AN ANALYSIS OF A SELECTION OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE KOREAN FOLKTALE PICTURE BOOKS

by

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Abstract

This study draws from the fields of folktale and fairy tale studies, Korean studies, and translation studies to examine the changes that are made to Korean folktales when they are retold in English, and published in North America in the form of picture books. The objective of the study is to determine whether discernible departures from the traditional, orally transmitted versions are apparent in the retold picture-book versions; to note any common trends in the types of changes which have been made (if any); and to discuss the possible reasons for such changes to be made.

The theoretical framework of this study is based in translation studies, and depends on the identification of the folktale reteller as fulfilling the role and facing the same issues as a translator does in transmitting cultural content from the source audience to the target audience. Analysis is conducted via close readings of the primary texts, the retold picture books, and the reference texts, which are comprised of a collection of the traditional Korean folktales which have been retold as picture books in English.

After close examination of the motifs present in the traditional and retold picture-book versions of two well-known Korean folktales, it was possible to conclude that one was domesticated, in its omission of all potentially offensive content and addition of a non-traditional happy ending. The other folktale retelling was a largely “faithful” version of the traditional story, but some judicious insertion of information into the text was necessary in order to recreate the experience of a reader of the source culture, due to a (perceived) lack of cultural knowledge of Korean customs on the part of the target reader.
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To my parents, who are my beginning
Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Motivation

I have always loved fairy tales, since I was a child growing up in Korea; for me, the fairy tales of Andersen, the Grimm brothers, Perrault, and others have been always fascinating because different. They seemed to have no roots, to float in some bubble of fiction separated from the reality of my own world, lacking even a basis in the physical realm. While I also read and enjoyed collections of traditional Korean folktales, they were not as attractive to me as those fairy tales featuring princesses, witches and fairies, which contrasted with the tales of peasants and animals that I associated with “Korean stories.” The difference showed most in the illustrations: the chunky mountains and melting plains of Korea look nothing like those deep forests with trees dripping moss, and the black-haired people in loose white trousers and straw or horsehair hats of Korean traditional tales also do not resemble the princes in bright armor, or velvets and silks, of, say, “Rapunzel,” “Sleeping Beauty,” or “Snow White.” This sense of the unfamiliar made me very happy. The emotion may be similar to what readers of fantasy and science fiction are often accused of: a desire to escape, a longing for that which is alien and yet recognizable. This feeling of fairy tales being distanced and unreal persisted even as I discovered fairy tale retellings such as Robin McKinley’s Beauty, in which details of everyday life are given in a realistic fashion, because they were not related in any noticeable way to my life, framed in Korean culture.

Eventually I came to the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, intending to pursue the study of tales such as “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Beauty and the Beast,” or “Cinderella.” Here I was startled by three observations, which resulted in my deciding to study Korean folktales and not European fairy tales. The first was that the cool, rain-wet woods in Vancouver look exactly like the illustrated forests that fairy-tale princesses wander
through; a shocking realization that fairy tales might actually be related to a physical reality in this world.

The second was learning, through my own readings of folktale and fairy tale scholars, that the narratives and motifs of folktales and fairy tales are actually deeply interlaced through our culture, and influence our daily lives in multiple ways. Fairy tales were said to be the shapers of our worldviews, mirrors of traditional values and social norms, means of oppression and means of revolt, both empowering and enslaving as narratives. I discovered studies of folktales which traced the origin of individual tales, and studies which explored the sociopolitical context of the tales’ collection and dissemination. I was unsure if any Korean narratives I had grown up with had any great impact on my life, or on Korean society, and I became curious as to whether there were comparable studies on the history of Korean folktales.

The third observation was that, a long time into reading through those scholarly works, I noticed that the authors would often establish in the introduction or first chapter that they were addressing a “Western” tradition of fairy tales – and then use words like we and our without any clarification. See, for instance, my own use in the preceding sentences: our culture, our worldviews, and our daily lives. Whose? Such usage assumes a universal quality, condition, or theory which applies to all human cultures of all time periods. I became interested in whether the assumption would prove true, and the scholarly discussions I had been reading in English would apply meaningfully to the traditional Korean folktales I had heard and read while growing up.

1.1.1 The Definition of Fairy Tales and Folktales

To begin with, the definitions of folktales and fairy tales are varied and somewhat confusing as to their use. In general, the term fairy tale, when used in everyday society, is
quite broad in boundary. It can include tales authored by specific individuals (such as “The Little Mermaid” by Hans Christian Andersen and “The Happy Prince” by Oscar Wilde) or orally transmitted tales of anonymous origin which may contain fairies or magic (such as the many versions of “Cinderella” type tales found across the globe), and may even refer broadly to any fantastic tale with a happy ending. In an academic context, the definitions are more specific and the scholar will delineate what he or she intends the term fairy tale to signify, such as the literary fairy tale, which refers to a tale based on or similar to traditional folktales but created by individual authors (Saltman 249); the aforementioned tales by Hans Christian Andersen and Oscar Wilde belong to this category.

Jack Zipes considers folktales to be the higher category that includes fairy tales, specifically the literary fairy tales (2002). Zipes defines literary fairy tales as a genre growing out of oral folktales, as the oral tales are collected and the given a “definitive version” by individual authors (4-9). The folktale he defines as:

An oral narrative form cultivated by non-literate people and literate people to express the manner in which they perceived and perceive nature and their social order and their wish to satisfy their needs and wants…the tales are reflections of the social order in a given historical epoch, and, as such, they symbolize the aspirations, needs, dreams and wishes of common people in a tribe, community, or society, either affirming the dominant social values and norms or revealing the necessity to change them. (7)

There is an emphasis on the desires and values of a community; essentially, the term folktale is defined as an oral narrative which contains communal values.

Zŏng In-Sŏb, on the other hand, classifies fairy tales as “innocent tales for children” (xxi), one of the five groups of tales (myths, legends, fairy tales, fables, and old novels) that
together compose folktales. The assumption in his introduction is that folktales are self-evident and need no definition; but after examining his reason for including three old novels in his collection of folktales, “because these old tales have been told among the people for so long that they have almost become popular folk tales [sic] and some of the authors forgotten” (xxii), it can be surmised that Zŏng considers folktales to be tales of no known authorship, passed down orally over a long period of time. The Korean title for his book *Folk Tales from Korea* (1982), 우리고담, translates to *Our Old Tales/Stories* and seems to imply the same: if it’s old and has been told, it’s a folktale.

### 1.1.2 The Character and Transfer of Folktales

Folktales, then, in the sense of old, well-known stories expressing communal values and desires, bind and shape our lives. They remain a strong frame for how we create and interpret narratives, and as common cultural references have the function of (when describing certain typical or common situations) delivering gigantic amounts of information in a single quick phrase. Think of the terms ‘Cinderella story,’ ‘Bluebeard’s chamber,’ ‘big bad wolf,’ ‘third son,’ ‘Beauty and the Beast,’ and ‘happily ever after,’ for example; just hearing those words brings to our minds numerous associations, and these terms are still being used quite often in everyday speech and writing.

However, these folktale references are often culture-specific, which accords with Zipes’ abovementioned definition of folktales as products of a community. Outside of the community of origin, references become hard to catch, perhaps because they are loaded with so much culturally specific information. To demonstrate, I offer some Korean folktale terms as a comparison to the European fairy tale references above, which, to a Korean, will have the same function of delivering a large amount of implied contextual information about a situation, easily recognized by the familiar listener or reader:
• Kongjui and Patjui (a good-girl, bad-girl situation);
• As poor as Hŭngbu/as greedy as Nolbu;
• Green/Blue frog (a disobedient and contrary child);
• Snail Wife (perfect caretaker);
• Is this axe your axe? (A question testing honesty, addressed from a mountain spirit to a poor woodcutter); and
• Sim Chŏng (self-sacrificing, deeply filial daughter).

I doubt that these terms will ring any deep note of recognition, or bring to the forefront any rush of generalizations, in the mind of someone unfamiliar with the folktales referred to.

What will happen, then, when such powerful yet restricted carriers of meaning as folktales are taken across national and geographical boundaries, and plumped squarely in an unfamiliar culture? Folktales from all across the world are being translated into English, and retold in English by native and non-native speakers of English. What, for example, happens to Korean folktales when faced with an English-speaking North American audience? How do they “survive,” in the sense of continuing to be read and told by a number of people? Are changes made to the values and desires represented in the original tales as they are translated or retold, and if so, do those changes distinguish between uniquely “Korean” values and those which are perceived to be universal to human society?

1.2 Significance

There have been numerous studies of (European) folktales and fairy tales and how they change, and many interpretations and evaluations of folktales and fairy tales by scholars such as Betsy Hearne (1989), Lutz Röhrich (2008), Maria Tatar (1999), and Jack Zipes (1994, 2002). There have also been studies of storytelling itself and the effect stories and storytelling
can have on our lives by Afra Kavanaugh (1998), Maria Tatar (2009) and Marina Warner (1994). What is common in these studies is the acknowledgement that folk and fairy tales are dynamic, entities that change and adapt naturally, interacting with society and with individuals. Warner’s description illustrates this awareness: “The nature of the genre is promiscuous and omnivorous and anarchically heterogeneous…these are stories with staying power, as their antiquity shows, because the meanings they generate are themselves magical shape-shifters, dancing to the needs of their audience” (xxiii-xxiv).

Because I have been unable to find equally extensive studies of Korean folktales’ collection and dissemination throughout history, nor studies of how Korean folktales are transferred to other cultures, the topics seem worthy of investigation. Do Korean folktales, as the studies indicate that European folktales do, change and adapt readily to the cultural contexts in which they find themselves; and as they re-create themselves, is it possible for them to yet retain their essential nature? An examination of Korean folktales published in North America will be an effective way to investigate this issue, as the two cultures are very different and have begun to interact heavily only quite recently (within two centuries or so). There is a higher possibility of cultural content existing in Korean folktales which are unfamiliar, incomprehensible, or unacceptable to the North American reader. Additionally, picture books being published in North America commonly undergo a rigorous process of selection and editing, carried out by a staff of mainly North American editors and art directors. If there is, in this process, a pressure for change in the sense of conforming to the standards of the new culture into which the folktales are being introduced, it is likely that those picture books which end up published will contain significant changes, and possible that the resulting changes made to the folktale will be clearly discernible to a reader familiar with the original, traditional versions of the folktale.
At this time and in a North American context, there is a paucity of scholarly research on Korean folktales in the picture book format. What exists in English is very recent. Lee Sung-Ae has looked at a specific character or motif in Korean folklore, the fox-woman, and how the significance of the character is being newly negotiated in the context of modern Korean society (2011). Carolyn Kim (2008), Sarah Young Park (2004), and Caroline Cho (2011) have all examined books with Korean content published in North America, seeking to identify stereotypes and racial bias. Sarah Young Park has also written her doctoral dissertation on how trans-racial adoption of Korean children is featured in children’s literature, in a North American context (2009). None focus explicitly on folktales.

Son Eun Hye (2009) recorded the responses of several transnational Korean children (at varying stages of familiarity with Korean and North American culture) to picture books with Korean content, including their responses to inauthentic representations. Son explicitly avoided choosing folktales for her project, because she considered realistic fiction to be “a more direct representation of the Korean people’s lives and culture” (70).

The conscious use and self-referential contemplation of exoticism as a strategy in Korean-American adult novels was examined by Grace Haekyung Park (2008). While the study does not concern picture books or folktales, the concept of exoticism may be relevant to the adaptations of folktales and is worth remembering.

Sung Yoo Kyung (2009) views Korean-American children’s representations in picture books from a post-colonial position, arguing that the mainstream view of Koreans as being part of a generic pan-Asian minority group is evident in not only the selection of picture books, but also in the reviews of those picture books. Folktales were not included in this analysis.

With the exception of Lee, who examines content (films and picture books) produced
and marketed in Korea, the scholars above discuss materials produced in English and therefore, presumably meant for the consumption of an English-using North American readership. It can be seen that the scholars have chosen not to focus on folktales, but instead to concentrate on realistic fiction depicting contemporary or near-contemporary Koreans. There was an emphasis on detecting bias. This study differs from earlier research, in that the focus is not on evaluating materials for stereotypes or racism, but on tracking the changes that occur in the process of selecting and editing folk tales for introduction, via publication, into a target multicultural society which differs greatly from the source society of the tales’ origination.

Translation studies provides a scholarly background on which to carry out this research, as it deals with the process of, and issues related to, making materials from one culture accessible to another. The relation of translation studies to the retelling of Korean folktales in English is that an author who retells a folktale in another language can also be considered to be in the role of translator, in the sense that she or he transmits content from one culture to another. If we allow this assumption, we can examine retold folktales as we can examine any other translation, using the established theoretical framework of translation studies; the translation process would apply directly to the creation of the retelling in the author’s mind, in a similar or more organic fashion than that which the translator goes through when working with a given manuscript. It is difficult to examine this process because it takes place in the author’s mind; there is no original manuscript and resulting translated manuscript available for analysis, but a single, culture-translated original manuscript, simultaneously created and translated, awaiting editing and publication. It is possible, however, to consider earlier recorded versions of the retold folktale to be original material, and carry out evaluations accordingly. Göte Klingberg (1986), especially, provides many of the basic terms and concepts used in this study, although other scholars and concepts are
discussed in the literature review.

1.3 Research Questions

What sorts of changes occur in Korean folk tales when arriving in North America? What factors influence those changes? Some parts of Korean culture that are emphasized in Korean folk tales, such as extreme filial piety or the complicated relationship the Korean peasantry had with Korean Buddhism and the Buddhist monks, may directly contradict some of the traditional values of Canadians and Americans (such as independence), or just be less meaningful to them. In cases such as these, are these tales edited for publication in the sense of being culturally purified, that is, interpreted explicitly in a different way from the original, in order to align them with those values perceived to be more acceptable in the culture into which they will be published; or are tales which ‘don’t fit’ simply avoided altogether? Does the survival of a folk tale in an unfamiliar culture depend on its having some desirable elements that are compatible with the new culture? This study proposes to investigate the following questions:

1. Are Korean folktales changed as they are published into a North American market, and;

2. If so, how? To what degree? Does the process of translation from the source to the target culture impact the Korean folktale retellings beyond their folkloric content?

3. Why?

1.4 Theoretical Basis

Neither postcolonial nor critical race theory seemed an appropriate theoretical framework for the purposes of this study, which is not a focused examination of texts based
on a predetermined critical standpoint but more of an exploration, examining texts according to the research question, “could it be possible that Korean folk tales are changed on arrival to North America?” Both critical theories, however, were noted during the process of reviewing relevant literature; of the previously discussed studies of fiction for children with Korean content, many were made from these critical standpoints.

Translation studies became the main basis for research, as the field deals deeply with issues which a reteller of folktales is likely to encounter, during the process of creating a retold version of a folktale for an audience of a different culture. The translator and the reteller must both consider: who his or her audience is, and how that influences the content and format of the retelling; what his or her reader is likely to know about the source culture (that which the folktale originates from); what the perceived purpose is, of both retold folktales and (children’s) literature in general; and what is considered acceptable content in the new culture into which the folktale is being introduced, to name just a few. Inevitably, such concerns as time and marketability will also arise. The reteller also undertakes a task similar to that of a translator when she or he takes content which exists in a different culture, perhaps also in a different language, and transfers it for the use or consumption of people in a different culture, who may not have access to this content otherwise. Therefore, for the purposes of this study (and recognizing that this does not apply literally) it can be argued that retellers of folktales, fulfilling a similar role and facing similar issues as do translators, can be considered (within the narrow context of this study) to be translators.

1.5 Selection of Primary Texts and Reference Texts

By considering the retellers of folktales to be in the role of translator, in that they take folktales from one culture and retell them in another culture, it becomes possible to evaluate retold folktales as translations, assessing them through a close reading for changes
from their originals in a thorough and nuanced manner which can take into consideration the entire reading experience of the reader, instead of merely counting discrepancies between the older folktale versions and their newer retellings. Issues of domestication and foreignization, which are also based in translation studies, can also be addressed during this evaluation.

In order to efficiently carry out such an evaluation, for this study the primary texts for analysis were limited to retellings of single folktales, published in the picture book format. My rationale for choosing picture books for analysis is that I believe this form will have undergone the most careful selection by the creators and producers of the book, whether author, illustrator, editor or publisher, in terms of content and values. Being meant mostly for younger children to enjoy at home, this type of book will therefore exhibit the most changes or discrepancies in content from the original, in the event that changes do indeed occur. In a collection of tales, with an assumed older reading audience, it is desirable to have variety, and so some amount of content with unfamiliar values, violence or otherwise difficult elements could be included that would not, perhaps, be considered acceptable in a single-tale picture book. The picture book format, with its many visual cues and its concise text, is also very conducive to close analysis, precisely because the constraints of the usual 32-page format ensure that all images and words are chosen carefully, with intent, and work together to produce a unitary whole. Two titles were chosen for analysis, in accordance with criteria which will be discussed at length in the Methodology chapter, Chapter Three:


In order to analyze these texts as translations, it is necessary to have “original” texts
against which to evaluate them. Since, as folktales, there can be no “absolute” definitive original versions to compare with their “translated (retold)” versions, it is necessary to first establish a reliable, comprehensive collection of authentic Korean folktales collected in Korean, and then compare the folktales to the retold versions produced in North America, in English. In the Asian Library of the University of British Columbia I found two large collections of Korean folktales, consisting of several volumes, and a number of single volumes of Korean folktale collections. The titles of the two extensive collections follow:

- 호남 구전자료집 [Collection of Orally Transmitted Material from (the) Honam (Region)]
- 한국 구전 설화집 [Collection of Korean Orally Transmitted Folktales]

The single titles include:

- 김덕순 민담집 [Collection of the Folktales of Kim Tŏk-sun]
- 북한 설화의 연구 [Study of North Korean Folktales]
- 분단 이후 북한의 구전설화집 [Collection of Orally Transmitted Folktales from North Korea, After the (North-South Korean) Division]
- 용인 중부지역의 구비전승 [Folklore of the Mid-Yongin Region]
- 이강석 구연설화집 [Collection of Folktales Performed by Yi Kang-sŏk]

All of the titles listed above are collections of Korean folktales and folklore material, created for academic use. Some are simply collections of transcripts from recorded storytelling sessions while others have been edited for ease of reading, but all have been collected directly from their sources, the people who were asked to tell a story, and all note
information on the source storyteller such as name, age, gender, educational background, and whom the storyteller first heard the story from. As such, they are highly reliable as reference material for this study, and a collection of Korean versions of the retold folktale picture books by Choi and Park was made, to be used as reference text(s) for the analysis.

조선설화집 [Collection of Chosŏn Folktales] was the oldest collection of Korean folktales that I could find in the UBC Asian Library which included versions of the retold folktale picture books chosen for analysis; it was first published in 1930, and the tales were collected in the 1920s. However, it was not included in the reference text collection, because its first publication was in Japanese (Korea, which was called Chosŏn at the time, had been annexed by Japan). While the tales were doubtlessly collected in Korean, translation of the tales into Japanese and the subsequent re-translation into Korean (in 2009) render the collection less reliable than the sources chosen for reference. The presence of the tales chosen for analysis in this earliest collection of Korean folktales, however, was noted.

