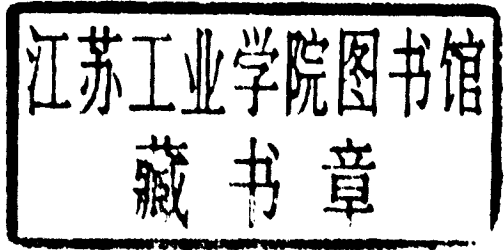


A Companion to the Fairy Tale



A COMPANION TO
THE FAIRY TALE

EDITED BY
Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri



D. S. BREWER

© Editors and Contributors 2003

All Rights Reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owner

First published 2003
D. S. Brewer, Cambridge

ISBN 0 85991 784 3

D. S. Brewer is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
and of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
PO Box 41026, Rochester, NY 14604-4126, USA
website: www.boydell.co.uk

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A companion to the fairy tale / edited by Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri with Derek Brewer.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-85991-784-3 (alk. paper)

I. Fairy tales – History and criticism. I. Davidson, Hilda Roderick

Ellis. II. Chaudhri, Anna, 1961–. III. Brewer, Derek, 1923–

GR550.C65 2003

398.2'09 – dc21

2003010053

This publication is printed on acid-free paper

Typeset by Joshua Associates Ltd, Oxford
Printed in Great Britain by
The Cromwell Press Ltd, Trowbridge, Wiltshire

Abbreviations

AT	Aarne–Thompson
ETK	Evald Tang Kristensen
FFC	Folklore Fellows Communications, Helsinki
FTAW	G. Anderson, <i>Fairy Tale in the Ancient World</i> (2000)
IFC	Irish Folklore Collection, the main manuscript collection, Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin
KHM	Grimms' <i>Kinder- und Hausmärchen</i>
TIF	Seán Ó Súilleabháin and Reidar Th. Christiansen, <i>The Types of the Irish Folktale</i> (1963)
TR	Thompson and Roberts, <i>Types of Indic Oral Tales</i> , FFC 180 (1960)

We owe the conception of this book on the fairy tale to Derek Brewer, and we are most grateful for the support and encouragement which he has given to us throughout. In our collection of material from scholars working on the fairy tale, we have sought to give a picture of its main characteristics and regional variety, and to seek the reasons for its wide distribution and long survival.

Hilda Ellis Davidson
Anna Chaudri

Contents

<i>Abbreviations</i>	vii
Introduction	1
<i>Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri</i>	
1. The Interpretation of Fairy Tales	15
<i>Derek Brewer</i>	
2. Creativity and Tradition in the Fairy Tale	39
<i>Neil Philip</i>	
3. The Ultimate Fairy Tale: Oral Transmission in a Literate World	57
<i>Ruth Bottigheimer</i>	
4. A Workshop of Editorial Practice: The Grimms' <i>Kinder- und Hausmärchen</i>	71
<i>David Blamires</i>	
5. Old Tales for New: Finding the First Fairy Tales	85
<i>Graham Anderson</i>	
6. Helpers and Adversaries in Fairy Tales	99
<i>Hilda Ellis Davidson</i>	
7. 'Catch if you can': The Cumulative Tale	123
<i>Joyce Thomas</i>	
8. Unknown Cinderella: The Contribution of Marian Roalfe Cox to the Study of Fairy Tale	137
<i>Pat Schaefer</i>	
9. Hans Christian Andersen's Use of Folktales	149
<i>Bengt Holbek</i>	
10. The Collecting and Study of Tales in Scandinavia	159
<i>Reimund Kvideland</i>	
11. The Wonder Tale in Ireland	169
<i>Patricia Lysaght</i>	

