

LA TRADUCTION COMME CRÉATION

TRANSLATION AND CREATIVITY

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TABLE DES MATIÈRES

MARTINE HENNARD DUTHEIL DE LA ROCHÈRE
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Préface 11

RÉFLEXIONS

SUSAN BASSNETT

Translation and Creativity 39

MARTINE HENNARD DUTHEIL DE LA ROCHÈRE

Ecrire à travers le miroir des langues :
les poétiques traductives d'Angela Carter..... 63

MARIE ÉMILIE WALZ

« For she does joy [...] to be free from hard
restraynt and gealous feares » :
Angela Carter's Feminist Translation/Rewriting
of Edmund Spenser's « Book of Chastity »
in « Puss-in-Boots » 87

IRENE WEBER HENKING

De la colonne Morris au tambour :
le rythme de la traduction créative..... 109

TÉMOIGNAGES

CHRISTINE RAGUET

Alienability and Creativity : the Role of
Sounds and Sensations in Translation 135

PIERRE LEPORI

Comment je suis devenu *queer (in translation)* :
un témoignage littéraire 161

JEAN-PIERRE LEFEBVRE

Ecrire être soi et traduire être un autre ? 179

CRÉATIONS

JOANNA M. SZYMANSKI

Traduire c'est partir en voyage 191

ISABELLE SBRISSA

4 poèmes italiens de Yari Bernasconi
menés vers le français par Isabelle Sbrissa
en suivant des chemins divers 211

CLÉA CHOPARD & ARNO RENKEN

see folly in folie en intraduisant
comment dire *what is the word* 223

Notes sur les auteurs 243

Remerciements 249

Publications du CTL 251

« For she does joy [...] to be free
from hard restraynt and gealous feares » :
Angela Carter's Feminist
Translation/Rewriting of Edmund Spenser's
« Book of Chastity » in « Puss-in-Boots »

MARIE ÉMILIE WALZ

« Through a writer's life, translation may be one of several different literary activities undertaken by the same person », Susan Bassnett observes in « Writing and Translating » (p. 174). This was true of British author Angela Carter (1940–1992), whose literary activity combined reading and writing, translating and rewriting, in a dynamic relationship. Some of Carter's texts are translations strictly speaking, as they transpose written works into another language. Others are rewritings in different genres, styles and forms that openly transform their source(s) according to Carter's feminist sensibilities. However, translation and rewriting are more often than not intertwined in Carter's literary practice of actively engaging with past texts: for instance, Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère has shown how Carter's translations of Charles Perrault's and Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's fairy tales shed new light on her rewritings of the same tales collected in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979). I argue in this article that Carter's engagement with medieval and early modern literature also combines translation and rewriting in order to reactualise these texts for a modern audience. My case study here is Carter's response to Edmund

Spenser's allegorical poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590 and 1596) in « Puss-in-Boots »¹ from *The Bloody Chamber*. Carter both translates Spenser's sixteenth-century language into modern-day English and rewrites an episode from his « Book of Chastity »², questioning the sexual politics of the early modern allegory. Yet, Carter's own archaising language gestures towards Spenser's poem, while her subversion of Christian ideology highlights ambiguities in the representation of gender

- 1 « Puss-in-Boots » has attracted little critical attention compared to other fairy-tale retellings in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*. The story is briefly discussed by Danielle M. Roemer and Cristina Bacchilega in their introduction to *Angela Carter and the Fairy Tale* and by Margaret Atwood in her article « Running with the Tigers », while Merja Makinen makes a passing reference to it in « Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonization of Feminine Sexuality ». More substantial analyses are given by Maria Sofia Pimentel Biscaia in « Angela Carter's « Puss-in-Boots » » and Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère in *Reading, Translating, Rewriting*. Both attribute this relative lack of interest to the comic mode of the story in an otherwise Gothic collection and the strong emphasis on male sexual exploits. My own hypothesis is that it is also due to the fact that Carter's « Puss-in-Boots » not only rewrites Charles Perrault's French *conte* « Le Maître Chat ou le Chat botté » but also harks back to a similar episode from Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, a heretofore unnoticed intertext.
- 2 In « The Letter to Raleigh », published with the first edition of *The Faerie Queene* in 1590, Spenser explains that his aim in writing this allegorical poem is « to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline » (p. 451). Thus, he plans on writing twelve books for *The Faerie Queene* recounting the adventures of twelve knights, patrons of twelve virtues. Spenser, however, managed to write only six of the twelve books before he died in 1599: Book I is concerned with the virtue of Holiness, Book II with Temperance, Book III with Chastity, Book IV with Friendship, Book V with Justice, and Book VI with Courtesy.