1.6 Definition of Terms

1.6.1 Folktale and Fairy Tale Terms

Folktale: The terms folktale and fairy tale both have fluid boundaries and are sometimes used interchangeably, even by scholars; nevertheless, they must be quite clearly defined, in order to prevent confusion. The two terms have been discussed previously; in this study I will refer to folktales to mean “narrative tales of anonymous origin, originally transmitted through popular retellings”, and this will be modified by using terms such as Korean folktales and European folktales (or German folktales or French folktales, etc.) to indicate specific cultures of origin when necessary.

Fairy tale: The term, as used in the works of different scholars, can include both
folktales (as per the definition above) and works of literary fairy tale, a subgenre of fantasy by known authors, in its boundaries, such as *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* or the works of Hans Christian Andersen and Oscar Wilde. In this study, however, the term does not occur outside of the literature review, as the focus is on analysis of folktale retellings; therefore *fairy tale* will simply refer to that definition which is given to it by the scholar being discussed.

**Folk and fairy tale scholars:** I have called those scholars of tales of the Western or European tradition *folk and fairy tale scholars*, as most of them do not limit themselves to only folktales or only fairy tales, however they may define those terms; their works I have generalized as *folk and fairy tale studies*, and they are discussed in the “Folk and Fairy Tale Studies” section of the following chapter, the literature review. The Korean scholars of Korean folktales and folklore need no such specific designation as there is no confusion concerning the exact delineation of boundaries which corresponds to that of the terms *folktale* and *fairy tale*.

**Folklorist:** Scholar of folktales. “Folklorists use two kinds of classification to discuss folktales.”

**Tale type:** “A type index. . . assigns a number to each entire tale. For example, the tale ‘Cinderella’ is Type 510.”

**Motif:** “A motif index assigns a motif number to each small part of a tale: an action, actor, or object within the tale.” (MacDonald and Sturm ix)

1.6.2 Translation Terms

When discussing matters of translation, I use the definitions provided by Göte Klingberg in *Children’s Fiction in the Hands of the Translators* (1986, 11-12).
**Source language:** “is the language from which the translator translates.”

**Target language:** “is the language which the translator writes.”

If, for example, one were to translate from Korean into English, Korean would be the source language, and English would be the target language. From this one can also get the terms *source text, source culture, source reader* and *target text, target culture, target reader*.

**Adaptation, Degree of Adaptation:** The regard that the creators of a book have for the supposed reader in terms of understanding, entertainment and so on is called *adaptation*, and the degree to which this is considered is called *degree of adaptation*.

**Cultural Context Adaptation:** *Cultural context adaptation* is the translator’s adaptation in accordance with the new (target) readers’ cultural understanding of the elements in the source text. The translator may attempt to adjust cultural elements in the material so that their unfamiliarity do not prevent the reader from having an equivalent reading experience as the supposed source reader.

**Purification:** *purification* differs from *cultural context adaptation* in that it seeks to align the target text with the accepted values of the target culture; it can include both the elimination of “offensive” material and the addition of “desirable” material.

### 1.7 Overview of Following Chapters

In the following chapter, Chapter Two, the scholarship relevant to this study as outlined previously (folk and fairy tale studies, Korean studies, and translation studies) is reviewed, and their significance in relation to the purpose of this study discussed. Chapter Three discusses the methodology and critical framework for the study, Chapters Four and Five comprise the actual analyses, and Chapter Six reports the conclusion of the study and includes suggestions for further research.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

In the examination of Korean folktales in picture book form, and whether they are changed upon being retold in English, I have relied on relevant scholarship from three academic fields: folk and fairy tale scholarship dealing mainly with European tales (tales in what Emer O’Sullivan calls “the Western Tradition” (2006, 155), scholarship dealing with Korean content, including the telling of folktales, and scholarship on the translation of literature, especially children’s literature. The reason for this sampling of scholarly resources is the extremely specific circumstance being examined: the act of a folktale being retold, through the medium of the picture book, to a child audience assumed to be of a different culture from the culture of the folktale’s origination. In this case, none of the aforementioned academic fields can, on its own, account for all the possible influencing factors that culminate in the final product, the published (and received, well or ill, in the new or target culture) folktale picture book.

To make a sweeping generalization, folk and fairy tale studies in English understandably focus mainly on the European tales: the collections of the Grimms, Perrault, Asbjørnsen and Moe, Joseph Jacobs, etc., and their roles and meanings in a European or North American cultural context. Some scholars include the creative writings of Hans Christian Andersen and Oscar Wilde in their studies of fairy tales, as Maria Tatar does in her edited work The Classic Fairy Tales, arguing that the tales have “mutate[d] into folklore, … becoming part of our collective cultural awareness” (1999, 15). It cannot be taken for granted, therefore, that the resulting theories will apply directly to Korean folktales.

Korean folk studies, on the other hand, tend to focus on the meanings and roles of Korean folk culture in its entirety, with folktales mostly considered together with songs,
rituals, and superstitions, and an emphasis on the recording and preservation of such folk culture as it disappears under the onslaught of modernization and globalization. As such, the scholarship I have been able to access has been concentrated on the culture located in Korea, and I have been unable to find any studies of Korean folktales as they appear in a non-Korean cultural context.

I find it fitting that in many ways, translation studies serves as the bridge or linking force to bring the works of folk and fairy tale scholarship and the works of Korean folk studies together. Being concerned with the actual process of enabling communication between two different languages and cultures, translation studies scholars are very aware of the changes that texts go through as they cross linguistic boundaries, and the market concerns, pedagogic concerns, ideologies, etc. that influence those changes. There are many studies devoted to tracing the changes of a single original text as it is translated into different cultures in different time periods, although in this study I will make use of the more general theories concerning the translation of children’s materials and the manifold adult intents which change them.

2.2 Folk and Fairy Tale Studies

There have been varied studies of folk and fairy tales, and how they change across time and vary across cultures, and many interpretations and evaluations of folk and fairy tales (Hearne, 1989; Röhrich, 2008; Tatar, 1999; Zipes, 1994, 2002). There have also been studies of storytelling itself and the effect stories and storytelling can have on our lives (Kavanaugh, 1998; Tatar, 2009; Warner, 1994). While this study will focus primarily on the translation and adaptation (via retelling) of folktales, it may be mentioned that Bettelheim analyzed the content of tales for deep psychological and symbolic meanings, and Campbell claimed a universal structure of myth for all of humanity. Stephens and McCallum (1998) consider
Campbell’s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and the influence it has in the field of children’s literature to be primarily based in its usefulness as a surrogate for religion (15), and Bettelheim and his work is mentioned by Betsy Hearne in her summary of the varying theoretical viewpoints in the study of folk and fairy tales, together with Jack Zipes, Alan Dundes, and Robert Darnton (2011).

In the studies of folk and fairy tales, the function of tales and the survival of tales are common issues, both of which are relevant to this study. What is common in these studies is the acknowledgement that folk and fairy tales are dynamic things that change and adapt, interacting with society and with individuals, and that they are not escapist but have specific functions relevant to real life.

Betsy Hearne, in particular, emphasizes the term ‘survival’ in her writings about stories; of folktales, she states that “folklore is not frozen in the past but either survives in a changing context or lives not at all” (2011, 210). While tracing the many transformations of the tales of Brer Rabbit, and how the collection changed its status in society several times before acquiring recognition as ‘acceptable’ content for children, Hearne refers to the tales as tricking the readers, in the sense that they are readily adapted to the interpretive needs of the audience, in order to continue to be told (2010). Adaptation thus becomes something a tale initiates of its own accord. In her study of the history and many incarnations of the “Beauty and the Beast” tale in *Beauty and the Beast: Visions and Revisions of An Old Tale* (1989), Hearne showed how a tale may change according to the requirements of the author and the expectations of different societies and cultures in particular eras, yet remain essentially the same through the preservation of certain core elements. The interpretation of the tale’s moral, and the evaluation of certain characters in the tale, may change completely over time, but the story itself will, again, survive in a recognizable form. Marina Warner states the
adaptation/survival of tales in a different manner: “The nature of the genre is promiscuous and omnivorous and anarchically heterogeneous…these are stories with staying power, as their antiquity shows, because the meanings they generate are themselves magical shape-shifters, dancing to the needs of their audience” (xxiii-xxiv).

Jack Zipes concentrates on the socio-political aspects of folk and fairy tales, exploring the ideological backgrounds to several folktales as well as literary fairy tales (1994) and seeing them as struggling to maintain positions of power or to subvert the mainstream narratives in the societies in which they are widespread (2002). By placing tales in the cultural and historical context of their creation, he challenges the notion that folk and fairy tales have within them universal and perennial values, and encourages the active retelling and subverting of tales in accordance to their function: “Folk and fairy tales remain an essential force in our cultural heritage, but…their value depends on how we actively produce and receive them in forms of social interaction which lead toward the creation of greater individual autonomy” (2002, 199).

Lutz Röhrich (2008) has explored motifs, functions, and variants of mainly fairy tales, and emphasizes the influence that the context of story collection and publication – the social standing of both storyteller and story collector, the setting of the performance and collection of the story, the demands of the publisher and the reading public, the editor’s opinion on the suitability of some stories over others for the intended audience – has on what ends up being recorded, and in what form. This issue is similar to that of translation studies in which the translation act is also constrained by such social and material concerns, bringing us again to consider the significance of selection and adaptation in the transfer of tales from one culture to another. He also looks at methods of researching and interpreting fairy tales, and the significance of history and locale in their dissemination.
Maria Tatar collects multiple versions of the same “classic” fairy tales from several cultures and time periods, including some non-European sources, and also brings together a selection of critical writing on the meanings, significance and development of fairy tales (1999). She also explores, through pictures and anecdotes as well as with scholarly theory, the impact of narrative storytelling on children’s lives (2009). Afra Kavanaugh (1998) records the results of a symposium in which, somewhat similarly, the role of storytelling in education, counseling, and culture was discussed by teachers, counselors, and storytellers, among many others.

Marina Warner has examined folktales from around the world from a feminist point of view, focusing on the female characters in tales and the values and roles they embody or are made to embody through the intervention of (male) collectors and editors. As such, she follows the activities of the Grimms and Perrault, probes the Sibyl legend of Italy, the cult of Saint Anne in France, and the depictions of the biblical Queen of Sheba, tracing the social and historical contexts around the stories and the women who told them (1994).

2.3 Korean Studies

2.3.1 Limitations

Here it should be mentioned that there were two limitations in my search for, and access to, Korean scholarly works relevant to this study. The first is that of location: currently living in Vancouver, British Columbia, I had no access to books in libraries in Korea, but had access to the University of British Columbia’s Asian Library and its collection of works in Korean concerning folk studies. The second limitation is that of academic language in Korea and my own lack of fluency in the use of Chinese characters. Korea has gone through reforms concerning the use of Chinese characters in schools, official documents and everyday use, resulting in a generational gap between those fluent in the use (both reading and writing) of
Chinese characters and those who can passably recognize the most frequently used characters by sight. While this gives rise to no problems in everyday life, in academic publications the more recent works are written mostly in Korean with Chinese characters in parenthesis for clarification, leaving the older works (or works by older scholars), with most of the nouns written in Chinese characters, which are very difficult and time-consuming to read for persons of the post-reform generation who are not trained scholars of classical Chinese. In this case, as none of those works seemed from a precursory reading to be more directly relevant to this study than more recent works, I have chosen to reference the scholarly works mainly written in Korean, with occasional phrases in Chinese characters.

Also, while not a limitation, it should be mentioned that, unless otherwise noted, I am the author of all translations of Korean text into English within this study. The text will be given in Korean first, followed by the English translation in parentheses.

2.3.2 Korean Folktales

Choe Rae-ok (2009) has written a comprehensive introduction to the study of oral literature in Korea, Theory of Korean oral literature. Oral literature is divided into categories of stories/tales, songs, rituals, Pansori, folk theatre/drama, wise sayings, riddles, and superstitions. Stories are divided again into myths, legends, and folktales. As the purpose is to explain the scope and boundaries of Korean oral literature and its methods of study and collection, there is not much discussion specific to the transmission of Korean folktales to non-Korean cultures, but an accurate general knowledge of Korean oral literature was a necessary background knowledge for this study, in order to prevent any thoughtless assumptions of equivalence when considering theories of Korean and non-Korean folktales. The discussion of different systems of indexing folktales, including some developed in Korea, and how Korean tales are often not as clearly defined as belonging to one or the other
category in the Western-derived systems, is useful.

The classification of Korean folktales is also taken up by Sin Dong-hŭn (2000), who further divides folktales by their defining characteristics into fantastic, dramatic and realistic folktales (177). Sin notes that the fantastic folktale category is that which is often considered most appropriate for children. In his list of fantastic folktales I recognized most as tales I had first encountered in picture book form in my own childhood, and all the Korean folktales retold in English which were found during my preliminary search would fit in this category.

Han Sŏn-a’s study of Korean folktales focuses on the interactive interpretation of the texts by the reader, engaging the values and meanings of the tales through agreement or conflict, and either accepting those values or creating new interpretations which were in alignment with their own values (2005). Han read through 102 of the Korean folktales which appeared with the most frequency in folktale collections, with the purpose of establishing the function of sharing folktales with young children in an educational context. Han quotes Kim Kyŏng-jung’s definition of the term 전례동화 [Traditional Children’s Tales], which is the definition commonly used to refer to the tales Sin classifies as fantastic folk tales:

“전례동화는 옛날 이야기, 민담, 우화, 전설과 같은 설화의 형태 속에서 그 상징적, 심리적 의미를 포착하여 동심의 수준에 맞게 개작.재화한 유아문학 작품으로, 유아들에게 보편적 삶의 가치와 의미를 심어주는 데 결정적인 역할을 해왔다 (김 경중, 1997)” [Traditional Children’s Tales are works of children’s literature created through grasping the symbolic and psychological meanings of tales, such as stories of long ago, folktales, fables, and legends, then adapting and retelling them according to the level of a child’s mind; they have been instrumental in the instillation of universal life-values and meanings in children] (quoted in Han, 2005, 15).
This definition is revealing of a Korean pedagogical stance towards folktales in which the value of folktales lies in their usefulness as tools of education; such a view would accord with Sin’s previous note that the category of fantastic folktales is often considered suitable for children.

Sin Yŏn-u (2008) has examined the meanings of several Korean tales by tracing the history of their origination and dissemination, defining the social circumstances of the tales’ origin (when possible), analyzing their structure, and interpreting the psychological elements of the tales. In this collection the tales analyzed are not from the more common category mentioned above, the fantastic folktales which are adapted into children’s traditional tales, but the lesser known tales which are closer to legends and myths, and are therefore perhaps a bit more distanced from the everyday life of Koreans. Tales are said to be created and told as reflections of, and in response to, the folk’s desires and frustrations in the world they live in, sometimes in direct contrast to the dominant values of the time.

The Korean Oral Literature Association published a collection of papers exploring the significance of oral literature in relation to varied fields of study, ranging from history and anthropology to philosophy, psychology and semiotics (2002). Of these, Ham Han-hŭi’s paper concentrates on the methods of cultural study through oral literature, holding that it is possible to discern the cultural structure of a people by the tales they share as common heritage, and that the behavior of individuals and groups will be according to their cultural structure, which nevertheless can go through change as it interacts with events in history (or ‘the real world’).

Other than these studies of Korean tales in general, there have been studies of specific elements in Korean tales, or certain forms of Korean oral literature; in this case they are mostly studied together with similar forms in China, Japan, or both, indicating an
awareness of the cultural influences the three countries have exchanged through the centuries, and, perhaps, also a desire to assert Korean culture as distinct by differentiating Korean cultural forms from those of the neighboring countries.

2.3.3 China-Korea-Japan Interactions and Korean Folktales

A brief summary of the history of the three cultures’ interactions may be useful here, although only the broadest of sketches can be made; the history and relations of China, Korea and Japan are the subjects of many learned scholars’ entire careers. Being neighbors, with Korea sharing a border with China to the north and having a thin strip of sea between its south-eastern tip and Japan, there has naturally been an active exchange of goods among the countries, and accompanying this, cultural exchange including the dissemination of schools of philosophy, new religions such as Buddhism from India via the Silk Road, art forms, and architectural styles. China being the largest, more powerful nation of the three, exerted a heavy cultural influence; Japanese and Korean officials would visit the Chinese court to pay their respects, and when they returned they would often bring news, ideas, and fashionable artifacts from the merchants and scholars they had encountered. Chinese script played a large role, as it was used in the official documents of all three countries: scholars who could not speak one another’s language could easily communicate through writing (although official trained interpreters were also available). It is possible, therefore, to surmise that cultural influence flowed from West to East, following the Silk Road into China then passing through the Korean Peninsula on its way to Japan. While this fails to take into account the preexisting native cultures, and the different ways in which cultural elements become adapted and localized according to folk character and the needs of the time, it does point to a pattern of commonality in many aspects of Chinese, Korean and Japanese cultures, which draws scholars to examine the three together when contextualizing a study.
Korea’s cultural relationship with Japan is more complex. While there was a large-scale invasion into Korean territory by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in the second half of the 16th century, the greatest Japanese impact on Korean culture recognizable today arguably would be the annexation of 1910, following which Korea was systematically exploited for resources and strong cultural purification policies were carried out, until the total surrender of Japan to Allied Powers in 1945. Korea was catapulted into modernization in the period of the World Wars, and the strong emphasis on Korean national identity during and immediately following this period must be taken into account when considering studies, records and individual actions. Korea continues to have ongoing rivalry with Japan on a cultural and political scale, and several unresolved political and human rights issues, some of which can be related to a scholarly desire to differentiate Korean culture from Japanese culture, or a desire to establish a hierarchy of cultural superiority. Even without considering this complex sociopolitical context, however, it would be very difficult to discuss the more recent collections of folk tales and traditions (from living sources) without including a discussion of the Japanese influence, as the current oldest living sources of folk culture have lived through the period of Japanese rule. Those who are interested in an overview of Korea’s history and relationship with its neighbors, beyond that outlined here, can refer to (among many others) Korea Old and New: A History, by Carter J. Eckert, et al.

Kim Chong-dae (1994) has made a comprehensive study of the Korean Tokaebi (a type of goblin or troll), the linguistic origins of the name, rituals and beliefs concerning Tokaebi, and the local development of the concept of the Tokaebi as fertility spirits, bumbling, good natured spirits who can be tricked into providing wealth, or malicious spirits who bring disease and confuses minds. Tales are divided into those in which the Tokaebi are considered to be objects of religious devotion, in which cases they are concerned with fertility in real life activities such as fishing, those in which the Tokaebi are considered to be spirits who are
lesser than gods but more powerful than humans, and those in which they are considered equal in status to humans, although fundamentally other, and engage in contests of strength or cunning with men and women. Tokaebi are considered to be the explanation for all odd, inexplicable occurrences and as such often are referred to in old sayings.

