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***Fairy Tale: A Very Short Introduction* by Marina Warner**

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REVIEW ESSAYS

NAVIGATING THE *CARTE DU TENDRE* IN *FAIRY TALE: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION* BY MARINA WARNER

BARBARA PRESCOTT

FAIRY TALE: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION. Marina Warner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. xxix + 156 pages. 9780199532155. £7.99 RRP. \$11.95 USA.

THIS USEFUL LITTLE BOOK IS PART OF THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS SERIES “Very Short Introductions,”¹ a wide-ranging topical set of concise and explanatory small paperbacks, the purpose of which is to offer a taste to the reader of a particular subject. *Fairy Tale: A Very Short Introduction* by acclaimed mythographer Marina Warner does what it is intended to do, that being to briefly introduce the field of fairy tale history and analysis to an educated general audience in a handy, affordable, guide.

However, the unavoidable reality facing the reviewer, as well as the reader, is that *Fairy Tale* is but a slightly abbreviated version of an already concise introduction by Marina Warner to the field of fairy tale history and research, *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of Fairy Tale*, also published by Oxford University Press in 2014.

I admit to being mildly puzzled by the reason Oxford would choose to publish *Fairy Tale* thus as a tiny reference guide in printed form rather than, perhaps more usefully, only as an e-book. After long thought, I concluded that there may be some advantages to the abbreviated hard copy format, possibly toward that of keeping the tiny book conveniently tucked in one’s purse or pocket to consult when walking through a haunted wood, for example, or easily accessible in the event of a fairy tale emergency. The advantage to a pocket copy may become clear in the following discussion.

¹<https://global.oup.com/academic/content/series/v/very-short-introductions-vsi/?cc=us&lang=en&>

Apart from pondering the reasons to publish *Fairy Tale* as a gently condensed version of *Once Upon a Time*, we are obligated to consider both books in this discussion. A review of *Fairy Tale* necessitates, by the very fact of its content replicated from *Once*, an incorporated review of the earlier book. So one may consider this review, for all practical purposes, to encompass both books by Marina Warner, *Fairy Tale* and *Once Upon A Time*. As this review is ostensibly that of *Fairy Tale*, my comments are aimed primarily toward that book. When the content differs substantially from *Once Upon a Time*, I will make the point. However, for all practical purposes, my comments apply to both books unless otherwise noted.

Fairy Tale is organized into a Prologue (xxi-xxix) and nine chapters, each lightly titled with charming descriptive phrases which immediately pique the reader's interest. These are as follows in order: 1) "The worlds of faery: far away & down below"; 2) "With a touch of her wand: magic & metamorphosis"; 3) "Voices on the page: tales, tellers & translators"; 4) "Potato soup: true stories/real life"; 5) "Childish things: pictures & conversations"; 6) "On the couch: house-training the id"; 7) "In the dock: don't bet on the prince"; 8) "Double vision: the dream of reason"; and 9) "On the stage & screen: states of illusion." The content proper is followed by an Epilogue, Further Reading, Publisher's Acknowledgements, and, finally an Index. A List of Illustrations (xix-xx) and author Acknowledgements (xvii-xviii) are included. Other than some variance in capitalization and punctuation—print courtesies which are more clearly delineated in the earlier book—all follow in order and wording that of *Once Upon a Time*.

In the Prologue to *Fairy Tale*, Warner begins to weave her mythographic magic. We are immediately introduced to the map by which the author will guide her readers through the labyrinth of fairy tale research and history. Preparing her readers well for the adventure, the author provides us with a detailed atlas. We are in good hands.

From the beginning, Warner invites us to envision the history of fairy tale as a map which may be used to navigate the many paths and roads winding through the lands of faerie and story. The map in question is, however, not an ordinary road atlas but a *Carte du Tendre*, a map of tenderness, such as those drawn by Parisian romancers, "to chart the peaks and sloughs of the heart's affections" (xxi). Consulting this unique guide, one is led to two important landmarks, Charles Perrault's *Histoires et Contes de temps passé*, 1697, in the distance, and the Grimm Brothers' *Kinder-und Hausmärchen*, 1812, in the foreground. These two landmarks in fairy tale history and research, Warner explains, are the source of the main route to which we are directed in order to begin our adventure. Upon being set safely on the road, we notice various paths and winding ways emanating from the highway, leading in every direction to

worldwide storytelling populations. The reader is led east to Alexander Afanasyev and Vasilissa the Beautiful in Russia, still further east to the enchantment of the *Arabian Nights*, west to W.B. Yeats in Ireland, to the English *Mabinogion* of Charlotte Guest in Wales, south to Sicily, or north to the romance of Walter Scott in Scotland and to the childhood magic of Hans Christian Andersen in Denmark. In the nearest towns reside Margaret Atwood and Angela Carter, revisioning and writing, along with numerous other tellers of the tale.