roles in *The Faerie Queene*. Carter's translation/rewriting³ of Spenser's poem thus not only challenges its surface meaning but also retrieves some of its textual complexity, underlining in the process the fact that *The Faerie Queene* is also a translation/rewriting of earlier texts.

Translation as Rewriting and Rewriting as Translation

The intertwining of translation and rewriting in Carter's literary activity is a good example of recent reconceptualisations of translation as a creative process. In the past few years, scholars like Susan Bassnett, André Lefevere, and Lawrence Venuti⁴, among others, have been concerned with « rethinking the view of translation that sets the original in a higher position than the text created for a new target audience » (Bassnett 1993 : 141). Rather than situating an original text and its translation in a hierarchical relationship, these scholars view translation as a rewriting and agree that « [a]ll rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology

3 Because I argue that translation and rewriting are intimately connected in Carter's work, I keep the two terms together to account for the complexity of her engagement with medieval and early modern texts, especially Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*.

4 See for instance Susan Bassnett's concluding chapter, « Towards Translation Studies », in *Comparative Literature*, and « Writing and Translating » in the book she co-edited with Peter Bush, *The Translator as Writer*; see also André Lefevere's *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of the Literary Fame*; Bassnett and Lefevere's *Constructing Cultures*; and Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility*.

and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way » (Lefevere 1992 : vii). As well as rethinking the relationships between a so-called original text and its translation(s), these scholars also seek to deconstruct the opposition between the activities of writing and translating, with writing being seen as a creative activity and translation as its mechanical and hence inferior counterpart. As Bassnett argues, « it is absurd to see translation as anything other than a creative literary activity, for translators are all the time engaging with texts first as readers and then as rewriters, as recreators of that text in another language » (Bassnett 2006 : 174). Bassnett's definition of translators as « readers », « rewriters » and « recreators » aptly captures Carter's dynamic literary activity and engagement with past texts as a reader, translator and rewriter. In *Reading, Translating, Rewriting : Angela Carter's Translational Poetics*, Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère shows that Carter's reading and writing practices are informed by her « *translational poetics* » (2013 : 6, italics in original). Taking the example of Carter's translations of French fairy tales into English in *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault* (1977) and *Sleeping Beauty and Other Favourite Fairy Tales* (1982) and her rewritings of these tales in *The Bloody Chamber* and beyond, she argues that « the interrelationship between reading, translating, and fiction writing as continuous and intricately related activities [...] reflect a coherent aesthetic and pragmatic project » (*Ibid.*, 2). In Carter's work therefore, the distinction between writing, rewriting, and translating becomes blurred, these activities feeding each other in a continuous, dynamic, and creative process.

Carter's « translational poetics » in fact extends to her engagement with medieval and early modern literature. A recently published collection of Carter's poetry entitled *Unicorn: The Poetry of Angela Carter* (2015) attests to this : it includes two poems which are translations/rewritings of texts from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. At the end of « William the Dreamer's Vision of Nature », Carter indicates that it is « freely translated from passages in William Langland's Middle English alliterative poem « Piers Plowman » » (Carter 2015 : 11), and the poem both modernises and adapts Book or *Passus* XI from the fourteenth-century text. Another poem in this collection, « Two Wives and a Widow », is subtitled « A modern version from the Middle Scots of William Dunbar » (12). Rosemary Hill, the editor of the collection, argues that Carter is « so in tune with Dunbar that she takes few liberties with him as her source. Her version is if anything too respectful to succeed as an independent poem » (65), and so this « version » can be better seen as a translation from Middle Scots into modern English rather than as a rewriting of the sixteenth-century poem *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*. Although this claim is debatable, Carter being known for engaging in a creative *and* critical dialogue with all her sources, even with those by authors she admired such as William Shakespeare, Hill's comment bears witness to the continuity between translation and rewriting in Carter's works based on medieval and early modern texts. To study her translation/rewriting strategies therefore leads to a better understanding of the nature and purpose of Carter's engagement with this particular set of intertexts.

