

ANDREW LANG AND THE FAIRY TALE

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by

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Abstract

This thesis concerns itself with identifying Andrew Lang's theories on the fairy tale and the ways in which he applied these theories to his collections and his own fairy tales. The first chapter will deal with the traditional tale, offering a sampling of the many contradictory opinions about its origin and definition, and attempting to illustrate the problems involved in a discussion of this genre. Then it provides a history of the traditional fairy tale and the attitudes in England towards it. The second chapter surveys Lang's fairy tale collections, The Twelve Colour Fairy Books, and explores the conception of the fairy tale reflected in the selection and editing of the tales and in the prefaces to the separate volumes. It will then offer a definition of the fairy tale that fits Lang's collections in the light of the several working definitions established in Chapter I. Chapter III will investigate the emergence of the Victorian literary fairy tale and discuss the characteristics of this genre and Chapter IV will address itself specifically to Lang's own fairy stories and attempt to see them in relation to the traditional and the literary fairy tale.

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INTRODUCTION

Andrew Lang (1842-1912) was one of the most prolific writers of the Victorian period and devoted much of his writing career to recording fairy tales and to theorizing about them. There is little doubt about Lang's popularity in this period and about the respect which his works received from his peers. His collections of fairy tales, the twelve volumes of The Fairy Books of Many Colours, were among the most famous popular works at the end of the century. Although he introduced his fairy tale collections at a time when the fairy tale was a controversial genre, Lang not only found a sufficiently receptive audience, but also aroused the applause of his contemporaries. The following statement by Roger Lancelyn Green in his biography of Lang more than supports the idea that Lang was part of the rejuvenation of the fairy tale genre as literature: "It would probably be no exaggeration to say that Lang was entirely responsible for this change in the public taste."¹

However, Lang's fascination with fairy tales was for him only one of a large number of interests. In a forty year period, Lang published about two hundred and fifty books, either written, edited or translated by himself, and several thousand magazine and newspaper articles. Over

¹R. L. Green, Andrew Lang (Leicester, 1946), p. 32.

a hundred of these books were entirely written by Lang. His subjects varied from mythology to history and from fairy tales to the Greek and Roman classics. He translated the Aeneid, wrote histories of Scotland and of golf and angling, and was an early practitioner of the detective story. He wrote several impressive studies on the supernatural and combined these with a study on religion. He also collected many volumes of lyrics and ballads from England, France and China. Along with his own collections of fairy tales, Lang wrote introductions to other fairy tale collections, including a collection of nursery rhymes and another of animal stories. Besides all these collections of fairy stories, Lang wrote four of his own fairy tales. Writing indeed became obsessive for Lang who took literally every opportunity to express himself. His fervour for writing is illustrated in the anecdote of one of Lang's acquaintances and cited in the Green biography:

At a garden party Professor Murray recalls seeing Lang seek the seclusion of the shubbery to sit down and write an article! Indeed, towards the end of his life, writing became almost a disease.²

Much of Lang's writings are little known today. Those books which do remain in circulation deal mostly with mythology, as Lang offers one of the few extensive treatises on the subject. The obscurity into which most of his works quickly fell is verified in the statement of one

²Green, p.ix.

of Lang's friends, George Saintsbury, who said after Lang's death: ". . . by far the larger part of the printed Lang . . . never got reprinted at all."³

Despite the voluminous material written by Andrew Lang, the amount of writing about Lang is very scanty. Besides a fairly comprehensive biography by Roger Lancelyn Green, Andrew Lang, there is a small biography by George Gordon in The Dictionary of National Biography and sections devoted to Lang in Rider Haggard's autobiography, The Days of My Life, and in the Ella Christie and Alice King Stewart work, A Long Look At Life. Green, himself, gives possible reasons for the lack of biographical information on the writer:

In obedience to his wish, no life of Lang was written, nor was any collection of his letters made. Lang's widow obeyed her husband's behest with heart-rending completeness, and it is said that she used to complain that her wrists ached for weeks and weeks after tearing up Andrew's papers.⁴

Not only is biographical information limited, but little has been written about his works either, in an evaluation of his writing style or in criticism of his ideas. Any criticism of Lang's writings was written before his death and published in magazines now not readily available.

This thesis makes some attempt to fill the gap. It tries to see Lang's work on the fairy tale against the

³The Eighteen-Seventies, H.G. Barker, ed. (New York, 1929), p.90.

⁴Green, p.ix.

background first, of the traditional tale and attitudes to it in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and second, against the background of the literary climate of the Victorian period in general and in relation to the genre of the Victorian literary fairy tale in particular. The argument will hopefully indicate that Lang, in twelve volumes of The Fairy Books Of Many Colours along with his own four fairy tales, attempted to reintroduce the traditional fairy tale to Victorian England and at times tried to harmonize the fairy classics with the changes which Victorian writers were making in the tone of the genre.

The first chapter will deal with the traditional tale, offering a sampling of the many contradictory opinions about its origin and definition, and attempting to illustrate the problems involved in a discussion of this genre. Then it provides a history of the traditional fairy tale and the attitudes in England towards it. The second chapter surveys Lang's fairy tale collections, The Twelve Colour Fairy Books, and explores the conception of the fairy tale reflected in the selection and editing of the tales and in the prefaces to the separate volumes. It will then offer a definition of the fairy tale that fits Lang's collections in the light of the several working definitions established in Chapter I. Chapter III will investigate the emergence of the Victorian literary fairy tale and discuss the characteristics of this

genre and Chapter IV will address itself specifically to Lang's own fairy stories and attempt to see them in relation to the traditional and the literary fairy tale.

This thesis cannot be an extensive study of the life of Andrew Lang, nor can it possibly adequately explore all the writings of the author. It will be an appreciation of the contribution made by that man to the fairy tale through his efforts to preserve one of the fundamentals of literature.

I

THE TRADITIONAL FAIRY TALE

Although the fairy tale is structurally simple, it has many distinctive characteristics which are difficult to reduce into one general definition. The term "fairy tale" has become the common title in English for a species of popular literature from very many countries and from various periods of history.¹ The boundaries of fairy tales are just as blurred as other literary genres such as the novel. While the fairy tale has many distinctive features, it is frustrating to note that even the few characteristics found in common in some fairy tales are not necessarily common to all tales. For instance, fairies, ogres, and witches usually coexist and interact with royal or poor peasant families in a majority of fairy tales from most countries. However, there are some tales in which talking animals replace witches and fairies as in the well-known "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Goldilocks and The Three Bears".

One fairly common characteristic of the fairy tale is that it does deal almost exclusively with social extremes. The rich and poor are contrasted, compared and often paired together. If the fairy tale did have its origins in primitive times, it is possibly because the middle class was a later social development that merchants and prosperous

¹known in French as conte de fée, in German as Märchen.

farmers seldom appear as often as the mysterious royalty or the hopelessly impoverished do. There are examples in which merchants do appear in tales, but their roles are mostly de-emphasized. For instance, in "Beauty and The Beast"² the merchant father, humbled by poverty, and his wretched daughter are the subjects of the story. It is the poverty of the girl which is emphasized and the wealth and mystery behind the enchanted prince in beast form which receive sympathetic treatment rather than the remaining siblings who retain their middle class values. Thus the fairy tale seems to be a genre which extols the prince and the peasant.

The various efforts to define the genre have tended to focus on one aspect of the fairy tale. By examining such efforts, one may be able to make a fairly comprehensive study of the problems surrounding any discussion of fairy tales. One well-known definition is that of J.R.R. Tolkien who finds the common element in fairy tales to be the land of Faerie: ". . .fairy stories are not in normal English usage stories about fairies or elves, but stories about Fairy, that is Faerie, the realm or state in which fairies have their being."³ This state as Tolkien describes it suggests a realm of the

²The Blue Fairy Book, A. Lang, ed. (New York, 1960), p. 100.

³J.R.R. Tolkien, Tree and Leaf (London, 1964), p. 16.

imagination in which any creation or action of nature is credible and where logic and reason also find a place.

One comment often made about fairy tales is that they are truly universal. The fact that fairy tales derive from so many countries does not seem to alter the fact that these tales are incredibly similar. This characteristic causes critics such as Max Lüthi to remark: "The characters of the fairy tale are not personally delineated; the fairy tale is not concerned with individual destinies."⁴ Fairy tales then, to Lüthi, neither distinguish nationally nor individually but champion some sort of common human condition. This observation has been approximated by Yearsley who claims that

the fact which first strikes one is that most of them [fairy tales] can be reduced to certain well-defined groups of narratives which are common to all races, although not infrequently disguised by local and other influences.⁵

What Yearsley means is that specific patterns so often recur as a major feature in fairy tales that labels begin to be attached to tales containing common archetypal motifs. Stories dealing with youngest sons, outcast children, enchanted princes and kindly grandmother figures provide excellent examples of such motifs. The Cinderella figure, of which

⁴M. Lüthi, Once Upon a Time (New York, 1970), p.24.

⁵M. Yearsley, The Folk-Lore of Fairy Tale (London, 1924), p.2.

there are hundreds of variations, is evidence of the extent to which such archetypes are reworked. Andrew Lang's Fairy Books of Many Colours alone present several dozen versions. In The Red Fairy Book, "Kari Woodengown" and "The Wonderful Birch" have plots remarkably similar to the more famous Perrault version. Both stories are themselves from distant and apparently racially and linguistically unrelated countries, the former being from the Swedish collections of Asbjørnsen and the latter of Russian origin. The male counterpart of the Cinderella figure is often named the Cinderlad. Such a character is found in tales like "The Seven Foals", another Swedish tale collected by Asbjørnsen's partner, Moe, in The Red Fairy Book, and "The Glass Mountain" translated from an anonymous Polish story in The Yellow Fairy Book.

In his discussion of The Folk-Lore of Fairy Tale, MacLeod Yearsley suggests that the repetitive nature of fairy tales best suits the younger listener:

The fairy tale is our first introduction to literature. It is a primitive literature abounding with enchanted princesses, heroic youngest sons, talking animals and horrid monsters; a literature which fascinates our early years, supplies our craving for the marvelous and which we receive without question.⁶

Much consideration has been given to the question of whether fairy tales are meant to be addressed to younger or older

⁶Yearsley, p. 1.

