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Articles

Misperceived Perceptions: Perrault's Fairy Tales and English Children's Literature

Ruth B. Bottigheimer

The place of Charles Perrault's fairy tales in the development of English children's literature has been both misunderstood and overrated. This view of Perrault's role in children's literature has a history. In the libraries I've scoured for books written for and read by children in eighteenth-century England, Perrault's fairy tales have been more an absence than a presence. This observation, however, is not enough to support so fundamental a redefinition of the early history of English children's literature. What can—and does—support my argument is book history, whose perceptions and methodologies I use here.

Let me offer one example of how book history is able to correct misperceptions that have arisen from the way books are listed in published library catalogs. Catalogs take their data from title pages, but title pages can be misleading. For example, what if one publisher, after a year of dismal sales, sold his books to another publisher, who then inserted a new title page and sent the books newly titled but otherwise unchanged out into bookshops? The catalog would record two dates of publication for one printing. Book history, in contrast, would use its resources to identify the book's text and its title page and to recognize that only one printing had, in fact, taken place. This is not an imagined example; it actually happened with a 1764 printing of Perrault's tales.

Unraveling an eighteenth-century printing practice like the reissue of 1764/65 requires a methodology and a vocabulary uncommon in the study of children's literature. "Printruns," "sheets," and "fingerprints" all play a role in explicating the relative popularity of indi-

vidual books in the eighteenth century. The argument that follows has a slow pace, and for that I apologize. I am urging a fundamental change in long-held views, and I want to build my case carefully and persuasively.

With clockwork regularity literary anthologies and course textbooks imply, suggest, or assert that eighteenth-century English children's literature was rooted in fairy tales, specifically those of Charles Perrault. Harvey Darton, whose richly documented history of English children's literature has provided the guiding direction for countless other accounts, wrote that Perrault's tales "have been naturalized citizens of the British nursery" since they were translated by Robert Samber in 1729 (88). In *Classics of Children's Literature*, John Griffith and Charles Frey put five of Perrault's tales—"Sleeping Beauty," "Little Red Riding-hood," "Blue Beard," "Puss in Boots," and "Cinderella"—front and center and claim that they "grew steadily in popularity" once they were translated into English (3). Little wonder that Geoffrey Summerfield could comfortably state without further proof or elaboration that "these tales of Perrault soon passed into England, and in Robert Samber's translation were frequently reprinted throughout the eighteenth century" (44). Summerfield's easy acceptance of the Perrault paradigm characterizes both lay and scholarly perceptions.

The chronology of the publishing history of Perrault's tales in England would appear to substantiate such claims. Translated by Robert Samber and published in London in 1729, those tales preceded the 1740s printings of children's books by London's Thomas Boreman, Mary Cooper, and John Newbery by a good ten to fifteen years. But this simple chronological sequence has made it all too easy for generations of literary historians to leap directly to the conclusion that Perrault's prior appearance represented a point of origin. Exploring late seventeenth- and early- to mid-eighteenth-century English children's literature presents a disturbing disjunction between scholarly claims of Perrault's precedence and the mood evident in the literature itself.

Over the past several years I have undertaken a journey of discovery to research libraries in the United States, Canada, and England. My study of hundreds of books published for children between 1670 and 1770 has led, among other things, to a sense that it is necessary to revise fundamentally the place that Perrault's fairy stories occupy in the early history of English children's literature. The history of fairies and fairy literature in England encourages such revision; scholarship

in such newly emerging fields as book and publishing history supports it; and most significantly, the evidence of children's literature itself requires it.¹

The fairies of Charles Perrault's *Histoires* were preceded by centuries of England's own imps and phantoms as well as by decades of Mme d'Aulnoy's supernaturals (Palmer, Palmer and Palmer, Verdier). By the time Perrault's supernatural protagonists arrived on English soil in such fairy tales as "The Fairy," "Sleeping Beauty in the Wood," and "Cinderilla" [*sic*], they represented England's third generation of fairies,² one which eventually overlaid both England's native fairy population (calendared by Reginald Scot) and Mme d'Aulnoy's successfully imported and disseminated fairy traditions. Perrault's tales provided the basis for the modern canon of fairy tales. That is not in doubt. But the ultimate success of Perrault's fairy tales has blinded generations of scholars to the fact that they conquered the field with near-glacial slowness. The reasons for Perrault's tardy success implicate genre and gender, while more far-reaching explanations rest on patterns of book consumption and book marketing.

