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Growing up in "a new sort of country": charting transnational identities in the fairy tales of Margaret Collier Galletti di Cadilhac

This article investigates narratives of growing up in *Prince Peerless: A Fairy Folk Story Book* (1886), a collection of fairy tales by a little-known Victorian writer, Margaret Isabella Galletti di Cadilhac (née Collier, 1846-1928),[1] to examine how they chart new geographies of encounters between children, or young adults, and magical creatures. At the end of the nineteenth century, Collier's writing was informed by her life in a newly united Italy; for the first time, this study opens the door to her Anglo-Italian nursery and the ways in which her multilingual and multicultural household stimulated her storytelling. *Prince Peerless* is informed by the same attention to intercultural encounters shown in her previous fictional and non-fictional writing but, through fantasy, it moves beyond factual and practical experience of negotiating Anglo-Italian dynamics to speculate on the potential of growing up multinational. In the fairy tale, Collier finds a subjunctive form to explore how childhood experiences of visiting fairylands can shape one's cultural models of identity and transcend national borders by configuring identities that go beyond sociocultural expectations defined by nation states.

Published as an illustrated Christmas book, *Prince Peerless* is Collier's only fantastic literature for and about children. In the late 1870s, her career started with short and serialized fiction in the *Cornhill Magazine*, *The Victoria Magazine*, *Good Words,* and the *New Quarterly Magazine*. By the end of the 1880s reviewers in *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* (1882, 1887), *The*

Westminster Review (1887), and *The Athenaeum* (1887) praised her Italian stories for their originality and freshness. They acknowledged their appeal based on unfamiliar Italian geopolitics she understood well as a British resident in Italy. The reception of *Prince Peerless* was mixed; for example, *The Athenaeum* judged its fairy tales to be "somewhat sad and dreary" and with "shadowy symbolism" ("Christmas Books" 824). Conversely, the reviewer in *The Saturday Review* found in them "a wealth of fancy and humour, of untiring invention and poetic conception" and, quoting from John Keats's *Lamia* (1820), asserted their provenance as "doubtful tale[s] from Fairyland [sic], hard for the non-elect to understand" and made an "association with" (665) those by Hans Christian Andersen and Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Following a pattern that was well established by the second half of the nineteenth century, Collier published fairy tales composed for her children (Auerbach and Knoepflmacher; Hilton, Styles, Watson) but they are not didactic. Only one brief story, "Two Fairies", affirms the virtue of silence by directly summoning two appropriate fairies, Speech and Silence. The other seven are fantastic tales inviting young readers to use their imagination. Their "shadowy symbolism" is a result of them not conforming to Victorian conventions but conveying the potential and challenges of shaping identities in between cultural boundaries and national borders.

In *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and Elves* (1987), Jack Zipes discusses the revival of the genre for both male and female writers as a means to stimulate the imagination of children. From the 1860s fairy tales developed two diverging strands, either conforming to existing societal expectations or conversely questioning them and creating alternatives, suggesting change and innovative perspectives from which to compare the conditions of the world around them. Collier's fairy tales belong to the latter category as they reveal what Susan Stanford

Friedman defines as a "dialogic of sameness and difference" upon which existing cultural models of identity are formed, and which is intrinsic to a connection with others "based in similarity that can be grasped only through a sense of difference from others" (153). Friedman's emphasis on the permeability of national boundaries and personal identity borders as a powerful tool in pursuing transnational lines of enquiry is central to this study of Collier's narratives of growing up. This discussion centers on how her young protagonists come of age by exploring similarities and differences with fantastic beings and negotiating the geopolitical interconnections between one's own community and others. Initially used to define global connections spanning across national borders, transnationalism is a concept that exposes the permeable nature of borders and the dynamics of negotiation and interaction they stimulate simultaneously across nations. It highlights the significance of geopolitics in constructing, negotiating, and communicating personal identities that interact beyond nationalities. Like Friedman and more recently Ann Smith (2019), I perceive borders to be simultaneously markers of separation and connection; they are "the liminal space in between, the interstitial site of interaction, interconnection, and exchange" (Friedman 3). In *The Girl in the Text*, Smith suggests adapting transnationalism to include "the breaking of conceptual ethnic and cultural borders, or, at least, making them permeable" (11) to explore transnational possibilities of change for girls around the world. Collier's Victorian fairy tales are spaces in which national and cultural borders are weakened to imagine a transnational childhood whose ambition is more personal and maternal than the one Smith proposes.

Published at a time when the interest in collecting stories transmitted orally by local communities had not yet fully surged in Victorian Britain,[2] Collier's storybook recreates storytelling by preserving the features of a Western tradition of wonder tales

shared orally by a fireplace. Though familiar with British and Italian popular tales, Collier's collection differs from the nineteenth-century anthologies published by the Brothers Grimm in Germany. These anthologies establish a national literary tradition based on the idea of folk stories original to a place, not literature produced by an elite section of society. In Collier's title, "folk" suggests stories transmitted by people, including fairies. Her use of this term is closer to that of Andrew Lang, who "had an inclusive, generous, world-embracing" (Warner, *Once Upon A Time* 69) view of fairy tales as narratives that travelled across time and space, and were shared by people across borders. Collier's collection displays "the cross-cultural exchange" (Zipes, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition* 846) that leading scholars, such as Zipes, Marina Warner, and Andrew Teverson, have demonstrated is and remains central to the fairy tale, a literary genre that is "transnational and hybrid from its inception" (Teverson, *Fairy Tale World* 12). Furthermore, it demonstrates the genre's potential to encourage alternatives, possibilities, and alterations, later ingeniously understood by contemporary writers such as Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood, and Salman Rushdie.

