Victorian Fairy Tales

Edited by Michael Newton

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VICTORIAN FAIRY TALES

VICTORIAN FAIRY TALES offer a charmed path deep into the period's dreams, desires and wishes. Full of comedy and mystery, these are tales of surprising vitality and wit. They take us into a world uncannily like our own, but suffused with the pleasures and the strangeness of the pure fantastic. The fairy-tale form attracted some of the greatest writers of the period – John Ruskin, W. M. Thackeray, Dinah Craik, Oscar Wilde, and Rudyard Kipling – as well as such great practitioners of the form as George MacDonald, Mary De Morgan, Kenneth Grahame and E. Nesbit. The stories collected here range from pure whimsy and romance to witty satire and dark enchantment. Fairyland proves a dynamic and beguiling place, one that permitted the most striking explorations of gender, suffering, love, family and the travails of identity. It provides a mirror-world of Victorian England, and an ongoing reflection of our own deepest concerns.

Michael Newton's introduction and notes explore the literary marketplace in which these tales appeared, as well as the role they played in contemporary debates on gender, power, and scepticism and belief. The book also includes a generous selection of original illustrations by some of the masters of the field such as Richard Doyle, Arthur Hughes, and Walter Crane.

MICHAEL NEWTON is the author of *Savage Girls and Wild Boys: A History of Feral Children* (2002) and *Age of Assassins: A History of Conspiracy and Political Violence, 1865–1981* (2012). He has edited Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* for Oxford World's Classics and Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and *The Penguin Book of Ghost Stories* for Penguin Classics. He has taught at UCL, Central Saint Martins College of Art, and Princeton University, and now works at the University of Leiden.

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Victorian Fairy Tales

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by

MICHAEL NEWTON

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INTRODUCTION

In Britain and Ireland during the nineteenth century, writers started creating their own fairy stories, sometimes for children and sometimes also for adults, transforming a form based in the shared telling of tales into self-conscious, authored literary texts. They were also imitating a tradition of collecting and writing down such oral tales, or making up new ones, that had begun centuries before in Italy, had moved to France in the late seventeenth century, and then around the turn of the nineteenth century flourished in the German states. In doing so, those British and Irish writers responded to their own notions of what those original, anonymously invented texts meant, and therefore also to ideas of 'the folk', the fairy, and the child. They experimented with the form to explore political and social concerns, as well as questions of identity, love, and the moral life. Together they built up a body of work that contains some of the most vivid, most astonishing, and most entertaining writing of the century.

Some have decried the literary fairy tale as sentimental, escapist, and kitsch. Though much substandard work was published, in the finest examples there is a lot of tough-mindedness, wit and genuine humour, as well as cognizance of suffering, and traces too of the numinous. The literary fairy story involves the fantastic, a supernatural that is neither eerie nor horrific, but rather is whimsical, playful, or invitingly strange. Condemnations of escapism should further be tempered by the fact that for loathers of industrialism such as John Ruskin or George MacDonald, for women like Dinah Mulock Craik and Mary De Morgan, for gay men like Oscar Wilde or Laurence Housman, there was much in contemporary Victorian life from which one might want to escape. Moreover, far from pure flight from life, such stories are rather a way to expose social tensions and psychological conflicts and to devise their potential solutions.

Critics and writers have frequently presented fairy tales as neglected, spurned, on the point of being lost. Anxiety hovers about them. This fear concerning fairy stories often situates itself as a defence of traditions, of the old cultural and economic ways. The ogre that threatens fairyland is dry rationalism, a tepidly actuarial take on life. At the start of the century, in 1803, the devoutly

Anglican writer Sarah Trimmer (1741–1810) could see fairy tales as injuring children's minds by 'exciting unreasonable and groundless fears'.[1] On the other side of the political spectrum, the radical Mrs Anna Barbauld shared her antipathy. A practical, no-nonsense form of fiction for children was proposed, and the child was supposed to be stranded among the dry, if rational pages of an author like Jane Marcet, a writer of popular scientific texts for children. Such critiques were countered by many over the next hundred years, though for some they retained their force. In particular, the circle of 'the Lake poets' (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and, in far-off London, Charles Lamb) held out against this somewhat exaggerated threat. They would protect the fairy tale from harm, rescue it from neglect. In his 'Preface' to *German Popular Stories* (1823), Edgar Taylor begins by lamenting that 'Popular fictions and traditions are somewhat gone out of fashion; yet most will own them to be associated with the brightest recollections of their youth'.[2] We should grasp that part of the appeal of the Grimms' tales to early nineteenth-century British readers was that they enshrined the free imagination, but did so by recalling native versions of tales they had already listened to in childhood. From the start of the century such stories belonged to nostalgia; they were believed to be despised by others, but beloved and cherished by you.

The defenders of the fairy tale, such as Coleridge, Dickens, Ruskin, Craik, Ewing, and MacDonald, all saw it as a form implicitly moral, but spoilt by overt moralization. Fairy tale stands for all that the Gradgrinds and the Bounderbys of the world would reject; in place of fact, calculation, and the ratio, they propose fancy and mystery; in place of a mathematical and analytical understanding, they offer affection, intuition, and strangeness.

In any case, far from being an endangered species in the nineteenth century, it is noticeable how vital Perrault, d'Aulnoy, Grimm, Andersen, and the *Thousand and One Nights* were to the majority of British and Irish writers. Even so poignantly down-to-earth a text as Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1851–3)—let alone Charles Dickens's

[1] Quoted in Nicholas Tucker (ed.), *Suitable for Children: Controversies in Children's Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 38. Trimmer was, however, not consistently opposed to fairy tales.

[2] Edgar Taylor, 'Preface' to *German Popular Stories*, trans. Taylor (London: C. Baldwyn, 1823), p. iii.

Hard Times (1854)—consistently has recourse to these fables and fairy tales; they were simply part of the shared vocabulary of Victorian culture. If we wish to understand the Victorians, we should read their dreams.

Sources, Inspirations, Origins

Often fairy tales include no actual fairy. Perhaps, as Jack Zipes has suggested, the very term 'fairy tale' misleads us, and it would be better to think of such stories as a *Zaubermärchen*, as a *conte merveilleux*, a tale of wonder and supernatural fantasy.[3]

Nevertheless fairies, those elusive beings, continue to colour our sense of such stories. Like ghost stories, the fairy tale can depend on a sense of ineffable presence, the immaterial materialized in another kind of body, another kind of self. These fairies are not abject as ghosts are, but superior, delicate, better than ourselves. They have been seen variously as nature spirits, dwindled gods, visitors from other worlds; as another race of rational beings besides humans and angels; as the dead; as the merely natural, creatures like any other, resembling the human, but soulless. As these contrasting theories demonstrate, in the Victorian period, fairies—like fairy tales, children's literature, and childhood itself—were objects of contention. In *The Discarded Image*, C. S. Lewis argued that fairies had brought to the coherent and overarching medieval picture of the world an element of elusive mystery; these were creatures who moved easily between categories, sometimes damned spirits, sometimes mirthful and miniature creatures, sometimes high emissaries from another finer, more dangerous world.[4] Though alleviated in most cases by an absence of actual belief, this indeterminacy, this fugitive and uncategorizable quality in the fairies persisted into the nineteenth century. Fairies, like fairy tales, were never one kind of thing, or perhaps were things that might be interpreted in many contrasting, and even contradictory, ways.

If one vital, if indirect, source for the Victorian literary fairy tale was the idea of the fairy, another was the body of classic fairy

[3] Jack Zipes, 'Introduction' to Zipes (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. xvi.

[4] C. S. Lewis, 'The *Longaevi*', in Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 122–38.

tales, from Giovanni Straparola and Giambattista Basile, through Charles Perrault, Madame d'Aulnoy, Madame de Beaumont, and the *Thousand and One Nights*, to the Grimms and Hans Christian Andersen. In particular, the Grimms' volume vitalized the form. Indeed, it may be, as Caroline Sumpter has suggested, that Grimm in particular became the canonical version of such tales with the 1823 volume, assuming an inviolable status as true origin which extended to Cruikshank's illustrations.[5] The Victorian writers love to refer back to their famous predecessors. Everywhere these stories contentedly expose the fact that they are indebted to other stories, and several of the best fairy stories are also pastiche fairy stories (as in the tales in this volume by Thackeray, Lang, Grahame, and Nesbit). This inherited body of literary fairy tales from Straparola to the Grimms had very probably emerged out of the oral form.[6] The literary fairy tale was therefore both entwined with the 'popular', 'oral' folkloric tale, while being also distinct from it. The popular *Märchen* (or folk fairy tale) was felt to be a different kind of thing from the self-conscious *Kunstmärchen* (an authored and imitative fairy tale), for the latter was curiously doubled, an artful version of supposedly naive folk art.

