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童话的青春灵药：

从“白雪公主”与“睡美人”的
当代重写谈起



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前 言

童话曾是人类原始梦想的最初记录,曾是踏步孩提的枕畔宝书。它不仅拥有不计其数的忠诚读者,又是娱乐业、商业用之不竭的法宝。让它永葆青春的灵丹妙药便是来自不同社会历史背景、出于不同动机的及时重写。本书以“白雪公主”和“睡美人”为参照,选取了唐纳德·巴塞尔姆(Donald Barthelme, 1931—1989)、安吉拉·卡特(Angela Cater, 1940—1992)、罗伯特·库弗(Robert Coover, 1932—)、安妮·赛克斯顿(Anne Sexton, 1928—1974)四位当代作家的重写作品作为研究对象。书中分析了两则童话的发展进程,详述了重写作品的重述规模,列举它们对文学遗产的贡献。虽然童话重写具有一定的颠覆性和破坏性,但因其解构了经典童话中陈旧的意识形态、反映了时代精神,所以对童话这一文学类型的发展大有裨益。

本书由引言、主体三章及结论组成。引言首先简洁扼要地介绍了本书对童话、童话重写的理解,以及形成这一文学现象的理论催化剂;其次,进行了国内外文献综述,并概述了现有的研究方法;最后,勾画出本书的研究内容、框架、意义及贡献。

第一章,“诞生与诅咒:童话的庇护者”,着重纵向探讨两则童话的发展历程,追述它们从佚名祖先,到巴吉雷、佩罗,再到格林兄弟,乃至迪斯尼的演变。通过分析,本书发现童话首先从口头文化转变为书面文化,继而其中的淫言秽语招致涤清,从此它们成为正典。饮誉之时,童话也逐渐转变成神话,成为“化石”,最后被商品化。

第二章,“解除魔法:二十世纪起义者”,将研究重点转向童话重写,集中讨论了重写文本对前述文本的颠覆。本章又分为三个部分:对老套人物的破坏、对潜在关系的揭露、对隐晦禁忌的评说。本书阐明了此种任达不拘重写的功用,揭示了它为理解旧有艺术形式带来的启示。透过童话单纯无知的假象,就会发现它是被主流意识形态型塑、用以达到其目的的工具。

第三章,“终极觉醒:着魔的读者”,论述了童话重写的积极意义,并将其归纳为三重转变,分别为文学转变、时空转变、权力转变。通过改变叙事人称、替换背景等一系列手段,当代作家将原有的“读者文本”转换成了“作者文本”。除此之外,他们变革了经典童话中的权力关系,赋予了读者更多的权利。从而,传统童话不再被集权所束缚,读者不再盲从于童话,童话得以枯枝再春、与时偕行。

通过上述各章对两则童话过去发展的讨论、对当代重写的分析,本书详细列举了改写作品的破坏性与建设性,并得出以下结论:当代童话重写推翻了文学界的霸权,打破了旧有意识形态的枷锁,因此拯救了停滞不前的经典艺术形式,同时证实了自身的合法性。总而言之,童话重写不仅曾经是其发展不可或缺的部分,现在和将来都将扮演同样重要的角色。正是有了这眼青春之泉,童话才能随着时代变迁不停成长,却又能青春永驻。

虽然本书仅分析了 20 世纪文学史上的童话重写现象,但此番重写热潮尚未退熄。作家刚有松懈,影视界又紧追其后,为传统童话加入时代的欲望、当下的审美和私人的创伤。2010 年与 2011 年,每年都有一部《睡美人》电影上映,2012 年将有两部由“白雪公主”改编的电影上映。一部是 Relativity Media 电影公司出品的《格林兄弟的白雪公主》(或译《魔镜魔镜》),侧重其魔幻色彩;另一部则是环球影业的《白雪公主与猎人》,风格黑暗,白雪公主也为此做出了很大转型。由此可见,童话仍拥有无数的拥趸,

它不仅是座天然的富矿,可供后世淘金,同时也从新时代吸收能量,从而与时俱进、还年驻色。

最后,感谢所有在我写作本书过程中给予我支持和帮助的人,同时也要感谢浙江工商大学外国语学院对出版本书的资助。由于笔者个人的学术水平及掌握资料有限,在研究过程中难免有所疏漏,不足之处,敬请各位给与批评和指正,由衷地希望本书能为童话这一特殊文体发展做出微薄的贡献。

