Fractured Fairy Tales And Subversion: *Red Ridin' In The Hood And Other Cuentos* By Patricia Marcantonio

Marina Bernardo-Flórez
University of Barcelona

MARINA BERNARDO FLÓREZ received her PhD in Representation and Construction of Cultural Identities at the University of Barcelona and carried out postdoctoral research as a visiting scholar at the University of California, Santa Barbara (2023) within the Fulbright Program. She researches Chicanx children's literature and identity, and is a member of the International Research Society for Children's Literature (IRSCL) as well as the Children's Literature Association (ChLA). She is currently Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education, University of Barcelona.

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ABSTRACT

Inside a cardboard box, Mama packed a tin of chicken soup, heavy on cilantro, along with a jar of peppermint tea, peppers from our garden, and a hunk of white goat cheese that smelled like Uncle Jose's feet.
That meant one thing.
"Roja, your abuelita is not feeling well," Mama told me. "I want you to take this food to her."
"But Mama, me and Lupe Maldonado are going to the movies," I replied, but felt guilty as soon as I'd said it.
These are the lines which open Patricia Santos Marcantonio's fractured version of the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood*. In her retelling of this and other ten fairy tales published in the volume *Red Ridin' in the Hood and Other Cuentos* (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2005), the Mexican American author makes use of a series of elements to provide a Latinx version of these fairy tales to counterbalance the lack of representation of Latinx children in the books she read growing up in the United States.
In my paper I will explore the elements Marcantonio modifies in order to subvert these fairy tales with a Latinx flavor.
KEYWORDS: Latinx, young adults, fractured fairy tales, contemporary literature, Patricia Marcantonio

RESUMEN

Inside a cardboard box, Mama packed a tin of chicken soup, heavy on cilantro, along with a jar of peppermint tea, peppers from our garden, and a hunk of white goat cheese that smelled like Uncle Jose's feet.
That meant one thing.
"Roja, your abuelita is not feeling well," Mama told me. "I want you to take this food to her."
"But Mama, me and Lupe Maldonado are going to the movies," I replied, but felt guilty as soon as I'd said it.
Así comienza Patricia Santos Marcantonio su versión fracturada del cuento *Caperucita Roja*. En su nueva versión de éste y otros diez cuentos de hadas publicados en el volumen *Red Ridin' in the Hood and Other Cuentos* (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2005), la autora mexicoamericana hace uso de una serie de elementos para ofrecer una versión latina de estos cuentos de hadas con el fin de contrarrestar la falta de representación de los niños latinos en los libros que leía mientras crecía en Estados Unidos.
En mi artículo exploraré los elementos que Marcantonio modifica para subvertir estos cuentos

PALABRAS CLAVE: Latinx, jóvenes adultos, cuentos de hadas fracturados, literatura contemporánea, Patricia Marcantonio

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1. FAIRY TALES, CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, AND SUBVERSION

In her introduction to *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales* (2002) scholar Maria Tatar underscores the universality and centrality of fairy tales in our cultural capital spread through different means such as opera and theatre, cinema and advertising. Fairy tales are still alive because they deal with our worries, with our fears and wishes, with romance, passion, and love. According to Jack Zipes, one of the most renowned experts on classic fairy tales, these metaphorical stories, which were originally transmitted orally, not only stemmed from basic human experiences, but also "contained vital information that strengthened the common bonds of people living in small clans and tribes" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 210), and still now they have an acculturation role in forming and conveying ideologies of a particular society. In fact, for Zipes the conflict that fairy tales begin with is a reflection of the conflict that we face at the beginning of our lives in order to fit in with our environment and with other people making use of communication to resolve our desires and instincts (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 210). The genre has been employed by social institutions and writers and artists to conform to the dominant principles of society or to question them. In his work *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (2012), Zipes reminds us that fairy tales have been considered dangerous because they can be subversive. Although Disney's production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) opened the way for the use of the fairy tale to promote conservative patriarchal values, such as virginity and pure love, subversion has been present not only in the origins of the fairy tale art, but also in children's literature.

