives that are situated within a 'nebula of which the edges are necessarily blurry'[46,] and which

> transgressent en 1er lieu les règles du domaine auquel on les rattache (lois du réalisme dans le mainstream, contraintes de genre en SF); ensuite, seulement, ils peuvent diversifier davantage leurs infractions.[47]

> first transgress the rules of the domain to which they belong (rules of realism in mainstream fiction, genre constraints in SF) and then only, can they further diversify their transgressions.

Berthelot defines imaginative fiction as a type of fiction which happens beyond general literature by 'introducing distortions to the world in which we live or by inventing its own universe.'[48] Berthelot's study considers works which are at the intersection of various genres—anglophone and francophone alike, such as Alain Fournier's *Le grand Meaulnes* (1913), Raymond Queneau's *Les fleurs bleues* (1965), Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* trilogy (1946-1959) and Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* (1981)—and how transgressions made through combinations create new possibilities.[49]

Breaking away from most definitions and earlier taxonomies of fantasy, Farah Mendlesohn's *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008) does not aim to create a strict taxonomy of

---

[44] Brian Attebery, *Stories about Stories, Stories About Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.32.

[45] Attebery, p.4.

[46] 'une nébuleuse dont les contours sont forcément indistincts', Francis Berthelot, *Bibliothèque de l'entre-mondes,* p.19.

[47] Berthelot, p.19.

[48] 'Les littératures de l'imaginaire […] [introduisent] des distorsions dans le monde où nous vivons, soit en inventant leurs propres univers', Berthelot, p.15.

[49] Berthelot, pp.16-19.

fantasy but rather a classification meant to help create new ways of approaching fantasy works. She postulates a model based on the way the supernatural enters the narrative through four categories: (1) 'The Portal-Quest Fantasy' in which the reader is invited through the fantastic (as in C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* for instance), (2) 'The Immersive Fantasy', which is a work of fantasy which creates a world with no reference to ours (such as J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth (*The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings, The Simarillion*) or Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* (*The Earthsea series*, 1964-2001) (3) 'The Intrusion Fantasy' which designates a work in which fantastic elements enter the fictional world and are the clincher of the unfolding of the story, and finally (4) 'Liminal Fantasy' which refers to a work in which the reader understands that what he is reading is happening in an everyday world, in which the supernatural should be intrusive / disruptive but does not surprise the protagonist. Mendlesohn's taxonomy enables usual categories to overlap and present works in a new light and as we shall see in chapter four, it can also be combined with possible worlds theory.

3. Genre

The elusive notion of genre has been discussed and defined in many various and contrasting ways.[50] As the term 'genre' has been used extensively until this point, it now seems indispensable to define its use within this thesis—an endeavour which seems especially apt when studying what is often called 'genre literature'—especially as I wish to show how the traditional boundaries between genres have been and are constantly questioned in the works under study. Almost derogatory, the denomination 'genre literature' (used mostly outside of academia) seems to imply that science fiction and fantasy literature are niche, specialised areas, with a specific fan base and an acquired taste, one for which mainstream or 'proper' literature do not qualify (cf. the discussion on Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant* in chapter one).

In this thesis, broadly speaking, genres are seen as tacit contracts between writers and their readers which can be found in all types of literature and texts: conventions created and marked by specific signals and indications. Genre is a means of establishing a context within a literary text through specific markers, the way gesture and intonation do in the context of everyday speech or storytelling. Thus, if one sees genre as a network of

---

[50] See Daniel Chandler, 'An Introduction to Genre Theory' (1997).
<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf> [accessed June 2015]

more or less consciously crafted signals, the question of genre revolves around an author's choice of material and his reliance upon his reader to pick up on those signals to create meaning. Using the conventions of a genre implies entering in a dialogue with the history of that genre, renewing it, and questioning it.

One of the main problems with genre classification is that it is more than often exclusive and may lead to being restrictive. Thus, reading a work through the lens of a specific genre can be fruitful but one also runs the risk of being blind to other characteristics. As Björn Sundmark notes, notions of genre often tend to be 'prescriptive rather than descriptive', with, for instance, the idea that a fairy tale 'ought to have' certain characteristics to be considered as such; when Tolkien gives his definition of the fairy-tale genre he does so in terms of what it *should* be.[51]

Thus, crucially, rather than seeing them as binding, these 'genre contracts' are particularly useful tools when they allow to shed a new light on a work. As Brian Attebery notes:

> One lesson we can take from all these generic puzzles is that no single answer will do: the question of what genre a particular text belongs to will never be resolved, nor need it be. The interesting question about any given story is not whether or not it is fantasy or science fiction or realistic novel, but rather what happens when we read it as one of those things. What happens when we read *Frankenstein* as an instance of the philosophical Gothic? How does that reading differ from one that looks for the markers of science fiction, or horror? Depending on the generic perspective one favors, certain details of plot and motivation will stand out, while others will recede into the background. The central questions will shift.[52]

By focusing on rewritten fairy tales, this thesis, clearly chooses to read the texts in this specific light: in chapter 4, for instance, the TV series *Grimm* is examined specifically in relation to its fairy-tale intertexts, but it could equally be read through the lens of a police drama or a horror narrative, or even studied specifically in terms of filmography.

It is important to stress that as the works studied are rewritings, none of them corresponds to what would be called 'traditional' fairy tales. The term 'traditional' does not refer to the time in which they were written or who wrote them—which is why I do not use the term 'original'—but rather to the canonical and expected style, structure, and elements

---

[51] Björn Sundmark, *Alice in the Oral-Literary Continuum* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1999), p.30.
[52] Brian Attebery, *Stories About Stories,* p.38.

described earlier on in chapter one (or in the case of a specific tale to the most commonly accepted version).

The rewritings either adapt the style and the structure of fairy tales (in a process of novelisation for instance) or reuse the content of well-known fairy tales by transforming them, parodying them, subverting, or inverting their motifs. By doing so the texts are created in part by means of intertextuality, a concept that is implied by the use of the term 'retelling' or 'rewriting' which denotes the existence of a source text. This heightened reliance on intertextuality points to the crucial role played by readers in the construction of its meaning: the text is different to every reader and intertextualities can be created by the reader without the writer's intent. But because all the selected texts, although very different on some points, deal very explicitly with well-known fairy tales, the reading of these texts is influenced by the knowledge of the fairy-tale genre, knowledge constantly subverted and superimposed with the use of and interaction with other genres of which the reader also needs be aware if he/she wants to grasp all the subtleties of the text. Through the use of well-known motifs and an accumulation of references, authors who rewrite fairy tales create texts for which the reader's previous knowledge of the (main) source text is central to the rewriting process and to the creation of meaning. Moreover, even if one tale might be the main focus, these works do not simply deal with one fairy tale but tend to create a network of references to other fairy tales and fairy-tale motifs—a magic mirror, a glass coffin, a red apple—which also bring to the fore the complexity of the tales.

Especially in the light of its complex history and various ramifications, a synchronistic view of genre does not work in the case of the fairy tale and thus looking at genre, as Alastair Fowler does, as a diachronistic process proves more fruitful. When discussing genre in *Kinds of Literature* (1982), Fowler uses Wittgenstein's concept of family likeness in game theory: individual members of a family may not resemble each other at all, but when viewed as a group one can see similarities and perceive that they all belong to the same group. The family metaphor also includes the component of time, and the idea that traits are inherited but subject to modification, and may even miss one generation and appear in the next. The historical context is important: genres evolve and each work can bring something new to the genre that may (or may not) change it dramatically and redefine it. As Todorov writes: 'Each era has its own system of genre, which is linked to its dominant ideology. A society chooses and codifies the acts which correspond the more closely to its ideology: this is why the existence of some genres in a

society and their absence in another reveal that ideology.'[53] These views are also therefore compatible with a consideration of the fairy tale in its context. The fairy tale has evolved through time, through its history of orality and literacy, and it has evolved into different branches in different countries, the focus in this study being of course the differences between the francophone and anglophone contexts as developed in chapter one and two.

In his study on genre theory, Daniel Chandler argues that readers' pleasure comes from the familiar, but also from its manipulation, from 'the consequent shifting of [their] expectations'[54]—pointing to the importance of the combination of cognition and estrangement in rewritings. In fact, I would like to argue that the process of rewriting itself and its combination of cognition and estrangement is key to the inducement of wonder. If McDonald writes specifically about romance, the following can be applied to the fairy tale too:

> Narrative pleasure is produced by, and in, the gap that exists between the conventions that structure romance (the use of stock characters, formulaic language as well, of course, as the social and cultural norms that are omnipresent) and the transgressions that its narrative produces. The prevalence of convention in romance is integral to the kind of pleasure it achieves; without convention (without a system of norms and expectations that can be transgressed), the effect of transgression is lost. And it is in this *effect* that pleasure is located.[55]

In the texts studied, disruptions which thwart the reader's expectations occur on several levels. All of the rewritings modernise the tales they use. They include modern themes or contexts (*Grimm* and *Once Upon a Time* happen in 21st century America, *Truismes* in 1990s France) or else exhibit a modern form of narration (many of the works studied are postmodern or show postmodernist traits: Pratchett's, Coover's, Chevillard's etc.). Authors also tend to tell the story from a different perspective (with the villain telling his/her side of the story: 'Snow, Glass, Apples') thus developing characters—a trait which was virtually absent in traditional fairy-tales—and, in conjunction with these elements, also altering the style itself.

---

[53] 'Chaque époque a son propre système de genres, qui est en rapport avec l'idéologie dominante. Une société choisit et codifie les actes qui correspondent au plus près à son idéologie ; c'est pourquoi l'existence de certains genres dans une société, leur absence dans une autre, sont révélatrices de cette idéologie.' Tzvetan Todorov, *Les Formes du discours*, quoted in Michel Corvin, *Qu'est-ce que la comédie* (Paris, Dunod, 1994), p. 4.

[54] Daniel Chandler, 'An Introduction to Genre Theory', p.9.

[55] Nicola McDonald, 'A Polemical Introduction', in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. by McDonald (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp 1-21 (p.16).

Thus, all the texts studied make—more or less explicitly—comments on the fairy-tale genre and their source texts. References to their own fictionality, to the act of writing and rewriting, and even to fairy-tale scholarship, are numerous through the corpus of texts. Thus, none of the texts studied corresponds to a traditional fairy tale, as they all play with and bring something new to the fairy tale genre, which has become, as Jack Zipes argues, 'a hybrid genre'.[56]

4. Fairy-Tale Hybridity

The fairy tale has shown an incredible ability to recreate itself and mutate, spreading to different types of narratives and media. These trans-media, trans-genre adaptations raise the question of classification: are rewritten fairy tales fairy tales themselves? Is wonder still inherent to and present in rewritings, and if so, how is it induced?

4.1. Case Study: The Lunar Chronicles

I would like to draw attention to the hybridity and plurality of the contemporary fairy tale by using the example of Marissa Meyer's young adult novels: *The Lunar Chronicles* (*Cinder,* 2012; *Scarlet*, 2013; *Cress*, 2014; *Winter*, 2015). In this series, Meyer rewrites and brings together four traditional western fairy tales ('Cinderella', 'Little Red Riding Hood', 'Rapunzel' and 'Snow White'). In each book, Meyer introduces a new fairy-tale heroine into a dystopian future in which human beings cohabit with cyborgs and androids on Earth. Not only is there a deadly mysterious pandemic ravaging the planet, but the Earth is also on the break of a war with the Lunar, a race of humanoids with psychic powers, descendants of the first moon settlers.

If science fiction and fairy tales are often included under the same largely encompassing heading of 'imaginative fiction,' a blending of the two genres is not unheard of,[57] but remains a surprising premise as the fairy tale is often associated with the natural while science fiction with the unnatural and the technological. Within the context of this thesis, this blending of two genres raises the question of the impact this hybridity has on the tales themselves and their evolution. In his 'Introduction to Genre Theory' (1997) Chandler refers to 'competent readers', who

---

[56] Jack Zipes, *Sticks and Stones,* p.3.
[57] A most famous one is Tanith Lee's 'Beauty' (1983), a futuristic retelling of 'Beauty and the Beast'.

are not generally confused when some of their initial expectations are not met—
the framework of the genre can be seen as offering 'default' expectations which
act as a starting point for interpretation rather than a straitjacket. However,
challenging too many conventional expectations for the genre could threaten the
integrity of the text. Familiarity with a genre enables readers to generate feasible
predictions about events in a narrative. Drawing on their knowledge of other texts
within the same genre helps readers to sort salient from non-salient narrative
information in an individual text.[58]

Meyer's series is interesting because it is an example of how the two genres can work
together, and its study raises several questions: which elements are retained from each
genre? Can the books still be described as fairy tales? How significant is the use of the
fairy tale and what does it bring to the book? By introducing androids, flying
transportation, space travel, and a mysterious pandemic to her basis narrative Meyer uses
very common tropes and codes of the science-fiction genre. This move into the future
creates a remoteness of setting that is equivalent to the vague setting of the fairy tale in a
distant past; it remains a world that the reader does not really know and can never entirely
grasp. Cinder, the main character is, on her own, the perfect embodiment of the hybridity
of the novel: she is a lost princess *and* a cyborg, she is the fairy tale *and* the science-fiction
type character at the same time. Making her into a cyborg is not only noteworthy because
losing a whole foot on the palace stairs is—while arguably humorous—a striking way to
bridge the gap between the two genres, but also because of the relevance of cyborgs in
exploring human nature and our relationship to technology and nature. The novels are a
good example of the integration and development of traditional fairy-tale stories within a
modern, technological world.

Just like science fiction and fairy tales, women cyborgs work almost as an
oxymoron: as the feminine is usually associated with nature and the machine with sterility,
robotics seems to be the polar opposite of 'femininity'. Reusing the 'Cinderella' trope of
'the persecuted heroine', in her narration, Meyer not only explores ideas of otherness and
identity but also ethnicity and race. Cinder is treated as a second-class citizen and rejected
as a monster, first because she is a cyborg, then because she is actually a Lunar, two
categories which make her foreign, dangerous, and untrustworthy in the eyes of the society
she evolves in. In her famous 'Cyborg Manifesto', Donna Haraway argues that by breaking
dualisms, the cyborg is a challenge to the dominant antagonistic Western discourse—as

---

[58] Chandler, p.8.

linked with patriarchy and colonialism for instance. Moreover, the image of the cyborg raises questions of control and lack of control over the body, object and subject, nature and culture. Haraway uses the metaphor of cyborg identity to expose the way in which things considered natural, like human bodies, are only constructions of our minds. She defines the cyborg as follows: 'a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction'.[59] Her study has particular relevance to feminism, since Haraway argues that indeed women are often discussed or treated in ways that reduce them to bodies only, a point I discuss further in chapter 5 and 6.

Thus, while rewriting the basic 'Cinderella' plot, Meyer uses the science fictional aspects of her text to question concepts of truth and the difference between artificial reality and empirical reality. Reminiscent of other fairy-tale narratives and the links between mirrors and beauty, the Lunar Queen Levana uses mind control to have people perceive her as beautiful. Only Cinder's partly artificial brain, which sees through lies, shows her as she really is: a hideous, manipulative monster. The use of the cyborg thus pushes the reader to consider the difference between artefacts and nature, between virtual reality, computing imagery and the human. Nina Lykke argues that in addition to blurring the boundaries between human and non-human, cyborgs also blur the boundaries between the material world and the semiotic world of signs and meanings: 'The Cyborg [of virtual reality] tends to absorb the material into the semiotic. The material is constructed as potentially changeable by semiotic, sign-producing acts, by programming and reprogramming'.[60] Cinder's computer brain turns the world into words, and the hybrid heroine embodies the world of fiction in which she evolves. Meyer's novels effectively merge fairy tale and science fiction and by being a hybrid of the two genres, as the series introduces strangeness to well-known narratives, it questions, renews and reintroduces wonder to the genres.

4.2. Evolutionary Theories of Literature

Recent studies have shed light on how the hybridity of the fairy tale resides not only in the obvious connection between traditional fairy tales and the incorporation of/within other genres but also with fairy-tale scholarship and criticism. Jack Zipes argues: 'since 1980 there has been an inextricable, dialectical development of mutual influence of

---

[59] Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto, Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the late Twentieth Century', in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.149-81.

[60] Nina Lykke, *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace* (London: Zed Books, 1996), p.27.

all writers of fairy tales and fairy-tale criticism that has led to innovative fairy-tale experiments in all cultural fields.'[61]

As argued in previous chapters, the fairy tale has indeed become a complex genre, intermingling various media, integrating or integrated (with)in different genres. In her most recent work, Cristina Bacchilega uses the image of a 'fairy tale web'[62] to 'respond critically to the *multivalent currency* of the fairy tale', the 'need to approach the genre's social uses and effects in ways that account for how this multiplicity of position takings produces not ideological binaries, but complex alignments and alliances.'[63] Her approach is extremely fruitful; with the image of the web, Bacchilega links the fairy tale to current media development as well as the ancestral links of storytelling with concepts of 'spinning' and 'weaving'. Stemming from a similar idea, I wish to postulate an image of the fairy-tale genre and all its various manifestations as an evolutionary tree, with various ramifications, developments, and roots. Jack Zipes also writes that 'the fairy tale is similar to a mysterious biological species that appeared at one point in history, began to evolve almost naturally, and has continued to transform itself vigorously to the present day.'[64]

Indeed, the evolution and the survival of the fairy tale through numerous metamorphoses, borrowing and integrating motifs from different genres and literatures could be compared to that of an organic process. Storytellers often talk about stories as living entities; in *Once Upon a Time* (2014), Marina Warner describes the fairy-tale genre as follows:

> Think of it as a plant genus, like roses or fungi or grasses, which seed and root and flower here and there, changing species and colour and size and shape where they spring. […] The stories' interest isn't exhausted by repetition, reformulation, or retelling, but their pleasure gains from the endless permutations performed on the nucleus of the tale, its DNA as it were.[65]

In *Letting Stories Breathe* (2010), Arthur W. Frank presents a socio-narratological approach which defines stories as 'material semiotic companions'.[66] He quotes John Law:

---

[61] Zipes, *Relentless Progress: The Reconfiguration of Children's Literature, Fairy Tales, and Storytelling* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p.122.
[62] Cristina Bacchilega, *Fairy Tales Transformed*, Introduction, pp.1-30.
[63] Bacchilega, p.18.
[64] Zipes, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition*, p.xi
[65] Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time*, p.45.
[66] Arthur W. Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p.42.

> [T]here is no important difference between stories and materials. Or, to put it a little differently: stories, effective stories, perform themselves into the material world—yes in the form of social relations, but also in the form of machines, architectural arrangements, bodies, and all the rest. This means that one way of imagining the world is that it is a set of (pretty disorderly) stories that intersect and interfere with one another. It also means that these are, however, not simply narrations in the standard linguistic sense of the term.[67]

Law argues that stories can have an impact on the world, that they perform a function that materialises in the everyday world. In *Prospecting* (1989), Wolfgang Iser defines his famous 'Reader's Response' as the way in which 'the reader's faculties are both *acted upon* and *activated*'[68] (my emphasis), he adds: 'a text can only come to life when it is read.'[69] Similarly, Doležel writes:

> The text that was composed by the writer's labors is a set of instructions to the reader, according to which the world reconstruction proceeds […] Having reconstructed the fictional world as a mental image, the reader can ponder it and make it part of his experience, just as he experientially appropriates the real world. The appropriation, which ranges from enjoyment through knowledge acquisition to following it as a script, integrates fictional worlds into the reader's reality.[70]

All these theorists acknowledge the impact that words and stories can have on the actual world. Of course, the status of this impact is a complex one, which points to the physical qualities of words: text is both material and immaterial; it is not made of the things it describes and creates, but neither is it an object as such. Moreover, text does not represent anything independently: the reader gives it life and creates it through the process of reading. The evolution of stories is therefore mutualistic; the stories on paper come to life through the reader. Writing gives presence to immateriality, the text has a tangible existence in the world: the reader cannot bring this life on his own but he needs the materiality of the text to do so, to create his own vision of the world in written form, to bring it to life, thus, words and writing give presence to immateriality.

In *Gossip from the Forest* (2013), scholar and writer Sarah Maitland, argues that forest and fairy tales are inextricably linked: to her, fairy tales are stories that emanated

---

[67] Quoted by Arthur W. Frank, p.48.
[68] Wolfgang Iser, *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p.vii.
[69] Iser, p.4.
[70] Doležel, p.21.

from the forest itself, told by forest dwellers, and inspired by it. Conversely, in Maitland's opinion, fairy tales tell us how to approach and respect forests: 'They are spooky but special in our imaginations. Woods are part of our fantasy of childhood because of fairy stories. That love protects our woodlands.'[71] She points to the biological concept of 'mycorrhiza' as a good image of this mutualistic growth and evolution:

> Most plants are dual organisms. Attached to their roots is a fungus whose hyphae are thinner and more richly branched than the root itself; they invade more soil than is directly accessible to the roots. The host plant supplies the fungus with the carbon needed to make its hyphae. […] Neither functions well without the other; seedlings use their seed reserves to make contact with the fungus, and die if they fail to find a partner.[72]

People often talk about the 'survival' of the fairy tale as if it was something alive. Neil Gaiman refers to one of his stories as a virus which you cannot get rid of once read.[73] In *The Company We Keep* (1989) Wayne C. Booth notes that while it is artificial, fiction comes naturally to human beings,[74] and going even further, in his study *On the Origins of Stories* (2013), Brian Boyd develops an approach to fiction which looks at stories in evolutionary terms. Boyd argues that fiction, like any art, is something that is inherent to human nature and which man has developed because it an evolutionary necessity. This necessity for stories in our lives is reminiscent of Linda Hutcheon's concept of 'narrativization' mentioned at the start of the chapter; Hutcheon argues that the world is made up of stories and that stories are our way to comprehend the world, being a form 'of imposition of meaning and formal coherence on the chaos of events'.[75]

The vocabulary often used to describe fiction such as seeds, evolution, origins, roots, branches, disseminate, spread, mutate etc. also points in this direction. Boyd justifies his approach as follows:

> a biocultural approach to literature invites a return to the richness of texts and the many-sidedness of the human nature that texts evoke. But it also implies that we cannot simply go back to literary texts without assimilating what science has discovered about human nature, minds, and behavior over the last half-century,

---

[71] Sara Maitland, *Gossip From the Forest* (London: Granta, 2013), p.21.
[72] Oliver Rackham, *Woodlands* (*New Naturalist Library No.100*) (London: Collins, 2006), p.34.
[73] Neil Gaiman, *Smoke and Mirrors* (London: Headline Review, 1999), p.32.
[74] Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep, An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1988)
[75] Linda Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1988), p.121.

and considering what these discoveries can offer for a first truly comprehensive literary theory.[76]

Fairy tales are part of a bigger ensemble, and it is through evolution—an evolution that seems almost natural and not simply artificially created—that the fairy tale has survived and remained relevant. The idea I wish to develop here is similar in its premise, in that it is similar to the image of an evolutionary tree, I propose to consider the fairy tale genre as an organic entity in constant evolution. Looking at the tales and their evolution as a living system which takes into account its various branch points, including writers and readers is fruitful: it implies examining the texts as material that simultaneously springs from a specific environment while also having an impact on that environment. As such, it is an especially apt approach for a comparison between francophone and anglophone literatures and their fields of cultural production.

This brings us back to the idea of hybridity and hybrid genres. Ihab Hassan designates 'hybridization' as one of the characteristics of postmodernism, what he calls 'the mutant replication of genres.'[77] It could be fruitful to start from and develop Fowler's concept of genre as family likeness mentioned above, and push it to see it as something organic and alive. While hybridity in science usually only means a combination of two elements, I use the word in a larger sense, and when I talk about 'hybridity' I do not mean only two elements but possibly more.

Fairy tales are created through infinite combinations of elements which include intertexts, paratexts, and contexts. This, it seems, is especially relevant when talking about the fairy tale and its history of orality and literacy, the way it spread over countries each time influenced by the socio-historical context as they were told and retold. Just as rewritings and adaptations are often seen as lesser versions, hybridity and the 'unnatural,' in biology especially, are often linked with sterility and seen negatively by the public (see the GMOs for instance) they are seen as 'un-pure' forms of the original. But there is no pure fairy tale: the fairy tale as it is known today springs from centuries of oral stories and written texts spread over continents, cultures, and social classes mutually influencing each other. This is once again reminiscent of Laura Martin's argument (mentioned in the previous chapter) when she argued that tale and anti-tale have always evolved alongside

---

[76] Brian Boyd, *On the Origins of Stories, Evolution, Cognition and Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), p.2.
[77] Ihab Hassan, 'Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective', p.20.

one another, [78] a pure form is a utopian concept: what makes the fairy tale rich—or any work for that matter—is its plurality, a plurality which is largely present and visible in fairy tales. The fairy tale is a material that is in essence 'borrowed', manipulated, transformed. In the context of this study, we can also see francophone and anglophone rewritings as belonging to various branches, starting from a same material, sharing similarities but having also evolved from various outgrowths, different contexts, in different ways.

5. Conclusions: Mutualistic Constructions

To conclude on these three introductory chapters, I would like to point to an element which I believe is central to an understanding of contemporary rewritings of fairy tales, and which brings together reader-response theories, the history of the fairy tale, its hybridity, and its current manifestations: the extra-textual interaction between writer and reader. Tales were told orally for thousands of years, evolved through an intermingling of oral and literary versions (such as the tales collected by the Grimms), but were also adapted for various contexts, such as the way the *conteuses* wrote intricate tales that were meant to be read in educated circles. Nowadays, the fairy tale is undergoing a new interaction between its creators and its recipients, one especially prominent in popular culture. Fan-based interventions and interactions between writers and their readers (or audience) are increasing and having a new impact on the texts and on the way authors play with their readers' expectations. Not only are writers creating extremely self-conscious texts (where narrator and writer blur into one for instance) but many authors are also developing new relationships with their audience. For instance, Neil Gaiman, who has rewritten several fairy tales ('Snow, Glass, Apples', and more recently *Hansel and Gretel*, 2014 (illustrated by Lorenzo Mattotti); *The Sleeper and the Spindle*, 2014 (illustrated by Chris Riddell) among others), directly communicates with his readership outside his texts. Gaiman answers questions and emails from his fans through his blog and social media, but also writes introductions for his short stories in which he explains why and when he has written such and such piece. If not orality, it seems that at least a more direct form of communication has become part of the contemporary fairy tale.

Of course, readers always interact with the texts they read but these new tendencies, where writers, series creators and actors share their process of creation (as is the case especially in the American series *Once Upon a Time* discussed in Chapter 4) make

---

[78] Laura Martin, 'The German Enlightenment and Romantic *Märchen* as *Antimärchen*', in *Anti-Tales*, p.23.

the reader or audience feel that they are an active part of the project (rather than a simple recipient). The creation of 'official' paratexts which discuss the filming of some projects, explain the process of creation etc. and enable fans and viewers to comment on (and participate in?) its creation.[79] However, not always simple marketing moves, some of these interactions can have an impact on the creation itself. For instance, George R.R. Martin, the author of the epic fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-current) (adapted for the television as *Game of Thrones* by HBO), has admitted that some fans on the internet have guessed elements of the plot that are yet to be revealed and have pushed him to question whether he should go along as planned or change the plot, thus giving readers real power over his work.[80]

---

[79] See also, Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media, Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2013) on media engagement and participation.

[80] Eric Dodds, 'George R.R. Martin Admits Die-Hard Game of Thrones Fans May Have Already Uncovered the Show's Biggest Surprise', *Time*, 12 August 2014. <http://time.com/3104085/game-of-thrones-jon-snow-plot-twist/> [accessed May 2015]

CHAPTER FOUR

Formal Approach:

Blurring World Boundaries, (Not So) Wondrous Fairyland

Fantasy is an exercise bicycle for the mind. It might not take you anywhere, but it tones up the muscles that can.

—Terry Pratchett

1. Traditional Fairyland

Emblematic of the fairy tale, the opening formula 'Once Upon a Time' (and its French equivalent: 'Il était une fois') acts as a threshold into fairyland. The four words are enough to put the reader in a certain state of mind, conjuring up a landscape and a sense of wonder. As Umberto Eco writes, the opening formula 'sends out a signal that immediately enables it to select its own model reader,[1] who must be a child, or at least somebody willing to accept something that goes beyond the commonsensical and reasonable.'[2] From the outset, the setting of the fairy tale takes a step away—both in space and time—from the everyday world. In traditional fairy tales, the setting remains vague: Peter Hunt calls the geography of fairyland 'nebulous' as it is 'a space where things happen, not a place in itself',[3] and Joyce Thomas talks about 'a timeless, spaceless, quasimythic sphere'.[4] Of course, because fantasy worlds are composed of non-mimetic elements, the role of author and reader to create believability is heightened, but, as Vanessa Joosen argues: 'questioning the realistic nature of fairy-tale elements seems to miss the point of the genre'

---

[1] Eco's 'model reader is, as he states himself (*Six Walks*, p.15), very similar to Wolfgang Iser's concept of the 'implied reader'. See Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp.15-19.

[2] Eco, *Six Walks*, p.9.

[3] Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz, eds, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* (London and New York: Continuum, 2001), p.12.

[4] Joyce Thomas, 'Woods and Castles, Towers and Huts: Aspects of Setting in the Fairy Tale,' *Children's Literature in Education*, 17:2 (June 1986), 126–34 (p.126).

as we enter 'a magic mode' with the fairy tales' opening words.[5] Joosen quotes Anne Wilson's description of 'magical thought':

> Magical thought is the level of thought we all engage in when we are not making the effort to think rationally and imaginatively so as to deal effectively with the external world. It is effortless, spontaneous and solipsistic, wholly free from the laws and realities of the external world.[6]

When entering this mode, the reader should not feel the need to question the boundaries between realistic and unrealistic, and accept the world depicted as it is. This effortless, spontaneous engagement with the fictional world corresponds to what Tolkien calls 'secondary belief' and which, for him, is necessary to the art of creation itself. In his essay 'On Fairy Stories' (in which he presents his concept of fantasy and the rules it ought to follow) Tolkien challenges Coleridge's concept of 'willing suspension of disbelief' with his own notion of 'secondary belief'. To Tolkien, the suspension of disbelief is actually a sign that the work of art has failed: the reader should not have to make an effort to believe in the world laid out for him. Thus, secondary belief, relies on what Tolkien calls 'subcreation' which is based on an inner consistency of reality and the creation of an autonomous, internally consistent world which Tolkien calls 'secondary world' (cf. chapter 3).[7]

Tolkien's belief in a complete acceptation of an autonomous and internally coherent, sealed-off world is very often debunked in recent fairy-tale rewritings, thus questioning his concept of the necessary relationship between author and reader in order to create the world of 'Faërie'. This chapter therefore examines anglophone and francophone works which aim to undermine the performative role of 'once upon a time' / 'il était une fois' by challenging Tolkien's strict conception of boundaries as the texts studied bring together various fairy-tale narratives.

---

[5] Vanessa Joosen, 'Disenchanting the Fairy Tale : Retellings of 'Snow White' between Magic and Realism', *Marvels & Tales*, 21:2 (2007), 228–39 (p.228).

[6] Anne Wilson, 'Magical Thought in Story', *Signal,* 36 (1981), 138–51 (p.139).

[7] The entry for 'secondary world' in Clute and Grant's *Encyclopedia* reads as follows:
'[A Secondary World] can be defined as an autonomous world or venue which is not bound to mundane reality (as are many of the domains common to Supernatural Fiction), which is impossible according to common sense and which is self-coherent as a venue for Story (i.e., the rules by which its Reality is defined can be learned by living them, and are not arbitrary like those of a Wonderland can be).´ (Authors' emphasis) <http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/fe.php?nm=secondary_world> [accessed July 2015]

The stories selected and studied in this chapter are all part of an extremely popular trend in recent fairy-tale revisions which consists in recreating a narrative world in which characters from different fairy tales interact with one another. These works are either set in an everyday world in which fairy-tale characters and the magical is intruding (as is the case for instance in Henri Courtade's novel *Loup y es-tu?* 2010; Pierre Dubois's short story 'Les Musiciens de la ville de Brême', 2008; the TV series *Grimm*,[8] 2011-ongoing; and the movies *The Brothers Grimm,* 2005; and *Enchanted,* 2007); in another fictional fantasy world which seems to be pervaded by trivial everyday elements (as in Terry Pratchett's Discworld series, 1983-2015; and Dufour's novel *Blanche Neige et les lance-missiles,* 2002) or even sometimes in several worlds more or less simultaneously (such as in the TV series *Once Upon a Time*,[9] 2011-ongoing; the comic book series *Fables,* 2002-2015, and Pierre Pével's book series *Ambremer*, 2004-2015[10]). All these works require therefore the creation of a sustainable space which can be inhabited by fairy-tale characters from different stories and within which they can interact with one another.[11] By doing so, (to borrow Eco's words) all these rewritings redefine ideas of what is 'commonsensical and reasonable' in a way traditional fairy tales do not.

The works studied experiment with the processes of rationalisation, enchantment, and disenchantment, notably by emphasising the clash between ordinary and magical, and the consequences of introducing everyday elements to a magical world or introducing magic to an everyday world. Moreover, by bringing together various narratives and characters the authors play with their reader's expectations and rely heavily on their reader's knowledge, and also, therefore, a great deal on dramatic irony. The reader knows—or thinks he knows—the fate of the characters before they do themselves: this expected knowledge of the original texts enables the development of self-conscious genre-play and results in an extended reliance on the reader to construct meaning and make sense of the fictional world presented.

All the works studied in this chapter have been selected because of their distinctive construction of the world of fiction; a construction which is deeply referential and rests on an intricate weaving of narration, characterisation, and landscape. I aim to show that both despite of and because of the transgression of the common rules of fiction*,* wonder is still a

---

[8] The analysis in this chapter is based on season one to four (2011-2015).
[9] The analysis in this chapter is based on season one to four (2011-2015).
[10] At the time of writing only the first two volumes have been published.
[11] Tolkien repeatedly criticised his friend and colleague C.S. Lewis's world creation as he mingled various mythologies together and lacked consistency (including for instance Father Christmas).

crucial aspect and goal of these rewritings and adaptations. In fact, I would like to argue that in most cases—francophone and anglophone alike—it is specifically through these disruptions that wonder is induced.

2. The Possible (Fairy-Tale) Worlds

All the works studied in this chapter are popular materials: TV series,[12] comic books and graphic novels, sword-and-sorcery fantasy (also called, with all the connotations this suggests, romance fantasy). Their supposed anti-literariness, clashes with the complex self-referentiality and defiance of genre expectations present in these works. All of them, albeit in different ways, question traditional narratives through collage, pastiche, and plurality, and indeed, all the texts raise ontological questions which Brian McHale considers as central to and characteristic of postmodernist fiction:

> What is a world?; What kinds of worlds are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structured? And so on.[13]

Because of the media used to retell the tales—most being serialised—the authors are given or give themselves the textual and (fictional) space and landscape to explore fairy-tale narratives, providing the characters with depth and the world with detailed contours. But, in true postmodernist fashion, all these works do not simply rewrite the tales (through a process of novelisation for instance) but also foreground and complicate the role

---

[12] For clarity I use the term 'series' for both *Grimm* and *Once Upon a Time*.
Theorists draw a difference between series and serials, for instance, as Sarah Kozloff explains:
> 'Series refers to those shows whose characteristics and setting are recycled, but the story concludes in each individual episode. By contrast, in a *serial* the story and discourse do not come to a conclusion during an episode, and the threads are picked up again after an hiatus. A series is thus similar to an anthology of short stories, while a serial is like a serialised Victorian Novel.', 'Narrative Theory and Television', pp.90-91.
As Glen Creeber argues, however, there has now been a 'Small screen hybridisation' (p.11) and the term need to be redefined: 'unlike the single play the episodic nature of the serial form means that it also shares important characteristics with the series. This means that the serial can frequently break free of the narrative limitations of single drama and exploit some of the most seductive elements of serialisation' Creeber, *Serial Television* (p.9)
> Because of the hybridisation of the two genres and the blurring of the distinction between the two, the one term TV series will be used. To begin with, *Grimm*, for instance, focused on a criminal case in every episode. Now through its third season, the cases have been pushed to the background and serve more and more the main narration and development of the main characters (see Trebel in season 3).

[13] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1991 [1989]), p.10.

of the reader. What Lubomír Doležel writes on the topic of postmodern rewritings in general can be applied to fairy-tale rewritings too:

> the rewrite not only confronts the canonical fictional world with contemporary aesthetic and ideological postulates but also provides the reader with a familiar space within the strange landscape of radical postmodernist experimentation.[14]

The selected works play with the clash between natural and supernatural, trivialising magic by pitting the forces of magic against the forces of the real world, as inscribed in its laws, accumulating cultural references which often break immersion—always focusing on the boundaries, the *in-between,* thus breaching the gap between different genres. But if all the works studied betray Tolkien's principle of secondary belief (which is built on internal consistency) by defying genre expectations, how do they construct any belief? And can belief be constructed in worlds that seem ontologically insecure (i.e. which existence and laws are unknown to the reader and possibly inconsistent or illogical)?

In answer to McHale's first question: 'what is a world?' I turn towards possible-world theory, a methodology which replaces the one-world view with that of a multiple world frame and is particularly apt to textual analysis of fantasy literature. In *Heterocosmica,* (1998), Doležel explains: 'The best known theories of fictionality are based on the assumption that there is only one legitimate universe of discourse (domain of reference), the actual world.'[15] For example, many read *The Chronicles of Narnia* as happening both in the real, actual world, and in a fictional, magical world, but, as Marie-Laure Ryan argues, there is only one actual world: 'the one where I am located'.[16] The plot of *Narnia* is simply set in two different fictional worlds. As Doležel explains:

> Possible-world semantics makes us aware that the material coming from the actual world has to undergo a substantial transformation at the world boundary. Because of the ontological sovereignty of fictional worlds, actual-world entities have to be converted into nonactual possibles, with all the ontological, logical, and semantical consequences that this transformation entails.[17]

Possible-world theory enables us to read *all* the worlds represented as constructions, therefore rendering all worlds equals so that no world is ontologically

---

[14] Doležel, p.206.
[15] Doležel, p.2.
[16] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p.i.
[17] Doležel, p.21.

privileged or set apart; a reading even more fruitful as the works studied all play with ideas of interactions between reality and fiction *in* fiction. Doležel adds:

> Contemporary thinking about possible worlds is not metaphysical. Possible worlds do not await discovery in some remote or transcendent depository, they are constructed by the creative activities of human minds and hands. This origin of possible worlds has been tersely stated by Kripke—'Possible worlds are *stipulated*, not *discovered* by powerful telescopes' […]—and by M.J. Cresswell— 'Possible worlds are things we can talk about or imagine, suppose, believe in or wish for'.[18]

Understanding all possible worlds of fiction as '*artifacts* produced by aesthetic activities'[19] enables us to focus on these worlds as constructions and a relationship of mutual creation and construction between author and reader/viewer. Thus, even when 'real' places (or people) appear within the world of fiction, because they are 'nonactualized possibles', they are, as Doležel also argues, 'ontologically different from actual events, places'.[20] Bertrand Westphal, also talking about possible-world theory, takes *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as an example:

> [I]n the hypothesis of this heterocosmic proliferation, the world of reference— that one that encompasses the so-called objective real— would be a world among others that fiction created. In Wonderland, Alice evolves in a world that ontologically is contiguous to that which overlaps the White Rabbit's hole and where she is bored by her sister. One is the fruit of the imagination of Lewis Carroll, the other an 'emanation' of Victorian England. Both are representations that maintain with the real a relation of degree that is undoubtedly different (so much so that different worlds are placed in a hierarchical relationship in regard to one another) but of an analog nature.[21]

Because it presents the 'natural' world, on the same level as the 'supernatural' one for instance, possible-world theory challenges Tolkien's belief that *Alice in Wonderland* cannot be a fairy tale because of the dream framing. In many of the works studied, events happen in fictional representations of actual places: New York (*Fables, Enchanted*), Portland (*Grimm*), or even nineteenth-century French occupied Bavaria (*The Brothers Grimm*); these 'emanations' can be read as parallels to their real counterpart. This also

---

[18] Doležel, p.14.
[19] Doležel, pp.14-15.
[20] Doležel, p.16.
[21] Bertrand Westphal, *The Plausible World*, trans. by Amy D. Wells (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.3.

means that all worlds should be studied in relation to one another because their construction is often made in opposition and/or in comparison to one another—the 'real', mundane everyday world and the magical, alien one. The physical rules of one are created in relation or by opposition to the other: in the series *Once Upon a Time* for instance, one world is magical, the other is not, in one world spells and curses work, not in the other. But while one world is more realistic than the other it is also a re-imagined reality. Seeing *all* the worlds depicted as human constructs 'brings the concept down from its metaphysical pedestal and makes it a potential tool of empirical theorizing'.[22] This empirical theorising would ease and enable the use of studies usually unconventional to textual analysis. For instance, Jane Carroll applies Landscape History practices to Terry Pratchett's Discworld. She argues that Landscape History practices can be applied to texts as 'the field asks that we begin to view landscapes as texts, as narratives as well as topological spaces, as deep palimpsests,' she adds:

> Landscape History is as much about reading the story of the space as it is about looking at the physical features of the territory. Because of the central role narrative plays in the criticism the methodology may be extended easily to include imagined landscapes.[23]

Landscape History is a means of reading landscape through the lens of its history and people's relation to it, thus, rather than being a simple backdrop for the character to evolve in, the landscape becomes a place, shaped by its people, pointing to the interaction between characters and their environment. This chapter will compare the use of wonder in francophone and anglophone rewritings by first examining worlds specifically built around and entered through knowledge: knowing about them and understanding them is the only way for characters to (more or less literally) step into these new worlds. Secondly, this chapter will focus on framed worlds, worlds constructed in ways which contradict Tolkien's secondary belief as they are either framed as dreams or flights of fancy, or even through extreme self-referentiality and humour.