Perrault's fairy tales differed fundamentally from the traditional fairy fictions of Mme d'Aulnoy. Unlike her tales, Perrault's stories generally obfuscated sex. And differing even more fundamentally from a dystopic tale like Mme d'Aulnoy's "History of Adolphus," in which Time brutally strangled the hero in the concluding paragraphs, Perrault's (rare) violence was wrought only upon the wicked. ("Red Riding Hood" is, of course, not a fairy tale but a warning tale.) Best of all for late-eighteenth-century propriety, every one of Perrault's fairy tales had a hero or heroine who was virtuous, at least in formal terms, and ended with a clearly set out moral. The morals themselves were sometimes wry, sometimes ironic, and always worldly, yet on the surface they and the fairy tales' endings regularly stressed the importance and utility of goodness. Whatever internal contradictions might on occasion disturb the smooth flow of a moral, the overt message of the majority of Perrault's tales was that happy endings crowned virtuous lives.

Mme d'Aulnoy further explored the narrative consequences of human intrusions into fairyland and of fairy entries into human life in stories like "Graciosa and Percinet," "The Fair One with Golden Locks," and "The Hobgoblin Prince." Perrault, in contrast, examined the social life of human beings, the obstacles to whose easy success were swept away either by earthly kings or by fairy magic. In his stories a fairy made roses, pearls, and diamonds fall from the mouth of a

kindly but ill-treated daughter ("The Fairy"); a fairy godmother created a coach from a "pompion" ("Cinderilla"); and another fairy made the hideous Riquet appear handsome and transformed his beloved but stupid Princess into a sensible woman ("Riquet a la Houpe"). Only one of Perrault's fairy tales—"Sleeping Beauty in the Wood"—resembled Mme d'Aulnoy's stories in that a good fairy and a malevolent one pitted their magic against one another in a contest of wills that produced repercussions in the lives of the tale's human protagonists.

The date of Perrault's first translation into English, 1729, is generally cited as the moment of its initial success in England. It is easily demonstrated that Perrault's tales were translated and published in London in 1729, but many important facts in conjunction with its fallaciously claimed success have been eagerly, perhaps willfully, overlooked. To explore the question of the popularity of Perrault's tales, we need to return to the world of print as it existed in publishing centers in Paris, the Lowlands, and London at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries.

Within a few months of the January 1697 appearance of Perrault's fairy tales in Paris, his stories had been pirated by the Amsterdam publisher Jaques [*sic*] Desbordes. Desbordes's book claimed to be a faithful copy of the French edition ("suivant la copie a Paris"), yet its publisher misspelled the author's name ("Perreault") even as he added Perrault's illustrious title ("de l'Academie François"). Desbordes's book sold well enough on the Continent to justify a second printing in 1700 and a third in 1708. In 1711 Estienne Roger, another Amsterdam publisher, produced a six-volume compendium of French fairy fictions and fairy tales. Volume 5, entitled *Les Chevaliers Errans par Madame la Comtesse D****, included Perrault's tales and five others by Mme D'Auneuil;³ the sixth volume bore the title of Perrault's oeuvre, *Histoires ou Contes des Temps Passé*, and was attributed to "Perreault," but with an insouciant disregard for authorship, it contained not a single one of Perrault's tales!

Perhaps it was volume 5, *Les Chevaliers Errans*, in Estienne Roger's set of fairy tales that caught Jaques Desbordes's eye and led him to calculate that Perrault's tales could be made even more attractive by adding a traditional and lengthy fairy fiction. Whatever his reason, in 1716 Desbordes added "L'adroite Princesse ou les aventures de Finette," which had been written by Perrault's niece, Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon. Desbordes finally spelled Perrault's name correctly and published *Histoires ou Contes du temps Passé, Avec des Moralitez. Par M. Per-*

rault. *Nouvelle Edition augmentée d'une Nouvelle, à la fin. Suivant la Copie de Paris.* His successor firm republished it in 1721 and 1729.

