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Preface to the Special Issue on the Fairy Tale After Angela Carter

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From April 22 through April 25, 2009, the conference on "The Fairy Tale after Angela Carter" was held at the University of East Anglia (UK) to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber,* a story collection that has had a profound and pervasive impact on our understanding of and engagement with the fairy tale. The objective of the conference was to use this important anniversary as an opportunity to reflect on the legacy of Angela Carter and to examine the state of the fairy tale and fairy-tale studies today.

The following collection of essays is the product of that gathering. It represents only a small number of the papers presented over the four days of the conference; there were many similarly inspiring and insightful engagements with this burgeoning field of study that might have been included. The guest editors for this issue hope, however, that the selection gives an indication of the range and interdisciplinary vitality of the research that was showcased at the event. They also hope that it succeeds in delineating some of the common areas of dominant, emergent interest that became apparent in the course of the debates and discussions, particularly those that suggest future directions for research and writing in the field.

One of the more persistent of these emerging themes concerns the relationship between fairy tales and nationalist or colonialist ideology, a theme that was addressed at the conference in three of the four keynote addresses (Donald Haase's, Cristina Bacchilega's, and Marina Warner's) and that is represented here by Haase's "Decolonizing Fairy-Tale Studies" and by Sara Hines's examination of how the collection practices employed in Andrew Lang's colored Fairy Books corroborate nineteenth-century discourses on colonialism and empire. Vassilena Parashkevova, in her contribution, also addresses the cultural

significance of fairy tale by examining Githa Hariharan's subversive and transformatory engagement with the orientalist history of the *Arabian Nights* in the novel *When Dreams Travel* (1999).

Another robust area of research in fairy-tale studies, as it became apparent in the course of the conference, concerns the intersection of fairy tale and film. Jack Zipes's keynote address focused on reutilizations of "Little Red Riding Hood" in recent films, and there were conference papers on Neil Jordan's *Company of Wolves* (1984), the films of the Walt Disney Company, Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), and Mitchell Lichtenstein's *Teeth* (2008), among others. In the present collection this area of interest is represented by Susan Cahill's investigation of the representation of older women in Terry Gilliam's *The Brothers Grimm* (2005) and Matthew Vaughn's *Stardust* (2007), and by Sharon McCann's innovative analysis of *The Company of Wolves,* which explores the possibility that Jordan's primary concern in this film is less with the female psyche, as conventional criticism has tended to suggest, and more with the Irish "Troubles" that preoccupy him in several of his other films.

Consideration of the work of contemporary writers who have, like Carter, used fairy tale as a springboard for imaginative invention has been one of the most buoyant areas of academic research in the field over the last thirty years. Papers at the conference indicated that interest in the area has not abated. There were new perspectives on the uses of fairy tale in the fiction of established writers such as A. S. Byatt, Jeanette Winterson, and Margaret Atwood, together with papers that examined the work of writers who have yet to receive significant critical attention, including Kelly Link and Francesca Lia Block. Parashkevova's reading of the work of Githa Hariharan falls within this field, as does Jennifer Orme's analysis of Emma Donoghue's story collection *Kissing the Witch* (1997), the latter drawing on queer theory as a means in part of opening up fairy-tale studies to new—new to fairy-tale studies, that is—and productively disruptive critical angles. Vanessa Joosen explores aspects of the synchronicity between fairy-tale fiction and contemporaneous critical work in the field, again drawing our attention to lesser-known texts.

Finally, an increasing interest in the subject of translation in studies of Carter's work—both translations of her writings and translations by the author herself—was also apparent at the conference. This interest is reflected here in the article by Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, who focuses closely upon Carter's translation of Charles Perrault's "La Belle au bois dormant" and argues that Carter, rather than subverting Perrault's tales, as is more commonly thought, in fact seeks to "reclaim them for feminism," because she recognizes in them "a common aim to familiarize children with the politics of experience."

In many respects the theme of translation and the translatability of fairy tales extends the discussion of the cultural and national significance of fairy

tales addressed, in various ways, by Haase, Hines, Parashkevova, and McCann. This in turn indicates what was arguably the most consistent theme to emerge from the conference as a whole: the association between fairy tales and cultural identity, and the capacity of fairy tales to cross, or fail to cross, national borders. In the complex, interdisciplinary matrix of engagements with fairy tale in evidence at the conference, these issues—of ownership, cultural translation, cultural specificity, and appropriation—recurred repeatedly, and though there was no clear consensus, it was certainly apparent that these and related questions will preoccupy scholars in the field for some time to come.

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Guest Editors