✓

audiences. Laura Kready also addresses herself to this problem in A Study of Fairy Tales and claims that fairy tales were intended for children:

The tale feeds upon the imagination, for the soul of it is a bit of play. It suits the child because in it he is not bound by the law of cause and effect, nor by the necessary relations of actual life. . . He likes the mastership of the universe. And fairy-land-- where youth abides; where things come out all right-- is a pleasant place.⁷

Many critics find this opinion unacceptable. Many would object, for example, to the assumption that the fairy tale "suits the child". Furthermore, there is great contrast between the concept of the child in the Middle Ages and childhood as it came to be regarded in the Romantic period. Jonathan Cott, in his introduction to Beyond The Looking Glass, illustrates the fact that the term "child" in the Middle Ages was used to designate familial relationship rather than age. Children were seen basically as miniature adults. He elaborates upon this, citing examples in which the figure of a child was identified with the soul in early art and literature. French medieval art, as one of many instances, depicts the soul as a little child who is naked and usually sexless. Thus he seems to be indicating that, in the Middle Ages, children were not considered the epitome of innocence which the Romantic movement considered the child to be. If fairy tales were originally intended for the

⁷L. Kready, A Study of Fairy Tales (Cambridge, 1915),
p.5.

medieval child, they would have been directed towards the "miniature adult" whose experiences and attitudes were not distinguished from those of the mature adult and they would be totally unsuitable to the modern child of whom Kready speaks. It is more likely, given the high infant mortality of the Middle Ages, that fairyland may have represented a concept unique to the medieval child. Fairy tales, contemporary to this time, Cott suggests, could well be celebrating the after-life in which the soul of a child dwells. Rather than a realm of innocence whose depiction in the fairy tale produces the "joy [which] works towards physical health, mental brightness and moral virtue"⁸, fairyland may be something altogether different: a depiction of the final escape from life. It may have been ". . . indistinguishable from the world of the dead."⁹ This, incidentally, may not always be the "pleasant place" to which Kready alludes. The majority of tales contain elements of ugliness and violence with such settings as the "Blue Beard" chamber in which:

. . . the floor was all covered with clotted blood, on which lay bodies of several dead women, ranged against the walls. (These were all the wives whom Blue Beard had married and murdered, one after another.)¹⁰

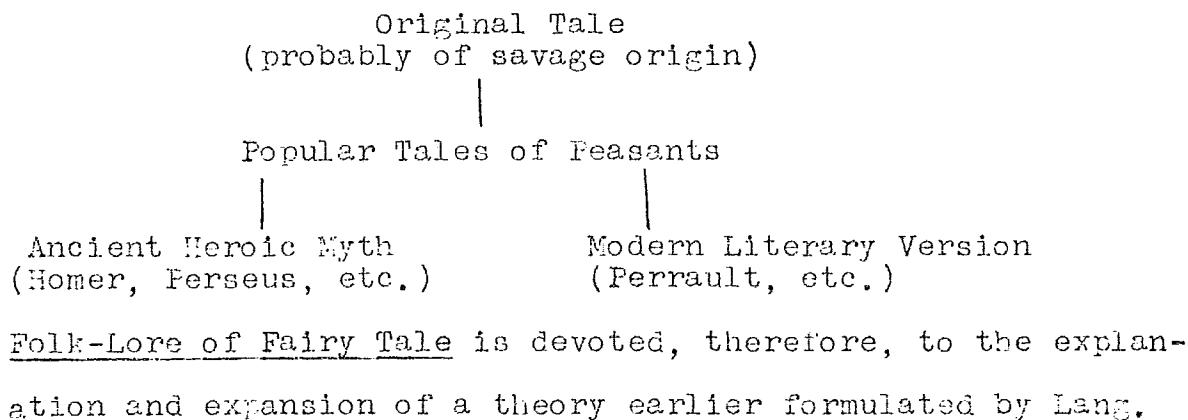
Critics who disagree with Kready's opinion that fairy

⁸Kready, p. 3.

⁹Yearsley, p. 13.

¹⁰C. Perrault, "Blue Beard", The Blue Fairy Book, pp. 291-92.

tales are intended for children do so with a degree of bias equal to that displayed by Kready. Rosemary Haughton finds adult philosophical meanings in the fairy tale. Seeing the literature as some unwitting form of historical record of mankind's primitive nature, she indicates that: "Fairy stories are never deliberately symbolic, yet they embody mankind's shrewdest and most realistic insights into human nature."¹¹ Such an attempt to trace fairy tales back to a primitive state is also found in several anthropological treatises. One such theory belongs to Andrew Lang. Lang envisions an evolutionary process commencing with primitive consciousness and gradually subdividing into more sophisticated mythology as one branch and the written fairy tale as the other. Yearsley agrees with Lang as to the origin of fairy tales and his book is designed to add substance to Lang's theoretical skeleton. He illustrates graphically in his book, specifically citing Lang's theory:



¹¹R. Haughton, Tales From Eternity (New York, 1973), p. 15.

Yearsley builds a case for the influence of primitive tribal customs, cannibalism, tabus, fetishism and totemism upon fairy tales in general. Several solidly-based comparisons comprise a credible explanation of the characteristics found to be common to each country's popular literature. He draws on examples directly from the tales and correlates them to primitive customs. The social structure of Faerie, for instance, with its small kingdoms and an abundance of royalty is suggested to perhaps reflect back to a prehistoric period when kingdoms were actually tribes under a petty chief. The fairy tale ritual surrounding love and marriage is very primitive in its origin. Frequent incidents in which kings gave princesses in marriage to suitors who had successfully completed a series of difficult tasks echo the marriage customs of some tribes wherein suitors were obliged to take a certain number of heads before marrying. Certainly the supremacy of the woman in folklore had to arise from quite ancient sources. The magical powers in nearly all tales derive from female fairies and witches. Yearsley defines feminine dominance with the explanation:

The priestess of earlier civilization, in whom all love and religion was embodied became the accursed witch of the later time.¹²

Explanations of the mechanics of beast stories and enchanted princes and princesses can be linked to the

¹²Yearsley, p.34.

primitive religious beliefs of totemism. Andrew Lang concentrates heavily on this topic as an anthropological study in such books as Custom and Myth, Magic and Religion and Myth, Ritual and Religion, but it is Yearsley who so closely and distinctly relates it to folklore. He describes totemism as ". . .the term applied to the belief in the sacred nature of certain animals and plants from which men claim descent."¹³ Talking animals and princes entrapped in animal skins may be a result of the belief that all animals may once have been men. Perhaps a familiar illustration of totemism is Madame de Villeneuve's "Beauty and The Beast" in which man's association with animals is so closely drawn that the test of the virtue of a young girl and the lifting of the spell enslaving a human form depends on her consent to take an animal in marriage:

'Beauty, will you marry me?' She answered softly:
'Yes, dear Beast.'

As she spoke a blaze of light sprang up before the windows of the palace; fireworks crackled and guns banged, and across the avenue of orange trees in letters all made of fire-flies, was written:

'Long live the Prince and his bride.'

Turning to ask the Beast what it could all mean, Beauty found that he had disappeared, and in his place stood her long-loved prince!¹⁴

Yearsley also claims that cannibalism is an obvious element in fairy tales which he distinguishes into two main types:

¹³Yearsley, p.55.

¹⁴Madame de Villeneuve, "Beauty and The Beast", The Blue Fairy Book, p.118.

. . . 1, that in which an ogre, witch or demon belonging to another race devours men; and 2, that in which it is depicted as a perverted taste in individuals of a people no longer addicted to the practice.¹⁵

An example of this practice is offered in "Sleeping Beauty in the Wood". Later editions seem to revise the cannibalistic element, but the earlier accounts such as that of Charles Perrault, rather than leaving the couple to their marital bliss, inflict further hardship upon their situation, combining the two types of cannibalistic creations in the prince's mother of whom

. . . it was even whispered about the Court that she had Ogreish inclinations, and that, whenever she saw little children passing by, she had all the difficulty in the world to avoid falling upon them.¹⁶

The horror of cannibalism is further exaggerated as the mother makes every effort to devour Sleeping Beauty and her two children, only to be devoured herself by her own invention. Thus, within the above-mentioned boundaries of the traditional fairy tale, much evidence has been forwarded by Yearsley and Lang, himself, to include the opinion that the customs, rituals and beliefs of man in a primitive state have been simplified into this popular form of literature.

In England, as elsewhere, fairy tales were kept alive only verbally until the close of the seventeenth century. The first recorded versions of English tales are the small pamphlets printed by the chapmen and travelling salesmen. These were sold at a cheap price and came to be known as chapbooks. The chapbook became a record of a kind of popular

¹⁵Yearsley, p. 41.

¹⁶C. Perrault, "Sleeping Beauty in The Wood", The Blue Fairy Book, p. 60.

history and is described by Jonathan Cott as:

. . . a universal library which was at the same time a sub-history of English Literature. . . . The chapbook from 1700 to 1840 or thereabouts, contained all the popular literature of four centuries in a reduced and denigrated form; most of it in a form rudely adapted for use by children and poorly educated country folk.¹⁷

At this time as well, fairy tales and nursery tales from foreign sources appeared in English translations. The first of these were from the French writer, Charles Perrault, in 1697. The Countess d'Aulnoy's tales appeared in England about the same time.¹⁸ The two French writers described a more sophisticated fairy character than the rustic hobgoblin of the English tales, as well as introducing the idea of a fairy godmother into England.¹⁹ The fairy godmother is found in such Perrault tales as "Cinderella or The Glass Slipper" and "The Fairies". In both stories the fairies are assigned the task of aiding abused but virtuous and lovely daughters who have cruel stepmothers.²⁰ Mme d'Aulnoy's "Felicia and the Pot of Pinks" contains a godmother figure of exquisite distinction. Great care is taken to make this Queen of fairies sophisticated, "a stately lady", engulfed in an

¹⁷ Beyond The Looking Glass, J. Cott, ed. (New York, 1973), p. xlili.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. xii.

¹⁹ K. Briggs, The Fairies in Tradition and Literature (London, 1967), p. 32.

²⁰ C. Perrault, Classic French Fairy Tales (New York, 1967).

elaborate setting:

. . . Six maids of honour carried her train, and she leaned upon the arm of another.

When they came near the fountain a canopy was spread for her, under which was placed a sofa of cloth-of-gold, and presently a dainty supper was served, upon a table covered with dishes of gold and crystal, while the wind in the tree and the falling water of the fountain murmured the softest music.²¹

In subsequent foreign additions to English fairy literature, the collection of tales which most influenced later tales written in the Victorian period and those most popularly received were The Household Tales of the Brothers Grimm which were translated and published in England about 1826.²² These tales were translated into many different languages and influenced the fairy tale culture of countries as far distant as Japan. According to Leslie Fiedler in an introduction to Beyond The Looking Glass, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's interpretation of old wives' tales partially satisfied the opposition of science and fantasy literature by continuing "to sift them with 'scientific' rigor, in quest of what was truly native and authentic."²³

The Grimms' tales emphasize the countryside peasant. Their stories have a distinctive pattern, making good use of parallel structure and repetition. For example, in the

²¹ Anne d'Aulnoy, "Felicia and The Pot of Pinks," The Blue Fairy Book, p. 149.