Should we, suddenly blessed by an unusually kind-hearted djinn, be given a vision of moving windows in which each of these storytellers is pictured, we would see the entire mandala in process of creation: the cultural variation, the invention, the gathering, the interpretation and revisioning that are inherent to the kaleidoscopic motion and interweaving of stories, and, most particularly, to that of faerie stories as they provide the connective tissue between our mythological past and present reality.

In the legend of our navigational map, Warner directs the reader's attention to the defining components of the fairy tale. By definition, a fairy tale: 1) is a short narrative, 2) is a familiar story, 3) belongs to the realm of folklore, 4) may be verbal (*Märchen*) as part of the body of oral literacy, or written (*Kunstmärchen*) as part of the corpus of written literacy, both often interwoven and interchangeable within second-order narrative of music, film, or social media, 5) reflects a depository of wisdom or expectation within a culture or social group, 6) reflects the past while interweaving the present through recombination and reordering of familiar plots, characters, devices, and images. In its alchemical transformation of the classic fairy tale, the television series *Once Upon a Time* comes to mind, as does *Supernatural*, *Grimm*, or the vintage *Fractured Fairy Tales*. The displaced faerie folk in *Shrek* command our attention and sympathetic amusement as do the endangered species of faerie creatures that pervade J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. We recognize ourselves in their predicaments. As a result, the fairy tale, 7) is generically recognizable, even when the exact identity of the story is not clear (i.e., I know it when I see/read/hear it.). Furthermore, 8) the scope of the fairy tale is made by language in the form of a narrative grammar. In effect, "fairy tale consists above all of acts of imagination, conveyed in a symbolic Esperanto" (xxv). We all recognize the stepmothers and princesses, the elves and giants, irrespective of the particular situation, as we also have an anticipatory sense of what will happen (C.S. Lewis's "surprisingness"). Next, 9) the story must elicit a sense of wonder from the audience. J.R.R. Tolkien's descriptions of the elves and architecture of Rivendell elicit not only wonder, but respect, even awe. The world of these elves is not one of frivolity but of serious enchantment.

Warner proposes that the term “wonder tale” from the German *Wundermärchen* is perhaps more appropriate a title for the fairy story as it conveys a crucial element to the story’s *raison d’être*, the pleasure of wonder inherent to the journey into a world where the unusual is commonplace and desires are fulfilled (see *Wonder Tales*, edited by Marina Warner, 1994). Finally, a fairy tale, 10) elicits hope by displaying the generic marker of a ‘happy ending.’ Although often a result considered highly unlikely in the given circumstances, a miraculously positive ending manifests itself through providence, enchantment, or magic. Stated concisely by André Jolles, “The miraculous is here the only possible guarantee that the immortality of reality has stopped” (qtd. in Zipes, *Grimm Legacies* 4), or as Lewis Carroll noted in chapter six of *Alice in Wonderland* “We’re all mad here,” and later in the poetic postscript of *Through the Looking-Glass*, “Life, what is it but a dream?”

In their classic sense, as Warner points out, fairy tales are pointed, succinct narratives, “one-dimensional, depthless, abstract, and sparse; their characteristic manner is matter-of-fact. This is as it is, as it happened; the tale is at it is, no more no less” (xxvi). These characteristics allow structuralists, such as Vladimir Propp, to organize and categorize the components of the fairy tale into codified features, a process which certainly has its limits, but provides a skeleton upon which to hang the decorative elements of quantitative and qualitative research that allow various cross-cultural comparisons within fairy tale structure. J.R.R. Tolkien reminds us, however, that, “There are many things in the Cauldron, but the Cooks do not dip in the ladle quite blindly” (“On Fairy-stories” 31). Fairy tale, as oral or written literature, is continuously being reinvented with new ingredients, and its survival depends on the transformations that a good cook will add and mix into the blend.