Cultural transmission is touched upon in the comparison of a Japanese tale concerning Oni (Japanese spirits), “How the old man lost his wen” to a similar Korean tale concerning Tokaebi, “Gaining a Tokaebi mallet.” Kim notes the differences in characters and character behavior, and traces the history of the tale’s arrival in Korea to Korea’s annexation by Japan and the subsequent cultural assimilation policies carried out in schools through textbooks; “How the old man lost his wen” does not appear in elementary school textbooks until the year 1915, five years after annexation, after which it appears often and steadily” (147-148). The reference is important because Kim states as one of the main reasons for his study the definition and establishment of Tokaebi as a being substantially different from the Japanese Oni; he feels threatened that the ancient, traditional Tokaebi is disappearing in people’s minds due to the introduction and uncritical mass dissemination of the Oni image through the media, which equates the two superficially similar figures without consideration of their essential characteristics (3-5).

Yi Ŭ-ryŏng (2010) has collected essays from Korean, Chinese and Japanese scholars, primarily one of each, on the subject of the dragon as it appears in the mythology, legends, art, and religion of their respective cultures, including a chapter on the dragon in modern popular culture. In particular, Yi as the editor of the collection includes his own changing perceptions of the dragon from childhood through adulthood to illustrate the many meanings of the dragon for Koreans: as a symbol of the authority, nobility and morality of the King, it was related to a spirit of resistance to the Japanese Heavenly Emperor, who is not officially
associated with the dragon, in the period of annexation (during which Yi, born in 1934, was a child). It is understood differently in the contexts of Buddhism and Confucianism, and Yi cites the characteristics of the dragon (imaginary animal composed of parts from many different animals, divine presence achieved by ordinary beings through effort and virtue, heavenly being which controls the rain and seas) in contrast to those of the western counterpart (evil, greedy, cunning beast which is associated with fire) to describe the differences in Western and Eastern ways of thinking. Lastly, Yi takes the dragon as a symbol of an Asia working together in harmony while respecting differences in a globalized world.

Pak Yong-san (2007) has compared Korean Pansori, the singing narrative performance, to the puppetry and singing performance Jyoruri of Japan, discussing how their origins are similar but they developed in different directions for the former to become a mostly musical performance, while the latter integrated puppets and became a more visual performance. In the comparison, Pak traces the history of both as originating in the entertainment culture of performed drama, which incorporates the three elements of narration, movement, and music, then changing as the two cultures chose to emphasize different aspects of the performances. Chunhyangga [Song of Chun-hyang] and Sonezakishinju are used as examples of Pansori and Jyoruri, respectively, to analyze the structure, literary characteristics, and performance characteristics of the two genres.

2.3.4 Korean Studies Written in English

It is necessary to also consider the works of scholars of Korea whose research is written in English, and to round out the discussion by relating the studies more towards children’s literature. At this time, there is a lack of scholarly research on Korean folktales as picture books, and a general paucity of scholarship on children’s literature with Korean content in a North American context. What scholarship exists in English is recent, and deals
mainly with realistic fiction.

Carolyn Kim (2008) and Sarah Young Park (2004) have both written master’s theses on the subject of Korean material published in North America, Kim on Korean-Canadian children’s books and Park on Korean-American children’s picture books. While Kim discusses all material with Korean-Canadian content, including memoirs and nonfiction, Park concentrates on picture books meant for children. Neither, however, focuses on the analysis of Korean folktales, but rather seeks to identify stereotypes and racial bias. Park has also written her doctoral dissertation on how trans-racial adoption of Korean children is featured in children’s literature, in a North American context (2009).

Caroline Cho (2011) analyzes the text and illustrations of picture books with specifically Korean and Korean-American representations, searching for trends in the existence or types of stereotypes within the picture books. The study found that while there are no meaningful differences, according to the ethnicity of the authors, in the amount of inaccuracies and stereotypes in the written picture book text, there is a significant difference (according to whether or not the illustrator was of Korean heritage) in the amount of inaccuracies and stereotypes found in the illustrations. The study does not include any folktales.

Son Eun Hye (2009) records the responses of several transnational Korean children (at varying stages of familiarity with Korean and North American culture) to picture books with Korean content, including their responses to inauthentic representations. Son explicitly avoided choosing folktales for her project, because she considered realistic fiction to be “a more direct representation of the Korean people’s lives and culture” (70)

The conscious use and self-referential contemplation of exoticism as a strategy in Korean-American adult novels is examined by Grace Haekyung Park (2008). While the study
does not concern picture books or folktales, the concept of exoticism may be relevant to the adaptations of folktales and is worth remembering.

Sung Yoo Kyung (2009) views Korean-American children’s representations in picture books from a post-colonial position, arguing that the mainstream view of Koreans as being part of a generic pan-Asian minority group is evident in not only the selection of picture books, but also in the reviews of those picture books. Folktales were not included in this analysis.

It can be seen that the scholars who have chosen to conduct research related to Korea and Korean culture in a North American context have chosen not to focus on folktales, but instead to concentrate on realistic fiction having to do with contemporary or near-contemporary Koreans. This study differs in that the focus will not be on evaluating material for stereotypes or racism, but on tracking the changes that occur from selecting and editing folk tales for introduction into a multicultural society which differs greatly from the society of the tales’ origination.

Two studies specifically on the transformation of Korean folktales and the use of Korean folktale motifs in literature should be noted. Lee Sung-Ae (2011) has looked at a character or motif in Korean folklore, the fox-woman, and how the significance of the character is being newly negotiated in the context of modern Korean society. The fox-woman has traditionally been a female fox which shifts shape in order to pass as human, usually bringing ruin upon the humans it encounters. Lee focuses on films and television shows meant for adults, and picture books and an animated film for children; she explores the many ways in which the texts frame or interpret what she calls the fox-woman script, and the tensions which can arise through the affirmations and subversions of the traditional script.

Ross King (2005) has looked at how six writers of modern Korean fiction have retold
the tale of the “The woodcutter and the nymph” as a form of parody, using different strategies such as interspersing the text with poetry, specifying or distancing the locale of the story to create an immigrant or diasporic perspective, change of narrator, or intertextual framing, to express their values, make social comments, or subvert what they perceive to be the original message of the text, concluding with a list of salient features common to the six retellings.

2.4 Translation Studies

In translation studies, the concern with how to correctly convey the experience of reading the text from one language and culture to another, and what constitutes a ‘correct’ recreation of that reading experience, is always a major one. Göte Klingberg (1986) gives as reasons for either retaining or making changes to the original text (in the form of abridgment, deletion, adding text, changing proper nouns, etc.) the educational purpose, or “pedagogical goals” (14) of the adults involved in the translation process, making a distinction between cultural context adaptation, meaning the necessary changes made to the text in order to ensure the same level of interest and understanding will be retained as would be usual among readers of the text in the source language, and purification, meaning the changes made to the text in order to align it with a given set of values, even though the content thus deleted or changed would not have been incomprehensible or uninteresting to the reader of the translated text (11-12). Klingberg is of the opinion that one must be faithful to the original text by changing as little as possible while retaining the same level of understanding of the text: “Thus it could be held that the translator has no right to alter the author’s text. … A changed text will easily lose something which is important to the book – its character, its atmosphere” (14).

Maria Nikolajeva, in her comprehensive essay on the translation of children’s literature “Translation and Crosscultural Reception,” states that when texts are translated
across cultures, the views of that culture on childhood and the function of children’s literature are likely to have a great influence on the selection of text to be translated and the degree of change it will go through, because adults are choosing and translating for an implied child reader (405). Here she also contrasts the approach to translation of Klingberg, which promotes faithfulness to the original text whenever and however possible, with that of Riitta Oittinen, “named dialogical, since it is based on a creative dialogue between the source and target cultures,” as representative of the two ends of the spectrum of possible approaches to translation. Two important translation strategies, foreignization and domestication, are also introduced as illustrative of the different approaches mentioned above. When encountering elements in the original (source) text which are deemed unfamiliar or difficult for the reader to understand, foreignization may leave them unchanged in the translated text, so the reader can become aware of differences in culture and language; the fact that the text is a translation becomes overt. The dialogic approach, however, will substitute similar elements from the reader’s culture (target culture) in the translation, so that the reader from the target culture may have, as much as possible, the same reading experience as a reader from the original (source) culture. While both approaches are used in the actual process of translation, which end of the spectrum one is closer to depends, again, on what one regards as beneficial to children, or the purpose of children’s literature (407-413).

Oittinen regards translation as “cross-cultural communication – including child and adult culture” (6). In the dialogic process of translation, translators are not considered to be invisible conveyers of meaning from source culture to target culture, but to be individuals with their own particular background of cultural heritage, ideology, and intent regarding the translation itself; the translator’s interactions with the text, with the author through the text, and with the readers of the translated text, is a dialogic relationship which also includes the illustrator and publisher (3). Reading is seen as a creative and interpretive action in which the
reader and the text collaborate to create meaning; from this point of view, translation is an adaptation, or a retelling of the text, while reading is also a kind of translation. This view is enriched by also considering how Emer O’Sullivan calls attention to the act of reading which takes place during translation by stating that the narrative voice of the translator is one separate from that of the author or the narrator, using the term implied translator to show how the translator acts as both the real reader of the text in its original language, and also as a second narrator (in their role as real translator of the text) to the implied reader of the translated text (2005, 104-129). O’Sullivan also differentiates between the transmission of those translations of children’s works written specifically for children, which are “‘literary’ translations of literary originals,” and translations or adaptations of other materials such as fairy tales or general literature (i.e. adult literature), which show the characteristics of written folklore, bringing the concept from the works of Roman Jakobson and Alieda Assmann (2006, 159-160).

John Stephens and Robyn McCallum (1998) raise an important issue regarding the retelling of traditional tales with their concept of the metanarrative, “a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience,” and that which arranges the metanarratives into “a large interlocked set,” the Western metaethic (6-7). Through these concepts they explain how “we” (an assumed reader from the Western humanist tradition) interpret, accept, or reject elements in tales as universal truths, or assume them to be self-evident; as the term Western metaethic indicates, their main object is to show how children’s literature is primarily under the influence of “androcentric, ethnocentric, and class-centric” Western metanarratives (9). The concept is important because it explains how tales from different cultures are automatically assumed to have the Western metanarrative as its structure, is interpreted as such, and thus contributes to the illusion of universal truths in world literature; if they are too incompatible with the Western metanarrative, they may be
simply incomprehensible to the reader, not even capable of being understood and then rejected.

Many of the scholars mentioned above, some of whom are also working translators, noted the asymmetry of the structure of children’s literature, in that children’s literature is written, illustrated, edited, published, reviewed, and selected by librarians, booksellers, and parents – all adults. Market concerns or personal views of appropriate content for children on the part of editors/the publishing house were also often mentioned by translators. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine more closely these two concerns in regards to the reception of retold folktales, but they form a setting in which I understand the process of a book’s creation takes place. Under such conditions, and having no fixed original manuscript to be faithful to in the process of translation, a folktale retelling as a translation would be intrinsically more (likely to be) oriented towards the target culture, on a level greater than the translation of a fixed work, i.e. a retelling of a folktale published in the source language, would allow.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter the three fields of academic study, folk and fairy tale studies, translation studies, and Korean studies focusing on Korean folktales, have been examined and their relevance to the purpose of this study established. Folk and fairy tale studies provide a base theory of how tales are told, how they change, and how they influence people. The Western bias of the theories and any errors in regards to Korean folktales which might result are corrected and complemented by the addition of studies by Korean scholars on specific Korean folktales and folktale elements, which are also considered in the context of the cultures of neighboring China and Japan. Translation studies provides an important lens on the actual process of taking content from one culture to another and the forces that influence
that process, bringing about changes in the material. In the next chapter, Methodology, the knowledge acquired in this chapter is used to select and create the actual methods of analyzing the selected primary texts.
Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Translation studies, especially the concepts of domestication and foreignization, will be the foundation of the analysis. A major decision in the construction of the theoretical framework for the research was to identify the retellers of the folktales as translators, because the retellers are not actually translating these folktales from existing picture books (first published in Korean) into English, but rather taking Korean folktales (from memory or from other sources) and retelling them in English. The validation for this approach was given in the introductory chapter, and is repeated here:

The translator and the reteller must both consider: who his or her audience is, and how that influences the content and format of the retelling; what his or her reader is likely to know about the source culture (that which the folktale originates from); what the perceived purpose is, of both retold folktales and (children’s) literature in general; and what is considered acceptable content in the new culture into which the folktale is being introduced, to name just a few. Inevitably, such concerns as time and marketability will also arise. The reteller also undertakes a task similar to that of a translator when she or he takes content which exists in a different culture, perhaps also in a different language, and transfers it for the use or consumption of people in a different culture, who may not have access to this content otherwise. Therefore, for the purposes of this study (and recognizing that this does not apply literally) it can be argued that retellers of folktales, fulfilling a similar role and facing similar issues as do translators, can be considered to be translators.

Emer O’Sullivan’s overview of comparative children’s literature (2005) is a solid foundational resource for this study, as much of her research addresses the myriad issues surrounding translated children’s books, the practical concerns and cultural, pedagogical
assumptions of the adults who control the entire process of production, distribution and evaluation.

Issues of domestication and foreignization, which are also based in translation studies, are addressed during the analysis. While the terms may be unfamiliar, they point to a choice every translator, and, for the purposes of this study, the reteller, has to make in the course of his or her work: when faced with foreign elements from the source text such as food, proper names, customs, geography, even the style and vocabulary of the text to be translated, does one replace these with corresponding elements in the translated target text in order to enhance comprehension, or leave the unfamiliar as it is, with the intention of being faithful to the author’s work, or perhaps in order to educate and stimulate the reader? O’Sullivan (2005, 93) is neutral as to the ethics of this choice, simply defining domestication as the substitution of culturally familiar elements for unfamiliar ones, while foreignization is the preservation of culturally unfamiliar elements; the focus is on the asymmetry of communication between adult translators and child readers: “Translators of children’s literature decide, therefore, what young readers can or cannot understand; they make assumptions about elements of foreign cultures that in their view are not part of the readers’ repertory” (97). Lawrence Venuti, however, in whose work, The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation (1995), the terms domestication and foreignization are largely considered to have originated, is emphatic as to the moral and political weight these two translation strategies carry. In the “Anglo-American” culture which values translations which read fluidly and effortlessly, domestication is “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home,” while foreignization is “an ethnodeviant pressure on those [target-language cultural] values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad…a strategic cultural intervention” (20).
In this study, the terms domestication and foreignization primarily refer to the directional approach of the retellings, whether the texts display strong evidence of assimilation, of making the folktales “reassuringly familiar, easy to read” (302), or whether they are kept, in many aspects, unfamiliar to the target culture.

3.2 Selection of Reference Texts and Primary Texts

As discussed in Chapter One, this study focuses on the discovery of significant changes which may be found to exist in folktale retellings, when the retellings are evaluated as translations. Therefore, the picture books chosen for analysis must be retellings of tales of which many traditional examples are available, and it is preferable that the traditional examples display a high level of consistency among themselves as to plot and motifs.

3.2.1 The Reference Texts

From the collections of Korean folktales listed in Chapter One, namely the Honam Collection, the Hanguk Collection and the various single-volume collections, examples of the folktales which had been published in North America in English, as retold versions, were collected to become the reference texts for the analysis.

3.2.2 The Primary Texts

Two picture-book retellings of Korean folktales were chosen as primary texts for analysis: The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: A Korean Folktale, written and illustrated by Yangsook Choi, and The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon: A Korean Folk Tale, written and illustrated by Janie Jaehyun Park. The criteria for selection are as follows:

1. Picture book format: an illustrated picture book edition, retelling a single Korean folktale. The format is restricted in its content and length, and undergoes rigorous editing before publication, making it ideal for the purposes of this study as any
changes to the original folktales are more likely to have been made with purpose.

2. Published in North America, retold in English: originating from an English-language publisher for a North American, English-using child reader.

3. Mass-market: created for widespread distribution and consumption. This is because those changes discovered through analysis are more likely to have sprung from the desire to appeal to a large number of people, resulting in the pressure to align with the cultural “norm,” that is, those values and customs perceived to be acceptable to the majority of society in the target culture.

4. Reviewed and Accessible: easily located and acquired through booksellers or through the public library system. The title should have been reviewed positively by at least one magazine or journal such as Booklist, Horn Book or Kirkus. This is merely to confirm that the titles are indeed widely distributed, and likely to be widely consumed.

5. Relevant: recently published, within the last two decades of the time of this study (i.e. since 1992).

6. Large number of reference texts: the picture books should feature folktales of which at least thirty traditional examples can be found in the reference collections, for more reliable results of analysis.

7. Regularity: for reliable results, the creators of the picture books should share as many common factors as possible, such as their knowledge of Korean and North American culture, or whether they are the author or the illustrator, etc.

8. Diversity: The titles should, however, be from different publishers and by different creators, if possible, to ensure that the study does not end up merely taking note of a single author’s or publishing house’s tendencies in retelling folktales.
The two picture-book retellings of Korean folktales were chosen for analysis in accordance with the criteria listed above, via the following procedure:

First, I searched through the Vancouver Public Library (a large urban public library with strong collections for children) online catalogue, using general search terms such as might be employed by a parent or teacher for an initial search. The words “Korea” and “Korean” turned up the same results in all searches; “Korea(n) folk tale” turned up 18 results, of which eight were folktale collections, two were retellings of European fairy tales in Korean, three were part of a series of picture-book retellings, two folktales per picture book, and five were single picture-book retellings of Korean folktales. The term “Korea(n) folktale” turned up 12 titles, of which, oddly, only one title (a folktale collection) was included in the results of the first search using “folk tale” as a search term instead of “folktale”; the rest of the titles were single folktales in picture book format. “Korea(n) fairy tale” resulted in 16 titles, of which one was a folktale collection, six were single folktales in picture book format, seven were European fairy tales written in Korean, one was a DVD and the other was a comic book. The phrase “Korea(n) tale” generated the most titles, 63, of which 17 were irrelevant (in terms of format and subject matter), and the rest were those titles mentioned above. Typing only the term “Korea” resulted in 5,842 titles; refining through the use of the menu bar, checking off the boxes for “Language: English,” “Format: Book,” and “Audience: Children” resulted in 146 titles of which 39 titles seem to be informational books on Korea and its customs (many are simply titled Korea, while one is titled The Koreans), with all the titles found in previous searches included; and the remaining titles were books with Korean content other than folktales.

Searching the websites of the online bookseller Amazon, Amazon.com and Amazon.ca, using the keyword “Korea” and refining through the hyperlinks provided, the
Amazon.com category “Books-English-Children’s Books-Ages 3-5 (the category which includes picture books)” yielded 55 titles. The Amazon.ca category “Books-Children’s Books-Ages 3-5” yielded only 27 results, while, peculiarly, the category “Books-Children’s Books-Ages 6-8” included those titles located in the “Ages 3-5” section of Amazon.com, resulting in a group of 106 titles. Of both websites, the group of single folktale picture books found was largely the same as that found through searching the Vancouver Public Library catalogue.