3. Epistemological Thresholds

3.1. Reader's Role And Self-Referentiality

---

[22] Doležel, p.14.

[23] Jane Carroll, 'Land Under Wave: Reading the Landscape of Tiffany Aching', *Gramarye*, 7 (summer 2015), 8-19 (p.11).

As mentioned in chapter 3, and close to Iser's theories of reader-response, Doležel sees the construction of fictional worlds as a collaboration between author and reader:

> possible-worlds semantics insists that the world is constructed by its author and the reader's role is to reconstruct it. The text was composed by the writer's labors as a set of instructions for the reader, according to which the world reconstruction proceeds.[24]

The instructions left by the author constitute a set of knowables which enable the reader to (re)create the world set out for him. This process is complicated when the texts are postmodern or depict worlds that seem liminal and are situated at the boundaries between natural and supernatural. Thus, because of the nature of the texts studied, the role of the reader (or the viewer) is both heightened and complicated: the reader allegedly already knows a lot about the characters and their world and the authors can confirm, thwart, and play with the readers' knowledge repeatedly.

The ontological homogeneity of the works under study is complicated as they are built on the intersection of several narratives. The works studied in this chapter create a complex network of references, similar to a spider-web, that all come together to build a new narrative arc or be built around one. Often limited to strictly fairy-tale narratives to start with, because they develop around lengthy, serial narrative arcs, the works studied open up to other types of fantastical narratives too. For instance, the comic book series *Fables*,[25] which ran between 2003 and 2015 (and has had several spins-off, some focusing on specific characters such as Cinderella or Jack) mingles fairy tales of different origins (from 'Red Riding Hood' to 'Thumbelina' and 'Jack and the Beanstalk'), nursery rhyme characters, legends (with mentions of Camelot), and other fantastical fictional characters (such as Ichabod Crane from Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, 1820; and the Lilliputians from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels,* 1726).

Similarly, after focusing mainly on traditional fairy-tale characters in the first season, the second season of the TV series *Once Upon a Time* starts introducing characters or elements from Arthurian Legends and the Robin Hood stories. *Once Upon a Time* is especially remarkable for its constant use of flashbacks which intermingle characters' lives in the past (actual retellings of their tales) and in the present (sequels to the tales, when they are exiled to our world). Rumpelstilskin (Robert Carlyle) is one of the main and most

---

[24] Doležel, p.21.
[25] Bill Willingham, *Fables*, 150 issues (New York: DC, Vertigo, 2002-2015)

interesting characters of the series. The cliff-hangers and revelations about his character are numerous and difficult to even summarise: just like the character in the traditional tale, he can spin straw into gold, tries to control people by knowing their names, and attempts to get the first born of a princess in exchange for his help, in this case, Cinderella, thus linking those two tales. But before being the villain he is known as, Rumpelstiltskin was once a simple man trying to protect his son and, in his endeavours, killed a dark lord to steal his magic. The magic corrupted him and he turned into an evil creature with oily grey skin. His son, now scared of him, begged the Blue Fairy (from 'Pinocchio') to help him restore his father to his good, older self. The Blue Fairy gave the child a magic bean to create a portal and travel with his father to our 'real' world, where magic does not exist and would stop corrupting Rumpelstiltskin. But because the latter cannot resolve to forsake his powers, the son's plan fails and he goes through the portal alone. In subsequent episodes, we learn that Rumpelstiltskin's wife ran away with a pirate. Years later, as an evil lord, he finds the lovers, kills his wife by ripping her heart out—the way he has taught Snow White's stepmother to do it—and cuts off the hand of the pirate. The pirate in turn becomes Captain Hook and wishes to get his revenge on the one he calls 'a crocodile' because of the look of his skin. This look and his cruelty make for his other nickname, 'the beast'. This in turn makes him become 'The' Beast as the character Belle becomes his servant, they fall in love and she helps him towards redemption.

Some of these links might seem overly tenuous but they are developed over many episodes—episodes which rely on cliff-hangers. By doing so, the boundaries between the different texts are completely eliminated and the texts all woven together as one. Even if Iser refers to texts, his comments on the role of the break between instalments can be applied to the TV series: '[the break] brings out a different kind of realization, in which the reader is compelled to take a more active part by filling in these additional gaps.'[26] Moreover, the ABC Television Network belongs to the Disney/ABC Television Group and the creators of the series use their audience's knowledge of the Disney movies extensively. This is done through visual cues (the dresses of many of the characters for instance) but also the introduction of characters that specifically belong to the Disney universe, using for instance the names of the Dwarfs from the 1937 Disney *Snow White*[27] or staging the sequel

---

[26] Iser, *Prospecting*, p.12.

[27] Something which Henri Courtade also does in *Loup y es-tu?* as the dwarfs' surnames in German correspond to Disney's names: Grumpy is called Albert Mürrisch and Bashful Franz Schüchtern.

to the movie *Frozen* (2013) as its main characters Elsa and Anna interact with the rest of the characters of *Once* in season four.

While the premises of the works under study account for the serial form of most of them, the reliance on the spectators to create meaning is examined by Rebecca Hay and Christa Baxter in their article 'Happily Never After: The Commodification and Critique of Fairy Tale in ABC's *Once Upon a Time*'. The two scholars point to the role of fan-based communities and of social media upon the series as they push their spectators to engage with the stories week after week, episode after episode. Unsurprisingly, the two scholars point to the monetary interest behind such 'fan identification and participation in the Disneyfication of everyday life', as the series' process of 'mixing of reality and fantasy also helps bolster its economic interests'.[28]

Far from having only a negative impact on the works, however, the experimentations with narration and their structure in instalments work for character building and demand for a consistent world building and creation, an establishment of the rules of possibility and probability. As Ursula K. Le Guin comments on consistency and the apparent freedom of the process of writing:

> It's my world I can do anything! Only, of course, you can't. Exactly as each word of a sentence limits the choice of subsequent words so that by the end of the sentence you have little or no choice at all, so […] each word, sentence, character description, speech, invention and event in a novel determines and limits the rest of the novel.[29]

In her article 'Disenchanting the Fairy Tale: Retellings of "Snow White" between Magic and Realism', Vanessa Joosen argues that looking at contemporary fairy tales in the very light of probability and possibility can be enlightening. Joosen gives the following example from the traditional 'Snow White' tale: 'It is possible that a woman is so jealous of her (step)daughter that she orders a huntsman to have her killed […] but it is not very probable.'[30] By deflating magic, the authors studied in this chapter make the impossible

---

[28] Rebecca Hay and Christa Baxter, 'Happily Never After: The Commodification and Critique of Fairy Tale in ABC's *Once Upon a Time*' in *Channeling Wonder*, edited by Pauline Greenhill and Jill Terry Rudy, pp.318-35 (p.317).

[29] Ursula K. Le Guin, *Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), p.131.

[30] Vanessa Joosen, 'Disenchanting the fairy tale', p.229.

less implausible (in ways similar to what rationalised fantasy and science fiction do as they explain what seems impossible through consistent physical laws).[31]

Possibilities and impossibilities strictly belong to one world as they are the basis for its construction, creation, and its coming to life. The rules of what is possible and impossible differ from one world to another. For instance, as the series *Once Upon a Time* advances, the viewers discover that there are actually more worlds than first expected, and at times, the characters also go into Lewis Carroll's Wonderland[32] and J.M. Barrie's Neverland. The interweaving of all these different worlds works well most of the time, as the narrative presents all the worlds on the same level of reality and possibility. Wonderland is not simply a dreamt-of land anymore, Neverland is not what is often described as a simple children's fantasy, a 'desirable playground',[33] and fairyland (The Enchanted Forest), while not properly mapped, does become the place where 'real' characters are from—that is one where their lives do not start or end with the stories we know. All these worlds have strict rules which differentiate them from one another: magic does not exist in the everyday world, but it does in the world called the Enchanted Forest. It is limited, however, to spells and only available to a few specific people such as witches and fairies. Thus, for instance, to people from the Enchanted Forest, a world such as Neverland is seen as enchanting because simply wishing for things makes magic happen, and one can fly by using pixie dust.

The first of Farah Mendlesohn's categories in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (mentioned in chapter 3 above) is 'The Portal - Quest Fantasy' in which the reader is invited through the fantastic: this is the case in several of the works under study in which the idea of a portal to cross worlds becomes crucial to the interactions between magic and the everyday, this is the case in *Once Upon a Time* and the comics series *Fables*. Portal fantasies do not have to be quests as such and, as Mendlesohn argues, generally, the magic is contained within the other world and cannot cross through (if it does cross through to our world, it falls into her other category of 'intrusion fantasy').

---

[31] Mendlesohn defines 'rationalised fantasy' as fantasy that is logical and 'concerned with creating a science of the fantastic' (*Rhetorics*, p.63). This is the case for instance of China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* (2000) where one of the main characters is a scientist who studies the magical abilities of some of the creatures in his world.

[32] A spin-off series of 13 episodes was released at the end of 2013 called 'Once Upon a Time in Wonderland' focusing exclusively on Alice and her adventures as an adult returning to Wonderland.

[33] As Peter Hunt writes: 'Neverland seems to be composed of favourite elements of (British) children's games, where one can fight pirates and red Indians, and play with mermaids, and feast with impunity', Peter Hunt, *Alternative Worlds*, p.28.

Thus, in those cases, the two worlds are defined in comparison and in relation to one another. As Brian McHale writes:

> Whatever the example, the ontological structure of the projected world is essentially the same in every case: a *dual* ontology, on one side our world normal and everyday, on the other side the next-door world of the paranormal or supernatural, and running between them the contested boundary separating the two worlds—Cortázar's stout oak door.[34]

In several of the works under study the ontological qualities of the world are intrinsically linked to epistemology: one can only step into the magical world and discover it by knowing of its existence. The threshold becomes allegorical as it is this knowledge which 'creates' the world (usually for the main character): this is the case for instance for 'new worlds' unveiled such as the wizard community in *Harry Potter* (1997-2007), or London Below in Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996). This process of uncovering 'the truth' can be paralleled to the process of reading: the reader can only step into the world if he is given the (reading) keys for it. As we shall see in the examples below, the building of the everyday world in comparison to the magical world is very often linked with the characters' (and the readers') knowledge—and therefore understanding—of it. The everyday world works as a basis of ontological certainty (what can or cannot happen according to natural laws of physics) which are thwarted when the reader (and sometimes character) discovers either that other worlds exist, or that there are elements about the everyday world that eluded him/her until then. In fact, these works create a type of wonder which can be linked with Fisher's pleasure in intelligibility mentioned in the introduction. Wonder for the reader is created through this intersection between familiar and new, the uncovering of the world through a new light.

3.2. Urban Settings: The Known World(s)

While fairy tales are easily associated with the natural and forests (as we shall develop further on), there has been an increase of urban settings in fairy-tale narratives; for instance, Francesca Lia Block situates her tales in contemporary L.A. in *The Rose and the Beast* (2000), China Miéville displaces the narrative of the 'Pied Piper of Hamelin' to contemporary London in *King Rat* (1998), the comic book series *Fables* is set in New York, the TV series *Grimm* in Portland, and *Once Upon a Time* in Maine. As Doležel

---

[34] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, p.73.

writes, this means that the ontological quality of, for instance, Portland in *Grimm* and Portland in actuality, is different: these narratives take place in fictional places based on actual ones. The two can never be identical *per se,* but there is between the two a relationship which 'extends across boundaries; fictional [elements] and their actual prototypes are linked by transworld identity.'[35]

In NBC's TV series *Grimm*, the main character Nick Burkhardt is a homicide detective in Portland. One day he discovers that he is a Grimm—a descendant of the famous German brothers, who can see Wesens even when they disguise themselves as humans. Wesens are supernatural creatures who can shapeshift between their human and their animal form. Each episode opens with a quote, usually from a fairy tale and references to fairy tales are numerous throughout (a woman dressed in red is attacked by wolf-type of Wesens for instance). The viewers are put in the same situation as Nick, sharing his knowledge (or lack of) as he slowly uncovers the extent of his powers and the history of his family. Throughout episodes (and seasons) Nick learns about this surreptitious but extremely well-established world, based on communities and governed by strict rules enforced by the Wesen Council. Slowly, Nick discovers the alternate history of the world he thought he knew, notably the rules written in the Book of Law (the *Gesetzbuch*) by the Wesen Council of Wallenstadt in 1521 (regulating for instance when Wesens can show their true form), and political intricacies as he has to intervene in some undercover (and ancestral) wars between royal families fighting for power over the Wesens.

The revelation of the Wesens' existence acts as an allegorical threshold into a new world for Nick and, as Angela Tenga points out in her article 'Wandering *Wesen*: Immigration as Adaptation in *Grimm,*' Nick's journey is one of self-discovery and knowledge. Tenga's reading of the series as an allegory of immigration and adaptation between the Old World (where the Royal families live and the Wesens originated) and the New World is especially interesting: 'The human masks of the Wesen are a visual reminder of the ways in which the creatures have had to adapt and assimilate in the New World: once lords of the *Märchenwald,* they must now hide their true selves'.[36]

---

[35] Doležel, p.17.

[36] Angela Tenga, 'Wandering *Wesen*: Immigration as Adaptation in *Grimm'*, *Supernatural Studies*, 2:1 (Winter 2015), 34-46 (p.36).

Tenga also justly underlines the importance of language in the series: many characters speak several tongues and most of the books Nick has inherited from his family are written in foreign languages too—as Tenga notes, several of the words of Germanic origin used to describe Wesens are approximate German; thus reflecting the changes that occur when immigrants adapt and appropriate the language of the place they have migrated to. Nick is one of the only characters in the series who does not speak a different language (his boss speaks German and French, his partner Spanish, and his best friend German) and he often lacks the knowledge necessary to decipher and grasp the world he is trying to be a part of.

The world, made magical, is in fact a reflection on immigrants' struggles and stereotyping; it is more than a simple landscape in which characters evolve, and it truly takes shape through knowledge and, as landscape history suggests, through an understanding of its history. Rather than rewriting the tales *per se*, the series creates an alternate history which introduces wonder to the everyday world by introducing magic as a seamless actuality, hidden from most but which explains everyday events.[37] Once the viewer and the characters start grasping the rules of the world they are presented with, they are given what could be (according to these rules) rational explanations of the origins of myths and fairy tales. This world makes the stories crucial to the understanding of the world, notably as they account for historical events (Hitler was a type of Wesen especially known for its nastiness who possessed magical artefacts which drove him insane) but also of current events (most of the crimes cases Nick has to solve are linked with feudal wars between various Wesen communities). *Grimm* therefore specifically works on a negotiation between past and present, the past being crucial to an understanding of current events.

The world depicted in *Grimm* is not, of course, the only world defined both by the historical and therefore the perception and the projection of knowledge on the world; in *Once Upon a Time*, for instance, the main character Emma Swan also has to uncover the

---

[37] In her article 'Getting Real with Fairy Tales', Claudia Schwabe argues that both *Grimm* and *Once Upon a Time* employ various forms of magic realism as they 'synthesize quotidian reality with supernatural/magical reality, forming a new reality with magical influences'. She postulates that these works create what she calls 'a third reality'. Claudia Schwabe, 'Getting Real with Fairy Tales: Magic Realism in *Grimm* and *Once Upon a Time*', in *Channeling Wonder: Fairy Tales on Television*, ed. by Pauline Greenhill and Jill Terry Rudy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014), pp.294-315.

magical world, its rules, its history and the history of her family. But in *Once Upon a Time* the writers aim at making the viewer believe in the possibility of a 'happy-end' in the everyday 'real' world. By opposition, *Grimm,* pushes the viewer to redefine his vision of the world and his stereotypes. The series is not only an invitation to dream about the magical, it also proposes to have a more tangible impact and questioning not only of fairy-tale narratives but also narratives of identity and race and exclusion.

To some extent, in his first novel *Loup y es-tu?* (Are you there, wolf? 2010),[38] Henri Courtade starts from a premise similar to *Grimm* as it proposes a fairy-tale alternate history. In the novel, also set in our contemporary world, a powerful (capitalist) witch controls most of the world's media outlets and is behind most of the world's ailments— from the rise of Nazism in the 1930s to the 9/11 attacks. Immortal, she is afraid of one thing only: the four 'princesses' (Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty and Red Riding Hood) who could destroy her. The women have lost all memories of their previous lives and evolve oblivious in modern New York. Courtade anchors his novel solidly in our 21th century through numerous mentions of contemporary (anglophone)[39] popular culture— from songs to famous actors such as Nicole Kidman and Brad Pitt. Just like *Grimm*, the novel also aims at giving rational explanations for historical events, notably through flashbacks mostly related to World War Two. The novel lacks the series' creativity and depth, however, notably through lack of detail and consistency: the third-person narration distances the reader from the characters who despite their amnesia accept easily that they are fairy-tale characters; the world of magic from where the characters originated is vaguely mentioned but never described or elaborated upon. Certainly the novel stands out from most other francophone rewritings in that magic is neither debunked nor minimised, but it remains minimal and not very believable: we are told that the fairy Mélusine can 'teleport' herself but that this method is not very convenient as it demands a lot of energy and needs to be recharged for a month.[40] This could be compared to the fallibility of the fairy's powers in Coover's *Briar Rose*, but because this explanation seems so out of place within the narrative world, it breaks immersion in the way Chevillard's sarcastic narrator would.

---

[38] This is a literal translation of the title which is a reference from a line in a French nursery rhyme 'Promenons-nous dans les bois'.

[39] It is extremely anglophone overall—the novel is mostly set in the United States, most of the references are to mainstream anglophone culture, and in the acknowledgements the author thanks his friend for helping him with anglicisms. Henri Courtade, *Loup y es-tu?* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), p.381.

[40] Courtade, p.331.

3.3. The Everyday World and the Other: Home, Community, and Exile

In 2007, the Disney studios decided to leave fairyland behind and cross for the 'real' New York in *Enchanted*. The film starts as an animated movie featuring a young naive woman, Giselle, who embodies perfectly all the stereotypes of previous Disney princesses. To get rid of her, the Evil Queen pushes her through a portal into the everyday world: Giselle (now played by Amy Adams) ends up in the very real, live-action New York. The young woman lives through many misadventures due to her own displacement: she does not know the world and its rules and has to adapt to it—she tends to burst into song at any moment (much to the annoyance of people around her) and when she calls for animals to help her in one of her cleaning frenzies, rats, pigeons and cockroaches show up. Her dresses become unpractical and dirty, and, to her dismay, she realises that love at first sight does not really work in the everyday world. Overall, New York is presented as a bright, enchanting city, but it needs Giselle's innocence to make people reconsider their positions and create a happy ending. She embodies the ingenuousness of her own pastoral world that people in the city have lost. Wonder is created through the intrusion of the fantastic within the everyday world, of the innocent, spontaneous character in the contemporary American society, and it is the clash between the two worlds that creates laughter and wonder.

While the urban settings could suggest that without forfeiting their inhuman—or superhuman—qualities these 'others' have been incorporated into human society, the two often clash. Creating an alternative history which includes these characters seems to allude to the fact that these fairy-tale characters are an integral part of the world, but in truth, in all these types of narratives the concept of community prevails. This is the case in *Grimm*, *Once Upon a Time*, and *Fables*: fairy-tale characters are not simply evolving in the everyday world incognito, they are living together, as a community, bonding over their shared knowledge of what sets them apart from others.[41] Thus, even if they have always been present, fairy-tale characters are usually presented as outsiders or intruders because they tend to embody the natural, alleged innocence of the folk. They are often very

---

[41] In *Castle Waiting,* another graphic novel, the plot follows a small self-sufficient community living within the walls of what used to be sleeping beauty's castle. Not a retelling as such, Laura Medley presents the everyday life of minor fairy-tale characters such as the elderly ladies in waiting of the princess. In this case, the idea of community is one linked with characters that are not the main characters of famous fairy tales—they do not have any status in the world because they are secondary in the stories.

conservative and care about heritage and history: the fairy-tale characters in *Fables* (called the Fables) are immortal and very strict on traditions, Munroe, one of the Wesens in *Grimm* is a clock maker and his house is full of objects inherited from his German ancestors. The fairy-tale characters have trouble adapting because they are displaced. Their natural (and romanticised) selves are in conflict with the modern everyday world. Temporality and history are disrupted in cities, as the places change constantly but also never follow natural cycles—lights and lampposts replacing natural sunlight and seasons. Thus, in most of the works under study, as the fairy-tale characters embody, not only a magic to long for but also a nostalgic 'before' (as linked with the presumed innocence of the folk), the rational everyday world is presented in a negative light.[42] In *Once Upon a Time*, for instance, the characters all wish they could go back to their own magical, natural world. The Evil Queen (Lana Parilla) has decided to take her revenge over Snow White (Ginnifer Goodwin) and punish all the people of the Enchanted Forest by exiling them. They have been sent to a town in Maine, which to them, because the world is devoid of magic is seen as the worst place one could possibly imagine.

The fairy-tale characters, even if they do not perform magic themselves, are presented as outsiders: just like *Grimm* interrogates stereotypes linked with migrants, these strategies all reflect on bigger problems of exile, and concepts of place, longed-for utopias, and nostalgia. As Michael Seidel writes: 'An exile is someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another.'[43] Seidel adds: 'For the exile, native territory is the product of heightened and sharpened memory, and imagination is, indeed, a special homecoming.'[44] The exile constructs an image of the new world he lives in and of the world he wishes he could go back to. Pitting against one another home world and exiled world means that themes of home and exclusion come up repeatedly. Home is usually associated with a positive image of safety, comfort and warmth, 'something we all desire',[45] and crucially for this study, Bowlby writes that home exists as 'a place of origin,

---

[42] This dichotomy between natural and artificial is also at the core of many fantasy novels. Despite Tolkien's claims that his work is not allegorical it is difficult not to read a criticism of industrialisation in his presentation on the one hand of the elves' forest and the hobbits' countryside and on the other the orcs that destroy the land to build armies and spread terror over Middle Earth. The opposition between natural and unnatural is one Robin Hobb also uses, notably in her trilogy *The Soldier Son* (2005-2007) where the main character is torn between his town-dwelling people and the magical forest people.

[43] Michael Seidel, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p.ix.

[44] Seidel, p.xi.

[45] Sophie Bowlby, Susan Gregory and Linda McKie, '"Doing home": Patriarchy, caring, and space', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 20:3 (May–June 1997), 343–350 (p.343).

a place of belonging, a place to which to return'.[46] Many of the characters experience this longing for home and their homelands: in the comics *Fables*, the first title of the series is 'Legends in Exile'. All the fairy-tale characters live in New York and have been forced to leave what they call 'The Homelands' because of a mysterious 'adversary'.

The Homelands is the land of magic, and is often described in comparison to the everyday world as a place to long for. The New York community of Fables is regulated by very strict rules and even the few Fables who choose to live outside it have to abide by them to protect the community's secrecy. The Fables should not make themselves known to the humans whom they call 'the mundys' and most of them decide not to interfere with human affairs.[47] Talking about the ethnic origins of nations, Fabienne L. Michelet writes: 'This locus need not be a physical location; it can be an imaginary space, a remembered homeland, or a desired, promised land. These two elements often mingle and link a group's sense of self and its destiny with the possession and control of a given territory.'[48] This is all the more striking in the case of *Fables* as Bill Willingham makes it a clear allegory of Israel in issue fifty.[49]

Thus, crucially, characters themselves long for other realities, for other worlds, and by doing so they reflect the world creation of which they are part.[50] McHale points to how the concept of 'possible worlds' also works within fictional worlds:

> Possible worlds depend on somebody's propositional attitude: that is, in order for them to *be* possible, they must be believed in, imagined, wished for etc., by some human agent. We do this everyday, when we speculate or plan or daydream—but also, of course, when we read or view or write fictions. Characters *inside* fictional

---

[46] Bowlby, p.344.

[47] The only character who does is Sheriff Bigby (the Big bad wolf in human form) who participated to both World Wars as he believed that this type of human affairs would indeed have an impact on the Fables' lives.

[48] Fabienne L. Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest: Imaginary Geography and Sense of Space in Old English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 2.

[49] 'BIGBY: Ever hear of a country called Israel? […] Israel is a tiny country surrounded by much *larger* countries dedicated to its eventual total destruction. Because they stay *alive* by being a bunch of tough little bastards who make the other guys pay dearly every time they do something against Israel some in the wider world constantly wail and moan about the endless cycle of violence and reprisal. But since the alternative is *non-existence*, the Israelis seem determined to keep at it. They have a lot of grit and iron. I'm a big fan of them. […] Fabletown has decided to adopt the Israel template in whole.' Bill Willingham, *Fables,* Issue 50, (2006), p.24.
Willingham's stance created quite a controversy at the time, which he responded to in various interviews: <http://www.steelbananas.com/2010/05/fables-just-an-analogy/> [accessed 20 July 2015] and <http://www.avclub.com/article/bill-willingham-14134> [accessed 20 July 2015]

[50] In *Grammaire du Décaméron* (1969), Todorov first noted and commented on the way worlds considered as possible by characters themselves (wished for or postulated) could have an impact on the fictional world and the narrative of which they are part.

worlds are also capable of sustaining propositional attitudes and projecting possible worlds. Eco calls these possible-worlds-within-possible-worlds *subworlds*; Pavel prefers the term *narrative domains*.[51]

Thus, most strikingly, some magical worlds also become fantasies for the fairy-tale characters themselves, and paradoxically, even in its absence, the forest, which embodies the natural world of nostalgia, remains a strong topos in fairy-tale rewritings, a place to long for.

3.4. Sylvan Thresholds

In *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994) (Norton Lectures from 1993) Umberto Eco uses the woods as 'a metaphor for the narrative text'.[52] Eco highlights the crucial role of the reader in the world-building process: 'Even when there are no well-trodden paths in a wood, everyone can trace his or her own path, deciding to go to the left or to the right of a certain tree and making a choice at every tree encountered. In a narrative text, the reader is forced to make choices all the time.'[53] Eco's metaphor is an especially apt image in the case of the works studied as the forest often becomes literally a threshold into the magical narrative, becoming a space to go through for both reader and character. Jack Zipes opens his article 'The Enchanted Forest of the Brothers Grimm' with the following paragraph:

> Inevitably they find their way into the forest. It is there that they lose and find themselves. It is there that they gain a sense of what is to be done. The forest is always large, immense, great, and mysterious. No one ever gains power over the forest but the forest possesses the power to change lives and later destinies. In many ways it is the supreme authority on earth and often the great provider. It is not only Hansel and Gretel who get lost in the forest and then return wiser and fulfilled.[54]

And indeed, Zipes lists various tales to which 'they' could be referring to: 'The Riddle', 'The Devil with the Golden Hairs', 'Fledging', 'Snow White', 'Six Who Made their Way into the World', 'Hans my Hedgehog', 'The Old Woman in the Forest', 'The Glass Coffin', 'St. Joseph in the Forest'.[55] As Joyce Thomas underlines, 'probably no landscape is so

---

[51] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, p.34.
[52] Umberto Eco, *Six Walks*, p.6.
[53] Eco, p.6.
[54] Jack Zipes, 'The Enchanted Forest: New Modes of Approaching the Grimms' Fairy Tales', *Germanic Review*, 2:62 (1987), 66-74 (p.66).
[55] Zipes, p.66.

automatically associated with the faerie as is the woods; probably no amorphous locale is so often recreated as is that of the Black Forest.'[56]

In *Gossip from the Forest* (2012), Sara Maitland underlines the strong bond that unites fairy tales and forests. Her book is made of accounts of visits to various forests over Britain and followed by a rewriting of a famous tale linked to the woods. Maitland argues that fairy tales have been shaped by the forest but that, reciprocally, our views of the forest have been shaped by stories and fairy tales. As it acts as a gateway, the forest as a place (both actual and longed for) does often play a key role in narrative development and characters' growth. Thomas writes:

> The forest is an appropriate threshold to the supernatural. Its edge constitutes a literal threshold between man and nature, the cultivated and uncultivated, the tame and wild, the known and the unknown. Its lush, luxuriant vegetation well exemplifies the faerie realm. A place of towering oaks, whispering firs, lacy ferns, pristine streams, multifarious flora and fungi, a wealth of warm- and cold-blooded creatures, sun and shade, sable night and silver moon, the woods best embodies, best signifies the faerie, the wonder-full. It is a living, metamorphosing being, magically transformed by day and night and season.[57]

The spatial setting in traditional fairy tales often relies on the opposition between a human space (home, village, the royal court) and the space of the Other, the forest. The forest is often vast and it is a space which is difficult to comprehend: it is a liminal area, a retreat away from a mapped space and, in many rewritings, the woods still fulfil the role of threshold into the magical and/or the otherworldly.

In Terry Gilliam's *The Brothers Grimm* (2005), the famous brothers are travelling con artists who set-up fake supernatural events to swindle money out of terrified German peasants. Uncovered by the French invaders, the brothers (Heath Ledger and Matt Damon) have to travel to the Black Forest, and expose other con artists. Sceptics at first, all the characters realise that the strange events occurring in and around the woods have been caused by a curse, cast by an immortality-seeking Thuringian Queen (Monica Bellucci). When the brothers step in the forest, the historical 'map-able' world disappears, the rules of the outside world—that obey Euclidean geometry—do not exist anymore and make way for a 'marvellous geometry' where the forest is constantly shifting. The forest acts as the

---

[56] Joyce Thomas, 'Woods and Castles, Towers and Huts', p.127.
[57] Thomas, p.127.

epiphanic threshold through which the Grimms become believers and the storytellers they are known to be. The forest is only a liminal space: it act as a transformative passageway, but it is impossible to stay in it; the woods are dangerous and cannot truly provide shelter.

In a similar way, Stephen Sondheim's musical *Into the Woods* (both the Broadway production and the Disney 2014 film), opens with a song in which all the main characters have to go 'into the woods' to begin their stories. It is the passage into the forest that triggers the rest of the narrative: Cinderella has to go to her mother's tree to get a dress to go to the ball (a reference to the 'Juniper's Tree' version), Jack has to cross the woods to sell the cow, the girl with the red cloak has to cross the woods to go to her grandmother's, and the main characters—the baker and his wife—have to go into the woods to retrieve various objects so as to break a curse. The woods are not only a necessary pathway to and a trigger of the stories, they also transform the characters; about halfway through their quest, the baker's wife tells (sings to) her husband: 'You've changed | You're daring | You're different in the woods | More sure | More sharing | You're getting us through the woods | If you could see | You're not the man who started | And much more open-hearted | Than I knew | You to be'. When walking through the woods, a change operates which shifts her view of her husband and/or actually changes him directly.

Zipes underlines the role of the forest in Grimms' tales:

> it is interesting to note that the forest is rarely enchanted, though enchantment takes place there. The forest *allows* for enchantment and disenchantment, for it is the place where society's conventions no longer hold true. It is the source of natural right, thus the starting place where social wrongs can be righted.[58]

The series *Once Upon a Time* is probably the most striking (and literal) example of the use of the forest as an otherworldly space. The show reuses all the clichés of the genre, up to its most romanticised ones, and owns up to it: as explained above, the common idealised magical forest becomes a world in itself. If for the whole first season the fairy-tale characters are exiled from 'The Enchanted Forest', even when in the 'real' world, Storybrooke is surrounded by woods and it is a space where characters have hidden objects of their pasts or where they go when they need to think or hide: the forest remains the place all the characters long for.

---

[58] Jack Zipes, 'The Enchanted Forest', p.67.

In Pierre Dubois's 'Les Musiciens de la ville de Brême' (2008), the main character, Georges Boutonnet, is a single, middle-aged clerk who is still afraid of his mother. One Sunday, his alarm clock does not work and his routine is upset—he is going to be late for his mother's Sunday lunch. In his hurry he has forgotten to urinate and needs to stop his car in the woods. The forest represents everything that Georges is not, or has not been allowed to be: 'Mum had always kept him away from things that could not be controlled, from the wild, the green, the organic.'[59] To him, the forest is only a setting, scenery from his car, not a place he has ever experienced. Just like in the anglophone examples above, as the character steps into the woods, he marvels at the sights and smells and loses himself, until he finds in a valley surrounded by the pine trees 'le village des contes de fées'. In this village live all the heroes of fairy tales. Stepping into the forest takes Boutonnet away from his secluded, dull, unfulfilling life and works as an introduction to a more exciting and dangerous one, because these heroes sacrifice people who wander into the woods to the fairy-tale villains as a form of truce. But, unlike the anglophone works, and once again similarly to the division postulated in the introduction, the reader realises that this wondrous world does not truly exist, even in the narrative world, for it is nothing but the nightmare of its main character.

4. Framed Worlds

While, as Maria Nikolajeva has noted, fantasy and fairy tale are 'undoubtedly generically related',[60] contrary to fairy tales, the type of fantasy called high fantasy, romance fantasy, or sword-and-sorcery fantasy usually introduces a specific different world. It is undeniable that some of the typical fairy-tale settings have found their way into fantasy, be it the forest huts, gigantic castles or enchanted forests, but by forsaking the vagueness of the fairy-tale world, the works under study effectively create a new world, often with a precise landscape, history and customs. The most famous examples of these (and what Mendlesohn calls 'Immersive Fantasy', i.e. a work of fantasy which creates a world with no reference to ours) are *The Lord of the Rings* and the other books happening

---

[59] 'Maman l'avait toujours tenu éloigné des choses incontrôlables, du sauvage, du végétal, de l'organique.' Pierre Dubois, 'Les Musiciens de la ville de Brême', *Comptines Assassines*, p.152.

[60] Maria Nikolajeva, 'Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern', *Marvels & Tales*, 17:1 (2003), 138-56 (p. 138).

in Middle Earth[61] (*The Hobbit, The Simarillion* etc.) as well Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea (*The Earthsea series*, 1964-2001). But as they accumulate references, none of the works studied in this chapter—even the ones which happen entirely in a fantasy world—can accurately be categorised as 'Immersive fantasy'. As Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz notes, in the Sword-and-Sorcery type of fantasy: 'Very often, places are very precisely described or mapped, emphasizing the gap between the real and unreal worlds'.[62] I would like to argue that the works studied in this second part are always experimenting with this gap by constantly pointing to its frame, limitations, and relations to the 'real' world and therefore undermining secondary belief. Thus, if the works studied below draw a type of 'contract' between writer and reader which undermines almost systematically secondary belief, can wonder still be a part of them?

4.1. Parodies of Fairyland

Terry Pratchett developed the Discworld over several short stories, forty-one novels (starting with *The Colour of Magic* (1983) and finishing with *The Shepherd's Crown* published posthumously in August 2015), four *Science of the Discworld,* and several Discworld companions and guides. Pratchett's volumes can be read separately but come in series of storylines focusing on different characters (Rincewind, Death, the Witches, the City Watch, Tiffany Aching, and Moist Von Lipwig). In all his works, Pratchett creates links and references between the different novels, weaving an intricate web of allusions to previous novels and characters (Death, for instance, appears in almost all novels).

Because they are so well known, fairy tales are both a narratorial drive and an especially important source of jokes in the Discworld universe. One of the novels is a loose rewriting of the 'Pied Piper of Hamelin', *The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents* (2001). In the novel a group of rats have experienced 'a change' and have become smart enough to think and talk. They are accompanied by Keith, a boy pied piper, and Maurice, a generally grumpy cat, who has also undergone the change (after eating one of the talking

---

[61] As mentioned above, the type of sword-and-sorcery fantasy as exemplified by Tolkien has had a sustained influence on world building, whether the authors who undertake this type of world creation embrace it or criticise it—sometimes both simultaneously. The number of works that were directly influenced by Tolkien's Middle Earth is impossible to even estimate. The aftermath of the publication of *LOTR* has enabled the development of a new type of fantasy but it has also been reused almost to exhaustion and some of its tropes have become stereotypes to either experiment with or mock. In *The Tough Guide to Fantasy Land* (1996) (subtitled 'Actually very little to do with *The Lord of The Rings*') Diana Wynne Jones, a celebrated fantasy children's literature author writes a mock travel guide to the fantasy world and repeatedly mocks all the stereotypes associated with it.

[62] Peter Hunt, *Alternative Worlds,* p.11.

rats). Supervised by Maurice, the group goes from one city to another terrorising the inhabitants as the rats create chaos and the pied piper turns up at the appropriate time to ask for money in exchange for his services. Magic exists in the Discworld of course, and is mostly wielded by wizards of the Unseen Academy (a parody of modern-day academia) and yet, the fact that there should be talking rats and cats is not very probable—animals usually do not talk in the Discworld—but it is possible. The reader is given a rational explanation which works within the rules of the fictional world: the rats all ate some of the magical rubbish left outside the Unseen University and it made them smarter.

In one town, Maurice and Keith meet Malicia, the daughter of the mayor, descendant of 'The sisters Grim', Agoniza and Eviscera Grim. The girl only sees life through the filter of fairy stories and acts according to what she has read and believes should happen in line with stories. The following extract is the perfect example of this mixture between fairy tale, sword-and-sorcery, and the everyday. Malicia asks—or rather questions—Keith about his childhood:

> 'You were stolen away at birth, I expect. You probably are the rightful king of some country, but they found someone who looked like you and did a swap. In that case, you'll have a magic sword, only it won't look magic, you see, until it's time for you to manifest your destiny. You were probably found on a doorstep.'
> 'I was, yes.' Said Keith
> 'See? I'm always right!'
> […]
> 'There was a magic sword or a crown in the basket with you, probably. And you've got a mysterious tattoo or a strange-shaped birthmark, too,' said Malicia.
> 'I don't think so, no. No-one ever mentioned them.' Said Keith. 'There was just me and a blanket. And a note.'
> 'A note? But that's important!'
> 'It said "19pints and a Strawberry Yoghurt" said Keith.
> 'Ah. Not helpful, then.' […] 'Were you beaten and starved and locked in a cellar?'[63]

In the specific case of this book, Pratchett integrates a fairy-tale narrative and elements of the fairy-tale genre to his already specific world. Ironically, despite the magical aspects of his world, fairy tales are still fairy tales: tall tales despised by most people who believe that they are irrelevant children stories. Pratchett points to the rules of

---

[63] Terry Pratchett, *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents* (London: Random House, 2011[2001]), pp.62-63.

his world and its possibilities by repeatedly playing with the boundaries between readers and characters' expectations. Even in the Discworld, where magic is part of reality, talking cats are not a normal, common occurrence: the reader who is acquainted with the oddities of Pratchett's universe is not overly surprised by it—but characters are. Pratchett turns the situation around, putting his reader in an interesting position: the reader knows that Malicia clearly believes too much in stories and should not realistically apply fairy-tale narratives to her life, while at the same time, sharing this opinion with Maurice, a talking cat.

The grounding of the magical links back to the discussion on Chevillard and Coover in the introduction; it does not always mean that magic is rationalised to the point that it does not exist, but rather that it is made more 'believable'. In Pratchett's works fairy-tale characters have become multi-faceted, more fallible and therefore more 'normal' and relatable. Conversely, 'fairyland' is not a land completely out of reach anymore as it has even stronger links with our world. Similarly to Coover, Pratchett introduces wonder by mingling the everyday (in *Briar Rose* the fairy needs to tend to the princess's bodily needs in her sleep) and the magical (there is a fairy with magical powers).

