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ORIGINAL PAPER

Carter's Feminist Revision of Fairytale: The Narrative Strategies of "The Company of Wolves"

Jie Wu[1]

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Abstract The paper examines how the British woman writer Angela Carter rewrites Charles Perrault's household fairy tale—"Little Red Riding Hood" in her short story—"The Company of Wolves." This paper attempts to analyze the two distinctive narrative strategies—re-characterization and second-person narration, skillfully deployed by Carter in order to rewrite Perrault's classic tale into a feminist story. In Carter's version, Little Red Riding Hood is represented as a witty new woman who embraces her own sexuality and regards herself as a subject rather than an object. Through the transposition between reader and character, Carter's tale produces a new subject position for readers, particularly for young female readers.

Keywords Angela Carter · "The Company of Wolves" · Feminist rewriting of fairytale · Narrative strategies

1 Introduction

In the paper, I examine the feminist rewriting of fairytale, which emerged in the 1970s in the wake of the second women's liberation movement. One of the prominent examples of feminist revision of the genre is "The Company of Wolves" which is included in the well-known short story collection—*The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) written by the British woman writer Angela Carter who is greatly influential in shaping contemporary British literature. The focus of the paper is on how Carter deploys the two narrative strategies in order to rewrite Perrault's classic tale.

In Part I, I trace the history of fairytale creation back to the seventeenth century when the French writer Charles Perrault rewrote the oral folklore prior to him after

✉ Jie Wu
jeniewoo@sjtu.edu.cn

[1] Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China

his own taste and remolded them into tales with bourgeois ideology. The evolving nature of fairytale appeals to Carter for her own demythologizing project. It is during the translation of Perrault's work from French to English that Carter decides to return the genre back to its original dynamic form and recreates witty and self-reliant images of women.

In Part II, the paper focuses on Carter's widely acclaimed story—"The Company of Wolves" which is based on Perrault's household tale—"Little Red Riding Hood." By mixing genres of fairytale and pornography, Carter hopes to expose the falsity of universal truth in both genres. Her erotic story attempts to reveal that those man-made myths intend to reduce women to passive objects in a strongly patriarchal society.

Part III deals with how Carter re-characterizes Red Riding Hood in "The Company of Wolves." Although Carter's girl remains nameless, she is evidently a new woman who doesn't fit any of the three archetypes characterized by the French feminist theorist Luce Irigaray. In Carter's version, the girl accomplishes the metamorphosis from a virgin girl beautiful but feeble into a witty young woman who dares to assert her sexual agency.

Part IV is concerned with the other narrative rewriting strategy—the second-person narration. Since few previous researches have been done in this aspect, this paper explores how Carter utilizes this strategy to challenge the single narrative authority. I argue that this tale fits Brian Richardson's category of "hypothetical" second-person narration which is deployed to satirize the warning voice of the narrator and engage readers in Carter's story to reconsider their own situations.

In conclusion, Carter's tale sets out to expose Perrault's tale as a constructed, artificial thing which imposes an illegitimate shape on reality. Carter's debunking narrative strategies are congruent with her feminist intention to disable the patriarchal ideology embedded in Perrault's tale.

2 The Feminist Rewriting of Fairytale

Reproduced in a variety of discourses, fairy tales in the second half of the twentieth century "enjoyed an explosive popularity in North America and Western Europe" (Bacchilega 1997: 2). It was exactly in the 1970s, during the second women's liberation movement, that "the genre of feminist rewrites of fairy tales emerged" (Gupta 2008: 4). Feminist genre study has placed the question of gender to the fore. Fredric Jameson stresses that genre is "an ideology in its own right" (Jameson 1981: 141). In a male-dominated culture, literary genres, like all cultural productions, represent an inescapable male bias. According to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's observation, "most Western literary genres including fairy tales are … essentially male-devised by male authors to tell male stories" (Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 76). In response to the male-centered ideologies of genres, there arise feminist genre fictions of all kinds. Anny Cranny-Francis noted that "genre and gender" combined together could "help restore women back to the position of power" (Cranny-Francis 1990: 19). By exposing the masculinist mechanism hidden in the literary categories, contemporary feminist rewriting of fairy tales is a prominent

example of appropriating the dominant genres for feminist use. Feminist revision of the fairytale genre makes "an intervention in this configuration" and "an attempt to subvert the dominance of patriarchal discourse" (ibid.: 17). Feminist fairytale rewriting thereby is not only a writing practice but serves political aims as well, which criticizes the patriarchal representation and promotes feminist consciousness.

