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# 1

## Serialising Scheherazade: An Alternative History of the Fairy Tale

'The custom, in periodicals, of sustaining interest by happily-conceived divisions of the plot, may perhaps be traced to this subtle artifice of Scheherazade', James Mew observes in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1875.<sup>1</sup> Mew was not the first writer to make the analogy between the skills of the fairy-tale narrator and those of the magazine novelist: for Dickens, Mrs Gaskell was famously 'my Scheherazade', spinning artfully rationed weekly instalments for the readers of *Household Words*.<sup>2</sup> In fact, both echoed enterprising editors from the previous century, who made literal links between Scheherazade and serialisation. While the first English novel serialised in a newspaper, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, was still running in the *Original London Post*, the *Churchman's Last Shift* was entertaining its readers with 'The Voyages of Sinbad'. Three years later, in 1723, the *Arabian Nights* began appearing thrice-weekly in *Parker's London News*. Making good use of its heroine's mastery of pleasurable postponement, the serialisation took over three years to come to completion.<sup>3</sup>

In his *The Blue Fairy Book*, the Victorian folklorist Andrew Lang revealed that Perrault's *Contes de ma Mère l'Oye* (1697) had been 'Englished' by 1729, for a 'version is advertised in a newspaper of that year'.<sup>4</sup> While eighteenth-century newspapers alerted readers to the appearance of future classics of the genre, its boundaries were still far from defined. When the *Universal Spectator* published one of the French court tales, Mlle Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier's 'The Wary Princess, or the Adventures of Finette' in 1743, it was subtitled a 'novel' rather than a fairy tale.<sup>5</sup> Such classifications reveal the still emergent nature of both literary forms in mid eighteenth-century Britain and the significant traffic between fairy tale, novel and romance. The variety of works with fantastic elements circulating in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century periodicals – from the dream narrative and tale of alternative worlds to the oriental tale, the 'novel of circulation', the fable and the satire – reveal that fairy tales were shaped by a much wider literary dialogue. Indeed, Hans Christian Andersen's 'rare and surprising' art for anthropomorphism seems

less surprising in relation to some of these tales from the previous century, in which coins, pins and lapdogs narrate their own tales.<sup>6</sup>

Histories of the fairy tale in Britain before the first English translation of the Grimms' tales (1823–6) often chart the appearance of some key book editions. These include Antoine Galland's French translation of *The Thousand and One Nights* (1704–17) and the first English translations (1706 onwards): Robert Samber's 1729 translation from Perrault, *Histories, or Tales of Past Times* (also known by its frontispiece as *Tales of Mother Goose*); the first English translations of Madame d'Aulnoy's tales (1699 onwards); and the eighteenth-century versions for children, *Tales of Mother Bunch*. These are often joined by realist texts that featured interpolated fairy tales – Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* (1749) and the French and English versions of Madame Prince de Beaumont's *The Young Misses Magazine* (1756/1757), which included a version of 'Beauty and the Beast'.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, critics have long acknowledged that legends and tales such as 'Jack the Giant-Killer' and 'Tom Thumb', as well as condensed versions of medieval romances, enjoyed a much longer and varied life (and much larger audiences) as chapbooks, which were sold by travelling chapmen throughout Europe and the British Isles. While such texts seem to have circulated widely from at least the sixteenth century, in the eighteenth century the *Arabian Nights* and French court tales joined the chapbook repertoire. This mode of circulation remained popular in Britain into the early decades of the nineteenth century. As Ruth B. Bottigheimer has shown, the wide and early circulation of chapbook romances challenges those Romantic histories of the fairy tale that locate the origins of the genre (and authenticity within the tradition) within an oral culture completely untouched by literacy.<sup>8</sup> Those myths might be exploded once and for all when we look at a rather different form of print.

In *Before Novels*, J. Paul Hunter offers an account of the fairy tale's disappearance from popular culture in the seventeenth century. He argues:

On the Continent (and in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands) the tradition of fairy tales remained intact into the nineteenth century when the writing down of such material began to be systematic. But in England the tradition was interrupted between the seventeenth century and the mid eighteenth; for some reason the tales were no longer passed down from generation to generation, and the joy once associated with their telling turned to fear and distrust.<sup>9</sup>

Elizabeth Wanning Harries has rightly questioned the evidence for this narrative of exile – for the evaporation of a 'joyous' oral tradition that evolved entirely beyond the influence of print. The notion that this oral tradition remained 'intact' on the Continent and in Ireland and Scotland has also come under interrogation. As Peter Burke (among others) has argued, that

systematic writing down – the discovery of folk culture – might equally be described as an invention by a ‘group of German intellectuals at the end of the eighteenth-century’. Burke usefully draws attention to the assumptions of ‘primitivism’, ‘communalism’ and ‘purism’ that underpinned Herder and the Grimms’ constructions of the folk, while subsequent critics have produced a wealth of analysis to show the significant roles played by print culture, as well as editorial intervention, in the Grimms’ orally collected tales, the *Kinder und Haus Märchen* (1812–14).<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, while Harries uses the chapbook to point to Hunter’s neglect of the fairy tale in print, neither writer makes links between the fairy tale and the newer print cultures that Hunter’s book captures so evocatively. For counter to Hunter’s claims, fairy tales were clearly circulating in Britain before the 1750s: in newspapers and magazines as well as in chapbooks. They evolved alongside, rather than cleared the way for, that newest of genres, the novel – a dialogue that was to continue throughout the nineteenth century.

If many historians and folklorists have been keen for some time to signal distance from nineteenth-century celebrations of primitivism, communalism and purism, we still need to look beyond the canon created by the Romantics and Victorians to see the true variety of fairy tales that circulated in Britain in the late eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> In fact, tales published in magazines included fantastic authored works inspired by the *Arabian Nights*, translations from German Romantics such as Wieland and Musäus, French court tales, and some unexpected authored texts. One of the latter, ‘Annette: A Fairy Tale’, which purported to be by ‘Master George Louis Lenox, Aged only 12 years’, is as far as can be imagined from a tale from the folk. Modelled on an elaborate French courtly romance tradition, it is suspiciously sophisticated for an author not yet in his teens. Whether Master Lenox was a journalistic hoax or a genuinely precocious schoolboy, the tale clearly reached a significant periodical public: from its first publication in *The British Magazine and Review* in 1782, it was republished in at least four more magazines (including the cheaper serials) in the next 25 years.<sup>12</sup> While Lenox’s text seems to target adult audiences, children were also beginning to be recognised as readers of fairy tale and fantasy. John Newbery is often credited with the first experiment in serial publishing for children, with *The Lilliputian Magazine* in 1751. In the early 1770s, a competitor of the same name appeared, which promised the adventures of ‘King Tom Thumb of Lilliputia’ in monthly instalments.<sup>13</sup>

While eighteenth-century magazines reveal a history of adult fairy-tale reading that has often been overlooked, periodicals also help us to engage more critically with another familiar account of the fairy tale’s disappearance – this time from middle-class children’s literature at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In this history, taken up by much twentieth-century criticism, Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth are presented as defenders of the imaginative freedom of the fairy tale in defiance of didactic and

rationalist educators, while the Romantics are seen to be ultimately vindicated by the triumph of Victorian fantasy and fairy tale. Alan Richardson has made the most convincing attacks on this “Whiggish” version of the history of English children’s reading’, revealing that those oppositions between fantastic and didactic literature were far less sustained than has frequently been assumed.<sup>14</sup> This is indeed apparent in one of few periodicals, Sarah Trimmer’s *Guardian of Education* (1802–6), that does receive a mention in most histories of the fairy tale in Britain. Only recently, however, has the critical reliance on the same highly selective quotations, used as evidence for a widespread middle-class backlash against the fairy tale, been challenged by more nuanced readings of the periodical as a whole. In fact, Trimmer may have refused to review chapbooks and cheap publications, but she was not always entirely hostile to fairy tale and fantasy.<sup>15</sup> In ‘Observations on the Changes That Have Taken Place in Books for Children and Young Persons’ (1802), she claims:

When the idea of uniting amusement with instruction was once started by such a writer as Mr. Locke, books for children were soon produced of various sorts: Fables, Fairy Tales, &c &c. [...] Some of the books written in what may be called the *first period of Infantine and Juvenile Literature* in this country, we well remember, as the delight of our childish days, viz *Mother Goose’s Fairy Tales; Esop [sic] and Gay’s Fables; the Governess, or Little Female Academy*, by Mrs Fielding, &c &c.