In the introduction to her work *Power, voice and subjectivity in literature for young readers* (2010), Maria Nikolajeva proposes the term *aetonormativit*y (from Latin *aeto*-, pertaining to age) to refer to the child/adult power hierarchy when arguing that if all literature reflects power structures, power is in some way or other present in all children's literature. The particular characteristic of children's literature is its focus on the child/adult power hierarchy, just as the specifics of feminist literature is the gender-related power structures, and the specifics of postcolonial literature is the ethnic-related power structures (Nikolajeva 7). However, the author points at two particularities of children's literature within a discourse of the Other which make it a unique form of art and communication: one is the fact that, as an instrument to educate, socialize and oppress a particular social group —children—, "nowhere else are power structures as visible as in children's literature" (8). The other particularity that Nikolajeva emphasizes is that, unlike other kinds of literature, children's literature is characterized by "a constant change of power positions: yesterday's children grow up and become oppressors themselves" (9).

Nikolajeva frames her argument within the "discourse of the Other" or heterology in order to explore how the imbalance, inequality or asymmetry between children and adults is presented and assessed in children's books. Following Queer Theory, which interrogates one single condition as a norm, in this case, *aetonormativity* referring to the assumption that adults and adult experience are normative, while children and childish experiences are deviant or other, the purpose of Nikolajeva's study is to test "how we can exchange an established pattern, in our case, adult normativity, for another one, and examine what happens if we instead depart from child in power as norm and powerless child as deviation" (8). What happens if literary texts substitute child normativity for adult normativity? Nevertheless, the author reminds us that Queer Theory does not attempt to replace one norm by another, but asserts that all conditions are equally normal.

In order to refer to the exchange of established patterns or the subversion of power positions, Nikolajeva refers to Bakhtin's application of carnival theory to literature. Carnivalesque features, such as hyperbole, distortion, upside-down world, the grotesque, and the circus, to number a few, create a temporary reversal of

the established order when power structures are exchanged (10). According to the author, in children's literature, the fictional child is empowered only "on certain conditions and for a limited time" (10) by a series of elements such as physical dislocation, the removal of parental protection, extraordinary situations, far-away settings, and temporary isolation, among others, to produce a subversive effect. Thus, Nikolajeva claims that, although adults have unlimited power in our society as compared to children (who lack economic resources as well as a political and social voice, and who are subject to a large number of rules which the adults expect them to obey without interrogation), and this is regarded as norm in real life as well as in literature, children's literature can, however, subvert its own oppressive function.

2. FRACTURED *CUENTOS* WITH A LATINX FLAVOR

Going back to fairy tales and subversion, numerous writers have retold these metaphorical stories opening the genre to experiments and creating innovative and provocative fairy tales. When some of the elements of a fairy tale are changed in order to make it more modern or to convey an updated lesson, we can refer to these retellings as "fractured fairy tales". Certain plot developments, contrary points of view, and unexpected characterizations may be humorous, such as in Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes* (1982). In his retelling of six well-known fairy tales, Dahl makes use of simple, basic, and coloquial language in his verses to introduce twists in the characters and plot from a cynical and ironic approach. Fractured fairy tales are not the same as fairy-tale parodies since they serve different purposes: if parodies mock individual tales and the genre itself, fractured fairy tales seek to impart updated social and moral messages (Zipes, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* 172).

Fractured tales might be considered to be more suitable for young readers since it is assumed that their audience know the traditional version, so that they can understand and enjoy the fractured one. There is a number of different ways to fracture a fairy tale, mainly:

- change or swap the roles of the main characters;
- have the story take place somewhere else;
- have the story take place in another time period;
- tell the story from a different character's point of view;

- make the problem of the story different;
- change an important item in the story;
- you can even change the end of the story (maybe they don't live "happily ever after")

In my analysis I focus on the elements that Chicana author Patricia Marcantonio uses in order to provide a Latinx version of eleven classic fairy tales to counterbalance the lack of representation of Latinx children in the books she read growing up in the United States. I analyse three of the tales in more detail to explore subversion not only in terms of ethnicity, but also gender in these fractured fairy tales. Note that I have compared the fractured versions to the classic versions in Maria Tatar's *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales* (2002), in which she includes a study on the possible origins, evolution, and the different versions of the classic tales.