Questions concerning the probabilities within fiction become really interesting when they are raised *within* what seems to be a sealed-off fictional world. Pratchett is the perfect example: after establishing—through numerous volumes—the rules that govern his Discworld, he plays with the concepts of possibility and probability by rationalising the sword-and-sorcery genre itself. For instance, in *Witches Abroad* (1991), Lilith, a fairy godmother has decided to force people into being happy and create her own version of 'Cinderella' (called 'Emberella'). Another witch who is trying to stop her comments:

> I've seen the future. There's a coach made out of a pumpkin. And that's impossible. And there's coachmen made out of mice, which is unlikely. And there's a clock striking midnight, and something about a glass slipper. And it's all going to happen. Because that's how stories have to work.[64]

Through these types of occurrences Pratchett parallels his world with that of the reader (despite the magical world, his characters too have expectations of what is possible and is not). The creation of a world over so many books requires an even more consistent world building because it increases the chances of inconsistencies, especially in a world that is already allegedly undermined by humour which—as it is inherently absurd—breaks

---

[64] Terry Pratchett, *Witches Abroad* (London: Gollanz, 2014 [1991]) p.10.

immersion by highlighting the artificiality of the world.[65] But as he draws attention to the limits of his world as a fictional one, Pratchett also points to its possibilities: stories do have a special way of working, but they also enable great freedom.

In his article 'Toying with Fantasy: The Postmodern Playground of Terry Pratchett's Discworld' Daniel Lüthi reads Pratchett through the lens of Tolkien's 'On Fairy Stories' and the latter's claim that for secondary belief to happen, magic 'must not be made fun of'.[66] As Lüthi argues, Pratchett frequently crosses these boundaries, constantly bringing to the fore the fictionality of his texts and undermining Tolkien's rules for the creation of a 'secondary world'. I concur with Lüthi in saying that, however, especially with time, Pratchett did create a 'fully-fledged secondary world'[67] (even if, using possible-world theory, I am reluctant to use the term 'secondary' myself) moving from simple parody to more sophisticated satire. Pratchett is always careful not to undermine the internal consistency of his world by playing with notions of possibility and impossibility and creating specific rules and laws. He refers to these frequently through his volumes, but also wrote (with co-authors scientists Jack Cohen and Ian Stewart) four volumes of *The Science of Discworld* (1999, 2002, 2005, and 2013). The first volume opens by comparing the Discworld with ours (called Roundworld). Science, the authors explain, is based on the 'observations and the ensuing deductions' that scientists have made on earth and our universe. They explain that the Discworld is simply made out of a different ontological 'material':

> What runs Discworld is deeper than mere magic and more powerful than pallid science. It is *narrative imperative,* the power of story. It plays a role similar to that substance known as phlogiston, once believed to be that principle or substance within inflammable things that enabled them to burn. In the Discworld universe, then, there is narrativium. It is part of the spin of every atom, the drift of every cloud. It is what causes them to be what they are and continue to exist and take part in the ongoing story of the world.[68]

---

[65] As John Morreall writes, with humour 'some thing or event we perceive or think about violates our normal mental patterns and normal expectations' (Morreall, *Comic Relief. A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humour* (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), p.11) which, as Daniel Lüthi justly notes, works 'in the same manner as fantasy itself transgresses what is regarded as normal or possible' (Lüthi, 'Toying with Fantasy. The Postmodern Playground of Terry Pratchett's Discworld Novels', *Mythlore,* 33:1 (2014), 125-42 (p.127).

[66] Tolkien p.33.

[67] Lüthi, p.126.

[68] Jack Cohen, Terry Pratchett, and Ian Stewart, *The Science of Discworld* (London: Random House, 2013 [1999]), p.10.

Pratchett therefore clearly asserts that his world is made of stories, it *is* a story. Mark J.P. Wolf, in his work on imaginary worlds, claims that the deepest level of creation 'is the *ontological* realm itself, which determines the parameters of a world's existence, that is, the materiality and laws of physics, space, time, and so forth that constitute a world'.[69] By introducing the idea of narrativium, Pratchett gives all the keys to the ontological realm of the Discworld, one which links back to Hutcheon's concept of 'narrativization'—humans make up stories and use narration to make sense of the world. The three authors of *Science of the Discworld* even point to the link that unites science and narration: 'the rules of the universe have to be able to produce everything that we humans observe, which introduces a kind of narrative imperative into science too. Humans think in stories.'[70]

Catherine Dufour's novel *Blanche Neige et les lance-missiles* from 2002 (which literally translates as 'Snow White and the Missile Launchers') is a clear homage to Terry Pratchett's work. His influence is clear in the French author's work: while in Pratchett's case the disc travels through the universe on the back of four elephants standing on the back of a giant turtle, in Dufour's novel the world is a flat disc balanced by gigantic creatures akin to dragons that sleep at specific points at its edges. Dufour focuses more on fairy-tale characters and narratives than Pratchett does: the story happens *after* most of the happy endings. Snow White has become a dictator, her evil stepmother (who has terrible sight) poisoned Cinderella by mistake, the Sleeping Beauty speaks obsolete French because she has slept a hundred years, and Donkeyskin fell in love with the wrong prince.

Catherine Dufour constantly points to her world's limits and possible inconsistencies: only religious fanatics and dumb characters claim that the world is truly flat. By doing so she instils doubts as to whether their stance could only be a reflection of medieval beliefs or not. Similarly, many of the references Dufour uses solidly ground the novel in contemporary times and even more explicitly, contemporary France. A knight visits a harbour called St Képique which is a clear parody of Brittany, there are fairies from the *Bois de Boulogne* (a wood in Paris' suburbs famous for its prostitutes), and the dwarfs grow *saucisson* (a dry kind of sausage extremely popular in France). Her work therefore *cannot* come under a category that 'must be sealed' and 'cannot, within the confines of the

---

[69] Mark J.P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds, The Theory and History of Subcreation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), p.36.
[70] Cohen, Pratchett, and Stewart, p.11.

story, be questioned'.[71] She does not truly represent a fictional entity of the world but rather parodies it.

Rather than creating, as Pratchett does, an ensemble that works together, the comments of Dufour's narrator constantly bring into collision the 'real' and the fictional world and blur the true nature of the world. Dufour rehashes plots and does not truly achieve any sub-creation: her world is not a creation on its own as Pratchett's is, but rather a stage. Where the world and the landscapes shapes the adventures in Pratchett's world and the characters truly interact with it,[72] Dufour's disc-world only works as a backdrop for parodic adventures and is secondary to the plot. In fact, very similarly to Coover and Chevillard, who also both used humour in their rewritings, Pratchett creates an ambiguous type of magic, one which is real within the Discworld—if not always entirely reliable— whereas Dufour only uses it as a means of parody and a way of questioning the fairy-tale genre.

4.2. Alternate Realities

Pierre Pével's *Ambremer* is a striking example of self-conscious framing. Pével is one of the only French fantasy writers to have been translated into English. He does not rewrite specific fairy tales as such, but he writes fantasy works which include fairy-tale elements, and his type of world building is unusual. Pierre Pével lays bare the construction of his fictional world from the start. In *Les Enchantements d'Ambremer* (2003) he creates an alternate reality of the late nineteenth-century world: in his novels, the magical world of fairies (l'OutreMonde) and Paris are only a train away from one another. The two worlds communicate easily as Ambremer and Paris are twin-cities and the interaction between the two has considerably altered Paris. Thus, the Eiffel Tower has been built in a magical white type of wood, undines swim in the city fountains, and magicians are part of private clubs. Most striking of all is Pével's preface which begins with the following words: 'Il était une fois le Paris des Merveilles…'[73] and subtitles it by the following: 'where we set the stage of a version of Paris which never truly existed'.[74] In the preface, Pével expressly invites the reader to imagine how history might have been if fairyland (l'Outremonde) and the 'real'

---

[71] Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy,* p.xx.

[72] Especially, as Jane Carroll demonstrates, in the case of Tiffany Aching (the main protagonist of *The Wee Free Men* (2003)*, A Hat Full of Sky* (2004)*, Wintersmith* (2006)*, I Shall Wear Midnight* (2010) and *The Shepherd's Crown* (2015)) who has a deep bond with the land she grew up and lives on (the Chalk).

[73] Pierre Pével, *Les Enchantements d'Ambremer* (Paris: Le Pré aux Clercs, 2003), p.7.

[74] 'où l'on plante le décor d'un Paris qui n'exista jamais tout à fait.' Pével, p.7.

world had interacted and influenced one another. Pével then proceeds to describe for about forty lines 'Le Paris de la Belle Epoque' before finally exhorting his reader to 'imagine'. Almost an echo to a builder's hammer at work, his use of anaphora marks the process of the world construction:

Voilà Paris, en deux mots, tel qu'il fut. A présent, imaginez…

Imaginez des nuées d'oiseaux multicolores nichés parmi les gargouilles de Notre-Dame ; imaginez que, sur les Champs-Elysées, le feuillage des arbres diffuse à la nuit douce lumière mordorée ; imaginez des sirènes dans la Seine ; imaginez une ondine pour chaque fontaine, une dryade pour chaque square ; imaginez des saules rieurs qui s'esclaffent ; imaginez des chats ailés, un rien pédants, discutant philosophie ; imaginez le bois de Vincennes peuplé de farfadets cachés sous les dolmens ; imaginez, au comptoir des bistrots, des gnomes en bras de chemise, la casquette de guingois et le mégot sur l'oreille ; imaginez la tour Eiffel bâtie dans un bois blanc qui chante à la lune ; imaginez de minuscules dragons bigarrés chassant les insectes au ras des pelouses du Luxembourg et happant au vol les cristaux de soufre que leur jettent les enfants ; imaginez la reine des Fées se rendant à l'opéra dans une Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost ; imaginez encore de sombres complots, quelques savants fous, deux ou trois sorciers maléfiques et des clubs privés de gentlemen magiciens. Imaginez tout cela, et vous commencerez à vous faire une petite idée du Paris des Merveilles…

Pierre PEVEL[75]

Here is Paris, in two words, as it was. But now, imagine…

Imagine flocks of multi-coloured birds nesting in Notre Dame's gargoyles; imagine that the foliage of the trees on the Champs-Elysées releases a soft, bronze light; imagine mermaids in the River Seine; imagine an undine for each fountain; a dryad for each park; imagine laughing willows guffawing; imagine winged cats, slightly pedantic, talking philosophy; imagine the wood of Vincennes inhabited by elves hiding under dolmens; imagine, standing at the bar, gnomes in shirtsleeves, a lopsided cap and a cigarette butt on the ear; imagine the Eiffel Tower built of white wood, singing to the moon; imagine minuscule colourful dragons hunting insects in the Luxembourg lawns and snatching mid-flight the sulphur crystal thrown to them by children; imagine the Queen of Fairies going to the opera in a Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost; imagine again dark plots, a few deranged scientists, two or three evil wizard and private magicians club. Imagine all this, and you will start to have a small idea of the *Paris des Merveilles*.

---

[75] Pével, pp.7-10.

Pierre PEVEL

As he signs this introduction, Pével seems to feel that the contract usually naturally drawn between a reader and the text he is engaging with needs to be explicit, and outside the main fictional text. From the outset then, the fantasy world of Pével is presented not as fantasy (as Tolkien would have it) but as *a* fantasy. The building of the world is a conscious game of construction, laying bare its workings and openly asking the reader to follow him in this dreamt-of world.

In an article devoted to Pével's work, which he entitles 'Fantasy à la française,' Alain Lescart studies the use of alternate history (*uchronie* in French) as a specifically culturally francophone trait. *Uchronies* are indeed fairly common in French Literature, so much so that in his study on the supernatural, Francis Berthelot classifies it as a genre in itself (to which belong Jean-Claude Albert-Weil's *L'Altermonde* trilogy, 2004) but are not limited to French circles: other famous alternate histories being Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) and Portuguese Nobel Prize Jose Saramago's *The History of the Siege of Lisbon* (1989)).

As Lescart underlines, the use of *uchronie* enables Pével to play with the knowledge of the reader of places in Paris which exist but have undergone slight changes. Pével constantly plays with fiction and reality, introducing historical and other famous fictional characters to his narrative (presenting Georges Méliès as a wizard for instance)[76]. Lescart comments: 'Contrary to the "parallel-world" option, *uchrony* offers the possibility to revisit a well-known space through new time factors that add a touch of originality without being too deeply alien or alienating.'[77] Like Chevillard, Pével wishes to create a playful alternate reality, building a different type of interaction with his readers, giving them, for instance, reading advice:

> Francois Ruycours avait loué une loge qu'il occupait seul. Portant le numéro 5, c'était la première à côté de l'avant-scène de gauche, celle que l'on ne réservait plus à personne depuis les évènements dont Gaston Leroux avait fait le récit dans le fantôme de l'opéra, génial roman que le lecteur est invité à découvrir, si nécessaire, dès qu'il aura achevé celui-ci.[78]

---

[76] Pével, p.62.
[77] Alain Lescart, '"Fantasy à la Française": The Case of Pierre Pével', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 15:2 (2011), 241-248 (p.241).
[78] Pével, p.64.

François Ruycours had taken a box he occupied on his own. It was the number five, the first one next to the left downstage, the one that had not been reserved for anyone since the events Gaston Leroux related in his work the Ghost of the Opera, a brilliant novel the reader is invited to discover, if necessary, as soon as he has finished this one.

The supernatural, while present, is in fact minimal and often limited. Pével often points to the difficulties of using some types of magic and creates what could almost be classified as 'rationalised fantasy', where the magical is linked with the scientific: his main character creates machines which combine science and magical elements—and do not always work. As Lescart notes: 'Magic, this preeminent element of the *Fantasy* genre, is not so much a substitute for science as it is an alternate solution, equally efficient…or inefficient.'[79]

Commenting on the use of *uchronie* in literature P.J.G. Mergey sees the device as one that is crucially involved with and revelatory of the context in which it was written:

> Comme toute création artistique, l'uchronie est bien sûr le fruit du contexte dans lequel elle est rédigée. Mais peut-être plus que d'autres formes de création artistique, parce qu'elle manipule l'histoire et par conséquent les faits politiques, sociaux, culturels, religieux, bref, tout ce qui touche aux activités humaines, elle montre, au-delà même du sujet qu'elle entend traiter, les préoccupations locales ou temporelles de son auteur et par conséquent, *à priori*, de ses lecteurs.[80]

> Like all artistic creation, *uchrony* is of course the fruit of the context in which it is written. But maybe even more than other forms of artistic creations, because it manipulates history and therefore political, social, cultural, religious facts, in short, everything that relates to human activity, it shows, beyond the subject it is meant to study, the local or temporal concerns of its author and consequently, *a priori*, of its readers.

The extent to which Pével's narration is truly a reflection of the context in which it is written is difficult to assess but his work certainly inscribes itself within other francophone texts studied in this thesis. In ways reminiscent of Chevillard's *Le Vaillant petit tailleur* Pével constantly points to the fictionality of his text, for instance, repeatedly anchoring his text to a specific time and readership: 'Ambremer was a medieval city, such

---

[79] Lescart, p.246.

[80] P.J.G. Mergey, 'L'uchronie: l'histoire au service de la fiction', in *Fantastique, fantasy, science fiction: mondes imaginaires, étranges réalités*, ed. by Léa Silhol and Estelle Valls de Gomis (Paris: Autrement, 2005), p.79.

as you and me and the majority of our contemporaries dream of.'[81] It is also certainly akin to Marc Petit's construction of fiction in *Le Nain géant* (mentioned in Chapter 1). Both writers create self-reflexive works which are built on witty interactions with their readers and play on nineteenth-century instalment novel conventions (based on a mystery to be resolved and a series of cliff-hangers). Undeniably, Pével introduces magical elements to his narrative, where Petit only mentions myths and fairy tales. However, even if, in some of the worlds mentioned above some of the characters postulated, imagined, and wished for other worlds themselves, the reader was always provided with a fictional world in which he could travel. Pével goes even further than Petit in that he does not simply suggest magical elements or occurrences before dismissing or disproving them, he actively makes the reader wish for a world that is constantly undermined. The reader is presented with a world he can never feel is 'real'; it is never a space to which he can escape and marvel, but it is a world he is undeniably made to actively constantly construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct.

5. Conclusions

All the works studied in this chapter share a very heightened reliance on readers and viewers to participate in the world building and creation of the world. The complex world building and use of referentiality shows the capacity of so-called popular materials to integrate literariness and go beyond simple market value. The very popularity of the texts shows great engagement with readers and audiences, which sometimes directly influences the content of the texts.

All these texts make attempts at renewing the tales by redefining the boundaries between magical and everyday life, and rather than being completely escapist, there is a clear will to introduce wonder to the everyday world and involve the reader in the world creation. Many of these works invite readers and viewers to see themselves as the *other* and take a new stance on the world in which they live. Dubois's short story invites the reader to let go of their dull unfulfilling life, *Once* attempts to show that not only fairy-tale characters can get their happy endings, *Grimm* reflects on issues of immigration and adaptation. On several occasions, in *Fables*, Bill Willingham pits against one another the

---

[81] 'Ambremer était une cité médiévale, telle que vous, moi et l'essentiel de nos contemporains la rêvent.' Pével, p.47.

magical and the everyday world through characters' estrangement: as they just crossed the Oz border to Canada some fairy-tale characters comment:

> 'People can talk to each other from across the globe for less than the cost of a single meal. And every house has a box that plays music and another box that gathers information and another box for—well, I guess you might describe it as endless puppet shows. […] And not just for the gentry. Even the peasantry has these things.'
>
> 'Astonishing.'
>
> 'And yet we call this the mundane world.'[82]

Conversely, we learn that the rulers of the Homelands control their borders very tightly because while magic is only yielded by a selected few, guns and other human weapons can be used by anyone. By shifting the point of view, Willingham makes magical what is everyday to his readers.

Once again, fewer works in French follow this process of a world building which rests in part on the multiplicity of references. Francophone and anglophone works do seem to stem from a similar endeavour, but their means of doing so varies. It is difficult to establish whether the more openly meta-fictional world-construction of the French writer (Pével) betrays a stronger confidence or, on the contrary, a fear of letting go of conventions to be better accepted. Do the French really need such openly framed invitations to enter a world of fantasy? The magical always seems to be framed, either through a dream structure, *uchronie*, or constant narratorial comments.

This does not mean of course that the francophone authors cannot ever create a fully-fledged world, but the reliance on the reader to construct meaning is not only necessary, it is also very explicitly requested—a clear contract has to be drafted before entering the dangerous realms of fantasy. One can truly wonder if francophone readers are simply not ready to enter the woods, or if it is the writers themselves (and their editors) who are not ready to make the first step.

---

[82] Bill Willingham, Chapter One March of the Wooden Soldiers, Volume 19, *Fables*, p.2.

CHAPTER FIVE

Thematic Approach:

Wondrous Metamorphoses: Porcine Brides

Despite [their] haunting permanence, the beings or natural phenomena that people of all lands and ages have termed monstra possess no fixed, secure, inherent attributes which can attract or justify such a denomination. If we were to look for one single element of constancy within the ever-changing borders of 'monstrosity', this would almost certainly be the relativity of the 'monster' as a humanly constructed concept, that is to say, the simple truth that its prerogatives and its essence are powerfully interlocked with the perennial dialectic of 'Otherness' with respect to 'Norm'. And as norms are culturally determined, 'monsters' too become inevitably culture-specific products.

—Ismene Lada Richards[1]

1. Introduction: Cultural Monsters

In the spring 2001, the DreamWorks studios surprised audiences with their (now-cult) animated movie *Shrek*.[2] Using and turning Disney's fairy-tale tropes upon themselves, the film humorously subverts patriarchal codes, transforming the image of the fairy-tale beast and pushing its viewers to question norms of beauty and normality. Shrek appealed to audiences because it defied their expectations in humorous ways: contrary to traditional 'Beauty and the Beast' type of tales (such as 'Hans my Hedgehog' or 'The Princess and the Frog'), the main character is an ogre who does not become 'beautiful' in the expected, normalised way. Frightened by his appearance, the people he meets either

---

[1] Ismene Lada Richards, '"Foul Monster or Good Saviour?" Reflections on Ritual Monsters' in *Monsters and Monstrosity in Greek and Roman Culture*, ed. by Catherine Atherton (Bari: Levante, 1998), p.46.

[2] The film was so successful that three subsequent movies and a spin-off with Puss in Boots as the main character were released and have grossed a combined $3.5 billion. <http://theweek.com/articles/556154/how-shrek-went-from-worlds-biggest-animated-franchise-internets-creepiest-meme> [accessed June 2015]

run away from him or try to kill him. The ogre is excluded from society, until Lord Farquaad, who is looking for a princess to make him king, sends Shrek on a mission to deliver Princess Fiona from her dungeon. Despite his aspirations, Farquaad is far from being a prince charming: short in stature, ruthless, power-hungry; he is simply too lazy to go and find his princess himself. Fiona, on the other hand, is not only a beautiful, smart, and wilful princess during the day, she is also, unbeknownst to all, cursed to be an ogress at night. The princess needs true love's kiss to break the spell and take on 'love's true form'. When at the end of the film Shrek and the princess finally acknowledge their feelings for each other and kiss, thus breaking the spell (Farquaad has been swiftly gotten rid of in the meantime), Fiona permanently becomes an ogress. Rather than equating goodness with beauty, the two main characters remain 'ugly' and find happiness in this shape because they do not feel the need to fit within the bodily norms of a society which excludes them. The critique of Disney and its perpetuation of beauty diktats is all the more striking as the said-society is represented by Duloc castle: perfect in appearance (if maybe a bit too sanitised) it is a clear caricature of a Disneyland resort—complete with waiting lines, information points, and turnstiles at the gates. Jack Zipes comments:

> This is a far cry from the perfect union dreamed by Le Prince de Beaumont [author of 'Beauty and the Beast', 1740] […]. Ultimately *Shrek* uses various strains of the carnivalesque to explode standard notions of the fairy tale and normative standards of beauty, proper mating behavior, femininity and masculinity. The freakiness of *Shrek* is a delightful and hopeful anticipation of a de-Disneyfied world.[3]

Jack Zipes's cry for a 'de-Disneyfied world' is one the scholar has been making for a long time now, most remarkably with the publication in 1979 of *Breaking the Magic Spell,* a very influential critique of Disney Studios' use of fairy tales, especially regarding their attitude towards women.[4] In an article published the same year, Karen Rowe also criticised fairy tales and the romances stemming from them for 'glamoriz[ing] a heroine's

---

[3] Jack Zipes, *The Enchanted Screen: the Unknown History of Fairy-tale Films* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), p.244.

[4] In *The Enchanted Screen* Jack Zipes traces the history of fairy tale films and criticises the hold Disney has had on our contemporary conception of fairy tales:
'[Walt Disney's] productions effaced the name of Charles Perrault, The Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and Collodi and became synonymous with the term fairy tale. […] Our contemporary concept and image of a fairy tale have been shaped and standardized by Disney so efficiently through the mechanisms of the culture industry that our notions of happiness and utopia are and continue to be filtered through a Disney lens even if it is myopic. It seems that myopia has come to dominate both reality and utopia, thanks to Disneyfication, or that we are conditioned to view reality and fairy tales through a myopic pseudo-utopian lens.' p.17.

traditional yearning for romantic love which culminates in marriage'.[5] Walt Disney's features certainly have had a strong role in promoting a certain ideal of love and beauty. In fact, the Disney princess is still such a prominent feature of the movies that a lot of the company's recent marketing industry revolves around the image of the princesses and the 'princessisation' of little girls who should want to dress up like them—the 2009 global sales of the princess line topping four billion dollars.[6]

While Zipes repeatedly praises the fairy tale's powers and abilities to debunk the patriarchal imagery perpetuated by Disney,[7] Rowe claimed in her article that having lost its potency and relevance, the fairy tale needed to be put aside as it only contributed to the continuity of patriarchy. *Shrek* is a good counterpoint to Rowe's argument because it works both as a fairy tale (using its patterns and tropes) and as a response to the type of fairy-tale narratives mainstream audiences have been taught to expect. The will of *Shrek*'s creators to subvert conventions of the 'Beauty and the Beast' type of tale (in which the monster finds love and becomes a prince charming)[8] is, I believe, symptomatic of an approach to fairy tales influenced by feminism since the 1970s.

This chapter will look at ideas of feminine monstrosity in fairy tales through other recent francophone and anglophone rewritings of the 'Beauty and the Beast' type and most specifically through two works which depict animal brides instead of animal bridegrooms. The American movie *Penelope* (2006) and the French novel *Truismes* (1996) (published in English as *Pig Tales, A Novel of Lust and Transformation*, 1997) both present a main female character burdened with the physical attributes of a pig. As they are deemed monstrous by the society in which they were born and evolve, the tales depict the heroines' struggle to interact with others and integrate despite their shared longing for acceptance and love.

---

[5] Karen Rowe, 'Feminism and Fairy Tales', *Women's Studies: An Inter-Disciplinary Journal*, 6:3 (1979), p.240.

[6] Linton Weeks, 'The Fairy Tale Struggles to Live Happily Ever After', *NPR*, Jan.21, 2011.

[7] Several artists have taken up to revising these images to denounce the image given of women in fairy tales but also our cultures in general. In a collection of pictures entitled 'Fallen Princesses', artist Dina Goldstein takes photographs of women wearing Disney's heroines' costumes: Beauty is having cosmetic surgery, the little mermaid lives in an aquarium, and Snow White is seen in a living room, visibly exhausted, with children swarming around her while Prince Charming sits on his sofa, a beer in his hand.
<http://www.fallenprincesses.com/> [accessed July 2015]

[8] In subsequent films, a character named Charming certainly has the looks of a Disney prince but clearly lacks any other 'charming' qualities.

As Ismene Lada-Richards argues in the opening quote of this chapter, monsters are inherently cultural constructions and culturally defined. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen even argues that one can '[read] cultures from the monsters they engender' as he believes that 'the monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy […] the monstrous body is pure culture'.[9] Thus, the shift from a male monster to a female one in these tales is meaningful not only because it is unusual to depict a central female character as monstrous, but also because their representation reflects a specific view of femininity in fairy tale in the context of their creation and narration—in this case, contemporary Hollywood and France. These works play on the interaction between the modern myths of monster and modern myths of femininity—that is myth in the Barthean sense, where the term myth refers to the wide understanding and conceptualisation of a subject specific to a cultural period.[10] Also using the Barthean model in her work on the representation of women, Myra MacDonald argues that often, in our societies, 'the diversity of real women, potentially challenging to male authority is transformed into manageable myths of "femininity" or the "feminine"';[11] an idea which, as we shall see, can be applied to the works examined in this chapter.

Moreover, both film and novel work as reflections of Zipes's and Rowe's stances: as Darrieussecq turns her fairy tale into a complex multi-faceted narration (which includes pornographic, dystopian satire), *Penelope* remains a child-friendly romanticised version, and one could genuinely wonder whether it actually does more than romanticising its heroine's yearning for love and beauty.

2. The Evolution of the Fairy-Tale Monstrous Lover

In traditional fairy tales, characters are set into strict types (brave princes, daring boys, beautiful princesses, wicked stepmothers, etc.) and female characters have an especially restricted set of roles. As Marcia K. Lieberman notes:

> What is praiseworthy in males, however, is rejected in females; the counterpart of the energetic, aspiring boy is the scheming, ambitious woman...[The stories]

---

[9] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses) (extract)', *Speaking of Monsters: a Teratological Anthology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.15-16.
In his study *On Monsters* (2009), Stephen T. Asma also studies the evolution of the representation of monsters through history, notably in relation to cultural fears.

[10] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957)

[11] Myra MacDonald, *Representing Women*: *Myths of Femininity in the Popular Media* (London: E.Arnold, 1995), p.2.

> establish a dichotomy between those women who are gentle, passive, and fair, and those who are active, wicked, and ugly. Women who are powerful and good are never human; those women who are human, and who have power or seek it, are nearly always portrayed as repulsive.[12]

Strikingly, the equation of ugliness with evil and beauty with goodness is still prevalent (in fairy tales and elsewhere), but it is something which, as *Shrek* shows, is questioned in many retellings. For instance, many authors rewrite tales by developing character's motives and writing from the villain's point of view. This is the case in Robert Coover's *Stepmother* (2004) and in several of Gregory Maguire's novels, notably *Wicked* (1996), which tells the story of Oz's Wicked Witch of the West, and *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* (1999) which (as the title implies) retells 'Cinderella' from one of the stepsisters' point of view.[13] These revisions are often parodies, but whether humorous or not, they all offer a refreshing, contrasting version which often breaks patriarchal conventions.

The traditional pattern of animal bridegroom tales can be traced back to Apuleius's second century BCE 'Cupid and Psyche' tale (which appears in his *Metamorphoses or The Golden Ass*). Strikingly, in this first version, the male is only feared to be a monster: embedded within a larger story, the tale focuses on Psyche, a young woman so beautiful that people slowly start worshipping her and neglect Venus. Outraged, the goddess sends Cupid to get rid of the maiden. But once he has seen her, Cupid cannot resolve to kill the beautiful young woman himself and hides her away in a luxurious palace instead. The first night, a man whom she does not see—the god himself in disguise—makes her his wife and sleeps beside her. He comes back every night and despite the fact that she never sees his face, Psyche falls in love with him. After a while, she begs her new husband to let her go back and see her family. Tricked by her sisters into believing that her lover must be some evil creature, Psyche cannot resist looking at her husband, and as she beholds the god asleep in her bed, she becomes instantly even more infatuated. However, she wakes him up inadvertently and in a rage, the god of love leaves her, marking the start of her 'search for the lost husband' (ATU 425).

---

[12] Marcia K. Lieberman, 'Some Day My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation Through the Fairy-Tale', *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*, ed. by Jack Zipes (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp.185-201 (pp.187-188).

[13] See also, Amie A. Doughty, "'This Is the Real Story I Was Framed': Point of View and Modern Revisions of Folktales," *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures*, 357-62, and David Calvin, 'In Her Red-Hot Shoes: Retelling "Snow White" From the Queen's Point of View' in *Anti-Tales,* ed. by Catriona McAra and David Calvin, pp.231-245.

There are many variants of the tale (in a Norwegian version 'East of the Sun, West of the Moon,' trolls curse the groom to be a polar bear by day) but as Warner writes, 'it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the French fairytale writers invented the pattern familiar today'.[14] Indeed, as Jack Zipes notes, the 'Cupid and Psyche' tale was revived in France with a publication of Apuleius's work in 1648, which inspired in turn La Fontaine's 'Les Amours de Psyche et de Cupidon' (1669) and Corneille and Molière's tragédie-ballet *Psyché* (1671).[15] Madame d'Aulnoy reworked various tales of animal bridegrooms in 'Serpentin vert'[16] ('The Green Serpent', 1697), 'Le Mouton' ('The Ram', 1697) and 'La Grenouille bienfaisante' ('The Beneficent Frog', 1697) among others.

The influence of Apuleius on French tale writers is most obvious in the two first versions of 'Beauty and the Beast' written in 1740 by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve's and Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont in 1756.[17] In both tales, the prince has been cursed to take the shape of a beast and can only find redemption through love. De Beaumont's version (now the best known of the two) is shorter than its older counterpart and its main goal is didactic: her motivation behind rewriting the tale is to educate young ladies. The message of her version of the tale is that wives should be attentive and live selfless, devoted lives. In the tale, the female character shows respect, obedience, and compassion.

If De Beaumont's bride embodies the perfect understanding caring wife, the male animal bridegroom, now truly a beast, incarnates the unfamiliar and daunting manliness (and sexuality) young women were faced with in arranged marriages. The feelings of repulsion first experienced by young ladies promised to animal bridegrooms were often (especially in seventeenth-century tales), allegories of forced marriages and the processes women had to go through to accept their husbands. As Maria Tatar argues:

> The central female figures of the tales in which [the bridegrooms] appear are, therefore, either newlyweds or girls about to enter the state of (in this case) unholy matrimony. Often they have been coerced into marriage by a father who has frivolously promised to hand over the first living thing that meets him on his arrival home or who seeks financial gain through the favorable marriage of his

---

[14] Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, p.277.
[15] Zipes, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition*, p.787.
[16] 'Serpentin vert' follows Apuleius's tale closely, even presenting a main protagonist who makes the same mistakes as Psyche—despite having read her tale.
[17] Respectively in *Les Contes marins ou la jeune américaine* (1740) and *Magasin des enfants, ou dialogues entre une sage gouvernante et plusieurs de ses élèves* (1756).

daughter. Is it any wonder, then, that the heroines perceive their grooms and husbands as beasts and monsters?[18]

The tale is therefore used to reassure young ladies that their first impressions are most likely erroneous and that, eventually, they will come to love the husband their father has chosen for them. As Karen Rowe writes, at the end of Beaumont's tale, when Beauty's feelings of repulsion are replaced by romantic feelings, her reward is that 'the beast in the bedroom becomes transmuted into the prince in the palace'.[19] The transformation undergone by the tale from Apuleius's to De Beaumont's thus altered its goal and message; as Maria Tatar notes, the heroines' roles are very different: while Beauty needs to be perceptive and is often presented as eloquent, Psyche is a lot more active: 'She undertakes a mission that not only requires the performance of feats […] but also demands that she renounce that quintessential feminine virtue known as compassion—the very trait that comes to the fore in European variants of "Beauty and the Beast".'[20]

Where other bridegroom tales at the time used animalistic monstrous males as allegories, in 'Riquet à la houppe' (1697) Perrault is a lot less metaphorical. The main protagonist, Prince Riquet, was born 'so ugly and misshapen, that for a long time, it was unsure whether he had human form.'[21] The Prince is, however, very smart, and wins the heart of a princess who, at the end of the tale, finds her lover beautiful. Perrault, as is his habit, plays with the rationalisation of magic: 'Some people guarantee that it were not the Fairy's charms that performed the metamorphosis but love only.'[22] Just as in other tales of metamorphosis, the woman has learnt to be perceptive and accept and love her husband, despite, it seems, his bestial aspects.[23]

Tales such as 'Catskin', Basile's 'The She-bear', and Perrault's 'Donkeyskin' (all ATU 510B) could be classified as tales of animal brides but they rather fit within what

---

[18] Maria Tatar, *Off With Their Heads!,* p.170.

[19] Karen Rowe, 'Feminism and Fairy-Tale', Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 6:3 (1979) 237-57 (p.245).

[20] Maria Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales,* p.26.

[21] 'si laid et si mal fait, qu'on douta longtemps s'il avait forme humaine.' Perrault, p.193.

[22] 'Quelques-uns assurent que ce ne furent point les charmes de la Fée qui opérèrent, mais que l'amour seul fit cette Métamorphose.' Perrault, p.202.

[23] In fact, in Perrault's fairy tales physical metamorphosis is unusual and almost absent: the only tale which includes full human-animal transformation is 'Cinderella' where the fairy godmother turns rats and lizards into coachmen and footmen. Their role remains secondary and no attention is directly paid to them; the animals all retrieve their previous shape when midnight strikes and the reader is never aware of their thoughts or feelings or even given the hint that they may have any. In *I was a rat!* (1999), a sequel to 'Cinderella', Philip Pullman humorously tells the story of one of the rats who remained a boy and has to adapt to his new human form.

David Gallagher calls 'metamorphoses of clothing'.[24] In this type of tale, the heroine who tries to escape a threat (usually the advances of her own father) disguises herself in furs and dirt. The metamorphosis is not actual and rather than being cast as a degrading curse the new skin is offered as a redemptive escape. The heroines' altered appearance gives them a new chance as the skin bestows an identity upon them: before wearing the skin and becoming Donkeyskin, Perrault's heroine was only the nameless princess of an unspecified kingdom.

In fact, the female/male divide follows the two most common types of human transformation in classical myths (such as Ovid's) where metamorphosis is either used as protection (e.g. Myrrha) or punishment (Arachne and Lycaon).[25] While male beasts often have to break a curse, hoping for redemption and love, females tend to welcome the changes as it hides their true nature and protects them from harm: they do not actually physically shapeshift into an animal. As Lieberman argues, in canonical fairy tales, true female monsters are not heroines: they are evil witches and wicked stepmothers.[26] And conversely, if female beasts are common in myths and legends, they are mostly portrayed as threatening figures, hiding their true bestial nature. Alluring in form, they are usually cunning females who reveal their true nature and monstrosity only later, once they have trapped men in their lairs. As David Gallagher has noted, in myth 'metamorphosis of the female is often synonymous with seduction and the seductive temptress in the form of a snake-like female, who oscillates between human and fish form'.[27] Classical tropes are mermaids, who lure sailors to their deaths, or Mélusine who takes the form of a serpent on specific days but hides her true nature from her lover the rest of the time. These are, however, almost completely absent from canonical fairy tales: shapeshifting females such as Swan Maidens are usually the ones who suffer at the hand of men, specifically because they are attractive and abducted.[28]

---

[24] David Gallagher, *Metamorphosis: Transformations of the Body and the Influence of Ovid's Metamorphoses on Germanic Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York, N.Y.: Rodopi, 2009), p.75.

[25] Myrrha is turned into a tree by the gods to save her from certain death, while Arachne is turned into a spider and Lycaon into a wolf for having offended the gods.

[26] Lieberman, pp.187-188.

[27] Gallagher, p.81.

[28] Lada-Richards takes the example of mermaids to show how the concept of monster can evolve and change from dangerous creatures to beautifully romanticised beings. Another obvious and striking example is the vampire, evolving from a folkloric lowly creature to Bram Stoker's noble count (*Dracula*, 1897) to belonging to well-developed underground vampire societies (Anne Rice's vampire series, *Underworld*, 2003, *Blade*, 1998 etc.) up to the *Twilight* series (2005-2008) in which the main vampire character is an attractive rich teenage boy who hides from the sun because his skin glitters, drives in fast cars, and is hopelessly romantic.

As argued in chapter two, Angela Carter's fairy-tale rewritings were extremely influential to subsequent anglophone revisions. In her version of 'Beauty and the Beast' entitled 'The Tiger's Bride' (1979), Angela Carter plays with gender role reversals: when De Beaumont's Beauty was looking for the human under the animal skin, Carter points to the animality of the male: he is repulsive, smelly, hairy. But crucially, when the bride finally gives herself up to him, she is the one who undergoes a transformation:

> He dragged himself closer and closer to me, until I felt the harsh velvet of his head against my hand, then a tongue, abrasive as sandpaper. 'He will lick the skin off me!'
>
> And each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of shining hairs. My earrings turned back to water and trickled down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur.[29]

Undermining the male/female divide, Carter subverts the transformation: when she discovers sexual bliss, the traditional young blushing bride does not fear her husband and his animalistic desires any more. As she embraces them and her own, she transforms herself, thus qualifying common gendered sexual divisions and uncovering her own bestial nature.

3. Female Monsters

3.1. Beauty and Status

The association of feminine beauty with status pervades many traditional tales: women are in places of power (i.e. married to a king) only if they are beautiful. Old crones and witches might be powerful in terms of the magic they yield, and the fear they instil, but they live on the fringes of society. In 'Snow White', for instance, the stepmother is not simply being vain: she is fighting for her place and her throne; without her beauty she loses everything.

As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have argued in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), in 'Snow White' the mirror is a representation of the masculine gaze and the rivalry between the two women revolves around the struggle for the power it provides. It is the mirror who tells the stepmother that Snow White is 'the fairest of them all' and it/he

---

[29] Angela Carter, 'The Tiger's Bride', *The Bloody Chamber* (London: The Folio Society, 2012), p.75.

plays a crucial role in the tale. In fact, very often, the mirror is portrayed as a man[30] and sometimes is even replaced by the father himself commenting on the beauty of his wife and his daughter:[31] '[The King's] surely is the voice of the looking glass, the patriarchal voice of judgement that rules the Queen's—and every woman's—self-evaluation.'[32] The mirror—the masculine gaze—kindles the rivalry between the two female protagonists, and in fact, the rivalry emerges from, and is a function of this gaze.[33] What Laura Mulvey writes of women in film fits perfectly in this case: 'The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact.'[34] In many ways, as Elizabeth Bronfen argues too, Snow White is the perfect example of the way women are seen in Western society:

> [a]s auto-icon, Snow White performs the apotheosis of one of the central positions ascribed to Woman in western culture; namely that the 'surveyed' feminine body is meant to confirm the power of the masculine gaze. In Lemoine-Luccioni's words, Woman doesn't look; she gives herself to be looked at; she is beauty and being beauty, she is also an object of love.[35]

In her collection of fairy-tale rewritings, *Kissing the Witch* (1997) Emma Donoghue interweaves thirteen famous tales, as each tale is told by its heroine who then asks the subsequent narrator to tell her own story. Donoghue replaces male figures with female ones, telling tales in which—helped by older female characters who sometimes become their lovers—the heroines move towards personal transformation. Her rewriting 'The Tale of the Rose' seems to follow the 'Beauty and the Beast' tale closely, but Donoghue gives clues as to the beast's identity throughout her story. When she is on her

---

[30] As in the Disney version or the recent movie *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012), in the TV series *Once Upon a Time* (2011-ongoing), and in Henri Courtade's *Loup y es-tu?* (2010) for instance. (In some other versions, however, such as *Mirror Mirror* (2012) or *Snow White: A Tale of Terror* (1997), the mirror seems to represent the dark side (and possible insanity) of the stepmother rather than a fully separate entity.)