12. Welsh Folk Narrative and the Fairy Tale <i>Robin Gwyndaf</i>	191
13. The Ossetic Oral Narrative Tradition: Fairy Tales in the Context of Other Forms of Traditional Literature <i>Anna Chaudhri</i>	203
14. Russian Fairy Tales and Their Collectors <i>James Riordan</i>	217
15. Fairy-Tale Motifs from the Caucasus <i>David Hunt</i>	227
16. The Fairy Tale in South Asia: The Same Only Different. <i>Mary Brockington</i>	239
17. Rewriting the Core: Transformations of the Fairy Tale in Contemporary Writing <i>Tom Shippey</i>	253
General Index	275
Index of main tales and tale-types	291

Introduction

HILDA ELLIS DAVIDSON AND ANNA CHAUDHRI

First we tell tales to children. And surely they are as a whole, false, though there are true things in them too.

(Plato, *The Republic*, trans. A. Bloom)

What is a fairy tale? Anyone who ventures to write on this rich and complex subject must begin with a definition of the term. This is because it is commonly used so loosely and inconsistently, as Holbek pointed out in his *Interpretation of Fairy Tales* (1987: 23), that 'one must sometimes doubt whether the various authors have the same material in mind'. A distinction must be made between the oral fairy tale, recorded with various degrees of accuracy, as delivered by a storyteller to an audience, and the literary fairy tale, the individual creative work of a writer. However, there is no clear-cut division between these two types, which constantly overlap. The Danish writer, Hans Christian Andersen, composed many memorable fairy tales, four of which appear to be popular tales which he heard narrated and retold in his own style (Chapter Nine below). On the other hand, there is no doubt that many features in his own tales were brought in from popular oral tradition. We are fortunate to be able to include here an article by Bengt Holbek, published in 1990, on this aspect of Andersen's work. This study deserves to be more widely known because of the influence of Andersen on the development of the fairy tale and his contribution to its enduring popularity.

Scholars continue to argue as to how far the tales in the Grimm brothers' collection can fairly be called oral, since they were frequently told directly to them from memory by educated people from varying backgrounds, not narrated by storytellers for entertainment. Moreover, the collection of the Grimms was edited no less than seven times and the differences between these editions are marked, with notable omissions and adaptations to accord better with popular nineteenth-century taste. This material has been studied in detail by Maria Tatar (1987). In Chapter Four David Blamires examines the contribution of the Grimms to making fairy tales accessible to both children and scholars. He points out that the fact that the Grimms 'imposed their own ideas and views on the fairy tales they published is no different from what happens with storytellers of any period' (see p. 82 below).

Ruth Bottigheimer, who is firmly of the opinion that the fairy tale is a literary phenomenon, stresses a factor which she feels has been seriously

underestimated, namely that cheap printed versions of literary tales appeared frequently in the past, available to a large popular readership which would have included many professional storytellers, from the sixteenth century onwards (see Chapter Three). Few of these cheap editions survive but in their day they spread rapidly by way of book fairs, local markets and travelling pedlars, through the main countries of Europe and, in the nineteenth century, printed versions were included in school primers. In this way many famous literary works, like Apuleius' 'Cupid and Psyche', became widely known, and the sophisticated tales of Italian and French writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were passed on to readers from very different backgrounds. This type of source, like oral narratives from medieval times onwards, is now beyond recovery, but needs to be taken into account when an established tale survives through the centuries in many parts of Europe and beyond. With this evidence in mind, Bottigheimer seeks to dispel the idea that the fairy tale belongs to an ancient oral tradition of indeterminable antiquity.

There can be no doubt that the literary element in the transmission of the fairy tale is of great importance. In the case of India, for example, as Mary Brockington points out in Chapter Sixteen, literary texts have been transmitted orally, without the aid of writing, alongside what can be defined as folktales, while major literary creations contain much folk material. India has a very significant literary element in its folklore; Kenneth Jackson (1961: 31) notes the importance of the very old and extensive written compendiums of tales in India. These have been read, retold and popularised over the centuries, so that the oral tradition is full of literary influences. Jackson goes on to demonstrate a similar development in the oral traditions of Gaelic Scotland and Ireland.