After removing titles published before 1992, those that were collections of folktales or in a format other than the picture book, and those that were found to be translations from earlier versions in Korean or Japanese, the following titles best fulfilled the stated criteria:

- *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy* (1997) by Yangsook Choi; and
- *Kongi and Potgi: A Cinderella Story from Korea* (1996) by Stephanie Plunkett and Oki Han, illustrated by Oki Han.

Of these, only *The Mole’s Daughter* is a retelling of a relatively obscure folktale, while the others are, from my personal experience, all very well known in Korean culture. All of the tales were confirmed to exist in the reference collections, although the mole often
appears as some other animal.

While the above titles all satisfy criteria 1-5, *The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon* and *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy* were chosen as primary texts due to the difference in publishing house, and the great similarities in many other factors. Both titles were created by bi-cultural author-illustrators (born and raised in Korea, who moved to North America in order to study art) as their first folktale retellings. *The Green Frogs* could not be included because less than ten reference texts could be found; *The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon* and *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy* were found to have 30 and 36 respective references collected for analysis.

3.3.Method of Analysis

Because the focus of the study is on the changes made to folktales retold in a different language and culture, and whether these changes are in accordance to the values of the source culture or the target culture, initially I intended to compile a list, from the reference texts, of important Korean cultural elements and values which could then be checked and quantitatively assessed against the primary texts for their inclusion or absence. Eventually, however, I concluded that determining the essence of Korean culture was both research beyond the scope of this study, and unnecessary for answering the questions this study aims to explore, as the main focus is on changes and not on what is, or should be, constant. It is also limiting to focus only on cultural values expressed in the texts, as domestication and foreignization strategies include the substitution or preservation of such physical cultural elements as geography or clothing.

It is more effective, therefore, for my purposes in this study, to concentrate on identifying all changes made in the primary texts by comparing them directly to the reference texts, rather than to a list generated from the reference texts. The changes identified can then
be examined in greater depth, including consideration of whether those changes were made as an element of the retelling author’s individual style or as an instance of domestication, in order to assimilate the retold folktale into the target culture.

This is a qualitative rather than quantitative study. As the texts are retellings of folktales, which do not have a single authoritative version to be adhered to, the quality of the retold or ‘translated’ texts cannot be judged quantitatively by comparing the primary texts, line-by-line, with some definitive traditional version (which, again, cannot be identified, as folktales are anonymous in origin), and counting the number of differences. It is possible, however, to collect several prior records, from scholarly folktale collections, of the tales being retold, and identify a strong degree of similarity within the groups thus formed, a ‘family resemblance’ of sorts, by which tales differing in slight details can nevertheless be recognized, not as variants of the same tale type, but as essentially the same tale, retold. This is achieved mainly through the identification of common motifs (recurring meaningful elements) in the narrative, such as a ring or a rose. Then it becomes possible to determine, through comparison with this reference group of tales, whether the primary texts can be reasonably judged to be the same tale by displaying the same degree of family resemblance, sharing most, if not all, of the major details while differing only in the minor. In this process The Storyteller’s Sourcebook (MacDonald and Sturm, 2001) is consulted to determine the tale type of the folktales, and to identify motifs. The Storyteller’s Sourcebook is based on the classification system of Stith Thompson, which it modifies; Hans-Jörg Uther’s revised Aarne-Thompson index, The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, is also consulted, as is Alan Dundes’ Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook, for information on “Siblings and Tiger” type tales.

The main method of analysis is close reading of the texts, through which it is
determined whether there are elements in the primary texts which were added, deleted, or changed from the reference versions. All preexisting versions of the retold folktale (that picture book which is the primary text), taken from the reference collections, are read together, constituting a reference group, after which the primary text is read. Any differences between the reference versions and the primary text are noted, as well as the type of difference. If the primary text shows variation in a part of the tale which also varies from version to version of the reference group, it is noted separately from those instances in which the reference group shows similarity and only the primary text shows difference.

Examination and evaluation of domestication and foreignization also occur at this point, through considerations of whether the changes were made in major or minor details, what impact the changes have on the structure and atmosphere of the story, what cultural values or assumptions the changes relate to, and whether they were likely to have been deliberately made.
Chapter Four: The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: A Korean Folktale

The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: A Korean Folktale, a picture book written and illustrated by Yangsook Choi, is a retelling in English of the traditional Korean folktale “Hae wa Tal i Toen Onui” (“The Brother and Sister Who Became the Sun and Moon”). Published in 1997, it was positively reviewed by Publisher’s Weekly and School Library Journal, and given a less enthusiastic review by Booklist. Publisher’s Weekly deemed it an “absorbing Korean folktale” with some similarity to “Little Red Riding Hood.” It also noted that “although the resolution may leave youngsters with questions, the reassuring reunion of mother and children will likely quell any fears.” (“Sun Girl”, Publishers Weekly) School Library Journal, on the other hand, mentioned “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids” and another folktale retelling (of a version of a Chinese tale, “Grandaunt Tiger,” which will be discussed below), Lon Po Po by Ed Young: “Readers familiar [with these tales] will know what happens next. This version, however, ends on a mythic note. . . . A creation myth told as the adventures of innocents pursued.” (Chang) Booklist also found the picture book to be “reminiscent of Little Red Riding Hood. . . [ending] with a creation myth”; the reviewer did not find the ending of the tale to be satisfactory, however, and pointed out that “the escape is arbitrary, and the final mythical transformation seems to come from another story.” (Rochman)

4.1 About the Folktale

From the reference texts used in this study, which are comprised of the Honam collection, the Hanguk collection and several single-volume collections of Korean oral traditions, as discussed in the previous chapter, 36 examples of “Siblings and Tiger” type tales were collected. The tales, depending on whether they include a reference in the ending to the tiger’s demise as the reason for why sorghum stalks are sometimes flecked with red,
are titled throughout the collections either “The Brother and Sister Who Became the Sun and Moon,” or “Why Sorghum Stalks Are Red.” In this study the tale itself will be referred to as “Siblings and Tiger” in order to include tales under both title variants, which refer to the same tale with or without an added element in the ending.

4.1.1 Summary of “Siblings and Tiger”

The following is a summary of the tale in its most representative form:

A mother and her two children (usually an older brother and younger sister) live in poverty. The mother leaves home to sell rice cakes, or to work for hire at a house in a neighboring village. A tiger either visits the siblings while the mother is gone, planning to eat them, or the mother is attacked and eaten by a tiger on her way home and the tiger decides to eat up her children as well. The tiger initially pretends to be the siblings’ mother, and succeeds in entering the house through either deception or force. The siblings flee up a tree, and pray to heaven for help, specifically requesting a rope to be sent down from the sky. When it sees the siblings carried up to the heavens, the tiger also asks for a rope, but the rope that comes down this time is rotten and breaks as the tiger climbs up. (The tiger’s blood stains the stalks of sorghum growing in the fields below, which is why sorghum stalks are flecked with red to this day.) The two siblings become the moon and the sun in the sky.

4.1.2 Tale Type and Motifs

This section will establish the tale “Siblings and Tiger” in the larger context of folktale studies by examining how it has been categorized in folktale indexes, whether it corresponds to any well-known tale types, and what tales it is similar to.

Choi In-hak lists “Siblings and Tiger” under the title “The Origin of the Sun and the Moon” in his *Type Index of Korean Folktales*. Choi divides tales into the categories of Animal
Tales, Ordinary Folktales, Jokes and Anecdotes, Formula Tales, Mythological Folktales, and
Unclassified Tales. “Siblings and Tiger” is classified as tale 100, a part of the category,
Escape from Ogre (tales 100-108), which is again part of Man and Animals, (100-146) under
the larger category of Animal Tales (1-146).

Margaret Read MacDonald and Brian W. Sturm include The Sun Girl and the Moon
Boy: A Korean Folktale in their comprehensive guide for storytellers, The Storyteller’s
Sourcebook: A Subject, Title, and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children 1983-
1999. The picture book is indexed as an example of motif A736.1.2.1*, “On return from
market mother is eaten by tiger.” It is the only given example of its motif, and the asterisk
indicates that it is an extension created by MacDonald and Sturm of the Aarne-Thompson
motif index, on which their Sourcebook is based. The tale summary also includes the
extended motif A761.0.3*, “Mother of children who become sun and moon becomes stars,”
again giving The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy as the only example of the motif. Motif
A761.0.3*, “Mother of children who become sun and moon becomes stars,” however, only
appears in the picture book The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy, and is absent in all “Siblings and
Tiger” tales found in the reference texts used for this study; it is highly likely to be an
addition by the author, Yangsook Choi, made in the process of retelling the folktale.
Therefore, considering that both motifs list the single picture book as an example, and that a
motif clearly absent in other versions of the tale, motif A761.0.3*, is listed in the index, it is
possible to surmise that The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy was the only “Siblings and Tiger”
type tale that MacDonald and Sturm used as a source in the creation of their index.

The full summary of The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy is given by MacDonald and
Sturm in the entry for motif A736.1.2.1*, “On return from market mother is eaten by tiger.” It
includes the motifs K1839.1.1*, “Tiger shaves paw to disguise himself,” an extension of
K1839.1, “Wolf puts flour on his paws to disguise himself”; F51, “Sky-rope”; and A761.0.3*, “Mother of children who become sun and moon becomes stars.” The tale has presumably been listed in the category A700 through A799, “The Heavens,” because of the ending, in which the sister and brother ascend to the sky and become the sun and moon. This ending, which is sometimes used as the title for the folktale itself (“The Brother and Sister Who Became the Sun and Moon”), may be the reason that the tale was listed as a creation myth instead of with animal tales or tales of trickery. “Siblings and Tiger,” however, has quite strong resemblances with, and is probably related to, those folktales mentioned in the reviews of The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids” and “Little Red Riding Hood.”

On a first reading, the “Siblings and Tiger” folktale, including the picture-book retelling The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy, is most similar to “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids,” which is motif K311.3 A in MacDonald and Sturm, and is also tale type AT (Aarne-Thompson) 123. “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids” also has a predator posing as the mother of its intended victims, disguising its voice and paws to gain access to the house. Except for the fact that the characters are animals in “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids” as opposed to humans in “Siblings and Tiger,” and the large difference in the role of the mother figure in the two tales (the mother is the helpless first victim in “Siblings and Tiger,” while in “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids” she rescues her kids and simultaneously disposes of the wolf), the two tales have basically the same plot. MacDonald and Sturm cross-reference A736.1.2.1*, “On return from market mother is eaten by tiger” with K311.3 A, “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids,” as well. In addition, Hans-Jörg Uther’s folktale index and bibliography, The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, lists Choi 100, “The Origin of the Sun and the Moon,” as an example of ATU 123, The Wolf and the Kids.
The tale of “Little Red Riding Hood,” which is Aarne-Thompson type 333 “The Glutton (Red Riding Hood),” seems at first not to have much in common with “Siblings and Tiger” beyond a vague resemblance in the tone of the story, and perhaps in the wolf’s deception of the grandmother as it enters her cottage. Alan Dundes, however, in his collection of scholarship on the folktale, *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook*, points out that the Perrault and Grimm versions of the tale, which are those generally known to the public, are only an atypical part of a rich and varied oral tradition, and specifically mentions “a probable cognate of the tale [which] is widely distributed in China, Japan, and Korea” as “vital information” for a better understanding of the tale type (13). This “Far East” version is also mentioned by Paul Delarue in his essay on oral versions of “Little Red Riding Hood” tales, with a focus on the motif of escaping from the “monster” by pretending to need to relieve oneself. Delarue calls this tale “The Tiger and the Children” and comments that “by the subject and number of motifs” the tale seems to be related to both “Little Red Riding Hood” and “The Goat and the Kids [*sic*]” (Delarue 19). It seems probable that “Siblings and Tiger,” which is quite distinctive and shows a lot of consistency throughout the reference texts as to the form it takes, is closely related to the tale discussed by the two scholars, if not indeed the tale itself. This becomes clearer when taking into account the work of another scholar, Wolfram Eberhard, on a Chinese folktale called “Grandaunt Tiger.”

Eberhard collected 241 texts of the tale “Grandaunt Tiger,” all from oral storytelling sessions from families in Taiwan who spoke Min-nan (the story was told on request). His essay is a detailed analysis of the folktale, motif by motif, which lists variation in the selection of motifs, and even the length of the story, according to such sociological factors as the level of education, age, sex, and position in the family (father, mother, son, or daughter) of the teller. A paraphrased “core story” of “Grandaunt Tiger,” that is, “the minimal form in which the story still is a story and in which it can be transmitted from one teller to another”
A mother leaves her two children of the same sex at home while she visits family. A tiger gains access to the house in the guise of a grandaunt and eats the younger child during the night. The remaining child asks for some of what the grandaunt is eating and receives a finger of the devoured sibling. The child then asks to leave the room to go to the toilet; the tiger ties a rope to the child, which the child unties and ties to another object. The child climbs a tree, and after a while the tiger comes searching for the child. The child kills the tiger by asking for a kettle with boiling liquid, which it then pours down the throat of the tiger.

Eberhard’s work is important for this study because it establishes the relationship of “Siblings and Tiger” with not only “Grandaunt Tiger,” but also with “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids” and “Little Red Riding Hood.” “Grandaunt Tiger” is shown to be recognizably the same tale as “Siblings and Tiger,” despite some cultural differences as to the mother’s reasons for leaving the house and a distinct preference for having two girls as the main characters of the story, of which one is eaten by the tiger. A large difference between the two tales is in the ending, especially the complete lack of any creation-myth elements in “Grandaunt Tiger”, which exist in “Siblings and Tiger” in the form of explanations for the creation of the sun and moon, and additionally for the appearance of sorghum stalks. Eberhard mentions that it is characteristic of the stories he collected to prefer an ending in which the tiger is killed by the surviving girl, while “most of the mainland stories and all of those from Korea and Japan seem to prefer other endings. The astral myth occurring in the Korean and Japanese versions seems to be unknown in Taipei.”(57) From this and later statements in which he mentions the coloring of “millet” with the blood of the falling tiger, the eating up of the mother “piece by piece,” and the two children surviving to become the
sun and the moon (60-61), it is possible to identify the Korean variant of “Grandaunt Tiger” which Eberhard referenced above as being “Siblings and Tiger.”

Eberhard considers it “highly likely that AT 123 [The Wolf and the Kids] and AT 333 [Red Riding Hood] are basically the same folktale,” indexed in two different categories due to Antti Aarne’s “arbitrary division” of folktales with human characters from those with animals as the main actors. Based on this, he proposes that “Grandaunt Tiger” is a cognate of the two tales (22), which places “Siblings and Tiger,” as a Korean version of “Grandaunt Tiger,” in the same “family” relationship with “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids” and “Little Red Riding Hood.”

4.1.3 Examination of Motifs and Motif Variants in Reference Texts

“Siblings and Tiger” is a distinctive tale with a strong, consistent linear plot, which is maintained throughout the reference collections. Although the reference texts contain tales told by Koreans of varied age, gender, education, and locality, in the stories collected there do not seem to be discernible differences which correspond to these factors. The differences which exist occur within specific motifs, such as that of the mother leaving the house to her children, and are themselves limited to two or three variants. So, for example, in the reference texts the mother will leave the house for one of three reasons, if mentioned at all. Because there exists very little deviation from these “norms” of the story, it is meaningful to examine closely all the variants of motifs within “Siblings and Tiger.” This knowledge creates a context for comparison when examining the retold version, The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: A Korean Folktale. A close reading of the reference texts resulted in the following motifs.

Mother and Children

To begin with, the status of the mother and her young children is the unchanging backbone and starting place for the entire story, in all versions: she is a widow. We know this
sometimes through direct statement by the storyteller (“the father died”), or sometimes it is simply communicated by the use of the term “horŏmŏni” (“lone mother”). In those cases when the father’s death is not directly mentioned, it is automatically assumed by teller and listener alike as the simplest explanation for the absent male adult. This is also accepted as the reason for both the poverty of the family and therefore their probable location, either at the outskirts of the village or completely separated from the village proper. The children are probably around the age of ten or younger, not yet old enough to go to market or into the mountains on their own, and especially in the case of the daughter, not old enough to accompany her mother to work at neighboring villages. Most versions have two children of different sexes; when specified, the older sibling is often male.

To restate, the tale requires the tiger to have access to the mother and both her children, at different times, and this is fulfilled by having the family situation be that of a widow and her two young children. It would be possible to tell the tale with the father alive and present, but that would greatly reduce the vulnerability of both the mother and her children, and thus detract from the dramatic effect of the story. It would also necessitate the invention of either a reason for the father to be absent at the time of the tiger’s attack, or a way for the tiger to eat both the mother and the father in separate locations (as they would most likely not be working together), which creates unnecessary complications. In the same vein, it is unnecessary to create a plausible reason for the father to be alive and absent from the family, such as his being drafted into the army, traveling as a merchant, or having an affair with another woman. The tale depends, emotionally, on how unstable and vulnerable the position is (perceived to be), of a family with no father figure. In this respect, if the son is to be a part of the story at all he must be too young to be considered the man of the family, effectively standing in for the absent father as the protector and provider figure. As soon as the son became old enough he would be considered responsible for the household, and
depending on the circumstances would begin to work as a farmer, woodcutter, hunter, merchant, etc. If the family were socially classed as nobility, he would begin studying for the government exams for becoming officials (this is a possibility as there is no mention of the family’s social class, but it is somewhat unlikely as there is no reason in the tale for the family to specifically be of an upper social class, reduced to poverty; it is more likely that they were simply from the ordinary commoner class). Again, if the lone parent had been the children’s father, the tale would have taken a different turn, perhaps into a Cinderella-like narrative in which the children are abused by the stepmother; men who lost their wives were very likely to marry again, while women were expected (at least in theory) to live the rest of their lives in faithfulness to their dead husbands.

*Mother Leaves the House*

With the widowed mother being the sole provider for the family, then, there is a reason for her to leave the house all day to her two young children while she works. In all the tales the mother leaves the house, but as regards the reasons for her action, the tales show two variants:

A. The mother leaves to sell rice cakes at the market, which is some distance away. In this case, it is always rice cakes that the mother sells, never pots or cloth, or another type of food item such as herbs or roots gathered from the mountains.

B. The mother goes to the neighboring village to trade work for food. This is more common than variant A. and is divided into another two variants: a) the mother goes to help prepare hemp threads for setting up on a loom (an important process in traditional weaving, called *sizing* in English and *bemegi* in Korean), or b) to help at a house where there is either a *chesa*, a traditional ceremony which honors the ancestors of a household, or a celebration (*chanch’i*) which, although unspecified, would most likely be a formal event such as a
wedding or the 60th birthday of an elder of the household, something to which the whole village is invited (hence the need for as many extra hands in the kitchen as can be found). Both the sizing of hemp and the preparation of Korean traditional food, in adequate amounts for the number of people implied by the term *chanch'i*, are labor-intensive and time-consuming tasks, which account for the mother being unable to return until early evening or full dark, leaving her children at home the entire day.