[31] This is the case in Emma Donoghue's 'The Tale of the Apple' in which the father stirs up the rivalry between the two young women: 'Two such fair ladies, he remarked, have never been seen on one bed. But which of you is the fairest of them all?' *Kissing the Witch* (London: Penguin Books, 1998 [1997]), p.46.

[32] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd edn. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p.38.

[33] For a detailed discussion of the role of the mirror in 'Snow White', see Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic,* pp.37-44.

[34] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', in *Feminism and Film Theory* ed. by Constance Penley (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 57-68 (p.62).

[35] Elizabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body*, p.102.

way to the beast's castle, villagers tell the heroine that 'there had been no wedding or christening in that castle for a whole generation. The young queen had been exiled, imprisoned, devoured (here the stories diverged) by a hooded beast who could be seen walking on the battlements.'[36] The beast is never given a name and never once does Donoghue use a pronoun to refer to the character. When the narrator has to leave the castle, the beast tells her: 'I must tell you before you go: I am not a man.'[37] At this point of the story, the heroine still cannot grasp the beast's identity and, like others before her, thinks of superstitious tales: 'I knew it. Every tale I had ever heard of trolls, ogres, goblins rose to my lips.'[38] Only when she returns to the castle does she realise that the monster is in fact simply a woman who, because she refused to marry, started being called a monster and ended up hiding behind a mask, truly owning up to her nickname of 'beast'. By making the monster a woman who refused to conform to societal expectations (as hinted by what the villagers deplore: the lack of wedding and christening, i.e. marriage and children) Donoghue points to the crucial role non-conformism plays in shaping concepts of monstrosity and beauty. The tale concludes: 'And as the years flowed by, some villagers told travellers of a beast and a beauty who lived in the castle and could be seen walking on the battlements, and others of two beauties, and others, of two beasts.'[39] Thus, in this tale, and in her other retellings, Donoghue repeatedly asks what happens when the heroine does not conform to male expectations: if she turns out to be ugly in the eyes of the society in which she evolves (whether this ugliness is physical or in this case not conforming to heteronormative expectations) can a heroine achieve a happy ending, and more importantly, is it what she should aspire to?

These preliminary observations made, we will now proceed to the examination of the two principal texts, the study of which will be two-pronged: first, a consideration of the way the heroines in *Truismes* and *Penelope* are perceived by others, and second, an inquiry into the significance of the heroines' bodies upon their lives and how their physical differences affect the process of their own construction of identity. Once again, the study and comparison of these themes—transformation, monstrosity, and femininity—aim to uncover the similarities and differences in the way wonder is used in these two francophone and anglophone works.

---

[36] Donoghue, p.31.
[37] Donoghue, p.34.
[38] Donoghue, p.34.
[39] Donoghue, p.37.

3.2. Pig Tales

In Mark Palanski's film, Penelope is cursed from birth with a snout and pig ears as a result of the behaviour of one of her ancestors towards a witch. The witch has cursed the noble and proud Wilhern family so they may also know the pain of rejection: the next girl to be born to the family will have the face of a pig, 'and only when one of your own kind claims this daughter as their own, til death do they part will the curse be broken'. The story is consciously built like a fairy tale and its structure is very well-delineated and predictable. It plays on codes fairy tales and romantic comedies share: the movie opens with the words 'Once Upon a Time' and is framed by a storyteller, Penelope herself, who starts by telling her family's history and explaining why she was born with pig ears and a snout. Halfway between a 'Cinderella' and a 'Rapunzel' type of tale (respectively ATU 510A 'The Persecuted Heroine', and ATU 310 'Maiden in the Tower'), Penelope lives prisoner in a luxurious mansion, manages to slip away to go out into the world, and while she realises at the end that all she truly needed to do was accept herself as she was, she does find love and an expected happy ending. The end of the film reveals that the butler was in fact the witch herself, still alive and who can shapeshift. Thus, the only magic is linked with physical metamorphosis but the fairy-tale feel is reinforced by the absence of specific setting (a generic, though romanticised, contemporary North American town) and Penelope's circumstances as her family attempts to find noble suitors to break her curse with a true love kiss.[40]

While *Truismes* also portrays a woman with the appearance of a pig, it raises very different questions. The title is a playful pun on the words *truisme* (truism) and *truie* (sow), instantly conveying the sexual connotations associated the word *cochon* in French mentioned in chapter one[41] (in this particular case its feminine form *cochonne*, the French vernacular for a dirty woman). *Truismes* is told in a first-person narration by an unnamed narrator and also set in a contemporary setting, this time in the suburbs of Paris. The transformation in Darrieussecq's novel goes in a movement opposite to Penelope's: shortly after the start of the novel, the narrator begins noticing changes in her body. She starts growing fatter, rounder, and turns pink. Suddenly, she cannot help but devour the flowers she sees, but gets sick at the very idea of eating pork. In contrast to Penelope who is born

---

[40] Further than her name, the character's circumstances as an isolated woman with numerous suitors are reminiscent of Homer's character of course.

[41] The sexual connotations associated with the pig were also used by Marcella Iacub in her novella *Belle et bête* (2012), see chapter one, 2.3.2.

with pig attributes which disappear upon breaking a spell, the narrator's transformation does not follow a linear movement; she often switches back from one form to another being at times 'more pig' or more human than others.

As the state of the narrator seems to deteriorate so does the country, and a dictatorship is slowly put into place. If in *Truismes*, just like in *Penelope*, corporeal transformation is the only supernatural occurrence, its treatment is very different. The world becomes distorted in an arbitrary dystopian state which, like the narration's transformation, is reminiscent of Kafka's work (both *The Metamorphosis*, 1915 and *The Trial*, 1925). While everything seems rational at first, slowly, through the details given by the narrator on her surroundings, the reader starts to realise that the Paris described is incongruous and far from being either the one he knows or the one he would usually picture.

But why choose to depict the heroines as pigs specifically? As Margaret Atwood writes: 'Very rarely is an animal liked or disliked for itself alone; it is chosen for its symbolic anthropomorphic values.'[42] Tales and stories of pigs are not uncommon; some well-known examples including the episode with Circe in *The Odyssey*, Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945)*, but also nursery rhymes, children's stories such as *Charlotte's Web* (1952) by E. B. White and the popular tale 'The Three Little Pigs'.[43] Moreover, while pig and femininity might seem irreconcilable at first, the pig is, as Claudine Fabre-Vassas notes in *La Bête singulière* (*The Singular Beast*, 1994), often associated with fertility. Less known to the wider public than some of the stories mentioned above, there is a category of bridegroom tales in which a Queen wishes so much for a child that she gives birth to a pig. Apart from the gender of the main character, the movie *Penelope* starts from a premise very similar to these traditional 'king pig' tales. The first known literary version is Giovanni Straparola's 'Il Re Porco' ('The Pig King') which appeared in *The Facetious Nights* and was published in Venice between 1550 and 1555. As mentioned in chapter one, Straparola is one of the precursors of literary fairy tales and had a significant influence on seventeenth-century French tale writers in the salons. This specific tale inspired two of

---

[42] Margaret Atwood, 'Animal Victims' in *The Wild Animal Story*, ed. by Ralph H. Lutts (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), p.220.

[43] Coincidentally, Atwood herself wrote a few poems on the theme of pigs ('Pig Song' in *Selected Poems 1965-1975* (1976) and 'Circe / Mud Poems' in *You are Happy* (1974)). Pigs seem to be a recurrent theme in her work as transgenic pigs (called pigoons) bred to grow replacement organs for humans take on an important role in her dystopian *Maddaddam Trilogy* (*Oryx and Crake*, 2003, *The Year of the Flood*, 2009, *Maddaddam*, 2013).

them: Madame d'Aulnoy 'Le Prince Marcassin' (1698)[44] and La Comtesse de Murat who wrote 'Le Roy Porc' (1699).[45]

The three tales are excellent examples of how fairy tales take on new meanings and are written with different goals related to their context of creation: the basic plot revolves around a prince cursed to be a pig until he marries three times, the curse will be broken by a third wife, the one who will accept him as he is. Straparola's tale is bawdy and plays on the idea of having an actual pig in bed—he describes how the boy cannot help himself but roll in the mud, put his paws on court ladies' beautiful garments or leave marks on the bed sheets which horrify his first wives. It is humorous but also very dark: the prince overhears his first wife's plans to kill him during the night and, aware of her intentions, kills her by stabbing her with his hooves. In d'Aulnoy's tale, the prince pig also kills one of his wives in self-defence, but like de Murat's, her retelling is proper and clean, fit for the court and the salons. Contrary to Straparola, the French tales have clear didactic aims: where Straparola emphasised the comedic qualities of having a pig for a prince, the French *conteuses*, while using the same frame story, focus more on the moral and philosophical implications of the tale, in ways similar to 'Beauty and the Beast': the idea that beauty and grace can be found beyond appearances.

The image of the pig is a complex, multifaceted one: it is associated with gluttony, filth, sexuality (especially in French), sometimes used for comical or caricatural purposes. The pig is actually physiologically very close to humans: they have an almost identical DNA, similar eyes, and an epidermis so close to that of human beings that it is used by tattoo artists for practise. Fitting with Ismène Lada-Richards's argument that the monster is culturally determined, Pierre Ancet believes that monstrosity springs from the proximity of the monster: 'The worst monster is the one that looks like us.'[46] And truly, the pig seems to

---

[44] Madame d'Aulnoy, *Contes nouveaux* (1698).
[45] La Comtesse de Murat, *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques* (1699).
[46] 'Le pire monstre c'est celui qui nous ressemble', Pierre Ancet, *Phenoménologie des corps monstrueux,* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006)*,* p.1.

be an animal that is ambiguous and liminal enough to both endear and repulse.[47] To Ancet, this proximity with the human is the paradoxical but crucial basis of the monster. Frankenstein's creation is one of the most haunting monsters of fiction and he is so terrifying because he is so similar to human beings, made of human parts, looking, acting, and feeling like a human being—but he is not one. And truly, Frankenstein's monster is the very epitome of the monster: a literal embodiment and representation of the fragmentation of the self which characterises all those labelled as monsters. Nina Lykke even sees Frankenstein's monster as 'the early harbinger of the cyborg world of the late twentieth century'.[48] As argued in chapter three, the concept of the cyborg is deemed disturbing because of its hybridity and artificiality and in similar ways, the metamorphic, shapeshifting body acquires a monstrous quality because it seems unnatural.

To outsiders, the skin is the place where identity is first formed and perceived; the monstrous body therefore becomes the identity of the person who inhabits it, equating ugliness with evil. As the heroines display both human and porcine features, they do not fit within prescribed normative morphologies and are therefore deemed less than human. Not only do they not conform to morphological ideals, but their bodies are also perceived as ontologically uncertain. The protagonists trigger uneasiness within others because of the liminality of their metamorphic beings: they are neither completely human nor are they completely the thing or the animal, this *other,* into which they have turned. A fitting analogy within imaginative fiction (and one which is present in *Truismes*) would be lycanthropy: whatever the shape he is in, the werewolf is never completely either man or wolf. As its liminality induces wonder, curiosity, and fascination, the body is turned into an object: the etymology of the word monster is, after all, the Latin *monstrare* (to show) and pushes towards this direction as it is an 'object of display' (*monstrum*).

3.3. The Objectification of Monstrous Bodies

[47] Irving Massey wrote a book on literary metamorphosis which he titled *The Gaping Pig* (1976) because to him, as it balances between animal and human expression the pig is the perfect representation of the ambiguity and impenetrability of metamorphosis:
'the strange habit that pigs have of gaping or stretching their jaws…[it?] is of course the same position of the mouth that they fall into when they squeal or scream. The image produces the kind of interpretable paradox that is characteristic of metamorphosis. Is it a mockery of human laughter? Is it the agonised shriek of the animal? Laughter or desperation? A hideous expression of life, or the frozen face of death? In either case, it seems to belong to that metamorphic world that persistently ridicules our attempts at interpretation.' Irving Massey, *The Gaping Pig, Literature and Metamorphosis* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1976), p.11.

[48] Nina Lykke, *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace* (London: Zed Books, 1996), p.17.

Just like the Beast in most 'Beauty and the Beast' tales, both Penelope and Darrieussecq's narrator have to hide and live in fear of what others might do if they discover their difference. Because their very selves are in conflict with the normative models of society they cannot be assimilated into accepted taxonomies and denominations. And indeed, when Foucault talks about 'the human monster' (referring to hermaphrodites for instance) he explains that they do not fit in societies—being problematic entities for bureaucracies and the law for example—because they belong to the realm of the impossible and unutterable: administrative bodies often fail to integrate them as they do not correspond to conventional, predetermined taxonomies.[49] As Judith Butler argues, when they are born a set of semiotic signs is bestowed upon children: name, gender, race— all determining the place of an individual in society, all mainly built upon their bodies. Here Butler comments on coercive surgery performed on hermaphrodite infants or children:

> This movement offers a critical perspective on the version of the 'human' that requires ideal morphologies and the constraining of bodily norms. […] The norms that govern idealized human anatomy thus work to produce a differential sense of who is human and who is not, which lives are liveable, and which are not.[50]

In the 2012 graphic novel, *Fashion Beast* (a rewriting of 'Beauty and the Beast' by Alan Moore and Malcolm McLaren) Beauty (who is called Doll in this version) is androgynous and many believe she is a transvestite. People deem her repulsive, insult and beat her; only the character of the beast, himself reclusive and socially unintegrated, can see the beauty of her androgyny. Characters in Gregory Macguire's *Wicked*, demonstrate a similar prejudice. During a discussion about the Wicked Witch, where the aim is to determine what makes her so evil, the Tin Woodman ventures: 'She was castrated at birth, […] she was born hermaphroditic, or maybe entirely male.'[51] This gossip reflects a view where uncertain bodies (here clearly linked with gender) are associated with evil and the monstrous.

If some feel that transgender individuals can be abused psychologically and/or physically, it is precisely, Butler argues, because transgender bodies are perceived as non-

---

[49] Michel Foucault, 'Lecture Three, 22 January 1975', *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France*, trans. by Graham Burchell (New York and London: Verso, 2003), pp.55-79.

[50] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), p.4.

[51] Gregory Maguire, *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West West* (London: Headline Review, 2006 [1995]), p.2.

human.[52] As feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti writes: 'We all have bodies, but not all bodies are equal: some matter more than others; some are quite frankly disposable. Forms of genderization and racialization of differences play an important role in this process. The monstrous body, which makes a living spectacle of itself, is eminently disposable.'[53] By pitting individuals against each other, these processes dehumanise the *other* and justify their objectification: these bodies, which are different, and therefore unknown, are fascinating and yet repulsive. The use of the animal in those cases is the perfect allegory: the animal is by nature uncanny, it is familiar and yet elusive, it can be loved, admired and yet, always considered inferior because it cannot speak or (supposedly) think.

The dehumanisation and objectification of Penelope follow movements between abhorrence and fascination: she becomes prey to paparazzi to the point that her parents decide to fake her death shortly after her birth and hide her. Strikingly, rather than through her personality or actions, Penelope's worth is assessed through her capacity to find a husband to break the curse. In ways similar to traditional 'Beauty and the Beast' tales, Penelope's mother locks her daughter up from birth in their mansion house so that no one can see her until she has become fully human. She meets potential suitors through a one-way mirror and they are legally bound to secrecy in case they do see her. As she decides to escape her home, she becomes again the object of newspapers' fascination, first depicted as a dangerous monster that needs to be found and locked up, described as 'a killer pig', a violent and dangerous animal which should be tamed and controlled. In an attempt to dispel rumours, Penelope eventually decides to meet journalists to tell her story. As she does so, she suddenly becomes an object of fascination, loved by the public, harassed by people who want to learn more about her, because in fact, even her newfound celebrity reduces her to her abnormality. Her mother herself confirms it: 'To them, you're just a talking pig'.

While Penelope's tale remains close to traditional pig fairy tales mentioned earlier, some of the changes have significant consequences. To start with, the process of metamorphosis is a lot more superficial and more easily remedied than it is for her male counterparts. Penelope does have a snout and pig ears but she is not as horrible looking as the reactions' of the people around her imply—men running away and throwing

---

[52] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p.25.

[53] Rosi Braidotti, 'Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: on Teratology and Embodied Differences', in *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs*, ed. by Rosi Braidotti, Nina Lykke (London: Zed Books, 1996), p.136.

themselves out of the window, for instance. Of course, it would hardly be appropriate for a romantic comedy to have Penelope kill any of her suitors, but her curse is exaggerated: when traditional male pigs looked and behaved like pigs, Penelope is very human and hardly has the appearance of a pig.

When she is first born, Penelope's mother wishes and attempts to normalise her daughter's body with plastic surgery but abandons the idea (only) when it proves too dangerous for her daughter's life. Her mother keeps on repeating to her: 'You're not your nose. It's your great great great grandfather's nose. You're somebody else inside'. By doing so, she alienates Penelope from her own body and reassures her (and herself) that her appearance is only temporary. It is only when she becomes normal and fits with the societal norms of human morphology that she will, accompanied by her husband, integrate into society. Andrea Dworkin points to the harmful results of beauty practices in relation to their bodies:

> Standards of beauty describe in precise terms the relationship that an individual will have with her own body. They prescribe her mobility, spontaneity, posture, gait, the uses to which she can put her body. They define the dimensions of her physical freedom.[54]

Naomi Wolf, in turn, argues that 'the beauty myth is always actually prescribing behaviour and not appearance.'[55] And indeed, the way Penelope has been taught to approach her body as something alien completely cuts her off from the outside world and from reality. When she first escapes her house she cannot truly integrate, first because she feels she has to hide her deformity, then, because of her social ineptitude, a result of her sheltered upbringing. Other characters draw attention to her inability to integrate socially by making humorous allusions to common social experiences such as dating which Penelope does not and cannot understand.

In similar ways, Darrieussecq's narrator's freedom is also dependent on her appearance: as soon as she ceases to be attractive to men, the narrator in *Truismes* loses her place in society; her partner leaves her and she is fired. From being in the company of some of the most influential men in the country (because she looks so inviting and appetising, a politician uses her as the face of his political campaign) she becomes even

---

[54] Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974), p.112.
[55] Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (London: Vintage, 1991 [1990]), p.14.

less than a common nobody; at times, people do not simply reject her, they do not even notice her when she lives in the street. But the dehumanisation of the narrator in *Truismes* is a lot more violent than the one in *Penelope,* and pushed further, notably because of the clear links made between her monstrous body and the sexual fascination and repulsion it provokes. The narrator works in a beauty salon and even though she never directly calls herself a prostitute, it is clearly part of her job: she often talks almost innocently—and grotesquely—about what she is expected to do with her 'clients'. When she signs the contract with her boss she becomes a commodity, willingly selling her body for perfume and cosmetics: while kneeling under her boss's desk doing 'her duty' she daydreams of all the free beauty products she is going to get once on the job.

She is slowly turning into a sow, but it is unclear whether her transformation is the cause of men's lust for her, or whether it is a consequence of the way the men satiate that lust. When her transformation first begins, the narrator is surprised that her clients seem even more interested in her than before:

> Moi qui avais cru que mes bourrelets les dégoûteraient, eh bien pas du tout. Contre toute attente, tous, et même les nouveaux (grâce au directeur ils disposaient de passe-droits sur mon emploi du temps déjà surchargé, mais ils payaient bien), tous semblaient m'apprécier un peu grasse. Il leur venait un appétit pour ainsi dire bestial.[56]

> I had thought that my rolls of fat would disgust them, well, not a bit. Against all my expectations, all of them, even the new ones (thanks to the director they had free reign on my already overloaded timetable, but they paid well) seem to like me a bit fatty. They were taken up by what you'd call a bestial appetite.

In this passage, and often in the novel, even if she is the one turning into a pig, it is the men who seem to act more like animals, falling prey to their most basic instincts. Animalistic sex remains male, for the narrator is constantly subjected to men's desires while suppressing her own impulses. As mentioned earlier (above and in chapter 1), in French, the word for pig *cochon* has strong sexual connotations, and it is interesting that the slang phrase 'faire des cochonneries' means to do something of a sexual nature. It almost seems that it is in fact what the men do to the narrator—*des cochonneries*—which slowly provoke her transformation into a 'cochonne': a sow or a dirty woman. As this passage anticipates, slowly, men's fascination turns into sadism, where the narrator is

---

[56] Marie Darrieussecq, *Truismes* (Paris: Folio, 1996), p.33.

nothing more than a disposable body, thus propelling forward the process of her dehumanisation and her rejection from society. The very few times the narrator in *Truismes* attempts to exert any amount of control over her body—at one point in the story she starts enjoying and desiring sexual intercourse—she is quickly repressed by the men who suddenly find her repulsive. They do not want her to exert any amount of control: they are only interested in her when she is a passive recipient of their desires and impulses. She becomes an object and a commodity to be had and consumed at will, but also thrown away when men are finally disgusted by her—and possibly by themselves and their own animalistic desires.

Her body is just a thing that is supposed to please the men around her and the constant changes it undergoes imply that her worth as a human being is constantly shifting. This is not limited to the heroine's relationship to men but also reflected in her interactions with other women: they all see each other as rivals and act accordingly. It is by comparing her body to others and judging the strength of the desire that men feel for her that the narrator assesses her worth in society. In her study, *Communities of Women* (1978), Nina Auerbach looks into the formation and portrayal in fiction of self-sufficient women's communities free from patriarchal diktats, united by their status as 'monsters'. The narrator in *Truismes* never finds the solace of community described by Auerbach. To start with, the narrator embodies well what the scholar calls the 'conventional ideal of a solitary woman': she is 'living for and through men, attaining citizenship in the community of adulthood through masculine approval alone.'[57] Then, as she becomes less and less a woman and more and more a sow, she is not only alienated from other women but also from the world of human beings in general. In contrast to Carter's or Donoghue's rewritings in which female protagonists, subdued by traditional fairy-tale male rules, bond together to save one another, the narrator in *Truismes* can find no respite; she is always defined through her (hetero)sexual attractiveness.

4. Building One's Identity

4.1. Metamorphosis and Identity

Truismes is reminiscent of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* in many ways: while it is clear that she is turning into a pig, the narrator depicts her body as something alien,

---

[57] Nina Auerbach, *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction* (London: Harvard University Press, 1998 [1978]), p.5.

uncontrollable, incomprehensible. For most of the novel, her body seems to be a prison for her self rather than an embodiment of it. In the natural world metamorphosis is often a sign of growth and development; snakes constantly shed skins, tadpoles turn into frogs, and after forming a chrysalis the caterpillar turns into a butterfly. But in fiction, especially when metamorphosis is undergone by human beings, it is often linked with monstrosity, decline, and darkness. Contrary to the metamorphoses in Ovid's work or in fairy tales where physical transformations are clearly described as a swift shift from one specific, identified being into another—be it the mermaid into a human being or the woman into a tree—the result of Kafka's metamorphosis remains clouded in ambiguity: the result appears to be an assemblage of parts, an incoherent body rather than a finished form. Indeed, the imagery is both graphic and suggestive; it is difficult to determine what the metamorphosis consists of exactly and even if various parts of Gregor Samsa's body are described throughout the short story, they seem impossible to reconcile, conveying an uncanny feeling of dislocation and of loss of identity—further reinforced by Gregor's loss of speech capacities.

In literature, metamorphosis does often represent a struggle in itself, one that explores identity by threatening it and by attempting to alter it. It is what Bruce Clarke sees as 'a travesty of identity, a di-vestment that sheds one identity while allowing for the donning or emergence of another'.[58] In ways similar to the tales studied, the emerging identity is, in many cases, linked with the animal: the metamorphosis often seems to either bring out and uncover the bestial hidden within the human or the human trapped within the beast. In *Metamorphosis and Identity*, medievalist Carolyn Walker Bynum traces the evolution of the notions of change and identity in literature and writes:

> Yet throughout the change of man to wolf, woman to tree, youth to nightingale, something perdures, carried by the changing shape that never completely loses physical or behavioral traces of what it was. Daphne becomes a laurel whose leaves flutter in eternal escape; Ovid's werewolf Lycaon and Marie De France's Bisclavret retain in (or under) wolfishness the rapaciousness or courtesy of human selves.[59]

Bynum points to the duality of metamorphosis: as it combines and explores the themes of change and unity simultaneously, it is the symbol of alterity *par excellence* and yet seems

---

[58] Bruce Clarke, *Allegories of Writing: The Subject of Metamorphosis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995) p.77.
[59] Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), p. 32.

to be the perfect tool to uncover and reveal what really is and what was already present before the changes even occurred. But what to make of this in the cases studied? Penelope certainly does not seem to betray any porcine aspect (other than superficial), her curse is arbitrary: her ears and snout have absolutely no impact on her behaviour and they are the only things which link her to the animal. The pig seems to have been chosen by the writers simply because it is halfway between endearing and grotesquely repulsive. But the choice of the pig in *Truismes* seems to be more significant, notably because of its sensual and sexual connotations in French culture. As the narrator tries to fight the porcine part of herself, she cannot reconcile body and mind: at times she almost completely loses the ability to stand up, control herself, or even speak. Interestingly, the narrator only seems to be able to see herself when she looks in a mirror (cf. quote above and below) and is distressed by her appearance when she sees a reflection of what others perceive. Typically, in this passage, shocked by her appearance and alienated by it, she first uses a third person to refer to her body:

> J'ai vu mon pauvre corps, comme il était abîmé. De ma *splendeur* ancienne tout ou presque avait disparu. La peau de mon dos était rouge, velue, et il y avait ces étranges taches grisâtres qui s'arrondissaient le long de l'échine. Mes cuisses si fermes et si bien galbées autrefois s'effondraient sous un amas de cellulite. Mon derrière était gros et lisse comme un énorme bourgeon. J'avais aussi de la cellulite sur le ventre, mais une drôle de cellulite, à la fois pendante et tendineuse. Et là, dans le miroir, j'ai vu ce que je ne voulais pas voir. […] Le téton au-dessus de mon sein droit s'était développé en une vraie mamelle, et il y avait trois autres taches sur le devant de mon corps, une au-dessus de mon sein gauche, et deux autres, bien parallèles, juste en dessous. J'ai compté et recompté, on ne pouvait pas s'y tromper, cela faisait bien six, dont trois seins déjà formés.[60]

> I saw my poor body, how much of a wreck it was now. Almost everything of my former *splendour* had disappeared. The skin of my back was red, furry, and there were strange greyish stains swelling along the spine. My thighs which used to be so firm and curved collapsed into a heap of cellulite. My bottom was big and smooth like a gigantic bud. I also had cellulite on my belly, but it was a strange type of cellulite, both saggy and tendinous. And there, in the mirror, I saw what I did not wish to see. […] The nipple above my right breast had formed into a real udder, and there were three other stains on the front of my body, one above my left breast, and two others, perfectly parallel and right beneath it. I counted and counted again, there was no mistake, there were six of them, including three breasts that were already formed.

---

[60] Darrieussecq, p.55.

The narrator is horrified by her discovery, especially as she tends to assess her worth through her sexual attractiveness (here referred to as her 'former splendour'). This reduction of her breasts to their first natural function (through their multiplication and the repeated use of the term 'udder') is one of many instances where the transformation is linked with extreme femininity (not to say 'femaleness'). In fact, I would argue that *Truismes* can be read as a tale in which the woman is excluded from society because her bodily functions betray aspects of her femininity which clash with her purely sexual (and non-reproductive) charms. This is for instance reminiscent of the reactions of disgust and shock women face when breast-feeding in public, because it is, it seems, a reminder of breasts' natural, primary function, one which desexualises them. Darrieussecq seems to be using the image of the pig as a means of pushing these views to extremes, to a point of disgust and abjection, writing the female body, it seems, as Cixous advocates: 'in white ink', 'in mother's milk'.[61]

4.2. Sows and Mothers

Origins play an important part in the quest for self-determination each heroine engages in. And in each case, the mother is the principal figure relating to these origins. She should be a natural role model for the heroine, guiding her from birth, but in each case the mother fails to fulfil this role, the reason being that the relationship between daughter and mother reflects that between daughter and others—it is fundamentally dysfunctional and fraught with difficulties. In her discussion of traditional pig tales, Fabre-Vassas wonders: 'But why, specifically, is a *pig* born to the sterile woman?' As the scholar notes, by giving birth to a pig, the image of the sow is extended to the mother: when she gives birth to a pig, the queen becomes to some level a substitute, an image of a sow. As Fabre-Vassas writes:

> porcine prolificity is thus the exact opposite of feminine sterility. In an exceptional situation fate—chance and sorcery combined—or simply an irrepressible desire sends the women, in a seesaw movement, to the other extreme. Thus she gives birth to a pig-son—only one, it is true, but one that appears under the sign of abundance, excess, as well as great social distance, which, on another level, adds to the dissonance: contrary to other fabulous births in which the progenitor uses the skin of the bear or the wolf to engender a furry boy, this

---

[61] Helène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', *Signs*, 4:1 (Summer, 1976), 875-93 (p.881).

Mediterranean fable stays on the side of the mother; the king has nothing to do with it.[62]

Similarly, in both contemporary tales, the figure of the father is minor: Penelope's father plays a small role in the film and the father is mentioned only in passing in *Truismes*. And usually, in the traditional versions, the mother yearns so much for a child that she accepts and loves him, no matter his deformities: she will raise the pig-child and help him find love no matter what—even when it means getting rid of his wives' bodies on the way. It is very rare to find examples of bad mothers in children's tales nowadays, especially as the Grimm brothers edited the bad mother out of their tales, turning her into the wicked stepmother, because, Zipes argues, they 'held motherhood sacred.'[63] The benevolent nurturing mother is, after all, one of the most striking representation of femininity, while the bad mother, the one who either abandons or kills her children (whose ultimate representation is Medea) is a monster.[64] As Susan Bordo puts it: 'Denial of the self and the feeding of others are hopelessly enmeshed in [the] construction of the ideal mother.'[65] Taking on the role of the mother is often seen as one of the quintessential requirements to becoming a woman, one which goes back to a specific vision of women's bodies, where without either man or children, the woman is perceived as 'anatomically lacking'.[66]

Strikingly, where in traditional tales the mothers wished to bear children no matter their outward form and helped them through anything, both Penelope's and *Truismes*'s narrator's mothers reject their daughters and are selfish and self-centred. They do not accept their implicit roles as substitute and try through any means to differentiate themselves from the 'pig' embodied by their daughters. They completely lack maternal love: Penelope's mother is shallow and worries more about what people will think of her if they see her daughter's snout than the latter's well-being. By not accepting her daughter's appearance and teaching her not to accept herself either, she delays the breaking of the curse, and even once Penelope has lost her snout, she suggests more plastic surgery because she wants her daughter to look her best. In *Truismes,* the mother tries to secure money from her daughter when she becomes famous, but proves too selfish to provide any

---

[62] Claudine Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians and the Pig* trans. by Carol Volk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p.45.

[63] Jack Zipes, *The Complete First Edition of the Original Folk and Fairy Tales*, p.xxxvii.

[64] Marina Warner dedicates the first of her Reith Lectures to the 'monstrous mother', in *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time - The 1994 Reith Lectures* (London: Vintage, 1994), pp.1-16.

[65] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2003 [1993]), p.118.

[66] Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power, and Corporeality* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.xii.

help when her daughter needs it, and pays so little attention to the changes the heroine's body undergoes that she almost sends her to a slaughterhouse.

Penelope is clearly portrayed as the counterpoint of her own mother, herself a caricature of the selfish, hysterical woman. By often taking charge and helping run the house when her mother goes through one of her uncontrollable frenzies, Penelope displays the traditional qualities sought for in a well-mannered young woman: patience, perception, and humility. In fact, her behaviour is very similar to Disney's Cinderella (she also disobeys and goes out in disguise to learn more of the world) and foretells the outcome of the movie: once Penelope has metamorphosed, she becomes a primary school teacher (a conventionally domestically public maternal woman) and the epitome of the successful—if modern—mainstream fairy-tale heroine.[67] In the final scene, her partner sits next to her as she tells stories to children, and the two lovers fulfil perfectly the vision of marital bliss with children swarming round her—because truly, Penelope never was a monster and she deserved a happy ending.

Motherhood for the narrator in *Truismes* takes on a very different form: in ways similar to the tales Fabre-Vassas describes above, the narrator becomes incredibly fertile as a sow; she falls pregnant three times within the first half of the book. But this very fertility is presented as an intrusive, unwanted, and upsetting experience for the narrator and an opportunity for Darrieussecq to comment on womanhood and the relation women have towards their bodies. As her body undergoes many changes, the narrator seems to have little control over it and never seems able to truly determine whether she is pregnant or not.

The first time she falls pregnant, the narrator miscarries and doctors at the hospital hurt her so much that she is surprised to still be 'female'. The second time, worried that she might either get fired or that her partner might leave her if her condition is discovered, she decides to get an abortion. The surgery takes place despite the presence of a pro-life demonstrator who has handcuffed himself to the surgery table: he instructs her on her evil nature and ends up covered in her blood. The third time finally, the narrator gives birth to piglets in the street but despite all her efforts they all die quickly. It remains unclear whether the narrator fails to keep her offspring alive because she is human, pig, or hybrid, but at the start of the novel especially, as she sees her body as dysfunctional (fighting

---

[67] In the series *Once Upon a Time* (studied in chapter 4) when Snow White is exiled to our world she also becomes a primary school teacher who is soft, understanding and in harmony with nature and animals.

anything that comes naturally to her) it is legitimate to assume that the deaths are a consequence of her alienation from her own self.

Her various failed pregnancies are related swiftly and in passing by the narrator who hardly seems to grasp what is happening to her. Under cover of her heroine's naiveté, Darrieussecq comments on issues of motherly qualities, fertility, barrenness, and body ownership:

> J'ai pris un peu trop de poids […] j'ai commencé à me dégoûter moi-même. Je me voyais dans la glace et j'avais, pour de bon, des replis à la taille, presque des bourrelets! […] J'étais persuadée qu'il y avait comme un phénomène de rétention du sang dans tout mon corps […] Je me disais, si mes règles revenaient enfin je me viderais de tout ce sang, je deviendrais à nouveau fraîche comme une jeune fille; et j'avais des envies de saignées.[68]

> I started putting too much weight on […] I started being disgusted by myself. I could see myself in the mirror, and I had, for real this time, folds at the waist, almost bulges! […] I was convinced that there was some sort of blood retention phenomenon in my whole body […] I kept telling myself that if my period finally came back I'd be cleaned out of all this blood, I'd become new again like a young woman; and I wanted to be bled.

The blood, shared between mother and child is perceived as alien and nefarious, and the narrator wants to get rid of it as if it was not hers anymore. Her pregnant body is a reflection of her alienation from herself. The split between the narrator's self and her own pregnant body is reminiscent of Julia Kristeva's description of pregnancy:

> Cells fuse, split, and proliferate; volumes grow, tissues stretch, and body fluids change rhythm, speeding up or slowing down. Within the body, growing as a graft, indomitable, there is an other. And no one is present within that simultaneously dual and alien space to signify what is going on. "It happens, but I'm not there." "I cannot realise it, but it goes on." Motherhood's impossible syllogism.[69]

Kristeva also points to the double meaning of the term 'enceinte' in French: when used as a noun it is 'a fortress' and when used as an adjective it means 'pregnant'. Considering 'enceinte' in this way points to the idea of the encasement of the child in utero but also to

---

[68] Darrieussecq, pp.26-27.
[69] Julia Kristeva, 'Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini' in *Desire in language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art,* trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Janine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p.237.

the vulnerability and yet passivity of the woman at that stage. And crucially, contrary to *Penelope*, at the end of the novel, when she is finally happy, the narrator does not mention children. As mentioned earlier, the narrator's body is not only monstrous to herself but also to others: while she tries her hardest to meet male's expectations of the sexually attractive and available young woman, she also ends up embodying one of the most rejected female monsters: the bad mother. Once again, when the transformation in *Penelope* is simply a playful and light fairy-tale trait, the porcine features of Darrieussecq's narrator could be read as the natural womanly cycles and changes—age, weight, menstruation, pregnancy, sexual drive—and it is when the narrator tries to repress her natural urges that she is the most unhappy.

4.3. Hybridity and Identity: Being One's Body

As he explains in an interview on his work, Alistair Rolls believes that to shed light on some difficult and ambiguous works (he is a Boris Vian scholar) it is fruitful to use a series of different lenses to read them.[70] This is what he has done with *Truismes,* by first offering a pomological reading[71] of the text ('"Je Suis Comme Une Truie Qui Broute": Une Lecture Pomologique De *Truismes* De Marie Darrieussecq', 2001) and a few years later, in an article written with Marie-Laure Vuaille-Barcan a virtualising reading ('Une seule ou plusieurs femmes-truies? Une lecture virtualisante de *Truismes* de Marie Darrieussecq', 2009). As argued in chapter 3 in relation to genre, whether these readings clash with one another does not truly matter, in fact it is rather constructive to see the multiplication of perspectives as completing one another and enabling to approach texts in various ways.[72]

In his first article, Rolls offers an approach which studies bodily consumption, examining the strong bonds between (and overarching presence of) food and sexuality in *Truismes*. The article concludes that the tale can be in fact read as the musings of a sow who dreamt she was a woman; she is after all, the one who opens the text and the one who concludes it.[73] Rolls's second reading is what he and Vuaille-Barcan call 'une lecture

---

[70] Alistair Rolls, 'Irrelevance opens minds' <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/profile/alistair-rolls> [accessed July 2015].

[71] Pomology is the branch of botany which studies fruits. Through this lens, Rolls actually looks at the role of apples and truffles as linked to the sow, focusing on the sensual and 'culino-sexual' aspects of the text.

[72] See Chapter 3 2.Genre: Brian Attebery's quote on genre reading in *Stories About Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth,* p.38.

[73] Alistair Rolls, '"Je Suis Comme Une Truie Qui Broute": Une Lecture Pomologique De *Truismes* De Marie Darrieussecq', *The Romanic Review*, 92.4 (Nov. 2001), 479-90 (p.490).

virtualisante': for the two scholars, reading *Truismes* as a tale of metamorphosis is erroneous: 'Far from being a transformation, what we see in this novel is rather the *mise en scene* of an act of mutating with no beginning nor end'.[74] Rolls and Vuaille-Barcan read *Truismes* through the Deleuzian lens of *devenir* where the subject is no longer thought of as an identical individual and is rather understood as a complex movement of becoming. This becoming refers not to the transformation of one thing into another—person into pig, for example—but rather to a transformation that remains 'in the middle', where this middle is a milieu of intensity—an intensive process that is more fundamental than any of the familiar terms (e.g. pig/person) that lie at its edges.[75] Rolls and Vuaille-Barcan's article focuses on the textual identity of the protagonist and make the argument that because the narrator is never fully woman nor sow, one cannot talk of a transformation because 'there is no linear progression from a fixed point one can call "beginning" until an ultimate point where the transformation would be brought to its final stage'.[76] So we might distinguish, on their behalf and in a Deleuzian spirit, between a transformation (a movement with a beginning and end) and a transformative becoming (a movement 'in the middle' that has neither beginning nor end).

Until this point, this chapter has offered a reading which does not exactly clash with a virtualising approach (that is an approach that prioritises becoming over identity) but one which reads the text as belonging to the genre of the fairy tale. According to this view, Darrieussecq's novel *is* a tale of complete transformation. It is useful here to refer to Grant and Clute's encyclopaedic entry for 'metamorphosis' and apply it to a comparison of *Truismes* and *Penelope*; the scholars draw a difference between shapeshifting and transformation: as they write 'The keys to Shapeshifting are reversibility and repeatability', which would apply to *Truismes*, whereas 'Transformation implies and emphasizes an external agent of change: the Frog Prince is transformed by a Witch', and therefore which would apply to *Penelope*.[77] (Authors' emphases)

---

[74] Alistair Rolls and Marie-Laure Vuaille-Barcan, 'Une seule ou plusieurs femmes-truies? Une lecture virtualisante de *Truismes* de Marie Darrieussecq', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 46 (2009), 31–44.

[75] See especially, chapter 10 '1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible...', Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London : Continuum, 2008, 1987).