As a case in point, this article reads Carter's short story « Puss-in-Boots » as a translation/rewriting of an episode

from Spenser's « Book of Chastity », which both retells the story in modern-day English and subverts its ideological subtext in order to rehabilitate the figure of the adulterous wife. The basic plots of the two texts are quite similar, but their endings differ radically, insofar as the adulterous wife is punished in Spenser's poem and rewarded in Carter's story. In *The Faerie Queene*, Hellenore is a young and chaste woman who is married to an old and impotent husband called Malbecco. Fearing that she might run away with a younger man, Malbecco keeps Hellenore in his castle and forbids anyone to enter it. One day, however, some knights succeed in being let into the castle to be sheltered from a storm. One of these knights is Paridell, a lustful young man who seduces Hellenore and runs away with her. After taking her virginity, he abandons her in the woods where she is found by a band of satyrs who make her their housewife and sexual plaything.⁵ In Carter's « Puss-in-Boots », « Missus » (Carter 2006 : 76)⁶ is also a young virgin married to an old and impotent man, Signor Panteleone⁷. Rapunzel-like, she is imprisoned by her

5 This is reminiscent of the « Snow White » tale albeit in a more « adult » version. Another echo of the tale is found in Book III, canto viii, in which a witch creates a young girl out of snow for her son. It is thus possible that Spenser knew a version of this fairy tale and rewrote it several times in his « Book of Chastity ».

6 Hereafter, references to Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* will be abridged *BC*.

7 Signor Panteleone is Carter's reconfiguration of Pantalone, a wealthy and greedy character in the *commedia dell'arte*. In the British adaptation of the genre, the Harlequinade, he is the father of Columbine and tries to separate her from her lover, Harlequin. Likewise, Puss and his female friend, Tabs, are Carter's own Harlequin and Columbine.

husband in a tower, only allowed to open the window for an hour every evening and to leave the house once a week to go to Church. One morning, Puss's master, a cavalry officer, sees her and the young man instantly falls in love with her. Like Perrault's cat in « Le Maître Chat ou le Chat botté » (which Carter's « Puss-in-Boots » also rewrites), who cunningly succeeds in getting a miller's son married to a princess, Puss and his female friend, Tabs, plot to get the young man into Signor Panteleone's home, so the young lovers can be united. They even arrange for Signor Panteleone to trip over Tabs : he falls down the stairs and dies on the spot. Missus ends up a rich widow, free to choose the cavalry officer as her second husband, and they live happily ever after. In rewarding the adulterous wife, Carter's story thus turns the moral of Spenser's poem on its head, subverting its Christian condemnation of unchaste women, denouncing arranged marriages and celebrating love and sex instead.

As well as rewriting its plot, « Puss-in-Boots » also translates the adulterous wife episode from Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, whose language can be considered as « foreign » for modern-day Anglophone readers. Spenser's poetic language⁸ is littered with archaisms and neologisms invented by the poet himself. The syntax of *The Faerie Queene*, which

8 See Willy Maley's « Spenser's Languages » and Dorothy Stephens's « Spenser's Language(s) » among others.

often reverses word order to fit the Spenserian Stanza⁹, also contributes to making the text « foreign » for contemporary readers. Roman Jakobson argues that « poetry by definition is untranslatable. Only creative transposition is possible : either intralingual transposition – from one poetic shape into another, or interlingual transposition – from one language into another, or finally intersemiotic transposition – from one system of signs into another » (Jakobson 2004 : 143). Carter's story performs a « creative transposition » from « one poetic shape into another » as « Puss-in-Boots » adapts Spenser's poetic language for twentieth-century readers and yet often harks back to old-fashioned forms of English, using archaic words or locutions as well as alliterations, a characteristic device of medieval poetry also extensively used by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*. These linguistic traces in Carter's story hint back at Spenser's English as a « foreign » language of sorts that Carter's retelling translates into modern-day English for contemporary readers.

