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A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

THE CLASSIC FAIRY TALES



TEXTS
CRITICISM

Edited by
MARIA TATAR
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



W • W • NORTON & COMPANY • New York • London

Introduction

Fairy tales, Angela Carter tells us, are not "unique one-offs," and their narrators are neither "original" nor "godlike" nor "inspired." To the contrary, these stories circulate in multiple versions, reconfigured by each telling to form kaleidoscopic variations with distinctly different effects. When we say the word "Cinderella," we are referring not to a single text but to an entire array of stories with a persecuted heroine who may respond to her situation with defiance, cunning, ingenuity, self-pity, anguish, or grief. She will be called Yeh-hsien in China, Cendrillon in Italy, Aschenputtel in Germany, and Catskin in England. Her sisters may be named One-Eye and Three-Eyes, Anastasia and Drizella, or she may have just one sister named Holoek. Her tasks range from tending cows to sorting peas to fetching embers for a fire.

Although many variant forms of a tale can now be found between the covers of books and are attributed to individual authors, editors, or compilers, they derive largely from collective efforts. In reflecting on the origins of fairy tales, Carter asks us to consider: "Who first invented meatballs? In what country? Is there a definitive recipe for potato soup? Think in terms of the domestic arts. 'This is how I make potato soup.'"¹ The story of Little Red Riding Hood, for example, can be discovered the world over, yet it varies radically in texture and flavor from one culture to the next. Even in a single culture, that texture or flavor may be different enough that a listener will impatiently interrupt the telling of a tale to insist "That's not the way I heard it." In France, Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother are devoured by the wolf. The Grimms' version, by contrast, stages a rescue scene in which a hunter intervenes to liberate Red Riding Hood and her grandmother from the belly of the wolf. Caterinella, an Italian Red Riding Hood, is invited to dine on the teeth and ears of her grandmother by a masquerading wolf. A Chinese "Goldflower" manages to slay the beast who wants to devour her by throwing a spear into his mouth. Local color often affects the premises of a tale. In Italy, the challenge facing one heroine is not spinning straw into gold but downing seven plates of lasagna.

Virtually every element of a tale, from the name of the hero or heroine through the nature of the beloved to the depiction of the villain, seems subject to change. In the British Isles, Cinderella goes by the name of Catskin, Mossycoat, or Rashin-Coatie. The mother of one Italian "Beauty" pleads with her daughter to marry a pig, while another mother runs interference for a snake. In Russia, the cannibalistic witch in the forest has a hut set on chicken legs surrounded by a fence with posts made of stacked

1. Angela Carter, ed., *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (London: Virago Press, 1990) x.

human skulls. Rumpelstiltskin is also known as Titeliture, Ricdin-Ricdon, Tom Tit Tot, Batzibitzili, Panzimanzi, and Whuppity Stoorie.

While there is no "original" version of "Cinderella" or "Sleeping Beauty," there is a basic plot structure (what folklorists refer to as a "tale type") that appears despite rich cultural variation. "Beauty and the Beast," for example, according to the tale-type index compiled by the Finnish folklorist Antti Aarne and refined by the American folklorist Stith Thompson, has the following episodic structure:

- I. The monster as husband
- II. Disenchantment of the monster
- III. Loss of the husband
- IV. Search for the husband
- V. Recovery of the husband

While the monster as husband is a structural constant, the monster itself may (and does) take the form of virtually any beast—a goat, a mouse, a hedgehog, a crocodile, or a lion. The search for the husband may require the heroine to cover vast tracts of land in iron shoes, to sort out peas from lentils in an impossibly short time, or simply to wish herself back to the monster's castle. Despite certain limitations, the tale-type index is a convenient tool for defining the stable core of a story and for identifying those features subject to local variation.

Telling fairy tales has been considered a "domestic art" at least since Plato in the *Gorgias* referred to the "old wives' tales" told by nurses to amuse and to frighten children. Although virtually all of the national collections of fairy tales compiled in the nineteenth century were the work of men, the tales themselves were ascribed to women narrators. As early as the second century A.D., Apuleius, the North African author of *The Golden Ass*, had designated his story of "Cupid and Psyche" (told by a drunken and half-demented old woman) as belonging to the genre of "old wives' tales." The Venetian Giovanni Francesco Straparola claimed to have heard the stories that constituted his *Facetious Nights* of 1550 "from the lips of . . . lady storytellers" and he embedded those stories in a narrative frame featuring a circle of garrulous female narrators.² Giambattista Basile's seventeenth-century collection of Neapolitan tales, *The Pentamerone*, also has women storytellers—quick-witted, gossipy old crones who recount "those tales that old women tell to amuse children."³ The renowned *Tales of Mother Goose* by Charles Perrault were designated by their author as old wives' tales, "told by governesses and grandmothers to little children."⁴ And many of the most expansive storytellers consulted by the Grimms were women—family friends or servants who had at their disposal a rich repertoire of folklore.

The association of fairy tales with the domestic arts and with old wives' tales has not done much to enhance the status of these cultural stories.

2. Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994) 36.

3. *The Pentamerone*, trans. Benedetto Croce, ed. N. M. Penzer (John Lane: The Bodley Head, 1932) 9.

4. Charles Perrault, "Préface," *Contes en vers* (1694; reprint, Paris: Gallimard, 1951) 50.

"On a par with trifles," Marina Warner stresses, "'mere old wives' tales' carry connotations of error, of false counsel, ignorance, prejudice and fallacious nostrums—against heartbreak as well as headache; similarly 'fairy tale,' as a derogatory term, implies fantasy, escapism, invention, the unreliable consolations of romance."⁵

Although fairy tales are still arguably the most powerfully formative tales of childhood and permeate mass media for children and adults, it is not unusual to find them deemed of marginal cultural importance and dismissed as unworthy of critical attention. Yet the staying power of these stories, their widespread and enduring popularity, suggests that they must be addressing issues that have a significant social function—whether critical, conservative, compensatory, or therapeutic. In a study of mass-produced fantasies for women, Tania Modleski points out that genres such as the soap opera, the Gothic novel, and the Harlequin romance "speak to very real problems and tensions in women's lives. The narrative strategies which have evolved for smoothing over these tensions can tell us much about how women have managed not only to live in oppressive circumstances but to invest their situations with some degree of dignity."⁶ Fairy tales register an effort on the part of both women and men to develop maps for coping with personal anxieties, family conflicts, social frictions, and the myriad frustrations of everyday life.

Trivializing fairy tales leads to the mistaken conclusion that we should suspend our critical faculties while reading these "harmless" narratives. While it may be disturbing to hear voices disavowing the transformative influence of fairy tales and proclaiming them to be culturally insignificant, it is just as troubling to find fairy tales turned into inviolable cultural icons. The Grimms steadfastly insisted on the sacred quality of the fairy tales they collected. Their *Nursery and Household Tales*, they asserted, made an effort to capture the pure, artless simplicity of a people not yet tainted by the corrupting influences of civilization. "These stories are suffused with the same purity that makes children appear so marvelous and blessed," Wilhelm Grimm declared in his preface to the collection. Yet both brothers must also have recognized that fairy tales were far from culturally innocent, for they extolled the "civilizing" power of the tales and conceived of their collection as a "manual of manners" for children.⁷

The myth of fairy tales as a kind of holy scripture was energetically propagated by Charles Dickens, who brought to the literature of childhood the same devout reverence he accorded children. Like the Grimms, Dickens hailed the "simplicity," "purity," and "innocent extravagance" of fairy tales, yet also praised the tales as powerful instruments of constructive socialization: "It would be hard to estimate the amount of gentleness and mercy that has made its way among us through these slight channels. Forebearance, courtesy, consideration for the poor and aged, kind treatment of

5. Warner, *Beast* 19. (Excerpted below, p. 309.)

6. Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982) 15.

7. From Jacob and Wilhelm Grimms' "Preface," *Nursery and Household Tales*, 1st ed., 2d ed., trans. Maria Tatar, in Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978) 206, 207.

animals, the love of nature, abhorrence of tyranny and brute force—many such good things have been first nourished in the child's heart by this powerful aid."⁸

Even in 1944, when Allied troops were locked in combat with German soldiers, W. H. Auden decreed the Grimms' fairy tales to be "among the few indispensable, common-property books upon which Western culture can be founded." "It is hardly too much to say," he added, "that these tales rank next to the Bible in importance."⁹ Like the devaluation of fairy tales, the overvaluation of fairy tales promotes a suspension of critical faculties and prevents us from taking a good, hard look at stories that are so obviously instrumental in shaping our values, moral codes, and aspirations. The reverence brought by some readers to fairy tales mystifies these stories, making them appear to be a source of transcendent spiritual truth and authority. Such a mystification promotes a hands-off attitude and conceals the fact that fairy tales, like "high art," are squarely implicated in the complex, yet not impenetrable, symbolic codes that permeate our cultural stories.