While Trimmer echoes Locke in her condemnation of tales such as ‘Bluebeard’ for their perceived ability to terrify young minds, ‘valuable French books’ such as Madame le Prince de Beaumont’s are viewed as far superior to the novels from circulating libraries: novels which Trimmer notes also fell into the hands of young people in the same period.<sup>16</sup> In November 1802, the *Adventures of Musul; or, The Three Gifts* is deemed a book that is entitled ‘to rank among instructive ones, though the Tales are full of the marvellous’.<sup>17</sup> It is works that unite ‘amusement and instruction’ – that conform to the narrow strictures of Trimmer’s own Christian morality, and counter the radical ‘torrent of infidelity’ – that are lauded in the early volumes of the *Guardian of Education*, whether they employ fantasy or realism. In 1802, Trimmer is concerned that ‘such a rage for new publications is excited in the nation, that even *children* are taught to expect a *daily supply of literature*’.<sup>18</sup> Trimmer could always be relied upon for hyperbole, but she was also right to perceive an expanded audience for print since her youth: newspaper circulation had also doubled between 1753 and 1792.<sup>19</sup> As new firms such as Tabart brought fairy tales to child audiences, Trimmer proved that magazines were not just contexts in which fairy tales were read, but also sites where they were reviewed, championed and censured – indeed where such works became a subject of public debate.

Even such a necessarily brief snapshot of this earlier period suggests a more complicated history of the fairy tale than its complete exile by rationalist educators and its subterranean survival as the 'literature of the people', in the chapbooks of popular culture. It is now becoming less controversial to argue that to privilege orality over print in the fairy-tale tradition is to take Romanticism on its own terms. However, it was not just the oral tale, but the chapbook that became central to that British folktale revival – that underwent, to use Susan Stewart's term, its own nineteenth-century process of 'artificialization'.<sup>20</sup> Here, I argue that the celebration of the chapbook as authentic folk culture was related to the emergence of reading audiences undreamt of in the eighteenth century and to the growth of newer forms of print.

### **Antiquarianism, Romanticism, nationalism: The chapbook and the press**

In his 1819 *Quarterly Review* article on the 'Antiquities of Nursery Literature', Francis Cohen notes with regret that *Fairy Tales: or the Lilliputian Cabinet* (a reissue from Tabart) is far inferior to the fairy tales told by his nurse in his youth. Cohen laments:

Scarcely any of the *chap books* which were formally sold to the country people at fairs and markets have been able to maintain their ancient popularity; and we have almost witnessed the extinction of this branch of our national literature. Spruce modern novels, and degenerate modern Gothic romances, romances only in name, have expelled the ancient 'histories' even from their last retreats. The kitchen wench, who thumbs the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, or the *Rose of Raby*, *won't grieve at all* for the death of Fair Rosamund.<sup>21</sup>

Cohen does not merely celebrate the oral tale, but the literate lower-class reader and an older print tradition that has been purged of its traditional associations with the crude, the licentious and the vulgar and has been reborn as authentic in the wake of the novel and its popular subgenres. While Gothic fiction circulated through sixpenny and shilling novelettes as well as circulating-library novels, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also saw the emergence of new cheap magazines which clearly targeted some of the old chapbook audiences. These hybrid forms (which Robert Mayo has termed 'serial chapbooks' and 'serial anthologies') included the *New Novelists' Magazine*, *Tell-Tale* and the *Marvellous Magazine*, which brought tales from the *Arabian Nights* as well as redactions of Gothic novels (including Radcliffe's) to less wealthy literate publics.<sup>22</sup>

Cohen does not acknowledge the continued circulation of older fairy tales and romance through these newer forms of serial culture.<sup>23</sup> In fact, he

suggests that it is not just the novel, but serial reading of a more radical kind that is killing off the kitchen wench's links to the fairy tale and the spirit of the folk:

Politics and sectarianism complete the change which has taken place in the budget of the flying stationer. The old broadside-ballads have given way to the red stamp of the newspaper; and pedlars have burnt their ungodly story-books like sorcerers of old, and fill their baskets with the productions sanctified by the Imprimatur of the Tabernacle.<sup>24</sup>

Alan Richardson argues that concern about the spread of political pamphlets via chapbook sellers may explain Wordsworth's celebration of the less volatile fairy-tale chapbook.<sup>25</sup> Similar concerns may be lurking in Cohen's account too, for beyond the 'red stamp' and prohibitive four-penny tax on the official newspapers (which nevertheless doubled in circulation from 1800 to 1830), there was a cheaper, unstamped political press that was not so easy to regulate.<sup>26</sup> In Cohen's metaphor, the political fare of the newspaper is a new kind of sorcery that engenders the death of the fairy tale: the chapman is now a 'flying stationer' whose wares have the power to cast off the old gods of superstition. Yet the newspaper signifies more than the birth of political consciousness among the folk. It is directly linked to Cohen's championing of scholarly antiquarianism, a practice that promises to tabulate and record the last vestiges of folk innocence. Wryly suggesting that the now obsolete penny chapbooks of the publisher Marshall will soon fetch high sums under the auctioneer's hammer, Cohen reveals a clear link between lower-class engagements with news and new print cultures and the middle-class 'artifactualization' of the chapbook, which is reinvented as the true voice of the folk.

Cohen's article, which asks readers to lend a sympathetic ear to 'the ingenious theories of the historian, the mythologist, or the philologist', prefigures the substantial growth of those fields in a British context. Linking the fairy tale to a racial and cultural infancy ('the imagination of man in the childhood of his race'), Cohen also explores an originary thesis that would come to exert a profound influence over nineteenth-century imaginations. Championing 'the important addition to nursery literature' in Germany by 'John and William Grimm [*sic*] two antiquarian brethren of the highest reputation', Cohen elaborates the Indo-European thesis, which had been sketched by Sir William Jones in the 1780s, was further developed by the German new philology, and was popularised in relation to the folktale by the Grimms in their *Kinder und Haus Märchen*. Cohen argues not only that English and German folktales emerged from a shared Teutonic mythology, but also that the similarities between German, Danish, English and Indian tales revealed a distant linguistic source to which all these mythologies could be traced, back to the 'the first seat of the Caucasian tribes'.<sup>27</sup>

When Edgar Taylor published the first volume of *German Popular Stories*, his immensely successful translation of the Grimms' tales in 1823, he acknowledged a deep debt to Cohen's article for revealing 'how wide a field is open, interesting to the antiquarian as well as the reader who only seeks amusement'.<sup>28</sup> Before producing this translation, however, Taylor had helped to shape a receptive audience of both kinds of reader through his own periodical journalism, in his four articles on 'German Popular and Traditional Literature' in the *New Monthly Magazine* (1821–2). Noting that many beast fables were common to Persia, India and Germany, Taylor, echoing Cohen, asks whether such animal fables are not

remnants of some great mass of amusing moral instruction, which has at the remotest periods and in all countries found its way for the edification of man, flowing from some fountain-head of wisdom, whence Calmuck, Russian, Celt, Scandinavian and German, in their various manifestations, have imbibed their earliest and simplest lessons of improvement?