Oral tradition remains potent in a tale such as 'The Three Bears'. Southey recommends the reading of his tale with a proper emphasis for it 'never fails of effect with that fit audience for which it is designed, if it be told with dramatic spirit, in the manner that our way of printing it may sufficiently indicate, without the aid of musical notation'.[7] He returns to the same thought at the tale's conclusion, visualizing it as having been not just read, but acted out to its child audience.[8]

It may now seem a strange anomaly of literary history that Ford Madox Ford, author of the magnificently jaded *The Good Soldier* (1915), began his career with the writing of fairy tales. Fairy tales were not merely ethereal properties, they were also a business, and afforded to writers a dual market of children and adults, as well as a means to position themselves as a particular kind of writer. Few writers were only fairy-tale writers: Ruskin was a critic; Thackeray

[5] Caroline Sumpter, *The Victorian Press and the Fairy Tale* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 28.

[6] See Jens Tismar, *Kunstmärchen* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1977).

[7] From Robert Southey, *The Doctor* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1837), iv. 316–17.

[8] Southey, *The Doctor*. iv. 327–8.

and MacDonald were novelists and editors; Wilde was a man of letters staking a claim for himself as an author in many different fields; Craik was one of the most famous novelists of her day. Many of the writers produced other kinds of fantastic fiction, notably ghost stories, as in the case of E. Nesbit and Kipling. Nonetheless the fairy tale was a recognizable niche product, one that took its place in the book market or in periodicals alongside many other kinds of fiction for children, and for adults. The fairy-tale volume, married as it was to illustration, formed a natural locale for writers who might broadly be described as 'aesthetic' or even 'decadent'.

Literary fairy tales, of course, worked differently from their cousins in the oral tradition. They were authored, manufactured, derivative; yet something of the folk idea clung to them. They may not be authentically primitive, but they were certainly aspiringly primitivist.

In fact the fairy tale is the most eclectic of forms, whose origins are fascinatingly varied, drawing in such native examples of 'the fairy way of writing' as Sir Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, as well as the work of the German Romantics—Novalis, Tieck, Motte Fouqué, and Hoffmann. These sources were mixed, and were themselves potently 'syncretic', relaxedly combining Athens and the English woods, Christendom and fairyland, nobility, mechanicals, and fairy royalty. At a time when anthropologists and folklorists dreamt of purity, the writers borrowed freely from whatever inspired them, giving their tales a glorious hybrid, piebald form.

When, in his essay 'The Fantastic Imagination', George MacDonald asks what is a fairy tale, he answers by pointing to Motte Fouqué's *Undine*—and not to 'The Yellow Dwarf' or 'Sleeping Beauty'. This Germanic connection was not shared by everyone; some of the writers in this volume might be thought of as Francophile rather than Germanophile. Yet in some quarters there was a particular interest in England's sharing a 'Northern antiquity' with the Grimm tales.[9] Some writers, folklorists, and anthropologists were especially impelled to trace back the tales to some envisioned, pure beginning. This place of origin was seen as being variously Celtic, or Saxon or Teutonic. When Charles Boner translated Hans Christian Andersen's stories they were presented as 'the *Danish* story-book'—the product

[9] Taylor, 'Preface' to *German Popular Stories*, p. vi.

of a country, and not an author. A taste for a certain kind of fairy story might tell of political allegiances. In aligning themselves as more akin to Perrault or to the Grimms, to the Scandinavians or the Celts, more was at stake than a purely aesthetic choice; an affiliation to a particular image of culture was involved. If the initial influences were French or German, as the century progressed interest sparked up in locally national identities, in Celtic tales or English lore. In this way the collection of oral, popular folk tales could form part of a nationalist project, the establishment of an unsullied identity; such they were to W. B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory, collecting folk tales of the peasantry with an eye to the establishment of a purely national myth.

In the Victorian literary fairy tale, folklore becomes the root of a literary art. Though their primary interest was not artistic, but philological or anthropological, at their best the folklorists were responsive to other things. Men like Sir Walter Scott were touchingly in love with the wonders they researched. The gift that folklorists gave to the writers of literary fairy tales was a path back to a reality, a past that was everywhere open to the marvellous.

This marvellous might have connotations of national identity that linked folklore inextricably to political aims. Now that most critics understand Wilde as a covertly Irish nationalist writer, undermining 'John Bull' through wit and humour that English people failed to get, it is all the more surprising that in his fairy tales he did not ostensibly take the Celtic route followed by Yeats. After all, his father had collected oral folk tales from among the Irish peasantry, and his mother had written such tales herself. As we shall see, it may be that there are indeed references and allusions to Ireland in Wilde's stories. It may also be that all kinds of fairy tale proposed a kind of national self-definition, as many Scots, Welsh, and Irish writers—the romantic, anti-empiricist 'Celtic fringe'—favoured fantasy.

This interest in 'the folk' was just one of the highly contemporary ways in which writers conceived of a state prior to modernity. Although such concerns had been present since the Grimms, in the 1880s and 1890s, thinking on the fairy tale was transformed under the pressure of evolutionary theories, particularly the idea of recapitulation (the belief that the life of the individual re-enacts the story of the race). Edward Clodd's study *Tom Tit Tot: An Essay on Savage Philosophy in Folk Tale* (1898) exemplifies this belief. In his

monograph, fairy tales go on to link us to the childhood of the human race in savagery, and to the more childlike, unsophisticated world of the peasant. Moreover, such tales are themselves expressive of atavistic states of mind, relics of an original philosophical understanding of the world. On the principle of analogy—but also with the thought that some kind of shared identity was in fact involved—folklorists, educational theorists, and anthropologists fancied savages, peasants, children, and sometimes women, to be all at the same primitive developmental point, possessing an atavistic mode of mental and imaginative perception. This archaic simplicity, smuggled into the present in the bodies and minds of these modern people could be represented as desirable or despicable. In his 'Preface' to the *Violet Fairy Book* (1901), Andrew Lang writes, 'These stories are as old as anything that man has invented. They are narrated by naked savage women to naked savage children . . . Then learned men collected and printed the country people's stories, and these we have translated, to amuse children. Their tastes remain like the tastes of their naked ancestors, thousands of years ago, and they seem to like fairy tales better than history, poetry, geography, or arithmetic, just as grown-up people like novels better than anything else.'[10] (In this account, primitive women tell the tales; savage children hear them; sophisticated men collect them.) The thought outlined here could be illustrated by dozens of other similar statements.

Now the fairy tale and the fairy itself both appeared as dark survivals. The notion is strongest in the supernatural fiction of Arthur Machen, whose masterpiece 'The White People' (1899), though not a fairy tale as such, succeeds in reinvesting the fairy with an ancient, lingering malevolence. It is there in a more benign form in Kipling's writing, where Puck stands as an ever-present embodiment of the spirit of place, the stories recommending a backwards path into a real England of wonder and enchantment. *Puck of Pook's Hill* is a book of exiles, of people out of place, and in 'Dymchurch Flit' the fairies themselves become the latest such migrants. With urbanization and the decline of the rural economy, the poor of the countryside were on the move, and their new peripatetic lifestyle finds its mirror in this story.

Just as, in relation to race, the fairy tale could seem a trace of a pure historical origin, so the stories themselves and the manner of their

[10] Andrew Lang, 'Preface' to Lang, *The Violet Fairy Book* (London: Longmans and Co., 1901), pp. ix–x.

telling might appear both ancient and timeless. However, it is a paradox quickly grasped that in these 'secondary fairy tales', these literary imitations of a literary response to an anyway historicized oral narrative, the very fact of the tale expresses yearnings for timelessness in the midst of an industrialized modernity. If fairy tales relate to primitive psychology, to savage ideas, we should consider what it means for a sophisticated writer self-consciously to produce one as a literary construction.