Despite efforts to deflect critical attention from fairy tales, the stories themselves have attracted the attention of scholars in disciplinary corners ranging from psychology and anthropology through religion and history to cultural studies and literary theory. Every culture has its myths, fairy tales, and fables, but few cultures have mobilized as much critical energy as has ours of late to debate the merits of these stories. Margaret Atwood, whose personal and literary engagement with fairy tales is no secret, has written vividly about her childhood encounter with an unexpurgated version of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*: "Where else could I have gotten the idea," she asserts, "so early in life, that words can change you?"¹⁰ Atwood's phrasing is magnificently ambiguous, referring on one level to the transformative spells cast on fairy-tale characters, but also implying that fairy tales can both shape our way of experiencing the world and endow us with the power to restructure our lives. As Stephen Greenblatt has observed, "the work of art is not the passive surface on which . . . historical experience leaves its stamp but one of the creative agents in the fashioning and refashioning of this experience."¹¹ As we read fairy tales, we simultaneously evoke the cultural experience of the past and allow it to work on our consciousness even as we reinterpret and reshape that experience.

Carolyn Heilbrun has also addressed the question of how the stories circulating in our culture regulate our lives and fashion our identities:

Let us agree on this: that we live our lives through texts. These may be read, or chanted, or experienced electronically, or come to us, like the murmurings of our mothers, telling us of what conventions de-

8. Charles Dickens, "Frauds on the Faires," in *Household Words: A Weekly Journal* (New York: McElrath and Barker, 1854) 97.
9. W. H. Auden, "In Praise of the Brothers Grimm," *New York Times Book Review*, 12 November 1944, 1.
10. Margaret Atwood, "Grimms' Remembered," in Donald Haase, ed., *The Reception of Grimms' Fairy Tales: Responses, Reactions, Revisions* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1993) 292.
11. Stephen Greenblatt, "Introduction," *Representing the English Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988) viii.

mand. Whatever their form or medium, these stories are what have formed us all, they are what we must use to make our new fictions. . . . Out of old tales, we must make new lives.³

Heilbrun endorses the notion of appropriating, revising, and revitalizing "old tales" in order to produce new social discourses that can, in turn, refashion our lives.

How we go about mobilizing fairy tales to help us form new social roles and identities is a hotly contested question. Some advocate the recuperation and critique of the classic canon; others have called for the revival of "heretical" texts (stories repressed and suppressed from cultural memory) and the formation of a new canon; still others champion rewriting the old tales or inventing new ones. This volume furnishes examples of each of these strategies, providing "classic" versions of specific tale types side by side with less well known versions from other cultures and inspired literary efforts to recast the tales. These projects for reclaiming folkloric legacies are not unproblematic, and they have each come under fire for failing to provide the answer to that perennial question of what makes an ideal cultural story.

For some observers, the classic canon of fairy tales is so hopelessly retrograde that it is futile to try to rehabilitate it. Andrea Dworkin refuses to countenance the possibility of preserving tales that were more or less forced upon us and that have been so effective in promoting stereotypical gender roles:

We have not formed that ancient world [of fairy tales]—it has formed us. We ingested it as children whole, had its values and consciousness imprinted on our minds as cultural absolutes long before we were in fact men and women. We have taken the fairy tales of childhood with us into maturity, chewed but still lying in the stomach, as real identity. Between Snow-white and her heroic prince, our two great fictions, we never did have much of a chance. At some point the Great Divide took place: they (the boys) dreamed of mounting the Great Steed and buying Snow-white from the dwarfs; we (the girls) aspired to become that object of every necrophiliac's lust—the innocent, victimized Sleeping Beauty, beauteous lump of ultimate, sleeping good.⁴

Yet for every critic who is convinced that we need to sound the tocsin and make fairy tales off-limits to children, there is one who celebrates the liberating energy and revolutionary edge of fairy tales. Alison Lurie, for example, sees the tales as reflecting a commendable level of gender equality, along with a power asymmetry tilted in favor of older women:

These stories suggest a society in which women are as competent and active as men, at every age and in every class. Gretel, not Hansel, defeats the Witch; and for every clever youngest son there is a youngest daughter equally resourceful. The contrast is greatest in maturity.

3. Carolyn Heilbrun, "What Was Penelope Unweaving?" in *Hamlet's Mother and Other Women* (New York: Columbia UP, 1990) 109.
4. Andrea Dworkin, *Woman-Hating* (New York: Dutton, 1974) 32–33.

where women are often more powerful than men. Real help for the hero or heroine comes most frequently from a fairy godmother or wise woman, and real trouble from a witch or wicked stepmother. . . . To prepare children for women's liberation, therefore, and to protect them against Future Shock, you had better buy at least one collection of fairy tales.⁵

Whom are we to believe? Andrea Dworkin, who contends that fairy tales perpetuate gender stereotypes, or Alison Lurie, who asserts that they unsettle gender roles? Do we side with those who denounce fairy tales for their melodrama and violence or with the psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, who finds them crucial to a child's healthy mental development? Margaret Atwood would answer by saying "It depends." Astonished by reports that *Grimms' Fairy Tales* was being denounced as sexist, she observed that one finds in the volume "wicked wizards as well as wicked witches, stupid women as well as stupid men." "When people say 'sexist fairy tales,'" she added, "they probably mean the anthologies that concentrate on 'The Sleeping Beauty,' 'Cinderella,' and 'Little Red Riding Hood' and leave out everything else. But in 'my' version, there are a good many forgetful or imprisoned princes who have to be rescued by the clever, brave, and resourceful princess, who is just as willing to undergo hardship and risk her neck as are the princes engaged in dragon slaying and tower climbing."⁶ Few fairy tales dictate a single, univocal, uncontested meaning; most are so elastic as to accommodate a wide variety of interpretations, and they derive their meaning through a process of engaged negotiation on the part of the reader. Just as there is no definitive version of "Little Red Riding Hood," there is also no definitive interpretation of her story.

Some versions of Little Red Riding Hood's story or Snow White's story may appear to reenforce stereotypes; others may have an emancipatory potential; still others may seem radically feminist. All are of historical interest, revealing the ways in which a story has adapted to a culture and been shaped by its social practices. The new story may be ideologically correct or ideologically suspect, but it can always serve as the point of departure for debate, critique, and dialogue. In this volume, I have tried to convey a sense of the rich cultural archive behind stories that we tend to flatten out with the monolithic labels "Little Red Riding Hood," "Snow White," or "Cinderella."

Recovering fairy tales that have undergone a process of cultural suppression or that have succumbed to cultural amnesia has been the mission of a number of folklorists in the past decades. Instead of reshaping canonical fairy tales or trying to reinvent them, these collectors seek to fill in the many empty spaces on the shelves of our collective folkloric archive. Rosemary Minard's *Womenfolk and Fairy Tales* explicitly seeks to identify tales in which women are "active, intelligent, capable, and courageous human beings."⁷ While Minard succeeds in reviving some resourceful folklore heroines, many of the faces in her anthology are familiar ones. A Chinese Red Riding Hood, a Scandinavian Beauty, and a British wife of Bluebeard

5. Alison Lurie, "Fairy Tale Liberation," *New York Review of Books*, 17 December 1970, 42.

6. Atwood, "Grimms' Remembered," 291-92.

7. Rosemary Minard, ed., *Womenfolk and Fairy Tales* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975) viii.

minge in her anthology with the more obscure Unanana, Kate Cracker-nuts, and Clever Manka.

Like Minard, Ethel Johnston Phelps aims to collect tales that feature "active and courageous girls and women in the leading roles" for her volume *Tatterhood and Other Tales*.⁸ By contrast, Angela Carter's *Virago Book of Fairy Tales* chooses texts for their historical interest, for the way in which they provide models of how women struggled, succeeded, and also sometimes failed in the challenges of everyday life. "I wanted to demonstrate the extraordinary richness and diversity of responses to the same common predicament—being alive—and the richness and diversity with which femininity, in practice, is represented in 'unofficial' culture: its strategies, its plots, its hard work."⁹

Our own fairy-tale repertoire can now be said to consist of two competing traditions. On the one hand, we have the classical canon of tales collected by, among others, Joseph Jacobs in England, Charles Perrault in France, the Grimm brothers in Germany, and Alexander Afanasev in Russia. On the other hand, we have a rival tradition of heretical stories established by folklorists who have sought to unearth buried cultural treasures and to conduct archaeological exercises designed to connect us with a subversive dimension of our collective past. In addition to this twin folkloric legacy, we have the reinventions of such authors as Hans Christian Andersen and Oscar Wilde, who, in competing with the raconteurs of old, attempted to supplant their narratives and to provide new cultural texts on which to model our lives.

