

New Fairy Tales

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NEW FAIRY TALES

Essays and Stories

Edited by

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UNLOCKING PRESS

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New Fairy Tales: Essays and Stories

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Introduction On Making New Fairy Tales

John Patrick Pazdziora and Defne Çizakça

In the preface to *The Lilac Fairy Book* (1910), Andrew Lang complained that many readers and writers “think that to write a new fairy tale is easy work. They are mistaken: the thing is impossible. Nobody can write a *new* fairy tale; you can only mix up and dress the old, old stories, and put the characters in new dresses.”¹

It seems altogether too likely that this delusion of ease continues. Ed Catmull, head of Pixar Animation Studios, said in an interview that “If you say to somebody, ‘You should be doing fairy tales,’ it’s like saying, ‘Don’t be risky.’”² Catmull implies that fairy tales are safe, sheltering, unchallenging, that an author chooses the fairy tale form because it presents little risk.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Finding

The fairy tale, as an art form, is far from the saccharine stories of happy endings. It is built from folktales and folk customs and forms a literary memory of an oral tale tradition. A new fairy tale, on the other hand, is neither a retelling of the old tales, nor a deconstruction. It is a new story told in the old manner; it appropriates motifs from the folkloric tradition, but remains recognisably the work of an individual author.

This form has proved a fascinating and fertile challenge for generations of writers. Lang himself was not immune, rearranging Scottish folk motifs in *The Gold of Fairnilee* (1887), and satirising the French conte tradition in his Pantouflia stories. Which bits and forms are available to the artist and the scholar seems an irresistible subject of conjecture—consider the pragmatic but poetic grandeur of such catalogues as Stith Thompson’s *Folk Motif Index* (1955-1958), which arranges and interrelates the motifs by their tens of thousands. A wholly new tale may be impossible, but a new arrangement, though fiendishly difficult, has lured authors time and again in the past centuries—including the editors of this present volume.

From 2008 to 2010, a small online journal quietly restructured the nature of modern fairy tale discourse. The journal, *New Fairy Tales*, was created and edited by the Lancastrian author Claire Massey. She was later joined by Faye Durston, Andy Hedgecock, and Anna McKerrow. In the

introduction to the inaugural volume, Massey wrote: "We don't believe the fairy tale canon is complete or that we should only retell old stories. We believe that there are many new fairy tales out there waiting to be written and read and loved."³ This process of discovery, of providing a space for new fairy tales to flourish, provided the aesthetic and intellectual backdrop to the project.

New Fairy Tales was unique in online culture at the time. It shared a similar emphasis and aesthetic to Terri Windling's *Endicott Studio* and *The Journal of Mythic Arts*, and Windling has undoubtedly had some influence on Massey's work. But *New Fairy Tales* departed even farther than *The Journal of Mythic Arts* from the mainstream of speculative fiction and genre fantasy; rather than emerging from the conventions of fantasy, it took its place in the tradition of literary fairy tales themselves. Hedgecock, himself the editor of the prominent science-fiction magazine *Interzone*, explained the distinction:

Here was a site showcasing stories which drew on traditional tales of wonder to extend our imaginative response to the world in which we live. It offered highly original variations on the themes of traditional tales of wonder; or used their symbols and tropes to provide thematically and stylistically innovative stories.⁴

Massey, in fact, specifically related the stylistic innovation of new fairy tales to both the literary and oral tradition:

Fairy tale bequeaths us a language rich in motifs which I believe we should feel free to plunder. Fairy tales have always belonged to the tellers, their listeners and readers; they belong to us all. And rather than stuffing them away in a cupboard we should play with the form, experiment with its language, make it our own, tell the stories that mean something to us, the stories that dance at the edge of our dreams...⁵

The present anthology evolved directly from Massey's online journal. But, though Massey has provided the inspiration for this volume, and contributed a new fairy tale of her own, it is not the same project. As with the fairy tale tradition itself, we have taken bits from Massey's original idea, rearranged and elaborated them. We are, quite simply, curious about the innovative use of the new fairy tale form which the *New Fairy Tales* journal showcased. The question behind this anthology is not only what a new fairy tale is, but perhaps more importantly how new fairy tales are made. Making

J.R.R. Tolkien, in his 1939 Andrew Lang Lecture "On Fairy-stories," attempts somewhat fancifully to compare the process of rearrangement with soup: "Speaking of the history of stories and especially of fairy-stories we may say that the Pot of Soup, the Cauldron of Story, has always been boiling, and to it have continually been added new bits, dainty and undainty."⁶ In other words the motifs and types of the folk and fairy tale tradition should not be placed on an ascending or descending scale from myth to history; everything, whether the loves of the gods or the Archbishop of Canterbury's tumble on a banana skin, roils together in a fertile imaginative stock.⁷ Perhaps in tacit attempt to vindicate his own ambitious project of writing an English mythology, Tolkien argues for the importance of the individual author: "if we speak of a Cauldron, we must not whole forget the Cooks. There are many things in the Cauldron, but the Cooks do not dip in the ladle quite blindly. Their selection is important."⁸ To some extent Tolkien is being demure, if not disingenuous; three years earlier he argued in "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" that the role of the poet in reshaping the traditional material was of immense aesthetic importance, demanding "considerable [...] learning and training."⁹ He calls the Beowulf poet "a greater man than most of us," and insists that "the author draws upon tradition at will for his own purposes, as a poet of later times might draw upon history or the classics and expect his allusions to be understood."¹⁰ This is a different posture than saying that an author works "not quite blindly"; the

individual will, and the discipline to learn both the tradition and the practice of the art, are of ultimate importance to the telling.

It is, perhaps, the idea of tradition which best informs the creation of a new fairy tale. T.S. Eliot argues that tradition “cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour.”¹¹ Tradition, he says, involves “a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence”; a writer understands not only the historicity of literature, but its immediacy, as the whole exists within his own time.¹² To speak of new fairy tale tradition, then, suggests not only a general awareness of literature, but the specific awareness of the folkloric roots of fairy tale, and the uses they have been put to—the soup, as Tolkien inelegantly puts it. Whereas retelling involves complex understanding of an individual tale type, and deconstruction requires a renunciation of the past, a new fairy tale demands knowledge of the breadth of folkloric and literary fairy tale tradition, and a recognition of how these interact.

Retelling the tales can too easily descend into rote, with the self-delusion that one has done something new; it is often better perhaps simply to tell the old tales, than retell them. These perils may be what Catmull had in mind. And deconstruction, sitting in haughty judgement on the past, is inevitably a cracked cistern, breeding both unhealthy contempt for the past and smugness about the present, failing in the storyteller’s task of speaking judgment on his own age.

The work of the teller of new fairy tales is both like that of the poet drawing on tradition for his own purposes, and of the oral storyteller reassembling an old tale for immediate telling. He must love the past for its own sake, yet address himself fearlessly to the present; in his mind they are undivided. In this way the care, the discipline, and the transience of the cook’s art are all apt metaphors for the work of writing a new fairy tale.

Yet Tolkien would later draw away from this image of the cook, or at least return to it more critically; the Great Cake cooked in *Smith of Wooton Major* (1967) began as an analogue to the craft of storytelling. Here the cooks are more ambiguous figures, alternately an adventurer, a charlatan, and an elf; the central figure of Smith, arguably Tolkien’s self-portrait, becomes a craftsman—the village blacksmith—but never a cook. His wandering in Faeire makes his utilitarian craft unique, but brings the unresolved fear that when he grows too old for travelling his work will lose its uniqueness. The cooks with their Great Cakes—authors with monumental works—may have less or more vision than Smith, but he is ultimately not one of their number. The wanderer is an outlier, with no status in society; Smith’s wanderings are only valued because of the aesthetic prettiness they give to his utilitarian craft. This tension is never resolved within the tale; Tolkien concludes somewhat wistfully that people benefit from the visions of the wanderers whether they are aware of it or not.

In light of all this, one could be forgiven for despairing of the new fairy tale as nearly unattainable, and unlasting when attained—impossible, as Lang suggested, and hopelessly ephemeral. But perhaps Tolkien strikes closer to the truth later in “On Fairy-stories” when he claims that there is “a mythical or total (unanalysable) effect” to the old stories, and the new stories drawn from them: “they open a door on Other Time, and if we pass through, though only for a moment, we stand outside our own time, outside Time itself, maybe.”¹³ And here we have come to the heart of literary tradition, and of the new fairy tale.

Eliot explains that “a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional.” Thus the distinction of new and old has no ultimate significance. By participating in tradition rather than simply responding to it, the new fairy tale attempts to re-discover and re-enter that Other Time, to stand “outside Time itself, maybe.” Small wonder, then, that Lang and others like him would both judge the thing impossible, and find it irresistible. The timeless and temporal together create the frisson of the new fairy tale

and the power of its inception. In Eliot's words:

There is only the fight to recover what has been lost,

And found and lost again and again; and now,

under conditions

That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.