[76] 'Il ne s'agit pas dans *Truismes* d'une transformation, pour la simple raison qu'il n'y a pas de progression linéaire depuis un point fixe que l'on peut nommer 'début', jusqu'à un point ultime où la transformation serait menée à son terme.' Alistair Rolls and Marie-Laure Vuaille-Barcan, p.37.

[77] Clute and Grant, 'Metamorphosis', *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1996)

Penelope's transformation is not a physical process as such: she is cursed into a form which does not represent who she is and it is by growing up and breaking free of social beauty diktats that she breaks her curse and becomes fully human. In *Truismes*, the transformation is a constant process, and the idea of approaching or leaving behind oneness is a sustained concern. By the end of the novel, the narrator is transformed. She has learnt to control her shapeshiftings and rather than just being called a sow, the narrator in *Truismes* truly becomes one and embraces it—and there is a crucial difference between claiming this identity for herself and having it imposed upon her. It is the difference between self-assertion and conforming to degrading stereotypes; she is not a pig because she is called one but because she eventually welcomes and affirms this part of herself.

Clute and Grant's definitions are once again useful at this stage and point to the crucial differences between the two works: they argue that 'an abhorred metamorphosis is likely to have generated the Story' (*Penelope*) while 'a longed-for metamorphosis is likely to resolve the Story through a Recognition of the true identity of the protagonist', as it does in *Truismes*.[78] Thus, while both heroines have an identity bestowed upon themselves by others, the liminal qualities of their beings reflect their own quest for themselves. As such, both works follow the traditional pattern of the transformative quest, similar to a *bildungsroman*, but while for Penelope the pig does not reflect her identity, *Truismes* deconstructs the expectations of humanity and symbolisms it creates (the truisms disseminated throughout the text). By doing so Darrieussecq undermines the Barthean myths and subconscious creations of femininity in the societies in which the heroines evolve. Her novel questions the representations of women in western culture (such as the one in fairy tales) and exposes them as little else but clichés—the very clichés which are, in fact, reinforced by *Penelope* through its typically Hollywodian 'romantic fairy-tale feel'.

5. Decline or Evolution: Learning, Reading, and Writing the Self

If reading and writing are often associated with the positive, transformational notion of improvement and identity formation (see Cixous above and below), paradoxically, Penelope's reading habit is not seen as positive in relation to her character and situation. It rather represents her lack of knowledge of the world, reading being associated, in the story, with cheap romanticism rather than self-advancement. In her favourite book, a collection of poetry, Penelope has written that she loves the poet and

---

[78] Clute and Grant, 'Metamorphosis', *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1996).

circled his name with hearts, pointing once again to her isolation and lack of interaction with people other than her close family. Moreover, the books are reduced to their monetary value as she explains that her library is full of expensive, first editions.

In their study, Rolls and Vuaille-Bacan point to the transformation in *Truismes* as a textual reflection of the narrator's physical changes. Certainly, many readings of metamorphosis point more or less directly to the parallel between body and textual creation and transformation of the text itself. As Bruce Clarke writes: 'The transformation of spoken language or visual images *into* writing prefigures all the other transformations carried out by and in writing.'[79] Darrieussecq is especially apt at pointing to the relationship between the creation of the body within the text and the creation of the text as body as she parallels the act of writing with her narrator's creation of identity through her choice of narrative voice but also by using the pun: 'Mon écriture de cochon' on the first page. To 'have the handwriting of a pig' means to have a bad handwriting, one that is messy and hard to decipher. By opening the book with these words, Darrieussecq points, of course, to the porcine features of her narrator, but also provides a covert warning of the difficulties of deciphering and understanding a text which constantly creates, delivers, mocks, and undermines truisms. The fact that the narrator writes her story down could imply that she performs a final and structured possession of both body and mind: as Hélène Cixous argues, 'by writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display.'[80] It would seem logical that, indeed, because writing and reading are inherently human intellectual activities, Darrieussecq points to the ideal of human transformation through the power of words, erudition, and knowledge. And accordingly, through the novel, the narrator turns back into a human when she reads books, but turns into a pig when she gives in to more basic activities such as eating or sex. However, Darrieussecq complicates this apparently straightforward divide between the animal and the thinking human: when the narrator in *Truismes* reads, she reads books written by men, and is particularly taken by one written by a known nazi sympathiser, Knut Hamsun.[81]

---

[79] Bruce Clarke, *Allegories of Writing,* p.2.
[80] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', p.880.
[81] Hamsun was an influential Norwegian writer who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1920, but openly supported Hitler during the Second World War. The narrator proves once again how ignorant she is; not only does she not know who Hamsun is, but she does not even understand what she is reading either. The passage she reads (which is also the novel's incipit) makes her uncomfortable but she cannot fathom why; it describes the killing of a 'verrat' a word she does not understand—an old fashioned word that refers to a male pig.

In her article 'Reading ourselves: Towards a Feminist Theory of Reading', Patrocinio P. Schweickart argues that 'for feminists the question of *how* we read is inextricably linked with the question of *what* we read.'[82] As the scholar argues, in a largely androcentric literary canon women are led to identify with male characters and to feel that in fact, to their authors, female characters are of a lesser importance than the male ones. Crucially, Schweickart notes, to be universal is to *not be* female.[83] If we read (as argued previously) *Truismes* narrator's alienation from the world and her transformation as an expression of her natural feminine qualities and impulses, it is no wonder that she turns back into a human being when reading male texts. She turns back into what she is expected to be, and what the (totalitarian and patriarchal) society in which she is wants her to be.

In fact, Darrieussecq seems to turn upon itself Simone de Beauvoir's famous: 'on ne naît pas femme: on le devient':[84] the woman finally escapes a world where she is despised and valued in terms of her sexual attractiveness and passivity only by becoming a sow rather than remaining human. At the end of the book, when she is no longer subjected to human rule, she has gained control over her body and can choose what she wants to be and when: she declares that she is now mostly a sow who stays away from men and only turns back into her human form when she wants to watch TV—apparently the only thing worth doing as a human being.

As a sow, she finds happiness in the forest, occasionally (and shamelessly) spending time with a 'beautiful and extremely strong boar'.[85] But as a human being who writes, she laments several times her non-obedience to male rules in the novel, apologises repeatedly for talking about her sexuality as she knows it is not proper for a young woman to do so. In the end, the narrator gains her freedom as a 'female' by ceasing to be human. In this, the novel stands in complete opposition to *Penelope*: in the film, if not beautiful, the woman needs to look at least 'normal' to conform to and integrate into society. In a much more sarcastic way, *Truismes* goes back to a Melusine-type: the narrator becomes a pig and she is a monster before being a human being, and it seems to be, to the narrator, a better prospect.

---

[82] Patrocinio P. Schweickart, 'Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading' in *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts,* ed. by Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocinio P. Schweickart (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992 [1986]) pp. 31-62 (p.40).

[83] Reminiscent of course of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929).

[84] Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Vol.2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p.13.

[85] 'Je me suis acoquinée avec un sanglier très beau et très viril', Darrieussecq, p.148.

6. Conclusions: Cultural Fields and Target Audiences

When it came out in 1996 (during a *rentrée littéraire*)[86] *Truismes* triggered what in France is often called *un évenement littéraire* (a literary event). The media coverage around the publication of the novel (even before its publication) was such that Anneliese Depoux devotes an article to it, looking at the impact this over-exposure had on the perception of the text itself but also on the status of its author as someone 'important'. As she argues, journalists tended to focus on the extra-textuality of the book to sell it; its title, its author and her life, the impact her background had on the book, etc. Through a study of about forty newspaper articles on the text Depoux claims that these elements as well as the provocative theme of the book rather than its quality and creative aspects as a piece of literature have been used to sell it. It was clearly meant to shock and provoke and it certainly sold well (to a rather *bourgeois* readership).

Penelope is a big Hollywood production and was also produced according to various marketing requirements, but these and the goals of the film are completely different from the ones of Darrieussecq's novel. *Penelope* is clearly intended to create a sense of wonder which fits with most mainstream views of the fairy tale as uplifting and linked with a sense of happy, easy romance. The film has a strong fairy-tale feel (even more blatant in marketing products, such as posters, than the film itself) and follows expected patterns of romantic comedies (the characters fall in love, something comes in the way of their love story—usually a misunderstanding—the problem is resolved and results in a happy ending). It easily falls within the very category of tales which Rowe criticises as mindless entertainment contributing to the perpetuation of patriarchy: the twist (Penelope simply needed to accept herself to break the curse) is completely undermined as the writers do not seem to see the irony (where *Shrek*'s creators did) in the fact that the spell is broken when Penelope exclaims: 'I like myself the way I am'. When she finally accepts who she is (despite her mother and the people around her) freeing herself from beauty diktats, her body metamorphoses so she is finally beautiful in the eyes of society. After years of struggle, when Penelope finally accepts her body as part of her identity, she is immediately robbed of it, as if being granted beauty was the appropriate reward for not being shallow. The feminine body is ultimately presented as something that needs to be worked on and improved. This is clearly amplified by the very artificiality of her curse, her body is imperfect—and that is important: it is *imperfect* but not actually horrifying to the viewer—

---

[86] cf note on *la rentrée littéraire*, chapter one, footnote 30, p.42.

because she needs a man to make her complete and finally turn her into what is considered to be a real, normal woman.

Thus, the Hollywood production has very limited role models and it follows closely the patriarchal message of canonical fairy tales: similarly to many recent Disney features, the female protagonists are given more agency, the characters are more assertive, but often hide the same stereotypes. *Penelope* is presented as a role model, she goes out in the world and conquers her fear despite her appearances, she learns to love her own body. And yet this love turns her into the physically normal woman that all can accept easily.

In fact, the wonder in the two works falls within the spectrum of wonder as described in the introduction, where the magical exists, and *Truismes* represents the use of the supernatural as a way to question and critique the genre of the fairy tale. The tale is surprising, possibly disgusting and revolting too.[87] *Truismes* and *Penelope* have been chosen because they both confirm and debunk the main thesis of this research. While I would usually lament the striving for realism and the dismissal of the imagination present in many francophone works, I equally deplore utter mindless escapism. *Truismes* is symptomatic of recent attitudes towards the supernatural in French literature; it is dark and harsh, set in an imagined dystopian Paris, and the critique and parodical stance taken by the author encourage a reflection on issues of feminism, magical narratives, and the monstrous. *Penelope* lies at the complete opposite end, being representative of Hollywood's fairy-tale views where women are fulfilled if they have love, beauty and fit within heterosexual norms. *Penelope* works on a principle similar to the series *Once Upon a Time* (studied in chapter four) in that it aims to create a wonder-induced domestic happy ending while *Truismes* questions the very concept of everyday, domestic gendered representations. These two tales therefore do fit the pattern postulated in the introduction in that *Penelope* attempts to give the viewers a sense of wonder as linked with marvels and enchantment while *Truismes* uses the idea of magical transformation as a means of reflection on the perception of women's bodies. However, the two tales somehow stand at such extremes that they defy the notion of the francophone tale somehow being 'less'/giving less through its limited use of the magical and the wondrous.

In the 35 years that followed Karen Rowe's claim that fairy tales were no longer relevant, the fairy-tale genre has spread and developed in almost all media showing an

---

[87] A term used by Jerome Garcin in his critique « De l'art et du cochon », *L'Express*, 22 août 1996, 'un roman très repoussant et très réussi.'

incredible variety, capacity to evolve, change and thrive. Arguably, some works just like *Penelope* do not push the boundaries of storytelling, gender stereotypes, and beauty canons very far but many others do. And indeed can we not see the strong links between metamorphosis and fairy tales as the embodiment of the strong links between fairy tale and its own metamorphosis as a genre and material, becoming once again relevant to our societies, carrying new messages and participating in changing the traditional patterns? As Marina Warner concludes her own study on metamorphosis:

> Tales of metamorphosis express the conflicts and uncertainties and in doing so, they embody the transformational power of storytelling itself, revealing stories as activators of change. They can help us respond to the fundamental question, why tell stories?[88]

---

[88] Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.210.

CHAPTER SIX

One Tale Approach:

Transgressing His Rules: Stepping into Bluebeard's Cabinet of Wonder

I am one in a row of specimens. It's when I try to flutter out of line that he hates me. I'm meant to be dead, pinned, always the same, always beautiful. He knows that part of my beauty is being alive. But it's the dead me he wants. He wants me living-but-dead.

— John Fowles, *The Collector*[1]

Only the curious
have, if they live, a tale
worth telling at all.
—Alastair Reid, 'Curiosity'[2]

1. Introduction: A First Glimpse at the Forbidden Room

In many fairy tales, curiosity and disobedience are propellers for action and lead to adventure: disobedient children who wander off the path, Jack who sells a cow for magic beans, or Cinderella who goes to the ball against her stepmother's wishes. As Maria Tatar writes: 'Magic happens on the threshold of the forbidden,' she adds:

> Disobeying orders, violating bans, and intruding on prohibited terrain may get literary characters into trouble, but these actions also open the gateway to

---

adventure, taking figures on enchanted voyages of discovery. Wonder inevitably produces the desire to wander.[3]

In his essay 'On Fairy Stories' (1947) J.R.R Tolkien talks of 'The Locked Door' as 'an eternal Temptation' and attributes the persistence of some interdictions in tales and literature to the 'great mythical significance of prohibition'.[4] The tale of 'Bluebeard', which revolves entirely around the moment of disobedience and its consequences, can fruitfully be compared to the stories of Eve or Pandora: too curious, the woman disobeys orders and has to deal with the terrible consequences of her actions.

Not always well known under the name of 'Bluebeard', the tale is one that permeates western culture: its motifs—the murderous husband, the forbidden room, the blood-stained key—can be found in numerous literary works, films, and art forms. The infamous Bluebeard first appears in 1697, in Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé.* The influences for the tale can be traced back to earlier folkloric sources, such as an Italian version called 'Silvernose',[5] and stories the Brothers Grimm used (over a century after Perrault) to write 'Fitchers Vogel' ('Fitcher's Bird', ATU 311 'Rescue by the sister') and 'Der Räuberbräutigam' ('The Robber Bridegroom', ATU 955). Many have also argued that Perrault's character was based on a real person, but Maria Tatar questions the historical theory and favours Perrault's knowledge of folk narratives instead:

> Cultural historians have been quick to claim that Perrault's 'Bluebeard' is based on fact, that it broadcasts the misdeeds of various noblemen, among them Cunmar of Brittany and Gilles de Rais. But neither Cunmar the Accursed, who decapitated his pregnant wife Triphine, nor Gilles de Rais, the Marshal of France who was hanged in 1440 for murdering hundreds of children, present themselves as compelling models for Bluebeard. This French aristocrat remains a construction of collective fantasy, a figure firmly anchored in the realm of folklore.[6]

In Perrault's tale, a young girl marries her rich, older suitor, despite his frighteningly blue beard and his fearsome reputation; all his previous wives have disappeared mysteriously. Shortly after the wedding, Bluebeard leaves his bride in charge of the domain and gives her the keys to all the rooms: now mistress of the castle, she can

---

[3] Maria Tatar, *Secrets Beyond the Door: The Story of Bluebeard and his Wives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.1.

[4] J.R.R Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories', p.32.

[5] Italo Calvino, 'Silvernose', in *Italian Folktales.* trans. by George Martin (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), pp.26-30.

[6] Maria Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tale*, p.138.

do as she pleases. Her reign only knows one limit: her husband instructs her not to try to find and open the door which the smallest key unlocks. However, and predictably, finding it impossible to contain her curiosity, the young heroine enters the room. She discovers the corpses of Bluebeard's previous wives hanging from the walls and in her surprise drops the key in the clotted blood on the floor. Despite her best attempts, she cannot wash the key clean and upon coming back, Bluebeard immediately realises that his bride disobeyed him. He declares that as she could not abide by the rules either, she shall face the same fate as his previous wives. The young heroine manages to delay her death and luckily, her brothers arrive in time to kill her monstrous husband.

As Jack Zipes comments: 'Little did Perrault know when he created the fairy tale about the serial killer Bluebeard that his villain would become a memetic icon in most Western societies by the twenty-first century.'[7] Not only has the tale 'Bluebeard' been adapted hundreds of times but, as Zipes notes, in the past fifteen years alone, four academic studies devoted specifically to the tale of 'Bluebeard' have been published: Mererid Puew Davies' *The Tale of Bluebeard in German Literature: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (2001), Maria Tatar's *Secrets beyond the Door: The Story of Bluebeard and His Wives* (2004), Shuli Barzilai's *Tales of Bluebeard and His Wives from Late Antiquity to Postmodern Times* (2009) and Casie Hermansson's *Bluebeard: A Reader's Guide to the English Tradition* (2009).[8]

The tale's durability and adult themes make it an appropriate subject for this study, since it traces the evolutionary development of tales through retellings in relation to their (selected) adult themes. Its popularity is also noteworthy; the tale has a remarkably high number of adult rewritings and we should wonder at the attraction of the tale for adults and its power of endurance. What makes Bluebeard an excellent subject for this study, however, are the particular themes and ideas found therein: the idea of transgression is at the core of the tale, and is central to this thesis; space, transformation and representations of the female body, also among the enduring Bluebeard themes, were explored in the previous two chapters, and will be revisited in this chapter. To the objection that the tale traditionally lacks magic, and thus does not sit comfortably with the rest of the selected texts, it only needs to be pointed out that it is, nonetheless, still a fairy tale, and one that is interesting not only for the reasons just given, but also because of the choices made by the

---

[7] Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale*, p.42.
[8] Zipes, p.42.

authors in the face of the absence of this magic element. How a tale changes and develops through retellings depends on its central themes and ideas, and often absenting one element leads to a curious and interesting growth of others. In the case of Bluebeard, realism and wonder flourish as themes, taken in different directions by the authors in the absence of magic. Examination of the tale thus allows to probe these themes, explored in previous chapters, further.

This chapter will first introduce Angela Carter's feminist retelling 'The Bloody Chamber' (1979) as a turning point in the evolution of the tale of 'Bluebeard' and examine some aspects of Carter's work as an example of transcultural influence and adaptation, specifically by looking into the impact her own translations of French tales has had on her English rewriting and how her work has been translated back into French. Maria Tatar notes that many folklorists have been ready to read 'Bluebeard' as 'a story about marital disobedience or sexual infidelity rather than about her husband's murderous violence,'[9] but a shift in focus is already visible in Carter's change of title: rather than being named after the male protagonist (or his beard), the tale is named after the forbidden room. As Tatar writes, with her title, Carter enunciates 'exactly what is at stake in this Bluebeard tale: a bloody chamber that houses the corpses of a husband who has murdered one wife after another.'[10] Many of the rewritten tales are built around the threshold it represents, its transformations, its shift as a *space,* one that can be sacred, forbidden, and transformative. The room can also be read as a display, a place of creation, one that is wondrous because surprising, shocking, and even, to some extent, artistic. It is a place which induces awe and fear and plays on the notions of believability in its depiction of crude elements which are both realistic and surreal in nature.

2. Choosing to Marry the Man with the Blue Beard

2.1. Willing Victimisation

Perrault opens his tale with a description of the 'gentleman':

---

[9] Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tale*, p.141.
[10] Tatar, *Secrets beyond the Door*, p.115.

Il estoit une fois un homme qui avoit de belles maisons à la Ville et à la Campagne, de la vaisselle d'or et d'argent, des meubles en broderie, et des carrosses tout dorez; mais par malheur cet homme avoit la Barbe bleue.[11]

There was once a man who had great houses both in Town and Country, crockery made of gold and silver, embroidered furniture, golden carriages; but unfortunately, this man had a blue Beard.

Because traditional fairy tales are built around type characters, the little information given is always worthy of attention: in this case, the two main features of the character are his riches and the colour of his beard. It is significant: his riches give him status and power (which fairy-tale characters always seem to strive for) and the blue beard is presented as the disruptive element in what could otherwise be the perfectly happy life of a perfectly happy man in a fairy-tale world. The beard, uncanny to the reader because of its colour, is accepted by other characters as simply unfortunate: to them, it is a sign of Bluebeard's character and is perceived as an indicator that he cannot be trusted—the beard is to Bluebeard what a crooked nose is to a witch. Despite the fact that his previous wives have all mysteriously disappeared, it seems to be the beard that scares people away: 'it made him look so ugly and terrible that there was no woman or girl who did not run away from him.'[12] The bride's friends only visit when her husband is away because they are *specifically* scared of his blue beard.

In 'Bluebeard's Daughter' (2010), Deborah Templeton parallels the character's actions with the colour of his beard: after she has seen the contents of the room the bride 'will always know | what she always knew | that his beard is exactly so blue.'[13] Templeton's narrator implies that because of the colour of his beard, the heroine should never have trusted the man she married. After all, the title of Perrault's story is not simply 'Barbe bleue' but 'La Barbe Bleue'; the use of the article and the capitalisation point to the active role of the beard and the metonymy is kept throughout the tale as the character is always referred to as 'La Barbe bleue'. Similarly, in Pierrette Fleutiaux's rewriting 'Petit Pantalon Rouge, Barbe-Bleue et Notules' (1984) studied further below, the character's beard is cursed: when a woman falls in love with him, the beard starts growing thorns,

---

[11] Charles Perrault, 'La Barbe Bleue', pp.57-58.

[12] 'cela le rendoit si laid & si terrible, qu'il n'estoit ni femme ni fille qui ne s'enfuit de devant luy.' Perrault, p.58.

[13] Deborah Templeton, 'Bluebeard's daughter', *Stolen and Other Stories* (Yorkshire: Macushla Books, 2010) (the edition has no page numbers)

giving its owner murderous thoughts and overpowering him, as if a woman's (irrational) love should be avoided at all cost.

By being such an obvious indicator of Bluebeard's character, the beard thus often becomes a symbol of women's willing victimisation: they all fall for a man they are scared of and know they should avoid. Angela Carter's 'Bloody Chamber' is often hailed as one of the first feminist rewritings of the tale, and yet it is also largely built on this idea of willing victimisation: the narrator knows the danger the Bluebeard character might represent, and yet, somehow wants it. When he first undresses her, she is 'aghast to feel [herself] stirring.'[14] The same year as *The Bloody Chamber*, Carter published her essay *The Sadeian Woman*, in which she reassesses the Marquis de Sade's work from a feminist perspective and examines relations between power and sexuality. Her rewriting of the tales can be read as an opportunity for the writer to explore these sadomasochist relationships and the attraction of dominance. Not limited to Carter, versions of 'Bluebeard' often raise the question of sado-masochism on the heroine's part. The women all fall for a man that they know is potentially dangerous and put themselves in the situation of the willing victim. This is also the case for instance of Francesca Lia Block's narrator in 'Bones' (2000) who explains: 'I wanted him to break me. Part of me did'.[15] In even stronger ways than in 'Beauty and the Beast' tales, the heroines are as attracted to the dangerous man as they are repelled by him—for he truly is a monster.

In an article from 1973, entitled 'Somebody's Trying to Kill Me and I Think It's My Husband', Joanna Russ studies the Modern Gothic and its popularity among American women. Russ examines women's apparent fascination for stories in which the heroine is attracted to what she calls a 'shadow male'—a man they know to be dangerous and who could potentially harm them. And indeed the books all tend to follow the same premise: a young woman is attracted by an older 'magnetic man' who:

> treats her brusquely, derogates her, scolds her, and otherwise shows anger or contempt for her. The Heroine is vehemently attracted to him and usually just as vehemently repelled or frightened — she is not sure of her feelings for him, his

---

[14] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, p.13.

[15] Francesca Lia Block, 'Bones', *The Rose and the Beast: Fairy Tales Retold* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), p.161.

feelings for her, and whether he (1) loves her, (2) hates her, (3) is using her, or (4) is trying to kill her.[16]

Russ's point seems as relevant as ever with the tremendous success and fascination for the *Fifty Shades of Grey* series. In Amélie Nothomb's novella, *Barbe bleue* (2012) the Bluebeard character wonders at the attraction women have for him despite and / or because of his reputation: 'It makes me feel terrible to realise how many women are attracted by my frightening reputation. Can you explain this feminine behaviour?'[17] and the heroine answers him:

> Sans doute existe-t-il chez la plupart des femmes, une forme de masochisme. Combien de femmes ai-je vues succomber à l'attirance de pervers répugnants? En prison, les émules de Landru reçoivent des paquets de lettres d'admiratrices amoureuses. Certaines vont jusqu'à les épouser. J'imagine que c'est le côté obscur de la féminité.[18]

> There is probably a form of masochism in most women. How many women have I seen fall for abhorrent perverts? In prison, disciples of Landru receive bundles of letters from smitten admirers. Some go as far as marrying them. I suppose it's the dark side of femininity.

Similarly, in her collection of poems, *Waiting for Bluebeard* (2013), Helen Ivory explores the childhood of the heroine, asking what could have driven her to become Bluebeard's wife: a household surrounded by death of relatives and pets, where séances are held. Several comparisons with the tale of 'Donkeyskin' hint at the heroine's father's abuse too, and Ivory draws parallels between the abusive father and the abusive husband.

Pointing to the 'willing victimisation' of the female characters does not, however, necessarily involve judging them, (or rather pre-judging them), and blaming them for bringing about their own downfall. It rather involves looking into the motivation of the female character in order to arrive at a more sophisticated understanding of her desires and a deeper understanding of desire in general. As Zipes comments on Carter's work: 'Instead of victimization she focused more on how women could realize their deep sexual desires, whether sadistic or masochistic, and could determine their sexual and social roles with

---

[16] Joanna Russ, 'Somebody's Trying to Kill Me and I Think It's My Husband', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 6:4 (1973), 666-91 (p.668).

[17] 'Cela me rend malade, quand je constate que tant de femmes sont aimantées par mon effroyable réputation. Pouvez-vous m'expliquer ce comportement féminin?' Amélie Nothomb, *Barbe Bleue,* p.53.

[18] Nothomb, p.54.

greater freedom.'[19] In fact, the more closely this 'willing victimisation' is examined, the larger 'will' (desire) becomes and the smaller 'victimisation' becomes. Elements of the complex notion of desire are explored in the texts, with, at the limit, the texts becoming somewhat like a diagnostic exercise.

2.2. Translating and Transforming Perrault's *Cabinet*: How Carter Opened a New Door

According to Jack Zipes, Carter started writing 'The Bloody Chamber' while she was still translating Perrault: 'As she began her work on Perrault, she also started writing her own original stories that formed the basis of *The Bloody Chamber*.'[20] In his introduction to her translation, Zipes writes that:

> one could possibly argue that even her translations of Perrault's tales were an unusual brazen appropriation of his works, and that she remade Perrault and his tales into something different from what they were. This was typical of Carter, a very independent and original thinker, who rebelled against classical tradition while absorbing and re-creating it in her own distinct down-to-earth, baroque manner.[21]

To him, Perrault's collection 'enabled her to transcend the limits of translation'.[22] One of the most striking elements of her translation is her rendition of Perrault's moral (which puts the blame on the heroine rather than the murderous husband): 'Clearly she sensed the problematic aspects of Perrault's style and ideology, which she purposely glossed over in her translation, and this may have made her so dissatisfied that she was 'driven' to revisit Perrault's tales in a dramatically and radically different way in the *Bloody Chamber*, while she was translating Perrault's tales.'[23]

In his moral, while Perrault puts the blame directly on women:

> La curiosité malgré tous ses attraits,
> Couste souvent bien des regrets ;
> On en voit tous les jours mille exemples paroistre.
> C'est, *n'en déplaise au sexe,* un plaisir bien leger ;
> Dés qu'on le prend il cesse d'estre.

---

[19] Zipes, 'Introduction: Re- making of Charles Perrault', in Angela Carter, *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault* (London: Penguin, 2008 [1977]), pp.vii-xxvii (p. x).
[20] Zipes, p.ix.
[21] Zipes, p.vii.
[22] Zipes, p.x.
[23] Zipes, p.xxv.

Et toûjours il couste trop cher.[24] (my emphasis)

(My literal translation:) Despite all its attractiveness, Curiosity often costs many regrets, as one can see a thousand examples of every day. *Whether the fair sex likes it or not*, it is a very light and fleeting pleasure; as soon as it is satisfied it ceases to exist and always costs too much.

Carter eliminates the direct reference to women:

Curiosity is a charming passion but may only be satisfied at the price of a thousand regrets; one sees around one a thousand example of this sad truth every day. Curiosity is the most fleeting of pleasures; the moment it is satisfied, it ceases to exist and always proves, very, very expensive.[25]

Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère's comments on Carter's relation to Perrault and believes that: 'Even though the critical consensus reads into Carter a feminist imperative to subvert classic fairy tales, […] she valued Perrault as a practical educator, a proto-folklorist and an accomplished storyteller'.[26]

In one of her essays, 'The Better to Eat You With' (1976), Carter famously expresses her view that the reader has a crucial role in the construction of meaning of a text; a belief which, as Martine Hennard Dutheil de La Rochère and Ute Heidmann have underlined, 'shapes her understanding of how writing itself works'.[27] Their article 'New Wine in Old Bottles' is entitled after one of Carter's famous phrases: 'Reading is just as creative an activity as writing and most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts. I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode'.[28] Once again, according to the two scholars, this very sentence attests to Carter's view of appropriation and reinterpretation: 'the bottle metaphor is not gratuitous. It draws attention to the profoundly transformative impact of the rewriting process as it frees up anti-conventional readings of old texts that

---

[24] Perrault, p.81.
[25] Angela Carter, *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault* (London: Penguin, 2008 [1977]), p.10.
[26] Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, *Reading, Translating, Rewriting: Angela Carter's Translational Poetics* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), p.3.
[27] Ute Heidmann and Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, '"New Wine in Old Bottles": Angela Carter's Translation of Charles Perrault's "La Barbe bleue"', *Marvels & Tales*, 23:1 (2009), 40–58 (p.40).
[28] Angela Carter, 'The Better to Eat you With',.

challenge expectations, certainties, and comfortable beliefs, and undermine all efforts to contain meaning.'[29]

Thus, Carter took what she had started to subvert in her translations of Perrault and started creating something new, and even more subversive. Where Perrault had been succinct, she developed, embellished, and surprised. As Marina Warner writes, Perrault's version 'shapes Angela Carter's retelling, as she lingers voluptuously on its sexual inferences, and springs a happy surprise in a masterly comic twist on the traditional happy ending'.[30] Her tale is not magical as such; there are no supernatural elements within the text, but it is her writing, lush and baroque, that has often been said to be magical in itself. To cite just a few, Jack Zipes describes her writing as a 'terse metaphorical language',[31] Rebecca Munford believes it is 'predisposed to performance and adornment, to duplicity and disguise',[32] Lorna Sage defines her fiction as 'prowl[ing] around on the fringes of the proper English novel like dream-monsters—nasty, erotic, brilliant creations that feed off cultural crisis',[33] and Marina Warner refers to her as a writer who 'clothes herself in sparkling ornament and sensuous fantasy'.[34] It is undeniable that Perrault was her main (narrative) source, but she rewrote his text while masterly positioning herself within the female heritage of storytelling, including Perrault's female contemporaries, the *conteuses* who wrote elaborate, florid, longer tales, and were often overshadowed by the male canon.[35]

As Marina Warner notes, the impact of Carter's work was tremendous:

> Carter seems to have opened the forbidden door for a generation of young women with her vision of Bluebeard as a languid connoisseur of every depravity, half beast, half *ancien régime* tyrant, who unexpectedly arouses her: 'For the first time in my innocent and confined life, I sensed in myself a potentiality for corruption that took my breath away.'[36]

---

[29] Heidmann and Hennard, p.41.

[30] Marina Warner, Introduction Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (London: The Folio Society, 2012 [1979]), pp.x-xi.

[31] Jack Zipes, 'Introduction: Re-making of Charles Perrault', in Angela Carter, *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault* (London: Penguin, 2008 [1977]), pp.vii-xxvii, (p.x).

[32] Rebecca Munford, *Decadent Daughters and Monstrous Mothers: Angela Carter and European Gothic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p.1.

[33] Lorna Sage, 'The Savage Sideshow: A Profile of Angela Carter', *New Review*, 39/40 (1977) 51-57 (p.51).

[34] Marina Warner, 'Introduction', in Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (London: The Folio Society, 2012 [1979]), pp.ix-xvi (p.xii).

[35] See chapter 2, 2.

[36] Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time*, p.139.

Like all tales, the tale of 'Bluebeard' has travelled and crossed borders. It is one that is particularly interesting to look at in this thesis as it is a French tale whose most famous rewriting is in English; an English version that has had a tremendous impact on subsequent rewritings and which has also been translated into French. In their article 'Back to the Future: The Journey of *The Bloody Chamber* in Italy and France', Diana Bianchi and Catia Nannoni compare the translations of *The Bloody Chamber* in France and in Italy. If we look at France only, Carter's novel, written in 1979, was not published and translated into French until 1985, probably, as the two scholars note, to benefit from the visibility offered by Neil Jordan's film *The Company of Wolves,* released in France in September 1984. This is further confirmed by the title of the collection, named *La Compagnie des loups et autres nouvelles* after the film, rather than after the English title *The Bloody Chamber*. The order of the stories within the collection has been changed as well. The order of texts within a collection is not gratuitous: as Ute Heidmann and Jean-Michel Adam have argued, altering it changes the 'cotextuality of the texts,' as 'their particular position in the collection […] has an impact on the idea of the genre conveyed to the reader and determines the meaning of the tales themselves'.[37] Bianchi and Nannoni believe that the aim was to capitalise financially on the release of the film but also to integrate it within the popular 1980s theme of the werewolf.[38] I would like to argue that because of the status of fantasy in French high culture, these marketing decisions might have effectively downgraded the status of the collection: werewolves are by essence popular, non-serious protagonists. While Angela Carter is hailed as one of the most important English writers of the twentieth century, she is not very well-known in France; many of her works have not been published at all and some not translated until the late 1990s: for instance *The Magic Toyshop,* published in 1967, was only translated in 1999 under the title *Le Magasin de jouets magique,* and *Shadow Dance* (1966) translated and published in 1998 as *La Danse des ombres*. In an article on the use of fairies and fairy tales in fantasy, Léa Silhol mentions Carter's collection as an aside and adds (clearly referring to a French audience): 'The

---

[37] Heidmann and Adam, "Text Linguistics and Comparative Literature: Towards an Interdisciplinary approach to Written Tales; Angela Carter's Translations of Perrault", in *Language and Verbal Art Revisited: Linguistic Approches to the Study of Literature*, ed. by Donna R. Miller and Monica Turci (London: Equinox, 2007), pp.181-96 (p.187).

[38] Bianchi and Nannoni list werewolf films released that decade: *An American Werewolf in London,* directed by John Landis (1981); *The Howling,* directed by Joe Dante (1981); *Ladyhawke,* directed by Richard Donner (1985); and *Teen Wolf* (1985), directed by Rod Daniel. Bianchi and Nannoni 'Back to the Future: The Journey of The Bloody Chamber in Italy and France', in *Marvels and Tales,* Vol.25 (2011), 51-69.

general public mostly knows her for her short story 'The company of wolves',[39] adapted for the screen by Neil Jordan'.

Bianchi and Nannoni, praise Jacqueline Huet's translation of *The Bloody Chamber* for its fluidity and the way in which it 'manages to reproduce the particular texture of the original'.[40] Interestingly, the divergences that they notice 'illustrate clearly the translator's intent to strengthen the bond with French culture,'[41] a bond which Carter had already created in her tale. According to the two scholars this is not achieved through cultural appropriation as such but rather through 'a rather subtle intensification at a microtextual level of what is already tightly connected to France.'[42] The knowledge and use of Perrault's tale as reference, for instance, is striking. Indeed, while Carter kept the word *cabinet* (a small art storage room) in her translation of the tales to refer to the forbidden room, she titled her own tale 'The Bloody Chamber', literally in French 'La chambre sanglante'. While this would have made perfect sense, Carter's translator, Jacqueline Huet, in turn chose to remain faithful to Perrault and translate the title into 'Le cabinet sanglant'.

The impact of either the original or the French translation of Carter's collection is difficult to evaluate or measure. There are certainly fewer rewritings of the tale of 'Bluebeard' in France but it is interesting to note that another feminist collection of rewritten tales was published in France in 1984, this time by a French author Pierrette Fleutiaux: *Les Métamorphoses de la reine*. Once again, the differences both in style and content of the francophone and anglophone writers are striking. Fleutiaux's texts are more openly self-reflexive (with numerous narratorial intrusions, reminiscent of Chevillard) than Carter's and while also depicting scenes of female sexual awakening and subversion of patriarchy, the tone is much lighter than its English counterpart.

For instance, the tale 'Petit Pantalon Rouge, Barbe-Bleue et Notules' ('Little Red Trousers, Bluebeard and Short notes') mingles the stories of 'Red Riding Hood' and 'Bluebeard' and adds a list of sarcastic narratorial endnotes. The Red Riding Hood character meets Bluebeard, a rich man, who is rejected by all because of the colour of his beard. The two fall in love and marry almost immediately. The bride discovers later that Bluebeard has been cursed and every time a woman loves him his beard grows into thorns,

---

[39] 'Elle est surtout connue du grand public pour sa nouvelle la compagnie des loups, portée à l'écran par Neil Jordan', *Léa Silhol,* 'Fées et fantasy, un mariage heureux?' in *Fantastique, Fantasy, Science-fiction* (Paris: Autrement, 2005) pp.30-43 (p.41).

[40] Bianchi and Nannoni, p.59

[41] Bianchi and Nannoni, p.60.

[42] Bianchi and Nannoni, p.60.

becoming unmanageable and corrupting him. As he explains: 'dark thoughts came out of my mouth like toads and all that fell into my ears seemed poisoned'.[43] The reference to the tale 'Diamonds and Toads' here is clear, but the curse is not literal and while some elements of magic are present, they are undermined by narratorial intrusions. In ways akin to Chevillard's narratorial asides, the short notes at the end of the tale systematically draw attention to and apologise for all the improbabilities and inconsistencies of the text, often blamed on the multiplicities of versions.[44] Moreover, there are no extravagant killings and no bloody chamber as such: when Bluebeard is taken over by dark murderous thoughts he manages to simply imprison his wives. When they are finally freed, Bluebeard foresees 'terrible complications, heartbreaks, and maybe even court trials',[45] but as an answer to the traditional version, the women, after living together for so long, have 'learnt to know one another, and there is no need for a man to make women happy'.[46] The modifications of the texts and the narratorial comments deflate its status as a fairy tale and cancel all magic, rationalising the tale, bringing it back to an everyday reality.

3. Stepping into Bluebeard's House

3.1. A Masculine Space

Controlling and punishing transgressive women is an ancestral trope present most strikingly in the portrayal of characters such as Eve or Pandora. Eve transgresses the rules, she is the downfall of humanity; Pandora opens the box, she unleashes evil upon the world. The opening of either the box or the room and the eating of the apple (whether these are read as sexual awakenings or not) are clear quests for knowledge. The woman is discouraged from and punished for wanting to acquire knowledge because the acquisition makes her dangerous; she becomes an equal, one who can challenge and overcome the male protagonist. In *Off with their Heads!* (1992) Maria Tatar comments:

> For several centuries now, standard interpretations have identified Eve as the primary agent of transgression and have infused her act of disobedience with

---

[43] 'des pensées noires comme des crapauds sortaient de ma bouche et tout ce qui tombait dans mes oreilles me semblait empoisonné', Pierrette Fleutiaux, *Les Métamorphoses de la reine* (Paris: Folio, 1984), p.129.

[44] Fleutiaux, pp.137-138.

[45] 'Il prévoyait d'affreuses complications, des déchirements, qui sait même des procès'. Fleutiaux, p.129.

[46] 'au placard si longtemps, nous avons appris à nous connaitre, et qu'il n'est point besoin d'un homme pour rendre des femmes heureuses', Fleutiaux, p.132.

strong sexual overtones. Eve not only 'disobeys' commands but also 'tempts' and 'seduces' Adam. She has become the real serpent in the garden.[47]

Tatar devotes a whole chapter of her study on 'Bluebeard' to the status of 'cultural hero' the character acquired over time: he is sometimes described as one who kills 'in order to create a higher ethical order'.[48] Tatar claims that the beginning of the eighteenth century witnessed the development of a 'love for the criminal':

> a 'new literature of crime' had emerged from ballads and broadsheets, one that positioned criminals as legendary figures, both infamous and admirable. Michel Foucault tells us that 'there were those for whom glory and abomination were not dissociated, but coexisted in a reversible figure.'[49]

What distinguished the criminal was not only 'the beauty and greatness' of his crime but also his 'cunning' and 'tricks'.[50] A figure like Bluebeard was often used by artists such as Anatole France ('Les Sept femmes de la Barbe bleue', 1886) or Béla Bartók in his Opera *Bluebeard's Castle* (1918) but also to describe and talk about criminal cases (the most famous one is Henri Désiré Landru commonly called 'The French Bluebeard')[51] which triggered sympathy rather than hate. Thus, according to Tatar, Bluebeard has been read as an upholder of morals because, through his testing and control of women— interchangeable females—he punishes all women. The deeds of the heroine are indeed a repetition of the Fall and therefore the tale identifies not only Eve or the heroine 'as the principal agent of transgression' but *every* woman.

