



The intertextual use of the fairy tale in postmodern fiction.

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The Intertextual Use of the Fairy Tale in Postmodern Fiction

Kevin Paul Smith



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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the intertextual use of the fairy tale in postmodern fiction. I contend that the fairy tale, whether Grimm, Andersen or Perrault, is an important intertext in many texts considered canonical postmodernist fiction, especially *Midnight's Children*, *Waterland* and *Nights at the Circus*. I demonstrate that the fairy tale is used in novels to raise concerns that Hutcheon and McHale characterise as postmodern: questions about reality and representation, how language affects the way humans perceive the world, and the necessity of storytelling.

The study first addresses issues of intertextuality, examining re-tellings of "Bluebeard" specifically. Drawing upon the theories of Genette and Bakhtin, chapter one defines eight elements of intertextuality. John Fowles' *The Collector* & A.S. Byatt's *Babel Tower* are closely examined here, as is Margaret Atwood's "Bluebeard's Egg" and Kurt Vonnegut's *Bluebeard*.

Chapter two highlights that fairy tale intertexts can create magic realism. A close reading of Kate Atkinson's *Human Croquet* leads to a discussion of the formal features of magic realism, informed by definitions of that genre from Chanady and Faris.

Magic realism is also a theme in chapter three, where the concept of the storyteller is explained. This chapter examines fictions which depict oral narration, including Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Atkinson's *Emotionally Weird* and notes the storyteller in these texts' similarity to the archetypal storyteller of the *Arabian Nights*, Scheherazade. Chapter four explains *why* the process of storytelling is depicted, and highlights the metafictional effects raised by this feature. The final chapter examines how fairy tale revisions can be subversive by looking at how Terry Pratchett's *Witches Abroad* critiques the "classic fairy tale" exemplified by Disney. The conclusion looks at how fairy tale film can be analysed in the same way that I have examined the novel, by briefly studying *Shrek* and its sequel, and Tim Burton's *Big Fish*.

Informed throughout by contemporary criticism of the fairy tale by Jack Zipes and Marina Warner, this study isolates the different ways fairy tale intertexts are used, and suggests reasons why they are important.

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Introduction

"The novel in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has always incorporated forms of myths and fairy tales" as A.S. Byatt writes in *On Histories and Stories*, "Fanny Price is Cinderella" (2001: 130). And Byatt is entirely correct, and perhaps even understates the case; the history of popular fiction, from Shakespeare to *Shrek* is suffused with fairy tales, those simple stories that function in the vernacular as a synonym for lies. In last three decades, however, there has been a perceptible shift in the use of the fairy tale by novelists and filmmakers. Rather than being something that underlies a narrative and informs its structure, or a handy metaphor, the fairy tale has become central to the work. Interrogating the fairy tale, examining the way in which formulaic stories hold a grip over the human imagination has become increasingly popular among novelists and film-makers, to the extent that it is necessary to examine precisely *why* the fairy tale has become so important. That is the aim of this study. I will contend that the fairy tale is being intertextually used for ends which can be called postmodern.

The title of this thesis invokes three contentious categories: intertextuality, postmodernism and the fairy tale. Each of these terms is a battleground of interpretation, and familiarity with the debates raging in each subject area leads me to think that attempting to settle upon a unitary definition of "postmodernism", "intertextuality" or indeed, "the fairy tale" would be the work of an entire book, leaving little space for the study of those texts that piqued my interest in this area in the first place. For this reason, the understanding of postmodernism I will use within this study is derived primarily from 'historiographic metafiction', Linda Hutcheon's coinage in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, although other theorists or critics of postmodernism will be mentioned when the need arises. Chapter one will demonstrate my approach to the term "intertextuality", opting for a pragmatic view of how individual texts relate to others, rather than a view of all literature, all language in fact, as fundamentally interconnected.

The main area that needs to be addressed in this introduction is precisely what I mean when I use the term fairy tale.

A working definition of fairy tale

One of the problems of attempting to locate a fairy tale intertext, is the plurality and over-determination of the fairy tale. The term fairy tale itself is an ill defined construction lacking any sort of stable definition, much like the terms intertext and postmodern. The English term "Fairy Tale", which has been part of the English language since the mid-eighteenth century, is a translation derived from the French *Contes de fée*, which was first used in the title of Madame D'Aulnoy's collection of 1697. This was just one of the terms used to describe fantastic narratives based upon folkloric stories that caught on during the ascendancy of the fairy tale as a fashionable form at the court of Louis XIV, and was used interchangeably with other terms such as *Contes des oye*. As all critics invariably point out, when defining the fairy tale one of the main problems with the term is that many stories considered emblematic don't contain a single fairy (Thompson 1977: 8, Carter 2001b: ix). J.R.R. Tolkien addresses this problem when he writes:

The definition of a fairy-story – what it is, or what it should be – does not, then, depend on any definition or historical account of elf or fairy, but upon the nature of *Faërie*: the Perilous Realm itself, and the air that blows in that country. I will not attempt to define that, nor to describe it directly. It cannot be done. *Faërie* cannot be caught in a net of words; for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible. It has many ingredients, but analysis will not necessarily discover the secret of the whole. Yet I hope that what I have later to say about the other questions will give some glimpses of my own imperfect vision of it. For the moment I will say only this: a "fairy-story" is one which touches on or uses *Faërie*, whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy. *Faërie* itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic – but it is magic of a peculiar mood and power, at the furthest pole from the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific, magician. There is one proviso: if there is any satire present in the tale, one thing must not be made fun of, the magic itself. That must in that story be taken seriously, neither laughed at nor explained away.

(Tolkien 1965: 16)

For Tolkien, fairy stories take place in the realm of *Faerie*, a statement that suggests they would come under the category of the Marvelous in Tzvetan Todorov's infamous structuralist attempt to define the fantasy genre. If we assign the tales to an imaginary world where animals can speak and magic is accepted as normal, then the term "fairy tale" is a shorthand for a type of fantasy that predates the literary fantastic.

This raises one obvious problem: it places magical events in an entirely other world, as though all listeners of fairy tales assume that magic can only take place in such a place, ignoring the possibility that once upon a time perhaps the distinction between fairy tale and realism was not so clear cut. I will return to this problem when we address the thorny issue of magic realism in chapter two.

But some tales that are regarded as fairy tales are less fantastic than others. In Charles Perrault's "*La barbe-bleue*" (translated as "Bluebeard"), for example, there is little obvious magic: no witches, no spells, no talking animals, no wishes, and no fairies. To some influential fairy tale critics, such as Bruno Bettelheim, this means that it is *not* a fairy tale, but Bettelheim also believes that any story without a happy ending is also not a "true" fairy tale. This disqualifies Perrault's version of "Little Red Riding Hood", where the Wolf wins and need fear no fortunately-within-earshot woodsman who just happens to rescue the girl and granny. Bettelheim's exclusive application of the term "fairy tale" to those stories that centre around the numinous or uncanny is also taken up by Maria Tatar in *The Hard Facts of Grimms' Fairytales*, where she creates a binary division between "marvellous" fairy tales and folk tales, are naturalistic in character (Tatar 1987: 33). This approach to the term fairy tale takes the term "fairy" as a metonym signifying the otherworldly and magical, and sets up a binary opposition between what Tolkien would call those tales set in the realm of faery and those set in the real world. She argues that the term "fairy tale [...] is above all reserved for narratives set in a fictional world where preternatural events and supernatural intervention are taken wholly for granted. A fairy tale can thus belong to the category of folktales, but it stands in contrast to the folk tale which is sharply biased in favor of earthy realism" (33)¹. Once again, the fairy tale is defined as part of the fantasy genre, and a dichotomy is set up between those texts that are clearly fantastic and those which are not. In practice, this binary seems artificial and counterintuitive. Perrault's "Red Riding Hood" is, apparently, no longer a fairy tale but a folk tale, although perhaps

¹ Rather confusingly Tatar uses the word "folklore" to refer to the entire field of collected narratives of oral cultures and the phrase "folk lore" to refer to those folkloric narratives that are realistic rather than fantastic in nature.

the Grimm's "Red Cap", in which the little girl and her grandmother are rescued from the digestive tract of the sleeping wolf, is a borderline case. As Stith Thompson highlights, "It is not always easy to tell, in tales of the marvelous, whether we are dealing with magic or with mere exaggerations of actual qualities" (Thompson 1977: 81).

Some critics, especially folklorists, prefer to use the German term *Märchen* to refer to the fairy tale. Thompson defines the *Märchen* as "a tale of some length involving a succession of motifs or episodes. It moves in an unreal world without definite locality or definite creatures and is filled with the marvelous. In this never-never land humble heroes kill adversaries, succeed to kingdoms and marry princesses" (1977: 8). However, although Thompson himself prefers the term *Märchen* to fairy tale he undercuts any notion of the German term being more precise when he notes that it is used in the German language to cover not only stories like "Cinderella", but also legends of saints, pious tales from the middle ages and jokes and anecdotes, much like the imprecision of the English "fairy tale" (22). Despite *Märchen*'s use by folklorists, combined with the reassuring strangeness that the term has for English speaking tongues, it does not resolve the problem of vagueness that we have with the more familiar "fairy tale", derived from the French. Because it does not have general currency in English, we may use the term to refer only to those tales that comply with the formal characteristics outlined by Thompson above. But this gain in specificity is a false one, and can also be seen as an unnecessary jargonisation of the critical lexicon: especially when German Folklorists like Max Lüthi use the term *Zaubermärchen* (or "wonder tale") to refer to what Thompson would call simply *Märchen*².