This process of using archaic forms of English or foreign words to summon a chronologically or geographically distant frame of references in her own texts is an integral part of Carter's « translational poetics ». In her introduction to *Angela Carter traductrice/Angela Carter en traduction*,

9 The Spenserian Stanza is composed of nine lines ; the first eight are iambic pentameters while the last one is an iambic hexameter, and its rhyme scheme is *ababbcbcc*. As Stephens puts it in her introduction to Book III and IV of *The Faerie Queene*, « Italian could handle such a rhyme scheme easily, but the relative dearth of rhyming words in English makes the scheme more challenging » (Stephens 2006 : xix), hence a syntax which often reverses word order so as to have rhyming words at the end of the lines.

Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère explains that Carter's rewritings of Perrault's *contes* often originated in her philological investigations of French words :

Lire les contes familiers en langue étrangère suscite une véritable rêverie sur les mots et la langue de Perrault, qui deviennent le point de départ de nouvelles histoires : leur poids culturel, leur épaisseur historique et leur richesse sémantique, la trace graphique et le rythme des phrases, les associations et la musicalité de la langue étrangère ouvrent des possibilités formelles, narratives, stylistiques et génériques jusque-là inexplorées. (Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère 2014 : 17)

Like Perrault's French words which « become the starting point of new stories », Spenser's archaisms open « formal, narrative, stylistic and generic possibilities » (translation mine) which Carter plays with in her own story. More specifically, the language of the cat narrator in Carter's « Puss-in-Boots » echoes the poetic language of *The Faerie Queene*. Although the story is written in English, Puss states that he speaks Italian, but that he mixes « his virile, muscular, native Bergamasque with French, since that is the only language in which you can purr » (BC 77). In her introduction to Carter's collection of short stories, Helen Simpson describes this mix of English, Italian and French as « a vivid mixture of Latinate elaboration and Anglo-Saxon bluntness » (Simpson 2006 : xv). Similarly, *The Faerie Queene* displays neologisms based on Italian and French words which Spenser introduces in early modern English. For example, he uses the word « affrap »

(Spenser 2006 : III, ii, 6.4)¹⁰ which Dorothy Stephens identifies as « one of Spenser's wonderfully backward-looking neologisms – more Chaucerian than Elizabethan, yet new to the world. He is thinking of the Italian *affrappare*, but his version is sturdily Anglo-Saxon in sound » (Stephens 2006 : 31, n. 13). While being Spenser's own creation, this word also evokes Geoffrey Chaucer's¹¹ Middle English, and even though it is based on an Italian word, it paradoxically sounds English. The mix of « Latinate elaboration and Anglo-Saxon bluntness » which Simpson identifies as typical of Puss's language is therefore also a linguistic feature of Spenser's poem, and although « Puss-in-Boots » modernises the sixteenth-century language of *The Faerie Queene*, a trace of it nevertheless remains in Puss's own tongue.

From the « Book of Chastity » to « Puss-in-Boots »

Carter's translation/rewriting of the Spenserian episode has the effect of rehabilitating the adulterous wife figure, mainly through a modernisation and recreation of the three main

10 Hereafter, references to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* will be abridged *FQ*.

11 In addition to imitating Chaucer's language, Spenser rewrites many episodes from *The Canterbury Tales* in *The Faerie Queene*. The adulterous wife episode for instance adapts Chaucer's « The Merchant's Tale », which may actually also be a part of the variety of intertexts rewritten in Carter's « Puss-in-Boots ». As Nicoletta Pireddu shows in « CaRterbury Tales », Carter's take on the genre of romance is very similar to Chaucer's. Since Spenser's own recuperation of romance is also indebted to Chaucer, Carter may be drawing on both their works in *The Bloody Chamber*.