In presenting the possibility of an 'Oriental hypothesis of the origin of [...] fairy fictions', Taylor joins a number of writers in the *New Monthly Magazine* in the 1820s who focus on European and Asian myth from comparativist and Romantic perspectives.<sup>29</sup> 'The Smith Velant' (1822), noting the parallels between a supernatural tale found in Scandinavia, a supernatural tale found in Berkshire and a work by Walter Scott concludes: 'we are brought back at length to a common country of the greater number of most ancient traditions – to India, which may be regarded as the cradle of truths and fables'.<sup>30</sup> In one of his *New Monthly Magazine* articles, Taylor argues that 'traditional tales' are the 'curious momentos of simple and primitive society, the precious glimmerings of historic light' – and that they offer an invigorating escape from the present.<sup>31</sup> In the *Five-Book Prelude* (1804), Wordsworth had famously lamented the 'deep experiments' of the child 'prodigy' valorised by Enlightenment rationalism, holding empire with 'telescopes and crucibles and maps':

Oh! Give us once again the wishing cap  
Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat  
Of Jack the giant-killer, Robin Hood,  
And Sabra in the Forest with St George!  
The child whose love is here at least does reap  
One precious gain – that he forgets himself.<sup>32</sup>

Taylor also hopes for the child's liberation from rationality and modernity through chapbook romance. In the *New Monthly Magazine*, he looks forward to a time when

the gay dreams of fairy innocence shall again hover around them, and scientific compendiums, lispig botanics, and leading-string mechanics, shall be postponed to the Delights of Valentine and Orson, the beautiful Magalona, or Fair Rosamond.<sup>33</sup>

A very similar quotation appears in the introduction to Taylor's *German Popular Stories*. The epigraphs to these volumes are taken from the prefaces of seventeenth-century chapbooks: the first from 'Thom Thumbe the Little' (1621) and second from the romance of 'Valentine and Orson' (1677). While the subtitle to Taylor's volume assures readers that the Grimms' tales are collected 'from oral tradition', the English tradition was perceived to be rather more difficult to trace. Supposedly deprived of their own unbroken stream of oral tales, the chapbook tradition also becomes English readers' way back to the past – a print form that seems to preserve remnants of that 'fountain-head of wisdom'.

In the *New Monthly Magazine*, Taylor, like Cohen, addresses his comments largely to a readership of upper-middle-class, educated adult males, within the discourse of an expensive, small-circulation periodical.<sup>34</sup> The celebration of both British folk traditions and German literary Romanticism was widely evident in such periodicals from the 1820s to the 1840s. *The New Monthly Magazine* published articles on Schiller and Goethe, while *Fraser's Magazine* republished a recent translation of Goethe's 'The Tale' in 1832. In the same year it offered 'Dorf Juystein', an original tale clearly shaped by German Romantic predecessors; an article discussing Welsh fairy superstitions; and serialised tales based on Scottish folklore by the 'Ettrick Shepherd' – the former *Blackwood's* stalwart James Hogg.<sup>35</sup> *Blackwood's* published a short story inspired by Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihl* in 1839, and also published Ludwig Tieck's fantasy 'Pietro D'Abano: A Tale of Enchantment' in the same year.<sup>36</sup> In fact, Tieck was the subject of numerous reviews in the monthlies and quarterlies throughout the Victorian period. These literary texts were also intimately connected to Romantic constructions of the folk, including the German *Volksbuch* or chapbook tradition. As Tieck argued:

The common reader should not make fun of the popular stories (*Volksromane*) which are sold in the streets by old women for a Groschen or two, for *The horned Siegfried*, *The sons of Amyon*, *Duke Ernst* and *Genoveva* have more true inventiveness and are simpler and better by far than the books currently in fashion.<sup>37</sup>

While Tieck produced his own versions of chapbooks, his literary tales were praised for their supposed connection to folk roots: a writer cited in the *Athenæum* in 1841 claims that they seem to be written 'by fairies', and have 'the engaging naïvité and the daring invention of the old stories that lived in the hearts and on the lips of the people'.<sup>38</sup> When writers appropriated the

chapbook in a British context, they often continued to move (like Taylor before them) between higher journalism, antiquarianism and commercial children's fiction. In 1846, W. J. Thoms, using the pseudonym 'Ambrose Merton', wrote a letter to the *Athenæum* in which he proposed 'a good Saxon compound, Folklore', in place of the current terms in usage, 'Popular Antiquities and Popular Literature'.<sup>39</sup> As Thoms helped to establish a developing scholarly discipline by contributing columns to the *Athenæum* (which in turn led to the establishment of the more specialist *Notes and Queries*), he was also engaged in the production of a far more popular series of texts, 'Ambrose Merton's *Gammer Gurton Story Books*. These books exhibited antiquarian interest in the chapbook culture from which they took their sources, while simultaneously sanitising their contents. British legendary tales were 'newly revised and amended' for middle-class pockets and tastes.<sup>40</sup>

Thoms's legends formed part of the *Home Treasury* series, commissioned by the publisher Joseph Cundall in conjunction with the *Felix Summerly* collection of fairy-tale books. In presenting old fairy tales anew to middle-class readers, Henry Cole undertook a similar process of revision. When he came to produce a new edition of 'Little Red Riding Hood' in the 1850s, Henry Cole again turned to chapbook sources, revealing he had before him 'not less than five *penny* editions of a very primitive sort, printed almost on brown paper' which did not look 'more than fifty years old'.<sup>41</sup> Cohen's prediction – that the chapbook would become the prized possession of the middle-class antiquarian's library – had clearly already come to pass.

When Edward Clodd introduces a new edition of Hans Christian Andersen's tales in 1901, he strives to link Andersen's literary work to a folk tradition that existed in print as well as oral form. Claiming the Odense of Andersen's childhood had been culturally static for 200 years, and 'was rich in unspoilt folk-tales such as the Grimms collected', he also notes that '[t]he home cupboard had its shelf of chap books and the like'.<sup>42</sup> Yeats also draws on similar impulses when he claims that, in late nineteenth-century Ireland, chapbooks are still a vital part of folk culture. In 1888, he suggests that they are

to be found brown with turf smoke on the cottage shelves, and are, or were, sold on every hand by the pedlars, but cannot be found in any library in this city of the Sassanach. 'The Royal Fairy Tales', 'The Hibernian Tales', 'The Legends of the Fairies' are the fairy literature of the people.<sup>43</sup>

That 'are, or were' is crucial. There are reasons why Yeats tentatively acknowledges that the sale of chapbooks in Ireland may be a thing of the past, while wanting to assert that it is very much of the present. In the same book, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, Yeats also acknowledges some very different sources. Although he mentions the publications of the