This article examines how, in *Prince Peerless*, fantastic creatures are an effective vehicle in representing linguistic, cultural, and socio-historical diversity, and an essential interlocutor for children to grow up understanding the value of being other, of cultural differences, interaction, and negotiation. It considers Collier's life as a British mother in an Anglo-Italian multinational household and focuses on six of the eight stories in the collection to demonstrate how *Prince Peerless* represents a meaningful experiment with imagining permeable national cultural borders. To read her fairy tales with her Anglo-Italian life in mind is key to recognizing them as narratives of growing up seeking possibilities for transnational young protagonists. Like Christina Rossetti's *Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book* (1872), the echoes of an

Anglo-Italian family life can only be perceived in *Prince Peerless* through a biographical approach. However, whilst in her nursery rhymes Rossetti reminiscences about her own Anglo-Italian childhood and her relationship with her mother, in *Prince Peerless* Collier's perspective is that of a mother who imagines alternative worlds where children can forge transnational identities as they grow up. Collier's fairy tales, I argue, present valuable attempts to transcend cultural expectations and shape new ways of asserting multicultural and multilingual identities.

Becoming the Honorable Margaret Collier

In 1873, Collier married an Italian Count, Arturo Galletti di Cadilhac (1843-1912), and settled in Italy, in the south of present-day the Marche. She did not move in established communities of her compatriots, such as those in Florence, Naples, or her husband's natal city of Rome; she migrated instead to a region that was unknown to both herself and her husband and whose economy depended entirely on agriculture. The daughter of Robert Porrett Collier, first Baron Monkswell (1817-1886), Collier had been educated in a liberal, political, and intellectual atmosphere in London. In the Marche, she found herself off the beaten track and notably other, not only because of her nationality but also her religion. An Anglican and the wife of an atheist, she lived on an estate originally owned by the Roman Catholic Church and sold by the Kingdom of Italy. Like his father, Bartolomeo Galletti (1812-1877), Arturo Galletti had fought for the unification of Italy in the legions led by Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882) and then had become a Lieutenant Colonel in the Italian Artillery.

Collier's writing is distinguished by a desire to fill in a gap in Victorian Britain's knowledge of Italy and to present a deeper and more complex understanding of the fragmented regional conditions of Italy at the time of its transition into a

modern nation and a national identity. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel books rarely refer to the Marche. The main exceptions are *The English Woman in Italy: Impressions of Life in the Roman States and Sardinia during Ten Years' Residence* (1860) by Amelia Louisa Vaux Le Mesurier Gretton (1823-1894), who stayed with relatives in Ancona in 1847, when the Marche was still part of the Papal States; *A Visit to Italy* (1842) by Frances Trollope (1779-1863), who visited Fano, near Pesaro; and *A Lenten Journey in Umbria and the Marches* (1862) by her son, Thomas Adolphus Trollope (1810-1892), the first to cover the area where Collier resided. Her husband's political career gave her an advantageous position: he was firstly the local town's mayor and later a member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies for five consecutive mandates (1892-1909). Her works are also enriched by her study of the local heritage and a preference for the rural communities of the Marche and their ways of life. Her interest in them is evidenced in her fictional writing where her experiential knowledge, gained in running a farming estate with her husband, informs her creation of rural characters of the Marche who are protagonists as well as secondary characters. Her first publication, for instance, "The Vergaro: A Tale" (1876), centers on a thirty-five-year-old, poor relation of a noble family in a fictionalized town in the Marche, who disregards her family's social prejudices to find happiness by marrying a farmer, the Vergaro in the title,[3] and running a farm.

In 1886, *Our Home by the Adriatic* established her success as a British writer who produced distinctive and genuine accounts of Italy,[4] a country so often idealized by Victorian women writers who also resided there, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Vernon Lee. If her first collection of stories, *The Camorristi and Other Tales* (1882), had attracted attention as "unusually attractive and interesting" ("Minor Notices" 224), *Our Home by the Adriatic* was more widely and positively reviewed.

In *The Academy*, Horatio Forbes Brown (1854-1926) praised it as "a counter irritant to the many exaggerated and heightened descriptions of Italian life" ("Our Home by the Adriatic" 304). The reviewer in *The Saturday Review* thanked Collier "for the most readable, sincere, well-informed and, on the whole impartial book on the social life of Italy that as fallen into [their] hands for several years" ("Reviews" 487). At the end of that same year, some Victorian reviewers remarked *Prince Peerless* did not fully match Collier's "unmistakable talent" ("Prince Peerless" 361) by comparing it to *Our Home by the Adriatic*; others praised it for revealing examples of "the richer field of fancy and remoter imaginative heights" ("Christmas Books" 665).