For us, there is only the trying. The rest

is not our business.¹⁴ Arranging

A study of new fairy tales should pay homage to the fairy tale tradition as well as to the novelties present in the new form. But most of all it must allow readers to make their own discoveries in this relatively unexplored field. To this end, the present volume is composed of three different types of contribution. The first are academic essays on new fairy tales. The second are new fairy tales themselves, both in prose and poetry. The third are process essays that study the craft of writing new fairy stories.

In *New Fairy Tales*, we have worked with both writers and academics, as well as with writers who are academics and academics who are writers. Fiction and critique appear within the same sections rather than separately. We hope the interplay between critical thought and aesthetic practice will inspire even more new fairy tales to come to life. The current table of contents reflects our own biased interests, and hopefully creates an interplay between critical thought and aesthetic practice which will inspire further creation of new fairy tales. The anthology is divided into the following sections thematically: miniatures, shadows and reflections, storytellers, fairy brides, and fairy tale pedagogy. But there is more than one way to read this volume, as several bridges connect the featured pieces and we invite the readers to discover their own paths.

Miniatures: The compact nature of miniatures is both welcoming and paradoxical. Claire Massey, in her story "Glass, Bricks and Dust," follows a boy who builds a city out of scrap materials from a construction site. The danger lurking behind this adventure is that the miniature city begins to mock the real town, casting doubt on the life the boy had previously led. In her process essay, Massey tells us of her fascination with miniature worlds and about how they make dreaming easy through their perfect, miniscule proportions. She also discusses what makes for a good new fairy tale, identifying wonder as one of these primal elements. Jesse Sharpe's essay follows Massey's story, and analyzes miniatures through the depiction of the fairy world in Robert Herrick's *Hesperides*. Sharpe argues that the clarity of the miniature fairy world enables Herrick to discuss themes he finds to be of utmost importance: love, nature, divinity, and marriage. Catriona McAra takes us through a visual arts perspective and questions what role taxidermy can play in creating new anti-fairy tales. Through a study of Tessa Farmer's animation work, McAra analyses the flipside to the conventional, playful, innocent fairies. McAra's interviews with Farmer allow readers to eavesdrop on the artist's childhood inspirations from fairy stories. The section concludes with Katherine Langrish's short story "Gnomes." She hints that the little men we have all grown too familiar with through garden decorations may have some secrets of their own.

Storytellers: *New Fairy Tales* takes a non-Western turn with the section on storytellers. Hanna Livnat's contribution is an invaluable contextual essay on the development of Israeli fairy tales. Livnat emphasizes the proximity of Hebrew fairy tales to folk tales and legends and studies stories that are more difficult to classify. Difficulties in classification are also a theme Defne Cizakca investigates in her essay on new Ottoman fairy tales. She focuses on the loss of the Ottoman

language and the coffeehouse tales of Istanbul, and charts the ambivalent relationship Turks have formed with their own fairy tale traditions. These place-specific studies are followed by John Patrick Pazdziora's literary study on James Thurber. Pazdziora studies the various guises of the storyteller in Thurber's fiction and distinguishes him from the writer, narrator and heroes of fairy tales, ultimately aligning the storyteller to the Fool of the tarot deck. The section on Storytellers ends with Fiona Thackeray's "Cloud Catching in the Realm of the Drought King." This Brazilian fairy tale follows Rita from Rio de Janeiro to the backlands of the country. Thackeray's fiction focuses on how different places may tell us different stories, and consequently mould us into different people.

Shadows and Reflections: This section opens up with a fairy tale that celebrates communal identity. A strong northern wind, a crooked house, and a tilted girl are the main characters in "A Prevailing Wind" by Elizabeth Reeder. Both the inhabitants of the unnamed town and the readers understand the struggles of the heroine through her body, her shadows and her unspoken words. Reeder's story is followed by an analysis of Oscar Wilde's fairy tales, which were originally labelled unsuitable for children. Colin Cavendish-Jones tries to find out whether this critique is well founded through a discussion of nihilism, beauty and artistic creation in Wilde's fiction. The study of beauty continues in Daniel Gabelman's "Radiant Mysteries". Gabelman goes back to the medieval understanding of clarity and simplicity as the two basic modes of beauty, and discusses how two prominent fairy tale authors – George Macdonald and G.K. Chesterton – viewed their own writing through this Augustinian lens. This section on shadows and reflections ends with a fairy tale by Eric M. Pazdziora that inversely reflects Reeder's story in its playful layers. These are fairy tales within a fairy tale, and each story takes us deeper into magic, longing, and serendipity.

Fairy Brides: This section begins with Mayako Murai's in-depth study of *The Bridegroom was a Dog* by Yōko Tawada. Murai analyses the motif of marriage between different species in Japanese tales and discusses how this theme is subverted and consequently renewed in Tawada's fairy tale. This is followed with an essay by Josh Richards, introducing us to the unexpected inspirations behind his long poem "Dante": the Japanese manga *Hayate the Combat Butler* by Kenjiro Hata. In this passionate article, Richards discusses the metaphysics and unique catharsis of the Gothic back-story in Hata's work. "Dante" itself follows, an eerie tale of love; it is a gothic poem poised between Hata's tale and the poet Dante Alighieri's work.

Fairy Tale Pedagogy: The final section of the collection is on fairy tale Pedagogy. The first essay, by Kate Wolford, is on teaching "The Little Mermaid" to first year literature students and is followed by a joint student essay by Emily Midkiff and Orlando dos Reis which focuses on Barry Deutch's comic "Hereville: How Mirka Got Her Sword." Midkiff and dos Reis focus on the use of images in new fairy tales, and on how they can strengthen the written word through depictions of the unsaid. A Japanese fairy tale by Kirstin Zhang follows suit. Zhang tells us of a strong and gentle empress who forms an unlikely friendship with a little girl – the daughter of the imperial gardener – during a time of war and scarcity. Zhang's story is followed by Travis Prinzi's study on J.K. Rowling's "The Tales of Beedle the Bard." J.K. Rowling presents these stories as the fairy tales of the Wizarding World. Prinzi's essay discusses the ethical codes presented through these tales. The last chapter of *New Fairy Tales* is a fairy tale by Tori Truslow. It talks of deep waters, a bucket that contains a whole world, and a mysterious messenger. It is a new fairy tale about emancipation, the joys of work, and trusting intuitions. Acknowledgments

It is, of course, impossible to assemble a work of this nature without having very many people to thank. John Granger, owner and publisher of Unlocking Press, has shown unflagging enthusiasm for the project since we first presented it to him. This anthology would not have been possible without the energy, skill, and encouragement provided by him and his team. Claire Massey, editor of the *New Fairy Tales* journal, responded to the idea of the project with similar enthusiasm, letting us build on her ideas and writing a new fairy tale for the volume. She has been our advisor,

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Joe Sutliff Sanders of Kansas State University enthusiastically embraced the admittedly peculiar idea of having his graduate class in graphic novels co-author a chapter, and his oversight and keen guidance brought a remarkable academic experiment to life. Zohar Shavit gave us her kind advice during the early stages of the work, and Rabbi Aharon Mendez offered much-needed good humor and encouragement at a key point in the development of the project. Danielle Bett assisted us with her linguistic knowledge and unfailing punctuality, and Gaby Cohn delivered skilled editorial work under immense time pressure with aplomb. Special thanks to Barry Deutsch and Tessa Farmer, who have graciously allowed us to reproduce their artwork. Faye Hanson illustrated and designed the cover, and the resulting image is, in one sense, her own new fairy tale.

In addition, we offer our heartfelt thanks to each of our contributors. Their expertise, creativity and hard work have been a constant source of encouragement throughout the project. We have been honoured to work alongside them, and are proud to present their work in this volume. The strengths and virtues of this anthology are their doing; the blunders and weaknesses are of course our own.

Finally, we are grateful to Kitty and Murat Çizakça, Pedro Germano Leal, Rebecca Pazdziora, and Fern Rose for their unfailing love, support, and patience. Notes

1 Andrew Lang, preface to *The Lilac Fairy Book* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1910), viii.

2 Dawn C. Chmielewski and Claudia Eller, "Disney Animation is closing the book on fairy tales," *Los Angeles Times*, November 21, 2010, accessed July 18, 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/nov/21/entertainment/la-et-1121-tangled-20101121>.

3 Claire Massey, 'Letter from the Editor,' *New Fairy Tales* 1 (October 2008): 2, accessed 6 April 2011, <http://www.newfairytales.co.uk/pages/issuetwo.pdf>.