Folk-Lore Society, the *Folk-Lore Record* (established in 1878) and the *Folk-Lore Journal* (1883), he claimed in private correspondence that they were 'useless', and had turned instead to more popular miscellanies. In *Fairy and Folk Tales*, Yeats lists the *Dublin and London Magazine* (noting 'Sir William Wilde calls this the best collection of Irish folk-lore in existence'), the *Dublin University Magazine* and a host of cheaper Irish titles. He claims: 'Old Irish magazines, such as *The Penny Journal*, *Newry Magazine*, and *Duffy's Sixpenny Magazine* and *Hibernian Magazine*, have much scattered through them. Among the peasantry are immense quantities of ungathered legends and beliefs.'<sup>44</sup>

Yeats's last two statements, presented as unrelated, beg some obvious questions. What are the links between those Irish magazines (including the penny weeklies established in the 1830s) and that store of 'ungathered' peasant legends? Brian Earls has explored the ways in which improving literacy rates, an emergent nationalism and more numerous outlets for literary production coalesced in Ireland from the 1820s onwards, making supernatural legends widespread in new serial contexts. He notes that such legends, the most common of which included tales of fairy figures such as the Púca and the Sidhe, became immensely popular, in part because their length was ideally suited to these new magazine formats.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, as soon as they emerged, such newspapers and magazines became the subjects (as well as the disseminators) of fairy legends. In 1825, the *Dublin and London Magazine* opens with the fifth article in its series entitled 'Superstitions of the Irish Peasantry'. In County Wicklow, on a Sunday in 1822, the reader encounters Jerry O'Toole, encircled by villagers and 'labouring to spell his way, with the help of spectacles, through an old newspaper, lent him by his neighbour Father Kavanagh, the parish priest'. Although he struggles through the bankruptcy notices and political news, Jerry's listeners draw close 'with looks of intense curiosity' when he reads aloud 'An Account of the Luprechaun, lately seen near Carlow'. The newspaper account is the springboard for villagers to offer their own oral accounts of Luprechaun (or Leprechaun) sightings and tales.<sup>46</sup>

A footnote from the editor reveals that the same newspaper article is discussed that month by another contributor, 'The Hermit'. In the latter text, the writer visits Carlow, where a friend and native of the place asks him if he remembers hearing of the visit of the Leprechaun. The narrator indeed recollects 'having seen something in the Carlow Morning Post at one time, about a small shoe that was found, and a strange little being that was seen near it'. The tale, as retold, features a Mrs Doran, who captures a Leprechaun, is tricked out of a promised pot of gold and deposits the Leprechaun's shoe for public appraisal at the office of the *Carlow Morning Post*.<sup>47</sup> In these intriguingly self-referential accounts, the newspaper becomes a source of supposed folkloric authenticity; oral tale-telling is assumed to be reinvigorated by its appearance. Like images of Mother Goose, of course, this tale-telling

frame is a conceit, part of the colourful authorial fiction. Yet such frames are nevertheless revealing about assumptions concerning the reach of print in Ireland in the 1820s, and about the ways in which oral tellers (including the illiterate) are assumed to be audiences for, as well as contributors to, fairy legends in newspapers and magazines.

While the *Dublin and London Magazine*, nationalist in sympathy, sought to present itself as a cheaper Irish competitor to the *New Monthly Magazine*, the *Irish Penny Magazine* sought a much wider audience. Borrowing elements from the cheap weeklies launched in 1832, Charles Knight's *Penny Magazine* and Robert and William Chambers's *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, it targeted readers who ostensibly included men such as Jerry O'Toole. An 1833 contribution, 'Sketches from the Country II: Bringing a Wife to Reason', offers a similar framing device to the *Dublin and London Magazine*, but one which functions far more explicitly as self-promotion. The writer (in all probability Samuel Lover) informs his readers that, in Wexford, a group of seven or eight peasants meet twice weekly in a back parlour of an alehouse, each taking turns to buy a copy of the *Irish Penny Magazine*. Larry Hennessy, who is always called upon to read aloud the 'grotesque and ludicrous' stories from the magazine, tells his companions that he once tricked some magazine editors into thinking one of his invented tales was an ancient local legend. When chastised for his deceit, he tells the editors a supposedly true anecdote about a possessive wife. He repeats this tale for his oral listeners at length in the alehouse. When the story is concluded, Larry tells the club's members

That's the way I'll compose – I'll tell my story – another picks it up, an claps it down in black an' white, with what illustrations he likes for the 'Magazine,' – nay, I'll bet ye a cherry-cheeked apple against a turnip, that this story of '*bringing a wife to raison*', is in one of them this moment.

In this most metafictional of articles, the magazine is presented as a forum where folklore meets fiction – and both are reinvented by readers as well as writers. Larry, the peasant tale-teller, may have offered an invented tale to credulous editors, but it would be a credulous reader indeed who would take the humourised Larry as an authentic voice of the peasantry. The employment of the device of peasant readers and listeners in the rural alehouse seeks to displace the myth of print as the killer of communal lore, but it also seeks to displace something else, as the opening of the article makes apparent:

All success to the PENNY MAGAZINES! They deserve it. Their editors have gone spiritedly and sensibly to work, and already the good effects are visible. Many a rough *fist* that erst had clutched the shillelagh, or worse still – the paltry and ribald ballad in which nonsense and sedition frequently strive for mastery, now thumbs the Penny Magazine.<sup>48</sup>

It is not oral tale-telling, but a different kind of cheap print – the ballad and chapbook – that the *Irish Penny Magazine* sought to supplant. While Earls is right that Irish magazines with both Tory-Unionist and nationalist politics could unite in their condemnation of the chapbook, to view chapbooks as part of ‘an autonomous popular culture’ also risks disguising this older form’s commercial status and the intimate relationships between publishers of chapbooks, newspapers and books. As Earls himself notes, James Duffy made extensive use of fairy legends in the numerous nationalist magazines that he published from the 1840s onwards, but his career began with an earlier form of print: he was a chapbook hawker and printer before he began to publish magazines.<sup>49</sup> It was in the commercial interest of cheap magazines to continue to employ the type of material that had entertained chapbook audiences, while fostering the notion that chapbooks were of dubious cultural value.

In 1833, *Chambers’s* was proud to reveal to its readers the revolutionary technological innovations – from the steam press and stereotyping to the paper-making machine – that had enabled it to provide a magazine for a penny and a half. Such developments have been described by one twentieth-century commentator as ‘the greatest step forward in book production since Caxton’.<sup>50</sup> As R. K. Webb notes, it was this mechanisation, combined with transport improvements, that ‘facilitated the expansion and centralization of newspapers, magazines, serial stories, and novels in parts’. Yet to assert that new habits of reading ‘made the cruder and simpler tales of an earlier generation fall away’ may overlook the ways in which even self-consciously ‘improving’ papers such as *Chambers’s* capitalised upon, as well as condemned, the storytelling traditions of the chapbooks.<sup>51</sup> *Chambers’s*, which claimed a sale of sixty-six thousand copies a week by 1838 (from printers in Dublin and London as well as Edinburgh), published a plethora of ballads, fairy tales, superstitions and fairy poems, as well as articles about international folklore.<sup>52</sup>