In 1729 Robert Samber's word-for-word translation of Perrault's tales appeared in London. It included, in the printer's fanciful typography, "THE Little red Riding-Hood," "THE BLUE-BEARD," "The FAIRY," "THE SLEEPING BEAUTY in the WOOD," "THE MASTER CAT: OR, PUSS in BOOTS," "CINDERILLA: OR, The little GLASS SLIPPER," "RIQUET A la HOUE," and "LITTLE POU CET, AND His two BROTHERS." Samber worked from Desbordes's Dutch edition, similarly including Mlle L'Héritier's "Discreet Princess; or, the Adventures of Finetta. A Novel."⁴ Mlle L'Héritier had originally addressed "L'adroite Princesse" to another French author of fairy fictions, Mme de Murat. Samber's Englishing of the book extended to the novel's dedicatee, and so on the separate title page that preceded the "novel," he addressed "The Discreet Princess" to "The Right Hon. Lady Mary Montagu," daughter of John, Duke of Montagu.

Perrault's own tales are so familiar that I needn't repeat their plots here, but Mlle L'Héritier's "Discreet Princess" has fallen from the canon and requires a brief retelling so that modern readers may understand the full reach of Samber's book as it appeared in London in 1729:

Once upon a time there were three princesses, idle Drone-illa, prattling Babillarde, and virtuous Finetta. After their mother's death, their father feared both for his daughters' well-being and for their virtue, and so having had a fairy make a glass distaff for each of his daughters that would break if its owner acted dishonorably, he locked them all into a high tower and forbade them to receive guests. Lazy Drone-illa and prattling Babillarde were distraught at their isolation, but Finetta spent her days contentedly, reading and sewing.

One day Drone-illa and Babillarde hauled up a wizened old woman who had begged entry to their tower. The "old woman" was, in fact, the crafty Prince Riche-cautelle, who easily seduced first Drone-illa and then Babillarde. The virtuous Finetta, however, repulsed his advances and defended herself with Boccaccian trickery, dropping him into a stinking sewer. To avenge his honor, Riche-cautelle had Finetta kidnapped and carried to a mountaintop, down which he proposed to roll her in a barrel studded with knives and nails. Instead, Finetta kicked *him* into the barrel and rolled him down the slope. When Finetta returned home, she

found that her two sisters had each given birth to a son born of her "marriage" night with Riche-cautelle. To conceal her sisters' shame Finetta, dressed as a man, carried the two children in boxes to the capital, and left them behind as "ointment" for the prince's wounds. Once again bested by Finetta, Riche-cautelle made his noble brother, Prince Bel-a-Voir, swear to marry Finetta and kill her on their wedding night.

Finetta, whom a fairy had warned to always be on her guard because "distrust is the mother of security" (141), substituted a straw dummy for herself in the marriage bed. From a hiding place she saw her husband stab it murderously, even though in so doing he lamented his act and declared that he intended to kill himself afterward. Finetta hindered his suicidal resolve, and they lived long and happily together.

Robert Samber claimed that the story, "though entirely fabulous . . . wrap[s] up and infold[s] most excellent morality, which is the very end, and ultimate scope and design of Fable" (140). At its conclusion, he repeated his warm approval of the novel's "great deal of good morality," for which reason, he said, it "ought to be told to little children in their very infancy, to inspire them betimes with Virtue" (201–2). A strange sort of morality, we may well conclude.

Few London parents, however, seem to have told, or read, these stories to their infants, as the following publishing history will demonstrate. Montagu and Pote, the book's publishers, took twelve years to issue a second English-language edition; a third appeared nine years after that, in 1750.

To counterbalance a century's baseless claims, it is worth carrying out a simple mathematical calculation based on reasonable numbers and rational assumptions. In the eighteenth century a print run of 1,000 books was the general maximum for the commercial market. Smaller print runs were common, but larger print runs were generally reserved for subsidized Bible printings and the like. Rational commercial practices dictated that publishers would not and did not reissue a book while stocks remained unsold on their shelves. Conversely, publishers quickly reprinted sheets when they had sold out.