'Bluebeard' is therefore a tale about women who transgress rules but it is also a tale about men's need to control these unruly women. Many felt that Bluebeard was either the victim of 'the unbearable state of matrimony'[52] and/or that his acts were justifiable, as he had been faced with what some believe to be the greatest sin of all: women's curiosity. Seeing the wife as a burden seems to account for Bluebeard's behaviour; in this light, it is justifiable that he has two correlative requirements: (i) an alternative space, outside of

---

[47] Tatar, *Off with their Heads*, p. 96.
[48] Tatar, *Secrets*, p.152.
[49] Tatar, p.133.
[50] Tatar, p.133.
[51] In 1972, for instance, Rayner Heppenstall published a book entitled *Bluebeard and After*, subtitled 'three decades of murder in France' which studies among others the case of serial killer H.D Landru, nicknamed 'the French Bluebeard' in newspapers. Landru was a serial killer who claimed eleven victims between 1915 and 1919. He would seduce rich widows before stealing their assets and murdering them.
[52] Tatar, p.133.

(societal) norms and diktats, where he can be free, and (ii) a subdued woman, mastered through violence and death if necessary.

As Marina Warner notes, in Hesiod's version of Pandora's story marriage is already presented in a negative light, 'an artful snare, a double bind, from which man can no more extricate himself in good shape than Ares and Aphrodite could disentangle themselves from the meshes of Hephaestus' net'.[53] This association of marriage with entrapment and subjugation is a persistent one, one with which Amélie Nothomb plays in her rewriting *Barbe bleue*. In her tale, a young student moves in with a rich Spanish Lord in a luxurious but cheaply rented apartment at the heart of Paris. She is portrayed as a strong, independent young woman who does not let herself be intimidated by a noble, rich, older man, but rather makes the most of the situation—her landlord opens priceless champagne bottles for her on a daily basis. In the novella, the forbidden room becomes the symbol of matrimony when Saturnine proclaims her right *not* to marry: 'I do not marry […] it's my right.'[54] She associates this right with the right to secrecy and privacy: 'You have your dark room where no one can go. My lack of matrimonial desire is my very own dark room.'[55] Nothomb here parallels entering a sacred symbolic state with literally entering Bluebeard's room—a room which seems to be a sacred space to him. Just like the heroine, Don Elmiro, the rich landlord, wants a personal secret space where he can be free—the two of them presenting marriage as both intrusive and disruptive.

Other traditional variants of 'Bluebeard' are also constructed around the idea of a secret masculine space or territory. 'La Barbe bleue' by Perrault is only one—if probably the most famous—version of the tale.[56] The Grimm brothers collected two other variants: 'The Robber Bridegroom' and 'Fitcher's Bird'.[57] While the tale of 'Fitcher's Bird' is very similar to 'Bluebeard'—apart from its ending and a far more resourceful female character—in 'The Robber Bridegroom' (and its English counterpart 'Mr Fox') a young

---

[53] Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: the Allegory of the Female Form* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985), p.216.

[54] Je n'épouse pas […] c'est mon droit', Nothomb, p.56.

[55] 'Vous avez votre chambre noire où personne ne peut aller. Mon absence de désir matrimonial c'est ma chambre noire à moi.' Nothomb, p.56.

[56] Authors who rewrite the tale often tend to mix different versions together: for instance Margaret Atwood's 'Bluebeard's Egg' (1983) brings 'Bluebeard' and the symbol of the egg from 'The Robber Bridegroom' together. Similarly, Gregory Frost's novel's title *Fitcher's Brides* (2002) is a clear reference to the tale 'Fitcher's bird' but is subtitled 'The tale of 'Bluebeard', re-envisioned as a dark fable of faith and truth'.

[57] Just like they had done with 'Red Riding Hood' (see Chapter 3), in the first edition of their tales, the brothers Grimm included a version of 'Blaubart' (1812) which they took out in subsequent editions because of its French origins. See Zipes, *The Complete First Edition, The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm,* p.xxxvi.

bride-to-be starts telling a tale at her engagement party which she first presents as a dream. She explains that she travelled to her groom's castle to learn more about him—once again hinting at the idea that the house is an indication of who a person is. Thus, in these versions, the bride plans to enter her fiancé's house without his permission or knowledge. In the English version, 'Mr. Fox', as she gets closer to his domain, the bride gets more and more pressing warnings (along with words of encouragement): 'Be bold, be bold, but not too bold'. Just like in 'Bluebeard', the maiden first wonders and marvels at the riches in the castle, when she hears someone come, however, she hides, conscious that she is intruding. From her hiding place she sees the groom murder one of his wives before hacking her corpse into bits. The bride-to-be then presents her audience with the hand of the woman as proof. The groom who had been claiming his innocence cannot claim it any longer and the guests all turn against him and kill him.

All versions therefore include a masculine space which the female is not supposed to enter. This is interesting because of the link often made between the concept of home and femininity; the idea of home as safe and domestic. But in all versions, the home is not safe any more because at its core is the room, the secrets, and death. The violence and gore in the tale is not unusual in traditional tales but it stands alone in its representation of marriage as a threat; in other tales, such as 'Snow White' or 'Cinderella', entering marriage is synonymous with marital bliss as well as safety. As Stephen Benson writes: 'The problematic, marginal status of this tale is a potentially disruptive presence in the romance narrative, suggesting a failed marriage and a genuinely beastly male nature'.[58] Even in the lesser known ending of Perrault's 'Sleeping Beauty' (when the husband's mother turns out to be an ogress who tries to eat her grandchildren), the husband comes back to protect his family. He is not a threat, he is a protector; it is his mother who is the violent one. It is also true that after Bluebeard's death the heroine marries again happily, but the tale does challenge the image of the happy marriage, and is the only one of Perrault's collection to do so. As Tatar emphasises, what readers remember of the tale is certainly not this ending but rather the nightmare of the union that preceded it.

3.2. Domestic Violence

---

[58] Stephen Benson, "Stories of Love and Death: Reading and Writing the Fairy Tale Romance", in *Image and Power: Women in Fiction in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Sarah Sceats and Gail Cunningham (London: Longman, 1996), pp.103-13 (p.107).

No matter the version of the tale, in Bluebeard's house, female bodies are surveyed, dominated, controlled, violated, and sometimes even dismembered. As Reinders and Van der Land write 'in a modern sense home is often seen as a phantasmagorical space',[59] pointing to the fact that the ideal home is an illusion. As Pauline Greenhill notes: 'The home, statistically the most unsafe location for women in Euro-North American culture, is also the place where Fitcher [The Grimms' Bluebeard], the serial killer, commits his murders.'[60] Many rewritings use the tale as a way to comment on the type of marriages usually celebrated in traditional tales and the risk of mismatch. This is the case in Atwood's 'Bluebeard's Egg' (1983) in which the heroine suspects her husband of being unfaithful, or in Jane Campion's movie, *The Piano* (1993) in which the mute heroine is married off to a man who does not understand her.[61]

The heroines in 'Bluebeard' tales are often excited to meet, marry or sleep with the Bluebeard character because of the difference in their statuses. He is a figure of high social rank, and having considerable wealth, Bluebeard is admired by many, while the heroines are poor, sometimes plain, and all nonplussed by his interest in them. Nothomb's heroine is a destitute student, Lia Block's is poor and hungry, Dubois's is a prostitute, Frost's are all young sisters who know and have seen little of the world. And conversely, the Bluebeard figures are all world-wise and influential: in Nothomb's novel, Don Elmiro is a rich Spanish Lord, in Lia Block's story he is a patron in Los Angeles who throws parties for the social elite, in Dubois's short story he is extremely rich, and finally Reverend Fitcher in Frost's novel is adulated by hundreds of followers. No matter whether a marriage takes place or not, in all these retellings, the story truly begins when the heroine enters the character's space, his home.

In Western culture, home is usually attributive of gendered roles.[62] But the home the heroines enter is, from the outset, a space both strange and wonder-inducing: Carter's narrator marvels at 'that luminous, murmurous castle of which I was the châtelaine, I, the

---

[59] Leeke Reinders and Marco Van Der Land, 'Mental Geographies of Home and Place: Introduction to the Special Issue', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 25:1 (2008), 1-13 (p.4)

[60] Pauline Greenhill, 'Fitcher's [Queer] Bird: A Fairy-Tale Heroine and Her Avatars', *Marvels & Tales*, 22:1 (2008), 143-67 (p.163).

[61] While the 'Bluebeard' intertext is most obvious and present in the staging of a 'Bluebeard' play in the movie, the film itself is a loose adaptation of the 'Bluebeard' tale itself: Ada is sent from Scotland to New Zealand by her father, married off to a man she has never met. The forbidden room is another's man house, where she is first pushed to go to give him piano lessons. As time goes by and the two fall for each other, Ada's husband locks her up and forbids her to go back. Ada sends her lover a (piano) key on which she inscribes a love message, and her husband, angered by her disobedience chops off—not her head—but a finger.

[62] Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home* (Routledge: Oxon, 2006) pp.100-101.

little music student whose mother had sold all her jewellery, even her wedding ring, to pay the fees at the Conservatoire'[63]; Francesca Lia Block's heroine met Bluebeard while waiting on him and goes to his party in 'a small castle that some movie star had built in the fifties with turrets and balconies and balustrades.'[64] In Dubois's tale the heroine wanders 'eyes wide open, she admired the furniture of all styles, the paintings […] from one room to the next, from drawing room to drawing room, she marvelled at everything.'[65] Because of her status, the female is forever an intruder of sorts; the home is not comfortable, but rather too luxurious. Even as Bluebeard gives the heroines licence to do anything they want, declaring them mistress of the house, the female characters do not feel at home— often even before any mention of the forbidden room. The palace is a masculine, unfamiliar space: even if there is a piano for Carter's narrator, her perceptive ear quickly realises that it is not attuned properly, and when she visits the rooms his presence is constant: 'His library seemed the source of his habitual odour of Russian leather'.[66] Her feeling of alienation is reinforced as the first book she opens, still a virgin, is pornographic, and tell-tale of his peculiar tastes. The female characters do often enjoy the riches in the house, but they marvel and wonder at them, when they are not simply intimidated by them.

In her short rewriting, 'Bluebeard's Daughter', Deborah Templeton introduces a neglected child to the story. Bluebeard has not attempted to kill the child and has rather acted, ever since he learned that she was female, as if she did not exist. The girl has been living in the castle, hiding in the dark, living on scraps, and is described as follows: 'There were many secret and unspoken things in the castle deep, and one was small and pale, and had tangles of blue-black hair.' The child then, becomes part of the secrets held by the house. When Bluebeard leaves the castle, it is by looking for the girl and following her that the bride finds 'the killing floor'. The girl knows the ineluctability of the story and through child play she is the one who leads the latest bride to the chamber. In this case there is no direct confrontation with Bluebeard: the wife now 'will always know | what she always knew | that his beard is exactly so blue'.[67] The focus also changes: it is not only Bluebeard's relationship to the dead that matters but also his attitude towards the living. The wife is of course dismayed by the discovery of the dead wives, but mostly by the

---

[63] Angela Carter, 'The Bloody Chamber', p.11.
[64] Francesca Lia Block, 'Bones', p.154.
[65] 'les yeux écarquillés, elle admirait le mobilier de tous styles, les peintures […] de pièce en pièce, de salon en salon, elle s'étonnait de tout.' Dubois, p.256.
[66] Carter, 'The Bloody Chamber', p.13.
[67] Deborah Templeton, 'Bluebeard's daughter', *Stolen and Other Stories* (no page numbers)

neglected child whom she saves from the house, taking her outside for the first time in her life.

In Helen Ivory's collection of poems *Waiting for Bluebeard* (2013), after entering the house, the bride slowly disappears, losing her identity, as documented through a series of nine poems all called 'The Disappearing'. The process begins as soon as she steps into the house:

> The tariff for crossing the threshold
> was a single layer of skin
>
> She imagined a snake
> unzipping itself in one deft move.
>
> She imagined herself lithe
> inside the house, her new home.[68]

By moving in, the bride has to fulfil the role of the dutiful wife, making coffee, doing the dishes and keeping out of her husband's study, unaware of what he does during the day.[69] Slowly, after losing a child and looking for its body in the garden and the cupboards,[70] she becomes a stranger to herself. When the door is finally unlocked she finds:

> […]
> Neatly labelled jars —
> Fingernails, tangles of hair,
> An unborn child.

The poem concludes:

> My skin hung from a wire hanger
> On the back of the door
> Like a wedding dress
> Emptied of its bride.
> It was too tight to climb into,
> So she left the house naked.[71]

---

[68] Helen Ivory, 'The Disappearing 1', *Waiting for Bluebeard* (Hexham: Bloodaxe Books, 2014), p.82.
[69] Ivory, p.86 and p.93.
[70] Ivory, p.100.
[71] Ivory, 'The Disappearing 9', p.110.

The shift in the last stanza from a first person narration 'my skin' to a third person one 'she left', accentuates the idea of disembodiment. Being probed is the idea that the body has memory, and that only by leaving her skin behind (in a way similar to 'Donkeyskin' and Christine Angot's retelling *Peau d'âne* mentioned in chapter one) can she escape—cease to be the bride and break the mould she has been forced into.

Through his narration, in *Fitcher's Brides* (2003), Gregory Frost also tackles issues of domestic violence, by presenting a manipulative husband who abuses psychologically and physically his wives by drugging them, flagellating their bodies, threatening them, raping them, and finally killing them. The Reverend Fitcher is very methodical and even adapts his means of pushing his wives to a mental and physical breakdown according to their own weaknesses: one of the sisters is more subject to sexual desire so he rapes her and abuses her when she is drugged, another one doubts her worth so he convinces her that to be purified he needs to flagellate her every night. Following the Grimms' 'Fitcher's Bird' narrative, the third sister finds her sisters' dismembered bodies and pieces them back together again to bring them back to life. But even years after coming back to life, the two sisters are described as deranged, and they never remarry—the trauma and abuse they have undergone both mentally and physically can never truly disappear.

In his discussion of the notion of home, Easthope talks about the concept of 'feeling at home' as proper to a place where one feels 'ontologically secure'.[72] This is a place with a firm ontological foundation, one without cracks or gaps and thus a concept that can be put into conversation with the tale of Bluebeard and its various versions. Even provided that the male character is not a murderous villain, his process of revealing information (there is a room) while withholding information (only he can know what it contains), creates a gaping hole—an ontological gap—within the house in which the characters live and evolve. This gap prevents the bride from obtaining this ontological security, this sense of 'feeling at home'. The house becomes uncanny, in the Freudian

---

[72] Hazel Easthope, 'A place called home', *Housing, Theory and Society*, Vol.21 (2004) 128-138 (p.134).

sense, *unheimlich*: un-familiar and un-homely, because the gap is a rupture in a world, making it unfamiliar.[73]

All the female characters actions can be understood in relation to this ontological gap. The heroines' is a (female) subjectivity defined by the gap: (they) she cannot feel at home until she knows what is in the house, what is contained at its core. Thus, the gap installs a drive into her action, a specific desire. The gap functions as an attractor for her actions; she must fill it. Thus, the gap is transposed onto a field of desire, a specific desire (to fill this particular gap) that defines her as subject. And this subjectivity is tied to Bluebeard, in fact it is sculpted by him. He, by realising this process, constructs her being, her female identity. If we think of it in these terms, the female character does not really have a choice but to resolve the mystery and discover what is in the room, she cannot feel at home until she knows what is in the house, what is contained at its core.

Neil Gaiman plays with this lack of anchoring in his short poem 'The Hidden Chamber': the narrator, implicitly addressing his bride, reassures her that the ghosts in the house 'are the least of [her] worries' as the noises the ghosts make are:

> endearing, not upsetting. (Sic) It makes the place feel so much more like home.
> Inhabited.
> Apart from ghosts nothing lives here for long. No cats,
> no mice, no flies, no dreams, no bats.[74]

The narrator talks about the house in which they live, enumerating all the things that she should not be afraid of, the things that do not pose a threat. Rather than being reassuring, his enumeration of all the things she should not fear has the opposite effect; slowly one starts to wonder what the actual threat is, or when the danger will appear.

Of course, in 'Bluebeard' tales, the woman is never truly meant to feel at home: first, she becomes prey when she enters the male's territory. Keeping her marvelling at his riches gives him power and ascendency over her. Paradoxically, it could be argued that the Bluebeard figure also remains in control and keeps his power by making himself

---

[73] This is reminiscent of the ontologically unknown and unknowable space which appears within the main characters' house in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000). One day a black space appears within the house, it does not exist when measuring the house, and by its simple quality of simultaneously being and not being there breaks up the family. It makes the house 'unhomely'. Some of the characters are fascinated by it and want to study it, others are made to feel insecure, do not feel at home anymore and want to leave the house. In both cases, the house is not a home anymore.

[74] Neil Gaiman, 'The Hidden Chamber', in *Fragile Things: Short Fictions and Wonders* (London: Headline Review, 2007), p.83.

vulnerable. He gives the keys to the bride and a warning, putting the temptation within reach just like the tree in Eden. Whatever the woman decides to do, he is in a situation of control: either she is obedient and does not go in the room, or she does go in the room and he punishes her for it. The punishment itself enables him to (i) exercise his power (ii) prove that he is right about women. Bluebeard truly is—as was hinted by Perrault's use of *cabinet*—a collector, and collecting goes hand in hand with the very idea of classification; to the male character, women only fall into two categories, an aspect which Hennard also notes as she talks of 'the husband's perverse enjoyment of the spectacle of his wife's 'martyrdom'. He can relate to women only through the two categories that are also stereotypes of saints and whores.[75]

In all versions, female subjectivity is constructed by the male, or at least is understood as a relation (of power) between male and female, with the male in a dominant position—even if, as we shall see further down, these power relationships are different in anglophone and francophone texts. And further, the two categories of female subjectivity (the saint and the whore) are clearly linked to the ontological gap: the gap refers to a choice between two alternatives, and the alternatives define the categories. The choice she makes—whether she enters the room or does not—define her as one or the other. Either she fills the gap (thus is a whore) and is killed, or she does not fill the gap (thus is a saint) but in doing so remains unfulfilled. As categories they represent a contradiction at the core of female subjectivity; it is an impossible choice, between death and non-life. The gap in her being is, as such, one that cannot be truly filled.

Because these categories are forced upon the female by the male, they negate Bluebeard's very idea of 'proof': his demonstration of women's 'true' nature is inevitable because he is the one responsible for it in the first place. He creates a desire that defines her being (a desire that must, as such be fulfilled), and so there is no throw of the dice in her actions; he has preordained the outcome. As he is proved right, it is just for him to exercise his power in response and execute the female in the name of a justice he has created but one that is created in such a way that sustains the illusion of independence and choice. While these considerations of Bluebeard's behaviour *before* the wife even enters the room are true of both anglophone and francophone retellings, this chapter will now turn to the opening of the room and the representations of its contents which differ more systematically from one culture to the other.

---

[75] Hennard, *Reading,* p.116.

4. Ritualistic, Righteous Murders: the Forbidden Room as a Sacred Space

The position of power which Bluebeard creates for himself has in fact another dimension, also linked with the quality of the room: it gives him a god-like status. The seat of power from where he judges, controls, and punishes is not earthly, or not only earthly, it is (also) transcendent; he exercises power over life and death from 'above'; he tests his women as their patriarch and their god, aiming to keep only the purest specimens. The room therefore works both as a prohibition and a warning and, to pursue the religious analogy, it is awe-inspiring and awesome (in the first sense of the term).

Amélie Nothomb's Bluebeard character, Don Elmiro, is a religious fanatic who reads and quotes the Bible frequently, and admires and praises the Inquisition. Although always implicitly, several of his statements link women to the figure of Eve; although he claims that one woman having flaws does not mean he believes they are all sinners. His leaving the door open is akin to God's placing of the tree of knowledge within reach in the Garden of Eden and subsequently punishing Eve for giving in to the temptation he presented by reaching for it.

In Gregory Frost's novel, the forbidden room is on the top floor of a wooden house shared by the community and its structure is reminiscent of that of a church. The Reverend Fitcher has a stained glass representation of Eve and Adam overlooking his forbidden chamber and the decomposing corpses. It is the first and only thing the girls can see through the keyhole before unlocking the door:

> The colors and light came from a large stained-glass panel fitted into the ceiling. It showed Adam and Eve standing on either side of the tree of knowledge, with the serpent, as large as either of them, entwined around its trunk. The heads of the figures were almost directly above hers. Eve's eyes were cast down. Adam stared across at her in judgement. The serpent, its head bowed, eyed her sidelong with heavy-lidded mockery. The tip of its tail was curled around her ankle.[76]

As Cristina Bacchilega writes, entering the chamber is a 'process of initiation'.[77] She argues that the true issue is not the curiosity and the fact that the act is done behind her husband's back but rather '[t]he heroine's knowledge of her husband, of herself, and of

---

[76] Gregory Frost, *Fitcther's Brides* (New York: Tor, 2002), p.253.
[77] Bacchilega, *Postmodern Fairy Tales,* p.107.

sexual politics'.[78] And indeed, opening the door is a discovery of her husband's secrets but the corpses she finds are not simply corpses, they 'symbolize Bluebeard's past secrets (murders and corpse hoarding) and present ones (desire for repetitive discovery of the corpses, his current wife's horror, and his uxoricide)'.[79] When discovering that she has entered the room, Reverend Fitcher lectures his wife before killing her:

> There are secrets that women should *never* be party to, but you all insist, every one of you. You inquire, you inveigle. You use your wiles, your charms, your sex. That courtesan Sherazade should have had her head cut off the moment she opened her mouth. She tricked the caliph. Wore him down with words. You've all been the same forever. You all were trained by Eve. 'Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body'[80]

Catherine Velay-Vallantin also draws a parallel between 'Bluebeard' and *The Arabian Nights:*

> L'histoire de Barbe Bleue n'est pas loin de celle du prologue des *Mille et une Nuits* où un roi, pour se venger de l'infidélité d'une épouse, fait exécuter toutes les jeunes femmes de son palais. Précédé par la défloration, viol justicier, le meurtre est celui qui, répété à l'infini, anéantit tout un sexe et par conséquent l'espèce humaine.[81]

> The story of Bluebeard is not far from that of *The Arabian Nights'* prologue in which a king, to get his revenge on his wife for her infidelity executes all the young women in his palace. Preceded by the defloration, rape in the name of law, the murder is the one which, when repeated indefinitely, annihilates a whole sex and therefore the human race.

In Dubois' version of the tale, the Bluebeard figure hires prostitutes to fulfil his fantasies. Dubois plays with the traditional vision of Christian righteousness by making his main female protagonist into a prostitute, thus undermining the idea of the innocence of the heroine—his narrator notes sarcastically that disobedience and curiosity can hardly be counted as sins in comparison to her usual occupations. The irony increases as the Bluebeard character ties the heroine to a bondage cross to torture and rape her before *pretending* to stab her, putting her in the Christ-like sacrificial position. This 'fake show' is

---

[78] Bacchilega, p.107.
[79] Katherine J. Kim, 'Corpse Hoarding: Control and the Female Body in "Bluebeard," "Schalken the Painter," and *Villette*', *Studies in the Novel*, 43:4 (Winter 2011), 406-27 (pp.406-407).
[80] Frost, p.261.
[81] Catherine Velay Vallantin, *L'Histoire des contes* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), p.89.

ultimately a display of his power, artistry and methodical work. In Francesca Lia Block's rewriting the Bluebeard figure is, again, presented as God-like figure: 'People were bringing offerings—bottles of booze and drugs and guitars and drums and paints and canvases. […] It was his house, his party, they were all making the pilgrimage for him.'[82]

In most versions, Bluebeard puts himself in a position from which he is adulated and admired but also can command, control, and sacrifice on his 'altar' of self-righteousness. He is a vengeful, punishing, patriarchal God-like figure, one who creates rules and regulations that dictate people's behaviour outside and inside his forbidden room. By defining the rules ascribed to the space, Bluebeard makes it into a territory into which no-one shall trespass and enter. If they do enter, the trespassers have to be punished. He thus raises the space to 'sacred' status by attributing to it these qualities and in the process he transforms himself into an agent of a higher ethical order, or a god.

However, in this action he not only makes the space sacred to himself, but also to the female, albeit in a different sense, one relating to her subjectivity, rather than his. Not only does it have rules and regulations that dictate people's behaviour towards it, the space also has the quality of transcendence proper to the sacred. The space transcends the female subject's experience, the gap being a region she cannot access. It is not, to clarify, the case that the room is transcendent (inaccessible) because she is barred from going into it. It is rather that the room represents a gap within her own being. The room, because it represents a choice between death and non-life, neither of which she can bear to experience, represents an impossibility, a problem so formulated that it cannot be resolved. Thus, the space is sacred to both Bluebeard and to the wife, though in different ways. Each way is, however, intimately linked to gender and subjectivity.

The analogy is all the more fitting as sacred sites are also often burial sites and sacrificial places, and moreover, as David L. Carmichael writes: 'Sacred sites are intimately linked to gender, status and role'.[83] The woman is proscribed from entering the space and if she does she has to be sacrificed and become part of the space. She could become a warning herself—just like people used to be hanged and their limbs displayed at the entrance of cities to deter people from misbehaving—but she does not and remains a secret; once the woman has seen what happened to her predecessors it is too late for her. She cannot know, unless she sees. When discussing the myth of Pandora, Laura Mulvey

---

[82] Francesca Lia Block, 'Bones', p.155.
[83] David L. Carmichael, *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p.4.

writes: '[her] gesture of looking into the forbidden space, the literal figuration of curiosity as looking in, becomes a figure for the desire to know rather than the desire to see, an epistemophilia.'[84] Because Pandora is the first woman created by the gods (and therefore artificial), Mulvey extends the imagery of the box to that of the feminine:

> The box easily allows a metaphoric relationship to come into existence between the box and the female genitals, providing a substitute, suggested by shape and imaginative similarity rather than by contiguity, while both are associated with secrecy, and therefore once again linked by a metonymy.[85]

As mentioned above, the transgression in the traditional tale of 'Bluebeard', which is in effect a discovery, has often been interpreted as linked with sexuality. For instance, Bruno Bettelheim read 'Bluebeard' as an expression of female desire for sexual discovery and male anxiety about sexual infidelity. Just as the woman's body has to be pure and for himself only, so does the room. The process of opening the door and going past the threshold is often read as a loss of innocence, and therefore also a discovery of sexuality. In folklore, the murderous husband is also often seen as the one who controls childbirth: in some versions he kills his wife before she can mother any children, in others before she gives birth—and this often without the transgression. Killing the woman is the ultimate control over her body, her womb, and her sexuality.

5. Bluebeard, the Artist: Deadly (Re)Creations, Displaying the Female Body

5.1. Women as Objects

In her book devoted to the tale of 'Bluebeard' and its different versions, Maria Tatar devotes a chapter to the vision of Bluebeard as 'artist and aesthete'.[86] According to Tatar, not only has Bluebeard sometimes 'come to be celebrated as a cultural hero, a master criminal who kills in order to create a higher ethical order' (see above), but has also become a 'folkloric villain, a powerful model for the artist who must preserve and nourish his creative energies by killing the beloved and thereby shielding himself against the depleting effects of intimacy'.[87] Thus, in many versions, the tale of 'Bluebeard' plays with

---

[84] Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity: Cinema and the Mind's Eye* (London: BFI, 2013), p.75.
[85] Mulvey, p.72.
[86] Tatar, *Secrets*, p.152.
[87] Tatar, p.152.

the 'romantic cult of morbid beauty'[88] and its perpetuation: the dead woman is presented as a muse, a fascinating object that must be collected, pinned down, and displayed to nourish its owner's ingenious desires.

Seeing the room as sacred, while being composed, in part, of his wives' bodies is not necessarily a contradiction. Art displayed in churches loses its specific value, its sanctity, when removed from the space. Museums now perform a similar role as both spaces transform objects into art. As Victoria D. Alexander notices, 'if we already think of the creator as an artist, or if we see a work in a museum we tend to call it art.'[89] Bourdieu makes a similar remark:

> The constitution of the aesthetic gaze as a 'pure' gaze, capable of considering the work of art in and for itself […] is linked to the institution of the work of art as an object of contemplation, with the creation of private and their public galleries and museums, and the parallel development of a corps of professionals appointed to conserve the work of art, both materially and symbolically.[90]

Art is enhanced by the space in which it is presented—this is even more striking in contemporary art where some mundane objects are transformed into art when they are displayed (just like Snow White in her labelled frame—a point to which we will come back later).

If, as argued above, the beard betrays Bluebeard's character, the room itself works as the catalyst and climax of the story; it is at the centre of it, and it exhibits the meticulous artistic *mise en scene* of female corpses. The room itself becomes a striking illustration of the artistic struggle in which the artist is torn between methodical creation and lethal madness. As Hennard writes:

> The wonder that these extraordinarily crafted objects provokes in the visitors soon gives way to a different kind of wonder when the bride finds the murdered bodies mirrored in the blood in another 'cabinet', this time associated with fear and horror.[91]

---

[88] Tatar, p.153.
[89] Victoria D. Alexander, *Sociology of the Arts: Exploring Fine and Popular Forms* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), p.2.
[90] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p.36.
[91] Hennard, *Reading,* p.112.

Here Hennard points to the ineluctability of the tale, already contained in the naming of the room: 'Unsurprisingly, the key is to be found in the shifting meanings of the word *cabinet* itself. Readers must enter the tale, which contains useful knowledge provided that they read it closely enough.'[92] As Hennard notes, the very name of the room already hints at 'the idea of women being killed into art—in both senses of killed for art and killed as an act of art'.[93]

The juxtaposition of morbidity, beauty, and femininity pervades western culture, a conjunction which Elisabeth Bronfen discusses at length in her study *Over Her Dead Body* (1992). As she writes, 'the aesthetic coupling of woman and death […] appears as a popular though diversely utilised thematic constant in literature and painting from the age of sensibility to the modern period'.[94] She uses many examples such as Millais's painting of Ophelia from Hamlet (1851-52) or Gabriel von Max's *The Anatomist* (1869). This obsession with the dead female body is also found in popular culture: in the series *Twin Peaks* (1990-91) for instance, the plot revolves around Laura Palmer's murder, but she hardly appears as a character, even in flashbacks. Her bluish face, wrapped in plastic remains a very well-known image used as a marketing asset: it appeared on some of the covers for the VHS versions, and even more strikingly, the actress had to do several promotional photo-shoots, naked and wrapped in plastic. Sheryl Lee, the actress who played Laura, found the attention given to her character ironic and commented: 'If Laura had been this regular character who lived, nobody would have cared.'[95]

While we argued earlier that the female was defined by her desire, these depictions of the dead female body in turn make the woman into a perfect object of desire: they are ambiguous, both unattainable and yet, an object which can be taken and possessed. This idea of the quiet, tame, possibly dead, woman is very common in fairy tales: this is the case of the 'Sleeping Beauty' for instance, especially as she is raped in her sleep in the early literary version by Giambattista Basile's 'Sun, Moon, and Talia' (1634). Bronfen also uses the tale of 'Snow White' as an example of the fascination for dead women and of the instant when seeing becomes synonymous with 'possession and pleasure'.[96] In her coffin, Snow White elicits what the scholar calls an 'aesthetic viewing':[97] the Prince does not only

---

[92] Hennard, p.155.
[93] Hennard, p.112.
[94] Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body,* p.60.
[95] 'Interview: Sheryl Lee' <www.davidlynch.de/withlauraparlmer.html> [accessed June 2015].
[96] Bronfen, p.100.
[97] Bronfen, p.100.

ask the dwarfs for her body but for 'the whole display': her body *and* the coffin. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their study *The Madwoman in the Attic,* argue that the succession of glass enclosures in 'Snow White' symbolise the entrapment of women; the mirror and the coffin are 'the tools patriarchy suggests that women use to kill themselves into art'.[98] Bronfen adds: 'Since the dwarfs have written her name and her heritage in gold letters on to the coffin, Snow White resembles an art object displayed in a labelled frame.'[99] In Pablo Berger's 2013 adaptation of the tale, *Blancanieves*, Snow White's body becomes a commodity that sells and is sold: bought over by a circus manager, Snow White has become part of an attraction, people pay to come and see her in her coffin, and are also given the opportunity to try and kiss her back to life—for a few more coins.

In a retelling of the 'Snow White' tale, 'Snow, Glass, Apples' (1994), Neil Gaiman develops and brings to the fore this idea of fascination with the dead body in much more direct ways. In his short story, Gaiman portrays the Prince as a necrophiliac; when Snow White's stepmother, the queen, first meets him she sees the possibility of an alliance and tries to seduce him. However, as they are about to sleep together, the Prince asks her explicitly 'not to move and to breathe as little as possible'. When she does not comply and cannot help but reciprocate, he leaves in anger and frustration. Following this event, the Prince happens upon Snow White by chance, and 'negotiat[es] with the little hairy men— offering them gold and spices for the lovely corpse under the crystal mound'.[100] And it is when he proceeds to 'mount her' that the apple is loosened up from Snow White's throat and she wakes up. The two of them live happily ever after *because* Snow White is a vampire—undead, strangely still, and she will probably never age. The stepmother's crippling fear of not being the fairest any longer, of getting older, is the trigger of the tale. The tale revolves around a woman's fear of being no longer an object of desire; when women are not young and desirable in fairy tales, they can be little else but witches or old crones, which of course brings us back to the tale of 'Bluebeard' in which a rich suitor gets rid of his wives to find a new, younger wife and keeps all the previous ones as trophies.

The idea of the dead woman as a muse is a very common image: and indeed, as Edgar Allan Poe once wrote: 'The death […] of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world'.[101] Sylvia Plath wrote a short poem entitled 'Bluebeard'

---

[98] Gubar, Gilbert, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, p.36.
[99] Bronfen, p.100.
[100] Neil Gaiman, 'Snow, Glass, Apples', *Smoke and Mirrors* (London: Headline Review, 2005), p.382.
[101] Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Philosophy of Composition' (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1999 [1846]), p.165.

(1955), in which she talks about 'Bluebeard's study' as a place where she can see her 'X-rayed heart, dissected body'.[102] In her poem, Bluebeard's room becomes both an artist's and a surgeon's study and the exploration of the female body parallels art and autopsy. It is a striking parallel because while the dissection of the body hints at the ephemerality of the female body, art is a means of turning it into something for posterity: it is the end of death; if women are stopped from ageing or losing their beauty they can become art.

Angela Carter's Bluebeard is an art collector; he is a refined Marquis who is proud to show his bride his art collection. When he undresses her, the bride even compares herself to a picture her husband showed her when courting her:

> He stripped me, gourmand that he was, as if he were stripping the leaves off an artichoke—but do not imagine much finesse about it; this artichoke was no particular treat for the diner nor was he yet in any greedy haste. He approached his familiar treat with a weary appetite. And when nothing but my scarlet, palpitating core remained, I saw, in the mirror, the living image of an etching by Rops from the collection he had shown me […] the child with her sticklike limbs, naked but for her button boots, her gloves, shielding her face with her hand as though her face was the last repository of her modesty; and the old monocled lecher who examined her, limb by limb. He in his London tailoring; she, bare as a lamb chop. Most pornographic of all confrontations. And so my purchaser unwrapped his bargain.[103]

In this passage, Carter links again voyeurism with consumption, but also art. As Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère notes 'When she sees herself in the mirror, the bride realizes that her undressing is staged as a *tableau vivant*, although she is still ignorant of the fact that her husband's real intentions are to turn her into a *nature morte*'.[104] While the viewer of the picture is cast in the role of the client Carter's reader is made to identify with the bride. The comparison to a lamb chop is not fortuitous either: in *The Sadeian Woman* (1979), Angela Carter writes that pornography gives its consumer 'the opportunity to purchase the flesh of other people as if they were meat'.[105] Here, Carter brings together the interplay of the abstract and the visceral, the body as flesh and as art.

---

[102] Sylvia Plath, 'Bluebeard', *Collected Poems*, ed. by Ted Hughes (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1981), p.305.
[103] Carter, 'The Bloody Chamber', p.12-13.
[104] Hennard, *Reading*, p.144.
[105] Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (London: Virago, 2006 [1979]), p.14.

Amélie Nothomb also points repeatedly to the idea of women as commodities: the Bluebeard character in her novella utters the following threat when pointing at his forbidden chamber:

> Ceci est l'entrée de la chambre noire, où je développe mes photos. Elle n'est pas fermée à clef, question de confiance. Il va de soi que cette pièce est interdite. Si vous y pénétriez, je le saurais, et il vous en cuirait'.[106]

> This is the entrance to the dark room where I develop my photos. It is not locked, this is a question of trust. Of course, this a forbidden room. If you went in, I would know it and you would get your fingers burnt.

As the reader learns later, the room has a built-in mechanism which makes it impossible to open from the inside and which drops the temperature when the room is entered, freezing any trespasser to death. The room is a rational explanation for the conservation of the bodies in perfect stillness—and beauty—but it also becomes an obvious image for a cold room where one keeps edibles. This also makes the use of the verb *cuire* (to cook) extremely striking—the heroine reuses it a few pages later. Her friend voices her concern regarding her safety and she answers: 'Je suis une dure à cuire'.[107] The phrase in French means that one is strong and fierce, foreshadowing Saturnine's subsequent victory over the Bluebeard character, but it also literally translates as 'I am hard to cook'.

Nothomb plays with the set roles of her characters and the association of sex with the idea of consuming and devouring—what the male character literally does in the 'Robber Bridegroom' and what Gilles De Rais had been suspected of. After confessing his love for her, Don Elmiro reverses the roles and tells Saturnine 'I would love you to devour me,'[108] making her the predator (see chapter 5).

In her short retelling of 'Bluebeard', 'Bones' (2001), Francesca Lia Block also links sexuality with hunger. Her narrator superposes hunger for food with sexual hunger, the two becoming one and the same thing because Bluebeard can see that the heroine is hungry. She is hungry both in the emotional, sexual sense, but her actual hunger also makes her the perfect prey as he equates it with weakness.

---

[106] Nothomb, *Barbe bleue*, p.15. [Verb: *cuire* here translated as 'get burnt' is literally 'to cook'].
[107] Nothomb, p.17.
[108] 'J'adorerais que vous me dévoriez', Nothomb, p.42.

And often, the space, by being so gruesome, becomes a butcher's room: in Gregory Frost's *Fitcher's Brides*, the heroine describes the room as a 'monstrous abattoir'.[109] The 'display' is made of two parts: on the walls hang torsos: 'The heads and limbs had been hacked off. Two hung upside down, robbed of context, dehumanized into things so abstract that at first she could not comprehend what she was seeing', and a cauldron in the middle of the room:

> was half full of liquid, a red-stained solution. In the center, four hands stuck out like little trees planted in a circle. Something like moss was tangled in the decaying finger branches. It was hair—hair strung from beneath the surface of the solution, strung from the most terrible sight of all. From severed heads.[110]

Here, as in most Bluebeard stories, the description of the room does not focus on specifics, there are indeterminate body parts, the number of women killed does not really matter either: in most cases, there is a number of them hanging on the walls but also either a pile or a cauldron filled with indefinite limbs. Bluebeard stories are ultimately a more literal representation of Carter's argument about female bodies as commodities: in Bluebeard's cabinet the woman's body is literally and figuratively deconstructed and dehumanised. By turning them into a display, the Bluebeard figure gains ultimate control over the bodies: this fragmentation which brings them together as effectively one 'creation' (his display, in his room) completely robs them of identity or individuality, in the same way that one woman's body can be substituted for another one in infinite succession in pornography. This fragmentation—the unknowability of their numbers and the multiplicity of limbs—contributes to the horror, but also the sheer awe—almost absurdity—of the scene: how can this be real? As Pauline Greenhill notices:

> Though the dead women's bodies become spectacular, both in the sense of the grotesque and in the sense of their presentation for the purpose of being seen to the horror of those who succeed them, these images of the monstrous feminine are a male creation.[111]

Greenhill compares 'Bluebeard' with 'Fitcher's Bird', in which the heroine sorts out and puts limbs back together with their rightful bodies, to bring her sisters back to life. Thus, the female heroine actually defeats the Bluebeard character by undoing his work of

---

[109] Frost, *Fitcher's Brides*, p. 376.
[110] Frost, p. 253.
[111] Pauline Greenhill, 'Fitcher's Queer Bird', p.163.

amalgamation, his composition. She tricks the male figure into freeing them and then disguises herself into a bird by covering herself in honey and feathers. Pauline Greenhill argues that ultimately, by disguising herself into a Fitcher's bird, the heroine turns herself into art. To her, the image of the bird is used 'not only for its visual impact, but because it is itself artful.'[112] When the heroine realises that her abductor can only see women as objects and body parts, she creates something the male groom cannot comprehend. She reclaims the idea that her body is art, but an art he has no supervision or control over. She does not only lead to the Bluebeard figure's demise but overpowers him by putting on a performance rather than the still life he had been aiming for.[113]

5.2. From Flesh to Photography

In both Amélie Nothomb's and Pierre Dubois's rewritings, the corpses hanging in the forbidden room are replaced by photographs of the women in death. The pictures become perfect still representations of women in an unchanging, non-decaying state, to be seen and devoured at will. In Nothomb's rewriting of the tale, this is even more striking: as remarked upon above, when women enter the room, a mechanism locks them in and freezes them to death. But the room is also (literally) a dark room used to develop photographs. Her Bluebeard character prides himself in being a photographer who has taken only eight photographs, all displayed in the room, one of each of his dead lovers— the perfect immobile subjects for long exposure cameras. Once dead, the women become objects of desire again, perfect in their stillness; his artistic creations.