There is no doubt that a vigorous two-way traffic of oral and literary tales existed in Europe from the middle ages onwards. As Marina Warner puts it (1994: 24),

Fairy tales act as an airy suspension bridge, swinging slightly under different breezes of opinion and economy, between the learned, literary and print culture in which famous fairy tales have come down to us, and the oral, illiterate, people's culture . . . and on this bridge the traffic moves in both directions.

This constant interplay and mutual influence renders it impossible to describe the fairy tale, within the broader context of the folktale, as an exclusively literary or an exclusively oral phenomenon. It also makes it virtually impossible to date the origin of any one tale. Many fairy tales seem to retain ancient survivals; in Russian fairy tales, for example, the figure of the monstrous Baba Yaga is almost certainly a representation of an ancient goddess associated with the world of the dead. Nevertheless, this does not mean that all the stories in which she is mentioned were composed at an ancient date. On the other hand, the very structure of some tales and the vivid power of some of their characters, have guaranteed their survival through both oral and literary transmission. As Jackson (1961: 56) points out, the plot of many tales is complex and tight-knit; episodes follow each other logically, apparently insignificant details are taken up to provide a later twist to the plot. Rhythms and patterns are established, for

example the use of the number three, the balance between the number of adversaries and helpers, the use of stock phrases and characters. These devices all ensure ease of transmission, whether in writing or by word of mouth, but there can also be no doubt that they greatly favour oral delivery of a fairy tale. Neil Philip makes this point very eloquently in Chapter Two below.

Graham Anderson claims in Chapter Five that, in some cases, earlier forms of famous fairy tales can be traced back to the ancient world. Evidence for storytelling there has been largely ignored because classicists and fairy-tale specialists tend to keep apart. He gives as evidence traditions and story patterns in Greek and Latin literature which bear striking resemblances to some of our most popular fairy tales. For instance, Greek stories of women dancing as Bacchantes in the woods could be the basis of tales of princesses who steal away to dance until their shoes wear out, while the story of Epimenides of Crete sleeping in a cave could be an early form of 'Rip van Winkle'. On the oral side, we have much evidence of storytellers in remote places, for instance in Denmark and Ireland, who were not likely to have been influenced by printed material. But a good story has many ways to travel. Kenneth Jackson (1961: 40) points out that some well-known tales were current in Europe by the tenth century, long before printed material developed. Many, he believed, could have been carried from one country to another during the Viking Age and the Crusades, and brought into Britain from distant regions. The amazing characteristic of fairy tales is that, in spite of the complex nature of their distribution, the essential patterns of a large number have survived for centuries over a large area of Europe and parts of Asia. The story of 'Cinderella' with its endless variations but resilient plot, a phenomenon first revealed by Marian Cox, has been discussed by Pat Schaefer in Chapter Eight and is a striking example of how a popular tale may be welcomed and recreated in many widely differing styles in various cultures.

Although the historio-geographic method of the Finnish school, in particular the work of Antti Aarne in classifying and recording folktales, has been criticised and weaknesses have been recognised, such as, for example, the strong emphasis on oral transmission, yet Aarne's principles of folktale study are still valid. It would otherwise be very hard to account for the enormous popularity and huge geographical distribution of tales such as 'Cinderella'. References to the 1961 Index of Folktale Types are prefixed with AT throughout this book. Fairy tales dealing with the supernatural world are categorised there as *Zaubermärchen* and included between numbers 300 and 749. The advantages and weaknesses of such a system have been clearly set out by Holbek (1987: 159ff.), and again in a study of 'Snow White' by Steven Swann Jones (1983), which shows how the analysis given in the Index may be misleading because of the wide variety of motifs in different versions. Monumental and painstaking studies such as Kurt Ranke's 1934 collection and analysis of the international tale of 'The Two Brothers' show the need to collect and compare all known variants of a tale. Only then can theories be advanced as to how such a tale might have been transmitted via migratory peoples or individuals, such as traders. Application of the methods of the Finnish School should eradicate the error of selecting only certain variants of a given tale to suit certain theories. Unfortunately this rigour has not always been applied, particularly in some of

the highly theoretical studies of the fairy tale, as Holbek suggests is the case in the Introduction to Alan Dundes's 1980 book *Interpreting Folklore* (see p. 9 below).