Angela Carter, a major British woman writer, is tremendously influential in shaping contemporary British literary landscape. Distinguished for her extraordinary imagination and dazzlingly rococo style, her original narratives open a new possibility of writing modern fictions. Although Carter's experiment with genres helps pave the way for a wider critique of gender and genre (Rubinson 2000: 3), she is certainly best known for her rewriting of the genre of fairytale. Salman Rushdie calls her "the benevolent witch queen" and Margaret Atwood refers to her as "the Fairy Godmother" (Rushdie, qtd. in Zipes, 2008[1979]: xi).

Historically, the genre of fairytale, which has undergone numerous appropriation and transformation, is intrinsically intertextual. Carter's attitude toward fairy tale is stated in her introduction to *The Old Wives' Fairy Tale Book* (1990):

> The term "fairy tale" is a figure of speech and we use it loosely, to describe the great mass of infinitely various narrative. …stories with no known originators that can be remade again and again by every person who tells them, the perennially refreshed entertainment of the poor. (Carter 1990: ix)

Her short story collection—*The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979*), which establishes her as a major British writer, serves as a leading example of revising the genre for feminist purposes. It's worth pointing out that Carter's view about fairytale is largely influenced by Jack Zipes's seminal study in folk and fairy tales. In the introduction, Zipes argued that oral folk tales, representing a "pre-capitalist folk form," had been "transposed" by Charles Perrault and the Grimm Brothers into a "bourgeois art form" (Zipes 2008: 20). Zipes also revealed that classic fairy tales erased their positive references to sexuality and female power and altered oral folktales by turning them into "a male creation and projection" that "reflect[ed] men's fear of women's sexuality— and of their own as well" (ibid.: 80–81).

It was during translating Perrault (1628–1703)'s collection from French into English that Carter carefully read his tales. "Perrault may have been her 'fairy godfather', however, according to Zipes, Carter did "not accept his magical gifts as a docile obedient goddaughter" (Zipes, 2008: vii). She was "an unruly, mischievous 'child' and many of her own fairy tales were subversive renditions of his classical tales" (ibid.). After completing the translation, Carter wrote: "I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode" ("Notes from the Front Line" 1998: 76). In the afterword to her translations of Perrault's tales, she pointed out that Perrault "was a man who self-consciously defined himself as 'modern,' who disliked superstition and did not indulge in excesses of the imagination for the imagination's own sake. He was a man who wanted to make of Paris a modern Rome, a visible capital of sweet reason" (Carter 2008: 76). What is implicit in Carter's comment is that Perrault

recreates fairy tales after his own taste and remolds them into tales with bourgeois ideology.

The genre of fairytale thereby holds a great appeal to Carter whose writing career is fully occupied with the "demythologizing business" ("Notes from the Front Line," 1998: 71). Despite the historical manipulation and transformation, this genre has still retained its renewing potential. Carter quite clearly sees herself as writing within this tradition. Fully aware of the evolving nature of genres as well as ideologies inherent in them, Carter is actively engaged in the revision of fairy tales for her own demythologizing project. Her purpose, just as Hilary S. Crew notes, is to rewrite "the conventions of genre so as to encode discourses that contradict or challenge patriarchal ideologies" (Crew 2002: 77).

3 The Case of "The Company of Wolves"

"The Company of Wolves," included in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, is based on Perrault's household patriarchal tale—"Little Red Riding Hood." In this context, Carter's unfaithful rewriting is powerful, subversive, transgressive, and most significantly, gendered.