Another problem muddying the possibility of definition is the use of 'fairy tale' to refer indiscriminately to collected folklore that has magical characteristics, such as the Grimms' "*Aschenputtel*", along with literary tales authored by individuals such as Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid". Several critics have offered up alternative

² This is because of the term *Märchen*'s vagueness in the German language: Lüthi is attempting to be more specific and talk about "wonder tales" (those in magic worlds featuring magic) rather than simply "Märchen" which, as we have noted above, can include legends and jokes.

terms to distinguish between tales derived from folklore and those that have an identifiable author with whom the tale originated. Gail De Vos and Anna E Altman, drawing from the work of Maria Tatar and Max Lüthi, suggest a distinction between these different sources by referring to fairy tales that have been written down and collected as “book folktales” or “book fairytales” and “original literary fictions that draw on or imitate traditional folktales, like those of Hans Christian Andersen” as “literary folktales” or “literary fairy tales” (2002: 7-8). In his introduction to *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* Jack Zipes suggests an opposition between the oral folk tale and the literary fairy tale:

In his first short monograph, [Jens] Tismar set down the principles for a definition of the literary fairy tale (das Kunstmärchen) as genre: (1) it distinguishes itself from the oral folk tale (das Volksmärchen) in so far as it is written by a single identifiable author; (2) it is thus synthetic, artificial, and elaborate in comparison to the indigenous formation of the folk tale that emanates from communities and tends to be simple and anonymous; (3) the differences between the literary fairy tale and the oral folk tale do not imply that one genre is better than the other; (4) in fact, the literary fairy tale is not an independent genre but can only be understood and defined by its relationship to the oral tales as well as to the legend, novella, novel, and other literary fairy tales that it uses, adapts, and remodels during the narrative conception of the author.

(Zipes 2000:xv)

Tismar’s definition is key to Zipes’ own discussion of the fairy tale as he too insists on an absolute difference between the fairy tale as manifest in an oral culture, and the literary fairy tale. Certainly, for my purposes, it is important to acknowledge that the fairy tales manifested as intertexts in postmodern fictions have been shaped and influenced by the written genre of the fairy tale. Oral transmission of traditional narratives is not a common activity in a culture that relies upon the easy dissemination of mass produced fictions, and it is therefore necessary to realise that the fairy tales we recognise are more part of a literary tradition than an oral one.

If the definition of fairy tale a major problem, so too is the plurality and over-determination of the fairy tale. There are thousands of collected folktales and many of those collected are variations on the same tale. I have already mentioned the difference between the Perrault’s “Little Red Riding Hood” and the Grimms’ “Red Cap”. This leads to the thorny problem of which version of an intertext is being used. Not only are there variations between the different versions, but difference is also

significant in the case of the Grimms, where the first edition of their collection, an academic publication, is significantly less punitive against wrongdoers and less literary in its style than the later editions that were aimed at children. Mahdi highlights the fact that the *Arabian Nights* in particular is a polymorphous and shifting collection, shifting significantly in terms of structure, amount of stories and even which stories are included every time it is edited. For example, the Sinbad tales, the most famous and recognisable tales for westerners reading the *Nights*, were found and added by Antoine Galland and were not part of the “original” manuscript he claimed to be translating (Mahdi 1995: 38).

Comparing literature with fairy tale is problematic because there is *no definitive text* for any fairy tale that has folkloric roots. Maria Tatar gives two examples of critics being misled in their interpretations of fairy tales by assuming that they can treat fairy tales in the same way as literature. Bruno Bettelheim’s and Ernest Jones’s interpretations of the “Frog King” identifies the frog with “clammy sensations” associated with the male sexual organ, overlooking the dozens of tales where the frog turns into a princess. Similarly, Erich Fromm’s interpretation of “Red Riding Hood” hinges upon the bottle she carried in her hand-basket despite the fact that many versions of the tale do not feature this object. Tatar uses these examples to illustrate the fact that:

[a]ny attempt to unearth the hidden meaning of fairy tales is bound to fail unless it is preceded by a rigorous, if not exhaustive, analysis of a tale type and its variants. That analysis enables the interpreter to distinguish essential features from random embellishments and to identify culturally determined elements that vary from one regional version of a tale to the next.

(Tatar 1987: 43)

This is an unusual position for anyone trained in the study of literature, where the solidity and permanency of the text is taken for granted. We do not usually feel the need to study all editions of *Our Mutual Friend* before making claims about meaning that hinge upon a certain word in the text, even though there were inevitably variations between different editions of the text. In the cases where there exists more than one version of a text, for example, Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, arguments are used to

prioritise a certain version depending on either how close it is to the author's "original intentions". Ultimately, despite any problems, the literary text is viewed as a stable matrix, where instances of individual words or signifiers can be used to generate meaning. It is entirely possible to claim meaning for a literary text by analysing the recurrence of a single word or image. Literary criticism, at least before post-structuralism, relied on the premise that one can generate stable, unequivocal readings of texts. No such illusion can be sustained when examining orally transmitted tales, whose meaning changes in every iteration.

Of course, this problem is nullified in the cases of those identifiable authors who write "original" fairy tales, like those of Hans Christian Andersen, although even in this case there is the problem of "versions" as the sources of many of Andersen's original tales were Danish folk tales collected and retold by his immediate predecessors J.M.Thiele, Adam Oehlenschläger and Bernard Ingemann (Zipes 2000: 14). Though, as literary critics, we may be certain that an individual image is pivotal in studying one of Andersen's texts, because we can identify it as a single version whose form is fixed (as long as we are studying the Danish version: translation is another minefield of meaning), it is also possible to look at the sources for Andersen's versions and study the differences between the collected folkloric version and the literary version.

Despite the problems with the term, in this study I will retain the use of the word fairy tale. I will not attempt to re-define what is and isn't a fairy tale, by, for example, ruling out tales with unhappy endings or those fairy tales that aren't magical enough. To my mind, this sort of tampering, although well intentioned, only further muddies the water, meaning that the general public and the scholarly community denote altogether different things when they talk about fairy tales. Furthermore, these attempts always seem to involve a certain ideological attempt to specify an "ideal" fairy tale that may exclude tales that have been regarded as fairy tales, printed in fairy tale collections for centuries. To be told that according to Bettelheim's categories "Little Red Riding Hood" isn't a fairy tale because it doesn't have a happy ending (sometimes), or that "Bluebeard" isn't a fairy tale because it isn't "magic" enough, seems a Canute-like

attempt to turn the tides. Though we may yearn for more solid and clear-cut differentiations between the literary fairy tale, oral fairy tale, folktale, and myth, there is little to no chance that this more precise terminology will have any effect upon language outside the community of scholars who have time to argue about such things. In this study I will focus on well-known fairy tale intertexts, rather than obscure or lesser-known tales. This is an important point: the fictions that I will analyse utilise fairy tales that are easily recognisable by their target audiences as fairy tales *because it is important that the reader catches the reference*. “Bluebeard”, “Cinderella”, “Sleeping Beauty”, “Little Red Riding Hood”, and the *Arabian Nights* will be the most frequently occurring fairy tales in this analysis

Critical approaches to the intertextual use of fairy tales

There are a number of standard ways of examining fairy tales in contemporary literature. One of these is to examine a particular tale and how it is intertextually used in contemporary fiction. Casie Hermansson’s *Reading Feminist Intertextuality through Bluebeard Stories* is one of these, where the author identifies one particular tale as particularly important and then proceeds to build up a monograph about that particular tale and its intertextual uses by feminist writers. The same strategy is used to a lesser extent in Cristina Bacchilega’s *Postmodern Fairy Tales*, where each chapter tackles a particular fairy tale: one chapter for ‘Snow White’, one for ‘Red Riding Hood’, one for ‘Bluebeard’ and so on.

Another approach is to concentrate on an individual author’s use of fairy tale intertexts, as in Sharon Rose Wilson’s *Margaret Atwood’s Fairy-Tale Sexual Politics*. This would take the form of either an entire work about the uses of fairy tale in one author’s oeuvre, or perhaps one chapter on how, say, Angela Carter uses her fairy tale intertexts, followed by one on how Salman Rushdie uses his.

This study could easily have been conceived along lines relating to a particular critical theory: for example as an examination of fairy tale intertexts as they appear in post-colonial works, feminist works, positing a ‘group’ of ‘feminist’ or ‘postcolonialist’ writers who may or may not constitute a ‘school’ and then attempting to find

commonalities or differences between members of this school and what this means about their works. Such a technique is used in Zipes's *Don't Bet on the Prince*, a collection which presents a group of feminist fairy tale revisions, and feminist fairy tale criticism.

Finally, it is conceivable that a historical approach could be taken as an organising principle, beginning with the 'first' postmodern texts that utilise intertexts and then charting the spreading influence chronologically, perhaps beginning with Ann Sexton's poetry, moving through Carter's short stories, until we reach a cut off date if a cut-off date for postmodernism can be found.