The fairy tale belongs to the larger group of folktales, traditional tales of various kinds, including animal tales, cautionary tales, religious and farcical tales, memorates and legends. There are also cumulative tales, related to fairy tales in their animation of objects and emphasis on the power of the spoken word. These are discussed in Chapter Seven by Joyce Thomas, who has shown how these apparently elementary tales for children may be works of art, a challenge to both the teller and the audience, with an undercurrent of deeper meaning. Holbek, in his far-reaching study of fairy tales, chose to deal only with oral tales, since he refused to consider as folktales 'tales known to have been re-told or tampered with by professional writers, whatever their intentions', and therefore ruled out 'texts from the *Arabian Nights*, Perrault, Andersen, even the Grimms' (Holbek 1987: 23-4). *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, on the other hand, concentrates on 'the literary formation of the Western fairy-tale genre and its expansion into opera, film, and other related cultural forms' (Zipes 2000: xvi).

Most writers define a fairy tale by its content. Jack Haney, in his study of the Russian Folktale (1999: 93), defined the *volshebnaia skazka* ('wondertale' or 'fairy tale') as a subgroup within the folktale (*skazka*), as a family-oriented but individually centred tale (Haney 1999: 93). The tale begins and ends within the family sphere but the hero is driven beyond the bounds of the family to seek his fortune within the enchanted realm. Within that realm the hero or heroine will be required to pass a series of tests set by adversaries and be wise enough to recognise the assistance of supernatural helpers when this is offered. The geographical settings of the tales are deliberately vague – a palace, a hut in a forest, a tall mountain – and the characters are usually known only by their functions – a king, a poor man and his wife, a princess – or else by simple names such as Ivan, or nicknames. Haney defines the Russian 'wondertale', which is his preferred term for the fairy tale, as one among some ten categories of the folktale and he stresses oral transmission as a fundamental feature of Russian folktales (Haney 1999: 4-5).

Maria Tatar (1987: 33) defines the traditional European fairy tale as set in 'a fictional world where preternatural events and supernatural invention are taken wholly for granted'. While it is included in the category of the folktale, it does not share the earthy realism characteristic of such popular stories. Instead it allows the hero or heroine to enter a world of enchantment and to encounter characters endowed with abnormal wisdom and magical powers. There is a willing suspension of disbelief and no attempt, as with legends, to claim that the story is true. Neil Philip, discussing creativity in the fairy tale in Chapter Two, suggests that it 'mediates between the life we have and the life we want'. The tales usually have a happy ending but the hero or heroine may have to overcome enormous obstacles, often by supernatural means and assisted by powerful helpers of various kinds, while other characters impose demanding tasks and threaten destruction. These figures have been discussed by Hilda Ellis Davidson in Chapter Six and may throw some light on the origin of the fairy

tale. The central character is young and inexperienced and, at the opening of the tale, often in a position of apparent weakness, despised and unfairly treated.

Both Reimund Kvideland in Chapter Ten and Tom Shippey in Chapter Seventeen find that there is a core-group of familiar stories which are most popular. In *The Classic Fairy Tales* (1999), Maria Tatar deals with 'Beauty and the Beast', 'Snow White', 'Cinderella', 'Bluebeard', and 'Hansel and Gretel' in detail, tales which have occasioned a great deal of discussion in recent years, largely owing to arguments among feminists about their interpretation. The Opies, in 1974, selected twenty tales (together with four from Hans Andersen), to give a general impression of the character of fairy tales popular in Europe but there has, perhaps, been too strong an emphasis on this particular group of tales by scholars. Tom Shippey, in analysing the feminist contribution to the study of the fairy tale, points out that a very small core-group of tales has come to form an unofficial canon (p. 261 below).