4 Andy Hedgecock, "Letter from an Editor," *New Fairy Tales* 5 (June 2010): 3, accessed 11 June 2012, <http://www.newfairytales.co.uk/pages/issuefive.pdf>.

5 Claire Massey, 'Letter from the Editor,' *New Fairy Tales* 2 (February 2009): 3, accessed 6 April 2011, <http://www.newfairytales.co.uk/pages/issuetwo.pdf>.

6 J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tolkien On Fairy-stories: Expanded Edition, with Commentary and Notes*, edited by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson (London: HarperCollins, 2008), 44-45.

7 Tolkien, *On Fairy-stories*, 46-47.

8 Tolkien, *On Fairy-stories*, 47.

9 J.R.R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," in *Beowulf—A Verse Translation: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticisms*, translated by Seamus Heaney, edited by Daniel Donahue (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 123

[10](#) Tolkien, "Monsters," 113, 118.

[11](#) T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1920), 43.

[12](#) Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, 44.

[13](#) Tolkien, *On Fairy-stories*, 48.

[14](#) *East Coker* V.15-18.

Chapter 0 Galantha

Josh Richards

Sister Snowdrop died

Before we were born.

She came like a bride

On a snowy morn.

Head bowed and Lilith-pale, a slender

Girl swayed amid the snow,

Lending a cold, desolate splendor

To fields where nothing else could grow.

5 Her fairy song softly intruded

The study where I sat secluded;

Her voice, like winter waves at dawn

Lapping the wharves of Avalon,

Shivered amid the heaps of dusty

10 Leaves, compelling me to look,

To rise, ignore the holy book,

Which then had grown desperately musty,

And throw the window open wide

To let that haunting song inside.

15 I smiled sadly as I listened;

Her beauty greened a garden where
The frost on stone was all that glistened
In the February air.
Then, with a pining note, she lifted
20 Up her eyes, and something shifted
In my heart. I left the sill;
I left my books; I ran until
I knelt breathless beside the girl
And asked if she would stay and sing
25 To me. Her soft response will ring
Within my mind like the dark curl
On Beatrice's crimson dress;
I still can hear the fatal yes.

PART I Minatures

Chapter 1 Glass, Bricks, Dust

Claire Massey

At the top of the mound he was king. The broken-brick, gravel and glass mountain had stood for over a year in a deserted street not far from the boy's house. When the excavators and bulldozers had come to demolish the old mill, a high metal fence had barricaded the site. But when the men in high-vis vests and hard hats disappeared with their machines, they took the fences with them. They left polystyrene cups balanced on top of the gateposts, where they filled with rainwater. They left the building's ribs—inner walls and doorways without doors. They left lumps of concrete, lengths of pipe, metal girders, and fire exit signs. And they left the mound. As the days passed, rubble and red-brick dust spread onto the pavement and gathered in the gutters of the road.

On summer evenings, he crept around the edge of the mound, toeing shards of glass and empty cider cans. He circled his kingdom, noting newly burnt lumps of wood and scrunched-up cigarette packets, but he never caught sight of the grown-up intruders who'd left them. There were lazy red butterflies on the tangle of flowering weeds that had pushed through the building's remains. Blackbirds gathered on the street's only lamppost before darting off overhead. He clambered up the mound, which looked like an enormous sand dune against the bright blue sky. From up there he could see the whole town: rows of terraced roofs, two church steeples, the town hall clock, and the last mill chimney with its luminous supermarket sign. At his back were the moors and the wind.

One evening, the boy was crouched on the top of the mound making a new town out of a heap of broken glass. He liked this time of day best—after tea, before bed. The air seemed to get grainy as its colour changed from vinegary yellow to candyfloss blue. He could rub it between his fingers like dust and slow time down. At the top of the mound he was in charge and he didn't want to go home to bed. He collected green glass shards and broken brown bottle necks. He tumbled fragments of old window in his hands like shattered marbles. He pushed the glass into the mound, making houses, balancing roofs on them, building towers. The last of the sunlight caught and glinted in the tiny glass walls.

More of the blackbirds than he'd ever seen before rushed overhead and gathered on the lamppost. The orange light hadn't yet switched on but the shadows were growing. He heard nine chimes of the town hall clock. For a moment, the lamppost looked like a tall thin man wearing a large black hat. When the man turned towards him, he looked like a lamppost. The man had a greyish-green coat speckled with rust and a black hat that quivered with beaks and feathers. The man didn't need to climb the mound; he was face to face with the boy with his feet still planted in the pavement.

"What are you making?" asked the man.

The boy didn't answer.

"It would be better to tell me. I could help. Every child is always making something. Cut them open and shake them out and they're full of dust and dreams."

The boy squirmed at the mention of cutting. He stood up, ready to run, but then he remembered that at the top of the mound he was king. He dug his heels into the rubble. "I'm making a new town, better than this one. The sun can shine in through the walls. The buildings look grander. It'll be a great glass city."

"All it needs is people," said the man.

"Yes, it needs people," said the boy. And when he looked down, tiny creatures were scuttling beneath the glass roofs. They looked like ants or spiders, but the sky was darkening and the creatures were moving too fast to be sure. He looked to the man but there was only the lamppost and as its orange light snapped on, the birds launched into the sky.

The boy plunged down the mound and ran, hoping he wouldn't get told off for being late home. Before he reached the end of the street he knew something was wrong. The world was too quiet. Where were the sounds of cars? Of footballs being kicked against walls? Of smokers chatting outside the pub? There were no shouts from parents calling everyone in.

"Mum?" He pushed open their front door. The house was in darkness but the telly was switched on. His mum wasn't in any of the rooms. A half-drunk cup of tea had been left on the arm of the settee.

The boy thundered back along the silent streets. He stood in the orange light beneath the lamppost. "Give them back," he shouted.

Nothing happened, although he could hear the rustle of feathers coming from the darkness above the light.

The boy ran to the top of the mound. "Give them back!"

“But I haven’t got them.” The man’s face glowed. “You have.”

In the gloom, it was hard to make out the tiny creatures beneath the glass roofs. They were no longer moving. The boy couldn’t be sure what was a particle of rubble and what was a person sleeping in their broken-glass house. “How do I get them back?” he asked.

But the man was a lamppost again.

The boy crouched at the top of the mound and looked out at the night-dark shapes of the town. If he made the town as it really was, an exact replica, maybe that would bring everyone back.

He worked all night, building with bits of old brick. The clouds overhead moved slowly and their bellies were orange. Every time he looked up and caught a glimpse of a star, a bird flew from the lamppost to blot it out.

When the dawn came, it was damp and grey and the boy’s fingers were stained red with brick dust. He looked proudly at his miniature town, with its rows of roofs, two steeples and the last mill chimney. He peered into the glass town beside it and saw it was empty.

The boy skidded down the mound and ran home. The streets were still silent, but they would be so early in the morning. In the living room the telly was still on, the cup still on the settee arm. The boy pounded up the stairs, not caring if he woke his mum and got into trouble. But she wasn’t there. Her bed was empty.

The boy raced back to the mound. There were an impossible number of birds gathered on top of the lamppost watching him. The light had switched off, ready for a new day. At the top of the mound, he peered into the little broken-brick houses. The gaps he’d left for windows were too small to let in much light; he couldn’t separate any tiny people from the darkness. He pressed his fingers into the grit and dust. He had to try again. He gathered small mounds of dust and emptied rainwater from the old polystyrene cups onto them. He moulded houses and steeples and the chimney and the tower for the town hall clock. The buildings were misshapen and muddy.

“Aren’t you going to ask me to give you the people back?”

The boy looked up at the lamppost. The creak of its voice had disturbed its hat and wings were thrust out here and there.

“No,” said the boy. “I’m going to go and get them.” As his words touched the air it thickened with dust and as he rubbed it between his fingers he knew he could make himself small.

The boy was no longer at the top the mound, but standing in the dusty street outside his house. He looked up at the sky, trying to see the edges of the bigger town where there was a mound of rubble on top of which he’d built this town. But the sky was too wide. He walked through the doorway without a door to his house and found his mum, dust collected in the lines round her eyes, sitting in front of the greyish lump of the telly. “Mum.”

She didn’t look up. “Don’t interrupt, love,” she said, “this is a good bit.” So he took a deep breath, and blew. He blew at the telly and at the walls and at the clouds of dust that surrounded him. He ran out into the street, climbed to the top of a mound of dust and he blew and he blew and he blew the town away.

At the top of the mound he was king. The ruins of the three small towns lay scattered at his feet. He could hear cars and footsteps and voices and the nine chimes of the town hall clock.