Prince Peerless and *Our Home by the Adriatic* denote a turning point in her life and career, signaled by her name on their title pages. For the first time, she signs as the Hon. Margaret Collier, followed by Madame Galletti di Cadilhac in brackets and smaller font. When her career started in 1876, she published under her married name, which was at times misspelt as "Galetti".[5] In 1886, Collier draws attention to her Britishness revealing a tension in her endeavor to be truthful to her life experience that *Prince Peerless* and *Our Home by the Adriatic* denote, if considered together. Although she separated from her husband formally in 1899 (Gooch 109), by the 1880s her marriage was already difficult; she regularly spent time in England with her children, who were raised between England and Italy (Stoddard; Gooch). *Our Home by the Adriatic* is a record of her first decade of country life in the Marche through a first-person narrative that reports everyday domestic trials but avoids those of a private nature. It is in the fairy tales of *Prince Peerless* that Collier finds *loci* to explore her personal challenges, especially as a mother. As a storyteller, she relies on the two-fold value of fairy tales in tackling human actions both as matter of fact and as practice in wishing and desiring transformations and alterations. Fairy tales are, in

Italo Calvino's opinion, "consolatory fables" (qtd in Warner, *Once Upon on a Time* xxii) because, as his Marco Polo explains in *The Invisible Cities* (1974, *Le città invisibili* 1972), they give solace by charting those traces of happiness that shape a glimpse of what life could be if conditions were different. A literary genre that is central to both British and Italian literature, the fairy tale becomes Collier's means to look beyond the present.

In *Prince Peerless*, Collier also marks a new direction in her work by dedicating it to her children, Giacinta (1875-1960), Arthur (1877-1967) and Roberto Clemens (1879-1932).[6] Growing up in a home where English, Italian, French, and German were all spoken thanks to the multicultural backgrounds of their parents, grandparents, and a German-speaking Swiss governess (Stoddard; Muzzarelli), they were her inspiration as well as her ideal audience.[7] Collier's previous works center on encounters between British and Italian characters set in Britain or Italy, which reflect on belonging and foreignness through older characters of either nationality who had to leave their native country. For example, Helen Morton in "Altofiore", a tale included in *The Camorristi and Other Tales*, perceives cultural borders to be overwhelming. After 1886, Collier's coming-of-age narratives, in particular her novel *Babel* (1887) and her novella "Rachel and Maurice" (in *Rachel and Maurice and Other Tales* 1892), have young, binational Anglo-Italian protagonists. In "Rachel and Maurice", the Anglo-Italian hero, Maurice, identifies as Anglo-Italian stating, "I am both" (53). In *Babel*, the approach to being Anglo-Italian diverges between Ugo and his sister Giannetta. While Ugo presumes that denying being "half an Englishman" (16) heightens his likeness to his Italian father, Giannetta decides to visit her mother's country of origin to explore her multicultural identity. Giannetta alters expectations of female fulfilment established by Germaine de Staël's highly popular and influential

Anglo-Italian heroine of *Corinne, ou L'Italie* (1803, *Corinne, or Italy* 1807) by finding acceptance and love in England.[8] Not all of the tales in *Prince Peerless* show confidence in a happy ending for protagonists who want to claim a transnational identity, but the most original ones do, including "The Great Snow Mountain" and "Prince Peerless", which Victorian reviewers singled out for being "strangely impressive" ("Christmas Books" 665). My analysis of Collier's fantastic narratives begins with the unsettling magic creatures of "The Great Snow Mountain", the only story with clear elements of Italian regional folklore and Italian characters.

Fairies, Elves, Gnomes, and Sorceresses: Margaret Collier's Magic Creatures

Human and magic creatures do not interact in the six pencil drawings that enrich *Prince Peerless*. The visual storytelling favors the young protagonists of Collier's stories and poignant moments in their coming-of-age narratives thus providing opportunities to pause and reflect on the implications generated by taking risks and making decisions in childhood. Four illustrations capture crucial turning points when the young characters can succeed in maturing and not only growing older. The other two differ as they depict the three ominous supernatural women associated with mysterious abductions of young adults in "The Great Snow Mountain", conferring them a prominent role in the collection. These female figures are the only magic creatures to be represented visually and they are not mischievous, little fairies but dangerous enchantresses. Their origins are in the Italian fairy-tale tradition, where the image of the fairy intertwines the Fates of Greek and Roman mythology with witchcraft and, in the case of the Marche, the myth of the Sibyl. Legends maintain that the Cumaean, or the Tiburtine, Sybil lived in a cave on the peak that bears her name in the Sibylline mountains at the border between the Marche and Umbria.

Collier adds a godlike figure but retains elements of local folktales such as *Guerrin meschino* (Wretched Guerrino), a mediaeval epic collected by Andrea da Barberino (1370-1432).[9]

The drawings were realized by Collier's younger brother, John Collier (1850-1934), who was a renowned portraitist and had previously illustrated *The Little People, and other tales* (1874) by Juliet Pollock, William Clifford, and Walter Pollock, and the 1880 serialization of Thomas Hardy's "The Trumpet Major" in *Good Words* (Springall).[10] For *Prince Peerless,* he produced illustrations in a pre-Raphaelite style depicting the juvenile protagonists of "Fairy Folk", "The Ill-Starred Princess", "The Shadow World", and "Prince Peerless", and the magic sisters who lure young adults to the top of the mountain that gives the title to the story, where an old giant confines them as specimens. Prince Peerless is the only male subject to be included; though, the godlike figure who lives at the top of the "Snow Mountain" appears in the background of the frontispiece, which focuses only on one of the three magic sisters. Entitled with her name, "The White Woman", the frontispiece is one of two illustrations portraying the supernatural women in "The Great Snow Mountain". It also introduces elements of the Sibylline mountains, a landscape Margaret Collier admired from her Italian hilltop home, depicting the mountain range on a clear, cold starry night. It evokes the Sibylline mountains as a charming but arcane space inhabited by fairies, who, at first, appear innocent and serene, instead of removed and indifferent, as the impenetrable eyes of the "white woman", positioned at the center, suggest.