Based on the commercial premises that guided publishing and republishing, we may reasonably conclude that 1,000 copies of the English-language edition of Perrault's *Histoires* were sold between 1729 and 1741. That works out to about 83 books of Perrault's fairy tales

sold per year over a twelve-year period (1729–41). Between 1741 and 1750 the rate of sale increased slightly to 111 books per year. Before declaring this a bestseller, however, one must remember that England's population numbered approximately seven million with large numbers of English-speakers in Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Perrault's book in its English translation reached a very small fraction of England's population, approximately 1/3,500. When James Hodges, at the Looking Glass, facing St. Magnus Church, London-Bridge, re-issued *Histories or Tales of Passed Times* in 1750, his sales of all-English Perrault tales plummeted. It took average sales of 52.6 copies a year to clear the shelves to make way for another such edition nineteen years later, in 1769!

Perrault's *Histories* had a second publishing history in England as a dual-language textbook. England had long had a market for dual-language textbooks, of which Johan Amos Comenius's *Orbis Pictus* is perhaps the most famous representative. In England his Latin-English catalog of the (principally) secular world was one of several Latin-English textbooks on the market for Latin-learning English pupils. However, with the increasing popularity of a grand European tour to crown eighteenth-century aristocratic boys' education, French displaced Latin as the language of choice in dual-language schoolbooks in England, and new French-English books like Faerno's *Fables* and Hübner's *Youth's Scripture Kalendar* found a market there.

It was to England's dual-language textbook market that England's first publishers of Perrault's tales turned in 1737 to repair their financial damage when commercial sales of the English-only edition evidently failed to cover their printing costs. They restored Perrault's French to create a dual-language book, "very proper to be read by young Children at Boarding Schools, that are to learn the *French Tongue*, as well as in private Families." Unlike the single-language English translation of Perrault's tales, the textbook flourished. If they printed 1,000 copies per print run, then the dual-language textbook sold three times as well as the English-language children's book, at a gratifying average rate of 250 copies per year, sales that justified re-printing it four years later, in 1741.

The surviving books of Perrault's tales, with their scribbles and signatures, suggest yet another consideration, gender. In the English-language and dual-language editions of Perrault's tales that I have inspected, my tally to date hints that girls more often owned English-language editions, boys French or dual-language ones. The evidence,

though sparse, is tantalizing, because it corroborates the publishing history of Mme Leprince de Beaumont's girl-centered *Magasin des Enfants*, whose English translation swiftly supplanted and far outsold the French original in England.

In 1741 and after, however, sales of Perrault's dual-language *Histoires* apparently slowed down, because the book was not reprinted again until 1750. In that year Montagu and Pote yielded their rights for Perrault's *Histoires* to James Hodges, who supposedly printed an edition "in French and English. Price Bound 2s. 6d" (according to an advertisement in his 1750 English edition). But Hodges's 1750 dual-language edition of Perrault's *Histoires* must have sold even more slowly than had the ones published by Montagu and Pote in 1735 and 1741, if indeed the dual-language edition was ever published at all. If it was not published, then the overall sales for Perrault's tales in dual-language editions fall even lower. A summary of this publishing history is listed below.

English-Language Editions

Publisher and Year	Average Sales
Montagu and Pote, 1729	83/year
Montagu and Pote, 1741	111/year
James Hodges, 1750	?
B. Collins, 1763	?

Dual-Language Editions

Publisher and Year	Average Sales
Montagu and Pote, 1737	250/year
Montagu and Pote, 1741	111/year
James Hodges, 1750	71/year
J. Melvil, 1764 (= Van Os 1765)	very few

One may well wonder why Perrault's tales lost market appeal in both their English- and dual-language editions. Because sales dipped when James Hodges took over publication, it is tempting to conclude that his books were in some way inferior. But, in fact, they differed very little from the Montagu and Pote editions in paper quality, and they had exactly the same illustrations. One explanation lies in the differing manner in which textbooks and children's books are used over

time. Textbooks have a way of saturating the market because students hand their books on. That observation is consistent with the textbook's diminishing sales between 1737 and 1764. But why are sales of the English-language edition also so low? These books addressed a leisure market, in which a book was a present, something to be treasured and kept, something that one purchased anew to give as a gift. For this market, it is likely that the changing temper of the times had a powerful effect on book choice: after 1750 strong anti-French sentiment animated an English public exasperated by continuing conflicts with France.

