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Sowing Seeds Of Subversion: Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers' Subversive Use Of Fairy Tales And Folklore

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**SOWING SEEDS OF SUBVERSION: NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH WOMEN
WRITERS' SUBVERSIVE USE OF FAIRY TALES AND FOLKLORE**

by

SHANDI LYNNE WAGNER

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2015

MAJOR: ENGLISH

Approved By:

Advisor

Date

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DEDICATION

For my parents,

who always encouraged me to follow my dreams wherever they may take me.

For my mom, especially,

who shared my excitement and frustration as this project emerged,

who brought me coffee in the mornings, and

who accompanied me to many a conference presentation.

I truly could not have completed this without your support.

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INTRODUCTION: FAIRY TALES & FEMINISM IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY GREAT BRITAIN

The comparative studies and anthologies described above presuppose that the recovery of neglected fairy-tale texts by women will continue and that these texts will be made available in new editions and translations. Scholars like Blackwell and Jarvis are doing exemplary work within the field of German literary history, and the work of the French *conteuses* has certainly enjoyed a critical renaissance. Nonetheless, similar projects to resurrect women's fairy tales need to be undertaken in other cultural contexts and with the work of disregarded women writers and storytellers. While recover work may reflect an earlier phase of feminist scholarship, in fairy-tale studies it remains an urgent desideratum. (Haase 29-30)

For decades, feminist scholars have investigated the ways women have revised and rewritten traditional fairy tales. In particular, feminist fairy-tale research has focused on postmodern authors such as Angela Carter and Anne Sexton.¹ But as Jack Zipes explains in his introduction to *Don't Bet on the Prince*, “there were feminist precedents set in the literary fairy-tale tradition by the end of the nineteenth century” (13). He cites Mary de Morgan, Mary Louisa Molesworth, and Evelyn Sharp as less widely known Victorian authors who “conceived tales with strong heroines who rebel against convention-ridden societies” (13). Yet feminist scholars have only begun to appreciate the Victorian precursors to the feminist fairy tale.

This project focuses on the fictional works of nineteenth-century British women authors, analyzing their use of fairy-tale and folklore motifs to criticize social mores, in particular those surrounding domestic ideology and the institution of marriage. I argue that nineteenth-century women authors found fairy tales, fairy-tale adaptations, and the incorporation of fairy-tale and/or folklore motifs to be tools that they could use to disperse subversive, proto-feminist social criticism. These women, from well-known authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley to lesser-known (and even mostly neglected) authors like Mary de Morgan, employ techniques in their fairy tale writings that later become popularized in the twentieth century by feminist fairy-

tale authors like Anne Sexton and Angela Carter. But while there is much scholarship on these postmodern feminist fairy tales, their nineteenth-century proto-feminist precursors have been largely ignored by scholars. There is currently only a single book-length text that focuses on nineteenth-century women's adaptation of traditional fairy tales, namely U. C. Knoepfelmacher and Nina Auerbach's *Forbidden Journeys: Fairy Tales and Fantasies by Victorian Women Writers*. However, this book was published in 1993, and although it contains some critical material, it is still more or less an anthology. Moreover, the subversive use of fairy tales composes only a third of the text. The intention of my project is to fill this rather large gap in scholarship, to explore various sites for the publication of subversive fairy tales by nineteenth-century women authors, and to show through analysis of select texts that there did indeed exist a proto-feminist fairy-tale tradition long before the publication of *Transformations* and *The Bloody Chamber*.

In *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England*, Mary Lyndon Shanley explains her use of *feminist* to describe nineteenth-century activists, writing, "Although the term feminist was not used until the late nineteenth century, it makes sense to apply it to the mid-century activists studied here [in her book], who urged the liberation of women from restrictive social custom and law alike" (3). In my argument, I am making a similar claim regarding the authors I analyze, who through their published fairy tales "urged the liberation of women from restrictive social custom," specifically those customs surrounding ideals of femininity and marriage. In urging their readers to think critically about such social customs through their literary works, the influence of these women authors is, I argue, comparable to that of the mid-century activists discussed by Shanley. Notably, several of the women discussed here, such as

Anna Brownell Jameson, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Egerton, were friends of such activists or were activists themselves.

The act of composing a proto-feminist fairy tale is in and of itself an act of subversion because the classic fairy tales uphold the ideal of marriage as women's "happily ever after" as well as adhere to normative feminine and domestic ideology. The prevalent feminine ideal was that of the "Angel in the House," which called for a devoted and even angelic wife and mother who epitomized moral purity and modesty and who happily sacrificed her own desires and needs to care for her husband, children, and household. This ideal was directly connected to women's role as wife and mother and therefore to marriage, which "was deemed the apotheosis of womanly fulfilment" (Foster, *Victorian Women's Fiction* 6). As Shirley Foster explains, "Emotional and psychological pressures on women to marry were thus added to the social and economic ones of earlier periods, when it was understood that pragmatism would be a primary consideration of female matrimonial aspirations" (*Victorian Women's Fiction* 6). However, marriage added its own restrictions, as legally and economically a husband represented both himself and his wife. This is not to say that all classic fairy tales feature passive, domesticated heroines and/or a marriage-plot, but that the hypotexts adapted and revised by the authors in this analysis are such tales, including "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," "Bluebeard," and "Little Red Riding Hood," that do not traditionally feature strong heroines and/or that end with a marriage and "happily ever after." However, I would also like to be clear that I am not suggesting that these authors shared the same proto-feminist ideals, only that, in their own ways, they expressed proto-feminist concerns in their authorship or revision of fairy tales. Nevertheless, all the women and tales discussed in this project depart from the hegemonic fantasies that many classic tales perpetuate. They depict women who save their male partners with their activity, women who find

fulfillment outside the domestic space and outside the roles of wife and mother, women who refuse to wed and yet still live happy lives, and women who take on the role of husband and father to care for a friend. They also present the tragic consequences that can occur when women do not realize that the promises in fairy-tales are fantastic delusions: women who are so self-sacrificing that they die and women who refuse to recognize or abandon abusive marriages. These authors show the impossibility of the ideal of the “Angel in the House,” of the devoted, self-sacrificing feminine woman who is absolutely and completely fulfilled by married life. They suggest that the men who presumably desire this feminine woman as wife are in fact more attracted to a more active, more intelligent, and more outspoken kind of woman. Essentially, these authors advise their readers to be wary of the idealized fantasy perpetuated by classic fairy tales and domestic ideology, deconstructing the tales to better reflect the reality of the situation of (middle-class) women in nineteenth-century Great Britain.

Notably, the audience for these folk and fairy tales is not limited to children. The fairy-tale genre is associated with children’s literature, and as Victorian children’s literature, the fairy tale offered greater freedom of expression for women authors. Nina Auerbach and U. C. Knoepfelmacher write in *Forbidden Journeys*, “Once women conformed outwardly [by adhering to Victorian society’s stereotyped roles], an age still free of psychoanalytic suspicion exempted their emotions from close inspection” (1). Likewise, “children were perceived as secure in their innocence,” so critics did not feel compelled to “expurgate anger, subversion, or literary experimentation from their reading” (2). However, it is significant that of the authors analyzed in this project, only one author, Mary de Morgan, was writing for an audience of children. Moreover, it is recorded that even de Morgan’s fairy tales were written with a dual audience of adults and children in mind. Although this may contradict our current conception of the fairy tale

as children's literature, Sandra L. Beckett explains that "crosswriting," or writing for a dual audience, is part of the children's literature and even fairy tale traditions:

The art of crosswriting child and adult obviously is not a new phenomenon. Since the boundaries between adult and children's fiction were first drawn in the mid-eighteenth century, authors have been crosswriting them in both directions. The texts of even earlier authors, such as Charles Perrault, Jean de La Fontaine, Fénelon, John Bunyan, and Jonathan Swift, have traditionally a dual audience of children and adults. (xii)

While Mary de Morgan's dual audience can be connected to a fairy-tale tradition that includes seventeenth-century French authors such as Charles Perrault and the fabulist Jean de La Fontaine, the other women authors discussed in this project can be associated with the seventeenth-century French *conteuses* in their adult audiences, and even Mary de Morgan shares stylistic traits with this female fairy-tale tradition.

In writing for primarily adult audiences, the women writers discussed here participate in the literary tradition of the French *conteuses* (women authors of fairy tales). As Lewis C. Seifert asserts, "In fact, literary fairy tales *were* intended for adult readers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (1). Shuli Barzilai notes this in regard to Anne Thackeray Ritchie, explaining that "in rewriting fairy-tale plots for the entertainment of adult readers, Ritchie may be said to carry on the tradition inaugurated by Madame d'Aulnoy and other French women writers who transformed existing Italian, Oriental, and oral tales into literary fairy tales that [. . .] engage[d] [with] the social and political issues of [their] day" (Barzilai 83-84). In fact, most of the women authors in my analysis have adapted, rewritten, or transformed classic fairy tales as the French *conteuses* did. Intriguingly, many of the hypotexts these British authors revised can be traced back to the seventeenth-century French fairy-tale tradition of Madame d'Aulnoy and Charles Perrault, suggesting the episode of fairy-tale revision to be examined here is a direct descendent of the well-known and well-studied French tradition, and perhaps a missing link

between the tales of the French *conteuses* subversive storytelling and the more recent feminist fairy-tale tradition. Indeed, it is interesting to note that even Elizabeth Wanning Harries's insightful *Twice Upon A Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale* connects the fairy tales of the French *conteuses* to those of more contemporary feminist fairy-tale authors without looking at the subversive fairy tales of nineteenth-century British women. Although Harries does briefly acknowledge that "less well known tales, many of them by women, were much more complex and layered narratives" like those of the *conteuses*, for her, the British fairy-tale tradition is one of translation and editing rather than subversion or revisioning (99). But as I intend to demonstrate, there is more to women's fairy-tale tradition in nineteenth-century Great Britain than Harries perceives.

While the fairy tale frequently upholds dominant ideologies, such as those surrounding gender and marriage, fairy-tale scholarship also asserts that the genre also easily lends itself to subversive social critique. As Harries explains, "Feminists, of course, have been criticizing the Grimms' patriarchal assumptions and nineteenth-century bourgeois attitudes for nearly three decades. [. . .] As the second wave of feminist thinking got under way in the 1970s, many critics fixed on fairy tales as condensed expressions of social expectations for women and as dangerous myths that determined their lives and hopes" (13). This idea of the genre as ideological and patriarchal buttress cannot be denied, particularly in the classic fairy tales best known today from authors like Perrault, the Grimms, and Disney. Fairy tales such as "Cinderella" and "Sleeping Beauty" in their classic forms certainly reinforce feminine ideals of beauty and passivity as well as the idea that women will live "happily ever after" once wed. But while these French, German, and English fairy tales were being written and distributed to the public, there were also tales written by women that undermined the patriarchal ideology in order to critique the expectations

and restrictions placed upon women. While these fairy tales may not be considered canonical and may not be well known by the general populace, the subversive fairy-tale tradition created and continued by women authors proves the subversive potential of the genre.

As Marina Warner points out, the very structure of the genre lends itself to social criticism, as the “enchantments” in fairy tales “encipher concerns, beliefs and desires in brilliant, seductive images that are themselves a form of camouflage, making it possible to utter harsh truths, to say what you dare” (xxi). This is for many reasons, including but not limited to the fantastic nature of the narratives, the marginality of the genre, and its later association with the feminine realm of child-rearing. For the French *conteuses*, Seifert explains “that the vogue of fairy tales enabled the *conteuses* to assert and demonstrate their own vision of women’s roles in literary culture and society at large” (9) at a time “when their role in the cultural sphere was a hotly debated issue” (8). Seifert continues his analysis by pointing out how the genre was ideal for women to assert their subversive viewpoints because it was a non-threatening genre:

The fairy-tale form was particularly well suited to this task because of its ambivalent marginality. It was at once an unthreatening genre that was far from approaching the elite status of tragedy or epic poetry and a *mondain* form that signified the sociable ideal of aristocratic culture. It was at once a genre that women could appropriate without threatening male literary figures and a form that enabled them to defend and perpetuate their own *locus* of cultural authority. (9)

While the French *conteuses* used the form to defend their position in French society under “increasing pressure [. . .] to retreat from the public sphere” (9), Seifert also notes the genre’s more recent utilization by feminist fairy-tale authors: “A number of authors (including Angela Carter and Anne Sexton) have either rewritten or invented tales so as to empower heroines, attenuate male aggression, and/or problematize the traditional marriage closure” (4). Similarly, I argue that nineteenth-century British women authors used the fairy tale to critique social expectations of women, thereby influencing their audiences to enact social reforms liberating

women from the chains of domesticity and ideal femininity, or to at least change public opinion regarding the advisability and plausibility of preserving such ideals. They did so by employing a variety of techniques, from heroines who depart from the accepted feminine ideal to an emphasis on female disillusionment with marriage following the wedding, and in this way they continued the tradition of the seventeenth-century French *conteuses* and foreshadowed the work of twentieth- and twenty-first century feminist fairy-tale authors.

The nineteenth century was a time of great change for British women as well as a cultural period saturated by fairy tales. The country transformed over the century with a growing middle class, industrial revolution, increased literacy, class conflict, suffrage movements, and other advances and developments, and Barbara Caine provides a succinct overview of the changing situation of women during the period:

The “woman question” was a staple of nineteenth-century serious journals. In the early part of the century, interest centred on women’s nature and appropriate activities, and on the characteristics of women as writers. By the middle of the century, the issues covered were becoming more extensive as questions about women’s work, their political and legal rights, the need for reform of the marriage laws and of girls’ education assumed greater and greater prominence. The problem with marriage and the advantages of female celibacy, domestic violence, the iniquities of the sexual double standard and of prostitution, the desires of women for ever greater independence were all matters written about in major journals. (102)

As Caine points out, these are the debates held in “serious journals,” suggesting the significance of these debates over the situation of women. Lyn Pykett similarly observes that “women generally were the subject (or object) of a proliferation of legal discussion and legislation throughout the nineteenth century” (“Women Writing Women” 84). These discussions and legislations addressed concerns regarding women’s rights in marriage, as mothers, as property owners, and in regard to their authority over their own bodies, among others (Pykett, “Women Writing Women” 84). As both Caine and Pykett explain, women writers increasingly gained a

voice in these debates, whether through non-fiction published in the serious journals or through the publication of fiction. Pykett additionally suggests that male and female writers struggled to assert their own interpretation of womanhood:

Nineteenth-century writing, by both men and women, was the site of a vigorous contest over who could represent Woman or women, and how Woman and women could be represented aesthetically, culturally and politically. Given their lack of political representation, and their inequitable legal and social position, participation in the cultural domain—and particularly writing—was one of the most significant ways in which nineteenth-century women could shape and change how they understood their own gender and sexuality, and how these were understood more generally. (“Women Writing Women” 79)

As this project will demonstrate, fairy tales were one genre of fiction women authors used to participate in the debate over the representation of women as well as the conception of ideal femininity, an issue addressed by almost all the authors analyzed in the following chapters. While I cannot say with certainty why these women authors chose to communicate their social critique via the fairy tale, I will point out that the fairy tale was pervasive in Victorian culture following the early translations of French, German, and Dutch fairy tales. Mary Clark Hillard asserts,

reception of the tale can be measured by its very proliferation across the century, and its rising consumption as family entertainment. A well-rounded Victorian library would be rich in collections of fairy tales and fairy legends from Arabic, Italian, French, and German traditions, as well as from Britain itself. The fairy tale and legend were also widely adopted into other literary genres: the poetry, fiction, and drama of both popular and elite media. (2)

Hillard further argues that fairy tales “provided a language through which authors and artists came to understand, represent, and contribute to social and political issues of the day. [. . .] Far from remaining a nostalgic, marginalized, or immaterial form, then, the fairy tale proved itself again and again to be fundamental to Victorian intellectual culture” (7). Current scholarship supports Hillard’s assertions, analyzing the fairy tale in relation to novelists such as Charles

Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Charlotte Brontë as well as fairy tales by authors like George MacDonald and Oscar Wilde. I can only speculate that the genre was available to these women authors and perhaps appealed to them in its ambivalent if omnipresent status. Moreover, an author like Anne Thackeray Ritchie, who was familiar with the fairy-tale tradition of the French *conteuses*, may have consciously chosen the genre as a literary tradition that provided a method of communicating subversive messages about femininity and marriage.

In addition to addressing concerns of femininity, three distinctive techniques used by the women examined in this project deserve some acknowledgment in this introduction: the use of narrative frames, the replacement of fantastical and magical elements with realistic interpretations, and the rejection of the “happily ever after” matrimonial conclusion. As Harries discusses in detail, the use of the narrative frame was a distinguishing characteristic of the French *conteuses*, who wrote complex fairy tales within larger frameworks such as novels in opposition to the concise, simple model produced by Charles Perrault. Frequently, this framework replicated salon conversation, and in doing so, Harries states that the *conteuses* “create[d] a new model of femininity: the woman who not only talks—by the fireside to children or in the salon—but also writes” (72). In the tales analyzed in the following chapters, several include narrative frames, but these frames seem to most commonly be used to assure the reader that the tale that follows is indeed an accurate relation of real events. Such frames include the assurance that the following narrative was put together based on notes written by a barrister cousin (Chapter One), that the story related is an accurate reflection of events as told by a witness (Chapter One and Chapter Three), that the harrowing tale of misadventure presented is copied verbatim from a manuscript letter written by the heroine (Chapter Five), or even that the narrative is a letter published by the recipient (Chapter Five). The only frame I will discuss that

does not contribute to a sense of realism and veracity is that employed by Mary de Morgan in Chapter Four. Like the French *conteuses*, de Morgan intriguingly encloses the first three fairy tales of her first collection of fairy tales (*On a Pincushion*) by a frame narrative that situates the reader in a feminine space (the vanity) and confirms the oral origin of the tales that follow (as told by a brooch, a shawl-pin, and a pin on the vanity). In addition to enhancing the meaning of the tales, these frameworks also effectively distance the author from the subversive content in the tale that follows, providing some ironic distance that allows the author to evade moralistic judgment from publishers, critics, and readers.

But while the authors create distance via the narrative framework, they simultaneously bring the action into reality through an intriguing but distinctive move away from the magic that characterizes classic fairy tales. This move towards realism is perhaps unsurprising given the nature of the frameworks used and discussed above, but this move is decidedly worth discussion. Barzilai states, “Fairy tales have a basically paradoxical dimension: they dissimulate *and* disclose the truth; or, more accurately, disguise enables the transmission of the real-life privations, abuses, conflicts, and concerns that the tales unveil” (75). But what is notable about the majority of these tales is that they do not use the realm of fantasy and indefinite land of magic to disguise their political and social commentary. Instead, the women authors, with the exception of de Morgan, actively bring the fairy tales into “real” life. For this reason the tales are probably most accurately called adaptations because the authors adapt the fairy tale to fit the rules of reality. In the case of some tale types, such as “Bluebeard,” this move to reality works to bring the threat of the murderous husband into the realm of the real, effectively negating Perrault’s assertion that such husbands no longer exist so women need not fear or worry. In other tale adaptations, this move to the real seems to function as a method of demonstrating their

disillusionment with the idea of marriage as the sole avenue leading to women's happiness and fulfillment, which will be discussed next. There is no magic or fairy to transform Cinderella's appearance and no magic key to indicate Bluebeard's wife's entrance into the forbidden chamber. Wolves are disguised as men and even husbands. Notably, this desire for realism includes realistic and frequently specific settings, such as Ireland, Wales, Rome, and Paris, and with the exception of those tales set in Great Britain, it seems significant that these fairy tales are set in European countries with a strong fairy-tale tradition: Italy, France, and Germany. Finally, when magic is present, as in de Morgan's tales and Gaskell's "Curious, If True," its use creates as many problems as it solves (if, indeed, it solves any problems).

The final and perhaps most significant technique used by many of the authors analyzed here is the rejection of "happily ever after" and the marriage-plot. While the significance of "happily ever after" to the classic fairy tale need not be discussed, Barbara Weiss explains the significance of "happily ever after" marriages to Victorians:

The obligatory wedding as a happy ending to the complications of a plot was not of course unique to the Victorian novel. Marriage as the appropriate end of social comedy may be traced at least as far back as Roman comedy. But there has perhaps never been an age (or a literature) as relentlessly *pro* marriage as the Victorian period, in which a loving marriage is generally seen as the resolution to every social ill in the novel. This is all the more remarkable in the face of some very clear evidence that there was dawning in the nineteenth century the reluctant knowledge that the institution of marriage was seriously flawed. (67)

Although Weiss's analysis looks at the works of canonical novelists such as Dickens and the Brontës, I would assert that the "happily ever after" is more of an obligatory end to classic fairy tales like "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," and even "Bluebeard," although there are certainly classic tales, like Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood," that do not end happily. Significantly, however, marriage was one of the only "professions" open to nineteenth-century middle-class women, even after a population imbalance halfway through the century left many women with

little hope of marriage.ⁱⁱ Throughout the century women advocated for greater education and more options for fulfilling work outside of the domestic space, and many of the authors here suggested these changes were necessary in their fairy tales. They did so by highlighting the unhappiness women might find in marriage, especially to abusive husbands who legally controlled their every move. Some, like Landon and de Morgan, suggested even marriage to non-abusive husbands must be acknowledged to be less a “happily ever after” than a continuation of a life that will inevitably be characterized by conflict and rough times. Only the fairy tale by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley maintains the traditional conclusion of the wedding as “happily ever after,” as even Anna Brownell Jameson’s tale features a wife journeying to right a wrong caused by her husband’s drinking. This disillusionment with “happily ever after” marriages is one way in which nineteenth-century women authors anticipate the techniques used by twentieth- and twenty-first-century feminist fairy-tale authors like Anne Sexton and Angela Carter.

When feminists in the 1970s began to criticize the fairy tale, they focused on the effect classic fairy tales like “Cinderella,” “Sleeping Beauty,” and “Snow White” had on women’s ideas of gender roles and expectations of being rescued and wed by Prince Charming. In 1979, Karen E. Rowe asserted that classic fairy tales “glorify passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice as a heroine’s cardinal virtues” (210). In addition, Rowe argued that women “transfer from fairy tales into real life those fantasies which exalt acquiescence to male power and make marriage not simply one ideal, but the only estate toward which women should aspire” (211). As Rowe’s analysis indicates, canonical fairy tales emphasize the same qualities the 1870s press advocated as “womanly,” including the supremely feminine virtue of self-sacrifice, while at the same time the tales insist on marriage and motherhood as women’s sole aspiration. While feminist fairy-tale criticism such as Rowe’s has been revised to incorporate both less canonical tale types and fairy

tales written by Victorian women authors like Anne Thackeray Ritchie, other Victorian women authors, who also used the fairy-tale genre to challenge pervasive cultural expectations in the nineteenth century, are still largely neglected. In addition, the proto-feminist fairy-tale tradition in nineteenth-century Great Britain has been almost completely overlooked. The tales analyzed here do not stand alone as examples of British woman's literary proto-feminism, and their complex use of the fairy-tale genre to intervene in contemporary discussions regarding the situation of women in nineteenth-century society deserves greater scholarly attention than it has hitherto received.

Ultimately, my project makes specific contributions to current scholarship on fairy tales and nineteenth-century literature by women. It recovers and examines neglected and important texts and authors. These texts are analyzed in relation to nineteenth-century history and specifically women's literary and cultural history, including the fairy-tale tradition created by the French *conteuses* and the various women's movements making inroads during the century in Great Britain. I discuss how the authors made stylistic and generic choices that accommodated their texts to the prevailing cultural powers, and I attend to the texts as deconstructions of hegemonic fantasies regarding ideals of femininity and domesticity as well as the delusion that women's desires can be completely satisfied by marriage. Finally, as I will discuss below, these texts are related to their publication history and thereby to their intended audiences, the recipients of their proto-feminist messages.

Project Overview

My analysis is divided into three parts by publication history. I examine fiction and poetry published in literary annuals, in fairy-tale collections, and in the more generally available collections of poetry and short stories bearing no obvious connection to fairy tales or folklore.

Each part consists of two chapters that feature one or more works by a single author; the exception to this division is Chapter One, which looks at tales by Anna Brownell Jameson and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley in the literary annual. Also with a single exception, the chapters are arranged in chronological order by the publication date of the works analyzed. The exception to this chronology is Chapter Five on Elizabeth Gaskell, whose texts fit the publication location of Part Three but were published a decade prior to those texts analyzed in Part Two.

As a genre, the literary annual has only recently begun to be studied by scholars, usually through a book history/periodical press lens. Much has been written on the genre regarding its marketing to middle-class women and its increasingly female contributors and editors, but only a few scholars, like Kathryn Ledbetter and Harriet Devine Jump, have written about the genre as a site for the publication of fiction that does not simply reinscribe domestic ideology. In Part One, I argue that the literary annual became a site for women to publish proto-feminist fairy tales that would directly reach a middle-class, female audience (as opposed to the children audience of traditional fairy tale collections). My analysis will explore the way literary-annual fiction by women subverts ideals of femininity and marriage in four literary-annual publications. In addition to presenting background information on the literary-annual genre and women authors' relationship to the genre, Chapter One examines Anna Brownell Jameson's folk tale "Halloran the Peddler" (1828) and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's Cinderella adaptation "The Invisible Girl" (1833). Both of these tales feature strong heroines whose resourcefulness manages to save the lives of their respective partners. Chapter Two analyzes two texts by Letitia Elizabeth Landon: "Theresa" (1833) and "The Sleeping Beauty" (1837). These literary annual contributions are a Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty tale, respectively. In "Theresa," Landon undermines the portrayal of Prince Charming. In "The Sleeping Beauty," she rejects the

traditional conclusion of *Sleeping Beauty*'s "happily ever after" with the prince, suggesting her dreams of marriage are too idealistic to live up to the reality of marriage, even to a prince.

Part Two explores the work of two female fairy-tale authors: Anne Thackeray Ritchie and Mary de Morgan. Current analysis of subversive fairy tales by nineteenth-century women writers is largely limited to passing mention in introductions to anthologies, although it is a subject of increasing scholarly interest. For instance, Mary de Morgan, a woman who published three collections of fairy tales, is largely known for only one story, "The Toy Princess," which has been published in several anthologies. While "The Toy Princess" does critique social ideals of femininity, de Morgan has many other tales that have been neglected by scholars that do the same, sometimes to an even greater degree. In this section, I intend to analyze how Mary de Morgan and Anne Thackeray Ritchie used the fairy tale to publish works that critique society by attacking social ideals concerning femininity, love, and marriage as women's sole aspiration. In Chapter Four, I provide an overview of several of de Morgan's subversive tales before focusing on "The Seeds of Love" (1877). I argue that de Morgan uses this tale to critique ideals of femininity, marriage as women's destiny, and the deceptive nature of idealized love. This chapter will be preceded by one on Anne Thackeray Ritchie's "Bluebeard's Keys" (1874). In this revision of the Bluebeard tale, Ritchie, like de Morgan, disrupts the fairy-tale plot, as her heroine neither marries nor is killed by Bluebeard because she actively chooses not to wed and remains unmarried her whole life. Both women seem to be responding to contemporary debates regarding marriage as female destiny and stereotypes of ideal femininity. Both of these texts are contextualized in the debates on marriage and ideal femininity that played out in the 1870s periodical press.

Finally, I will examine how women authors subversively incorporate fairy-tale adaptations and motifs into their short stories and poetry. Unlike the previous stories and poems, the short stories and poems in this final section were published for general audiences (not specifically for children or women) and were not advertised as relating in any way to fairy tales. Elizabeth Gaskell reworks Bluebeard in one of her gothic stories, “The Grey Woman” (1861/1865). She also offers readers an almost postmodern fairy tale in “Curious, If True” (1860/1865), in which various fairy-tale characters are brought together for a reunion ball by the fairy godmother and the illusion of “happily-ever-after” is dismissed when, for instance, Prince Charming is irritated by Sleeping Beauty’s narcolepsy and Cinderella’s feet are swollen by her frequent wearing of glass slippers. Both these stories appeared first in a periodical and then later in Gaskell’s short story collection *The Grey Woman and Other Tales* (1865). In Chapter Six, I conclude my analysis of the proto-feminist fairy-tale tradition with a look at two short stories by New Woman author George Egerton: “A Cross Line” (1893) and “Virgin Soil” (1894). In these stories, Egerton twice adapts the tale of “Little Red Riding Hood” to explore and advocate for a greater awareness of female sexuality in her short story collections, *Keynotes* and *Discords*. In doing so, she suggests that women’s knowledge of their own sexuality leads to more stable marital and familial relationships.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE: RESOURCEFUL WOMEN & LITERARY ANNUALS: ANNA BROWNELL JAMESON'S "HALLORAN THE PEDLAR" & MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY'S "THE INVISIBLE GIRL"

[There is now] a more widespread scholarly interest in the decades of the 1820s and 30s. Simultaneously post-romantic and pre-Victorian [. . .] The period was once dismissed as unimportant to literary history, due to its domination by the trivial "feminine" productions of writing for the annuals and gift books and "silver fork" novels, but the recent increase in interest in female poets such as Felicia Hemans and L.E.L. has given it new prominence [. . .]. (Sussman 175)

My exploration of the proto-feminist fairy-tale tradition in nineteenth-century Great Britain begins in the 1820s with the advent of the literary annual. As Margaret Linley explains, literary annuals "[e]merg[ed] in England in the second quarter of the nineteenth century as a new class of publication" and "were sumptuously bound serial gift books published once a year, showcasing an eclectic modern library of contemporary poetry, short fiction, travel writing, art criticism, social satire, brief essays, and even some parlour music alongside a gallery of new steel-plate art engravings" (13). Katherine D. Harris provides even greater detail in describing the genre:

Literary annuals are early nineteenth-century British texts published yearly from 1822 to 1860, primarily intended for a middle class audience due to its moderate cost (12s. - £3). Initially published in duodecimo or octavo, the decoratively bound volumes—filled with steel plate engravings of nationally recognized artwork and sentimental poetry and prose—exuded a feminine delicacy that attracted a primarily female readership. Published in November and sold for the following year, the annual became an ideal Christmas gift, lover's present, or token of friendship. ("Borrowing" 1)

As both Linley and Harris point out, literary annuals were intended as gifts, usually to a woman from a relative, friend, or suitor.¹ These books were to be kept as tokens of remembrance and affection, hence the names of the various literary annuals, which include *The Keepsake*, *The*

Forget-Me-Not, A Bridal Gift, A Love Gift, The Annual Token, The Christian Keepsake, The Keepsake of Friendship, and The Souvenir Keepsake, to name just a few.

Yet women participated in this print and gift culture as more than just the recipients, or even purchasers, of literary annuals. Harriet Devine Jump asserts, “The world of the annual was essentially a woman’s world: women were the primary readers, of course, but they were also contributors and, increasingly as the annuals came of age, editors” (3). Patricia Pulham points out the role the literary annual played in female authorship when she writes, “A cursory glance at some of the current anthologies of nineteenth-century women’s poetry will provide a long list of names, such as Mary Howitt, Maria Jane Jewsbury, Joanna Baillie, Amelia Opie, Helen Dufferin, Sarah Stickney Ellis, and Louisa H. Sheridan, whose primary outlet was the annual, or who contributed to the annuals at some point in their professional careers” (12). Given the female editorship, authorship, and readership of literary annuals, it proves to be an intriguing genre for the publication of proto-feminist texts, as women editors and authors would be assured of reaching women readers. This is especially the case because a woman who acts as the editor of a literary annual is a woman who, by necessity, has stretched the bounds of Victorian domestic ideology in order to become a professional but who is expected to uphold traditional domestic ideology in her editorial production. The conflicting nature of this position is evident given that the most influential women editors of the annuals were women with an unorthodox past or present, such as Lady Blessington, Caroline Norton, and Letitia Landon. As Kathryn Ledbetter asserts, “Indeed, the longest running and most successful of these annuals, *The Keepsake*, championed domestic tranquillity [*sic*]; yet it also provided opportunities for women as editors and authors when women rarely found access to other careers, and it aggressively

sought a new middle-class female readership by exploring the fantasies of escape from restrictive middle-class mores” (“White Vellum” 35).

These women editors were responsible for soliciting and arranging contributions for individual annuals, such as *The Keepsake*, but, as women, they were forced to do so in a social rather than professional setting. Lady Blessington, for instance, used her role as a premier hostess of a kind of intellectual salon to solicit authors for the annuals she edited, as Prudence Hannay explains: “During the first half of the nineteenth century two London hostesses, Lady Holland and Lady Blessington, entertained the most intellectual society of the day” (23). Hannay asserts that Lady Blessington’s home, Seamore Place, was a “favourite resort for literary society” (29), especially for those who preferred a less formal gathering, and she goes on to describe the demographics of the guests in Lady Blessington’s salon in greater detail, writing, “The Blessington salon was accepted almost as a literary club for editors, journalists and publishers [. . .] Dramatists, too, attended regularly [. . . as well as a] number of eminent politicians [who] were also regular visitors” (30-31). Notably, however, Lady Blessington’s “visitors were almost exclusively male” due to Blessington’s scandalous past and intimate association with Count d’Orsay (Hannay 23). Although Hannay also asserts that “[s]everal of these distinguished personages contributed to their hostess’s *Book of Beauty*, if only as a mark of affection and respect,” later scholars have since argued that literary-annual contributions were the purpose, rather than the effect, of Blessington’s gatherings (30). Ann Hawkins writes that “the Salon gave [Lady Blessington] access to publishers and writers who were invaluable in furthering her literary career” (“Formed”), while Hoagwood and Ledbetter are more explicit in describing Blessington’s home and salon as her place of business: “While male annuals editors could knock on doors or conduct business in a London office, Blessington had to work from her parlor

writing flattering notes or inviting authors to a reception (at her own expense), where he could be entertained and charmed into contributing” (“*Colour’d Shadows*” 84). Hoagwood and Ledbetter ascribe more agency and cleverness to Lady Blessington’s solicitation of annual contributions than Hannay by describing her as actively soliciting contributions rather than passively receiving them as gifts.

Hoagwood and Ledbetter also point out the necessity for such active solicitation by revealing the intense competition that existed between annual editors. They explain,

By July, [Lady Blessington] was working frantically to meet deadlines, competing with other editors for production and sharing the same pool of artists, engravers, printers, and binders. Every year editors such as Norton, L. E. L., Anna Maria Hall, and Louisa Sheridan were involved in a massive public relations job, trying to out-flatter and out-pay each other, courting the entire publishing community for favors or contributions. (Hoagwood & Ledbetter, “*Colour’d Shadows*” 82)

According to Bradford Allen Booth, by 1832, there were sixty-two literary annuals in circulation (qtd. in Hoagwood & Ledbetter, “Introduction”). As Hoagwood and Ledbetter explain, although the number of literary annuals published each year was decreasing by the 1840s, editors like Blessington and Landon had their work cut out for them trying to convince authors to contribute to their annuals, as well as commissioning the production team.

Although at a disadvantage given their gender and the associated social restrictions, women editors made the best of their situation by using their feminine appeal and personal connections to secure annual contributions. As female editors seeking contributions from male authors, “[t]he manipulation of male weakness for feminine charm and beauty was a powerful weapon for [women editors like] Norton, L. E. L., and Blessington” (Hoagwood & Ledbetter, “*Colour’d Shadows*” 80). For instance, Lady Emmeline Stuart-Wortley enacted quite the coup when she edited *The Keepsake* in 1837, making use of a mutual acquaintance to secure “an early version of one of [Alfred Tennyson’s] more popular poems, ‘St. Agnes’ Eve’” (Hoagwood &

Ledbetter, “*Colour’d Shadows*” 82). As seen in the Tennyson example, connections were important in the collection of annual contributions, and Lady Blessington was promised “first choice of any of [William Savage Landor’s] unpublished works” after befriending him abroad and acting as his unofficial literary agent in London (Mariani 24). When dealing with unknown (female) writers, Patricia Pulham notes that women editors used a different tactic: “Indeed women editors requesting contributions often highlighted the annual’s role as a springboard to literary success” (12).

The content of the *The Keepsake* and other literary annuals was dismissed by reviewers (and many male authors) as sentimental, and it was further expected to be appropriate for a young female audience, meaning reinforcing Victorian morals, ideals of femininity, and domestic ideology. As Kate Flint explains in *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*, there were three fears associated with the concept of the woman reader:

As in the earlier period [prior to the eighteenth century], the anxieties expressed fall into easily identifiable categories. In particular, one encounters the familiar fear that young women will be corrupted by what they read, and, becoming preoccupied with the importance of romance, will seek perpetually for excitement; and the criticism that reading fiction, especially when carried to excess, wastes time which may more valuably be employed elsewhere. In the later years of the eighteenth century a new apprehension appears: that reading may teach politically seditious attitudes, especially, but not exclusively, challenging the role of the family and the position of woman in relation to authority. (24)

It was the literary annuals’ editors’ job to make sure such fears did not become a reality by ensuring the contributions met society’s expectations for “wholesome literature” (Harris, “Feminizing” 580), for as Harris writes, “Editors, then, were the gatekeepers of this patriarchal femininity, morality, and literary aesthetic in the annuals” (“Feminizing” 592). Despite this expectation, Harris argues that the annuals’ “female authors and readers [and editors] attempt[ed] to render [in] it their own feminine ideal” (“Feminizing” 578), one that featured “a new type of

feminine strength” through representations of femininity that “exuded other virtues abnormal to the patriarchal feminine: strength, labor, life-giving, complicated” (“Feminizing” 622).

However, while Harris is careful to assert that women editors, authors, and readers were by no means “feminist,” other scholars, such as Jump and Ledbetter, view the content of the annuals as much more subversive (“Feminizing” 622). Jump argues that women writers like Lady Blessington, Caroline Norton, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon demonstrate an “evident self-awareness and the willingness to parody the conventions” of traditional femininity (17). Meanwhile, Ledbetter argues that “an examination of literary themes in [. . .] *The Keepsake*, shows that it undermined notions of propriety by suggesting romantic fantasies of escape from restrictive social boundaries for its middle-class women readers” by “reflect[ing] many social aberrations hidden in the fabric of moral society [. . .] explor[ing] issues of female victimization, patriarchal imprisonment, social deviance, and tainted domesticity in literature focused by romance “ (“Domesticity Betrayed” 16). Ledbetter further asserts that the “emotional disturbance of *Keepsake* heroines is symptomatic of a disordered domestic ideology and a dysfunctional society” (“Domesticity Betrayed” 16) and that “[t]o *Keepsake* writers such as Caroline Norton, Letitia Elizabeth Landon, the Countess of Blessington, and others, domestic ideology is the cause of social disturbance, rather than the solution” (“Domesticity Betrayed” 16-17). In this way, Ledbetter and Jump suggest that the women involved in the production and consumption of the literary annual as editors, authors, and readers did far more than re-inscribe traditional feminine ideals, rather they intentionally tried to subvert and undermine socially accepted ideals of femininity and domesticity.ⁱⁱ

The discovery of fairy-tale adaptations in the literary annual is perhaps unsurprising given the fairy-tale genre’s prevalence in Victorian society. As Molly Clark Hillard explains,

reception of the tale can be measured by its very proliferation across the century, and its rising consumption as family entertainment. A well-rounded Victorian library would be rich in collections of fairy tales and fairy legends from Arabic, Italian, French, and German traditions, as well as from Britain itself. The fairy tale and legend were also widely adopted into other literary genres: the poetry, fiction, and drama of both popular and elite media. (2)

Yet subversive, proto-feminist fairy tales, and specifically those written by women, are a different story, and my endeavor to find such tales in literary annuals is far from complete or conclusive. The sheer proliferation of literary-annual volumes was staggering, given they were published annually between 1823 and 1857, with more than sixty different annuals being published in a single year at the height of the genre's popularity. Yet even in my limited research of thirteen literary annuals,ⁱⁱⁱ I discovered no less than twelve proto-feminist contributions that either adapted fairy tales or incorporated fairy-tale motifs. (This is in addition to the fairy-tale adaptations I found in collections of Mary Shelley's short stories and Letitia Landon's literary-annual contributions.)

Yet a new challenge presented itself, as most of these stories and poems were published anonymously, under names that obscure the gender of the author, such as C. De Lisle, or by men. So while C. De Lisle's "The Gamester's Daughter," published in *The Winter's Wreath*, is suggestive of "Beauty and the Beast" as the hero meets the heroine after saving her father from financial ruin and is gradually revealed to be a rich nobleman (rather than a middle-class gambler) while the heroine is revealed to be of equal status, an in-depth discussion of this narrative cannot be included here as the gender of the author is unknown and this project is examining fairy tales by women. For these reasons, I have decided to perform an extended analysis on four proto-feminist fairy-tale adaptations published in British literary annuals: In this chapter, I will discuss Anna Brownell Jameson's "Halloran the Pedlar" and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's "The Invisible Girl," and in the next chapter I will focus on two adaptations by Letitia

Elizabeth Landon. I can be sure that these four proto-feminist fairy tales were indeed written by women because these three authors are known for their other works of literature.

“Halloran the Pedlar” and “The Invisible Girl,” published in 1828 and 1833 respectively, are a good starting point for my discussion of the proto-feminist fairy-tale tradition in Great Britain because, while both stories feature strong and resourceful heroines, these two tales are far less subversive than those that will come as the century progresses. Furthermore, although both tales maintain the requisite “happily ever after” fairy-tale ending, it should be noted that “Halloran the Pedlar” is not an adaptation of a traditional fairy tale, as “The Invisible Girl” adapts “Cinderella,” but is instead a folk tale that focuses on the lives of peasants in Ireland. The distinction between the folk tale and fairy tale is not black and white, as the genres frequently overlap. Ruth Bottigheimer most explicitly indicates the difference between the folk and fairy tale, so for the purpose of this analysis I will use her definition of the folk tale. In addition to “linear plots,” brevity, and a “a very large proportion of [. . .] [un]happy ending[s],” Bottigheimer argues that “folk tales reflect the world and the belief systems of their audiences” and “are typically peopled with husbands and wives, peasants, thieving rascals, or an occasional doctor, lawyer, priest, or preacher” (4). While she also associates “linear plots,” brevity, and “a very large proportion of [. . .] [un]happy ending[s],” with folk tales—and “Halloran the Pedlar” is neither brief nor unhappy, although it is indeed linear—it certainly is not a fairy tale in the traditional sense. The tale does not allude to a classic fairy tale, nor does it feature magical aid or a marriage plot as most classic fairy tales do. These factors, combined with the tale’s focus on peasant characters overcoming drunken choices and murderous and thieving criminals, situate the tale well within the genre of the folk tale.

“Halloran the Pedlar” & the Heroic Wife

Anna Brownell Jameson offers her readers a strong female protagonist in “Halloran the Pedlar: An Irish Story.” Published in the 1828 volume of *The Bijou: or Annual of Literature and the Arts*, “Halloran the Pedlar” is, despite its title, not about the character of Halloran; instead, the short story features an illiterate Irish peasant, Cathleen Reilly, as its heroine, whose simple nature disguises a will of steel that is displayed as her control and sensibility are tested during a trek to Cork to see her husband before he is sent overseas as a soldier. In *The Bijou*, the story is attributed to “the writer of the ‘Diary of an Ennuyée’” rather than to Jameson by name, perhaps because *The Diary of an Ennuyée* became popular after its publication in 1826. Such an attribution (“to the author of”) was not uncommon in the literary annuals, especially in their early years, as publishers and editors at first tried to attract consumers with famous contributors. As Ledbetter explains, “A list of celebrated authors would become an important imaging tool for annuals editors, but for this debut volume [of *The Keepsake*], Heath and Ainsworth decided to treat *Keepsake* contributors anonymously” (“White Vellum” 38). Although it should be noted, however, that anonymous contributions continued to a varying extent despite the desire for famous authors, it is also important to notice that Shelley’s “The Invisible Girl,” discussed later in this chapter, was published with the attribution of “The Author of Frankenstein” rather than with her given name.

Before I analyze the story, it is relevant to note some aspects of Anna Brownell Jameson’s personal life. Born in Dublin in 1794, Jameson was largely self-educated,^{iv} and she became a governess when she was sixteen. It was her position as a governess that sent her to Italy and inspired her first publication, *The Diary of an Ennuyée*. Anna married Robert Jameson in 1825, but by 1829, the two were separated and “Anna was making no secret of unhappiness in

her marriage” (Thomas).^v As Clara Thomas explains in her biographical entry in the online *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Jameson’s writing career was established with the publication of *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad* in 1834: “For it, as for all her future works, Anna Jameson was now assured of a reading public; she had become an established author.” “Halloran the Pedlar” precedes this confirmed success, although it follows her first entrance onto the literary scene with *The Diary of an Ennuyée*, a book that caused Jameson to “became the ‘lioness’ of the hour in London society” (Thomas).

Like Mary Shelley and many other literary-annual contributors, including Letitia Landon (discussed in the next chapter), it seems likely that Anna Jameson contributed to *The Bijou* out of financial need. As Adele M. Holcomb explains, “Because she was pressed by a lifelong burden of support she assumed for her parents and sisters, Anna Jameson’s material circumstances were always precarious, and remained so even after she received the settlement (partially defaulted) to which she was entitled after the final breakdown of her unhappy marriage in 1838” (15-16).^{vi} Unlike Mary Shelley and Letitia Landon, however, Jameson appears to have only published two texts in literary annuals, both in 1828: “Halloran the Pedlar” in *The Bijou* and “Much Coin, Much Care” in the *Christmas Box Annual* (Johnston xi).

Notably, Anna Jameson had proto-feminist leanings. In *Anna Jameson: Victorian, Feminist, Woman of Letters*, Judith Johnston discusses “Jameson’s direct involvement with the new generation of young feminists, particularly Bessie Raynor Parkes (later Belloc), Barbara Leigh Smith (later Bodichon) and Adelaide Anne Proctor,” asserting “[t]hat these younger women looked on Jameson as a mentor, and for leadership” (8). She was also an “intimate” of Elizabeth Gaskell (Johnston 3). As Thomas explains, “From the beginning of her writing career Anna Jameson stressed the importance of better education for women. She was a determined,

though conservative, early feminist, one of the many in her generation who were increasingly vocal about their rights in law and their needs and opportunities in society.” This position on women’s education is evident in “Halloran the Pedlar,” and Jameson’s proto-feminism emerges in the characterization of and focus on the heroine Cathleen, who meets Jameson’s definition of “womanliness,” which Anne E. Russell describes as the “inherent inner qualities of modesty, pity, love and tenderness (39). While Jameson did believe in gender differences and an ideal of “womanliness,” this definition is significantly “without prescribing—or proscribing—particular social practices” (39).^{vii} Yet scholars agree that “[f]rom the beginning, her writing focuses on women” (Russell 38), for as Johnston declares, “her choice of subjects and [. . .] the way in which her writing consistently maintained a feminist approach revealed [. . .] her historical and social interest in the lot of women, even while she never styled herself politically a feminist” (8).

Like Mary Shelley’s “The Invisible Girl,” Anna Jameson’s story begins with a speaker who provides information regarding the story’s origin and veracity. Unlike Shelley’s story, however, this speaker also emphasizes the purpose or message of the narrative. The first paragraph is a quotation: “‘It grieves me,’ said an eminent poet once to me, ‘it grieves and humbles me to reflect how much our moral nature is in the power of circumstances. Our best faculties would remain unknown even to ourselves did not the influences of external excitement call them forth like animalculae, which lie torpid till wakened into life by the transient sunbeam’” (205). The speaker responds to this quotation in the following paragraph, stating, “This is generally true” (Jameson 205). This foreshadows the tale to follow, which highlights the “moral nature” of the humble Cathleen as she encounters and overcomes terrifying challenges in her journey to see her husband. As the speaker later reveals, this “awaken[ing] of dormant faculties” in the face of adversity as one’s “instinct of self-preservation” controls the mind and

overcomes “physical weakness” is “truly exemplified [. . .] in the story of HALLORAN THE PEDLAR” (Jameson 206).

The speaker then discloses that this is a true story, offering “[t]he real circumstances of this singular case, differing essentially from the garbled and incorrect account which appeared in the newspaper some years ago” (Jameson 206). The speaker relates how s/he received her barrister cousin’s papers after he retired following an inheritance that enabled him to arrange a “tour through Italy and Greece” (Jameson 207). This cousin, “George C * * * , an Irish barrister of some standing” (Jameson 206), had “a number of scraps carefully pinned together, containing notes on a certain trial” (Jameson 207). This trial was evidently that which followed Cathleen Reilly’s adventure to Cork. The speaker ends his/her introduction with the statement, “The intense interest with which I perused these documents, suggested the plan of throwing the whole into a connected form, and here it is for the reader’s benefit” (Jameson 207). With this explanation, the speaker asserts the veracity of the tale that follows; it is true, “real,” and verified by her cousin’s legal documents as well as by the “incorrect account which appeared in the newspaper some years ago.” Such realism is reinforced by the details of the story, including Cathleen’s home in southern Kilkenny County and travel to Cork, about forty-eight miles away.

Wed to “a poor peasant named Michael,” Cathleen Reilly is presented as a good but unexceptional woman who is content with her simple and quiet life. Jameson writes,

Reilly was able, skilful [*sic*], and industrious; Cathleen was the best spinner in the county, and had constant sale for her work at Kilkenny: they wanted nothing; and for the first year, as Cathleen said, “There wasn’t upon the blessed earth two happier souls than themselves, for Mick was the best boy in the world, and hadn’t a fault to speak of—barring he took the drop now and then; an’ why wouldn’t he?” (208)

Unlike Anna Jameson’s marriage, the Reillys are essentially happy together. There is, however, one problem, and that is Michael’s drinking: “But as it happened, poor Reilly’s love of ‘*the drop*’

was the beginning of all their misfortunes” (Jameson 208). While drunk on whiskey after selling the family pig and the yarn spun by his wife, Michael loses “all he possessed in the world,” and therefore all Cathleen possessed as well, to a thief (Jameson 208). His drunken solution is to enlist “into a regiment under orders for embarkation, and instantly set off to Cork,” informing his wife of this occurrence via a letter that his illiterate wife cannot read (Jameson 209).