2.1. Red Ridin' in the Hood and Other Cuentos by Patricia Marcantonio

Red Ridin' in the Hood and Other Cuentos was published in 2005 by Farrar Straus Giroux. Illustrated by Brazilian artist Renato Alarcão, it won an Anne Izard Storyteller's Choice Award, was a Commended Title — Americas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature, and earned a Starred review — American Library Association. Coming from a family of storytellers, Marcantonio is the author of multiple books, including *Felicity Carrol and the Perilous Pursuit* (2019) and *Felicity Carrol and the Murderous Menac*e (2020), a Victorian mystery series published by Crooked Lane Books, as well as the novel *Verdict in the Desert*, published by Arte Público Press in 2016. Her horror mystery *Under the Blood Moon* was published by Dark Ink in 2022, and her young adult's book *Best Amigas* was released by Regal Publishing in the fall of 2023. She produced and directed her original play, *Tears for Llorona*, inspired by the old Mexican ghost story and published through CreateSpace in 2015, and she has workshopped her play *Starring Jane Eyre*. Pioneer Drama Service has published her new play, *Roja Ridin' in the Hood and Other Tales*, which retells four of the classic fairy tales from the original book.

In order to begin my analysis, I will identify the elements that Marcantonio changes to fracture these eleven fairy tales. First of all,

despite being written in English, the titles of the stories have been latinized with proper names of characters and places, as well as key words in Spanish: *Jaime and Gabriela* (*Hansel and Gretel*), *Red Ridin' in the Hood* (*Little Red Riding Hood*), *Blanca Nieves and the Seven Vaqueritos (Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs), Juan and the Pinto Bean Stalk (Jack and the Beanstalk), The Piper of Harmonía (The Pied Piper of Hamelin), Alejandro and the Spirit of the Magic Lámpara (Aladdin), Belleza y La Bestia (Beauty and the Beast), Emperador's New Clothes (The Emperor's New Clothes), The Three Chicharrones (The Three Little Pigs), The Sleeping Beauty* (as told by the *bruja* who cast the spell) *(Sleeping Beauty)*. Nonetheless, the latinization of these titles does not prevent young and adult readers from recognizing the classsic fairy tales. The tale *El Día de los Muertos*, a retelling of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, takes place in the time of the Aztecs, and casts Orpheus as the feather-maker Nochehuatl and Xochiyotl as Eurydice. This may be the only tale whose title may not be easily identified as a fractured version of the classic story, at least not until it has been read.

The places where the stories are set have been changed for landscapes which are closer to Mexican American culture: Jaime and Gabriela live in a desert of *nopales* and scorpions, and their father is an adobe maker; Blanca Nieves loves to ride her horse over the lands of her father's *rancho*, and the *vaqueritos* live in Rancho García; the setting of Nochehuatl and Xochiyotl's story is a place where "the white pyramids rose into the sky of blue, bluer than the waters of the lake surrounding the splendid place of the Eagle and the cactus" (Marcantonio 49), which is a clear reference to the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlan, where, according to the myth of Aztlan, the tribes migrating from the North settled down after finding the symbol which marked the place in which they had to found their city: an eagle standing on a cactus eating a serpent. In *The Piper of Harmonía*, the beautiful town of Harmonía ('harmony' in English) is near the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, in the Rocky Mountains between southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, surrounded by fields where farmers grow wheat, pumpkins and corn (81). Both Juan and Emperador Gómez live in contemporary urban areas: Juan wears baggy pants and a bandana so low that he can barely see. His mother wants him to finish school and go to college, so that he can

get a good job, stressing: "I dream your children will never know hunger" (64). Emperador Gómez, in turn, is the most popular boy at Emiliano Zapata High School: "(H)e always dressed as if he had just popped out of a teen magazine, from his perfectly gelled spiky hair to the soles of his expensive tennis shoes" (137).