Hans Christian Andersen and Oscar Wilde can be seen as moving in an imitative mode, attempting to capture the style and spirit of folk raconteurs in their literary efforts. Yet their fairy tales, with their self-consciously artless expressions and calculated didactic effects, diverge dramatically from the traditional tales of folk cultures. What both Andersen and Wilde seem to have forgotten is that the folktale thrives on conflict and contrast, not on sentiment and pathos. P. L. Travers tellingly registers her response as a child to reading Andersen's fairy tales: "Ah, how pleasant to be manipulated, to feel one's heartstrings pulled this way and that—twang, twang, again and again, longing, self-pity, nostalgia, remorse—and to let fall the fullsome tear that would never be shed for Grimm."¹⁰ Andersen wants to erase "the pagan world with its fortitude and strong contrasts." Still, Andersen's "Little Mermaid" reveals just how easily literary fairy tales can mutate into folklore, lending themselves to adaptation, transformation, and critique in a variety of media and becoming part of our collective cultural awareness.

Feminist writers have resisted the temptation to move in the imitative mode, choosing instead the route of critique and parody in their recastings of tales. For Anne Sexton, for example, the history and wisdom of the past embedded in fairy tales is less important than the construction of new cultural signposts for coping with "being alive." Anne Sexton's *Transfor-*

8. Ethel Johnston Phelps, ed., *Tatterhood and Other Tales* (Old Westbury, New York: Feminist Press, 1978) xv.

9. Carter, *Virago*, xiv.

10. P. L. Travers, *What the Bee Knows: Reflections on Myth, Symbol and Story* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Aquarian Press, 1969) 232.

mations begins by staking a claim to producing fairy tales, by declaring herself to be the new source of folk wisdom and of oracular authority. She positions herself as speaker, "my face in a book" (presumably the Grimms' *Nursery and Household Tales*), with "mouth wide, ready to tell you a story or two." In a self-described appropriation of the Grimms' legacy ("I take the fairy tale and transform it into a poem of my own"), Sexton creates new stories that stage her own "very wry and cruel and sadistic and funny" psychic melodramas.² As "middle-aged witch," Sexton presents herself as master of the black arts, of an opaque art of illusion, and also as a disruptive force, a figure of anarchic energy who subverts conventional cultural wisdom. Nowhere is her critique of romantic love, of the "happily ever after" of fairy tales, more searingly expressed than in the final strophe of "Cinderella":

Cinderella and the prince
lived, they say, happily ever after,
like two dolls in a museum case
never bothered by diapers and dust,
never arguing over the timing of an egg,
never telling the same story twice,
never getting a middle-aged spread,
their darling smiles pasted on for eternity.
Regular Bobbsey Twins.
That story.

Sexton's transformations reveal the gap between "that story" and reality, yet at the same time expose the specious terms of "that story," showing how intolerable it would be, even if true.

Sexton enters into an impassioned dialogue with the Grimm brothers, contesting their premises, interrogating their plots, and reinventing their conclusions. Other writers, recognizing the social energy of these tales, have followed her lead, rewriting and recasting stories told by Perrault, the Grimms, Madame de Beaumont, and Hans Christian Andersen. The dialogue may not always be as emotionally charged as it is in Sexton's poetry. In some cases it will be so muted that many readers will be unaware of the intertextual connection with fairy tales. Few film reviewers, for example, recognized the allusive richness of Jane Campion's *The Piano*,³ which opens with a bow to Andersen's "Little Mermaid," then nods repeatedly in the direction of the Grimms' "Robber Bridegroom" and Perrault's "Bluebeard."

With her collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter joined Anne Sexton in reworking the familiar script of fairy tales, in her case to mount "a critique of current relations between the sexes." Carter positions herself as a "moral pornographer," a writer seeking to "penetrate to the heart of the contempt for women that distorts our culture." "Beauty and the Beast," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Puss in Boots," and "Bluebeard":

2. Diane Wood Middlebrook, *Anne Sexton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991) 336-37.
3. *The Piano*, dir. Jane Campion, Miramax, 1994.

all these stories have, according to Carter, a "violently sexual" side to them, a "latent content" that becomes manifest in her rescriptings of fairy tales for an adult audience.⁴ Carter aims above all to demystify these sacred cultural texts, to show that we can break their magical spells and that social change is possible once we become aware of the stories that have guided our social, moral, and personal development. Margaret Atwood's novels and short stories also enact and critique the plots of fairy tales, showing the degree to which these stories inform our affective life, programming our responses to romance, defining our desires, and constructing our anxieties. Like Sally, the fictional heroine of Atwood's "Bluebeard's Egg," Atwood questions the seemingly timeless and universal truths of our cultural stories by reflecting on their assumptions and exploring the ways in which they can be subverted through rewritings.

It was Charlotte Brontë who inaugurated with full force the critique of fairy-tale romance in fiction by women for women. The life story of the heroine of *Jane Eyre* (1847) can be read as a one-woman crusade and act of resistance to the roles modeled for girls and women in fairy tales.⁵ At Gateshead, Jane Eyre finds herself positioned as domestic slave, as a Cinderella figure in the Reid household. Employed as an "under-nurserymaid, to tidy the rooms, dust the chairs" (25), she is subjected on a daily basis to reproaches, persecuted by two unpleasant "stepsisters" and by a "step-mother" who has an "insuperable and rooted aversion" (23) to her, and excluded from the "usual festive cheer" (23) of holiday parties. Jane, although initially self-pitying and complicit, takes a defiant stance, refusing to be contained and framed by the cultural story that has inscribed itself on her life. Rather than passively enduring her storybook fate (which will keep her—as a "plain Jane"—forever locked in the first phase of "Cinderella"), she rebels against the social reflexes of her world and writes herself out of the script.

Just as Jane refuses to model her behavior on Cinderella, despite the seductive, though false, hopes of that story, so too she refrains from accepting the role of beloved in Rochester's fairy-tale fantasies. No beauty, Jane is nonetheless at first enchanted by the prospect of domesticating a man who is described as "metamorphosed into a lion" and who inhabits a house with "a corridor from some Bluebeard's castle," a house that contains the dreaded forbidden chamber familiar to readers of "Bluebeard." Jane recognizes what is at stake for her in succumbing to a fairy-tale concept of romance: "For a moment I am beyond my own mastery. What does it mean? I did not think I should tremble in this way when I saw him—or lose my voice or the power of motion in his presence" (214). Jane Eyre rejects the cult of suffering and self-effacement endorsed in fairy tales like "Cinderella" and "Beauty and the Beast" to construct her own story, renouncing prefabricated roles and creating her own identity. She reinvents herself and produces a radically new cultural script, the one embodied in

4. Robin Ann Sheets, "Pornography, Fairy Tales, and Feminism: Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber,'" *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1 (1991): 635, 642.

5. All parenthetical citations to *Jane Eyre* refer to Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Richard J. Dunn (New York: Norton, 1987).

the written record that constitutes her own autobiography. Making productive use of fairy tales by reacting to them, resisting them, and rewriting them rather than passively consuming them until they are "lying in the stomach, as real identity," *Jane Eyre* offers us a splendidly legible and luminous map of reading for our cultural stories.

The Texts of THE CLASSIC FAIRY TALES



INTRODUCTION: Little Red Riding Hood

Late in life, Charles Dickens confessed that Little Red Riding Hood was his "first love": "I felt that if I could have married Little Red Riding Hood, I should have known perfect bliss."¹ Dickens's sentimental attachment to a fairy-tale character brought to literary life by Charles Perrault and reincarnated by the Brothers Grimm as Little Red Cap is hardly remarkable. But had Dickens been aware of Red Riding Hood's folkloric origins, he might have been more guarded in his enthusiasm for Perrault's "pretty village girl" or the Grimms' "dear little girl." Fairy tales, as folklorists and historians never tire of reminding us, have their roots in a peasant culture relatively uninhibited in its expressive energy. For centuries, farm laborers and household workers relied on the telling of tales to shorten the hours devoted to repetitive harvesting tasks and domestic chores. Is it surprising that, in an age without radios, televisions, and other electronic wonders, they favored fast-paced narratives with heavy doses of burlesque comedy, melodramatic action, scatological humor, and free-wheeling violence?

The distinguished French folklorist Paul Delarue claims to have found an authentic peasant folk narrative in "The Story of Grandmother" [10-11], a version of Little Red Riding Hood recorded in Brittany in 1885 but presumably told by the fireside at least a century earlier. While the tale recounts a girl's trip to grandmother's house and her encounter with a wolf, the resemblance to Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood" and the Grimms' "Little Red Cap" ends there. This Gallic heroine escapes falling victim to the wolf and instead joins the ranks of trickster figures. After arriving at grandmother's house and unwittingly eating "meat" and drinking "wine" that turns out to be the flesh and blood of her grandmother, she performs a striptease for the wolf, gets into bed with him, and escapes by pleading with the wolf for a chance to go outdoors and relieve herself.

Although Delarue's "Story of Grandmother" was not recorded until 1885 (almost two centuries after Perrault wrote down the story of "Little

Bracketed page numbers refer to this Norton Critical Edition.

1. Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Tree," *Christmas Stories* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1898), 8.