protagonists of the story. Carter's description of the young cavalry officer updates the characterisation of Paridell in *The Faerie Queene*. While Spenser's protagonist is a knight « fayre pricking on the playne » and in whose « port appeared manly hardiment » (*FQ* III, viii, 44.7 and 9), Carter's officer belongs to the cavalry and is « handsome enough and even en déshabillé, nightcap and all, there's a neat, smart, dandified air about him » (*BC* 78). In *The Faerie Queene*, Paridell's lechery is signalled by the allegorical motif of the « burning hart » (*FQ* III, viii, 45.4) which he wears on his breast. In Carter's story, Puss describes his master in a more explicit fashion as being « lecherous as liquorice » (*BC* 78). Yet, this phrase's double alliteration, of the « l » and « ch » sounds, both hints at the early modern poem, which also resorts to alliterations, while celebrating sensuous delights. Similarly, the sexual implications of Paridell's self-description are made quite explicit in Puss's account of his master's exploits. When he introduces himself, Paridell says that he seeks adventures and « faire ladies love » (*FQ* III, ix, 37.7), a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Carter's story, on the contrary, is not euphemistic at all as Puss clearly states that his master « made the beast with two backs with every harlot in the city, besides a number of good wives, dutiful daughters, rosy country girls come to sell celery and endive on the corner, and the chambermaid who strips the bed, what's more » (*BC* 80). Here again, Carter's story gestures towards the early modern period, referencing another Renaissance text : the dated expression « to make the beast with two backs » is an Italian and French proverb first used in English by Shakespeare in *Othello* (*Oxford English Dictionary*, entry on « beast », II. b.). This hints at the mixture of languages, mainly English, Italian and French, in both

Puss's speech and Spenser's poem, and summons as well an early modern frame of references in Carter's story. Keeping the defining characteristics of the figure of the handsome and lustful young man, Carter's text modernises Spenser's description of him and yet retains some of the poetic devices typical of the literature of the period.

However, Carter's young cavalry officer also departs from the lecherous knight archetype, as he truly falls in love with Missus. In Spenser's poem, Paridell remains true to his nature defined by the burning heart on his breast. When he and Hellenore exchange longing looks during dinner, the poem uses the traditional imagery of the poisoned arrow of love and the wounded lover. Hellenore sends a « fyrie dart » (*FQ* III, ix, 28.8) into Paridell's heart, but the image is then ironised as Paridell is used to this pain which is actually for him « [n]e paine at all ; for he so ofte had tryde / The powre thereof, and lov'd so oft in vaine » (*FQ* III, ix, 29.7-8). He thus seduces Hellenore and tricks her into leaving her husband. This is followed by an ellipse in the poem and the next time Paridell appears, he is riding alone « without his Paragone ; / For having filcht her bells, her up he cast / To the wide world, and let her fly alone » (*FQ* III, x, 35.6-8). The metaphor used here comes from the game of hawking and means that Paridell, having obtained from Hellenore what he wanted, abandoned her. Spenser's poetic persona comments : « So had he served many one » (*FQ* III, x, 35.9). In Carter's retelling, the young cavalry officer, on the contrary, falls « head over heels » (*BC* 79) for the unhappily married Missus, to Puss's surprise, and he stops sleeping around as a result. Thinking that « love is desire sustained by unfulfilment » (*BC* 81), Puss imagines a trick that will allow the young cavalry officer to enter into

Missus's chamber. The cat indeed believes that, like Paridell, he just needs to «take his fill of her lily-white» and then «he'll be right as rain in two shakes and next day tricks as usual» (*BC* 81). But the cat soon sees that his plan does not work and that, contrary to Paridell, «satisfaction has not satisfied» (*BC* 90) the young cavalry officer, who claims that he «must and will have her for ever» (*BC* 90). Thus, as the figure of the lustful knight is transposed into Carter's story, it is transformed from a lustful young man causing Hellenore's downfall to an amiable lecher who contributes to Missus's liberation and happiness.