In fact, *Chambers’s* employed the very same self-promotional strategies as the *Irish Penny Magazine*. In 1833, it cites an account in the *Dumfries and Galloway Courier* from a bookseller who claims that he no longer stocks ‘trashy ballads’ and ‘trashy pamphlets’, for ‘almost every urchin’ among the milk boys of rural Scotland is now ‘thumbing *Chambers’s* instead’. The 1855 article ‘Chap-Book Literature’ designates chapbooks ‘vile and worthless trash’, but claims that such literature is largely obsolete: ‘*Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal* and similar publications have superseded the literature of our forefathers’. Predictably enough, *Chambers’s* treats such material in the spirit of nostalgia rather than condemnation by the 1860s, when chapbooks are viewed as entirely an ‘antique class of literature’. In 1862, fairy-tale chapbooks such as ‘Blue-Beard’ and ‘Jack the Giant-Killer’ are praised for their ‘firm, manly, old-English style, like the ballads’ and extensive quotations are provided from the humorous and superstitious publications that

*Chambers's* had earlier condemned. In the 1880s, the paper is again quoting liberally from chapbooks as the quaint and harmless entertainment of the past, while assuming the very concept is unknown to *Chambers's* readers: they are now valuable collector's items which 'very rarely come within the ken of ordinary readers'.<sup>53</sup>

The newspaper, *Chambers's* proclaims in 1844, is 'the ephemeral record of the exciting *now*': unlike the endlessly reprinted chapbook, it belongs to the contemporary moment.<sup>54</sup> As Earls has noted, many of the writers attracted to fairy legends in Ireland between the 1820s and 1840s were middle-class Catholics fighting for the repeal of the Union; they made extensive use of local newspapers as well as magazines. Yet in magazines too folklore was incorporated into those nationalist debates. In the article by 'the Hermit' in the *Dublin and London Magazine*, the Leprechaun is seen as an auger of trouble, anticipating the visit of the 'Bible-men', who oppose the people's claims 'as subjects of a free state', and begin to separate Protestant and Catholic.<sup>55</sup> In the 1820s, the decade in which campaigners won the fight for Catholic Emancipation, the legend was a possession that was reinvented anew, with the fairies claimed in different papers for nationalism and Britishness.<sup>56</sup> In the English magazine *The Leisure Hour* in 1890, Yeats claims that he is often doubted when he insists that the Irish peasantry still believe in fairies, for people think it impossible that 'any kind of ghost or goblin can live within the range of our daily papers'.<sup>57</sup> Yeats's critics may have raised sensible questions about his sentimental endorsement of folk belief, but in fact magazines and newspapers were just where the ghosts and goblins multiplied. Yeats's wry tale in the *Celtic Twilight*, in which a peasant is chased by a copy of the *Irish Times* which metamorphoses into a devilish seducer, suggests that he was less confident about Irish folk culture's imperviousness to the press than he sometimes claimed.<sup>58</sup> In the 1820s and 1830s, a period that saw investments in literacy in Ireland that were significantly higher than those in England, such magazine and newspaper tales undoubtedly found their way into oral tale-telling, shaping those 'immense quantities of ungathered legends and beliefs' that Yeats discovered among the Irish peasantry.<sup>59</sup>

The great success among English readers of Thomas Crofton Croker's *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825–8), which claimed to be taken down from the 'mouths of the peasantry', cannot be separated from these political or print debates. If fairy beliefs in Croker's tales were sometimes rationalised and humourised as the delusions of drunk and over-exuberant peasants, Croker was also keen to insist that the folk themselves were still firm believers. In the preface to the second volume, he turns to some intriguing evidence: not oral testimony, but newspapers reports. Croker quotes from two murder trials, where fairy involvement had been claimed by the accused, lifted from *The Dublin Evening Mail* and the *Morning Post*. He both insists and laments that such 'delusions' still exist among Irish

peasants; if perpetuated fairy superstitions will 'retard the progress of their civilization'.<sup>60</sup> As Angela Bourke has shown, in the 1890s such rare and sensationalised cases could still be invoked in defence of the Union. During the debate over Home Rule, the burning of Bridget Cleary by her husband (who claimed that his wife had suffered a fairy abduction) became a *cause célèbre* courtesy of both Irish and English newspapers, nationalist titles countering the implications drawn by the Tory-Unionist press.<sup>61</sup> As Chapter 5 reveals, Yeats's own nationalist, symbolist and spiritualist leanings in the 1890s ensured that he saw the Irish peasantry through a very different primitivist lens to Croker's. Commenting on Croker's Anglo-Irish origins and sympathies, Yeats notes that his humour had done its own political work: Croker's writing 'had the dash as well as the shallowness of an ascendant and idle class'. Croker and Lover had 'created the stage Irishman': 'The impulse of the Irish literature of their time came from a class that did not – mainly for political reasons – take the populace seriously'. Yet while Yeats suggests that the famine had 'burst their bubble', he also ensures that a number of Croker's tales live on: they appear, following this introductory caveat, in (and as) *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*. Sinéad Garrigan Mattar is right to claim that Yeats's collection is a 'tertiary text masquerading as an original', but it sometimes reveals part of that masquerade.<sup>62</sup> In both asserting and undermining straightforward distinctions between editors and the 'folk' and between orality and print, Yeats echoes strategies used by Croker himself as well as by the Irish press.<sup>63</sup>

In 1882, John Ashton claims that in England chapbooks had 'flourished, for they formed nearly the sole literature of the poor, until the *Penny Magazine* and Chambers's penny Tracts and Miscellanies gave them their deathblow, and relegated them to the book-shelves of collectors'. It is the cheap magazine, not the newspapers identified by Cohen, that Ashton sees as ending the reign of the chapbook. Despite his own antiquarian interests, Ashton views the expansion of the press as progress: the time when 'newspapers were rare indeed, and not worth much when obtainable' is hard to imagine in a 'day of cheap, plentiful, and good literature'.<sup>64</sup> Others were more ambivalent about equating the expansion of the press with progress.

To avoid the newspaper tax in the 1830s, *Chambers's* also needed to carefully avoid news: this may be another reason for its frequent focus on the (supposedly) timeless subjects of folklore and fairy tale. Parallel developments can be seen in other national contexts. As Satu Apo has noted, the Tsarist administration in nineteenth-century Finland censored printed matter, and stories and folktales made up a significant part of Finnish newspapers. One well-known oral, regional tale bore a very close resemblance to a newspaper serialisation from the 1860s, discovered by chance by a folklorist among his grandfather's papers.<sup>65</sup> Folktale collectors in Hawaii in the 1860s and 1870s may have been surprised by the local knowledge of tales which bore an uncanny resemblance to the Grimms' 'Twelve Brothers', the *Arabian*

*Nights*, 'Snow White' and 'Bluebeard'. All had been translated in a Hawaiian language newspaper.<sup>66</sup>

In 1878, the *Folk-Lore Record* argues that a history of 'popular fictions' has 'never yet been written, nor can it be undertaken with any completeness until the vast mass of materials on which it must be based – the fragments that are scattered through innumerable journals – are, if not collected and printed, at least recorded and indexed'. The article (which was reprinted from the *Pall Mall Gazette*) cites the author's own book of clippings from 50 years earlier, which includes Somerset and Lincolnshire folktales in the *Quarterly Review* and the *Mirror*, and articles in the *Literary Gazette* and in *Blackwood's*.<sup>67</sup> Yet the notion that the press could shape oral tradition rather than merely recording it was less easy for the folklorist to countenance. In 1889, Edward Clodd suggests that the value of the folktale 'Tom Tit Tot' lies in its 'being almost certainly derived from oral transmission through uncultured peasants', despite the fact that he first discovered it in an old copy of *The Ipswich Journal*.<sup>68</sup> While much work remains to be done in British and international contexts, the reach of the press in the nineteenth century – including local papers and cheap magazines – encourages us to rethink assumptions about audiences for the fairy tale in print, as well as to accord greater significance to that long history of creative interchange between voice and text.