As for the roles of the main characters, Marcantonio's Latinx versions keep these roles practically the same. However, in some tales she introduces some twists: Blanca Nieves does not collaborate in the Vaqueritos' rancho doing housework, but rather offers to help with the animals; in the fractured version of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Juan is lazy and does not want to work, whereas in the classic version by Joseph Jacobs, Jack has been looking for work unsuccessfully to help his mother, a widow; in the case of Emperador Gómez, he is a teenager who bullies everyone at his high school because of their appearance and the clothes they wear. However, the parallelism with the King in the classic tale remains in Marcantonio's versions, since both characters seek adulation from their vassals.

Another element which characterizes fractured tales is the change of important items in the stories. In some of the fractured tales certain key objects have been localized: Malvina, Blanca Nieves's stepmother, tries to kill her with a poisoned avocado, instead of an apple. In *The Piper of Harmonía* it is lizards that invade the town, and lazy Juan is sent by his mother to sell *Old Vaca,* their white station wagon, to get some money, not their cow as in the classic version.

If one of the main features of fairy tales is that they stem from basic human feelings and experiences, their fractured versions keep the problems in the stories and their development unchanged. In spite of this, a twist in the ending of the stories is a recognizable element in the fractured versions: if at the end of Hans Christian Andersen's version of *The Emperor's New Clothes*, the Emperor does not pay attention to the child's comment that he is not wearing clothes, and he goes on with the parade adopting an even more arrogant attitude towards his vassals, Emperador Gómez learns his lesson of humility, and decides not to judge anyone by what they wear. *The Three Chicharrones*, Pereza, Gordo and Astuto, are not eaten by the wolf who is represented by the property speculator in this fractured version. Dinero Martínez pays Pereza and Gordo little money for their lands to build a casino and a hotel, but at the end he

is arrested by County Sheriff Sánchez, and the three Chicharrones start *Residencias Chicharrones*, homes for those who are just starting out in life. In *Blanca Nieves and the Seven Vaqueritos*, Malvina drowns in a river when the *vaqueritos* are chasing her: "(T)he river into wich Malvina fell was renamed *Río Malo*. *Vaqueros* who pass during a storm claim they hear a woman screaming, and they quickly ride in the other direction" (47). In Marcantonio's ending, the legend of *La Llorona*, the weeping woman who cries for her dead children and who usually appears near rivers, clearly resonates, especially for Mexican American children.

As for fractured stories narrated from a different character's point of view, a clear and interesting example in this collection is *The Sleeping Beauty*, told by the *bruja* who casts the spell. This is one of the tales I analyse in the following subsections, as well as *Belleza y La* Bestia, but I will begin with the tale that gives its name to Marcantonio's collection, *Red Ridin' in the Hood*, in which most elements are twisted. These three fractured versions will also allow me to explore how gender is fractured in these Latinx retellings of the classic fairy tales.

2.2. Abuelita goes out for a game of bingo

Red Ridin' in the Hood takes place precisely in the hood, an urban landscape easily recognizable for Latinx and Chicanx people in major cities of the southwestern United States. Roja, a girl living in the hood, and the first person narrator of the story, is asked by her Mamá to take a box with food to her Abuelita, who is not feeling very well and whose apartment building is at the end of Forest Street.

Although the plot and the moral do not differ from the classic version of the tale, the characterizations of Roja and her Abuelita are significantly different from the traditional ones. Roja does not feel like going to her Abuelita's apartment because she had planned to go to the movies with her friend, Lupe Maldonado. She feels ridiculous wearing the red dress her Abuelita made for her, since it is long and old-fashioned, with a high-collar: "I looked like the kid on *Little House on the Prairie*" (22). She decides not to take the bus so that she can keep the bus fare, and to walk along Forest Street instead, even though "the biggest trees in the whole barrio, tall and thick and blocking out the sun" made it very dark and dangerous (22). When

Lobo Chávez appears driving his "glossy brown low-rider Chevy with licks of flame painted on the hood" and "SUAVECITO" painted in blue and silver on the back windshield" (24), she does not feel scared, and later in the story she recognizes him right away when he is at Abuelita's apartment wearing her nightgown and glasses: "I knew then that this is one pretty dumb wolf" (26). She plays along to find out if Lobo has hurt her Abuelita. The author keeps the famous lines in the tale replacing the English words referring to ears, eyes and mouth in Spanish: "Abuelita, I never noticed before, but what big *orejas* you have" (26). Roja fights Lobo shoving the goat cheese in the box into his mouth and calls two police officers who finally arrest him. While she does not need a male figure to save her, thanks to her wit and courage, Roja, as in the classic version, disobeys her mother, and in the end she learns her lesson when Abuelita says to her: "(T) his is a dangerous world, and it's best to keep your eyes and ears wide open, even if they aren't as big as a wolf's" (27).