Faced with this literary and psychological conundrum, writers responded variously to the challenge. Some fell back on artfulness and whimsy, others sought a Romantic attuning to primitive and fugitive states of mind, to the suprarational self, and to the past (the child, the savage, the rustic) against the modern world.

Certainly the fairy tale shadows the history of technology over the century, and beyond. The form stands as a pre-industrial survival, and therefore an implicit emblem of resistance to modernity; yet fairy tales fitted comfortably into the niches created by each innovation: changes in the printing technology transmuted the literary form, particularly with regard to its relationship to illustration. At the end of the century in particular, with the growing impact of the 'gift-book' and new techniques of colour reproduction (mostly through chromolithography and the three-colour process) the fairy-tale volume became a luxury item. Modern methods of printing and publishing indisputably also made a space in which the literary fairy tale could flourish.[11]

Such sumptuous products inevitably raised questions as to whether or not they were intended for children. In any case, writing on fairy tales inevitably, and perhaps unfortunately, brings in the question of their audience. Are these stories for children or adults or both? As J. R. R. Tolkien explained in his essay 'On Fairy Stories', there is no necessary connection between the child and the fairy tale; although it is vital to our understanding of the form that in the nineteenth century people perceived one. Ideas of the childlike, and of the trust, open-heartedness, and wonder once found in the child, infiltrated critics' and writers' views of the form. For adults, reading fairy tales extended a route back into the childhood they had lost, or retained merely fitfully. Jack Zipes has suggested that writers always had two audiences in mind, the middle-class young and the middle-class adult, and that they had different aims in mind with each of these

[11] See Sumpter, *The Victorian Press and the Fairy Tale*.

audiences: with the children, they wished to influence and form; with the grown-ups, they hoped to 'challenge and reform'.[12] These are stories told by adults to children, and as such can only exist through a tacit understanding of what childhood is conceived to be. In both writing and reading such tales, adults dramatize their own wants and dreams, and simultaneously dream themselves back into their own childhood and project themselves out into the childhood of others. Concepts of the child interact with concepts of 'the fairy' and of 'the fairy tale', and these distinct things start to seem allied. The child recapitulated a lost past, and so brought into the world both its own absolute newness and also something archaic, the thoughts and feelings of the human race at its origin. If these stories and their style harked back to a simpler age, this was therefore likewise true of their anticipated audience, of childhood as conceived before and within these stories.

That such stories were good for adults as well as children was a commonplace—as Israel Zangwill remarked of the folklorist Joseph Jacobs, 'his books delighted equally the nursery and the drawing-room'.[13] Thackeray described *The Rose and the Ring* as a story for 'us children'.[14] The gifted fantasy writer Neil Gaiman has spoken of the way in which such stories do not envision an absolute literary divide between children and adults, but rather appeal to the literariness of the child and the childlike in the adult reader. It is with fairy tales that the child makes his or her first discovery of intertextuality; these stories are something known, and loved, and mockable, and quickly understood as working in generic terms, according to accepted rules. The tales in this volume play on the knowledge of the child reader. Thackeray, Lang, and Nesbit, in particular, rely on our knowingness—that we will have guessed most of the plot already, that we are clever, worldly-wise readers and therefore not 'childish', even if we are still children.

This question of the audience raises the suitability of the tales for children. In 1891, a critic wrote of Wilde's latest book of fairy tales: 'Is *A House of Pomegranates* intended for a children's book? We confess that we do not exactly know. The ultra-aestheticism of the pictures

[12] Jack Zipes, 'Preface' to Zipes (ed.), *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and Elves* (New York and London: Routledge, 1987), p. xi.

[13] Quoted in Anne J. Kershen, 'Joseph Jacobs', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

[14] William Makepeace Thackeray, letter to James Hain Friswell, 10 December 1854, in *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, ed. Gordon Ray (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), iii. 405.

seems unsuitable for children—as also the rather "fleshly" style of Mr. Wilde's writing.'[15] Here knowingness becomes suspect, as such stories are felt to touch on matters of love and sex—questions popularly supposed to be properly absent from children's books, though palpably at the heart of the Victorian fairy tales.

The Stories: Fairyland and the Real World

Fairy tales may be regarded by some as the simplest of all narrative forms. However, they are in fact one of the most experimental of all nineteenth-century genres. After all, these stories, from Ruskin to De Morgan, are what the great twentieth-century Modernists read as children. In particular, they inherit from German Romanticism a mode of narrative that is fragmented, apparently irrational, the organized structure of a tale coming closest to the visionary freedom of dreams. The fairy tale disobeyed aesthetic strictures that demanded a strict realism and adherence to fact in the literary work.

In Robert Southey's 'The Three Bears', language exists as structure and incantation, building the sense of inevitability contained in pattern. It is a story with no real resolution, no consolation. It only establishes a design in which a disruptive outsider breaks into an order (of three). The woman is an intruding rogue, the bears put upon; but her coming is a random event; she's just someone up to no good.

There were other ways to play with storytelling. Fairy stories were often framed within larger narratives, as in Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind*, or the children's novels of Mary Molesworth. In Grahame's *Dream Days*, the frames around the story 'The Reluctant Dragon' multiply, taking in the narrator's tale, the circus-man's yarn, the conventional stories that the Boy reads, the lies told by the villagers, and the feigned performance presented by St George and the dragon. Everyone here is a storyteller, and sometimes a listener to others' stories. The story tells us what does not get into the books (though such information is, of course, present in this one).

If, in Grahame's story, narrative expectations are comically defeated, then the ultimate such expectation in the fairy tale is that the story should end happily. We may wonder if a fairy tale should ever be tragic.

[15] From *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 November 1891, p. 3.

The phrase 'a fairy-tale ending' implies a happy one. Yet Andersen, De Morgan, and Wilde all produced moving tales with markedly unhappy conclusions. Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* plays with the possibility of tragedy, taking the plot of *Hamlet* and turning it comic.

Such contrasts work too in the very style of the stories, and, at times, in their illustration. Fairy tales could radically mix techniques, as in Oscar Wilde's tales, which sometimes pose a style derived from Andersen against an Orientalist luxuriance. A different contrast animates Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring*. Thackeray perhaps found his theme in the drawings that inspired his text. There he draws out an intriguing contrast between an art that improves on nature and an art that uglifies it; both are seen as distortions. Within the tale, Tommaso Lorenzo's painting counterfeits a notably enhanced and lying version of its subject (see illustration on p. 57), while Thackeray's art of caricature exposes the grotesque exaggeration of human moral and physical frailty. In his drawings, Thackeray could purvey either a passable version of the fashionably prettified style of the time, or give himself over to the outrageously ridiculous. Sometimes Thackeray's two styles of drawing confront each other in the same picture. By these means, Thackeray wonders over the difference between true and illusory beauty, as expressed in the mystifying effect of the fairy ring. This is a story about the creation of a world through the lens of a style, and the eye of a beholder. The mixture of prettiness and the grotesque manifest here vivifies innumerable fairy paintings, which both show a beautified world yet impress on it the twisted, improbable bodies of the fairies themselves.

Thackeray's approach endorses the knowing artfulness, the position of performance in the fairy-tale tradition. This aspect of the fairy tale was connected to one other of its manifestations and sources—the place of theatre, fairy ballet (such as *La Sylphide*), and, especially, pantomime. In his 'Preface' to his translation of the Grimms' tales, Edgar Taylor makes the link:

> Popular fictions and traditions are somewhat gone out of fashion; yet most will own them to be associated with the brightest recollections of their youth. They are, like the Christmas Pantomime, ostensibly brought forth to tickle the palate of the young, but are often received with as keen an appetite by those of graver years.[16]

[16] Taylor, 'Preface' to *German Popular Stories*, p. iii.

For this reason, fairy stories, like ghost stories, were strongly connected with Christmas; indeed Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843) may be deemed to have equally forged the association of two kinds of supernatural tale with the season. Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* derives from the Twelfth Night characters; and Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River* was also a Christmas book (and, like *The Christmas Carol*, one that celebrated giving over meanness and lack of charity). However, the link between fairy tales and Christmas may have had other, higher connotations, and have as much to do with 'incarnation' and midwinter renewal as with performance and make-up.