The spirit of the classic Western fairy tale may be one of “heroic optimism” (Carter, *Virago Book of Fairy Stories* xviii), where characters may find themselves the recipients of violence, injustice, and mischance, yet through otherworldly forces, or their own cunning, change those circumstances to their advantage, outsmarting the villains, all culminating in a happy ending. The rare fairy story ends badly, such as in Perrault’s retelling of Red Riding Hood, yet often results in various editions, some turning the finale into the desired positive end for the hapless heroine. We simply must have our happy ending, even if that ending is in the journey itself. The map of fairy tale structure and history is therefore identifiable and universally recognizable, even across cultural boundaries and languages. We can all be participants in the generic fairy tale through imagination, by experiencing other-worlds of magic and enchantment, yet within the safe boundaries of a culturally-specific structure that strengthens our identity, validates our ability to overcome adversity, and leads to the hard-won satisfactory conclusion. The map of the classic fairy tale is marked by hope,

magical adventure, mischance, and victory. By hearing, reading, and telling these stories, we teach ourselves, and one another, to be of humanity, socially competent, and victorious over evil in enchanted other-worlds and, by extension, in the reality of this world.

These, in essence, are the map and vision that Marina Warner presents in her prologue to the history of the fairy tale. The magical journey is as enticing to us as was the gingerbread cottage to Hansel and Gretel. When we enter the adventure, however, we are more fortunate than those lost, beguiled, children because we have Warner's map to guide us through the forest. We, knowing that not all those who wander are lost, may take a small treat and lesson from each story, then be on our way, hopefully without being snared and cooked in the process. Good guides are, indeed, a necessary prerequisite when entering the world of "*Once upon a time*." Warner presents her audience of adventurers with such a map to guide us safely toward understanding the magical journey. And so we "begin to move in, listening out, eyes open, trying to find our bearings" (xxix).

In chapters one through five of *Fairy Tale*, Warner's map guides the reader through a main route of the magical realm by way of roads which intersect and explore the physical, emotional, and moral geography of the fairytale. We find hamlets of shape-shifting beings, human trees, wise children, godly animals, and nonliving things that can assume life, defying all restrictive laws of normalcy and logic. We ponder good and evil as we stop to rest by the wayside, and we reconsider the effect of language as a magical force in the land of faerie. In chapters six through eight, we arrive at the university of reason, where we are challenged to consider the workings of the human mind, the id, and that peskiest of things, human rationality, within terrains where reason seems not to have a place at all (e.g., Wonderland). Finally, Warner leaves us in that most magical of all kingdoms, Hollywood, where the fairytale is transformed, transmuted, and transported into different dimensions and forms, some almost unrecognizable as fairytale (or perhaps most fundamentally recognizable as such). There the map ends, Warner leaving her reading adventurers to find their own way back. Luckily, we still have the map tucked into our pockets for just such an occurrence. Let us begin.

The first place Warner's map takes us is to the realm of faeries. In Chapter 1, "The worlds of faery: faraway & down below," we are introduced to the historically powerful image of the faery. Due to their involvement in many and varied stories and in many guises, faeries have somewhat of a tangled history with respect to a past realm of belief that is not always in tandem with the skeptical present. In effect, the past powerful reputation of faery beings has been diluted to that of benign mischief in the present, exemplified by Disney creations, Manga transformations, and cartoon characterization. In contrast,

J.R.R. Tolkien noted that the allure of the powerful dragon, “had the trade-mark *Of Faërie* written plain upon him” (“On Fairy-stories” 41). Fairyland was the Secondary World referenced by Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, and George MacDonald’s literary world was that of the faerie. Warner notes that these secondary worlds are alternative allegories to the world of reality, ranging from the merry beings of Shakespeare to the sinister goblins of Rossetti.

The salient features of the fairy realm, Warner explains, which make it a necessary setting to the fairy tale, are that, first, within the world of faerie live the powerful undercurrents of romance and eros in the form of dreams. Secondly, the realm is ripe with secret knowledge and intimacies. Thirdly, the realm is a miniaturized universe which draws attention to a disjunction of scale when compared to normative proportion. The world of Shakespeare’s Queen Mab embodies the salient features of the fairy realm, although the realms of Puck and Ariel, rather than being entirely of enchantment, form a bridge between faerie and human reality. Ariel’s presence does not make *The Tempest* a fairy tale, but rather incorporates him into the complexities of human interaction within Prospero’s reality.