A tale by someone claiming to have encountered fairies, or to know a relative or acquaintance who has done so, would not normally be described by folklorists as a fairy tale but as a memorate, and indeed in most of the so-called fairy tales fairies represented as the 'little people' play no part, as Ruth Bottigheimer points out (p. 57 below). Patricia Lysaght, in her detailed study of the international fairy tales in Ireland, chooses to use the expression 'wonder tales' to distinguish them from the many Irish stories of encounters with fairies (p. 171ff. below). Legends, unlike fairy tales, are 'told for true' and concerned with known people or places. The novella, a long tale of marvellous happenings, differs from the fairy tale in that the story takes in the human world, as in the well-known 'Sindbad the Sailor' in the *Arabian Nights*.

Fairy tales have inspired such comments as that of Schiller: 'Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told to me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life' (*Piccolomini* III, 4). James Roy King (1992: 4) claims that they challenge norms and open new possibilities. Bettelheim who, as a psychoanalyst, dealt with many seriously disturbed children during the Second World War, declared that the struggles of an apparently weak hero or heroine against odds and their eventual success in the tales enabled children to gain a new understanding of themselves and of life (Bettelheim: 1976). One reason for the enduring popularity of the fairy tale is surely the quality of fantasy. Adults and children alike know that when the words 'Once upon a time' or 'Long, long ago in a kingdom far away' open a tale, the realm of wonder and enchantment is about to be revealed. This undoubtedly accounts for the tolerance of unusual cruelty and questionable moral messages within these tales; it also accounts for the fact that generations of children have been exposed to fairy tales with no ill-effects.

We know that the tales were not originally told only to children but, as Tolkien put it (1964: 34), they were banished to the nursery when they became unfashionable, like old furniture, a process which accelerated in the course of the nineteenth century in Europe. In earlier times they were narrated primarily for the amusement of adults, often by professional storytellers, but one important source of tales from very early times was that of stories told to children by their nurses. They might also be told in the home when neighbours assembled to

listen, or among groups of people engaged in dull, repetitive work such as spinning or shoemaking or some forms of agricultural labour, or among men in the army (p. 150 below). Marina Warner (1994: 23) quotes the Scottish poet Liz Lochhead:

No one could say the stories were useless
for as the tongue clacked
five or forty fingers stitched
corn was grated from the husk
patchwork was pieced
or the darning was done

Thus listeners of many kinds and all ages might be found listening to fairy tales.

The importance of old women, nurses, grandmothers and the like for the passing on of such tales has been discussed by Marina Warner in *From the Beast to the Blonde* (1994). Storytellers may be referred to as Mother Goose or Mother Stork, a foolish old woman who tells 'old wives' tales', but such tellers may also be seen as wise women who instil moral precepts in the young (Warner 1994: 79). Some have expressed doubt as to the importance of such old women as storytellers (Harries 1997) but the evidence for this seems convincing. The nature of the contribution made by women to the spread of the fairy tale has aroused considerable interest in recent studies and there has been a revolt against the so-called patriarchal element in nineteenth-century tales, which tended to aim at restricting women's independence and turning them into dutiful wives. Fairy tales can be turned into cautionary tales, as Maria Tatar reminds us (1987: 166) and this tendency increased as the tales began to be retold for children.

Grimm thought that fairy tales developed out of myths, while some like Mircea Eliade (1964: 201–2) felt that they were based on ancient initiatory practices. Others, like Derek Brewer in Chapter One, see them primarily as chronicling the emergence of the young from dependence on others into a new maturity, the theme of many great works of literature. Neil Philip has defined the fairy tale as 'a family drama, in which the characters, by means of a series of transformations, discover their true selves' (see p. 41 below). Whatever the reason for their appeal, such tales have proved incredibly popular and long-lived. They are found in many parts of Europe and beyond and some may be traced back into medieval times. Perhaps, as Jackson writes, 'No explanation is needed other than the fact that man has always loved stories . . . for their own sake' (1961: 43).