Among all the thirty-six various versions of the tale on different lands,[1] Anne Sexton's poem "Red Riding Hood" (1971) and Carter's "The Company of Wolves" are the two most experimental feminist fairy tales which seek to provoke the reader to reconsider their former view of sexual relationship and the power politics of those relationship. In contrast to Sexton's pessimistic poem which depicts the girl as sex object, Carter's story represents Red Riding Hood in a more positive way. In addition, Carter provides not one but three variations of Perrault's tale—"The Werewolf," "The Company of Wolves" and "Wolf-Alice," which are labeled by Kimberly Lau as "Carter's wolf trilogy"—"a set of Little Red Riding Hood stories borne of unfaithful readings, marked by multiple rewritings, full of intricate and intimate betrayals, not of Charles Perrault's patriarchal 'Little Red Riding Hood' but also of the feminist desire to 'eroticize' the classic tales" (Lau 2008: 77). Among them, "The Company of Wolves" is the most brilliant one which has also been adapted to radio program and film.

According to Zipes, Perrault, "who appears to have had a low opinion of women and of the superstitious customs of the peasantry" (Zipes 1993:25), changes the oral folklore prior to him and "makes the little girl totally helpless" (ibid.). To drive home his point that young girls should be aware of any improper sexual behavior, Perrault adds three consecutive morals to the tale:

> Children, especially pretty, nicely brought-up young ladies, ought never to talk to strangers; if they are foolish enough to do so, they should not be surprised if some greedy wolf consumes them, elegant red riding hoods and all.

[1] Refer to Jack Zipes (ed.), *The Tials & Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, 1993, p. vii–ix.

> Now, there are real wolves, with hairy pelts and enormous teeth; but also wolves who seem perfectly charming, sweet-natured and obliging, who pursue young girls in the street and pay them the most flattering attentions. Unfortunately, these smooth-tongued, smooth-pelted wolves are the most dangerous beasts of all. (Perrault 2008: 3)

In Carter's version, she intends to return the genre to the more physiologically explicit and individualistic themes commonly expressed in its pre-literary folk origins so that her revision speaks to contemporary feminist concerns. Despite the three pieces of cautionary advice, Carter endeavors to restore the helpless girl created in Perrault's tale back to the witty and self-reliant image originally produced in the folklore. Carter also deploys the second-person narration to create a more dialogic mode so that young female readers might feel identified with Carter's Red Riding Hood.

In the 1970s the creation of erotic fairy tales was prevalent among feminist revisionists. The reason why Carter blends fairytale with pornography in her erotic revision is that she finds parallels between the two genres. Just as pornography often relies on "the process of false universalizing" and "belongs to the timeless, locationless area outside history" (Tiffin 2009: 12), so does fairytale usually operate in an ahistorical and universalizing space. Such a genre-blending might make Carter look suspiciously like being complicit in the male fantasies about sexually precocious young girls. Patricia Duncker, for instance, criticized Carter for "re-writing the tales within the strait-jacket of their original structures" and therefore reproducing the "rigidly sexist psychology of the erotic" (1984: 3–14). Avis Lewallen, although recognizing Carter's attempts at constructing an active female erotic, was still suspicious of her ability to revise the form for a feminist purpose.

However, rather than further reinforcing dominant male fantasies, Carter's erotic tales aim to lay bare the cultural fetisization and sexualization of young women. Her transgression is in accordance with de Sade's exposure of the cultural systems of his time, as is evident in Carter's own "claim of kinship" with him (qtd. in Tiffin 2009: 12). More than de Sade, Carter's intention to reconstruct female sexuality prioritizes women's sexual agency as subjects rather than objects. In "Running with the Tigers," Margaret Atwood defends Carter's use of pornography which "may be read as a 'writing against' de Sade, a talking back to him; and above all, as an exploration of the possibilities for the kind of synthesis de Sade himself could never find because he wasn't even looking for it" (Atwood 1994: 136). Through *The Sadeian Woman* (1979), Carter claims herself "a moral pornographer" who might use pornography as a critique of relations between the sexes, as Margaret tells us "[l]ambhood and tigerishness may be found in either gender, and in the same individual at different times" (ibid.: 137). For Carter, then, the virginal, sexually precocious girl is not so much a desired object of patriarchal projection as an autonomous desiring subject.