Cathleen’s reaction to her husband’s letter hints at her later strength and self-possession. As her neighbor Nancy reads the letter to her, “Cathleen listened to her husband’s letter with clasped hands and drawn breath, but quiet in her nature, she gave no other signs of emotion than a few large tears which trickled slowly down her cheeks” (Jameson 210). Although upset and horrified by her husband’s actions, in particular the risk he is taking in enlisting, Cathleen is not overly emotional or melodramatic in her response. Instead, she determines to walk to Cork to see her husband but, rather than to wish him goodbye, Cathleen determines to get permission to travel abroad with him. She tells Nancy, “and who knows Nancy dear, but they’ll let me go out with him to the foreign parts? Oh! sure they wouldn’t be so hard-hearted as to part man and wife that way!” (Jameson 210). Cathleen is, however, naïve in her plans (and perhaps her expectations), and this merely provides more evidence of her simple and seemingly unexceptional nature. Jameson explains Cathleen’s inexpert travel plans:

she purposed setting off for Cork the next blessed morning, being Tuesday, and as the distance was about forty-eight miles English, she reckoned on reaching that city by Wednesday afternoon; for as she had walked to Kilkenny and back (about twenty miles) that same day [to retrieve Michael’s letter], without feeling fatigued at all, “*to signify*,” Cathleen thought there would be no doubt that she could walk to Cork in less than two days. (210-11)

Cathleen is, of course, mistaken in her estimations.

As Cathleen sets out upon her journey to Cork, the speaker explicitly notes that there is nothing indicating heroism in her nature or appearance. Jameson writes,

It is worthy of remark that this poor woman who was called upon to play the heroine in such a strange tragedy and under such appalling circumstances, had nothing heroic in her exterior: nothing that in the slightest degree indicated strength of nerve or superiority of intellect. Cathleen was twenty-three years of age, of a low stature, and in her form rather delicate than robust: she was of ordinary appearance; her eyes mild and dove-like, and her whole countenance, though not absolutely deficient in intelligence, was more particularly expressive of simplicity, good temper and kindness of heart. (211-12)

In all respects, Cathleen is described as unremarkable. She lacks any semblance of extraordinary strength of will, intellect, or physical strength and endurance. What is perhaps most notable in this description is Cathleen's femininity, with her "delicate" frame, "mild and dove-like" eyes, and kind and good personality. Yet Cathleen is indeed the heroine of the tale, and Jameson demonstrates that this feminine and simple appearance is misleading, as Cathleen later displays great courage, sense, and perseverance on her "appalling" trip to Cork.

Cathleen first displays her powers of logical deduction on the third day of her journey. Exhausted by her long walk and the hot summer heat, Cathleen lies down by a stream and, "overcome by heat, weakness, and excessive weariness she put her little bundle under her head for a pillow and sunk into a deep sleep" (Jameson 212). She later wakes to discover her bundle of possessions has been stolen. First thinking fairies were responsible for the theft, Cathleen quickly reevaluates upon sighting footprints: "Her first thought was that the good people, (i. e. *the fairies*) had been there and stolen it away; but on examining further she plainly perceived large foot-prints in the soft bank and was convinced it was the work of no unearthly marauder" (Jameson 212-13). Although instinctively superstitious, Cathleen astutely recognizes the reality of her situation. While she is uneducated, she is not fanciful, and this characteristic is emphasized when she does not seek out the "lofty castle on a distant hill" for aid despite her distress (Jameson 213). Cathleen does, however, display human weakness, as she weeps in despair of reaching her husband before he is shipped out.

It is at this point that the title character, the pedlar Peter Halloran, enters the narrative, as he happens upon Cathleen and advises her to “lean upon [his] arm” while he finds them housing and food for the night (Jameson 215). Halloran guides Cathleen to the Hogan household, where the two are reluctantly greeted by Bidy Hogan, a “wrinkled, half famished and half naked beldam” (Jameson 217). Although Halloran is surprised by Bidy’s appearance, he quickly recognizes her as a friend and leads Cathleen into the kitchen. Cathleen, however, is not so quickly reassured: “When she was sufficiently recovered to look about her, Cathleen could not help feeling some alarm at finding herself in so gloomy and dreary a place” (Jameson 217). When Halloran asks Bidy about her changed appearance and circumstances, she explains that her son Barny lost his position with the neighboring nobleman and has since “taken to bad ways” while her husband is “ruled by him quite entirely,” resulting in their impoverished situation (Jameson 220).

Cathleen’s good and kind nature overcomes her uneasiness, and she gives her host the best portion of the food. Despite Bidy’s woeful account, Halloran offers Cathleen first choice of the food Bidy had prepared after Halloran demonstrated that he was willing and able to pay for their accommodations for the night. Jameson writes,

Cathleen, who was yet more faint from hunger than subdued by fatigue, was first helped by the good-natured Pedlar to the best of what was there: but, just as she was about to taste the food set before her, she chanced to see the eyes of the old woman fixed upon the morsel in her hand with such an envious and famished look, that from a sudden impulse of benevolent feeling, she instantly held it out to her. The woman started, drew back her extended hand, and gazed at her wildly [. . .] she pressed it upon her with all the kindness of her nature. The old woman eagerly seized it [. . .] and retiring to a corner, she devoured the food with almost wolfish voracity. (221)

Despite her own hunger, Cathleen insists that the older woman take the best of the available food. As will be seen, such kindness, combined with Cathleen's self-control and abstinence, enables Cathleen to survive her night and morning with the Hogans.

Notably, the pedlar is not without pity himself, but he does not abstain from drink as Cathleen does, and this leads to his death. As they are eating, Hogan and his son Barny return and appear less than pleased when they see that they have guests: "The old man gave the pedlar a sulky welcome. The son [gave] a muttered curse [. . . and] was a short, brawny, thickset man, with features not naturally ugly, but rendered worse than ugly by an expression of louring [*sic*] ferocity disgustingly blended with a sort of stupid, drunken leer, the effect of habitual intoxication" (Jameson 221). Halloran is surprised and sad at the changed appearance of the Hogans, as Jameson notes: "Halloran stared at them awhile with visible astonishment and indignation, but pity and sorrow for a change so lamentable, smothered the old man's wrath" (221). Despite the fact that Barny is described as becoming more reprehensible through drink (Jameson associates Barny with descriptors such as "ugly," "disgusting," "stupid," "drunken" and "habitual intoxication" in the above quotation), Halloran offers to share his flask of whisky with his hosts. All but Cathleen begin drinking, and Halloran becomes indiscreet under the influence of the alcohol, drawing attention to the money he now carries after successfully selling his wares by "slapping his pocket in which a quantity of loose money was heard to jingle" (Jameson 222). As with Cathleen's husband, Michael, drinking is the cause of Halloran's downfall.

Cathleen's abstinence from drink and subsequent awareness enables her to survive the night where the kindly Halloran does not. While Halloran tosses his money about ordering breakfast for the morning, Cathleen is "alarm[ed]": "She fancied to detect certain suspicious

glances between the father and son, and began to feel an indescribable dread of her company” (Jameson 222). “[C]oncealing her apprehensions under an affectation of extreme fatigue and drowsiness,” Cathleen asks to be shown to her bed and unsuccessfully attempts to convince the pedlar to retire as well (Jameson 222). Yet even in this perilous position, Cathleen remains virtuous, insisting that a screen be set up between her bed and that of the pedlar, as well as saying her prayers before “only partly undress[ing] herself” and going to bed (Jameson 223). But when the pedlar soon finds his own bed and falls quickly asleep and the house is quiet, “Cathleen could not sleep” as “undefinable [*sic*] fears beset her fancy; and whenever she tried to compose herself to slumber the faces of the two men she had left below flitted and glared before her eyes” while her “feeling of oppression increased” (Jameson 224). Such instinctive apprehension is proven to be accurate as the two Hogan men enter the bedchamber and murder Halloran in his sleep.

Cathleen survives the night through will power and the same logical deduction she used in determining what sort of being stole her bundle of possessions. Jameson describes Cathleen’s situation and instinctive but composed response:

Cathleen listened, almost congealed with horror, but she did not swoon: her turn, she thought, must come next, though in the same instant she felt instinctively that her only chance of preservation was to counterfeit profound sleep. The murderers, having done their work on the poor Pedlar, approached her bed, and threw the gleam of their lantern full on her face; she lay quite still, breathing calmly and regularly. (224-25)

Cathleen manages to overcome her “horror” and fear in order to successfully pretend to be fast asleep, and she fools the Hogans even when they lean in closer with the lantern. Cathleen asserts her success, “I knew that if I would preserve my life, I must keep the sense in me, and *I did*” (Jameson 225). While Cathleen may have been overcome with helplessness earlier that day, after her bundle was stolen, she kept her cool when it counted that night.

Also similar to her response after her bundle was stolen, Cathleen again rejects fanciful notions and supernatural fears in order to think logically. When the men leave the room to consult with Bidly, Cathleen at first “fancied she heard the murdered man move, and creep about on his bed [. . .] but she set herself to listen fixedly, and convinced her reason that all was still” (Jameson 225). Jameson’s heroine refuses to give in to such terrifying fancies, instead turning to the evidence of her senses, this time her hearing, to determine the veracity of her superstitions. As Jameson then explains,

She then turned her thoughts to the possibility of escape. The window first suggested itself: the faint moon-light was just struggling through its dirty and cob-webbed panes: it was very small, and Cathleen reflected, that besides the difficulty, and, perhaps, impossibility of getting through, it must be some height from the ground: neither could she tell on which side of the house it was situated, nor in what direction to turn, supposing she reached the ground; and, above all, she was aware that the slightest noise, must cause her instant destruction. She thus resolved upon remaining quiet. (225-26)

In this paragraph, Jameson takes the reader through Cathleen’s thought process as she tries to determine the best course of action. Her considerations are logical and organized despite the extremely stressful nature of her situation. Moreover, Jameson notes that Cathleen’s deductions were correct in the next sentence: “It was most fortunate that Cathleen came to this determination, for without the slightest previous sound the door again opened” (226). This time, it is Bidly, who argues with her son but ultimately is able to convince him not to kill Cathleen because she was demonstrably asleep and unaware of the murderous happenings. Her reason for doing so, however, is not so much good nature as it is gratitude because, as she tells her son, “didn’t she take the bit out of her own mouth to put into mine?” (Jameson 227). Cathleen is checked in on again during “that long, long night of horror,” yet because “she remained quite still, and apparently in a deep calm sleep, they left her undisturbed” (Jameson 227). She survives

the night thanks to her good sense not to drink, logical thinking, and the will power she used to remain calm, collected, and still while under the scrutiny of murderers.

Cathleen continues this act of obliviousness the next morning, evincing gratitude and soliciting directions to Cork. As Jameson writes, Cathleen pretended to accept Biddy's explanation of Halloran's early leave-taking and said goodbye to Biddy "with many demonstrations of gratitude" before "she proceeded on her fearful journey," and even though "the sense of danger was paramount, while her faculties were all alive and awake to meet it, for a feverish and unnatural strength seemed to animate her limbs," Cathleen "never once turned her head, nor quickened nor slackened her pace," despite a sensation of being watched (Jameson 229). She again uses logical deduction to determine her plan of action, deciding to follow Biddy's directions to Cork despite her suspicions because she fears not following them will indicate her knowledge of the murder to the Hogans. Cathleen therefore forgoes the seeming safety of the road and "pursue[s] the lonely way through the fields" as Biddy directed her (Jameson 229).

Cathleen's perception and her ability to act oblivious to the dangers surrounding her are given one final test as she approaches Cork and sees "an old woman in a red cloak" (Jameson 230). Although Cathleen is at first delighted to see another person, she quickly sees through the disguise and discerns that the old woman is in fact Barney Hogan:

The sight of a human being made her heart throb more quickly for a moment; but on approaching nearer, with all her faculties sharpened by the sense of danger, she perceived that it was no old woman, but the younger Hogan, the murderer of Halloran, who was thus disguised. His face was partly concealed by a blue handkerchief tied around his head and under his chin, but she knew him by the peculiar and hideous expression of his eyes: yet with amazing and almost incredible self-possession, she continued to advance without manifesting the least alarm, or sign of recognition; and walking up to the pretended old woman, said in a clear voice, "The blessing of the morning on ye, good mother! a fine day for travellers like you and me!" (Jameson 230)

Not only is Cathleen quick to recognize Hogan's disguise, but she also courageously initiates conversation with him to conceal her own fear and awareness of danger. Even when Barny stops her from passing by grabbing her skirt, "Cathleen did not quail," addressing the "monster" and calmly "recommend[ing]" s/he "apply" to the Hogans for food and water, assuring her/him, "Sure they're good, honest people, though poor enough, God help them" (Jameson 231). Her act of innocence, fearlessness, and obliviousness convinces Barny that she is indeed unaware of his criminal activity, so he allows her to continue her journey, "secure in his disguise, and never doubting her perfect unconsciousness" (Jameson 231-32).

Cathleen continues her walk to Cork and her husband "with the same unfailing spirit, and at the same steady pace," but even her strong will has reached its limits of endurance. As she crosses the last field before the road leading to Cork, her flights of fancy get the best of her when two men "burst through the fence at the farther side of the field, and advanced towards her": "Her imagination was possessed with the one supreme idea of danger and death by murderous hands; she doubted not that these were the two Hogans in some new disguise, and silently recommending herself to God, she steeled her heart to meet this fresh trial of her fortitude; aware, that however it might end, it must be the last" (Jameson 232-33). When Cathleen finally realizes one of the men is her husband, she loses all control, fainting from shock and the realization of safety in her husband's presence. Jameson details the effect this final shock has on Cathleen's system: "The poor woman, who had hitherto supported her spirits and her self-possession, stood as if rooted to the ground, weak, motionless, and gasping for breath. A cold dew burst from every pore; her ears tingled, her heart fluttered as though it would burst from her bosom [. . .] she sank down at [her husband's] feet in strong convulsions" (233). Furthermore, when she regains consciousness, Cathleen is delirious, for "her intellects appeared to have fled

her for ever, and she uttered such wild shrieks and exclamations, and talked so incoherently, that the men became exceedingly terrified” (Jameson 233). As she has been throughout the narrative, Jameson’s heroine is, after all, only a young and uneducated country wife who never expected to survive such harrowing experiences and who certainly was never expected to do so by anyone else.

In spite of this moment of weakness, Cathleen initiates an investigation, trial, and sentencing. Regaining her composure later that night, she tells her story to a magistrate who has stopped by the inn in which she is staying. Constables, finding the Hogan house abandoned, search the area and eventually discover Halloran’s body and stolen property and, later, the Hogans, who had separated while on the run. Cathleen is “the principal witness” at their trial, and her testimony is as composed and coherent as she was during her night of terror (Jameson 236). Jameson writes, “She appeared, leaning on her husband, her face was ashy pale, and her limbs too weak for support; yet she however, was perfectly collected, and gave her testimony with that precision, simplicity, and modesty, peculiar to her character [. . .] The evidence was clear and conclusive; and the jury, without retiring, gave their verdict, guilty—Death” (236). Yet significantly, although Cathleen has been physically changed by her harrowing experience (changed in a manner similar to that experienced by Anna in Elizabeth Gaskell’s “The Grey Woman”), her kindness is still an inherent part of her nature, as is demonstrated by her impassioned appeal for mercy for Bidy, who, as Cathleen relates to the court, “had mercy on me! She only did *their* bidding” (Jameson 237). Although it was discovered that Bidy or her son had stolen Cathleen’s bundle while she napped, Cathleen insists she would have given it to her, negating the robbery. Her impassioned call for mercy “much affected” the judge, and

although Cathleen was “forcibly carried from the court,” her plea was successful and Bidy “was reprieved, and afterwards transported” (Jameson 237).

As for Cathleen, “our *heroine*, in the true sense of the word,” she and her husband lived, for all intents and purposes, happily ever after. As Jameson describes,

Her story, her sufferings, her extraordinary fortitude, and pure simplicity of character made her an object of general curiosity and interest: a subscription was raised for her, which soon amounted to a liberal sum; they were enabled to procure Reilly’s discharge from the army, and with a part of the money, Cathleen, who, among her other perfections, was exceedingly pious after the fashion of her creed and country, founded yearly masses for the soul of the poor Pedlar; and vowed herself to make a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to St. Gobnate’s well. (238-39)

Cathleen’s strength allows her to save her husband from the perils of the army; she effectively saves him from himself since it was his drinking that led him to enlist in the first place. The idea that Cathleen would donate money in the name of Halloran as well as pledge a pilgrimage is not surprising because she prayed before going to bed at the Hogans and showed her piety more clearly when she begged mercy for Bidy Hogan. Furthermore, Halloran the Pedlar was a kind man who, like her husband, was brought low by the dangers of alcohol but who did his best to look after Cathleen after coming across her in her moment of despair.

Yet Cathleen’s adventures did more than simply restore the status quo, as her situation is actually improved, thanks to the magistrate Cathleen talked to in the inn the night she was reunited with her husband. Jameson explains at the end of the narrative,

Mr. L., the magistrate who had first examined her in the little inn at Balgowna, made her a munificent present; and anxious, perhaps, to offer yet further amends for his former doubts of her veracity, he invited Reilly on very advantageous terms, to settle on his estate, where he rented a neat cabin, and a *handsome* plot of potatoe [*sic*] ground. There Reilly and his Cathleen were living ten years ago, with an increasing family, and in the enjoyment of much humble happiness; and there, for aught I know to the contrary, they may be living at this day. (239)

So while “Halloran the Pedlar” is more of a folk tale than a fairy tale, dealing, as it does, with the adventures of peasants, it does feature a fairy-tale ending, in which Cathleen is rewarded for her kind nature and self-possession by not only her husband’s safe and legal removal from the army, but also an “advantageous” arrangement on a very nice plot of land. Cathleen adeptly saves the day and gains justice for the late Halloran.

“The Invisible Girl” & Cinderella

Like many women, Mary Shelley took advantage of the lucrative nature of the literary annual, submitting contributions to various literary annuals to support her family financially after the death of her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley. As Judith Pascoe asserts, “Mary Shelley’s letters to the editor of the *Keepsake* center most often on the issue of payment; clearly publication in these volumes held foremost importance for the opportunity it provided of earning money” (179). Yet this “financial motivation” does not mean that the fiction and poetry lacked literary value, for as Pascoe goes on to argue, “Mary Shelley clearly did not limit her annual publication to the sweepings of her desk but rather published work there that she counted as her very best” (180). While only one of Mary Shelley’s literary annual contributions adapts a fairy tale, it is notable that this adaptation is intriguingly proto-feminist in its depiction of a resourceful Cinderella who is more than capable of surviving in the Welsh countryside on her own. In fact, Shelley’s Cinderella not only manages to survive, she also saves the life of her prince and the lives of several local fisherman. Published in the 1833 *Keepsake*, Shelley’s “The Invisible Girl” was commissioned to illustrate an engraving (as will be discussed),^{viii} and it is a Cinderella tale that suggests young, unprotected, middle-class women are capable of surviving and winning a prince without magical aid. Like Anna Brownell Jameson’s “Halloran the Pedlar,” Shelley’s tale features a strong and resourceful female heroine who saves herself and her beloved

from misfortune. It also intriguingly appears to rewrite Mary Shelley's life story, from her relationship with her father to her tragic romance with Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Like many of the fairy-tale adaptations to be discussed here, including Jameson's "Hallowan the Pedlar," Shelley uses the narrative frame to impart realism to her Cinderella tale, removing the action from the realm of fantasy to that of the real world. In "The Invisible Girl," she presents a British Cinderella who is feminine yet resourceful, capable of saving herself and her "prince" without the aid of magic. Shelley specifies both a specific time period and location for her tale in the narrative frame; the narrator explicitly reminds readers that "I write at the beginning of the eighteenth century" as s/he relates a tale learned near a ruined tower on the Welsh coast (190). The narrative frame details how the narrator came across a ruined tower in Wales, only to find that inside the tower was furnished and decorated, "fitted up somewhat in the guise of a summer-house," complete with a portrait of a young girl entitled "The Invisible Girl" (Shelley 190). Notably, this portrait is the engraving that accompanied and inspired Shelley's short story, although it is entitled "Rosina" in the literary annual; Rosina is the name of Shelley's heroine. Gregory O'Dea notes this aspect of the narrative as well, writing that "'The Invisible Girl' makes use of the frame device with which Shelley was familiar and comfortable" and that Shelley "offers a clever solution [to the difficulty of writing a story to illustrate an engraving] by making the engraved image itself a principal object in the tale" (69). As the narrator explains, this portrait is in great contrast with its desolate environment: "a picture, simply painted in water-colours, which seemed more than any part of the adornments of the room to be at war with the rudeness of the building, the solitude in which it was placed, and the desolation of the surrounding scenery" (Shelley 190). This description foreshadows the surprising strength displayed by Rosina, a seemingly delicate and decidedly feminine orphan, which further suggests

the significant change Shelley makes to the traditional “Cinderella.” An old woman who acts as the care-taker of the tower when uninhabited tells the narrator the story behind the portrait, which the narrator then relates to us, the readers.

The story begins with the arrival of Henry Vernon, a baronet’s son, to the area on a stormy September evening. Although not a prince, Henry plays the role in Shelley’s Cinderella tale, as he is wealthy and well above the station of our heroine. In addition, his purpose for traveling in the storm is to find the heroine, an aspect of the story that duplicates the prince’s search for Cinderella following the ball. Henry is “the only child of Sir Peter Vernon, and as much spoiled by his father’s idolatry as the old baronet’s violent and tyrannical temper would permit” (Shelley 195). While spoiled, Henry is not without kindness or concern for others, for although he insists on hiring a boat to get to his father’s mansion that night despite the storm, “Vernon bitterly regret[ed] the thoughtlessness which had made him cause others to share his peril, unimportant as far as he himself was concerned” (Shelley 193). The men are saved when they use a beacon from the ruined tower to get safely to shore as the storm rages around them. They tell Henry that the beacon has saved the lives of other fishermen and that some believe it to be the work of a fairy while others insist that “it is burnt by the ghost of a maiden who lost her sweetheart in these parts; he being wrecked, and his body found at the foot of the tower: she goes by the name among [them] of the ‘Invisible Girl’” (Shelley 194). Yet the story does not grab Henry’s interest—he wastes only a grumbling thought on the source of the beacon while the men struggle to find an entrance to the tower that will shelter them that night, that “she of the beacon light must be both ugly and old, or she would not be so peevish and inhospitable”—as he is too focused on his purpose for coming to Wales—to find the body of his beloved Rosina (Shelley 194). As Shelley writes, “It would require a good-sized volume to relate the causes which had

changed the once happy Vernon into the most woeful mourner that ever clung to outer trappings of grief, as slight though cherished symbols of the wretchedness within” (195).

Shelley’s heroine, Rosina, was an orphan raised in Henry’s household by his father, the widower Sir Peter, and though she “was treated with [. . .] generosity and kindness” by Sir Peter, her budding romance with Henry and the arrival of Sir Peter’s widowed sister, who is to play the role of Cinderella’s evil stepmother, results in her self-assertion, resourcefulness, and eventual reunion with Henry (Shelley 195). Rosina is described as “a cheerful-tempered girl, a little timid, and careful to avoid displeasing her protector; but so docile, so kind-hearted, and so affectionate, that she felt even less than Henry the discordant spirit of his parent” (Shelley 195). All these appropriately feminine characteristics that Shelley attributes to Rosina fit with the more traditional tale of Cinderella or Cinderwench, although Rosina’s connection to Cinderella will be more explicitly made later in the story. For now, it is important to note that Rosina was nothing if not kind-hearted and grateful for the upbringing provided by Sir Peter. In fact, Rosina fears upsetting her benefactor by her mismatched romance with Henry, for as Shelley writes, “Rosina was frightened to imagine that this secret affection [for Henry], and the vows they pledged [to each other], might be disapproved of by Sir Peter” (195). So while the couple grew up together and fell in love, they kept this attachment a secret from fear of Sir Peter’s disapproval, Rosina out of fear of disappointing Sir Peter and Henry “to secure his beloved girl from persecution and insult” (Shelley 195). With their romance kept secret, the household remained peaceful and happy: “If ever human spirit lived in an earthly paradise, Rosina did at this time: her pure love was made happy by Henry’s constant presence; and the confidence they felt in each other, and the security with which they looked forward to the future, rendered their path one of roses under a cloudless sky” (Shelley 195-96).

Yet this contentment vanishes with the advent of the stepmother figure, Mrs. Bainbridge. That Mrs. Bainbridge will be the villain of the narrative is made clear from her first introduction to the story; Shelley writes, “All at once an ominous personage made its appearance in Vernon-Place, in the shape of a widow sister of Sir Peter, who, having succeeded in killing her husband and children with the effects of her vile temper, came, like a harpy, greedy for new prey, under her brother’s roof” (196). Described as an “ominous,” “vile,” “greedy,” “harpy”-like predator determined to make life miserable for, and even kill, those around her, Mrs. Bainbridge wastes no time disrupting the harmony of Vernon-Place, as “[s]he too soon detected the attachment of the unsuspecting pair” and “made all speed to impart her discovery to her brother, and at once to restrain and inflame his rage” (Shelley 196). Shelley continues her description of how Mrs. Bainbridge manipulates Sir Peter in order to adeptly separate the couple and thereby more effectively persecute Rosina:

Through her contrivance Henry was suddenly dispatched on his travels abroad, that the coast might be clear for the persecution of Rosina; and then the richest of the lovely girl’s many admirers, whom, under Sir Peter’s single reign, she was allowed, nay, almost commanded, to dismiss, so desirous was he of keeping her for his own comfort, was selected, and she was ordered to marry him. The scenes of violence to which she was now exposed, the bitter taunts of the odious Mrs. Bainbridge, and the reckless fury of Sir Peter, were the more frightful and overwhelming from their novelty. (196)

Left without the protection of Henry and abandoned by Sir Peter in his rage, Rosina appears defenseless against the machinations of the malicious Mrs. Bainbridge.

In the face of Mrs. Bainbridge’s assault on her future happiness, Rosina evinces a surprising and rather unfeminine defiance and stubbornness. She absolutely refuses to obey the command to marry: “To all she could only oppose a silent, tearful, but immutable steadiness of purpose: no threats, no rage could extort from her more than a touching prayer that they would not hate her, because she could not obey” (Shelley 196). Upon her adamant refusal to marry,

Mrs. Bainbridge convinces Sir Peter to relocate to his Welsh mansion so that Rosina will feel isolated and give in to their demands to marry. As Shelley explains, “Here [in Wales] poor Rosina’s sufferings gr[o]w intolerable” as Mrs. Bainbridge attempts to “see if her spirit be not bent to [her] purpose” by complete isolation (196). Rosina is “made a prisoner in her apartment,” and when “her courage beg[ins] to fail,” she falls into another of Mrs. Bainbridge’s traps (Shelley 196). In desperation, Rosina attempts to send a letter to Henry asking him to return and help her, but she naively entrusts this letter to Mrs. Bainbridge’s maid, who, “under the tutelage of her fiend-like mistress,” gives the letter to Mrs. Bainbridge rather than send it to Henry as promised (Shelley 196). Mrs. Bainbridge then uses the letter to enrage Sir Peter over the thought that the poor Rosina intends to marry his son and heir. The two confront Rosina, calling her an “infamous seductress” (Shelley 197) among other things, and between “the howling of Sir Peter and the snarling of his sister,” Rosina is told to leave the house immediately (Shelley 197). The result of this final confrontation is detailed by Shelley, who relates, “More dead than alive, Rosina was at last dismissed. Whether guided by despair, whether she took Sir Peter’s threats literally, or whether his sister’s orders were more decisive, none knew, but Rosina left the house; a servant saw her cross the park, weeping, and wringing her hands as she went. What became of her none could tell” (197).

It is notable that Sir Peter is not as hard-hearted as he appears in this moment because when he calms down, he regrets his anger and sends servants to search the countryside for Rosina. Shelley asserts, “he showed by his anxiety to trace her steps and to find her, that his words had been but idle threats. The truth was, that though Sir Peter went to frightful lengths to prevent the marriage of the heir of his house with the portionless orphan, the object of his charity, yet in his heart he loved Rosina, and half his violence to her arose from anger at himself

for treating her so ill” (197). Yet Sir Peter’s regret and return to his senses come too late, as no sign of Rosina can be found and it is assumed that she committed suicide by throwing herself into a river. In contrast to Sir Peter’s regret, Mrs. Bainbridge is shown to be “inhuman,” as she “cried, ‘The vile hussy has too surely made away with herself out of revenge to us’” (Shelley 197).^{ix} This outcry seems to be the last straw for Sir Peter, who finally stands up to his sister and “command[s] her to silence” (Shelley 197). However, the deed is done, Rosina is lost and presumed dead, and though Sir Peter is “forced to acknowledge in his own heart that he would willingly lay down his life, could he see her again, even though it were as the bride of his son,” he is left no option but to tell Henry of Rosina’s death, causing Henry to leave immediately for Wales in the hope of recovering her body (Shelley 197-98). This is the purpose that causes Henry to insist on taking the boat up the river during the storm, leaving him and the fisherman to spend the night in the ruined tower.

In the most obvious reference to Cinderella, Henry comes across a slipper in the woods around the tower while the fishermen work to repair the storm-damaged boat the next morning.^x Shelley writes, “Since Cinderella so tiny a slipper had never been seen; as plain as shoe could speak, it told a tale of elegance, loveliness, and youth. Vernon picked it up; he had often admired Rosina’s singularly small foot, and his first thought was a question whether this little slipper would have fitted it. It was very strange!—it must belong to the Invisible Girl” (199). Although making the connection between the size of the shoe and Rosina’s dainty feet, as well as remarking “that it exactly resembled such [shoes] as Rosina wore,” Henry is a bit too dense to consider that the Invisible Girl is in fact Rosina (Shelley 199). He only discovers this when he enters the tower at night to return the shoe to the Invisible Girl and finds Rosina, living all this

time in the ruined tower and surrounding woods. Or more accurately, Rosina finds Henry, as she recognizes him before he does her.

Rosina, unsurprisingly, is changed by her experiences in Sir Peter's house and alone in the Welsh countryside. Shelley explains, "Altered indeed she was by suffering and woe" while Henry notices her "slender, *wasted* form" when he hugs her upon their reunion (200, my emphasis). Perhaps the most significant transformation, or revelation, can be seen in Rosina's ability to survive on her own. Henry is surprised that she did not come to him for protection rather than make her own way. This is evident in his thoughts following their reunion, for "even now he dared not inquire how she had existed in that desolate spot, or wherefore she had so sedulously avoided observation, when the right thing to have been done was, to have sought him immediately, under whose care, protected by whose love, no danger need be feared" (Shelley 201). While Rosina did attempt to do "the right thing" and request Henry's aid via the letter given to the betraying maid, and while she admits that "[h]er only hope was that Henry would return—that Henry would never rest till he had found her" and "that the long interval and the approach of winter had visited her with dismay" because "she feared that, as her strength was failing, and her form wasting to a skeleton, that she might die, and never see her own Henry more," it is significant that Rosina did survive on her own. Rosina faces greater obstacles than the traditional Cinderella, with the vicious Mrs. Bainbridge and the betrayal and rejection of her father figure Sir Peter. She is not condemned to domestic labor but outcast into the countryside, and there is no magical aid to protect her or bring about her reunion with Henry. Still, Rosina's strength and resourcefulness allow her to survive. Shelley writes,

After wandering about, hiding by day, and only venturing forth at night, she had come to this deserted tower, which seemed a place of refuge. How she had lived since then she could hardly tell;—she had lingered in the woods by day, or slept in the vault of the tower, an asylum none were acquainted with or had discovered;

by night she burned pine-cones of the wood [. . .] and [she] was terrified lest her hiding place should be revealed to [Sir Peter]. (201)

Still feminine and very much afraid, Rosina manages to survive until Henry's return, and in doing so she burns the pinecone beacon that lights the way to safety for her prince and the local fisherman.

Shelley returns to the narrative frame to conclude the tale with a happy ending. The narrator explains how, reunited, the couple return to Sir Peter, who "delighted again to see his orphan-ward, whom he really loved, was now as eager as before he had been averse to bless her union with his son," while "Mrs. Bainbridge they never saw again" (Shelley 201). The tower was then decorated with a portrait of Rosina as a memorial of their reunion, and the couple visits Wales, the place of their reunion, each year. Interestingly, Shelley introduces a reference to "Sleeping Beauty" when she discusses this annual return to Wales: "But each year they spent a few months in their Welch mansion, the scene of their early wedded happiness, and the spot where again poor Rosina had awoke to life and joy after her cruel persecutions" (Shelley 201).

Shelley's "The Invisible Girl" is more closely linked to the Cinderella tale than by the device of the slipper reuniting the two lovers. Henry Vernon is the prince, having fallen in love with the Cinderella-figure of Rosina despite the fact that he knows his father, Sir Peter (a.k.a. the King) considers her to be inappropriate marriage material because she is poor and without a dowry to bring to the union. She would, in effect, be making an advantageous marriage that no one expects, just as Cinderella does. And although lacking the stepsisters that torment Cinderella, the stepmother has an active role in "The Invisible Girl" in the form of Sir Peter's widowed sister, Mrs. Bainbridge, whose appearance in the household disrupts the harmony of the family as she insists on separating the two lovers and plots to reveal their intention to marry to Sir Peter.

It is ultimately not Sir Peter but Mrs. Bainbridge that Rosina must overcome, just as Cinderella overcomes the restrictions placed upon her by her stepmother.

Rosina fulfills the role of Cinderella. Although kind-hearted and feminine like the traditional Cinderella, Shelley also makes Rosina stubborn and steadfast (evident when she refuses to marry any suitor but her beloved Henry) as well as resourceful, given she manages to survive on her own in the woods for weeks before Henry finds her. Moreover, Rosina not only saves herself but also the lives of the fisherman and her beloved when the fire she sets in the tower acts as a beacon for those in boats during storms. Shelley's empowerment of Cinderella is further emphasized by the lack of magic in the tale; Rosina must overcome her obstacles and be united with her prince without the magical aid of a fairy godmother or her mother's guardian spirit. In this way, Shelley translates the Cinderella tale to eighteenth-century Great Britain for her nineteenth-century British female audience, giving her readers a more realistic, magic-free "Cinderella" that features a stronger female protagonist than the traditional tale offers.

Yet there is an additional biographical interpretation to be layered with this analysis of "The Invisible Girl" as an adaptation of "Cinderella," and it intriguingly offers a possible reason for Shelley's decision to maintain the traditional fairy-tale happy ending. In his biography of Mary Shelley, *Mary Shelley: A Literary Life*, John Williams explains how Percy Shelley's death affected Mary's literary production, writing, "This devastating moment in Mary Shelley's life was also a key moment for the development of her literary life. From this point on she was driven to write and rewrite in fictional form different versions of the narrative of her life with Percy" (92). Williams suggests an autobiographical component in Shelley's fiction was a "drive" or impulse over which she had no control, yet this aspect in "The Invisible Girl" seems quite intentional and well developed. In "The Invisible Girl," Shelley revises her romance with Percy

(notably a baronet's son like Henry), writing a story in which she, as Cinderella, survives and lives happily ever after with her prince, Percy/Henry, while she is reconciled with her father figure(s) and any female interlopers are vanquished and removed. Most notably, in her revision of her life story, Shelley empowers herself as she becomes Percy/Henry's savior.

In depicting a resourceful Cinderella who overcomes all obstacles to be reunited with her prince, Mary Shelley is rewriting her own romance with Percy, one in which she saves him from drowning. Although this is not the first time Shelley rewrote Percy's death scene,^{xi} "The Invisible Girl" is different because Shelley revises the death scene into a near-death scene. John Williams argues, "For Shelley, confronting the present was essentially to confront the issues of her personal survival, a harrowing and heroic struggle accompanied always by the fear that close friends might let her down, that the malign intentions of her father-in-law would rob her of her son, and that she would fail in the duty she had in establishing her husband as a poet of genius and a good man" (115). Rosina, as a revised depiction of Mary Shelley, absolutely "survives" the "harrowing" obstacles she faces. Moreover, she does so on her own, and in doing so also manages to save the life of her beloved, effectively erasing the tragic events that took Percy from her in real life. She is the heroine of the tale, surpassing even Henry in that regard as he is relatively inactive in the tale. In addition, in this version of events, Percy, in the form of Henry, is the true lover, absolutely devoted to Rosina/Mary. This is in part because Shelley has written other women out of their romance, but there is also no "grey" in Henry's character; he is the charming, devoted, faithful young man who cannot imagine his life without his beloved. Never at odds, the pair is an ideal couple reunited in the end and never to be parted.

In depicting Rosina's reconciliation with Sir Peter, Shelley effectively enacts her own reconciliation with her father figures: her father William Godwin and her father-in-law Sir

Timothy Shelley. Following Percy's death, Sir Timothy first tried to gain custody of his grandson, although he later agreed to help financially support him under Mary Shelley's care, provided that she did not publish anything under the name of Shelley. This indictment foiled Mary Shelley's plans to redeem Percy posthumously in the public eye, but she gave in to her father-in-law's demand out of financial need. At one point referring to Sir Timothy as "a real-life tyrannical father-in-law (cheque-book in hand, breathing down her neck)" (124), John Williams explains Mary Shelley's relationship with him, stating, "She had to write to live, and the control Sir Timothy had over her fate will have inevitably made her as cautious of establishing a radical political presence (worthy of Percy Shelley) as she had to be of displaying the Shelley name" (121-22).

Yet perhaps more likely, Sir Peter represents William Godwin. Mary Shelley's relationship with her stepmother, Mary Jane Clairmont, was reportedly a tense one. Their continuing conflicts caused Godwin to send Mary away from home more than once, an action that mirrors Rosina's banishment from Sir Peter's household. As John Williams relates one incident of this banishment, "On her return at Christmas-time, 1811, Mary's presence once more swiftly became a problem, and almost before she knew it she had again been banished" (34-35).

According to Williams,

The evidence relating to what went on during these formative years is primarily anecdotal, but it is certain that Mary came to loath her stepmother, holding her responsible for the fact that a close relationship was never allowed to develop between her and her father. She saw herself as the victimised daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, set aside by a stepmother who felt threatened by the presence of them both. (34).

If Mary Shelley did indeed see her stepmother as an interloper obstructing her relationship with her father, it could account for her uncompromisingly negative portrayal of the stepmother figure in her Cinderella tale, Mrs. Bainbridge. John Williams's depiction of Godwin "engaged in

refereeing a contest between the clashing temperaments of Mary and Mary Jane” suggests his position caught between his daughter and his second wife, and in sending Mary away, he effectively takes the side of his wife (32).

In the tale, familial reconciliation is only possible with the eviction of Mrs. Bainbridge; similarly, Shelley’s relationship with her father Godwin theoretically would have been stronger and closer without the presence of her stepmother. That Mrs. Bainbridge represents Mary Jane Clairmont is supported by her correspondence with the role of Cinderella’s evil stepmother. Moreover, Mrs. Bainbridge’s revelation of Rosina and Henry’s intention to wed in many ways replicates a scene from Shelley’s early romance. John Williams relates,

Shelley called regularly at Skinner Street from spring into early summer, and the couple’s relationship deepened as they developed a routine of regular visits to Mary Wollstonecraft’s grave in St Pancras churchyard [. . .] Godwin discovered what was afoot in July, and at once forbade Mary to meet Shelley. [. . .] Mary Jane was to recall a dishevelled young man proposing a suicide pact with Mary (laudanum for her, a bullet for him) if Godwin did not consent to their union. Godwin called his bluff and sought to confine Mary and Jane to the house. (38-39)

Although certainly more dramatic than the scene Shelley depicts in “The Invisible Girl,” the similarities are striking: a budding romance is interrupted by parental figures and the couple is separated against their will. It is unclear what role Mary Jane played in this incident, yet Mary may have blamed her without much evidence given their strained relationship. That Mary would still blame her stepmother in 1833 is entirely likely, however. As Robert Gittings and Jo Manton note, “Mary and Mrs Godwin [were] rivals to the last” (168). Without her stepmother, Mary Shelley may have been closer to her father and unseparated from her lover, and this possibility is made a certainty in “The Invisible Girl,” as the absence of Mrs. Bainbridge would have allowed Rosina and Henry to reveal their romance in their own time to Sir Peter, thereby avoiding all the ensuing drama. Therefore, in rewriting “Cinderella,” Mary Shelley is also revising her own life

story, in which she, as the resourceful and steadfast heroine, repairs her relationships with her father and father-in-law, saves Percy from death by drowning, and lives happily ever after with a perfected and faithful version of her husband.

The literary annuals and resourceful women go hand in hand. Resourceful women are to be found not only in the annuals' pages, in such stories as "Halloran the Pedlar" and "The Invisible Girl," but also in the editors, contributors, and readers who produced and consumed the genre. While there is certainly much more work to be done on the genre, including in regard to the genre's relationship with proto-feminist fairy tales, the tales examined in this chapter and those by Landon (discussed in the next chapter) indicate that at least some women found the literary annual to be a site for the publication of proto-feminist fiction. Jameson, Shelley, and Landon's publication of subversive fairy tales in the literary annual provide evidence of Romantic women's precedent for the subversive fairy tales that later would be published by Victorian and fin-de-siècle women authors. Yet as will be demonstrated in the chapters that follow, the fairy-tale "happily ever after," and its accompanying glorification of marriage as women's happy ending, is not as constant in the proto-feminist adaptations by nineteenth-century British women as it is in the classic fairy-tale tradition.

CHAPTER TWO: DISILLUSIONMENT IN LETITIA ELIZABETH LANDON'S LITERARY ANNUAL FAIRY TALES

[H]er poetry enables its conventional readership to (mis)recognize the artificial conventions of sentimentality, even to enjoy those conventions, and certainly to buy them, while her poetry simultaneously mocks, parodies, and bitterly criticizes those sentimental illusions—first by making them visible as constructed illusions, and secondly by emplotting disillusionment. (Hoagwood and Ledbetter, “Life”)

Letitia Elizabeth Landon (or L. E. L.), like Mary Shelley, submitted contributions to various literary annuals to support her family financially. As explained in more detail in the previous chapter, the literary annual was a lucrative genre; it was also largely a woman's genre, as it was marketed to young women readers and increasingly edited and written by women. Featuring famous contributors but better known for their steel-plate engravings, literary annuals were marketed as luxuriously bound, appropriately moral reading for young women. Yet as some literary-annual scholars suggest, such marketing techniques did not preclude some authors from subverting and challenging socially accepted ideals of femininity and domesticity. Kathryn Ledbetter explains,

Yet a deceptively smooth surface of propriety inspires popular views of *The Keepsake* [and other literary annuals]; as a token of respectability, *The Keepsake* appeared to guard domestic values, for most people viewed annuals as a genre suitable for family reading that would portray women in plots that embraced marriage, children, and domestic harmony [. . . but] *The Keepsake* did not always promote middle-class standards or morality in its literature, often featuring instead the painful aspects of love and marriage, while exploring the outer limits of sensuality. (16)

Such ideological subversions and challenges are apparent in the fairy-tale adaptations Shelley and Landon published in the literary annuals. Acting as both author and editor, Letitia Elizabeth Landon helped produce numerous literary annuals during her career, and this production included the composition and publication of two fairy-tale adaptations that critique the

idealization of marriage as women's happy destiny. Like the texts examined in the previous chapter, Landon's publication of subversive fairy tales in the literary annual provides evidence of Romantic women's precedent for the subversive fairy tales that later would be published by Victorian and fin-de-siècle women authors.

In nineteenth-century Great Britain, the content of the *The Keepsake* and other literary annuals was dismissed by reviewers and many male authors as sentimental. It was further expected to be appropriate for a young female audience, meaning the contributions were to be moral and reinforce Victorian ideals of femininity and domestic ideology. As Kate Flint explains in *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*, there were three fears associated with the concept of the woman reader: "that young women will be corrupted by what they read, [. . .] that reading fiction, especially when carried to excess, wastes time which may more valuably be employed elsewhere [. . . and] that reading may teach politically seditious attitudes, especially, but not exclusively, challenging the role of the family and the position of woman in relation to authority" (24). It was the literary annuals' editors' job to make sure such fears did not become a reality by ensuring the contributions met society's expectations for "wholesome literature" (Harris, "Feminizing" 580). As Katherine D. Harris writes, "Editors, then, were the gatekeepers of this patriarchal femininity, morality, and literary aesthetic in the annuals" ("Feminizing" 592).

Despite this expectation, scholars, such as Harriet Devine Jump and Kathryn Ledbetter, view the content of the annuals as much more subversive. Jump argues that women writers like Lady Blessington, Caroline Norton, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon demonstrate an "evident self-awareness and the willingness to parody the conventions" of traditional femininity (17). Meanwhile, Ledbetter argues that "an examination of literary themes in [. . .] *The Keepsake*, shows that it undermined notions of propriety by suggesting romantic fantasies of escape from

restrictive social boundaries for its middle-class women readers” by “reflect[ing] many social aberrations hidden in the fabric of moral society” and “explor[ing] issues of female victimization, patriarchal imprisonment, social deviance, and tainted domesticity in literature focused by romance“ (16). In this way, Ledbetter and Jump suggest that the women involved in the production and consumption of the literary annual as editors, authors, and readers did far more than re-inscribe traditional feminine ideals; rather, they intentionally tried to subvert and undermine socially accepted ideals of femininity and domesticity.

Landon wrote prolifically and in a variety of genres, as F. J. Sypher details: “she wrote a great deal: seventeen or more volumes of poetry (plus a sizeable amount of uncollected verse); three lengthy novels (and part of a fourth novel); dozens of short stories; countless critical articles and reviews (mostly anonymous, and unidentified); a drama; and innumerable letters (many remain unpublished and untraced)” (*Biography* 10). Until her marriage in 1838, as a single working woman Landon’s literary production, although enjoyable (Landon refers to her poetry composition as “the most subtle and interesting of pleasures”), was very much focused on earning enough money to support herself, her mother, and her brother (*Letters* 168). Landon’s literary labor needed to be productive, meaning it needed to earn her money, and Landon found the literary annual to be a particularly lucrative genre in which to publish. As Glennis Stephenson writes, “For Landon, working for the annuals was first and foremost a way to make a living” (156). The financial advantages of literary-annual publication is emphasized when Katherine Harris markedly points out, “Well-published, but ‘minor’ poets (both men and women) earned a comfortable income by contributing to literary annuals” (575). Furthermore, Harriet Devine Jump names Landon as one of the “[p]rominent among the female writers who depended largely on the annuals for the livelihood” (1).

Both Landon and literary annuals are topics that scholars have only begun exploring extensively since the 1990s, and scholars focusing on Landon's literary-annual work tend to analyze her work with a particular annual, such as *The Keepsake*, *Fisher's Drawing-Room Scrapbook*, or *Bijou Almanack*,ⁱ and/or a general trend within her annual contributions, be it gift poetics,ⁱⁱ classical influences,ⁱⁱⁱ or an aspect of subversion.^{iv} The literary annual as a feminized genre is also a recurring trend in scholarship.^v But while Landon's literary-annual work is increasingly studied, little attention has been paid to Landon's letters and what they indicate about her personal views regarding topics and themes she engages with in her literature. As a single woman who supported herself and others by publishing her literary work, Landon's letters indicate that Landon's knowledge in producing leisure reading extends to the content of her literary annual submissions, which do not always correlate with the personal views expressed in her letters, for instance on love, money, and marriage.

I posit that Landon's knowledge of the literary-annual genre, in combination with her need for her literary labor to be financially productive, led her frequently to subsume her personal views in her literary-annual submissions in order to provide her readers with the kinds of poems she believed they would expect. This included presenting the young female leisure readers of the literary annuals with a depiction of marriage as a romantic affair rather than as a business transaction. Thus although Landon's letters reveal a practical and almost mercenary approach to marriage and a rejection of an idealized view on love and love-matches, many of her literary-annual submissions suggest love is the correct criterion to refer to when choosing a spouse. This contradicts the views expressed in Landon's letters, suggesting she has altered her literary content to reflect what she thinks the audience wishes to read rather than what she personally believes. While Landon's letters could be considered another work of fiction, written

with a specific audience in mind and therefore not an indicator of her true beliefs, the personal nature of the letters discussed, as well as Landon's well-known business savvy, suggest the letters sent to close friends are more revealing of Landon's views than her published literary works.

If this is the case, much of Landon's poetry, then, is clearly not an expression of her personal views or experiences but rather the product of intellectual labor that she performs in order to support herself financially through the sale of her work to leisure-reading consumers. As Terence Allan Hoagwood and Kathryn Ledbetter point out in *"Colour'd Shadows": Contexts in Publishing, Printing, and Reading Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers*, "the notion that the feelings described in a poem can be attributed to its writer (e.g., Mary Robinson, or Felicia Hemans) is still widespread [among scholars], often without interpretative anxiety concerning sincerity, mechanisms of exchange, or other realities of the author's life or the history of the book" (4). Connecting present-day scholars to Landon's literary-annual consumers, Hoagwood and Ledbetter continue, "We suggest that some scholars simply purchase the package of feelings that consumerism produces" (*"Colour'd Shadows"* 4). Interestingly, however, Landon's fairy-tale adaptations *do* illustrate the sentiments expressed in Landon's letters, suggesting that Landon, like the other women authors discussed in this project, found the fairy tale to be a genre open to a more explicit expression of subversive or unconventional ideas.

In this chapter, I examine Letitia Elizabeth Landon's literary annual fairy tales in conjunction with an analysis of her letters. Scholars frequently attribute to Landon the conventionally romantic sentiments evident in much of her literary work, yet an analysis of her letters indicates this approach is problematic. This is particularly evident in regard to the topics of marriage, love, and money, for while Landon's work frequently condemns the mercenary

marriage, her personal letters reject the concept of true love and advocate marriage as a business contract arranged for increased wealth and status.