阙蕊鑫
2012年,杭州

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Introduction

Once upon a time, the forefathers of mankind resort to folktale in quest of the truth of this world and the reason for our being. Those stories, told around the fire and passed on by the vagrants, express the essential knowledge and thought of human being on the early stage. They are like the ancient flame, which is kindled into a fire that blazes during countless generations to the present. The steady flow of collective wisdom and shared experience evokes profound feelings of awe, generates respect for life as a miraculous process and inspires curiosity in the exploration of life. One kind of folktale, which especially emphasizes fanciful events and legendary deeds, is later named as fairy tale. Most of them set in an imaged place and in abstract time, they portray the witches, the talking animal, the royal families and other folkloric characters, they involve enchantment and supernatural sensation, they follow the formulaic sequence of events and usually conclude with happy endings. The documentation of such tales gives birth to literary fairy tale, which keeps the ancient plots and motifs of the oral culture. The wide scope of literary fairy tale's circulation, the high number of its reprints and the multiple adaptations in various fields are the

proofs of the enduring charm and the passports to the test of time. One open sesame of fairy tale is its perennial freshness in representing its own time and awakening our regard for the condition of life. With legions of hands does fairy tale evolve from the oral folk culture to the present classical stories, and with more can it retain the vitality and prosperity in the coming age.

1. Classic Fairy Tale

In spite of the fact that fairy tale, as a literary genre, has institutionalized for more than a century and well established itself as the canonical text, it is arduous and even impossible to provide a concrete definition for this genre due to its complicated system. Under the entry of *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*, fairy tale is defined either as “a tale about fairies” or “an incredible story; a fabrication” (Hawkins and Allen 508). Nevertheless, it fails to be a satisfactory definition since the former depicts a partial picture and the latter has the flaw of vagueness. By narrowing the topic to a manageable scope, Maria Tatar tries to pinpoint the meaning of the traditional European fairy tale as a story which “[sets] in ‘a fictional world where preternatural events and supernatural invention are taken wholly for granted’” (Davidson and Chaudhri 4). Further explorations give up the task of providing a definition in a meticulous way and favor the strategy of descriptive study. For instance, the mention of the phrase is once associated with “tales that include

elements of folk tradition and magical or supernatural elements, tales that have a certain, predictable structure” (Harries, *Twice* 6). Other scholars take a different perspective and approach the genre from its function.

They are not just psychological blueprints; they are also what the Princeton historian Robert Darnton calls “historical documents”. That is, they catalog not only broad elements of human experience but also the particular details of each day and age. They express our collective truths, even as these truths change beneath our noses. And part of their magic lies in the fact that as they do they provide not only a glimpse into our present concerns but also a record of our past. (Orenstein 12)

No matter how fairy tale is defined, the invariable is its social and literary significance. In “The Storyteller”, a famous essay from Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), he speaks highly of the genre. “[He] singles out the fairy tale as the clearest and most powerful example of that true storytelling: ‘The fairy tale, which is to this day the first tutor of children because it was once the first tutor of mankind, secretly lives on in the story. The first true storyteller is, and will continue to be, the teller of fairy tales’” (Harries, *Twice* 10). With the crowning glory, fairy tale is canonized and worshiped by people around the world. Whereas, it is from this moment on that fairy tale rests on its laurels and stops the natural evolution. The honor keeps the rewriters at a respectful distance and a century has passed

without any prominent adaptation. Suffering the setback, the prevalent fairy tale gradually becomes a literary antique of the last century and is fossilized in the art gallery.