During the nineteenth century some writers worried over the potential impiety of the fairy tale, as though the supernatural it offered was contaminated by ancient paganism. Others were happy to use the form, implicitly or explicitly, for Christian purposes. Andersen, MacDonald, and Craik actively Christianize the fairy tale, rendering it the vehicle of a religiously understood sense of mystery; the Christian resonances at the close of Wilde's 'The Selfish Giant' are also salient. MacDonald's novel *Adela Cathcart* enacts this idea, showing its heroine restored to faith in God, in life and love by hearing tales—including fairy tales. It may be that, for some, the very basis of the tales carry religious significances, in so far as they celebrate the world while expressing and transcending our dissatisfaction with it. Here is a world like our own, but also better, more natural; perhaps this is just more escapism, or perhaps part of a human longing for a golden world. Similarly the morality of fairy tales offers a justice for which there is no real equivalent in human life; the humble and good are exalted, the proud and wicked cast down.

It is sometimes argued that the Victorian interest in fairies (as, in a darker vein, with ghosts, spirits, and vampires) represented an attempt to find the sacred in a world disenchanted (in the terms used by the sociologist Max Weber) by industrialism, urbanization, and 'the death of God'. The interest in fairy tales might simply be part of a broader simultaneous re-enchantment of the world, found in the European interest in spiritualism, in parapsychology, in Indian religions, in theosophy, in a renewed commitment to a miraculous Christianity, and, for someone like W. B. Yeats, in a willed desire to believe in the fairies that science would reject. Certainly when Doyle came to write his book about the case of the Cottingley fairies, it was

vital to him that the existence of fairies, as evidenced in the photographs taken by two young Yorkshire girls, could demonstrate the existence of a spiritual realm.

How might these concerns play out in the stories themselves, where, as many have noted, fairies often play little or no part? They do so in part by dramatizing questions of belief and credence, in asking us to follow the characters within the stories and so 'awake our faith'. Hence, at its worst, that infamous moment in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, when the audience are emotionally blackmailed into declaring a belief in fairies. At its best, as in Lang's *Prince Prigio*, we have a story that comprehends the sceptic's position. Tolkien disapproved of the fact that in Lang facetiousness gets entangled in the fable, sarcasm impinging on the sense of wonder. In fact that is the story's strength, one that enables it, through a joke, to affirm faith in love and in the marvellous. Here, in self-forgetting, love lifts you above scepticism.

Whatever the theological implications of the form, nonetheless belief was central to the tales, in so far as they assert fantasy over realism; artifice over naturalism; romance over the real. This set of preferences once made the stories seem unengaged with the social conditions and political conflicts of the time. In fact, of course, these tales themselves offered a way into thinking about the problems of the present and of framing political concerns. Fairy tales engage with modernity, but do so surreptitiously.

As Jack Zipes has argued, in the fairy tale modern industrial society and the pursuit of money and social success are often questioned.[17] Such ideas inspired traditionalists but also social radicals; both impulses (conservatism and radicalism) merge in Ruskin and William Morris. *The King of the Golden River* is, among other things, an ecological fable, contrasting material gold and the real gold of natural things.

Most recent criticism focuses on the literary fairy tale as primarily political, and (in most accounts) hiddenly engaged in subversion, the making of a mirror-space where protests against Victorian culture and morality could be voiced. In such critiques, as in fairy tales themselves, nothing is what it appears to be, and anything might at some point turn into something else. Penetrating insights derived from psychoanalysis and sociology pierce the story; the fantastic text

[17] Zipes, 'Introduction' to Zipes (ed.), *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and Elves*, p. xvi.

becomes a mask designed by its very unreality to lay bare the strictures and constrictions imposed on Victorian social identity.

The old belief was that within the surface, in images of something infinitely desirable, were concealed truths too great for telling. The contemporary critical orthodoxy is that this same surface actually delineates tensions and conflicts in the class, imperial, and gender relations of the time. It is the productive tension between these two aspects of these tales, as both psychologically pregnant and perhaps inherently political, that establishes their continuing relevance to us.

The pleasures of these tales were no doubt touched for contemporary writers and readers by such political dreams. Images of the political (on the large or the personal scale) imbue the fairy tale. Even a cursory reading of the tales would show how fascinated they are with ideas of authority, power, and rule. The starkly simplified political worlds of these tales offer satirical but also symbolic representations of power and inheritance. The fairy-tale world is so often a place of kings and queens, princes and princesses, but then so was Britain and most of Europe. The queens and kings in the stories aptly reminded readers of their own heads of state. (After all, Disraeli dubbed Victoria 'the faery'.) Questions of inheritance are central to the literary fairy tale, partly drawing on the oral tradition and partly on Shakespeare (following *Hamlet* and *King John*, uncles get as bad a press as stepmothers). The very grain of the stories can be steeped in politics; these are often tales of rule and misrule. In one sense, fairyland is no utopia; in the mirror of its being, injustice exists there as here. Far from being straightforwardly monarchical, such tales can sometimes show the weariness of ruling; the heroes and heroines are as likely to wish to forgo their royalty, as to try to win it.

It is not hard to find contemporary political concerns manifest in the tales. Written in an Italy partly ruled by Austria and prevented from unifying by Louis Napoleon, Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* explores tyranny and the effects of corrupt government (as well as offering patriotic succour during the Crimean War). Craik too offers the creation of a no-place that is also a reflection of here, in a tale that is political and socially conscious. (One critic has suggested that Craik's most popular 'realist' novel, *John Halifax, Gentleman*, was itself 'the fairy-tale of the middle classes'.[18]) Wilde's tales certainly contained

[18] Alan Horsman, *The Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 199.

discreet social comment. The presence of the notable socialist Walter Crane as illustrator for his first fairy-tale volume perhaps signals Wilde's own attempt to combine aestheticism and radicalism. This volume, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, has its connections to the impoverished East End in the period; that book was published in 1888, the year of the match girls' strike, and symbolically enough Wilde sent a copy to Toynbee Hall (a philanthropic institution in Whitechapel). He examines here the same problems that preoccupied the naturalist novels of the period, but by means of a fable; one reviewer described his second volume of fairy-stories, *The House of Pomegranates*, as 'half-medieval, half-modern Socialist'.[19]

Wilde's tales may have had their own tacit relation to Britain's colonial rule of Ireland. Very likely the history of empire in the period provided a political context against which the apparently ahistorical world of the fairy tale might be understood. (In Thackeray, race would appear to be absent from the tale, but it is there in the pictures, if not in the text, in so far as the servants in Crim Tartary are all black.) Across Ford's fairy country, the shadow of British imperial conquest obliquely falls: 'there is even no talk of opening the country up, which alone shows how difficult it must be to reach' (p. 324). His *The Queen Who Flew* seemed subversive at the time; one reviewer complained that the tale did not end as it should—Eldrida instead choosing poverty and rustic life over royalty and succession.[20] Ford's politics are hard to read; he presented himself as both papist and Tory, but also as someone intrigued by his friends' and acquaintances' Anarchist leanings; there is something of an Anarchist utopia about the farm of Woodward and the country where it stands. However, for all the sympathy for poverty, there are class rigidities here too; the working-class voices are mocked; the norm is the nicely well-spoken upper-middle-class child.

Such stories also offer a space for dreams, for lucid refreshment, for images that startle and astonish and both prompt our yearning and in some small measure satisfy it. No one can wish themselves naive; no reader ought to pretend that fairyland was as simple a place as some

[19] Review in the *Saturday Review*, in Karl Beckson (ed.), *Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 115.

[20] See Alison Lurie, 'Ford Madox Ford's Fairy Tales for Children', in Sondra J. Stang (ed.), *The Presence of Ford Madox Ford* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 136–7.

Romantics and Victorians longed for it to be. The stories work, it is true, by delight, by the romance of images, the allure of glamour, by humour—all of which feed taste and moral discrimination, and not by explicit or implicit 'messages'.

The writers of the literary fairy tales themselves seem to have been engaged by a sense that the folk tale depicts (and perhaps stems from) a historyless space. The stories take place in time, and not in history—or they happen in a world so remote, geographically or chronologically, that they can be conceived in any way the writer wants. The world of 'time' crosses the path of history.