When the boy turned away from the mound and the lamppost, he found the streets were coated in dust. Soft greyish-brown snow. He felt the gritty air between his fingers and knew that if he rubbed it he could slow time down. But he didn't want to be in charge again, at least not for a while. He wanted to go home to bed.

Process Essay

Writing New Fairy Tales Claire Massey

*All writers must go from now to once upon a time; all must go from here to there; all must descend to where the stories are kept; all must take care not to be captured and held immobile by the past. And all must commit acts of larceny, or else reclamation, depending how you look at it.*¹

I have been exploring the fairy tale form as a writer and editor for several years. A chance encounter with a collection of Grimms' fairy tales in a train station bookshop drew me back into stories half-remembered from childhood. Except these weren't the stories I remembered, they were much darker and much brighter, and I was entranced. From the Grimms, I moved on to Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen, Joseph Jacobs, Oscar Wilde, and George MacDonald. Thanks to the internet, I had instant access to fairy tales from all over the world, but I became particularly intrigued by the stories that had been written as new fairy tales, rather than as literary retellings of oral tales. These stories married the form of the traditional fairy tale with ideas and images from the writers' own imaginations rather than a previous oral or literary source. These stories chimed with my growing desire to write fairy tales, and specifically to write new ones. In late twentieth and early twenty-first century publishing, retellings seemed to be the dominant form of fairy tale. I enjoyed many of the retellings I read, but, perhaps due to innate stubbornness, I wanted to make my own fairy tales.

Writing is a process of discovery, and when writing new fairy tales there are many paths through the forest to choose from, but in this short essay I'd like to discuss three elements I have begun to consider essential to the form. Drawing on existing tales

*the fairy tale has no landlord*²

If the fairy tale has no landlord, perhaps we are free to do whatever we would like with the form. But new fairy tales can't be written in ignorance of the older tales; they can only be written by those who have immersed themselves in the stories that have come before, by those who have a desire to create new shoots from old branches.

Marina Warner has referred to the store of fairy tales as "that blue chamber where stories lie waiting to be rediscovered" and has said these stories offer "magical metamorphoses to the one who opens the door, who passes on what was found there, and to those who hear what the storyteller brings."³ But when we visit the store we should heed Margaret Atwood's warning not to be captured by the past.⁴ I've felt the temptation to play with the old tales, and to emulate a Mother Goose voice, rather than striving to find my own. It would be too easy to become trapped by these stories. But if we can journey in and out, carrying only what we need, there are many treasures to be pilfered. Atwood compares writers' methods to the ways of a jackdaw: "we steal the shiny bits, and build them into the structures of our own disorderly nests."⁵ We should feel free to take from the old tales, but build the material into our new nests with care.

Carol Ann Duffy has retold fairy tales by the Grimms and Perrault. She has also drawn from existing tales to write several new fairy tales. In *The Princess' Blankets* (2008), a beautiful new fairy tale in traditional guise, the blankets of ocean, forest, mountain, and earth recall dresses that resemble the elements, or light from heavenly bodies, in tales such as "Donkeyskin." When Duffy's princess

sees the pattern on the ocean blanket, we're told that "many fish swam in it and that dolphins leaped in its borders."⁶ Duffy uses the traditional trope of a fantastical fabric in a new and inventive way, giving us blankets rather than garments, yet the line from traditional to new fairy tale is clear.

When drawing on existing tales, we can also subvert what we find. A.S. Byatt retold and translated traditional tales. In "The Story of the Eldest Princess" (1995) she tells a new tale by subverting the old. The eldest princess is aware of the fairy tales in which the two elder siblings are sent out first and fail at their quest and she wants her story to go differently, realising: "I could just walk out of this inconvenient story and go my own way."⁷ Byatt also consciously subverts the fairy tale order by turning the sky green, having acknowledged that "Lüthi makes the point that green, the colour of nature, is almost never specifically mentioned in folk tales."⁸

When writing "Glass, Bricks, Dust," I took inspiration from existing tales in which places are transformed into miniature, such as the Grimms' "The Glass Coffin," whilst consciously subverting several elements of the form. I am interested in finding ways to put a time, date, and place stamp on a form which typically eschews such details, whilst striving to retain the magical feel of the traditional tale. I am very keen on bringing the landscape of contemporary Lancashire into my stories. This is a county of exposed moorland and crumbling old mill towns tucked into valleys. The woods beside the cottage where I grew up became entwined in my mind with fairy tales, as did a tower nearby on the moors. But, for me, there's also a latent magic in the rubbish heaps and abandoned buildings of the postindustrial landscape. With rows of empty shops and boarded-up pubs, the town I live in can feel abandoned by money and politicians, but it doesn't have to be abandoned by story. Lüthi wrote that "The fairy tale portrays an imperishable world."⁹ In "Glass, Bricks, Dust" I purposefully wrote about the perishable landscape I see around me. Playing with wonder

*The dimension of wonder creates a huge theatre of possibility in the stories: anything can happen.*¹⁰

Whether a new fairy tale takes traditional or contemporary guise, whether it remains in the realm of "once upon a time" or takes the story into a specific time and place, there is one element that cannot be tampered with if the story is to remain a fairy tale: wonder. Fairy tales present us with the most fantastical of circumstances; without wonder there isn't a fairy tale. Yet, the wonderful events must never be questioned. As Lüthi notes: "The real fairy-tale hero is not astonished by miracles and magic: he accepts them as if they were a matter of course."¹¹

So it is possible for the stepmother in Carol Ann Duffy's "The Stolen Childhood" (2003) to cut away her stepdaughter's shadow with scissors and steal it, replacing the girl's shadow with her own "heavy, leathery shadow," and for this exchange of shadows to mean an exchange of old age for youth.¹² As long as the fairy tale author writes with conviction, and the characters accept the elements of the fantastic, the reader will, too.

Lüthi wrote that "Fairy tales are unreal but they are not untrue."¹³ I agree with this wholeheartedly, but when writing new fairy tales I try to lessen that sense of unreality, aiming to create what short story critic Ailsa Cox refers to as a "mismatch between the mundane and the fantastic."¹⁴ For me, the presence of the quotidian can amplify the fantastic. By featuring everyday objects and settings the fantastic becomes more unexpected and is heightened. But however far the story strays into reality, maintaining the fairy tale rule that the fantastic should not be questioned is vital to making new fairy tales work. If you allow the question, you draw attention to the artifice and break the spell. Using lasting images

*Where do they come from, these images that rain down into the fantasy?*¹⁵

There is no doubt that images from fairy tales last. They have often gone on to lead lives outside their tales. Glass slippers, red hoods, glass mountains, iron shoes—whether rooted in oral versions of a tale or literary flourishes added at a later date—all have the power to trap the imagination, pulling us into the state of wonder.

Here I want to concentrate for a moment on the image of a miniature place. This is a motif that appears in tales such as the Grimms' "The Glass Coffin," and Kate Bernheimer continues this tradition in her delightful story *The Girl in the Castle inside the Museum* (2008). In Bernheimer's story, the miniature castle sits inside a glass globe and there are "moats and turrets and bright shining lamps. There are dark winding streets that gleam in the rain."¹⁶

There is something almost unbearably appealing to my imagination about a miniature place. Not a dollhouse, but an actual place, perfect in its miniscule dimensions, so you feel as a reader you need only shrink down to enter it. Miniaturising the world to a scale at which we can comprehend much more of it can give us an enormous sense of possibility. One of my reasons for writing "Glass, Bricks, Dust", was that I wanted the chance to create miniature towns. Gaston Bachelard wrote, quite rightly, that "miniature causes men to dream."¹⁷ Making tales

*[Children] feel irresistibly drawn to the detritus created by building, gardening, housework, tailoring, or carpentry. In waste products they recognize the face that the material world turns to them and them alone. In putting such products to use they do not so much replicate the works of grown-ups as take materials of very different kinds and, through what they make with them in play, place them in new and very surprising relations to one another. In this way children form their own material world, a small one within the large one.*¹⁸

When I watch my children at play, they seem to have a sense of mastery over the world that we lose as adults. Their sense of story gives them the power to create and destroy. They dismiss impossibility and fall easily into the language of wonder. We first encounter fairy tales as children, yet they're a literature we can draw from throughout our lives. They're also a literature with which we should feel free to play without feeling bound to strict replication. We can take the materials of traditional tales and use them to inspire us in the creation of new tales. As adults, fairy tales give us the ability to reclaim lost wonder; as writers, they allow us to make our own small worlds within the large. Bibliography

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1 Margaret Atwood, *Negotiating with the Dead* (London: Virago, 2003), 160.

2 Max Lüthi, *Once Upon a Time: On the Nature of Fairy Tales*, translated by Lee Chadeayne and Paul Gottwald (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 63.