The second illustration, "The Two Chill Sisters" (fig. 1), stands out **[Image to be inserted here or nearby in the text]**. It captures the moment in which the three female figures reveal their sinister power: at the center of the image, the white and the

blue women entangle their arms and long hair creating “a twi-coloured rope [that] twisted about their long, lithe forms like the coils of a shining serpent” (82). The narrator associates them with a frightening Hindu divinity with multiple heads and arms, but John Collier’s figures remain eerie, beautiful women who, like the Sibyl, embody enchanting but dangerous magic. They also anticipate his depiction of subject portraits inspired by enigmatic, strong women of the past who are often evoked as tragic, fatal, and seductive, such as Cleopatra, Clytemnestra, Lady Godiva, and Lucrezia Borgia, whose brother Cesare Borgia ruled in the northern area of the Marche. The symbolism of the serpent is captured by the two sisters’ hair spiralling around their bodies while their sinister, deceiving nature is emphasized by the third sister, “the old woman of the fire” or “red woman” (60). She crouches in the background with her head turned towards the viewer and “fiercely burning eyes” (82), which, in the pencil drawing, appear empty and more terrifying. The “lurid figure of the fiery woman” (82) embodies their malevolent power: she looks like a witch and her advanced age evokes the image of the ancient prophetess as an old, frightening, wise oracle.

In “The Great Snow Mountain”, “the old woman of the fire” explains the intensions of the ruler she serves to the young couples who reach the summit and provides them with information and options. She is an intimidating but reliable interpreter and, when the young couples do not share a common language, she is also a useful translator. In *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (1994), Warner argues the myth of the Sybil includes “the figure of a storyteller [who] bridges divisions in history as well as hierarchies of class. She offers the suggestion that sympathies can cross from different places and languages, different peoples of varied status … , from one era of belief to another” (11). The figure of “the old

woman of the fire" represents the wisdom of storytelling and oracles; she can foresee the couples' future but cannot control their actions. In "The Great Snow Mountain", the three sibylline sisters separate the image of a seductive sorceress from that of an old, wise oracle. There are no other sibylline figures in Margaret Collier's fairy tales, but other old women who possess knowledge and understanding. They are not garrulous or gossips, but astute and wise women who have foresight and knowledge of the fantastic folk that still survive in nature, like "Dame Green" (25), or "Mother Green" (47), in "Fairy Folk", the opening story. She is the only person who shows sympathy to Bridget, the protagonist, when she returns home after having spent seven years with the fairies. Dame Green, whom Bridget remembers as a family's old neighbor who looked like "an old witch" (24) and was a good storyteller, welcomes her back and explains what happened in her absence; but she cannot help Bridget because she is too poor. Her tears warm Bridget's heart demonstrating "how much better is this human life with all its pain and all its poverty, than fairyland with all its pleasures and all its enchantments!" (47) This is a moral that returns in other tales. As Dame Green suggests, Bridget is no longer "fit for mortal life" (47) and dies by peacefully falling asleep. The illustration emphasizes this consolatory ending by picturing Bridget, like Sleeping Beauty, on "a soft bed of leaves" (48) the immortal fairies built for her, guarded by frogs awaiting her awakening.

With the exception of "The Great Snow Mountain", in Collier's fantasy realms children and young adults interact with fairies, gnomes, brownies, elves, and fairy godmothers, who belong to a mythical time or a planet far away. In "The Ill-Starred Princess", the fairies in fact reveal they moved to earth from a star "beyond the Milky Way" when their world "came to pieces" (107) and they assigned themselves a role as protectors of human beings. Their otherness originates both in

space and in experiences of a traumatic migration caused by natural disaster. In their new home on our planet, they also acquire a Christian symbology: on earth they are like angels, watching over humans. Nonetheless, their protecting mission is not completely recognized by humans. Fairy godmothers wisely bestow virtues on their godchildren that are essential to a rewarding adulthood; however, their purposeful gifts are not always appreciated by parents, who distrust magic, or understood by the children on whom they are bestowed, as "The Ill-Starred Princess" and "Prince Peerless" demonstrate.