2. Theoretical Catalyzer of Fairy Tale Rewritings

It is not until “the politicized 1960s and 1970s, of Vietnam protest and feminism, of civil rights and gay activism” that fairy tale greets the new importation (Hutcheon 140). The rewritings of the classical fairy tale have many theoretical backups. In a more general term, “[contemporary] fiction,” in Steven Connor’s words, “seems marked by the imperative of the eternal return. [In] contemporary fiction, telling becomes compulsorily belated, inextricably bound up with retelling” (qtd. in Moraru 3). With retrospective eyes, modern writers glance back to the literary legacies and judge them through the contemporary criteria. Each evaluation serves as a reflection of the past as well as the present. The correspondent literary theory of such practice emerges “from the structuralist and poststructuralist movement of the 1960s, especially in France” and is often articulated in literary jargons such as intertextuality, “[the] ‘rewriting’ impulse, which is much more than simple imitation” (Sanders 2). Fairy tale, as an exemplary literary relic, cannot escape this revisional fad. Sensing the interaction between the old and the renovated, Craig Owen (1950-1990) coins the “allegorical impulse,” in his famous 1980 essay, to identify “[this] paradoxical conviction of the remoteness of the past and

the need to deal with it in the present” (Hutcheon 96). These theoretical concerns boil down the dispersed practices to a revisional urge and systematically study its motive, the method and the effect, which lays the foundation for further studies in the field.

To relocate the retelling impulse to its cultural settings, the book moves to the discussion of the fermenting powers from the socio-historical and philosophical grounds, especially feminism and postmodernism. The world, as the background of literary creation, has changed beyond recognition. John Barth’s (1930-) breathless collocation highlights the significant transformations: “Freud and Einstein and two world wars and the Russian and sexual revolutions and automobiles and airplanes and telephones and radios and movies and urbanization, and now nuclear weaponry and television and microchip technology and the new feminism and the rest, and except as readers there’s no going back to Tolstoy and Dickens” (202). The revelation justifies the literary road and presses it forward. Its application to fairy tale is the rejection of protectionism and fearless exploration in the upheaval.

One radical trend of thought has its root in feminism, which is moving towards the second wave after achieving the goal of the first one. “Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which has been seen as the herald of feminism’s second wave, also calls for a ‘drastic reshaping of the cultural image of femininity that will permit women to reach maturity, identity, completeness of self’” (Thornham 35). With the women’s liber-

ation in mind, the feminists draw on the inspiration of the civil rights movement and other social and ideological trends, such as anti-Vietnam War and student movements of the 1960s. Even though the emphasis on emancipation, which captures the essence of the first wave feminism, coexists alongside, “a desire [...] to define a ‘feminine’ identity and discourse; an impulse” [...] “was to become a central concern of certain sectors of second wave feminism” (Gamble ix). Within the feminist frame of reference, fairy tale stands out as the culmination of patriarchal hegemony with the mask of innocence and remoteness. Therefore, it is necessary to refashion it from the opposite. In spite of the fact that not all rewriters are feminists, they are influenced, to some extent, by this school of thought and redress the scales of their own accord.

A more influential and controversial movement, which serves as the background to almost all the revolutionary attempts, is postmodernism. Notwithstanding the frequent uses, it remains the center of vehement debate. The appearance of this usage can be traced to the late 1960s and “[its] first widespread currency came from Charles Jencks (1939-) in his book, *The Language of Post Modern Architecture* (1975)” (Easthope 17). Among the supporters of the notion, Fredric Jameson (1934-), both inspired by Mandel’s tripartite scheme and confirming it, proposes “a periodization in which the forces of production correspond to a stage of capitalist development and mode of cultural production” and denotes postmodernism as the cultural logic of late or multinational capitalism (Easthope 21).

In the same strain, Jean Francois Lyotard (1924-1998) articulates his opinion in his famed “The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge” and shifts the focal interest from production to knowledge. He argues that “[knowledge] is seen to be communicated by means of narrative, and Lyotard is critical of what he calls grand narratives; theories that claim to be able to explain everything, and to resist any attempt to change their form (or ‘narrative’)” (Sim 8). In accordance with this criterion, fairy tale can be classified as one kind of grand narrative that tends to preserve its glory and canonical status. To debunk the authoritarian attitude, Lyotard “celebrates the cause of ‘little narrative’ (*petit récit*) in its stead,” because “little narratives are put together on a tactical basis by small groups of individuals to achieve some particular objective, and do not pretend to have the answers to all society’s problems” (Sim 8-9). The plausibility of the little narrative lies in its adaptability rather than the universal value. The fairy tale renovation, which targets at the ailment of fairy tale tradition, is a centrifugal force against the grand narrative. “Christina Bacchilega has recently called these techniques ‘postmodern,’ a term she uses to include the ‘conflictual dialogue with a pervasive tradition’ that many contemporary fairy tales engage in. Postmodern narrative transformations, she argues, ‘do not exploit the fairy tale’s magic simply to make the spell work, but rather to unmake some of its working’” (qtd. in Harries, *Twice* 15). The disenchantment eradicates the superstition that fairy tale answers all calls and in return counteracts the universalization trend.