3 Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers* (London: Vintage, 1995), 418.

4 Atwood, 160.

5 Atwood, xviii.

6 Carol Ann Duffy, *The Princess' Blankets* (London: Templar Publishing, 2008), 8.

7 A.S. Byatt, *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* (London: Vintage, 1995), 52.

8 A.S. Byatt, "Happy ever after," *The Guardian*, January 3, 2004, accessed January 10, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/jan/03/sciencefictionfantasyandhorror.fiction>.

9 Lüthi, 45.

10 Warner, xvi.

11 Lüthi, 46.

12 Carol Ann Duffy, *The Stolen Childhood and other Dark Fairy Tales* (London: Puffin Books, 2003), 60.

13 Lüthi, 70.

14 Ailsa Cox, *Writing Short Stories* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 83.

15 Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millenium*, translated by Patrick Creagh (London: Vintage, 1996), 87.

16 Kate Bernheimer, *The Girl in the Castle Inside the Museum* (New York: Schwartz and Wade Books, 2008), 14.

17 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, translated by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 152.

18 Walter Benjamin, *One-way Street and Other Writings*, translated by J.A. Underwood (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 55.

Jesse Sharpe

Robert Herrick's fairies come at the point in which the Renaissance has completely changed the fairy from the Medieval incarnation of a large and imposing supernatural or otherworldly being who needs to be feared, to the small and mischievous being who is enjoyed in a condescending manner due to their now insect-sized stature. Even as recently as Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, fairies were portrayed as human-sized beings who lived in a world parallel to, though different than, the world inhabited by humans, but with Shakespeare's miniature fairy court of Oberon and Titania in his play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the land of fairy was forever changed. It was no longer a place that existed beside the natural world, instead it was now that fairies lived in our world, but they were so small that they could be easily overlooked, and while they were still magical beings, there was no fear of their stealing babies and replacing them with changelings, nor was there worry of being seduced into their world and made into a slave. By the time that Robert Herrick published his book of poetry, *Hesperides*, in 1648, fairies had basically been domesticated into the English landscape, and they now were figures of amusement rather than dread.

That the fairy poems receive a place of prominence by Herrick can be seen in the opening poem to *Hesperides*. "The Argument of his Book," which acts an introduction to what is to come in the 1,400 poems that follow, gives fairies a rather prominent position in his book, despite the fact that there are only five fairy poems. "The Argument" reads:

I Sing of *Brooks*, of Blossomes, *Birds*, and Bowers:

Of *April*, *May*, of *June*, and *July*-Flowers.

I sing of *May-poles*, *Hock-carts*, *Wassails*, *Wakes*,

Of Bride-grooms, Brides, and of their *Bridall-cakes*.

I write of Youth, of Love, and have Accessse

By these, to sing of cleanly-*Wantonnesse*.

I sing of *Dewes*, of *Raines*, and piece by piece

Of *Balme*, of *Oyle*, of *Spice*, and *Amber-Greece*.

I sing of *Times trans-shifting*; and I write

How Roses first came Red, and *Lillies White*.

I write of *Groves*, of *Twilights*, and I sing

The Court of *Mab*, and of the *Fairie-King*.

I write of *Hell*; I sing (and ever shall)

Of *Heaven*, and hope to have it after all.¹

Here Herrick has been able to distil a diverse and large volume of poetry into a simple and elegant fourteen lines of verse. Nature, love, marriage, eating and drinking, and festivals all factor largely in *Hesperides*, and the religious poems mentioned in lines thirteen and fourteen of the sonnet even

have their own section, "His Noble Numbers," which contains 272 poems. All of these topics are replete in this book, except for "The Court of *Mab*, and of the *Fairie-King*." It must then be asked why Herrick believed the five fairy poems were important enough to warrant inclusion in "The Argument of his Book." While Herrick, Sir Simeon Steward, and Michael Drayton had all written fairy poems in the 1620s,² the publication of *Hesperides* over ten years later hardly indicates that Herrick might be building on the success of an earlier movement. Rather, by describing the miniature world of the fairies, Herrick is allowed to play with the ideas and subjects that interest him the most due to the fact that this small and imaginary world allows him to create by way of whatever he finds to be of most interest. And it is this focus on the miniature and imaginary world that Daniel H. Woodward has used to argue for understanding the fairy poems as a representation of *Hesperides* in miniature.³

"The Argument of his Book" informs the reader of what is to come in the volume that follows, but it is in the fairy poems that the reader can see all of Herrick in practice. Of the five fairy poems, three ("The Fairie Temple: or, Oberons Chappell. Dedicated to Master John Merrifield, Counsellor at Law," "Oberons Feast," and "Oberons Palace") form a small narrative, whereas the fourth and fifth poems ("The Fairies" and "The Beggar to Mab, the Fairie Queen") are stand-alone poems. "The Fairies" is a folk poem reminding women to mind their chores lest Queen Mab will pinch their toes, and "The Beggar to Mab" can be read as a reminder to the gentry to fulfill their charitable responsibilities; however, it is "The Fairie Temple," "Oberons Feast," and "Oberons Palace" that tell a fairy tale in which the reader is shown a festival day which moves from church, to feast, and finally to the royal bedroom and the night.

As one begins to consider the relationship between "The Fairie Temple," "Oberons Feast," and "Oberons Palace," it becomes clear that these poems closely follow the pattern of Herrick's epithalamia (or poem commemorating a wedding).⁴ From the description of the "Temple" to the "Feast" and ending at the marriage bed in the "Palace," Herrick is moving through his familiar territory of a poem that allows him, in celebrating a marriage ceremony, to sing of nature, festival, feast, and sex in the "cleanly-*Wantonnesse*" of the marriage bed. The epithalamium is one of the poetic modes that he returns to time and again throughout *Hesperides*, with most of the longer poems being epithalamia, and it has been well argued that other poems, such as the much anthologized and praised "Corinna's going a Maying,"⁵ are variations on the epithalamium's themes. The appeal of poems celebrating marriage is easy to see when one considers all that Herrick says he will "sing" of in "The Argument of his Book."

In Herrick's paganized Christianity, this priest and poet portrays nature as being inherently sanctified and worshipful. Flowers and trees and birds all praise through their beauty, and as the participants in the festival, that is the marriage ceremony and celebration, they too sanctify the day by joining in the celebrations. Thus nature and festival and humanity all unite in the divinely-approved celebration that bridges the carnal and the sacred as the poem moves from marriage at church to the consummation of the marriage in the marriage bed. In treating "The Fairie Temple," "Oberons Feast," and "Oberons Palace" as an epithalamium, I wish to argue that the magical world of Herrick's fairies is not only a representation of *Hesperides* in miniature, but a perfect embodiment of the natural religion that permeates the book. Through comparing the natural religion that Herrick espouses in his epithalamia, and particularly in "Corinna's going a Maying," to the sanctified kingdom of Oberon and Mab, the reader sees that it is plants and trees and forest creatures which carry with them an innate spirituality that is transferred to humanity when it participates in festivals such as May Day celebrations or marriage ceremonies. The fairy world, then, completely comprised of natural objects found and reappropriated for this small and magical race, provides the reader with a complete picture of a church and culture that has perfectly recognized the importance of the natural world and has properly incorporated it into its society.

In addition to "Corinna's going a Maying," the other primary epithalamia are "An Epithalamie to Sir Thomas Southwell and his Ladie" and "A Nuptiall Song, or Epithalamie, on Sir Clipseby Crew and his Lady." Although these three poems may seem scant in view of the 1,400 contained in the volume, they are among the longest poems in the book, and they are the chief marriage poems, but by no means the only ones. Herrick's poems discussing marriage are much too numerous to mention in this chapter, but there are two shorter poems that do nicely lay out the general theme of the rites of the marriage festival and the epithalamium as Robert Herrick sees them. The first, "A Nuptiall Verse to Mistresse Elizabeth Lee, now Lady Tracie," is sixteen lines long and worth quoting in its entirety.

Spring with the Larke, most comely Bride, and meet

Your eager Bridegroom with *auspicious* feet.

The Morn's farre spent; and the immortall Sunne

Corrols his cheeke, to see those Rites not done.

Fie, *Lovely maid!* Indeed you are too slow,

When to the Temple Love sh'd runne, not go.

Dispatch your dressing then; and quickly wed:

Then feast, and coy't a little; then to bed.

This day is Loves day; and this busie night

Is yours, in which you challeng'd are to fight

With such an arm'd, but such an easie Foe,

As will if you yield, lye down conquer'd too.

The field is pitcht; but such must be your warres,

As that your kisses must out-vie the Starres.