4 Re-characterization

The characterization of Red Riding Hood in "The Company of Wolves" is in stark contrast to that of the girl in Perrault's tale. Fairytale, as Andrea Dworkin observes, offers only "two definitions of woman": "There is the good woman. She is a victim. There is the bad woman. She must be destroyed. The good woman must be possessed. The bad woman must be killed, or punished" (qtd. in Sheets 1991: 649). Both Little Red Riding Hood and Granny in Perrault's version fit the gender stereotype of gentle submissive female, and in Dworkin's words, good woman. Consequently, they both are gobbled up by the wicked wolf in the tale. In "The Company of Wolves," however, Red Riding Hood is represented as the new woman who is not afraid of her own sexuality and therefore does not end up being swallowed, while Granny, strongly holding to the patriarchal tradition, comes to a tragic end.

According to the French feminist theorist Luce Irigaray, representations about women should not simply be one. In her book entitled *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985), Irigaray identifies three main female archetypes which have prescribed and limited women's social behaviors: "mother, virgin, prostitute": "These are the social roles imposed on women. The characteristics of (so-called) feminine sexuality derive from them: the valorization of reproduction and nursing; faithfulness; modesty, ignorance of and even lack of interest in sexual pleasure; a passive acceptance of man's "activity"; seductiveness" (qtd. in Rubinson 2000: 720). However, such archetypes are not innate categories which describe universal reality but cultural constructs that prescribe and reinforce stereotypical gender roles and behaviors in a strongly patriarchal society. Without conforming to the three female archetypes categorized by Irigaray, Carter's Red Riding Hood is re-characterized as a new type of young woman who is not willing to be subject to patriarchal order. Although "well-warned," "this strong-minded child insists she will go off through the wood" ("CW" 113). By symbolically deviating from the beaten path, the girl is turning a deaf ear to the patriarchal warning that the forest is full of danger. Having insisted on traveling alone to her Granny's house, she deliberately dawdles along the way to ensure that the handsome young man (wolf) will win the bet so that she will lose him a kiss.

The girl in this story remains nameless, only referred to by the heterodiegetic narrator as "she." Since names and titles are symbols of identities, identities without them will lose their very foundations. In a patriarchal society, women deprived of their names are subject to a marginalized position. Therefore, this namelessness of the girl reveals the oppressive elements of a patriarchal society which treats women as inferiors. Additionally, Carter employs the third-person pronoun to replace the original image of Red Riding Hood, or at least she doesn't like her readers to "anticipate fulfillment of certain expectations," thus "subvert[ing] traditional categories and frustrat[ing] reader's expectations" (Kainulainen 1996: 289). Although the ghost of Little Red Riding Hood is constantly lurking behind the story, the representation of Carter's girl is strikingly different from that of Perrault's. The girl is wearing a red shawl knitted by her grandma, which "today,

has the ominous if brilliant look of blood on snow" (ibid.) and is "as red as the blood she must spill" ("CW" 117). The erotic infidelity to Perrault's tale in "The Company of Wolves" is represented by the "red shawl" ("CW" 113) which symbolizes the girl's sexuality:

> Her breasts have begun to swell; her hair is like lint, so fair it hardly makes a shadow on her pale forehead; her cheeks are an emblematic scarlet and white and she has just started her woman's bleeding, the clock inside her that will strike, henceforward, once a month. ("CW" 113)

Carter goes on to celebrate the girl's coming of age and sexual puberty which emphasizes her virginity:

> She stands and moves within the invisible pentacle of her own virginity. She is an unbroken egg; she is a sealed vessel; she has inside her a magic space the entrance to which is shut tight with a plug of memberance; she is a closed system; she does not know how to shiver. She has her knife and she is afraid of nothing. ("CW" 114)

Carter makes a great effort to meticulously and explicitly describe the virginity of the girl. By evoking such exaggerated symbols as "the sealed vessel" and "a magic space," Carter's description dramatizes Little Red Riding Hood's childlike desirability and the age-old fact that her virginity is fundamental to her desirability. However, sensitive readers might notice that although the girl's innocence defines her as a sacrifice, it simultaneously affords her a strange detachment from this system as "she does not know how to shiver. She has her knife and she is afraid of nothing" (ibid.). In defiance against the three archetypes that Irigaray summarizes about the representations of women, Carter creates a virgin girl with her sex appeal, simultaneously prioritizing her sexual agency.

