

## ON MEDIATED TRANSLATIONS OF FAIRY TALES

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**Abstract:** In the present article, we regard mediated translations of fairy tales as unique recreations, making the afterlife of the original text and contributing to its variability. Our attention has been focused not so much on the equivalence of the mediated translation to the original as on the nature and main characteristics of the mediated translation as a text. The goal of this study has been to rethink the very status of indirect translations involving intralingual and intersemiotic readings of the original in our research. The survey results have demonstrated the fascinating potential of the source text to modify and transform.

**Keywords:** mediated translation; direct translation; fairy tales; authorship; intersemiotic translation; intralingual translation

### 1. Introduction

In translation studies, mediated or indirect translation has traditionally been considered inferior to direct translation. Hence, more academic attention has been drawn to direct translation, while the role of mediated recreations of source texts has been mostly underestimated and considerably belittled, if not neglected. However, mediated translation is often the norm regarding folk and fairy tales. Compared to other text types, fairy tales have a high degree of intertextuality (similar or comparable motifs and plots are found in most remote cultures), and fairy tale elements are easily transformable. These two qualities of the genre make fairy tales a unique and valuable material for research into mediated translations.

### 2. Interlingual Mediated Translations

Mediated translations were prevalent in the history of fairy tales. Some mediated renderings of fairy tale collections have had an essential role in the awareness, dissemination and acceptance of the values of the source culture. Thus, the first English

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translation of *Thousand and One Nights* (a 12-volume version known as the Grub Street Edition (c. 1706 – c. 1721) was translated from Antoine Galland's French version of the Arabic original and was entitled *Arabian Nights Entertainments*. Assessing this anonymous translation, Nessim Joseph Dawood, known for his English translations of the Quran, has pointed out:

This version, stilted and dull as it may well appear to the modern reader, established the popularity of the *Nights* with successive generations of Englishmen and was read with delight by the English Romantics in their childhood. For it was a very long time before an attempt to render a direct translation from the Arabic was made. (Dawood 1973: 9)

Martha Conant, too, acknowledged the vital role of this mediated edition:

...translations from Galland's beautiful and very modified appropriation of the tales ran through innumerable editions and generated imitations, variations, extensions, and indeed the vogue of the Oriental tale, a precursor of Romanticism. (Conant 1966: 245-51)

The first two Russian translations, Aleksey Filatyev's (1763–1774) and Yulia Doppelmeier's renderings (1889-1890), were also made from Galland's French text. So were the earliest German, Italian, Danish, Flemish and Yiddish translations. Armenian fairy tales first reached the English reader through Andrew Lang's indirect translations from the French of Frederic Macler's *Armenian Folk Tales* (Contes Armeniens 1905). The tales were included in Lang's famous *The Olive Fairy Book* (Lang 1907). Despite the existence of direct German-Armenian translations of the Grimm Brothers' *Children's and Household Tales* (Kinder-und Hausmärchen), Hovhannes Toumanian's translations from Russian remain the most read version of the German tales owing to Toumanian's immense popularity and his unsurpassed translational and narrative talent (Grimm 1914-1915).

Indirect translations can be even more important than one can suggest. There are cases when a mediated translation becomes irreplaceable because of the inaccessibility of the original. Although Charles Downing translated Armenian folk tales from the original dialect versions, some of his texts were rendered indirectly from Yakov Khachatrians' Russian translations (Khatchatrian 1933) "owing to the unavailability of the original Armenian texts" (Downing 1972: 217). What is more, some essential collections of Armenian folk tales are unique in that the tales they comprise were told to the recorders in Armenian but were written down in English, French or German. Because the oral texts are understandably irrecoverable, the intermediary language has become a source language.

The history of mediated translations shows that indirect readings of texts are not necessarily inferior to direct renderings. Antoine de Saint Exupery's *The Little Prince* (Le Petit Prince) has had six interpretations in Armenian. However, the first rendering authored by the Soviet Armenian children's author Saghately Harutyunian is to be recognised as surpassing the subsequent direct translations in terms of the artlessness of the target text (Saint-Exupery 1966).

The awareness of these facts makes it possible to reconsider the status of mediated translation, at least in fairy tale studies. If translation studies often view indirect translation as inferior to direct translation, students of cross-cultural studies suggest mediated translation plays an essential role in connecting distinct cultures.

Further, we will show several distinct features that are characteristic of mediated translation as such.