Fall down together vanquisht both, and lye

Drown'd in the bloud of Rubies there, not die.

The formula of the marriage festival and epithalamium are all here. The poem instructs the bride to rush to church, enjoy a feast, and then off to bed. This formula is also seen quickly summarized by Herrick in his poem "The Entertainment: or, Porch-verse, at the Marriage of Master Henry Northly, and the most witty Mistresse Lettice Yard," when using more pagan imagery he writes

Do all things sweetly, and in comely wise;

Put on your Garlands first, then Sacrifice:

That done; when both of you have seemly fed,

We'll call on Night, to bring ye both to Bed (7-10)

While the formula of church, or sacrifice, feast, and bed is established, there is another component—hinted at in “A Nuptiall Verse” when Herrick writes “Dispatch your dressing then; and quickly wed”—in which the religious ceremony is a part of the rites, the magic, of the day, but that the religious rites need be rushed as one moves onto the feast and finally the night. The reasons for rushing through one’s religious obligations is well described in “Corinna’s going a Maying” when Herrick writes

Get up, get up for shame, The Blooming Morne

Upon her wings presents the god unshorne.

See how *Aurora* throwes her faire

Fresh-quilted colours through the aire:

Get up, sweet-Slug-a-bed, and see

The Dew-bespangling Herber and Tree.

Each Flower has wept, and bow'd toward the East,

Above an houre since; yet you not drest,

Nay! not so much out of bed?

When all the Birds have Mattens seyde,

And sung their thankfull Hymnes: 'tis sin,

Nay, profanation to keep in,

When as a thousand Virgins on this day,

Spring, sooner then the Lark, to fetch in May.

Rise; and put on your Foliage, and be seene

To come forth, like the Spring-time, fresh and greene;

And sweet as *Flora*. Take no care

For Jewels for your Gowne, or Haire:

Feare not; the leaves will strew

Gemms in abundance upon you:

Besides, the childhood of the Day has kept,

Against you come, some *Orient Pearls* unwept:

Come, and receive them while the light

Hangs on the Dew-locks of the night:

and *Titan* on the Eastern hill

Retires himself, or else stands still

Till you come forth. Wash, dresse, be briefe in praying:

Few Beads are best, when once we goe a Maying. (1-28)

The descriptions of a spiritual natural surrounding and the call that “Few Beads are best, when once we goe a Maying” tells the reader that in Herrick’s *Hesperides*, the normal modes of devotion are not to keep one from participating in festivals, and that these festivals, which take place out of doors, only take on a divine nature when communing with nature. The importance of the sacred state of the natural world is integral to the understanding of the fairy poems as an epithalamium. Though in “Corinna” Herrick instructs Corinna to “be briefe in praying” because nature has already redeemed the day, he slows the pace of the epithalamium and spends a great deal of time on the “Fairie Temple” because this is not the description of a human needing to catch up with sacred nature but the portrayal of nature being made sacred. The magical, but fully natural, fairy folk are seen in their temple composed of objects that have been tossed aside by people or animals as unimportant or from bits of nature that are easily found lying around the English forest and countryside. The Marriage Chappel

“The Fairie Temple: or, Oberons Chappell. Dedicated to Master John Merrifield, Counsellor at Law” is where this fairy tale of an epithalamium begins. As can be told by the complete title, this poem is dedicated to a “Counsellor at Law,” and indeed, as the poem begins, the reader is greeted by a six line introduction which declares the superiority of this temple over all others that John Merrifield has seen.

Rare Temples thou hast seen, I know,

And rich for in and outward show:

Survey this Chappell, built, alone,

Without or Lime, or Wood, or Stone:

Then say, if one th’ast seene more fine

Then this, the Fairies once, now *Thine*.

The description of the temple to follow will not be the normal building of worship that is made great through the hewing and binding of large woods nor through the cutting of rock and the use of cement, instead, the beauty of this “fine” temple is created through the use of the small, castaway, natural. While Roger B. Rollin reads this poem as a satire of the Roman Catholic Church, [6](#) the poem seems more like Herrick at play than Herrick mocking. The elements of nature that he reads as mocking can just as easily be read as celebrating nature, and so, while there may indeed be a light satiric bent to the poem, the fact the poem is clearly the introduction to a three poem tale, of which Rollin admits that none of the “other fairy poems is satiric in mode,” [7](#) the fact that the dedicatory poem that introduces “The Fairie Temple” celebrates what will be found, and the fact that Rollin says it could be satirizing “Anglicanism as well as Catholicism and polytheism” [8](#)

argues in favor of "The Fairie Temple" not representing religious satire as much as Herrick's playful imagination.

As Herrick begins his description of "The Fairie Temple," the reader is greeted by a manufactured beauty before being moved into the realm of nature. There is

A Way enchar't with glasse and beads

There is, that to the Chappel leads:

Whose structure (for his holy rest)

Is here the *Halcion's* curious nest (1-4)[9](#)

The reader may expect fairyland to have a chapel that would create wonder for the observer through some sort of supernatural, or finely wrought structure made by these magical beings, and there is a sense of that when we read of an entrance that is "enchar't with glass and beads," but just as quickly as this has begun, Herrick changes things, because by the fourth line of the descriptions of the temple, the reader sees that this "structure" is "the *Halcion's* curious nest." The "*Halcion*" being the halcyon or kingfisher, so what the reader finds is that the structure for this chapel is actually not made by the fairies at all; instead, they are more like scavengers than craftsmen when it comes to the building of their holy temple. These magical beings have not created a magical dwelling for their religion, instead they have found a natural object formed by a bird, and in this are sufficient supernatural properties for them. This idea of the magical properties of nature is further supported by the observation made by J. Max Patrick in his annotation to this line when he notes that "The elaborately contrived nest [...] was fabled to charm winds and waves to rest."[10](#) So a nest, created by an everyday bird, can be more "elaborately contrived" than the "Rare Temples" that John Merrifield, the poem's dedicatee, has ever seen wrought by human hands. Moreover, these magical creatures recognize the magical properties that already exist in nature, and so they can show their devotion to their gods through simply using natural objects that they would find in their surroundings.

The creation of a sacred place of worship by way of scavenged objects from the English countryside is continued in Herrick's description of this temple.

First, at entrance of the gate,

A little-Puppet-Priest doth wait,

Who squeaks to all the commers there,

Favour your tongues, who enter here.

Pure hands bring hither, without staine.

A second pules, Hence, hence, profane.

Hard by, i'th'shell of halfe a nut,

The Holy-water there is put:

A little brush of Squirrils haire,

(Compos'd of odde, not even paires)

Stands in the Platter, or close by,

To purge the Fairie Family. (38-49)

The "Holy-water" for the fairies and its administration to the practitioners is once again offered by way of found or disregarded objects. The "brush of Squirrils haire" is made through collecting fallen debris, but at the same time, there is an act of deliberate creation, much like that of the kingfisher building its nest of twigs and grasses yet still making a deliberate and well considered structure. The "brush" is "Compos'd of odde, not even paires." The fairies then do not just find random objects and playfully use them in some mock worship; instead there are conscious decisions behind the building of their objects of worship. This is further found in the descriptions of the other objects required for their sacred acts of worship.

As the reader moves through the entrance of the chapel and begins to see the inner dwelling of this sacred space and sees the worship ceremony unfold, the scene is nothing but the appropriation of nature into the devotion of this little race.

The Altar is not here foure-square,

Nor in a forme Triangular;

Nor made of glasse, or wood, or stone,

But of a little Transverce bone;

Which boyes, and Bruckel'd children call

(Playing for Points and Pins) *Cockall*.

Whose Linnen-Drapery is a thin

Subtile and ductile Codlin's skin;

Which o're the board is smoothly spread,

With little Seale-work Damasked.

The Fringe that circumbinds it too,

Is Spangle-work of trembling dew,

Which, gently gleaming, makes a show,

Like Frost-work glitt'ring on the Snow. (54-67)

The altar, then, is a knuckle bone, over-wrapped with an apple's skin, and has the "Spangle-work of trembling dew." It is a simple and humble affair, but it is also one that cannot be easily created by humans. The tiny details involved and the objects that have, once again, been tossed aside, do give the ordinariness of this decoration a uniqueness that comes through the fact that this could only be a fairy creation. Also, as the description of the altar continues, the reader finds that

Upon an end, the *Fairie-Psalter*,
Grac't with the Trout-flies curious wings,
Which serve for watched Ribbands. (70-72)

The inclusion of dew and "Trout-flies" wings helps create a small yet striking image of beauty. Not only would small hands be needed to carefully arrange these details, but it would also require small eyes to be able to fully appreciate the beauty in the small, but multi-faceted parts of this most holy of objects in the temple.