Moreover, contrary to Perrault's tale, the dialogue between Red Riding Hood and the wolf in Carter's version is really flirtatious. The wolf is ambiguously described as not a wolf but a man. To be exact, it is "a very handsome young" man-wolf-hunter ("CW" 114) that Red Riding Hood encounters in the wood. The girl was alert at first but he "laughed with a flash of white teeth when he saw her and made her a comic yet flattering little bow" (ibid.). She had never "seen such a fine fellow before, not among the rustic clowns of her native village" (ibid.), and "[s]oon they were laughing and joking like old friends" (ibid.). Similarly, this man-wolf-hunter makes a bet with the girl to see who will arrive first at her grandma's home. What contradicts Perrault's version is that the young man has a modern gadget—a compass to direct him away from the path. And the conversation carried out between them is as follows:

> What will you give me if I get to your grandmother's house before you?
> What would you like? She asked disingenuously.
> A kiss.
> Commonplaces of rustic seduction; she lowered her eyes and blushed. ("CW" 115)

Unlike Perrault's Little Red Riding Hood, this girl here is deliberately represented as the one with full sexual consciousness—both innocent and knowing. Desiring the kiss from the handsome young man, she "dawdled on her way to make sure the handsome gentleman would win his wager" ("CW" 115). When the girl finally confronts the wolf in her grandma's cottage, the scene again contains all of the "commonplaces of rustic seduction" (ibid.) and sexual flirtation:

What big eyes you have.
All the better to see you with.
……
What shall I do with my shawl?
Throw it on the fire, dear one. You won't need it again.
……
What shall I do with my blouse?
Into the fire with it, too, my pet.
……
What big arms you have.
All the better to hug you with.
….
What big teeth you have!
All the better to eat you with. ("CW" 117-118)

This sensual and flirtatious dialogue exaggerates the sexual tension hidden in the tale's traditional prohibition of social and sexual misconduct. However, toying with the notion of male sexual fantasy, Carter writes her own moral pornography as a way of further dismantling a world of sexual dualism. The girl's symbolic act of disrobing and throwing her clothes into the fire is the indicator of her transcendence over the very symbols that otherwise will have her fixed in a patriarchal society. Remarks such as "[a]ll the better to eat you with" intensify the desire to such a point that requires the ultimate release of sexual tension. Laughing with the knowledge that she is "nobody's meat," the girl "ripped off his shirt for him and flung it into the fire, in the fiery wake of her own discarded clothing" ("CW" 118). Her striptease is playful since she is fully aware that she offers herself as flesh not meat, which removes her from the realm of patriarchal pornography. This is a sexual moment which is no longer chained to a dominant erotica that limits the social positions of men and women. Discarding the weak and sacrificial feminine image, she defiantly disobeys Perrault's warnings against female sexuality. Outside, the wolf pack's howling celebrates the murder of sense and order, signaling the encroachment of darkness and dissolution. In Perrault's tale, Little Red Riding Hood is not open to any transformation but remains a victim, while in Carter's version, when the wolf and the girl eventually lie down together, the sacrificial contract is broken and a metamorphosis is achieved. To quote Wendy Swyt, "Carter's narrative performs a deconstruction of 'the virgin function'. It is a tale of girl becoming…" (Swyt 1996: 316). The metamorphosis that Carter's girl undergoes from the archetype of virgin girl who is beautiful but can barely protect herself to the witty young woman who knows how to use her sexuality for her own survival, is of practical significance, as Carter deconstructs the traditional myth of

female virginity. Thus, the dualism of male subjectivity and female objectivity in a traditional society is upset and challenged.

In her well-known article, Merja Makinen insightfully identifies Carter's fairy tales as "her female protagonists' confrontations with desire, in all its unruly 'animalness'" (Makinen 1992: 11). If we accept Makinen's perception and interpret the wolf as "the projections of a feminine libido" (ibid.: 12), then Carter's wolf-story becomes a tale of repression being liberated by female libido. As Merja Makinen stresses, the "strength" as well as the "dangers" of Carter's narrative texts lies in the "aggressive subversiveness" and "active eroticism" (ibid.: 3). Evidently, Red Riding Hood is embracing her own animal side and asserting her female sexual subjectivity, thus entirely reversing the moral of Perrault's tale. During an interview with Haffenden, Carter commented: "She [the girl] eats the wolf, in effect" (Haffenden 1985: 83). At odds with the stereotype of woman as virgin and victim, Carter's alternative representation of Red Riding Hood "reflects the changing attitude toward women and sexuality in Western society in a more positive way" (Zipes 1993: 64). Hence, Carter is providing readers with a new possibility conceived by Irigaray: The representations of women are not being one.