An intriguing connection between the world of faerie and the literary world of poetry occurs in the revivalist work of the Romantics, particularly that of W.B. Yeats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. Within their anthology *Lyrical Ballads* may be found the supernatural ballad of the Ancient Mariner and the spellbound Christabel. John Thelwall’s *The Fairy of the Lake* as well as Shelley’s “Queen Mab” closely weave together both genres. Walter Scott, on a scale surpassed only by the Grimm Brothers in Germany, hunted faerie lore from every source in his native Scotland, bringing to public attention Kirk’s work on faeries and the legend of Thomas the Rhymer. Should the reader wish to pursue study of these topics, Warner has thoughtfully supplied a list of further readings to guide one to the next step.²

Warner’s map of the faerie realm takes the reader through a brief history of folklorists, storytellers, and poets who have demonstrated the need to move beyond the limits of normative reality in their work to the realm of the supernatural faerie, melding both through past and present. It is an intriguing *amuse-bouche* that Warner presents us in this brief treatment of faerie research and writing, yet certainly piques the reader’s interest to wander farther into the uncharted territory of any one of the diverse topics she touches. We are given a plate of appetizers from which to choose. These are not filling, but they are tasty.

² The reviewer would recommend going straight to Warner’s book, *From the Beast to the Blonde* (1994), for a feast of information on the general history of the fairy tale. In addition, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, by Jack Zipes (2012) is almost required reading. A third, both helpful and beautifully written, discussion of the fairy tale is given by J.R.R. Tolkien in the poem “Mythopoeia” (*Tree and Leaf* 85-90).

Furthermore, we note the main points of interest on her map of the faerie realm. We may now move on, having had both a treat and a lesson.

Moving along on our walking tour, we come to a garden of talking flowers in the second chapter, "With a touch of her wand: magic and metamorphosis," as Alice so did in the course of her adventures. Here Warner delves into the form, function, and mutability of magic as the fabric of everyday reality permeated by invisible forces manipulated by supernatural beings. The magical world contradicts the laws of physics, logic, and probability, yet does so within the normative realm of the physical world. As a result, our mundane world is transformed to show us its unexpected possibilities. In the magic of nature, animals speak, rocks and trees shape-shift, and water has a will of its own, moving between the living and nonliving worlds with abandon. In the *Arabian Nights*, severed heads speak after death. In *Cinderella*, a dead mother returns as a tree to nourish her daughter.³

An intriguing observation made by Warner is that magic in European fairy tales works along lines of magnetism, incorporating the pull of the tides or the wonder of an eclipse as the medium of magic. In our modern world, it may be noted, the discovery of ley lines circumventing the earth lends credence to the interweaving of the magnetic spiritual and physical worlds. Our ancestors in many diverse cultures knew of those magnetic lines and incorporated them in stories of metaphysical allegory. The physical realities of gravity, electricity, and magnetism place us squarely in the worlds of magic and metamorphosis. In a sense, we are living a fairytale in normative daily physical existence.⁴

Warner's map now takes us into the woods of dark intent and deception (see *In A Dark Wood*, 1977, by Marina Warner). The beings who govern the multiple currents of supernatural power are sometimes recognizable as dangerous, sometimes disguised as friendly beings, or are ambiguous in their intent. Sometimes it appears that even demons do not understand why they do that which they do to harm. Warner makes the curious statement that, of all creatures, females dominate fairytale evil. Whether this tendency within fairytale is a manifestation of social control, fear of female power, or jealousy, is certainly culturally specific, but the role of women as powerful beings, good or evil, appears dominant in Western fairy tales and fiction. Perhaps a good Proppian analysis of gender roles and dominance within the myths, legends,

³ Further discussion of the points Warner begins in this chapter may be found in her book, *Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights* (2012). See also Verlyn Flieger and Doug Anderson's commentary in *Tolkien on Fairy-Stories* (2008), and Jorge Luis Borges's *The Book of Imaginary Beings* (2002).

⁴ Two helpful resources to learn more about this topic are *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds*, by Marina Warner (2001) and Jessica Tiffin's *Marvellous Geometry: Genre and Metafiction in Modern Fairy Tale* (2009).

and fairy tales of specific cultures or subgroups (e.g., that of urban legends) may be, once again in time, a worthy subject of research.