As the fairy parishioners partake in the ceremonies of oblation, sacrament, and offering, the use of the implements of worship continue the theme.

The Bason stands the board upon
To take the Free-Oblation:
A little Pin-dust; which they hold
More precious, then we prize our gold:
Which charity they give to many
Poore of the Parish, (if there's any)
Upon the ends of these neat Railes
(Hatcht, with the Silver-light of snails) (86-92)

This listing of the fairies' use of cast aside natural objects reaches its apex towards the end of the poem when Herrick begins to list mundane objects and rubbish and loses the ability to align them with any particular religious practices:

Dry chips, old shooes, rags, grease, and bones;
Beside their *Fumigations*,
To drive the Devill from the Cod-piece
Of the Fryar, (of work an odde-piece.)
Many a trifle too, and trinket,
And for what use, scarce man wo'd think it. (119-124)

The descriptive narrative is almost lost here. Herrick seems to have let the descriptions get away from him, and yet, the listing of various objects also lends verisimilitude to the tale because it does give the impression that Herrick has indeed seen the chapel, with all of its accoutrements, and is simply unable to see how they would fit into a religious ceremony. He regains the tale's thread as one reads

Next, then, upon the *Chanters* side

An *Apples-core* is hung up dry'd,

With ratling Kirnils, which is rung

To call to Morn, and Even-Song. (125-128)

And as the church ceremony ends, the minister "dons the Silk-worms shed, / (Like a *Turks Turbant* on his head) / And reverently departeth." (137-139)

Herrick has written a fairy tale of a church service. In "The Fairy Temple," the reader has been moved both through the actual building and the ceremony of worship that is being held within. In all of this, from the entrance to the exit, and from the altar to the "*Fumigations*" of incense, the reader finds that this whole world is created from the things thrown aside by human and animal. It is a scavenger's temple, yet the rubbish found in the forest is sanctified and redeemed through its use in the religious practices of the miniature, magical creatures that are the fairies. In this, Herrick is aligning the fairies with the form of religious devotion that he prefers for his readers. As was seen in "Corinna's going a Maying," nature is religious in and of itself. The birds singing their everyday songs are their morning matins and prayers. The dew, and the flowers, and the trees, simply through growing, fulfill their religious obligations, and so humanity, in participating in festivals and holy days in natural settings, joins in with the redeemed and holy creation. While Herrick has to goad humans with the reminder that "'tis sin, / Nay, profanation to stay in," the fairies cannot help but worship in nature because their temple, and all of their religious ceremonies, are created from and incorporated with the nature of the everyday. As the poem comes to a close, the final couplet of "The Fairie Temple" points the reader to the next part of this fairy festival

And by the glow-worms light wel guided,

Goes to the Feast that's now provided. (141-2)

Herrick's promised "wel guided" way to the next section of this fairy tale is not quite as easily followed as Herrick makes out. While the next fairy poem is "Oberons Feast," and while this does indeed continue the narration and gives the reader the feast promised, there are seventy poems in between these two verses. In addition to the passage of many poems, there is also a passage of dedicatees as Herrick has now moved onto another friend, so "Oberons Feast" is not dedicated to John Merrifield, instead this poem, and "Oberons Pallace," is dedicated to Thomas Shapcott, also a man of law.¹¹ The Marriage Feast

In keeping with "The Fairie Temple," Herrick provides the reader with a six line introduction to the dedicatee, and once again, the poem and its introduction are written in the same meter. The poem will feel familiar to the reader, despite the distance between the two poems, and it is in the introduction that the reader sees that despite the change in dedicatee, these poems definitely belong together. The introduction reads

Shapcot! To thee the Fairy State

I with discretion, dedicate.

Because thou prizest things that are

Curious, and un-familiar.

Take first the feast; these dishes gone;

Wee'l see the *Fairy-Court* anon.

Here, as in "The Fairie Temple," there is an invitation to the dedicatee to view the extraordinary; however, instead of this being an invitation to witness a structure that can be compared with and found superior to the religious buildings Merrifield had seen before, Shapcott is not asked to compare the feast that will be described to any he has eaten. Now the fairy feast and festival will be "Curious, and un-familiar," but it will not be, as "The Fairie Temple," "more fine" than any he had seen before. This is to be a feast that will entertain the reader, but it will not necessarily make the reader want to join in the celebration. Here the reader will be able to mark a break between the sanctifying nature of the "Fairie Temple" with its scavenged adornments as sacred objects and the grand, but unappetizing, meal presented before a return to the sacred palace and marriage chamber found in "Oberons Palace."

Despite the fact that this poem is not specifically describing the meal in terms of the creation of a sacred place, the feast is a required component of the holy day, and so must take place in order that the divine nature of the ceremony be experienced in its full. The meal then fits in with the part of the festival day in which Herrick, as is his form, moves away from a narration of direct address and begins to describe a feast that will be partaken by those who are joining in the celebrations. In Herrick's epithalamia, the waking and sanctifying of the day are told in the present tense, and there is an immediacy given to the events, one that he does not want the individual addressed to miss. However, once the person is out of bed and dressed for the event, Herrick moves the narrative mode into the future, and from here, all events in the day are portrayed as events that are to be anticipated, and the distance between Herrick and events that have yet to take place gives him greater license, as a priest, to praise events that may not be readily embraced by the Church. In this, he celebrates gluttony, drunkenness, and sex, but is able to portray them as events that have not yet taken place, and so all readers and participants are still pure. In a similar fashion, by moving this fairy tale away from the desire to see and participate in the fairy religious ceremonies, Herrick now no longer offers what will be seen as a rather disgusting meal to his reader, instead, the palette will be pure despite the odd victuals offered.

"Oberons Feast" is less fantastic than "The Fairie Temple," both in length (it is 54 lines versus the 142 of "Temple") and description, but the meal that is presented to the reader, while probably not causing one to salivate, will at least entertain. The "Feast" begins with a pleasant description, but this does not last long, and the reader soon finds that the food being eaten will more closely resemble descriptions in Herrick's "mocking" epigrams¹² rather than the feast in "The Hock-cart, or Harvest home: To the Right Honourable, Midlay, Earle of Westmorland." In "The Hock-cart" the feasters dine on

Ye shall see first the large and cheefe

Foundation of your Feast, Fat Beefe:

With Upper Stories, Mutton, Veale

And Bacon, (which makes full the meale)

With sev'rall dishes standing by,

As here a Custard, there a Pie,

And here all tempting Frumentie.

And for to make the merry cheere,

If smirking Wine be wanting here,
That's that, which drowns all care, stout Beere; (28-37)

This is contrasted with the fairy folk in "Oberons Feast" dining on
His kitling eyes begin to runne
Quite through the table, where he spies
The hornes of paperie Butterflies,
Of which he eates, and tastes a little
Of that we call the Cuckoes spittle.
A little Fuz-ball-pudding [...] (24-29)

And then
Of Emits eggs; what wo'd he more?
But Beards of Mice, a Newt's stew'd thigh,
A Bloated Earewig, and a Flie;
With the Red-capt worme, that's shut
Within the concave of a Nut,
Browne as his Tooth. A little Moth,
Late fatned in a piece of cloth:
With withered cherries; Mandrakes eares;
Moles eyes; to these, the slain-Stags teares:
The unctuous dewlaps of a Snaile;
The broke-heart of a Nightingale
Ore-come in musicke; (36-47)

And to wash it all down:
 [...] with a wine,
Ne're ravish from the flattering Vine,
But gently prest from the soft side
Of the most sweet and dainty Bride,

Brought in a dainty daizie, which
He fully quaffs up to bewitch
His blood to height; this done, commended
Grace by his Priest; *The feast is ended.* (47-54)

This feast, which is at times a bit delightful and at others repugnant, is a playful exercise in the imaginary microcosm of the world of the fairies. It is a feast that carries with it the concept of a day of celebration, and as can be seen by the final line of the poem, it is a celebration overseen by a "Priest," and therefore sanctified. The Marriage Bed

As epithalamia must end in consummation in the bedroom, so too does Herrick bring the reader into the home of Oberon and Mab with the poem "Oberons Palace." Once again there is a brief introductory stanza for the poem, and as in "Oberons Feast," this one is dedicated to Herrick's friend Shapcott. Herrick links this poem with the previous fairy poem, despite the 150 poems that come between them, when he begins his introduction with the lines "After the Feast (my *Shapcot*) see, / The Fairie Court I give to thee." The reader is then reintroduced to Oberon and is told just how well Oberon has held up under the great meal that he has enjoyed:

Where we'le present our *Oberon* led
Halfe tipsie to the Fairie Bed,
Where *Mab* he finds; who there doth lie
Not without mickle majesty. (3-6)

The stage is then set for this final section of the tale, and in it the reader will be led by a "tipsie" Oberon to the bed of his wife. The description of the palace will come as the reader walks with Oberon through the building, and as will be seen, the description of this royal house is a grotesque mixture of the decorations of the "Temple" and the food from the "Feast."