The disillusionment with marrying for love that Landon expresses in her letters coincides with the unconventional sentiments expressed in two fairy-tale adaptations Landon published in literary annuals. Landon's two literary annual fairy tales demonstrate Landon's critique of the idealization of love at first sight and marriage as women's happy ending. These tales are "Theresa," a Cinderella tale published in the 1833 *Heath's Book of Beauty*, and "The Sleeping Beauty," published in the 1837 *Forget Me Not*. Furthermore, such unconventional sentiments are not necessarily in opposition to Landon's more conventional work, which frequently features tragic romances rather than happy endings, thereby suggesting Landon's inability to imagine successful relationships based on love existing in the real world. Such disillusionment, as it appears in the literary annuals, also seems connected to Landon's disillusionment with the literary marketplace, as her financial need causes her to increasingly view writing not as artistic production but as exhausting work.

Marry for Money: Love in Landon's Letters

Significantly, several scholars, including Glennis Stephenson, Harriet Devine Jump, and Terence Allan Hoagwood and Kathryn Ledbetter, identify a subversive aspect in Landon's annual contributions as she implicitly critiques the social conventions she writes about in a way that is not necessarily noticeable to her more traditional readers. As Hoagwood and Ledbetter explain in detail,

"Increasingly, as she grew older, L.E.L. lifted into the explicit surface of her writings a critique of the illusions (foremost among them the conventional story of true love) featured in popular

literature and art, but that critique was present (though not always noticed) from the beginning” (“Life”). The two scholars go on to assert,

Her work amounts to a trenchant critique of the (commercial and conventional) lies about life that reappeared, then as now, in popular entertainments--especially the sexualized story of true personal love and the correlative reduction of art to an illusion of passionate (and true, and personal) feeling. As a professional manufacturer of such products, L.E.L. had a workaday acquaintance with their fictitious and fabricated nature. She was able to manufacture examples (by the hundreds) that satisfied precisely the expectations of which they were most harshly critical. (“Life” n.p.)

Jump and Stephenson make similar, if less detailed, observations of Landon’s subversion of “conventions” when they analyze various pieces of Landon’s literary-annual production. Speaking of “Grasmere Lake: by a Cockney” and “Sefton Church,” both of which appeared in the 1833 *Fisher’s Drawing-Room Scrapbook*, Jump writes, “Landon [. . .] is clearly using these subversive stories to problematize both her own self-presentation and the conventional demands of her readers” (16). Likewise, in an analysis of Landon’s *Flowers of Loveliness*, Stephenson maintains, “While many of the engravings invite a reading that would present a positive assessment of love and marriage, Landon’s poetical illustrations repeatedly deflate the expectations that would be inevitably raised in the reader by the visual images” (167). Such subversive trends clearly exist in Landon’s personal correspondence, in particular in her expressed thoughts concerning love, money, and marriage. Moreover, as my analysis will demonstrate, Landon seems to have found freedom of expression in her fairy-tale adaptations, in which she is far less subtle in her subversion of romantic and sentimental tropes.^{vi} Like many fairy-tale authors before and after her, Landon ironically deploys the genre of the fairy tale to question the validity of the social conventions surrounding gender and love that the genre is conventionally believed to uphold.

When Letitia Landon discusses marriage and love in her letters, marriage is depicted as a business contract not to be corrupted by emotions like love. Landon actually advises both her friend Rosina Wheeler, who eventually marries Edward Bulwer, and her brother Whittington Landon to marry for the more practical reasons of money and status. In 1825 she advises Wheeler: “No carissima, I will tell you what you must do, marry by all means; and marry well Dieu de l’Amour forbid, I should desire you to change Miss into Mrs. on the strength of a set of diamonds, a brussels lace dress, and a coach and four, but I must say in calculating matrimonial *agreements*, the most important are those which will outlive the honeymoon” (*Letters* 21). Four years later, she reports to Anna Thomson that she gave her brother similar advice: “but when I found he listened with all the attention of interested conviction, when I said a lady’s face should be looked for in the three per cents, and her figure in landed property, I felt safe in the belief that he would deeply enter into the merits of an heiress” (*Letters* 53). While Landon’s family’s need for money could have been the motivation for her advising Whittington to marry for money rather than attraction, Landon had no such reason to advise Wheeler to do the same four years prior, suggesting that this is a sincere expression of how Landon felt on the issue of marriage. However, while the views expressed in these two letters may be surprising when attributed to a poet who so frequently focused on love and romantic relationships, these same views on marriage are quite in keeping with a business-minded woman who has managed to succeed in a male-dominated field and who even negotiates her pay in order to maintain herself and her family members financially. This is especially clear in Landon’s advice to Wheeler, as she explicitly discusses marriage as a business contract when she writes of “calculating matrimonial *agreements*” (*Letters* 21).

Landon's views on marriage seem to be the result of her rather disillusioned views on love. In fact, Landon expresses in her letters a complete dismissal of the reality of the romantic love she so frequently wrote about and for which she was criticized. In 1835, she writes G. Huntly Gordon, "As to falling in love, it seems to me quite out of place except in a book" (*Letters* 131). Although this may have been a clever response to some comment made by Gordon, Landon's opinion regarding the lack of existence and endurance of romantic love is supported by statements from her previously discussed letter to Rosina Wheeler. After making the point that a marriage contract should be based on concerns that "outlive the honeymoon," Landon continues, "I have no faith in the happiness of love matches, marriage should be a treaty in which every concession is duly weighed, every article carefully examined, and how can this be done when every object is seen thro' the magnifying <glass> diminishing or rose coloured glasses of love's observatory" (*Letters* 21). Love for Landon would seem to be both ephemeral and reality distorting, two qualities that make love, in Landon's mind, an inadequate and even disastrous basis for marriage. Money, on the other hand, is both everlastingly necessary and materially present and accountable, and Landon even compares the receipt of a publishers check to the receipt of love letters in an 1829 letter to Anna Thomson, writing of "two pale pink cheques, inscribed with a name at once 'so dreaded and so dear,' (what lover's name will ever make my breast beat as does that of Messrs. Longman?)" (*Letters* 53). Such personal views on love and marriage are very interesting in light of the way Landon adapts fairy tales in her literary annual publications, emphasizing the falsity of the fairy-tale concept of "happily ever after."

"Theresa": Subverting Cinderella's Rags-to-Riches Marriage

While Mary Shelley maintains the "happily-ever-after" marriage plot of the traditional Cinderella tale in "The Invisible Girl," as discussed in the previous chapter, Letitia Elizabeth

Landon's fairy-tale publications in the annuals cause readers to question the ideal of marriage as "happily ever after." Like many twentieth-century feminist fairy tales, Landon's Cinderella tale, titled "Theresa," disrupts the concept of marital bliss by showcasing what happens after Cinderella makes her rags-to-riches marriage to the prince. Published in 1833, the same year as Shelley's "The Invisible Girl," the peasant Theresa forms a rags-to-riches marriage early on in the tale when she marries the nobleman Count Adalbert while he ironically is isolated in the countryside by his uncle to avoid his making an unseemly betrothal to the dancer Angeline. Not long after the marriage, Adalbert is released from his exile and leaves his peasant-wife to return to Vienna and society. The two are eventually reunited when Theresa's noble father returns to claim, educate, and introduce her as his daughter who was betrothed since birth to Prince Ernest von Hermanstadt, who happens to be Count Adalbert. However, this happy ending is questionable as such because the character of Adalbert is far from the princely ideal and Theresa only reclaims her position as Adalbert's wife after she is revealed to be Baron von Haitzinger's daughter and is transformed by her education in social refinements.

Theresa epitomizes natural and selfless femininity, particularly at the start of the tale before her education and introduction into society. With blonde ringlets, blue eyes, and rosy cheeks, Theresa incarnates the physical ideal of Victorian femininity. And for the narrator, such ideal beauty is inseparable from "the beauties of Nature" (Landon 109); Landon writes,

[Adalbert] met with one of [Nature's] beauties indeed, the loveliest peasant girl that ever "made sunshine in a shady place." A scarlet cloth cap, trimmed with fur, partly covered a profusion of fair hair, which was parted on the soft forehead, and fell in bright and natural ringlets on the neck; her dress was of grey serge, and short enough to shew a foot and ankle [*sic*] such as not even the rude country shoes could disguise; her cheek had the bright beaming crimson of early youth and morning exercise; and her deep blue eyes shone with the vivacity of uncurbed gaiety and unbroken spirits. She came along, bearing a willow basket of wood-strawberries and wild blossoms, with a dancing step, and a lively song on her lips, singing in the very gladness of her heart. (109)

Like a wood nymph, or even a Little Red Riding Hood with her red cap and basket, Theresa is unconsciously genuine and natural when she first encounters Adalbert in the countryside. Theresa is innocent and without pretension, and even her menial station as a peasant becomes attractive, as her peasant dress and shoes display her lovely foot and ankle. As Jennifer Lawson explains in *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Lore*, “The nymph is a highly ambiguous figure. Though sexually desirable, she is usually free of the familial restriction applied to mortal women and can rarely be fully domesticated” (4). Lawson continues, “In a fragment of the *Anacreontea*, Aphrodite and the nymphs both bring to mind flowers, gardens, and blushes” (34). Like characteristics of the mythical Greek nymphs discussed by Lawson, Theresa’s natural “vivacity of uncurbed gaiety and unbroken spirits” is associated with nature, indicated by Landon’s use of “Nature,” “sunshine in a shady place,” “fur,” “wood-strawberries,” and “wild-blossoms,” and with sexual appeal given her dress is “short enough to shew a foot and ankle.” She is also associated with blushing youth, since “her cheek had the bright beaming crimson of early youth and morning exercise,” as well as song (“lively song” and “singing in the very gladness of her heart”). She is, moreover, unrestrained by social mores advising female restraint and decorum as she, with her “dancing steps,” encounters a strange man during her morning walk.

Yet despite her lack of appropriate restraint, Theresa’s giving and kind nature solidifies her natural femininity. When she first encounters Adalbert, Theresa “divided her fruit with the stranger, eagerly pressing the best upon him, in all the frank and earnest good-nature of a child. She was too simple, and too much accustomed to meet with kindness from every one, to be bashful” (Landon 109-10). Her simplicity is further emphasized by her activities: “spinning-wheel of an evening” and “wandering in search of wild-flowers and fruit” (Landon 110).^{vii} Landon describes Theresa as both “generous” (109) and “guileless,” characterized by a

“naturally vivid imagination” that “refines both feeling and manner” (110). Landon further highlights Theresa’s inherent refinement when she asserts, “if the poet’s dream of unsophisticated, yet refined nature, was ever realised, it was in that sweet and innocent maiden” (110). Indeed, Theresa’s virtues cause her guardian, Ursaline, to believe in the possibility of fairy-tale “happily ever after.” As Landon explains, “Though very ignorant, she [Ursaline] had seen something of society beyond their own valley and its peasantry, and at once discovered that the Count was their superior: but the goodness and loveliness of her child entitled her, in the old woman’s eyes, to be a princess at least” (110). Naive, unguarded, innocently friendly, and naturally giving, Theresa falls in love with Count Adalbert without reserve, and once more like a nymph, Theresa forms a union with a mortal (and imperfect) man who does not approach Theresa’s ideal and divine nature.

While literally a prince in disguise, Count Adalbert is a far cry from the ideal man. This is suggested in the first lines of the narrative, in which Adalbert laments, “There are individuals doomed to misfortune, and such is my destiny. There must be, among the general ill-luck, some one who is the unluckiest of them all: I am that one” (Landon 108). The cause of this rather melodramatic lament is Adalbert’s banishment from Vienna to “the old Castle of Aremberg” after his uncle (and presumed guardian) “perceive[ed] the young Count’s predilection for the prettiest dancer that had ever illuminated the horizon of Vienna,” Mademoiselle Angeline (Landon 108-09). Adalbert is described as being “in despair” (Landon 108), “the delinquent,” airing “discontents,” “grumbl[ing],” and “thinking of suicide” when falling asleep only to awake “dreaming of Angeline” (Landon 109). Though Adalbert’s mood is vastly improved by his unplanned encounter with Theresa in the countryside, a new and even more troublesome personality trait is revealed by his relationship with the lovely young woman: his inconstancy.

Landon emphasizes this trait in the first mention of the pair's blossoming romance: "Yet a week had not elapsed before Adalbert thought the said castle very well for a change, and the neighbourhood delightful. The truth is, he had fallen in love—as pleasant a method of passing time in the country as any young gentleman could devise" (109). Landon's punctuation, in particular the dash, qualifies Adalbert's having "fallen in love" by clarifying that this is a transitory, temporary kind of love, reminiscent of his passing love for the dancer Angeline. Loving Theresa is merely a way for Adalbert to pass his time in exile, yet Theresa is unaware of this qualification. Moreover, she is led to believe even more in the permanence of her relationship with Adalbert when he marries her "one whole fortnight" after meeting her (Landon 110).

Yet the fairy-tale concept of love at first sight is quickly undermined in Landon's Cinderella tale. Although "[t]he first three weeks of Adalbert's married life passed very delightfully away," Adalbert's inconstancy ensures that the wedded bliss will not last, as his "previous habits had been ill-fitted to make their present state one of security" (Landon 111). He soon realizes that his illiterate peasant wife's lack of sophistication and "ignorance [. . .] would, as he was aware, have been fertile matter of ridicule in society—ridicule, too, which must have reflected on him. Besides, all the prejudices of ancestry had, from infancy, been grafted on his mind—and he would as soon have thought of throwing his companion into the river [. . .] as of presenting her at Vienna" (Landon 111). Between his concern over how Theresa would cope with being introduced to society and his concern over how her actions and ancestry would reflect badly on his own reputation, Adalbert determines to tell his wife that he is leaving on "important business" but will return, when in actuality he has been recalled to Vienna by his uncle now that Angeline is now safely wed to another (Landon 111). Lying to escape the embarrassing situation

he has created for himself while visiting the country, Adalbert decides to rid himself of the evidence of his folly and return to his life in the city. Moreover, that “he would as soon have thought of throwing his companion into the river [. . .] as of presenting her at Vienna” suggests the extremity of his desire to keep his imprudent marriage hidden from society, implying that he would even kill his peasant wife before acknowledging her position as his wife in front of his social peers and family. Yet Landon asserts that murdering Theresa “would have been the more merciful course” of action than Adalbert’s abrupt abandonment once the “complete novelty” of his rural married life wore off and his banishment ended (111).

However, Landon does not vilify Adalbert. Landon explains Adalbert’s mixed feelings on parting with his peasant wife: “To say he felt no regret, would be doing him scant justice—to say he felt much, would be more than truth” (111). Furthermore, it is not only Adalbert’s selfish desire not to be embarrassed by his wife that causes him to leave her behind in the countryside; Landon describes some of Adalbert’s thought-process: “Once or twice he thought of taking Theresa with him; but from this step he shrank for many reasons, not the least of which was, that a lingering impulse of good forbade his transplanting the pure and beautiful flower to wither and die in the thick and blighting atmosphere of the city; besides, he should often be able to visit Aremberg” (111). While Adalbert does not, it seems, make any effort to return to his peasant bride after he returns to Vienna, his thoughts concerning how his naturally effervescent wife would fare in the city and Vienna society is not incorrect, as Landon later reveals. So, while inconstant, selfish, and even “almost angry that she shewed [*sic*] none of the passionate despair” he expects upon their parting, Adalbert also leaves Theresa in the countryside in part to preserve her natural innocence and beauty (Landon 112).

Ending the tale at this point, with Adalbert's deceitful abandonment of Theresa, would certainly be in keeping with Landon's sentiments regarding the imprudence of marrying for love. However, Landon adds a twist to her rags-to-riches tale that is in keeping with her own views on marriage and yet still offers her young female annual readers a romantic tale that ends in a presumably happy marriage. Reminiscent of Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve's *Beauty and the Beast*, in which the heroine is revealed to be not the merchant's daughter but an adopted daughter of royal and fairy lineage, Landon's tale has Theresa's noble father return to claim her. Theresa's father, the Baron, arrives at the cottage one day as Theresa anxiously awaits Adalbert's return, never guessing that he has indeed abandoned her. Forced into exile but wanting to keep his daughter safe, the Baron had sent Theresa to be raised by his former foster-sister Ursaline in the safety and seclusion of the peasantry; it is only when the Baron learns that he has been absolved of his supposed treachery that he returns to claim his daughter so the two of them can take their place in society. Like Adalbert, however, Theresa's father is alarmed to see that having his daughter raised in simplicity has left her completely uneducated, so for two more years Theresa is kept in seclusion with a French governess and singing professor (Landon 114). Crucially, Theresa must undergo the civilizing process for which European authors like Charles Perrault penned their fairy tales.^{viii} This process alienates Theresa from her natural state of impulsive smiles and innocent sexuality. During her period of education, or rather acculturation, Theresa is taught "the transformation, control, restraint, and concealment of drives and impulses that is demanded of the individual by society" (Elias 189). Theresa and Ursaline keep her marriage to Adalbert a secret from the Baron, and eventually Theresa enters society as a more elegant yet sadder and more thoughtful young noblewoman, a woman unrecognizable from her previously natural self.

Between her marriage and subsequent abandonment and civilizing education, Theresa's experiences have changed her in crucial ways. No longer is she the exuberant, innocent young woman, akin to nature, unguarded in her expression, and expecting only kindness from those around her. Although she still refuses to blame Adalbert for his abandonment of her, finding any possible reason to excuse him of responsibility, Theresa has effectively come of age, and as Landon relates, coming into her womanhood is inextricably associated with grief. Landon writes, "Youth's first acquaintance with sorrow is a terrible thing—before time has taught, what it will surely teach, that grief is our natural portion, at once transitory and eternal" (112). While here "our" could refer to humans in general, Landon suggests that it more specifically references women as she continues in her discussion of the effects abandonment had on Theresa: "her girlhood had passed for ever; she took no pleasure in any of her former pursuits; she had put away childish things; and nothing had arisen to supply their place, save one memory haunted but by one image" (112). Grief is part of coming of age, of leaving behind one's childhood, or in Theresa's case "girlhood," and this grief is caused by heartbreak. Landon thereby indicates that "grief" is woman's "natural portion" and that marriage leads not to "happily ever after," as in fairy tales or popular conceptions of female destiny, but to more grief. Even Ursaline loses faith in the fairy-tale ending she once believed her adopted daughter deserved; Landon writes, "but one fear had taken possession of her mother Ursaline's mind—that the stranger was false; and bitterly did she lament that she had ever intrusted [*sic*] him with the happiness of her precious child" (112).

Theresa's misery is not abated by her return to "perfect seclusion" for the education of a proper noble woman (Landon 114). She finds herself even more isolated than she was previously in her life as a peasant, for Ursaline dies from the stress of keeping Theresa and Adalbert's

marriage a secret, while the Baron keeps his distance from his daughter in order to urge her to devote as much time as possible to her studies. Landon comments on Theresa's state in a vein similar to that noted above:

Treated as a child, offered the amusements and rewards of a child, when her heart was full of *the grief and care of a woman*—hourly she was more and more thrown upon herself [. . .] She soon took an interest in the employments [educational activities, such as learning French] selected for her—they served to divert her attention from a *remembrance* that grew continually more painful. Every step she gained in knowledge, every experience brought by reading or conversation, but served to shew her more fully *the difficulty of her position*.

Love is the destiny of a woman's life, and hers had been sealed on the threshold of existence: it was too late now to change the colour of or alter the past. (114, my emphasis)

Here Landon explicitly connects grief to womanhood, as well as to love, for it was Theresa's "heart [that] was full of the grief and care of a woman." Landon also reaffirms the socio-cultural belief that marriage should be woman's sole aspiration in her assertion that "love is the destiny of a woman's life," yet the love Landon portrays in "Theresa" is not the kind that brings happiness. Loving for Theresa brings misery and grief, and Landon suggests that this is not an uncommon occurrence for the women of her time, writing of the "vows which had the common fate of being kept but by one" (114). Theresa remained true to her vows while Adalbert did not; the result of her faithfulness is the misery and grief of womanhood.

Furthermore, Theresa cannot move forward into her new life, as even her education and refinement only briefly distract her from the events of her past, specifically her time with Adalbert, and eventually reinforces the differences present in her new life. No longer Adalbert's social inferior, Theresa can neither embrace her new position in society as the daughter of a nobleman, nor resume her now socially acceptable marriage to Count Adalbert because she neither knows Adalbert's location nor seems willing to reveal to her father that she married in secret while living with Ursaline. She cannot be like the other young woman of her station

because, as Landon explains, “The difference between herself and those of her own age consisted in this, that they looked to the future, she dwelt upon the past; they hoped, she only remembered” (114). While Theresa’s reunion with her father and resumption of her proper place in society should be a wonderful time of new beginnings, she is instead left “living” in the past, in the remembrance of happiness during her brief time with Adalbert.

When Theresa’s education is complete, she enters society a woman changed by her experiences. She is transformed in both appearance and personality. Theresa is still the lovely, giving young woman she was in the countryside, and she is even still naïve at times because she refuses to accept Adalbert’s inconstancy even three years after his abandonment and is so unaware of her own beauty that she is “utterly unprepared for the sensation she produced on her introduction to society” (Landon 115). But she is now more reserved and sadder than she used to be. Landon explains,

Theresa at twenty more than realised the promise of seventeen; yet it is singular how much the character of her beauty was changed. She had been a glad, bright, buoyant creature, with a cheek like a rose, a mouth radiant with smiles, and the golden curls dancing in sunny profusion over the blushes they shaded. Now her hair and eyes were much darker, her cheek was pale, and the general cast of her face melancholy and thoughtful; her step was still light, but slow—it was urged on no longer by inward buoyancy. (115)

Theresa has lost her effusive, naturally effervescent beauty. She is no longer a child of Nature for she has been transformed into a proper, reserved lady by her heartbreak and education. Notably, her father is happy and “charmed” by the changes in his daughter, as she is now described as “so ethereal, so intellectual [. . .] sad [. . .] self-possess[ed . . .] the perfection of beautiful repose” (Landon 115). Now the noble lady in society, Theresa only remains the same in her “indifferen[ce]” to the “vapid and worthless” activities that surround her, her refusal to condemn

Adalbert for his abandonment of her, and, as will be discussed, her continuing giving and forgiving behavior when she once more encounters Adalbert (Landon 115).

Theresa is introduced to her betrothed, the Prince Ernest von Hermanstadt, only to find that this Prince is her Count Adalbert, who had taken on an assumed name once he was exiled to the countryside. While Theresa “endeavoured to collect her scattered spirits from their first confusion of surprise and delight” and “by a strong effort, recalled her presence of mind,” Adalbert does not recognize his peasant wife in this educated noblewoman, greeting her in a “manner [that] was most gentle, most attentive; but [. . .] that of a perfect stranger” (Landon 116). Landon accounts for Adalbert’s lack of recognition by once more implying his inconstancy and deceit when she notes that Theresa “too deeply treasured [his countenance] for forgetfulness” (116). It is at this point that Theresa for the first time seriously contemplates the circumstances regarding his abandonment of her; “her head dizzy with surprise and sorrow,” Theresa realizes “that Ernest’s absence from his country had been entirely voluntary—that she had known him under a feigned name—therefore, from the very first he had been deceiving her” (Landon 116-17). Yet Theresa quickly excuses Adalbert’s lack of recognition with an observation of how changed her appearance and manner are from when he had known her as his wife: “I marvel that he knew me not?—it were far greater marvel had he known me” (Landon 117). And while Theresa briefly contemplates revenge—“What if I could make him love me now? and then let him feel only the faintest part of what I have felt!” (Landon 117)—this is quickly forgotten as she “in vain sought to hide herself from the truth, that she felt a keen pleasure in observing how much more suitable her new self was to her former lover” (Landon 117). Now that she is no longer the illiterate peasant, Theresa sees herself as a much better match for Adalbert.

Adalbert agrees with Theresa's assessment of the couple's relationship. He is "delighted with the melancholy and thoughtful style of her conversation" (Landon 117).^{ix} Significantly, "melancholy" and "thoughtful" are adjectives used to describe Theresa only after she is changed by her education and experience of romantic tragedy, suggesting Adalbert prefers the new sophisticated, sad, and civilized Theresa to the natural and lively Theresa he wed and abandoned in the countryside. This is confirmed when Adalbert again professes his love to Theresa. But this time, he also offers Theresa truth, "acknowledg[ing] to her his marriage with a peasant" (Landon 117).

Penitent and ashamed of his previous actions, Adalbert now "bitterly deplored the misery he must have caused the young and forsaken creature whose happiness he had destroyed by such thoughtless cruelty" (Landon 117-18), and he now determines that "the sacrifice" of his happiness now, in his inability to marry his true love Theresa, "may well be held an atonement" for his previous cruelty (Landon 118). Yet while Landon writes that "a deep and true feeling elevates and purifies the heart into which it enters" and that "[h]is passion for Theresa brought back his better nature," the reader cannot help but think that Adalbert's current (and abrupt) regret and misery are related more to his inability to marry the woman he deems his social equal than to any newfound shame regarding his abandonment of a peasant wife years before. Indeed, Landon references Adalbert's "spoilt" nature and previous confusion of "vanity and interest for love" immediately before asserting Adalbert's moral transformation (Landon 117). Marrying the new Theresa, who has turned down several previous marriage proposals, would be quite the social coup, appealing to Adalbert's ego and concern for his reputation, both of which were strongly demonstrated when he abandoned Theresa in the countryside.

It is only when the Prince finally reveals the truth to his betrothed, telling her of his previous marriage to a peasant girl that will inhibit his marriage to his new beloved, that Theresa finally reveals herself to be his peasant wife. Landon thereby ends her tale with a happy ending, as “Confession and forgiveness followed of course” (118). Landon concludes the tale with the following sentence: “Still, it is but justice to state, that Theresa never had any further occasion to regret that her husband’s heart was once lost and twice won” (118). While questions concerning Adalbert’s change of heart may linger, as suggested in Landon’s need to assert explicitly that Theresa did not “regret” forgiving Adalbert’s inconstancy, the rags-to riches tale is lost, as the new union between the noble Adalbert and noble Theresa is a riches-to-riches tale. Admittedly, Theresa’s restoration to her noble position in society is in keeping with the classic Cinderella tales written by Charles Perrault and the Grimm brothers. But Landon’s Cinderella story is no longer a romantic love affair, as not only is the marriage that neither Theresa nor Adalbert “regrets” one between two equally wealthy and aristocratic individuals, but it is also a marriage arranged by their parents at birth. Landon uses Adalbert’s shame regarding his uneducated wife and subsequent abandonment of her to suggest that the rags-to-riches fantasy of the Cinderella fairy tale, in which the prince falls in love with and weds an unknown girl who spends her days cleaning and in rags, is simply a fantasy that cannot be realized in her readers’ reality. At the same time, she seriously questions the reality of the figure of the noble and charming prince, showing him to be far more flawed and inconstant than a woman, or more specifically a wife, might wish or expect him to be.

“The Sleeping Beauty”: Rejecting Marriage as Woman’s Happy Destiny

Landon’s 1837 poem “The Sleeping Beauty” is her most obvious revision of a fairy tale, namely “Sleeping Beauty,” as well as her most explicit critique of marriage as “happily ever

after.” A letter Landon wrote to Frederic Shoberl on May 12, 1836 indicates that Landon named the print and therefore intended to rewrite this specific fairy tale:

Dear Sir

A violent attack of influenza has prevented my before answering your note. I would call the print “The dream of the Sleeping Beauty.” This changes it completely—and I think a very fanciful and graceful poem may be founded on the charming old fairy tale—you shall have it almost at once.

Your obliged

L E L (142)

In this “fanciful and graceful” poem, Landon emphasizes how the reality of marriage cannot compare to the idealized concept of which the princess, and Victorian women in general, dream. “The Sleeping Beauty” directly questions the concept of happily ever after in marriage, suggesting that a young girl’s dreams of an idealized marriage will never be fulfilled as the reality can never live up to the ideal.

Landon begins her poem with a focus on the young woman’s enforced stasis.^x From the first line of the poem, it is clear that the woman is trapped in sleep, although it may be sweet as “honey”: “Sleep with honey-dews hath bound her” (Landon 263). Such a description is reinforced later by Landon’s reference to Beauty’s sleeping chamber as a “sweet prison” (264). “Bound” in the “prison” of sleep, Landon describes how Sleeping Beauty’s situation is due to “words of power,” or an enchantment (263). She then goes on to eerily detail the almost haunting aspect of the unchanging castle, Beauty’s chamber, and Beauty herself, as “All is as before” (Landon 263).

Unchanging and still as the rest of the palace, Sleeping Beauty is described in “rosy shades” of red, suggestive of a budding sexuality waiting to bloom in marriage. This emphasis on the color red is an element Landon added to the tale, as Perrault only briefly mentions his Sleeping Beauty’s coloring in order to assert her continued life in “Sleeping Beauty in the

Wood” (1697): “The trance had not taken away the lovely color of her complexion. Her cheeks were delicately flushed, her lips like coral. Her eyes, indeed, were closed, but her gentle breathing could be heard, and it was therefore plain that she was not dead.” Landon takes this simple “flush” further, as is evident at the conclusion of the third stanza,

On her cheek the *rose* is breathing
 With its softest *red*;
 And the *auburn* hair is wreathing
 Round the graceful head:
 Changeth not that *rosy* shade,
 Stirreth not that *auburn* braid. (263-64, my emphasis)

Of the six lines describing the physical appearance of Sleeping Beauty, five include a reference to red, such as “rose,” “red,” “auburn,” and “rosy.” Beauty is in the bloom of youth although asleep, awaiting her first experience of love and passion, an experience to come with her marriage to the prince who awakens her.

Yet the color red could be interpreted as being symbolic of more than Beauty’s budding sexuality waiting to bloom in marriage. The reference to “rose” is also a reference to the Grimm brothers’ version of Sleeping Beauty, “Brier Rose” (1812). Furthermore, Molly Clark Hillard convincingly argues that John Keats’s “The Eve of St. Agnes” (1819) took “Sun, Moon, and Talia,” from the Italian fairy-tale collection by Giambattista Basile, *The Pentamerone* (1634), as one of its source texts. This first version of “Sleeping Beauty” is far more sexual in nature than those written by Perrault and the Grimms. It is suggested that this Sleeping Beauty is raped, for Talia is impregnated by a passing king while in an enchanted sleep caused by a splinter; she bears twins while still in her enchanted sleep and is eventually awakened when her children suck out the splinter while attempting to nurse, mistaking her finger for her breast. Similarly, as Hillard points out, in “The Eve of St. Agnes” it can be argued that Porphyro rapes Madeline while she dreams of marrying him; she “awakes in despair to find herself violated” while

“Prophyro promises to take her away and marry her” (83). Both Madeline and Talia are first introduced to sex while asleep, and their loss of virginity is also associated with the color red. Moreover, because Landon chooses to highlight Sleeping Beauty’s dreams, it is plausible that she is building not only from the classic Sleeping Beauty tales by Perrault and the Grimm brothers, but also from Keats’ (possible) revision of the more erotic version of “Sleeping Beauty.”

Significantly, although the palace is enchanted and still, Sleeping Beauty is not alone as she is given sweet dreams by a visiting fairy for a “moonlit hour” each night (264). As with the color red, this is a detail from Perrault’s “Sleeping Beauty in the Wood” that Landon has emphasized in her retelling. In Perrault’s tale, Sleeping Beauty’s dreams are literally an afterthought, mentioned in an aside after she awakens to her prince: “It seems (although the story says nothing about it) that the good fairy had beguiled her long slumber with pleasant dreams.” Landon focuses on these dreams in the two stanzas following Beauty’s rosy appearance. She explains how a fairy “Cometh [. . .] to that sweet prison / For the sleeper’s sake” (Landon 264). Landon spends a full stanza detailing the quality of the dreams supplied by the fairy:

Then she [the fairy] calls fair spirits nigh her,
 Each one with a dream,
 So with sweet thoughts to supply her,
 And those shadows seem
 Real as life, but that each vision
 Hath a lovelier ray,
 More ethereal and elysian
 Than earth’s common day.
 Human thoughts and feelings keep
 Life in that enchanted sleep. (264)

As this stanza suggests, the dreams the fairy “supplies” Sleeping Beauty with are idealistic, more exquisite (“ethereal”) and blissful (“elysian”) than real life (“common day”), although these dreams appear “Real as life” to the sleeping woman. These realistic yet idealistic dreams sustain

Sleeping Beauty through her enchantment by provoking “Human thoughts and feelings.” Yet these “sweet” dreams may, as Landon suggests, prove troublesome once the woman awakes.

Landon suggests in the final stanza that Sleeping Beauty, waiting for a passionate love affair and sustained by idealistic dreams, will be disappointed upon awakening to real life with the prince. As Landon explains, the traditional “gentle moral” of the Sleeping Beauty tale is that “Love” will awaken “woman’s heart” like it, in the form of the prince, awakens Sleeping Beauty, after which Sleeping Beauty and women in general will experience the happiest time of their lives (“life’s loveliest part”), presumably in marriage (264). This moral is in keeping with that which concludes Charles Perrault’s “The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood”:

Many a girl has waited long
For a husband brave or strong;
But I'm sure I never met
Any sort of woman yet
Who could wait a hundred years,
Free from fretting, free from fears.

Now, our story seems to show
That a century or so,
Late or early, matters not;
True love comes by fairy-lot.
Some old folk will even say
It grows better by delay.

Yet this good advice, I fear,
Helps us neither there nor here.
Though philosophers may prate
How much wiser 'tis to wait,
Maids will be a sighing still—
Young blood must when young blood will!

While Landon makes no mention of Perrault’s suggestion of female impatience in the first stanza, her stated traditional moral is in keeping with Perrault’s assertion that women will eventually meet their “true loves” and essentially live happily the rest of their lives, as love “grows better by delay.”

But while Perrault effectively asserts that good things come to those who wait, and that youthful impatience is folly, Landon subverts this moral at the end of her version of “Sleeping Beauty.” Landon casts the classic happily-ever-after ending in doubt with the last lines of the poem: “Ah, the heart which it must waken, / Soon it will mourn its rest forsaken” (264). With these two lines, Landon rejects the “happily ever after” of love and marriage, as the reality of love and marriage will have Sleeping Beauty, and women in general, wanting to return to sleep and dreams. As far as Landon is concerned, the best days of her Sleeping Beauty’s life come during her sleep, before the arrival of her “love” and marriage to the prince. Certainly, however, Madeline’s rude awakening by Porphyro did not live up to her St. Agnes Eve dream of Porphyro as her future husband, and both Madeline and Talia, as well as Perrault’s Sleeping Beauty, find no easy path to marital bliss, as Madeline must run away in the night with Porphyro for an elopement, Talia and her children are almost killed by the king’s jealous wife, and Perrault’s Sleeping Beauty must avoid being eaten by her ogress mother-in-law. In fact, of the possible hypotexts discussed here, only the Grimm brothers’ Brier Rose discovers “happily ever after” upon awakening from her slumber. Whether rape, jealous wife, hungry mother-in-law, or simply overly idealistic dreams, one thing Landon does not leave in doubt is that her Sleeping Beauty will wish to return to her sleep and pleasant dreams, rather than experience the reality that awaits her upon her awakening. This can also be safely assumed given the way Landon’s other works deconstruct the idealized romantic love that the classic tales perpetuate.

Landon, like Keats, does not pursue the tale to its happy end, instead leaving her readers with the expectation of Beauty’s disillusionment upon awakening. Discussing a non-fairy-tale literary-annual poem written by Landon, Ledbetter makes an assertion that is applicable to “The Sleeping Beauty”: “Marriage is a bitter pill after the promise of joyful love in her youth” (21).^{xi}

Ledbetter's assertion requires the substitution of only one word to sum up Landon's moral in "Sleeping Beauty": Marriage is a bitter pill after the promise of joyful love in her *dreams*. The dream of marriage is shown to be sweeter than the real experience, suggesting the idea of an ideal, fairy-tale marriage is an illusion that leaves women disappointed in reality.

It is also interesting to note that Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes" was intended specifically for men—his friend Richard Woodhouse comments in a letter that Keats's revision of the poem, (arguably) indicating the rape more explicitly, "will render the poem unfit for ladies, and indeed scarcely to be mentioned to them among the 'things that are'" to which he reports Keats replied that "He does not want ladies to read his poetry: that he writes for men (qtd. in Hillard 84)—while Landon's revision suggests many similarities but is intended specifically for women readers of the literary annual. Yet, significantly, whereas Keats's revision of "Sleeping Beauty" is subtle and admittedly debatable, Landon's revision is clear: Sleeping Beauty will not find happiness upon awakening.

Tragic Romance & Fairy-Tale Disillusionment

Richard Cronin asserts in "Felicia Hemans, Letitia Landon, and 'Lady's Rule,'" "Landon's poems tell over and over again the same story. A young woman is loved, returns the love, is abandoned, and dies" (225). And this is certainly an accurate representation of many of Landon's poems. Yet I argue that Landon's disillusionment with love and marriage can be seen even here, in her more conventional works, because Landon seems incapable of imagining love existing in real life to form a successful basis for marriage; instead, lovers, even those that seem to love truly, must die and/or otherwise be separated by circumstances. If the pair truly love one another, they may share a grave and be united in death and/or the afterlife, but true love simply cannot succeed in the real world. As was demonstrated in the two fairy-tale revisions discussed

above, inconstancy, deception, vanity, and disappointed expectations all impede the achievement of “happily ever after.” Moreover, the only successful marriage depicted is one of convenience: Theresa finds happiness with Adalbert only after it is revealed that their betrothal and therefore marriage was arranged in infancy. Notably, wealth also characterizes this marriage. Ledbetter writes of one of Landon’s other literary-annual contributions, specifically “Remembrance” from the 1837 *Keepsake*, “To L. E. L. a bride could expect only misery after marriage, no matter how idyllic its beginnings” (21). Life cannot become more idyllic than at the happy romantic conclusion of a classic fairy tale, when love unites a couple in marriage,^{xii} yet Landon casts this idyll as an illusion. Such disillusionment is entirely in keeping with the sentiments expressed in her personal letters: Love only exists in fiction and therefore it is better marry for money and status.

In addition, it is notable that such disillusionment is also in keeping with Landon’s experience of the literary marketplace. Publishing her first poem in her teens, Landon gained and maintained her literary career not through impulsive poetic inspiration, but through hard work, a demanding and grueling schedule, and keen self-marketing.^{xiii} Like marriage, publishing for Landon was not about love but about money; as most scholars agree, Landon wrote to support herself and her family. So while she may have begun writing out of love for her art, at some point love turned to necessity and writing became less of a pleasure and more of a job. Like her *Sleeping Beauty*, Landon was eventually awakened to disillusionment.

PART TWO

CHAPTER THREE: “THE WEDDING WAS HAPPILY BROKEN OFF”: SKIPPING THE MARRIAGE AND MURDERS IN ANNE ISABELLA THACKERAY RITCHIE’S “BLUEBEARD’S KEYS”

[F]airy tales are inevitably shaped by the historical period in which they are published and must be viewed through a sociopolitical lens. Indeed, many historians and literary critics envisage fairy tales as documents marked by social and economic conditions. (Talairach-Vielmas, “Beautiful Maidens” 272)

In addition to writing subversive fairy tales in the literary annuals marketed to middle-class women consumers, nineteenth-century British women writers also communicated proto-feminist messages in fairy-tale collections. Significantly, these fairy tales were not intended solely for children; Mary de Morgan wrote for a dual-audience of children and adults while Anne Thackeray Ritchie wrote her fairy tales explicitly for adults. Despite this difference in intended audiences, both of these women used their fairy tales to critique contemporary ideals of femininity as well as the glorification of marriage as the apotheosis of Victorian women’s lives. Both authors did so by blurring the distinction between the feminine and unfeminine woman as well as by problematizing the fairy-tale marriage-plot conclusion to demonstrate that women may be happier single than wed without love.

In this chapter and the next, I will be analyzing the fairy tales of Anne Thackeray Ritchie and Mary de Morgan. These women authors share many similarities: both grew up in intellectual families, both specifically wrote fairy tales that appealed to adults (although de Morgan also wrote for child audiences as well), and both published fairy tales during the 1870s.¹ Furthermore, Ritchie’s “Bluebeard’s Keys” (1874) and de Morgan’s “The Seeds of Love” (1877) respond to contemporary debates on marriage and women’s role in society. In order to situate these two tales within this socio-cultural context, it is necessary to preface these chapters with an overview of this debate as it played out in various British periodicals during the 1870s.

The Debate Over Marriage in the 1870s

When the 1851 census revealed that the number of women in Great Britain surpassed the number of men by five hundred thousand, it became clear that there were too few men and too many women for all to settle themselves into married life (*Census 4*).ⁱⁱ What to do with these so-called “redundant” women became a topic of much debate, causing Victorians to question the long-held idea that marriage was the natural destiny of all women.ⁱⁱⁱ Indeed, by the 1861 census, two million women were reported to be “engaged in independent industry,” prompting demands for more educational and professional opportunities for women (Amberley 99). As the fight for women’s rights continued into the 1870s, and these “redundant” women moved out of the domestic sphere and found fulfilling lives outside of matrimony, many writers felt the need to defend the institution of marriage.

Critics often defended marriage by belittling single life. As suffragist Julia Wedgwood explained in her 1872 essay “Female Suffrage in its Influence on Married Life,” opponents of women’s political rights feared that such rights “could not help giving a certain dignity to single life which would, in the long run, tell as a slur upon marriage” (362). Indeed, there were many who believed that married life was the only “dignified” life available to women. For instance, an 1878 essay from *The Examiner*, “Matrimony as a Means of Livelihood,” promotes the ideal of marriage as female destiny while expressing pity for those unfortunate women who cannot find husbands:

There is no particular misfortune to such girls in their depending upon marriage, provided they do marry; the misery is that so many of them must perforce remain single and be sooner or later left to provide for themselves, weighed down, not only by the social difficulties in their way and their own incompetence to undertake any fairly remunerative labour of a ‘not menial’ description, but by the depressing sense that providence has dealt sternly with them in refusing them their one fitting means of livelihood, matrimony. (846)

The author argues that there is nothing wrong with women's dependence on marriage, instead insisting that it is merely unfortunate that some girls must be miserable because they have been unlucky enough not to find a husband. Citing female "incompetence," the author suggests that women are only suited to the "profession" of wife, leaving marriage "their *one fitting means* of livelihood" (my emphasis). Simply stated, the author insists that the idealization of the institution of marriage is not the problem. Likewise, even critics who acknowledge that the "dependence of women on marriage [. . .] taints the female character," also state that unmarried women "are doomed to single life," and therefore are to be pitied ("Mrs. Lynn Linton on Women" 597). Such viewpoints pressured women to conform to patriarchal notions of ideal femininity in order to improve their chances of obtaining the socially mandated goal of matrimony.

By the 1870s, articles in popular English periodicals such as *Bow Bells* and *The Saturday Review* extolled the virtues of the "womanly" woman. As explained in an 1870 essay, "Womanliness," the "more especially" feminine virtues include "patience, self-sacrifice, tenderness, quietness, with some others, of which modesty is one" (167). The author also states, "[T]he most womanly among women [. . .] has those virtues in greatest abundance and in the highest *perfection*" (167, my emphasis). Perfection, the achievement of the ideal, was the true sign of femininity. As one women's rights supporter wrote in "Modern Views about Women" (1870), "Angelic strength and serenity and self-devotion are expected of women; and as even the best of them are not quite angels (though surely some of them are nearly so), much individual misery is caused by the sense of failure [. . . a] woman feels when she has only just not fulfilled the impossible expectations" (661).

Yet of all these feminine virtues, self-sacrifice appears to receive the greatest attention, as it does in Mary de Morgan's "The Seeds of Love," and, to a lesser extent, in Anne Thackeray

Ritchie's "Bluebeard's Keys." For example, the 1870 essay "Womanliness" describes feminine self-sacrifice as "heroic," arguing that woman "has done her best work, and earned her highest place" through her "exercise" of "unselfishness" (167), while an 1876 essay, "The Womanly Woman," praises "that sweet submission which is one of the distinctive feminine charms" (404). That same year, Eliza Lynn Linton praised the old maid who, "bless[ed with] self-sacrifice," is a friend to wives and mothers although she herself "has no personal part in the great stream of life" ("Old Maids" 483). Some article contributors even depicted the act of marrying as feminine sacrifice, as the bride renounces her familiar life to begin a new one as her husband's helpmate. For instance, the author of the 1870 article "Wife and Husband" states, "She [the bride] lays upon the altar her liberty and all the hours of all her days, to be used for him and for his offspring thenceforth while they shall live" (165). While the author later insists that "the gift of her whole life [. . .] is not esteemed a sacrifice by a loving woman," the sacrificial imagery cannot be ignored (165). Such depictions suggest that women must be willing to sacrifice their lives in order to marry.

In contrast to the "womanly" woman, the "strong-minded" (or "elevated") woman is depicted as being independent and undisciplined. Indeed, as one author put it, she embodies "[p]assionate ambition, virile energy, the love of strong excitement, self-assertion, fierceness, and an undisciplined temper" ("Womanliness" 167). This type of woman, who desires something more than marriage and motherhood, is warned in "Young Ladies as They Are" (1870) that this desire for more may leave them single whether they wish it or not:

Of course it is open to a woman to say that she does not care for marriage: but if she does, she should be warned that a doctor of law or physic might find a dangerous rival even in an unimproved, unsophisticated Rosebud, who with an imperfectly developed intellect hangs with breathless interest over the stories, and is actually capable of admiring the poetry, of the *Young Ladies' Journal*. (802)

The “Rosebud” the author speaks of is the type of woman who existed before the women’s movement, who reads the *Young Ladies’ Journal* and “desire[s] to be told that [she] look[s] nice and write[s] prettily, and [who is] busy with fancy work, music, and novels, until ‘he’ appears and absorbs all [her] thoughts” (801). The author insists that while the educated, professional, “strong-minded” woman may look down upon such frivolous Rosebuds, men would much prefer to marry the Rosebud, concluding the essay by stating, “We are sure that any unmarried man who reads this description [. . .] will determine to gather a rosebud while he may” (802). However, not everyone agreed on the undesirability of the “strong-minded” woman. For example, an 1873 article in *Bow Bells* argues against the idea that “strong-minded” women are unmarriageable, stating that there are “hundreds” of men, like Robert Browning, Robert Hall, James Parton, and John Stuart Mill, who are happily married to “highly-educated” and “distinguished” women (“Sweet Ignorance” 269).

Some commentators also questioned the desirability of marriage for both “womanly” and “strong-minded” women, warning of the dangers inherent in unhappy marriages. A number of articles stress the need to know one’s spouse before marriage,^{iv} while others assert that a happy marriage can only be based on true affection.^v Victorian marriage was to be based on love and affection, rather than the more mercenary motives of improved social status and financial security. As an anonymous author writes in the 1871 article “Happy Marriages—How They Happen and How They Do Not Happen,” “marriages are happy when they take place from pure love, between two persons who are already thoroughly acquainted with each other, and who are quite content with each other as they then are. First, Love must be the motive” (132). Furthermore, as several contemporary writers assert,^{vi} knowledge and love of one’s future spouse

was not only essential to a happy marriage but was also particularly important to the women who would be completely dependent upon their husbands.

Yet courtship rituals made it difficult for both men and women to truly get to know their future spouses. In an 1871 article titled “Before and After Marriage,” the author describes courtship as “conscious acting” on the part of the man, who in order to woo his future bride must “seem [. . . to be] the slave of her smallest wish” (44). The author goes on to describe “[m]arriage as the dropping of the curtain,” as “[t]he attentions cannot continue,” concluding, “The arrangement is cruel to women” (44). This conscious male performance in courtship, in which the man follows a social script to woo his chosen bride, suggests a lack of true affection and therefore the insincerity of professed love, a topic de Morgan addresses in “The Seeds of Love” through the deception of the fairy Love and the prince’s performance of a love he does not feel. Other articles published in *The London Journal* (1877) and *The London Reader* (1878)^{vii} also discuss the disillusionment that follows the wedding, while an 1871 article by the pseudonymous A Matron asserts, “The life of a contented, useful ‘old maid’ is infinitely to be preferred to that of a wretched, heart-broken wife” (“Advice” 92). Julia Wedgwood proves this point when she gives an example of leniently punished spousal abuse; she tells of “a case in 1870, in which a man, for whom any length of incarceration would evidently have been only a boon to his hardworking wife, and who had thrown vitriol on her clothes because she refused to live with him, was recommended to mercy by the jury on the ground that he had been influenced by his intense affection for her!” (“Female Suffrage” 370). With marriages based on lies, abuse, and feminine self-sacrifice, single life was increasingly depicted as an attractive option for women in the 1870s. This is particularly the case in Ritchie’s “Bluebeard’s Keys.”

Rejecting Marriage in “Bluebeard’s Keys”

Indeed, because the fairy-tale genre overtly hinges upon marriage—promising, as it does, women happiness if they conform to the feminine ideal and accept their dependence on men—it becomes an ideal vehicle for Ritchie to voice her opinion through a reworking of the tale. The use of the fairy-tale genre allows Ritchie to focus on the marriage plot she seemed to be at pains to come to terms with—the better to transform and adapt it to the world of Victorian reality. (Talairach-Vielmas, “Beautiful Maidens” 277-78)

Anne Thackeray Ritchie, unlike many of the authors discussed here, has been recognized by scholars as a Victorian fairy-tale author. “Nevertheless, despite the renown she achieved during her own life, Ritchie’s work is relatively neglected and unexamined today” (Barzilai 69). Although often overshadowed by the literary accomplishments of her father, William Makepeace Thackeray, no discussion of the proto-feminist fairy-tale tradition in nineteenth-century Great Britain would be complete without some discussion of Ritchie’s fairy tales. These fairy tales are clear rewritings of classic French and English tales and were originally published in *Cornhill Magazine* between 1866 and 1874 before being published in two fairy-tale collections: *Five Old Friends and a Young Prince* (1868) and *Bluebeard’s Keys and Other Stories* (1874). Moreover, an analysis of Ritchie’s “socially acceptable feminism” provides an ideal transition from the less overtly subversive fairy tales written by Anna Jameson, Mary Shelley, and Letitia Landon to the tales written by Mary de Morgan, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Egerton (Mourão “Delicate Balances” 75).