### Originals and counterfeits: Inventing the 'classic' fairy tale

In *All the Year Round* in 1860, Dickens recalls a terrifying tale that had haunted him as a child – a tale, he claims, told repeatedly by his nurse before he was six years old. This daughter of a shipwright had, our narrator reveals, 'a fiendish enjoyment of my terrors, and used to begin, so I remember – as a sort of introductory overture – by clawing the air with both hands, and uttering a long low hollow groan'. These chilling gestures prefaced the bloodthirsty story of Captain Murderer, a cannibalistic serial husband whose wives unknowingly make the piecrusts that their own human flesh will fill. Dickens retells the tale for his periodical readers with his own fiendish enjoyment of their terrors – an enjoyment that has its literary equivalents to the nurse's gestures and groans.<sup>69</sup>

Like the creations of the Irish press, Larry Hennessy and Jerry O'Toole, Dickens's autobiographical reminiscence is also a fictional conceit, a rhetorical device to bring readers together as a magazine community. In his attempts to capture the immediacy and the thrill of oral culture, Dickens claims links to a storytelling tradition that will outlast the commercial moment. However, as Dickens told John Forster, such haunting tales came from print as well as oral contexts: from his regular childhood purchase of the 'penny blood' the *Terrific Register*.<sup>70</sup> In fact, the tale of cannibalism recalled in 'Nurse's Stories' bears more than a passing resemblance to an

urban myth that originated in a more recent penny magazine: the tale of the barber Sweeney Todd, which appeared in 1846 in Edward Lloyd's *The People's Periodical*. In the 1840s, publishers such as Lloyds made both Gothic fictions and fairy tales widely accessible to lower-class readers. While the 'String of Pearls', featuring Sweeney Todd, was in serialisation, the *People's Periodical* also published the 'The Twelfth-Cake Goblin: A Story for Christmas', and carried regular advertisements for a new penny-part work, Lloyd's 'Splendidly Illustrated Edition' of the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*.<sup>71</sup> In the early 1860s, George Vickers, who published the *Halfpenny Journal: A Weekly Magazine for All Who Can Read* offered another enticingly cheap fairy-tale edition: *Grimm's Goblins*, a loosely translated and profusely illustrated version of the tales was available in sixpenny monthly parts or for a penny a week.<sup>72</sup>

In his well-known article 'The Unknown Public' (published in *Household Words* in 1858), Wilkie Collins makes ethnological specimens of the readers of the penny press. He is eager to assert the middle-class consumer's distance from such popular reading, a distance that Dickens's own childhood reading belied.<sup>73</sup> However, if the two-penny *Household Words* sought middle-class audiences, it also professed more inclusive aims. Dickens famously claims in his opening 'Preliminary Word':

To show to all, that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it out:— to teach the hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil, that their lot is not necessarily a moody, brutal fact, excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination; to bring the greater and the lesser in degree, together, upon that wide field, and mutually dispose them to a better acquaintance and a kinder understanding — is one main object of our *Household Words*.<sup>74</sup>

This was not the only occasion on which Dickens would encourage *Household Words*' readers to 'tenderly cherish that light of Fancy', presenting the fairy tale as central in that project of class rapprochement. In *Hard Times*, serialised in the periodical in 1854, Sissy Jupe has been taught to renounce her days in the circus, when she read to her father from the 'wrong books', but she also knows that they have 'kept him, many times, from what did him real harm. And often and often of a night, he used to forget all his troubles in wondering whether the Sultan would let the lady go on with the story, or would have her head cut off before it was finished'.<sup>75</sup> In Coketown, Blue Books have replaced Bluebeard. If fairy tales have helped to make Sissy the 'good fairy' of the narrative, the narrator also offers a darker warning about keeping 'fancy' and 'romance' from the lower classes:

Utilitarian economists, skeletons of schoolmasters, Commissioners of Fact, genteel and used-up infidels, gabblers of many little dog's-eared

creeds, the poor you will have always with you. Cultivate in them, while there is yet time, the utmost graces of the fancies and affections, to adorn their lives so much in need of ornament; or, in the moment of your triumph, when romance is utterly driven out of their souls, and they and a bare existence stand face to face, Reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you!<sup>76</sup>

The fairy tale in *Hard Times*, and in *Household Words* itself, is not simply a celebration of freedom of imagination: it is sometimes a consolation for seemingly intractable social problems, and protection from the wolves of class unrest that seem to lie in wait. Henry Morley had also turned to the same fairy-tale metaphor in 'Little Red Working Coat', published in *Household Words* in 1851, but the 'good fairy' here is not fancy but the 'Ragged School Shoeblick Society', saving poor children through productive labour from 'the wolf that fattens in our London alleys'. Such children are clearly future wolves as well as prey, unless rescued from streets 'which they pollute, and where they are polluted'. Blacking shoes by day, while attending a Sunday and evening Ragged School, such boys are shown to be 'very much satisfied with the existing order of things'; they 'look up to the good fairy generally with an earnest gratitude'. Morley concludes that '[it] is by practical schemes like these that the best fairy-transformations of our own day are effected. Little-Red Working Coat can tell a story quite as interesting to our hearts as any pleasant legend of the nursery'.<sup>77</sup> If the working child is not the Romantic archetype who appears elsewhere in *Household Words*, Morley sidesteps such problems through appeals to the 'heart': to sentiment, 'romance' and 'fancy'. Staunch in its condemnation of factory abuses and in the call to working men to protest, yet sometimes equally anxious about trade-union demagoguery, fairy-tale analogies elide tensions at the heart of *Household Words* from the beginning.<sup>78</sup>

In 'Frauds on the Fairies', Dickens famously claims '[w]hosoever alters [fairy tales] to suit his own opinions, whatever they are, is guilty, to our thinking, of an act of presumption, and appropriates to himself what does not belong to him'.<sup>79</sup> Dickens frequently used *Household Words* to do exactly that: his own 'The Thousand and One Humbugs' offered a satirical reworking of the *Arabian Nights'* Tale of the Barber's Sixth Brother, in which Palmerston offers an empty dish of 'reefawm' to the long-suffering 'Guld Publeek'.<sup>80</sup> If Dickens's position in 'Frauds on the Fairies' seems perplexing, it is perhaps because we are so used to casting this well-known debate in the terms used by critics such as Michael Kotzin, with Dickens as one of the 'pro-fancy forces' in the fairy tale 'war'.<sup>81</sup> We might, however, see this as a rather different debate: not as an argument over the relative merits of didacticism and imagination, but as a defence of an established middle-class canon of works. For the 'act of presumption' to which Dickens was responding had been made by George Cruikshank, who, having rendered the Ogre with such

'extraordinary justice' in Taylor's Grimm, was now inseparable from *German Popular Stories* in many middle-class minds. When Cruikshank revised the Grimms' tale of 'Hop O' My Thumb' – later to form part of his *Fairy Library* – in line with his own teetotalism, Dickens (after reading Forster's positive review in the *Examiner*) conceived, 'half playfully and half-seriously', his own damning response.<sup>82</sup>