²² Beyond The Looking Glass, p. xliv.

²³ Ibid., p. xvi.

tale entitled, "Brother and Sister", the conversation of the two siblings not only is repeated three times for each statement but the number of times this is done is also three. In fact, often events occur in threes in the Grimm tales. The statements are frequently lyrical as evidenced in the last of the repeated chants of the sister: "Is my child well? Is my Roe well? I'll come back twice and then farewell."²⁴ The Grimms also blend violence into their accounts in an almost choreographic manner so that neither the tone nor the rhythm of the work is disturbed. Thus violence and death at times seem flippant in the Grimms' tales:

...so the king ordered his head to be cut off.
After him came several others; but they all had the same luck, and all lost their lives in the same manner.²⁵

The fortune of the fairy tale in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was considerably influenced by the change of attitude towards childhood in the late seventeenth century. Cott quotes the opinions of John Locke on the diet for young children:

For breakfast and supper, milk, mild pottage, water-gruel, flummery, and twenty other things, that we are wont to make in England, are very fit for children: only in all these let care be taken, that they be plain, and without mixture, and very sparingly seasoned with sugar, or rather none at all: especially all

²⁴J. and W. Grimm, "Brother and Sister", The Red Fairy Book, p. 23.

²⁵"The Twelve Dancing Princesses", Grimms' Fairy Tales, K. Webb, ed. (Harmondsworth, 1943), p. 32.

spice, and other things, that heat the blood, are carefully to be avoided.²⁶

This blandness of diet finds an analogue in the kinds of books written for children. In the eighteenth century, books of religious and moral instruction intended for children increased in numbers. They were indeed disappointing to the active imagination of the child. Cott explains:

By the end of the eighteenth century fairy lore was being driven underground. While William Blake was creating poems ever written for "children of all ages" his more famous contemporary Mrs. Trimmer was about to found a magazine called The Guardian of Education, in whose pages she reviewed books, answered correspondents, and generally passed ex cathedra judgments. She banished Cinderella from the children's library after one of her readers wrote to her stating that the story "paints some of the worst passions that can enter the human breast, and of which little children should, if possible, be ignorant. . ." In her Essay on Christian Education, Mrs. Trimmer summed it up: "Formerly children's reading, whether for instruction or amusement, was confined to a very small number of volumes; of late years they have multiplied to an astonishing and alarming degree and much mischief lies in them."²⁷

This eighteenth century concern with morality profoundly affected the presentation of the traditional tale. For example, twenty years after he illustrated the first English edition of Grimms' Popular Stories, "George Cruikshank, who had now become a violent teetotaller and obsessive moralist, made an about face and rewrote the tales as temperance tracts."²⁸

²⁶ Beyond The Looking Glass, p. xxviii.

²⁷ Ibid., p. xlivi.

²⁸ Ibid., p. xliv.

The definition of the traditional fairy tale picks up a little more detail after consideration of some conflicting critical opinion. The respective arguments to support an older or a younger reader tend to lead one to the conclusion that the fairy tale audience is ageless. The fairy tale's patternistic and repetitious style points to an original oral tradition resembling the ballad. Moreover, the universality of the traditional fairy tale is evidenced in the similarity of tales from countries of cultural and geographic extremes. One convincing concept which definitely adds new understanding to the fairy tale genre is the Lang-Yearsley theory of the link between mythology and fairy tales. The added arguments of this chapter produce a definition of the traditional fairy tale upon which this thesis relies. The traditional fairy tale is a popular form of literature from very many countries and from various periods of history which is universal and ageless in its appeal. Its characters and settings excite the childish imagination and, in a simplified and indirect manner, reflect the social and intellectual evolution of man.

II

ANDREW LANG'S FAIRY TALE COLLECTION:

THE FAIRY BOOKS OF MANY COLOURS

Among all the many interests of Andrew Lang, his earliest and longest-lasting was, according to R. L. Green, the fairy tale. Born of simple peasant stock in the Scottish border town of Selkirk, Lang was devoted to fairy tales from his childhood:

. . . Andrew and the other children used to meet of a summer's evening, when twilight put an end to cricket, and there tell to each other the ancient folk-tales of the country which they had heard from their parents and nurses; and on other occasions he and his brothers and their friends visited two old ladies who would recite to them the old stories learnt in their youth. . .¹

This early childhood interest in folk-lore and fairy tales initiated Lang's adult pursuits of anthropology and mythology. The folk-lore which he read from various distant and totally unrelated countries prompted Lang to formulate several convincing anthropological theories. Green connects Lang's interests in folk-lore and anthropology thus:

. . . Lang was struck more and more by the fact that the most divergent races--Aryans, Aztecs and Australians--often delighted in the very same tales, with almost identical incidents, but with characters bearing completely different names.²

¹Green, p. 68.

²Green, p. 69.

Lang was such an avid supporter of the oral tradition of ballad literature and folk-lore that ". . . for long he felt almost distaste for the more literary tales."³ His belief in the imagination of children is expressed in his negative statement directed toward normal school methods of public education in which he maintains that ". . . small boys are often unconscious poets, but one term of preparatory school brings them down to the flattest prose."⁴ Thus it seems to have been Lang's appreciation of childhood fantasies coupled with his own lingering adult interest in fairy tales which prompted him to begin his series of The Fairy Books Of Many Colours. However, it was the criticism of his colleagues in this field which caused him to extend his volumes beyond the original three to a final twelve^{4a} and to obsessively defend his concept and evaluation of the fairy tale in the prefaces to these volumes.

Lang, as editor of The Fairy Books of Many Colours, has embraced the fairy tale in its broadest definition. These fairy books consist of what may be described as "traditional"

³Green, p. 80.

⁴Green, p. 13.

^{4a}Two additional volumes which were not Lang's work at all were added to the Lang collection by A. L. Burt, a publishing company in New York, in 1894. The volumes include short stories, not necessarily fairy stories, by eighteenth and nineteenth century writers such as Voltaire, George Sand and Lermontov, as well as some anonymous older traditional tales. They were entitled The Silver and The Golden Fairy Books and are illustrated by H. R. Millar. The cover design is a duplication of the other Lang volumes, illustrated by H. J. Ford.

fairy stories and folk tales gathered by Lang from the historical collections of peoples from every section of every continent and rewritten to suit children.^{4b} Lang's original intention in his first volume, The Blue Fairy Book, was to edit a collection of tales which by this time had come to be considered classics: "The Tales in this volume are intended for children, who will like, it is hoped, the old stories that have pleased so many generations."⁵ The fairy tales which he considers to be the core of the "tradition" are those of the Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault and Mme d'Aulnoy plus the more famous ones from the Arabian Nights. Lang's admiration of Mme d'Aulnoy is indicated in Literary Fairy Tales:

Madame d'Aulnoy is the true mother of the modern fairy story . . . She invented the modern Court of Fairyland, with its manners, its fairies . . . its queens, its amorous, its cruel, its good, its evil, and its odious and its friendly fées.⁶

The Blue Fairy Book alone gives ample indication of Lang's lack of concern in defining the boundaries of fairy tales. In this first volume, he includes extraneous short stories which obviously elude the genre. The story of "The History of Whittington" is a tale involving not the

⁵"Preface", The Blue Fairy Book, not paginated.

⁶Quoted in Green, p. 85.

^{4b}Lang considered narration with a lot of conversation necessary to hold a child's attention. See "Preface", Orange Fairy Book, p. vi.

country or "folk", but is situated in the city of London. The central figure of the tale, Dick Whittington, rather than being a product of fiction, is an historical figure, although the events surrounding his image are themselves fictitious. Thus, it would seem that Lang considers "legend" to be a type of fairy tale as well.

Perhaps the tale whose inclusion in The Blue Fairy Book it is most difficult to justify is Swift's Gulliver's Travels, "A Voyage to Lilliput". This work can in no way be defended as a traditional fairy tale with its heavily satirical comments so obviously levelled at just about every adult institution. Realizing the strict moral structure of nineteenth century society, it is not hard to predict that Lang would have edited the Gulliver story. Conspicuous by its absence is the incident in which Gulliver, the giant, saves the Lilliputian palace from fire by evacuating his bladder over the flames.⁷ Although the editor has retained most of the social criticism of "A Voyage to Lilliput", the story itself is not disrupted by this satire and it was likely considered by Lang to be worthy enough to be included for its imaginative plot alone.

Also considered in the fairy tale classification is the realm of mythology. Lang himself translates a story in

⁷J. Swift, Gulliver's Travels (Boston, 1960), p. 45.

the Blue Book which he says in the preface is . . ."adapted from Apollodorus, Simonides and Pindar".⁸ In Lang's adaption, the unnamed but accurately described figures of Mercury and Venus are portrayed as fairy creatures who help a boy resolve an impossible task:

Then he felt some one touch him on the shoulder, and he turned, and saw a young man like a king's son, having with him a tall and beautiful lady, whose blue eyes shone like the stars. They were taller than mortal men, and the young man had a staff in his hand with golden wings on it, and two golden serpents twisted round it, and he had wings on his cap and on his shoes.⁹

Roger Lancelyn Green, the Lang biographer, has, in fact, dedicated an entire book to converting Greek mythology into fairy tales. In his edition entitled Old Greek Fairy Tales, Green claims near originality in retelling Greek stories in "a way which has hardly been attempted before, except in the one story included by Lang in The Blue Fairy Book over seventy years ago."¹⁰ Green again gives Lang credit for the realization of the relationship between myth and faerie:

The Helmet of Hades is only the old Cap of Darkness given a grand name, and the good fairy of the jealous mother-in-law has become a goddess, Athena or Aphrodite--or is still a Nymph of the woods which is really only the Greek name for a Fairy.

⁸ "Preface", The Blue Fairy Book, not paginated.

⁹ The Blue Fairy Book, pp. 134-135.

¹⁰ Old Greek Fairy Tales, p. 9.