After Perrault's fairy tales foundered as a textbook at mid-century, a publisher with access to provincial markets, J. Melvil of London and Exeter, took up Perrault's *Histoires* and brought out a dual-language edition in 1764. His sales must have been poor, too, because a publisher with offices in London and The Hague, Van Os, ended up with Melvil's unillustrated, and unsold, sheets, that is, the large pieces of paper with several pages printed on each, which, when folded, produce a fascicle, or section of a book. That Melvil's 1764 sheets were re-issued by Van Os in 1765 can be demonstrated by identifying the printing's "fingerprint," the letters that appear directly above a designated marker, usually A2 or A3. Van Os substituted roughly executed and reversed copies of previously published illustrations, inserted them between the pages, and provided Melvil's sheets with a new title page, *Mother Goose's Tales*, a title first given Perrault's tales by another Dutch publisher, Jean Neaulme, twenty years before. Melvil's disposal of his unsold sheets was probably an act of desperation. But what readers should note is that sales for Perrault's *Histoires* were low for the English editions and steadily declined for the dual-language textbooks from 1729 to the 1760s, that is, during precisely the period in which English children's literature was beginning to assume its modern form.

James Hodges, as mentioned earlier, also brought out an English-language edition of Perrault's *Histoires* in 1750. This edition should be investigated carefully because there is evidence that in 1763 B. Collins published *Mother Goose's Tales* in Salisbury, with provincial sales augmented by a Mrs. Maynard in Devizes, and with London sales managed by W. Bristow in St. Paul's Church-Yard.⁵ The question to be raised here is whether Hodges's and Collins's sheets are one and the same, as were Melvil's and Van Os's (a bellwether for sluggish sales) or whether the two books represent separate print runs (and hence higher rates of sale). If Bristow's London sales were successful, then they would have

set the commercial possibilities of fairy tales before the very eyes of John Newbery, a point to which I will return later.

Chapbooks are another possible place to search for tales from Perrault's *Histoires*. It is far easier, however, to find assertions in histories of children's literature that Perrault's tales were widely disseminated by the chapbook trade to England's children by the mid-eighteenth century than it is to actually locate chapbook copies of those tales. It is true that Perrault's *Histoires* were common in France's chapbooks, the *Bibliothèque bleue*, between 1725 and 1775. But it wasn't until well after 1750 that isolated tales from Perrault's oeuvre begin to turn up in the Dicey Brothers' chapbook printing catalogs from Aldermay Church-Yard in London.⁶ Gilles Duval, a French historian of English chapbooks, carefully assessed eighteenth-century chapbook content and characterized Perrault's tales as Johnny-come-latelys ("adaptées tardivement").⁷ In so doing he flatly contradicted generations of assumptions and assertions about the role of Perrault's tales in the originary years of English children's literature in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Diehard defenders of the hypothesis that Perrault's tales were pre-eminent would probably explain the absence of Perrault's fairy tales from English chapbooks as the result of his tales having been so beloved that they were read to shreds. Book history, however, demolishes that argument: avid eighteenth-century chapbook collectors left no Perrault tales in collections that they assembled before 1750. Nor are Perrault's tales found in the records of eighteenth-century circulating libraries in child-friendly formats. Instead, as Matthew O. Grenby found, they were "designed for an adult market . . . in multi-volume editions costing several shillings."⁸