I have rejected these approaches for various reasons, but mainly because I find the intertextual use of the fairy tale in postmodern fiction to be too diverse and unpredictable to comfortably fit into any of these arbitrary divisions. Organising the thesis around individual tales is not feasible because my interests are less to do with the revision of individual tales, and more to do with the use of the fairy tale as a genre. Sticking to one particular author is not appealing because what interests me is the *range of different* authors, all of whom use the fairy tale in considerably different ways. Instead of utilising any of these safer, and perhaps easier, approaches for structuring my thesis, I have taken a more ambitious approach. The thesis does not therefore follow a conventional structure where each chapter can be viewed as a discrete entity, but functions in a more fluid manner with each chapter explaining a point of interest that was raised in the previous one.

The starting point for this thesis will provide its theoretical groundwork. In chapter one, I will investigate the crucial issue of intertextuality, utilising and expanding upon the theories of Gerard Genette and Mikhail Bakhtin, in an attempt to find a way of making intertextuality a useful critical tool that can help me define my object of study. This chapter will sketch out 8 different 'elements' of intertextuality, providing textual examples for each category, and then attempt to highlight which of these elements are particularly important for the postmodern texts that I will be examining. Chapter two will follow on from an area of interest raised by chapter one, looking at the mode of magic

realism, and taking Kate Atkinson's *Human Croquet* as an example of a magic realist novel where the magic realism is formed in no small part by its use of fairy tale intertextuality.

Chapter three addresses the metafictional element of fairy tale intertextuality, defined in chapter one, by using the tools of narratology to sketch out a narrative situation which depicts a kind of 'fairy tale within the text' that is based upon the frame story of the *Thousand and One Nights*. I call this narrative situation 'the storyteller', and this chapter is primarily concerned with defining 'the storyteller' and providing examples of texts where this storytelling frame, which depicts characters telling 'the fairy tales of their lives', is important.

Chapter four goes on to explain the importance of the storyteller with relevance to critical theory in order to explain why the storyteller is a postmodern trope. It is in this chapter that the idea of realism is interrogated, as I attempt to explain the importance of the fairy tale, a genre which is usually opposed to realism and functions in the vernacular to refer to lies and other forms of fiction-making. Storytelling is an essential human activity, and the way in which storyteller operates in the texts under analysis highlights the importance of storytelling as a way of understanding one's life and place in the world.

If chapter four sees the fairy tale as a liberating framework that allows postmodern subjects a form flexible and easily adaptable for them to narrate their life stories, chapter five shows how the fairy tale can also operate as what Roland Barthes called 'myth', and be a repressive and normative mechanism.

Before chapter five the fictions I examine are all based in the real world, even if they do cause us to question what reality is, and the extent to which the real is intertextually constituted by pre-existing stories, what Barthes would call the already read or *déjà lu*. There are 3 reasons for this bias. Firstly, using these texts allows me to set up a strategy for defining the intertextual use of fairy tales even in texts that do not necessarily appear fairy tale like at first sight. Secondly, some of the texts analysed are canonical examples of postmodern literature, and therefore highlighting

their usage of the fairy tale intertext is of obvious benefit to my thesis. Finally, the analysis of fantasy literature is still somewhat frowned upon, due to it being seen as escapist or, as Lucie Armitt correctly suggests, a “mere narrative formula” (Armitt 2000: 15). In chapter five, which closely analyses the use of fairy tale in Terry Pratchett's *Witches Abroad*, we will see how these “mere narrative formulae” actually work to shape and structure our understanding of the world.

Chapter One: The Eight Elements of Intertextual use of Fairy Tales

The fairy tale has always been a popular form of literature, and it is possible to find examples of works throughout the canon that utilise fairy tale intertexts. If we were to make a list of every text that contained a reference to fairy tale plots we would end up with a list of thousands containing samples from every genre and every period. However, it is my thesis that the fairy tale has been used in as an intertext in interesting ways for various purposes by a certain group of writers whose work is typically called “postmodern”. In order for me to make this claim, I must be able to differentiate between texts in which the fairy tale intertext is important and contributes a significant amount to our understanding of the story, and those texts in which the fairy tale is simply one intertext among many and does not affect our reading of the text to a great extent.

In defining the ways in which these intertexts operate, I will draw upon various theories of intertextuality. My exploration of intertextuality will be mostly informed by the theories of Gerard Genette, due to his attempts to differentiate between different types of intertextuality, or as he calls it, transtextuality.

Genette differentiates between 5 sub-categories of transtextuality: “Kristevan” intertextuality, which covers allusion as well as quotation and plagiarism; paratextuality, which covers the relations between the “text itself” and its titles, epigraphs, illustrations, and even factors which we usually judge as separate to the text itself, for example reviews and author interviews; metatextuality, which concerns the relationship between commentary and its object; architextuality, the relationship between a text and its nominal genre, a tacit, perhaps even unconscious gesture to genre demarcations, and hypertextuality which is the relationship between a late-coming text and its pre-text (Still and Worton 1990: 23).

As Genette states, and this chapter will demonstrate, these different categories rarely exist in isolation, although the focus of this inquiry will necessarily gravitate

towards the field of hypertextuality, “a field of literary works the generic essence of which lies in their relation to previous works” (Allen 2000: 108). I will discuss Genette’s categories when relevant, but will not be using his term transtextuality over the more readily accepted intertextuality.

Drawing upon Genette’s categories, I suggest that there are eight identifiable ways in which the fairy tale can operate as an intertext within mass-produced fictions.

1. **Authorised:** Explicit reference to a fairy tale in the title.
2. **Writerly:** Implicit reference to a fairy tale in title.
3. **Incorporation:** Explicit reference to a fairy tale within the text.
4. **Allusion:** Implicit reference to a fairy tale within the text.
5. **Re-vision:** putting a new spin on an old tale
6. **Fabulation:** crafting an original fairy tale
7. **Metafictional** discussion of fairy tales.
8. **Architextual/ Chronotopic:** “Fairy Tale” setting/ environment

I will call these eight categories “elements”, in order to reflect the complexity of intertextuality and to reflect that they can be found in numerous different combinations. The OED defines an element as “a component part of a complex whole”, which I find a satisfactory label for these eight types of intertextuality.

The eight elements I propose are all based on one of Genette’s categories of intertextuality. Elements one and two, with their concern for the title as the most prominent piece of text within the text are examples of paratextuality, discussed at length by Genette in *Paratexts*. Elements three and four are examples of the hypertextuality that Genette discusses in *Palimpsests*. Element five combines the idea of the palimpsestic text with the notion of architextuality, the relationship between a work and genre, and element six relies further on the idea of architextuality, as does Element eight. Element seven demonstrates the use of metatextual intertextuality as it discusses a kind of criticism in the text, and element eight also shows some signs of this feature.

As can be deduced, I have put forward two categories for every one of Genette’s except for his category of “Kristevan” intertextuality. This is because Genette’s

category of “Kristevan” intertextuality covers quotation and plagiarism. Where quotation is usually seen as an acceptable practice because it (sometimes) overtly signals its source, plagiarism as unacknowledged quotation or “the wrongful appropriation or purloining, and publication as one’s own, of the ideas, or expression of the ideas [...] of another” (OED) is viewed generally as taboo in many areas, especially, as we will see, the field of literary production. But the borderline between the two is not always cut and dried. Sometimes quotation is not referenced to its source, and the only way for a reader to recognise it as a quotation is if they already know the source from which it derives. Therefore, Kristevan intertextuality appears in this study as the binary opposition between explicit and implicit intertextuality¹ with elements one and three representing explicit intertextuality (where the source is acknowledged so it therefore approximates quotation) and elements two and four representing implicit intertextuality, which approximates an un-referenced quotation or plagiarism.

Due to the simplification I have enforced on elements one through to six, however, it is necessary to point out that it is impossible for a text to contain *all* the elements I have identified. Unless a title is particularly long it would be difficult for it to be both authorised *and* writerly, although it is possible for a text to both incorporate a fairy tale intertext, *and* to allude to the same intertext². Nevertheless, identifying these eight elements allows me to specify the way(s) in which a text uses its fairy tale intertext(s), which facilitates comparison with others of the same type, but also helps rule out texts where the fairy tale intertext is not overly important. It is entirely possible for a text to exhibit more than one of these elements, and the more elements a text displays the safer it is to say that the fairy tale is a major intertext that is worth investigating rather than perhaps one among many intertexts that a text may or may not have.

¹ Although, as I will demonstrate, a binary opposition between explicit and implicit is an oversimplification, but perhaps a necessary simplification if we are to find the idea of intertextuality useful.

² Byatt’s *Babel Tower*, as we will see, proves this. When reading it, I was constantly aware of allusions to “Bluebeard”, but it is only later in the narrative that this intertext is explicitly revealed.

In order to demonstrate the eight ways a fairy tale intertext can be used, I will concentrate on one of the most popular fairy tale intertexts in contemporary fiction, “Bluebeard”. The fairy tale “Bluebeard” has been used as an intertext in many fictions in recent years and has proved a fertile field of criticism for feminist critics due to its explicit patriarchal message. The fact that “Bluebeard” criticism is a well-ploughed furrow is here an advantage rather than a disadvantage. By using a single fairy tale, the exposition of the different ways that fairy tales can be used as an intertext does not rely on the reader’s knowledge of dozens of significant fairy tales, and the criticism can, to some extent, excuse me from repeating arguments about “Bluebeard” again here, which are covered in depth in studies such as Casie Hermansson’s *Reading Feminist Intertextuality through Bluebeard Stories* (2001). Before I go on to discuss in further detail the eight ways in which fairy tales can be used as intertexts, it is necessary to provide a little historical information about “Bluebeard”.