'The story would run more simply if all the characters were unnamed,' wrote the Classical scholar Andrew Lang, one of the greatest of all experts on Fairy Tales, about the original of the first story in his book. And he himself once re-told the adventures of Perseus as a Fairy Tale to prove his point.¹¹

With such a variety of tales, one wonders what then is Lang's definition of the fairy tale? It would seem from The Blue Fairy Book that Lang is offering a very simple definition. Because his volumes are addressed to children, one would assume that Lang's idea, in fact, agrees with Kready's, that fairy tales are meant for children. However, Lang's anthropological treatise claims that the fairy tale was derived from primitive man's imagination. The key to the understanding of Lang's ideas is to recognize that the author considered primitive man to be childish in his mental development:

These fairy tales are the oldest in the world, and as they were first made by men who were child-like for their own amusement, so they amuse children still, and also grown-up people who have not forgotten how they were once children.¹²

Thus, for Lang the only satisfying definition of the fairy tale is any story of fantasy which excites the childish imagination.

Lang uses the prefaces of his colour fairy books to

¹¹ Ibid., p. 9.

¹² "Preface", The Green Fairy Book, p. vi.

defend the fairy tale for children and particularly to express his own broad views on the nature of the fairy tale. In his Green Fairy Book, Lang addresses himself to the Victorian argument that fairy tales are not suitable for children:

There are grown-up people now who say that the stories are not good for children because they are not true, because there are no witches nor talking beasts, and because people are killed in them, especially wicked giants. But probably you who read the tales know very well how much is true and how much is only make-believe, and I never yet heard of a child who killed a very tall man merely because Jack killed giants, or who was unkind to his stepmother, if he had one, because in fairy tales the stepmother is often disagreeable.¹³

Even though Lang demonstrates trust in the reasoning powers of children, he finds his own imagination much too vivid to endure violence in literature himself. Green emphasizes that

. . . even at the earliest date this interest in bloodthirsty fiction was a delight in heroism and the doing of mighty deeds, and was accompanied by an almost morbid fear of inflicting or even witnessing pain. "Cruelty made me ill," Lang tells us, "and I skipped the passage where they roast the commendator of Crossagnel in Tales of a Grandfather. I could hardly persuade myself to kill a trout, and even now I would as lief restore him to the water. I saw cruelty practiced by other children with horror."¹⁴

¹³"Preface", The Green Fairy Book, p. vi.

¹⁴Green, pp. 11-12, quoted from "At the Sign of the Ship", Longman's Magazine (London, 1896).

Although the fairy books edited by Lang are not devoid of violence, there are places where one can see that the violence has been edited out. In the first three volumes especially, Lang seems caught between the desire to correctly transcribe the classics and the desire to de-emphasize violence. The tales of the classics of Perrault, the Grimms and Mme d'Aulnoy are directly translated and unabridged. However, in comparing the Green and Lang versions of "The Terrible Head", the Victorian editor's conscious deletion of violence may be witnessed. Green includes battles with sea monsters described with violence and anticipation:

As the Sea Monster drew near, Prince Perseus swooped down and struck at him with the Sword of Sharpness, wounding him again and again. But still he reared up out of the water roaring horribly and snapping his great jaws . . .¹⁵

Green continues to the point where Perseus uses the Terrible Head as his last coup to turn the monster into stone. The Lang version, however, deletes the long-lasting violence and suspense by making the prince defeat the monster by one mere action:

Before he could rise and bite again the boy had whipped the Terrible Head out of his wallet and held it up.¹⁶

¹⁵ Old Greek Fairy Tales, p. 34.

¹⁶ The Blue Fairy Book, p. 190.

The end of Lang's story is a happy one with no moral overtones. It allows the boy, his wife and his mother to live "long and happily after all their troubles",¹⁷ whereas Green's Perseus is tragically also turned into stone by the Terrible Head and carried out to sea.

Lang's ambiguous feelings about the portrayal of violence also find expression in The Orange Fairy Book. There, however, the author's prejudice towards religious instruction in fairy tales seems to override his aversion to violence:

In many tales, fairly cruel and savage deeds are done, and these have been softened down as much as possible, though it is impossible, even if it were desirable, to conceal the circumstance that popular stories were never intended to be tracts and nothing else.¹⁸

In the introduction of The Green Fairy Book, Lang expresses the opinion that moral instruction is only a minor element in fairy tales: "Some of the stories were made not only to amuse, but to teach goodness . . . But after all, we think more as we read of the diversion than of the lesson."¹⁹ This corresponds again with the public image of Lang who refused to involve himself with any religious issue.²⁰ Although Lang took exception to the religious aspect of

¹⁷Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁸"Preface", The Orange Fairy Book, p. vi.

¹⁹"Preface", The Green Fairy Book, p. vi.

²⁰The Eighteen-Seventies, p. 33.

fairy tales, stories which criticized society and the human condition received his applause. He recognized such characteristics in the traditional tales of Andersen and, by way of introduction to six of them in The Pink Fairy Book, comments: . . . "Andersen wants to 'point a moral' as well as to 'adorn a tale'; . . . he is trying to make fun of the follies of mankind as they exist in civilized countries."²¹ Andersen's tales make general comments on man's basic nature rather than commenting on a specific country's problems at a specific time. "The Grocer and The Goblin" mocks man's inability to choose between his soul's satisfaction and his stomach's delight--a book of poetry or a pot of jam.²² "The Shirt Collar" is an extended metaphor to describe the boastful tendencies in man and his eventual undoing,²³ while "The Fir-Tree" derides the false sentiment behind tradition ending in the gentle mocking tones of: "Here our Danish author ends. This is what people call sentiment, and I hope you enjoy it!"²⁴

Lang had completed his collection of the familiar old fairy tales after his publication of the Blue, Red, and Green Fairy Books. He says to his young readers: "If we

²¹"Preface", The Pink Fairy Book, p. vii.

²²Ibid., pp. 12ff.

²³Ibid., pp. 54ff.

²⁴Ibid., p. 111.

have a book for you next year it shall not be a fairy book."²⁵ However, it would seem that intellectual argument amongst certain colleagues prompted Lang to publish The Yellow Fairy Book. In the fourth volume, he hides behind his young audience in order to level criticism at the more mature reader. He groups children as his allies against "grown-ups" saying: "The Editor thinks that children will readily forgive him for publishing another Fairy Book."²⁶ Then, using the façade of simple explanation supposedly addressed to children, he reveals his hostility toward fellow theorist, Mr. G. Laurence Gomme, president of the Folk Lore Society to which Lang belonged:

Once a year he makes his address to his subjects of whom the Editor is one, and Mr. Joseph Jacobs (who has published many delightful fairy tales with pretty pictures) is another. Fancy, then, the dismay of Mr. Jacobs, and of the Editor, when they heard their president say that he did not think it very nice in them to publish fairy books, above all red, green and blue fairy books! They said that they did not see any harm in it; they were ready to 'put themselves on their country' and be tried by a jury of children. And, indeed, they see no harm in what they have done; nay, like Father William in the poem, they are ready 'to do it again and again.'²⁷

The remaining eight fairy books for the most part repeat those story frames found in the classics of the early editions. In searching them out and publishing them,

²⁵"Preface", The Green Fairy Book, p. vii.

²⁶"Preface", The Yellow Fairy Book, p. ix.

²⁷"Preface", The Yellow Fairy Book, p. ix.

Lang is expounding his own anthropological theories. He points out his pattern to his audience again in a very teacher-to-child way: "A child who has read the Blue and Red and Yellow Fairy Books will find some old friends with new faces in The Pink Fairy Book, if he examines and compares."²⁸ He has described these fairy story patterns in a highly intellectualized argument in Modern Mythology:

From the beginning, man was eager causas cognoscere rerum. The only cause about which self-consciousness gave him any knowledge was his personal will. He therefore supposed all things to be animated with a like will and personality. His mythology is a philosophy of things, stated in stories based on the belief in universal personality.²⁹

Eager, himself, to be able to express his theories whenever possible, Lang takes the opportunity to re-express this in The Pink Fairy Book, this time in 'pabulum' form:

Here then, fancies are brought from all quarters: we see that black, white, and yellow peoples are fond of just the same kinds of adventures. Courage, youth, beauty, kindness, have many trials, but they always win the battle; while witches, giants, unfriendly cruel people are on the losing hand.³⁰

Although the Lang theory is illustrated in the patterns found in all his coloured books, The Pink Fairy Book, in which he draws attention to them, has few examples

²⁸"Preface", The Pink Fairy Book, p. vii.

²⁹Modern Mythology (London, 1897), p. xii.

³⁰"Preface", The Pink Fairy Book, p. viii.

to offer. The one direct parallel is a tale labelled "from the Danish" entitled "Maiden Bright-Eye", which closely echoes Perrault's "Toads and Diamonds" which was included in The Blue Fairy Book. The Pink Fairy Book, rather, introduces a number of different types of tales. For example, it contains more animal tales than so far presented, offering at least a dozen tales of talking cats, dragons, hares, jackals, lions, snakes and several types of birds. The other type of tale featured is that of Andersen, whose satirical story-telling technique bears little resemblance to the traditional fairy kingdoms of Madame d'Aulnoy or Charles Perrault or the German folk in Grimms. Lang might better have used, as an example of patternistic traditional tales, The Red Fairy Book, whose tales mimic the preceding Blue volume. "Kari Woodengown" and "The Wonderful Birth" resemble "Cinderella" and "Little Golden Hood" is the same character as "Little Red Riding Hood". "Snowdrop" also bears similarity to "The Three Dwarves."

In his Prefaces, Lang also comments on the infiltration of the familiar patterns he describes into other genres of literature. "The stories as usual illustrate the method of popular fiction. A certain number of incidents are shaken into many combinations like fragments of coloured glass in the kaleidoscope."³¹ This perhaps explains

³¹"Preface", The Grey Fairy Book, p. viii.

Lang's experimentation with the detective novel which seems itself a kaleidoscope of facts. Lang's fairy tale knowledge, indeed, tends to creep into this type of fiction. In The Mark of Cain, a mystery novel, the hero's inability to find his fiancée is described in a literary allusion, the entirety of which Lang reproduces fifteen years later as "The Story of Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Paribanou" in The Blue Fairy Book.³² His hero, Maitland, using his creator's fantastical imagination, wishes for a detective aid:

. . . of all gifts. . . the magical telescope of Prince Ali, in the "Arabian Nights". With his glass, it will be remembered, he could see whatever was happening on whatever part of the earth he chose, and, though absent, was always able to behold the face of his beloved. How often would one give Aladdin's Lamp, and Fortunatus' Purse and the invisible Cap which was made of "a darkness that might be felt", to possess for one hour the Telescope of Fairyland!³³

Although Lang claimed that the tales he collected came from the child-like state of primitive man,³⁴ and although he could adequately explain superstition and mysticism as a product of the ignorance of savages, he nevertheless also realized the necessity of the supernatural to the contemporary imagination: ". . . if there are really

³² The Blue Fairy Book, pp. 342ff.