Similarly, as the old and impotent husband is translated/rewritten in Carter's story, his features are comically exaggerated, leading the reader to sympathise with Missus. The early modern poem describes Malbecco as «old, and withered like hay» (*FQ* III, ix, 5.1) and afflicted with a «blinked eye» (*FQ* III ix, 5.5). Carter's contemporary retelling elaborates on the grotesque physical traits of Signor Panteleone and describes him as «an old dodderer with his bald pate and his goggle eyes and his limp, his avarice, his gore belly, his rheumaticks, and his flag hangs all the time at half-mast indeed ; and jealous as he is impotent» (*BC* 82). The last part of this description makes explicit what Spenser's text only euphemises, namely that Malbecco is «[u]nfit faire Ladies service to supply» (*FQ* III, ix, 5.2). This already repulsive portrait of the old husband is reinforced by the fact that Carter's text fills in a gap in Spenser's poem by sarcastically describing Signor Panteleone's marital life with Missus. The early modern poem only hints that Hellenore is «[d]epriv'd of kindly joy and naturall delight» (*FQ* III, ix, 5.9) because of Malbecco's impotence. By contrast, «Puss-in-

Boots » details Signor Panteleone's ritual in the evening when the couple goes to bed as follows :

up he tucks besides Missus and, since she is his prize possession, consents to finger her a little. He palpitates her hide and slaps her flanks : « What a good bargain! » Alack, can do no more, not wishing to profligate his natural essence. And so drifts off to sinless slumber amid the prospects of tomorrow's gold. (*BC* 91)

Here again, Carter's story both restores information that was silenced in Spenser's poem and hints at an older form of English in the old-fashioned word « Alack » and the alliteration « sinless slumber ». Carter's translation/rewriting of Missus's husband thus makes the reader sympathise with the « immoral » wife and later condone her adultery.

The reader's sympathy for Missus is further elicited by the fact that the adulterous wife herself is thoroughly transformed when she is translated/rewritten from Spenser's Christian poem into Carter's feminist story. Both Hellenore and Missus are beautiful and chaste young women, forced into arranged marriages with old men who put them under lock and key like prized possessions. However, while Hellenore is gullible and fashions « worldes of fancies » in « her fraile witt » (*FQ* III, ix, 52.4-5) believing Paridell's love for her to be real and not seeing that he only wants to sleep with her, Missus is « a sensible girl » (*BC* 83) who « exhibits a most praiseworthy and collected presence of mind » (*BC* 87), and rapidly understands the plots designed by Tabs, Puss and his master. Moreover, Hellenore's sexual desires are presented as sinful, while Missus's are praised as natural. Paridell and Hellenore flirt over dinner playing a game with their wine. Hellenore knows the game and uses it to show Paridell her

« desire her inward flame to slake » (*FQ* III, ix, 31.4). This depicts her as a lustful woman, and even her name designates her as such, since it can be heard as a compound of the beautiful Helen of Troy's name and the word « whore ». Missus's sexual desires, on the contrary, are celebrated by Puss as he notices that she is more sexually active than the young cavalry officer when they meet for the first time in her bedchamber. Puss comments : « women, I think, are, of the two sexes, the more keenly tuned to the sweet music of their bodies » (*BC* 88). Thus, while the adulterous wife is presented as gullible and condemned as sinful in Spenser's poem, she is depicted as sensible and praised for her liberated sexuality in Carter's retelling.

The transformation of the adulterous wife climaxes in the scenes of sexual intercourse between her and the cavalry officer in Carter's story. While Paridell's and Hellenore's sexual encounter is elided in the early modern poem, Carter's retelling features two detailed and funny love-making scenes, in which Missus is particularly active, and this contrasts thoroughly as well with the scene in which Malbecco sees a satyr having sex with his wife. In this scene which adopts the voyeuristic point of view of Malbecco, he is searching for Hellenore in the woods and finds her asleep among satyrs. He witnesses as one of them « all the night did minde his joyous play » (*FQ* III, x, 48.4) with Hellenore and « [n]ine times [...] come aloft ere day » (*FQ* III, x, 48.5), namely has nine orgasms in one night. Nothing in the scene is said about Hellenore. In contrast, the love-making scenes as rendered by Carter's Puss enthusiastically depict a very active Missus who turns her lover around and « throws him on his back, her turn at the grind, now, and you'd think she'll never stop » (*BC* 93).