If the girl's characterization in Marcantonio's version differs from the traditional one, in terms of gender, Abuelita's characterization towards the end of the tale is a remarkable feature of this fractured tale. She is not at home when Lobo arrives there because she has been feeling better and has decided to go out for a game of bingo. When Roja opens the box with the food her mother has prepared and they both smell the *queso* ("that smells like your Uncle José's feet" [29]), Abuelita suggests that they should go for Chinese, instead, and they drive Lobo's low-rider Chevy, which the police give Roja as a reward for her bravery. Thus, this unexpected and humorous characterization of the modern Abuelita differs from the passive and sick old lady of the classic tales, since she has her own will and a life of her own outside the realm of the home.

2.3. When a bruja's feelings are hurt… The Sleeping Beauty

As we will see in the next subsection, even though the fractured version of *Belleza y La Bestia* is narrated from Bestia's point of view, the development of the main events in the story does not change when compared to the classic version by Madam de Beaumont, narrated by a third person narrator. In the case of Marcantonio's version of *The Sleeping Beauty* it is clear from the title that the main twist lies in the story being told from the point of view of the *bruja*

who cast the spell, as it appears in the title between brackets. Retellings of classic fairy tales from another character's point of view have lately gained attention and popularity. The 2014 Disney live-action production *Maleficent* is a retelling of the story of the villainous role in Walt Disney's 1959 animated film *Sleeping Beauty.* Starred by Angelina Jolie and Elle Fanning, the plot focuses on the powerful fairy's love and trauma after the peasant boy she loves, Stefan, cuts off her wings and delivers them to King Henry, Maleficent's enemy, as proof of her death, so that he can marry the king's daughter and become his successor. Maleficent will take her revenge later by cursing King Stefan's newborn daughter, Aurora, to sleep forever.

In Marcantonio's retelling, Maricela, the teenage *bruja*, starts her story by saying that despite what people think, she has feelings and they have been hurt, not only because she has not been invited to Rosa's *quinceañera* party, but because she has always been an outcast. Rosa, with whom Maricela went to school together, is a beautiful and popular girl who ignores her for being different: she knows the *bruja*'s art and the fact that she is an orphan. The *bruja*'s reasons in this fractured retelling may not be as tragic and fantastic as Maleficent's in the Disney live-action film. Nevertheless, for a teenager like Maricela, who is an orphan, feeling different and being excluded from the group is a serious matter: "I had no parents, my best friend was an owl, and I knew the *bruja*'s art for making mischief. That made me different. And being different made me lonely" (166). But witches also love to have fun, and instead of feeling sorry for herself, Maricela decides to show up at Rosa's *quinceañera*, and she casts a spell so that, on her eighteenth birthday, Rosa will prick her finger on a spinning wheel and fall asleep forever. The gift from one of the Madrinas at the party is that she will sleep until she is awakened by a true love kiss.

The development of the story is roughly the same as in the classic tale, but with changes in some of its elements: around Rosa's big house giant cactuses grow, instead of rose bushes; although the young man who arrives at Rosa's house to break the spell is "as princely as any gentleman" (178) he is a farmer, not a prince; after realizing that Rosa is a spoilt rich girl who wants to change him so that he fits into her world, the farmer sees Maricela, and he decides to give her the kiss of true love, thus awaking in the *bruja* goodness and kindness after a long sleep (181). Marcantonio not only changes the ending of the

classic fairy tale, but she does so with a touch of humour when Rosa says: "Hold on! This is not how this *cuento* is supposed to end," and Pepe, the young farmer replies: "I did my part, *señorita*, (…) You're awake, and I hope you live happy ever after" (181).