Because much has already been written on Ritchie’s life and fairy tales, I will limit my introduction to a review of the relevant scholarship necessary to set up my analysis of “Bluebeard’s Keys.” Andrzej Diniejko succinctly describes Ritchie’s revision of classic fairy tales: “She also modernised classical fairy tales, such as *Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Sleeping Beauty*, setting them in the Victorian time, and replacing magical elements for realistic

ones. In her fiction Annie provided a rather mild picture of Victorian domestic life, but she did not avoid showing the restricted condition of women in Victorian society.” Diniejko’s final point, regarding Ritchie’s concern for the situation of women, is emphasized by other scholars. For instance, Laurence Talairach-Vielmas asserts, “Ritchie was much concerned with the social condition of Victorian women and the few choices offered to women outside marriage” (“Rewriting” 264). She later connects this concern to Ritchie’s choice of genre, writing, “Because the literary fairy-tale is a genre hinged upon marriage that highlights the civilizing process—teaching women to remain in their ‘sphere’ and to wait passively for their prince—the reworking of fairy tales provides interesting literary material for Ritchie to probe gender construction and feminine identity” (“Rewriting” 266).

Ritchie is able to question gender roles precisely because she rejects the fantastical to show how the action of fairy tales can reflect “contemporary cultural mores” (Sumpter 65), although Caroline Sumpter also notes that “Thackeray’s allusions became acceptable within the whimsical frame of the fairy-tale” (77). Sumpter argues, “Thackeray replaces fairy-tale simplicity with social observation that is both wry and perceptive, producing a winning formula that creates realism within fantasy and uneasy social commentary within engaging popular fiction” (78). In doing so,

Anne Thackeray’s short story [“Little Red Riding Hood”] manipulates the “traditional” fairy tale’s ideological codes and presents a much more equivocal discussion of Victorian marriage and courtship rituals. In this text, Anne Thackeray produces a subtle critique of the convention of the passive heroine in both the fairy tale and the Victorian novel. While the generic codes of the fairy tale are challenged, so are the conventions of realism and the reader is encouraged to question women’s power over the courtship process. (Sumpter 67)

Although Sumpter is referring specifically to Ritchie’s “Little Red Riding Hood,” this analysis can be extrapolated to her other fairy tales, including “Bluebeard’s Keys,” in which the heroine

asserts herself to terminate her betrothal. Moreover, Sumpter's use of the word "subtle" to describe Ritchie's social critique is repeated by other scholars in their discussion of Ritchie's feminism.

Scholars of Ritchie's fairy tales consistently note that her brand of proto-feminism is "subtle." Talairach-Vielmas states, "In fact, neither conformist nor radically feminist, her writings display constant tensions" ("Rewriting" 264). In another article, she suggests Ritchie hides her feminism under "conservative trimmings," arguing, "Ritchie reappropriates the fairy-tale motifs and plot patterns for feminist claims: under its conservative trimmings, her fairy tale ["Beauty and the Beast"] does point out women's limited choices outside marriage" ("Beautiful Maidens" 282). Shuli Barzilai similarly notes the subtle nature of Ritchie's proto-feminism: "Although situated within the Victorian establishment, Ritchie continually protests against and challenges that establishment. She does so, however, without beating kettledrums to announce her divergence and defiance" (71). Yet although scholars agree that Ritchie's social critique is subtle rather than overt, they also agree that her novels, short fiction, and non-fiction essays provide evidence of her central concern regarding the situation of women within Victorian society and her subsequent questioning of gender ideology, the idealization of marriage, and the lack of opportunities outside of marriage for women.^{viii}

Ritchie's "subtle version of feminism" also is discussed in Heidi Anne Heiner's introduction to a collection of Ritchie's fairy tales (4). Heiner explains,

While most of the stories, at least on the surface, represent and uphold prevalent Victorian attitudes, Ritchie's subtle version of feminism can be found throughout, especially in the secondary characters, such as the aforementioned Miss Williamson, a happy and fulfilled spinster, who is interested in the romantic adventures of the young but obviously prefers her own single existence. Marriage isn't always the source of "happily ever after." Ritchie offers a few "contented ever afters" instead. Still, most of the subversive text is minimal, almost invisible, since Ritchie was not a crusader and also firmly believed and supported some of

the conservative attitudes that appear in her literature. (4)

The proto-feminist nature of Ritchie's fairy tales is not immediately apparent, but the "subversive text" is not always "minimal," as the following analysis of "Bluebeard's Keys" will demonstrate. However, the proto-feminism of "Bluebeard's Keys" is most clearly revealed during a conversational interlude between Miss Williamson and her companion H. It is this conversation that emphasizes Ritchie's subversive point in the novella, that for Fanny and Barbi, "[m]arriage isn't [. . .] the source of 'happily ever after'" but that their separate single lives are examples of "contented ever afters."

Before continuing, it is important to clarify the relationship between Miss Williamson and H. and the way in which this relationship contributes to a subversion of classic fairy tales. Miss Williamson is a spinster, and her companion H. is a widow. As the source(s) of all of the fairy tales that Ritchie relates, the two seem to affirm the traditional association between fairy tales and an aged female source, similar to Perrault's Mother Goose or the Grimms' peasant storyteller Dorothea Viehmann. Indeed, Nina Auerbach and U. C. Knoepfelmacher assert, "Ritchie's Miss Williamson, though a genteel Victorian lady, is this figure's [Mother Goose or Dame Bunch] latter-day incarnation" (14). But as Barzilai explains, there is more to be inferred from this relationship. Barzilai writes, "The two women exemplify what may be called, albeit anachronistically, an alternative lifestyle. They have been sharing homes and traveling together for many contented years. [. . .] In short, 'We' [they] form an enduring household unit" (80). She continues,

To be sure, Ritchie describes a perfectly conventional Victorian arrangement: a pair of respectable, middle-class, unmarried women sharing their lives and interests, providing stability and companionship for one another, and sometimes even raising or caring for young children together. Nevertheless, what Ritchie also steadily, subversively, shows are other ways of living happily outside of the heterosexual coordinates—one man and one woman—that structure conventional

fairy tales and other fictions. (Barzilai 81-82)

Thus, although these two women are significant to an understanding of the proto-feminism expressed in Ritchie's "Bluebeard's Keys," they also serve to distribute this proto-feminism throughout Ritchie's fairy tales because they are consistently present as an example of a happy and fulfilling life beyond the bounds of marriage.

Published in 1874, Anne Thackeray Ritchie's "Bluebeard's Keys" appears entirely conservative and traditional until the reader reaches Part II. Up until this moment, Ritchie's revision of Perrault's "Bluebeard" is largely faithful in terms of key events: the heroine, Fanny, is betrothed (although, notably, not wed) to the mysterious and brooding Bluebeard-figure, the Marquis Octavio Barbi, who refuses to discuss his past and warns Fanny not to open a certain locked chest. The chest, like the forbidden chamber in Perrault's "Bluebeard," holds the secrets of Barbi's past marriages. Fanny finds the key to the chest while Barbi is away, and she rushes to open the chest in the hopes that it will allay her fears and concerns regarding her upcoming marriage to the marquis. Inside the chest, Fanny discovers letters and clothing belonging to Barbi's first two wives. The letters reveal that Barbi was a bigamist, wedding a noble woman in Rome after inheriting his title even though he already had a wife in the country. Worse, however, is the letter from his first wife detailing how his sin of bigamy weighed on her, resulting in her determination to commit suicide and thereby release Barbi from their marriage. At the conclusion of this suicide note is a statement from Barbi's second wife, indicating that she has read this letter and therefore has knowledge of his bigamy; she, too, dies soon afterwards from "shame and a broken heart" (Ritchie 221). As Fanny is reading this final letter, her sister Anne announces Barbi's arrival. Like Perrault's text, the key becomes stained with blood, but in this tale it is Fanny's blood rather than the blood of Bluebeard's previous wives. This occurs when

Barbi angrily grabs Fanny's hand to retrieve the key to the chest, accidentally causing a ring to cut Fanny. Finally, as Barbi rages, the two sisters lock themselves in a room and call out the window for help. This first part of the tale ends with the arrival of two brothers, not of Fanny and Anne but religious Brothers of Pieta^{ix} who arrive to escort Barbi to a funeral procession.

Part II begins with a conversation between Ritchie's narrator, Miss Williamson, and her companion, H.; it is at this point that the subversive nature of this Bluebeard tale is revealed. When H. complains that the tale of Fanny and Barbi seems incomplete, Miss Williamson's response is decisive:

I told her that I was surprised that, with all her experience of life, she should imagine that things did come out straight, or that people ever extricated themselves from their difficulties. [. . .] I answered gravely that the point of my story was, that they did *not* marry. Most stories end with a wedding, the climax of mine was, that the wedding was happily broken off. H., who was in a teasing mood, laughed and said, "that if this was my ideal of perfect happiness, there seemed to be no lack of it in the world." (Ritchie 223)

Ritchie's narrator concisely and explicitly states the proto-feminist aspect of this story: "that they did *not* marry." Significantly, Miss Williamson and H. both note that this "happily broken off" wedding, or at least the characters' continuing single statuses, is a realistic portrayal of life events for most people. This is evident in H.'s final comment, regarding the "lack" of single people and/or broken off weddings "in the world," which could be a reference to the so-called "redundant" women in British society at the time.

Ritchie's narrator goes on to discuss how an unhappy marriage could be a virtual death for some. In response to H.'s question "whether Barbi would really have killed Fanny if she had married him," Miss Williamson replies,

It was not a real actual death with which Fanny was threatened by a marriage with Barbi, [. . .] but rather a slow extinction of life. Do you remember Mr. K. telling us that a man bored him one day until he fainted, so much had his heart's actions been lowered? Don't you know, H., how the society of some people seems

actually to absorb what little vitality we have left of our own, while that of others does give us new life? (Ritchie 223).

In describing how an unhappy marriage can basically kill one's soul, Ritchie effectively argues against the notion that for a woman, any marriage is better than no marriage. To be sure, Ritchie does not suggest that women would find their single life perfectly happy, given the unwed Fanny is later described as "not one of the very happiest of women of my acquaintance, but she is one of the most content; her life is happier than the average, and bright and melancholy too" (Ritchie 246). Nor does she advocate against marrying someone whom one loves or is compatible with, as Anne happily weds the English Melville. But as Fanny explicitly does not love Barbi, although she is very much pleased with his wealth, gifts of jewels, and social status, marrying him would not end well. Significantly, Anne, Fanny, and Barbi all realize this in the tale.

H., however, is still not convinced by Miss Williamson's argument, and this is made evident in their final exchange before the story recommences and the fates of the characters are told:

"All the same; I am not quite certain," H. said absently, knitting in a fresh skein of wool; "if an unhappy marriage is not better than none at all, and if your Fanny might not have made something out of the Marquis? Are you quite sure Barbi never came back for her?"

"Quite sure," said I; "Fanny is in England now, and I saw the Marquis when I was last at Rome. My friend, Mr. Phidias, pointed him out to me."

"Unmarried?" asked persistent H.

"Unmarried," I answered drily. (Ritchie 223)

This conversation is crucial to the reader's understanding of Ritchie's revision of "Bluebeard" and its relevance to 1870s British society. H. is the voice of social conventions. Surely, she and society argue, a young, poor woman like Fanny would be better off married to a wealthy bachelor like Barbi, no matter his past or her fear of him. But Miss Williamson is adamant in her resolve that the two do not wed, and that this is the happiest ending either one can expect given

the circumstances. I propose that Anne Thackeray Ritchie shares Miss Williamson's views, for as Nina Auerbach and U. C. Knoepfelmacher point out that Miss Williamson is "a name that befits the real-life daughter whom *William* (Thackeray) had brought up as his literary *son*" (13).

Mrs. de Travers, Fanny and Anne's mother, is similar to H. in that she too believes any marriage is better than no marriage for her daughters. According to Barzilai, "Mrs. de Travers is widowed, and impoverished, and desperate to have her daughters—or, at least, the beautiful elder Anne—make advantageous marriages" (85). Notably, this belief is not entirely selfless. Mrs. de Travers is very upset when Fanny breaks off her advantageous marriage to Barbi, as it would have secured the family financially as well as raised their social standing. In addition, Mrs. de Travers's father-in-law had finally acknowledged her and her daughters, changing his will to benefit them once he had learned of Fanny's betrothal. As Ritchie writes, in the aftermath of the broken engagement,

Mrs. de Travers' ill-humour, acting upon a torpid organisation, had stirred up strange ailments. She was scarcely accountable for her violence. She thought herself the most injured and ill-used of women: it was a martyrdom she inflicted on the two poor girls, upon Fanny especially, who with bitter self-reproach told herself that she was partly the cause of her mother's distress. (242)

Mrs. de Travers cannot look past her own selfish desires. She wants wealth and social status, and seeing it within reach with Fanny's betrothal, Mrs. de Travers can only see herself as a victim, or a "martyr," when Fanny refuses to wed Barbi.

Yet despite Fanny's "bitter self-reproach," she does not question her decision. Even with her mother's "violence" and condemnation, Fanny asserts, "And yet if it were all to do over again she would do it" (Ritchie 242). Fanny's relief is evident following Barbi's outburst. As Fanny and Anne finally leave the room in which they hid, "Fanny looked transformed" (Ritchie 225). Ritchie describes the reason for this transformation: "'Free!' she said to herself, drawing a

long breath. She had not known until now how she had dreaded the thought of a life spent with that man. The thought had seemed to choke and freeze and weigh her down, though she had never owned it; she might be miserable, she might be lonely some day, but she was free” (225). Evidently oppressed by the thought of marriage to Barbi, a man that she was first attracted to and later fearful of, Fanny can only rejoice in the lifting of such a dreadful weight. Acknowledging her own feelings toward Barbi and marriage, Fanny leaves her betrothal empowered: “This feeling of liberty seemed to give her courage and strength that she had never felt before; she feared no one any more—not her mother—not even poor Barbi in all his mad rage and frantic agony” (Ritchie 225).

Indeed, Fanny’s broken betrothal is depicted as a necessary yet revolutionary point in her personal development. While an unpleasant episode, she needed her relationship with Barbi to assert her independence from her mother and social conventions alike. Reflecting on her betrothal, Fanny is “ashamed”: “She thought how she had nearly sold herself and deceived him, for what? for a cypher on her pocket-handkerchief, for a string of beads round her neck, for a daily drive in the great swinging coach, from which [. . .] there would be no escape until the day when she might have taken her place in the sumptuous family vault” (Ritchie 239). Whereas Barbi felt true affection and perhaps even love for Fanny, she acknowledges that it was his wealth that most attracted her to him, although at first, “[s]he had loved him a little, but her fear had overmastered her love, and now she only trembled at his coming” (Ritchie 219). And yet, Fanny not only admits that it would have been wrong to deceive Barbi by pretending to feel more for him than she did, but that her marriage to him for money and status would have also been like a prison sentence for herself, one which she could only “escape” in death. Even Anne, the wise and tender sister, equates Fanny’s possible marriage to Barbi as a death, for following

the breaking off of the betrothal, “Anne sat by her sister’s bed, holding her had close in hers, and feeling as if Fanny had been given back to her from the grave” (Ritchie 229). But although the courtship and betrothal contribute to Fanny’s maturation and coming in to her own, Ritchie leaves no doubt in the reader’s mind that the marriage would have been disastrous and unhappy.

Because freedom comes to Fanny when she is once again single, Ritchie also addresses the commonly held belief that marriage offers women more freedom. This idea is not false, as Judith Johnston points out that Anna Jameson’s unhappy marriage at least provided her with the freedom to travel unaccompanied (2-3). Yet Fanny chafes at the restrictions placed upon her by Barbi, who “expect[s] obedience” (Ritchie 216). Fanny angrily exclaims to Anne, “I love him well enough [. . .] only I no longer am able to do as I like. What is the good of marrying if one can’t do as one likes?” (Ritchie 212). Ritchie is clear that Barbi tried to control Fanny, particularly following the engagement:

Barbi knew that there were very few people whom he could not rule. Fanny had charmed him, but that was no reason why she should not obey his wishes. [. . .] But now that she was engaged to him, she found that if she had been ruled before with a rod of flax, it was a rod of iron now. She never seemed to be alone. He was always there; even when he was away, he seemed to be present,—always expecting her to be ready to talk to him, to listen to him, to admire him. (212)

The assertion of Barbi’s controlling nature following the engagement seems to reference the idea expressed in “Before and After Marriage” that courtship is an act put on by the groom to be dropped once his bride is secured. The demands Barbi places on his betrothed, and would place on his wife, even a dearly loved wife, are more than Fanny expects when she agrees to the marriage. The reader is presented with Fanny’s thought process as she contemplates her future while Barbi is away (and just prior to her opening of his locked chest of secrets):

Fanny sat down by the table. Her heart was beating, and her cheeks were burning red, like two summer roses. Should she leave his secrets, and have done with them and him? Should she go back and finish out the play? What was she doing?

She had loved him a little, but her fear had overmastered her love, and now she only trembled at his coming. Would she take him if he were as poor as herself? Ah! no, no, no, thought Fanny, wringing her hands. (Ritchie 219)

The freedom to be her own person, to do as she likes without concern for her ever-present betrothed/husband, can only be found in singlehood. Like the spinster narrator, Miss Williamson, Fanny finds fulfillment without marriage.

Remaining single is not, however, a happy ending for Anne. The more conventionally feminine of the sisters, Anne's narrative features a more conventional fairy-tale ending when she meets and weds an Englishman. Interestingly, Anne's marriage contributes to Fanny's continuing and future happiness as a spinster. Ritchie writes, "People were curious to know how Fanny bore her disappointment: they might have blamed her more, if Anne's marriage to Henry Melville had not been announced just about this time, and diverted the various gossips of that friendly Babel. Henry Melville was rich, well-connected, and able to protect his poor little sister-in-law from malicious tongues" (245-46). While Anne's marriage distracts the gossipmongers from Fanny's broken betrothal, her husband also does not condemn Fanny for not marrying, choosing to instead "protect" her and even help her learn the fate of Barbi, who joined a religious community to seek forgiveness for his previous sins. Indeed, Henry in many ways appears princely, including virtues to match those of the devoted Anne, who "is always looking about, and is quite determined that her sister is to be very happy indeed" despite her support of Fanny's broken betrothal (Ritchie 246). It is Anne and Henry who, it seems, ameliorate some of the negative effects of Fanny's single life, although it is assumed that the money Barbi left her also helps.

Blurring Stereotypes of Womanhood in “Bluebeard’s Keys”

Ritchie’s ideal women are neither totally passive and male-dependent creatures nor self-assertive, independent women. (Talairach-Vielmas, “Beautiful Maidens” 277)

In her own extensive and insightful analysis of Ritchie’s “Bluebeard’s Keys,” Shuli Barzilai notes Ritchie’s contrasting characterizations of Anne and Fanny. According to Barzilai,

Anne and Fanny present a case study in contrasts, the one gentle, sweet, and reconciled to the ‘twopenny cares’ of their daily lot, and the other chafing, sulky, and rebellious. Anne is a fairy-tale maiden, whose beauty and virtuous patience are finally rewarded with a ‘rich, well-connected’ Englishman: ‘Anne was married in London’ (*Bluebeard’s Keys* 116-17). Her story, however, only serves as a subplot and counterpoint for the main action. Ritchie soon elicits the reader’s sympathies for the ‘bad’ and more interesting sister: ‘Poor little Fanny! how she hated the stealings and scrapings of fashionable life that fell to their share—the lifts in other people’s carriages, the contrivances and mortifications’ (8). Fanny’s remonstrations are unavailing against the Victorian ‘demon of duty’ that dictates her mother’s conduct of their lives. (88)

Indeed, Ritchie frequently contrasts the two sisters, especially in regard to temperament. However, in doing so, she does more than simply continue the “good” and “bad” girl dichotomy Barzilai discusses. Rather, Ritchie responds to the distinction between the “womanly” and “strong-minded” woman. Anne is certainly the more traditionally feminine of the two, the more “womanly,” yet as Ritchie demonstrates, Fanny is not without her appeal despite her “strong-minded” personality. In the end, the willful Fanny does remain unwed, seemingly confirming the view that strong-minded women are unlikely to wed, but even here Anne Thackeray Ritchie subverts expectations, as it is Fanny’s conscious choice to remain unwed, not her sad fate as an unappealing prospective wife. In the end, the two are not as different as they may seem, and they both find contentment in the paths they choose for their lives. Consequently, Ritchie suggests that the “womanly” woman and “strong-minded” woman are not the opposing extremes they at first appear to be.

From the first chapter, Fanny and Anne are introduced as two sides of the same coin, similar in many ways and yet distinctly different. Although lengthy, the reader's first introduction to the two sisters is significant and so will be quoted in full. Ritchie writes,

Anne Travers was a sweet young creature. Fanny was very pretty, but not to compare to her; she was smaller, darker, more marked in feature: she looked like a bad photograph of her beautiful elder sister.

Nature is very perverse. She will give one sister one hair's breadth more nose, that makes all the difference, one inch more height, one semitone more voice, one grain more colouring. Here was Anne, with beautiful dark eyes and beautiful black hair, lovely smiles, picturesque frowns, smooth gliding movements, and a voice that haunted you long after it had ceased to utter; and there was Fanny, stitching away on the marble step, surrounded by white scraps, and with black hair on end, and smaller eyes, shorter limbs, paler cheeks. She was nothing particular, most people said; not beloved, like Anne; she did not hope for much to brighten her toilsome life; she despaired and lost her temper at times; and yet there was a spirit and pathos of impetuosity about the little woman, that, so one person once said, outweighed all the suave charm of her sister's grace. Everyone loved Anne, she was so soft, so easily pleased, and so sure of pleasing. The life she led was not a wholesome one, but it did not spoil her. The twopenny cares that brought the purple to her mother's hair, and the sulky frown to Fanny's brow, only softened Anne's eyes to a gentle melancholy. (191)

This first introduction to the two Travers sisters is crucial to the reader's understanding of Fanny and Anne, as well as of the story as a whole. Both sisters are pretty, but Anne is ever so slightly prettier. Fanny is a "bad photograph" or distorted reflection of her practically perfect elder sister. Anne is described as "beautiful," "lovely," "picturesque," "smooth" and "gliding," "beloved," "soft," "easily pleased," "pleasing," unspoiled, "suave," charming, graceful, and "gentle" with a haunting voice. She meets many of the requirements of the feminine ideal despite her dark coloring. In contrast, Fanny is described as "smaller," "darker," unkempt, pale, ordinary ("nothing particular"), pessimistic, "despairing," volatile, and "sulky." In comparison to her sister, Fanny seems to come up short on feminine virtues. Yet it seems that Fanny's spirited personality at least in part makes up for her shortcomings because, as Ritchie notes in the middle of this passage, "yet there was a spirit and pathos of impetuosity about the little woman, that, so

one person once said, outweighed all the suave charm of her sister's grace." Although impetuosity is not a womanly virtue, Ritchie here suggests that it can be an appealing characteristic in a woman nonetheless. Furthermore, it is Fanny, not Anne, who is the heroine of the tale and, as Ritchie demonstrates throughout the narrative, the details of the strong-minded Fanny's life are far more interesting than those of her womanly sister Anne.

Anne in many ways meets the expectations held for the "womanly" woman. As described previously, the qualities of this feminine ideal include "patience, self-sacrifice, tenderness, quietness, with some others, of which modesty is one" ("Womanliness" 167). In addition to the beauty and gentle and pleasing nature discussed in the previous paragraph, Anne is patient, self-sacrificing, modest, and obedient. Anne's "small inheritance" is used to support the family financially (Ritchie 191), and she attends social events according to her mother's wishes: "Anne took things placidly, accepted kindness and patronage with a certain sweet dignity that held its own" (Ritchie 192). Anne does not protest the family's circumstances or her mother's expectations for her. In the beginning of the tale, Anne sits quietly, dutifully stitching her dress despite the room's darkness and heat and her mother's snoring; she only agrees to Fanny's desire to leave the room because her "head aches" and she "suppose[s] there will be time to finish [their] work" later (Ritchie 193). Even still, "Anne followed slowly" while Fanny rushes around the courtyard to find entertainment (Ritchie 194). Dutifully, it is Anne who suggests a return to their work after they have explored for a while: "'We ought to go back and finish our flounces,' said Anne, remembering the unfinished frills heaped up on the work-table in the window" (Ritchie 197). Finally, as the "womanly" woman should, Anne weds and lives happily ever after.

Indeed, Fanny is aware of how she differs from her sister. She demonstrates her own internalization of feminine ideals when she responds to Anne's teasing assertion that Fanny had

caught the attention and interest of Barbi,

Fanny blushed up red, and answered, “You know I charm no one, Anne. No one will ever care for me. I wish you wouldn’t say such things. I’m neither pretty nor good, and not like you, who are both. I’m sure I don’t know why I wasn’t made one or the other,” said Fanny, indignant.

[. . .]

Fanny was neither very pretty, nor very good, nor very patient. She was discontented too, and impatient and clever and warm-hearted, and almost hopeless at times. The poor little thing had grown so tired of the life they were leading, that she would have done almost anything to escape from it. She was naturally shy except when her interest was roused [. . .]

Anne would preach patience, but Fanny had no patience. (Ritchie 204)

Although the “good” and “patient” Anne assures her sister, “I am very glad you were made as you are,” Fanny does not fit the mold of the “womanly” woman as Anne does, and this suggests that she is not as appealing to prospective grooms as Anne is. Mrs. de Travers also recognizes Anne’s ideal femininity and believes Anne to be her only hope for a financially secure future and advantageous wedding. This can be seen after Fanny faints upon first meeting Barbi: “Mrs. de Travers made very light of Fanny’s vertigo. Fanny’s vertigos were of no consequence. If it had been Anne, it would have been different. Anne was her pride, her darling, her beautiful daughter. Mrs. de Travers looked to Anne to redeem the Fortunes of the Family” (Ritchie 200).

However, despite Anne’s ideal femininity, it is Fanny who catches the eye and affection of the rich and eligible bachelor Barbi. Fanny falls into the category of the “strong-minded” woman. She is characterized by a “[p]assionate ambition, virile energy, the love of strong excitement, self-assertion, fierceness, and an undisciplined temper” (“Womanliness” 167). Unlike Anne, Fanny is unsatisfied with their mother’s attempt to maintain their social standing despite their lack of funds: “Fanny chafed and fumed and frowned at the contrivances and scrapings and disputings of their makeshift existence” (Ritchie 192). She becomes restless when the sisters are supposed to be preparing their dresses for a social event, and she expresses her

discontent to Anne: “‘Everything is so tiresome,’ says Fanny, impetuously, ‘and I hate Lady Castleairs. O dear, how I wish,—I wish I was enormously rich’” (Ritchie 193). Fanny is described as “adventurous” and “less even-tempered than her sister” because “she would spring from all the depths to all the heights of excitement in a few minutes” (Ritchie 197). She does not wish to return to her sewing when Anne suggests their return, declaring with a stamped foot, “Horrid things! Anne, how can you always talk about work just when we are most happy!” (Ritchie 197). Outspoken in her discontent, Fanny notably never mentions any dreams of marriage to change her circumstances, even though she frequently wishes to be rich.

It is Fanny’s “strong-minded” personality that first attracts a suitor and then later enables her to choose the unconventional path of spinsterhood. Barbi is enchanted and “very much in love” with Fanny’s headstrong ways: “her quickness and vivacity suited and amused him” (Ritchie 209). Yet he is not amused when she questions him about his past and the old chest, nor when she later disobeys him by unlocking the chest and learning his secrets. And while the rich clothing and jewelry Barbi gives to Fanny has her “look[ing] pretty now for the first time in her life,” Fanny begins to doubt her decision to wed Barbi, as she is increasingly frightened by him and intrigued by his secret past. With fears surrounding her future as Barbi’s wife circling in her mind, Fanny impulsively determines to ignore Barbi’s orders and open the forbidden chest to learn his secrets: “‘Am I to pay with all the rest of my life for the crimes he has committed?’ thought Fanny rebelliously. ‘I am a horrid little worldly wretch: I haven’t committed any crimes in my life—but I should like to commit one now. My honour! Is it honourable to have secrets; to hide away dreadful things in boxes? Anne!’ cried poor little Fanny in a sudden frenzy” (Ritchie 219). Although “rebellious” and “frenzied,” Fanny consciously refuses to accept Barbi’s secretive behavior concerning his past. She refuses to wed someone she does not know and who

does not trust her. After ending her betrothal to Barbi, Fanny furthermore has the “strength to keep to her determination when she came to face her mother’s reproaches,” despite Anne’s fears (Ritchie 225). Fanny asserts herself to find contentment, even though “she should be always ashamed for herself and sorry for [Barbi]” (Ritchie 225).

Yet although repeatedly contrasted, Fanny and Anne are not as different as they at first appear. Fanny makes the unconventional decision not to marry. Anne does marry, but she also supports Fanny’s unmarried state. She is consistently depicted as worried by Fanny’s engagement, particularly as she witnesses Fanny awakening from nightmares crying. Miss Williamson relates one such episode: “Anne did not know what to think. Fanny often had strange dreams at night, from which she started up, sobbing. Once, in the darkness, she cried out, ‘Anne, Anne, what *shall* I do?’” (Ritchie 214). Anne’s response is decisive: “‘Do!’ cried Anne, starting up in bed. ‘Break off this horrid marriage. Dearest Fanny, don’t cry. Send him away, and we will go and hide ourselves, and work, and be happy, or miserable. What will it matter, so long as we are together?’ Fanny sobbed and sobbed, and did not answer” (Ritchie 214). Significantly, even the “womanly” Anne proposes to remain unwed in order to convince her sister to avoid an unhappy marriage with Barbi.

Unlike her mother, Anne does not believe that an advantageous marriage without love is better than the life of a poor and single woman. Anne is silent and obedient until this point, but this late-night episode inspires Anne to stand up to her mother the next morning, although her effort proves futile, especially when Fanny arrives and denies any anxiety:

“Oh, mamma,” said Anne, “nothing would ever induce me to marry a man like the Marquis—not twice as many houses and diamonds. Oh, mamma, do you think Fanny is happy?”

“Happy!” cried Mrs. de Travers. “She is the happiest—most—most—most— —“

Words failed Mrs. de Travers; but she added severely, “I hope, Anne, you

have not been putting nonsense into her head?"

"Dear mamma," said Anne, bursting into tears and clasping her hands, "I *know* she is unhappy. Let us save her while it is time. If you had but heard the stories I *know* to be true!" (Ritchie 214-15)

While Mrs. de Travers angrily suggests that Anne is jealous of her sister's good fortune, the significance of this scene lies less in the outcome than in its evidence of Anne's assertive nature. Although typically quiet and non-disruptive, Anne is willing to speak out on behalf of her sister, going so far to argue with her mother and relate the gossip she has heard regarding Barbi's past.

In addition to standing up to her mother and protesting Fanny's engagement, Anne asserts herself as other than the accepted feminine ideal in two other instances. She again departs from the feminine ideal when she only "faintly" protests Fanny's reading the letters found in the now unlocked chest; as Ritchie explains, "'Oh, Fanny, don't,' Anne said, very faintly; for Anne, with all her sweetness, was human, and curious too" (220). Admittedly, this is a minor detail, but it absolutely negates any sense of feminine perfection on Anne's part because she, like Fanny, is "human" and naturally "curious." This moment also suggests, if not asserts, the naturalness of Fanny's curiosity and disobedient actions. Moreover, Anne determines to protect her sister from society's busybodies at their first social event following the broken betrothal, "st[anding] a few yards before her, shielding her as best she could, parrying questions, intercepting forward people" (Ritchie 233).

Similarly, Fanny displays some of Anne's feminine qualities, such as humility and self-sacrifice, following the end of her engagement to Barbi. Fanny quickly realizes how she, too, wronged Barbi in agreeing to wed him when she did not love him as he did her. In their final brief conversation following the climatic scene with the opened chest, Fanny insists on apologizing to Barbi for her actions, saying, "I also wanted to see you. I want to tell you that I too have been to blame. [. . .] I have deceived you and wronged you. I shall never forgive myself.

I did not love you as . . .” (Ritchie 238). When Barbi interrupts to say the blame is his, Fanny “passionately” demands, “What do you mean? *You* have no wrongs against *me*” (Ritchie 238). She pities Barbi and is humbled by his humbleness, particularly after she discovers that he has exiled himself to repent for his sins.

Perhaps more importantly, Fanny demonstrates that she is willing to sacrifice her own comfort throughout the tale. This is first evident during her engagement to Barbi, for despite her desire for money, Fanny is also acting out of concern for her family. This is made clear just before Fanny finds the lost key to the chest, as she is contemplating whether her betrothal to Barbi was a mistake: “Fanny had begun to be afraid of herself [because of her decision to wed Barbi without loving him . . . But] to do her justice she had thought of her mother and sister as much as of herself” (Ritchie 218). While Fanny ultimately decides to act in her best interests and chooses not to wed Barbi, this element of self-sacrifice emerges once more following her broken betrothal and return to England after Anne’s marriage. As the tale concludes, Fanny does not use the money gifted to her by Barbi only to advance herself, as her early declarations of her desire to be rich might lead the reader to assume. Instead, Fanny uses this money to benefit others by establishing and running an orphanage. As is explained in the final paragraph of “Bluebeard’s Keys,” “Fanny laughs, and shakes her head, and runs away to the little orphanage she has set up with Barbi’s money, and where she teaches the children to read. She has many *protégés*; and there are none in whom she takes more interest than those little Italian boys who wander about London with their merry and forlorn faces” (Ritchie 246). Thus, Fanny tries to atone for deceiving Barbi while finding fulfillment outside of marriage. In this way, Ritchie provides a positive example of female social contribution outside of the establishment of marriage.

Notably, Ritchie does not punish the “strong-minded” Fanny for refusing to adhere to the

proscribed path and wed. Although, certainly, the conclusion of the tale can be read in different ways, as Shuli Barzilai explains:

Of course, if read in the conventional cautionary terms, Fanny's unmarried status at the end also amounts to an apt punishment for her past behavior, for her avarice and wayward heart; but rather than "she gets the comeuppance she deserves," the same ending could be read otherwise. Having found the courage to break her engagement bond and flout common expectations, Fanny decides to retain her hard-won independence. She is chastened but unbound [. . .] Moreover, Fanny, unlike Barbi, does not adopt a monastic existence and withdraw from society. Rather, after having schooled herself, she becomes a schoolmistress. (Barzilai 106)

I would argue that Fanny's end is to be read positively, particularly because the narrator of the tale, Miss Williamson, is herself unwed and not judged or punished. I agree with Manuela Mourão's assertion that "Ritchie uses the persona of her narrator to full effect, as an example of a woman who has resisted the cultural imperative of marriage and who does not have an empty life, but is rather an example of what strong women can see as viable alternatives to demeaning marriages of convenience" ("Negotiating" 70). Indeed, Mourão notes other non-fairy-tale short stories, such as "Some Passages from Miss Williamson's Diary," which also use this narrator to "openly problematizes the notion that women's happiness necessarily depends on marriage" ("Negotiating" 69). As mentioned before, all of Ritchie's fairy tales feature this unique narrator, and all therefore suggest the possibility of contentment and happiness for women outside the bonds of marriage. Yet "Bluebeard's Keys" appears to do more than this, as it also suggests the "sisterhood" of the "womanly" and "strong-minded" woman. In this narrative, the two seemingly opposing stereotypes are blurred as the story progresses. Moreover, the sisters support each other's life choices, neither condemning the other and neither without her appeals and flaws. Barzilai suggests this blurring of the stereotypes, writing, "Translated, speculatively, into other terms, the name *Anny* used by [Ritchie's] family and friends (and now by some of her critics)

accommodates both the ‘bad’ rebellious *Fanny* and the ‘good’ conformist *Anne*, without suppressing or ‘killing’ either one of the Travers sisters” (Barzilai 106). Both are women, and perhaps taken together, they may be argued to form Ritchie’s ideal of femininity and womanhood.

Significantly, there is no villainous character in Anne Isabella Thackeray Ritchie’s “Bluebeard’s Keys.” The traditional villain, Bluebeard, is presented sympathetically. He is, to be sure, a misguided man who is a bigamist and prone to secrets and angry outbursts. But he is also deeply remorseful for his immoral actions and their tragic consequences. He takes all the blame for the broken betrothal and does not condemn Fanny for her decision to open the chest or end the engagement. Moreover, he isolates himself from society at the end of the tale in order to seek forgiveness and, presumably, to prevent harming any others in the future. Similarly, Mrs. de Travers is not a villain either. She does not accept Fanny’s broken betrothal silently or without reproach, but Ritchie depicts her as simply doing her best for her daughters’ futures in striving to maintain their social position and in trying to contract advantageous marriages for her daughters. In fact, Ritchie suggests that Mrs. de Travers comes to accept Fanny’s decision on her deathbed, as following an “attack” of some sort, “she sank a few days after, holding Fanny’s hand, and trying to speak as she looked wistfully up in her face” (246). While all the characters of “Bluebeard’s Keys” are flawed, none demonstrate ill will or a desire to harm those around them.

Instead, the villain of the tale appears to be Victorian society with its pervasive domestic gender ideology and glorification of marriage as woman’s happy ending. Sumpter makes a similar argument regarding Ritchie’s “Little Red Riding Hood;” she writes, “While the fairy tale conventionally places emphasis on individual virtue or villainy, in Anne Thackeray’s tale the

social system is the villain, more destructive and rapacious than either suitor or grandmother” (70). As will be seen in the next chapter, Mary de Morgan also presents society as the villain of “The Seeds of Love.” However, while de Morgan’s characters are unable to overcome society’s prescripts and norms, Ritchie’s characters are triumphant. Anne weds because she wishes to do so, not because she must. Fanny asserts her independence and assures her happiness by refusing to marry, and this rejection also ensures Barbi’s happiness by providing him the opportunity to find peace in an isolated religious community. Even Mrs. de Travers achieves her happiness through Anne’s marriage while also coming to accept Fanny’s spinsterhood. All of Anne Thackeray Ritchie’s characters find peace and contentment in spite of society’s strictures, and a happy ending is achieved precisely because the Fanny-Barbi marriage does not occur.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOWING SEEDS OF SUBVERSION IN THE FAIRY TALES OF MARY DE MORGAN

Fairy tale offers a case where the very contempt for women opened an opportunity for them to exercise their wit and communicate their ideas [. . .] where they might set their own seedlings and plant out their flowers. (Warner xxiii)

In his essay “Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship,” Donald Haase cites the “recovery of neglected fairy-tale texts by women” as a crucial area of future research (29). The work of Mary de Morgan would certainly qualify as “neglected.” Writing at the end of the nineteenth century, de Morgan published three collections of fairy tales. However, with the exception of five critical essays and one newly released book,ⁱ Mary de Morgan is only fleetingly mentioned by scholars in Victorian fairy-tale anthologies. In such anthologies, she is given anywhere from a sentence to a page, and almost all focus on her tale “A Toy Princess” (1877). Furthermore, even when scholars discuss the feminist aspects of her work, they limit their discussion to her strong female characters rather than explore how her plots and the minute details she provides contribute to a feminist reading. Unlike the other women authors discussed in this project, Mary de Morgan wrote original fairy tales rather than adaptations of classic tales written by Perrault and the Grimms. Because of this, her proto-feminism is embedded within the tales’ structures and cannot be revealed by a comparison to its source texts, and yet her subversive use of the fairy-tale genre to critique Victorian models of femininity, marriage, and love deserves more attention than it has previously received.

Zipes acknowledged de Morgan’s use of strong female characters in his introduction to *Victorian Fairy Tales* in 1987.ⁱⁱ However, since that time only Alicia Carroll’s 2010 article, “The Greening of Mary De Morgan: The Cultivating Woman and the Ecological Imaginary in ‘The Seeds of Love,’” Marilyn Pemberton’s 2011 article, “The Fairylands of Mary De Morgan:

Seedbeds of Domestic Anarchy,” and her 2012 book, *Out of the Shadows: The Life and Works of Mary De Morgan*, have in any way addressed de Morgan’s proto-feminist treatment of gender, love, and marriage. Carroll analyzes the “The Seeds of Love” through an ecofeminist lens and concentrates mainly on de Morgan’s depiction of greenery and nature in relation to gender and race, while Pemberton’s analysis in both article and book focuses mainly on de Morgan’s tales “The Hair Tree” and “The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde” as evidence of her New Woman critique of marriage. My analysis takes a different approach, demonstrating how de Morgan subverts the fairy-tale genre in order to further explore the problematics of ideal femininity, love, and “happily ever after” throughout her published fairy tales before paying specific attention to her tale “The Seeds of Love.”

This subversive use of the fairy-tale genre is unsurprising given Mary de Morgan’s life. Born in 1850, Mary Augusta de Morgan was the youngest child of Augustus de Morgan and sister to the artist and novelist William de Morgan. De Morgan’s mother, Sophia Elizabeth, was most likely a great influence on her feminist leanings. In 1866, Sophia de Morgan was one of 1,499 women to sign the women’s suffrage petition, and she was also the author of the 1870 essay “Our Better Selves,” which argued for better education and increased political and professional rights for women (Crawford 717, 756). In 1890, Mary de Morgan followed in her mother’s footsteps when she joined the Women’s Franchise League, whose stated objectives were “[t]o extend to women, whether married, unmarried, or widowed the right to vote at parliamentary, municipal and local and other elections on the same conditions which qualify men [and] [t]o establish for all women equal civil and political rights with men” (qtd. in Crawford 716). Mary de Morgan never married, although it is unknown whether this was due to personal

choice or circumstance. However she shared her fairy tales with her family and the children of family friends, and it is in her fairy tales that readers can discern her feminist leanings.

The fairy-tale genre offered Mary de Morgan the unique opportunity to speak her mind without social condemnation. As Roger Lancelyn Green indicates, she was not one to hold her tongue even amongst the many artists who visited the de Morgan family, going so far as to insult a young Bernard Shaw, “who heard some home-truths from Mary, and in consequence ‘hated her exceedingly’” (10). De Morgan and other Victorian women writers found freedom of expression in juvenile literature, including the fairy tale. Although considered an appropriate genre for women writers because of its association with children, Ann Shillinglaw explains that the fairy-tale genre was “a popular and highly acceptable Victorian narrative form” to be read by children and adults alike (89). Indeed, Green notes that de Morgan told her fairy tales to entertain adult friends “even though there were no children” present (10). Furthermore, as discussed in the introduction, the very structure of the genre lends itself to social criticism, as the “enchantments” in fairy tales “encipher concerns, beliefs and desires in brilliant, seductive images that are themselves a form of camouflage, making it possible to utter harsh truths, to say what you dare” (Warner xxi). Consequently, the fairy-tale genre was the ideal narrative form for de Morgan to adopt as a vehicle for voicing her controversial opinions on femininity, love, and marriage. In fact, Mary de Morgan wrote three collections of fairy tales: *On a Pincushion* (1877), *The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde* (1880), and *The Windfairies* (1900).

Like Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Mary de Morgan depicts several tragic romances in her fairy tales, suggesting to her readers that fairy-tale romances and marriages that end with a happy ending are rare. In “The Story of the Opal” (1877), the female Moonbeam and male Sunbeam can only be together in death, hiding under a stone together to try to save themselves from death

once they have been separated from their respective sources of life, the moon and sun. The pair's tragic romance causes the creation of the opal: "Men found it and called it the Opal. But the Nightingale knew that it was the Sunbeam and Moonbeam who, in dying, had suffused the Stone with their mingled colours and light" (de Morgan 61). It is not union, but reunion that ends in tragedy in "The Wanderings of Arasmon" (1880). In this tale, the married musicians Arasmon and Chrysea are separated when Chrysea is cursed to transform into a harp after breaking the spell the dark elves placed over a village. Arasmon finds the harp and wanders far and wide in search of his wife Chrysea, never realizing she is the very harp he plays for his survival despite her attempts to "speak" to him through her music.ⁱⁱⁱ After returning to the place where he first found the harp, near the now prosperous village where he last saw Chrysea, Arasmon unknowingly releases her from the curse by playing a specific tune on the harp. However, it is too late for the couple to live happily ever after: "'Chrysea!' cried he [Arasmon]; 'I have found my wife Chrysea!' and he laid his head on her bosom and died. And when Chrysea saw it her heart broke, and she lay beside him and died without a word" (de Morgan 204). The two are later found "in each other's arms" by the villagers, who note that Arasmon "looks quite content and as if he wished nothing more, since he has found his wife Chrysea" (de Morgan 205). Although "content" when together in death, the tragic romances of the Sunbeam and Moonbeam and Arasmon and Chrysea highlight the otherworldliness of happily ever after in de Morgan's fairy tales.

When de Morgan does depict romances ending in a happy marriage, it is frequently not because a woman is beautiful but in spite of it. In this way, Mary de Morgan departs from the traditional tales of beautiful women wedding the prince, or, as Lieberman calls it, the "beauty contest" (385), wherein "girls are chosen [for marriage] for their beauty" (386). This is apparent

in “The Story of Vain Lamorna” (1877), in which the heroine, Lamorna, must be disfigured and thereby lose her beautiful appearance before she is “fit” to marry her suitor Erick, who is himself maimed by the loss of his arm. Lamorna was too distracted admiring her own beauty to pay much attention to her suitor, and it is only when the water elves take away her reflection and her face is severely scarred that she is “cured” of her vanity and able to appreciate and love Erick (de Morgan 33). On the other hand, in “The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde” (1880), Fiorimonde never loses her vanity and therefore is left unmarried despite her numerous suitors; she does, however, lose her beautiful face and figure, as she is punished for trying to enchant her suitors and thereby avoid marriage by being transformed into a lovely bead. Moreover, as will be discussed in more detail later, the beautiful but jealous Zaire in “The Seeds of Love” is left a single woman in the end, a conclusion that is perhaps unsurprising as vanity and jealousy are frequently punished in de Morgan’s tales, while the beautiful marry despite being beautiful and not because of it as in more traditional fairy tales, such as “Sleeping Beauty” and “Snow White.”

In fact, many of Mary de Morgan’s tales advise against the folly of female vanity. Like Lamorna, the queen in “The Hair Tree” (1880) is punished for her vanity by losing the source of that vanity, her long beautiful hair. When she refuses to give a passing eagle some of her hair for his nest, the queen is cursed by the eagle to lose all of the hair she loves and for which she is loved by her husband and their people. It is notable that in both “The Story of Vain Lamorna” and “The Hair Tree,” the vain women are valued for their beauty by the men in their lives; this is also the case in a third story, “Vain Kesta” (1900). Like the farmer’s daughter Lamorna, who believes her beauty will allow her to make a socially advantageous marriage—Lamorna tells Erick, “I do not mean to marry for ages—perhaps never—certainly not a fisherman” (de Morgan 25)—the dairymaid Kesta’s vanity causes her to try to manipulate the men around her in order to

make the most advantageous marriage. Although she almost weds a duke, Kesta cannot use her beauty to overcome her position in life, and unlike Lamorna, who does eventually marry the fisherman Erick, Kesta is rejected by all her various suitors in the end, including her original suitor, the farmhand Adam. Such a warning against female vanity is certainly quite conventional, but de Morgan undermines this normative critique by indicating that the source of this feminine vanity lies in patriarchal society's valuing of female beauty.

Mary de Morgan's fairy tales offer a response to the question of the source of female vanity: Is it the woman's valuing of her beauty that makes her vain or is she vain because that is what the man values in her? De Morgan's "The Story of Vain Lamorna," "The Hair Tree," and "Vain Kesta" suggest that women are vain because men value their beauty. When Lamorna finally agrees to wed Erick, she laments, "But my looks were different then as well. I don't mind about them for myself but I wish I had not lost my pretty face, as you used to admire it" (de Morgan 33). This statement convinces the water elves that she was "cured" of her vanity, and they then return her reflection to her; upon seeing herself, Lamorna again suggests that she valued her beauty because men, including Erick, valued it: "How much my cheek is marked! But I don't mind it if you don't, dear Erick" (de Morgan 33). To be sure, Erick then "kissed the scar, and told her [Lamorna] that he loved her all the better for it," yet Lamorna's concern over how *he* would feel concerning the loss of her beauty is telling (de Morgan 33). Her continuing concern over her appearance suggests Lamorna has so internalized the norms of female beauty that even when her beau does not care, she cannot overcome normative femininity.

As Lamorna suspects her value arises from her beauty, the queen in "The Hair Tree" is not the only one to value her beautiful hair. While the queen tells the passing eagle that "I value my hair more than anything on earth" (de Morgan 79), the reader is also told that "The Queen's

husband, the King, was as proud of it [her hair] as his wife, and gave her all sorts of lovely jewellery with which to dress it—diamond pins and golden combs—and by his special command the court gardener always kept the best flowers for the Queen to place in her hair” (de Morgan 78). But the queen’s beauty is valued even further, as “not only the King and Queen, but all the courtiers and court ladies—indeed, everyone in the country—praised and admired this beautiful hair [. . .] all agreed that it would be a real national misfortune if any harm came to it” (de Morgan 78). The queen is valued by those around her not for her personality, her leadership, or her kindness, but for her beautiful hair, so much so that the King’s “grief was so great that he sobbed aloud” when the queen went bald due to the eagle’s curse (de Morgan 81).