Miscellanies for children offer a final potential entry point to be investigated in an analysis of the role of Perrault's tales in the emergence of English children's literature. We don't expect to find fairy tales in such books as *Every Youth His Own Moralist* (J. Shatwell, 1771) or *Vice in Its Proper Shape* (Francis Newbery [1767]). But to modern minds there is at least the hint of a promise of fairy tales in books with titles like *A Christmass[sic]-Box for Masters and Misses* (London: Mary Boreman, 1746), *The Amusing Instructor: or, Tales and Fables in Prose and Verse* (W. Harris, 1769), *Mrs. Lovechild's Golden Present, to all the little Masters and Misses, of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America* (Francis Newbery [1770]), or Don Stephano Bunyano's *Prettiest Book for Children; Being the History of the Enchanted Castle* (J. Coote, 1770). The magic and the otherworldly char-

acters that these books introduced, however, drew not at all on Perrault's fairies and fairy tales but on England's old heroes and giants.⁹ John Newbery flirted with fairy tales in *Short Histories for the Improvement of the Mind* (1760)—not Perrault's, however, but the highly moralized ones by François Fénelon.

One other miscellany remains to be investigated, Mme Leprince de Beaumont's *Magasin des Enfans* (1756). Soon translated into English as *Magasin des Enfans, or, The Young Misses Magazine*, it retained its half-French, half-English title for decades and was published well into the nineteenth century. Alternating fairy fictions and moral tales with geography, ancient history, and Bible histories, the book valorized *history* (histoire) over *tale* (conte) in both structure and commentary. When it came to magic transformations in the service of love, Mme Leprince de Beaumont substantially revised Perrault's "Riquet a la Houpe" and then composed her own highly moralized and still popular story of female beauty and male hideosity, "Beauty and the Beast." In other words, she too rejected Perrault's oeuvre.

When John Newbery copublished B. Collins's *Pretty Book for Boys and Girls* in 1743, he associated himself with a book in which both the warning tale "Red Riding Hood" and the fairy godmother of "Cinderilla" appeared, as Elizabeth Johnson reports in her catalog description of the Ball Collection of Children's Literature at the University of Indiana. Both tales were still in the 1756 *Pretty Book*, touted as "the seventh edition," along with "Fortunatus" and "The Effect of Good Nature. A Family Tale," a retelling of Perrault's "Diamonds and Toads," a quintessentially normative narrative of good behavior rewarded.

Several questions arise in connection with the B. Collins book of 1743 and following editions. Was "the seventh edition" really a seventh edition, or was that an early example of an advertising device meant to suggest market success and therefore desirability, something that one often finds in eighteenth-century publishing? Scholarly inquiries like these make *A Pretty Book for Boys and Girls* an avenue to explore.

It is at this point that John Locke's often-cited disapproval of fairy tales becomes relevant. If we accept the evidence of the Collins provincial imprint, then we are led to the inevitable conclusion that both early and late in his publishing career Newbery's Lockean anti-fairy inclinations were directed more against England's own fairies than against French imports. The second, and equally inevitable, conclusion is that if Newbery, a canny publisher as John Buck has demonstrated, had believed before 1767 that Perrault's fairy tales would have

sold well as a whole, then he would have offered them for sale. The possibility that he went in with Collins in 1743 on a book that included "Cinderilla," but that he himself didn't turn towards Perrault again until more than twenty years later suggests that he assessed England's market for such literature and concluded that Perrault was unprofitable.

What is verifiable is that Perrault's "Puss in Boots," the quintessential modern rags-to-riches fairy tale, appeared in a commercially successful miscellany (commercially successful by my definition means successive editions within a few years of each other) in 1767, when John Newbery included it in his gaily harum-scarum *The Fairing*.¹⁰ Schooled as we all are to understand John Newbery as the ultimate Lockean producer of rationally based and socially useful books for children and as a publisher who doubted the suitability of fairy tales for children, we scarcely expect to find Perrauldian magic instead of Lockean literacy leading to wealth in one of Mr. Newbery's books. As an aside it is worth noting that Newbery invited one of England's own supernaturals, Queen Mab, to advertise his *Lilliputian Magazine* in 1750 (Pickering, 1981, 223), but during his entire publishing career he otherwise staved off the English imps and gnomes whom Locke had excoriated. Another London publisher, John Marshall, did the same thing. Samuel Pickering Jr. has interesting things to say in this regard. He tells us that Marshall assured buyers that his children's books were entirely divested of the prejudicial nonsense of hobgoblins, witches, and fairies.¹¹ The fact that Marshall eventually published Perrault's tales demonstrates that he too distinguished between England's fairy population and those in Perrault's fairy tales.