“Bluebeard” made its literary debut in Charles Perrault’s 1697 *Histoires ou contes du temp passé*. Perrault was not a “collector” of fairy tales, like the Brothers Grimm³, and he freely adapted and changed oral tales for his own purposes. His collection was also one of the first to address a double audience of adults and children. Before Perrault most literary fairy tales were written by and for adults, ranging from the medieval bawdy of Boccaccio and the risqué tales of Basile and Straparola to the works of the erudite and aristocratic *Saloniers* Madame D’Aulnoy and Madame L’Héritier; the concept of the fairy tale as educational children’s literature did not arise until the nineteenth century, although we can certainly recognise Perrault as a precursor of this trend. While supposedly written for children, the writer takes up a faux naïf style of narration that winks knowingly at adult readers⁴. Although Perrault’s precise sources are unknown, it is generally agreed that the tale(s) that Bluebeard was

³The Grimms have been criticised for not being true to their sources. Though they saw themselves as collectors rather than fabricators or adapters of folk tales, when they came upon multiple versions or fragments of a tale they would create their *own* hybrid “ideal” form, and their editing was heavily influenced by the values of their time, See Zipes (1988) *The Brothers Grimm*.

⁴ A dual voice which is brought out by the narrator’s identification of the wolf in Red Riding Hood with young men in the moralistic verses that occur at the close of that tale (see Zipes 1993).

based on was/ were well known, and existed for some time before Perrault's adaptation.

Various historical sources have been suggested as the basis of the tale, from the murderous Baron Gilles De Rais, who confessed to murdering 140 young boys and burying their remains about his castle, to Cunmar (or Comorre, the spelling seems to vary) the accursed, who decapitated a succession of wives as soon as they became pregnant (see Warner 1994a: 261, Windling 2002: 14-5). It is possible that Perrault knew of the legends surrounding these historical figures and incorporated details from the legends to add to his own tale, or it is just as possible that he knew similar stories that we now have no record of. Whatever his sources it is generally agreed that the remarkable facial hair of the murderous husband was Perrault's invention. A version of Perrault's tale, including the titular blue beard, was also reprinted in the 1812 first edition of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Kinder und Hausmärchen*, but was removed from later editions, according to Maria Tatar, because its obvious French heritage clashed with the illusion of a uniquely German folklore that the Grimms were attempting to portray (Tatar 1987: 157). It is ironic, then, that in her article on Bluebeard in the *Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, Maria Tatar identifies two tales in the Grimm collection as representative of the pre-Perrault French Bluebeard stories:

The French versions of 'Bluebeard' that pre-date Perrault's story reveal a close relationship to two tales recorded by the Brothers Grimm. The first of these, 'Fitcher's Bird', shows the youngest of three sisters using her 'cunning' to escape the snares set by a clever sorcerer [...] The heroine of "The Robber Bridegroom" also engineers a rescue, mobilizing her mental resources to thwart the thieves with whom her betrothed consorts

(Tatar 2000: 56)

The Grimms' "Fitcher's Bird" (KHM 46: AT 311), and "The Robber Bridegroom" (KHM 40: AT 955) have been linked with Bluebeard for many years. In the introduction to the 1888 edition of *Perrault's Popular Tales*, Andrew Lang highlighted the similarities between Perrault's tale about a murderous husband and those collected in the *Kinder und Hausmärchen*. We will return to the question of how we identify the relationship between fairy tales later, but the fact that Lang in 1888 felt it necessary to spell out an intertextual relationship between these tales is important.

1. Authorised

Element one, the fairy tale as an authorised intertext is the most obvious use of fairy tale as an intertext. The use of a proper name of a fairy tale in the title acts as an authorial sanction that the text is to be understood in its relevance to a prior, pre-existing fairy tale. No one would be surprised by an article 'revealing' the importance of "Bluebeard" to Margaret Atwood's "Bluebeard's Egg", for example. There are numerous examples of this relationship that one may cite: Kurt Vonnegut's *Bluebeard*, Max Frisch's *Bluebeard*, Donald Barthelme's *Snow White*, Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride* and Robert Coover's *Briar Rose*. However, although there are thousands upon thousands of collected folk tales that can be categorised as fairy tales there are relatively few fairy tales that are known by a proper name⁵, and there is therefore a sliding scale of recognition with the Disney popularised titles such as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* operating as extremely explicit references, and with lesser known tales such as *Briar Rose* and *The Girl Who Trod on a Loaf* operating at the more ambiguous end of the scale. This difference can be seen in Atwood's *The Robber Bride*, where one of the narrators of the text describes the story of the Grimm fairy tale, "The Robber Bridegroom". Because this fairy tale intertext is not as obvious or well known as the most popular fairy tales that have been adapted by Disney, it is necessary for the author to explain or make the intertextual title explicit within the text itself by explaining it. Furthermore, it is entirely possible that an author may mislead the reader: a text may, in theory, be called *Snow White* and yet

⁵ This can be seen in the different names given to certain stories. The Grimms' version of "Little Red Riding Hood" is called "Little Red Cap". Due to difficulties in translation stories even within the Grimm collection are known by different names. One fairy tale has been translated as "Thousand Furs", "Thousandfurs", "All Fur" or left in the original German as "*Allerleirauh*" (All kinds of fur). Another tale, a variant of Bluebeard we will see more of below is known as "Fitcher's Bird" or "Fowler's Fowl" depending on the whim of the translator and the edition of the text used by the critic. It was this indeterminacy of naming that led to the practice of referring to tales by the numbers by which they appear within the Grimms' collection, so a reader can tell that by "Thousandfurs" they mean the tale 65 which is labelled in other books as "Thousand furs". The Grimms had no such idea in mind, however, and their collection is not organised with tales grouped like- with -like, and the adoption of the tale numbers led to some critics comparing tales from other cultures with the Grimms' "number 3".

have absolutely nothing to do with the fairy tale⁶. This suggests that the difference between Element one and two is arguably one of degree and not of type.

Due to the importance of the title of a work to the way in which we understand it, the examples above act as an exaggerated form of what happens any time a recognisable fairy tale name appears within a text. A critic might argue that Frederick Clegg in John Fowles's *The Collector* is a Bluebeard figure, but without a direct reference to the fairy tale such an assertion lacks explicit authorial sanction⁷. The critic would have no such problems in trying to link the protagonist of Max Frisch's *Bluebeard* with the eponymous fairy tale ogre. The case of Kurt Vonnegut's *Bluebeard* is also illuminating. In this text there are several characters that may be likened to Bluebeard. As Casie Hermansson points out, the hyper-realistic advertising artist and Mussolini-admirer, Dan Gregory, to whom the narrator is apprenticed, even has his own forbidden chamber (Hermansson 2001: 179), "Your loving Papa asked just one thing of you as an expression of your loyalty: 'Never go into the Museum of Modern Art'" (Vonnegut 1988: 166). This odious character whose violence, conservatism, misogyny and fascism seem in character with the monstrous nature of the fairy tale villain, is a complete contrast to the curmudgeonly, but likeable narrator, Rabo Karabekian, whose identification with Bluebeard is assured when he utters the words "I am Bluebeard, and my studio is my *forbidden chamber* as far as *you're* concerned" (47).

The explicit use of a fairy tale name in the title of Vonnegut's *Bluebeard* allows the reader to see the narrator as Bluebeard despite the fact that neither he, nor Dan

⁶ Thus far, this remains a theoretical possibility as I have yet to come across such a text. Furthermore, even if this case did exist, the same mechanisms of reading would be set up in the mind of a reader who already knew of the existence of the identically titled predecessor text. The reader would still read the text attempting to attribute the character of Snow White, the prince, the dwarves to different characters and in this way *even if the new text bore no relevance whatsoever* in the view of the author the reader would still read the text intertextually, with reference to patterns imported from the prior text.

⁷ This seems an archaic point to be making in an era after the criticism of Barthes' "The Death of the Author", but paradoxically, the author's explicit sanction still seems to be the difference between an accepted (and perhaps somewhat boring) reading of the intertextual relation between two texts and a critic's speculative interpretation. The case of *The Collector* is interesting because the title is the only place an author could link the novel to the fairy tale. Due to the novel's mode of narration by the perpetrator (Clegg) and the victim (Miranda), neither of these would particularly want to compare their situation to Bluebeard. Clegg, deluded and barely literate might not have heard of the tale, and constantly denies responsibility for his actions where Miranda who optimistically fools herself into thinking there is a possibility of release obviously prefers not to consider the possibility of her death.

Gregory, are serial killing maniacs who prey on young women. The use of the fairy tale title as the title of the novel, allows the reader to generate a reading of the text that appears uncontentious and even common sense. It also allows a degree of ambivalence, for despite his identification with the fairy tale ogre, the narrator appears as a wholly sympathetic character and we may object that it is perhaps Gregory, or even Gregory's abusive mentor Beskudnikov, who is the real ogre in the tale. This readerly ambivalence over role allocation, to make the new version (hypertext) fit with its predecessor (hypotext), is neatly highlighted in Barthelme's *Snow White* when the narrator forces the reader to acknowledge one character as a version of the Prince:

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you like the story so far? Yes (☐) No (☐)
2. Does Snow White resemble the Snow White you remember? Yes (☐) No (☐)
3. Have you understood, in reading to this point that Paul is the prince-figure? Yes (☐) No (☐)
4. That Jane is the wicked stepmother-figure? Yes (☐) No (☐)

(Barthelme 1996 [1965]: 88)

The title of Barthelme's *Snow White* refers the reader instantly to one of the most popular and recognisable (and Disneyfied) fairy tales, and the novella features a character called Snow White⁸, whose resemblance to the Snow White we remember is in question. In the extract above, Barthelme makes the reader consider characters in the light of the fairy tale, placing Paul up against the prince (a comparison that doesn't much help Paul) and Jane against the wicked stepmother. If we had not the above clarification, we could argue about which characters fulfil those roles, but the author's playful intervention helps relate the novella to the fairy tale and allocate characters to familiar roles⁹.