In “Vain Kesta,” Kesta realizes that female beauty is valued by men and tries to use it to her advantage. She climbs the social ladder through engagements with increasingly more prosperous men by telling each one of her valuable beauty: “I have to run from men who want to marry me, because I am so pretty” (de Morgan 294). She works her way up from the farmhand Adam to a duke, from whom she asks protection in order to “catch” him while he is fishing: “I have come to ask you to protect me from all the men who pursue me [. . .] Because I am so pretty [. . .] They all want to marry me: first the man at the farm, then the miller I met on the road, then your bailiff, then the banker, then the General of your army, and he would only let me go when I promised to go back to him” (de Morgan 297). While her scheme ultimately fails when each of her suitors rejects her after realizing she is a dairymaid, it is significant that Kesta realized beauty was valued by the men around her, even when it was merely perceived beauty, as most of the men only find Kesta beautiful and valuable after she tells them that the previous man did so. For instance, the duke’s response to Kesta’s tale of pursuit is “I should not have thought you so very pretty, but if what you say is true you must be. I’m not sure if it would not suit me to marry you

myself” (de Morgan 297-98). Kesta recognizes that the men she encounters value beauty in a prospective wife, and so she seeks and almost manages to “sell” herself as beautiful and in demand.^{iv}

One interesting facet of de Morgan’s discussion of beauty and vanity is that the beautiful are objectified. For instance, Kesta objectifies herself when she tries to sell herself in marriage to the highest bidder; she makes herself an object, a valuable possession that will bring power to her possessor-husband and cause those around and below him to envy him his prize. Lamorna is objectified by the water elves when they trap her reflection: the elves chain it down in a grotto where Lamorna cannot find it but where the elves can sit and admire its beauty whenever the wish. When Lamorna’s beauty is marred by the scar on her face, the reflection is released because she has learned her lesson and agreed to marry Erick, yet it is notable that the reflection is no longer the flawlessly beautiful object it was prior to Lamorna’s disfigurement. Moreover, it is not merely women who are objectified, but beautiful men as well; this can be seen in “The Seeds of Love,” in which the heroine Blanchelys falls in love with the Prince at first sight because of his beautiful appearance, causing her to bespell the Prince so that he falls in love with her in return and marries her. Yet it is in “The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde” that de Morgan most clearly and complexly takes on the topic of the objectification of men and women alike.

There is a series of literal and figurative objectifications in “The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde.” In the end of the tale, Princess Fiorimonde is literally objectified when she is transformed into a bead on a gold chain to be hung up in the hall and viewed as a warning against vanity and female independence for all who see it/her. This objectification is to be Fiorimonde’s punishment for objectifying her suitors by turning them into lovely beads she could wear around her neck, an action she took not only to enhance her beauty with a lovely

accessory, but more importantly to avoid an arranged marriage she did not want. It is significant that the independent Fiorimonde did not wish to marry—she objectified her suitors not necessarily to possess them but to avoid the marriage she did not want and to maintain her freedom. Furthermore, as none of Fiorimonde’s suitors knew her before desiring to marry her, it becomes clear that she was the first to be objectified as she was viewed as a beautiful princess who would enrich her suitors with a wealthy kingdom once wed. While the suitors are freed from their enchantment to return to their human form and find a new princess to wed, Fiorimonde is perpetually objectified to serve as a warning to all who see her: “See, here she [Fiorimonde] is, the thirteenth bead upon the string; let no one dare to draw it off, but let this string be hung up where all people can see it and see the one bead, and know the wicked Princess is punished for her sorcery, so it will be a warning to others who would do like her” (de Morgan 182). Although she is presumably punished for using sorcery to transform her suitors into beads, this sorcery, and therefore Fiorimonde’s punishment, cannot be separated from Fiorimonde’s vanity and desire to remain unwed. Significantly, the female characters who attempt to manipulate men are ultimately punished: Fiorimonde becomes a bead for trying to avoid marriage, Kesta is left unwed for trying to form the most socially advantageous marriage, and Blanchelys, from “The Seeds of Love,” dies in an attempt to keep her royal husband enchanted and in love with her, as will be discussed in more detail later.

While this punishment of women could be interpreted as Mary de Morgan’s condemnation of feminine manipulation and initiative, I propose instead that de Morgan is emphasizing the double standards in courtship practices and gender roles and expectations. Mary de Morgan highlights the double standard of courtship rituals when Kesta, as a woman, is not permitted to use her beauty to form an advantageous marriage. Only men, such as the orphaned

and impoverished Rupert of “The Hair Tree,” can be rewarded for their ingenuity with wealth and a royal marriage. Rupert’s quest for the Hair Tree that will return the hair to the queen’s head and secure him a hefty reward from the king leads him to an enchanted island where he encounters the cursed Trevina. Like Fiorimonde, Trevina was punished for refusing to marry, as her rejection of the monstrous tortoise king results in his mother cursing her to take the form of a tigress on the enchanted island. The only way for Trevina to “recover [her] own shape is by being beaten by a man with the rods that grow beneath the Hair Tree” (de Morgan 95). Consequently, when she encounters Rupert on the island, she begs him to beat her: “So now make haste and beat me at once [. . .] Beat me—beat me, I tell you” (de Morgan 103). Once he reluctantly but finally commences the beating, Trevina calls out, “Harder! Beat harder!” (de Morgan 103). Although there is no discussion of marriage between the two, the sailor Rupert and the lovely miller’s daughter Trevina are wed once Rupert restores hair to the queen’s head.

While the tale concludes that Rupert and Trevina “lived so happily together all the rest of their lives” (de Morgan 108), the incongruity of Trevina begging to be beaten and then marrying her beater cannot be stressed enough. De Morgan provides some textual clues to indicate that this scene is not to be read straightforwardly as a just punishment or practical method of dealing with women who refuse to wed. As previously stated, Trevina does not wish to wed the tortoise king, nor does she suggest she loves or desires to wed Rupert. Her curse is enacted by monstrous villains who have kidnapped her from her family, and neither the tortoise king nor his mother are depicted as anything other than monsters and criminals. Thus it would be odd for the two to be considered arbiters of social justice in their punishment of their victim because Trevina, in refusing to wed the tortoise king, is not acting wrongly, even in the eyes of a society that believes marriage to be women’s destiny. Finally, when Trevina begs to be beaten, she is near death and

will die if she is not beaten and transformed back to her human form. Her begging is an act of a desperate desire to live, not an admission of guilt or wrongdoing.

These details may seem slight, but they are essential to understand how de Morgan communicates proto-feminist critiques of marriage as women's destiny and violence against women in "The Hair Tree" without being censored for her rebellious message. De Morgan essentially implements feminist coding, which Joan N. Radner and Susan S. Lanser explain:

[W]e mean a set of signals [. . .] that protect the creator from the consequences of openly expressing particular messages. Coding occurs in the context of complex audiences in which some members may be competent and willing to decode the message, but others are not. In other words, coding presumes an audience in which one group of receivers is "monocultural" and thus assumes that its own interpretation of messages is the only one possible, while the second group, living in two cultures, may recognize a double message [. . .] *Coding*, then, is the expression or transmission of messages potentially accessible to a (bicultural) community under the very eyes of a dominant community for whom these same messages are either inaccessible or inadmissible. (3)

I argue that de Morgan uses two coding techniques discussed by Radner and Lanser: Distraction and Trivialization. The tale "The Hair Tree" is complex and convoluted, more so than most of her other tales, and the island on which Rupert encounters the Hair Tree and Trevina is filled with oddities, including plants and flowers featuring disarticulated female body parts.^v De Morgan uses such "noise" to obscure her proto-feminist critique (Radner & Lanser 15). At the same time, she encodes such messages in fairy tales, a "genre that the dominant culture considers unimportant, innocuous, or irrelevant" (Radner & Lanser 19). Significantly, Radner and Lanser acknowledge that while "coding may allow women to communicate feminist messages to other women of their community; to refuse, subvert, or transform conventional expectations; and to criticize male dominance in the face of male power," the act of coding "risks reinforcing the very ideology it is designed to critique" because "ambiguity is a necessary feature of every coded act" (23). However, if we accept that de Morgan's seemingly innocuous details and creation of an

incongruous and disturbing scene in which the heroine is beaten to survive are acts of feminist coding, the tale suggests that “happily ever after” is at times achieved only after the woman is beaten into submission, a suggestion that raises a question concerning the very existence of the happily-ever-after marriage-plot ending of traditional fairy tales.

While Mary de Morgan’s fairy-tale collections do include some stories that unquestioningly adhere to the traditional marriage plot, the incongruous details she includes in her stories are more likely to have the reader questioning social norms, in particular those surrounding femininity, love, and marriage. During the 1870s, much of the debate on the condition of women in Great Britain centered on the institution of marriage. Writers wrote numerous articles debating whether marriage was the appropriate destiny for all women. As has been discussed, several of de Morgan’s fairy tales participate in this debate, questioning the ideal of marital happiness by showcasing how such expectations cause women to become vain, jealous social-climbers who try to use their beauty to manipulate men or, conversely, result in a need for women at times to be literally beaten into submitting to an unwanted marriage. Yet it is in “The Seeds of Love” that de Morgan most emphatically rejects the argument that marriage is the sole destiny of women.

In the rest of this chapter, I will argue that Mary de Morgan participated in contemporary debates on the Woman Question by showcasing the dangers of marriage and dismantling the socially constructed dichotomy of the “womanly” and the “strong-minded” woman. Although “The Seeds of Love” focuses on the competition of two female cousins, de Morgan does not adhere to the good woman/bad woman binary featured in conventional fairy tales and popular discourse on marriage during the 1870s. Instead, de Morgan creates female characters who blur these stereotypes, possessing both traditionally “feminine” and “unfeminine” characteristics.

Moreover, de Morgan rejects the argument that marriage is the sole destiny of women by rejecting the traditional fairy-tale marriage-plot ending, highlighting the falsity of idealized patriarchal love, and sending the surviving woman into the world unwed. At the same time, the heroine's misery and suicide at the end of the story suggests that the ideal of marital happiness is a delusion. In this way, de Morgan suggests the need for women to look beyond the illusion of marital bliss and view the institution of marriage, and their conception of love, critically.

As with Anne Thackeray Ritchie's "Bluebeard's Keys," Mary de Morgan's "The Seeds of Love" needs to be situated within the socio-cultural context of the debates over womanhood and marriage during the 1870s. This contextualization will demonstrate how she dismantles the stereotypes of the "womanly" and "strong-minded" woman and argues against marriage as woman's sole aspiration. In doing so, de Morgan uses the fairy-tale genre to present her readers with a realistic, rather than idealized, view of women, love, and marriage, thereby anticipating objections voiced by feminist fairy-tale critics almost a century later.

Seeds of Division: The Debate over Marriage in the 1870s^{vi}

At the center of the debate over marriage and the mid-century woman's movement were the so-called "redundant" woman. As censuses revealed that the number of women in Great Britain increasingly surpassed the number of men, it became clear that there were too few men and too many women for all to settle themselves into married life, causing Victorians to question the long-held idea that marriage was the natural destiny of all women.^{vii} The dilemma of the "redundant" woman prompted demands for more educational and professional opportunities for women. As the fight for women's rights continued into the 1870s, and these "redundant" women moved out of the domestic sphere and found fulfilling lives outside of matrimony, many writers felt the need to defend the institution of marriage.

There were many who believed that married life was the only dignified life available to women. For instance, an 1878 essay from *The Examiner*, “Matrimony as a Means of Livelihood,” promotes the ideal of marriage as female destiny while expressing pity for those unfortunate women who cannot find husbands. Citing female “incompetence,” the author suggests that women are only suited to the “profession” of wife, leaving marriage “their *one fitting means* of livelihood” (“Matrimony” 846, my emphasis). Likewise, even critics who acknowledge that the “dependence of women on marriage [. . .] taints the female character,” also state that unmarried women “are doomed to single life,” and therefore are to be pitied (“Mrs. Lynn Linton on Women” 597). Such viewpoints pressured women to conform to patriarchal notions of ideal femininity in order to improve their chances of obtaining the socially mandated goal of matrimony.

By the 1870s, the press regularly extolled the virtues of the “womanly” woman and cautioned the independent and undisciplined “strong-minded” woman to change her ways. As explained in an 1870 essay, “Womanliness,” the “more especially” feminine virtues include “patience, self-sacrifice, tenderness, quietness, with some others, of which modesty is one” (167). Yet of all these feminine virtues, self-sacrifice appears to receive the most attention. That same article describes feminine self-sacrifice as “heroic,” arguing that woman “has done her best work, and earned her highest place” through her “exercise” of “unselfishness” (“Womanliness” 167). The article contrasts this self-sacrificing “womanly” woman with her “strong-minded” sister, who embodies “[p]assionate ambition, virile energy, the love of strong excitement, self-assertion, fierceness, and an undisciplined temper” (“Womanliness” 167). This type of woman, who desires something more than marriage and motherhood, is warned in “Young Ladies as They Are” (1870) that this desire for more may leave them single whether they wish it or not.

The author insists that while the educated, professional, “strong-minded” woman may look down upon such frivolous Rosebuds, men would much prefer to marry the Rosebud, concluding the essay by stating, “We are sure that any unmarried man who reads this description [. . .] will determine to gather a rosebud while he may” (“Young Ladies” 802).

Yet some authors also questioned the desirability of marriage for both “womanly” and “strong-minded” women, warning of the dangers inherent in unhappy marriages. A number of articles stress the need to know one’s spouse before marriage,^{viii} while others assert that a happy marriage can only be based on true affection.^{ix} As several contemporary writers assert,^x knowledge and love of one’s future spouse was not only essential to a happy marriage but was also particularly important to the women who would be completely dependent upon their husbands. However, as the author of “Before and After Marriage” notes, courtship rituals made it difficult for both men and women to truly get to know their future spouses because courtship was “conscious acting” on the part of the man, who in order to woo his future bride must “seem [. . . to be] the slave of her smallest wish” (44). The author goes on to describe “[m]arriage as the dropping of the curtain,” as “[t]he attentions cannot continue,” concluding, “The arrangement is cruel to women” (“Before” 44). This conscious male performance in courtship, in which the man follows a social script to woo his chosen bride, suggests a lack of true affection and therefore the insincerity of professed love, a topic de Morgan addresses in “The Seeds of Love.” Examples of abusive marriages are also described in some articles,^{xi} and so with marriages based on lies and abuse, single life was increasingly depicted as an attractive option for women in the 1870s.

Seeds of Dissolution: Challenging Feminine Stereotypes

Writing in the midst of debates over marriage and femininity, Mary de Morgan uses her fairy tale “The Seeds of Love,” published in her first collection, *On a Pincushion*, to reject the

stereotypes of the “womanly” and “strong-minded” woman while depicting the dangers associated with marriage. She questions the feminine virtue of self-sacrifice and ultimately suggests that it is better not to marry than to marry in the absence of true love.

On the surface, de Morgan’s “The Seeds of Love” (1877) appears to tell a patriarchal tale of the passive and submissive heroine who dreams only of love and marriage. Desiring ideal love and marriage to a prince, the heroine, Blanchelys, is favorably contrasted with her strong-minded and less amiable cousin Zaire. The two orphans live together in a humble cottage following the death of their grandmother, who left each girl a magic candle. When a handsome prince begins hunting in the area, Zaire dismisses the prince after he takes no notice of her beauty, while Blanchelys falls in love with him at first sight and begins to pine as he continually takes no notice of her. Desperate to win the prince’s love, Blanchelys lights her magic candle and summons the fairy Love, who gives her magic seeds to plant that will grow into a rose tree as the prince’s love for Blanchelys grows. Enchanting the prince by planting the seeds, Blanchelys achieves her dream of marrying a prince who seems to love her absolutely, and following the wedding, the two eventually gain the throne and have a son who will inherit their kingdom. However, her envious cousin Zaire uses her own magic candle to kill the magic tree in an attempt to steal the affections of Blanchelys’s husband away from her. The prince’s love for Blanchelys begins to fade as the rose tree withers, causing Blanchelys to leave on a secret journey to track down the fairy Love for help in regaining her husband’s love. When she does find the fairy at a funeral, he tells her she must pierce her heart with a thorn from the rose tree to make it bloom again, which in turn will make the prince’s love for her bloom again as well. Blanchelys returns to the kingdom on the day before her prince is to marry her cousin Zaire, says goodbye to her infant son, and writes the prince a letter, which she places on his pillow while he

sleeps, before she goes to the garden and pierces her heart with a thorn from the almost dead rose tree. The tale concludes when the prince finds the letter and then his dead wife the next morning, calls off the wedding to Zaire, and has her banished from the kingdom, stripped of her wealth and fine clothing while he mourns for the loss of his beloved Blanchelys. As this tale focuses on Blanchelys's desire to marry and the concluding sacrifice of her life in order to regain the love of the prince and save her marriage, it does not at first appear to subvert any cultural mores. In fact, "The Seeds of Love" seems to uphold the ideal of marriage as female destiny, as well as such conventional feminine virtues as passivity, submissiveness, forgiveness, and self-sacrifice.

However, a closer look at the tale reveals a different message. De Morgan includes several incongruous details that cause the reader to pause, creating a feeling of unease that leads the reader to discover that "The Seeds of Love," in the end, supports neither the glorified concept of marriage nor the patriarchal ideals of femininity that were so central to mid-Victorian domestic ideology. The fairy Love is revealed to be more a representative of patriarchal marriage than of genuine affection, and correspondingly, the prince's love for Blanchelys is shown to be more of a social performance than a sincerely felt emotion. Even Blanchelys's character and motives are exposed as being less naively innocent and ideally feminine than they at first appear. Given these considerations, the tale's carefully constructed masquerade as a traditional "happily ever after" fairy tale collapses.

Mary de Morgan begins *On a Pincushion* with three tales connected by a narrative frame that suggests to her readers that "The Seeds of Love," the second tale in the trio, should not be taken at face value. De Morgan frames "The Seeds of Love" within the story of "a pebble Brooch, a jet Shawl-pin, and a common pin" (19), all sticking out of a pincushion, who tell each other one story each in order to drown out the "chattering" of the nearby bracelets (20). "The

Seeds of Love” is the Shawl-pin’s tale, although he is repeating one “told him many years back by an Indian Scarf into which he was often stuck” (de Morgan 33). This detail is significant, for while the Shawl-pin may be male (“he”), his “sticking” the Indian Scarf is sexually suggestive and points to the female origin of the tale. Moreover, a female origin of the tale corresponds with the feminine space of the vanity on which the tale is told, indicating a subversive feminine storytelling tradition, in which women within the domestic sphere communicate proto-feminist ideas to each other through their stories. Being male, the Shawl-pin is blind to the hidden message embedded within the tale, thinking “his story had been a success” despite the pin’s weeping reaction and the Brooch’s description of the tale as “uncomfortable” (de Morgan 51, 50). While the Shawl-pin and patriarchal society hear a story of a women’s desire for male love, along with its accompanying glorification of marriage and maternity, a closer look at “The Seeds of Love” reveals a subversive, “uncomfortable” message. Through the disturbing portrayal of Love and the heroine’s ultimate suicide, de Morgan depicts the dangers associated with an idealized conception of love and marriage, specifically the self-sacrifice produced by women’s emotional enthrallment. At the same time, de Morgan breaks down the stereotypes that informed conservative views of love and marriage, in particular the idea that in order to be marriageable, women must conform to the patriarchal ideal of the “womanly” woman.

Through her initial description of Zaire and Blanchelys as polar opposites, Mary de Morgan appears to present the reader with a conventional good woman/bad woman dichotomy. Blanchelys, the heroine, seems to represent the patriarchal ideal of the “womanly” woman, while the anti-heroine, Zaire, seems to embody the dangers of the “strong-minded” woman and female freedom. In her introductory description of these two women, de Morgan insists they are opposites: “They were just the same age, but not the least alike” (34). Yet as the tale progresses,

Blanchelys's and Zaire's actions suggest that the two women are more alike than they at first appear, as they both act to win the love of the prince. By the end of the tale, it becomes clear that de Morgan has created the good woman/bad woman binary only to dismantle it, blurring the boundaries of the "womanly" and "strong-minded" women to show that these characterizations are not absolutely distinct. Interestingly, de Morgan suggests this lack of distinction in the women's names, as both appear to reference flowers and lightness; Blanchelys is a combination of the French *blanche*, white, and *lis*, lily, while Zaire may be a derivation of the Arabic *Zahra*, a women's name meaning flower and white, whose root *zahr* refers to a multitude of white flowers.

Initially, however, the girls' appearances and personalities are presented as a binary system, in which Blanchelys is the pure and good woman when compared to her cousin, the seemingly dark and evil Zaire. At first Blanchelys seems to epitomize all that one might expect a fairy-tale heroine to be. Blonde and blue-eyed, Blanchelys is a conventionally beautiful woman whose appearance is compared to valuable "gold" and lovely "cornflowers" (de Morgan 34). She is a happy and kind girl, as she works "cheerfully, and always said a pleasant word to each of the villagers as they came over the bridge" (de Morgan 34). Blanchelys also "grieved and wept much" after the death of her grandmother, displaying the appropriate and expected sentiment for the loss of a loved one (de Morgan 35). She is the patriarchal ideal of femininity, the "womanly" woman, a sweet and innocent girl who dreams of becoming a wife and mother and is willing to risk everything to gain the love of her prince. Furthermore, in keeping with her "womanliness," Blanchelys adheres to the patriarchal idea that the male should act while the woman should submit and receive his action, as is exemplified by her "participation" in their courtship. In her quest to gain and keep the prince's love, Blanchelys's "actions" are telling in their inactivity:

she “sighed,” “wept silently,” and “grew thin and pale,” (de Morgan 36-37). It is the enchanted prince who instigates all the couple’s interactions, first asking for a “glass of water” and then stopping and talking with her each day until he asks her to marry him (de Morgan 40). After their marriage, this trend of inaction continues, as Blanchelys puts no effort into their relationship, depending on the magical rose tree to nurture his love.

Just as Blanchelys at first seems to embody the “womanly” woman, Zaire, depicted as dark, dangerous, self-confident, and active, initially appears to epitomize the “strong-minded” woman. Zaire is described as the “prettiest girl in all the village,” with hair as “black as a raven’s wing” and eyes “like large sloes” (de Morgan 34). The darkness of her beauty transcends color in this description, as ravens are associated with death while sloes come from blackthorns, a thorny, and therefore potentially dangerous, bush. Zaire knows her worth. In response to the prince’s insult and disregard upon their first encounter, Zaire “fell into a passion” and declared that she “will never do it [open the gate for the prince] again”; she refuses to be dismissed, instead demanding that she receive the respect she believes she deserves (de Morgan 36). In addition, Zaire later actively tries to destroy Blanchelys’s happiness by violently attacking Blanchelys’s rose tree: “First, she pulled off its leaves, and cut its branches, but fresh leaves grew in the old ones’ places, and the maimed branches budded and sprouted anew. Then she took a sharp knife, and pierced it through the trunk, and peeled off the bark, so that it bled” (de Morgan 42). Although she is unaware of the tree’s symbolism, with her actions Zaire is unconsciously trying to destroy and dismantle the ideal of patriarchal love through her destruction of the tree. In this way, Zaire rebels against social ideals of femininity, refusing to be submissive, passive, and self-sacrificing. Furthermore, although she wishes to be admired by the prince, she shows no interest in achieving that goal so important to Blanchelys and “womanly” women: marriage. Zaire thus

seems to embody patriarchy's definition of a unappealing and un-feminine "strong-minded" woman.

However, a closer analysis shows that Mary de Morgan dismantles the dichotomy she creates, as Blanchelys demonstrates rare moments of initiative amidst her submissive passivity, while Zaire becomes obsessed with attracting the attention of the man she claims not to want. Although Blanchelys is too "womanly" to directly approach the prince and initiate conversation, she shows initiative when she uses her grandmother's candle to wish for the prince's love. Venturing alone into the stifling "black, black night," Blanchelys repeatedly "summon[s] her courage" as she lights her magic candle and wishes for love (de Morgan 37). In doing so, she not only shows initiative but also ignores the warning of her grandmother, who cautions her granddaughters to question the wisdom of their wishes, telling them, "If it is a good wish it will be a good fairy that appears, but if it is a wicked wish it will be a wicked fairy that comes; so I advise you to beware, for bad fairies help none" (de Morgan 35). Blanchelys's disregard for her grandmother's sage advice leads to tragedy but nevertheless indicates that there is more spirit and assertiveness in Blanchelys's character than one might expect to find in a "womanly" woman. Furthermore, although Blanchelys's silent, timid, and passive ways return when the rose tree begins to die and she "mourn[s] in silence till the last leaf fell from her tree," she once more takes action when she sneaks out of the castle in the middle of the night to search for the fairy Love (de Morgan 46). Blanchelys also demonstrates perseverance in her quest for Love, as she does not give up her search despite repeated failure to find him. So while Blanchelys might at first seem to embody the "womanly" woman, her rejection of her passive ways in order to gain what she wants, as well as her display of courage and perseverance in those actions, suggests she is less the "womanly" woman and more simply just "woman."

Just as the complexity of Blanchelys's character cannot be summed up by a simplistic stereotype, Zaire also transcends the stereotype of the "strong-minded" woman. As Zaire's jealousy of Blanchelys increases, she focuses all her independent ingenuity on destroying Blanchelys's marriage and stealing her husband in order to become queen. Unlike Blanchelys, Zaire never pretends to be interested in love, but is quite clear in her desire for status and riches. This lack of sentimentality also explains her seemingly callous reaction to her grandmother's death, as she is described as being "so busy thinking of her magic candle that she did not grieve for her grandmother's death, but sat brooding over what great thing she should wish for when she lit it" (de Morgan 35). Given her practical nature, when Zaire does turn her ambitions to marriage, it is not a love match she desires but increased social status. However, despite this difference, Zaire's interest in marriage is a departure from her previous characterization as an independent, "strong-minded" woman. Furthermore, although the fairy Envy insists on Zaire's action, informing her that she must dig "far into the earth" in order to reach the tree's roots and release the snake (de Morgan 45), it is in fact a moment of inaction, where Zaire "would not dance, and stood in a corner watching Blanchelys, her lips trembling in rage," that inspires Zaire to follow in Blanchelys's footsteps and turn to her magic candle for aid (de Morgan 42-43). Although generally more active, assertive, and confident than Blanchelys, such moments of silent inaction in Zaire, along with her desire for marriage, blur the lines of distinction between the "womanly" Blanchelys and "strong-minded" Zaire. In this way, de Morgan creates complex women who cannot be defined by simplistic stereotypes.

In addition to blurring the stereotypes of the "womanly" and "strong-minded" woman, Mary de Morgan also appears to be making a statement about what type of women men really want. As discussed above, although Blanchelys shows rare instances of activity, she is generally

silent, spending the majority of her time in her garden admiring her rose tree. De Morgan writes, “All her ladies knew that Princess Blanchelys’ favourite spot in the palace garden was close to the beautiful rose-tree, where she would sit for hours gazing up at its flowers and smelling them” (41). Yet even with such seemingly ideal feminine behavior, Blanchelys must turn to magic to gain the prince’s love. Zaire, on the other hand, uses her magic candle only to negate the magic of the rose tree and break Blanchelys’s enchantment of the prince. She ultimately gains his attention, and perhaps affections, through activity: “Every day he rode out hunting with Zaire, and at all the Court balls he danced with no one else” (de Morgan 46). It is the unfeminine, independent, active Zaire who the prince chooses to spend time with and marry once the magic of Blanchelys’s candle is broken. Through such a twist in the tale, de Morgan suggests that men do not really want the “womanly” feminine ideal, but that which they deride, the independent “strong-minded” woman. Yet the end of the fairy tale, with Blanchelys’s death and Zaire’s status as a single woman sent into the world to make a living on her own, seems to indicate that marriage for neither women leads to happiness.

Seeds of Disillusionment: Marriage as Social Performance

Writing in the midst of such debates over the institution of marriage, Mary de Morgan uses her fairy tale “The Seeds of Love” to depict the dangers associated with marriage, ultimately suggesting that it is better not to marry than to marry in the absence of sincere affection. Indeed, unlike classic fairy tales, “The Seeds of Love” does not end in marriage but in tragedy. Zipping through the courtship, wedding, and childbearing, Mary de Morgan’s tale focuses less on the traditional fairy-tale marriage plot, in which the poor, orphaned Blanchelys weds the prince, bears a son, and eventually becomes queen, and more on Blanchelys’s life after her marriage, when her complacency turns to misery and desperation as she watches her husband

become increasingly attracted to her cousin Zaire. Through the contradictions that exist between the appearance and supposed purpose of the fairy Love and his actions and environment, Mary de Morgan reveals the falsity of the ideal love promoted by Victorian society, which is less sincere affection than a means to promote the patriarchal marriage plot; this falsity is further reinforced by the prince's actions after his marriage and Blanchelys's suicide. De Morgan also emphasizes the extreme self-sacrifice expected of wives, and Blanchelys becomes an example of the tragedy that occurs when women's self-value is dependent upon the affection of her husband.

In her description of Blanchelys and Zaire after their first encounter with the prince, de Morgan shows her reader the adverse effects the desire for marriage and children can have on women, especially when there is little hope for the achievement of such goals. As orphans who were raised by their recently deceased grandmother, Blanchelys and Zaire make their living overseeing a bridge and appear to have few, if any, prospects for marriage, let alone such an advantageous marriage to royalty. Yet both make an effort to capture the prince's attention when he first returns to the area. After being dismissed and insulted by "a cloud of dust" kicked up by the prince's horse when the prince fails to notice her presence, Zaire grows angry and "f[alls] into a passion," but then quickly moves on (de Morgan 36). She is able to laugh, albeit at her cousin's expense, and "sleep[s] soundly" at night (de Morgan 37). Her independence and self-confidence, coupled with her apparent disinterest in marriage, allow her to live her life as a single woman in contentment, at least until she becomes envious of Blanchelys's marriage to the prince.

In comparison, Blanchelys, who greatly desires marriage to so beautiful a man as the prince, pines. After her encounter with the prince, she "sigh[s]" repeatedly, "we[eps] silently," "gr[ows] thin and pale," and lies "awake all night" (de Morgan 36-37). Such misery leads to

desperation, causing her to ignore her grandmother's warning and sneak out alone at night to use the magic candle. The impropriety of such a selfish and assertive act is emphasized by de Morgan's description of the state of Blanchelys's hair when she leaves the house to light the candle: "So she dressed quickly, but she left her hair hanging down her back" (37). Blanchelys, who typically adheres to patriarchal society's ideal of passive and proper femininity, is forced to abandon such ideals in order to achieve her socially prescribed goal of marriage, as she not only takes action to win the prince's love but also does so in an improper manner, alone at night with her hair undone. As Elisabeth G. Gitter explains in her analysis of the symbolics of women's hair in Victorian literature and art, "The hair is [. . .] the outward sign of the woman's inner self, the text that explains her" (941). The state of women's hair was a form of "self expression" for traditionally silent/silenced women (Gitter 953). Unrestrained hair becomes associated with unrestrained sexuality or, in Blanchelys's case, unrestrained femininity as her flowing hair is consequently connected to her momentary freedom from social strictures. As Rose Lovell-Smith explains in her expansion of Gitter's hair symbolics: "My suggestion for reading this image [of Victorian women with their hair thrown back from their faces, particularly in moments of distress] is that a woman's [tamed] hair frequently functions in Victorian description as a veil: it signifies concealment, modesty, and (by implication) private and proper femininity" ("Out of the Hair Tent" 73). Blanchelys must forgo her properly feminine self in order to act and win her prince, thereby "taking control of her identity" by trespassing social boundaries in order to become both a wife and royalty (Warner 354). By focusing on Blanchelys's wild hair and the lack of propriety needed for her to conform to her socially prescribed role of wife, de Morgan criticizes the perversity of society's expectation for women, as women are forced to act "unfemininely" in order to achieve their "feminine" goal of marriage.

Blanchelys's desire to marry and fulfill her feminine role of wife and mother brings about the appearance of a male fairy that represents both patriarchal society and the "ideal" form of love that underpins such a society. The fairy Love misleadingly appears as an angel. He is a "beautiful" boy with "golden hair," "like a halo," topped with "a wreath of pink roses" (de Morgan 37). He appears carrying "a branch of roses in his hand" and wearing a "white" "robe," "golden sandals," and a "golden girdle" (de Morgan 37-38). The description of his appearance is complete with the addition of "soft pink wings" and the detail that "his face was as beautiful as an angel's" (de Morgan 38). However, Love's angelic appearance is deceptive, and de Morgan offers many clues to support this claim, not the least of which is that his assistance and advice ultimately lead to Blanchelys's death. In the figure of Love, de Morgan has conflated the angelic with Cupid, the god of desire and love. This is significant because the figure of Cupid is much more multi-faceted than a simple angel, as Theresa Tinkle points out: "Cupid appears both [. . .] child and adult, playful and sinister, angelic and demonic. He may be a small boy, equipped with bow and arrows, vexing humans who fancy themselves too wise for love. He may be an adult, tyrannizing over the wretched humans subjected to his power—or a mature man introducing a youthful devotee to the mysteries of love" (1). Moreover, Tinkle states, "Cupid refers us to distinctly social constructions of love and desire" (59). Unlike the angelic fairy, Cupid can be deceptive or even cruel, and he function within (rather than outside) the strictures of society. However, because Love appears angelic, Blanchelys never questions his motives or role, and this ultimately leads to disaster.

The incongruity between Love's appearance and the dark and eerie settings into which he appears creates an atmosphere of uneasiness. When Blanchelys first lights her magic candle, the atmosphere de Morgan describes is ominous: it is a "black, black night," still and "hot," and

Blanchelys lights her candle under a yew tree that “looked like a great black giant in the night” (37). This stark contrast with Love’s innocent appearance is repeated when Blanchelys searches him out after the death of her rose tree. The setting for this second encounter is bleak, and even more disturbing than the sinister first setting. This second setting, described as “desolate barren plain” with “miserable cottages” and “an old church and churchyard,” is filled with the sound of the “roar[ing]” sea and with “wild sea-birds” (de Morgan 47). Neither environment evokes the warmth and happiness one would associate with true love.

Another indication that Love is not a good fairy can be seen in his interaction with Blanchelys. During their first meeting, Blanchelys, who was frightened by the ominous night, is not calmed by Love’s angelic appearance. Partially overcoming her fear and nervousness, she tells Love her wish “in a low, trembling voice” (39). While Blanchelys’s fear and nervousness can in part be attributed to her timid character, Love’s reaction to her emotions is telling, as he does nothing to ease her fear. In fact, he actually “smiled and laughed low to himself” after she states her wish (de Morgan 39). This response is not motivated by the kindness or care one would expect from a representative of love, for he seems quite unconcerned with her fear. Furthermore, his laughter suggests he is amused by her naïve wish for the love of the prince and has knowledge that she cannot obtain the true love she desires. This disturbing reaction from Love hints at the illusory nature of the kind of love he offers Blanchelys, a kind of love that supports patriarchal marriage but does not encourage the development of the sincere affection needed for Blanchelys and the prince to live “happily ever after.”

Love cannot produce true emotion but an artificially created love that is displayed and performed within the feminized domestic sphere. The rose tree is always put on display in domestic spaces, first in a flowerpot on Blanchelys’s windowsill and later in the castle garden.

As the prince's love for Blanchelys is to grow and bloom with the magical rose tree, Blanchelys's desire to admire the tree's growth and measure the prince's love for her whenever she wishes is provided ample opportunity by such domestic spaces, and the domesticity of the tree is further highlighted by Zaire's reference to it as a "pet" (de Morgan 44). In effect, the prince's love becomes her possession, something beautiful to be admired, just as she, as his wife, is his beautiful possession. This emphasis on beauty is also evident in her first reaction to the sight of the prince. Seduced by his beauty, Blanchelys falls in love with him because "she never had seen any one so beautiful in her life" (de Morgan 36). Based on his attractiveness, the unwed Blanchelys centers her daily life on the possibility of seeing him again. She declares, "I would stand at the gate all day if he would only ride by once," and she does so every day until she enchants and marries him (de Morgan 36). However, just as Blanchelys's love for the prince is based on his beauty and not his character, the emotion created by Love's magic is not sincere affection. This becomes obvious when the prince is not overly aggrieved by Blanchelys's death, even though the rose tree, symbolizing his love for his wife, is now once more healthy.

The prince's reaction to the death of his supposedly beloved wife emphasizes the falsity of his love for Blanchelys. Rather than shed even a single tear, the prince's reaction to his wife's melodramatic suicide letter is almost negligible, as "his cheeks turned pale, and he sighed bitterly" before "call[ing] his courtiers" to explain the situation to them (de Morgan 50). The prince only goes to the rose tree, and the dead Blanchelys, after talking with his courtiers. Furthermore, although he "kissed the Queen's pale face," "ordered [. . .] a grand funeral," "thought of no one but Queen Blanchelys, and each day sat by her grave," there is no passion in his response (de Morgan 50). These actions, especially as they are related by de Morgan, are mechanical, a ritual of grieving love without emotion, and the actions of a man under a magic

spell, who cannot feel what he acts. Essentially, Love's rose tree causes the prince to perform love without actually feeling it. Similar to the deceptions performed by suitors when courting their future wives, love, in de Morgan's tale, is therefore both illusory and destructive. Unlike the traditional fairy-tale narrative, magic does not lead to the concluding marriage but to the death of the heroine.

The deceitfulness of Love is emphasized in the circumstances of Blanchelys's encounter with the fairy at a funeral, where patriarchal love is associated with abuse. When asked where he could be found, Love warns Blanchelys, "But I am often where you would never seek me, and seldom where you would look for me" (de Morgan 39). This proves true, as Blanchelys searches unsuccessfully for Love at a wedding and a courtship, as well as in "a green, on which were playing a number of children" (de Morgan 47). Ironically, it is not until she comes to a funeral that she discovers Love. It is on this sad occasion that Blanchelys once more sees Love, "dressed as a mourner" and accompanying a widow at her husband's funeral (de Morgan 48). However, the scene becomes unsettling when the relationship between the widow and the deceased is described by some female villagers:

"He made her work for him day and night," said one, "and never gave her a kind word."

"He beat and kicked her," said the other; "it's very well for her that he is dead."

"[. . .] He was the wickedest man for miles round." (de Morgan 47)

Yet despite his cruelty and violence towards her, the widow still mourns for him, apparently not recognizing her good fortune, as the other women in the village do. Blanchelys's reaction to seeing her is telling: "Poor woman! she is unhappy; so am I" (de Morgan 47). Not only does Blanchelys confirm that the woman is indeed sad at the loss of her abusive husband, but she also draws a direct connection between herself and the widow.

The love experienced by both these women requires unnecessary self-sacrifice. Evoking the discourse on feminine self-sacrifice seen in the periodicals of the 1870s, de Morgan suggests that marriage and feminine self-sacrifice are indelibly intertwined. Because of her fidelity to an idealized conception of love that cannot be separated from patriarchal marriage and that persists in the face of her husband's abuse, the widow stayed with a man who abused her physically and mentally, using her as a workhorse and rewarding her with violence. Yet she still mourns his death, as the scene at his funeral indicates. Blanchelys, on the other hand, is so desperate to regain the false love of the prince after her rose tree is poisoned by Zaire that she commits suicide. Love warns her that the only way to make the rose tree "bloom out afresh" in order to make the prince love her once more is to "pierce [her] heart with a thorn from the tree, and let [her heart's blood] flow to the tree's roots" (de Morgan 48). Blanchelys willingly submits herself to this violent death in order to regain the love of the prince, even though she will not be alive to receive said love. In this way, both women submit to violence in order to receive the love of a man and fulfill their socially prescribed roles of becoming a wife and mother, sacrificing their happiness in order to achieve their reward. Therefore, Love is not the embodiment of sincere affection, but a warped kind of enthrallment, an idealized conception of patriarchal love that demands pain and the lives of its female possessors within the bounds of the institution of marriage. Neither woman, in fact, has experienced sincere affection, and this lack is at least in part responsible for their unhappy and even tragic married lives. As some of the writers in the 1870s periodicals warned, entering a marriage without sincere affection can be dangerous.

In "The Seeds of Love," Mary de Morgan presents the reader with the idyllic fairy-tale marriage only to dismantle it, piece by piece. After meeting the prince, the poor orphaned Blanchelys marries him with "great rejoicings [. . .] and illuminations everywhere" (de Morgan

40). Next, “Blanchelys had a little son, who was heir to the crown, and she was even happier than before, and her husband loved her better“ (de Morgan 41), until finally the two are “crowned King and Queen” in a culmination of good fortune and marital bliss (de Morgan 42). This idyllic image of marital and maternal happiness is a stark contrast to Blanchelys’s final state of desperation: “So Queen Blanchelys lay down on the ground, and put her arms round the trunk, and from the dead branch she tore a long smooth thorn, and pierced her heart with it, and the drops of blood trickled to the roots of the tree” (de Morgan 50). To a lesser degree, Zaire’s own brush with matrimony, as she tries to steal Blanchelys’s husband for herself, results in loneliness and poverty: “Zaire was stripped of all her fine dresses and jewels, and had the clothes which she wore before she came to the palace, and was banished from the land, and had to beg her bread from door to door” (de Morgan 50). Meanwhile, the unnamed widow is left grieving for a husband who abused her physically and mentally. In this way, de Morgan has left her readers with no positive example of matrimony.

Seeds of Distinction: The Critique of Victorian Love

Yet Mary de Morgan does not leave her readers completely without hope. A closer examination of Blanchelys’s motivation for desiring to marry the prince reveals that she was not as innocent in her love of the prince as she at first appears. Like the fairy Love, Blanchelys’s character is deceptive. In this final section, I will discuss how Mary de Morgan distinguishes between two types of love: ideal romantic love and sincere affection, which I will call true love for the sake of convenience. Both kinds of love are romantic, yet while idealized romantic love results in someone entering into a relationship (in the case of this essay, a courtship and marriage) with the expectation that the relationship will be one of perfect happiness and accord, true love is the kind of love that actually exists in reality and requires effort and

intimate knowledge of one's partner to develop and maintain. In "The Seeds of Love," Mary de Morgan condemns ideal romantic love as deceptive and leading to misery, showing how the Victorian perpetuation and idolization of this kind of love, as depicted in fiction such as novels and fairy tales, leads women to have unrealistic expectations concerning marriage.

According to Victorian domestic ideology, the love of a man combined with marriage (and children) are the ultimate goals for women, and therefore the focus of their lives. As Shirley Foster writes in *Victorian Women's Fiction: Marriage, Freedom and the Individual*,

This ideology had a considerable effect upon middle-class Victorian women, in both social and personal terms. Because so much importance was attached to the roles of wifehood and motherhood, marriage was deemed the apotheosis of womanly fulfillment, alternatives to which were regarded as pitiable or unnatural. Emotional and psychological pressures on women to marry were thus added to the social and economic ones of earlier periods. (6)

Yet as de Morgan suggests in her tragic fairy tales, this focus on love and marriage can be fatal, as women become willing to die in order to achieve their socially prescribed goal of being loved by a man.

The love that Blanchelys wishes to foster in the prince is an ideal romantic love that occurs within a marriage in which both the husband and wife love each other absolutely and to the exclusion of all else. In *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction*, Jenni Calder discusses this type of ideal romantic love in relation to Elizabeth Gaskell's *Sylvia's Lovers*, writing that Sylvia Robsen "is a victim of an idolizing love which she cannot return" (80). As will be demonstrated, the prince in "The Seeds of Love" is a "victim of an idolizing love," as Blanchelys does not truly know or want to know her beloved as an individual. Likewise, Blanchelys is herself victimized by her very belief in an ideal romantic love, as it is this that causes her to make her fatal sacrifice, despite the evidence that suggests that love has no part in the tale's romance. As de Morgan makes clear, this kind of love is nothing more than an ideal, something

vastly different from the experiences of real men and women in Victorian society, where “the grim workings of marriage capitalism” is the norm and marriages are more likely to be based on a desire for status and wealth than true love (Calder 26).

As Calder discusses, while “Victorian sensibility did not approve of mercenary marriages,” “[m]otives [for marriage] other than money, property and the acceptance of convention are barely relevant. Marriage is a part of one’s progress in the world, and the idea of marriage permeates the thinking of young women and young men long before any particular choice is considered” (32). Such an attitude suggests that Blanchelys is being perfectly reasonable and practical in her (unconscious) desire to marry for money and status. She is, in this sense, a product of her social time, for as Calder explains, “status and security,” where security refers to wealth and property, are “important” to both “men and women, but especially [economically vulnerable] women, [who] will go to the greatest lengths to win them” (25). Such a system of “marriage capitalism” (Calder 26) continues throughout the century despite social condemnations and “attacks on those who married for the wrong reasons” (Calder 14). As this section will argue, Mary de Morgan is concerned not only with condemning the practice of mercenary marriages, but also Victorian society’s idolization of romantic love, an idolization that encourages women to believe that there is no price too great to pay, including that of their lives, to foster said love in a man.

As the protagonist of de Morgan’s “The Seeds of Love,” Blanchelys dreams of a fairy-tale marriage that will allow her, a poor orphaned girl, to marry a prince. She opens and closes the gate for the prince every day in the hopes that he will notice her, and begins to pine when her dream of being noticed and loved by the prince does not occur. As de Morgan writes, Blanchelys has a physically visible reaction when her relationship with the prince does not unfold like a

fairy-tale romance, as she “wept silently, and when she slept at night she dreamed of the King’s son [. . .] So the days passed, and Blanchelys grew thin and pale” (36-37). Desperate to make her romantic dream a reality, Blanchelys turns to the magic candle her grandmother gave her before she died. Lighting the candle to summon the fairy Love, who appears in the form of an angelic cupid, complete with “golden hair [. . .] like a halo,” “soft pink wings,” and a “face [as] beautiful as an angel’s” (de Morgan 37-38), Blanchelys asks the fairy to “[g]ive [her] the love of the King’s son” (de Morgan 39). The fairy gives Blanchelys seeds “from the heart of the roses” he carries and tells her, “From them will spring a rose-tree, and as it grows so [the prince’s] love for you will grow. While that tree lives he will love you more than all the world, but should it pine and die his love for you would wane and die also” (de Morgan 39). Blanchelys takes the seeds and follows the fairy’s instructions, and the prince begins to notice her and talk to her as the rose tree grows, until finally he asks her to wed him. Blanchelys marries the prince, has his child, and is crowned queen; it would appear that the rose tree has enabled her to make her dream of ideal romantic love in a fairy-tale romance a reality, although as the story unfolds it becomes apparent that this is not the case, for as the fairy Love’s warning suggests and Carroll asserts, “like Blanchelys’ marriage,” the tree, and therefore the prince’s love, requires constant tending and is therefore “an unsustainable venture” (112).

Yet what becomes apparent after Blanchelys’s death is that the ideal romantic love that she has died for does not truly exist. Through the prince’s reaction to his wife Blanchelys’s death, Mary de Morgan suggests that the prince does not truly fall back in love with Blanchelys, and de Morgan thereby emphasizes the fact that his love was never real but rather the effect of an enchantment. Upon waking, the prince finds and reads the suicide note left on his pillow by Blanchelys, yet rather than run out mad with grief to find his wife, “his cheeks turned pale, and

he sighed bitterly, and then he called his courtiers” (de Morgan 50). The prince’s response lacks any sense of urgency, as he does not cry or try to stop or save Blanchelys but first calls in his courtiers to tell them about the note. When the prince finally goes to the rose tree and finds Blanchelys’s body, his response is still less than passionate. De Morgan writes, “The King kissed the Queen’s pale face, and ordered that there should be a grand funeral, and that she should be buried under her rose-tree, and from that day forth the King thought of no one but Queen Blanchelys, and each day sat by her grave under her rose-tree” (50). Although the prince creates a memorial in honor of his wife and “thought of no one but Queen Blanchelys,” his reaction to the knowledge of his wife’s suicide and discovery of her body is somehow lacking. The prince does not cry, bemoan Blanchelys’s cruel fate, or express any regret for the loss of a wife he is supposed to love. Instead, he is quite calm and methodical, suggesting his actions are motivated by the rose tree’s enchantment and are therefore more of a performance of grieving love than the actions of a man who truly loved and lost his wife. The prince, therefore, thinks about Blanchelys because the enchantment dictates he must do so, and this is perhaps not so surprising, considering that the prince’s love was always a performance because it was the result of a magic spell rather than true and sincere emotion. Therefore, “dead poor Queen Blanchelys” died in vain, as the only true effect her suicide has is seen in the now-red rosebuds blooming on her rose tree (de Morgan 50): “But when the rose-tree burst into bloom, the roses which were white before, were as red as the blood which sprang from the Queen’s heart, and which had coloured them” (de Morgan 50). Blanchelys’s heart’s blood, rather than ensuring that she is eternally loved by the prince, merely has an aesthetic effect on the roses, and the reader is left with the realization that Blanchelys never truly possessed, and never will possess, the ideal romantic love of which she dreamed and for which she died.

Rather than ideal love, the romantic relationship between Blanchelys and the prince is based on a desire for wealth and status. These two elements, along with a beautiful appearance, contribute to Blanchelys's desire to marry the prince. This becomes evident when one looks closely at Blanchelys's first encounters with the prince, before she lights the candle and enchants him. After seeing him riding his horse, "Blanchelys thought she never had seen anyone so beautiful in her life" (de Morgan 36). It is the prince's beauty that causes Blanchelys to sigh and say, "I would stand at the gate all day if he would only ride by once," and it is his beauty that causes Blanchelys to keep to her declaration and open the gate for the prince every day as he rides by her cottage (de Morgan 36). While "love at first sight" is a common fairy-tale trope, and therefore does not necessarily contribute to an argument that de Morgan is critiquing Victorian society's idealization of a non-existent ideal love, de Morgan also emphasizes that the prince's beauty, and therefore his appeal in the eyes of Blanchelys, is intricately connected to his wealth and status.