*Mother Encounters Tiger*

After working all day selling rice cakes at the market, sizing hemp, or cooking food, the mother starts for home as darkness falls, with food for her children and the day’s pay. The way home is always some distance, over hills (Korea is very hilly throughout, even mountainous in regions, and villages were quite commonly separated by a hill or two), and the tiger accosts the mother at this point. Here the tales are quite varied as to how they are told, in terms of the length of the tiger’s interaction with the mother, and how graphic the storyteller’s description of the mother’s death scene is. The crux of the motif is that the mother is eaten by the tiger on her way home.

Some tales have the tiger simply eating up the mother and taking her clothes. In other variations, the tiger proceeds to follow her as she climbs one hill after another on the way home, and each time she crests a hill it appears and has a toying conversation with her. First it demands from her the food she carries (“If you giiiiiiiiiive me one of your rice cakes, I will not eeeeeeeeat you up” is the usual sing-song chant used here, for terrifying effect), then her breasts, arms, and legs, one at a time, and finishes by swallowing her torso and putting on her clothes. Depending on the storyteller, the tiger may or may not demand the mother’s breasts, or may additionally take from her one item of clothing at a time as she walks home; the mother may or may not attempt to reason with the tiger and persuade it not to take her food.
and limbs; and the tale may also describe how she first walks, then hops, and finally attempts to roll home before being devoured.

*Tiger Enters the House, and Siblings Flee*

Unlike “Grandaunt Tiger,” there is little focus in “Siblings and Tiger” on the moment when the siblings realize they are dealing with a tiger. As such, the tiger’s entrance into the home and the siblings’ flight are often narrated in the same breath, with the implied understanding of the audience and the teller that the tiger was in animal form and recognizable, instead of being truly transformed to a human shape.

After the tiger arrives at the siblings’ home in the clothes of their mother, the siblings may flee immediately, but more often the tiger tries to trick them into opening the door by impersonating their mother. The tiger may have a conversation with the siblings in which it rationalizes why its voice and hands are different from their mother’s by referring to the hard work the mother went through that day, especially if the mother’s work was sizing hemp; in one case it disguised its paws by wrapping them in smooth persimmon leaves, and in two cases by dusting them in flour. Whether or not the siblings are persuaded to open the door, ultimately the tiger is understood to have entered the house. This is due to the typical Korean house being quite easy to access: there may be a low wall around the house or none at all, and with the house itself usually having doors of light wooden frames covered with paper, the tiger’s entry is inevitable in all cases.

Rarely, some versions have three siblings instead of two; in these tales the youngest is always an infant, and it is always eaten by the tiger. This perhaps indicates a closer relationship to “Grandaunt Tiger,” in which a sibling is devoured; presumably the number of siblings has been increased to three in order to retain the ending of “Siblings and Tiger,” which requires the survival of two children. In tales of this variant, the tiger, standing outside,
will ask the children to give it the baby to breastfeed, and the children are horrified to hear crunching noises from beyond the door. Alternatively, after the tiger succeeds in entering the house the siblings may realize the tiger’s identity and flee as they hear crunching sounds coming from the corner of the darkened room, or from the kitchen.

The manner of the siblings’ departure from the house depends on where the tiger is. If the tiger is already in the house they either escape while the tiger is eating the baby in the kitchen, or ask permission to leave the room, usually under the pretext of going to the outhouse (which is, again, similar to “Grandaunt Tiger”). In tales in which the siblings are not fooled by the tiger’s disguise and the tiger is forcing its way in, the siblings will flee by way of the back door while the tiger is entering the house.

_Siblings Climb Tree; Conversation with Tiger_

Once they flee, the siblings climb a tree; sometimes a specific tree is named, such as willow or persimmon. An additional motif of “reflection in water” can occur here: usually the tree is one growing next to a well or spring. If the well or spring is mentioned, the pursuing tiger mistakes the children’s reflections in the water for the children themselves and tries to scoop them out, prompting the children to laugh and inadvertently reveal their location in the tree. Otherwise, the tiger attempts to climb the tree but finds it difficult (an odd point in the story, as actual tigers not only climb trees very well but are also experts at jumping to great heights), and asks the children how they managed to get up so high. One, usually the elder sibling but sometimes unspecified, answers that they came up by smearing oil (on the trunk of the tree, or on their hands and feet; the Korean used allows for either interpretation), which the tiger tries to no avail. Then the other sibling, laughing at the tiger’s antics, tells the tiger to get an axe and climb up by cutting notches in the trunk.

While the gender of each child is not treated with much prominence up to this point,
if any judgment of the children’s behavior is made based on gender it is made here, with the
storyteller explicitly stating that the younger sibling is a girl and that is why, being “flighty,”
she was so silly as to give this advice to the tiger. In most cases it is simply stated that the
elder sibling tricks the tiger, and the younger sibling makes a mistake and gives the tiger
sound advice which endangers the siblings, attributing the lack of caution to a younger age.

The Rope from Heaven and Death of Tiger

As the tiger advances, the siblings make an appeal to heaven, praying for a new rope
to be sent down if they are meant to live, and an old or rotten rope if they are meant to die (“if
you would save us” and “if you would kill us” are the literal translations). A new rope is sent
down accordingly, and as the tiger watches the siblings being pulled up into the skies, it also
asks for a rope. Here the tiger may either request the wrong rope by mistake, asking for a
rotten rope if it is meant to live and vice versa, or it may make the proper request; in either
case, the rope sent down is rotten, and snaps as the tiger is halfway up to heaven. The tiger
falls, and here it may be explained that this is the reason for red flecks on sorghum stalks,
because the tiger fell into a field of sorghum after harvest, and was pierced by the sharp
pointed stems. (Several diseases of sorghum do indeed have as their symptoms reddish spots
or stripes on the sorghum stalks and leaves.)

It is possible for the story to end at this point, but the majority of storytellers end with
the additional motif of the creation of the sun and moon.

Siblings become Sun and Moon

Upon their arrival in the sky the siblings become the sun and the moon, and the tales
vary in how they decide who shall take on which role. In some tales, it is unspecified which
sibling takes on which role. In some cases the brother becomes the moon from the outset, and
the sister becomes the sun. In other variants, the sister becomes the moon and the brother the
sun, and the two remain that way; while in some cases they switch roles soon afterwards because the sister finds the nights too dark and frightening. In those tales in which the sister ultimately becomes the sun, it is sometimes added that she pokes or pricks the eyes of people who try to look at the sun directly, because she is modest and shy of so many people gazing at her.

4.2 About the Retelling of the Folktale

4.2.1 About the Author-Illustrator

Author-Illustrator Yangsook Choi, according to an interview with PaperTigers.org ("Interview"), grew up and lived in Korea until her graduation from university, then moved to the United States in 1991, in order to study art. Currently she lives in New York. Having spent her childhood and young adult years in Korea, and her adult life in Northern America, including having a successful career as an author and illustrator of books for children written in English, it is possible to argue that she is effectively bicultural: she has a native understanding of Korean culture (having reached adulthood in Korean culture) and a professional understanding of North American publishing culture for children’s picture books, which is ideal for this study.

We can speculate that, from her life in Korea, Choi has a full understanding of the cultural information and assumptions underlying the story “Siblings and Tiger.” On the other hand, The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: A Korean Folktale is her first book, published approximately six years after she moved to the United States, and her only folktale retelling to date. Because of this, it is a little more difficult to surmise that at the time of its creation Choi had a great deal of experience or knowledge as to the cultural assumptions and expectations of North American children’s publishing and the North American picture book market. It is possible that Choi had acquired an extensive understanding of North American
culture and its views on children during her six years of study in the United States; it is also possible that any lack of knowledge was compensated for by the knowledge and experience of the editor, in the creation process of the picture book. However, it is also possible to argue that because *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy* is Choi’s first book, the editor would have had much more influence in the creation process, and Choi would have been more likely to comply with the editor’s opinion. These are all factors which should be considered while examining *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: A Korean Folktale*.

Yangsook Choi states in the author’s note of *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy* that she was told this folktale many times in her childhood, including by her grandmother, and that she “wanted to write down this story . . . to preserve her [grandmother’s] spirit.”(n.p.) It is possible, therefore, to infer that her retelling is based primarily on her personal recollections of hearing the story being told, as opposed to reading it in books as a child, and rather than basing her retelling mainly on research done as an adult. The impression given is that this retelling is a faithful recording of the story, as heard and remembered, rather than a story changed or edited in any way. This is implied by Choi’s use of the phrase “write down this story” (n.p.) as opposed to other possible expressions such as “tell my own version of the story,” “introduce to a new, English-using audience,” which would address the matter of retelling in a different language than that of the tale’s origination, or “make more accessible,” which would imply that changes were made to the text.

**4.2.2 Analysis of The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy**

This section examines the text of *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy* in conjunction with the analysis of the reference tales carried out previously, considering the following: each motif of “Siblings and Tiger” extant in *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy*, the retelling in picture-book format in English; which variant of motif was selected and what might be the
reason for such a choice; any departures in the main story from the traditional Korean “Siblings and Tiger” tales, in the form of added, deleted, or changed elements; and any additional material in the picture book, other than the main story, intended for the reader of the picture book.

Yangsook Choi’s retelling of the “Siblings and Tiger” tale contains all of the motifs examined previously, in some form. Some have been changed. When *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy* reaches a point in the plot where the reference tales diverge, the narrative generally proceeds in a direction which appears to be that readily understood by the North American target reader for the picture book. While this may simply be a faithful reiteration of that version of “Siblings and Tiger” told to Choi by her grandmother (Author’s Note, n.p.), it is significant that one or two noticeable changes were also made to the story, which do not occur in any of the reference tales. Those elements which were changed also happen to be those parts of the story which may be problematic or difficult for the North American target reader.

### 4.2.2.1 Additional Material

Apart from the story itself, Choi has added an introduction to the title page at the beginning of the book and an author’s note at the end, which together supply context and background information for the child reader (and also, perhaps, the adult who buys the picture book and reads it to the child), both assumed to be unfamiliar with Korean culture and folktales in general, and this folktale in particular. The introductory title page precedes the copyright information, and is the first page one sees after the endpapers. Underneath a small illustration of a tiger’s eyes staring out at the readers from the shadows of grass and leaves, the introduction runs in a bold but very readable font, the text centered in the page and looking, in form and content, rather like the beginning credits to a movie or an animated film.
It is quoted here in full:

A long time ago in Korea,

there was not enough light.

It was before the sun and the moon

had been created.

People lit their homes with oil lamps

and warned their children

not to open the door to strangers.

The dark land was full of

wild and powerful animals.

People were scared of them—

most of all, the tigers . . . (n.p.)

By adding an introduction in the dramatic tones of a storyteller who begins with “Once upon a time, in a land far, far away. . . ,” complete with the introduction trailing off, seemingly fading into the main story, Choi creates anticipation, and also gives some information to the reader about what type of story will be told, what is likely to happen, and the atmosphere of the tale. Choi, like a playwright, is “setting the stage,” much as the lighting, the music, the props, the characters’ attitudes and their costumes alert the audience to what they should expect and what to pay attention to, immediately as the curtains go up and the play begins. In this case, the reader is reminded that the narrative takes place in Korea, told to focus on the lack of sun and moon in the world, and provided with a sense of approaching danger. Through the description of parents warning their children “not to open the door to strangers” and the use of the words “dark land,” “wild,” “powerful,” “scared,” and “tigers. . .”
an atmosphere of foreboding is created. The readers are now primed to the story, and expect that sooner or later there will be a terrible encounter, in the dark, with a tiger. The introduction also serves to link the reader to the folktale being retold so that it is more accessible, in the same way that the author’s note does, by creating a common ground from which to view the story to be told: the parents’ warning to their children, “not to open the door to strangers,” is familiar to both adults and children, as well as the fear of the dark and its lurking monsters. Evoked together, the terror of being devoured by a monster becomes linked to the anxiety about crime that preys on children in modern society, and the anxiety of children being left unprotected at home when their parents are absent.

The author’s note, which was referenced previously, gives some information about the author, Yangsook Choi (she grew up in Korea), and the folktale that is being retold (it is well-known in Korea and was told to Choi by her grandmother, among others). In the main, the author’s note serves two functions, one being to establish Choi’s credibility as the reteller of this folktale by letting the reader know the extent of her knowledge of Korea, and the folktale she retells. The other function is to create a context for the folktale itself, as it is being newly introduced into an unfamiliar culture and a readership to whom it may seem strange or different. By linking both Choi’s knowledge of the folktale itself, and Choi’s desire to retell it in English, with the figure of her grandmother (and the childhood experience of being told a story), it is possible to form an emotional common ground with the reader: both the adult, who is interested (or engaged) in storytime with a child, and the child, who likely has grandparents or other affectionate adult figures, who may tell or read them stories, can feel that they have something, a familiar and pleasant experience, in common with the author and her story. It also places the story in a time and place, told by a “real person,” which may help make the story more accessible to the reader.
4.2.2.2 Analysis of Motif Selection and Changes

Mother and Children

The situation of the family is not mentioned or given any attention in *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy*. This may be due to the constraints of the picture-book format, which is commonly 32 pages in length and meant for children who are listening to a story being read aloud, or who are learning to read. This limits the amount and difficulty of the words in the text, and also the content it is acceptable to express. However, the family situation can be communicated to the reader by the use of two words, “widow” and “poor.” Since the lack of a father figure and the consequent vulnerability of the widow and her children is the basis for “Siblings and Tiger” in Korean, the choice to leave out any reference to the status of the mother and the absence of the father in the retelling in English is likely to be deliberate. It is plausible that this choice was made in order to reflect reality, and to avoid offense; there are many forms of family in North America, and to be without a husband or father is no longer perceived as automatically rendering the family vulnerable or poor. The omission also obviates the need for a great deal of culture-specific information as to where the family is likely to live, what they live on, why the mother leaves the children at home and how she meets the tiger, etc. which is not essential to the plot and for which the North American target reader has no context.

Mother Leaves the House

The main story begins as the mother admonishes her two children not to open the door to anyone else, before leaving for the market. It moves on immediately to the moment of her return through fields of some sort, just before she is accosted by the tiger. There are only two children, a boy and a girl, and it is not mentioned in the text which is older, although the boy is drawn slightly taller in the illustrations.
Of the three “traditional” reasons for the mother to leave the house: A. going to market to sell rice cakes; B. going to the next village to help with the work of sizing hemp; and C. going to the next village to help with the work of preparing for a chanch’i or chesa, A. is the one which has the least culture-specific content and is therefore most easily accessible to the reader unfamiliar with Korean culture. The motif of a mother leaving to go to market, actually, is possibly quite familiar to North American readers, as it occurs in “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids” and also in children’s stories such as The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter. It is also a reasonable choice to have the mother going to the market rather than to work, as this obviates the need for extra explanations concerning the type of work the mother does, and, therefore, allows the story to be told in one of the traditional versions while still maintaining a quick-paced beginning. There is no mention of the mother going to sell anything at the market; it seems that she is merely going to buy supplies for the family, and when her basket “full of corn cakes for her son and daughter” is mentioned, as it is necessary for the following exchange between the tiger and the mother, there is no hint of its being anything other than a purchase, a treat for the children. The mother’s reasons for going to the market are simply left out, perhaps because without any emphasis on the absence of the father, or any mention of poverty (lacking the automatic assumption that a single mother with two children must be struggling to make ends meet), there is no special need to mention them; they do not advance the plot in any way.

**Mother Encounters Tiger**

On her way home, the mother walks not over a series of hills but through a wide field, shown in the illustrations as grassy crops of some sort swaying in the wind, and expressed in the text as “the dark fields.” This is an inexplicable change to the traditional versions, which quite uniformly describe the return trip as being over one hill followed by another. The
change does not alter the story’s accessibility to its audience, as hills and fields are not very culture-specific, and neither does it have much impact on the story itself, as the location where the mother meets the tiger is not, in itself, very important. It is possible to surmise that the versions told to Choi in her childhood were either non-specific as to where the tiger attack took place (perhaps simply stating that on her way home she met a tiger), and Choi later filled in the details from her imagination, or her grandmother and others who told her this story recounted a unique variation of it which has not been collected in the reference texts used in this study.

Having surprised the mother on her way home, the tiger engages in the classic conversation in which it asks what she is carrying on her head, and demands an item from her (in this case, a corn cake) in return for letting her go; after the initial conversation, however, it simply continues to demand more corn cakes (instead of letting her go, following her, and demanding one piece of food at a time) until she has nothing left. Instead of then going on to demand her limbs and clothes, the tiger then eats the mother up at once.

By condensing the repetitive chase-and-threaten sequence into one scene, Choi manages to retain the initial conversation between the mother and tiger in its entirety, and changes the focus of the narrative from the deterioration and dismemberment of the mother, as the tiger demands first food, then limbs, then devours the mother, to the insatiable appetite of the tiger, as it first demands food, then, unsatisfied, eats the mother and plans to consume her children as well. This is perhaps an unavoidable change to the story, as it is hard to imagine a story depicting in detail the drawn-out, gruesome death of a mother figure being successful as a picture book for young children in North America. The mother’s death is not avoided, but is made relatively painless and quick, as the tiger swallows her whole (similar to how the grandmother and little girl are swallowed alive in the Grimms’ version of “Little Red
Riding Hood”), and moves on immediately to start trying on her clothes. An effort to lighten the mood visually is made here, as it is the only instance in the book of text and illustrations mixing freely on a white background, and an entire two-page spread is devoted to the tiger’s change of clothes in a light-hearted, almost playful manner as it tumbles around putting on shoes and tying on a headscarf. It even manages to look at itself in a mirror (although it is a mystery where that came from, as a mirror was not something the mother was likely to be carrying with her on her way to or from the market).

*Tiger Enters the House, and Siblings Flee*

When the tiger arrives at the house it remains outside, conversing with the siblings through the door, which is depicted as a panel of wood in the illustration; perhaps to avoid having to explain the traditional Korean paper doors, which would be too flimsy to keep out the tiger. In the variants of “Siblings and Tiger” with three children waiting in the house, the toddler would at this point be eaten by the tiger, but this version is less common than those with only two children. The graphic death of a baby is as gruesome and unacceptable for a picture book in North America, if not more so, than the graphic death of a mother figure, and the inclusion of this element does not advance the story beyond emphasizing the terror felt by the siblings, which makes the avoidance of it altogether by Choi both a faithful retelling and a reasonable creative choice. It may also possibly be an editorial marketing decision.

The tiger speaks first in a “gruff” voice, and when the girl goes to open the door she is stopped by the boy (they are always referred to as “the girl” and “the boy,” or “the children,” collectively, never “brother,” “sister,” or “siblings”), who is suspicious of the tiger’s voice and demands to see its “hand.” After being rejected due to its hairy paw, the tiger returns to its home, shaves, and puts flour on its paw, successfully deceiving the children with its smooth, “nice” paw and “sweet” voice.
Having the tiger succeed in deceiving the children is actually one of the less common variants among the reference tales, which, while they usually have the conversation between the tiger and the children in which the tiger tries to convince the children that it is their mother by referencing the type of work the mother did that day (sizing hemp, plastering the walls of a house, keeping sparrows away from drying grain, etc.), are not specific about whether this results in the children opening the door. It is of little significance whether they believe the tiger or not, because as mentioned above, Korean doors will not stop a tiger in any case. Ultimately, the tiger ends up forcing its way in as the siblings flee. In a North American context, however, where readers would imagine (in this sort of tale) a house somewhat like a cabin or a cottage, the doors are understood to be sturdier and it is implied that the children will be safe if only they do not open the door; hence the necessity for the siblings to be completely deceived. The deception of the children is possibly more familiar to the child reader as well, again because of the similarity to events in “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids.” Convinced that the tiger is their mother, the siblings open the door.