An explicit intertextual reference within the title, then, sets up a whole set of mechanisms whereby the reader automatically assumes that this intertextual reference is somehow relevant to the following text, the default setting may indeed be to assume

⁸ A feature which, in a novel, is not necessary at all. The 1997 Film *Snow White: A Tale of Terror* has the protagonist/ Snow White character given the name Lilliana Hoffman, a change from folkloristic allegoric naming to the non-allegoric naming that Philippe Hamon identifies as one of the major features of realistic narrative. (Hamon, 1992: 168)

⁹ It is interesting the way Barthelme frames this question: "Have you understood that Paul is the prince." While suggesting that Paul *is* the prince, the question also allows the possibility that the reader who answers yes has been mistaken.

that the new text is a version of the earlier, identically titled text. This is the most obvious sign of an author explicitly indicating the intertextual relation between his or her text and a predecessor. It is also a fairly rare phenomenon, due to the problems of copyright law, marketing, and the concept of originality. Though we may not see any problem with an author titling his or her text *Bluebeard*, *Sleeping Beauty* or *Briar Rose*, or even *Ulysses*, it is likely that we, and the courts, would find a new novel taking the name *The Great Gatsby* or *Midnight's Children* a more problematic situation¹⁰. In the cases where a new novel does take on the plot of a previous tale, if the new text does wish to refer itself to its predecessor it is more likely to signal this intent through a use of element two.

2. Writerly

Element 2, an implicit or **writerly** reference within the title, may seem a contradiction in terms but the difference is one of reference. A direct reference to a well-known fairy tale in the title, as we have seen above, instantly generates an interpretation of the text that carries a certain authority (because it obviously has the author's overt sanction), but the use of a more implicit reference allows for some interpretation. For example, John Fowles' *The Collector* has been read as a version of "Bluebeard" (see Grace 1984 and Hermansson 2001), and in this argument its title can be used to substantiate this claim. Bluebeard is a collector of wives, and by this interpretation the unhinged protagonist of Fowles' text can be viewed as a latter-day Bluebeard. However, by being at one remove from an explicit reference, the title allows more ambiguity: though we might argue, as Sherrill Grace does, that *The Collector*'s Clegg is a Bluebeard figure because he "collects women", (1984: 254) it is entirely possible to say that the title is derived from his other hobbies, namely his habit of butterfly collecting¹¹.

¹⁰ The one major exception I can think of to this is in the world of Hollywood remakes, where revisions (or remakes) of old films are relatively common, and what is more, usually signal their relationship to the original by way of having an identical title.

¹¹ An interpretation given weight by the cover of the 1998 Vintage edition of the text which features a painting of a butterfly with a number presumably identifying it, in a decaying wood frame.

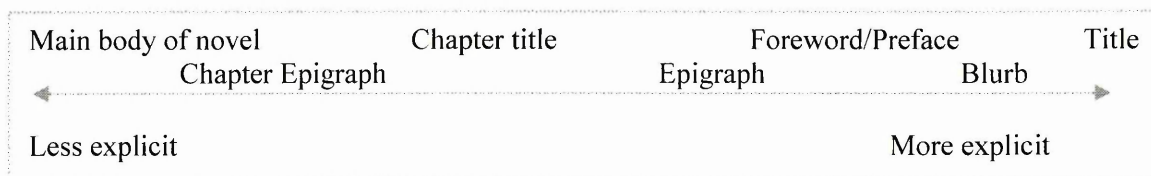
Other examples of a writerly reference in the title of a text could be Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. The titular "Nights" of both these texts can be seen as cryptic intertextual references towards the *Arabian Nights*, an argument backed up by the references to Scheherezade and *Nights*-like storytelling in both texts. Again, the overlap between elements can be demonstrated by the fact that Angela Carter's short story collection is called *The Bloody Chamber*, an implicit reference to the secret room of Bluebeard's castle. Although the tale "The Bloody Chamber" is obviously a revision (element 6) of "Bluebeard", the nexus between Perrault's story and Carter's is not explicit in the title of the short story.

Both element one, the explicit (authorised) reference, and element two, the implicit (writerly) reference, would be considered, according to Genette's categories, examples of **Peritextual** transtextuality. "Peri" is, like Genette's other terms, derived from Greek and roughly translated means "around" or "round about" (OED). He uses it to discuss elements that we might not normally consider part of the text itself: for example the title, front and back cover, chapter titles, epigraphs, forewords, after-words, "about the author" prefaces, footnotes, endnotes, type-faces and illustrations. This term makes up one half of the two subclasses of Genette's **Paratextuality**, with its opposite, **Epitextual** transtextuality referring to the halo of texts that surround a text and orient the reader towards it in meaningful ways, texts such as author interviews, reviews and criticism. Two good examples of the way in which peritextual features can influence a reader's experience of the text are suggested by Graham Allen in his book, *Intertextuality*. He points to the example of Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* where the book's typeface was chosen by the author to closely resemble the typeface used in gothic literature of the time (Allen 2000: 104). This choice of font added something of meaning to the reader at the time that is lost in modern reprints that do not use the same lettering. Joyce's decision to remove the chapter titles in the book edition of *Ulysses* again, changed the reader's experience of the text. Where in serial-form the title of each instalment stated the author's Homeric model for that chapter, in book form

these readily available and author sanctioned “sources” were obfuscated, depriving the reader of each chapter’s Homeric model, although Joyce did work to recirculate these chapter titles and reaffirm the relation between the two texts (2000: 106).

The difference between the authorised and writerly types of intertext in the title is an accentuated version of what happens in the text proper. Peritextual features that explicitly refer to the title (or other major, recognisable feature) of a well-known fairy tale are more prominent than similar references that occur within the main text itself. There may be hundreds of thousands of words in a novel, but only one title. There can be hundreds of allusions, but if the allusion is in the title, foreword or epigraph, it stands out from the rest of the text and assumes a certain importance.

We can therefore attribute a certain level of importance to the different types of peritextual intertextuality according to how prominent they are, assuming that the most prominent and explicit intertextual references affect the reader’s expectations of the text the most. The most obvious form of this is re-using a well-known fairy tale name in a prominent position (like the title, or subtitle), which either suggests the affinity of this text with a fairy tale intertext, or signals that this is a revision of the previous text, a supplementary version. A (named) fairy tale epigraph, a foreword by the author that mentions a fairy tale, or a chapter title that refers to a fairy tale, act in the same way as the next level down of explicitness. Implicit peritextual features that point towards a fairy tale intertext come further down the scale, and are less evident to the reader, and therefore may require more argument if a critic wishes to highlight the importance of an intertext pointed to by peritextual references. A graphical representation of the scale of explicitness would look something like the following:



This diagram however, only concerns peritextual features. It is doubtless true that epitextual features also affect the reader’s approach to a text. In the example of

The Collector, for example, critics have had access to an interview that Fowles gave in which he mentioned Béla Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* as one of the primary sources that he drew on when writing the novel (Newquist 1964). In cases like this, texts that are typically viewed as extraneous can fundamentally alter one's perception of a novel. Furthermore, the line between epitextual and peritextual features can be blurred. Consider modern editions of *Ulysses* that feature footnotes concerning the changes between versions and drafts, essays, and Joyce's own criticism of the text, from various personal letters.

3. Incorporation

The most obvious way a fairy tale can be explicitly referred to is **incorporation of the fairy tale into the novel**. The following example from Kurt Vonnegut's *Bluebeard* is a case in point:

I have now returned to this typewriter from the vicinity of the swimming pool, where I asked Celeste and her friends in and around that public teenage athletic facility, if they knew who Bluebeard was. I meant to mention Bluebeard in this book. I wanted to know if I had to explain, for the sake of young readers, who Bluebeard was.

Nobody knew. While I was at it, I asked them if they recognized the names of Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, or Terry Kitchen, or Truman Capote, or Nelson Algren, or Irwin Shaw, or James Jones, all of whom had figured not only in the history of arts and letters but in the history of the Hamptons. They did not. So much for achieving immortality via the arts and letters.

So: Bluebeard is a fictitious character in a very old children's tale, possibly based loosely on a murderous nobleman of long ago. In the story he has married many times. He marries for the umpteenth time, and brings his latest child bride back to his castle. He tells her that she can go into any room but one, whose door he shows her.

Bluebeard is either a poor psychologist or a great one, since all his new wife can think about is what might be behind the door. So she takes a look when she thinks he isn't home, but he really *is* home.

He catches her just at the point she is gazing aghast at the bodies of all his former wives in there, all of whom he has murdered, save for the first one, for looking behind the door. The first one got murdered for something else.