John Newbery's use of Queen Mab as a spokesperson tells us a lot about the market he addressed. Not a profound innovator, Newbery was rather an improver and popularizer of existing genres and characters, as Buck's thorough study of Newbery's literary merchandising makes clear. Consequently, his turning to Queen Mab early in his career tells us that she was a stock figure whose familiarity to his readers made her a useful advertising vehicle.

Newbery's 1767 introduction of Perrault's "Puss in Boots" into *The Fairing* was, however, a far more significant inclusion than Queen Mab, and it is legitimate to wonder why Newbery finally took this significant step. Although he had worked together with Collins over the years, he had *not* been part of the 1763 Collins-based consortium that brought Perrault's fairy tales to Mr. Bristow's shop in St. Paul's Church-Yard.

But he could hardly have missed either knowing that Mr. Bristow was selling *Mother Goose* or seeing little customers walking out of Mr. Bristow's shop with copies of the book in their hands. And so if *Mother Goose* was a commercial hit at Mr. Bristow's shop just across the way, it would have been a natural move for Mr. Newbery, who habitually added to his list from genres that were in popular demand (Buck, *passim*), to tap into Perrault's tales for his own books.

The year 1767 thus represents the point at which it may be asserted that Perrault's tales entered the ranks of mainstream (i.e., London produced and distributed) English children's literature. The year 1767 postdates the 1744 publication of *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, usually cited as the beginning of modern English children's literature, by more than twenty years. In the context of the history of children's literature as a whole, the late date (at the end of John Newbery's publishing career) at which fairy tales became a mainstream constituent in children's literature means that we need to think of the emergence of the genre as a generation-long process. It was, above all, a process that responded to market opportunities and market tastes. It can be said to have begun with Newbery's little primers and to have achieved much of its potential with Newbery's acknowledgement of Perrault.

Two years later, in 1769, Perrault's *Histories or Tales of Past Times, Told by Mother Goose with Morals* was finally both printed and published as a children's book in London. (Earlier B. Collins editions had been printed in Salisbury in the provinces and distributed, i.e., published, in London.) Gone now was the sexually problematic "Discreet Princess," which leads to the conclusion that London's middle and upper-middle classes really did not want their children to know about Prince Riche-cautelle's "pernicious pleasure" (1729 161), or about Drone-illa's immoral welcome of the knavish Riche-cautelle "for her husband . . . [with] no greater formalities than those which are the conclusion of marriage" (163), or about Riche-cautelle's caddish bedding of Drone-illa at night and Babillarde in the morning (168). Perrault's tales must have become far more attractive to middle-class English book buyers when the repellent images, affronting references, and negative examples of Mlle L'Héritier's "novel" disappeared from its pages. It is certainly noteworthy that the disappearance of Mlle L'Héritier's novel coincided exactly with an increased sales rate of Perrault's fairy tales.

By 1769, forty years after its first appearance in England, both Perrault's book and the times had changed. John Newbery had died and his heirs had taken over his publishing firm. Even at this late date, the

publishers of Perrault's fairy tales were still giving signs of skittishness about the financial risk of their venture: three firms—John Newbery's successor firm Newbery and Carnan, B. Collins from Salisbury, and S. Crowder of London—carefully spread the risk by joining together in the undertaking.

Successful production of Perrault's fairy tales as a whole (rather than as individual stories) in England can be said to have begun in Salisbury in 1763 with B. Collins's *Mother Goose* and to have continued in London in 1769 with the Newbery-Carnan-Collins-Crowder team. From this point onward, Perrault's tales began their spectacular commercial ascent, blazing glory and trailing success. Whatever concerns Newbery, Carnan, Collins, and Crowder might have had about the market acceptability of Perrault's fairy tales in 1769 must have been dispelled by subsequent developments. Perrault's stories captured imaginations and markets, and chapbook editions of individual Perrault tales abounded in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹²

Why has Perrault's point of impact on English children's literature been misdated? One reason is that research tools available for the study of children's literature, although improving, still remain limited: reference books often repeat predecessors' views; catalog information is incomplete in such long-standard references as the pre-1956 National Union Catalog; and even the British Library's far more inclusive catalog presents another stumbling block by utilizing eighteenth-century title page practices. Meant to enhance the public's perception of a book's success, eighteenth-century publishers often misleadingly and intentionally numbered the printing of different kinds of books sequentially. With reference to the publishing history of Perrault's fairy tales in England, James Hodges called his 1750 reissue of Montagu and Pote's Samber 1729 English translation not the third edition, which would have accurately reflected the real situation, but "the fourth edition," because he counted in two dual-language school-book editions as second and third editions.