In "The Ill-Starred Princess", the fairy godmother wants to protect the princess by donating "the faculty of learning by experience" (108), which becomes essential to her progress into adulthood. However, she cannot instill wisdom into the princess early enough to protect her from another alien creature, Stella, who takes the princess away leaving her body behind. For generations, the court takes care of the princess's body as they believe she is in a trance. Stella is the favorite friend of the ill-starred princess and, as her Italian name suggests, comes from a star that was destroyed. She is on a mission to explore planet earth and gather information to create a new world for her people. She has assumed a human form molded on the princess. When Stella returns to her world, she invites the princess to travel with her "further than any mortal had ever travelled before" (104) and discover a society modeled on humanity, but without sin, sickness, pain, or sorrow. The princess believes Stella's world sounds ideal and goes with her only to ascertain that ordeals and grief are necessary to becoming a mature human being. In a painless world, children cannot gain virtues such as patience, wisdom, and hope. The princess is able to return to earth where she lives as a beggar and experiences both extreme happiness and extreme sorrow. The fairy godmother is sure that her gift means the princess can learn from these

experiences and continue to grow wiser, but she underestimates the princess's despair. The princess is so disheartened that she asks to be with her deceased beloved. The fairy godmother decides to facilitate her journey "where fancy cannot follow" (140) with the help of death who appears as a knight on a white horse. She explains to the heart-broken princess, who wants to appease her anguish, that he is "the great equalizer of all human destinies" and a "consoling angel" (140). This is the last story to conclude with a sad though soothing ending.

In "Prince Peerless", the eponymous protagonist does not disappoint his fairy godmother who bestows on him the gift of being "a good *man*" (219), a virtue that, at the beginning, appears to be troublesome. His good actions are consistently misunderstood even by his family, because adults have no confidence in human qualities, such as honesty and altruism. Princess Gentilia, his love interest, does not believe his words either but she is proven wrong by his actions, which include not only a noble quest but also a refusal to accept her hand as a gesture of gratitude, because he wants her to choose him as her partner freely. This is a prince who restores hope in human beings and his story mirrors this by including little magic interference. Both Prince Peerless and Princess Gentilia are strong young adults who come of age on their own terms. Although she is not mentioned in the title, Gentilia is of equal importance: the narrator interrupts Peerless's story to tells us about her upbringing before returning to their first encounter because, as I will illustrate, this story is about them both growing up.

The most delightful among Collier's fairies is Chrysanthemum, the protagonist in "The Sick Fairy", a tale that imagines flower fairies disguised as human beings. It begins in fairyland and keeps the fairies' perspective as Victorian technological inventions are examined with interest as "wonderful things for such

poor clumsy creatures to contrive" (149). Humans, Chrysanthemum explains, do not rest much because they deal with more onuses, anxieties, and hard work without magic. Instructed by the doctor to renounce magic and "live amongst the mortals as one of themselves; taking any form which pleases [her], and *keeping* to it" (148), to recover from her illness, she needs to be reassured that, if she transforms into an aristocrat, she will be able to rest. Thus, she metamorphosizes into an old Countess and moves to a castle on a hilltop in "Mortal-land" (149) with her team of flower fairies, who are challenged to work without their magic. They cause playful incidents that arouse suspicion in the rural area where they reside. Chrysanthemum too appears an odd old woman because her shriveled body does not match her ability to dance, play sports, and be generally lively at the many social gatherings she hosts.

By living within the human community, Chrysanthemum hopes to amend a mistake she made by turning Ernest, the youngest of the Mortons' children, into a turnip instead of his brother Charley. This error caused her illness. Ernest is a well-behaved child and she did not aim to punish him but rather his mischievous older brother. Fortunately, Charley listens to the fairy and does what he is asked to ensure Ernest can return from the realms of the gnomes safely. This is a story about taking responsibility, for both Charley and Chrysanthemum; furthermore, it is an example of weakening cultural borders and envisaging a new, transnational community. There may be growing rumors regarding the old Countess's haunted castle, but Chrysanthemum becomes so at ease in "Mortal-land" that she confidently discloses her supernatural identity, presenting herself, and her household, as fairies. Her wand reveals that the kitchen garden is alive with elves appearing out of flowers and vegetables, and "the bees, wasps and butterflies" are transformed into "little flying fairies" (194). She acknowledges how in-between cultural borders, through a

"dialogic of sameness and difference", fairies and humans might "not be always in accordance" (193) but can coexist successfully. In a communal atmosphere both human and magic beings partake in the joyous fairy procession, and the storyteller ingeniously declares that, when one becomes an adult, fairies are the subjects of legends or dreams; on the other end, children know that magic exists and do not fear it.

In "The Sick Fairy", flower fairies embody difference positively and represent the transformative power of nature, Collier's favorite locus of the fantastic, through the seasonal passing of time. Their otherness aptly combines the cyclical magic of mother earth with the image of the old woman oracle. The age gap between the fairies and the children is central to the fairies' ability to offer wise suggestions and to their willingness to trust the children to make their own mistakes on the way to adulthood. The fairies' small size projects an image of youth and naivety and their appearance is not threatening; their playful, curious nature associates them with children. Chrysanthemum is an experienced, wise fairy who, disguised as the old Countess living on the top of a hill in the countryside, recalls the image of the author herself. In *Our Home by the Adriatic*, Collier reveals how the local community named her "*Inglesina*" (little English woman). This endearing Italian diminutive captures her difference in terms of nationality and physique and aligns her with the small, ageless fairy. This diminutive form implies youth or minuteness in the size of the person it defines and therefore it would be commonly used to refer to children.