It is only after the description of the prince's golden appearance and costly clothing, including his "velvet cap" and "diamond clasp," that Blanchelys comments on his beauty (de Morgan 36). He is described as being "clad in a suit of burnished gold that sparkled and shone in the sunlight" while his hair is also described in terms of gold, as it is "darker and redder than his golden dress" (de Morgan 36). As Blanchelys has yet to have a conversation with the prince, it is apparent that her infatuation is based on the prince's affluent appearance. Moreover, after Blanchelys's marriage to the prince and the couple's coronation upon the king's death, de Morgan consistently calls Blanchelys "Queen Blanchelys," constantly denoting her improved social status (de Morgan 42). Such an attention to Blanchelys's new position as queen would suggest that such a change in status is important. It would therefore seem that it is not love that

motivates Blanchelys to enchant the prince, but rather an infatuation with his wealth and status. Her wish on the magic candle therefore brings her the Cupid-like fairy Love not because she loves the prince, but because she “desires” (from the Latin *cupido* according to Tinkle) him (59). De Morgan thereby makes it clear that Blanchelys’s marriage to the prince was not one based on the ideal love she used her magic candle to wish for, but is instead one of the mercenary marriages that were so common in Victorian society despite that same society’s stated condemnation of them.

Mary de Morgan offers her readers another example of why the idolization of romantic love is harmful to women. In keeping with the idea that despite Victorian condemnation of mercenary marriages, said marriages are more the rule than the exception, Blanchelys’s search for the fairy Love after the withering of her rose tree proves difficult, as she cannot find him at either an affluent wedding or under a tree where “a couple of lovers [sat] courting,” suggesting love is absent from many of the social relationships where one might hope and expect to find it (de Morgan 47). Instead, Love is to be found next to a grieving widow attending her abusive husband’s funeral. That the fairy Love is standing next to the mourning widow at the interment suggests that this marriage was one based on love, yet it proved to be a most miserable marriage for the woman turned wife turned widow. Through this example, de Morgan suggests that this is the result of encouraging women to believe in ideal romantic love and a happily-ever-after marriage, as it led the woman to enter into—and remain in—an abusive relationship.

Mary de Morgan uses “The Seeds of Love” to try to dispel the socially encouraged illusion of the existence and desirability of ideal romantic love. She does so by emphasizing the Victorian reality that courtships and marriages are based more often on a desire for financial or social gain than on true and sincere affection. She also does so by showing the suffering such an

illusion fosters on the part of women through her depiction of the abused widow and through the suicide of her idealistic protagonist Blanchelys. The effect of the idealization of romantic love in this fairy tale is not happiness but disillusionment and death. As Justin T. Jones writes of Wilde's tales, "Wilde's fairy tales further defy generic convention in the repeated rejection of the happily-ever-after trope of the classical tradition" (886). Such an observation can easily be extended to include Mary de Morgan's "The Seeds of Love," and it is this rejection of fairy-tale happy endings that emphasizes de Morgan's point concerning the reality of marriage in Victorian society: despite the assertions of domestic ideology and the endings of traditional fairy-tale romances, marital happiness is not guaranteed, especially when partners approach marriage with a delusional expectation of ideal romantic love or a mercenary desire to increase their wealth and/or social status.^{xii}

Given de Morgan's rejection of conventional stereotypes and the tradition of happily-ever-after marriages in "The Seeds of Love," her work can be interpreted as an argument for social reform. By depicting the adverse effects society's demands and expectations have on the lives of women, de Morgan is advocating change and a need for a more viable option for "redundant" women, an option that involves neither poverty nor hasty, risky marriage for money and status. The independent Zaire manages to survive only as an impoverished single woman who must find some way to support herself in the world. Yet this life seems preferable to the life of the widow, who has worked her entire life to support an abusive husband, as well as the life of tragic, self-sacrificing Blanchelys, who kills herself in order to regain the attention of her husband and "save" her marriage. In this way, de Morgan shows spinsterhood and poverty to be preferable to a marriage without sincere affection, as neither the widow nor Blanchelys had

happy marriages based on true love. In this way, Mary de Morgan does not allow her readers the fairy-tale illusion of marriage as an enchanted and blissful ending for women, for as de Morgan portrays it, marriage is dangerous, false, and demanding—a cruel performance.

Yet as de Morgan's tale makes clear, it is not just men who enact this performance, but society as whole, leading women to believe that marriage is their natural destiny and therefore sole source of happiness. It is, after all, Blanchelys who dupes both herself and the prince into believing they love each other and will live happily ever after; the prince, honestly if rudely, has no interest in Blanchelys until his enchantment. Domestic ideology's insistence that marriage and motherhood are the only viable aspirations for women, and that spinsterhood is pitiable, is the impetus that drives Blanchelys to turn to magic to achieve her goal of marrying the prince. Therefore, it is not Zaire who is to blame for Blanchelys's misery and suicide; rather, as in Anne Thackeray Ritchie's "Bluebeard's Key," Victorian society's rigid set of expectations concerning the role of women and the definition of femininity is the villain in de Morgan's tale.

PART THREE

CHAPTER FIVE: ELIZABETH GASKELL'S GOTHIC FAIRY TALES: "THE GREY WOMAN" & "CURIOUS, IF TRUE"

Clopton Hall" [. . .] is the first appearance of those houses haunted by the past, and by stories, which will recur so often in Gaskell's fiction, like the fantastical chateau of "Curious if True" [. . .] And the fate of the Clopton women anticipates a host of tales with oppressed yet defiant heroines: "The Old Nurse's Story", "The Grey Woman", "Morton Hall", "Crowley Castle". From the beginning Gaskell's stance was both radical and feminist, and she continued all her life to make use of these Gothic conventions to link the cruel oppression of wives and daughters to the pressure of history and the patriarchal power of the aristocracy, in contrast to the tenderness of women, the mutual care of the poor, the rough, loving loyalty of servants. (Uglow 120)

Unlike Mary de Morgan, Elizabeth Gaskell has not suffered from scholarly neglect. In fact, there is plenty of scholarship available on Gaskell's life and works, although only a small portion relates to her use of fairy tales. It is unclear when Elizabeth Gaskell first became familiar with the fairy-tale genre. John Chapple explains in *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years*, "Her mind was later full of classic fairy tales by Charles Perrault and others, [. . .] but it is not at all certain just when she might have first encountered the children's works pouring from the presses since the 1780s [. . .] She could have revived them for her own children, or read them then for the first time" (197). While Gaskell was undoubtedly familiar with the seventeenth-century French fairy tales, she also would have access to those by Hans Christian Andersen through her friend Mary Howitt, who "was known for her translations of [. . .] Hans Christian Andersen" (Uglow 170). Furthermore, it is likely Gaskell was familiar with Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's fairy tales as well. Edgar Taylor published the first English translation of the Grimms' tales in 1823 and Gaskell had a demonstrated interest in Germany, having travelled there and set several stories in Germany as well.¹ Whenever Gaskell first encountered the fairy tale, the genre clearly stuck with her, influencing, directly and indirectly, several of her literary works. This influence is

subtle in her novels. In particular, several of her novel heroines reflect the situation of classic fairy-tale heroines in their attempts at transformation or maturation. For instance, Sylvia Robsen (of *Sylvia's Lovers*) in her scarlet cape enacts Little Red Riding Hood's journey toward maturation while Lady Ludlow (of *My Lady Ludlow*) progresses from a state of sleeping oblivion to one of awakening or awareness like Sleeping Beauty or Snow White. However, this fairy-tale influence is more overt in some of Gaskell's short stories, in particular "The Grey Woman" and "Curious, If True." These two stories directly adapt and interact with classic fairy tales and will be the subjects of this chapter. It is notable that both of these tales are set in countries with strong fairy-tale traditions, specifically Germany and France. Intriguingly, despite Gaskell's recorded love of fairy tales from her childhood through adulthood, her adaptation of fairy tales in her literary work also shows a conspicuous disillusionment with the fairy-tale concept of "happily-ever-after," a disillusionment that is also at odds with her own marital and familial happiness.

Several scholars have already noted the influence of fairy tales on Elizabeth Gaskell's novels and short stories. In her essay "Gaskell as Scheherazade: Fairytale Themes in *Cousin Phillis* and *North and South*," Vanessa Williams argues that Gaskell's novels *Cousin Phillis* and *North and South* feature heroines similar to Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel in their social isolation and later sexual awakening and maturation. Significantly, given my own argument, one of these fairy-tale adaptations ends unhappily, for the heroine does not marry the hero but instead returns to her sleeping isolation at the conclusion of the novel. Jenny Uglow similarly discusses *My Lady Ludlow* as a version of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, in which "Lady Ludlow is awakened and brought back into the world by men" (470). Another scholar, Rose Lovell-Smith, has discussed how Gaskell's gothic story "The Grey Woman" is a retelling of the Bluebeard tale in "Anti-Housewives and Ogres' Housekeepers: The Roles of Bluebeard's Female Helper." As a

Bluebeard tale would have it, marital bliss is already suspect since the heroine weds a murderous husband. Yet Gaskell further denies the happy ending of the heroine's remarriage following her rescue, given that Anna is forever changed and experiences conflict with her daughter long after escaping her first marriage. Finally, Gaskell's short story "Curious, If True," which features a gathering of barely disguised fairy-tale characters, has been analyzed by Peter Stiles and Janice Kirkland. But while Kirkland notes the unhappiness of some of the fairy-tale characters, this unhappiness is not analyzed as fairy-tale disillusionment but is instead interpreted as reflecting the romantic conflicts experienced by Gaskell's daughters. Therefore, while the fairy-tale aspects of Gaskell's work has not been neglected by scholars, even though these novels and stories were not presented as fairy tales per se, the proto-feminism of Gaskell's disillusionment with happily-ever-after fairy-tale endings has yet to be examined.

Gaskell & the Mid-Century Women's Movement

Patsy Stoneman writes, "During Gaskell's lifetime 'woman's role' and the relation of men and women within their separate worlds were the subjects of endless prescription and debate, and it was among these shifting positions that she formed her opinions and began to write" (132). Although Elizabeth Gaskell was not a devoted advocate of the women's movement, she did actively support aspects of the movement and certainly was not opposed to the growth of women's rights in Victorian society and law. This support can be seen in her Unitarian beliefs and connections, her own marriage and personal life, and her characterization of women in her novels and short stories.

As Coral Lansbury explains, "Elizabeth Gaskell was born to a heritage of political and social reform, and a passion for individual liberty and justice" as a Unitarian (12). According to Lansbury, the Unitarians believed in "the creation of individuals who would each in his and her

own way find fulfillment as an active member of society” (13). Both male and female Unitarians were expected to actively work to better society, and gender distinction was rejected in regard to education. Because Unitarians focused less on gender distinctions than the dominant Victorian population, Lansbury asserts, “To be born a woman in the Victorian era was to enter a world of social and cultural deprivation unknown to a man. But to be born a woman and Unitarian was to be released from much of the prejudice and oppression enjoined upon other women” (11). Therefore, as a Unitarian Gaskell experienced more freedom than most women, and this freedom naturally inclined Gaskell and other Unitarian women to be sympathetic to a cause that proposed to extend such freedoms to all women. Lansbury notes that “the Unitarians were to be leaders in the movement for women’s rights” as “Eliza Fox, Barbara Bodichon, Harriet Martineau, Emily Shaen and Florence Nightingale were all Unitarians of varying degrees of faith” (13).

Lansbury and other scholarsⁱⁱ observe that Gaskell was closely connected to these and other women’s rights leaders, but that she did not wholeheartedly support their mission. For instance, in *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Portrait in Letters* Chapple confirms that Gaskell signed a petition for a Married Women’s Property Bill at the urging of her friend Eliza Fox. But while Gaskell notes the lack of legal authority afforded to married women, writing to Fox, “a husband can coax, wheedle, beat or tyrannize his wife out of something and no law whatever will help this that I see,” she concludes her letter with a statement expressing her doubt regarding the success of such an act of Parliament: “However our sex is badly enough used and legislated *against*, there’s no doubt of *that*—so though I don’t see the definite end proposed by these petitions I’ll sign” (xii-xiv). Uglow similarly describes Gaskell’s mixed response to the women’s rights movement, explaining, “Elizabeth gave them her qualified support. She signed the petition for the amendment of the married woman’s property laws organized by Barbara in 1854, and

approved their campaigns for education and employment. But she was disturbed as well as attracted by their radicalism” (311). Perhaps part of Gaskell’s hesitation can be ascribed to her own apparently happy situation as wife and mother, although as a publicly recognized author Gaskell led a domestic life was not the Victorian norm.

Gaskell’s domestic happiness likely can be attributed to the Unitarian upbringing she and her husband shared, as theirs was according to all accounts a union of equals. Uglow explains, “she was never to play a submissive role. Once married, she always signed herself Elizabeth Gaskell, not Mrs William Gaskell” (77). Deirdre D’Albertis makes a similar assertion, writing,

Looking at the Gaskell marriage closely, we see that it was based not so much on compromise or subordination as on compatibility and an acceptance of parallel lives. [. . .] Equilibrium, for this couple, was guaranteed by separation with connection. Given their temperamental differences, William and Elizabeth eventually maintained divergent work lives, social schedules, friendships, and travel itineraries. (20).

Yet although scholars agree that the couple maintained their separate interests, their level of contentment is debated. Some scholars, like Aina Rubenius, suggest that Gaskell resented her husband. Others, such as Lansbury, compellingly argue that “the occasional grumbling letter that was sent to her friends and relations” that may appear to indicate marital discord is “more likely” evidence of “a woman who feels she has the freedom to complain about her marriage, when so inclined, [and who] is one who has a reasonably stable relationship with her husband” (17). Lansbury goes on to state, “Elizabeth Gaskell never idealised marriage, and never saw it as more than a working partnership between individuals with different tastes and inclinations,” and I am inclined to agree with this analysis, particularly given Gaskell’s portrayal of marriage in the two texts to be analyzed in this chapter. Lansbury’s additional assertion, that “It was clearly not the ideal Victorian marriage, but it endured with affection and respect to the end,” also seems apt (19).

Despite her own (debatably) happy marriage, Gaskell did not shy away from “examin[ing] the domestic hell of marriage” or examining how “women become ‘natural’ victims of the system their tacit obedience supports” (Uglow 472). Examples of her empowerment of women and depiction of the perilous situation of women in society are too numerous to list here and ultimately unnecessary, as this trend in her work continues in the two short stories to be analyzed in this chapter, “The Grey Woman” and “Curious, If True,” both published in the 1860s. As Uglow crucially notes, “Although Elizabeth was too firmly locked in the domestic sphere to be an out and out radical, from 1850 a sharper feminist note enters her fiction, sometimes in unlikely places” (315). While the “unlikelihood” of such an occurrence in fairy tales is debatable given the genre’s frequently subversive nature, Gaskell’s (proto)feminism is realized in her fairy-tale adaptations.

“The Grey Woman” & Bluebeard

Many scholars have commented on the differences between Elizabeth Gaskell’s short stories and her novels. Shirley Foster explains, “Wide-ranging in content and technique, these [short pieces, including stories, essays, autobiographical reminiscences, and travelogues] show Gaskell at her most original and inventive, experimenting with genre and narrative methodology, and dealing with topics which, though also explored in her novels, often have a sharper impact in the more restricted space” (“Elizabeth Gaskell’s Shorter Pieces” 108). Laura Kranzler, editor of Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Gothic Tales*, makes a more specific assertion regarding Gaskell’s treatment of gender conflict in her gothic short stories, including “The Grey Woman” and “Curious, If True”: “In Gaskell’s Gothic scenarios, it is usually the female characters who are victimized by the males, and it is this investment in exposing the conflict between the powerful and the powerless that links these stories and novellas most explicitly with the themes of her better-

known full-length works” (xi). The power conflict that Kranzler recognizes easily can lend itself to a proto-feminist message, and Uglow discusses how Gaskell combines this power struggle with fairy-tale and folklore motifs to create suspense as a heroine fights to rebel against and overcome the patriarchal oppression embedded in Victorian society:

In these stories women become ‘natural’ victims of the system their tacit obedience supports. Unless, that is, they have the courage to defy, and even then they may not survive. Like the fairy stories and folk-tales which so often underlie her work, Gaskell’s is a fiction full of pain as well as love, annihilation as well as assertion of self. Physical and mental cruelty abound. In her Gothic story, ‘The Grey Woman’ (1861), a young German girl is married to a deceptively effeminate man, who offers her love and wealth only to entomb her (like Bluebeard) in a castle on the edge of a cliff. (472)

In “The Grey Woman,” the heroine, Anna, relates her tale of tragedy and terror to her daughter via a letter, detailing the horror of her marriage to a Bluebeard figure and her escape with the help of her maid, Amante. Like Anne Thackeray Ritchie’s “Bluebeard’s Keys,” Gaskell brings the Bluebeard story into reality while also creating distance for her readers, in Gaskell’s case through a narrative frame that sets the events in the past, as Anna’s letter is related to the reader through several steps of separation: Anna, born in 1778, wrote the letter to her daughter, but in the 1840s the letter is in the possession of her great nephew, a miller, who gives the letter to two curious English travellers visiting the German mill but forced inside to wait out a rainstorm; while inside, they see a portrait of Anna and ask about her story. Anna’s letter is related to the reader by one of the unknown English travellers, who speaks in the first person in the narrative frame.

Elizabeth Gaskell’s “The Grey Woman” has been studied by scholars from various viewpoints. While Peter Skrine discusses the long short story in connection to Gaskell’s other tales set in Germany and the influence her time in Germany had upon her literary work, Lovell-Smith focuses on the tale as an examples of an “alternative tradition” of Bluebeard tales written

by nineteenth- and twentieth-century women authors that focus less on the heroine's curiosity and punishment and more on "female bonding" between Bluebeard's wife and the female helper within the household ("Anti-Housewives" 198-99). Lovell-Smith analyzes Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Elizabeth Gaskell's 'The Grey Woman,' and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* as revisions of Bluebeard in which the "female helper [. . .] is found acting as servant, ally, relation, or even lover of the husband, while at the same time doubling as companion, informant, confidante, or saviour of the heroine" ("Anti-Housewives" 199). She argues that "[her] study of such characters as developed by female authorship shows that they are more properly defined as the heroine's helpers than the Bluebeard's" ("Anti-Housewives" 199). Lovell-Smith further states, "The female bonding within the husband's house offered by these helpers was apparently sensed by all three writers to be a dangerously subversive element" ("Anti-Housewives" 199). After her somewhat brief analysis of "The Grey Woman," Lovell-Smith asserts, "Both *Jane Eyre* and "The Grey Woman" are clearly mid-Victorian 'proto-feminist' texts, as evidenced by their common interest in women's work, in female bonding, in female independence of male financial support, and in their sensational departures from images of the centrality of the happy home and the finality of the happy marriage" ("Anti-Housewives" 204). I agree with Lovell-Smith's assertion of "The Grey Woman" as proto-feminist, and will make the same case regarding "Curious, If True" later in this chapter. However, whereas Lovell-Smith bases her argument on the characterization and role of the female helper in the story, namely Amante, I will examine more fully the story as a whole and the way marriage and its dangers are presented to readers.ⁱⁱⁱ

Maria Tatar writes, "'Bluebeard' can [. . .] be viewed [. . .] as a story with an impassioned social purpose, a mission to broadcast what can go wrong in marriage. Situating us squarely in the domestic arena, from the honeymoon to the first lovers' quarrel, it stands virtually alone

among our canonical fairy tales in its negation of a ‘happily ever after’ ending” (53). But there are several variants of the Bluebeard tale. Perrault’s “Bluebeard” is perhaps the best known. In it, a young girl marries a wealthy neighbor despite his unappealing blue beard. Before leaving on a business trip, he gives his wife the keys to all the rooms in the house, but tells her that one room is forbidden to her. Overcome by curiosity, the wife uses the key to enter the forbidden chamber, in which she finds the bodies and blood of several women, all previously wed to Bluebeard and all with their throats cut. The enchanted key is dropped on the floor in shock and thereby stained by the women’s blood, providing Bluebeard evidence of his wife’s disobedience. Declaring she must die and join the bodies in the forbidden room, the wife is saved only when her brothers arrive, at the behest of her older sister Anne (who was visiting), to slay Bluebeard. Bluebeard’s widow then goes on to wed another and live happily after inheriting her first husband’s wealth. But as Tatar explains, there are two German variants of the tale as well: “When we consider the form in which ‘Bluebeard’ circulated in an oral culture, it quickly becomes evident that the story must be closely related to two tales recorded by the Brothers Grimm,” specifically “Fitcher’s Bird” and “The Robber Bridegroom” (59).

“The Robber Bridegroom,” and its English variant “Mr. Fox,” are of particular significance for the following analysis, as Gaskell used these texts, along with Perrault’s “Bluebeard,” as source texts in “The Grey Woman.” “The heroine of ‘The Robber Bridegroom,’ though not faced with a forbidden chamber and a test of obedience, rescues herself from a murderous suitor, mobilizing her wits and her narrative skills to escape the cannibalistic thieves with whom her betrothed consorts” (Tatar 59). In this German version, a miller’s daughter is promised to a rich suitor despite her protests, and he invites her to visit his house in the woods. On the way there, she is warned away by a bird, and she arrives to be told to hide by an elderly

woman in the cellar. Her bridegroom and his band of robbers arrive with a young girl, who they butcher and eat. The elderly woman helps the girl escape once the cannibals fall asleep, and she takes with her a finger of the girl as evidence of what occurred. On the morning of the wedding, the girl proceeds to tell the story of horror as if it were a dream, until she reveals the finger of the victim. The story concludes with the trial and execution of the robbers. The English “Mr. Fox”^{iv} is very similar to “The Robber Bridegroom,” except the heroine is a Lady Mary rather than a miller’s daughter. Lady Mary becomes betrothed to Mr. Fox, who like the Robber Bridegroom invites her to visit his house. She determines to go one day unattended, and although cautioned repeatedly by written warnings, she proceeds into the empty house and into a chamber filled with bones and blood. She sees Mr. Fox returning with a young lady and hides under the staircase, where she witnesses Mr. Fox cutting off the hand of the girl with his sword when she grabs the bannister to stop their progress. As in “The Robber Bridegroom,” Lady Mary, at a dinner party with Mr. Fox, relates the narrative as if it were a dream until she produces the hand as evidence of Mr. Fox’s atrocity. The dinner guests then proceed to cut Mr. Fox up with their swords. There are three crucial differences between these two tales and “Bluebeard”: the heroine plays an active role in the defeat of the murderous bridegroom, the heroine does not marry the bridegroom, and the heroine’s curiosity is not a factor in the tale. Notably, however, the female helper is absent in the tale of “Mr. Fox.”

While the Norman servant and companion Amante proves to be Anna’s best friend, surrogate mother, protector, and imposter-husband both inside Anna’s husband’s household and outside of it once they escape and run for their lives, the first part of “The Grey Woman” focuses on the opposite kind of female interaction, both within a household and without, in which jealousy and the desire for status and reputation pit woman against woman in a struggle for

power and status. This is first presented in Anna's interactions with her brother's new and jealous wife, Babette Müller. As Anna explains in her letter, both she and Babette were considered beauties, causing Babette "to look upon [her] as a rival" (Gaskell 292). This female rivalry leads Babette to try to marry Anna off and thereby remove her from her brother and father's household: "I began to see that Babette was egging on Karl [an unwanted suitor] to make more open love to me, and, as she had once said, to get done with it, and take me off to a home of my own" (Gaskell 293). Anna resists, having "no notion of being married," but Babette finally manages to remove her from the household when a friend, Sophie Rupprecht, invites her to visit (Gaskell 293). In Anna's words, "Babette was all for my going" and so "I yielded to circumstances—to the pulling of Sophie and the pushing of Babette" (Gaskell 293). Babette also manages a final jab when she inspects Sophie's wardrobe, for Babette "settled that this gown was too old-fashioned, or that too common, to go with [Anna] on [her] visit to a noble lady" and then "took [it] upon herself to spend the money [Anna's] father had given [Anna] to buy what was requisite for the occasion" (Gaskell 293). It is a desire to get away from her sister-in-law that causes Anna to leave the safety and security of her familial home and visit her friend in the thick of society where she will first encounter and become entrapped in an engagement with her future husband and Bluebeard-in-disguise, Monsieur de la Tourelle. As Anna asserts in her letter to her daughter, "That Babette Müller was, as I may say, the cause of all my life's suffering" (Gaskell 292).

Anna is also manipulated by Madame Rupprecht, Sophie's widowed mother, whose "one great object of [. . .] life was to retain her position in society" (Gaskell 294). Unlike Babette, Madame Rupprecht does not dislike Anna, but her position in society and desire to maintain or even increase her social status and wealth cause Madame Rupprecht to push Anna into what

appears to be a socially advantageous marriage to a wealthy French nobleman. And indeed, even Anna is at first awestruck by Monsieur de la Tourelle's beauty. She writes, "I was so lost in admiration of this beautiful young man, that I was as much surprised as if the angel Gabriel had spoken to me, when the lady of the house brought him forward to present him to me" (Gaskell 295). However, two sentences later, Anna explains that her awe is tempered by his mannerisms, as she "became a little tired of the affected softness and effeminacy of his manners, and the exaggerated compliments he paid [her], which had the effect of making all the company turn round and look at [her]" (Gaskell 295). Notably, "Madame Rupprecht was, however, pleased with the precise thing that displeased" Anna (Gaskell 295), and after de la Tourelle visits Anna again the next day, "Madame Rupprecht congratulated [Anna] on the conquest [she] had made" (Gaskell 296).

With Madame Rupprecht's unwavering support, Monsieur de la Tourelle quickly entraps the naïve Anna in marriage arrangements. Unimpressed by the wealth that attracts Madame Rupprecht, Anna's mixed feelings regarding her suitor continue throughout his courtship of her. She explains,

I do not quite know [. . .] if I loved him or not. He was very much devoted to me; he almost frightened me by the excess of his demonstrations of love. And he was very charming to everybody around me, who all spoke of him as the most fascinating of men, and of me as the most fortunate of girls. And yet I never felt quite at ease with him. I was always relieved when his visits were over, although I missed his presence when he did not come. (Gaskell 296)

Anna is clearly unprepared to deal with such a socially adept suitor, and given her distance from her family, she is furthermore without any support in her attempts to negotiate the social conventions surrounding courtship. This is made clear when she tries to reject de la Tourelle's gifts, including "articles of valuable old jewellery, evidently belonging to his family" (Gaskell 297). She realizes that accepting such gifts "doubled the ties which were formed around [her] by

circumstances even more than by [her] own consent,” but notes that “Madame Rupprecht seemed to consider [her] an affected prude if [she] refused them” (Gaskell 297). This coercion leads directly to Anna’s betrothal to de la Tourelle, which she learns about after Madame Rupprecht informs her that she has written to her father to arrange his presence at her betrothal. Anna is surprised to hear that her betrothal is already being arranged:

I started with astonishment. I had not realized that affairs had gone so far as this. But when she asked me, in a stern, offended manner, what I had meant by my conduct if I did not intend to marry Monsieur de la Tourelle—I had received his visits, his presents, all his various advances without showing any unwillingness or repugnance—and it was all true; I had shown no repugnance, though I did not wish to be married to him,—at least, not so soon)—what could I do but hang my head and silently consent to the rapid enunciation of the only course which now remained for me if I would not be esteemed a heartless coquette all the rest of my days? (Gaskell 297)

Between Madame Rupprecht’s urging and desire to take credit for an advantageous marriage and Monsieur de la Tourelle’s careful casting of a net constructed of social mores regarding the conduct between men and women in society, Anna is well and truly entangled. Although she is ill at ease around de la Tourelle and although she is adamant that she does not want to marry, she can find no way out of her upcoming betrothal that would not leave her stigmatized in the eyes of society. She does make one final attempt to escape marriage to de la Tourelle when she later tells her father that she does not want to wed him, but when she cannot name “any fault or crime” of de la Tourelle to prevent their marriage, her father dismisses her protests as “only the fancy of a silly girl who did not know her own mind, but who had now gone too far to recede” (Gaskell 298). And so Anna and de la Tourelle marry.

Following their marriage, the soft and effeminate de la Tourelle transforms into a controlling and demanding husband. (Interestingly, this post-wedding transformation is similar to that seen later in the century, in George Egerton’s “Virgin Soil.”) Anna first notices this

transformation during their betrothal, noting how de la Tourelle “was very polite to [her father and brother]; put on all the soft, grand manner, which he had rather dropped with [her]” (Gaskell 297). Yet immediately following the wedding, as Anna and de la Tourelle prepare to travel to his French castle, Gaskell depicts a decided change in his personality. He refuses Anna’s request to travel to her father’s home in Heidelberg on their way to France as well as her desire for her family to visit them soon. As Anna explains, “I found an amount of determination, under that effeminate appearance and manner, for which I was not prepared, and he refused my request so decidedly that I dared not urge it” (Gaskell 299). Anna’s account of her married life reinforces this new characterization of de la Tourelle. During the journey to his castle, “jealousy of [her] regret for [her] father and brother got the better of M. de la Tourelle, and he became so much displeased with [her] that [she] thought [her] heart would break with the sense of desolation” (Gaskell 299). When Anna later clings to him, disliking the haunting quality of her assigned sitting room in her new home, “he seems angry with [her], although he affected to laugh, and so decidedly put aside the notion of [her] having any other rooms but these, that [she] trembled in silence” (Gaskell 300). Anna therefore chooses to avoid her sitting room, “[b]ut this preference of [hers] for occupying [her] bedroom annoyed M. de la Tourelle” (Gaskell 300). Anna is surprised by such reactions given his affected effeminacy and softness during their courtship; this perceived weakness was apparently an act put on by de la Tourelle to manipulate Anna and Madame Rupprecht:

For, while M. de la Tourelle behaved towards me as if I were some precious toy or idol, to be cherished, and fostered, and petted, and indulged, I soon found out how little I, or, apparently any one else, could bend the terrible will of the man who had on first acquaintance appeared to me too effeminate and languid to exert his will in the slightest particular. (Gaskell 301)

Now that Monsieur de la Tourelle possesses his lovely bride, he reveals his true nature.

Unlike Gaskell's (relatively) happy marriage of mutual respect, Anna's marriage to de la Tourelle is one of female subjugation and submission and its counterpart, male control. Gaskell explicitly explains the consequences of such an unequal marriage that leaves Anna unable to love her husband or to find any sense of happiness in her new role as wife. Anna explains,

I understood that I had made what Madame Rupprecht and her set would have called a great marriage, because I lived in a château with many servants, bound ostensibly to obey me as a mistress. I understood that M. de la Tourelle was fond enough of me in his way—proud of my beauty, I dare say (for he often enough spoke about it to me)—but he was also jealous, and suspicious, and uninfluenced by my wishes, unless they tallied with his own. I felt at this time as if I could have been fond of him too, if he would have let me; but I was timid from my childhood, and before long my dread of his displeasure (coming down like thunder into the midst of his love, for such slight causes as a hesitation in reply, a wrong word or a sigh for my father), conquered my humorous inclination to love one who was so handsome, so accomplished, so indulgent and devoted. But if I could not please him when indeed I loved him, you may imagine how often I did wrong when I was so much afraid of him as to quietly avoid his company for fear of his outbursts of passion. (Gaskell 301-02)

This monologue at the conclusion of Portion I of "The Grey Woman" explains that though Anna is inclined to love her husband for his beauty and devotion, she is too afraid of his mood swings and controlling nature to do so. In consequence, Anna pleases her husband less than she would if she did love him, and so they are both unhappy in their marriage, even though society would expect them to be happy given their wealth and beauty. Significantly, Anna's timidity, which she cites as problematic in this relationship, is in keeping with social ideals of femininity, and the basic composition of the pair's marriage is the social norm, in which the wife's desires are subsumed under the desires of the husband, who is the head of the household and therefore the one in control. In this description of Anna and de la Tourelle's miserable marriage, Elizabeth Gaskell undermines the ideal conception of Victorian marriage, demonstrating how this unequal partnership fails to lead to happiness.

Ironically, it is Monsieur de la Tourelle's iron control of and attempts to isolate Anna that cause her to disobey him, entering his apartments against his expressed wishes in order to retrieve a letter from her father. Following their wedding, Monsieur de la Tourelle had informed Anna that he would not "allow" her to have "much or familiar intercourse" with her father and brother because, as his wife, she would "move in a different sphere of life" (Gaskell 299). At his castle, Anna finds herself "repelled" or "afraid" of the servants, finding that her "grand isolation [. . .] was very formidable" (Gaskell 301); her maid, Amante, is the only exception to Anna's isolation and her husband's "unreasonable anger and his passionate fondness" (Gaskell 303). Anna confides in Amante, including her fear that her elderly father may fall ill or die in her absence: "I said that it was so long since I had heard from my father; that he was an old man, and so many things might happen—I might never see him again—and I so seldom heard from him or my brother. It was a more complete and total separation than I had ever anticipated when I married" (Gaskell 305). Meaning to cheer her melancholy (and, at this time, pregnant) mistress, Amante informs her that a letter had arrived for her from Germany but had been taken to her husband's "private sitting-room," which Anna and Amante have been explicitly forbidden to enter, to await his return the following day (Gaskell 306). Anna's desperation for news from home causes her to insist that the letter be retrieved that very night despite Amante's advice that she wait; Anna exclaims, "But I felt as if I could not exist till the next day, without the letter. It might be to say that my father was ill, dying—he might cry for his daughter from his death-bed!" (Gaskell 307).

As in "Bluebeard," Anna's entrance into the forbidden chamber leads to the revelation of her husband's murderous nature, as she becomes a witness to his murder of their neighbor. Monsieur de la Tourelle returns unexpectedly to his sitting room via the window when Anna is

alone in the dark room while Amante retrieves a candle to search for the letter. Not knowing at first who is seeking entrance through the window, Anna “sank down softly, and crept under the table, hidden [. . .] by the great, deep table-cover, with its heavy fringe” (Gaskell 310). Anna then details her discovery of the body her husband and his band of robbers hauled into the sitting room with them:

I was but just concealed when I heard the window lifted, and one after another stepped over the sill, and stood by me so close that I could have touched their feet. Then they laughed and whispered; my brain swam so that I could not tell the meaning of their words, but I heard my husband’s laughter among the rest—low, hissing, scornful—as he kicked something heavy that they had dragged in over the floor, and which lay near me; so near, that my husband’s kick, in touching it, touched me too. I don’t know why—I can’t tell how—but some feeling, and not curiosity, prompted me to put out my hand ever so softly, ever so little, and feel in the darkness for what lay spurned beside me. I stole my groping palm upon the clenched and chilly hand of a corpse! (Gaskell 311)

This account of events is not only suspenseful, evoking the sense of panic felt by Anna through the fragmentation created by dashes and commas, it also critically revises the traditional Bluebeard tale’s focus on the dire consequences of female curiosity. Gaskell, through Anna’s narration, makes it clear that Anna did not enter the “room of horror” out of mere curiosity, as she was instead motivated by her love and concern for her father (310). Moreover, Anna discovers the dead body from “some feeling,” but explicitly “*not curiosity*” (my emphasis). Gaskell thereby suggests that no fault is to be found in Anna and her entrance to the forbidden room; she is acting as a devoted daughter and the victim of a controlling husband, who, significantly, is revealed to be the heartless leader of a band of highwaymen, laughing as he strips the dead body of his neighbor to claim his valuables.

Elizabeth Gaskell’s “The Grey Woman” clearly draws from the tradition of the Grimm brothers’ “The Robber Bridegroom” and the English “Mr. Fox” while integrating elements of

Perrault's "Bluebeard." The German hypotext is evident in the set up of this tale and the first two paragraphs of "The Robber Bridegroom":

Once upon a time there was a miller who had a beautiful daughter, and when she was grown-up, he wanted to see her well provided for and well married. If the right suitor comes along and asks to marry her, he thought, I shall give her to him.

It was not long before a suitor appeared who seemed to be very rich, and since the miller found nothing wrong with him, he promised him his daughter. The maiden, however, did not love him the way a bride-to-be should love her bridegroom, nor did she trust him. Whenever she looked at him or thought about him, her heart shuddered with dread. (Grimm 141)

Like the Grimms' heroine, Anna is a German miller's daughter, whose father believes he is acting in her best interest by wedding her to a wealthy man, later revealed to be the leader of a band of robbers. Like the Grimms' heroine, Anna does not love her husband the way she thinks she should, and she finds herself uncomfortable in his presence even before their marriage. However, Anna, unlike the Grimms' heroine, finds proof of her husband's murderous activity when she touches his victim's hand. The Grimms' heroine notably catches the victim's disarticulated finger, while in "Mr. Fox," the heroine catches the victim's hand; both women then use this body part to prove the guilt of their murderous betrothed prior to the wedding.

Moreover, Anna actually weds the robber bridegroom before she discovers his thieving and murderous ways, and it is at this point that Perrault's "Bluebeard" reveals itself as a source for Gaskell's tale. Furthermore, Anna, while hidden under the table, learns that Monsieur de la Tourelle had killed a previous wife to protect his secret criminal activity; he reassures his band of robbers when they voice concerns regarding his new wife's obedience and possible suspicions:

Now, my good friends, what is the use of all this talking, when you know in your hearts that, if I suspected my wife of knowing more than I chose of my affairs, she would not outlive the day? Remember Victorine. Because she merely joked about my affairs in an imprudent manner, and rejected my advice to keep a prudent tongue—to see what she liked, but ask nothing and say nothing—she has gone a long journey—longer than to Paris. (Gaskell 313)

In this discussion of Victorine, the forbidden chamber in Gaskell's "The Grey Woman" does reveal the murder of previous wives, or at least one previous wife or mistress. It also reveals de la Tourelle's intention to murder Anna should she become a liability like Victorine. In this way, Gaskell merges three Bluebeard hypotexts in "The Grey Woman," although the Grimms' "The Robber Bridegroom" appears to take precedence in the form of the servant Amante, who like in the Grimms' tale, helps the heroine escape her dangerous predicament.^v

Just as Anna was unable to assert her desires and extricate herself from her unwanted betrothal, Anna is once more at the mercy of those around her following her discovery of her husband's true nature and activities; however, this time Amante is present and prepared to rescue her from her marriage to a murderer. When the highwaymen leave the room to eat before burying their victim, Anna knows this is her chance to escape but is frozen in fear: "Now, now was my time, if ever; and yet I could not move. It was not my cramped and stiffened joints that crippled me, it was the sensation of that dead man's close presence" (Gaskell 315). It is Amante who helps Anna leave the sitting room, carrying her in her arms, and who makes the preparations for their escape from the house. If Anna was out of her element in the salon and society, she is beyond helpless at this point in the story, and she admits such, writing, "She [Amante] gave me directions—short condensed directions, without reason—just as you do to a child; and like a child I obeyed her" (Gaskell 317). As Lovell-Smith asserts, "From her castle of horror, Anna is rescued by the vigilant and enterprising Amante" ("Anti-Housewives" 203), who plays the role of female helper as she works for the Bluebeard figure but also becomes "the heroine's saviour" and "prove[s] essential to the heroine's escape" ("Anti-Housewives" 197). Amante gets them out of the house, hides them at night, feeds Anna, develops their disguises, supports them financially

under the guise of Anna's husband, and even keeps Anna safe after Monsieur de la Tourelle finds and murders Amante while she is out working as a tailor.

Amante not only impersonates Anna's husband; she also acts as a husband should in the traditional conception of the Victorian marriage, protecting and caring for her weaker "wife" and later Anna's child. She does so when her father cannot, for he has indeed died since Anna's marriage, and when Anna's brother will not, because he is now firmly under the influence of Babette, who is working as an informant for Monsieur de la Tourelle. Amante determines the pair's future when Anna is betrayed by her brother. She tells Anna, "we will go on to Frankfort, and lose ourselves, for a time, at least, in the numbers of people who throng a great town [. . .] We will still be husband and wife; we will take a small lodging, and you shall housekeep and live in-doors. I, as the rougher and more alert, will continue my father's trade, and seek work at the tailors' shops" (Gaskell 334-35). When Anna's daughter is born, Amante shares Anna's joy and the three form an entirely female family unit. Anna explains, "At length my child was born—my poor worse than fatherless child. It was a girl, as I had prayed for. I had feared lest a boy might have something of the tiger nature^{vi} of its father, but a girl seemed all my own. And yet not all my own, for the faithful Amante's delight and glory in the babe almost exceeded mine; in outward show it certainly did" (Gaskell 335). Amante even manages to arrange her husbandly successor after she is fatally stabbed by the highwaymen, telling the gentle Dr. Voss, who had previously treated Anna for shock, "enough to enable him to understand the position in which [Anna] was left" while on her deathbed (Gaskell 338). As Anna writes to her daughter, Dr. Voss "at length persuaded me to become his wife. His wife he called it, I called it; for we went through the religious ceremony too slighted at the time" (Gaskell 339). He also gives both Anna and her daughter his surname and cares for both even after the eventual death of Monsieur

de la Tourelle. Yet Anna is forever changed by her marriage: she lives as a recluse in Frankfort even after de la Tourelle's death should ensure her safety, and her appearance is forever changed so that even de la Tourelle cannot recognize her. As Anna explains, "my yellow hair was grey, my complexion was ashen-coloured, no creature could have recognized the fresh-coloured, bright-haired young woman of eighteen months before" (Gaskell 339).

Unlike Perrault's "Bluebeard," the Grimm brothers' "The Robber Bridegroom," or the English "Mr. Fox," there is no happy ending for "The Grey Woman." As Foster writes, "The ending of the story, however, is both bleak and anticlimactic: the last view of Anna from the pages of the faded manuscript is of a ghost-like figure, grey-haired and ashen-complexioned, married to the doctor who has treated her in her breakdown, but permanently broken-spirited" ("Elizabeth Gaskell's Shorter Pieces" 123). Anna also has lost her family (Amante, father, and brother). Moreover, Anna's marriage to Dr. Voss is not the happily-ever-after ending experienced by many fairy-tale heroines. On the one hand, Anna's second marriage is bigamous, although she does try to excuse it, explaining that she and Dr. Voss "were both Lutherans, and [as] M. de la Tourelle had pretended to be of the reformed religion, a divorce from the latter would have been easily procurable by the German law both ecclesiastical and legal, could we have summoned so fearful a man into any court" (Gaskell 339). On the other hand, Anna's marriage to Dr. Voss seems to be one of necessity rather than love. To be sure, she mentions that she "mourned bitterly the loss of that dear husband," and she repeatedly insists that he was her daughter's father, but their relationship certainly appears to have lacked passion and was necessarily an unequal partnership given Anna's physical and mental state following her escape from her first marriage (Gaskell 340). Such a marriage could be considered an example of a

happy marriage of two people with separate interests, as Elizabeth Gaskell's marriage to William has been described, but the equal partnership Elizabeth and William shared is still lacking.

In addition to the omission of the happily-ever-after marriage, the ending of this Bluebeard tale is also unhappy in that the narrative frame for the story is evidence that Anna's relationship with her daughter was also rocky. Anna recorded the story of her first marriage and its effects in a letter addressed to her daughter Ursula, who is angry that her mother is no longer supporting her relationship with her beau. To explain her recent change of heart, Anna details her own marital experience with Ursula's biological father in order to reveal at the conclusion of the letter that Ursula's beloved is the son of the neighbor Monsieur de la Tourelle murdered. Anna does not specify her exact fear should Ursula wed her suitor, but it is important enough for Anna to reveal to Ursula her secret first marriage, escape, and bigamous second marriage; before this letter, Ursula believes Dr. Voss to be her biological father. Interestingly, what occurred between Ursula and her suitor or even Ursula and Anna is unknown at the conclusion of the tale. As Gaskell frames the story, Anna's letter is related to the reader as a manuscript read generations later by some English travellers to Germany who find themselves trapped indoors by a sudden rainstorm; the travellers are told of Anna and given the letter manuscript to amuse them during their wait. It seems safe to assume, however, that there was no happy ending for Anna, merely survival.

It is also important to note that Gaskell includes historical references to add realism to the tale. For instance, Anna references the French Revolution while she is describing her visit to Carlsruhe to see Sophie: "This visit to Carlsruhe took place in '89, just when every one was full of the events taking place at Paris; and yet at Carlsruhe French fashions were more talked of than French politics" (Gaskell 295). Such details, combined with the narrative frame and the

plausibility of the tale, add realism to the story, suggesting the reader is to trust that Anna's story and the plot of the narrative frame are accurate relations of events that really occurred. Indeed, the Bluebeard and Robber Bridegroom/Mr. Fox tales are less marvelous than other fairy tales to begin with, and perhaps this is why they easily seem to lend themselves to realistic depictions of abusive and murderous husbands. Intriguingly, however, although Gaskell again implements a narrative frame and a letter format in "Curious, If True," the reality of the events related is far less believable and the reader is left wondering what exactly happened the night Richard Whittingham found himself lost in the French countryside.

"Curious, If True" & the Fairy-Tale Sequel

In *Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale*, Elizabeth Wanning Harries writes, "Sometimes twentieth-century rewritings [of fairy tales] are *sequels* (or, very occasionally, *prequels*), imagining what might have happened before or after the traditional sequences of events [. . .] Such revisions extend the reach of classic fairy tales beyond their classic, misleading 'happily ever after'" (100-01). Like the twentieth-century feminist authors Harries discusses, Elizabeth Gaskell writes a sequel to several fairy tales in "Curious, If True," in which an unsuspecting Englishman wanders into a celebration in an isolated French château, a celebration that is revealed to be a reunion of fairy-tale characters from classic French fairy tales such as "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," "Beauty and the Beast," "Puss in Boots," "The White Cat," and more. Also similar to twentieth-century revisionist authors, Gaskell's fairy tale reveals the traditional happily-ever-after ending to be an illusion. For instance, Cinderella's glass slippers have left her feet so swollen she cannot walk, while Sleeping Beauty's constant need to be (re)awakened leaves her prince irritated and uncharmed by her sweet appearance and nature. While the disillusionment in Gaskell's story is not limited to female happily ever after (Puss in

Boots is less than thrilled with the Marquis), the proto-feminism expressed in Gaskell's "Curious, If True" cannot be ignored, as she presents her reader with a fairy tale that not only sets a precedent for later feminist fairy-tale revisions, but also depicts fairy-tale characters descending into material reality.

"Curious, If True" stands out among Gaskell's works, both long and short, as far more whimsical, open-ended, and subversive. There is no conclusion to the narrative, most of the narrative being presented as a (possible) dream experienced by the narrator Richard Whittingham, Esquire. There is no concluding moral enlightenment that lends the at times overly didactic tone to Gaskell's other works. For instance, unlike Mary Barton and Sylvia Robsen, Bluebeard's widow, Madame de Retz, does not realize the error of her ways at the conclusion of the story. This lack of moral conclusion could be attributed to the third notable characteristic of the story: its whimsy. As fairy-tale characters experienced in a (possible) dream while abroad and lost in the countryside, these characters' discontent and erroneous ways pose no threat to reality, in the way the conflict between factory owners and workers can, and therefore they require no reform. In fact, Gaskell seems to actively attempt to make the characters' lives comply with reality rather than fight it, as one could argue the deceptive "happily ever after" of classic fairy tales, with its idealized nature, conflicts with realistic expectations of life. I argue that in bringing fairy tales into reality, Gaskell encourages her readers to question the veracity of the promise of a fairy-tale happy ending because her continuation of the fairy-tale characters' lives reveals a mundane rather than a "happily ever after" experience.

As I previously noted, Marina Warner asserts that the very structure of the fairy-tale genre lends itself to social criticism, as the "enchantments" in fairy tales act as "a form of camouflage, making it possible to utter harsh truths, to say what you dare" (xxi). But Gaskell

takes this “camouflage” a step further by distancing her authorial self from the proto-feminist narrative through a narrative frame and foreign setting. This distancing technique begins immediately, as the subtitle reads, “Extract from a Letter from Richard Whittingham, Esq.” (Gaskell 271). Writing to an unknown “you,” Richard Whittingham is the narrator of the epistle, detailing his experiences one night when he became lost in the woods while visiting France to investigate his family tree. The action occurs outside of British society in France, and even outside of French high society given Richard’s rural wanderings and the absence of any buildings but the enchanted manor. So in effect, the reader is not far removed from the indefinite Once Upon a Time setting of classic fairy tales. Furthermore, the subversive presentation of fairy-tale disillusionment is not even clearly experienced, as Whittingham abruptly awakens the next morning, out of sight of the fantasy château in which the celebration was held, leaving the reader to decide for her/himself whether his experience was real or merely a dream. Still, as Janice K. Kirkland argues, the readers are inclined to believe Whittingham’s account of his experience to be true because “His errand [of genealogical research] and his descent [from John Calvin’s sister] show him to be a sober, rational observer not given to flights of fancy; readers are expected to believe what he tells the unknown recipient of his letter” (22).

While such a frame does indeed distance Gaskell, as well as her readers, from the narrative, Gaskell also pulls the fairy-tale characters out of their fantasy world and situates them firmly in reality, where the characters age and struggle to fit into a society with which they were not trained to deal. The realism imparted by the epistolary narrative, which includes both a specific day and location, namely August 18th and outside Tours, brings the experience into reality. The narrator, Richard Whittingham, is even made more realistic by his casually mentioned back story as a descendent of the pragmatic John Calvin’s sister, which gives veracity

to his telling, as the previous quotation from Kirkland explains. In addition to the reality of the location, time, narrator, and even epistle format, Whittingham's narration "accentuates the physical and behavioural aspects of these [fairy-tale] characters in such a way as to de-romanticize or de-mythologize them, exposing their foibles and less attractive sides" (Stiles 16). As Stiles so succinctly explains, "Elizabeth Gaskell establishes a deliberately realistic frame and context in which to explore the imaginative, gently amusing fantasy realm which is at the center of the story" (16). The contrast between fantasy and reality is epitomized in Gaskell's choice of supporting cast, a bevy of well-known fairy tale characters. But while Stiles argues that this mixture of "realist and escapist tendencies" in the text "confirms a recognition of unresolved antinomies which exist within her work" (16), I contend that Gaskell shows her readers that the fairy-tale happy endings these characters were supposed to experience are more fiction than truth, more fantasy than reality.