*siblings Climb Tree; Conversation with Tiger*

The children flee from the tiger, and, instead of stating that they climbed a tree and were reflected in a well, Choi describes the scene from the tiger’s point of view, with the narrative describing the tiger losing sight of the children, becoming angry and going to the well for water. It sees the children and they laugh to see the tiger speaking to their reflections in the water, prompting the tiger to look up. This is, again, a less frightening choice than having them barely escape up the tree with the tiger hot on their heels. It also makes a good transition scene into the second conversation between the children and the tiger.

When the tiger looks up and asks the children how they climbed the tree, the girl gives the traditional answer, that they put sesame oil on their hands and feet, tricking the tiger.
After this fails, the second (correct) advice of one of the children, that the tiger should use an axe, is omitted in this retelling; the furious tiger simply begins to climb by digging its claws in the bark, after wiping off its paws. This omission of the motif of foolishly truthful advice, while also made in some of the reference tales, is more significant as a creative choice of the reteller when considering a few other factors.

The child who thoughtlessly gives the tiger the appropriate advice to climb the tree after them is bound to be seen in a very negative light by the reader, which Choi or her editors may have wished to avoid. As a matter of fact, this careless action is attributed, in the traditional versions, to either the younger sibling of the two—or to the girl. When considering that Choi never establishes which of the two children is the elder sibling, and, therefore, understood to be responsible for looking after the younger child (which is likely a deliberate choice of words, as in Korean the nouns for older brother, younger brother, older sister, and younger sister are all different); when also considering how the girl is chosen, in the retelling, to trick the tiger into putting oil on its paws, after first being deceived in the first conversation with the tiger, when she goes to open the door and must be stopped by her more cautious brother; when further considering that in the traditional versions, the moment the wrong words come tumbling out of one of the siblings’ mouth, and the tiger is now able to climb the tree, is a quite exciting moment which boosts the tension that leads to the climax scene, and therefore it will not have been omitted without thought. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the two characters were quite deliberately balanced throughout the retelling so as not to give any emphasis to one or the other, by way of age, gender, or performance. In short, pains appear to have been taken to avoid any child readers being given the impression that “girls/boys are stupid.” This also, as a lesser consequence, influences the translation of “smearing oil.” If one takes the object of the smearing to be the trunk of the tree, while simultaneously omitting the presence of the axe, it becomes difficult for the tiger to
successfully climb the tree on the second attempt without the axe to cut notches in the trunk, as the tree trunk will continue to be slippery with oil; therefore the object of the smearing becomes the tiger’s own paws, which can be wiped and makes the easy climb up the tree trunk, with claws extended, more natural.

*The Rope from Heaven and Death of Tiger*

In the moment of absolute peril, at the climactic scene of the story as the tiger advances on the children as they cling to the tree, the siblings are quite suddenly, and apparently randomly, given critical aid by a rope which drops from the sky and pulls them to safety at “the very top of the sky.” The reader is left wondering what the significance of this rope is; has it been lowered by the children’s dead mother, who is seen at the end of the tale inexplicably “waiting for them”? This apparent anti-climax is due to the omission of an important scene in the traditional version of the story: the children’s desperate plea to the heavens for, not assistance, but deliverance.

When the children truly run out of options and are facing imminent death, in all the traditional versions of the story they make an appeal to the heavens, which is omitted in *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy*. The appeal involves asking for a rope or a basket (in most cases a rope) to be let down from the sky: if the siblings are to live, a new rope; and if they are to die, a rotten rope. There is more narrative logic in an appeal being made to precede the appearance of the rope, in order to have the story proceed in a well-organized manner and avoid confusion. As well, the form of the request adds some excitement to the story, as the audience hopes, but cannot be certain, that the rope which is duly lowered from the sky is indeed a strong new rope. To have deleted this part of the story creates a momentary pause in the flow of the story, as the audience is presented with new information which has not been mentioned beforehand and must therefore be processed before the following events can be
concentrated upon. Instead of the appeal and the answer, the reader of *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy* moves directly from the scene in which the tiger is climbing the tree to the rope dropping from the sky: “Suddenly, a strange and wonderful thing happened. A long rope dropped down from the sky.”

After the children are presented with the rope from the sky, the retelling proceeds in the mode of the traditional tales. As the siblings are being pulled up by the rope, the tiger makes a request for a rope to be sent down for itself; in the traditional versions it repeats the request made by the siblings, but as the original request is omitted in the retelling, in the retold version it “watch[es] in awe” and simply asks for a rope, although it is unclear to whom the request is made: “Oh, please. . .May I have a rope, too?” A second rope is sent down from the sky, which breaks and drops the tiger into a cornfield. It is not specified whether the tiger is killed by the fall, and there is no mention of the tiger’s blood staining stalks of sorghum, as the tiger is explicitly dropped into a cornfield. The tiger simply disappears from the narrative from that point. It is possible to speculate that this is a conscious decision made in order to avoid more mention of death and violence than absolutely necessary to advance the plot; the violence in the entire story has been reduced to the death of the mother, which is unavoidable and is ameliorated by her resurrection in the sky at the end of the story.

*Sibling become Sun and Moon*

While in a few traditional versions of the “Sibling and Tiger” tales the children meet some sort of deity in the sky upon their arrival via rope, such as the Jade Emperor or some heavenly maidens, and are then appointed to the post of sun and moon, the majority of tales simply end by stating that after rising up to the sky the siblings then became the sun and moon. In *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy* the children do not meet any supernatural beings;
instead, their mother is miraculously waiting for them. When the children rise “to the very top of the sky,” they meet their mother, and, following her admonition that “there should always be enough light for people to stay safe from danger,” the sister becomes the sun, while the brother and the children’s mother become the moon and the stars in the sky, respectively.

The scenes of climax and resolution, in which the siblings escape the tiger and become the sun and the moon, have been subjected to changes in *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy* which are beyond the judicious selection of that version of the tale which best fits the current retelling, or telling to a different audience. Each scene has only one change, but these are significant because they are alterations which are incongruent with the original story being retold ("Siblings and Tiger"). The alterations in this contemporary retelling create a reflection of what appears to be expected and required of the tale to make it palatable to its new, North American target culture, and do not reflect the cultural content which derives from the original source culture.

It is difficult to think that Yangsook Choi grew up hearing a version of “Siblings and Tiger” tale which simply omits the children’s plea to the heavens for help. Not only does the omission create a disconnected juncture which disturbs the audience’s immersion in the story, but also it is antithetical to Korean culture. Korea was, and is at present, very superstitious and religious, sometimes both at the same time. It is very probable that, if she heard this story from many sources, which included older people such as her grandmother, they would have included the prayer scene, as do all the traditional tales used for reference. Thus, it becomes plausible to speculate that the prayer scene was removed as a matter of authorial choice and editorial and marketing decisions, on the introduction of this tale, as a cultural product for children, into a North American context. The reason for this could be a wish to avoid any reference to religion or superstition, which could be perceived by some as offensive. This
would also dictate the removal of any deity figures from the sky, and any references to the sky as “heaven” or “the heavens”; as is indeed the case.

On the other hand, in Choi’s retelling, the mother has been somehow resurrected or deified to appear in the sky and accompany the sibling sun and moon by becoming the stars. This motif of resurrection or rebirth is absent in the traditional tales; in the traditional narratives, once eaten by the tiger, the mother does not appear again. The addition indicates a desire to create a “happy” ending by reuniting the children with their mother, and also perhaps to alleviate any residual distress from the child or parent reader over the death of the mother by making things “all better” in the end.

While not jarring to the flow of the story, by comparison to the preceding omission of the siblings’ plea to the heavens (in the sense of whatever deities reside in the sky, or to the sky itself as a deity), the mother’s presence in the sky after her death creates the impression of death or the afterlife being linked to the sky. The sky imagery is pointedly Christian or European as equated with Heaven (in the sense of the generic heaven, not so much associated with Catholic or Protestant doctrine as with images of angels and a vague impression of a good place one goes to upon death), and the mother’s ascension appears to be achieved because she is good. This is quite clearly a non-Korean association, as, upon death, Koreans, whether good or evil, were generally considered to leave for the “otherworld” (Chŏsŭng), which was, if any associations were made to physical dimensions, more likely to be underground or to the west than in the sky.

The mother’s existence in the sky, and her consequent transformation into the stars, also fulfills the pattern of three, which is very common in European cultures and most likely familiar to the expected readers of the retold tale. The sun and the moon create a dual balance of day/night, yang/yin, and (oddly, as day and yang are generally associated with male, rather
than female) female/male; whereas with the mother present as the stars, the duality or dyad is replaced by a simple triad, in which the mother fulfills no specific symbolic function. Thus, by way of a small addition to the text, which is not in itself very noticeable, any cultural significance or symbolism there may have been in the story’s ending (it is not the purpose of this study to establish if there is indeed any symbolic “meaning” in the “Siblings and Tiger” story itself) is replaced by a selection of cultural associations and values that are presumably more “natural” and acceptable to the intended readers in the target culture of the retold version. This further creates a mistaken impression that Korean cultural symbols and conventions (concerning the afterlife, significant numbers, and what constitutes a satisfying ending to a story) are very similar or identical to those of the North American target culture; the more so because, until the ending, The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy retells the original folktale relatively faithfully, while yet avoiding any unique Korean cultural content that might be difficult or challenging for the unfamiliar reader.

4.3 Conclusion

By comparing the traditional “Siblings and Tiger” tales collected from the reference texts with Yangsook Choi’s retelling, The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: A Korean Folktale, it is possible to conclude that the retold version has undergone significant changes in the process of being translated, not only into English, but into North American culture, as a product (picture book) meant for children. The changes mainly involve omitting cultural content unnecessary to the main plot, such as the probable social and financial situation of the family and the type of work the mother was likely to do; omitting content that can be potentially disturbing, such as the graphic death of the mother or the inclusion of a baby sibling who would be eaten by the tiger, and the death or injury of the tiger itself; avoiding any possible accusations of sexism by balancing the actions of the brother and sister;
avoiding accusations of proselytizing religion through omission of any references to deities or supernatural powers of any sort; and creating a “happy” resolution to the tale in which a pattern of three is fulfilled.
Chapter Five: The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon: A Korean Folktale

*The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon: A Korean Folktale* is a picture book retelling, in English, of the Korean tale “Horangi-wa Kotkam,” or “Tiger and Dried Persimmon.” Written and illustrated by Janie Jaehyun Park, the picture book was published in 2002. It was a finalist for Canada’s Governor General’s Literary Award in the English-language category of Illustration, Children’s Literature (year 2002), and a recipient of the Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Award, also year 2002. *Booklist* deemed the picture book “A sparkling incarnation of a Korean folktale” (DeCandido).

5.1 About the Folktale

As with “Siblings and Tiger,” a collection of 30 traditional “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” type tales was made from the reference texts. These were then read closely to determine their common motifs and format. In the various reference texts the tales are, with few exceptions, entitled “Tiger and Dried Persimmon,” or “Why Tigers are Afraid of Dried Persimmons;” in this study the tale will be referred to as “Tiger and Dried Persimmon.”

5.1.1 Summary of “Tiger and Dried Persimmon”

“Tiger and Dried Persimmon” tales are largely divided into two types: those which end with the tiger fleeing the village in fear of the dried persimmon, and those which have an additional twist in that a thief mistakes the tiger for an ox. The following is a summary of the “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” tale, in its most representative form:

A hungry tiger descends upon a village, searching for food. It overhears a mother trying to quiet her crying baby. First she attempts to hush the baby by threatening it with fearsome animals, such as wolves, bears and finally tigers; when this fails, she coaxes the baby to stop crying by offering a sweet dried persimmon. The tiger has been eavesdropping
outside the house, marveling at the courage of the baby who is not afraid of wolves, bears or
even tigers. When it hears the baby stop crying at the mention of dried persimmon, it assumes
that ‘Dried Persimmon (‘Kotkam’’)’ is a terrible beast or monster, more ferocious and
powerful than itself. The tiger decides to return to the mountains, never to come down again,
lest it meet the dreadful Dried Persimmon.

An ox-thief happens to be at the same house. The ox-thief mistakes the tiger for an
unusually large and well-fed ox and, unable to find its tether, gets on its back in order to ride
away with it. The tiger is terrified, thinking that it has been caught by the Dried Persimmon,
and leaps away with the ox-thief on its back. The ox-thief, on his part, soon realizes that he is
on the back of a tiger and is filled with alarm. When the thief manages to leave the tiger’s
back safely, by catching hold of a tree branch or falling into a stream, both the thief and the
tiger are relieved.

5.1.2 Tale Type and Motifs

This section will establish the tale ‘Tiger and Dried Persimmon’ in the larger context
of folktale studies by examining how it has been categorized in folktale indexes, whether it
corresponds to any well-known tale types and what tales it is similar to.

In his Type Index of Korean Folktales, Choi In-hak divides tales into the categories of
Animal Tales, Ordinary Folktales, Jokes and Anecdotes, Formula Tales, Mythological
Folktales, and Unclassified Tales. Choi lists ‘Tiger and Dried Persimmon’ in the category of
Animal Tales (tales numbered 1-146), indexing it in the smaller category of Animal Tales
(25-54) as tale 50, “Persimmons dried on a skewer which are more dreadful than a tiger.”

Because The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon: A Korean Folktale was published in
2002, the picture book itself is not included in The Storyteller’s Sourcebook: A Subject, Title,
and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children 1983-1999, by Margaret Read
MacDonald and Brian W. Sturm. The tale “Tiger and Dried Persimmon,” however, is indexed under N392.1.4*, “Tiger hears mother speak of ‘dried persimmon.” The sole example given for this tale type is a picture book by Suzanne Crowder Han, *The Rabbit’s Tail: A Story From Korea*, which was considered for this study but eliminated in order to maintain consistency in the cultural background of the author-illustrators.

N392.1.4*, “Tiger hears mother speak of ‘dried persimmon”’ is a part of the category Unlucky Accidents (N300-N399), and several tales are indexed in the same category which have similar or near-identical motifs. N392.1.7*, “Woman in old house fears dropping of rain (uttal),” for example, has a leopard fleeing from the mention of the “uttal” and being ridden by a man who mistakes it for a horse; the man escapes by clinging to the branch of a tree. It is a tale from India which seems, from the summary, to be almost exactly the same as “Tiger and Dried Persimmon.” Since, rarely, some versions of “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” from the reference texts have the tiger first hiding in the ox-shed in order to escape the *sonagi* or “sudden downpour” which has been mentioned by farmers coming in from the rain, it is possible that the two tales are one and the same. N392.1.1, “Thief fell by accident on tiger’s back and is carried away,” is also similar and is cross-referenced to J2132.1, “Numbskull rides on tiger’s back.” Both tales are from India. N392.1.6*, “Thief flees when hears old women talk of terrible ‘dibdib’” is listed as being from Arabia. J1758.3.1 “Tiger mistaken for ass,” another tale from India, is included in the category J1750-J1849: Absurd Misunderstandings, which might have been a more appropriate category for the tales listed above, as the plots revolve around the misunderstandings of the tiger or leopard, exacerbated by the subsequent misunderstandings (or mistakes) of the people who ride on them.

Unlike “Siblings and Tiger,” however, in which the geographically neighboring China, Japan, and Korea show examples of similar tales, in *The Storyteller’s Sourcebook* the
tales cited above do not include cross-references to similar tales from China or Japan, and neither are there Chinese or Japanese examples of the tales N392.1.4*, “Tiger hears mother speak of ‘dried persimmon’” or N392.1.7*, “Woman in old house fears dropping of rain (uttal).” Hans-Jörg Uther’s folktale index and bibliography, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, includes a tale type which is similar to “Tiger and Dried Persimmon”: ATU 75*, “The Wolf and the Nurse.” The tale summary is that a hungry wolf or tiger hears a nurse or mother threaten to give her child to the beast and waits, but is disappointed. The index includes Chinese and Japanese examples for this tale type, but no Korean ones. This is an odd omission, considering that Uther used the folktale index of Choi In-hak as a source of some Korean tales (as in the instance of the “Siblings and Tiger” type tale, Choi 100 “The Origin of the Sun and the Moon,” which is listed as a Korean example of ATU 123, The Wolf and the Kids).

5.1.3 Examination of Motifs and Motif Variants in Reference Texts

“Tiger and Dried Persimmon” is a relatively simple tale which revolves around an absurd misunderstanding. Because the initial misunderstanding of the tiger must be included in every story for it to be recognizable as “Tiger and Dried Persimmon,” the reference texts consequently show few deviations in the main plot from the representative form of the story presented above. Once the misunderstanding has been exacerbated by the second misunderstanding (that of the thief who mistakes the tiger for an ox), however, the means of the thief’s escape from the back of the tiger and what happens to the tiger afterwards is a more flexible matter. Because the tale itself does not require a particular ending, beyond perhaps the condition that as a comic tale it should end happily for the humans involved, the endings of “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” tales in the reference collections are varied.
Likewise, while the majority of tales begin with the appearance of the tiger, there are also some versions in which a preliminary misunderstanding has the tiger hiding in the cowshed instead of prowling around the house in search of prey. A close reading of the reference texts resulted in the following motifs.

_Village at Night_

In all tales it is assumed that the setting is in and around a village, which is in contrast to “Siblings and Tiger” type tales in which the events happen in isolated areas, such as the wooded hills and the solitary house of the mother and children. This is necessary for the justification of why the tiger does not simply push its way into the house and attack the family inside (as it does in “Siblings and Tiger”), and it also makes the appearance of the ox-thief plausible as thieves are more likely to appear in populated areas. The existence of a community of people provides a sense of safety which lessens the feeling of vulnerability and fear towards the tiger, allowing it to become a comic character.

The time frame of the story is also important: it must be night when the tiger is caught by the ox-thief. Otherwise, it becomes unreasonable for the thief to mistake the tiger for an ox, and the tiger to mistake the thief for a ‘dried persimmon.’ On this point, the story also requires that the tiger is attributed with human characteristics such as understanding human speech, and being unable to smell the thief, or identify it as a human, in the dark. Additionally, tigers do not usually approach human dwellings in full daylight, and neither do thieves, which makes it natural for the story to be happening at night.

Some tales, as mentioned previously, do not begin with the appearance of the tiger at the village at night; in these tales the tiger appears during the day, around the fields in which the villagers are working. The tiger overhears the farmers speaking of _sonagi_ (“sudden downpour”) in a manner which leads it to assume that it is something best avoided. As the
farmers hurry indoors from the rain, the tiger likewise hides in the nearest cowshed in order to prevent an encounter with the sonagi. From here the story continues as with other tales that start with the tiger in the village, by having the tiger overhear the mother speaking to her child. It can be assumed that night falls while the tiger is hiding in the shed.