3. Fairy Tale Rewritings

Rewriting, the act of looking back with fresh eyes and from a critical direction, for sure encapsulates the ethos of the twentieth century which manifests its skepticism towards totalization and authorization. The revisioners play in the literary funhouse and challenge the authoritative past. "The term 're-vision' deploys a strategic ambiguity between the word revise; to examine and correct; to make a new, improved version of; 'to study anew', and re-vision; to see in another light; to re-envision or perceive differently; and thus to recast and re-evaluate the original" (Moraru 23). This method of creation is confirmed by John Barth in "The Literature of Replenishment," sequel to his misapprehensive "The Literature of Exhaustion", and he reasserts that "the corpse could be revived by stitching together the amputated limbs and digits in new permutations; by pastiche, in other words" (Lewis 125). The common grounds shared by the critical impetus of revisionary writing, in Peter Widdowson's word, are "canonical target, conspicuousness of the 'source', 'denaturalizing' of embedded discourses and ideologies, innovative and 'liberating' rereading of the original and its historical context in which the present becomes oddly 'legible.'" (qtd. in Moraru 35). The interaction between the revisionary impulse and the canonical fairy tale justifies the tenor of postmodernism. With their innovative and liberating rereading, the senile fairy tale finally adapts to the modern world.

Within the confinement of the book's scale and the compass of my personal academic ability, the book discusses the rewritings of two classic fairy tales from four writers, namely Donald Barthelme (1931-1989), Angela Carter (1940-1992), Robert Coover (1932-) and Anne Sexton (1928-1974), whose experiments unanimously denote the source of such canonical tales as "Snow White" and "Sleeping Beauty", and venture to overthrow the dominant narrative of patriarchy and sacredness. Barthelme enlarges Snow White's cohabitation with the seven dwarfs in *Snow White* (1967); Carter revives a rare version, "The Snow Child", in *The Bloody Chambers* (1979); Coover continues the Snow White story in "The Dead Queen" (1973) which is narrated by the prince and magnifies Sleeping Beauty's slumber in *Briar Rose* (1996); and Sexton retouches both of them in "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and "Briar Rose (Sleeping Beauty)", which are collected in *Transformations* (1971), a poem anthology dedicated to fairy tale rewriting. The similar year of birth brings them radical views of the literary legacy alike and the vigor they impart to traditional fairy tale is not to be underestimated. The vulnerable selections, inevitably arbitrary and obviously personal, are nonetheless the result of careful decisions, either because of their historical importance, their great popularity or their intellectual enlightenment.

4. Literature Review and Research Methods

The study of fairy tale dates back to the eighteenth century

in Europe, and, with the appearances of various theories and cultural moods, the research has bloomed luxuriantly across the world. Generally speaking, Western research methods can be classified into six subgroups with their particular emphasis.

The first and most historical method is the anthropological and sociological studies sprung from the so-called Finnish School. The representatives of such early study are Kaarle Krohn (1863-1933), Antti Aarne (1867-1925) and Stith Thompson (1885-1976). The core to their study is to reconstruct the history of particular tale types by collecting, indexing and analyzing all of their variants. Aarne's work, *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* (*Types of Folk Tales*, 1910), and Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature* (1932-1936) still command attention today. Even though both of them cannot include all the tales, they are considered as effective means, which is known as the Aarne-Thompson classification system.

The second method comes from structuralism and some of the structuralists have a passion for fairy tale. The most distinct scholar is no doubt the Russian Formalist Vladimir Propp. In his *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (1928), he studies Russian folk tales and reaches the conclusion that fairy tale system is made up of thirty-one functions and seven spheres of actions. Each unique tale is a reshuffle and actualization of the system.

A defect of the above two approaches is the neglect of each tale's narrative components as well as the social and historical aspects. The third method, the literary approach, comes to their remedy. Represented by Max Lüthi (1900-1991) and his work