Red Riding Hood" [11–13]), it is presumably more faithful to an oral tradition predating Perrault, in part because the folklorist recording it was not invested in producing a highly literary book of manners for aristocratic children and worked hard to capture the exact wording of the peasant raconteur, and in part because oral traditions are notoriously conservative and often preserve the flavor of narratives as they circulated centuries ago. The "peasant girl" of the oral tradition is, as Jack Zipes points out, "forthright, brave, and shrewd."² She is an expert at using her wits to escape danger. Perrault changed all that when he put her story between the covers of a book and eliminated vulgarities, coarse turns of phrase, and unmotivated plot elements. Gone are the references to bodily functions, the racy double entendres, and the gaps in narrative logic. As Delarue points out, Perrault removed those elements that would have shocked the society of his epoch with their cruelty (the girl's devouring of the grandmother's flesh and blood), their inanity (the choice between the path of needles and the path of pins), or their "impropriety" (the girl's question about her grandmother's hairy body).³

Perrault worked hard to craft a tale that excised the ribald grotesqueries from the original peasant tale and rescripted the events in such a way as to accommodate a rational discursive mode and moral economy. That he intended to send a message about vanity, idleness, and ignorance becomes clear from the "moralité" appended to the tale:

From this story one learns that children,
Especially young girls,
Pretty, well-bred, and genteel,
Are wrong to listen to just anyone,
And it's not at all strange,
If a wolf ends up eating them. [13]

Perrault's Little Red Riding Hood has no idea that it is "dangerous to stop and listen to wolves" [12]. She also makes the fatal error of having a "good time" gathering nuts, chasing butterflies, and picking flowers [12]. And, of course, she is not as savvy as Thurber's "little girl" who knows that "a wolf does not look any more like your grandmother than the Metro-Goldwyn lion looks like Calvin Coolidge" [17].

Little Red Riding Hood's failure to fight back or to resist in any way led the psychoanalytically oriented Bruno Bettelheim to declare that the girl must be "stupid or she wants to be seduced." Perrault, in his view, transformed a "naive, attractive young girl, who is induced to neglect Mother's warnings and enjoy herself in what she consciously

2. Jack Zipes, ed. *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, 2d ed. (New York: Routledge, 1993) 26.

3. Paul Delarue, "Les Contes merveilleux de Perrault et la tradition populaire," *Bulletin folklorique de l'Île-de-France* (1951): 26.

believes to be innocent ways, into nothing but a fallen woman."⁴ No longer a trickster who survives through her powers of improvisation, she has become either a dimwit or a complicit victim. Bettelheim was also sensitive to the transformations endured by the wolf. Once a rapacious beast, he was turned by Perrault into a metaphor, a stand-in for male seducers who lure young women into their beds. While it may be true that peasant cultures figured the wolf as a savage predator, folk raconteurs had probably already gleefully taken advantage of the metaphorical possibilities of Little Red Riding Hood's encounter with the wolf and also exploited the full range and play of the tale's potential for sexual innuendo.

The Grimms' "Little Red Cap" [13–16] erased all traces of the erotic playfulness found in "The Story of Grandmother" and placed the action in the service of teaching lessons to the child inside and outside the story. Like many fairy tales, the Grimms' narrative begins by framing a prohibition, but it has difficulty moving out of that mode. Little Red Cap's mother hands her daughter cakes and wine for grandmother and proceeds to instruct her in the art of good behavior: "When you're out in the woods, walk properly and don't stray from the path. Otherwise you'll fall and break the glass, and then there'll be nothing for Grandmother. And when you enter her room, don't forget to say good morning, and don't go peeping in all the corners of the room" [14]. The Grimms' effort to encode lessons in "Little Red Cap" could hardly be called successful. The lecture on manners embedded in the narrative is not only alien to the spirit of fairy tales—which are so plot driven that they rarely traffic in the kind of pedagogical precision on display here—but also misfires in its lack of logic. The bottle never breaks even though Red Cap strays from the path, and the straying takes place only after the wolf has already spotted his prey.

The folly of trying to derive a clear moral message from "Little Red Riding Hood" in any of its versions becomes evident from Eric Berne's rendition of a Martian's reaction to the tale:

What kind of a mother sends a little girl into a forest where there are wolves? Why didn't her mother do it herself, or go along with LRRH? If grandmother was so helpless, why did mother leave her all by herself in a hut far away? But if LRRH had to go, how come her mother had never warned her not to stop and talk to wolves? The story makes it clear that LRRH had never been told that this was dangerous. No mother could really be that stupid, so it sounds as if her mother didn't care much what happened to LRRH, or maybe even wanted to get rid of her. No little girl is that stupid either. How could LRRH look at the wolf's eyes, ears, hands, and

4. Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

teeth, and still think it was her grandmother? Why didn't she get out of there as fast as she could?⁵

In analyzing the rhetoric of the text and showing how it subverts the very terms it establishes, Berne performs a kind of protodeconstructive analysis that challenges the notion of an unambiguous moral message in "Little Red Riding Hood." Still, both Perrault and the Brothers Grimm remained intent on sending a moral message, and they did so by making the heroine responsible for the violence to which she is subjected. By speaking to strangers (as Perrault has it) or by disobeying her mother and straying from the path (as the Grimms have it), Red Riding Hood courts her own downfall.

For every act of violence that befalls heroes and heroines of fairy tales, it is easy enough to establish a cause by pointing to behavioral flaws. The aggression of the witch in "Hansel and Gretel," for example, is often traced to the gluttony of the children. A chain of events that might once have been arbitrarily linked to create burlesque effects can easily be restructured to produce a morally edifying tale. The shift from violence in the service of slapstick to violence in the service of a disciplinary regime may have added a moral backbone to fairy tales, but it rarely curbed their uninhibited display of violence. Nineteenth-century rescriptings of "Little Red Riding Hood" are, in fact, among the most frightening, in large part because they tap into discursive practices that rely on a pedagogy of fear to regulate behavior. A verse melodrama that appeared in 1862 made Little Red Riding Hood responsible for her own death and for her grandmother's demise:

If Little Red Riding Hood only had thought
Of these little matters as much as she ought,
In the trap of the Wolf she would ne'er have been caught,
Nor her Grandmother killed in so cruel a sort.⁶

Or, as Red Riding Hood's father put it in a version of the tale by Sabine Baring-Gould:

A little maid,
Must be afraid
To do other than her mother told her.⁷

The story of Little Red Riding Hood seems to have lost more than it gained in making the transition from adult oral entertainment to literary fare for children. Once a folktale full of earthy humor and high melodrama, it was transformed into a heavy-handed narrative with a pedagogical agenda designed by adults. In the process, the surreal vi-

5. Eric Berne, *What Do You Say After You Say Hello? The Psychology of Human Destiny* (New York: Grove, 1972) 43.

6. Zipes, *Tales*, 158.

7. *Ibid.*, 200.

olence of the original was converted into a frightening punishment for a relatively minor infraction. It is only in the past few decades that the tale has been reinvigorated through the efforts of writers who have contested the disciplinary edge to the story and challenged its basic assumptions. Although the strategies for reframing the story vary from one author to the next, they generally aim to turn Little Red Riding Hood into a clever, resourceful heroine ("It is not so easy to fool little girls nowadays as it used to be" [17], as Thurber notes) or to rehabilitate the wolf ("Sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf," is the final sentence of Angela Carter's story "The Company of Wolves").⁸

Just as writers have felt free to tamper and tinker with "Little Red Riding Hood" (often radically revising its terms, as does Roald Dahl [21-23]), critics have played fast and loose with the tale, displaying boundless confidence in their interpretive pronouncements. To be sure, the tale itself, by depicting a conflict between a weak, vulnerable protagonist and a large, powerful antagonist, lends itself to a certain interpretive elasticity. Allegorical readings invest the story with a kind of interpretive plenitude, giving it a meaning, relevance, and sense that claims to transcend historical variation. Yet these readings, whether they take the form of political or social allegories can turn out to be remarkably unstable.

Both Erich Fromm and Susan Brownmiller have trained their interpretive skills on "Little Red Riding Hood." Each has read the story in allegorical terms as depicting an eternal battle of the sexes, but those readings reach very different conclusions about what is at stake in that battle. Fromm, whose psychoanalytic account of "Little Red Riding Hood" came under heavy fire from the historian Robert Darnton, finds in the tale the "expression of a deep antagonism against men and sex."⁹ This story, presumably passed on from one generation of women to the next, portrays men as ruthless and cunning animals, who turn the sexual act into a cannibalistic ritual.

The hate and prejudice against men are even more clearly exhibited at the end of the story. . . . We must remember that the woman's superiority consists in her ability to bear children. How, then, is the wolf made ridiculous? By showing that he attempted to play the role of a pregnant woman, having living things in his belly. Little Red-Cap puts stones, a symbol of sterility, into his belly, and the wolf collapses and dies. His deed . . . is punished according to his crime: he is killed by the stones, the symbol of sterility, which mock his usurpation of the pregnant woman's role.¹

8. In *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (New York: Penguin, 1979) 118.

9. Erich Fromm, *The Forgotten Language: An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales and Myths* (New York: Rinehart, 1951) 241.