The collection concludes with a fire fairy, another magical creature that brings "the old woman of the fire" to mind. The transformative power of fire and its symbolic image as one of nature's essential elements is evoked as she is an invited guest and an effective interpreter of fantastic worlds for children in the safety of their

domestic space. “Something New” reiterates children can travel to fantastic lands by means of their imagination because fairies only appear in dreams and not “in the world of facts” (267). Furthermore, it highlights how fairy tales are an agile means of storytelling that stimulate children’s growth in a way that understands the transformative potential of childhood as a time to explore what it means to be human. Fairies combine effectively sameness and difference because their size associates them to children, but their eternal lives afford them wisdom. They are also effective interlocuters for children because they do not educate children but trust them to make their own mistakes as they grow older.

Charting Transnational Identity in “a new-sort of country”

The magical atmosphere of *Prince Peerless* is created in the preface by the first two stanzas of “The Fairies” (1850), a popular poem by William Allingham (1824-1889) whose lines simultaneously evoke the apprehension and allure of encountering the fairy folk in nature. Allingham’s octaves are a means to connect Collier’s young audience and her juvenile protagonists through their communal impulse to go “[u]p the airy mountain, / Down the rushy glen,” (Allingham qtd in Collier 8) and cross borders into wonderlands. Collier’s protagonists are enticed by the speculative pleasure of difference because they are curious, investigative, and keen to explore the potential of what lies beyond their home. *Prince Peerless* begins with “Fairy Folk” on “a chilly March evening” (9) and ends “on the last evening of the old year” (252) in “Something New”. Both stories present brothers and sisters by the fire in their homes, who dream of new places and adventures, but who grow up differently. In “Fairy Folk”, Bridget and Robin mature separately because they interact very differently with the fairies. Bridget subverts gender-based stereotypical expectations; she is

dynamic, courageous, and responsible, whilst her brother struggles to face the consequences of his actions. In “Something New”, Nelly and Tommy are equally keen to travel and negotiate effective ways to access together the wonderlands in which they are both interested.

“Fairy Folk” continues in the vein of Allingham’s poem with a scene on the Scottish border where “the dwellers in a cottage on the lonely hillside shivered, and gathered closer to the fire which blazed on the open hearth, as the wild gusts of wind made the windows rattle and the doors shake.” (9) In this ominous atmosphere, the woodcutter, David Malcolm, and his future son-in-law, who comes from the Scottish Highlands, attempt to tell stories about fairies unsuccessfully because they are interrupted by the doubtful Bridget and her fearful brother, Robin. A first-person storyteller takes over and narrates Bridget’s story, and then continues with seven diverse stories, asking the juvenile audience to engage. The storyteller and her listeners share a belief in magical parallel worlds. There are warnings about swearing and the need to shorten long speeches, doubts, secrets, and morals to be unfold. For those who listen attentively, the storyteller builds bridges between supernatural and human worlds to suggest ways to achieve permeable borders through knowledge and understanding. In “Fairy Folk”, the adults are wary of fairies because they are “capricious, vindictive, sometimes obliging, but oftener spiteful” (12), but ten-year-old Bridget desires to visit fairyland. After her brother destroys the fairies’ favorite thorn-tree and fails to protect her by arriving late to a duel with the commander in chief of the fairy army, she disappears. Robin confesses he provoked the fairies and elves by being disrespectful of their habitat, so the family assumes her abduction.

From Bridget’s perspective the story differs because she accepted the fairies’ invitation to discover their world; however, once in fairyland, she realizes she is a

specimen that is not much admired but, instead, labelled “a monster” (31) because of her size. Too big to be the king’s bride, she settles in their community “as a curiosity” (32) and explores the diverse natural worlds fairies inhabit under water, in caves, and on the clouds. She is enchanted by the ways they live in connection with nature. She also learns that “love is necessary to mortals” (45), because she misses it in fairyland where magical creatures have no heart. Time too is different because fairies do not age as humans do. She realizes this when she returns home and understands she is not a child any longer but a woman who, like her deceased mother, has been replaced. Her father has a new wife and daughter, also called Bridget, and rejects her as a changeling. Seven years have passed but, in fairyland, Bridget had nothing that could remind her of the passage of time; she has aged she still feels like a child because she has not matured emotionally. In-between a child and a magic being, she does not see a way forward but states, “what is the matter with me …? I feel the same” (46). The fantastic world Bridget visited lacked essential human values, like sympathy, sorrow, and hope, and though she craves them, after her return, they affect her so intensely that she is overwhelmed. It is not her “uncanny bringing up” (43) that should worry her father, but her inexperience with values that are central to being human. The somber ending reiterates the significance of childhood as an essential stage in life to experience the values that produce wise adults, and sympathizes with an explorative mind of a child who dared to follow her imagination. The endings of “The Great Snow Mountain”, “Prince Peerless”, and “Something New” sustain this potential of younger generations to imagine new ways of living and successfully transform their circumstances.