Afterwards, Puss comments that « so full of pleasure gratified her languorous limbs you'd think her very navel smiled » (*BC* 89). In this sense, Missus embodies Carter's point about women's right to actively participate in the sexual act and derive pleasure from it. Carter notably expresses this view in *The Sadeian Woman : An Exercise in Cultural History*, her essay on the Marquis de Sade's works published the same year as *The Bloody Chamber*. She writes : « Women do not normally fuck in the active sense. They are fucked in the passive tense and hence automatically fucked-up, done over, undone. Whatever else he says or does not say, Sade declares himself unequivocally for the right of women to fuck » (Carter 2012 : 31). In Spenser's text, Hellenore is indeed « fucked in the passive tense » by both the knight and the satyr, « and hence automatically fucked-up, done over, undone » as a sinner and submissive woman in a Christian and patriarchal culture. Missus, however, is portrayed neither as a victim nor as a sinner. She reclaims the right for women to be sexually active and to free themselves from men who cannot satisfy them, rehabilitating in the process the archetypal figure of the adulterous wife, and opening up the possibility of mutual love.

« For she does joy [...] to be free
from hard restraynt and gealous feares »

Carter's translation/rewriting of Spenser's episode in turn highlights the fact that Spenser's poem may be more ambiguous in its treatment of the adulterous wife than it might seem. Carter's retelling activates a hidden interpretation contained in the Spenserian episode : that Hellenore may actually be happy to live freely among the satyrs, who represent a

pre-Christian, pagan past. Even Malbecco understands when he finds her in the woods « [t]hat not for nought his wife them loved so well, / When one so oft a night did ring his matins bell » (*FQ* III, x, 48.8-9). The satyrs' lust indeed fulfils Hellenore's sexual needs, which is something her husband could never do. And when he begs her to return with him, she refuses, deliberately choosing to remain « emongst the jolly *Satyres* » (*FQ* III, x, 51.9). This is in fact anticipated at the beginning of the episode already. When Hellenore first appears, she is said to « joy to play emongst her peares / And to be free from hard restraynt and gealous feares » (*FQ* III, ix, 4.8-9), her « peares » turning out to be the satyrs who are as sexually free as she is at the end of the episode. Even though the figure of the adulterous wife seems to be condemned and punished in *The Faerie Queene*, in conformity with religious morality and patriarchal rule, Spenser's poem nevertheless subtly questions this punishment and perhaps even hints at a possible rehabilitation of female desires and sexuality. This rehabilitation is then fully achieved by Carter's translation/rewriting of Spenser's episode in her contemporary and feminist collection of revisited tales.

Thus, as Carter's « Puss-in-Boots » both modernises Spenser's sixteenth-century « Book of Chastity » in a contemporary audience and transforms its sexual politics for a feminist context, it nevertheless references the early modern poem in many ways and retrieves its inherent complexities. While Carter's rewriting of the adulterous wife episode subverts the Christian ideology allegedly conveyed by Spenser's allegory, it also draws attention to hidden interpretative possibilities which complicate a simplistic reading of its representation of gender roles and relations. Similarly, as Carter's

text translates Renaissance language into modern-day English, some archaizing features nonetheless recall Spenser's own use of archaic words and neologisms. And indeed, like Carter, Spenser was also a translator, rewriter and recreator of earlier texts for his own historical context. His adulterous wife episode is itself a translation/rewriting of both Homer's *Iliad* and Chaucer's « The Merchant's Tale » from *The Canterbury Tales*. Like Carter's story, Spenser's episode thus translates/rewrites Homer's and Chaucer's texts from Ancient Greek and Middle English respectively, resituating Homer's epic plot in a more domestic context through the genre of the *fabliau* inherited from Chaucer, and hence creating a new story. Bassnett's claim that « translation may be one of several different literary activities undertaken by the same person » (Bassnett 2006 : 174) with which I opened this article thus applies both to Carter and her early modern predecessor.

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