1. Fromm, *Forgotten*, 241.

The notion of a wolf suffering from womb envy may seem preposterous, but Fromm is not the only interpreter of the tale to read the wolf's act of devouring as a cover for the desire to conceive. Anne Sexton's wolf appears to be "in his ninth month" after gobbling down Red Riding Hood and her grandmother, and the two are liberated when a hunter performs "a kind of caesarian section."² A recent children's version of the tale shows the wolf peacefully sleeping with a glowing belly, swollen to accommodate the body of a serene Little Red Riding Hood.³

For Susan Brownmiller, "Little Red Riding Hood" recounts a cultural story that holds the gender bottom line by perpetuating the notion that women are at once victims of male violence even as they must position themselves as beneficiaries of male protection:

Sweet, feminine Little Red Riding Hood is off to visit her dear old grandmother in the woods. The wolf lurks in the shadows, contemplating a tender morsel. Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother, we learn, are equally defenseless before the male wolf's strength and cunning. . . . The wolf swallows both females with no sign of a struggle. . . . *Red Riding Hood* is a parable of rape. There are frightening male figures abroad in the woods—we call them wolves, among other names—and females are helpless before them. Better stick close to the path, better not be adventurous. If you are lucky, a good friendly male may be able to save you from certain disaster.⁴

Both Fromm and Brownmiller's efforts to view "Little Red Riding Hood" as a repository for certain timeless and universal truths founder precisely because every critic seems to find a different timeless and universal truth in the tale. Allegorical readings tend to undermine and discredit each other by their very multiplicity. Their sheer number begins to suggest that the story targeted for interpretation is nothing but nonsense, that it veers off in the direction of the absurd, signifying nothing.

"The Story of Grandmother" seems to support the notion that fairy tales function as little more than a diversion and that efforts to invest them with meaning inevitably misfire. But the excessive number of references to nourishment, starvation, cannibalism, and devouring in "The Story of Grandmother" also suggests that the interpretive stakes are high and challenges us to understand the story's engagement with the basic conditions of our existence. Psychoanalytic criticism has worked hard to understand what Alan Dundes refers to as the strong

2. Anne Sexton, "Red Riding Hood," *Transformations* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971) 72-79.

3. Benj Montresor, *Little Red Riding Hood* (New York: Doubleday, 1991).

4. Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Bantam, 1976) 343-44.

component of "infantile fantasy" at work in the tale.⁵ Dundes points out that "Little Red Riding Hood," identified in the Aarne-Thompson tale-type index⁶ as AT 333 and known by the title, "The Glutton," is probably a cognate form of AT 123, "The Wolf and the Seven Kids." The only real difference, Dundes insists, is that the ogre goes to the house of the child in AT 123, while the child goes to the house of the ogre in AT 333. Dundes further argues that "Little Red Riding Hood," at least in its early forms, had more to do with children's anxieties about being devoured than with the adult sexual anxieties that came to be foregrounded as the story evolved. Chiang Mi's "Goldflower and the Bear" (19-21) gives us an Asian version of "The Wolf and the Seven Kids" that reveals a clear kinship with early European versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" and suggests just how child-centered the tale was in its early forms.

Angela Carter recalls her first encounter with Perrault's Little Red Riding Hood: "My maternal grandmother used to say, 'Lift up the latch and walk in,' when she told it [to] me when I was a child; and at the conclusion, when the wolf jumps on Little Red Riding Hood and gobbles her up, my grandmother used to pretend to eat me, which made me squeak and gibber with excited pleasure."⁷ Carter's grandmother, by impersonating the grandmother-devouring wolf who also impersonates grandmothers, turns the tables by turning on her granddaughter, the girl who feasts on grandmother's flesh and blood in folk versions of the tale. Carter's account of her experience with "Little Red Riding Hood" shows the tale to be one of intergenerational rivalry, yet it also reveals the degree to which the meaning of a tale is generated in its performance. The scene of reading or acting out a text can affect its reception far more powerfully than the morals and timeless truths inserted into the text by Perrault, the Grimms, and others.

Consider Luciano Pavarotti's childhood experience with "Little Red Riding Hood" and how markedly it differs from Carter's:

In my house, when I was a little boy, it was my grandfather who told the stories. He was wonderful. He told violent, mysterious tales that enchanted me. . . . My favorite one was *Little Red Riding Hood*. I identified with Little Red Riding Hood. I had the same fears as she. I didn't want her to die. I dreaded her death—or what we think death is. I waited anxiously for the hunter to come.⁸

Little Red Riding Hood's brush with death is no longer burlesque, playful, or erotically charged. Instead, it has become the site of violence,

5. Alan Dundes, "Interpreting 'Little Red Riding Hood' Psychoanalytically," in *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook*, ed. Alan Dundes (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1989) 225.

6. Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1961).

7. Angela Carter, ed., *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (London: Virago, 1990) 240.

8. Luciano Pavarotti, "Introduction," in Montresor, *Little Red Riding Hood*.

melodrama, and mystery. The feeling of dread, coupled with a sense of enchantment, captures the fascination with matters from which children are usually shielded. Pavarotti, like Dickens, is enamored of Little Red Riding Hood, but his infatuation is driven by her ability to survive death, to emerge whole from the belly of the wolf even in the face of death's finality.

The Story of Grandmother†

There was once a woman who had made some bread. She said to her daughter: "Take this loaf of hot bread and this bottle of milk over to granny's."

The little girl left. At the crossroads she met a wolf, who asked: "Where are you going?"

"I'm taking a loaf of hot bread and a bottle of milk to granny's."

"Which path are you going to take," asked the wolf, "the path of needles or the path of pins?"

"The path of needles," said the little girl.

"Well, then, I'll take the path of pins."

The little girl had fun picking up needles. Meanwhile, the wolf arrived at granny's, killed her, put some of her flesh in the pantry and a bottle of her blood on the shelf. The little girl got there and knocked at the door.

"Push the door," said the wolf, "it's latched with a wet straw."

"Hello, granny. I'm bringing you a loaf of hot bread and a bottle of milk."

"Put it in the pantry, my child. Take some of the meat in there along with the bottle of wine on the shelf."

There was a little cat in the room who watched her cat and said: "Phooey! You're a slut if you eat the flesh and drink the blood of granny."

"Take your clothes off, my child," said the wolf, "and come into bed with me."

"Where should I put my apron?"

"Throw it into the fire, my child. You won't be needing it any longer."

† Told by Louis and François Briffault in Nièvre, 1885. Originally published by Paul Delarue, in "Les Contes merveilleux de Perrault et la tradition populaire," *Bulletin folklorique de l'Inde-France* (1951): 221-22. Translated for this Norton Critical Edition by Maria Tatar. Copyright © 1999 by Maria Tatar.

1. Yvonne Verdier ("Grand-mères, si vous saviez . . . le Petit Chaperon Rouge dans la tradition orale," *Cahiers de Littérature Orale* 4 [1978]: 17-55) reads the path of pins and the path of needles as part of a social discourse pertaining to apprenticeships for girls in sewing. In another region of France, the paths are described as the path of little stones and the path of little thorns. An Italian version refers to a path of stones and a path of roots.

2. Local variations turn the flesh into tortellini in Italy and into sausage in France, while the blood is often said to be wine.

When she asked the wolf where to put all her other things, her bodice, her dress, her skirt, and her stockings, each time he said: "Throw them into the fire, my child. You won't be needing them any longer."

"Oh, granny, how hairy you are!"

"The better to keep me warm, my child!"

"Oh, granny, what long nails you have!"

"The better to scratch myself with, my child!"

"Oh, granny, what big shoulders you have!"

"The better to carry firewood with, my child!"

"Oh, granny, what big ears you have!"

"The better to hear you with, my child!"

"Oh, granny, what big nostrils you have!"

"The better to sniff my tobacco with, my child!"

"Oh, granny, what a big mouth you have!"

"The better to eat you with, my child!"

"Oh, granny, I need to go badly. Let me go outside!"

"Do it in the bed, my child."

"No, granny, I want to go outside."

"All right, but don't stay out long."

The wolf tied a rope made of wool to her leg and let her go outside.

When the little girl got outside, she attached the end of the rope to a plum tree in the yard. The wolf became impatient and said: "Are you making cables out there? Are you making cables?"

When he realized that there was no answer, he jumped out of bed and discovered that the little girl had escaped. He followed her, but he reached her house only after she had gotten inside.

CHARLES PERRAULT

Little Red Riding Hood†

Once upon a time there was a village girl, the prettiest you can imagine. Her mother adored her. Her grandmother adored her even more and made a little red hood for her. The hood suited the child so much that everywhere she went she was known by the name Little Red Riding Hood.

One day, her mother baked some cakes and said to her: "I want you

3. Many oral renditions of the tale presumably drew out the story by dwelling at length on what happens to each article of clothing.

† Charles Perrault, "Le Petit Chaperon Rouge," in *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé. Avec des Moralités* (Paris: Barbin, 1697). Translated for this Norton Critical Edition by Maria Tatar. Copyright © 1999 by Maria Tatar.

to go and see how your grandmother is faring, for I've heard that she's ill. Take her some cakes and this little pot of butter."