2.4. "¡Viva Juárez!". Belleza's Revolution

And happily ever after lived Beauty and the Beast. According to Maria Tatar, the classic fairy tale is not only the story of romantic love which transcends physical beauty, but it also reflects on the feminine worries regarding marriage in certain times when young girls had to face the anxiety of marrying older men due to convenience arrangements. The first famous version, written by Madame de Beaumont in 1756 in a journal for girls and young women, aimed to transmit the value of good habits, good education, and good behavior. Beauty represents virtue and is happy to save her father and to show her love for him, and so does Belleza in Marcantonio's retelling of the tale. However, the time and place where the author sets the classic story adds a political element to both the plot and the final message, which goes beyond appearances and true feelings: "(W)e are only afraid of what we don't understand, Bestia. True ugliness can be found only in the hearts of people who hurt others" (130).

Right from the beginning of the story the reader is told by the first person narrator, Bestia, that he belongs to the Mexican upper society and that he despises the poor Indian population:

> My country was breaking apart with revolution and chaos. The poor began to shout for land and for change, and the name of Benito Juárez, whom they called the president of Mexico. Juárez was just a short Zapotec Indian who dressed in black" (120)

This is one of the most important episodes in Mexican history when in 1858 Benito Juárez, a politician and lawyer of Zapotec background from Oaxaca, became president. Mexico had a new constitution, with liberal reforms and less power for the Catholic Church. Juárez led the liberals in the resulting Reform War, in 1858-1860, fighting against the church and rich landowners and leading the resistance when the French Emperor Napoleon III supported a new emperor, Maximilian I of Mexico. Bestia, one of the supporters of emperor Maximilian, explains that he had been a spoilt child who treated his

servants, Indians and mestizos who worked his land, like his toy soldiers, using his whim to push them around. On his way to dispatch to the armies of President Juárez, Belleza's father, an Indian called Diego Hernández López, steals a flower from Bestia's garden. Despite the fact that the plot develops as in the classic tale, the Revolutionary message underlies the story when Belleza explains to Bestia her hopes of freedom and equality for her country:

> Now we have nothing but hopelessness,
> But we shall have freedom,
> We shall have victory or death,
> ¡Viva Juárez! (129)

Bestia is not only moved by her compassion to save her father, but also by her love for their country, so that at the end not only is the curse broken and they marry and have a child, but Bestia has given most of his wealth to the poor and the cause, wishing the war comes to an end with a victory for Benito Juárez, freedom, democracy, and independence for their people (135). Bestia's transformation is not only due to Belleza's love for him, but also because of the revolutionary values he has embraced thanks to her: "(F)or the first time, I am a human being" (135).

3. CONCLUSIONS: SUBVERSION AND LACK OF LATINX AND CHICANX REPRESENTATION IN U.S. LITERATURE

Marcantonio's fractured tales are the Mexican American author's answer to an early period in which the characters in the fairy tales that she loved when she was growing up in southern Colorado were "fair-haired, blue-eyed, and pink-cheeked" (Marcantonio, back jacket). Chicanx and Latinx writers have been trying to counterbalance the lack of representation in US children's and young adults' literature by providing Latinx and Chicanx children with books in which they can see themselves. Although since the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, and especially with the influence of multiculturalism in the US publishing industry, there has been an increase in the number of books for children and young adults about and by non-Anglosaxon communities, the percentage of books which represent the Latinx community is still extremely low. Scholars and teachers agree that

fairy tales can have a significant influence in developing children's identity, hence the importance of the messages that they transmit. It has long been recognised that the traditional European canon of fairy tales, those that have survived to the present day, are tales that reflect and reproduce the patriarchal values of the society that crafted them (Kuykendal and Sturm).

Throughout my analysis I have emphasized the elements that have been twisted in Marcantonio's versions to address precisely some of those values, especially the ones which reflect on ethnic and gender issues. The localization of cultural elements, and the use of Spanish to refer to proper names, objects, and food, help Latinx young adults see themselves and their realities and problems reflected in these retellings. The relevance of the *quinceañera* party (note that in the classic version of this tale the curse takes place while the girl's christening), the importance of looks and appearances, and experiences with bullying are issues that teenagers, and especially Latinx teenagers, are faced with and which challenge their sense of identity and belonging.