³³ A. Lang, The Mark of Cain (New York, 1886), p. 80.

³⁴ "Preface", The Green Fairy Book, p. v.

no fairies, why do people believe in them, all over the world?"³⁵ Obviously this statement is aimed at the intellectual level of a child, but, as with all his ideas, Lang found ample literary space in which to expostulate to his peers upon the necessity of fairy tales and legend. Using folk-lore as an example, he says in Custom and Myth: "Properly speaking, folk-lore is only concerned with the legends, customs, beliefs of the Folk, of the people, of the classes which have least been altered by education, which have shared least in progress."³⁶ He suggests that, by studying the lives of the peasantry and the religious ritual and tradition of "educated" people, one may see the reliance on the "savage ways and ideas and myths and usages of the educated classes in civilised races."³⁷

It is obvious from the extensive introductions which Lang supplies to his fairy books that he intends to be the first critic of his tales:

. . . perhaps authors might be more daring and candid than they are with advantage, and write regular criticisms of their own books in their prefaces, for nobody can be so good a critic himself as the author--if he has a sense of humour. If he has not, the less he says in his preface, the better.³⁸

Certainly Lang's own collection becomes more "daring" with

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶A. Lang, Custom and Myth (London, 1893), p. 11.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸"Preface", The Orange Fairy Book, p. v.

each new edition. As his tales become more exotic, the editor's words become more repetitious, reminding the reader again and again of the savage origins, the primal needs of men, and the importance of the child's imagination. French and German tales from The Red Fairy Book in 1890 are entirely replaced by stories from Russia, Servia, Rumania, Iceland, Finland, Japan and Portugal in The Crimson Fairy Book of 1904. The editor, indeed, seems to have turned a collection of the old classics into an ill-controlled and obsessive search for ". . . changing masters. . . old tales [which] are always being told with new names."³⁹

³⁹ Custom and Myth, p. 6.

III

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN LANG AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

In the initial decades of the nineteenth century the response to collections of fairy tales such as that of the Grimms was often very negative. One of the most severe criticisms leveled against the fairy tale was based on its failure to provide the child with moral and religious instruction. Leslie Fiedler, in his introduction to Beyond The Looking Glass, comments: "In the fairy tale bliss and misery are not equated with Christian Salvation, Hell and Heaven--but with Getting Married and Being Eaten."¹ Perhaps also in association with this strong religious objection is the moral aversion to expressions of passion in the traditional tale. Objections increased to such a pitch that even the simple tale of "Cinderella" was seen to contain elements of lust unsuited to the childish imagination.² Fears of sacrilege and of overt sexuality are the two elements which Fiedler sees as the predominant threats to the fairy tale in the Victorian period: "Perhaps it was precisely this persistent awareness of the demoniac and erotic substrata of the fairy tale which made its survival in the nineteenth century so difficult."³

¹Beyond the Looking Glass, p. xiv.

²Chapter 1, p. 24.

³Beyond the Looking Glass, p. xvi.

Partly in response to this situation, there developed in Victorian times a literary version of the fairy tale. Whereas the traditional fairy tale derived from perhaps centuries of orally transmitted ballads and tales, the Victorian fairy tale was the conscious product of a single author who intended it as reading material for children. In contrast with the traditional fairy tale, many of these Victorian literary fairy tales contain a conspicuous quantity of religious allegory and instruction. One of the most famous writers of this sort of allegorical fairy tale was George MacDonald, who wrote both fairy tales for the delight of children and adult fantasies as well. MacDonald was a former minister and his tales often reflect Biblical story patterns. In The Princess and The Goblin and The Princess and Curdie, published in 1872 and 1883 respectively, MacDonald's hero, Curdie, undergoes an obvious religious quest on which his faith and goodness are constantly tested. Faith is represented in the symbolic, anchor-shaped mattock which Curdie wields and is constantly and explicitly tested by his fairy grandmother. The idea that only the faithful have the ability to view the mystical grandmother is a recurring theme and she takes on the appearance of a divine revelation. Her bright green light appears to Curdie just as the burning bush does to Moses and the instructions are given to the Curdie-Moses combination as to the method of saving the chosen people.

Fiedler has chosen to describe the literary fairy tale of the Victorian period as "popular literature" which he says is the assimilation of High Literature (works of genius considered demi-canonical) and folk literature (of base origins whose authors are forgotten before their works are).⁴ He also describes the trend in the Victorian period towards looking at the Bible as a collection of poems and stories and the subsequent confusion of the "demi-canonical" High Literature with the Biblical stories. Predictably, therefore, Fiedler concludes that "the moment of apogee of the Culture Religion is the Victorian period, when (as the stories of George MacDonald in the collection testify) the fairy tale, itself, began to acquire a 'pop' scriptural status."⁵

In MacDonald, also, parallels may be drawn of the corruption of God's people in Moses' time and the King's people in The Princess and Curdie when the monarch's positive influence has been forgotten. Both sets of people turn alike to hoarding and fighting amongst themselves. Their lust for silver is described in Biblical terms:

There were people in the country who, when it came into their hands, degraded it by locking it up in a chest, and then it grew diseased and was called "Mammon" and bred all sorts of quarrels.⁶

⁴ Beyond the Looking Glass, p. xi.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ G. MacDonald, The Princess and Curdie, (Middlesex: 1971) p. 12.

Echoing the seven plagues of Egypt is Curdie's treatment of the vicious usurpers in the king's cabinet and household staff. Individual punishments are inflicted on the officials by Curdie's "plagues", that is, by his following of "uglies". The final plague and "Prophecy" repeat the passover situation in which an option of prevention is offered first. The household staff is also given a warning by the grandmother disguised as a maid: "If you do not repent of your bad ways, you are all going to be punished."⁷

In the "Princess" books, MacDonald also parodies the Darwinian theory of evolution. MacDonald evidently believed that animals, like men, had immortal souls, an idea that made him unacceptable as a clergyman. In The Princess and Curdie, the wise grandmother corrects the Darwinian hypothesis:

". . . Have you ever heard what some philosophers say--that men were all animals once?"
"No, ma'am."
"It is of no consequence. But there is another thing that is of great consequence--this: that all men, if they do not take care, go down the hill to the animals' country; that many men are actually all their lives, going to be beasts. People knew it once, but it is long since they forgot."⁸

⁷ Ibid., p. 164.

⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

The sort of allegory found in MacDonald's tales was in evidence several decades before they appeared. John Ruskin's religious concerns are apparent in his tale, The King of the Golden River. The King appears to the poor but honest Gluck as a combination of a divine and fairy godfather figure. As with Curdie, the hero must undergo a test of faith and charity. The quest in this case allegorically parallels the Christian's path towards Heaven:

Whoever shall climb to the top of that mountain from which you see the Golden River issue, and shall cast into the stream at its source three drops of holy water, for him, and for him only, the river shall turn into gold. But no one failing in his first, can succeed in a second attempt; and if anyone shall cast unholy water into the river, it will overwhelm him, and he will become a black stone.⁹

The validity of the prophesy is tested in its entirety by the first two unsuccessful attempts and subsequent "black stone" fates of Gluck's two brothers. All three brothers undergo obstacles of a dog dying of thirst, a small child starving on a rock, and an old man in like misfortune. These obstacles provide a religious test which might be described as a combination of the proverb of the good Samaritan and of the story of Siddartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. Gluck's reward, true to Christian metaphor, is not precisely gold, but prosperity and the proper use of it as emphasized in Ruskin's proverb-like

⁹Beyond The Looking Glass, p. 21.

diction:

And Gluck went, and dwelt in the valley, and the poor were never driven from his door: so that his barns became full of corn, and his house of treasure. And, for him, the river had, according to the dwarf's promise, become a River of Gold.¹⁰

Perhaps the most Biblical of those children's stories in the Victorian period which combine the love of fantasy and the respect for religion are the tales by Oscar Wilde. Wilde's fairy tales deal almost exclusively with man's eternal fate. Amongst his stories are a "Happy Prince", whose unselfish gifts to the unfortunate are rewarded in Paradise, and a fisherman, who sells his soul for love.¹¹ Jesus is even given a cameo appearance in Wilde's famous "The Selfish Giant", in which the identity of the child is unmistakable:

. . . on the palms of the child's hands were the prints of two nails and the prints of two nails were on the little feet.
 "Who hath dared to wound thee?" cried the Giant; "Tell me that I may take my big sword and slay him."
 "Nay," answered the child, "but these are the wounds of Love."
 . . . And the child smiled on the Giant, and said to him, "You let me play once in your garden, to-day you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise."¹²

¹⁰Op. cit., p. 37.

¹¹O. Wilde, Short Stories (London, 1952), pp. 97 and 56.

¹²Ibid., pp. 46-7.

One element in the religious and moral instruction which may be found in the Victorian fairy tale is the campaign for temperance. Evil characters such as Gluck's black brothers were described as people who too often frequented the taverns. Dislike of liquor and the movement against it were not only written into the literary fairy tales, but infiltrated the traditional tales as well, to the misfortune of the Grimms:

Twenty years after he illustrated the first English edition of Grimm's Popular Stories (1823-6), George Cruikshank, who had now become a violent teetotaller and obsessive moralist, made an about face and rewrote the tales as temperance tracts. In the "new" version, when Cinderella is about to be married, "all the wine, beer, and spirits in the place were collected together, and piled upon the top of a rocky mound in the vicinity of the palace, and made a great bonfire of on the night of the wedding."¹³

One fairy tale quite extraordinary among many of the Victorian tales is William Makepeace Thackeray's The Rose and The Ring.^{13a} Thackeray's tale is far from

¹³ Beyond The Looking Glass, p. xliv.