The characters within fairy tales may also evolve through time and change through cultural borrowing. Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's tragic mermaid transforms through time into Disney's perky, sub-marine, singing Ariel. The victimized innocent, Red Riding Hood, evolves into a formidable feminist. The brave and handsome loner, Prince Charming, is revealed in *Shrek 2* to be a spoiled whiner while the ogre, Shrek, displays rational and kind behavior. Time and social change can either make or break the image of an iconic fairytale figure.

Warner touches also upon the power of animist activity. The transference of vitality endows inert objects with active power. French structural anthropologist Claude Lévi Strauss famously noted that animals are "bon à penser," good to think with. Animal metamorphosis and changeable bodies extend the boundaries of natural form and break the rules of probability. In a fairy tale, anything and anyone may be changed by word or act. Furthermore, as we realize these possibilities, we are changed, possibly even experiencing a metamorphosis of our own.

A final point made by Warner is that magic transmitted is done so primarily by verbal language in the form of spells spoken or broken. Language, by its very nature, is magical effect transmitted from source to receptor. The dynamics of the narrative, the verbal act, assume their efficacy through spells, proverbs, saws, rhymes, riddles, and even in obscure allusions such as that spoken by Lear's Fool. "The web of words ensnares the cast of characters in the tale as surely as it intends to enthrall us" (32). Rhyme, repetition, rhythmic prose, or verse carry an undercurrent of verbal spell magic by their very effect upon the recipient. Story magic requires a teller, transmitter, receptor, and audience as accomplice. The verbal devices employed require the consent of the audience to accept that which is to come. "One could say, they cast a spell" (33). Considering the power of verbal devices to enchant, one may conclude that perhaps, in a sense, poetry is a language of the fairy tale. As one traverses this terrain it may be wise to note on the map each dialect spoken by the natives, for one's safety sake if nothing else.⁵

Continuing her emphasis on the importance of language and verbal devices to effect desired change as they are used to manipulate reality, thereby spilling magic into the 'real' world, Warner segues into Chapters Three ("Voices on the page: tales, tellers, & translators"), Four ("Potato Soup: true stories/real life"), and Five ("Childish things; pictures and conversations"). We have left the

⁵ For more juicy information about language and fairy tale, see Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tale and the Art of Subversion* (2006) and C.S. Lewis's *Selected Literary Essays* (1969).

pleasant country and arrived in a city filled with everyday realities as well as urban legends.

In order that a fairy tale (as story) exist, it must first be spoken (or written) by a teller (sometimes a translator), heard (or read) by others (the audience), and remembered by at least one person in that audience, usually more than one, who will discuss and disseminate the fairy tale. The cycle must continue. The story must move through a population, today through various media, sometimes changing through additions, twists to the plot, or character replacements. Once a story is adopted as desirable telling, it becomes part of social literature and continues to resurface, sometimes in the form of modern 'dark' fairy tales known as urban legends. Creators, or tellers, of the story are thus the kingpins who set the story in motion and vouch for its credibility by the telling. Tellers of the tale, thus, are the most powerful beings in the life of a fairy tale and its resultant migration. They are, in essence, creators. That tale which a teller creates is set in motion by the telling and takes on a life of its own. The first teller is the first voice who, in a sense, owns the tale, yet by the act of telling, sets the story free to be picked up by other voices and told again, *ad infinitum*. Thus fairy tales are born, grow, and migrate among social groups and through cultures.⁶

Continuing chapter three, Warner goes on to discuss the work of Charles Perrault (1697) and the *Mode Parisienne*, centering on *Mother Goose Tales* and the *Arabian Nights*. She introduces the author Giambattista Basile of Naples, and gives us an extended discussion of the Grimm brothers and the folklorists of the nineteenth century whose work has engendered much discussion and study regarding fairy tales and the collective unconscious. The sheer information Warner presents is formidable, but one begins to think that this section contains either 'too little' or 'too much' discussion for the purpose of this tiny guide.⁷

In "Potato Soup: true stories/real life," the reader is given a taste of uncomfortable reality as Warner dwells on folktales of everyday existence in the work of Italo Calvino and the topic of family secrets and extreme crimes, such as those told of Bluebeard, a serial killer. All of these stories constitute a response to generic human experiences and common bonds.⁸ Next, Warner touches upon

⁶ See *Red Riding Hood for All Ages: A Fairy Tale Icon in Cross-Cultural Contexts* by Sandra L. Beckett, 2008.

⁷ For more information on these weighty topics, see Charles Perrault, *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault*, trans. Angela Carter (2008) and Sara Maitland, *Gossip from the Forest: The Tangled Roots of Our Forests and Fairytales* (2012).