While Dickens's article is by far the best known, it forms part of a much wider middle-class periodical debate which sought to preserve the place of Taylor's Grimm as Cruikshank's 'true' fairy-tale edition. In the *Inquirer*, William Caldwell Roscoe suggests that before the travesty of the *Fairy Library*, Cruikshank had been 'associated with the purest and most delightful real fairy-stories'; he was the man from 'whom we learnt what an elf really was by the picture of that one putting on his breeches in the shoemaker's shop'. In an 1863 *Spectator* review of Dinah Mulock's *Fairy Book*, which included an extensive selection of familiar tales, R. H. Hutton gives the book an enthusiastic reception, but questions why the editor has been 'so hardhearted as to withhold that story of "The Golden Bird," which 'Cruikshank has immortalised for children by his unrivalled picture of that curious feat of foxmanship?' By mid-century, Cruikshank's illustrations have achieved their own authenticity: for Hutton they have 'almost identified themselves in children's imaginations with the tales themselves'.<sup>83</sup>

In 1869, Charlotte Yonge is delighted to note in *Macmillan's Magazine* that 'the true unadulterated fairy tale', provided by Taylor and Cruikshank, is back in circulation: 'we rejoice to see that the whole book, illustrations and all, has been reproduced by Mr. Hotten, with a preface by Mr. Ruskin'.<sup>84</sup> Ruskin's influential introduction echoes many of Dickens's earlier concerns, warning that there is a deep 'collateral mischief in this indulgence of licentious change and retouching of stories to suit particular tastes, or inculcate favourite doctrines'.<sup>85</sup> Yet despite Ruskin's wish that this beloved text should remain timeless, Taylor and Cruikshank's two volumes were clearly not the same: as a commodity, they now had a new cultural place as a valuable collector's item, as a publisher's advertisement at the front of the reissue reveals:

Both series passed through two or three editions soon after publication; and when Messrs. Robins the publishers retired from business, the work became very scarce. At the present day, when the collectors of the works of Cruikshank are greatly increased in number, the two volumes, originally sold for 12s., are worth at least £5 or £6!

Ruskin uses his introduction to dedicate the book to 'children of open hearts and lowly lives'; yet lower-class readers, urban or rural, could not have afforded to buy this text, in its original 12 shilling or contemporary reprint editions.<sup>86</sup> Reviews in middle-class periodicals played an important role in

establishing this text as 'the true unadulterated fairy tale', ensuring that it would be Taylor and Cruikshank's Grimm, not Vickers's *Grimms' Goblins*, that would be remembered as the Victorian nursery classic.

If this particular fairy-tale collaboration was unparalleled in its perceived cultural significance, there was nevertheless a wider canon of books that were promoted and established, like Taylor's Grimm, largely through periodical reviewing. In 1846, W. M. Thackeray's article for *Fraser's Magazine*, 'On Some Illustrated Children's Books', finds him in raptures over a new series of legends and fairy tales:

The mere sight of the little books published by Mr Cundall – of which some thirty now lie upon my table – is as good as a nosegay. [...] I envy the feelings of the young person for whom (after having undergone a previous critical examination) this collection of treasures is destined. Here are fairy tales, at last, with real pictures to them. What a library! – what a picture gallery! [...] I can fancy that perplexity and terror seizing upon the small individual to whom all these books will go in a parcel, when the string is cut, and the brown paper is unfolded, and all these delights appear.<sup>87</sup>

Thackeray's hopes for a thrilled response were not disappointed. In 1877, in an unpublished memoir for her niece, Laura Stephen, Thackeray's daughter Anne reminisces about her childhood and that of her sister, stating:

One of the nicest things that ever happened to us when we were children at Paris was the arrival of a huge parcel, which my Grannie cut open and inside there were piles and piles of the most beautiful delightful wonderful fairy tale books all painted with pictures – I thought they would never come to an end but alas! in a week we had read them all. They were called the *Felix Summerly* series.<sup>88</sup>

Thackeray's parcel to his daughter had some unexpected consequences. The antiquarian and commercial interests that fed into the *Felix Summerly* series inspired something quite different in the 1860s: Anne Thackeray Ritchie's complex, wry, realist short stories, based around the motifs of those classic fairy tales. Many of the middle-class readers who had bought or grown up with *Felix Summerly* were to become readers of Thackeray Ritchie's tales in one of the most innovative publishing ventures of the 1860s, the *Cornhill Magazine*.

In the *Cornhill*, Thackeray Ritchie's short stories appeared in a magazine that published articles on Venetian folktales, the *Arabian Nights* and comparative mythology – in a context where the fairy tale was the subject of philological and ethnological as well as literary debate. In fact, before professionalisation and the arrival of specialist journals, it was miscellaneous

titles with wider readerships that registered those disciplinary shifts from antiquarianism to folklore, and folklore to comparative mythology. Seminal in establishing the popularity of the latter was the work of the celebrated Sanskrit scholar and philologist [Friedrich] Max Müller. In his 1856 essay 'Comparative Mythology', Müller championed the Indo-European thesis, but also elaborated his own thesis of mythological origin: higher myths (and their degraded forms, folktales) could be traced back to the early ages of Aryan cultural development, to mankind's awe and linguistic creativity in response to the wonder of the sun. Müller's thesis and its remarkable influence are explored in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. Here, I merely wish to note the role of the press in establishing its popularity. Those unable to join the fashionable crowd who flocked to Müller's lectures could do the next best thing – they could read the lectures, or commentary on them, in the papers and magazines. Over eighty articles by Müller appear in the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* alone.<sup>89</sup> He was embraced in cheap papers and children's periodicals, as well as in the higher journalism.

In his introduction to *The Red Fairy Book* (1890), Andrew Lang muses that 'to exhaust the knowledge – literary, anthropological, religious, antiquarian, moral – of our nursery tales' could 'be the occupation of a career'. Wryly commenting on the hobby horses of the folklorist, he adds:

As specialism advances, we may see young men, spectacled from the cradle, and bald from their birth, voyage into middle age and extreme eld, still poring over 'Cinderella' or 'Puss in Boots'. They will trace these narratives to Aryans and barbarians; they will find lunar, solar, stellar myths in them; or will prove that 'Puss in Boots' was originally the spirit of vegetation, or a prehistoric parable of the Gulf Stream.<sup>90</sup>

Lang's gentle mockery of Müller's solar mythology thesis is not surprising. After the publication of E. B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871), when anthropological approaches began to challenge Müller's thesis, it was Lang who offered the most famous attack, and the press in which those battle lines were drawn. Lang's 1873 article in the *Fortnightly Review* was described as 'epoch-making' by the folklorist Joseph Jacobs: in his introduction to Margaret Hunt's edition of Grimms' *Household Tales* (1884), Lang revealed that the arguments between celestial mythologists (including Müller and George Cox) and the anthropologists (including Tylor, Clodd and Laurence Gomme) had been played out by their protagonists in the higher journalism, including in the *Nineteenth Century*, *Fraser's Magazine* and the *Contemporary Review*. In his *Fortnightly Review* article, Lang insisted that folktales were not the 'detritus of the higher mythology' of Müller's spiritual Aryans, but the remains of a much earlier stage of development, productions of the 'savage' consciousness that characterised all human origins. Supernatural elements in folktales (and the religious beliefs of the ancestors

to the Aryans) had indeed developed from what were regarded as the 'disgusting customs of savages' – from animal-worship, cannibalism, shamanism and belief in 'bestial transformations'. Richard M. Dorson claims that in 'one brilliant essay Lang reversed the whole trend of mythological criticism', but in many popular magazine contexts that reversal was not always so apparent, and Müller's thesis retained imaginative power well beyond the 1870s.<sup>91</sup> In articles in children's magazines, little magazines and in the formative reading of purchasers of the socialist press, anthropological theorisations of a universalised savage mind continued to battle it out with Müller's Romantically inflected primitivism.