^{13a} A bowdlerized version of The Rose and The Ring was offered to the modern public by Amy Stedman, published by Thomas Neilson and Sons Ltd., London. In her preface she states her motive for abridging Thackeray's work as being an effort to modernize an "old-fashioned" but familiar fairy tale to compete with the newer "more gaily dressed story books." She has, in fact, simplified Thackeray's words and removed any contemporary social criticism from the book, actually all the substance of the original fairy tale, leaving only the story skeleton. She adds in her initial address to the reader that she has not touched "the real story underneath, or, [she] hope[s], spoil[ed] the work of the great man who wrote it." Again, there is no date on the edition, but I would estimate between 1955 and 1960.

being religious allegory and outright moralizing. Even so, The Rose and The Ring also seems to support in part the temperance movement. Thackeray verbally sketches the caricature of a man, with the slightest hint of disapproval of the crutch which alcohol provides:

He rushed to the cupboard, seizing from the table one of the many egg-cups with which his princely board was served for the matin meal, drew out a bottle of right Nantz or Cognac, filled and emptied the cup several times, and laid it down with a hoarse "Ha, ha, ha! now Valoroso is a man again."¹⁴

Of all the fairy tales written in the Victorian period, Lang mentions that his favourite was The Rose and The Ring.¹⁵ The address to the reader with which Thackeray opens his tale shows that he agrees with Lang's opinion about the type of audience suitable to the fairy tale: "And you elder folk--a little joking, and dancing and fooling will do you no harm."¹⁶ Like Lang, Thackeray considers the fairy tale's appeal to be universal and ageless. While using much of the fairy tale convention, Thackeray at the same time parodies it. The usually skillful fairy godmother figure is not MacDonald's divine and mysterious apparition. Rather, she is given the kind of childhood education which Thackeray's young audience would find

¹⁴W. Thackeray, The Rose and The Ring (New York, 1854), p. 13.

¹⁵R. L. Green, p. 13.

¹⁶W. Thackeray, p. vi.

amusing:

When she was young, and had first been taught the art of conjuring by the necromancer her father, she was always practising her skill, whizzing about from one kingdom to another upon her black stick, and conferring her fairy favours upon this Prince or that.¹⁷

Thackeray's allusions to traditional tales, such as those of Perrault, are in gentle mockery of their patterns:

What good am I doing by sending this Princess to sleep for a hundred years? by fixing a black pudding to that booby's nose? by causing diamonds and pearls to drop from one little girl's mouth and vipers and toads from another.¹⁸

Certainly this is no indication that Thackeray disliked the tales of Perrault or of Madame d'Aulnoy but that these stories had become so well-known that the mere mention of them would be understood, and, as originality had gone from these tales by now, Thackeray could only achieve some distinction through parody. Parody is used for this same purpose in the author's allusions to Shakespeare whose fame makes him a perfect subject. Continuing his character sketch of Valoroso, therefore, Thackeray turns him ironically into a Shakespearian tragic hero and, in mimicry of the dramatist's soliloquies, he has Valoroso say:

"Ah well may England's dramatist remark, 'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown!' 'My did I

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

steal my nephew's, my young Giglio's--? Steal! said I? No, no, no, not steal, not steal. Let me withdraw that odious expression. . .¹⁹

However, The Rose and The Ring does not only make mockery of literary institutions, it also satirizes contemporary writers. In cynical criticism of a minor contemporary, Thackeray demonstrates self-confidence in his pretense of inferiority:

Had I the pen of a G. P. R. James, I would describe Valoroso's torments in the choicest language; . . . But I need not say I have not the pen of that novelist; suffice it to say Valoroso was alone.²⁰

Categorizing and defining the literary Victorian fairy tale is as difficult as trying to place boundaries on the traditional tale. Not all literary fairy tales provide religious or moral instruction, as evidenced in The Rose and The Ring, and, as in the traditional tale, not all literary fairy tales contain fairies. In the collection of Victorian fairy tales and fantasy, Beyond The Looking Glass, several of the stories included evade the descriptions so far mentioned in this chapter. Maggie Browne's story, Wanted--A King, for instance, turns fairyland into the land of Mother Goose nursery rhymes. Browne makes it obvious that this land is the world of a child's imagination. Like Alice in Alice in Wonderland and Through The Looking Glass²¹ and little Diamond

¹⁹Ibid., p. 4.

²⁰Ibid., p. 4.

²¹L. Carroll, Alice in Wonderland and Through The Looking Glass (Middlesex, [1865], 1972), p. 344.

in At The Back of The North Wind,²² Merle, in Wanted--A King, can only enter her fantasy land in an unconscious state. For Merle, childhood illness is what provides the key to the fantasy realm. From the adult perspective, a fantasy distraction provides a key to recovery from illness:

The screen always stood by the side of Merle's bed, between the bed and the door, so that when Merle was in bed she could look at the pictures and say the rhymes over to send herself to sleep.

She had needed something to send her to sleep, too, since the day she tumbled.²³

As childhood illness and death was still a problem in the nineteenth century, it is not unusual that it should provide subject material for the children's literature. Fantasy was thus seen more and more as existing in the minds of children, particularly "special" children. Three of the ten stories in Cott and Fiedler's collection directly correlate fantasy and a "special" child's dreams. Besides Browne's tale, there is Mrs. Clifford's Wooden Tony: An Anyhow Story and Mary de Morgan's Through The Fire. Mrs. Clifford's tale is the story of the dreams of a misunderstood autistic child who becomes one of the wooden figures he carves.²⁴ Through The Fire is the story of the miraculous

²²G. MacDonald, At the Back Of the North Wind (New York, 1966), p. 98.

²³Beyond The Looking Glass, p. 220.

²⁴Ibid., p. 160.

cure of a crippled boy whose recovery is explained in fairy terms as being the result of a journey through his unconsciousness to the North Pole.²⁵ The stories mentioned provide evidence for the previous suggestion that fairyland may be closely associated with death.²⁶ It is obvious that the children in each of these stories are certainly close to dying and the hardships they face on their journeys may be interpreted as a struggle with death. When MacDonald's child character, Diamond, stops struggling to return to reality, in fact, he does die. The narrator himself describes his passing in terms of the child's own imagination:

A lovely figure, as white and almost as clear as alabaster, was lying on the bed. I saw how it was. They thought he was dead. I knew that he had gone to the back of the north wind.²⁷

The Victorian period was a period rich in children's literature. Despite moral objections to fairy tales and despite the satirical use to which they were put, the separate status of the child encouraged a prolific response in literature. Cott suggests as well that the increased quality of the Victorian fairy tale corresponds with a change of attitude in the adult: "The real reason for the

²⁵Ibid., p. 191.

²⁶See Chapter I, p. 11.

²⁷At the Back of the North Wind, p. 233.

greatness of Victorian children's literature is that, for the first time, men and women could explore their senses of childhood without apologizing for their wish to do so or having to use alibis--as Perrault felt he had to.²⁸ It is between the Victorian tale with its depth of meaning and its skillful use of language and the intricately plotted traditional fairy tale that Andrew Lang decides to take his place.

²⁸ Beyond The Looking Glass, p. xlvii.

IV

LANG'S OWN FAIRY STORIES

While Roger Lancelyn Green has suggested that the young Andrew Lang detested "more literary tales", the mature Lang consciously applied stylistic controls to his own fairy stories. Perhaps because of the years spent in the role of literary critic and translator of the classics, Lang became sensitive to subtleties of language. In his translation of A Monk of Fife: A Romance of the Days of Jeanne d'Arc,¹ Lang writes in a narrative style which he finds comfortable, sacrificing detail in order to retain the mood which he feels is more essential:

The style, it will be observed, even in the medium of our translation, is far more free and familiar than anything of which Leslie [referring to Norman Leslie of Pitullo] could have attained in Latin.²

Lang considered his own writing to be concise. It is for this reason that he approves of the short story over the novel. In explanation of his opinion, and in justification of his collection of short stories, The Dead Leman and Other Tales, Lang states about the novelist in general:

He wastes his conception, he dilutes it, he surrounds it with a mob of needless characters and in a world of unnecessary incident. . . . In this way the art of fiction suffers, the author suffers, and beginners feel obliged

¹A Monk of Fife: A Romance of the Days of Jeanne d'Arc, A. Lang, trans. (New York, (1895) 1933)

²Ibid., p. 334.

to write three volumes of vast and wandering narrative before they have proved, in less laborious fashion, and in a limited field, whether or not they possess the right of telling a story at all.³

Of equal importance with Lang's concern for style is his belief in a possibility of supernatural senses. In his explanation in The Book of Dreams and Ghosts, Lang admits his credulity in the supernatural to a certain extent: "I do believe, with all students of human nature, in hallucinations of one, or of several, or even of all the senses."⁴ This combination of a lucid narrative style and a fascination for the mysterious made Lang an ideal fairy tale writer. These interests characterize his own fairy tales, in which we may also see his fascination with many kinds of fairy tales. His four stories include: one entirely traditional, two in the Victorian manner of Thackeray, and one imitation of an old Scottish folk tale.

All Lang's stories were published separately to begin with and later the last three were published in an edition called My Own Fairy Book, presumably so entitled to distinguish it from the Colour Fairy Books for which he was already famous. Once again feelings of paranoia and inadequacy surface in an appendix to his original collection:

³A. Lang and P. Sylvester, The Dead Lenan and Other Tales (New York, 1889), pp. viii-ix.

⁴A. Lang, The Book of Dreams and Ghosts (New York, [1897], 1970), p. xiii.

As your reviewer says, I ought to have mentioned in the preface of My Own Fairy Book that the three tales which it contains had appeared separately before. I did not omit this fact with intent to deceive, but merely because I thought (as an unpopular author has no right to think) that what was so familiar to me would be familiar to the amateur of fairies. . .⁵

This same humility appears in the poem which introduces his first fantasy work, The Princess Nobody, in 1884. The fairy tale was written around the collection of paintings by Richard Doyle. It was composed in 1870 and entitled "In Fairyland". In his initial ballad, Lang explains that he has attempted to form a story to satisfy the series of drawings. Several times throughout the ballad, however, he interjects in paranoid terms: "And please, don't say I desecrate/ The works of Dicky Doyle."⁶

The Princess Nobody is the one Lang tale which most closely suits the definition of the traditional fairy tale, that is, it is set entirely in Faerie and little of the physical description even slightly resembles reality. The inhabitants of Lang's story, for instance, are very tiny in size. They ride beetles and butterflies instead of horses. Lang is always very conscious of the Doyle illustrations and constantly draws the reader's attention to them. The actions seen in the Doyle paintings receive verbal explanation

⁵A. Lang, My Own Fairy Book (Bristol, 1895), insert marked st. Andrews, Dec. 3, 1895.