In Pierre Dubois's version, the Bluebeard character hires prostitutes to play a game, where he ties them up and makes them believe he is going to kill them. He tortures them up until a point, then stabs them using a fake (retractable) knife which causes them to faint allowing him to take a picture of them in that limp, unmoving state. But because he only pretends to kill his victims, he also exhibits photographs in which the women look dead and bloodied, perfect still memories of his fantasies. Susan Sontag has remarked upon the curious connection between death and photography: 'All photographs are *memento mori*.

---

[112] Greenhill, p.161.

[113] Tilda Swinton's performance in 'The Maybe' (with Cornelia Parker) works as an interesting counterpoint to this argument: the actress lies in a glass box in the museum, apparently asleep, immobile. By doing so, she makes herself into both an object and a subject and becomes both art or performance. As Amelia Jones writes in *Perform Repeat Record:* 'The iconic image of Swinton in the glass case has come to represent a signature moment in the exploration of the links between the "live" (performance art) and the "death" of the gallery space (its tendency to freeze in time and space that which is displayed there).' Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield, eds, *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), p.469.

To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it.'[114]

In her book *Transforming Images* (2000) Barbara E. Savedoff looks at the ambiguity of representation, focusing particularly on the boundaries between the real and its representation in painting but also, on the problematic status of photography. Photographs are often deemed a tangible reality—they are used as proof in murder cases for instance. As Kendall Walton notes (taking the example of war depictions), there is a greater immediacy to a photograph than a painting, one that makes the viewer accept it as proof, as an authoritative record.[115] As both Savedoff and Sontag argue, however, photography is an act of interpretation on the same level as any other form of art. And indeed, just like any art, photography is selection—subject, lighting, framing, exposure, angle, etc.

This is most apparent in these two versions where the photographs are complete arrangements: Dubois's character stages fake murders, with fake blood, tying up the women on a bondage cross before taking his pictures. The fact that we tend to *perceive* photographs as closely tied to reality emphasises the ambiguity of these pictures: they are memories of his fantasies. Nothomb's Bluebeard plans his pictures in a way very similar to a painter; he has created what he calls a 'démarche chromatique' (or chromatic approach) which consists in creating a shade of colour for each woman and clothing her in it once she is dead. Sontag notes:

> There is something predatory in the act of taking a picture. To photograph people is to violate them by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed.[116]

In Dubois's tale the female character 'frames' the Bluebeard figure by breaking his retractable knife and having him actually kill a woman. No details are given as to how he gets caught and arrested by the police but the reader can wonder whether the photographs of (fakely) dead women in his torture room falsely incriminated him too.

---

[114] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1979), p.15.
[115] *Mimesis as Make-believe: on the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).
[116] Sontag, p.14.

Interestingly, neither of these francophone retellings is about domestic violence as such. This might be due to the wish for realism in both versions; as they are both set in our times, it would be very unusual and not very probable for a man to be widowed several times and marry again. Thus, in Amélie Nothomb's story the Bluebeard figure finds his lovers by looking for flatmates and in Pierre Dubois's the male character indulges in his fantasies by hiring prostitutes. The ties between the female and male figures are transformed in accordance with the absence of the home space and of any prolonged intimate relationship. Also transformed is the kind of violence found in the tale, it having shifted from domestic to something else, something unfamiliar, or less familiar. And further, the lack of familiarity between the male and female figures gives rise to a different relationship between them, a balance of a sort, where the women are not as dependent (at least emotionally) upon the male figures as they are in other versions. Conversely, however, the lack of intimacy might also be read as a way for the men to enjoy their sexual perversions with greater freedom. Sontag writes:

> The camera doesn't rape, or even possess, though it may pressure, intrude, trespass, distort, exploit, and, at the farthest reach of metaphor assassinate—all activities that unlike the sexual push and shove, can be conducted from a distance, and with some detachment.[117]

According to Tatar, Bluebeard has been read as 'shielding himself against the depleting effects of intimacy'[118] through killing. This idea actually differentiates the versions with photographs from the ones where the Bluebeard figure creates something out of the flesh of his victims. Not only are the francophone versions less graphic than most anglophone ones, but they also give the victims an identity: for instance, in Dubois's version, the prostitute can recognise one of her friends on the pictures on the wall. And, as mentioned earlier, Nothomb's protagonist carefully chooses a colour for each of them and at one point in the novella he names all of his victims, giving details about each of them and the reason why he associated them with such and such colour. Paradoxically, the male characters are more distant from their victims: Halewyn never truly wishes to kill them and Don Elmiro does not kill them directly. While they bestow an identity upon the females, they do not dismember or de-individualise them, and seem, maybe because of this distance, somehow more lenient and less judgmental of their victims than some of their anglophone counterparts.

---

[117] Sontag, p.13.
[118] Tatar, *Secrets,* p.152.

6. Concluding Thoughts: Escaping the Room and Changing its Display

The stereotypical fairy-tale heroine (of those past 200 years or so) is kind, soft, and understanding. This is of course not limited to the fairy tale—women are usually portrayed as victims and even today, violence perpetuated by women is often perceived as an uncommon, surprising occurrence. Even Amazons altered their own bodies so as to be warriors, as if their strength and violent behaviour was somehow explained or justified by their loss or alteration of femininity. Women who do not respect the rules, and in the case of 'Bluebeard', the rules set by their husbands, become a threat to the natural order of society. The 'Bluebeard' tale, however, is about punishing unruly women, but it is also, ultimately, about the one woman who escapes, the one who vanquishes the murderous male figure. The portrayal of the woman at the mercy of the husband's will or her brothers' intervention is either balanced or absent in recent retellings. Thus, many rewritings (francophone and anglophone alike) suppress the male saviours present in Perrault's tale: in Carter's version, it is the mother who saves her daughter—rather than the brothers—and the heroine remains innocent.

But turning upon itself the idea of the heroine as a victim, in many subsequent rewritings the woman becomes a direct threat (and a true heroine): she not only fights back, but takes control and vanquishes Bluebeard, not only by uncovering his deeds but by also putting him to death. When she grasps what the intentions of the man she is with are, Francesca Lia Block's heroine not only takes control in the story but *of* the story. In an extremely self-aware passage, the heroine becomes the storyteller and rewrites her own tale:

> I will rewrite the story of Bluebeard. The girl's brothers don't come to save her on horses, baring swords, full of power at exactly the right moment. There are no brothers. There is no sister to call out a warning. There is only a slightly feral one-hundred-pound girl with choppy black hair, kohl-smeared eyes, torn jeans, and a pair of boots with steel toes. This girl has a little knife to slash with, a little pocket knife, and she can run.[119]

The transgression of narrative rules parallels perfectly the breach of reader's expectations: the heroine might look like a victim but she makes the decision not to be one, and alters the story. Interestingly, it seems that what makes Amélie Nothomb's heroine dangerous is her refusal to conform to expectations of her as a woman: as she is not under a husband's

---

[119] Francesca Lia Block, pp.164-165.

guidance, she cannot be controlled. After going into the room with the Bluebeard character, Saturnine runs out and locks him inside knowing that by doing so she condemns him to freezing to death, becoming another still life among others.

Since Carter, there has been a clear, noticeable shift from praising the righteous male character to focusing on his acts and behaviour. As the central catalyst of the story, the room is what carries the action, but also triggers it, and explains both characters' behaviours. The shift which has occurred, does not simply blame 'Bluebeard' and present the woman as his victim, but rather gives a representation of women (and men) that is much more human and balanced. This shift therefore completely discredits Bluebeard's view of women: she can be dangerous, she does not comply, she avenges herself, and does not need her brothers to do so. And as she does so, she does not fit within classifications any longer, and nor does she belong to the room. Just like definitions of art, the definition of what a woman is or should be has evolved. Bluebeard, the old patriarchal god, has become obsolete and is the one that truly belongs in the room.

Thus, the female makes Bluebeard become part of his own display: I think the best illustration of this is Catherine Breillat's adaptation of the tale *Barbe bleue* (2009). Towards the end of the film, for a few seconds the (very young) bride silently looks down on Bluebeard's decapitated head placed in a golden plate, in a scene clearly reminiscent of Salome and John the Baptist. The careful composition, costumes and colours make the shot look like a painting, and brings us back to this link between the *mise en scene* and the idea of consumption. The innocent-looking heroine has defeated the villain, and her apparent insensitivity leaves a feeling of uneasiness as it shows that she is not what she seems.[120]

Adrienne Evans and Sarah Riley, in *Technologies of Sexiness* (2014), study how women construct their identity in contemporary western culture, and argue that concepts of femininity have evolved: 'No longer valued for its passivity, contemporary femininity is now more likely to be articulated in terms of being "active, recreational, material, independent, [and] consumerist."'[121] A most recent and popular variant of the themes of 'Bluebeard' is the 2012 novel *Gone Girl* (and its adaptation by David Fincher in 2014) in which the author, Gillian Flynn, plays with this image of women and her readers'

---

[120] A similar scene occurs in Garrone's *The Tale of Tales* in which the princess, married off to an ogre, comes back to her father the king, covered in mud and blood, carrying a bundle under her arm. She reveals the ogre's head and exclaims: 'here is the husband you chose for me.' Her father and all bow before her and she is crowned Queen in the final scene of the movie.

[121] Adrienne Evans and Sarah Riley, *Technologies of Sexiness: Sex, Identity, and Consumer Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.1.

expectations. In the novel, Amy Dunne, the main female character, writes about 'the cool girl':

> Men always say that as the defining compliment, don't they? She's a cool girl. Being the Cool Girl means I am a hot, brilliant, funny woman who adores football, poker, dirty jokes, and burping, who plays video games, drinks cheap beer, loves threesomes and anal sex, and jams hot dogs and hamburgers into her mouth like she's hosting the world's biggest culinary gang bang while somehow maintaining a size 2, because Cool Girls are above all hot. Hot and understanding. Cool Girls never get angry; they only smile in a chagrined, loving manner and let their men do whatever they want. Go ahead, shit on me, I don't mind, I'm the Cool Girl.[122]

One day, Amy disappears and almost instantly, all suspicions turn towards her husband Nick. As the book develops, however, it turns out that Amy, dissatisfied with her husband, has staged her own murder very carefully, making sure that because she appears as the perfect wife and he as the abusive husband, Nick will be found guilty and given the death penalty.

Some critics read the book and its adaptation as a commentary of 'marriage as an abduction.'[123] Both the film and the book question the expectations put on both man and women by society. Amy is a highly educated, accomplished young woman, but after securing a man by playing 'the cool girl', her marriage and future children still seem to be her greatest possible achievements. As Elif Batuman writes:

> These narratives speak less to the specific challenges of having a sociopath for […] a spouse than to the pathology of the unstated assumptions that we all pass along and receive. They speak to the revelation lying in wait for women when they hit the ages of marriageability and childbirth: that their carefully created and manicured identities were never the point; the point was for it all to be sacrificed to children and to men.

At one point in the novel, while still pretending to be dead, Amy is mugged and has nowhere to go. She turns to a former boyfriend against whom she had had a restricting order. By this point, reader and viewer know that she has already falsely accused another man of rape and staged her own murder to frame her husband. But it turns out that her ex

---

[122] Gillian Flynn, *Gone Girl* (London: Orion Books, 2012), p.208.
[123] Elif Batuman, 'Marriage Is an Abduction', *The New Yorker,* 10 October 2014
<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/marriage-abduction> [accessed 2 August 2015]

boyfriend truly is a Bluebeard figure. Now that he truly has control over her, he keeps her in a house full of cameras, requires her to look the way he wants her to, and tries to control her constantly. To escape him, Amy kills him, slitting his throat while staging rape. Similarly to Lia Block's heroine, Amy takes control of the story, she is dangerous and cunning, and as Elif Batuman comments: 'It's as if she doesn't *invent* abuse so much as anticipate it.'[124] She finally goes home, back to Nick, and forces him to submit to her will and pretend they have a happy marriage for all to see. The narrative, like all the other 'Bluebeard' tales studied, questions the idea of appearances and the expectations of what women can or cannot be. *Gone Girl* seems to reflect the evolution of the meanings of femininity where the woman is not simply meant to be examined and looked at; she is breaking free of the room in which she has been kept for too long. This, however, works ambiguously, for in its subversion it seems to prove the Bluebeards to be right: the woman let loose really is dangerous. While *Gone Girl* is subverting in term of actions, it is not truly in terms of ideas and maybe this accounts for the persistence of the 'Bluebeard' tale: if concepts of femininity have evolved, it is still as relevant nowadays as it was when Perrault first wrote it.

---

[124] Batuman

CONCLUSION

The prejudice against imaginative fiction, fantasy, and fairy tales as being childish, escapist, and unfit for 'serious' literature has been and remains persistent in Western culture, and it is a bias evident in both anglophone and francophone circles. The project undertaken in this thesis, however, stemmed from a belief that this preconception was stronger in francophone literature (especially when linked to magical narratives aimed at adults) than in anglophone works. The French always seemed to deride the magical, restrict it, debunk it, and write about 'real' stories, 'real' life, and it proved difficult to find literary works that used imaginative fiction in a positive way. Authors that were critically acclaimed (often during the (in)famous *rentrée littéraire*)[1] and used fantastical elements always seemed to have a purpose and tended to remind their readers of the contrived nature of the very tools they were using: Christine Angot, Eric Chevillard, Marc Petit, etc. Of course, fantasy as a genre finds its roots in the anglophone world[2] but it seemed to me that even anglophone novels that used fantastical elements in 'serious' works of literature (such as the ones written by Salman Rushdie, Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter, Jeannette Winterson and A.S. Byatt) did so with more freedom than their French counterparts. This feeling—acknowledgedly subjective at first—was reinforced through conversations with colleagues who also read in both languages. I began to look more closely into this issue, wishing to find more tangible proof and, if possible, a clear rationale. Research on the subject and this division proved close to non-existent—limited to vague mentions of a different approach to the imagination (most of them quoted in this thesis) and more than often written by writers rather than academics.

Thus, with this research, I set out to trace a different approach to the magical and the wondrous in anglophone and francophone literary production. The fairy tale was selected as an especially apt medium for study and comparison: its overarching themes and its presence in both cultures, meant that authors would all reuse the same basic material (either the same narratives or narrative patterns) and adapt it and reshape it in their own ways. The association of the fairy tale and the magical with childhood also made the focus on adult fairy tales an important one in terms of their situation within the cultural field and the possible bias authors might have for or against it.

---

[1] See, Chapter one, footnote 30, p.42.
[2] As argued in chapter 2, 4.

It is difficult to trace differences between two different cultural fields without falling into stereotyping national minds, thus, while narrowing the study to fairy-tale rewritings, this thesis also endeavoured to explore a large range of material. This was carried out through several approaches: first through a study of the fields of cultural production (historical, cultural, contextual, theoretical) and their interactions as linked to imaginative fiction, then through textual studies and comparisons. While many texts were examined, numerous fairy-tale rewritings could not be included, and as empirical proof of the hypothesis advanced, the selection process relating to the francophone texts differed significantly from that of anglophone texts due to the variety of relevant texts in English and their relative poverty in French (as discussed in the first chapter).

The first three introductory chapters examined the historical and contemporary elements which could account both for the discrepancy in attitude but also for the similarities between anglophone and francophone cultural fields in relation to the fairy tale. Indeed, as discussed and demonstrated throughout this thesis, while the fairy tale is often thought of as a simple (not to say simplistic) genre, it is actually a complex, multi-faceted genre that, despite the globalisation of some of its motifs, has an important place in literary circles and a continuing influence on Western culture.

Chapter one was structured around a study of various recent tales, their reception and place within the cultural field. It examined fairy-tale scholarship before comparing francophone and anglophone literary spheres with regards to the place of imaginative fiction in each. Through various examples and two case studies, the first chapter concluded that the prejudice was much stronger in the contemporary French literary scene. This is reflected in the rationalisation of the magical and the belief that it should be used under exceptional circumstances, where its use is necessary for one reason or another. For instance, Christine Angot believes that the supernatural should only be used as a force to represent the real, never for aesthetic or 'lighter' reasons.

After exposing these differences, the second chapter aimed to render visible certain traits or characteristics of the fairy tale and related genres that could explain the division postulated between francophone and anglophone rewritings. The chapter aimed to bring these to light by tracing them back to their genesis from problematic fields of production, composed of literary figures embedded in social and historical contexts. Elements that seemed particularly relevant to this genesis were selected so as to provide an explanatory framework for the francophone/anglophone distinction. The distinction became clear(er)

through this tracing exercise, notably by pointing to the role of the *querelle des anciens et des modernes* in its relation to the use of the marvellous in 'serious' French literature. Similarly, as shown in this chapter, at a time when romanticism spread over Europe, French romantics did not focus on imagination in the way the English or the German did. Collected and edited a century after Perrault and the *conteuses,* the Brothers Grimm's fairy tales were inherently different from their French predecessors, and marked what Jack Zipes has called 'an equilibrium' of the genre, influencing and participating in the formation of the canonical fairy tale. Moreover, despite the importance of fantastic and horror tales in France in the nineteenth century, France did not witness the same rise in fantasy that England did (especially during the Victorian period) nor the same enthusiasm and development of heroic fantasy (after Tolkien) both in the States and in Great Britain in the 1960s and 70s.

Moving from a purely historical point of view, the third chapter examined theories of genre as linked with imaginative fiction and the evolution of the fairy tale. A consideration of both anglophone and francophone theories of fantasy enabled clarification of the difference between the focuses adopted by representative scholars, notably in relation to pivotal studies such as Todorov's *Le Fantastique.* Quite logically, as the creation of paratexts depends on the creation of texts themselves, monographs focusing on imaginative fiction are more numerous in English than in French, and (apart from Todorov's) have played a bigger role in the evolution and understanding of the various genres. As such studies often rely on taxonomical creations, looking at notions of genre and genre hybridity was an important part of the chapter, especially as the rewritings selected all play with and participate in this hybridity. Indeed, none of the works examined are fairy tales in the traditional, canonical sense, but rather products of this hybridity, using and compiling the fairy-tale genre with others, participating in its re-creation, renewal, and survival.

In order to provide specific example-based analysis pertinent to the general hypotheses formulated in the introduction and the first three chapters, the three following chapters were text-based studies. The spectrum of wonder postulated in the introduction (and as illustrated through Chevillard and Coover's examples) provided a useful framework to compare and examine texts. Three different approaches were chosen in an effort to expand the scope of the study and incorporate different views and various perspectives: formal, thematic, and one-tale-based. In doing so, the chapters complemented

one another: while the formal approach investigated the ways in which the everyday and the magical encountered one another, the theme of transformation (which is strikingly magical) worked as a counterbalance to the rational tale of 'Bluebeard'.

The fourth chapter, which examined the ways in which the wondrous and the everyday interact in elaborate world creations (notably by applying Possible-world theory) compared anglophone and francophone rewritings that all brought together numerous fairy-tale characters and combined various fairy-tale narratives. While all these works go against Tolkien's concept of 'secondary creation' by being openly metafictional and using framing techniques, the francophone works tend to underline their impossibilities: when anglophone works such as *Grimm* could be read as using magic realism, francophone authors such as Pierre Pével apologise almost systematically for their own use of the magical. Of course, francophone authors can create a fully-fledged world, but it seems that the reliance on the reader to construct meaning is not only deemed necessary, it is also very explicitly requested—a clear contract has to be drafted before entering the dangerous realms of fantasy.

Chapter five proposed a thematic view, focusing on tales of animal brides. The works studied raised questions linked with societal and contextual views of monstrosity and representations of femininity. This comparison proved to be both a confirmation of this thesis and a means of qualifying it. While the magical and the wondrous were clearly more present in the American film *Penelope*, the novel *Truismes* proved to be more transgressive, presenting as it did a deeper questioning of the magical aspects of metamorphosis as linked with new representations of femininity. If it affirmed the general thesis of this work, it also raised questions regarding the role of the tales. If I tend to think of the francophone tales as often 'giving less' (through their absence of the magical and their systematic debunking of the imagination and the very narrative they use), *Truismes* proved to be more relevant and thought-provoking than its more magical American counterpart *Penelope*.

Finally, chapter six examined rewritings of 'Bluebeard'. The tale was selected for several reasons: first of all, because it traditionally lacks magic, and secondly, because it is traditionally French, but also has had a crucial role in the history of anglophone rewritings of fairy tales (thanks to Angela Carter's rewriting 'The Bloody Chamber'). It is therefore a cross-cultural tale *par excellence*, one which has travelled between francophone and anglophone spheres. The approach chosen was to look specifically at the forbidden room

and its role as the catalyst of the story. As Bluebeard sacralises this space and uses it to sublimate his wives' bodies, the room works as an emotional cluster, the place where wonder and terror occur. Once again, the rewritings shared many similarities but the francophone variants presented a more systematically rationalised approach to the tales. Other versions of 'Bluebeard' such as 'Fitcher's Bird' (in which limbs grow back and dead women come back to life) were limited to anglophone rewritings and the francophone narrations tended to offer a more systematic adaptation to the times and a further rationalisation of the tales through the absence of murder and / or marriage.

While this thesis has established that the current anglophone and francophone literary circles tend to approach the magical differently and offer a different type of wonder in fairy tales, this study could extend to other types of imaginative fiction, notably epic or heroic fantasy, a genre which is common in anglophone circles but very much limited in francophone ones to *bande-dessinée*. To my knowledge, this is not a project that has been undertaken, especially not by anyone in the field of contemporary tales.

This thesis has focused on texts that have rarely been studied before—if at all—in some cases this is because they were published only very recently, but in others, I believe, it is because they have been judged unworthy of academic study due to their popularity as mainstream materials. This thesis also endeavoured to bring together and compare works and theories which had not been studied in conjunction with one another so as to shed new light on them, and to participate in the constantly expanding and evolving field of fairy-tale studies and comparative literature alike. Given the recent popularity of the fairy tale, the current research could be expanded upon and carried on within the anglophone and francophone cultural spheres of creation (also examining Canadian literature for instance), but also extended by introducing the theories and ideas presented to other genres and other languages.

Rereading texts, rewriting them, recreating the wonder inherent to them is crucial; these changes in the narratives and the stories we tell each other play a key role in how we construct ourselves. If fairy tales are, as some think, little escapist stories, they are nonetheless wonderfully resilient narratives. This thesis constitutes, itself, a celebration of these tales and, I hope, participates in these movements which advocate the importance of storytelling, and the meaningful impact stories and the imagination can have, through time, across borders, across class, as they are inherently, I believe, part of what makes us human.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Literary Works

Albert-Weil, Jean-Claude, *L'Altermonde* (Paris: Editions Gills Club La Panfoulia, 2004)

Angot, Christine, *Peau d'âne* (Paris: Le Livre de poche, 2005 [2003])

Apuleius, *The Metamorphoses or The Golden Ass* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Atwood, Margaret, *Bluebeard's Egg* (London: Vintage, 1996)

_____, 'Circe / Mud', *Selected Poems 1965-1975* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976)

_____, *Maddaddam* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

_____, *Oryx and Crake* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003)

_____, 'Pig Song', *You are Happy* (New York: Harper Collins, 1975)

_____, *The Year of the Flood* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009)

Barrie, James M., *Peter Pan: Peter and Wendy ; Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens,* ed. by Jack Zipes (New York: Penguin Books, 2004)

Baum, Frank L., *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (London: Puffin Books, 1994 [1900])

Bernheimer, Kate, ed., *Brothers and Beasts: An Anthology of Men on Fairy Tales* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007)

_____, ed., *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Women Writers Explore Their Favourite Fairy Tales* (New York, Anchor Books, 1998)

_____, ed., *My Mother She Killed Me, My Father He Ate Me. Forty New Fairy Tales* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010)

Block, Francesca Lia, *The Rose and the Beast: Fairy Tales Retold* (New York: Harper

Collins, 2000)

Calvino, Italo, *Italian Folktales*, trans. by George Martin (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980)

Carroll, Lewis, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Princeton: Prineton University Press, 2015 [1865])

Carter, Angela, *La Compagnie des loups*, trans. by Jacqueline Huet (Paris: Editions Point, 1985)

Carter, Angela, *The Bloody Chamber* (London: The Folio Society, 2012 [1979])

Carter, Angela, *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault* (London: Penguin Classics, 2008 [1977])

Carter, Angela, ed., *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (London: Virago, 1990)

Chevillard, Eric, *Le Vaillant petit tailleur* (Lonrai: Les Editions de Minuit, 2011 [2003])

Cohen, Jack, Terry Pratchett, and Ian Stewart, *The Science of Discworld* (London: Random House, 2013 [1999])

Conan Doyle, Arthur, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (London: Pan Book, 1975 [1902])

Coover, Robert, *Briar Rose* (London: Penguin Classics, 2011 [1996])

Coover, Robert, *Stepmother*, illustrated by Michael Kupperman (San Francisco, CA: McSweeney's Books, 2004)

Courtade, Henri, *Loup y es-tu?* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010)

Danielewski, Mark Z., *House of Leaves*, 2nd edition (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000)

Darrieussecq, Marie, *Truismes* (Paris: Folio, 1996)

Dick, Philip K., *The Man in the High Castle* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992 [1963])

Donoghue, Emma, *Kissing the Witch* (London: Penguin, 1997)

Dubois, Pierre, *Comptines Assassines* (Paris: Folio, 2011)

_____, *Les contes de crimes* (Paris: Hoëbeke, 2000)

Duchon-Doris, Jean-Christophe, *Les nuits blanches du Chat botté* (Paris: Juillard, 2000).

Dufour, Catherine, *Blanche Neige et les lance-missiles* (Pößneck: Nestiveqnen, 2011)

Eddison, E.R., *The Worm Ouroboros* (New York: Open Road, 2014 [1922])

Finn Garner, James, *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* (London: Souvenir Press, 1994)

Fleutiaux, Pierrette, *Les Métamorphoses de la reine* (Paris: Folio, 1984)

Flynn, Gillian, *Gone Girl* (London: Orion Books, 2012)

Fournier, Alain, *Le grand Meaulnes* (Paris: Fayard, 1971 [1913])

Fowles, John, *The Collector* (London: Vintage, 2004 [1963])

Frost, Gregory, *Fitcher's Brides* (New York: Tor, 2002)

Gaiman, Neil, illustrated by Lorenzo Mattotti, *Hansel and Gretel* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014)

_____, 'The Hidden Chamber', *Fragile Things: Short Fictions and Wonders* (London: Headline Review, 2007)

_____, *Neverwhere* (London: Headline Review, 2005)

_____, illustrated by Chris Riddell, *The Sleeper and The Spindle* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015)

_____, 'Snow, Glass, Apples', *Smoke and Mirrors* (London: Headline Review, 1999)

Graham, Kenneth, *The Wind in the Willows* (London: Penguin Books, 2005 [1908])

Gray, Alastair, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (London: Granada, 1981)

Hoffmann, E.T.A, *The Golden Pot and Other Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1814])

Iacub, Marcela, *Belle et bête* (Paris: Stock, 2013)

Ishiguro, Kazuo, *The Buried Giant* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015)

Ivory, Helen, *Waiting for Bluebeard* (Hexham: Bloodaxe Books, 2014)

James, Henry, *The Turn of the Screw* (London: Secker, 1915)

Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Tough Guide to Fantasy Land* (London: Gollanz, 1996)

Jonquet, Thierry, *La Bête et la Belle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011 [1985])

Kafka, Franz, *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, trans. by Michael Hofman (New York: Penguin Books, 2007)

Kingsley, Charles, *The Water-babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-baby* (London: Puffin Books, 1994 [1863])

La Fontaine, Jean de, 'Epitre à Huet', *A Monseigneur L'Evêque de Soissons*, *Œuvres diverses* (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade, 1958), pp. 647-649.

_____, *Fables* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1985)

Lee, Tanith, 'Beauty' in *Red as Blood or Tales from the Sisters Grimmer* (New York: DAW Books Inc., 1983), pp. 149-86

Le Guin, Ursula K., *Tales from Earthsea: Short Stories* (London: Orion, 2001)

Leprince De Beaumont, Mme, 'La Belle et la bête', in *Si les fées m'étaient contées*, ed. by Francis Lacassin (Paris: Omnibus, 2003)

Lewis, C.S., *The Chronicles of Narnia* (London: HarperCollins, 2005 [1950-56])

Lindsay, David, *A Voyage to Arcturus* (London: Gollancz, 1963 [1920])

Lovecraft, H.P, *At the Moutains of Madness and Other Novels of Terror* (London: Harper Collins, 2002)

MacDonald, George, *The Princess and the Goblin* (Whitethorn, Calif. : Johannesen, 1993 [1872])

Maguire, Gregory, *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* (London: Headline Review, 2006 [1995])

Manley, Tim, *Alice in Tumblr-land: And Other Fairy Tales for a New Generation* (London: Penguin Books, 2013)

Martin, George R.R., *A Song of Ice and Fire* (New York: Bentham Books, 1996-)

Maupassant, Guy de, *Le Horla et autres récits fantastiques* (Paris: Pocket, 2006 [1887])

McEwan, Ian, *Enduring Love* (London: Vintage, 2006 [1997])

McKinley, Robin, *Deerskin* (New York: Ace Books, 1993)

Medley, Linda*, Castle Waiting,* intro. by Jane Yolen, Volume I (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2006)

Medley, Linda*, Castle Waiting,* Volume II (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2013)

Mérimée, Prosper, *La Vénus d'Ille* (Paris: Nilsson, 1930 [1837])

Meyer, Marissa, *Cinder* (London: Puffin Books, 2012)

_____, *Scarlet* (London: Puffin Books, 2013)

_____, *Cress* (London: Puffin Books, 2014)

_____, *Winter* (London: Puffin Books, 2015)

Meyer, Stephanie, *Twilight* (London: Hachette, 2005)

Miéville, China, *King Rat* (London: Pan Books, 2011 [1998])

Moore, Alan and Malcolm Maclaren, *Fashion Beast* (Rantoul, Ill.: Avatar Press, 2013)

Morris, William, *News From Nowhere and Other Classics* (London: Penguin, 2004)

Nerval, Gérard de, *Aurélia et autres textes autobiographiques* (Paris: Flammarion, 1990)

Nesbit, Edith, *Five Children and It* (London: Puffin Books, 1996 [1902])

Nothomb, Amélie, *Barbe bleue* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2012)

Ovid, *Metamorphoses: a New Verse Translation,* trans. by David Raeburn (London:

Penguin, 2004)

Peake, Mervyn, *The Illustrated Gormenghast Trilogy* (London: Vintage, 2011 [1946-1959])

Perrault, Charles, *Contes en vers*: *fac-similé de l'édition originale de 1695-1697* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1980)

Pével, Pierre, *Les Enchantements d'Ambremer* (Paris: Le Pré aux Clercs, 2003)

Pilbeam, Chris, *The Asbo Fairy Tales* (London: Michael O'Mara Books Limited, 2008)

Plath, Sylvia, 'Bluebeard', in *Collected Poems*, ed. by Ted Hughes (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1981)

Pratchett, Terry, *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents* (London: Random House, 2011[2001])

Pratchett, Terry, *Witches Abroad* (London: Gollanz, 2014 [1991])

Pullman, Philip, *His Dark Materials* (London: Everyman, 2011)

_____, *I was a rat!...or the Scarlet Slippers* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2000 [1999])

Queneau, Raymond, *Les fleurs bleues* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965)

Radcliffe, Ann, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1794])

Reid, Alastair, 'Curiosity', *Inside Out: Selected Poetry and Translations* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2008), pp.55-56.

Rice, Anne, *The Vampire Chronicles Collection: Interview with the Vampire, Vampire Lestat, Queen of the Damned* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003)

Rowling, J.K., *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997)

Saramago, José, *The History of the Siege of Lisbon*, trans. by Giovanni Pontiero (London: Vintage, 2000 [1989])

Sexton, Anne, *Transformations* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971)

Shelley Wollstonecraft, Mary, *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus* (London, Dent, 1912 [1818])

Stoker, Bram, *Dracula* (London: Penguin Books, 2003 [1897])

Templeton, Deborah, *Stolen and Other Stories* (Yorkshire: Macushla Books, 2010)

Tolkien, J.R.R, *The Hobbit: or, There and Back Again* (London: Harper Collins, 2012 [1937])

_____, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: Harper Collins, 2005 [1954-55])

Villeneuve, Mme de, 'La Belle et la bête'*, in Si les fées m'étaient contées,* ed. by Francis Lacassin (Paris: Omnibus, 2003), pp. 767-815

Walpole, Horace, *The Castle of Otranto* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964 [1764])

Willingham, Bill, *Fables*, 150 issues (New York: DC, Vertigo, 2002-2015)

Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Penguin Books, 2004 [1928])

Film and Television

La Barbe bleue, dir. by Catherine Breillat (ARTE France, 2009)

'Barbe bleue', dir. by Georges Méliès (Star Film, 1901)

La Belle et la Bête, dir. by Jean Cocteau (DisCina, 1946)

La Belle et la Bête, dir. by Christophe Gans (Pathé ; Concorde Filmverleih, 2014)

Blancanieves, dir. by Pablo Berger (Nix Film, et al., 2012)

The Brothers Grimm, dir. by Terry Gilliam (Dimension Film, MGM, Mosaic Media Group, 2005)

'Cendrillon', dir. by Georges Méliès (Georges Méliès, 1899)

Cinderella, dir. by Kenneth Branagh (Walt Disney Pictures, 2015)

The Company of Wolves, dir. by Neil Jordan (Palace Productions, 1984)

Enchanted, dir. by Kevin Lima (Walt Disney Pictures, 2007)

Game of Thrones (HBO, 2011-present)

Grimm (New York: NBC, 2011-present)

Into the Woods, dir. by Rob Marshall (Walt Disney Pictures, 2014)

Maleficent, dir. by Robert Stromberg (Walt Disney Pictures, 2014)

Mary Poppins, dir. by Robert Stevenson (Walt Disney Pictures, 1964)

Mirror Mirror, dir. by Tarsem Singh (Relativity Media, 2012)

Once Upon a Time (ABC Studios, 2011-present)

Peau d'âne, dir. by Jacques Demy (Parc Film, Marianne Productions, 1970)

Penelope, dir. by Mark Palansky (Summit Entertainment, 2006)

'Petit Chaperon Rouge', dir. by Georges Méliès (Georges Mélies, 1901)

Red Riding Hood, dir. by Catherine Hardwicke (Appian Way Productions, 2011)

Shrek, dir. by Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson (DreamWorks Pictures, 2001)

Sleeping Beauty, dir. by Clyde Geronomi, Les Clark, Eric Larson and Wolfgang Reitherman (Walt Disney Pictures, 1959)

Snow White and the Huntsman, dir. by Rupert Sanders (Universal Studios, 2012)

Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, dir. by David Hand (Walt Disney Pictures, 1937)

Snow White, A Tale of Terror, dir. by Michael Cohn (PolyGram Filmed, 1997)

The Sword in the Stone, dir. Wolfgang Reitherman (Walt Disney Pictures, 1963)

The Tale of Tales, dir. by Matteo Garrone (Archimede, Le Pacte, 2015)

Twin Peaks, dir. by David Lynch (Lynch Frost Production, Propaganda Films, Spelling Television, 1990-1991)

The Wizard of Oz, dir. by Victor Fleming (Metro Goldwyn Mayer, 1939)

Works of Art

Max, Gabriel von, *Der Anatom* (*The Anatomist*), 1869, oil on canvas, 136,5 x 189,5 cm, Neue Pinakothek, Munich

Millais, John Everett, *Ophelia*, 1851-51, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 111.8 cm, Tate London

Rops, Félicien, "Ma Fille, Monsieur Cabanel", 1905, etching

Swinton, Tilda, and Cornelia Parker, *The Maybe*, 1995-2013, performance, The Serpentive Gallery, London

Critical Works

Alexander, Victoria D., *Sociology of the Arts: Exploring Fine and Popular Forms* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003)

Ancet, Pierre, *Phénoménologie des corps monstrueux* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006)

Asma, Stephen T.*, On Monsters, An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Attebery, Brian, *Stories About Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

_____, *Strategies of Fantasy in American Literature: From Irwin to Le Guin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992)

Atwood, Margaret, 'Animal Victims' in Ralph H. Lutts, ed., *The Wild Animal Story* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), pp.215-24

Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003 [1946])

Auerbach, Nina, *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction* (London: Harvard University Press, 1998 [1978])

Bacchilega, Cristina, *Fairy Tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013)

_____, *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999)

Bachelard, Gaston, *La Poétique de la rêverie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965)

Barchilon, Jacques, *Le conte merveilleux français de 1690 à 1790* (Paris: Champion, 1975)

Barney, Richard A., *Plots of Enlightenment, Education and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999)

Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957)

Barzilai, Shuli, 'The Bluebeard Syndrome in Atwood's Lady Oracle : Fear and Femininity', *Marvels and Tales*, 19:2 (2005), 249–73

Bassnett, Susan, *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993)

Baudou, Jacques, 'La Fantasy Française', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 15:2 (March 2011), 171-80

Beate Tobiassen, E., 'Promenades de lecteurs dans *Le Vaillant petit tailleur* d'Eric Chevillard', *French Studies*, LXII:3 (2008), 313-27

Beaumont Malden, Matthew, ed., *Adventures in Realism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2007)

Beauvoir, Simone de, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Vol.2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1949)

Beecroft, Alexander, *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (London: Verso, 2015)

Bellin, Joshua David, *Framing Monsters: Fantasy Film and Social Alienation* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005)

Belsey, Catherine, *Critical Practice* (London and New York: Methuen, 1980)

Bennett, Andrew and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (Harlow: Longman, 2009 [1995])

Benson, Stephen, 'Stories of Love and Death: Reading and Writing the Fairy Tale Romance', in Sarah Sceats and Gail Cunningham, eds, *Image and Power: Women in Fiction in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longman, 1996), pp.103-13

_____, ed., *Contemporary Fiction and the Fairy-Tale* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008)

_____, *Cycles of Influence, Fiction, Folktale, Theory* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003)

Benthien, Claudia, *Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and the World* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2002)

Bernheimer, Kate, 'This Rapturous Form,' *Marvels & Tales*, 20:1 (2006) 67-83

Berthelot, Francis, *Bibliothèque de l'entre-monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005)

Berthou, Benoît, 'La Bande dessinée de Fantasy : un genre français ?', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 15:2 (March 2011) 209–22

Besson, Anne, 'Comme une ombre lointaine: l'influence de Tolkien sur la Fantasy française', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 15:2 (March 2011), 141-51

_____, *La fantasy* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2007)

Bettelheim, Bruno, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy tales* (London: Penguin, 1991 [1976])

Bianchi, Diana, and Catia Nannoni, 'Back to the Future : The Journey of *The Bloody Chamber* in Italy and France Back to the Future', *Marvels and Tales*, 25:1 (2011), 51–69

Blunt, Alison and Robyn Dowling, *Home (Key Ideas in Geography)* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006)

Bobby Remington, Susan, ed., *Fairy-Tales Reimagined: Essays on New Retellings* (London: McFarland & Co Inc, 2009)

Booth, Wayne Clayson, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1974)

_____, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1988)

Bordo, Susan, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2003 [1993])

Bottigheimer, Ruth B., 'Misperceived Perceptions: Perrault's Fairy Tales and English Children's Literature', *Children's Literature*, 30 (2002), 1-18

_____, *Fairy Tales: a New History* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2009)

Bould, Marc, 'The Dreadful Credibility of Absurd Things : A Tendency in Fantasy Theory,' *Historical Materialism*, 10:4 (1915), 51-88

Bourdieu, Pierre, *La Distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979)

_____, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993)

Bowlby, Sophie, Susan Gregory and Linda McKie, '"Doing home": Patriarchy, Caring, and Space', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 20:3 (May–June 1997), 343–350

Bowra, Cecil M., *The Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, [1950])

Boyd, Brian, *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009)

Braidotti, Rosi, 'Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: on Teratology and Embodied Differences', in Lykke, Nina and Rosi Braidotti, eds, *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace* (London: Zed Books, 1996)

Branham, Robert J., 'Fantasy and Ineffability: Fiction at the limits of Language,' *Extrapolation*, 24:1 (1983), 66-79

_____, 'Principles of the Imaginary Milieu: Argument and Idea in Fantasy Fiction,' *Extrapolation*, 21:4 (1980), 328-37

Bronfen, Elizabeth, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992)

Brooke-Rose, Christine, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)

Brooks, Terry, *Sometimes the Magic Works: Lessons From a Writing Life* (New York: Del Rey, 2003)

Brunel, Pierre, ed., *Romantismes européens et romantisme français* (Montpellier: Éditions Espaces 34, 2000)

Brunson, Geoffroy, 'Fantasy : La France et les critiques: rapide tour d'horizon du métadiscours français', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 15:2 (March 2011) 181–90

Burwick, Frederick and Jürgen Klein, eds, *The Romantic Imagination: Literature and Art in England and Germany* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996)

Butler, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993)

_____, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990)

_____, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004)

Bynum, Carolyn Walker, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001)

Calvin, David, 'In Her Red-Hot Shoes: Retelling "Snow White" From the Queen's Point of View' in Catriona McAra and David Calvin, eds, *Anti-Tale: The Uses of Disenchantment* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp.231-245.