Fairy tales begin with 'Il était une fois', 'Es war einmal', or 'Once upon a time'. These words signal a uniqueness, the single occasion that this thing happened. The events here are something possible, but highly unusual and indeed unrepeatable. The fairy story tenders a unique event against the endless recurrence of individual human lives and the further background of eternity. The time in which it takes place is a past, a time that is another place and is unreachable. The fairy tale speaks from its historyless time to what is timeless in us. In fairy-tale time the assumption is that the future will resemble the past. The dailiness of history, its repetitions, its movements, laws, and typicalities are alien to the frame of the fairy tale. As we have just seen, most modern critics have wanted to historicize the tales, to return them to a political context. Certainly the literary tales themselves remain solidly Victorian; the ahistorical world they concoct now reads like a mirrored nineteenth-century England. Indeed, on occasion, as in Thackeray or Lang, the perspective shifts and we seem in an alternative version of now. Still, matters of time and history permeate the tales. It appears an open question when Lang's *Prince Prigio* is set. It seems to belong to a remote medieval world (with its talk of Saracens), yet the date on the cheque (itself a pragmatic property in a tale of seven-league boots and magic water) places it firmly in the eighteenth century. Both Thackeray and Lang set their tales not in some inaccessible land, but in recognizably situated (if highly exotic) European countries. Ruskin's valley appears a location to which we might one day travel. Happy anachronisms mark Ford's fairyland, a world where you can both meet the geese who saved the Capitol and have your photograph taken. In *Puck of Pook's Hill*, Kipling's stories take place now and in England, locating the world of fairy within the consciousness of history and of tradition.

Also caught between history and timelessness, personality and character, body and soul, is human identity. Classic fairy tales reveal a situation—and therefore an identity—hitherto concealed: the kitchen-maid is really a princess, the beast really a handsome prince. We think ourselves grand, but we are callous; we think ourselves lowly bodies and unimportant persons, but we are to be touched by the gift of grandeur. The tales let us identify with the inauthentic version and then with the real that the tale discloses. At the centre of such stories is an expectation of identification; the hero or heroine might resemble me, their reward could be mine, and their failings too. We are not merely vicarious participants in such stories, we are watchers of them, perhaps even watchers of ourselves watching; we are outside the tale, for all that we might be absorbed in it, and as such we may scrutinize and reflect.

As W. H. Auden has remarked, humility characterizes the fairy-tale hero or heroine; and if, like Prince Prigio, they are not humble at the tale's beginning, they learn to be so by its end. The reader too might be thought to be invited to share this open-hearted attitude, to forget themselves in the tale, and give themselves over to it. As the narrator in Joseph Conrad's *The Shadow-Line* remarks: 'I was very much like people in fairy tales. Nothing ever astonishes them.'[21] In any case, the surface of identity is mixed up and in flux here, though beneath all appearances lies a settled, ineradicable truth. In MacDonald's 'The Golden Key', the deaths of Mossy and Tangle create a strange dislocation; their deaths seem to alter nothing and their story continues regardless. So it is that in *The Rose and the Ring*, some people are two people, both Betsinda and Rosalba, just as the Princes, usurping kings, and deposed children are doubled, and anyone (by virtue of the ring) can be a beauty or a fright.

Sometimes this play with the nature of identity particularly involves thoughts of gender. While male writers longed to linger in childhood, women authors, oppressed by societal standards and conventions that worked to infantilize women, were more sceptical and more apt to stress the need to grow up and leave the idealized (because passive and powerless) child-state behind. Lamenting the narrow social opportunities permitted to women, Nina Auerbach and U. C. Knoepflmacher have convincingly argued that, 'In theory, at

[21] Joseph Conrad, *The Shadow-Line* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 40.

any rate, women lived the condition Carroll, MacDonald, and Barrie longed for. If they were good, they never grew up.'[22]

Fantasy offers the possibility of fantasizing gender relations, both exposing injustice in the real world and opening up the possibility of other social models. Often the protagonist is a woman or a girl. Many of the most famous classic stories are tales of girlhood, of Sleeping Beauty, of Snow White, of Cinderella. But these are also markedly passive heroines. The Victorian tales take over this feature of the form, but also transform it, giving us increasingly strong, independent figures, though also still marked by an unfashionable passivity—with its endorsement of patience, of the necessity of relatedness, of holding still. Elaine Showalter has forcefully argued that in Craik's *The Little Lame Prince*, Prince Dolor stands in for the author herself: 'cast out of the happy kingdom by her father's desertion, crippled by her female role, and finally redeemed through self-discipline and imagination'.[23] In a book on Craik, Sally Mitchell concurs, writing: 'The orphaned and helpless Prince Dolor is a projection of the female situation.'[24] As evidenced in her last novels, Craik was passionate about the social and political injustice experienced by women. However, convincing as this is, if *The Little Lame Prince* is about the passive suffering of women, then nonetheless Craik chose to make her central figure a boy and then a man—albeit one whose name and character derive from his mother. Mitchell has also argued that Craik's story aims at the education of the emotions, the creation of 'habits of feeling', a thought that answers the pathos and still beauty of the text, its evident investment both in resignation and in the wonder that resignation discovers, or that exists as its alternative.[25]

Concerns with gender and sexuality, and with desire and love, certainly pervade these tales. One element in the pleasure of fairy paintings was the titillation of a whimsical erotic impulse. Perhaps in part because its audience was more likely to belong to the nursery, the literary fairy tale was more circumspect in this regard. Love and marriage is central to the genre; though desire exists, in matters of sex, it

[22] Nina Auerbach and U. C. Knoepflmacher (eds.), *Forbidden Journeys: Fairy Tales and Fantasies by Victorian Women Writers* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1.

[23] Elaine Showalter, 'Dinah Mulock Craik and the Tactics of Sentiment: A Case Study in Victorian Female Authorship', *Feminist Studies*, 2/3 (1975), 8.

[24] Sally Mitchell, *Dinah Mulock Craik* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), 88.

[25] Mitchell, *Dinah Mulock Craik*, 79–80.

is in most cases strikingly chaste. In *The Little Lame Prince*, 'Prince Dolor' is ostensibly without sexual longings, literally dead from the waist down. He is emotionally linked only to his dead mother. Instead of active erotic longing, he pursues a passive, unthreatening habit of observation.

The manner in which love most arrestingly appears in the stories in this volume is with respect to the making of the self through suffering and through relatedness to others. As Craik's Dolor asserts: 'One cannot make oneself, but one can sometimes help a little in the making of somebody else.' The story is present at the reader's making too, a framing and altering of the self, performed by reading—fostering the capacity to play and the sense of justice. We take part in the making of the Prince, as he twice survives his dead image: once with the wax figure who is buried and once where the godmother replaces him with a 'quantity of moonshine'. (Perhaps there is a trace here of 'moonshine' as a synonym for nonsense.) Later the usurping king is himself laid out like a waxwork; there is a rhyme in the story here, a connection between death and a kind of feigned resurrection.

Love too lies at the heart of *The Rose and the Ring*, the contrast being between genuine love and doting. There is a worry throughout that persons may be interchangeable, one lover taking the place of another, one king on the wrong throne, exchanging one prince to be executed with another. Some of Mary De Morgan's tales (such as 'A Toy Princess' or 'The Windfairies') movingly posit the conflict between a real self—instinctual, passionate, and loving—and a social self—conventional, tamed, and mechanical. In this Romantic way, like many in the genre, her story intrinsically subverts the codes of polite society. The good that it celebrates is courtesy, not politeness, and the real and spontaneous human soul.