The links pointed out by Derek Brewer between fairy tales and the medieval romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in France and England (Brewer 1980: 62ff.) have received little attention from those working on the tales, presumably because the romances, like the classics, are unfamiliar territory. Many romances, however, tell of the attainments of young heroes, of implausible adventures which include supernatural encounters, and of the winning and losing of princesses and kingdoms. They may have had an important influence on later tales narrated to humbler audiences.

There have been claims that the building elements in fairy tales go back to a

more remote past in classical times or even to ancient Egypt or Sumeria, and that these may reflect early oral versions of the tales (Anderson 2000: 15). Hilda Ellis Davidson in Chapter Six has suggested that the importance of a journey into an enchanted country and the abundance of helpers in the tales from northern Europe might owe something to the traditional tales of the journeys of shamans to the Otherworld told in early times. One of the problems in considering early influences is to decide what constitutes the basis of a story. Are we to rely on the structure of the plot, even if the order of episodes and the details vary, as in the case of hundreds of surviving versions of 'Cinderella'? Or should we take into account elements in earlier tales by major poets and storytellers, such as the blinding of Polyphemus in the *Odyssey*, the adventures of the Babylonian goddess Inanna, or the tale of 'Cupid and Psyche' as told by Apuleius, as representing sources of popular fairy tales? The former assumption is based on the belief that an original form of all the known versions of a popular tale once existed somewhere in the world and that, like ever widening circles from a central point, the tales were diffused.

Theories as to where and how the most popular tales originated have been legion. At one time it was thought that they were first told in India and travelled westward into Europe. Links with Indian tales have been discussed in Chapter Sixteen by Mary Brockington. An assumption made by many scholars was that the 'folk' created its tales by a spontaneous natural process, a conception found in the writings of Jacob Grimm. A similar theory, now generally abandoned, was put forward to account for the origin of the ballad. Vladimir Propp, in his work on a selection of Russian tales (1984: 67–123), went so far as to claim that all fairy tales were of one basic structure and that this is what singles them out from folktales in general. Functions of character, he claimed, remained stable and constant elements in the tales, the basic pattern being the discovery of something lacking or a villainous act, after which help is given to the hero or heroine by a benefactor or donor. Other Soviet scholars, however, refused to view the tales as altered versions of a lost original, preferring to approach them as separate works of art in their own right. The latter view allows for much greater powers of human creativity, but Propp's approach does have merit in that it goes a long way towards defining the genre of the fairy tale within the wider context of the folktale and, as noted above, most modern writers still tend to define a fairy tale by its essential features. The problem with such an approach, however, is similar to that encountered when trying to find the earliest elements in certain tales, namely what exactly constitutes the tale?

It is only recently that the importance of the storyteller and the reaction between narrator and audience has been recognised, for it had been generally assumed by those working on folktales that storytellers among simple people merely repeated the tale as they had heard it from others, without any creative reshaping. It is remarkable that such ideas prevailed, since it has been possible, even in recent times, to attend storytelling sessions by expert narrators. A good narrator interacts with his audience and the audience, whether literate or not, is usually knowledgeable, a point made by Anna Chaudhri in her study of Ossetic narrative tradition. In the Caucasus much collecting of oral epic prose was done during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If one compares many

variants of the same legend, told by different narrators, it becomes clear that some of these were particularly reputed for certain elements of their repertoire. Details could often be left out of a story or a mere allusion made to an episode, because the audience would have known it well and some narrators, often generations of one family, followed certain lines of tradition. The Andiev family of southern Ossetia, for example, were particularly noted for their tales of the Nart progenitors (Abaev 1957). These storytellings were lively occasions. The audience would sigh or laugh and no doubt nod assent to such questions as 'And who knows what happened, but when was such-and-such a hero not an unrestrained and adventurous man?' Haney (1999: 4) writes the following when considering the oral transmission of Russian folktales:

When one considers that the telling of a traditional tale in a traditional setting was in every way a performance in Russia, it is easy to see that there could be no repetition of the tale – with its interface of narrator, text and audience in a specific setting and time. Indeed, the text invariably was a 'one-time event,' not really memorized and thus never to be repeated very exactly.