In my analysis, I have also paid attention to two tales in which the point of view changes from the classic versions of those tales. Bestia and Maricela, the teenage *bruja* in *The Sleeping Beauty*, allow us to consider the story from the Other's point of view, the one who does not belong. Bestia's physical appearance makes him the Other, the monster who is to be feared and whose otherness keeps him alone despite his palace and riches. Maricela is also feared not only because of her *bruja*'s art, but also because she is regarded as different, and that makes her feel lonely.

Even though *Red Ridin' in the Hood and Other Cuentos* has been described as "Latinx culture injected in eleven classic tales" in librarian and researcher Heidi Anne Heiner's specialized website surlalunefairytales.com, there are certain elements which may not be recognizable by all Latinx young adults, such as the episode of Mexican history in which *Belleza y La Bestia* is set. While Chicanx children's literature is considered part of a greater body of Latinx children's literature, which in turn is regarded as belonging to the category of multicultural children's literature, Latinx should be considered as a heterogeneous group despite common cultural traits. It would be interesting to explore how Latinx and non-Latinx young

readers respond to this retelling of the classic fairy tales. It should be noted that at the end of her book, the author includes a glossary with the Spanish words and phrases translated into English, and a section with the Aztec names in the story *El Día de los Muertos*, along with a guide for their pronunciation.

The representation of these fractured fairy tales in the book is not only verbal, but also visual, thanks to the illustrations by Brazilian artist Renato Alarcão. The black and white pencil drawings which accompany the stories complement and add meaning to the words in the texts. These pictures capture the main elements of the classic stories, visually adding at the same time the Latinx touch of Marcantonio's fractured tales. The importance of pictures in children's books and also in books for young adults has been underscored by scholars such as Maria Nikolajeva and Marina Warner: "Pictures imprint more strongly than words" (Warner 99). In fact, in the case of fairy tales, Warner points out that since the 19th century fairy tales have been transmitted mainly through visual storytelling, not only from the page, but also on stage and screen (Warner 98).

As for the representation of gender, I have underlined the importance of characterization in these fractured versions, especially of female characters and their roles in the story. Maria Tatar's studies call attention to how the female heroines of the classic tales lack capacity of action and the only thing they can do is wait for a male figure to rescue them. This lack of action takes it for granted that girls and women are intelligent and have resources in order to free themselves. Some anthologies and retellings of these tales have brought back old stories of strong, brave and resilient heroines, who rescue themselves and others. In these eleven fractured tales we see examples of these brave heroines, such as Roja, who fights Lobo to defend herself and rescue her Abuelita. To a certain extent, Belleza's message to support Juarez's revolution, and Blanca Nieves's offer to help with the animals in the rancho instead of doing housework, are other examples of a twist in the characterization of female roles in these fractured stories. This is rather significant if fairy tales are viewed as key sites for gender construction and acceptable forms of feminine and masculine behaviour, especially in Latinx communities where traditional female and male roles have a certain prevalence in the community.

In terms of subversion, in the introduction I already pointed out how the adult/child power relation inherent to children's and young adults' literature can be subverted, and how fairy tales are already subversive, as is the case of *Hänsel and Gretel*, a clear example of children's triumph over adults. In these fractured versions of the classic fairy tales subversion is implied at various levels, if we look at the different elements that have been twisted and which question the traditional values of classic fairy tales, mainly in terms of ethnicity and gender. This is why fractured fairy tales are useful for teaching point of view, setting, plot, as well as fairy tale conventions such as "they lived happily ever after." According to Glenn Saxby in his study "Searching for happily ever after: using fairy tales in primary classrooms to explore gender, subjectivity and the life-worlds of young people" (2022), fractured fairy tales can be effective resources to teach primary students in the contemporary classroom. In fact, there are studies which point at the growing popularity of the genre for young adults and which recommend teachers and librarians to resort to them, since students do not only develop critical thinking, but they also take advantage of the humor employed in these fractured versions, making learning more enjoyable (Saxby 227). Students can even create their own fractured fairy tales because it encourages them to use their imagination and helps them in the writing process at the same time. At the end of the day, stories survive thanks to renewal and transformation, and classic fairy tales do so thanks to their retelling through their fractured versions.

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