Questions of gender and of love inform Ford's *The Queen Who Flew*, presenting the difficulties of a trapped and pampered femininity. It is a tale that consciously takes (as do Ford's other fairy tales) the woman's position. For much of its length, it is apparently anti-romance, with Eldrida resisting numerous apt, if unwanted proposals of marriage. First, men wish to marry her for political reasons, and later fall in love with her by a kind of enchantment. Both prove simply a nuisance. The Queen (no princess, she) flees Narrowlands, a place that is, as its name would suggest, a country of constricted possibilities. It is a violent tale, with beheadings and assaults; the Regent

shoves his wife (we assume) into a bear-pit; and evil King Mark is trapped in the tower, and left there until he dies. The tailor similarly proves ready to murder his wife, if that means he can marry Eldrida. Some of the violence of Perrault and Grimm returns here, and is possibly one source of enjoyment for the child audience. There's a note of realism, a sort of angry energy and a vein of wild fantasy in it—as when Eldrida flies up to the sun, and is sent back to the earth by God. There's a touch of magic too, as in the beautiful stillness of the picture of the ploughman at twilight, an earthy presence. And for all its apparent refusal of interest in love, it stands as a kind of parable about affection too.

Housman's tales are often of love and transformation, with partners separated by the human–animal divide, or the division between the moon and the earth. Love between men and women seems possible, but roots itself in an immense difference, in which each must exchange part of their nature with the other. As in Wilde's stories, it is possible to see Housman's fairy tales as coded accounts of homosexual love—another desire that in the 1890s seemed bound up with suffering. Yet here, as everywhere in these tales, there is a sense that we must accept differences, that the world contains many possibilities, many kinds of uniqueness.

There is a famous anecdote, in which Vyvyan Holland, Oscar Wilde's son, recalled that his father cried when he read 'The Selfish Giant'. When asked why, Wilde replied that 'really beautiful things always made him cry'.[26] Tears normally have no place in critical accounts, or even in introductions. Wilde's story, and all the stories in this book, both provide places for thinking and reflection, and simultaneously play upon our feelings and exercise our capacity for compassion. Reading them is a serious delight. They introduce us to an already familiar strangeness, and through the resources of art grant a space to make believe.

[26] Vyvyan Holland, *Son of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 53–4.

NOTE ON THE TEXTS

As far as possible, the copy-texts used in this edition are based on their first appearance in volume form. Original spellings and punctuation have been retained, though single quotation marks have been used in place of double ones; obvious errors have been corrected. Full details of each copy-text used appear in the Explanatory Notes, as well as information about the authors and their careers. Individual notes are signalled with an asterisk in the text. An appendix brings together four classic critical explorations of the fairy tale, by Ruskin, Ewing, MacDonald, and Housman.

I followed a number of principles in selecting the tales for this anthology. In part, stories were chosen because of their representative nature, in order to give the reader a sense of the kinds of literary fairy story that were available in the Victorian period. Stories were similarly picked so that the most influential authors working in the field would be included. However, more than just being typical examples of the genre, each story was also chosen for its aesthetic interest. I have also been guided by my sense of which stories have seemed the most illuminating and complex to other writers and readers. These considerations have meant that I have not shied away from choosing stories that are likely to be already familiar to those engaged with the genre. On the other hand, some of the most interesting tales in the field have not been much anthologized (if ever), and I am very happy to include here Andrew Lang's *Prince Prigio*, Ford Madox Ford's *The Queen Who Flew*, and excellent less-known tales by Mary De Morgan, Juliana Horatia Ewing, and Laurence Housman. The volume ends with Kipling, a Victorian author writing on into the Edwardian period, who, while slightly outside the chronological limits of this volume, nonetheless provides a fitting end to it, with a tale that bids farewell to the fairy tale and to the fairies.

The volume begins with a prologue, featuring two short tales by Grimm and Andersen. These are included as an appetizer to the main feast for several reasons. First, the impact of Edgar Taylor's translation of Grimm and of the several translations of Hans Andersen's work appearing in 1846 cannot be overestimated. This is not to belittle the influence of other fairy-tale writers and collectors, such as

Charles Perrault or Madame d'Aulnoy. However, these are in their origin nineteenth-century books that had a vivifying effect on the Victorian fairy tale. Second, I felt it vital to show that one of the key ways that fairy tales permeated Victorian culture was indeed in the form of translation; the taking in of 'foreign' works and making them central to the English-language imagination was one of the animating forces of the time. Third, George Cruikshank's pictures adorn Taylor's translation, and, when it came to fairies, these images themselves expanded and opened up the Victorian imagination.

The only constraints on inclusion were length (hence the absence of Jean Ingelow's *Mopsa the Fairy*) and that each tale should make sense as an individual story if extracted from the book of which they form a part (hence the absence of anything by Mary Molesworth). While excellent in themselves, Anne Isabella Ritchie's fairy-tale pastiches seemed to me to belong more to an anthology of parodies than of Victorian fairy tales.

Illustration was central to the meaning and the appreciation of many of these tales. When *The King of the Golden River* appeared in 1851, the book's chief selling-point (and the only name to feature on its title page) was not its author, John Ruskin, but its illustrator, Richard Doyle. Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* is more a story constructed to make sense of its author's pictures than simply an illustrated book. (After all, the subtitle of *Vanity Fair* was 'Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society'.) While it has not been possible to reproduce all the original illustrations that accompanied these tales, I hope the selection in this volume will give some indication of their style, quality, and charm.

It became a feature of the fairy-tale book to experiment with typography, layout, font, and printing techniques, so that the actual physical presence and look of the book become an element in the meaning of the tale. These books were aesthetic objects in their own right, formed by the relationship between author, artist, and printer. Some of this can be seen here in the expressive use of typesize in stories such as Southey's 'The Three Bears', and in displayed type in other stories.

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On Victorian Fairy Painting

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Arabian Nights' Entertainments, ed. Robert L. Mack.
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—— *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens / Peter and Wendy*, ed. Peter Hollindale.
Carroll, Lewis, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through The Looking-Glass*, ed. Peter Hunt.
Collodi, Carlo, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, trans. and ed. Ann Lawson Lucas.
Grahame, Kenneth, *The Wind in the Willows*, ed. Peter Hunt.
Hoffmann, E. T. A, *The Golden Pot and Other Tales*, trans. and ed. Ritchie Robertson.
Kingsley, Charles, *The Water-Babies*, ed. Brian Alderson, introduction by Robert Douglas-Fairhurst.
Perrault, Charles, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, trans. and ed. Christopher Betts.
Wilde, Oscar, *The Complete Short Stories*, ed. John Sloan.

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE LITERARY FAIRY TALE

1705–8 Grub Street translation of the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* (*Thousand and One Nights*) (including the tales of 'Aladdin', 'Ali Baba', and 'Sindbad the Sailor').

1721–2 Translation into English of Madame d'Aulnoy, *A Collection of Novels and Tales* (including 'The Yellow Dwarf').

1729 First translation into English of Charles Perrault, *Histories or Tales of Past Times.*

1761 Madame de Beaumont, *The Young Misses Magazine* (the first translation of 'Beauty and the Beast' and 'The Three Wishes' into English).

1774 Birth of Robert Southey.

1803 Sir Walter Scott, 'On the Fairies of Popular Superstition', in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–3).

1804 Benjamin Tabart starts publishing his series of *Popular Stories* (to 1809), including versions of tales by Madame d'Aulnoy and 'Jack the Giant-Killer'.

1811 Charles Lamb, *Prince Dorus*; birth of William Makepeace Thackeray.

1812 Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (in German).

1818 First English translation of Motte Fouqué, *Undine.*

1819 John Keats, 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'; birth of John Ruskin.
Peterloo Massacre.

1820 Birth of Jean Ingelow.

1823 Edgar Taylor's translation of Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm's *German Popular Stories*, with illustrations by George Cruikshank.

1824 Birth of Richard Doyle; birth of George MacDonald.

1825 Thomas Crofton Croker, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (an expanded edition follows in 1828, with illustrations by Daniel Maclise).

1826 Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Oberon* (with libretto by James Robinson Planché) has its premiere at Covent Garden, London; Felix Mendelssohn composes his Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; birth of Dinah Mulock.

1827 Translation of E. T. A. Hoffmann, *The Golden Pot* (by Thomas Carlyle).

1828 Thomas Keightley, *The Fairy Mythology.*

1832 Filippo Taglioni (choreography) and Jean-Madeleine Schneitzhoeffer (music), *La Sylphide.*

1837 Robert Southey, 'The Story of the Three Bears'; birth of Anne Isabella Thackeray Ritchie.

Accession of Victoria.

1839 Catherine Sinclair, *Holiday House* (containing the chapter 'Uncle David's Nonsensical Story about Giants and Fairies').