⁸ An excellent discussion of the fairy tale in real world context may be found in Maria Tatar's *The Hard Facts of the Grimm's Fairy Tales* (2019) and Cassie Hermansson's *Bluebeard: A Reader's Guide to the English Tradition* (2009).

“Childish things: pictures and conversations.” Here we meet Alice, of course, and get a good dose of Lewis Carroll. Warner brings in the world of child readers and that niche market, including chapbooks, woodcuts, and illustrations for children, some in the Victorian era being more disturbing than comforting to children.⁹

At this point in our journey, we arrive at the school of reason (my wording) and head straight for the psychology and philosophy departments. Warner now shifts the focus of *Fairy Tale* to the cerebral by incorporating the esoteric world of rationality. Truth be told, this was not one of my favorite areas in which to wander; deduce from that what you will. Still, “On the couch; house-training the id” has an important point in its favor; it brings in the work of Bruno Bettelheim and *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976). Warner discusses not only the uses of, but also the abuses of, enchantment, particularly with respect to (Bettelheim and Jung & von Franz) female roles within classic fairy stories.¹⁰

In chapter seven, “In the dock: don’t bet on the prince,” Warner continues the theme of modern woman’s reevaluation of the messages aimed toward the female gender that are inherent to classic Western fairy tales by directing our attention to mid-century Disney animation classics such as *Cinderella* and *Snow White* in which stereotypic female roles predominated. A change of perspective occurred in the later twentieth century through critical reading to expose the influence of predominantly male authors and collectors upon the female stereotype.¹¹ Finally, Warner explores the theme of rationality in “Double visions: the dream of reason,” as she notes, “The tradition of fairy tale has lent itself, in the name and interest of rationality, to some of the most acute intellectual creations” (112). Those creations range from the romantic undercutting of Cupid and Psyche by Apuleius to the inverted Wolf Alice in Angela Carter’s fairy tale (1979), to the anti-tales of A.S. Byatt’s “The Eldest Princess” (1997), and to Neil Gaiman’s *Snow, Glass, Apples* (2019).

In the entertaining subsection “Impossible dreamers: keeping out of hell,” Warner observes that rational dreamers are still thinking up ways to avoid hell, even the hell of existence, by the use of reason to tackle concepts of the self and relations of human beings with the natural world through the medium of

⁹ A good follow-up to this topic is Gillian Beer’s *Alice in Space: The Sideways Victorian World of Lewis Carroll* (2016).

¹⁰ This transformation of thought has evolved into such current fairy tales as *Women Who Run With the Wolves* (1992) by Clarissa Pinkola Estés (recommended reading) and the poem-stories of Anne Sexton’s *Transformations* (1976).

¹¹ Women scholars such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar reground the stereotypic lens through studies such as *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), and Angela Carter refined that lens through *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) and *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (1979).

magic and fantasy. The repertoire continues to grow as the fairy tale changes shape, redefines characters, redirects our attention to alternatives in plot and 'happy endings,' and thus changes our concepts of reason and reality.¹² Fairy tales provide writers and others with "a fine scalpel to probe and test the conditions of daily survival, and then imagine alternatives and redress" (120). Reasoning and problem-solving through life (avoiding hell), specific to cultural context, both reside at the core of story, the core of fable, and the core of fairytale.

We now exit the school of reason to head straight for Hollywood, our last signpost on the map. We are, however, first detoured to a stop-over in London's theatre district to ponder the relations between fairy tale, ballet, and opera. Then on to the world of techno-magic and the dominion of Pixar. In "On stage & screen: states of illusion," Warner moves us into the scintillating secondary world of living fairy tale, one in which the story is not exclusively verbal but one in which the medium itself is an illusion. Modern film interpretations of the fairy tale have evolved into stories ripe with alternatives: alternative characters, alternative plots, alternative desirability (e.g., Fiona's choices in *Shrek*), and certainly alternative endings. In *Tangled*, Rapunzel is a brawny super-heroine. In *Frozen* (2013), Anna overcomes eternal winter to save her sister, Elsa. In the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Sam Gamgee evolves into a true hero of the story.