In the case of the transmission of the Russian material, the oral component is much stronger and the influence of written texts on the fairy tale would have been far more marginal than in western Europe until perhaps the mid- to late nineteenth century.

At the same time, the retelling of tales by gifted writers such as Boccaccio and Perrault for an educated audience, and by groups of sophisticated ladies in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italy and France, described by Ruth Bottigheimer (p. 65 below), clearly led to change and development. While the popular tale continued to develop along established lines, each country possesses its own particular history of collecting in the countryside on the one hand and of literary influences on the other. Reimund Kvideland has outlined the study of tales in Scandinavia, and Patricia Lysaght those in Ireland, in Chapters Ten and Eleven respectively. She has given an indication of the proportion of international tales recorded there, an important contribution to our knowledge of Irish fairy tales, and shown how, as in Wales, the decline of the native language played an important part. The tales from Russia have special characteristics of their own, discussed by James Riordan in Chapter Fourteen. Riordan has shown how, in marked contrast to the enthusiastic reception of the Grimms' tales in Germany, there was determined opposition in Russia to the work of collecting done by Aleksandr Afanas'ev, who died in poverty and neglect (pp. 223–4 below).

Some collectors were convinced that a study of fairy tales in their own country would help to discover and establish the national identity of its people. The Grimm brothers came to feel this as their work progressed, as did the Norwegian collectors, Asbjørnsen and Moe and others collecting tales during periods of ardent nationalism in various countries in Europe during the nineteenth century. However, as Tom Shippey points out in Chapter Seventeen, this did not happen in England, where the national identity was already firmly established. There was a lack of interest here in fairy tales, as Katharine Briggs found when working on her *Dictionary of British Folk-Tales*. The position in Wales

is particularly interesting, as Robin Gwyndaf has shown in Chapter Twelve. Here strong national feeling has found expression in a multitude of local legends narrated by storytellers and collected in printed books but these have links with the international fairy tales at many points. In Ireland, as Patricia Lysaght makes clear, tales in English spread far more widely as the native language declined.

We have to recognise that, since there was constant travelling in both directions over many frontiers, fairy tales cannot be confined to any one region or race. However, national characteristics can be found at the level of language and style and in the background of the tales and sometimes in the types of supernatural beings introduced, as in the case of Russia. As von Sydow pointed out (1932/1948: 12) each tradition handed down in the tales has its own group of bearers in one particular region, but these will amount only to a small number of local people, whose quality and background needs to be taken into account.

As well as the study of individual tales and groups of tales, there is an approach to the nature of the fairy tale in general when, as Holbek puts it, it is 'envisaged as a kind of superorganic entity, or as a single gigantic growth with its roots in a misty past and its branches covering large parts of the globe, if not all of it' (Holbek 1987: 25). The way in which these tales have obstinately preserved their basic approach and general characteristics, in spite of constant movement and changing influences, is surprising and impressive, and the problem of why this should be has fascinated many writers. The study of this involves the investigation of the imagery, themes and characters of the fairy tale, as in the work of Max Lüthi and James Roy King.