(Vonnegut 1988: 46)

Here, not only is Bluebeard explicitly mentioned, but a full synopsis of the tale is included to drive home the importance of the intertext. If the reader, like Celeste and her friends, did not know the title of the book, *Bluebeard*, was an intertextual reference to a fairy tale, they will certainly appreciate that fact after the above synopsis. The narrator and fictional autobiographer, Rabo Karabekian, feels that the fairy tale is important to his own story as we can see in his later remark to his visitor who is curious

about his locked studio: "Look: think about something else, anything else. I am Bluebeard, and my studio is my *forbidden chamber* as far as *you're* concerned" (47).

The technique of embedding a synopsis of a fairy tale is also used in Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride* which contains a synopsised account of "The Robber Bridegroom" (KHM 40) and her short story "Bluebeard's Egg" which contains a short version of "Fitcher's Bird" (KHM 46). In each case, the reader is explicitly alerted to the existence and importance of a particular intertext.

The fairy tale in both these cases acts as a supplement to the story and fulfils the paradoxical nature of the supplement highlighted by Derrida; although it may appear supplementary (or dispensable) the fairy tale plot takes on greater importance, becoming a model by which the reader can understand the text. As W.J.Keith suggests, Atwood's "Bluebeard's Egg" shows how the "Bluebeard" story affects its protagonist's world view (Keith 1994: 252), and indeed, the assignment given the protagonist in her creative writing class "a version of Bluebeard, set in the present day and not using the universal narrator" is an apt description of the short story.

In those cases where a fairy tale is incorporated into a novel, it often fulfils the function of the *mise en abyme*. A *mise en abyme* is defined by Lucien Dällenbach as "any internal mirror that reflects the whole of the narrative by simple, repeated or 'specious' (or paradoxical) duplication" (Dällenbach 1977: 36 author's emphasis).

Other uses of incorporating a fairy tale, or other story, into a novel is to give an insight into the narrator's psychological state and the intersubjective material that has influenced their expectations. The following quotation from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is a good example of this technique, where the reader is introduced to the legend of the Gytrash and the mysterious Mr. Rochester at the same time:

In those days I was young, and all sorts of fancies bright and dark tenanted my mind: the memories of nursery stories were there amongst other rubbish; and when they recurred, maturing youth added to them a vigour and vividness beyond what childhood could give. As this horse approached, and as I watched for it to appear through the dusk, I remembered certain of Bessie's tales wherein figured a North-of-England spirit, called a 'Gytrash'; which, in the form of a horse, mule, or large dog, haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came upon belated travellers, as this horse was now coming upon me.

It was very near, but not now in sight; when, in addition to the tramp, tramp, I heard a rush under the hedge, and close down by the hazel stems glided a great

dog, whose black and white colour made him a distinct object against the trees. It was exactly one mask of Bessie's Gytrash,— a lion-like creature with long hair and a huge head: it passed me, however, quietly enough; not staying to look up, with strange pretercanine eyes, in my face, as I half expected it would. The horse followed, —a tall steed, and on its back a rider. The man, the human being, broke the spell at once. Nothing ever rode the Gytrash: it was always alone; and goblins, to my notions, though they might tenant the dumb carcasses of beasts, could scarce covet shelter in the common-place human form. No Gytrash was this, — only a traveller taking the short cut to Millcote.

(Brontë C 1996: 128 Volume 1 Chapter 12)

4. Allusion

Element 4 is titled **allusion** due to the problematic nature of that term. Allusion is part of the standard toolkit of literary criticism and such a long-standing feature of literary criticism that it is very infrequently defined; no mention of it graces the pages of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* or even Katie Wales's *Dictionary of Stylistics*. It suits my needs to term implicit uses of intertexts as allusion because of the implicit nature of the allusion as defined by the OED. The OED contains four meanings for the word, three of them obsolete:

†1. Illusion. *Obs.*

†2. A play upon words, a word-play, a pun. *Obs.*

†3. A symbolical reference or likening; a metaphor, parable, allegory. *Obs.*

4. A covert, implied, or indirect reference; a passing or incidental reference (cf. Allude v. 5). Also attrib. In *allusion book*, a collection of references to a writer or his works.

(OED)

As the only non-archaic sense of the word makes clear, an allusion is typically covert or indirect. Where the dictionary uses the terms overt and covert, I substitute my preferred terms, explicit and implicit. Clearly, the incorporation of a fairy tale (element 3) cannot be described as covert, implied, indirect, passing or incidental. This type of intertextuality is of the kind that is usually termed intertextuality because of its obvious links with other texts, and it is for this reason that I term it explicit. Intertextuality that is closer towards the implicit end of the scale (because, as we saw above, there is a scale of explicitness, it is not a clear binary) is considered allusion. Intertextuality that cannot be missed or ignored is more likely to be given its proper name.

4.1 Quotation

Quotation is one of the classical types of allusion, and falls under Genette's category of "Kristevan" intertextuality. Indeed, Genette has written about the practice of quotation at length in *Paratexts* and I cannot hope to cover it at anything like the same depth here. Quotations are most obvious to the reader when they occur marked with quotation marks with references attributing them to their source (attributions to an author are common; telling the reader the book, edition and page number less so). When quotations are presented in this way, they accentuate their intertextuality (as they are, after all, references to another text) and can be considered an example of explicit intertextuality. However except in academic volumes very few quotations are presented in this manner, and when they are, the reader assumes that the quotation has a special significance.

Due to the recognisable tone of fairy tales, quotations tend to be easily recognisable. When the line "All the better to see you with" occurs in "The Bloody Chamber" few readers need to be told that this is the refrain from the fairy tale generally known as Little Red Riding Hood (Carter 1992: 17).

4.2 Character names, the proliferation of signifiers

This implicit intertext can be as small as a single word: When Philip Pullman in his novel *The Amber Spyglass* names one character Baruch, and another Metatron, these **character names** act as allusions, linking the text with Old Testament myth and the Apocrypha, just as the character Jibreel Farishta in Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* links that text with the Koran. Calling a character, or even mentioning the name Satan brings up a whole slew of intertextual references, from folklore to the King James' Bible and Milton's *Paradise Lost*

It is helpful, at this point to recall the distinction made by the Russian formalists between *sjuzet* and *fabula*. The *sjuzet* is the surface text, the way in which the events of the narrative are narrated, and the *fabula* is the events depicted, the underlying events that are narrated. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably with story and histoire, the French structuralist equivalents (Wales 1997: 169).

An allusory character name is an example of an intertextual reference that can be located on the surface of the text. The signifier used to refer to a character in one text is recognisably the same as the signifier used to refer to a character in another text. As allusions go, this type of allusion is fairly explicit, assuming that the reader recognises the name is also used in another text. Once again, we can see a sliding scale of recognition, where using the name of particularly famous characters like Emma Bovary, Hamlet or Cinderella occupies the explicit end and less famous characters like Trabb's boy, or any number of minor characters from the panoply of the novel genre the implicit end.

If all readers were omniscient we could assume that any character name that had been used in a previous book would be an explicit intertext, but unfortunately for us this is not the case. The term allusion is useful here precisely because it deals with a liminal area between two texts; a text might contain a reference to Bluebeard directly by name, but we cannot assume that the reader knows who Bluebeard is¹². In cases like this, the intertext is a cryptogram. It is only activated when the reader has the knowledge to decode it.

Allusions that exist on the level of the *sjuzet* may be cryptograms, but they are hidden in plain sight. A handy metaphor for this form of intertextuality is the practice of steganography. As Singh defines it, "Secret communication achieved *by hiding the existence of a message* is known as steganography, derived from the Greek words *stegano*, meaning 'covered', and *Graphein*, meaning to write" (Singh 1999: 5 my emphasis). **Steganography**, although a term originally used interchangeably with cryptography, has taken on specialised meaning in recent years. The term refers to the practice of hiding information within other information that may appear innocuous at first sight. The only way to decode a steganogram is to have foreknowledge of the secret code. One everyday example of this is the practice of watermarking, where a picture when treated in a special way (held up to the light) reveals a hidden message,

¹² And it is for this reason that I consider texts incorporating a synopsis of the fairy tale as the only examples where the reader is forced to acknowledge an intertext. Lack of prior knowledge, and indeed the reader's own familiarity with the intertext is rendered trivial by this method.

in this case the message that this piece of currency is genuine. More historical examples of steganography can be seen in the communications between the British government and the French Resistance in the Second World War. The BBC would include secret messages like “the chair is against the wall” in their broadcasts. This innocuous seeming phrase would not raise anyone’s attention unless the listener knew this to be a secret code, which signalled the target for that night’s Allied bombing (Lau 2003: 4). In this way, operatives could receive messages without it ever becoming clear to those who heard the broadcast but were not aware of the key that a secret transmission had occurred. An allusion on the surface level of the text, be it a character name, place name, or even an unreferenced quotation is very much like a steganogram: it is hidden in plain sight, and obvious to everyone who has the foreknowledge necessary to decode it. To those who lack this knowledge the communication makes sense only in its relation to other events on the sjuzet, rather than being an active link to extended meaning.