A “fine and original conception [that] is spoiled in the handling” (“Prince Peerless” 361), “The Great Snow Mountain” stands out because of its

transgenerational approach. This story narrates the life of a family through their male descendants, as three consecutive generations come of age and transform a traditional sacrificial ritual into an opportunity to create a new transnational community. Every twenty years, the giant, who lives at the top of a great mountain that separates two villages served by the three sibylline sisters, sends the white woman and the blue woman to collect the finest human specimens for his collection: a boy from one village and a girl from the other. From the perspective of the villagers, every generation's best girl or boy is abducted by an uncanny female figure, who guides them to the top of the mountain, and never returns. They explain this event differently: one community fears the ritual and mourns the loss of their selected boy; the other celebrates it as an honor that distinguishes the family of the chosen girl. At the top of the mountain, the chosen specimens become a couple and are confined in a "beautiful crystal cage" (62) so that the giant can observe them under his microscope. In his collection, men and women live a long life without sorrow or ordeals but are enclosed in a fixed space that evokes Victorian imperial Britain, as it is described as a "Crystal Palace made on purpose for them" (73). In this controlled space, patriarchy is imposed by a supersize monarch, "His Majesty" (56), who combines images of scientific conceptualizations of knowledge and colonialism, where female magical creatures and young girls have supporting roles and young men take decisive action.

Andrea is the young man who triggers the events changing the destiny of his generation and the ones to follow.[11] He wishes to be abducted to discover what is on the other side of the mountain and, once he reaches the cave on the summit, he interacts with "the old woman of the fire" to activate his plan. The old woman is his interlocutor with Angela, the young woman who comes from the other side of the mountain and is to become his bride; she also facilitates his understanding of the

ritual from Angela's perspective and of the opportunity he has to refuse to enter the cage. Andrea chooses to return to his community with Angela to prove that reaching the peak is not a death sentence but an opportunity. With Angela's help, he discovers another language and culture and comprehends that they live on an island, of which he produces a map. Their son, Angelo, who has been brought up transnational, promises his mother to reach the summit too and join her community of origin. Angelo keeps his word: he persuades Rosa, his bride, to go back to her village and celebrate their wedding there. Initially anxious, Rosa is highly pleased to see that her village too is relieved in understanding she is no martyr. The sacrificial ritual is thus transformed on both sides of the mountain; then, the third generation goes further by deciding to free the people imprisoned by the giant. Angelo's and Rosa's son, Guido, in agreement with his bride Viola, chooses to enter the cage "to release the prisoners in the crystal cage or to share their captivity" (85), and succeeds in freeing them.

Like previous fairylands, the crystal cage is a fabulous place without "cares or sorrows" (87) in which human beings can live to one hundred and twenty years of age but do not mature. Free to leave, the giant's prisoners "can't settle which way to go down, as all the men came up from one side of the mountain, and all the women from the other" (95). A hurricane solves the situation by transporting them to another island where they are joined by the communities on both sides of the mountain, who must leave their villages because of an earthquake caused by the giant falling off "his rocky throne" (96). The old tyrant is overturned, and a new community is formed by these diverse communities coming together on a new island. "The Great Snow Mountain" demonstrates how transnational identity empowers younger generations to create a new, multicultural society that does not fear defying oppressive structures; it sustains a positive belief in generational progress. By disobeying mysterious traditions and

defying social expectations, three consecutive multinational generations change the status quo. They accept partners from other communities, learn their language and customs, and bring up children who are transnational. Furthermore, they show that a sense of belonging requires an awareness of choosing one's way of life. In "Prince Peerless", these themes are pursued as Princess Gentilia succeeds in marrying Prince Peerless in a fairy tale where a happy-ever-after depends on her decision making.

"Prince Peerless" certainly appears to be a traditional fairy tale with a worthy prince who goes on a quest to conquer his princess; however, Prince Peerless and Princess Gentilia are not typical fairy-tale protagonists. Peerless, as previously mentioned, has received the gift of virtue which means that he is too good to be believed; instead, "[m]ost of his good deeds [are] attributed to a far-sighted policy, and his most amiable speeches [are] frequently mistaken for bitter sarcasm" (221). An orphan, Gentilia has some independence but, because of her father's will, cannot inherit the kingdom. Wanting to spare her worries, the king asks his brother to reign over the whole realm that their father had divided between them, on condition his daughter is cared for. A tyrant, her uncle wants to get rid of her and finds his opportunity when she chooses a husband. He kidnaps her betrothed and gives her an ultimatum to leave the people she still hopes to serve. After wandering for days, she reaches the realm of Peerless, a suitor she did not like but who is ready to fight for her. Gentilia struggles to understand Peerless because she misinterprets his words. It is by examining his actions that Gentilia realizes that his love is genuine. The tale ends with two weddings: Gentilia and Peerless and her previous fiancé and her widowed aunt. Gentilia gives her kingdom to her aunt and her husband and chooses to reign herself with her own husband. She too changes the status quo by deciding her path, which is different to the one designed by her father or her birth. She opts for a

transnational life built on a sense of belonging built not only on her interaction with Peerless but also with the people of his realm. It is by discovering their ways of life that she becomes a young queen who understands her duty towards the wellbeing of the people of her chosen country. This happy ending affirms not only the value of virtuousness in making decisions but also in resilience and unconventionality.