Appearance of Tiger

The tiger approaches the village in the night, coming down from the mountains nearby. As mentioned before, Korea is very hilly and many villages are traditionally situated south of a mountain range, adjacent to a river (“bae-san im-su”), which are the ideal conditions for blocking cold winds from Siberia in the winter, having access to water and lands for farming, and the use of the waterways for traffic. Unfortunately, this also made it easy for wild animals such as tigers and wild boars to approach the villages and attack humans and livestock, or spoil the crops (while tigers are no longer a problem in Korea, wild pigs continue to appear to this day and are often cause for the fire department to be called).

While bears, another large wild animal which might conceivably be mistaken for an ox, were also common in Korea, the main animal in the “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” reference tales is, without exception, a tiger. A bear may be mentioned at the end of the story as a sub-character which tries to catch the thief but ends up being killed; it never has a large role in the main story, however. Also, none of the reference tales mention wolves, except in the mother’s initial threats towards her baby. The wolf never appears as a character in the story.

Mother and Child

The tiger overhears a mother trying to hush her crying baby. No other human characters are mentioned as speaking or even being in the house, except the ox-thief who appears later. In this story, no other human characters are necessary for the plot to advance;
however, this does not lead to the cultural assumption that the woman is a widow with a very young child, as is the case in “Siblings and Tiger.” Since the household is located in a village and is possessed of an ox, it is quite likely that the family includes at least one adult male and its economy is comfortable, or at least not badly off.

Traditionally women looked after children, and children were not put to sleep in a separate nursery but slept in the same room as their mothers. Therefore, while it is possible that the mother was quieting her child prior to putting it to sleep, it is also possible that the baby was crying in the middle of the night, awakening the tired adults in the family and annoying them. This would mean that the mother, perhaps tired herself, would be in a hurry to stop the baby’s crying, which leads her to first attempt to frighten the child, but quickly resort to giving it a delicious treat. The baby is assumed to be old enough that it understands at least some of what its mother is saying, otherwise the mother’s threats lose their purpose. The baby must also be young enough that it is likely to be awake and crying at odd hours in the night.

*Threats and Coaxing: Tiger’s First Misunderstanding*

The mother threatens her baby with a succession of frightening animals, saying that a wolf will come to get it, a bear will eat it up, she will give the baby to the tiger, etc. The baby does not cease to wail. Finally the mother offers the baby a dried persimmon, or a piece of dried persimmon, and the baby stops crying. At this the tiger believes that ‘Dried Persimmon (*Kotkam*)’ is a ferocious monster, and is afraid.

The tiger’s mistake in believing *Kotkam* to be a beast more terrible than itself is founded on the tiger’s belief that the reason the baby continues to cry is because it is not sufficiently frightened by any of the animals with which the mother originally threatens it. Consequently, when the baby ceases to howl and is engaged in the dried persimmon, the tiger
believes that the dried persimmon is the only thing that even the baby is afraid of. The sources of the tiger’s misunderstanding are: A. a lack of understanding of the behavior of human babies and mothers, and B. the tiger’s lack of familiarity with the Korean (in this case, “human”) custom of drying persimmons in the fall to eat during the winter, rendering the term kotkam unfamiliar. Therefore the exchange between the frustrated mother and the crying baby is absolutely essential to the tale “Tiger and Dried Persimmon,” and is included in every reference tale.

Some of the reference tales end here, with the tiger simply fleeing the village for the mountains, vowing never to come down again lest it meet the dreadful dried persimmon. It is possible to end with the explanation that, ever since, tigers have been afraid of dried persimmons. Many tales, however, emphasize the absurdity of the misunderstanding and enhance the excitement by having a second misunderstanding occur in which the tiger is “caught” by an ox-thief.

**Arrival of Thief: Thief’s Misunderstanding**

In those tales that continue past the tiger’s initial mistake and consequent fear, a thief appears at this point, while the tiger is cowering in the ox-shed or the yard. The thief is usually designated as an ox-thief; rarely, the person who seizes the tiger is a horse-thief, or a man of the household. Those few tales that mention a horse-thief are collected from Koreans in China and North Koreans, which may account for the replacement of the ox with a horse.

The ox was an immensely important animal to the traditional Korean peasant. Traditional Korean farming was done with the help of an ox to pull the plow, and these oxen were treated as precious partners in labor. Because Korea does not have large pastures in which to set cattle to graze, oxen were kept in sheds next to the house and fed with straw, chaff, grass and leaves collected from the mountains (often by the children of the family), and
bean pods, cooked together into a mash. Not every family had an ox, and it was possible for an entire small village to make use of a single shared ox. Seldom were cattle raised for milk or meat alone, if ever. Therefore the ox was a prized property which, from the thief’s point of view, was more available and less risky to steal than money or jewels (which were only in the houses of nobles), easy to find a buyer for, and sure to fetch a good price. If the thief visited a moderately sized village, he was bound to find an ox worth stealing.

Depending on the story, the frightened tiger goes into the ox-shed to either eat the ox, or simply to hide from the dried persimmon. The ox-thief arrives, enters the shed and, in the darkness, cannot distinguish the tiger from an ox. In some tales the thief compares the ox and the tiger by running his hands along their bodies; he chooses the tiger as the fatter and sleeker animal of the two. Unable to find a tether (usually attached to the nose-ring of the ox), he decides to ride the ox out of the village and jumps onto its back.

*Tiger’s Second Misunderstanding*

The thief’s misunderstanding, in which he believes the tiger to be an ox, is made possible by the tiger’s second misunderstanding: in its fear of the dried persimmon, it believes that the being which so fearlessly approaches it, and seizes it by the neck to get on its back, must be the dried persimmon of which it has just heard. Here the tale can be told in two ways:

A. Paralyzed, the tiger does not react aggressively but allows the thief to do whatever he likes to it, which reinforces the thief’s belief that he has mounted a large obedient ox.

B. Crazed by fear, the tiger leaps out of the shed and heads for the safety of the mountains, with the thief reflexively clinging to its back.

Whichever variant is told, once out of the shed and in the moonlight, the thief is quick to
notice that he is actually on the back of a huge tiger.

*Thief’s Discovery of Tiger and Tiger’s Continued Agitation*

Once he realizes that he is riding a tiger, the thief is alarmed and starts squeezing the tiger tightly, or clinging to its fur, in an effort not to fall off. The thief knows that if he falls off he will probably be eaten by the tiger. On the other hand, when it feels the thief’s grip tighten the tiger believes that the dried persimmon is beginning to attack it, and tries to shake off the thief by running faster and leaping about. This continues for some time, with both parties terrified.

*Thief’s Escape*

The thief manages to cling to the back of the tiger without being shaken off for some time. The reference tales differ as to how he manages to safely get off the back of the tiger, but all end with the thief alive and well (the tiger is sometimes killed). The three major variants are:

A. The tiger leaps across a stream or river, and the thief is finally jarred off the tiger’s back. In this case, perhaps because the thief falls into water, the tiger does not return to identify the ‘dried persimmon’ but continues to run into the mountains. The tiger does not return to the village, and the thief gives up thieving, both due to their frightful experience.

B. The thief waits until the tiger runs into the mountains and grabs a tree branch as the tiger runs underneath, pulling himself up. The ending is the same as in A: the thief and the tiger are both relieved, and decide never to thieve again or approach human villages.

C. The thief grabs a tree branch as in B, but then climbs into a hole in the trunk of the
tree. In this case the tale does not end as in A and B; there is always a confrontation between the thief and an animal, whether the tiger itself or another animal such as a bear or hare, leading to the additional motif of *thief defeats animal.*

**Thief Defeats Animal**

When “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” is told in such a way that the thief leaves the tiger’s back only to hide in the trunk of a tree, there is always additional conflict between the thief and an animal, which results in the death of the attacking animal. The tales show much variety here. In some cases the tiger returns to the tree on its own, in order to identify the ‘dried persimmon,’ and in some cases the tiger speaks of its horrible experience to another animal it meets in the mountains, which either persuades the tiger to return to the tree or goes to see for itself. Therefore, the thief can be attacked by the tiger alone, by the tiger on the advice of a bear or rabbit, or by a bear alone.

The thief hides deep in the trunk of the tree, and the animals try to pull him out, to no avail. Then the attacking animal decides, or is advised, to block the hole the thief is hiding in with its rear end. The thief then unties either the bands on his trousers or his hair tie, and incapacitates the animal in one of two ways:

A. The thief ties the tiger’s tail to the tree, climbs out and clubs the tiger to death.

B. The thief ties the genitals of the bear or tiger so tightly that they die of the pain.

This is possible because traditional Korean clothing for men requires the trousers to be tied with bands at the ankles, and adult males tied their hair up in topknots with long, tough ties made of horsehair.

The role of the hare, when it appears as the advisor of the tiger or bear, is ambiguous; in some cases the hare states to the thief that it has helped him to not only survive, but also to
kill an animal that will fetch a high price with its pelt. In other cases there is no mention of whether the hare is an ally or enemy of the thief. In any case, none of the reference texts describes the hare itself attacking the thief. This is interesting because the previously mentioned picture book, *The Rabbit’s Tail: A Story From Korea*, by Suzanne Crowder Han, specifically deals with the rabbit as the attacking animal, citing the pulling off of its tail as the reason for rabbits now having short tails.

After the defeat of the animal, the thief descends the tree, sells the carcass of the tiger or bear, which fetches a high price, and gives up stealing. Additionally, a hunter passing by may shoot the (already dead) animal, in which case the thief demands compensation for the death of ‘his’ tiger or bear, increasing his profit.

5.2 About the Retelling of the Folktale

5.2.1 About the Author-Illustrator

Janie Jaehyun Park, the author and illustrator of *The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon: A Korean Folktale*, “was born and grew up in Seoul, Korea,” where she gained her bachelor’s degree from Yonsei University. Afterwards, she studied illustration at Sheridan College in Ontario, and now resides in Toronto, Canada (“Biography”). As such, her biography has many similarities with that of Yangsook Choi: both were born in Korea, spending their early adult years and completing their university educations there, then relocating to North America in order to study art. The similarity extends to the fact that the picture books included in this study are the first published picture books both written and illustrated by the two author-illustrators.

As with Choi, then, it is possible to argue that Park is effectively bicultural, having reached adulthood in Korean culture and subsequently established a successful career in North American culture. As *The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon* is Park’s first picture book,
it is also possible to speculate that her editor would have a good deal of influence over the creation process.

Park states in the copyright page of The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon that her version of the tale is written from memory, based on the many times her grandmother told her this story.

5.2.2 Analysis of The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon

This section examines the text of the picture-book retelling of the “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” tale, The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon, in conjunction with the analysis of the reference tales carried out previously, considering the following: each motif of “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” extant in The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon; which variant of motif was selected and what might be the reason for such a choice; any departures in the main story from the traditional Korean “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” tales, in the form of added, deleted, or changed elements; and any additional material in the picture book, other than the main story, intended for the reader of the picture book.

Apart from some introductory text at the beginning of the picture book (incorporated into the main story), and some added explanation in the form of a note on dried persimmons, Janie Jaehyun Park’s The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon is a quite accurate retelling of “Tiger and Dried Persimmon,” in that the text is highly similar to the representative summary of the tale presented in section 5.1.1, containing all the motifs extant in the reference texts and with few noticeable changes made to the plot, motifs or cultural elements. This may possibly stem from the fact that there are few elements in the tale “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” which are inherently unacceptable as the content of a North American children’s book, and there is little content which the North American reader will find difficult to understand, with the single exception being the culture-specific dried persimmon. The results
of a close reading of the text of The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon follow.

5.2.2.1 Additional Material

The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon has little additional material, that is, material other than the text and illustrations of the main story, meant for the reader. While information concerning Park’s source of the tale and how she chose to retell it (from memory) is provided, it is not given in a separate page, but given in moderate font as a part of the copyright page. While it also includes information as to the inspiration for and medium of the illustrations, it is not very noticeable and the casual reader is more likely not to read it. At the end of the picture book, a separate page with illustrations of both persimmons and dried persimmons is provided, together with an explanation of what persimmons are, and how Koreans make and eat dried persimmons (n.p.). This page is more likely to be a deliberate effort on the part of the author and editor to provide the North American reader with information on persimmons, as they are likely to be unfamiliar with this fruit.

5.2.2.2 Analysis of Motif Selection and Changes

As the story begins, an introduction of the tiger as a character is given in the first three pages, something which is not found in any of the reference texts, as it is unnecessary in Korea to establish the tiger as a figure. Tigers are regarded as both terrible predators that attack people and livestock, and at the same time as powerful and just mountain spirits which defeat the evil and spare the righteous. This image of the tiger makes it even more comical when the tiger becomes afraid of a dried persimmon.

Because the tiger (as a fictional animal character) may not be as familiar a figure to the North American reader as a wolf, fox, or lion, the first two pages serve to establish a context from which to regard the tiger, as well as to hint at the type of story which is to follow. The tiger’s power and arrogance are emphasized in the first full spread, with the illustration
showing the tiger sitting upright, huge and tall, and the text consisting of expressions such as “The tiger believed that he was the king of all that he could see” and “the mountains themselves almost fell down at the sound of his voice.” The following page, however, depicts the tiger cowering with its paws over its head, with the single sentence: “But one day, the tiger made a ridiculous mistake.”

Village at Night

The time of the tiger’s appearance at the village is established by describing the tiger’s awakening from a long nap, and then stating that by the time the hungry tiger arrived at the village, it was already dark. The text states clearly that it is a small village, and then draws the reader’s attention to a single house with “a cow shed in a corner of the garden,” ensuring that, together with the illustrations, the reader is in no doubt as to the location and setting of the story.

Appearance of Tiger

As the tiger approaches the house, the text explicitly mentions its desire to eat the ox sleeping in the shed. This differs from the reference tales, which do not particularly emphasize either the ox’s existence or the tiger’s desire to eat it. While the tiger does enter the shed in some reference tales, sometimes it is not mentioned whether there was an ox sleeping in the shed; it may have been an empty shed. The tiger either enters from a desire to (find and) eat an ox, or it enters in order to hide from the dried persimmon. Additionally, some tales simply do not specify where the tiger is exactly, at the moment of its meeting with the ox-thief. Apart from the scene in which the thief tries to choose between the ox and the tiger in the dark, the ox’s existence carries no significance in “Tiger and Dried Persimmon.”

This is a minor change, but seems significant when considered together with a later scene in the retold version, The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon, that in which the thief seizes
the tiger. The tiger is not hiding in the shed, and no comparison in the dark between the ox and the tiger occurs. In fact, the thief spies the tiger “just as the tiger [is] slinking away,” that is, in the yard or near the gate. Since there is no need to depict the tiger in the shed as a matter of logical storytelling, then, the focus on the tiger’s hunger for the ox seems to be a deliberate choice. There is a possibility that Park or her editor wished to avoid any disturbing implications concerning the danger of tigers towards humans, especially human babies. It could be argued that the emphasis on the ox as the tiger’s desired prey, early on in the story before it notices the baby, is intended to avoid any fear that the tiger could desire to eat the mother and baby.

Mother and Child

As with the reference tales, only the mother and her baby appear in the story, and the baby is depicted as being able to understand most of what its mother is saying, as it reacts to the mother’s warning that the wolf is coming by looking at the window. The baby is seen in the illustrations, held in its mother’s lap, and seems to be a toddler. When the tiger first hears the baby crying, it is described as a “mysterious growling” which the tiger has never heard before, which serves to point out the tiger’s unfamiliarity with humans. This makes the tiger’s following misunderstanding concerning the dried persimmon more plausible, and also enhances the tiger’s comic appeal.

Threats and Coaxing: Tiger’s First Misunderstanding

The mother’s attempts to frighten her child into shushing are similar to those of the reference texts: first she says that a wolf will come, then a bear, and finally a tiger. However, instead of listing the threats of the mother first and finally the offer of the dried persimmon, ending with the tiger’s misunderstanding and subsequent fear, in The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon the tiger reacts to each threat made by the mother. When she says that the wolf
will come and the baby continues to cry, the tiger thinks to itself from outside that neither the
baby nor itself is afraid of the wolf. The same happens with the threat of the bear; the text
therefore reads somewhat like a conversation or an exchange between the three characters.
The tiger begins to be engrossed in what the mother says and how her child reacts. When the
tiger is brought up, therefore, the tiger outside the house expects the baby to stop crying, and
is disappointed that it does not. The underlying misunderstanding of the tiger (based on its
ignorance of human behaviors), which is that the baby is not afraid of tigers, is highlighted
here. The tiger both considers the baby to be “strange” and remarks that it is not afraid of
itself.

When the mother proffers a piece of dried persimmon to her baby, in the text of The
Tiger and the Dried Persimmon she tells the baby that she will give the baby the treat, which
makes the tiger’s mistake somewhat less plausible. The tiger is said to actually see the mother
“bring something to her baby,” and the illustration clearly shows the silhouette of the mother
holding a small object in her upraised hand. This is possibly due to the desire of the author
and editor to make it clear to the North American reader that the mother is trying to coax her
baby with a delicious treat. If the reader has no idea what a dried persimmon is, and fails to
recognize the misunderstanding of the tiger, the story loses its comic properties. In contrast,
in the reference versions the mother usually says a short word or two, such as “Kotkam julkka?
(shall I give you dried persimmon?),” or even simply “Kotkam! ([Look,] Dried persimmon!)”
which makes it more believable that the tiger mistook the term kotkam for the name of a beast.
In the reference texts, it is taken for granted that the audience will be familiar with dried
persimmons.
Arrival of Thief: Thief’s Misunderstanding

The thief does not need such explanation. He is a “cattle thief” who arrives at the house and immediately takes the tiger for an ox. Because the tiger is not in the shed, and, therefore, the thief is not close enough to the “ox” to feel it or try to find its tether and nose-ring, the thief is made to jump on the tiger’s back and clasp its neck. While in the reference texts the thief usually discovers his mistake by means of the moonlight, or due to the unnatural leaping of his “ox,” in *The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon* the light of the sun is necessary for the thief to recognize the tiger for what it is. He even comments on the speed of the tiger. This is a minor but odd change in the retelling, because any ox-thief in Korea would expect an ox, trained to farm labor, to be used to being handled by people, and obedient to human commands. Farm oxen are characterized as docile, patient animals, which are strong but a little slow and lazy. When the “ox” started running, the thief was bound to have thought something was wrong with it, if the wild leaping and jumping of the animal did not alert him first.

Tiger’s Second Misunderstanding

When the thief mounts the tiger, the tiger reacts according to variation B (of this motif) of the reference texts: crazed with fear, it flees towards the mountains, running at top speed and attempting to shake the “dried persimmon” off its back.