Campbell, Lori M, *Portals of Power: Magical Agency and Transformation in Literary Fantasy* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., Inc., Publishers, 2010)

Carmichael, David L., ed., *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994)

Carroll, Jane, 'Land under Wave: Reading the Landscape of Tiffany Aching', *Gramarye*, 7 (summer 2015), 8-19

Carter, Angela, 'The Better to Eat You With', *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings* (London: Vintage, 1998 [1976]), pp.451-55

_____, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (London: Virago, 2006 [1979])

Cavallaro, Dani, *The World of Angela Carter: a Critical Investigation* (Jefferson, N.C. and London: McFarland & Co., 2011)

Chanady, Amaryll Beatrice, *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved versus Unresolved Antinomy* (New York: Garland, 1985)

Cixous, Hélène, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', *Signs*, 4:1 (Summer, 1976), 875-93

Clarke, Arthur C., *Profiles of the Future: An Enquiry into the Limits of the Possible* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973 [1962])

Clarke, Bruce, *Allegories of Writing: The Subject of Metamorphosis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995)

Clute, John and John Grant, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (London: Orbit Books, 1997)

Cohen, Joffrey Jerome, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses) (extract)', in Caroline Joan S. Picart, John Edgar Browning, eds, *Speaking of Monsters, A Teratological Anthology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp.15-18

Cope, Jackson I, *Robert Coover's Fictions* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986)

Corvin, Michel, *Qu'est-ce que la comédie* (Paris, Dunod, 1994)

Coupe, Laurence, *Myth* (London: Routledge, 2009)

Creeber, Glen, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen* (London: BFI Publishing, 2004)

Cupp, Jeff and Charles Avinger, 'Do Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers have Postmodern Dreams?' *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 4:3 (July 1993) 175-84

Darnton, Robert, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009 [1984])

Davidson, Hilda Ellis and Anna Chaudhri, eds, *A Companion to the Fairy Tale* (Cambridge and Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2003)

Davies, Paul, *Romanticism and Esoteric Tradition: Studies in Imagination* (Hudson, N.Y.: Lindisfarne Books, 1998)

De Bolla, Peter, *Art matters* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2003)

Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1975)

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Continuum, 2008, 1987)

De Musset, Alfred, 'Lettres de Dupuis et Coronet', *Oeuvres Completes*, vol III, (Paris: L. Conard, 1922-1937)

Depoux, Anneliese, 'La fabrique de l'événement littéraire: le cas de *Truismes*', *Communication et langages*, 142 (4ème trimestre 2004), 71-83

Doležel, Lubomír, *Heterocosmica* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998)

Doniger, Wendy, *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)

Donner, Christophe, *Contre l'imagination* (Paris: Fayard, 1998)

Doty, William G., *Myth: a Handbook* (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 2004)

Doughty, Amie A, '"This Is the Real Story…I Was Framed": Point of View and Modern Revisions of Folktales', *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures*, 25:3-4 (September 2002), 357-62

Duggan, Anne E., 'The Fairy-Tale Film in France; Postwar Reimaginings' in Jack Zipes, Pauline Greenhill and Kendra Magnus-Johnston*,* eds, *Fairy Tale Films Beyond Disney: International Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp.64-79

Dworkin, Andrea, *Woman Hating* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974)

Easthope, Hazel, 'A Place Called Home', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 21:3 (2004), 128-38

Eco, Umberto, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1994)

Edmundson, Mark, *Literature Against Philosophy, Plato to Derrida: a Defence of Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

Eliggi, María Graciela, 'Fairy tales, Old and New : Barthelme and Coover, Two Contemporary Fabulators and the Ancient Art of Story-telling', *Anuario*, 6 (2004), 271-77

Empson, William, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London: Hogarth Press, 1984 [1953])

Engell, James, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1981)

Evans, Adrienne and Sarah Riley, *Technologies of Sexiness: Sex, Identity, and Consumer Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Evans, Arthur B., 'Authorities, Canons and Scholarship: The Role of Academic Journals', in Gary Westfahl and George Slusser, eds, *Science Fiction, Canonization, Marginalization and the Academy* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2002), pp. 95-100

Eynat-Confino, Irène, *On the Uses of the Fantastic in Modern Theatre; Cocteau, Oedipus and the Monster* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

Fabre-Vassas, Claudine, *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians and the Pig*, trans. by Carol Volk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997)

Feldherr, Andrew, 'Metamorphosis in the *Metamorphoses*' in Philip Hardie, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 2002), pp.163-79

Fernandez Rodriguez, C., 'The Deconstruction of the Male-Rescuer Archetype in Contemporary Feminist Revisions of "The Sleeping Beauty"', *Marvels & Tales*, 16:1 (2002), 51-70

Fernandez, Irène, *Défense et illustration de la féerie. Du Seigneur des anneaux à Harry Potter: une littérature en quête de sens* (Paris: Phillipe Rey, 2012)

Fimi, Dimitra, 'Later Fantasy Fiction: Tolkien's Legacy', in S. D. Lee, ed., *A Companion to J.R.R Tolkien*, (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons), pp.335-49

Finch, Alison, *French Literature: a Cultural History* (Cambridge and Malden, Mass.: Polity, 2010)

Fisher, Philip, *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1998)

Fischlin, Daniel 'Queer Margins: Cocteau, La Belle et la Bête, and the Jewish Differend', *Textual Practice* 12.1 (1998), 69-88

Foucault, Michel, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France*, trans. by Graham

Burchell (New York and London: Verso, 2003)

Fowler, Alastair, *Kinds of Literature: an Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982)

François, Cyrille, 'Fées et *Weise Frauen*: les faiseuses de dons chez Perrault et les Grimm, du merveilleux rationalisé au merveilleux naturalisé', in Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère and Véronique Dasen, eds, *Etudes de Lettres, 289: Des* Fata *aux Fées*: *regards croisés de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 2011), pp.259-278

Frank, Arthur W., *Letting Stories Breathe: a Socio-Narratology* (Chicago, Ill. and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010)

Frye, Northrop, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957)

_____, *The Secular Scripture: a Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1976)

Fumaroli, Marc, *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998)

Furst, Lilian R., ed., *European Romanticism: Self Definition* (London and New York: Methuen, 1980)

_____, *Romanticism in Perspective: a Comparative Study of Aspects of the Romantic Movements in England, France and Germany* (London: Macmillan, 1969)

Gallagher, David, *Metamorphosis: Transformations of the Body and the Influence of Ovid's Metamorphoses on Germanic Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York, N.Y.: Rodopi, 2009)

Gatens, Moira, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power, and Corporeality* (London: Routledge, 1995)

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd edn. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000)

Goimard, Jacques, *Critique du merveilleux et de la fantasy* (Paris: Pocket, 2003)

Greenhill, Pauline and Jill Terry Rudy, eds, *Channeling Wonder: Fairy Tales on Television*

(Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014)

Greenhill, Pauline, 'Fitcher's [Queer] Bird: A Fairy-Tale Heroine and Her Avatars', *Marvels & Tales*, 22:1 (2008), 143-67

Griffin, Jasper, *Mirror of Myth* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986)

Guillory, John, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993)

Guyer, Paul, *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

Haase, Donald, 'Mine, Yours or Ours: Perrault, the Brothers Grimm and the Ownership of Fairy Tales' in Maria Tatar, ed., *The Classic Fairy-Tales* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1998)

_____, ed., *Fairy tales and Feminism: New Approaches* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004)

_____, ed. *Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales* (Santa Barbara, CA.: Greenwood, 2008)

Haraway, Donna, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the late Twentieth Century', in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.149-81

Harries, Elizabeth Wanning, *Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale* (Princeton, N.J. and Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2003 [2001])

Hassan, Ihab, 'Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective,' in Matei Calinescu and Douwe Fokkema, eds, *Exploring Postmodernism* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1987), pp.17-39

Hatem, Jad, *La Genèse du monde fantastique en literature* (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2008)

Hay, Rebecca and Christa Baxter, 'Happily Never After: The Commodification and Critique of Fairy Tale in ABC's *Once Upon a Time*' in Pauline Greenhill and Jill Terry Rudy, eds, *Channeling Wonder: Fairy Tales on Television* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014), pp.318-35

Hearne, Betsy, 'Beauty And The Beast : Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale', *The Lion*

and the Unicorn, 12:2 (1988), 74–111

Heidmann, Ute and Jean-Michel Adam, 'Comparatisme et analyse de discours. La comparaison différentielle comme méthode', in *Sciences du texte et analyse de discours. Enjeux d'une interdisciplinarité, Etudes de Lettres,* 1-2, ed. by Jean-Michel Adam and Ute Heidmann (Genève: Slatkine, 2005), p. 99-118

Heidmann, Ute and Jean-Michel Adam, 'Enjeux d'une comparaison *différentielle* et *discursive,* L'exemple de l'analyse des contes', in *Les nouvelles voies du comparatisme,* ed. by Hubert Roland and Stéphanie Vanasten, *Cahiers voor literaturwetenschap*, 2 (2010), pp.27-40

Heidmann, Ute and Jean-Michel Adam, 'Text Linguistics and Comparative Literature: Towards an Interdisciplinary approach to Written Tales: Angela Carter's Translations of Perrault', in *Language and Verbal Art Revisited: Linguistic Approaches to the Study of Literature*, ed. by Donna R.Miller and Monica Turci (London: Equinox, 2007), pp.181-96

Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Martine, '"But marriage itself is no party": Angela Carter's Translation of Charles Perrault's "La Belle au bois dormant"; or, Pitting the Politics of Experience against the Sleeping Beauty Myth', *Marvels & Tales*, 24:1 (2010), 131-51

Hennard Dutheil De La Rochère, Martine, 'Queering the Fairy Tale Canon: Emma Donoghue's Kissing the Witch' in Susan Redington Bobby, ed., *Fairy Tales Reimagined: Essays on New Retellings* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2009), pp.13-30

Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, Martine, and Ute Heidmann, '"New Wine in Old Bottles": Angela Carter's Translation of Charles Perrault's "La Barbe bleue"', *Marvels & Tales*, 23:1 (2009), 40–58

Hennard Dutheil De La Rochère, Martine, *Reading, Translating, Rewriting: Angela Carter's Translational Poetics* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013)

Heppenstall, Rayner, *Bluebeard and After: Three Decades of Murder in France* (London: Owen, 1972)

Herman, David, *Basic Elements of Narrative* (Chichester and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009)

Hermansson, Casie, 'Found in Translation: Charles Perrault's 'BlueBeard' in the English Eighteenth Century', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 76:2 (2007) 796–807

Horner, Avril, and Angela Keane, eds, *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)

Horstkotte, Martin, *The Postmodern Fantastic in Contemporary British Fiction* (Trier: Wissenshaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2004)

Hugo, Victor, *Cromwell* (Paris: Motteroz, 1881)

Hume, Kathryn, 'Postmodernism in Popular Literary Fantasy', in C.W. Sullivan, ed., *The Dark Fantastic: Selected Essays from the Ninth Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts* (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood, 1997)*,* pp. 173–182

_____, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1984)

Hume, Robert D., 'Gothic versus Romantic : A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel', *Language*, 84:2 (2012), 282–90

Hunt, Peter, and Millicent Lenz, eds., *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* (London and New York: Continuum, 2001)

Hunter, Lynette, *Modern Allegory and Fantasy: Rhetorical Stances of Contemporary Writing* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989)

Hutcheon, Linda, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, 2nd ed. (New York: Methuen, 1984)

_____, *Poetics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1988)

Irwin, William Robert, *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976)

Iser, Wolfgang, *How to Do Theory* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2006)

_____, *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989)

Jackson, Rosemary, *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981)

James, Edward and Farah Mendlesohn, *A Short History of Fantasy* (Faringdon: Libri Publishing, 2012 [2009])

James, Edward and Farah Mendlesohn, *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Jaubert, Anna, 'La Fontaine, l'Ancien et le Moderne. Rupture et continuité humanistes', *Rursus*, 6 (2011), 1–10

Jean, Raimond and J.R. Watson, eds, *A Handbook to English Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1992)

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media, Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2013)

Jones, Amelia and Adrian Heathfield, eds, *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012)

Jones, Christine A., and Jennifer Schacker, eds, *Marvelous Transformations, An Anthology of Fairy Tales and Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2013)

Joosen, Vanessa, 'Back to Ölenberg : An Intertextual Dialogue between Fairy-Tale Retellings and the Sociohistorical Study of the Grimm Tales', *Marvels & Tales*, 24:1 (2010), 99–115

_____, 'Disenchanting the Fairy Tale : Retellings of 'Snow White' between Magic and Realism', *Marvels & Tales*, 21:2 (2007), 228–39

_____, *Critical and Creative Perspectives on Fairy Tales: An Intertextual Dialogue Between Fairy-tale Scholarship and Postmodern Retellings* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011)

Jorgensen, Jeana, 'Innocent Initiations: Female Agency in Eroticized Fairy Tales', *Marvels & Tales*, 22:1 (2008), 27–37

Kay, Sarah, Terence Cave and Malcolm Bowie, eds, *A Short History of French Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Kérchy, Anna, ed. *Postmodern Reinterpretations of Fairy Tales: How Applying New Methods Generates New Meanings* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011)

Kermode, Frank, *Pleasure and Change: The Aesthetics of Canon* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Kim, Katherine J., 'Corpse Hoarding: Control and the Female Body in "Bluebeard,"

"Schalken the Painter," and *Villette*', *Studies in the Novel*, 43:4 (Winter 2011), 406-27

Knoepflmacher, U. C. 'Introduction: Literary Fairy Tales and the Value of Impurity', Marvels & Tales, 17:1 (2003), 15–36

Kodjak, Andrej and Krystyna Pomorska, eds. Stephen Rudy, *Myth in Literature* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1985)

Kozloff, Sarah, 'Narrative Theory and Television' in Robert C. Allen, ed., *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.67-100

Kroeber, Karl, *Romantic Fantasy and Science Fiction* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988)

Kusn, Jaroslav, 'Subversion of Myths : High and Low Cultures in Donald Barthelme's *Snow White* and Robert Coover's *Briar Rose*', *European Journal of American Culture*, 23:1 (2004), 31–49

Kuznets, Lois R, 'Fantasy : Revivals and New Definitions', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 11:1 (1987) 164–68

Lada-Richards, Ismène, '"Foul monster or good saviour?" Reflections on Ritual Monsters' in Catherine Atherton, ed., *Monsters & Monstrosity in Greek and Roman Culture* (Bari: Levante, 1998), pp.41-82

Laing, R. D, *The Divided Self: a Study of Sanity and Madness* (London: Tavistock, 1960)

Lampart, Fabian, 'The Turn to History and the *Volk:* Brentano, Arnim, and the Grimm Brothers', in Dennis F. Mahoney, ed., *The Literature of German Romanticism*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Camden House, 2004) pp.171-89

Langford, Jonathan, 'Why the Academy is Afraid of Dragons: The Suppression of the Marvelous in Theories of the Fantastic', in *Science Fiction, Canonization, Marginalization and the Academy* (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 2002), pp.51-64

Larrington, Carolyne, ed., *The Feminist Companion to Mythology* (London: Pandora Press, 1992)

Law, John, 'On the Subject of the Object: Narrative, Technology, and Interpellation', *Configurations*, 8:1 (Winter 2000), 1-29

Le Guin, Ursula K., *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction* (New York, N.Y.: Harper Perennial, 1993)

Lecoq, Anne-Marie, *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes: XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998)

Lee, Penny, *The Whorf Theory Complex: a Critical Reconstruction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1996)

Lescart, Alain, '"Fantasy à la Française": The Case of Pierre Pevel', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 15:2 (March 2011), 241–48

Letissier, Georges, ed., *Rewriting/Reprising: Plural Intertextualities* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009)

Lewis, C.S., *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961)

Lieberman, Marcia K., 'Some Day My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation Through the Fairy-Tale', in Jack Zipes, ed., *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp.185-201

López, Gemma, *Seductions in Narrative: Subjectivity and Desire in the works of Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson* (Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press, 2007)

Lovejoy, Arthur O., 'On the Discrimination of Romanticisms', *Modern Language Association*, 39:2 (June 1924), pp. 229-253

Lüthi, Daniel, 'Toying with Fantasy: The Postmodern Playground of Terry Pratchett's Discworld Novels', *Mythlore,* 33:1 (2014), 125-42

Lykke, Nina and Rosi Braidotti, eds, *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace* (London: Zed Books, 1996)

Macdonald, Myra, *Representing Women: Myths of Femininity in the Popular Media* (London: E. Arnold, 1995)

MacPherson, Pauline, ed., *Sub/versions: cultural status, genre and critique* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008)

Maitland, Sarah, *Gossip From the Forest* (London: Granta, 2013)

Makdisi, Saree and Felicity Nussbaum, eds, *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context:*

between East and West (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Malarte, Claire-lise, 'The French Fairy-Tale Conspiracy', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 12:2 (1988) 112–20

Manlove C.N., *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975)

Marcel, Patrick, 'Le fantastique aujourd'hui: catalogue des masques' in Léa Silhol and Estelle Valls de Gomis, eds, *Fantastique, fantasy, science fiction: mondes imaginaires, étranges réalités* (Paris: Autrement, 2005)

_____, *Atlas des brumes et des ombres* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002)

Margaret-Anne Hutton, ed., *Redefining the Real: the Fantastic in Contemporary French and Francophone Women's Writing* (Oxford and New York: Peter Lang, 2009)

Marr, Alexander and R.J.W. Evans, eds, *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Aldershot, Hants.: Ashgate, 2006)

Martin, Ann, 'Generational Collaboration in Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 35:1 (2010), 4-25

Martin, Laura, 'The German Enlightenment and Romantic *Märchen* as *Antimärchen*', in Catriona McAra and David Calvin, eds, *Anti-Tale: The Uses of Disenchantment* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp.18-36

Martins, Eunice, 'Du Conte aux romans de Fantasy pour la jeunesse,' *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 15:2 (March 2011) 191-97

Massey, Irving, *The Gaping Pig: Literature and Metamorphosis* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1976)

McAra, Catriona and David Calvin, eds, *Anti-Tales: The Uses of Disenchantment* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011)

McDonald, Nicola, 'A Polemical Introduction', in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. by McDonald (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004)

McGillis, R., '"A Fairytale Is Just a Fairytale": George MacDonald and the Queering of Fairy', *Marvels & Tales*, 17:1 (2003), 86-99

McGrath, Dearbhla, 'Weaving Words: A Diachronic Analysis of the Representation of Gender, Sexuality and Otherness in Women's (Re)Writings of *La Belle et la Bête'* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Dublin City University, 2013)

McHale, Brian, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1991 [1989])

Mendlesohn, Farah, 'Science Fiction in the Academies of History and Literature; Or, History and the Use of Science Fiction', in Gary Westfahl and George Slusser, eds, *Science Fiction, Canonization, Marginalization and the Academy* (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 2002), pp. 119–125

_____, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2008)

Michelet, Fabienne L., *Creation, Migration, and Conquest: Imaginary Geography and Sense of Space in Old English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

Mieder, Wolfgang, 'Grim Variations: From Fairy Tales to Modern Anti-Fairy Tales', *The Germanic Review*, 62:2 (1987), 90-102

Morreall, John, *Comic Relief. A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humour* (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing, 2009)

Mortimer, A. K. *Writing Realism: Representations in French fiction* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000)

Motte, Warren, *Fables of the Novel: French fiction since 1990* (Normal, Ill.: Dalkey Archive Press, 2003)

Mulvey, Laura, *Fetishism and Curiosity: Cinema and the Mind's Eye* (London: BFI, 2013)

Mulvey, Laura, 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', in *Feminism and Film Theory* ed. by Constance Penley (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 57-68

Munford, Rebecca, *Decadent Daughters and Monstrous Mothers: Angela Carter and European Gothic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013)

_____, ed., *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

Nadaud, Alain, *Malaise dans la Littérature* (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 1993)

Naddaff, Ramona, *Exiling the Poets: the Production of Censorship in Plato's Republic* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002)

Nash, Cristopher, *World-Games The Tradition of Anti-Realist Revolt* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987)

Niemeier, Susanne, and René Dirven eds, *Evidence for Linguistic Relativity* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 2000)

Nikolajeva, Maria, 'Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern', *Marvels & Tales*, 17:1 (2003), 138–56

Orme, Jennifer, 'Mouth to Mouth: Queer Desires in Emma Donoghue's Kissing the Witch', *Marvels & Tales*, 24:1 (2010), 116–30

Oziewicz, Marek, and Daniel Hade, 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell? Philip Pullman, C.S. Lewis and the Fantasy Tradition', *Mythlore*, 109/110 (2010), 39-54

Oziewicz, Marek, *One Earth, One People: the Mythopoeic Fantasy Series of Ursula K. Le Guin, Lloyd Alexander, Madeleine L'Engle and Orson Scott Card* (Jefferson, N.C. and London: McFarland & Co, 2008)

Pavel, Thomas, *Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986)

Péju, Pierre, *La petite fille dans la forêt des contes. Pour une poétique du conte: en réponse aux interprétations psychanalytiques et formalistes* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1997 [1981])

Perry, Kathleen A., *Another Reality: Metamorphosis and the Imagination in the Poetry of Ovid, Petrarch and Ronsard* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990)

Petit, Marc, *Eloge de la fiction* (Paris: Fayard, 1999)

Philmus, Robert M., 'Todorov's Theory of 'The Fantastic': The Pitfalls of Genre Criticism', *Mosaic*, 13:3 (1980) 71–82

Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by Desmond Lee (London: Penguin, 2007)

Poe, Edgar Allan, 'The Philosophy of Composition' (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1999 [1846])

Porter, Roy, ed., *Romanticism in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)

Prieto, Eric*, Literature, Geography, and the Postmodern Poetics of Place* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Propp, Vladimir, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin and London: University of Texas

Press, 1968 [1928])

Rabadi, Isabelle B, 'La réécriture décidément: *Le Vaillant petit tailleur* d'Éric Chevillard', *Synergies*, 7 (2010) 41–48

Rabkin, Eric S. *The Fantastic in Literature* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1976)

Rackham, Oliver, *Woodlands* (*New Naturalist Library No.100*)(London: Collins, 2006)

Ragan, K., 'What Happened to the Heroines in Folktales ? An Analysis by Gender of a Multicultural Sample of Published Folktales Collected from Storytellers', *Marvels & Tales*, 23:2 (2009) 227–47

Redies, Sunje, 'Return with New Complexities: Robert Coover's *Briar Rose*', *Marvels & Tales*, 18:1 (2004) 9–27

Redington Bobby, Susan (ed.) *Fairy Tales Reimagined: Essays on New Retellings* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2009)

Reinders, Leeke and Marco Van Der Land, 'Mental Geographies of Home and Place: Introduction to the Special Issue', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 25:1 (2008), 1-13

Renard, Jean-Bruno, *Le merveilleux: Sociologie de l'extraordinaire* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2011)

Rich, Adrienne, 'When We Dead Awaken : Writing as Re-Vision', *Women, Writing and Teaching,* 34:1 (1972) 18-30

Riffaterre, Michael, *Fictional Truth* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990)

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith, *A Glance Beyond Doubt: Narration, Representation, Subjectivity* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996)

Rodriguez, Carolina Fernandez, 'The Deconstruction of the Male-Rescuer Archetype in Contemporary Feminist Revisions of "The Sleeping Beauty,"' *Marvels & Tales*, 16:1 (2002) 51–70

Roemer, Danielle M. and Cristina Bacchilega, eds, *Angela Carter and the Fairy tale* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001)

Rolls, Alistair and Marie-Laure Vuaille-Barcan, 'Une seule ou plusieurs femmes-truies? Une lecture virtualisante de *Truismes* de Marie Darrieussecq', *Australian Journal*

of French Studies, 46 (2009) 31–44

Rolls, Alistair, '"Je Suis Comme Une Truie Qui Broute": Une Lecture Pomologique De *Truismes* De Marie Darrieussecq', *The Romanic Review*, 92:4 (Nov. 2001) 479-90

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *Emile ou de l'Education*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1969)

Rowe, Karen, 'Feminism and Fairy Tale', *Women's Studies: An Inter-disciplinary Journal*, 6:3 (1979), 237-59

Ruaud, André-François, *Cartographie du merveilleux* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001)

Russ, Joanna, '"Somebody's trying to kill me and I think it's my husband": The Modern Gothic', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 6:4 (1973) 666–91

Ryan, Marie-Laure, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991)

Sabin, Margery, *English Romanticism and the French Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1976)

Sage, Lorna, 'The Savage Sideshow: A Profile of Angela Carter', *New Review,* 39/40 (1977) 51-57

Sale, Roger, *Fairy Tales and After: From Snow White to E.B. White* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1978)

Sancier-Château, Anne, 'Modernité de La Fontaine', *Présence de la Fontaine* (Lyon: U. Jean Moulin, 1995)

Sandner, David, *Critical Discourses of the Fantastic* (Farnham and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Publications, 2011)

Sandner, David, *Fantastic Literature: a Critical Reader* (Westport, Conn. and London: Praeger, 2004)

Sarraute, Nathalie, *L'ère du soupçon: essais sur le roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956)

Schlobin, Roger C. ed., *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art* (Brighton: Harvester: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982)

Schneider, Marcel, *La Littérature fantastique en France*, (Paris: Fayard, 1964)

Schwabe, Claudia, 'Getting Real with Fairy Tales: Magic Realism in *Grimm* and *Once Upon a Time*', in Pauline Greenhill and Jill Terry Rudy, eds, *Channeling Wonder:*

Fairy Tales on Television (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014), pp.294-315

Schweickart, Patrocinio P., 'Reading Ourselves: Towards a Feminist Theory of Reading', in Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocinio P. Schweickart, eds, *Gender and Reading* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986)

Seidel, Michel, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986)

Seifert, Lewis Carl, 'France' in Jack Zipes, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales – The Western Fairy Tale Tradition from Medieval to Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.174-87

_____, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender in France 1690-1715, Nostalgic Utopias* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Short, Sue, *Cyborg Cinema and Contemporary Subjectivity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

Sigel, Lisa Z., *Making Modern Love: Sexual Narratives and Identities in Interwar Britain* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 2012)

Silhol, Léa and Estelle Valls de Gomis, eds, *Fantastique, fantasy, science fiction: Mondes imaginaires, étranges réalités* (Paris: Autrement, 2005)

Sinding, Jeppe, ed., *Myths and Mythologies: a Reader* (London: Equinox, 2009)

Slusser, George and Eric S. Rabkin, *Styles of Creation: Aesthetic Technique and the Creation of Fictional Worlds* (London: University of Georgia Press, 1992)

Smith, Kevin Paul, *The Postmodern Fairy Tale: Folkloric Intertexts in Contemporary Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

Smith, Ross, *Inside Language: Linguistic and Aesthetic Theory in Tolkien* (Zollikofen, Switzerland: Walking Tree Publishers, 2007)

Sobchack, Vivian Carol, *Screening Space: the American Science Fiction Film* (New York: Ungar, 1987)

Sontag, Susan, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1979)

Soriano, Marc, *Les Contes de Perrault, Culture savante et tradition populaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968)

Staiger, Janet, *Media Reception Studies* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005)

Sundmark, Björn, *Alice in the Oral-Literary Continuum* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1999)

Swinfen, Ann, *In Defence of Fantasy: Study of the Genre in English and American Literature Since 1945* (London: Routledge, 1984)

Tanner, Tony, *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965)

Tatar, Maria, 'The Houses of Fiction : Toward a Definition of the Uncanny', *Comparative Literature*, 33:2 (1981), 167-82

_____, ed., *The Classic Fairy Tales* (New York: Norton, 1999)

_____, *Secrets Beyond the Door: The Story of Bluebeard and his Wives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004)

_____, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987)

Tenga, Angela, 'Wandering *Wesen*: Immigration as Adaptation in *Grimm*', Marisa C. Hayes, ed., *Supernatural Studies*, 2:1 (Winter 2015), 34-46

Thomas, Joyce, 'Woods and Castles, Towers and Huts: Aspects of Setting in the Fairy Tale,' *Children's Literature in Education*, 17:2 (June 1986) 126–34

Tiffin, Jessica, *Marvelous Geometry: Narrative and Metafiction in Modern Fairy Tale* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009)

Tobiassen, Elin Beate, 'Promenades de lecteurs dans *Le Vaillant petit tailleur* d'Eric Chevillard', *French studies*, LXII:3 (2008) 313–27

Todd, Christopher, *A Century of French Best-sellers (1890-1990)* (Lewiston, N.Y.; Lampeter, Wales: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994)

Todorov, Tzvetan, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970)

Tolkien, J. R. R., *Tree and Leaf* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964)

Traill, Nancy H, *Possible Worlds of the Fantastic: The Rise of the Paranormal in Fiction* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1996)

Ussher, Jane M., *Fantasies of Femininity: Reframing the Boundaries of Sex* (London: Penguin, 1997)

Uther, Hans-Jörg, *The Types of International Folktales: a Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2004)

Valéry, Francis, *Passeport pour les étoiles* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000)

Vaz da Silva, Francisco, 'The Invention of Fairy Tales,' *Journal of American Folklore,* 123 (2010) 398-425

Velay-Vallentin, Catherine, *L'histoire des contes* (Paris: Fayard, 1992)

Viart, Dominique, *La Littérature française au présent: héritage, modernité, mutations* (Paris: Bordas, 2005)

Walton, Kendall L., *Mimesis as Make-believe: on the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990)

Warner, Marina, 'Introduction', in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (London: The Folio Society, 2012 [1979]), pp.ix-xvi

_____, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

_____, *From the Beast to the Blonde, On Fairy Tales and their Tellers* (London: Vintage; New Ed edition, 1995)

_____, *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time — The 1994 Reith Lectures* (London: Vintage, 1994)

_____, *Monuments and Maidens: the Allegory of the Female Form* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985)

_____, *Once Upon a Time, A Short History of Fairy Tale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

_____, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)

Watson, Ben, 'Fantasy and Judgement : Adorno, Tolkien, Burroughs Fantasy in Marx and

Adorno', *Historical Materialism,* 10:4 (1951) 213–38

Watt, Ian, *The Rise of the Novel, Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding,* 6th impression (London: Chatto and Windus, 1974 [1957])

Westfahl, Gary and George Slusser, eds, *Science fiction, Canonization, Marginalization, and the Academy* (Westport, Conn.; London: Greenwood Press, 2002)

Westphal, Robert, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces,* trans. By Robert T. Tally Jr. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

_____, *The Plausible World,* trans. by Amy D. Wells (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Williams, Christy, 'Who's Wicked Now? The Stepmother as Fairy-Tale Heroine', *Marvels & Tales*, 24:2 (2010) 255-71

Wilson, Anne, 'Magical Thought in Story', *Signal,* 36 (1981), 138–51

Wilson, Sharon Rose, *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction: From Atwood to Morrison* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

Wolf, Mark J.P., *Building Imaginary Worlds, The Theory and History of Subcreation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012)

Wolf, Naomi, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (London: Vintage, 1991 [1990])

Wolfe, Gary K., *The Literature of Fantasy* (New York: Garland, 1979)

Ziolkowski, Jan, 'Straparola and the Fairy Tale: Between Literary and Oral Traditions', *Journal of American Folklore,* 123:490 (2010), 377–97

_____, *Fairy Tales from Before Fairy Tales: The Medieval Latin Past of Wonderful Lies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006)

Ziolkowski, Theodore, 'Otherworlds: Fantasy and the Fantastic', *The Sewanee Review*, 86:1 (1978), 121-29

Zipes, Jack, 'Introduction: Re-making of Charles Perrault', in Angela Carter, *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault* (London: Penguin, 2008 [1977]), pp.vii-xxvii

_____, 'On the Use and Abuse of Folktales and Fairy Tales with children', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly, 1978 Proceedings* (1978), 113-22

_____, 'The Changing Function of the Fairy Tale', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 12:2 (1988) 7-31

_____, 'The Enchanted Forest of the Brothers Grimm: New Modes of Approaching the Grimms' Fairy Tales', *Germanic Review*, 2:62 (1987), 66-74

_____, 'The Meaning of Fairy Tale within the Evolution of Culture', *Marvels & Tales* 25:2 (2011), 221-43

_____, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*, 2nd revised edn (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2002 [1979])

_____, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: the Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (New York: Routledge, 2006)

_____, *Relentless Progress, The Reconfiguration of Children's Literature, Fairy Tales, and Storytelling* (New York: Routledge, 2008)

_____, *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter* (New York ; London: Routledge, 2002 [2001])

_____, *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989 [1988])

_____, *The Complete First Edition of The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014)

_____, *The Enchanted Screen: the Unknown History of Fairy-tale Films* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011)

_____, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: from Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm: Texts, Criticism* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2001)

_____, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: the Cultural and Social History of a Genre* (Princeton, N.J. and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012)

_____, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Fairy tales—The Western Fairy Tale Tradition from Medieval to Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

_____, *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 2007)

_____, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013)

Žižek, Slavoj, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London and New York: Verso, 2008)

Zunshine, Lisa, *Strange Concepts and the Stories they Make Possible: Cognition, Culture, Narrative* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008)

Newspapers Articles and Online Resources

'15 000 exemplaires de Barbe bleue vendus en quatre jours', *L'express*, 6 September 2012. <http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/15-000-exemplaires-de-barbe-bleue-vendus-en-quatre-jours_1157175.html> [accessed 9 July 2015]

Aissaoui, Mohammed, 'Rentrée littéraire: 589 romans prévus pour 2015', *Le Figaro*, 25 June 2015. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/livres/2015/06/25/03005-20150625ARTFIG00265-rentree-litteraire-589-romans-prevus-pour-2015.php> [accessed 9 July 2015]

Alter, Alexandra, 'For Kazuo Ishiguro, "The Buried Giant" Is a Departure', *The New York Times*, 19 February 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/20/books/for-kazuo-ishiguro-the-buried-giant-is-a-departure.html> [accessed August 2015]

Angot, Christine, 'Non, non, non, et non', *Le Monde*, 23 February 2013. <http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2013/02/23/non-non-non-et-non_1837772_3232.html> [accessed 6 July 2012]

Batuman, Elif, 'Marriage Is an Abduction', *The New Yorker,* 10 October 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/marriage-abduction> [accessed 2 August 2015]

Boone, John, 'Did Disney Digitally Alter Cinderella's Waist?', *Etonline*, 13 February 2015 <http://www.etonline.com/movies/159748_did_disney_digitally_alter_cinderella_waist/> [accessed July 2015]

Brosse, Luigi, Interview d'Alain Névant, *Elbakin.net*, 10 avril 2002.
<http://www.elbakin.net/interview/exclusive/Alain-Nevant-en-exclusivite/>
[accessed 01 November 2014]

Burkeman, Oliver, 'Fooled you', *The Guardian*, 16 August 1996.
<http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/1999/aug/16/features11.g24> [accessed
13 July 2015]

Cauwe, Lucie, 'Champagne pour Amélie et ses 21 romans en 20 ans', *Le Soir*, 31 august
2012. <http://www.lesoir.be/archives?url=/culture/livres/2012-08-31/champagne-
pour-amelie-et-ses-21-romans-en-20-ans-935129.php> [accessed 9 July 2015]

Chandler, Daniel, 'An Introduction to Genre Theory' (1997).
<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf>
[accessed June 2015]

Comba, François, 'Harry Potter est un batard', *Le Nouvel Obs*, 21 September 2013.
<http://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/actualites/20130920.OBS7871/harry-potter-est-un-
batard.html> [accessed July 2015]

Dodds, Eric 'George R.R. Martin Admits Die-Hard Game of Thrones Fans May Have
Already Uncovered the Show's Biggest Surprise', *Time*, 12 August 2014.
<http://time.com/3104085/game-of-thrones-jon-snow-plot-twist/> [accessed May
2015]

Gaiman, Neil and Kazuo Ishiguro, '"Let's talk about genre': Neil Gaiman and Kazuo
Ishiguro in conversation', *The New Statesman*, 4 June 2015

Garcin, Jérôme, 'De l'art et du cochon', *L'Express,* 22 August 1996

Garcin, Jérôme, 'Tendance', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 21-27 February 2013, p.80

Goldstein, Dina, 'Fallen Princesses', 2012 <http://www.fallenprincesses.com/> [accessed
July 2015]

Iacub, Marcella, Interview: 'Mon histoire avec DSK', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 21-27
february 2013, pp.

Jamieson, Teddy, 'Glasgow embarks on the world's first fantasy literature degree', *Herald*

Scotland, 27 June 2015. <http://www.heraldscotland.com/books-poetry/interviews/glasgow-embarks-on-the-worlds-first-fantasy-literature-degree.129597041> [accessed 9 July 2015]

Kakutani, Michiko, 'Review: In 'The Buried Giant,' Ishiguro Revisits Memory and Denial', *The New York Times*, 23 February 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/books/review-in-the-buried-giant-ishiguro-revisits-memory-and-denial.html> [accessed August 2015]

Le Guin, Ursula K., 'Are They Going to Say this is Fantasy?', *Book View Café*, 2 March 2015. <http://bookviewcafe.com/blog/2015/03/02/are-they-going-to-say-this-is-fantasy/> [accessed August 2015]

'Le Prix Imaginaire', website <http://gpi.noosfere.org/> [accessed July 2015]

McNamara, Mary '*Grimm*, *Once Upon a Time* reviews: Fairy tales all grown up' *Los Angeles Times*, October 22, 2011. <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/oct/22/entertainment/la-et-grimm-and-once-20111022> [accessed 6 July 2015]

Meslow, Scott, 'How Shrek went from the world's biggest animated franchise to the internet's creepiest meme', *The Week*, 21 May 2015. <http://theweek.com/articles/556154/how-shrek-went-from-worlds-biggest-animated-franchise-internets-creepiest-meme> [accessed 2 August 2015]

Petit, Marc, 'Le refus de l'imaginaire', *Le Monde*, 1–3, 1999.

Rolls, Alistair 'Irrelevance opens minds' <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/profile/alistair-rolls> [accessed July 2015].

Shattuck, Kathryn**,** '"Cinderella" Has a Dusting of "Downton Abbey"', *The New York Times*, 5 March 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/08/movies/cinderella-has-a-dusting-of-downton-abbey.html> [accessed July 2015]

Sheryl, Lee, 'Interview' <www.davidlynch.de/withlauraparlmer.html> [accessed July 2015]

Tasha, Robinson, 'Interview: Bill Willingham', *AVClub.com*, 6 August 2007,

<http://www.avclub.com/article/bill-willingham-14134> [accessed July 2015]

Topaloff, Anna, 'Va te faire voir chez les geeks', *Marianne*, 2 February 2008

Weeks, Linton, 'The Fairy Tale Struggles to Live Happily Ever After', *NPR*, 21 January 2011