To further analyze how Carter rewrites Perrault's tale, we will elaborate on her use of second-person narration in "The Company of Wolves." Few previous researches have been done in this aspect except for Monica Fludernik's apt observation of Carter's pronominal acrobatics in the story. Therefore, this article attempts to explore further how Carter utilizes this distinctive narrative strategy in order to challenge a single narrative authority, disables the patriarchal representation of woman and foregrounds female sexuality and intersubjectivity.

5 Second-Person Narration

In order to dispel a single narrative authority, feminist writers have made considerable investigation of pronouns, a practice that perhaps has its precedent in the predominance of confessional and autobiographical genres within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writing by women. In women's innovative texts, the narrative "you," or narration in the second person, is a particularly interactive process. "The Company of Wolves," for instance, is a typical feminist short story of inextricable layers of narrative and voice, as Carter tells Anna Katsavos in the interview that "there are a whole lot of verbal games in that I really enjoy doing" (Katsavos 1994: 15). To interrogate Perrault's authorial storytelling voice, Carter utilizes the second-person narration which is highlighted by a distinctly dialogic mode. It has been observed by Joanne Frye among others that these forms appear to articulate "subjectivist" rather than "objective" discourse, such that "to speak directly in a personal voice is to deny the exclusive right of male authority implicit in a public voice and to escape the expression of dominant ideologies upon which an omniscient narrator depends" (qtd. in Richardson 1994: 321).

I argue that this tale fits Brian Richardson's category of "hypothetical" second-person narration: "the hypothetical form employs the style of the guidebook to recount a narrative" (Richardson 2006: 18) as well as the three features of this

mode: "the consistent use of the imperative, the frequent employment of the future tense, and the unambiguous distinction between the narrator and the narratee" (ibid.: 29). What's more, "The Company of Wolves" deliberately adds another two parallel narrative sections about the folk tradition of werewolf to Perrault's tale in order to collapse the hierarchy through self-reflexivity. Consequently, the second-person narration involves the real reader within the textual world by not only breaking the frame of narration and violating the boundaries of narrative levels, but also laying bare the fictionality of storytelling. Resisting the conventions of narrative authority, the non-standard pronominal structure of "The Company of Wolves" breaks down the clear distinctions between writer, narrator, character, narratee and reader, and replaces them with interconnected selves.

In the first narrative section, the authorial narrator instructs a hypothetical "you" traveling through the forest—a "benighted traveler":

> At night, the eyes of wolves shine like candle flames…the pupils of their eyes fatten on darkness and catch the light from **your** lantern to flash it back to **you**…But those eyes are all **you** will be able to glimpse of the forest assassins as they cluster invisibly round **your** smell of meat as **you** go through the wood unwisely late. ("CW" 110)

In the second narrative section, the narrative is set in a more specific time: "winter" and "now" (ibid.). The narrator, previously classified as "authorial," now slips into the role of a character–narrator in the first-person plural, complaining and warning to "you":

> But the wolves have ways of arriving at **your** own hearthside. **We** try and try but sometimes **we** cannot keep them out. ("CW" 111)

In this case, "you" can be seen as the replacement of "we." The use of "you" allows the character–narrator the emotional distance to address an aspect of "we" that they might find difficult to confront. But as the hypothetical "you" creates a more general sense of "you," the text then increasingly molds itself on the example of an instructional manual or guidebook, dispensing standard advice on how to proceed in the dangerous forest:

> **You** are always in danger in the forest, where no people are. Step between the portals of the great pines where the shaggy branches tangle about **you**, trapping the unwary traveler in nets as if the vegetation itself were in a plot with the wolves who live there, as though the wicked trees go fishing on behalf of their friends— step between the gateposts of the forest with the greatest trepidation and infinite precautions, for if **you** stray from the path for one instant, the wolves will eat **you**. They are grey as famine, they are as unkind as plague. ("CW" 111)

The ambiguity of "you" in this tale works to open up narrative as a dialogic and readerly space where the readers' responsive participation is strengthened by the immediacy of the second person.