Although discussed in a few scholarly publications, Gaskell's "Curious, If True" has yet to be analyzed as a proto-feminist fairy tale. Only three articles have been written on the short story, and one of those is a short piece that points out a previous scholar's mistaken conflation of Poucet (Little Thumb) with Tom Thumb.^{vii} Peter Stiles analyzes the story in relation to the "tension inherent in much of Elizabeth Gaskell's fiction" regarding her commitment to "social reform and industrial progress," as she was "an outspoken supporter of the needs of the poor, while wanting not to offend her Manchester social circle, many of whom were in her husband's [Unitarian] congregation" (15). Stiles also notes "the manner in which [Gaskell] frequently forces her work to comply with conventional pattern of Christian reconciliation" and how "Curious, If True" diverges from this pattern, yet he also associates the continuation of the fairy-tale characters' stories not with an attempt to undermine the idea of happily ever after, but with

the Unitarian “notion of moral determinism” because “So many of the characters in this story are troubled by and unable to escape from the events of their former lives as depicted in the respective fairytales from which they have been taken” (18). Janice Kirkland, however, acknowledges Gaskell’s critique of marriage, stating, “The difficulties of successful marriage are one of the major themes of ‘Curious, If True’” (25). But after brief analysis of the marriages presented in the story, Kirkland concludes, “Women seeking marriage, says Gaskell, may depend on their physical attractions to attain it, may sleep through the actual relationship, and when it is over may remember an abusive life in a completely false way” (25). While both Stiles and Kirkland acknowledge Gaskell’s use of fairy-tale characters, neither takes into account the purpose or effect of continuing the fairy-tale characters’ stories past their traditional tales’ endings.

While “Curious, If True” does not feature strong female characters or end in tragedy rather than marriage like some proto-feminist and feminist fairy tales, the narrative does disrupt the “happily ever after” endings that always accompany the marriage plot in classic fairy tales. Gaskell begins the disruption in the description of Cinderella when Richard Whittingham first encounters her soon after entering the salon at the château and joining the party. Whittingham’s description of Cinderella focuses almost exclusively on the changes time has wrought on the fairy-tale princess. He writes to his pen pal,

Opposite to me sat a very sweet-looking lady, who must have been a great beauty in her youth, I should think, and would be charming in old age, from the sweetness of her countenance. She was, however, extremely fat, and on seeing her feet laid up before her on a cushion, I at once perceived that they were so swollen as to render her incapable of walking, which probably brought on her excessive *embonpoint* [stoutness]. (Gaskell 275)

Time has not been kind to the once beautiful Cinderella. She has gained a significant amount of weight, and the state of her hands are evidence of this excess weight, as well as of the time she

spent scrubbing floors prior to her marriage: “Her hands were plump and small, but rather coarse-grained in texture, not quite so clean as they might have been, and altogether not so aristocratic-looking as the charming face” (Gaskell 275). More importantly, Cinderella’s now “swollen” feet are repeatedly emphasized, as Whittingham later refers to her as the “lame old lady” and Cinderella feels the need to apologize to him for her inability to come to him to chat: “It is a little dull to be unable to move about on such evenings as this; but it is a just punishment to me for my early vanities. My poor feet, that were by nature so small, are now taking their revenge for my cruelty in forcing them into such little slippers” (Gaskell 281). The same feet that won Cinderella her prince and rise in station are now lamented in their painful state, and while Cinderella suggests this is fit “punishment [. . .] for [her] early vanities,” it also suggests that her married life has perhaps not turned out to be as happy as the fairy tale suggested it would be. The absence of her husband at the party, combined with her choice of a “black velvet” dress, further suggests that she is perhaps now a widow. Possibly widowed but definitely fat and lame, Cinderella in “Curious, If True” is a far cry from the fairy-tale happily ever after.

Yet even more disillusioning is the state of the marriage between Sleeping Beauty and her Prince Charming. As drinks are being passed around to all the guests, Whittingham’s attention is caught by the sight of “a lady,—beautiful, splendid as the dawn, but—sound asleep in a magnificent settee” (Gaskell 279). Sleeping Beauty is living up to her name; however, her husband is less than thrilled with her antics, as he “showed so much irritation at her ill-timed slumbers, that [. . .] he [. . .] was trying to awaken her with actions not far removed from shakings” (Gaskell 279). The unpleasant Poucet explains the prince’s frustrations to Whittingham, saying, “no one must venture to take their glass [. . .] till Madame la Princesse awakens; and, judging from past experience, those poor lacqueys may have to stand for a century

before that happens” (Gaskell 280). When he finally manages to wake up his wife, the prince is in no way enchanted by her naïve and affectionate greeting, as Sleeping Beauty “at first did not remember where she was, and looking up at her husband with loving eyes, she smiled and said: ‘Is it you, my prince?’” (Gaskell 280). Rather than returning her affection, the prince “was too conscious of the suppressed amusement of the spectators and his own consequent annoyance, to be reciprocally tender, and turned away with some little French expression, best rendered into English by ‘Pooh, pooh, my dear!’” (Gaskell 280). Whereas Cinderella is old, alone, and disabled after her fairy tale ended in marriage, Sleeping Beauty’s repeated naps have caused her husband’s love to turn to irritation. The prince no longer finds his wife, and her continuing beauty, to be so enchanting; instead, he is annoyed and embarrassed by the need to continuously awaken her, causing him to become almost violent as he shakes her awake where he once kissed her awake. The reenactment of the couple’s fairy-tale climax, when the prince saves the princess, has soured the couple’s relationship, and the happily-ever-after marital bliss is not present when Whittingham observes them at the gathering.

In contrast to Cinderella’s disability and absent prince and Sleeping Beauty’s annoyed and almost violent husband, Madame de Retz, Bluebeard’s once wife but now widow, has a delusional remembrance of her time with her murderous husband. Madame de Retz, now remarried, is the hostess of the party that Whittingham unwittingly joins after he becomes lost. Unlike Anna in “The Grey Woman,” Bluebeard’s widow mourns the loss of her first husband, exclaiming to Whittingham, “He was the love of my youth; his stern yet manly character first touched this heart of mine. When—when shall I cease to deplore his loss!” (Gaskell 285). She defends her former husband, explaining that Bluebeard “has often been represented in a false light” and that she “ha[s] never forgiven the brothers who interfered so cruelly, in such an

uncalled-for manner, between [her] dear husband and [her]self” (Gaskell 286). Instead, the widow blames herself for Bluebeard’s violent reaction to her curiosity, stating, “The best of husbands [. . .] will sometimes be displeased. I was young and curious, he was justly angry with my disobedience—my brothers were too hasty” (Gaskell 285). Rather than experiencing the happy ending Perrault’s “Bluebeard” concludes with, in which Madame de Retz is saved from her husband’s murderous intent by her heroic brothers and then goes on to marry again for love now that she has inherited Bluebeard’s money, Madame de Retz perversely mourns the loss of her “dear” Bluebeard, wearing a bracelet made of his blue hair, viewing his portrait sorrowfully, and even “praising her late husband to monsieur’s [her new husband’s] face” (Gaskell 278). Almost determined to be unhappy, Madame de Retz’s “happily ever after” would appear to be only possible with her murderous late husband Bluebeard.

Yet Elizabeth Gaskell does not limit her disillusionment of fairy-tale happily-ever-after endings to those fairy tales that end in marriage. Gaskell also shows how even the pair of successful tricksters known as Puss in Boots and his master the Marquis De Carabas did not live happily ever after in their status and wealth earned through their wit and con. Whittingham overhears Puss in Boots grumbling to himself as De Carabas awkwardly tries to follow his advice and charm Cinderella and Beauty (of “Beauty and the Beast”): “The chasseur, meanwhile, was talking to himself in a growling tone of voice [. . .] ‘Really, De Carabas grows more stupid every day. I have a great mind to throw off his boots, and leave him to his fate. I was intended for a court, and to a court I will go, and make my own fortune as I have made his’” (Gaskell 282). Puss sees, as does Whittingham, that De Carabas is not particularly welcome company for the princesses, who “bowed with that kind of haughty acknowledgement which shows that compliments from such a source are distasteful” (Gaskell 282). The two companions

are not well matched, despite the seeming success of their plans at the end of their fairy tale, although it must be noted that even in the source tale the marquis is completely dependent upon Puss's intelligence and schemes. Whittingham contrasts the two, describing De Carabas as "the weak-looking master of the sharp, intelligent servant, whom [he calls] the chasseur" but whom the reader recognizes as Puss in Boots (Gaskell 279). While De Carabas fumbles along at the noble gathering, Puss is fed up with the Marquis's social ineptness and is planning to make his own way in the world without the encumbrance of the Marquis.

It is, ironically, Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf who are depicted as the happiest "couple" at the gathering. Present not as guests at the gathering but instead as a ghostly apparitions, Little Red Riding Hood and her wolf exist on a seemingly completely different temporal plane. They are the ghosts the other fairy-tale characters are excited to see passing by the mansion outside, and as in their physical situation outside the mansion, these two characters seem to exist outside the magical fairy-tale existence in which the other characters live and socialize. While "Little Red Riding Hood" is, like the other fairy tales incorporated into Gaskell's story, a French fairy tale by Charles Perrault, "Little Red Riding Hood" differs from these other fairy-tale characters in that she does not survive her tale; in Perrault's version of the story, Little Red Riding Hood is in fact consumed by the wolf, along with her grandmother, and there is no woodsman present to rescue her. Yet, although the wolf is her murderer in the tale, in "Curious, If True," the wolf is repentant, walking by the side of the ghostly young girl and licking her hand:

there passed the figure of a little girl, with the 'capuchon' on, that takes the place of a peasant girl's bonnet in France. She had a basket on one arm, and by her, on the side to which her head was turned, there went a wolf. I could almost have said it was licking her hand, as if in penitent love, if either penitence or love had ever been a quality of wolves,—but though not of living, perhaps it may be of phantom wolves. (Gaskell 284)

This observed interaction is all that is detailed of these characters, yet it stands in stark contrast to the interaction between the other characters in the mansion, such as the semi-violent Prince and Sleeping Beauty. Outside of the society the other fairy-tale characters inhabit, Little Red Riding Hood and her wolf appear to be happy, if deceased. Moreover, their inclusion in the tale as ghosts would seem to appeal to the interest Elizabeth Gaskell had in ghost stories and other supernatural legends. It also seems to set the Little Red Riding Hood tale apart from the other fairy tales of social rising, and could be interpreted as a reference to the tale's more folkloric rather than fairy-tale nature.

In fact, much of Gaskell's undermining of the fairy tales surrounds the issue of character's rise in status and wealth. As previously mentioned, Cinderella's hands still show her lack of noble upbringing, their rough texture evidence of years of scrubbing floors. De Carabas is socially awkward despite his servant's help, and barely tolerated by the supposedly kind Cinderella and Beauty. Beauty and the Beast seem to be the only example of marital bliss, yet Gaskell repeatedly emphasizes the Beast's ugliness; Whittingham writes that he was "a very ugly, very pleasant-looking man," that he had "an honest, good face! but oh! how ugly!" and that "There was a look of pathetic acknowledgement of his ugliness, and a deprecation of your too hasty judgment, in his countenance that was positively winning" (Gaskell 282-83). The contrast between "The ugly husband [and] the lovely lady with the roses" suggests the two are mismatched despite their apparent happiness, but depending on which version of "Beauty and the Beast" one refers to, it is also important to note that this happy couple are actually of similar social standing if not wealth (Gaskell 283).^{viii} At the same time, the ugly Beast seems focused on keeping his wife happy, while Beauty is later described as "smil[ing] a little maliciously" as she makes fun of the delusional Madame de Retz, suggesting this relationship is less ideal than it

appears. Furthermore, part of Madame de Retz's issue with her second husband is that he is of a lower social class than Bluebeard, even though de Retz herself speaks French like a peasant according to Whittingham. Poucet, the most unlikeable of the fairy-tale characters at the gathering, is perhaps the most aware of the class differences of everyone present; his low lineage and sarcastic and bitter observations make him disagreeable to the other fairy-tale characters and Whittingham alike. The inability of all these characters to mix socially as equals highlights the delusional quality of the fairy-tale rise-to-fortune tradition. While characters like De Carabas and Cinderella can rise in status, they cannot completely overcome their origins, showing the fairy-tale ending to be false.

In "Curious, If True," Elizabeth Gaskell undermines the fairy tale in many ways, from questioning the idea that people can actually rise in fortune and status and live happily ever after without the proper upbringing to showing the idea of happily-ever-after marital bliss to be an illusion. Even the seemingly happy marriage between Beauty and the Beast is undermined by the Beast's subservience and Beauty's "maliciousness," as previously noted. Gaskell highlights the contrast between reality and fairy tale, leaving the reader to decide if Whittingham actually experienced the party or dreamed it while lost in the countryside. Nevertheless, she also endows her fairy-tale characters with realism in their dealings with real-life issues of physical disability, narcolepsy, mourning, and class issues, even telling ghost stories of sightings of the folkloric Little Red Riding Hood and her wolf. Like twentieth-century feminist fairy-tale authors, Gaskell shows her readers a possible continuation of beloved fairy tales, a continuation of their lives that does not include a determined happily-ever-after fairy-tale ending, but instead a life that continues past the tales' endings. Elizabeth Gaskell's "Curious, If True," makes readers reconsider the veracity of the fairy-tale "happily ever after," making them question the idea of

marital bliss, among other conclusions, that classic fairy tales like “Cinderella” and “Sleeping Beauty” depict.

“A gifted storyteller, with a zest for anecdote, legend, and social observation, [Gaskell] was innovative and experimental in her use of genre, particularly in the realm of shorter fiction” (Matus 1). As has been demonstrated by this analysis, Elizabeth Gaskell compellingly combines fairy tales with the gothic and the supernatural in order to critique the illusion of marriage as women’s happy and fulfilling end. As Jill L. Matus explains, “The short pieces suited her talents and temperament, allowing her to experiment with multiple narrators and multilayered narration. They also allowed her to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction” (6). This blurring of the distinction between reality and fantasy is evident in the two stories discussed in this chapter. Gaskell brings “Bluebeard,” “The Robber Bridegroom,” and “Mr. Fox” into reality in “The Grey Woman” before leaving the distinction between reality and fantasy open to reader interpretation in “Curious, If True.” Moreover, both tales feature “multilayered narration” that increases the sense of realism in what are certainly fictional or even fantastic stories.

In “The Grey Woman” and “Curious, If True,” Elizabeth Gaskell offers her readers two very different proto-feminist fairy-tale adaptations. As a Bluebeard tale, “The Grey Woman” joins the ranks Anne Ritchie’s “Bluebeard’s Keys” as Gaskell uses the murderous and duplicitous husband-figure of Bluebeard to showcase the dangers women face in marriages in which they are subordinate to their husbands. Unlike in Perrault’s “Bluebeard,” Anna is not punished for simple curiosity. Instead, she is punished for asserting herself as a loving daughter oppressed by her husband’s controlling and isolating nature. She is, in a way, punished for maintaining her separate interests, interests separate from her role as wife and separate from

those interests held by her husband. Presumably, such a punishment and relationship would be appalling to Gaskell given her own marriage was reportedly one of two equal individuals who maintained their separate interests and agendas.

Elizabeth Gaskell does stand out from the other proto-feminist fairy-tale authors described in this book, however, with her innovative and whimsical “Curious, If True.” Unlike any of the other fairy-tale adaptations discussed here, this tale effectively creates a fairy-tale world, a plane of existence in which fairy-tale characters gather together, share their experiences with each other, preserve their own folklore in the ghostly appearance of Little Red Riding Hood and her wolf, and enter reality as they age and live on past their “happily ever afters.” Such a technique combines Gaskell’s interests in fairy tales, ghost stories, and the seventeenth-century French salon culture.^{ix} The story also shreds the illusion that marriage and social climbing will lead to a happy and fulfilling life and that achieving these goals sets one up for happiness. Instead, Gaskell shows how even fairy-tale characters must work to maintain their relationships while suffering the consequences of their actions and changes in station. As previously discussed, this technique of the fairy-tale sequel was frequently used by twentieth-century feminist fairy-tale authors who wanted to revise the traditional meaning of fairy tales, yet as my analysis has shown, Gaskell used similar techniques a century earlier in “Curious, If True.

CHAPTER SIX: ESCAPING THE WOLF: THE NEW WOMAN LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD IN GEORGE EGERTON'S "VIRGIN SOIL" & "A CROSS LINE"

Charles Perrault penned the first literary version of the tale to warn girls and women against predatory males. Today "Little Red Riding Hood" can be seen as the archetypal tale of child abuse and rape [. . .] There are undoubtedly other reasons for its popularity, but this controversial topical theme certainly attracts a large number of authors and illustrators, especially, but not exclusively, women. Authors and artists who retell "Little Red Riding Hood" as a story of rape or child abuse generally adopt a very serious, even tragic tone, and their reversions seek to warn both children and adults of the ever-present danger of predatory males. (Beckett, *Revisioning 5*)

The tale of Little Red Riding Hood is both well-known and multifarious, as Sandra L. Beckett explains in her introduction to *Revisioning Red Riding Hood around the World: An Anthology of International Retellings*: "Little Red Riding Hood is a universal icon whose story has been recast countless times by authors and illustrators around the world. Considered by many to be the most popular fairy tale of all time, 'Little Red Riding Hood' has been revised and retold for readers of all ages in virtually every genre and mode imaginable" (1). In her compilation of the anthology Beckett thematically divides and organizes the Little Red Riding Hood tales into seven categories: 1) cautionary tales that highlight the danger of child abuse and rape, as detailed in the epigraph above, 2) tales of feminine maturation that focus on the protagonist's development from naïve girl to wise woman, 3) humorous tales that are more carefree and even self-referential, 4) tales that redeem the figure of the wolf, 5) tales that feature the wolf as protagonist, 6) tales that take a more psychological approach to a symbolic, wolf-like nature rather than the wolf as a character, and 7) tales that feature some sort of union between Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf (5-11). Beckett asserts, "This thematic structure [of the anthology] shows how various threads of the traditional tale have been woven together differently to reflect changing times, audiences, aesthetics, and cultural landscapes" (11). Yet

although Beckett focuses on twentieth- and twenty-first-century tales, her thematic divisions can also be applied to earlier revisions of the classic Little Red Riding Hood tales written by Charles Perrault and Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, such as those written by George Egerton at the end of the nineteenth century.

Although this revisionary process is not unique to women, as Jack Zipes demonstrates in *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* with a selection of thirty-one different literary versions of the Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale written by both men and women, Victorian women did find the fairy tale a unique site for the expression of more revolutionary ideas concerning issues of gender and sexuality, as well as the perception of women's role in society. Historically, the tale of Little Red Riding Hood is particularly conducive to the expression of subversive ideas surrounding women's nature and place in society because, as Zipes explains, "They [oral storytellers and writers] debated her [Little Red Riding Hood's] body, the fate of her body, who would control her destiny" (*Trials and Tribulations* 7). Writing at the end of the nineteenth century in the midst of the New Woman movement, George Egerton's "A Cross Line" and "Virgin Soil" revise the classic Little Red Riding Hood tales, incorporating thematic variations from Beckett's first, second, sixth, and seventh categories in order to communicate a feminist message.

According to Elizabeth Wanning Harries, "Because the tales written by Perrault and by the Grimms had become the dominant, canonical fairy tale mode, women writers of fairy tales in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often wrote against that canon, defining their work as subversive and oppositional" (14). In the Grimm brothers' "Little Red Cap," a young girl is given the duty of delivering wine and food to her ailing grandmother. Little Red Cap's mother cautions her daughter to be good and to stay on the path, but, giving in to the temptation presented by the

wolf, Little Red Cap leaves the path to pick flowers, thereby giving the wolf time to eat the grandmother and later Little Red Cap herself. It is only through the actions of the huntsman that Little Red Cap and her grandmother are rescued from the wolf's belly, although the two learn from their mistakes and later are able to save themselves from the schemes of a second wolf.¹ As Laurence Talairach-Vielmas points out, "The tale highlights the taming of the body and the restraining of natural instincts, since a little girl is punished for indulging in sensuality and must learn to discipline herself and to keep her instincts in check" ("Rewriting" 260-61). In addition, Jack Zipes asserts that Little Red Cap is both "punished and reprieved for trying to express her imagination and sexuality" and that the Grimm brothers' version of the fairy tale is "a coded message about rationalizing bodies and sex. Open sexual games and encounters were frowned upon throughout the 19th century. Hence, disciplinary measures had to be taken against all the Little Red Riding Hoods and Little Red Caps of the world" (*Trials and Tribulations* 34). Yet, while Little Red Cap might have set an example for children of both genders, it is significant that what are coded by the Grimm brothers' tale are *female* bodies and *female* sexuality.

Charles Perrault's version of Little Red Riding Hood, which preceded and was a likely source for the Grimm's version, is even more explicitly a tale advising the restraint of female sexuality. Perrault's focus on sexuality in his "Little Red Riding Hood" is noted by many scholars; for instance, Bruno Bettelheim asserts that "in Perrault's rendering the emphasis is on sexual seduction" (176) while Beckett states, "Perrault retold the [oral] story of Little Red Riding Hood as a cautionary tale to warn women and girls against predatory males" (*Red* 9). In addition, even though Zipes argues that Perrault's fairy tales "were intended to reinforce the prestige and superiority of bourgeois-aristocratic values and styles" while teaching children how to act within French society," he also acknowledges that "[l]ike the civilizing process itself, the tales also

perpetuated strong notions of male dominance, and here it is important to take Perrault's own [misogynistic] biases into account" (*Trials and Tribulations* 30). In Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood," the young girl is not warned by her mother to stay on the path, is told by the wolf to strip off her clothing and join him in her grandmother's bed (and she does so), and is eaten by the wolf at the end of the tale, as her grandmother was earlier in the story; in addition, there is no huntsman to save her. Moreover, unlike the Grimm brothers who end their tale with Little Red Riding Hood's encounter with a second wolf, Perrault ends his tale with an explicit moral:

One sees here that young children,
Especially young girls,
Pretty, well brought-up, and gentle,
Should never listen to anyone who happens by,
And if this occurs, it is not so strange
When the wolf should eat them.
I say the wolf, for all wolves
Are not of the same kind.
There are some with winning ways,
Not loud, nor bitter, or angry,
Who are tame, good-natured, and pleasant
And follow young ladies
Right into their homes, right into their alcoves.
But alas for those who do not know that of all the wolves
The docile ones are those who are most dangerous. (Perrault 93)

This moral clearly directs the tale to a young female audience, warning such young female readers to beware of the men they meet as appearances are deceiving and even a charming, seemingly docile gentleman can be a wolf in disguise, who, like the wolf of Perrault's tale, may ruin and kill a young lady's reputation by luring her into an inappropriate (sexual) encounter. Beckett writes, "The moral of Perrault's classic tale is essentially that well-mannered, two-legged wolves are the most dangerous of all" (*Red* 21). Like the Grimms' tale that followed it, Perrault's tale also cautions young women to be chaste and resist sexual temptation lest they too

meet Little Red Riding Hood's fatal end, her punishment for parental disobedience and lack of discretion.

George Egerton would have had access to several translations of both Perrault's and the Grimm brothers' versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" at the end of the nineteenth-century. Perrault's tales were first published in English in 1729, translated by Robert Samber, and Andrew Lang's popular series of colored Fairy Books included a translation of Perrault's tale in its first installment, *The Blue Fairy Book*, published in London 1889. Similarly, it is likely that Egerton was familiar with the Grimm brothers' version of the tale, either through the original German (Egerton went to school in Germany and was familiar with German authors like Friedrich Nietzsche) or through an English translation of the text; the Grimms' fairy tales were first translated into English in 1823 by Edgar Taylor and then translated once more by Margaret Hunt in 1884. Egerton's access to "Little Red Riding Hood" is therefore over-determined. In addition, it is not a great leap to assume that such a socially pervasive tale, focusing on the sexual transgression of a young girl and her subsequent punishment, would have appealed to George Egerton's revisionary instincts, especially given her repeated depiction of women as socially oppressed sexual subjects. As Martha Vicinus explains, "Egerton was never interested in guilt or punishment; rather, her works celebrate the potential of living the life of a New Woman in an old world" (ix).

Like the women writers discussed by Elizabeth Wanning Harries in the above quotation, George Egerton rejects the Little Red Riding Hood tale's traditional focus on transgression and punishment and instead chooses to use her revisionary tales, "Virgin Soil" and "A Cross Line," to emphasize the dangers of women's sexual ignorance and the effects of such ignorance on the stability of a marriage, while at the same time leaving her reader with an impression not only of

female solidarity but also an enthusiasm for future possibilities. In this way, she turns a tale of female sexual transgression into one that looks forward to female emancipation from sexual ignorance and social oppression. In addition, Egerton's double revision of "Little Red Riding Hood" offers her reader two distinct constructions of the wolf in human form:ⁱⁱ the sexually predatory husband who presents a physical threat and the tempting illicit lover who presents an emotional or mental threat.

Unlike the women writers discussed in previous chapters, George Egerton, the pseudonym of Mary Chavelita Dunne Bright, was writing and participating in a feminist movement, and, in fact, she is best known by scholars as a New Woman author. The New Woman movement emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, and while New Women shared a general goal of expanding women's roles in society and emancipating women from sociocultural and legal restrictions, the movement was by no means cohesive.ⁱⁱⁱ While New Women held a plethora of varying beliefs and goals for women, from expanding female education and employment opportunities, achieving woman's suffrage, and changing sociocultural expectations regarding appropriate or ideal femininity, to mention just a few, two almost contradictory factions emerged that are relevant to this discussion of Egerton's texts; when it came to mores and even laws surrounding female sexuality, one faction of New Women upheld the ideal of female moral superiority, urging that men be held to the same chaste standards as women were throughout the nineteenth century, while a second faction of New Women argued that women should be afforded the same lack of sexual restriction already held by men of the time period.^{iv} In her short stories, including "Virgin Soil" and "A Cross Line," George Egerton, a member and vocal component of this second faction, "celebrated women's sexuality and depicted women whose lives are as unconstrained by convention as men" (Nelson

xi). Notably, however, there existed some overlap between these two factions, as Carolyn Christensen Nelson points out, for like New Women who upheld notions of female moral superiority and therefore feminine chastity, Egerton's stories also communicate the belief that "because women's ignorance about matters of sexuality could have devastating consequences, women should be educated about sexual issues before marriage so they could make intelligent choices about the men they married" (xi).

Yet no matter their stance on individual issues related to the sociocultural and legal situation of women, New Women authors were viewed by many, including reviewers and critics, as a threat to society, connected with "decadent men, as members of an avant garde attacking marriage and reproduction" (Showalter ix). Such a view of the movement was not unjustified, as New Women were a threat to the patriarchal and Victorian status quo regarding the role of women in society. In an attempt to change the status quo and the perception of women and ideal femininity, authors like George Egerton wrote stories about women that focused on their psychology and, in Egerton's view, their inherently untamed nature. Showalter offers the following quotation of Egerton stating her intentions in her writing: "I realised that in literature, everything had been better done by man than woman could hope to emulate. There was only one small plot left for her to tell: the *terra incognita* of herself, as she knew herself to be, not as man liked to imagine her—in a word, to give herself away, as man had given himself in his writings" (qtd. in Showalter xii-xiii). Attacking what Simone de Beauvoir would later refer to as the Eternal Feminine, patriarchal ideals of femininity that women could not possibly achieve, Egerton rejected ideals of feminine purity and chastity, instead writing women as she knew them to be, writing woman as Egerton herself experienced life as a woman. Significantly, Egerton did not live a traditionally feminine life; Nelson explains that her romantic life was scandalous, as

she first lived in bigamy with an abusive alcoholic until his death, then wed and supported another husband until their divorce, before she finally met and wed another man fifteen years younger than she the same year as her divorce (7). As Nelson notes, Egerton's stories, "often drawn from Egerton's own experiences, explored psychological states of women, their dreams and fantasies, including their erotic desires" (7).

Like other New Women writers, Egerton's writing reflects a desire to expand women's roles and rights within British society. But as Martha Vicinus explains in her introduction to *Keynotes and Discords*, George Egerton's particular focus in her writing was on advocating for a greater awareness of female sexuality both inside and outside of marriage: "The 'New Women' revolted against what they saw as a totally unnatural upbringing, teaching them nothing about themselves or the opposite sex [. . .] Egerton in particular felt compelled to describe with a new vehemence and confidence the importance of honouring women's sexuality" (viii). In "Virgin Soil," this theme appears in the marital misery of the heroine, a young girl later identified as Flo or Florence, a misery caused by her ignorance of both her own sexuality as well as the sexual expectations a Victorian husband had for his wife. A different aspect of female sexuality is explored in "A Cross Line," in which the sexually aware heroine finds her staid marriage unfulfilling and is tempted, but ultimately declines, to escape her marriage by running away with an exciting and adventurous lover. Although both these short stories draw on the tale of Little Red Riding Hood to emphasize the excessive social repression of female sexuality through the trials of their heroines and their interactions with the wolves, the heroine in "A Cross Line" is not a victim of the wolf, like Florence in "Virgin Soil," but rather a victim of a society that does not understand or accept her.

George Egerton's short stories are not immediately recognizable as fairy tales. As Wanning Harries explains, "Less well known tales, many of them by women, were much more complex and layered narratives" (99). This perhaps accounts for the lack of scholarly research concerning Egerton's adaptation of fairy tales. Scholars have instead focused on her works' relation to the New Woman and decadent genres,^v her marginalized position in society and its effects on her writing,^{vi} her representation of female sexuality,^{vii} and her depiction of the various roles of women in society.^{viii}

Although it is important to note that Whitney Standlee presents "Gone Under" as "an inverted version of the Cinderella tale" (443), thereby recognizing if not analyzing Egerton's subversive rewriting of fairy tales in her short stories, in fact only one critic, Sarah E. Maier, has even briefly noted the occurrence of a Little Red Riding Hood motif in Egerton's works. In "Decadent Discord: George Egerton," Maier writes of "Virgin Soil":

Treated like the girl-child in 'Little Red Riding Hood,' Flo encounters Egerton's eroticized but dangerous revision of the wolf who 'comes for her; his hot breath smells of champagne, and it strikes her that his eyes are fearfully big and bright, and he offers her his arm with such a curious amused proprietary air that the girl shivers as she lays her hand in it' (147-48). Flo's marriage is quickly filled with 'bitter disillusion' (149) by a bestial husband who demonstrates the hypocrisy of any politically detached understanding of male sexuality. (107)

Maier recognizes Florence as Little Red Riding Hood and her husband as the wolf; however this is all that Maier writes on the subject of "Little Red Riding Hood," as her essay's purpose is to present an argument that George Egerton should be classified as a female decadent rather than be "confined" as a New Woman author (96). Maier's passing reference to Little Red Riding Hood in relation to only one of Egerton's stories, "Virgin Soil," in no way probes the implications of a New Woman author's revision of the Little Red Riding Hood tale within her short stories. Yet

such a specific rewriting of the tale, especially when it occurs in more than one short story, cannot and should not be ignored in critical research.

My analysis of Egerton's "Virgin Soil" and "A Cross Line" will use both Perrault's and the Grimms' versions of Little Red Riding Hood as hypotexts. Egerton's writing style in "Virgin Soil" and "A Cross Line" imitates that of traditional fairy tales, calling attention to how she is adapting and revising the classic fairy tale in her short stories for adults. My analysis will begin with "Virgin Soil," despite its later publication date, as it more closely follows the plot of the traditional tale, while "A Cross Line" is a more subtle revision. Yet despite the differences in Egerton's two revisions of "Little Red Riding Hood," in particular her characterization of the wolf and Little Red herself, both stories still contribute to George Egerton's New Woman agenda.

"Virgin Soil" & the Wolf as Bridegroom

The age-old tale, which has its origins in the oral tradition, possesses an amazing capacity to adapt to new social and cultural contexts. It can be transposed to any time and any place. (Beckett, *Red* 212)

In addition to reinterpreting various elements and occurrences from the classic Little Red Riding Hood tales written by Perrault and the Grimm brothers, Egerton mimics the style of the fairy tale by eliminating proper names. It is only in the second part of "Virgin Soil" that the reader learns that the protagonist is named Florence, familiarly called Flo by her mother, and is married to Philip. During the opening scene, Florence is referred to as "the girl," while Philip is simply "the bridegroom" (Egerton 145). Florence's mother, whose name is never given, is identified by her relation to Florence as "the mother" (Egerton 145). Egerton uses a similar technique in "A Cross Line," in which the characters are referred to mainly by pronouns. Other than the heroine's nickname, "Gipsy" (Egerton 14), the only character who is given a name is the

woman's maid, Lizzie (Egerton 12). By keeping the characters unnamed, Egerton is better able to evoke the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, in which the characters' identities are limited to a description of their occupation or garments:^{ix} Little Red Riding Hood, the wolf, the mother, the grandmother, and the huntsman. Furthermore, as in the classic tales of Little Red Riding Hood the settings of the stories are unclear. In "Virgin Soil," the only knowledge the reader has of the location is that it is a town with a train station, while the only reference regarding time is that the action occurs sometime after the implementation of trains. The setting is even more vague in "A Cross Line," which occurs somewhere and sometime near "Irish hills" (Egerton 20). By not using proper names to describe the characters or places, Egerton allows the reader to approach the tale without any reference to time or place. This ambiguity gives the fairy tale and Egerton's stories a sense of being unbound by time or place, leaving the reader to focus on the action without preconceived expectations concerning the topic or the message of the tale. This is especially true of "Virgin Soil," for, as alluded to above, the first section of the story is very distinctly styled to replicate the form of a fairy tale.

Divided into two unequal sections, the main action of George Egerton's "Virgin Soil" occurs in the second part of the story, when the empowered Florence returns to reveal to her mother the truth concerning her miserable marriage and to condemn her mother for not explaining to her the (sexual) reality of marriage. Yet the shorter first scene is not only essential to establishing the context of the main action that follows, but also evokes the tale of Little Red Riding Hood and thereby offers the reader valuable insight into how the main action is to be interpreted. In "Virgin Soil," George Egerton rewrites "Little Red Riding Hood" to highlight the depravity and perversion inherent in marriages in which young girls are ignorant of the world

and of themselves, as well as to advocate for women's self-emancipation from the oppression of marriage.

Egerton begins "Virgin Soil" by establishing the bridegroom as the deceptive and depraved wolf. The first description of the bridegroom, other than his impatience, is "his strong white teeth" (Egerton 145). By making this the first description of the bridegroom's physique, Egerton emphasizes his predatory nature while also referencing Little Red Riding Hood's observation concerning the disguised wolf's large mouth. His predatory nature is further emphasized by Egerton's reference to his "hunter" pocket watch (Egerton 145). As the description continues, the bridegroom's physique also suggests dissipation, as he is "florid, bright-eyed, loose-lipped, [and] inclined to stoutness," all physical manifestations of a man who enjoys too much liquor and food (Egerton 145). Despite his apparent tendency to over-indulge, the bridegroom "kept in good condition," and this condition, combined with his "well-dressed" affluence, appears to be sufficient to hide, or overcome, his hedonistic habits in the eyes of those around him (Egerton 145). However, the physical characteristics that truly solidify the bridegroom's connection to the wolf of "Little Red Riding Hood" are his "crisp, curly, slightly grey" hair and his "peculiar, pointed" ears (Egerton 145). Furthermore, like the wolf who is able to disguise his predatory nature with the appearance of innocence, the bridegroom is able to deceive those around him, for "when he smiles, [he appears] affable enough" (Egerton 145). Yet such affability is immediately put into doubt as anything more than an appearance, because the reader is already informed in the first sentence of the story that the bridegroom, rather than easygoing, is waiting impatiently for his bride in the hall. Significantly, in a departure from the classic "Little Red Riding Hood," the disguised wolf has already infiltrated the house (and entrapped the young girl) through the institution of marriage.

Once the bridegroom is identified as the deceptive, predatory, and overindulgent wolf, Egerton turns to the traditional beginning of the “Little Red Riding Hood” tale, where the mother sends her daughter alone into the world with the warning not to stray from the prescribed path. Yet in Egerton’s story, the mother’s advice to her daughter to follow the path will not keep her away from the wolf but rather will give him complete power over her life. Egerton’s Little Red Riding Hood is a seventeen-year-old girl, newly wedded, and innocently “sobbing with great childish sobs” upstairs into her mother’s shoulder (145). To soothe the girl’s anxiety concerning her marriage, the mother advises the young girl to adhere to the traditional subordinate role of the wife: “‘You are married now, darling, and you must obey’—she lays a stress upon the word—‘your husband in all things—but—marriage is a serious thing, a sacred thing’—with desperation—‘you must believe what your husband tells you is right—let him guide you’” (Egerton 146). The girl is not only told to always obey her husband, the wolf, but that whatever he tells her will be “right.” This advice leaves the girl no room to go against her husband’s wishes or to even question his thoughts or beliefs; in the event of a disagreement or difference of opinion, the girl is to believe that her husband is automatically right and therefore that she is automatically wrong. As a wife, the girl is not to think, but simply to obey; as Mary Lyndon Shanley explains in *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England*, “legal rules [. . .] gave any husband who cared to invoke them virtually despotic powers over his wife” because “marriage law was based on the premise that a wife owed obedience to her husband, and where she did not voluntarily follow his will the law would leave her no other option” (8).^x In this manner, the girl is expected to embody traditional wifely subordination while also accepting without protest her consumption by the wolf.

The girl's clothing emphasizes her state of being consumed by the bridegroom-wolf. Unlike the vibrant red worn by Little Red Riding Hood, Egerton specifies that the girl is dressed in a "silk [. . .], grey, going-away gown" accompanied by grey gloves (145). Dressed in grey to match her grey-haired bridegroom, the girl, as the wolf's bride, is legally an extension of his own person. Therefore, in the eyes of society and the government, the wolf has consumed the girl, body and soul. Moreover, the girl's lack of red clothing symbolizes her sexual ignorance, while her somber dress also foreshadows her future misery and worn appearance in the second part of the story, when she returns to the house to confront her mother.

Egerton highlights the mother's complicity in the girl's consumption by detailing the mother's anxiety and reluctance to give such advice to her daughter. The mother does not evince the happiness, pride, or sense of achievement one would expect from a mother who has successfully settled her daughter into an advantageous marriage. Instead, Egerton describes the mother as being "[s]carcely less disturbed than the girl," as she, "flushing painfully, mak[es] a strenuous effort to say something to the girl, *something that is opposed to the whole instincts of her life*" (145, my emphasis). Although Egerton never directly tells the reader how the mother found married life, this detail and others suggest that she did not enjoy it. Egerton's description of the mother is telling, as she uses words like "fragile," "delicate," "thin," "dove-like," and "monotonous" to evoke the sense of a woman worn down by experience and time (145). The "trembling, uncertain pauses" and "desperation" that characterize the delivery of the mother's advice to the girl, as well as the "helpless tears" that follow it, supports the image of a "faded" woman (Egerton 146). Furthermore, in the second part of the story, the reader learns that the mother refused at least two subsequent offers of marriage (Egerton 156). Yet despite the mother's apparent marital unhappiness and "acute distress," she refuses to empower the girl with

true knowledge regarding what to expect in married life, instead handicapping the girl by leaving her in ignorance and directing her to subordinate her own instincts, beliefs, and desires to those of her husband (Egerton 146). The mother conforms to what Adrienne Kertzer describes as the “traditional constructions of mothers as no more than dutiful reinforcers of patriarchal law” (20). Therefore, unlike the mother in the Grimms’ “Little Red Cap,” who gives her daughter advice in good faith that she is ensuring her safety, the girl’s mother knowingly sentences her daughter to misery by abandoning her to the mercy of the wolf.

Unlike the classic Little Red Riding Hood, the girl is not deceived by the wolf’s gentlemanly appearance and smiling amiability. She senses the wolf’s trap as it closes around her, begging her mother to tell her the information she knows she is lacking: “What is it that I do not know, mother? What is it?”—with anxious impatience. “There is something more—I have felt it all these last weeks in your and the others’ looks—in his, in the very atmosphere—but why have you not told me before [?]” (Egerton 146). In addition to being aware of her lack of knowledge, the girl detects a change in the bridegroom-wolf’s behavior towards her when he demands she hurry “with an imperative note that it strikes the nervous girl is new to it” (Egerton 146). Having achieved his goal of marrying and entrapping the girl, the bridegroom-wolf’s easy-going disguise begins to fray as the authoritative husband and predatory man is gradually revealed, and in reaction the girl becomes increasingly agitated. Upon arriving at the train station half an hour after leaving her mother’s house, the girl “jumps out [of the carriage] first; she is flushed, and her eyes stare helplessly as the eyes of a startled child, and she trembles with quick running shudders from head to foot. She clasps and unclasps her slender, grey gloved hands so tightly that the stitching on the back of one bursts” (Egerton 147). Half an hour after leaving the safety of her mother’s house, the young girl, feeling “helpless,” is fighting her instinctual urge to

escape her predatory husband; she immediately “jumps” from the carriage without awaiting her husband while her “flush” suggests increased heart rate and her “trembling” and “shudders” suggest an adrenaline rush and an uncontrollable need for movement. The girl experiences “running shudders” instead of merely running away. Furthermore, “bursting” the seam of one of her grey gloves, a symbol of her consumption by the grey wolf, suggests the girl’s desire to break free of the bonds that tie her to him. Moreover, when the girl revisits her mother’s house later in the tale, she tells her about “the mad impulse [she] had to jump down under the engine as it came in, to escape from the dread that was killing [her] soul” (Egerton 159). While she neither runs away nor commits suicide, the girl’s instincts are not wrong, as Egerton’s continuation of the girl’s story demonstrates.^{xi}

Assured of his successful capture of the girl and anticipating the rapidly approaching sexual consummation of their marriage, the bridegroom-wolf reverts to his depraved and predatory nature. The girl recognizes the predator as, mirroring the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, “it strikes her that his eyes are fearfully big and bright” (Egerton 147). The bridegroom-wolf avails himself of the opportunity to indulge his taste for liquor in the refreshment room of the station as they await their train, for when he returns to the girl “his hot breath smells of champagne” (Egerton 147). Moreover, it becomes clear that he intends to continue indulging his hedonistic tendencies when he returns to lead the girl to their private carriage and “offers her his arm with such a curious amused proprietary air that the girl shivers as she lays her hand in it” (Egerton 147-48). Egerton here contrasts the wolf’s anticipation of sexual pleasure and amusement over his bride’s fear with the young girl’s fear of the unknown, of that which she has intentionally been left in ignorance.

The scene ends on a sinister note, as “[t]he bell rings, the guard locks the door, the train steams out, and as it passes the signal-box, a large well-kept hand, with a signet ring on the little finger, pulls down the blind on the window of an engaged carriage” (Egerton 148). Egerton’s story refers to Perrault’s hypotext in this scene, particularly with respect to the tale as a story of rape.^{xii} The girl is now truly trapped, literally locked into her role as wife, and expected to perform her wifely duty and satisfy her husband’s sexual needs, whether she is willing or not. She is at the mercy of the imposing, large (-handed) bridegroom-wolf as he closes the blinds against prying eyes and society. Yet this mercy is practically non-existent given his amusement as he leads her to the prison that is the train carriage, and his previous indulgence in his hedonistic taste for liquor suggests he will not hesitate to indulge his sexual desire, even if his bride is unwilling and completely innocent. Five years later, the girl, Florence, also makes it clear that their marriage does not stop her husband’s womanizing, as he has made several “little trips” abroad with his mistress(es) (Egerton 153). Furthermore, her subordinate position in the marriage is made clear by the mention of the bridegroom-wolf’s signet ring, indicating his status and power in society and therefore his power over his bride. His “well-kept hand” combined with his ability to purchase a private carriage and indulge in champagne also suggest he is a wealthy and socially powerful man; the bridegroom-wolf’s social position is confirmed by the mother’s later assertion that “his position [. . .] is so good, and he is so highly connected” (Egerton 155). As when Little Red Riding Hood is consumed by the wolf disguised as her grandmother, the closing of the first scene of “Virgin Soil” leaves little hope for the girl’s survival; it appears that the deceitful, depraved, and sexually predatory wolf has succeeded in entrapping his Little Red Riding Hood and consuming his prey. But whereas the Grimms’ Little Red Cap and her grandmother are rescued at the last minute by the fortuitous arrival of the huntsman, there is no

hunter in Egerton's story to come and rescue the girl, just as no hunter rescued her mother from her own unhappy marriage. In this manner, Egerton's "Virgin Soil" is closer to Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood," although the girl does later manage to escape the wolf after years of abuse.

George Egerton emphasizes the need for the girl and the mother to rescue themselves, just as Little Red Cap and her grandmother out-manuever the second wolf in the Grimms brothers' tale. In making such self-emancipation the main action of the story, Egerton not only advocates social change but also transfers the emphasis of "Little Red Cap" from Little Red Cap's transgression, and subsequent punishment, to her later ability to rescue herself. This reevaluation of the significance of the tale of Little Red Riding Hood is further supported by the fact that it is only through transgression that Egerton's young girl is able to rescue herself from her oppressive marriage. Disobeying her mother's advice and straying from the prescribed path of marriage, the girl is determined to assert her individuality and right to spiritual and sexual fulfillment. She is determined to become Florence, a woman who exists outside of the obedient roles of wife and daughter and who has knowledge of both the ways of the world and her own desires. As she once again leaves her hometown by train, Florence significantly "takes the train in the opposite direction" and therefore embarks upon a future of her own choosing (Egerton 162).

What is perhaps more important to the achievement of the social change Egerton advocates is the way Florence's self-assertion and condemnation cause her mother to reevaluate her view of the women's rights movement. Egerton writes, "She [the mother] feels as if the scales have dropped from her eyes, as if the instincts and conventions of her life are toppling over, as if all the needs of protesting women of whom she has read with a vague displeasure have

come home to her” (161). Despite her own unhappy marriage and the difficulty she experienced while giving her daughter the socially acceptable advice concerning wifely duty, it is only when Florence’s misery and hatred are made undeniably clear that the mother is able to recognize the need for social change. And just as Little Red Cap’s grandmother helps her to defeat the second wolf, George Egerton’s “Virgin Soil” calls for a united front to achieve the goal of women’s emancipation from sexual ignorance and oppressive marriages.

“A Cross Line” & the Wolf as Lover

The technique of inversion or reversal is particularly popular with feminist authors who see parody as a powerful agent for changing the conventional gender roles that fairy tales have mirrored back to us through several centuries of patriarchal culture. (Beckett, *Recycling* 108)

Egerton revises and appropriates the Little Red Riding Hood tale even more subtly in “A Cross Line.” On the surface, there seems to be little similarity in the way Egerton rewrites the traditional tale in these two stories. For instance, in “A Cross Line,” the wolf is not a husband but rather a seductive stranger encountered in the woods, lacking in physicality, power, and intent to harm, while Little Red Riding Hood is not a sexually ignorant young girl but rather a married woman fully in touch with her sexuality. Furthermore, the rescuing huntsman of the Grimms’ “Little Red Cap” appears in the form of the woman’s husband. Yet, as in “Virgin Soil,” Egerton’s revision of “Little Red Riding Hood” in “A Cross Line” is distinguished by a heroine evading the wolf, a supportive community of women, and a concluding focus on future possibilities.

As in “Virgin Soil,” Egerton’s wolf in this story is characterized by the color grey, but otherwise there is little similarity between Egerton’s two wolves. The description of this man upon his first appearance is suggestive of the calculating womanizer, although he later comes to love the Little Red Riding Hood figure. In keeping with the Grimm brothers’ “Little Red Cap,”

Egerton's second Little Red Riding Hood, nicknamed Gipsy by her husband, first encounters the wolf in the woods; however, in a twist on the traditional Grimm brothers' tale, it is the wolf, not the woman, who is traveling "down the path" (Egerton 3). This detail is significant as it is the wolf, rather than Gipsy, who will stray from the prescribed path by becoming less of a villain and more of a lover who tempts Gipsy with the promise of happiness and freedom, apparently motivated by genuine affection if not love. Yet this role of affectionate lover is not immediate but rather a gradual process of transformation, perhaps because Gipsy is not helpless prey but an intriguing and powerful woman.

Egerton's introductory depiction of the wolf indicates that his life so far has been one of sexual conquest and womanizing. This wolf's approach in the woods with a fishing pole is signaled by the sound of his "singing the refrain of a popular music-hall ditty," a "slangy, vulgar tune" that signifies his familiarity with music halls and their debauchery, associated as they were with alcohol consumption and prostitution (Egerton 1).^{xiii} Notably, his hobby of fishing also interestingly characterizes him as more tame than the hunting of game performed by more predatory men and wolves. He is described as "a cool, neat, grey-clad figure" with "cold grey eyes [that] scan" the heroine (Egerton 3). Such a cold and meticulous appearance not only suggests a lack of emotion, but also contributes to the description of his calculating, scientific nature, made evident by Egerton's discussion of the wolf's "persistent study," desire to classify the women he meets, and lack of "any definite data as to what any one of the species [of women] may do in a given situation" (3). Conflating the roles of the scientist and the predatory hunter, the wolf is fascinated by his unexpected discovery of a "female animal" on which he can practice his methods of classification and seduction (Egerton 3); he is quick to notice her "thick wedding ring" and then turns to speculation over whether or not this lady is "fast" and therefore open to

seduction despite her marriage (Egerton 4). Despite his interest in, and even fascination with, Gipsy, his referral to her as a “female animal” indicates a misogynistic dismissal of her personhood, her status as a human being. She is no more than an animal to be analyzed and seduced. Yet although he takes a scientific approach to womanizing, it is clear that even this is a leisurely activity, like his singing and fishing, as his response to Gipsy’s “upset[ting] a fellow’s calculations” (Egerton 4) is a “lighting of his pipe, [and] say[ing] ‘check!’” (Egerton 7). Egerton thereby not only presents her reader with a complex wolf with different aspects to his nature, but also a wolf whose representation is less associated with the physical and more focused on his mental capacity. Yet this wolf cannot maintain his initially distant attitude, as his scientific interest transforms into genuine regard.