Thief’s Discovery of Tiger and Tiger’s Continued Agitation

As dawn breaks, the thief finally notices that he is riding a tiger, while his fearful grasp around the tiger’s neck leads the tiger to run even faster.
Thief’s Escape

The resolution of the situation comes about when the thief safely escapes from the tiger’s back, by grabbing the branch of a tree as he passes underneath it, variant B of this motif in the reference tales. Considering the common 32-page length of picture books, and the inappropriateness of depicting the death of an animal by either clubbing or the choking of its genitals, in a book usually meant for young children, it is reasonable to choose this ending for the tale and avoid further discussion of what happened to the tiger. Indeed, by ending the story at this point it is possible to both provide a happy ending in which no one gets hurt, and also to gently insert a moral into the story: the thief vows “never again to steal oxen from honest people.” The tiger also decides never to go down to the village, and the unwitting villagers have been fortunate.

5.3 Conclusion

By comparing the results of close readings of “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” tales from the reference collections and those of a close reading of The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon, it is possible to conclude that The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon has been generally accurate and faithful in its reproduction of the traditional tale. The plot does not display omitted or added motifs, and neither have major changes been made at any point in the tale. In the case of motifs with two or more variants, the motif which simplifies the story and avoids inappropriate content was chosen, as in the case of the ending. Those changes which were noticed during the close reading include:

A. the introductory content on the character of the tiger;

B. the unambiguous mention of the tiger’s “mistake”;

C. the tiger’s marked desire to devour the ox;
D. the tiger’s unfamiliarity with the sound of a baby’s crying;

E. the tiger’s individual reactions to the mother’s threats;

F. the mother’s unnecessarily long offer of dried persimmon to her baby; and

G. the thief’s odd inability to recognize the tiger.

A, B, D, and E can be considered ‘added content,’ with the purpose of making the story more interesting and helping the reader to anticipate the events to follow. None of the changes are particularly culture-specific. C may possibly be an effort to minimize any fears which might attach to the tiger as a possible predator of humans, allowing it to be more easily accepted as a humorous character. While not necessary for the story itself, it is not an unnatural change (tigers did occasionally attack and devour oxen in Korea) and does not contain unique cultural information. F is an incorporation of information into the dialogue which is necessary for the reader to understand and enjoy the story, should the reader be unfamiliar with the custom of drying persimmons and their sweet taste. G is incomprehensible, because the thief is bound to notice immediately that the tiger’s leaps and bounds are movements that an ox is incapable of, even in the darkness of the night. The thief’s prolonged ignorance of the tiger’s identity does not add significantly to the excitement or entertainment of the story, but it does not hinder the story in any way; neither does it create an inaccurate impression of Korean culture. It does, however, imply that the thief’s initial misunderstanding is due to stupidity, while the reference tales do not; on the contrary, those tales with extended endings tend to emphasize the thief’s ability to think quickly, as he manages to defeat an attacking animal with his wits.

Therefore, while The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon has been altered slightly in the details of the story, it can be said that there were no remarkable and significant changes made to the traditional version of the tale, such as those made in The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: A
*Korean Folktale.* The minor changes listed above are not beyond the scope of what a storyteller might make when telling a tale in a personalized style, as opposed to word-for-word accuracy.
Chapter Six: Conclusions and Discussion

6.1 Conclusions

In this study, the retelling of Korean folktales in a North American publishing and cultural context has been examined, focusing on single folktales retold in picture-book format. The research questions upon which the study was based are restated below:

1. Are Korean folktales changed as they are published into a North American market, and;

2. If so, how? To what degree? Does the process of translation from the source to the target culture impact the Korean folktale retellings beyond their folkloric content?

3. Why?

The previous chapters have demonstrated that the two Korean folktales, “Siblings and Tiger” and “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” were each changed to some degree, as they underwent the creative process of being retold in English as the texts of picture books. The answer to Question 1 would therefore be “yes.”

In order to answer the second question, it is necessary to compare the results of chapters Four and Five, the respective analyses of the picture books The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: A Korean Folktale, and The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon: A Korean Folktale. In both cases, content was added to, or changed from, the folktales found in the reference collections, but the manner and degree of the changes differ. Generally speaking, it can be said that both picture books are more “domesticated” than “foreignized,” as they have been adapted in order to be better understood and accepted by the target audience, i.e., the North American reader with minimal knowledge of Korea and its culture. No attempts are made to
actively engage the reader with the very unfamiliarity of the cultural elements in the story, as would be the case in a strongly foreignized retelling.

This answers the third research question, “why (were changes made to the original folktale)?” The purpose of the changes is to create a reading experience which is familiar and understandable to the target audience. *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy*, however, is arguably a more heavily domesticated folktale retelling than *The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon*.

*The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: A Korean Folktale* avoids content which is considered unacceptable for children in the target North American culture, namely: graphic death and violence; the possibility of perceived sexism or religious references; and a “tragic” ending in which the mother figure remains irrevocably dead. It also avoids heavily culture-laden content which is unnecessary to the advancement of the plot, such as descriptions of the family situation (poor, single mother and two children), or reference to traditional Korean housing and available work opportunities in traditional Korean society. These changes can be considered domestication, as the changes reliably correspond to cultural expectations of the target audience (the North American reader), making the retelling more accessible and easier to understand. This is also evident in the reteller’s choice of which motif variants are used in the story, for example the number of children in the family, or the mother’s reasons for leaving the house.

Some omission of detail may be both necessary and pragmatic in the process of creating a folktale retelling suitable in length and content for the picture book genre. However, the two most significant changes made in *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy*, the omission of the siblings’ appeal to heaven for a rope and the resurrection of the mother as the stars in the sky, are detrimental to the internal logic of the story itself (in the case of the former) and misleading to the reader in their presentation of Korean culture (in the case of the latter). The
omission of the siblings’ prayer to heaven is a major alteration, as the appeal motif is present in every reference text of the tale type. The omission also causes the siblings’ escape into the sky by way of a heavenly rope to appear arbitrary, as it lacks an apparent cause.

The addition of a reunion scene between the children and their mother creates a false cultural significance, as the reader may associate the mother and her two children with the motif of the number three, which commonly occurs in European folktales. These two changes are not only examples of domestication, in that content unfamiliar or disturbing to the target audience is omitted or replaced with that which is familiar, but are also examples of purification as the term is used by Klingberg, meaning the changes made to the text are in order to align it with a given set of values, even though the content thus deleted or changed would not have been incomprehensible or uninteresting to the reader of the translated text (pp. 11-12). Through these changes, the North American reader is both deprived of an opportunity to observe that traditionally Koreans found the idea of an appeal to heaven for aid in desperate circumstances to be quite natural, and also given the incorrect impression that the number three is significant in Korean culture, as a consequence, misunderstanding the Korean cultural significance of duality (brother/sister, sun/moon, night/day, yin/yang).

While The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon also includes a number of changes which can be classified as domestication, there are no instances of purification. The mode of storytelling is oriented towards a reader unfamiliar with the significance of the tiger as the main character of the tale, and with the Korean custom of drying and eating persimmons. Therefore, relevant information is inserted into the retelling in order to make it possible for the reader to recognize the humorous aspects of the tale (i.e., the tiger’s misunderstandings and its consequent fearful escape to the mountains). These changes, however, do not include or omit any culture-specific content or values which could affect the reader’s understanding.
of Korea itself, and therefore *The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon* is, overall, less changed from its origins as a retelling than *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy*.

Although the results of this comparison may be interpreted to mean that Janie Jaehyun Park, author-illustrator of *The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon*, is a more faithful folktale reteller than Yangsook Choi, who created *The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy*, it is important to consider the original folktales that were retold by the two author-illustrators. “Siblings and Tiger,” a tale of flight from a voracious predator, is inherently more violent and complex a tale than “Tiger and Dried Persimmon,” which is concerned with comical and absurd misunderstandings. The amount of content in the original folktale deemed by the author or editor difficult to understand or unacceptable in the North American context, is, arguably, directly related to the amount and degree of change the tale undergoes in the process of retelling. In order to verify this, it would be necessary not only to study Korean folktales and their retold versions as published, but to study the process of choosing a folktale to be retold.

### 6.2 Further Discussion

While the scope of this study is limited by necessity, there are several interesting aspects arising from the analysis which, while they could not be included in the study itself, are worth further discussion. One of these is a discussion on the nature of the tiger character, which appears in the two retold folktales (as well as their originals) in two dramatically different roles, as well as displaying different characteristics.

The tiger of the “Siblings and Tiger” tales is roughly similar to the character of the wolf in “Little Red Riding Hood” tale types, except that the sexual aspect of the latter tale type seems to be absent. The tiger exists as a terrifying, devouring figure which is defeated by the equivalent of divine retribution (the siblings themselves are not the agents in the tiger’s
demise; the tiger makes its request and is allowed, by the supernatural interference which provides the rope from the sky, to bring about its own doom). It could as easily be substituted by an ogre or a troll figure, in that its role is that of predator and threat from outside the family, that is, the stranger with harmful intent. The tiger does not display much character, beyond its desire to eat the children by any means. It may be showing a sense of humor, albeit a very cruel one, in those tales in which it pursues the mother home, requesting a part of her body to eat each time she crests a hill.

The tiger of the “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” tales, however, is much less threatening. While the threat of the tiger devouring the ox in the shed or the thief on its back is present in the story, the tiger does not end up carrying out this threat; instead, it is frightened into flight by an absurd misunderstanding and, in some examples, is even killed by the thief, providing him with a hefty profit from the sale of its hide. This tiger displays curiosity as to what the humans in the house are saying, a naïve ignorance of human (in this case, Korean) culture and customs, and a desire to avoid meeting an animal or monster (the dried persimmon) more feared than itself. It also shows the emotions of terror and relief, mirroring those of the thief as they both attempt to escape from the unwanted situation of the thief riding on the tiger’s back. This tiger is comical and a little stupid; a numbskull figure who provokes both sympathy and laughter.

While the tigers in both tales are authentic representations of the tiger figure in Korean culture, I believe that the contrasting characteristics are not intended to represent the complexities of a single, natural-supernatural figure, as is the case with some traditional trickster figures such as Anansi or Coyote. The tiger in “Siblings and Tiger” never invites humorous sympathy, while the tiger of “Tiger and Dried Persimmon” does not bring to mind the real possibility that it could attack and eat the mother and child, separated from it by a
light door made of paper and lattice. Rather, it is possible that the tigers are simply roles, adopted in accordance with the requirements of the tale being told, and reflect less of the characteristics of a consistent, unified “Tiger” figure in Korean culture than they are aspects of traditional Korean life, which was closely related to tigers.

Tigers in Korean folk superstition are revered as virtuous, wise animals, helpers of the mountain spirits and sometimes incarnations of the mountain spirits themselves. A term for tiger is “King of/in the Mountains (Sanjungwang),” and they are said never to harm the innocent, but to punish the wicked. On the other hand, tigers were being caught in Korea as late as 1946, and as Korea is roughly 70% mountainous area, it was easy for tigers to roam the countryside without being noticed until they attacked livestock or humans (“Horangi,” n.p). In real life, therefore, tigers were predators that could appear in circumstances similar to that of “Tiger and Dried Persimmon,” prowling down to the village during the night undetected, and carrying off a child as easily as it could kill an ox. The terrifying and humorous tales about tigers could be, arguably, attempts to respectively articulate and diminish the fear of tiger attacks in real life, through the power of the storytelling experience.

The translation of the oral storytelling format into a written (academic) format, and the changes that may have occurred during the process, is as significant as the process of translation from Korean language and culture into English and North American culture. In the case of the reference texts used for this study, it can be argued that the possible “interference” caused by this transition in form can be disregarded or considered negligible, because for this study the reference texts were solely composed of stories recorded as they were being told, and later transcribed for publication. There are, however, studies made by scholars of translation in which the transition of a written text into the form of a stage performance, or that of text into film and vice versa, are examined. Further research into how folktales (which
rely heavily on oral transmission) are influenced by their conversion to written text, especially in the case that this written text is then translated into a different language and culture, seems to be a fascinating possibility, the more so because the current society values the recorded (though not necessarily written) word and the identification of the author over communally created texts.

The transition which occurred in the minds of the two author-illustrators of the picture books used in this study, Yangsook Choi and Janie Jaehyun Park, as they translated their memories of orally transmitted folktales simultaneously into both the images and the words appropriate to a picture-book format and North American target culture, is doubtless an invaluable subject for further research from the field of translation studies. An aspect which should not be overlooked is that the illustrations, which function together with the text of a picture book to create the unified experience of reading both words and images, are a part of the transition process: the translation is not only from oral to written format, but also from oral to visual, specifically to the pictorial, format. As such, it is possible to speculate that the illustrations will be created in a process of negotiation with the words of a folktale, when retold in the picture-book format, and will also display similar levels of change or manipulation as those made to the words of the picture book. As an example from this study, it was noted during analysis of The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: A Korean Folktale that a motif, Mother Encounters Tiger, contained an inexplicable change: the mother was described and depicted as walking home through fields, instead of the mountains more common in Korea. While no analysis of the illustrations was made, it is possible that the decision was not a cultural but an aesthetic one, made to bring the reader’s attention to the tiger’s long tail as it waves above the tawny grasses of the fields, echoing both their color and curve (n.p.). If so, it is an example of the format of a translated text, and its requirements, affecting change in the content.
While translation studies provides the basis for this study, it is possible to approach the matter of changes made to folktales from a completely different point of view: that of the storyteller. Translation studies is concerned with the issues, among others, of authorial intent, faithfulness to the original material, and the comprehension of the target audience. The issues of domestication and foreignization, as stated by Lawrence Venuti, and the issue of purification in translations for children, can lead to discussions of political, ideological, and ethical values. Storytelling, however, is an interactive performance which is only completed by the active participation of the audience, that is, an immediate and real response to the material provided by the storyteller; storytelling is less like a recital than it is similar to a stand-up comedian’s act. As such, it can be argued that the storyteller is more likely to make quick changes “on the spot” in order to seize or maintain the attention of the audience during the performance, adjusting the story, to some degree, in accordance with that specific audience participating in the session. To a storyteller, these changes may not be considered to be concessions made to pressure from the mainstream culture (as the term domestication indicates) but a practical strategy, and a natural part of storytelling.

Added to this is the matter of storytelling culture in Korea. In Korea, formal storytelling by professional storytellers, in the traditional manner, is now considerably rare; perhaps even non-existent. However, there is a strong tradition of audience participation in the performing arts, including in the sung-spoken narrative performance of pansori and the traditional masked dances, which were performed with a circle of onlookers as the only stage. In the present day, the reference texts used for this study consist of tales collected by scholars who visited villages in person and recorded the stories they were told by the villagers. The tapes were later transcribed as accurately as possible, and published together with the details of the collection such as the date, the circumstances of the storytelling, and the personal information of the storyteller (including gender, age and level of education). Most of the time,
researchers were invited to a village hall or the house of one of the villagers, where they were usually treated to a meal, shared with the villagers.

The transcribed stories collected in this manner are conversational in tone, and show many instances of the audience actively participating in the story by asking questions, commenting on characters or even correcting the storyteller when they forget important details or tell the story poorly. Sometimes an audience member will even take over the story and start telling it herself, or himself. This is not considered to be an insulting action; the teller and listener merely switch roles. This may be due to the casual nature of the storytelling sessions, as none of the villagers were professional storytellers engaged in the practice of their art, but neighbors sharing folktales mostly familiar to all present. It highlights the importance of the audience when storytelling in Korean culture, and makes possible a discussion of whether Korean storytellers, and by extent, Korean folktale retellers (that is, retellers of folktales who are rooted in the Korean storytelling or performance tradition of heavy audience participation), are more likely to: modify the stories they tell, in order to accord with what they believe their audience will enjoy; modify the stories to a stronger degree or greater extent than do storytellers from non-Korean cultures; and to consider the act of modification to be natural or acceptable.

Finally, it is necessary to take into consideration the more external aspects of a folktale’s transmission to a different culture, namely, the policy and practice of the publishing house which undertakes the process. The Sun Girl and the Moon Boy: A Korean Folktale is published by Knopf, a part of Random House, a huge, multinational publishing house. The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon: A Korean Folktale is published by Groundwood Books, a smaller, Canadian publishing house dedicated to children’s books, mainly those by Canadian authors. It is impossible, from examining the published picture book alone, to discern the
editor’s attitude towards the source material and the source culture, or to know when a change made to the source material was the decision of the author, the editor, or due to the policy of the house itself. It is possible to surmise, however, that the larger publishing house Random will be less invested in any single picture book it publishes, while the smaller Groundwood, which is supported by several grants and publishes a fewer total of titles in a year, will be more motivated and able to pay more attention to the creation of a given title (“About Groundwood Books,” n.p.).

Additionally, while Random House states simply that their mission is “to connect readers worldwide to adult and children's fiction and nonfiction authors both familiar and new.” (“Facts & Figures,” n.p.) Groundwood Books includes in their introductory page that their books “tell the stories of people whose voices are not always heard,” specifically mentioning books by “the First Peoples” and those “who through circumstance have been marginalized and whose contribution to our society is not always visible” (“About Groundwood Books,” n.p.). From this it could be construed that Groundwood is more concerned with, and therefore likely to be attentive to, issues of cultural representation and authenticity, which seems to agree with the conclusion of this study, in which The Sun Girl, from Random House, was domesticated, while The Tiger and the Dried Persimmon, from Groundwood Books, was not.

6.3 Limitations of Study

This study was limited, in part, due to the limited availability of materials in Korean, including comprehensive collections of Korean folktales from which to amass reference texts, and also due to the relatively small number of retold Korean folktales available. As such, the retold texts for this study were narrowed down to those of which the originals were present in large numbers in the reference collections found in the Asian Library of the University of
6.4 Recommendations for Further Research

As mentioned previously, further study of the entire process of a folktale’s selection and introduction into an unfamiliar target culture seems necessary. An in-depth study of the process and criteria for choosing folktales to be retold for children, and a detailed account of the decisions made regarding cultural content in the process of creating the retold folktale, would be complementary to this study, revealing the complete progression of a folktale from its culture of origin to a different culture. Such a study would focus heavily on interviews with the individuals involved in the process, such as editors, the authors and the illustrators.

Research into how the published retellings are received into the target culture would be difficult to carry out, but meaningful. Such a study would investigate whether retold folktales are accepted widely, reviewed positively, and influence the perception of the source culture in the society of the target culture.

A broader study of retold folktales, including those in varying formats and those retold by authors of varying degrees of familiarity with Korean culture, would also be meaningful, as this study focused specifically on picture books created by author-illustrators of Korean descent, professionally active in North America. A similar study involving the selection and retelling process of folktales from English into Korean, conversely, could provide insight on whether, or how, factors such as the size of the publishing industry, the amount of translated works published in the target culture, the status of children’s literature, among other elements, can influence the migration of folktales. Additionally, studies of folktales retold from, and into, cultures which share geographical boundaries but not languages, such as from Mexico into the United States, or between some European nations, could be fruitful.
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*Note: Korean personal names written in English often involve idiosyncrasy in regards to spelling (as an example: Lee/Yi/Rhee are the same last name in Korean, which is usually pronounced the same as the first part of the word ‘ear’). While the names listed below are Romanized (i.e., spelled out in the Roman alphabet) according to MLA style, the Korean names in the preceding “Works in English” section are listed according to the title pages of the respective works.


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