By now, the ambiguities in nineteenth-century usages of the term 'fairy tale' will be obvious. Despite R. A. Gilbert's recent claim, it is far from the case that nineteenth-century fairy tales were simply defined as 'tales about the fairies'. While the term, adapted from the French, was established in Britain by 1750 (when it appears in the title of a periodical tale as well as a book collection), the question of whether fairy tales should contain fairies at all was the subject of much Victorian debate.<sup>92</sup> In the *Illustrated London News* in 1892, Lang uses the examples of the Grimms' tales and Dasent's *Tales from the Norse* to argue that '[e]very student of the genuine old nursery tales knows that in them fairies are conspicuous by their absence'. Moreover, Lang claims that while 'the ladies who followed Perrault [...] made a great deal of the fairies, inventing for them a Court and etiquette like that of the Grand Monarque', these literary fairies were very different from the barbarous fairies of peasant tradition, those 'survivals, perhaps in legend, of a vanished prehistoric race'. If Yeats shared Lang's prejudice against the ladies who followed Perrault, and his fascination with peasant 'survivals', it was in service of a different national agenda, with a different definition of the authentic fairy tale. For Yeats the English fairies were mere literary 'bubbles from Provence'. Ireland was the home to authentic fairy tales, whose vitality sprung from their status as true cultural survivals. Whether the fairies were believed to be degraded gods or fallen angels, Yeats was insistent that, in the 1890s, they were still part of living peasant belief.<sup>93</sup>

To seek a definition of the nineteenth-century fairy tale that smoothes over these contradictions is to ignore the political investments that made them culturally important in the first place. While Victorian folklorists often viewed collected oral 'traditionary tales' or folktales as altogether different to authored works, in reality these distinctions were rather more blurred. Many supposed supernatural 'traditionary tales', including Croker's, show clear signs of literary creation, while notions of folkloric authenticity shaped the writing and reception of authored tales.<sup>94</sup> While Edwin Sidney Hartland includes only orally collected material in his definition for his 1891 monograph *The Science of Fairy Tales*, a more familiar (and inclusive) range of works is discussed under the umbrella of the fairy tale by Charlotte Yonge in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1869. Yonge includes collections such as Taylor's

and Croker's, which were (packaged, at least) as tales from 'the folk', authored wonder tales by d'Aulnoy and Perrault, and more modern literary works by writers such as Hans Christian Andersen. The book-length contributions of Kingsley and Lewis Carroll – that are seen to deal with contemporary creatures 'and just dip them into the realms of Dreamland' – are also described as fairy tales, 'for want of a better name'.<sup>95</sup>

Other writers refused even such capacious formal definitions. When asked to define a fairy tale, George MacDonald responded, 'I should as soon think of describing the abstract human face'.<sup>96</sup> Yet despite these competing mystical, scientific and literary categorisations, there was nevertheless a list of mid-Victorian books that many writers assumed could be recognised as the genuine article. While Dickens spoke of 'simplicity' and 'purity', Yonge states in *Macmillan's* that it is 'the genuine – we had almost said authentic – fairy tale, taken in moderation, that is the true delight of childhood'. Lamenting the recent appearance of a burlesque note in children's literature, in which fantastic scenes are 'lowered to make Cockneys laugh', Yonge protests against parodies that are 'vulgarizing every sweet nook of fairyland'.<sup>97</sup> While Yonge refers to literary burlesque, her comments have interesting parallels with Dickens's earlier claims in *Frauds on the Fairies* that the theatre has 'done its worst to destroy these admirable fictions'.<sup>98</sup> If popular pantomimes and parodies are not 'genuine' fairy tales, Yonge has a clear sense of what should be included in their stead: with Taylor's *German Popular Stories*, Croker's *Fairy Legends*, Dasent's *Tales from the Norse*, Mary Frere's Indian tales *Old Deccan Days* and Mulock's *Fairy Book*, 'young people would be provided with the real classics of fairy lore, and would soon learn to regard them with the same sort of respect as the conclave of Olympus, with whom no one now-a-days thinks of taking liberties'. For Yonge, Mulock's book is 'an excellent collection of old English fairy-tales' despite the fact that its introduction reveals that most of the tales have been taken from Perrault, d'Aulnoy and Grimm.<sup>99</sup> In the mid-Victorian marketplace, it was the familiarity of the tales in Mulock's collection to middle-class readers that gave them the stamp of 'Englishness' and authenticity.

Yet as the cheap press expanded with the steady rise of literacy throughout the century, it became apparent that this intimate network of middle-class readers, with their possession of a shared history of treasured childhood editions, were far from the 'everyone' that they claimed to represent. While Andrew Lang's series of coloured fairy books, which brought international tales to better-off children are remembered as Victorian classics, W. T. Stead's 'Books for the Bairns' have been largely forgotten. Yet Stead's penny publications, issued each month in a series that ran for 25 years, sold a hundred and fifty thousand copies a month. In the preface to the issue for September 1896, *Cinderella and Other Fairy-Tales*, Stead claims to have made the fairy tale 'the Privilege of the Poor' rather than the 'Perquisite of the Rich', while in the abridged edition of *The Water-Babies* (published in May

and June 1905) he notes that 'this story has never before been published at such a cheap price; so for most children it will be quite a new fairy tale'.<sup>100</sup> Following in the footsteps of Vicker's *Grimm's Goblins* and Lloyd's *Arabian Nights*, Stead's series also reveals the significance of the monthly cheap issue, which existed in a curious hinterland between periodical and book. Indeed, in 1914, Stead's daughter Estelle briefly turned *Books for the Bairns* into a miscellaneous magazine, before returning to the previous booklet format. The fragility of such cheap publications has ensured a limited survival: most have crumbled like the chapbooks before them. Yet their disappearance is also an absence in the history of the fairy tale. Rather than killers of fairy tale and romance, newspaper editors brought international and British fairy tales, as well as penny poems and novels, to what was, by the end of the nineteenth century, an overwhelmingly literate public.<sup>101</sup>

Yonge argues that 'a real traditional fairy tale is a possession', while in 'Frauds on the Fairies', Dickens cautions that 'with seven Blue Beards in the field', a 'generation or two hence would not know which was which, and the great original Blue Beard would be confounded with the counterfeits'.<sup>102</sup> Yet fairy tales were also appealing precisely because there were no originals, and the tradition continued to be re-imagined as the century drew to a close. While Stead chose to claim the Grimms for pacifism, Oscar Wilde and Laurence Housman appropriated the Grimms' and Andersen's tales in the spirit of both homage and parody, inverting their motifs and wryly mocking their morality.<sup>103</sup> In the same period, Keir Hardie's recruitment of 'Jack the Giant-Killer' for socialism is proof that it was not just the fairy tale, but the lower social classes cast as its preservers that refused to remain fixed. The aesthetic failures of his *Fairy Library* might incline us to forget that it was Cruikshank, rather than Dickens, who ultimately won the argument. Any writer could 'take the liberty of altering a common Fairy Tale'.<sup>104</sup> While the fairy tale was never to function as Dickens had hoped, as a utopian space beyond politics and history, it was used in ingenious ways to rewrite that history, and took its own place in emergent political debates.

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