⁶A. Lang, The Princess Nobody (London, 1884), p. 1.

in the tale:

Once upon a time when Fairies were more common than they are now, there lived a King and Queen. Their country was very close to Fairyland and very often the little Elves would cross over the border, and come into the King's fields and gardens. The girl-fairies would swing out of the bells of the fuchsias, and loll on the leaves, and drink little drops of dew that fell down the stems. Here you may see all the Fairies making themselves merry at a picnic on a fuchsia, and an ugly little Dwarf is climbing the stalk.⁷

The author is faced with one serious problem in so closely matching paintings and tale. Doyle does not oblige him by illustrating the same characters in his series. Lang must thus provide an explanation for the change in appearance in his main characters. The two which he must mould most closely to suit Doyle are the Princess Nobody and Prince Comical, her rescuer. The Princess grows up in the course of the tale and thus is illustrated as a baby, a young girl, a woman and, even once, when the Doyle painting contained no female figure, as being invisible. Prince Comical is depicted in Doyle's illustrations as two different men. Lang has him change back and forth from being ugly to being handsome. This is done twice to the prince with the explanation that he was too proud of his good looks when

⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

he was first made handsome. By his second transformation Prince Comical had learned humility. As Lang strove to achieve an adequate explanation, the story became very contrived. The reader senses that the tale is taking second place to the illustrations. It seems that Lang is purposely demeaning himself, an attitude which matches many of the author's statements of inferiority to his creative peers.

Despite these technical problems, Lang's fairy tale provides him with an excellent opportunity to celebrate the genre. Whereas most traditional fairy tales combine one or two of the fairy tale plots, The Princess Nobody introduces at least ten of the familiar patterns found in the classic fairy tales. The first chapter alone is heavily laden with allusions. A childless King and Queen, wishing for a child "even if it were no bigger than her thumb"⁸ parallels the story of "Princess Thumbelina". The King, who "had been counting out his money all day"⁹ in "Old King Cole" style, makes a deal for a child with "the funniest little Dwarf that ever was seen." This dwarf makes the same cunning deal with the King as Madame d'Aulnoy's "Yellow Dwarf" makes with the Queen of that tale. Instead

⁸Ibid., p. 10.

⁹Ibid., p. 10.

of being yellow, "he had a high red cap like a flower. He had a big moustache and a short beard that curled outwards. His cloak was red, like his cap, and his coat was green and he rode on a green Frog."¹⁰ This description parodies that of the Yellow Dwarf of whom it is said: "He wore wooden shoes and a little yellow coat, and as he had no hair and very long ears he looked altogether a shocking little object."¹¹ The Yellow Dwarf also rode a yellow cat.

Like Thackeray's The Rose and The Ring, Lang's The Princess Nobody pays a kind of tribute to Shakespeare. The wandering Prince runs into Puck, The Jester of Fairy-land, who has some influence over the Fairy King and Queen. As in A Midsummer Night's Dream, Puck prompts the decision of the Queen to alter the events and draws the story to a happy conclusion.¹² Lang's closing line contains a quotation from the same playwright: "'Journeys end in lovers meeting', and so do stories."¹³

Because Lang uses many of the traditional conventions of the fairy genre in The Princess Nobody, it is

¹⁰Ibid., p. 10.

¹¹The Blue Fairy Book, p. 33.

¹²W. Shakespeare, "A Midsummer Night's Dream", The Comedies and Tragedies of Shakespeare: Comedies, Volume I (New York, 1944).

¹³The Princess Nobody, p. 52. Shakespearean reference from Twelfth Night, II, iii, 46.

apparent that his aim is to mimic the fairy tale masters for probably the same reason that William Thackeray mocks them.¹⁴ The patterns he has chosen to include are found in The Blue and The Red Fairy Books published after The Princess Nobody. These two fairy books contain the most famous tales. Thus it would seem that The Princess Nobody was also motivated both by an admiration for Doyle's artistic talent and by a feeling of reverence for the fairy classics. This reverence slips slightly in his presentation of Prince Prigio and Prince Ricardo, published in 1889 and 1893, respectively. Lang's attitude now seems to be more of familiarity with the genre. Although the tales gently mock the traditional fairy tale in the manner of Thackeray, Lang's stories still distinguish themselves from those of Thackeray and of most of the Victorians as well. Lang is capable of being satirical, but he does not do so as social critic or reformer. In all his works, Lang avoided the social arguments of his contemporaries. According to his friend, George Saintsbury, Lang was not interested in politics and gave science only slight treatment. He was not religious nor did he write about religion.¹⁵ The seeming political mockery in Prince Prigio refers occasionally

¹⁴ Chapter III, p. 44.

¹⁵ The Eighteen-Seventies, H. Grunville Barker, ed. (New York, 1929), p. 34.

to the English monarchy but certainly to no one in particular. The satirical comments about the King and his sons may more accurately be perceived as a jest of recurrent fairy tale events. The King-father's attempt to convince his eldest son, Prigio, to fight the Firedrake, and Prigio's refusal on the grounds that the youngest son always wins while the first two are slain, surely pokes fun at the youngest son cycle in fairy tales.

However, no traditional tale ever included popular comment on taxation. Prigio, offering to return his money reward, is rebuffed by the king who says: "Never mind, it's only an extra penny on the income tax. . ."¹⁶ Lang comments again on royal personages in Prigio's argument on the rules established by the monarchy:

When a subject only meant well, of course he had to suffer; but when a king said one thing, was he not supposed to have meant another? Any fellow with a wagon could bring the horns and tail; the difficult thing was to kill the monster. If Benson's claim was allowed, the royal prerogative of saying one thing and meaning something else was in danger.¹⁷

With a "Bravo!" from the King, Prigio wins his point.

Again, as Saintsbury suggests, science receives slight treatment in Prince Prigio. In the middle of his

¹⁶ Prigio, p. 36.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 79.

fairy tale, and with fairy equipment, Frigio conducts a scientific experiment. His goal is to test the life restorative powers of ACVA. DE. FONTE. LEONUM. (Water from the Fountain of Lions). His subject is an old black cat named Frank, whose head he cuts off: "It did not at once change into a beautiful young lady, as perhaps you expect; no, that was improbable, and as the prince was in love already, would have been vastly inconvenient."¹⁸ He burns the cat, adds the fairy water to the ashes and Frank returns to life, a more virile and much younger cat. Thus Lang has put science to a ludicrous use, thereby irritating Victorian scientists by combining scientific experiment with supernatural magic.

The "pop scriptural status"¹⁹ of nineteenth century fairy tales does not invade the stories by Lang but is rather parodied by the author. Subtle religious allegory which penetrates the works of MacDonald, Wilde and Ruskin, mentioned in Chapter III, is not even hinted at in Prince Frigio. Instead of following a religious quest which many Victorian fairy tale heroes do, both Frigio and Ricardo follow every traditional quest possible found in the fairy classics. Prince Frigio, to begin with, is

¹⁸Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁹Chapter III, p. 39.

given every classical gift at his christening including shoes of swiftness, seven league boots, the cap of darkness, the wishing cap, magical telescope and the magic carpet. The entire plot of Prince Frigio surrounds the fact that Frigio is too clever to believe in fairy gifts. The hero must finally be humbled into believing in fairies and magic, just as MacDonald's Curdie must be humbled into believing in Irene, the grandmother, as a supernatural power. MacDonald's tale is meant to be a religious allegory, Irene representing faith in God, whereas Lang merely intends Frigio to come to a realization about fairy tales and thus uses the religious quest theme for sacrilegious purposes.

Whereas the recalcitrant hero is shown that the truth to life is magical rather than logical in Prince Frigio, Prince Ricardo, King Frigio's son and heir, is a product of an extreme education in the magical arts. Frigio's complaint is that "Dick" has been raised on fairy books and now they can do nothing with him: "Round the world he goes, rescuing ladies from every kind of horror--from dragons, giants, cannibals, magicians; and then, when a girl naturally expects to be married to him, as is usual, off he rides!"²⁰

²⁰ My Own Fairy Book, p. 112.

Lang's sarcastic wit has doubled by the time he writes Prince Ricardo and his confidence in this tale is obvious in his introductory remarks: "There may be children whose education has been so neglected that they have not read Prince Prigio."²¹ His sarcasm also has become more pointed and he makes a token attempt at levelling remarks at specific social institutions. He does not challenge contemporary events, sticking to historical satire, history being one subject in which he feels confident.²² Scottish history being his favourite and historians being his target, he rewrites the story of Charles, Prince of Wales. Having received a totally illiterate letter from the prince from Rome, Ricardo alters history with magic:

I just take my Seven-league Boots, run over to Rome, pick up Prince Charles, put him on the magic carpet, fly to London, clap the Cap of Darkness on him so that nobody can see him, set him down on the throne of his fathers; pick up the Elector, carry him over to his Hanover, and the trick is done--what they call a bloodless revolution in the history books.²³

Lang passes sarcastic comment on religion, again as it

²¹Ibid., p. 107.

²² Lang published several history books, including A History of Scotland (1900) in two volumes, Prince Charles Edward Stuart (1900), The Mystery of Mary Stuart (1901) and James VI and The Gowrie Mystery (1902).

²³Cp. Cit., p. 153.

happened historically, and presents his own hindsight views of the feud of Rome versus the Church of England. With Charles and Henry, his brother, representing the opposing religious forces, Lang sketches the historical argument they may have had:

[Henry asks]: "And has Holy Church. . . given her sanction and her blessing of those instruments of an art, [Charles is playing golf] usually, in her wisdom, forbidden?"
 "Oh never mind Holy Church!" said Prince Charles, "This is business. Besides, the English are Protestants."
 "I pray for their conversion daily," said the Duke of York.²⁴

Like Prigio, Prince Ricardo also satirizes science, and, in keeping with the tone of this story, the jabs are more obvious. Jacqueline, a young maiden with skill in magic whom Ricardo has once saved, while waiting for him to marry her, learns the secret of drinking the moon. King Prigio scolds her for abusing something belonging to the scientist and issues the warning: "There is no great harm done yet and perhaps they would not believe you if you did explain; but just think, if some people ceased to believe Science, what would they have left to believe in?"²⁵

It is obvious that Lang does not wish his two Prince stories to be read solely by children for he

²⁴Ibid., p. 163.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 150-51.

takes the opportunity in both works, as Thackeray did, to engage in literary criticism and to poke fun at intellectuals. As in his prefaces to his Colour Fairy Books, however, his remarks are simplified so that children may read them but adults should receive the impact of meaning. Prigio is the Langian hero who represents the intellectuals and his follies reflect theirs. In the first tale, in one of Prigio's countless arguments with his averagely intelligent parent, Prigio enters the logic: "'Therefore to send me after the Firedrake were both dangerous and unnecessary.'" The author here intrudes with a footnote explaining his asterisk: "Subjunctive mood! He was a great grammarian."²⁶

Initially the fairy curse laid on Prigio consists of his being too clever. This curse caused him to be unpopular and led to his eventual alienation so that, by the conclusion of Prince Frigio, he makes a wish not to appear too clever and thus maintain his subjects' respect. In Prince Ricardo, however, the misery caused by Frigio's intelligence is again pointed out. By the end of this tale, Frigio is pleading for stupidity and goes to the moon to find it. Such a subject provides the author with endless ammunition and he begins to list those things he

²⁶ Prince Frigio, p. 50.

considers stupidities:

There it all lay in masses--the stupidity of bad sermons, of ignorant reviewers of bad poems, of bad speeches, of dreary novels, of foolish statesmen, of ignorant mobs, of fine ladies, of idle, naughty boys and girls. . .²⁷

The last in the list was probably included in remembrance of the young audience who was meant to understand his story.