1841 A. W. Pugin, *The Principles of English Architecture*; John Ruskin writes *The King of the Golden River*; birth of Juliana Horatia Ewing.

Henry Fox Talbot patents his photographic process.

1842 Coal Mines Act forbids the employment of children under the age of 10 and of women in underground coal mines.

1843 Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*; death of Robert Southey.

1844 Birth of Andrew Lang.

1845 James Orchard Halliwell (ed.), *Illustrations of the Fairy Mythology of A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Famine begins in Ireland (to 1850, the worst year being 1847).

1846 Hans Andersen, *A Danish Story-Book* (trans. Charles Boner); *Danish Fairy Legends and Tales* (trans. Caroline Peachey); *The Nightingale and Other Tales* (trans. Charles Boner); publication of *Household Stories* (first appearance in English of 'Hansel and Gretel'); Edward Lear, *A Book of Nonsense.*

Sir Joseph Noel Paton paints *The Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania.*

1848 First translation into English of Giambattista Basile, *The Pentamerone* (trans. John Edward Taylor, with illustrations by George Cruikshank).

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*; the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood founded.

1850 William Allingham, 'The Fairies'; birth of Mary De Morgan; at Christmas, John Ruskin, *The King of the Golden River*, with illustrations by Richard Doyle.

1851 Dinah Mulock Craik, *Alice Learmont*; Margaret Gatty, *The Fairy Godmothers.*

The Great Exhibition held in London.

1852 Sir William Wilde, *Irish Popular Superstitions.*

1853 George Cruikshank begins publishing his *Fairy Library*, a series of fairy tales rewritten in order to further a temperance message; Charles Dickens, 'Fraud on the Fairies' published in *Household Words.*

Start of the Crimean War.

1854 Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*; William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Rose and the Ring*; birth of Oscar Wilde.

1855 Richard Dadd begins painting *The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke* (to 1864).

1856 William Morris, 'The Hollow Land'; Charles Kean's spectacular production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Princess Theatre, London (with Ellen Terry playing Puck).

End of the Crimean War.

1857 Frances Browne, *Granny's Wonderful Chair and Its Tales of Fairy Times.*

The Indian Mutiny.

1858 George MacDonald, *Phantastes*; birth of Edith Nesbit; John Anster Fitzgerald paints *The Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of.*

Victoria proclaims permanent British rule of India by the Crown (as opposed to the East India Company).

1859 Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*; George Dasent, *Popular Tales From the Norse*; Henry Morley, *Fables and Fairy Tales*; birth of Kenneth Grahame.

1860 Alfred Crowquill, 'Heinrich; or, the Love of Gold' (in *Fairy Footsteps*); Henry Morley, *Oberon's Horn.*

William Morris founds Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.

1862 Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market.*

1863 Charles Kingsley, *The Water Babies* (illustrated by Joseph Noel Paton and Percival Skelton); death of William Makepeace Thackeray.

The underground railway opens in London.

1864 George MacDonald, *Adela Cathcart.*

1865 Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; birth of Laurence Housman; birth of Rudyard Kipling.

First Women's Suffrage Committee founded.

1866 First publication of *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, edited by Margaret Gatty.

1867 Lewis Carroll, 'Bruno's Revenge' (published in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*); George MacDonald, *Dealings with the Fairies*; William Morris, *The Life and Death of Jason.*

1868 Charles Dickens, 'The Magic Fishbone' (published in *All the Year Round*); Anne Isabella Ritchie, *Five Old Friends and a Young Prince*; Alexander Strahan founds the journal *Good Words for the Young* (first edited by Norman Macleod, and later by George MacDonald).

1869 Jean Ingelow, *Mopsa the Fairy*; John Ruskin, 'Introduction' to *German Popular Tales.*

Founding of Girton College for women in Cambridge.

1870 William Allingham (poems) and Richard Doyle (illustrations), *In Fairyland*; Juliana Horatia Ewing, 'Christmas Crackers', 'Amelia and the Dwarfs', 'Under the Sun' (in *The Brownies and Other Tales*); Edward Burne-Jones paints his first *Briar Rose* sequence (to 1873).

Married Women's Property Act; W. E. Forster's Education Act.

1871 Juliana Horatia Ewing, 'The Ogre Courting' and 'The Little Darner' (published in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*); Edward H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, *Moonshine* (including 'Charlie Among the Elves'); Edward Lear, *Nonsense Songs*; George MacDonald, *At the Back of the North Wind* published in volume form; Christina Rossetti, *Sing Song.*

1872 Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*; George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin.*

1873 Birth of Ford Madox Ford (Ford Hermann Hueffer).

Invention of the typewriter.

1874 Dinah Mulock Craik, *The Little Lame Prince and His Travelling Cloak*; Anne Isabella Ritchie, *Bluebeard's Keys and Other Stories*; Christina Rossetti, *Speaking Likenesses.*

1875 George MacDonald, *The Wise Woman.*

Norman Shaw designs Bedford Park, London's first garden suburb.

1876 Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark.*

Queen Victoria named Empress of India; invention of the telephone by Alexander Graham Bell.

1877 Edward Lear, *Laughable Lyrics* (including 'The Dong with a Luminous Nose'); Mary De Morgan, 'A Toy Princess' (in *On a Pincushion and Other Tales*); Pyotr Tchaikovsky composes *Swan Lake*.

Thomas Edison patents the phonograph.

1878 The Folklore Society founded in London (founding members include Andrew Lang, Jessie Weston, and Alfred Nutt).

Founding of Lady Margaret Hall, the first college for women in Oxford.

1879 Mary Molesworth, 'The Brown Bull of Norrowa' (in *The Tapestry Room*).

First electric street lighting in London.

1880 Mary De Morgan, *The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde.*

1881 W. S. Gilbert (libretto) and Arthur Sullivan (music), *Iolanthe.*

1882 Juliana Horatia Ewing, *Old-Fashioned Fairy Tales* (including 'The Ogre Courting' and 'The First Wife's Wedding Ring').

The Phoenix Park Murders in Ireland; Second Married Women's Property Act.

1883 George MacDonald, *The Princess and Curdie.*

In Chicago, the first skyscraper is built (ten storeys high).

1884 Andrew Lang, *The Princess Nobody*; Andrew Lang, *Custom and Myth.*

Sir Hiram Stevens Maxim invents the machine gun.

1885 Sir Richard Burton's translation of *The Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night* (in sixteen volumes, to 1888); death of Juliana Horatia Ewing.

Criminal Law Amendment Act; among other provisions, it raises the age of consent from 13 to 16, and also recriminalizes sexual contact (or 'gross indecency') between men.

1887 Mary Molesworth, *Four Winds Farm*; Lady Wilde, *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland* (partly based on material gathered by Sir William Wilde); death of Dinah Mulock Craik.

Thomas Edison patents the Kinetoscope.

1888 Andrew Lang, *The Gold of Fairnilee*; Andrew Lang's edition of Charles Perrault; Constance Wilde, *There Was Once: Grandma's Stories*; Oscar Wilde, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*; W. B. Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry.*

'Bloody Sunday': violence breaks out between police and radical demonstrators in Trafalgar Square.

1889 Lewis Carroll, *Sylvie and Bruno*; Andrew Lang, *Prince Prigio*; Andrew Lang, *The Blue Fairy Book*; W. B. Yeats, *The Wanderings of Oisin.*

1890 Joseph Jacobs, *English Fairy Tales*; Sir James Fraser begins publication of *The Golden Bough* (to 1915).

William Morris founds the Kelmscott Press.

1891 Oscar Wilde, *The House of Pomegranates.*

Death of the Irish politician Charles Stewart Parnell; the Assisted Education Act establishes the right to free elementary schooling.

1892 Ford Madox Ford, *The Brown Owl*; first English translation of Henrik Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*; Joseph Jacobs, *Celtic Fairy Tales*; Mary Molesworth, 'The Summer Princess' (in *The Enchanted Garden*); Pyotr Tchaikovsky, *The Nutcracker* (ballet).

1893 Andrew Lang, *Prince Ricardo of Pantouflia*; George MacDonald, 'The Fantastic Imagination'; W. B. Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight.*

1894 Ford Madox Ford, *The Queen Who Flew*; Laurence Housman, *A Farm in Fairyland*; Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book*; William Morris, *The Wood Beyond the World*; death of Christina Rossetti.