This leads on to the search for meaning in the tales. This has been discussed by Neil Philip and Derek Brewer in their contributions to this book. Folklorists in general have avoided the question of interpretation of the tales, but this has been taken up by psychologists and literary critics, some of whom, according to Holbek (1992: 8) 'offered the most provocative and usually ill-founded opinions on what folktales meant'. The psychoanalytic studies of the Jungian school present the fairy tale as a source of study of the human mind, consisting of archetypal patterns which 'embody primordial images and symbols, occurring the world over and constituting man's potential to understanding himself and the world around him' (Cooper 1983: 16). While the wide and lasting popularity of the fairy tale indicates the strength of its appeal to both children and adults, the difficulty in accepting the Jungian viewpoint is that such tales are not found throughout the world. They are missing, for example, in parts of Asia and Africa and in North and South America before the coming of the Europeans and so cannot be viewed as a natural phenomenon common to all peoples at a certain stage of development.

The Freudian approach to the tales is also criticised by Holbek. He disagrees with the arguments of Alan Dundes in the introduction to *Interpreting Folklore* (1980) concerning the meaning of the tales, on the grounds that Dundes has taken selected symbols from the discipline of psychoanalysis and then forced all his evidence into the same mould. He objects to Dundes's basic assumption that a great deal of folklore is preoccupied with sexuality in its many forms, and

these objections are shared by other writers, such as Lutz Röhrich (1974: 134), who criticises those who claim that one particular interpretation is the only right one, since 'many truths are better than one'. Neil Philip argues that 'The same text can be read as a spiritual allegory, as political metaphor, as psychological parable, or as pure entertainment' (p. 42 below).

Holbek himself stresses the importance of symbol in the fairy tale but in a different sense, since he sees the traditional storytellers using ready-made familiar symbols of everyday life (Holbek 1987: 318). The ogre or dragon or hostile king could represent the father opposing the hero as the wooer of his daughter, while the magical gifts the hero acquires might be seen as the natural qualities which enable him to succeed. Holbek also stresses the importance of the contrast between youth and age and rich and poor throughout the tales. But he supports Michele Simonsen when she claims:

Meaning does not lie *in* the story, nor does it lie *in* the interpreter's head. One could say that there is never a meaning, but only one (or several) minds engaged in the process of creating meaning out of a story (1985).

As Derek Brewer emphasises (p. 25ff. below) the fairy tale lends itself to interpretation and no one interpretation is exclusively valid. The deceptive simplicity of the tales allows them to be enjoyed and interpreted in a variety of ways. Over-interpretation, however, can lead to one losing sight of the integral magic and creative force of these tales. Certainly the language of the fairy tale is symbolic; Maria Tatar points out that this constitutes one of the main differences between folklore and literature. The symbolic code of literature is private and arbitrary, whereas that of folklore is public and set down by custom (Tatar 1987: 81). Surely, however, fairy tales should not be regarded as a thinly disguised series of social or sexual allusions, although their earthy content will always have been appreciated by listeners or readers.

The development of the literary fairy tale has been discussed in the chapters by Neil Philip, Tom Shippey and Ruth Bottigheimer. Bottigheimer sees the tales of Straparola in the mid-sixteenth century as 'a quantum leap in terms of narrative significance', because he created 'coherent order from existing narrative chaos' (p. 62 below). He and Basile brought many aspects from earlier books into their popular tales, while the work of Perrault and the learned ladies in France, particularly the Countess d'Aulnoy in the seventeenth century, helped to establish the fairy tale on a firm basis. More brutal and earthy elements from folktales were brought into the Italian tales, together with a sophisticated and cynical approach, so that the scope of the fairy tale had widened considerably before the Grimms approached it in the nineteenth century. Tom Shippey shows how many well-known writers have tried their hand at fairy tales, including Dickens, Thackeray and Robert Louis Stevenson (pp. 254-4 below). However he notes that on the whole their tales were non-serious, even patronising, and they never lost sight of their own world. One interesting and little-known example in a very different vein, discussed by Neil Philip in Chapter Two, is that of the tales of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, told to his disciples in the Ukraine between 1806 and 1810, which he used to convey deep theological truths (Band 1978: 32ff.).