The nineteenth century mythologized fairy tales and saw in them expressions of nationhood, evidence of unbroken connection with the childhood of mankind, and proof of a sacred social cohesion that transcended class boundaries, with nursemaids telling children stories from time immemorial. Few nineteenth- or twentieth-century scholars have questioned this set of beliefs, and, as a consequence, what has become firmly embedded in histories of children's literature is not evidence itself but *beliefs* about evidence.

This exploration of English, French, and Englished French fairy tales in conjunction with the development of books for English children in the first three quarters of the eighteenth century leads to two fundamental revisions to the history of English children's literature.¹³ First, Perrault's tales became "popular" in London's print trade only in the 1760s. Second, our old friend John Newbery did not eschew fairy tales to the end of his life. On the contrary, he introduced Perrault's magic when he saw that it sold. In both cases, market profitability took precedence over Lockean ideology in an increasingly mercantile world of publishing.

Postscript: Matthew O. Grenby of de Montfort University in England, who has recently investigated children's literature in eighteenth-century English lending libraries, has also noted a general absence of fairy tales in this period. Grenby's work will be published in a forthcoming issue of *Book History*.

Notes

1. Space does not permit me to include here my research on Mme d'Aulnoy. In brief, however, the d'Aulnoy material was first marketed to economically and socially privileged buyers, later to merchant readers, and finally to artisanal and child readers. As the collection of tales moved downmarket in social and/or economic terms, its prose was altered to address the consumers its publishers sought.

2. For a learned and lively discussion and a broad sample of seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century sentiment about fairies, fairy fictions, and fairy tales, see Samuel Pickering Jr., *John Locke and Children's Books*, chap. 2. Broader access to popular publications of this period in the last twenty years has required modifying some of Pickering's conclusions.

3. "Les Chevaliers Errans," "La Princesse Zamée," "Le Prince Elmedor," "Zalmayde," and "Le Prince de Numidie."

4. Justin Schiller says that Samber worked from the 1716 Desbordes edition published in Amsterdam (Schiller, Entry no. 17), but Samber could have used the 1721 or 1729 Desbordes editions.

5. This information comes from Carpenter and Prichard, *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, 251, but I myself have not seen such a volume, nor do I know of any documentation of its contents, i.e., whether it included or excluded "The Discreet Princess."

6. Nicholas Tucker alludes to (undated) fairy tales' chapbook associations in "Fairy Tales and Their Early Opponents," 107–8.

7. Duval, *Littérature de colportage*, 68.

8. Matthew O. Grenby, "Children's Books in British Circulating Libraries, 1748–1848," *Book History* (forthcoming).

9. Although it is not his purpose, Andrew O'Malley describes the same result in "The Coach and Six" (2000 *passim*), which is devoted to book size and contents in what he terms "transitional" books of the eighteenth century. Duval, of course, treats eighteenth-century English chapbook content far more extensively.

10. "Puss in Boots" may have appeared even earlier than 1767 because the 1767 edi-

tion, according to its complete title, is a "new edition," i.e., the publisher claims that it had also appeared previously. But the complete title also claims that it has "additions," and so we can't be sure that "Puss in Boots" appeared before 1767 until we can examine an earlier edition.

11. Pickering, *John Locke and Children's Books*, 41.

12. See Schiller, "Charles Perrault and His 'Contes des Fées,'" Entry no. 36.

13. The evidence here also reveals that the popular (as opposed to textbook) emergence of Perrault's tales seems to have originated in the provinces and thus to have reversed the usual direction, from London outwards. This is, in itself, worthy of note in the history of the book.

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