*Mediated translation mostly precedes direct translation.* There are exceptions, however. In some cases, mediated translation succeeds direct translation. When it comes to fairy tales, this may happen for several reasons: archaic forms and spelling found in direct translation may become unfit for child readership; direct translation is produced in a language variety/dialect that is not fully comprehensible for the readers. Thus, Wilhelm Hauff's fairy tales were first directly translated from German into Armenian in 1860 (a later edition appeared in 1882) by Mikael Vayelchants (the pen name of the Armenian Romantic writer Raphayel Patkanian) and published in St. Petersburg (Hauff 1860; 1882). However, due to obsolete words, outdated word forms and orthography, Patkanian's estimable work became unsuited to the readers' needs and is currently known only to a narrow circle of specialists. Hauff's tales are better known to Armenian readers owing to Harutyun Harutyunian's later indirect rendering from Russian (Hauff 1954).

Oddly enough, as an earlier version, a popular mediated rendering may impede the spread of direct translation. The following example can serve as a good illustration. Although the direct translation of A.A. Milne's books into Armenian (Milne 2015; 2017) was quite well-received by the young audience, older readers were vaguely resistant to it because of their nostalgic attachment to the Soviet Armenian edition. The latter was a mediated reading of Milne's text, or rather a translation of Boris Zakhoder's Russian adaptation, where Winnie the Pooh Bear had been transformed into Winnie the Dark Bear (Վինիի թուխ արջուկը) (Milne 1972).

*Mediated translations, as a rule, are geographically distanced from the source culture* because mediated translations are likely to bind remote cultures. On the other hand, since mediated translations usually precede direct translations, the author of the mediated translation is closer to the author of the original in time.

*Mediated translations can involve more than one intermediary language.* This can be demonstrated in the example of the Grimm Brothers' translations in Armenian. Mediated translations of the Grimms in Armenian show an ongoing dialogue with the original tales and reveal a variety of cross-lingual transformations, making the afterlife of the original. Below is a brief list of indirect translation chains of Grimms' tales in Armenian:

German → French → Armenian  
 German → Russian → Armenian  
 German → French → Russian → Armenian  
 German → Russian → Eastern Armenian → Western Armenian

Yesai Ter-Grigoryants' translation of the Grimms, with French as the intermediary language, was the earliest Armenian rendering of *Kinder und Hausmärchen*. Ter-Grigoryants' collection, comprising two volumes and 16 tales, was published in St.

Petersburg in 1864 under the title of *German National Tales* (Գերմանական սպասքի ն ստակներ) (Grimm 1864). The author of the Armenian translation gave no details concerning either the edition of the French source or the French translator's identity; however, he wrote an extensive preface to this edition expressing his unflattering view on fairy tales as unworthy entertainment (Grimm 1864: 5-11).

In the following years, many indirect translations from the Russian of the Grimms appeared chiefly in children's periodicals. However, Hovhannes Toumanian's interpretations, owing to the poet's unrivalled accomplishments as a translator and fairy tale writer, made his translations a captivating read (1914-1915).

Atabek Khnkoyan's Armenian translation of A. S. Pushkin's *The Sleeping Beauty and the Seven Knights* (Сказка о мертвой царевне и семи богатырях) (1834) could be seen as a rendering of the Grimms' *Snow-White* (Schneewittchen) twice mediated by the French and the Russian of the source text (Pushkin 1911). Pushkin's famous fairy tale in verse was apparently based on the French translation of the Grimms. According to the folklorist Mark Azadovsky's credible arguments, Pushkin's fairy tale was not based on the folklore text he had recorded but was created under the influence of the French rendering. A volume of Grimms' tales in French was found in the poet's library (Azadovsky 1936: 134-163).

Amalia Ghukasyan's mediated translation from Russian is the most complete volume of the Grimms in Armenian, including 200 tales. It was first published in 1981 and has had numerous editions since then (Grimm 1981).

Toumanian's mediated translations from the Russian of the Grimms were rendered into Western Armenian, thus extending the German → Russian → Armenian translation sequence into German → Russian → Eastern Armenian → Western Armenian chain (Grimm 1997).