The reader's guide, Oberon, is described in greater detail as the poem moves from the introductory stanza into the body of the poem. He is full of wine and full of wrath as he desires nothing but his Mab and is upset by anything that would delay him.

Full as a Bee with Thyme, and Red,
As Cherry harvest, now high fed
For Lust and action; on he'l go,
To lye with *Mab*, though all say no.
Lust ha's no eares; He's sharpe as thorn;
And fretfull, carries Hay in's horne,
And lightning in his eyes [...] (9-15)

The poem takes on the tone of the Fairy King, and the reader is then led through the palace. The

description of this palace is similar to that of "The Fairie Temple," and, as is found in that poem, the decorations and structure of the building is created from scavenged objects. The poem leads the reader through the palace and to the marriage chamber, and just as "The Fairie Temple" moved through the structure to the holy altar, the most sacred of places in the temple, "Oberons Palace" brings the reader through the halls and into the holy marriage chamber.

Lead by the shine of Snails; a way

Beat with their num'rous feet, which by

Many a neat perplexity,

Many a turn, and man' a crosse-

Track they redeem a bank of mosse

Spungie and swelling, and farre more

Soft then the finest Lemster Ore.

Mildly disparkling, like those fiers,

Which break from the Injeweld tyres

Of curious Brides, or like those mites

Of Candi'd dew in Moony nights.

Upon this *Convex*, all the flowers,

(Nature begets by th'Sun, and showers,)

Are to a wilde digestion brought,

As if Loves *Sampler* here was wrought;

Or *Citherea's Ceston*, which

All with temptation doth bewitch. (22-38)

Here the language is of pregnancy and life. The bank of moss is "swelling" and "Nature begets" as "All with temptation doth bewitch."

Sweet Aires move here; and more divine

Made by the breath of great-eyed kine,

Who as they lowe empearl with milk

The four-leav'd grasse, or mosse like silk.

The breath of *Munkies* met to mix

With *Musk-flies*, are th'*Aromaticks*,
Which cense this Arch; (39-45)
Now nature's aromas are an incense.
[...] and here and there,
And farther off, and every where,
Throughout that *Brave Mosaick* yard,
Those Picks or Diamonds in the Card:
With peeps of Harts, of Club and Spade
Are here most neatly inter-laid.
Many a Counter, many a Die,
Half rotten, and without an eye,
Lies here abouts; and for to pave
The excellency of this Cave,
Squirrils and childrens teeth late shed,
Are neatly here enchequered
With brownest *Toadstones*, and the Gum
That shines upon the blewer Plum.
The nails faln off by Whit-flawes: Art's
Wise hand enchasing here those warts, (45-60)

This mosaic is composed of parts from playing cards, bits of die, squirrel and children's teeth all "neatly inter-laid" showing the handiwork and care that has gone into the pathway leading to the royal chamber, and despite the inclusion of the "*Toadstones*" which are often seen as magical object, since Herrick's poems are more concerned with Classical rather than occult imagery, the inclusion of the object probably has more to do with the fact that it is surrounded by dice and cards which are used for gambling and the jewel of the toadstone could be riches to wager with instead of any magical properties that it may hold. Then as the reader is brought to the entrance, it is named a "holy Entrance."

The tempting Mole, stoln from the neck
Of the shie Virgin, seems to deck
The holy Entrance, where within

The roome is hung with the blew skin
Of shifted Snake: enfrez'd throughout
With eyes of Peacocks Trains, and Trout-
flies curious wings; and these among
Those silver-pence, that cut the tongue
Of the red infant, neatly hung.
The glow-wormes eyes; the shining scales
Of silv'rie fish; wheat-strawes, the snailes
Soft Candle-light; the Kittling's eyne;
Corrupted wood; serve here for shine.
No glaring light of bold-fac't Day,
Or other over radiant Ray
Ransacks this roome; but what weak beams
Can make reflected from these jems,
And multiply; Such is the light,
But ever doubtful Day, or night.
By this quaint Taper-light he winds
His Errours up [...] (63-83)

Here Oberon and the reader finally reach their destination—carrying a “Taper-light” which is a common motif in Herrick’s epithalamia—and they find that it is a chamber given over to soft light reflected which does not reveal whether it is “Day, or night” allowing the fairy King and Queen to love in peace without worry of the passage from night to day to break their revelry.

While Oberon has staggered his way to the bedroom, the royal chamber of the Fairy monarchy is, surprisingly, not a happy place. The first description of Mab is through the eyes of Oberon, and the description is as such: “and now he finds / His Moon-tann’d *Mab*, as somewhat sick” (83-84). The reader then is ending the epithalamia with a drunken Oberon stumbling his way for a night with his sick bride, a bit of a play on the expected end of Oberon’s journey, but Herrick moves the reader’s attention to the marriage bed, restoring the magic of the scene. Despite the moods of the two lovers, Oberon and Mab, being less than ready for love, the room is one that is sanctified for marriage and sex through the decorations that surround the King and Queen. Mab lies “Upon six plump *Dandillions*” (86) and these flowers “Whose woolie-bubbles seem’d to drowne / Hir *Mab-ship* in obedient Downe.” (88-89) She, though feeling ill, is resting upon a bed that soft, welcoming, and “plump.” Her sheets are “the Caule / That doth the Infants face enthral, / When it is born.” (90-92) The reader now sees that the Queen is already covered in a film of birth with the “Caule” being a

remnant of the amniotic sack, and so there is plumpness and pregnancy in her reclining and the marriage bed is with child. The "*Dandillions*" are weeds, often uprooted and cast aside, and the "*Caule*" is superfluous birth matter, and so, as in "*The Fairie Temple*" the bed and bedding is made of cast off materials, but this is briefly broken as poem continues, because the reader finds that the bed is also adorned with blankets and hangings made by spiders.

Spiders, or "*Spinners*" as the poem refers to them, have provided further comfort and beauty to the marriage bed of the Fairy king and queen. The sheets of "*Caule*" are "*ore- / Cast of the finest Gossamore*" (94-95) while

[...] over-head

A *Spinners* circle is bespread,

With Cob-web-curtains: from the roof

So neatly sunck, as that no proof

Of any tackling can declare

What gives it hanging in the Aire. (100-105)

The spiders have taken great care to provide a silk covering that shows the working of excellent skill. Oberon and Mab may be small, and portrayed in a condescending and humorous manner, but they are still royalty, and so in their most intimate of chambers, there is excellent craftsmanship shown in the decorations. However, despite the care and skill shown in the making of these decorations, Herrick is still describing this sacred place with cast aside materials. The poem that comes immediately before "*Oberons Palace*" is one entitled "*To the little Spinners.*" The "*little Spinners*" of the poem's title are spiders that are described as "*pretty Huswives*" (1), thus keeping with the theme of family and home found in the bed chamber of Oberon and Mab, and he promises "*that no Broom / Shall now, or ever after come / To wrong a Spinner or her Loom*" (13-15). By reading the preceding poem then, the reader is aware that these "*Spinners*" are praised by Herrick, but that their fine work is also constantly in danger of being swept aside by humans who consider it dirt or mess. The fairies recognize the delicate handiwork humans destroy, and the handiwork is so fine as to merit the honor of being the decoration of the king and queen.

After the work of the spiders, the reader is returned to sex and innocence as Herrick completes his creation of this marriage chamber with the cast off relics of the loss of virginity. After the lines of the "*Spinners*" contributions, Herrick continues with

The Fringe about this, are those *Threds*

Broke at the Losse of *Maiden-heads*:

And all behung with these pure Pearls,

Dropt from the eyes of *ravisht Girles*

Or writhing Brides; when, (panting) they

Give unto Love the straiter way. (106-111)

The use of the "*Threds / Broke at the Losse of Maiden-heads*" being broken hymens may be a pun

on the name of the god of marriage, Hymen, who is also often referenced in "An Epithalamie" such as with the lines "Then away; come, *Hymen* guide / To the bed, the bashfull Bride."¹³ In "A Nuptiall Song, or Epithalamie" Herrick also calls upon Hymen with the line "*Himen, O Himen!* Tread the sacred ground" (31). However, the strongest use of Hymen as a sanctifying force in the marriage celebration can be found in the poem "Julia's Churching, or Purification." This poem which recounts the purification rituals performed after safe and successful childbirth ends with lines that comment on the decorations of this royal bed. "Julia's Churching" ends with these lines:

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