It is no great insight to say that fictional characters, whether from folklore like Little Red Riding Hood or from literature, like Tom Jones, exist only as words. Things become more complicated when we begin to see characters with the same names as real people. The phenomenon of characters in a work of fiction being ‘borrowed’ from the books of others (like Emma Bovary in Woody Allen’s *The Kugelmass Experiment*) or recognisably real personages being depicted in works of fiction highlight the philosophical problems of intertextuality. When, in A.S. Byatt’s “The Djinn in the Nightingale’s Eye” the narrator meets Gerard Genette and Tzvetan Todorov, we see a kind of ontological clash¹³. How much of this is historically true? What part of it is real? Cases like these foreground ontological questions about the novel, and history itself. For the vast majority of people, famous people, like literary characters, exist only as words or images. This overlap between the fictional and the historical is one of the major sources of what Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction, or postmodernism.

¹³ Assuming, of course, that the reader knows that these names also refer to well known structuralist critics.

Sometimes, as in Pat Barker's *Regeneration*, the representation of literary characters who share the same name as historical personages is based upon real events and sometimes, as in D.M.Thomas's *The White Hotel*, it is a total fabrication. How can the reader know the truth of events without referring outside the text? How can the reader trust the texts outside the text, which are also words?

Brian McHale, for whom the key distinction between Modernism and Postmodernism is the former's emphasis on questions of epistemology and the latter's emphasis on ontology calls this phenomenon of "borrowed" characters, **transworld characters**, because they make the reader question the boundaries between one world (reality) and another (history or fiction). Postmodernism has been especially identified with the use of intertextuality, as in Hassan's famous list of the key terms of modernism and postmodernism (Hassan 1993: 152), despite the fact that the novel as a genre has been shot through with intertextuality, from *Don Quixote* onwards and that Modernism too was essentially intertextual, especially if we look at the examples of *The Wasteland* or *Ulysses*. It is perhaps because of the phenomenon of transworld characters, names that the reader recognises from one discourse (history), that postmodernism has been so heavily linked with intertextuality. The names operate as an intertext which forces the reader to question the nature of reality (did this event really happen) and the nature of representation (which discourses are considered 'authoritative' and why?).

4.3 Character description

If a character name allusion can be highly explicit types, slightly less explicit is **character description**. Margaret Atwood when discussing *The Handmaid's Tale*¹⁴ once asked, "What do you think of when you see someone in red carrying a basket?" (Wilson 1993: 271). The answer, to most people, is the heroine of that perennially popular fairy tale, Little Red Riding Hood. Recognising an intertextual link between one character and another is an operation that takes place on the threshold between *fabula*

¹⁴ The cover to one American edition of *The Handmaid's Tale* which Atwood described as "a knock-out!" helps readers recognise the fairy tale intertext, as it depicts two red-robed handmaids carrying baskets (Wilson 1993: 379).

and *sjuzet*; although any description necessarily takes place on the surface of the text, recognition usually takes place by comparing the *fabula* description of one character with another. If a character has two ugly sisters who mistreat her, we will be put in mind of Cinderella. If a character is portrayed as an old miser who is nasty even about Christmas (like the character Mr. Potter in Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life*) we might be put in mind of Ebenezer Scrooge.

One of the interesting things about allusions to fairy tales that operate via character names is that they have the capacity to be extremely explicit. The vast majority of western readers will instantly recognise references to Cinderella and Rapunzel, for example. But these names, like the vast majority of fairy tale character names are metonyms, a way of recalling a major facet of that tale in a "part for whole" keyword. Cinderella is named after the cinders that she is covered in (hence the name of the Grimm version, *Aschenputtel*), Rapunzel is named after the herb that her mother craved during her pregnancy, whose theft leads to her real parents being forced to give their child to the witch. Sleeping Beauty is almost a summary of the story rather than a description of the protagonist's personal qualities. The difference between character names and character definitions is very slight in the fairy tale due to the oral origins of the tales. A character may be given a different name by every narrator who tells their story, but what really identifies them is the actions that they take. For this reason, we have come to know characters by names that derive from either their actions, or by particular features that stand out as important in a tale: for example Little Red Riding Hood is metonymically named by her attire due to the intense symbolic nature of that garment¹⁵.

On the other hand, identifying a character as fairy tale-like can also be problematic. The example of Bluebeard is one where the character's murderous activities are typically the basis of comparison, especially when the murderer preys on women. However, the trope of the male serial killer is so common in contemporary

¹⁵ The riding hood is an addition by Perrault, but it is significant that it was adopted and became an important part of both literary and oral retellings of the tale after Perrault (Levorato 2003: 6-7)

fiction, from cinematic horror to pulp novels, that almost any murderer could be linked to Bluebeard.

This leads to a need for expanded linkage. The character of Bluebeard is not only defined by his distinctive mane/name but has various other characteristics, such as his wealth and his isolated castle¹⁶. In some stories using “Bluebeard” as an intertext, it could be argued that a character is Bluebeard-like due to these features. For example, in A.S. Byatt’s *Babel Tower* the character Nigel is aristocratic, rich, violent, misogynistic and owns a house that is (like a castle) surrounded by a moat, a list of qualities highly reminiscent of the fairy tale ogre.

These “Bluebeard”-like qualities correspond with resemblances between the plot of “Bluebeard” and *Babel Tower*, in which the protagonist, Frederica uses a “sharp toothed” little key to open a suitcase in one of her husband, Nigel’s “secret places”. She discovers not human remains, as in the fairy tale, but a stash of sadomasochistic pornography which is presented in the same way: “It is like finding trunks of butchered limbs, she tells herself wildly, hands and feet under the floorboards” (Byatt 1997: 101). Of course, it helps the reader to recognise Bluebeard as an intertext when the narrator describes Nigel as having blue stubble, and when later on the fairytale villain’s name is used as an analogy, first by Frederica and then by her husband’s divorce lawyer. In the case of *Babel Tower* then, the reader is aided in recognising Bluebeard as an intertext through the description of Nigel and through similarities between the two texts on the structural level.

4.4 Pattern Recognition (Structure)

Fairy tales are usually short in length and typically quite simple in terms of structure and character. They are perhaps the best example of **formulaic narratives**, which explains why formalist and structuralist critics have analysed them in such depth. The best-known example of structuralist criticism of the fairy tale is Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folk Tale* in which Propp, after analysing 600 Russian folk tales

¹⁶ Wealth and an isolated home are also characteristics of the wizards in “Fitcher’s bird”, and Calvino’s “Silver Nose”, and the robber in “The Robber Bridegroom” and “Mr Fox”.

identifies 31 functions which are found in all the tales. After observing that names and *dramatis personae* change from tale to tale but that neither their actions nor functions change, he rules that it is therefore possible to study the tale according to the functions of its *dramatis personae* where function is understood as “an act of character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action” (Propp 1973: 21). To adapt this point for my own focus on Bluebeard, it is evident that whether the ogre is called Bluebeard, Fitcher or Silver-nose, his function within the tale is identical: he is a murderous ogre who gives an interdiction to the protagonist that she will disobey. Likewise, the item given to the heroine that betrays her actions can be anything from an egg to a key items with vastly different symbolic connotations, but which fulfil precisely the same role within the tale as markers of disobedience.

Propp goes on to make four key claims about the fairy tale:

1. Functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale.
 2. The number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited [...]
 3. The sequence of functions is always identical [...]
 4. All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure.
- (Propp 1973: 21-24)

Point 4 deserves special consideration due to the enormity of the claim that Propp makes: All fairy tales are fundamentally constructed by a limited number of functions that occur in an identical sequence and there is no exception. Propp's work is an act of pattern recognition on the level of the text's **structure**. Details on the text's surface about where the hero is from, the hero's name or motivations, are irrelevant compared to the similarities on the structural level of the text. As an example, we might think of difference between the interdictions given by Bluebeard to his wives and that given to Sleeping Beauty. At first sight they appear fundamentally different in nature; where one is the command of a murderous husband, the other is the order of an overprotective parent. Propp recognises that even though these interdictions seem to be fundamentally different, structurally they play an identical role: it is in the nature of the interdiction in the fairy tale (indeed, in almost any type of story you care to mention)

to be violated, and therefore both of these interdictions would fall under the function he designates as “y”: “An interdiction is addressed to the hero”.

Recognising patterns on the level of structure is an innate critical reaction that is shared by almost all audiences. On the most simplistic level we recognise a play where the lead characters get married at the end as a form of comedy. A play where the lead character dies in the final act we recognise as tragedy. We compare books that contain flying saucers to other books with flying saucers, books set in the drawing room milieu of the early nineteenth century with other books set in the same environment. Pattern recognition is one of the key ways we identify genre; it is what Genette identifies as a book’s Architext.

4.5 Patterns or motifs? The Aarne-Thompson index

Folklorists regularly use a system that is based upon pattern recognition. The Aarne-Thompson index is a system used to classify folklore according to content, by assigning numbers to tale types that are recognisably derived from oral culture. Tales are grouped thematically, with animal tales occupying type numbers 1-299, ordinary folk tales (including fairy tales) numbers 300-1199, jokes and anecdotes 1200-1999. The Aarne-Thompson index covers a larger range of texts than Propp’s study, covering all folklore, not just the fairy tale. It is also much larger in scope than Propp’s *Morphology*. Where Propp reduces all fairy tales to 31 functions, Aarne and Thompson catalogue thousands of different tale types. One reason for this major difference is that folklorists in the eighteenth, nineteenth and even early twentieth century, tended to be concerned with the genealogy of a tale. Where Propp is concerned with the inner workings, the grammar of storytelling in general, folklore has traditionally been concerned with the origin and evolution of a certain tale type. We may recognise this as a major fault-line between two techniques that attempt to utilise a scientific model: where, according to Saussure’s terminology, Propp’s model is synchronic; the conventional model for folklorists is diachronic. The model governing Propp’s study is grammar; the model for Aarne and Thompson is ethno-botany.