*Mediated translations are more autonomous and independent texts than direct translations.* Because mediated translations are more distanced from the source text, they can be more easily 'detached' from the original. Many mediated translations of folk tales are covert, almost unrecognisable renderings. They may even be identified as belonging to the receiving culture, in this way, contributing to the diversity of folk tale variants. It is generally known that folk tales come in multiple versions, each intertextually connected. The line between cultural versions of a folk tale and its translation is not always as clear as might appear at first sight. The translated folk tale is occasionally submitted to a relevant, well-known variant in the receiving culture, comparable to the source text in motif and plot. Thus, in 1899, Levon Melik-Adamyants made an indirect translation of the Grimms' *Little Brother and Sister* (Schwetscherchen und Brüderchen), retitling it *Karen and Manen* (Կարենն ու Մանենը), keeping the title of the original as a subtitle and giving Armenian names to the nameless protagonists of the German tale. An inexperienced reader may mistake it for an Armenian folk tale version of the very well-known tale type ATU-450 (Little Brother and Little Sister) (Melik-Adamyants 1899).

While direct translation focuses more on the equivalence and fidelity to the author's language and style, *mediated translation is a more plot- and addressee-focused text.* Folk tale translators and editors prefer to think that the awareness of the story is more critical for the young reader than the equivalence of the translation to the original.

*The mediated translation is a text of collective authorship* since it is undoubtedly the result of at least three “authors”’ work. As was shown above, some Armenian mediated readings of the Grimms’ tales involve as many as four “tellers” of the texts.

*Mediated translations are notorious for neglecting sources, including the identity of authors, translators, tellers and recorders of the folk tales.* In 1907, the renowned Scottish ethnographer and folklorist Andrew Lang published his *Olive Fairy Book*, where, in addition to Indian, Turkish, French and Danish fairy tales, five Armenian tales were included. All five tales were borrowed from Frederic Macler’s French translation of Bishop Garegin Srvandstians’ collections (Srvandstians 1876). Lang’s *Coloured Fairy Books* (1889 -1910) were famous in Europe owing to the author’s great authority as a folklore scholar and collector of fairy tales. However, the Armenian source of the texts was neglected. Garegin Srvandstians’ name was not included in the first or any of the numerous later editions. Even though Macler’s *Preface* to the French edition comprised details about Srvandstians, Lang referred only to Macler: “I must especially thank Monsieur Macler for permitting us to use some of his *Contes Arméniens* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, Editeur) (Lang 1907: ix).” Nor did the name of the translator of Macler’s French texts and Lang’s wife (Leonora Blanche Alleyne) appear on the title page of the volume. Only in his *Preface* to *The Lilac Fairy Book* Lang noted the translator’s name:

The object of these confessions is not only that of advertising my own fairy books (which are not ‘out of print’; if your bookseller says so, the truth is not in him) but of giving credit where credit is due. The fairy books have been almost wholly the work of Mrs. Lang, who has translated and adapted them from the French, German, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, and other languages (Lang 1910: vii).

The children’s author and literary critic Anita Silvey has pointed out:

The irony of A. Lang’s life and work is that although he wrote [...] fiction; poems, books and articles on anthropology, mythology, history... *he is best recognised for the works he did not write.*” Nora is not named on the front cover or spines of any of the *Coloured Fairy Books*... (Silvey 1995: 387).

Such omissions could be explained by the policy of children’s editions, in which children’s texts were often published anonymously or only with the author’s names and initials. For some reason, information concerning the texts’ authorship was considered irrelevant to the child reader (Jivanyan 2020).

A comparable example is found in Armenian indirect translations. Here are a few examples. One of the earliest Eastern Armenian translations of Italian fairy tales was made by Hovhannes Toumanian. His translations of (1913a, 1913 b) were made from Maria Andreyeva’s Russian renderings edited by Maxim Gorky and published as anonymous texts (Andreeva 1912). However, the Italian tales had an author: they were written by Luigi Capuana, the founder of the Italian literary fairy tale. Surprisingly, although Capuana’s name repeatedly appeared in Andreeva’s and Gorky’s correspondence, it was left out of the Russian edition. The identity of the Italian writer

was probably considered unimportant. As a result, Toumanian's indirect Armenian translations also presented the Italian tales as authorless.

In his mediated rendering from the Russian of Seamus MacManus's Irish folk tale *The Old Hag's Long Leather Bag*, Toumanian does not mention the Irish storyteller's name. However, it was present in the Russian source. While the Russian edition presented a whole collection of Donegal stories, Toumanian had selected only one tale to translate and publish in a children's magazine (Toumanian 1914). This might be why he could have chosen not to add the narrator's name.