The Queen, Prigio's mother, represents the misbelievers in the fairy tale cult and her words echo contemporary criticism against the genre. In disbelief that she has actually been transported from Gluckstein to Falkenstein by means of a magic carpet, she voices a protest: "'Nonsense!' she cried, 'a story out of the Arabian Nights is not suited for a modern public and fails to win public credence.'"²⁸ Lang suggests that such people generally miss out on much, just as the Queen does when she misses her son's marriage by taking a coach back to her palace rather than returning with the others on the magic carpet.

Despite the fun Lang has in his sarcastic asides to his tale, he still means his stories to be enjoyed for themselves. His intention is not to abuse the traditional

²⁷ Ricardo, p. 217.

²⁸ Prigio, p. 74.

fairy tale conventions but rather to make use of the public's familiarity with them. His only moral is that the intellectual should not take himself too seriously and should possess a certain amount of "stupidity". He does not insist that this should be grasped by his reader, however, preferring first to delight and entertain: "The moral of the story will easily be discovered by the youngest reader, or, if not, it does not much matter."²⁹

"The Gold of Fairnilee" was written in 1888, between the appearance of Prince Prizio and Prince Ricardo. It is, therefore, curious that the cynicism which preceded and followed it should have no influence on the serious tone of the work. The setting is recognizable--a Scottish border town perhaps like the one in which Lang, himself, was born. The fairies live underground and the narrator's information about them is second hand. Although fairies influence the lives of people, they do not dominate the folk-tale. Fairies in folk-tales are slightly different from those to be found in the literary fairy tale and Lang makes this distinction. The Fairy Queen in "The Gold of Fairnilee" more closely resembles Titania in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, that is, she is normal-sized.

²⁹"Introduction", Ricardo, p. 107.

On the other hand, in Lang's tale, The Princess Nobody, he understands the fairies to be quite small, describing them as riding insects, swinging from fuchsias, and sleeping under mushrooms. In most fairy tales, whether traditional or literary, fairies dwell in the same land with fantasy kings and queens and have the option of being either good or bad. Their influence is seen as a kind of magic routine fantastically making things appear or disappear and their magical tricks are mostly visible and rarely subtle. The fairies of Lang's folk tale have quite a different nature. Not only do they not dwell on the same level of existence, but the kingdom in which they live has a negative influence over the country peasant who lives in the realm above them. Belief in the lower realm is noted as "superstition" whereas belief in the traditional or literary fairy kingdom is a foregone conclusion. Lang adds the characteristic Victorian depth of meaning³⁰ by interpreting the fairyland of his folk tale as the realm of experience to test the goodness and courage of those who enter it. His hero, Randal, who steps down into the well leading to Faerie, is immediately tested or tempted by the Queen to choose his life's fate:

³⁰ Chapter III, p. 49.

Then the Fairy Queen showed him three paths, one steep and narrow, and beset with briars and thorns: that was the road to goodness and happiness, but it was little trodden or marked with the feet of people that had come and gone. . . .³¹

The second of the three paths is the road to easy living and pleasure, a well-trodden route and the road to Elfland. Elfland to Lang is distinctly a testing ground and a key to human understanding. Randal, in his inexperience, sees the glamour of the land he is in and explores the pleasures. However, he finds a bottle whose liquid has the power to destroy "the 'glamour' of Fairyland, and make people see it as it really was."³² With the knowledge which he receives from the bottle, Fairyland becomes an unbearable Hell for Randal. Thus Randal has been taught the difference between illusion and reality and in order for him to be released back to his own realm, his lover, Jean, must also be tested for an honest nature and a receiving heart as well:

And he was sent up by the Fairy Queen in a fairy form, as a hideous dwarf, to frighten her away from the white roses in the enchanted forest. But her goodness and her courage had saved him, for he was a christened knight and not a man of the fairy world.³³

³¹ My Own Fairy Book, "The Gold of Fairnilee", p. 233.

³² Ibid., p. 293.

³³ Ibid., p. 295.

The fairy kingdom of Lang's Scottish folk tale provides insight into Lang's belief in fairies and magic. The fairyland of "The Gold of Fairnilee" exists in the imagination and a search into the nature of the land is a search into oneself, an investigation of one's worth and potential. Randal's discovery, with his nurse's help, of the gold would not have been possible without his first developing a philosophy of life in Fairyland. After Randal has developed the sensitivity and compassion necessary for a full life, the material possibility to continue that life is given him. The discovery of this gold depends on the belief in magic as well as a little good fortune. The gold was not fairy gold but "very ancient gold coins. . . such as were used in Briton before Julius Caesar came."³⁴

From the autobiographical hints in "Fairnilee," it is obvious that this tale closely represents the kind of environment in which Lang was raised, and the kinds of beliefs which influenced him. Randal's nurse, Nancy, bears the same name as Lang's own childhood nurse. Also, as Green has reported Lang's nurse used to do, Nancy. . . "would tell them old Scotch stories of elves and fairies, and sing them old songs."³⁵ The tale specifically

³⁴ Ibid., p. 309.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 253.

mentioned which she tells, "The Red Etkin", is included in Lang's first collection of classics, The Blue Fairy Book.³⁶

Whether or not Lang intended this tale as children's literature is uncertain but his delicate treatment of youth is just as acute in this tale as in the others. At Randal's father's death, Lang is sensitive to a child's reaction: "So in a short while Randal only felt puzzled. Then he forgot and began to play. He was a very little boy."³⁷ Death is a reality in the folk tale and not removed by magic as in Prince Ricardo, in which Frigio drinks the Water of Life from The Fountain of Lions, never to die, with Lang's comment: "No need such kings should ever die."³⁸ No matter how good he has been, Randal and his wife die. They are given a peaceful epitaph and placed near the grave of Sir Walter Scott, a famous Scottish folklorist:

As for Randal and Jean, they lived to be old, and died on one day, and they are buried at Dryburgh in one tomb, and a green tree grows over them, and the Tweed goes murmuring past their grave, and past the grave of Sir Walter Scott.³⁹

³⁶ The Blue Fairy Book, p. 385.

³⁷ Op. cit., p. 243.

³⁸ Ricardo, p. 252.

³⁹ "The Doll of Faimilee," p. 312.

Having read the original tales of Andrew Lang, one may see that he was a product of the Victorian fairy tale tradition but that he was also quite extraordinary to it. The fact that he wrote fantasy, in a period which encouraged his imaginary works, places him in the group of distinguished Victorians such as Carroll, Lewis, Thackeray and MacDonald, whose tales are still acclaimed. His sarcastic wit can be seen as a product of his age or, in view of its universal criticisms, in the nature of the traditional fairy writer, Hans Christian Andersen. In any case, he has an impressive knowledge of fairy tales and the variety of tales he has written places him in a category of his own.

CONCLUSIONS

Having viewed Andrew Lang's voluminous collections of fairy literature in contrast with other famous collections of both traditional and Victorian fantasy, one is greatly impressed with the extent of Lang's knowledge and experience with fairy tales and with his credible theories on the subject. However, despite the complexity with which Lang analyzes fairy mythology, his definition of the genre remains simple and general. While critics such as Yearsley dedicate books to classifying fairy tales, and while others write volumes distinguishing between fairy stories and folklore, Lang ignores these aspects, looking more to the historical origins. With such a perspective on the author, one may speculate that perhaps Lang would also have included science fiction under his broad term of "fairy tale".

It would seem probable that, the more Lang collected and wrote, the more faithful he became to the traditional fairy tale form. Three of his own four tales were written before he began his colour collection of fairy books. In fact, "The Gold of Fairnilee", the last written, most closely satisfies his understanding of the traditional fairy tale. Certainly, the editorial remarks made in introductions to each of the twelve fairy books became increasingly more vehement in support of traditional fairy tales. Lang, especially in later volumes, proposes the collections almost

as books of popular history while at the same time publishing them under the guise of simple entertainment for children.

Lang's own tales have been shown to differ from the sample types of Victorian tales discussed. The one exception to this is the tale by William Makepeace Thackeray upon whom Lang very probably patterned himself in at least two of his stories. All the Victorian tales discussed are easily available today and most of them are fairly well known. Andrew Lang, however, is not well remembered for his own fairy tales, nor are they in print. He still receives respect for his work in mythology, however, and some of his short stories are rare but not impossible to obtain. Dover publications also publish his Fairy Books of Many Colours, four of which receive the greatest display--the Blue, Red, Green and the Yellow. None of his own fairy tales have been reprinted since 1946 and now exist as rare books. One may only speculate why this is so. The Princess Nobody is without a doubt a problematic tale and Doyle's illustrations are quite famous enough to be printed alone. In fact, there are a few included in Beyond The Looking Glass, a collection of well-known fantasy pieces of the Victorian period. Folk tales have not the tremendous popularity today that they once had. They are especially not considered as children's literature and usually are published today in collections. Lang has written only one folk tale. Not having enough material to form a collection himself, any inclusion of

"The Gold of Fairnilee" in a modern volume of folk tales would be entirely at the discretion of the editor of that volume. Prince Prigio and Prince Ricardo are fine examples of the combination of the traditional and Victorian tale. However, it is possible that they are regarded as imitations of Thackeray's The Rose and The Ring and are thus ignored.

It is obvious that Lang had greater success as a theorist than as a creative writer. Just as Lewis Carroll is not known as much for mathematics¹, Andrew Lang is not best remembered for the fairy tales which he loved. However, although his specific tales are not remembered or cited, Lang's reputation is still associated with fairy tales. When this researcher was inquiring after Lang's works, the author's name often sparked in many familiar with children's books the phrase associated with him--"The story-teller of England".

¹L. Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through The Looking Glass (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 11-12.

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