Unlike the bridegroom-wolf in “Virgin Soil,” the wolf in “A Cross Line” is not a static character. In fact, Egerton explicitly indicates that the cold, calculating nature of the wolf is transformed over time into a much warmer emotion, writing that the “cool greyness [of the wolf’s eyes was] troubled by sudden fire” (25). As the wolf becomes emotionally involved with Gipsy, he also begins to abandon his previous pretensions and relax around her: “And he drops his grey-clad figure on the turf. He has dropped his drawl long ago, in midsummer” (Egerton 23). In doing this, the wolf makes himself more vulnerable in his relationship with the heroine, providing another indication that his feelings for her are true and not affectation intended to deceive. This sincerity has significant implications in regard to his offer to Gipsy to run away with him. He paints her a picture of the kind of life he would provide for her:

You would reign supreme; when your highness would deign to honour her servant
I would come and humour your every whim. If you were glad, you could clap
your hands and order music, and we would dance on the white deck, and we
would skim through the sunshine of Southern seas on a spice-scented breeze [. . .]
And if you were angry you could vent your feelings on me, and I would give in
and bow my head to your mood. And we would drop anchor and stroll through

strange cities, go far inland and glean folklore out of the beaten track of everyday tourists. (Egerton 26-27)

The wolf offers himself as a subservient worshipper, eager to fulfill her “every whim,” act according to her changing moods, and be her whipping boy, all while offering her the opportunity to travel to the exotic locals she daydreams about. In addition, the wolf’s last words to Gipsy seem to confirm the sincerity of his feelings, as he both entreats her to choose him while offering her another chance to reject him: “To-day is Monday; Wednesday afternoon I shall pass your gate, and if—if my moment is ended, and you mean to send me away, to let me go with this weary aching . . . [. . .] *Hang something white on the lilac bush!*” (Egerton 30). In giving Gipsy control of her future by offering to remove himself from her life if his presence is unwanted, the wolf is demonstrating how his interaction with Gipsy has humanized him, erasing his previously predatory and calculating nature, as well as changed his original perception of women as animals to be studied and seduced. Unlike the wolf in the classic Little Red Riding Hood tales and “Virgin Soil,” this wolf, with a catch in his voice, is enthralled by the heroine and desires her happiness more than her body or consumption.

Egerton’s heroine in this tale is firmly associated with the traditional Little Red Riding Hood through her “scarlet shawl” (3). Also like Little Red Riding Hood, Gipsy is characterized by a frivolous idleness; where Little Red Riding Hood is diverted from her task by a desire to pick flowers, Gipsy frequents the woods to read, fly-fish, and daydream. However, rather than the naiveté of Little Red Riding Hood and the innocence and nervousness of Florence, this new Little Red Riding Hood is unabashedly sexual and self-confident. The heroine’s self-possession and confidence are made evident at the very beginning of the story, for although she is given advance warning of the wolf’s approach by the discordant sound of his “profane, indelicate, [. . .] slangy, vulgar” singing of “ a popular music-hall ditty,” Gipsy does not flee but rather calmly

awaits his arrival with a look of both “disgust and humorous appreciation” (Egerton 1). Such disgust and amusement suggest recognition of the tune and therefore familiarity with music halls, supporting the impression that she is not an innocent young girl but a woman of experience. This impression is confirmed when, upon her first encounter with the wolf, the woman is described as being a “seated figure with its gipsy ease of attitude, a scarlet shawl that has fallen from her shoulders forming an accentuative background to the slim roundness of her waist” (Egerton 3). Her relaxed and untroubled seated position, association with a gipsy’s loose morals and sexuality,^{xiv} and suggestive state of dishabille contribute to the inherent sexuality symbolized by her red shawl. This is clearly not an innocent, sexually ignorant girl but rather a woman comfortable in her own skin and accepting of, if not reveling in, her sexual nature.

Gipsy also differs from Little Red Riding Hood and Florence in that she is strongly associated with the wildness of nature, as even her “slim brown hand” suggests she frequently spends time outdoors (Egerton 4). Whereas Little Red Riding Hood finds the forest a dangerous place in which she is taught a painful lesson on obedience and transgression and Florence is withheld from nature by her oppressive marriage, only beginning to experience it as she leaves her mother’s house to start her new life, Gipsy seems to find nature to be a site of freedom, where she can find solitude and indulge herself by contemplating the “thousand vagrant fancies” that fill her “busy brain,” many of which exhibit strong sexual overtones (Egerton 1).

This link between nature and sexuality is confirmed in Gipsy’s animalistic intimate interactions with her husband, and it is here that the argument can be made that Gipsy is herself representative of a second wolf, a she-wolf who rivals her wolf-lover. Beckett notes in her anthology that a number of twentieth-century, non-English revisions of the classic tale feature a “Little Red Riding Hood [who] has become a match for the wolf, since she now has a wolfish

essence of her own” (*Revisioning* 11).^{xv} Reminiscent of various predatory animals, Gipsy “springs out of her chair” before “she perches herself” next to her husband while they converse (Egerton 14). She goes on to state, “I’d *purr* if I knew how” while describing the pleasure she gains from having her hair played with, a pleasure that is of itself an indication of an inherently sensual nature (Egerton 15). As the conversation continues and she becomes more aggressive, she is described as “rubbing her chin up and down his [her husband’s] face” (Egerton 15), giving him a “fierce little kiss” (Egerton 16), and finally “biting his ear” and “bit[ing] his chin and shak[ing] it like a terrier in her strong little teeth” (Egerton 17). Bruno Bettelheim argues that the wolf “represents all the asocial, animalistic tendencies within ourselves,” and Gipsy, like a she-wolf, is not afraid to act on such tendencies with her husband (172); rather, to use Beckett’s characterization of Little Red Riding Hood, she is “an empowered heroine in full control of her sexuality” (*Revisioning* 11). Egerton indicates that such animalistic sexual overtures are successful in arousing her husband, as “[h]is eyes dilate and his colour deepens as he crushes her soft little body to him and carries her off to her room” (17-18). It therefore appears that Gipsy’s husband fully appreciates his wife’s natural sexuality.

The huntsman of “Little Red Cap,” absent in “Virgin Soil” and Perrault’s “Little Red Riding Hood,” appears in “A Cross Line” as Gipsy’s husband, who has a clear affinity for animals and a love of the outdoors. The husband-huntsman seems to give more value to his animals than to his wife, going so far as to argue with Gipsy over whether or not she would have been permitted to ride his favorite mare, even though the “mare [. . .] was sold before she knew him” (Egerton 10). This passionate love of and respect for animals is also evident in his excitement over the birth of some chicks, oblivious to Gipsy’s disgust as he “enthusiastically” exclaims over the hatchlings (Egerton 9). In fact, he acknowledges that he has a greater affinity

for animals than for people, “anxiously” telling Gipsy, “[I]f you were a mare I’d know what to do for you” (Egerton 8) and later proving the veracity of this statement by treating his wife with the same techniques he uses on his horses, inspecting her ankle “as one sees a man do to a horse with windgalls” (Egerton 12). In addition to this affinity to animals, Gipsy’s husband is constantly gardening, as well as encouraging his wife to come outside in the belief that it will “do [her] a world of good” (Egerton 32). Furthermore, although he is described as having a “delicate” face, this feature is “contradicted” by “a broad strong hand with capable fingers,—the hand of a craftsman,” indicating both his strength as well as the reliability associated with Little Red Cap’s savior, the huntsman (Egerton 13).

As in the Grimm brothers’ “Little Red Cap,” the huntsman and wolf are in opposition with each other, yet their oppositional relationship is much more complex in “A Cross Line” than in the fairy tale. Both are, in a sense, vying for Gipsy’s affection and attention, and both want to rescue her, the wolf from an unfulfilling marriage and the huntsman from her mental anxiety and depression. Her husband, unaware of any competition, is affectionate and indulgent in his interactions with her, attracted to Gipsy’s animalistic and natural behavior although seemingly oblivious to her desire for his more focused attention and deeper understanding. He is a steady if absent-minded version of the affable man that the bridegroom-wolf in “Virgin Soil” pretends to be. Gipsy is comfortable in her relationship with him, as in the evenings, “She draws in the smoke [from her cigarette] contentedly, and her eyes smile back [at her husband] with a general vague tenderness” (Egerton 11). As Egerton’s description indicates, the heroine’s marriage does offer her some freedom, such as smoking, but it is lacking the intensely passionate connection and understanding that Gipsy wants to share with her partner. Casey A. Cothran explains that

Gipsy's "husband, unable to read her feelings or to follow her argument[s], is unable to participate meaningfully in her life" (10).

In contrast, Gipsy's relationship with the wolf is one of true understanding mixed with tension and pain. Both the wolf and the heroine are uncomfortable and vulnerable in their shared relationship: "[T]hey sit silent, and they both feel as if the earth between them is laid with infinitesimal electric threads vibrating with a common pain" (Egerton 25). Despite, or perhaps because of, this pain and tension, Gipsy admits that the danger the wolf represents is to her peace of mind rather than her physical safety, telling him, "You have given me something—something to carry away with me—an infernal want. You ought to be satisfied. I am infernally miserable" (Egerton 25). Despite the wolf's non-threatening intentions and desire for the heroine's happiness, preferably with himself, he poses a threat to her wellbeing because he has made more explicit the inadequacies of the heroine's marriage by understanding her nature better than her husband does, thereby offering her the single thing that seems to be lacking in her marriage—(almost) complete intimacy. Notably, this wolf's endangering of Little Red Riding Hood's peace of mind rather than her physical wellbeing is in keeping with the more cerebral and emotional focus of both the wolf's depiction and the story as a whole. Although at one point Gipsy thinks that, unlike her husband, "the grey-eyed man never misunderstands her," this is shown to be false because, despite their intimacy and the wolf's ability to understand the heroine's deepest desires, he is unable to grasp her desire for complete freedom from *any* restriction, including the one the wolf would become should she leave her husband for him (Egerton 32).

The wolf offers Gipsy adventurous travel to exotic lands, freedom of expression, and power within their relationship. Yet this Little Red Riding Hood rejects the wolf's seductive proposition, recognizing that as long as he, or another man, is with her, the freedom, power, and

happiness offered is a false promise. She exclaims, “Can’t you understand where the spell lies? It is the freedom, the freshness, the vague danger, the unknown that has a witchery for me, ay, for every woman!” (Egerton 27). So although the wolf “never misunderstands her,” he still does not seem to truly comprehend her nature, her desire to be both physically and spiritually unrestrained. This loving and subservient wolf is thereby a triple threat: he threatens her peace of mind, her marriage, and her freedom by tempting her to run away with him. But the heroine resists the temptation and escapes her wolf unharmed, as Gipsy recognizes the unintentional lie in the wolf’s offer, and unlike Little Red Riding Hood and Florence, is not led (further) astray by his invitation. Moreover, any moments of indecision following the heroine’s first rejection of the wolf are completely erased by Gipsy’s discovery of her pregnancy.

In her depiction of Gipsy as a sexual Little Red Riding Hood, Egerton anticipates a later trend in twentieth-century retellings of the tale, as Beckett explains, “Modern Riding Hoods are often unconcerned with society’s conventions and taboos. Many are portrayed as sensual beings who are sexually attracted to the wolf” (*Red* 159). Beckett later continues her discussion, writing, “More often sensual Riding Hoods prefer the wild, free life of wolves, and they run with them in defiance of society’s conventions and taboos. Such retellings affirm woman’s sensual animal nature over a socially constructed femininity” (*Red* 203). By having a sexual relationship with the wolf, Gipsy not only emphasizes her own sexuality but also breaks social taboos, most significantly that of fidelity to her husband. Yet while she is undeniably linked to nature and even exhibits indications of possessing her own inner wolf, she ultimately chooses to return to her husband and at least outwardly conform to social expectations and constructions of femininity. However, Egerton is not reaffirming accepted feminine ideals here so much as what she viewed as women’s natural maternal instinct. Like the stereotypical New Woman, there is no

indication that Gipsy will give up aspects of her non-conformist lifestyle, such as her extreme sexuality, which her husband notably enjoys, or even smaller symbols of rebellion like smoking.

Gipsy's pregnancy becomes a site of maternal female communion and promise for the future. As Nicole M. Fluhr points out, pregnancy causes "the tenor of her [Gipsy's] thoughts [to] shift; previously focused on her husband and would-be lover, she now becomes occupied with her mother and maid" (257). Just before she realizes she is pregnant, Gipsy is reminiscing about her late mother because "she wants some one so badly to soothe her" (Egerton 32). Although the reader knows nothing about their relationship, such nostalgia suggests Gipsy's relationship with her absent mother was very different from Florence's relationship with her own, despite the fact that both *Red Riding Hoods* find themselves in unhappy and unfulfilling marriages. This maternal female community also includes Gipsy's maid Liz, who is the first person Gipsy tells about her pregnancy and who had previously borne and lost a child out of wedlock. Egerton shows the two women bonding over their shared maternity, as "the mistress, who is a wife, puts her arms round the tall maid, who has never had more than a moral claim to the name, and kisses her in a quick way" (35).^{xvi} This bond is more than maternal, however, as the maid's pregnancy outside of wedlock would suggest a natural, unrestricted sexuality similar to that of Gipsy. Moreover, the husband, who is only possibly the father but who Gipsy seems determined will fill the paternal role for her child, is significantly left out of the preparations for, and even the knowledge of, the baby's expected arrival.

As in "Virgin Soil," it is the future that is emphasized at the end of "A Cross Line." Looking to the future with "flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes," Gipsy and Liz begin to prepare for the baby's arrival (Egerton 35). Gipsy's intention that her child should have a better life than her own, a happy and fulfilling life, is symbolized in her selection of "the finest [garments], with

the narrowest lace and tiniest ribbon” to be used in constructing the baby’s clothing (Egerton 36). Furthermore, Gipsy is quick to give the wolf the signal of her final rejection by first telling Lizzie to hang the nightgown that will be transformed into the baby’s clothes on the lilac bush, before insisting, “I’ll do it myself!” (Egerton 36). Her quick change of mind would seem to suggest that she wants to make sure there will be no misunderstanding, that the wolf is out of her life as she prepares for her future motherhood. This insistence on marking the bush herself also suggests that she is taking back control over her life. The temptation of the wolf and her dissatisfaction concerning her marriage to the huntsman are completely forgotten as she looks to the future and, like Florence and the Grimms’ Little Red Cap, leaves the wolf behind to begin a new and better life.

Significantly, Gipsy is transformed by her encounter with the wolf, and unlike Florence, this transformation is positive. Beckett discusses initiation rituals in the classic tale of Little Red Riding Hood:

The heroine is sent to her grandmother’s on her own, separating her from her family and her community, and, notably, from her mother, as is the case in adolescent initiations. The old lady’s house, where the girl is to receive initiatory instruction that will bring wisdom and maturity, is located within or on the other side of the dark woods, which is the site for initiation rituals in many traditions. Initiation ceremonies involve a ritual death [. . .] followed by rebirth as an adult and return to the community. (*Red* 42-43)

While transformation, or “rebirth” is experienced by both of Egerton’s Little Red Riding Hoods, only Gipsy’s encounter with the wolf (in the woods) results in her return to the community, represented by renewed devotion to her husband and commitment to her child. Florence, meanwhile, is reborn into independence in a more negative manner; (justifiably) leaving behind her marriage and mother, Florence is left embittered and worn down by her encounter with the wolf, and she goes into the world in isolation, an outcast from the social community.

The Importance of Female Sexual Knowledge

The story of Little Red Riding Hood is an integral part of the cultural heritage, not only of Perrault's France and the Grimms' Germany but of the entire Western world, of which it is one of the most popular cultural icons.
(Beckett, *Recycling* 8)

Catherine Orenstein writes that fairy tales “catalog not only broad elements of human experience but also the particular details of each day and age” (12). For George Egerton, the “day and age” is fin-de-siècle British society, in which gender roles, women’s rights, marriage, and female sexuality were controversial topics being hotly debated. Although both of George Egerton’s revisions of “Little Red Riding Hood” reject the Grimm brothers’ focus on the girl’s transgression and punishment, as well as Perrault’s “present[ation of] female sexuality as something negative and dangerous,” her double revision of the traditional tale is complicated (Beckett, *Recycling* 44). In “Virgin Soil,” danger and the wolf are inherent within Florence’s marriage, and it is only by escaping her marriage that she is to find the freedom and possibility for love she desires and feels she deserves. On the other hand, in “A Cross Line,” Gipsy is tempted by the wolf to leave her marriage to the huntsman, who, unlike in the Grimm brothers’ tale, is not a hero but rather an absent-minded gardener. Furthermore, the wolf in this story is not the cruel, rapacious, unfaithful wolf of “Virgin Soil,” but rather a slightly misogynistic scientific sort, who is fascinated by, if not in love with, Gipsy, and who seems to have her happiness in mind when he offers her the chance to run away with him. So while Florence must run away from her bridegroom-wolf, Gipsy is offered, and rejects, the opportunity to run away from her husband *with* her wolf. This inconsistency indicates that Egerton does not equate all men with wolves or all marriages with domination.

While both of Egerton’s wolves are in human form and inherently sexual beings, that is where their similarities end. In “Virgin Soil,” the wolf is the heroine’s husband, and therefore

any sexual threat he presents to the heroine is legal. Yet this only serves to emphasize the heroine's perilous situation: she is at the mercy of a socially powerful, depraved, hedonistic, sexual predator who has total power over her, and it is only after years of abuse and adultery, including an implied abortion on the part of the heroine,^{xvii} that she is able to escape her wolf-husband and start a new life as a wiser but embittered woman. In contrast to the physical threat presented by the depraved and predatory wolf-bridegroom, the wolf in "A Cross Line" inadvertently threatens the heroine by seemingly offering her everything she desires: adventure and travel with a man who loves her and (almost) completely understands her. This wolf, although still sexual, is not a physical but an emotional threat to the heroine, and this is emphasized by Egerton's depiction of this wolf as a complex intellectual and emotional being. Furthermore, by tying the threat of the wolf into the legalities and customs of marriage, as well as by exposing how a threat can be both physical and legal or emotional and illicit, George Egerton expands the traditional tale from the unwed, innocent young girl who is tempted and falls prey to a sexually threatening wolf. Both her wolves appear less threatening than they truly are—the bridegroom is supposed to be the guardian of his young wife while the lover has no apparent intent to cause Gipsy any unhappiness—yet that merely serves to highlight the dangers a nineteenth-century British woman must be on the lookout for, as wolves pervade this society just as they did the seventeenth-century French society about which Perrault wrote. And as in "Little Red Cap," both of Egerton's nineteenth-century revisions are left open-ended, for while Egerton's heroines' futures are unknown, what is clear is that they have been transformed by their encounter with their respective wolves. As Bruno Bettelheim explains of the Grimm brothers' tale, "There is no need to tell what Little Red Riding Hood will do, or what her future

will be. Due to her experience, she will be able to decide this herself. The wisdom about life [. . .] is gained by every listener” (183).

It therefore would seem that the important distinguishing feature in Egerton’s tales is the bride/wife’s sexuality. Florence’s sexual ignorance leads to her dominating, unfulfilling, miserable marriage; as her accusations against her mother suggest, a true understanding of sexuality and marriage would have given her the opportunity to avoid the degradation she experienced as a wife. As a sexually aware woman, Gipsy, on the other hand, is able to find contentment, if not true happiness, in her marriage to the huntsman once she discovers her pregnancy, encouraging her to withstand the wolf’s seduction. This comfortable marriage also provides fulfillment as Gipsy is given the opportunity to be a mother and raise her child as she chooses.^{xviii} This is significant not only because it looks to the future, but also because Egerton ambiguously implies in “Virgin Soil” that Florence has aborted a child conceived in her oppressive marriage, thereby rejecting the maternal opportunity that solidifies Gipsy’s determination to stay with her husband. Therefore, in Egerton’s revisions of “Little Red Cap,” female sexual knowledge and experience are to be encouraged as a force that supports marital and familial stability.

In addition, Egerton ends both revisions with an emphasis on female solidarity and a look toward the possibilities of the future. Just as Gipsy becomes whole-heartedly engaged in planning for the arrival of her child, Florence leaves her husband and then her mother to begin a new life of her own choosing. Both appear to see renewal in their future prospects. Furthermore, although Florence only returns to her mother’s house in order to accuse her of being complicit in her misery and degradation, her heart is softened when she sees her mother “bowed in tired sleep” the next morning, causing her to leave her a “few kind words” of forgiveness on her way

out the door to her new life (Egerton 161). This, along with the mother's regret for her encouragement of the marriage and blindness to her daughter's misery, suggests, if not a community, then at least an uneasy peace. Yet a sense of female solidarity is still suggested in "Virgin Soil" by the mother's change of heart concerning the women's rights protestors she had previously found so distasteful. Essentially, while Florence and her mother may not be considered united, Florence's experiences and accusations have caused her mother to become more supportive of those women participating in the women's rights movement, and it is in this support that female solidarity can be seen in "Virgin Soil." Female solidarity is also emphasized at the end of "A Cross Line," in which said solidarity transcends the boundaries of propriety, class, and death. Gipsy's discovery and excitement over her pregnancy is associated with her memories of her late mother and explicitly shared with her maid Lizzie, who transgressed the patriarchal norms of her society. Thus maternal excitement unites these three women within a tradition of the past as well as a hope for the future.

The emphasis that George Egerton's revisions of "Little Red Riding Hood" place on the way women's sexual knowledge contributes to marital stability, as well as the stories' focus on female solidarity and the future, are in keeping with Egerton's New Woman message, for, as several scholars have pointed out, Egerton's concept of the New Woman differed greatly from the virtuous paragon advocated by other New Woman writers like Sarah Grand and Mona Caird.^{xix} Instead, Egerton's revisions of "Little Red Riding Hood" look forward to a future time when women are free to be sexual beings and make informed decisions when choosing a spouse or whether to marry at all. Additionally, as her emphasis on a unified and supportive community of women suggests, this time of women's sexual and social emancipation can only be brought to fruition when women as a community begin to support and inform one another rather than voice

and enforce the existing, oppressive social mores and restrictions on women's sexuality and social roles in general. In her fairy-tale adaptations, George Egerton challenges the traditional versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" by questioning what constitutes transgression in order to undermine the tale's movement from transgression to punishment, and she thereby offers her readers two New Woman fairy tales to inspire them where they were previously oppressed.

NOTES

Introduction

ⁱ For example, see Caroline King Barnard Hall's "Transformations: A Magic Mirror," in *Original Essays on the Poetry of Anne Sexton* (1988) and Carol Leventen's "Transformations's Silencings" in *Critical Essays on Anne Sexton* (1989).

ⁱⁱ I specify middle-class women because working class women by necessity worked outside of the home as servants, factory workers, etc.

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ⁱ Paula Feldman analyzed inscriptions in a private collection of 354 British literary

Chapter One

ⁱ Paula Feldman analyzed inscriptions in a private collection of 354 British literary annuals, of which 40% had "any sort of inscription" (56). Although admitting that the results were inconclusive given the limited nature of the collection she sampled, Feldman's findings suggest that literary annuals were gifted more often by relatives than suitors. Feldman also found that 27% of the inscribed annuals in the collection had been owned by men rather than women (57).

ⁱⁱ Some scholars assert that a woman editor's scandalous personal life could cause her to become more conservative in her selection of literary-annual contributions. For instance, Hawkins and Jump agree that Blessington was more cautious because of her scandalous relationship with d'Orsay. Hawkins notes, "Given her ambiguous public status, Blessington carefully guarded both the reputation of her texts and her relationships with her publishers. When collecting texts for her first *Book of Beauty*, Blessington cautiously refused those that might

evoke negative comments” (“Formed”). But this stated caution does not mean Lady Blessington was not at times subversive. As Hawkins argued in an earlier essay, although the poems Lady Blessington included in the 1836 annual, *Gems of Beauty*, are mostly “hegemonic” in terms of the romantic relationships depicted, Hawkins also singles out three poems in the collection as being more subversive, depicting women being “bartered” in marriage and (implicitly) sexually initiated, as well as incorporating “the veiled implication that marriage might be, as Mary Wollstonecraft had warned, a kind of legal slavery for women” in “the narrative of the enslaved concubine of the Sultan” (“Marketing” 235).

ⁱⁱⁱ Specifically, I read *The Bijou* for 1828 and 1829, *The Gem* for 1829, *The Comic Offering, or, Ladies’ Melange of Literary Mirth* for 1831 and 1833, *The Continental Annual and Romantic Cabinet* for 1832, *The Young Lady’s Gift* for 1838, *The Keepsake* for 1832 and 1843, *Finden’s Tableaux* for 1840, *An Offering to Beauty* for 1853, *The Winter’s Wreath* (exact date unknown), and *The Talisman* (exact date unknown).

^{iv} According to the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, “For a time the Murphys could afford a governess, whom Anna remembered as ‘one of the cleverest women I have ever met.’ Before the family moved to London, however, she had gone; henceforth the sisters’ education progressed with Anna in charge” (Thomas).

^v Interestingly, Judith Johnston notes one benefit of even this unhappy marriage: “Jameson’s married state did however permit her a particular licence [*sic*] to travel independently and to move freely in society in ways that an unmarried woman could not” (2-3).

^{vi} Holcomb discusses Jameson’s position on women employed in art, music, and theater in “Anna Jameson on Women Artists,” writing, “Indeed, among writers in English in the first

half of the 19th century, she seems to have been alone in challenging through published argument the entrenched prejudices against women in the arts” (16).

^{vii} Russell argues that in *Shakspeare's Heroines*, “Jameson’s aims are both literary—a defence [*sic*] of Shakespeare and his characters—and social—a critique of her own culture’s definition of womanliness, though not of the conception of womanliness as an ideal” (36).

^{viii} Ledbetter writes that “*The Keepsake*’s elegant steel-plate engravings of English art were its main attraction” (“White” 41). This is true of most literary annuals, which were valued for their engravings more than their fiction. Because of this, engravings were commissioned first and then distributed to authors for “illustration” in fiction. This reversal of the priority of image and prose is part of the reason annual contributions were considered to be non-literary fluff by critics and famous authors like Wordsworth.

^{ix} Shelley does write that Mrs. Bainbridge’s cry is an attempt “to harden her conscience by angry words,” but this seeming attempt to ameliorate the evil characterization of Mrs. Bainbridge cannot eclipse her consistent villainy (197).

^x O’Dea also notes “the Cinderella motif of the slipper,” arguing that it “indicates the degree to which the tale is composed of fragments from other narratives,” but he does not further investigate or discuss “The Invisible Girl” as “Cinderella” (71).

^{xi} Pascoe states, “Mary Shelley’s two poems commemorating her husband [“Dirge” and “On Reading Wordsworth’s Lines”] are also noteworthy for the way in which she rewrites the scene of P. B. Shelley’s death, inserting herself into the aftermath of the boating accident and the recovery of P. B. Shelley’s body, scenes at which she was not historically present” (182).

Chapter Two

ⁱ Such publications include Terence Hoagwood and Kathryn Ledbetter's website *L.E.L.'s "Verses" and The Keepsake for 1829*, Vanessa Warne's 2006 article "'What foreign scenes can be': The Ruin of India in Landon's *Scrapbook Poems*," and Cynthia Lawford's 1999 article "Bijoux Beyond Possession: The Prima Donnas of L.E.L.'s Album Poems."

ⁱⁱ See "Buyer Beware: The Gift Poetics of Letitia Elizabeth Landon" by Jill Rappaport.

ⁱⁱⁱ Discussed by Jennifer Wallace in "Classics as Souvenir: L.E.L. and the Annuals."

^{iv} Jump's "'The False Prudery of Public Taste': Scandalous Women and the Annuals, 1820-1850," Ledbetter's "Domesticity Betrayed: *The Keepsake Literary Annual*," and Hoagwood and Ledbetter's *L.E.L.'s "Verses" and The Keepsake for 1829* all discuss in some manner how Landon uses, in Jump's words, "subversive stories to problematize [. . .] the conventional demands of her readers" (16).

^v See, for example, Harris's "Feminizing the Textual Body: Female Reader's Consuming the Literary Annual," Pulham's "'Jewels—delights—perfect loves': Victorian Women Poets and the Annuals," and Stephenson's *Letitia Landon: The Woman Behind L.E.L.*

^{vi} Jacqueline M. Labbe argues in *The Romantic Paradox: Love, Violence and the Uses of Romance, 1760-1830* that Landon also subverts the romance.

^{vii} Lawson further points out that "maidens picking flowers in meadows [. . .] are archetypes of sexual vulnerability" (10).

^{viii} As Jack Zipes explains in *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, "Almost all critics who have studied the emergence of the literary fairy tale in Europe agree that educated writers purposefully appropriated the oral folktale and converted it into a type of literary discourse about mores, values, and manners so that children and adults would become civilized according to the social code of that time" (3).

^{ix} Theresa's restraint of her impulses and adherence to the behaviors advocated by high society are rewarded by her father's attentions and a return of Adalbert's attentions and love. Hence, her motivation to maintain this transformation in temperament could be attributed to what Freud refers to as "loss of love," as neither her father nor Adalbert were satisfied with her natural, "uncivilized" state (122).

^x This focus on stasis is reminiscent of Lord Alfred Tennyson's "The Sleeping Beauty" (1830).

^{xi} Ledbetter writes this in response to Landon's "Do You Remember It?" from the 1832 *Keepsake*.

^{xii} Although not previously noted, in the classic Bluebeard tales Bluebeard's last wife is saved by an outside force, such as her brothers, Bluebeard is killed, and his widow goes on to marry for love after inheriting his wealth.

^{xiii} Nicholas Mason makes a compelling argument that Landon's entire career, from the very beginning, was the result of marketing techniques employed by herself and her close friend and publisher William Jerdan.

Chapter Three

ⁱ Ritchie published her two fairy-tale collections in 1868 and 1874 while de Morgan published her three collections in 1877, 1880, and 1900. However, the two tales that I will be analyzing in depth were published in the 1870s: Ritchie's "Bluebeard's Keys" (1874) and de Morgan's "The Seeds of Love" (1877). Both respond to concerns regarding feminine ideals and marriage as woman's sole aspiration.

ⁱⁱ According to *The Census of Great Britain in 1851*, "In the course of the analysis of this mass of people, it has been already stated that they will be subdivided into males and females:

and it will be seen that at home there are 102 hundred thousand men and boys, 107 hundred thousand women and girls; and that the females exceed the males in the great and imaginary procession by five hundred thousand” (4). In regard to marital status, the author writes, “If we take only persons of the age of 20 and upwards, the *bachelors* amount to 1,689,116; the *spinsters* to 1,767,194” (36).

ⁱⁱⁱ For instance, see Frances Power Cobbe’s 1862 essay “What Shall We Do with Our Old Maids?,” published in *Fraser’s Magazine*, in which she states, “The old assumption that marriage was the sole destiny of woman, and that it was the business of her husband to afford her support, is brought up short by the statement that one woman in four is certain not to marry, and that three millions of women earn their own living at this moment in England” (594).

^{iv} See A Matron’s “Advice on Marriage,” published in *Bow Bells* (1871); “Before and After Marriage,” published in *The London Journal* (1871); “Happy Marriages—How They Happen and How They Do Not Happen,” published in *The London Journal* (1870); “Marriage,” published in *The London Journal* (1877); and “Marriage,” published in *The London Reader* (1878).

^v See “Marriage,” published in *The Sphinx* (1870), and “Marriage Vows,” published in *Bow Bells* (1877).

^{vi} See, for instance, “Before and After Marriage,” “Happy Marriages—How They Happen and How They Do Not Happen,” and “Marriage” for a contemporary discussion of the importance of knowing and loving one’s spouse and the disillusionment faced by women who do not heed this advice.

^{vii} See “Marriage,” published in *The London Journal* (1877), and “Marriage,” published in *The London Reader* (1878).

^{viii} See also Manuela Mourão’s “Delicate Balances: Gender and Power in Ann Thackeray Ritchie’s Non-Fiction” and “Negotiating Victorian Feminism: Anne Thackeray Ritchie’s Short Fiction.”

^{xi} Ritchie previously explains that the Brothers of Pieta “follow the funerals and pray for the souls of the dead” (195).

Chapter Four

ⁱ Namely James Fowler’s “The Golden Harp: Mary de Morgan’s Centrality in Victorian Fairy-Tale Literature” published in *Children’s Literature* (2005), Marilyn Pemberton’s “Mary de Morgan: Out of the Morrisian Shadow” published in *Postgraduate English* (2006), Alicia Carroll’s “The Greening of Mary De Morgan: The Cultivating Woman and the Ecological Imaginary in ‘The Seeds of Love’” published in *The Victorian Review* (2010), Marilyn Pemberton’s “Mary De Morgan: Fairyland as the Seedbed of Anarchy” published in *Latchkey: Journal of New Women Studies* (2011), and Marilyn Pemberton’s book (2012), *Our of the Shadows: The Life and Works of Mary De Morgan*. Fowler focuses on de Morgan’s centrism, from her equal treatment of both sexes in her tales to her respect for the folklore tradition and “sober outlook on the likelihood of struggle and loss in life” (229), while Pemberton argues that de Morgan was influenced by William Morris’ beliefs on industrialism, individualism, and materialism. Carroll also analyzes de Morgan in relation to William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement, arguing that de Morgan’s “The Seeds of Love” is a critique of love and marriage. Yet while Carroll shares my argument that de Morgan is critiquing love and marriage, her approach differs from my own as she analyzes “The Seeds of Love” in relation to green politics. Also similar yet different from my argument, Pemberton’s most recent article and book argue that De Morgan critiques marriage and femininity as part of the New Woman movement,

focusing on her tales “The Hair Tree,” “The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde,” and “The Wanderings of Arasmon;” Pemberton writes, “I will argue that De Morgan’s tales address the same concerns as the New Women writers did,” including “that fundamental New Woman demand: freedom for a woman to make her own choices about whom or even whether to marry, without fear of ridicule or marginalisation. It is clear by the traditional ending of the fairy tale that De Morgan is not objecting to marriage as such, but rather the means and reason for the union” (“Fairylands”).

ⁱⁱ Zipes argues that some Victorian authors, like Mary de Morgan, used the fairy tale to critique society. He asserts that “there is a strong feminine, if not feminist, influence in the writing of *both* male and female writers” and cites de Morgan, among others, as an author who “depicted female protagonists coming into their own and playing unusually strong roles in determining their own destinies” (*Victorian Fairy Tales* xxv). Although he only briefly mentions de Morgan’s tale “A Toy Princess,” he also states that her narratives “allow for women’s voices and needs to be heard” (*Victorian Fairy Tales* xxvi). I build upon Zipes brief argument by elaborating upon the issues de Morgan was trying to give voice to in “The Seeds of Love,” namely the delusional nature of women’s expectations for ideal love and marriage.

ⁱⁱⁱ Marilyn Pemberton convincingly points out that Chrysea’s silence and Arasmon’s agency mimics “many Victorian marriages,” arguing,

It is as if Chrysea no longer exists; although she is with him all the time, he does not ‘see’ her, nor hear her desperate cries. Arasmon gives up the lute and instead plays the golden harp, and although it is Chrysea who actually makes the beautiful music, it is her husband who is given the credit and the recognition. The wife’s own voice is effectively silenced; she can only make music when her husband plucks her strings, and she is powerless to control her own destiny. (*Out of the Shadows* 129)

^{iv} Kesta's perceived value outweighs her "real" value, but it is also interesting to note that in this tale Kesta becomes a subject and participant in her own commodification in a way that Luce Irigaray argues is denied to women as commodities in patriarchal society. Kesta recognizes that on the marriage market, "In order for a product—a woman?—to have value, two men, at least, have to invest (in) her," and so she manipulates the men she encounters into endowing her with a value she would otherwise lack (Irigaray 181).

^v See Pemberton's "The Fairylands of Mary De Morgan: Seedbeds of Domestic Anarchy" for an analysis of these plants and flowers.

^{vi} What follows in this section is a condensed version of the "The Debate over Marriage in the 1870s" presented at length in the beginning of Chapter Three.

^{vii} For instance, see Frances Power Cobbe's 1862 essay "What Shall We Do with Our Old Maids?," published in *Fraser's Magazine*, in which she states, "The old assumption that marriage was the sole destiny of woman, and that it was the business of her husband to afford her support, is brought up short by the statement that one woman in four is certain not to marry, and that three millions of women earn their own living at this moment in England" (594).

^{viii} See A Matron's "Advice on Marriage," published in *Bow Bells* (1871); "Before and After Marriage," published in *The London Journal* (1871); "Happy Marriages—How They Happen and How They Do Not Happen," published in *The London Journal* (1870); "Marriage," published in *The London Journal* (1877); and "Marriage," published in *The London Reader* (1878).

^{ix} See "Marriage," published in *The Sphinx* (1870), and "Marriage Vows," published in *Bow Bells* (1877).

^x See, for instance, “Before and After Marriage,” “Happy Marriages—How They Happen and How They Do Not Happen,” and “Marriage” for a contemporary discussion of the importance of knowing and loving one’s spouse and the disillusionment faced by women who do not heed this advice.

^{xi} Julia Wedgwood provides an example of leniently punished spousal abuse, describing “a case in 1870, in which a man, for whom any length of incarceration would evidently have been only a boon to his hardworking wife, and who had thrown vitriol on her clothes because she refused to live with him, was recommended to mercy by the jury on the ground that he had been influenced by his intense affection for her!” (“Female Suffrage” 370).

^{xii} In “The Seeds of Love,” Blanchelys comes to a tragic end when the magic rose tree that symbolizes her husband’s love for her is poisoned and begins to wither, causing Blanchelys to sacrifice her life to regain the love of the prince by piercing her heart with a thorn from the rose tree so that the tree, and his love, will bloom anew:

So Queen Blanchelys lay down on the ground, and put her arms round the trunk, and from the dead branch she tore a long smooth thorn, and pierced her heart with it, and the drops of blood trickled to the roots of the tree [. . .] and the tree again began to bloom and sprout [. . .] But when the rose-tree burst into bloom, the roses which were white before, were as red as the blood which sprang from the Queen’s heart, and which had coloured them. (de Morgan 50)

Eleven years later, Oscar Wilde published his first collection of fairy tales, titled *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*. In one of his fairy tales, “The Nightingale and the Rose,” the female protagonist comes to an end that is strikingly similar to that of Blanchelys, as the Nightingale pierces her heart with a thorn from a rose tree in order to provide a philosophy student with the red rose he needs to court his beloved:

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and the thorn touched her heart, and a fierce pang of pain shot through her. Bitter, bitter was the pain, and

wilder and wilder grew her song, for she sang of the Love that is perfected by Death, of the Love that dies not in the tomb.

And the marvelous rose became crimson, like the rose of the eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petals, and crimson as a ruby was the heart.

But the Nightingale's voice grew fainter, and her little wings began to beat, and a film came over her eyes. (Wilde 13)

In addition to the similar method and effect of Blanchelys's and the Nightingale's deaths, both protagonists share a similar motive: the desire to foster an ideal romantic love. Moreover, in both fairy tales it is a *female* protagonist who decides to die in the name of love, and in both cases the ideal romantic love that they die for proves to be nothing more than an ideal that does not exist. De Morgan and Wilde emphasize that such ideal love is an illusion by depicting courtships and marriages that are based not on true love but rather a desire for increased wealth and social status. In this way, both Mary de Morgan in "The Seeds of Love" and Oscar Wilde in "The Nightingale and the Rose" criticize society for nurturing in women the belief that an ideal romantic love is an achievable goal. Furthermore, the fairy tale, with its traditional happily-ever-after marriage-plot ending, is thereby subverted to depict a perceived reality concerning the unhappiness inherent in romantic relationships that are based on neither true love nor even mild affection for one's partner. Instead, the two authors use their stories to suggest that marital happiness will be achieved only when the illusion of an ideal romantic love is dissolved and the practice of marrying for financial and social gain is abolished.

Chapter Five

ⁱ For a discussion of Gaskell's German stories, see Peter Skrine's "Elizabeth Gaskell and her German Stories."

ⁱⁱ Jenny Uglow provides more detail regarding Gaskell's feminist connections:

Elizabeth's friends included the older mentors of the emerging mid-century women's movement—Harriet Martineau, Mary Howitt and Anna Jameson—who

had been calling for change since the 1830s. And since 1849, through Tottie, she had come to know several younger women in their early twenties, who would become the activists of the next decade. Many of them were the daughters of people she knew, and most had a Unitarian background, like Bessie Parkes, daughter of the Radical Birmingham MP, Joseph Parkes, and great-granddaughter of Joseph Priestley, and her inseparable friend, Barbara Leigh Smith, whose father, Benjamin, had been MP for Norwich. Other members of this group were Adelaide Proctor, daughter of the poet Barry Cornwall, who entertained Elizabeth in London in 1849, Anna Mary Howitt, daughter of William and Mary Howitt, and Miranda and Octavia Hill. (Tottie and Octavia both taught at the experimental school which Barbara Leigh Smith opened at Portman Place in 1854.) These were the women who formed the nucleus of the ‘Langham Place Group’ which organized around the *Englishwoman’s Journal* in the late 1850s. (310-11)

ⁱⁱⁱ Given Lovell-Smith’s analysis of the female helper, Amante, in “Anti-Housewives and Ogres’ Housekeepers: The Roles of Bluebeard’s Female Helper,” I will not be discussing this figure in any detail, although she is certainly fascinating.

^{iv} “Mr. Fox” was published in 1849 in James Orchard Halliwell’s *Popular Rhymes and Nursery Tales*. However, D. L. Ashliman points out a note by Edwin Sidney Hartland, who published his own very similar version of “Mr. Fox” in *English Fairy and Other Folk Tales* (1890):

This story was contributed to Malone's *Shakspeare* by Blakeway, in elucidation of Benedict's speech in "Much Ado about Nothing," act 1, scene 1 -- "Like the old tale, my Lord: it is not so, nor 'twas not so; but indeed, God forbid it should be so!" Blakeway adds that this is evidently an allusion to the tale of "Mr. Fox," "which Shakspeare may have heard, as I have, related by a great-aunt in childhood.

This note suggests that the oral tale of “Mr. Fox” was in existence long before its first publication in 1849. Either way, Elizabeth Gaskell is likely to have been familiar with the story.

^v For an analysis of Amante, see Lovell-Smith’s “Anti-Housewives and Ogres’ Housekeepers: The Roles of Bluebeard’s Female Helper.”

^{vi} Anna's passing description of her husband as "tiger natured" seems to anticipate Angela Carter's fairy tale "Tiger's Bride."

^{vii} See Irene Wiltshire's "*Curious, If True: Le Petit Poucet and Tom Thumb; A Case of Mistaken Identity?*"

^{viii} Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's 1756 version of "Beauty and the Beast" is the most familiar to us today, detailing how a merchant's daughter saves and weds the prince cursed to appear as a beast, but in Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve's longer 1740 version of the tale, a second half of the story provides the background of the titular characters, revealing that the heroine was adopted by the merchant and is actually the daughter of a king and fairy. So in Villeneuve's version, the prince weds a princess.

^{ix} Jenny Uglow notes, for instance, that Madame de Sévigné was "her heroine" (568).

Chapter Six

ⁱ While this addition of the second encounter with a wolf is a seemingly positive change from Little Red Riding Hood's fatal ending in Charles Perrault's tale, Sandra Beckett expresses some reservations about its significance, writing, "The Grimms' second tale about Little Red Cap, in which the little girl and her grandmother dispatch with another wolf, without any male assistance, by drowning him in a big trough, would be much more satisfactory if it didn't constitute merely a continuation or epilogue to the first tale, demonstrating that the disobedient girl has learned her lesson and been properly socialized" (*Red* 54).

ⁱⁱ Discussing a different text, namely Gillian Cross's 1990 novel *Wolf*, Beckett makes an interesting point that is worth noting but that I will not discuss in my analysis; Beckett asserts, "By presenting a man-wolf, Cross's novel [. . .] reminds us of some of the early versions of the [Little Red Riding Hood] tale which feature a werewolf rather than a wolf" (*Recycling* 306).

ⁱⁱⁱ This lack of cohesion in the New Woman movement is discussed by Carolyn Christensen Nelson in the introduction to *A New Woman Reader*, as well as by several scholars in *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Questions*, edited by Nicola Diane Thompson. This kind of fragmented women's movement is not new, as Susan Hamilton, discussing Victorian feminism mid-century in her introduction to "*Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors*": *Nineteenth-Century Writing by Women on Women*, also notes that this earlier feminist movement was "diverse, often contradictory" and that "[t]here was no one Victorian feminist line on any issue" (14).

^{iv} This particular division in New Woman ideology is addressed by Lyn Pykett in "Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Representations of the Female Artist in the New Woman Fiction of the 1890s" and Pamela Gilbert in "Ouida and the Other New Woman."

^v See Maier's "Decadent Discord," for example, discussed in the following paragraph.

^{vi} Jusová analyzes Egerton's work in relationship to race, nationality, sexuality, and social class while Standlee's and O'Toole's essays focus on Egerton as an Irish author.

^{vii} Almost all criticism on George Egerton deals in some way with her representation of female sexuality; however, two of the more interesting articles appeared in *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*: Cothran's "Fanged Desire: the New Woman and the Monster" analyzes the representation of the New Woman in Egerton and Grand as a hermaphroditic and serpentine figure, while Hager's "A Community of Women: Women's Agency and Sexuality in George Egerton's *Keynotes* and *Discords*" examines the role of sexuality in creating female communities.

^{viii} See, for instance, Fluhr's "Figuring the New Woman: Writers and Mothers in George Egerton's Early Stories," which looks at the relationship between mothers and female writers,

and Forward's "Attitudes to Marriage and Prostitution in the Writings of Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird, Sarah Grand and George Egerton," which looks at marriage and prostitution and the way some authors, like Egerton, equated marriage with prostitution.

^{ix} VanHoosier-Carey offers another interpretation of Egerton's lack of proper names, arguing, "Because none of the characters have names, they become essentialized images—the woman, the man in grey, the husband—which emphasize the inadequacy of the labels to fully represent the characters" (185).

^x It should be noted that women had gained some marriage rights by the end of the century, such as the right to own property after marriage.

^{xi} Interestingly, Florence's instincts in this scene would seem to align her more closely with the animalism that characterizes Egerton's second Little Red Riding Hood, Gipsy; however, where Gipsy is clearly associated with wilderness and sexual aggression, Florence is prey rather than predator, and she denies her instincts in order to adhere to social expectations (at least in the beginning of her marriage).

^{xii} Beckett states, "Perrault pens the tale basically as a story of rape, in which the wolf who devours Little Red Riding Hood is clearly a predatory male" (*Red* 89).

^{xiii} Although music halls become increasingly appropriate for middle-class or family consumption, they began as an extension of tavern entertainment directed toward male and working class audiences. For more information, see *Music Hall & Modernity: The Late-Victorian Discovery of Popular Culture* by Barry J. Faulk and "The Story of Music Hall" on the Victoria and Albert Museum website.

^{xiv} See, for instance, Abigail R. Bardi's *The Gypsy as Trope in Victorian and Modern British Literature* (2007), in which Bardi argues in the third chapter "that the Gypsy trope also

functioned as a vehicle through which the famously restrictive sexual practices of the Victorians were contested. In much the same way the trope functions as a site of multiple challenges to property and gender, so too does it signal contestations of normative sexuality, i.e., heterosexual sex within the confines of officially sanctioned marriage” (161).

^{xv} Beckett discusses Pierrette Fleutiaux’s 1984 “Little Red Pants, Bluebeard, and Wee Notes,” Huda al-Naimi’s 2001 “Layla and Me,” Annie Riis’s 1992 “The Wolf and Little Red Riding Hood,” Patricia Joiret and Xavier Bruyère’s 1991 “Mina, I Love You,” and Anne Ikhlef and Alain Gauthier’s 1998 “My Red Riding Hood” as examples of such revisionary tales.

^{xvi} For an opposing reading of this scene, arguing that Egerton is unsuccessful in realizing the creation of a female community in this story, see Hager’s essay.

^{xvii} This implication occurs when the mother suggests pregnancy and children as a remedy for Florence’s miserable marriage (Egerton 160). Jusová also reads Florence as “hav[ing] resorted to abortion” (67).

^{xviii} I specify *her* child because she makes no effort to inform her husband of the pregnancy or include him in the arrangements being made in preparation of the child’s arrival. On Egerton’s depiction of female reproductive autonomy, see Knechtel.

^{xix} For instance, Nelson explains, “Sarah Grand, as well as other women writers, believed that men should have to live up to the same moral standards as women and bring the same purity to marriage that was required of women [. . .] Grand’s views of sexual purity were not shared by all the New Women. George Egerton, for example, celebrated women’s sexuality and depicted women whose lives are as unconstrained by convention as men’s” (xi).

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ABSTRACT**SOWING SEEDS OF SUBVERSION: NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH WOMEN WRITERS' SUBVERSIVE USE OF FAIRY TALES AND FOLKLORE**

by

SHANDI LYNNE WAGNER**May 2015****Advisor:** Dr. Michael Scrivener**Major:** English Literature**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

“Sowing Seeds of Subversion: Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers’ Subversive Use of Fairy Tales and Folklore” focuses on the fictional works of nineteenth-century British women authors, analyzing their use of fairy-tale and folklore motifs to criticize social mores, in particular those surrounding domestic ideology and the institution of marriage. By situating texts within their sociocultural contexts, I explore how nineteenth-century women authors revised and adapted classic fairy tales to communicate subversive, proto-feminist social criticism to a variety of audiences. I examine fiction and poetry published in literary annuals, in fairy-tale collections, and in the more generally available collections of poetry and short stories as deconstructions of hegemonic fantasies regarding ideals of femininity and domesticity as well as the delusion that woman’s desires can be completely satisfied in marriage. Ultimately, this dissertation reveals a missing link in the tradition of subversive fairy tales by women inaugurated by the seventeenth-century French *conteuses* and continued by contemporary feminist fairy-tale authors like Anne Sexton and Angela Carter.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Shandi Lynne Wagner received her M.A. in English Literature from the University of St. Thomas (MN) in 2011 and her Ph.D. in English Literature from Wayne State University in 2015, with a specialization in Nineteenth-Century British Literature. Her research focuses on women's writing and fairy tales of the long nineteenth century and has been accepted for publication in *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies*.