When studying mediated translations of fairy tales, we encountered uncommon cases when the source and target languages of the mediated translations were identical. Among these rare examples, we have chosen one which follows the Armenian → German → Armenian sequence. In 1914, Atabek Khnkoyan translated a tale called *Brother and Sister* (Քույր և եղբայր) (Khnkoyan 1914: 6-9). We suggest that it was taken from *Tales and Legends of Armenians of Bukovina and Transylvania (Märchen und Sagen der Bukowinaer und Siebenbürger Armenier)*, a collection of Armenian tales in German compiled by the Austrian-Hungarian linguist and folklorist Heinrich Adalbert von Wlislöcki and issued in Hamburg in 1891 (Wlislöcki 1891: 6). From Wlislöcki's introduction and the explanatory subtitle (Aus eigenen und fremden Sammlungen übersetzt von Dr Heinrich von Wlislöcki) we know that the German translations of the Armenian texts were unquestionably accurate, having been rendered almost word for word and checked by Armenian scholars (ibid., VI). It is evident that we deal with direct Armenian-German translations. Doubtless, the Armenian of Transylvanian Armenians of the XIX century was noticeably different from Khnkoyan's Armenian. However, it was Armenian. This is a unique example of the source and target languages of the translated fairy tale being the same. It is essential to mention that this singular example of mediated translation cannot be considered a back translation: reverse translation is used as a quality assurance method, while Khnkoyan's text was translated and published in a children's magazine. Considering A. Khnkoyan's biography and education, it is not likely that he could know German. However, it is not expected that a Russian translation of Wlislöcki's German version existed, which Khnkoyan could have used as an intermediary text. While the translation sequence, in this case, is Armenian (oral discourse) → German → Armenian, there seems to be a missing ring in this rendering, namely a second intermediary language.

### 3. Intralingual Mediated Translations

When speaking about mediated translations, we usually consider interlingual translations. However, it is also possible to consider mediated transitions within the same language. Armenian intralingual translations of fairy tales could involve the two standardised forms of the language, Eastern Armenian and Western Armenian, as well as numerous Armenian dialects. As an illustration, we will bring a unique anonymous translation of Hans Christian Andersen's *Hans the Fool* (Klod Hans) in the Gavar dialect of Armenian. Because there are no direct Armenian translations of Andersen's

tales from Danish, we suggest that this translation is twice mediated: interlingually by Russian and intralingually by literary Armenian.

Different from intralingual translations, mediated intralingual translations doubtlessly have more limited functions. They are primarily self-sufficient texts, and their chief function is to have a humorous impact on the reader. Alternatively, they can serve as unique language experiments revealing the transformative potential of intralingual transitions.

#### 4. Intersemiotic Mediated Translation

Unlike ‘actual’ translation, intersemiotic translation reproduces the original text in a different medium, recreating verbal narratives by transitioning from one semiotic system to another (image, music, etc.). Moreover, like interlingual translation, the transition from one semiotic system to another can also be realised through intermediary links.

As an example, we have chosen one of the well-known classic fairy tales, *Beauty and the Beast*. The original text was written by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve (1740) and published in volume 1 of *La Jeune Américaine et les contes marins* (The Young American Girl and the Sea Tales) (Villeneuve 1740). In 1756, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont’s shortened retelling was published in *Magasin des enfants* (The Young Misses’ Magazine). Much later, Andrew Lang retold the fairy tale in his ‘Blue Fairy Book’ (Lang 1889). Gary Trousdale’s animated musical film (1991) can be seen as an intersemiotic translation of Villeneuve’s original text mediated by English translations, renderings and the screenplay of the film. Bill Condon’s 2017 American musical romantic fantasy film, too, is an intersemiotic mediated translation of the French tale. Interestingly, the film version was not the last ring of the intersemiotic sequence. The same year, Elizabeth Rudnick novelised Stephen Shbosky’s and Evan Spiliopoulos’s screenplay. Her version can be seen as an intersemiotic recreation of the original with interlingual translation and screenplay as intermediary rings (Rudnick 2017).