When Carter reads traditional fairy tales as "parables of instruction," she echoes Marcia Lieberman's identification of their function as "training manuals for girls"

serving "to acculturate women to traditional social roles" (1972: 395, 383). Similarly, Karen Rowe argues that traditional fairy tales "prescribe approved cultural paradigms which ease the female's assimilation into the adult community" (1986: 212). Thus, although the presence of generic "you" with which real readers might feel directly addressed instructs them not to enter the dark realm of the unknown which symbolizes the realm of the sexual, "this series of imperatives of ostensibly good advice is undercut stylistically by the poetic comparisons of the passage ('as if the vegetation itself were in a plot with the wolves', 'as though the wicked trees go fishing', 'unkind as plague')" (Fludernik 1998: 227). Apparently, it is with her deconstructionist intentions that Carter deploys the hypothetical mode of second-person narration in the story. First of all, it serves an ironic tool to play with the genre of fairy tale which repeatedly warns young girls to fear sex like plague. Second, the dialogic form of second-person narration engages readers, especially young female readers to see the instructions only work for the benefit of male authority.

In addition, the second narrative section contains three of the werewolf legends which reflect the three sections of the whole story, as Fludernik observed that "the three stories in a sense iconically reproduce the three sections of the story as a whole" (Fludernik 1998: 228). Hence, the self-reflexive sections in Carter's version reflect on each other without referring to the outside reality, or there is no general patriarchal truth after all. In the embedded third anecdote of the second section, the homodiegetic narrator, now a member of the village community—the potential victims of the wolves, goes on: "Not so very long ago, a young woman in our village married a man who vanished clean away on her wedding night" ("CW" 111-112). After fruitless searches, "the sensible girl dried her eyes and found herself another husband" (ibid.). Years later, when her first husband comes back, seeing her second husband and her little children, he instantly turns back into a wolf: "I wish I were a wolf again, to teach this whore a lesson!" (ibid.). The wife weeps and "her second husband beats her" (ibid.). From the description, we may see that some superstitious folklore, similar to traditional fairytale, tends to impose an illegitimate artificial shape on reality. By putting the werewolf lore in the character–narrator's mouth, Carter ironically highlights the practice of using folklore and legend in shaping specifically the role of women in the perpetuation of these patriarchal systems of signification. This is what Bacchilega suggests that the tale represents Carter's "dialogue with the folkloric traditions and social history of 'Red Riding Hood'" (Bacchilega 1997: 59), and what Zipes comments that Carter's version "recalls the superstitious past to transcend it" (Zipes 1993: 64).

Moreover, in these werewolf stories, the borders between the forest and the village have been trespassed since the legends cannot tame the beast as the narrator describes: "the teeming perils of the night and the forest, ghost, hobgoblins, ogres that grill babies upon gridirons, witches that fatten their captives in cages for cannibal feasts" ("CW" 111). With the wolf which symbolizes unreason and sexuality intruding the village, this generic contamination violates the borders of meaning and challenges the conventional social subject as the villagers attempt to keep the wolf out. The second section is also significant from the point of view of gender role. As Richardson notes that "most recipe books and many self-help

volumes specifically target a female audience" (Richardson 2006: 30), Carter's deployment of "you" initially signifies the feature of gender ambiguity. However, it then moves from an implicitly male to a female, as manifested in the final paragraph where the addressee seems cast in a female gender role: "If you spy a naked man among the pines, you must run as if the Devil were after you" ("CW" 113). This specific reference to females also anticipates the subsequent narrative about "Little Red Riding Hood" and the possibility of a love relationship with the wolf.

The third narrative section, inclusive of Perrault's original tale—"Little Red Riding Hood," sets the story in "midwinter," "the worst time in all the year for wolves" ("CW" 113), echoing the aforementioned season and time in the second section. While reading the final sentence, "sweet and sound she sleeps in Granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf" ("CW" 118), readers may feel indentified with the protagonist, as Richardson reminds us, "the protagonist is a possible future version of the narratee" (Richardson 2006: 29). In this regard, "she"—Little Red Riding Hood, is also "you" and "you" the replacement of "she." Although the engaging direct address has long been read as an "embarrassing," "feminine" cultural form (Warhol 1989), this ethical dimension of the "you" form, drawing readers into second-person relations, makes us think about our own positionality within a community of writing and reading selves.