Little Red Riding Hood left right away for her grandmother's house, which was in another village. As she was walking through the woods she met old Neighbor Wolf, who wanted to eat her right there on the spot. But he didn't dare because some woodcutters were in the forest. He asked where she was going. The poor child, who did not know that it was dangerous to stop and listen to wolves, said: "I'm going to see my grandmother and am taking her some cakes and a little pot of butter sent by my mother."

"Does she live very far away?" asked the wolf.

"Oh, yes," said Little Red Riding Hood. "She lives beyond the mill that you can see over there. Hers is the first house you come to in the village."

"Well, well," said the wolf. "I think I shall go and see her too. I'll take the path over here, and you take the path over there, and we'll see who gets there first."

The wolf ran as fast as he could on the shorter path, and the little girl continued on her way along the longer path. She had a good time gathering nuts, chasing butterflies, and picking bunches of flowers that she found.

The wolf did not take long to get to Grandmother's house. He knocked: Rat-a-tat-tat.

"Who's there?"

"It's your granddaughter, Little Red Riding Hood," said the wolf, disguising his voice. "And I'm bringing you some cake and a little pot of butter sent by my mother."

The dear grandmother, who was in bed because she was not feeling well, called out: "Pull the bolt and the latch will open."

The wolf pulled the bolt, and the door opened wide. He threw himself on the good woman and devoured her in no time, for he had eaten nothing in the last three days. Then he closed the door and lay down on Grandmother's bed, waiting for Little Red Riding Hood, who, before long, came knocking at the door: Rat-a-tat-tat.

"Who's there?"

Little Red Riding Hood was afraid at first when she heard the gruff voice of the wolf, but thinking that her grandmother must have caught cold, she said: "It's your granddaughter, Little Red Riding Hood, and I'm bringing you some cake and a little pot of butter sent by my mother."

The wolf tried to soften his voice as he called out to her: "Pull the bolt and the latch will open."

Little Red Riding Hood pulled the bolt, and the door opened wide. When the wolf saw her come in, he hid under the covers of the bed and said: "Put the cakes and the little pot of butter on the bin and climb into bed with me."

Little Red Riding Hood took off her clothes and climbed into the bed. She was astonished to see what her grandmother looked like in her nightgown.

"Grandmother," she said, "What big arms you have!"

"The better to hug you with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big legs you have!"

"The better to run with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big ears you have!"

"The better to hear with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big eyes you have!"

"The better to see with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big teeth you have!"

"The better to eat you with!"

Upon saying these words, the wicked wolf threw himself on Little Red Riding Hood and gobbled her up.

Moral

From this story one learns that children,
Especially young girls,
Pretty, well-bred, and genteel,
Are wrong to listen to just anyone,
And it's not at all strange,
If a wolf ends up eating them.
I say a wolf, but not all wolves
Are exactly the same.
Some are perfectly charming,
Not loud, brutal, or angry,
But tame, pleasant, and gentle,
Following young ladies
Right into their homes, into their chambers,
But watch out if you haven't learned that tame wolves
Are the most dangerous of all.

BROTHERS GRIMM

Little Red Cap†

Once upon a time there was a dear little girl. If you set eyes on her you could not but love her. The person who loved her most of all was her grandmother, and she could never give the child enough. Once she made her a little cap of red velvet. Since it was so becoming and

† Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "Rotkäppchen," in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 7th ed. (Berlin: Dieterich, 1857; first published: Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1812). Translated for this Norton Critical Edition by Maria Tatar. Copyright © 1999 by Maria Tatar.

since she wanted to wear it all the time, everyone called her Little Red Cap.

One day her mother said to her: "Look, Little Red Cap. Here's a piece of cake and a bottle of wine. Take them to your grandmother. She is ill and feels weak, and they will give her strength. You'd better start now before it gets too hot, and when you're out in the woods, walk properly and don't stray from the path. Otherwise you'll fall and break the glass, and then there'll be nothing for Grandmother. And when you enter her room, don't forget to say good morning, and don't go peeping in all the corners of the room."

"I'll do just as you say," Little Red Cap promised her mother.

Grandmother lived deep in the woods, half an hour's walk from the village. No sooner had Little Red Cap set foot in the forest than she met the wolf. Little Red Cap had no idea what a wicked beast he was, and so she wasn't in the least afraid of him.

"Good morning, Little Red Cap," he said.

"Thank you kindly, wolf."

"Where are you headed so early in the morning, Little Red Cap?"

"To my grandmother's."

"What's that you've got under your apron?"

"Cake and wine. Yesterday we baked and Grandmother, who is sick and feels weak, needs something to make her feel better."

"Where does your grandmother live, Little Red Cap?"

"It's another quarter of an hour's walk into the woods. Her house is right under three large oaks. You must know the place from the hazel hedges near it," said Little Red Cap.

The wolf thought to himself: "That tender young thing will make a dainty morsel. She'll be even tastier than the old woman. If you're really crafty, you'll get them both."

He walked for a while beside Little Red Cap. Then he said: "Little Red Cap, have you seen the beautiful flowers all about? Why don't you look around for a while? I don't think you've even noticed how sweetly the birds are singing. You are walking along as if you were on the way to school, and yet it's so heavenly out here in the woods."

Little Red Cap opened her eyes wide and saw how the sunbeams were dancing this way and that through the trees and how there were beautiful flowers all about. She thought to herself: "If you bring a fresh bouquet to Grandmother, she will be overjoyed. It's still so early in the morning that I'm sure to get there in plenty of time."

She left the path and ran off into the woods looking for flowers. As soon as she picked one she saw an even more beautiful one somewhere else and went after it, and so she went deeper and deeper into the woods.

The wolf went straight to Grandmother's house and knocked at the door. "Who's there?"

"Little Red Cap, I've brought some cake and wine. Open the door."

"Just raise the latch," Grandmother called out. "I'm too weak to get out of bed."

The wolf raised the latch, and the door swung wide open. Without saying a word, he went straight to Grandmother's bed and gobbled her up. Then he put on her clothes and her nightcap, lay down in her bed, and drew the curtains.

Meanwhile, Little Red Cap had been running around looking for flowers. When she finally had so many that she couldn't carry them all, she suddenly remembered Grandmother and set off again on the path to her house. She was surprised to find the door open, and when she stepped into the house, she had such a strange feeling that she thought to herself: "Oh, my goodness, I'm usually so glad to be at Grandmother's, but today I feel so nervous."

She called out a greeting but there was no answer. Then she went to the bed and drew back the curtains. Grandmother was lying there with her nightcap pulled down over her face. She looked very strange.

"Oh, Grandmother, what big ears you have!"

"The better to hear you with."

"Oh, Grandmother, what big eyes you have!"

"The better to see you with."

"Oh, Grandmother, what big hands you have!"

"The better to grab you with!"

"Oh, Grandmother, what a big, scary mouth you have!"

"The better to eat you with!"

No sooner had the wolf spoken those words than he leaped out of bed and gobbled up poor Little Red Cap.

Once the wolf had satisfied his desires, he lay down again in bed, fell asleep, and began to snore very loudly. A huntsman happened to be passing by the house just then and thought to himself: "How the old woman is snoring! You'd better check to see what's wrong." He walked into the house and when he got to the bed he saw that the wolf was lying in it.

"I've found you at last, you old sinner," he said. "I've been after you for a while now."

He pulled out his musket and was about to take aim when he realized that the wolf might have eaten Grandmother and that she could still be saved. Instead of firing, he took out a pair of scissors and began cutting open the belly of the sleeping wolf. After making a few snips, he could see a red cap faintly. After making a few more cuts, the girl jumped out, crying: "Oh, how terrified I was! It was so dark in the wolf's belly!" And then the old grandmother found her way out alive, though she could hardly breathe. Little Red Cap quickly fetched some large stones and filled the wolf's belly with them. When he awoke, he was about to bound off, but the stones were so heavy that his legs collapsed and he fell down dead.

All three were overjoyed. The huntsman skinned the wolf and went home with the pelt. Grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine Little Red Cap had brought her and recovered her health. Little Red Cap thought to herself: "Never again will you stray from the path and go into the woods, when your mother has forbidden it."

There is also a story about another wolf who met Little Red Cap on the way to Grandmother's, as she was taking her some cakes. The wolf tried to divert her from the path, but Little Red Cap was on her guard and kept right on going. She told her grandmother that she had met the wolf and that he had greeted her. But he had looked at her in such an evil way that "If we hadn't been out in the open, he would have gobbled me right up."

"Well then," said Grandmother. "We'll just lock that door so he can't get in."

Not much later the wolf knocked at the door and called out: "Open the door, Grandmother, it's Little Red Cap. I'm bringing you some cakes."

The two kept quiet and didn't open the door. Then old Grayhead circled the house a few times and finally jumped up on the roof. He was planning on waiting until Little Red Cap went home. Then he was going to creep up after her and gobble her up in the dark. But Grandmother guessed what he had on his mind. There was a big stone trough in front of the house. She said to the child: "Here's a bucket, Little Red Cap. Yesterday I cooked some sausages. Take the water in which they were boiled and pour it into the trough."