1895 Kenneth Grahame, *The Golden Age*; Laurence Housman, *The House of Joy*; Rudyard Kipling, *The Second Jungle Book*; George MacDonald, *Lilith*; Frances MacDonald draws *The Sleeping Princess.*

1896 William Morris, *The Well at the World's End.*

The invention of radio.

1897 W. B. Yeats, *The Secret Rose.*

1898 Edward Clodd, *Tom-Tit-Tot*; Kenneth Grahame, 'The Reluctant Dragon' (in *Dream Days*); Laurence Housman, *The Field of Clover*; Evelyn Sharp, *All the Way to Fairyland.*

1899 Arthur Machen, 'The White People'.

1900 L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*; Mary De Morgan, *The Windfairies and Other Tales*; E. Nesbit, *The Book of Dragons*; Alfred Nutt, *The Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare*; Evelyn Sharp, *The Other Side of the Sun*; death of John Ruskin; death of Oscar Wilde.

1901 E. Nesbit, 'Melisande' (in *Nine Unlikely Tales for Children*); Georges Méliès's film *Barbe-bleue* (*Bluebeard*).

Death of Queen Victoria; accession of Edward VII.

1902 Rudyard Kipling, *Just So Stories*; E. Nesbit, *Five Children and It.*

1903 The Wright Brothers' first successful powered flight; Ford Motor Company founded.

1904 First performance of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*; E. Nesbit, *The Phoenix and the Carpet.*

1905 Laurence Housman, 'Introduction' to *Gammer Grethel's Fairy Tales*; death of George MacDonald.

Albert Einstein describes the Theory of Relativity.

1906 J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (with illustrations by Arthur Rackham); Rudyard Kipling, *Puck of Pook's Hill*; E. Nesbit, *The Story of the Amulet*; Patrick Pearse rewrites Wilde's 'The Selfish Giant' in Irish as *Ísogán.*

1907 E. Nesbit, *The Enchanted Castle*; death of Mary De Morgan.

1908 Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows.*

1910 Lady Augusta Gregory, *Gods and Fighting Men*; Rudyard Kipling, *Rewards and Fairies*; E. Nesbit, *The Magic City.*

1911 J. M. Barrie, *Peter and Wendy*; Evans Wentz, *Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries.*

1912 James Stephens, *The Crock of Gold*; death of Andrew Lang.
The sinking of the *Titanic*.

1914 The beginning of the First World War.

PROLOGUE

JAKOB AND WILHELM GRIMM

Rumpel-Stilts-kin

In a certain kingdom once lived a poor miller who had a very beautiful daughter. She was moreover exceedingly shrewd and clever; and the miller was so vain and proud of her, that he one day told the king of the land that his daughter could spin gold out of straw. Now this king was very fond of money; and when he heard the miller's boast, his avarice was excited, and he ordered the girl to be brought before him. Then he led her to a chamber where there was a great quantity of straw, gave her a spinning-wheel, and said, 'All this must be spun into gold before morning, as you value your life.' It was in vain that the poor maiden declared that she could do no such thing, the chamber was locked and she remained alone.

She sat down in one corner of the room and began to lament over her hard fate, when on a sudden the door opened, and a droll-looking little man hobbled in, and said 'Good morrow to you, my good lass, what are you weeping for?' 'Alas!' answered she, 'I must spin this straw into gold, and I know not how.' 'What will you give me,' said the little man, 'to do it for you?' 'My necklace,' replied the maiden. He took her at her word, and set himself down to the wheel; round about it went merrily, and presently the work was done, and the gold all spun.

When the king came and saw this, he was greatly astonished and pleased; but his heart grew still more greedy of gain, and he shut up the poor miller's daughter again with a fresh task. Then she knew not what to do, and sat down once more to weep; but the little man presently opened the door, and said 'What will you give me to do your task?' 'The ring on my finger,' replied she. So her little friend took the ring, and began to work at the wheel, till by the morning all was finished again.

The king was vastly delighted to see all his glittering treasure; but still he was not satisfied, and took the miller's daughter into a yet larger room, and said, 'All this must be spun to-night; and if you succeed you shall be my queen.' As soon as she was alone the dwarf came in, and

said 'What will you give me to spin gold for you this third time?' 'I have nothing left,' said she. 'Then promise me,' said the little man, 'your first little child when you are queen.' 'That may never be,' thought the miller's daughter; and as she knew no other way to get her task done, she promised him what he asked, and he spun once more the whole heap of gold. The king came in the morning, and finding all he wanted, married her, and so the miller's daughter really became queen.

At the birth of her first little child the queen rejoiced very much, and forgot the little man and her promise; but one day he came into her chamber and reminded her of it. Then she grieved sorely at her misfortune, and offered him all the treasures of the kingdom in exchange; but in vain, till at last her tears softened him, and he said 'I will give you three days' grace, and if during that time you tell me my name, you shall keep your child.'

Now the queen lay awake all night, thinking of all the odd names that she had ever heard, and dispatched messengers all over the land to inquire after new ones. The next day the little man came, and she began with Timothy, Benjamin, Jeremiah, and all the names she could remember; but to all of them he said, 'That's not my name.'

The second day she began with all the comical names she could hear of, Bandy-legs, Hunch-back, Crook-shanks, and so on; but the little gentleman still said to every one of them, 'That's not my name.'

The third day one of the messengers came back, and said 'I can hear of no other names; but yesterday, as I was climbing a high hill among the trees of the forest where the fox and the hare bid each other good night, I saw a little hut, and before the hut burnt a fire, and round about the fire a funny little man danced upon one leg, and sang

"Merrily the feast I'll make,
To-day I'll brew, to-morrow bake;
Merrily I'll dance and sing,
For next day will a stranger bring:
Little does my lady dream
Rumpel-Stilts-kin is my name!" '

When the queen heard this, she jumped for joy, and as soon as her little visitor came, and said 'Now, lady, what is my name?' 'Is it John?' asked she. 'No!' 'Is it Tom?' 'No!'

'Can your name be Rumpel-Stilts-kin?'

'Some witch told you that! Some witch told you that!' cried the little man, and dashed his right foot in a rage so deep into the floor, that he was forced to lay hold of it with both hands to pull it out. Then he makes the best of his way off, while every body laughed at him for having had all his trouble for nothing.

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

The Princess and the Peas

THERE lived, once upon a time, a Prince, and he wished to marry a Princess, but then she must be really and truly a Princess. So he travelled over the whole world to find one; but there was always something or other to prevent his being successful. Princesses he found in plenty, but he could never make out if they were real Princesses; for sometimes one thing and sometimes another appeared to him to be not quite right about the ladies. So at last he returned home quite cast down; for he wanted very much to have a real Princess for a wife.

One evening, a dreadful storm was gathering; it thundered and lightened, and the rain poured down from heaven in torrents; it was, too, as dark as pitch. Suddenly a loud knocking was heard at the town-gates; and the old King, the Prince's father, went out himself to see who was there.

It was a Princess that stood at the gate; but, Lord bless me! what a figure she was from the rain! The water ran down from her hair, and her dress was dripping wet and stuck quite close to her body. She said she was a real Princess.

'We'll soon see about that,' thought the old Queen Dowager: however, she said not a word, but went into the bed-room, took out all the bedding, and laid three small peas on the bottom of the bedstead. Then she took, first, twenty mattresses, and laid them one upon the other on the three peas, and then she took twenty feather-beds more, and put these again a-top of the mattresses.

This was the bed the Princess was to sleep in.

The next morning she asked her if she had had a good night.

'Oh, no! a horrid night!' said the Princess. 'I was hardly able to close my eyes the whole night! Heaven knows what was in my bed, but there was a something hard under me, and my whole body is black and blue with bruises! I can't tell you what I've suffered!'

Then they knew that the lady they had lodged was a real Princess,

since she had felt the three small peas through twenty mattresses and twenty feather beds; for it is quite impossible for anyone but a true Princess to be so tender.

So the Prince married her; for he was now convinced that he had a real Princess for his wife. The three peas were deposited in the Museum, where they are still to be seen; that is to say, if they have not been lost.

Now was not that a lady of exquisite feeling?