Equally noteworthy is the Granny's part in this section, which is seen as a counterpoint to the young woman's in the third anecdote (in contrast to that tale, the wolf here enters rather than disappears). When the young man, the wolf, arrives at the grandmother's house, the traditional means of protection against these beasts disintegrate. In this part, the second-person narrative leaves what Richardson calls "hypothetical" mode, when the heterodiegetic narrator even walks into the story and talks to the story character—Granny, accomplishing what Genette terms "metalepsis":

> He strips off his shirt…but he's so thin you could count the ribs under his skin if only he gave you the time. ("CW" 116)

Dennis Schofield proposes another model called "the addressee model" which is based on to whom a narrator refers when addressing "you" (Schofield 1997: 102). The dialogue with Granny fits Schofield's second paradigm of the model, that is, "narrator to a character" instead of "narrator to reader" (ibid.). The narrator, with a lewd voice, mocks Granny who is depicted as a faithful keeper of the traditional patriarchal order: "We keep wolves outside by living well" ("CW" 115), directly addressing her with the second-person pronoun:

> **You** can tell them by their eyes, eyes of a beast of prey, nocturnal, devastating eyes as red as a wound; **you** can hurl your Bible at him and your apron after, granny, **you** thought that was a sure prophylactic against these infernal vermin … now call on Christ and his mother and all the angels in heaven to protect **you** but it won't do **you** any good. ("CW" 115-116)

This narrative also follows an internal focalization which is employed to reveal Granny's fear at the sight of Red Riding Hood's basket fallen into the wolf's hand when the stranger arrives at Grandma's house: "Oh, my God, what have you done

with her?" (ibid.). "Off with his disguise," the wolf does not pretend any longer, because "the forest has come into the kitchen" (ibid.). When the wolf approaches Granny with beastly eyes, the narrator even imitates Granny's shock: "his genitals, huge. Ah! Huge" (ibid.), which signals that desire has permeated Carter's discourse which cannot be easily exorcized and consequently the original interpretive context is disturbed and conventional common sense destabilized.

Conflating narrator, character and reader under "you," the second-person form's protean qualities threaten to collapse the traditional narrative boundaries. In such a situation, the reader is expected to choose between these two distinct positions between "an intrinsic, textual 'you'" and "an extrinsic, extratextual 'you'" (Phelan 1994: 350). The second-person narration helps dramatize the mental battles of an individual struggling against the internalized gendered discourse of an oppressive authority, as Charlotte Crofts points out, female characters such as Granny are suggestive of "female collusion in the patriarchal suppression of female sexuality" (Croft 2003: 55), which, however, has been seriously parodied and severely challenged in Carter's story. As their habitual anticipations of gender and genre are thwarted, readers have to readjust their expectations during reading this new story.

6 Conclusion

Distinguished for her extraordinary imagination and self-reflexive narrative, Carter's feminist revision of Perrault's moralizing tale—"Little Red Riding Hood"—changes the conventions of the fairytale genre, thus revealing the fictionality of Perrault's patriarchal representation of woman. Carter's version, instead, is a story of the girl's sexual initiation, which is rife with psychological details and an almost medical awareness of the girl's adolescent ripeness. By re-characterizing Perrault's girl, Carter has created a new Red Riding Hood—a girl who is not afraid of acting out her own desires and asserting her own sexual agency. Resisting the convention of narrative authority, the non-standard pronominal structure in "The Company of Wolves" breaks down the clear distinctions between narrator, character and reader. This is of great ethical significance as the second-person narration effects an engaged relation between self and other, complicating binaries of opposition and difference and relocating selfhood within matrices of community. In this sense, "The Company of Wolves" produces a new subject position, an interdependent selfhood or intersubjectivity for readers, particularly young female readers. In a nutshell, Carter's feminist ideology is in harmony with her distinctive narrative strategies, which signals the perfect unity of form and content in her work.

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Jie Wu is lecturer at School of Foreign Languages (SFL), Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU), Shanghai, China (200240), whose research area is English literature and narratology.