Warner makes the cogent point that fairy tale and film enjoy a profound affinity "because the cinema animates phenomena, no matter how inert; made of light and motion, its illusions match the enchanted animism of fairy tale" (127). There is an uncanny vitality to inert things. By far the most noticeable development in the marriage of fairy tale and cinema in recent years has been the rise of political sensitivity to gender, power relations, and ethnic acknowledgement as well as representation. There is an element of social engineering in the messages to which cinematic adaptations of fairy tale conform in language used, representations of culture, and gender issues (*Brave*, 2012) for both child and mature film audiences. In the movie *Strange Magic* (2015), the subtitle reads "Everyone deserves to be loved," which is a far cry from nineteenth-century fairy tale motifs that often involved various methods of child abandonment or cooking the unwary.

Perhaps we are still searching for the utopian dream in our cultural and personal quests for the ultimately satisfying fairy tale. Wishful thinking is certainly an essential component to the quest. However, it is an interesting point that no longer are 'happy endings' criteria in a fairy tale definition. Warner notes that "[t]he darkness of contemporary retellings threatens to grow so deep it throws a shadow over the happy ending itself" (135). Yet Warner goes on to

¹² For more along these lines, see Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, 1992.

reconfirm, "But sometimes this gloom does not altogether destroy the sense that an alternative world has been created where goodness can brighten us, lighten us" (135). And so Warner ends the guided journey with some warning, yet with a note of hope which is after all, at the very center of each fairy tale, ancient or modern. Along with Marina Warner, we choose to hope.

Warner leaves us with a brief Epilogue in which she gives her readers a final note of caution before we make our way back through the magical world of fairy tale as it interplays with our own notions of reality. While walking back through a dark forest, trying to spot breadcrumbs, we must become trackers and readers of signs, such as those given in our map, to reach a safe and satisfying conclusion to our quests. Warner comments that fairy tales are not much of a signpost, but they are something to start with (137). I would affirm that these markers of interwoven mythology and reality are far more powerful than we give them credit. In tandem with the observation of Lévi-Strauss, we affirm that fairy tales are good to think with. And, of course, we have our map.

In retrospect, I must admit that the more I pondered the intricacies of *Fairy Tale*, and the winding paths available to explore its terrain, the more I became enamored with the possibilities it offered. *Fairy Tale* is a deceptively tiny volume that provides a kaleidoscopic interweaving of myriad themes, details, contexts, and history within the type of story we title wonder tale, magic tale, or fairy tale. As noted in the beginning, this book is virtually a replication of Warner's *Once Upon a Time* in smaller format and in paperback. It is ultimately the choice of the reader which format is most pleasing. Both will give the reader an exciting journey and an excellent adventure.

After reading one (or both) of Warner's concise introductions to the fairy tale, I recommend moving directly to *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (1994) for an in-depth treatment of most topics begun in *Fairy Tale*. In that book you will find a full meal of fascinating information to digest at leisure. *From the Beast* is sure to satisfy even the hungriest of hobbits seeking a feast in the world of faerie. From there, I invite the reader to partake in *Long Ago and Far Away: Eight Traditional Fairy Tales*, *No Go the Bogeyman*, *Stranger Magic: Charmed States & the Arabian Nights*, *The Dragon Empress*, and the fictional *In a Dark Wood*, all written or edited by Marina Warner. The reader can be assured of many adventures in myth, legend, and fairy tale by investing in these satisfying studies.

In conclusion, I have decided that, when wandering, I intend to keep this tiny map of magical worlds in my pocket. *Fairy Tale: A Very Short Introduction* by Marina Warner is highly recommended for all those who travel in, speak tales of, and perhaps even write about, the intersecting worlds of magic and reality in their individual quests through the story of life.

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INKLINGS, A KING, AND AN UNSURPRISING PRIZE: *THE INKLINGS AND KING ARTHUR*

JARED LOBDELL

THE INKLINGS AND KING ARTHUR: J. R. R. TOLKIEN, CHARLES WILLIAMS, C. S. LEWIS, AND OWEN BARFIELD ON THE MATTER OF BRITAIN, Sørina Higgins, ed. Berkeley CA: Apocryphile Press, 2018, ISBN 9781944769895, x + 555 pp., \$49.99.

THIS IS A HIGHLY IMPORTANT BOOK, AND INDEED a landmark in its field—even though the bounds of the field may be a bit indistinct. The subtitle here pretty exactly describes the intention and contents of the volume: the reasons I say the bounds of the field are not entirely clear are suggested by the specificity of the subtitle (“Inklings” here meaning Tolkien, Williams, Lewis and Barfield, and the subject being their connections more or less with the King specifically,