Little Red Cap kept carrying water until that big, big trough was completely full. The smell of those sausages reached the wolf's nostrils. His neck was stretched out so long from sniffing and looking around that he lost his balance and began to slide down. He went right down the roof into the trough and was drowned. Little Red Cap walked home cheerfully, and no one did her any harm.

JAMES THURBER

The Little Girl and the Wolf†

One afternoon a big wolf waited in a dark forest for a little girl to come along carrying a basket of food to her grandmother. Finally a little girl did come along and she was carrying a basket of food. "Are you carrying that basket to your grandmother?" asked the wolf. The little girl said

† James Thurber, "The Little Girl and the Wolf," from *Fables for Our Time and Famous Poems*, illustrated by James Thurber (New York: Harpers, 1940). Copyright © 1940 by James Thurber, renewed 1965 by Helen Thurber and Rosemary A. Thurber. Reprinted by arrangement with Rosemary A. Thurber and the Barbara Hogensohn Agency.

yes, she was. So the wolf asked her where her grandmother lived and the little girl told him and he disappeared into the wood.

When the little girl opened the door of her grandmother's house she saw that there was somebody in bed with a nightcap and nightgown on. She had approached no nearer than twenty-five feet from the bed when she saw that it was not her grandmother but the wolf, for even in a nightcap a wolf does not look any more like your grandmother than the Metro-Goldwyn lion looks like Calvin Coolidge. So the little girl took an automatic out of her basket and shot the wolf dead.

Moral: It is not so easy to fool little girls nowadays as it used to be.

ITALO CALVINO

The False Grandmother†

A mother had to sift flour, and told her little girl to go to her grandmother's and borrow the sifter. The child packed a snack—ring-shaped cakes and bread with oil—and set out.

She came to the Jordan River.

"Jordan River, will you let me pass?"

"Yes, if you give me your ring-shaped cakes."

The Jordan River had a weakness for ring-shaped cakes, which he enjoyed twirling in his whirlpools.

The child tossed the ring-shaped cakes into the river, and the river lowered its waters and let her through.

The little girl came to the Rake Gate.

"Rake Gate, will you let me pass?"

"Yes, if you give me your bread with oil."

The Rake Gate had a weakness for bread with oil, since her hinges were rusty, and bread with oil oiled them for her.

The little girl gave the gate her bread with oil, and the gate opened and let her through.

She reached her grandmother's house, but the door was shut tight.

"Grandmother, Grandmother, come let me in."

"I'm in bed sick. Come through the window."

"I can't make it."

"Come through the cat door."

"I can't squeeze through."

"Well, wait a minute," she said, and lowered a rope, by which she pulled the little girl up through the window. The room was dark. In

† "The False Grandmother," recorded by Antonio de Nino, 1863, in *Italian Folktales*, selected and retold by Italo Calvino, trans. George Martin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980). Copyright © 1980 by Harcourt Brace & Company, reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace & Company.

bed was the ogress, not the grandmother, for the ogress had gobbled up Grandmother all in one piece from head to toe, all except her teeth, which she had put on to stew in a small stew pan, and her ears, which she had put on to fry in a frying pan.

"Grandmother, Mamma wants the sifter."

"It's late now. I'll give it to you tomorrow. Come to bed."

"Grandmother, I'm hungry, I want my supper first."

"Eat the beans boiling in the boiler."

In the pot were the teeth. The child stirred them around and said, "Grandmother, they're too hard."

"Well, eat the fritters in the frying pan."

In the frying pan were the ears. The child felt them with the fork and said, "Grandmother, they're not crisp."

"Well, come to bed. You can eat tomorrow."

The little girl got into bed beside Grandmother. She felt one of her hands and said, "Why are your hands so hairy, Grandmother?"

"From wearing too many rings on my fingers."

She felt her chest. "Why is your chest so hairy, Grandmother?"

"From wearing too many necklaces around my neck."

She felt her hips. "Why are your hips so hairy, Grandmother?"

"Because I wore my corset too tight."

She felt her tail and reasoned that, hairy or not, Grandmother had never had a tail. That had to be the ogress and nobody else. So she said, "Grandmother, I can't go to sleep unless I first go and take care of a little business."

Grandmother replied, "Go do it in the barn below. I'll let you down through the trapdoor and then draw you back up."

She tied a rope around her and lowered her into the barn. The minute the little girl was down she untied the rope and in her place attached a nanny goat. "Are you through?" asked Grandmother.

"Just a minute." She finished tying the rope around the nanny goat. "There, I've finished. Pull me back up."

The ogress pulled and pulled, and the little girl began yelling, "Hairy ogress! Hairy ogress!" She threw open the barn and fled. The ogress kept pulling, and up came the nanny goat. She jumped out of bed and ran after the little girl.

When the child reached the Rake Gate, the ogress yelled from a distance, "Rake Gate, don't let her pass!"

But the Rake Gate replied, "Of course I'll let her pass; she gave me her bread with oil."

When the child reached the Jordan River, the ogress shouted, "Jordan River, don't you let her pass!"

But the Jordan River answered, "Of course I'll let her pass; she gave me her ring-shaped cakes."

When the ogress tried to get through, the Jordan River did not lower

his waters, and the ogress was swept away in the current. From the bank the little girl made faces at her.

CHIANG MI

Goldflower and the Bear†

Long, long ago, there was a clever and brave girl called Goldflower who lived with her mother and brother. They were very happy.

One day, her mother said: "Your Aunt is ill. I'm going to see her and won't be back tonight. Look after your brother and ask your Granny to stay with you tonight!" Then she left with a basket of eggs and a hen.

At sunset, Goldflower herded the sheep home. After penning up the sheep, she shooed all the chickens into the coop. Then, she and her brother climbed a small hill to call Granny. Usually, after one shout, there would be an answer, but today there was no reply after several shouts. Goldflower thought: "It doesn't matter. I'm not afraid." They went home and she bolted the door.

Lighting a wick, they sat by the fire-pan and she began to tell her brother a story. Suddenly they heard a knock at the door. Brother hugged her and cried: "I'm afraid!"

They heard a strange but kindly voice saying: "I'm Granny." Brother was very happy and shouted: "Sister, open the door! Granny has come!"

Goldflower leaned against the door and asked: "Is that you, Granny? What's wrong with your voice?"

"I've a cold." Came the reply followed by coughs.

The boy urged his sister to open the door. Meanwhile, the voice continued: "My dear, there is something wrong with my eyes and I'm afraid of light. Please blow out the wick before letting me in."

It was so dark in the room that they couldn't see who was coming in. Goldflower invited "Granny" to a stool, but it cried out when sitting down. The children jumped in fright. The "Granny" said: "Dear, I've a boil so I can't sit on hard wood. Please give me a wicker basket."

The swishing of the Bear's tail in the dark caused Goldflower to ask: "What's making that noise?"

"Oh! It's the fly-swatter your grandpa bought for me," replied "Granny."

The clever girl stoked the fire brighter and, wow, there was a pair of hairy feet! Now she realized this isn't Granny. It's the Bear which likes to eat children. Goldflower calmed and pretended to have seen noth-

† "Goldflower and the Bear," in Jack Zipes, *The Truth and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Recorded by Chiang Mi, 1979. Copyright © 1993. Reprinted by permission of Routledge, Inc.

ing. But how to deal with this wicked Bear? Her mother had told her that bears were afraid of lice. She grabbed a handful of seeds and took off her brother's hat, pretending to be catching lice in his hair. She threw the seeds into the fire. They crackled. The Bear growled: "Don't let him sleep with me with his lice. Let him sleep outside!"

Brother was so afraid that he began to sob. Goldflower coaxed him to go to the other room to sleep. She locked the door on her way back. When she got back, the Bear asked her to go to bed. The Bear was very happy because it could have a hearty meal at midnight. But the clever Goldflower was also thinking of a way out. After sleeping for a while, she cried: "My tummy hurts! I want to go on the pot."

The Bear thought: She would not be good to eat like this. So, it tied one end of a belt to Goldflower's hand and let her go outside. After a while, the Bear pulled and then pulled again. It seemed that the girl was still on the other end. A long time passed. The Bear called several times but there was no answer. It got worried and pulled hard. Clunk. Something tumbled. The Bear was puzzled and felt its way along the belt. There was nothing at the end but a pot. The Bear was very angry. It was already midnight and the Bear started bellowing for food like any beast. Failing to find Goldflower, it stopped to drink some water from a pond before continuing the search. It saw Goldflower in the water and was overjoyed. When the Bear reached into the water to grasp Goldflower, she disappeared. The Bear angrily watched. When the water became still, Goldflower reappeared. The Bear reached out but Goldflower again vanished. The Bear did not know what to do. A laugh came from above. The Bear quickly looked up and saw Goldflower in a tree. The image in the water was her reflection. The Bear wanted to climb the tree, but Goldflower had covered it with grease. The Bear slipped again and again. The Bear could only wait under the tree hapless while Goldflower laughed up on the tree. "Granny, do you want to eat some pears? Please get me the spear in the house."