Ballet narratives are often inspired by fairy tales or are based on fairy tale plots, thus sharing many features with the latter. Many scholars have mentioned the affinity between the two. Suzanne Rahn highlights the closeness of these fascinating genres:

Emblems of childhood and cultural tradition, fairy tales provide ideal vehicles through which choreographers may question gender roles, social and political structures, the value and meaning of tradition, the nature of narrative, and the universality of art. Indeed, it seems likely that whatever future directions ballet may choose to travel, it will always be accompanied by its old companion, the fairy tale. (Rahn 2000: 38)

No wonder it is possible to acknowledge many fabulous fairy tale-based ballet performances as intersemiotic translations of the source texts and follow intermediary links binding the two. Tchaikovsky’s world-famous *Nutcracker* (Щелкунчик) can be held as a thrice-mediated intersemiotic translation of E.T.A Hoffmann’s original text *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* (Nußknacker und Mausekönig). Translator Sarah

Ardizzone notes that Alexander Dumas Père's wife, the actress Ida Ferrier (born Marguerite-Josephine Ferrand), is credited with translating Hoffman's *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* from German into French (Ardizzone 2015). Dumas adapted it as *The Story of a Nutcracker (Histoire d'un casse-noisette)* (1845). Later, Ivan Vsevolozhsky, the director of Russia's Imperial Theatres, recommended it to Marius Petipa, the renowned French and Russian ballet master and choreographer. Petipa created a ballet narrative adapting Dumas's story for the libretto of Tchaikovsky's two-act ballet, which premiered in December 1892. Accordingly, we can follow a thrice-mediated intersemiotic translation: the transition from Hoffmann's source text to Tchaikovsky's ballet is realised through three intermediary rings introducing Ida Ferrier's, Alexander Duma's and Petipa's readings.

Examples of intersemiotic mediated translations are not few in fashion history. Two centuries after Antoine Galland's French translation, Joseph-Charles Mardrus, the eminent French orientalist of Armenian descent, translated 116 tales from *One Thousand and One Nights* from Arabic into French (Mardrus 1899-1904). Mardrus's embellished translation inspired Paul Poiret, the great French couturier, to create his sumptuous Oriental fashion line and present it at the extravagant garden party, which he called *The Thousand and Second Night* (1911). Poiret's 'vestiary' recreation can be seen as an intersemiotic recreation of the *Nights* mediated by Mardrus' translation. This unique case of the profound and lasting influence of a translated work on art and fashion is examined by Ilaria Vitali:

...the translator reworks and embellishes the Arabic versions, emphasising Eastern exoticism and eroticism. In his interpolations system, the discourse concerning clothing plays a key role: Mardrus multiplies words like *babouches* and *voiles* and invents, for its sultanas, oriental outfits inexistent in Arabic sources in order to convey images and mythologies associated with the East. This Orientalist discourse naturally goes beyond his translation and resonates in world of art and fashion: *orientalisme vestimentaire* were absorbed by artists, dressmakers and designers, orientalist clothing becoming wardrobe essentials for *le Tout Paris*. (Vitali 2015: 21)

A series of luxury handbags produced by *Braccialini*, the Florence-based leather accessories company, present episodes, personages and settings of classic fairy tales. The latter can be held as discontinuous recreations of classic fairy tales. *Braccialini's* popular *Gingerbread House* bags are intersemiotic translations of the Grimms' *Hanzel and Gretel*. It is doubtless not easy to identify the intermediary language or medium, but it is not likely that these delightful samples could be inspired directly by the original text.

We will complete our study of mediated intersemiotic translations with an example presenting the most 'fragile' of fairy tale transformations, namely porcelain recreations. The Russian artist Mikhail Shemyakin's porcelain figurines of Nutcracker, Mashenka and Drosselmeyer, as well as the items of the tea set known as *The Rat Thieves* created in cooperation with St. Petersburg Imperial Porcelain Manufactory, can be seen as impressive intersemiotic equivalents of Hoffmann's *Nutcracker and the Mouse King* mediated by Marius Petipa's libretto, Tchaikovsky's ballet and Shemyakin's new stage production at the Mariinsky Theater in 2001.



## 5. Conclusion

Fairy tales are characterised by a high degree of intertextuality and are easily transformable. These two genre qualities make fairy tales a unique and valuable material for research into mediated translations. In this article, we have drawn attention to the fact that mediated translations of fairy tales have several distinctive qualities often conditioned by the intermediary rings of the translation sequence. In our research, we have tried to rethink the notion of indirect translation and broaden it from merely ‘actual’ interlingual interpretation to intralingual and intersemiotic recreations mediated by various media. It is very clear from the material we have examined that, like interlingual translations, the transition from one semiotic system to another can also be realised through intermediary links. As it seems from preliminary investigations, there is certainly scope for a more expansive study of indirect translations in the future. We hope this article can contribute to redressing the often dismissive attitude toward indirect translations as texts inferior to direct translations.

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### **Conflicts of Interest**

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

### **Ethical Standards**

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.