Collier's collection concludes with the hopeful tale on the transformative potential of the passing of time and aging of two charming siblings who are eager to create their own fairy tales. As they imagine fairies and fairylands together, they demonstrate promising transnational values in understanding and respecting difference. In "Something New", Nelly and Tommy conjure up fire fairies and many diverse wonderlands inspired by domestic objects such as umbrellas, tables, pins, and cards in their home while they wait for a new year to arrive. They do not need to venture outside because their parents trust them to use their imagination safely at home, where they can wonder to magical worlds and return to ordinary life by closing a book. Being older, Nelly is more perceptive and diplomatic. She understands that, like foreign country, a new world implies different expectations, distinctive customs, and manners; thus, she insists Tommy needs to be more respectful, sympathetic, and open minded when he visits new countries and interacts with their inhabitants even if they are animated objects. She does not assume sameness but wants to "extend [her] information" (263) and appreciate difference to build a permeable boundary in between. Nelly models a clearer awareness of "a dialogic of sameness and difference" than previous characters; she shows a transnational potential Collier developed later in her Anglo-Italian heroines. This final story celebrates the fairy tale as a safe place for children to mediate changes into adulthood that are challenging and in equal measure exciting and daunting; to wonder and imagine what life could be. It affirms

the significance of showing support, understanding and, in the case of Nelly, a little bit of patience when working with others. Nelly and Tommy are both excited in speculating what the new year will bring and how much more they will learn. By ending with a clock's bell striking the beginning of a new year, Collier's storybook celebrates the transformative potential of the passing of time and aging; it reiterates the significance of creating new worlds imaginatively together in childhood through storytelling. Moreover, it emphasizes how essential listening to and telling stories are as a means for children to question the representations of the world with which they are provided and to envision alternatives for it.

In *Prince Peerless,* Collier pursues the speculative potential of the fairy tale as a heterogeneous, inventive literary form to imagine being transnational; to chart new geographies of encounters open to difference, to multiple languages, cultures, and perspectives. Whether her protagonists are human or supernatural, her storyteller is keen to explain their understanding of events and, when they can express themselves well, they have their wish granted, even if they desire to die. Childhood is not an idealized stage in life but a time to develop those qualities that distinguish wise, sympathetic adults through storytelling. Wandering beyond their homes, her protagonists learn how to understand their identity through "a dialogic of sameness and difference" that offers glimpses of the deeper features distinguishing mortal human beings; of how ordeals and sorrows do not diminish the value of maturing but enhance the meaning of life. In "a new sort of country" (Collier 257), they weaken the boundaries of cultural models of identity and transcend national borders to shape ways of being in between, of asserting a multilayered identity that does not belong to a particular place or a specific country. Her fairy tales suggest that transnational

identity can be accepted within a community, that permeable borders show how both fairies and humans can be simultaneously familiar and different. They assert that storytelling is a powerful means for children to reimagine the world in which they grow into adults.

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[1] I use the writer's maiden name throughout this essay because she identified with it when she published *Prince Peerless.* She previously published as the Countess Galletti, M. I. Galletti, Madame Galletti, and Margaret Galletti di Cadilhac.

[2] It anticipates Joseph Jacobs's *English Fairy Tales* (1890) and *More English Fairy Tales* (1894), and Andrew Lang's *Fairy Books* (1889-1912). On the history of the fairy tale see, for example, Zipes, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition*; Warner, *Once Upon A Time*; Teverson, *Fairy Tale*.

[3] This is a vernacular, regional term defining the farmer who managed a farm in a landowner's estate, under a system of land tenure called *mezzadria*. The profit of the land was split in half between the *vergaro* who ran the farm and the landowner who gave the land as capital.

[4] On *Our Home by the Adriatic* see Capancioni "Victorian Women Writers" and "The *Risorgimento*".

[5] Her married name is spelt Galetti in 'The Vergaro: A Tale' in the *New Quarterly Magazine* and 'The Immortelles' in *The Victoria Magazine*, as well as on the title page of her last novel, *Some Annals of an Italian Village* (1895).

[6] Her first born, Ludmilla (1874-1876), died of meningitis (Muzzarelli).

[7] A graduate of Trinity College, Oxford, Arthur joined the Indian Civil Service and was secretary to Lord Curzon, then Collector in today Chennai. The *Galletti's Telugu Dictionary* (1935) best exemplifies his interest in India's cultures and languages. Giacinta studied painting in Rome, then married Guglielmo Salvadori (1879-1953), a professor of philosophy, and with him fought Fascism from its inception in 1922. Guglielmo was among the first antifascists to be brutally attacked in 1924. Robert studied engineering in Rome, but his pioneering work on wireless telegraphy and radar took place in the UK and France. After working with the Marconi Company, he set up his own transmitting station in France.

[8] On the influence of de Staël's *Corinne, ou L'Italie* see Chapman and Stabler; Moers.

[9] Barberino's version was the first published in 1473. See "Andrea da Barberino." *Britannica Academic*, Encyclopaedia Britannica. 12 February 2013. Academic-eb-com.bishopg.idm.oclc.org/levels/collegiate/article/Andrea-da-Barberino/7472. Accessed 27 August 2020.

[10] His portraits of Charles Darwin (1883, after his portrait of 1881) and of his father-in-law, Thomas Henry Huxley (1883), are in the National Portrait Gallery in London. Today, he is also appreciated as a pre-Raphaelite painter and illustrator. "Lady Godiva" (1898), at The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum in Coventry, is his most recognizable painting.

[11] In Italian Andrea is a masculine name in line with its Greek root, *andrós*, which refers to man.

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