The Bear was really happy to hear this and went to fetch the spear. The Bear handed her the spear and, pointing to a few big pears, it said: "Give me those."

"Granny, open your mouth. Here comes the pear!" Goldflower threw one at the Bear's mouth.

The Bear ate it in two bites and asked her to spear some more. "Granny, this time open your mouth wide. It is a real big one."

The Bear opened its mouth as wide as it could. And with all her might, Goldflower threw the spear into its mouth. With a groan, the Bear fell flat. Goldflower slid down the tree and kicked the dead Bear. "Do you still want to eat children?"

Roosters crowed. Goldflower opened the door to her brother's room. He was sleeping soundly. She woke him and took him to the dead body. Now he knew that it was the wicked old Bear. The sun was rising

red in the east. Mother came back. She was very pleased to hear what had happened and praised the brave little girl. The story of Goldflower and the Bear spread far and wide.

ROALD DAHL

Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf†

As soon as Wolf began to feel
That he would like a decent meal,
He went and knocked on Grandma's door.
When Grandma opened it, she saw
The sharp white teeth, the horrid grin,
And Wolfe said, 'May I come in?'
Poor Grandmamma was terrified,
'He's going to eat me up!' she cried.
And she was absolutely right.
He ate her up in one big bite.
But Grandmamma was small and tough,
And Wolfe wailed, 'That's not enough!
'I haven't yet begun to feel
'That I have had a decent meal!'
He ran around the kitchen yelping,
'I've got to have another helping!'
Then added with a frightful leer,
'I'm therefore going to wait right here
'Till Little Miss Red Riding Hood
'Comes home from walking in the wood.'
He quickly put on Grandma's clothes,
(Of course he hadn't eaten those.)
He dressed himself in coat and hat.
He put on shoes and after that
He even brushed and curled his hair,
Then sat himself in Grandma's chair.
In came the little girl in red.
She stopped. She stared. And then she said,

'What great big ears you have, Grandma.'
'All the better to hear you with,' the Wolf replied.
'What great big eyes you have, Grandma,'

† Roald Dahl, "Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf," in *Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes* (New York: Penguin, Puffin Books, 1995). Copyright © 1982 by Roald Dahl. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

said Little Red Riding Hood.
'All the better to see you with,' the Wolf replied.

He sat there watching her and smiled.
 He thought, I'm going to eat this child.
 Compared with her old Grandmamma
 She's going to taste like caviare.

Then Little Red Riding Hood said, *'But Grandma,
 what a lovely great big furry coat you have on.'*
*'That's wrong!' cried Wolf. 'Have you forgot
 To tell me what BIG TEETH I've got?
 'Ah well, no matter what you say,
 'I'm going to eat you anyway.'*
 The small girl smiles. One eyelid flickers.
 She whips a pistol from her knickers.
 She aims it at the creature's head
 And *bang bang bang*, she shoots him dead.
 A few weeks later, in the wood,
 I came across Miss Riding Hood.
 But what a change! No cloak of red,
 No silly hood upon her head.
 She said, 'Hello, and do please note
 My lovely furry WOLFSKIN COAT.'

ROALD DAHL

The Three Little Pigs†

The animal I really dig
 Above all others is the pig.
 Pigs are noble. Pigs are clever,
 Pigs are courteous. However,
 Now and then, to break this rule,
 One meets a pig who is a fool.
 What, for example, would you say
 If strolling through the woods one day,
 Right there in front of you you saw
 A pig who'd built his house of STRAW?
 The Wolf who saw it licked his lips,
 And said, 'That pig has had his chips.'

† Roald Dahl, "The Three Little Pigs," in *Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes* (New York: Penguin, Puffin Books, 1995). Copyright © 1982 by Roald Dahl. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

*'Little pig, little pig, let me come in!'
 'No, no, by the hairs on my chinny-chin-chin!'
 'Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your
 house in!'*

The little pig began to pray,
 But Wolfie blew his house away.
 He shouted, 'Bacon, pork and ham!
 'Oh, what a lucky Wolf I am!'
 And though he ate the pig quite fast,
 He carefully kept the tail till last.
 Wolf wandered on, a trifle bloated.
 Surprise, surprise, for soon he noted
 Another little house for pigs,
 And this one had been built of TWIGS!

*'Little pig, little pig, let me come in!'
 'No, no, by the hairs on my chinny-chin-chin!'
 'Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your
 house in!'*

The Wolf said, 'Okay, here we go!'
 He then began to blow and blow.
 The little pig began to squeal.
 He cried, 'Oh Wolf, you've had *one* meal!
 'Why can't we talk and make a deal?'
 The Wolf replied, 'Not on your nelly!'
 And soon the pig was in his belly.
 'Two juicy little pigs!' Wolf cried,
 'But still I am not satisfied!
 'I know full well my Tummy's bulging,
 'But oh, how I adore indulging.'
 So creeping quietly as a mouse,
 The Wolf approached another house,
 A house which also had inside
 A little piggy trying to hide.
 But this one, Piggy Number Three,
 Was bright and brainy as could be.
 No straw for him, no twigs or sticks.
 This pig had built his house of BRICKS.
 'You'll not get me!' the Piggy cried.
 'I'll blow you down!' the Wolf replied.
 'You'll need,' Pig said, 'a lot of puff,
 'And I don't think you've got enough.'
 Wolf huffed and puffed and blew and blew.

The house stayed up as good as new.
 'If I can't blow it down,' Wolf said,
 'I'll have to blow it up instead.
 'I'll come back in the dead of night
 'And blow it up with dynamite!
 Pig cried, 'You brute! I might have known!
 Then, picking up the telephone,
 He dialled as quickly as he could
 The number of Red Riding Hood.
 'Hello,' she said. 'Who's speaking? Who?
 'Oh, hello Piggy, how d'you do?'
 Pig cried, 'I need your help, Miss Hood!
 'Oh help me, please! D'you think you could?'
 'I'll try, of course,' Miss Hood replied.
 'What's on your mind?' . . . 'A Wolf!' Pig cried.
 'I know you've dealt with wolves before,
 'And now I've got one at my door!
 'My darling Pig,' she said, 'my sweet,
 'That's something *really* up my street.
 'I've just begun to wash my hair.
 'But when it's dry, I'll be right there.'
 A short while later, through the wood,
 Came striding brave Miss Riding Hood.
 The Wolf stood there, his eyes ablaze
 And yellowish, like mayonnaise.
 His teeth were sharp, his gums were raw,
 And spit was dripping from his jaw.
 Once more the maiden's eyelid flickers.
 She draws the pistol from her knickers.
 Once more, she hits the vital spot,
 And kills him with a single shot.
 Pig, peeping through the window, stood
 And yelled, 'Well done, Miss Riding Hood!'

Ah, Piglet, you must never trust
 Young ladies from the upper crust.
 For now, Miss Riding Hood, one notes,
 Not only has two wolfskin coats,
 But when she goes from place to place,
 She has a PIGSKIN TRAVELLING CASE.

INTRODUCTION: Beauty and the Beast

"Beauty and the Beast," unlike most fairy tales, accommodates two developmental trajectories. It not only charts the challenges facing Beauty but also registers the transformation sustained by Beast, showing how these two antithetical allegorical figures resolve their differences to be joined in wedlock. What makes this story especially attractive is the way in which it is deeply entrenched in the myth of romantic love even as its representational energy is channeled into the tense moral, economic, and emotional negotiations that complicate courtship rituals. Virtually every culture knows this story in at least one of the variant forms of the tale type designated by folklorists as "The Search for the Lost Husband" or "The Man on a Quest for His Lost Wife."¹ While we may be burdened with a version of "Beauty and the Beast" that reflects the social mores of centuries ago, we also have an array of adept rescriptings that address the rich complexities and troubling anxieties of contemporary romantic entanglements.²

"Cupid and Psyche," the earliest known version of "Beauty and the Beast," appeared in the second century A.D. in Apuleius's *Transformations of Lucian, Otherwise Known as the Golden Ass*. Told by a "drunken and half-demented" woman to a young bride abducted by bandits on her wedding day, it is described as a fairy tale meant to console the distraught captive. While "Cupid and Psyche" shares many features with "Beauty and the Beast" as we know it today, it deviates from what has become our canonical version of the tale in a number of key ways. Eros, the first "Beast," is only rumored to be a monster, and it is he who abandons Psyche, after her sisters urge her to take a look at the "enormous snake" that is her husband. More importantly, Psyche's story is what one critic has declared a "paradigm of female heroism."² The intrepid heroine, jilted by Cupid, never indulges in self-pity but sets off on an epic quest fraught with risks and requiring her to accomplish one impossible task after another. Unlike her clo-

Bracketed page numbers refer to this Norton Critical Edition.

1. Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1961).
2. Lee Edwards, "The Labors of Psyche: Toward a Theory of Female Heroism," *Critical Inquiry* 6 (1979): 37.