In the Aarne-Thompson index there is one unit smaller than the tale, and this is the motif. An extended quotation from Thompson himself explains the difference between the type and the motif:

A type is a traditional tale that has an independent existence, that can be told as a complete narrative and does not depend for its meaning on any other tale [...]

A motif is the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition. In order to have this power it must have something unusual and striking about it. Most motifs fall into three classes. First are the actors in a tale—gods, or unusual animals, or marvelous creatures like witches, ogres or fairies, or even the conventionalised human characters like the favorite youngest child or the cruel stepmother. Second come certain items in the background of the action—magic objects, unusual customs, strange beliefs and the like. In the third place there are single incidents—and these comprise the great majority of motifs. It is this last class that can have an independent existence and that may therefore serve as true tale types. By far the largest number of traditional types consist of these single motifs. For the purpose of furnish a basis for the survey of traditional narrative in an area having a large common store of tales a type index is necessary; the principal use of a motif-index is to display identity or similarity in the tale elements in all parts of the world so that they can be conveniently studied. A type-index implies that all versions of a type have a genetic relationship; a motif index makes no such assumption.

(Thompson 1977: 415-6)

Motifs, then, are highly important elements. A tale type can consist simply of one motif, or a chain of motifs linked together. The removal or addition of a certain motif may be the difference between one tale type and another. But for all the proposed scientific exactness that an index of motifs proposes, it cannot get round the fact that recognising a motif is an act of pattern recognition. It depends on the folklorist or critic recognising a “striking” feature and then comparing tales that utilise this striking event *or something like it*. The actual motif does not need to be exactly the same thing. The AT index is therefore an ideal model of the way that audiences and critics recognise patterns on the level of a story’s structure.

In this index, the tale named “Bluebeard” is given the number 312, placing it within the realm of tales that feature a “supernatural adversary”. The motifs identified in the AT index are:

I. G400. Person falls into ogre's power. R11.1. Princess (maiden) abducted by monster (ogre). G81. Unwitting marriage to cannibal. T721.5. Subterranean castle. C611. Forbidden chamber. Person allowed to enter all chambers except one. C311.1.1. Tabu: looking at ghosts. C227. Tabu: eating human flesh. C913. Bloody key as sign of disobedience.

II. C920. Death for breaking tabu.

(Aarne and Thompson 1964: 102)

In identifying the introductory motifs of Bluebeard (AT312), Aarne and Thompson refer to a tale type that has long since been associated with Bluebeard, and which is best known as the Grimms' "Fitcher's Bird" (AT311), and the index works to further accentuate the similarities between the two tales by presenting them in close proximity and interlinking 312 with 311 with the phrase "For introductory motifs, see type 311" (103). The following motifs are given as being specific to type 312:

S62.1. Bluebeard. K551. Respite from death granted until prayer is finished.
G551.1. Rescue of sister from ogre by brother. G652. Rescue from ogre by helpful animals.

(103)

As a cursory inspection of the motifs that are included in "Bluebeard", we can first see that many motifs are not found in the best-known example of the tale.

Motif	In "Bluebeard"	In "Hare's Bride"
G400	yes	yes
R11.1.	no	yes
G81	no	no
T721.5	no	no
C611	yes	no
C311.1.1	no	no
C227	no	no
C913	yes	no
C920	yes	no
S62.1.	yes	no
C551.1.	yes	no
C652.	no	no

Statistically, Perrault's "Bluebeard" only contains 50% of the motifs that supposedly characterise the tale¹⁷. This paltry score may be increased if we consider

¹⁷ This figure is, of course, questionable. Some of the motifs may be cases of either/ or particularly the two Tabus (a tale with a prohibition on looking at ghosts *and* eating human flesh is harder to imagine) although if the protagonist were a princess and the ogre a cannibal, then the criteria for G400, R11.1 *and* G81 would be fulfilled.

the secret room as being an example of C311.1.1 although if that *is* the case “looking at ghosts” is a strange summary to give of the motif, and “looking at corpses” would be more apt. This confusion over what to count as a motif is increased when stories are read symbolically. Marina Warner suggests that cannibalism in “Bluebeard” is a metaphor for promiscuity, pointing to cases where, despite being labelled a cannibal, the protagonist finds the intact remains of the ogre’s previous wives, raising the question of what exactly the cannibal has eaten (Warner 1994a: 259). To explain this consumption, Warner reads the cannibalistic urge as a form of male promiscuity where the woman is “consumed” in the symbolic sense, although as she later explains, this symbolic cannibalism is almost as dangerous to the woman as the real thing, given the likelihood of death during childbirth before the early twentieth century. But cannibal is also used in everyday language to refer to the uncultured, a synonym for “savages”. In *The Collector* Miranda even mockingly refers to her captor as Caliban, poking fun at his lack of urbanity, a fact that can be used to connect that novel with Bluebeard, if we read symbolically rather than literarily¹⁸. We may question the classification of tale types even further when analysing the second example of type 312 given in the AT index, the Grimms’ “The Hare’s Bride” (KHM 66).

This story tells of a girl who sits on the tail of a hare and is carried away to its little hut. Then the hare forces her to cook for the wedding guests, twice entering the kitchen telling her to hurry, the girl dresses up a straw doll to take her place, and escapes. The next time the hare tells the girl to hurry up, he furiously strikes the head off the straw doll, at which point the cap falls off the doll and the hare realises he has been duped and is sad.

The connection between this story and Bluebeard seems tenuous in the extreme. Instead of a mass murderer we have an unpleasant hare, there is no secret chamber,

¹⁸ In a chain of analogy where Caliban = Cannibal (suggested anagrammatically in *The Tempest* even though there is no evidence that Caliban has ever tasted human flesh) = Motif G81 = Bluebeard. The representation of the Bluebeard figure as uncultured is also a feature of Byatt’s *Babel Tower*, where the husband doesn’t understand poetry, Atwood’s *Bluebeard’s Egg* with its naïve heart surgeon (!), and even Carter’s *Nights at the Circus* where the duke may be rich, but his taste is also rather gauche and meretricious.

no dead brides and no sentencing to death. In fact, if “Bluebeard” matches the motif list only by 50%, this tale scores a paltry 17%, featuring only motif G400 and R11.1 (and those only if you accept the hare represents an ogre¹⁹, which is quite an imaginative leap). The latter part of the tale even resembles tale type 311 more than 312, particularly motifs G501 “Stupid ogre” and K525 “Escape by use of substituted object”. The only unifying theme between the two tales seems to be “bad husband”, and even this is an over-generalisation, given that the husband in the second tale is a hare and the protagonist and her nemesis aren’t even married. Saying that the two tales are of the same type seems counterintuitive.

The Aarne-Thompson index was designed to organise folk tales, so that tales of the same family, or with the same subject could be organised in a logical manner, as Aarne himself implies:

How much would it facilitate the work of the collector of tales if all the collections of folk-tales thus far printed should be arranged according to the same system. The scholar would be in a position to discover in a moment the material for which he has the need in any collection, whereas at present he is compelled to look through the entire work if he wishes to acquaint himself with the contents. [...] If now the classification of types issued by the Folk-Lore Fellows, in their collections and catalogues to appear in the future, should come into general use, the collecting of material would thereby be made very much easier.

(Aarne quoted in Thompson 1977: 415)

As we have seen, however, the classification of types can sometimes seem a haphazard and arbitrary arrangement. In a collection ordered according to the AT type index, a story about a nasty bunny would be right next to one of the darkest tales of serial murder in popular fairy tales. Furthermore, you would have to skip several hundred pages to find another tale type that has been linked with “Bluebeard” for centuries. “The Robber Bridegroom”, or a tale resembling it, has been suggested as a possible source that Perrault drew on when writing his tale by some critics (see Windling 2002 :15-21, Tatar 2000: 56), and the English version of the tale, “Mr. Fox”, is

¹⁹ Indeed the definition of ogre is also problematic within the Aarne-Thompson motif index. The ogre can be a giant, a serial killer, a witch, a queen and apparently, it seems, even a hare. This flexibility resembles Propp’s system of terming characters as “functions”, in that it does not matter to the structure of the story what name the villain is, he is the villain because he behaves villainously. Nevertheless, it is odd that a villain who happens to be a robber, is treated entirely differently to one who is not.

alluded to in *Much Ado About Nothing*, proving that this story predates Perrault's late 17th century collection (Carter 2001a:230).

Because the protagonist's fiancé in this tale is a robber, a natural rather than supernatural adversary, we find the tale amongst the other tales of robbers allocated the number 955. Here a relationship between tales (possibly in the traditional sense of source criticism) is obscured due to the non-magical nature of the villain, even though it is hard to see exactly what is magical about Perrault's Bluebeard, where only the key (and perhaps the blue beard) appears supernatural. Whether tales are related to each other seems always to be decided by the individual critic. If Aarne and Thompson judged the marital relationship between protagonist and villain more important than whether the villain was realistic (a robber) or unrealistic (a wizard or ogre) we can easily imagine the tales would be closer together in classification. Similarly, we can imagine that different critics might find different motifs the most important aspect of a tale, as Maria Tatar writes, critics have constantly focused on the "bloody key as a sign of disobedience" as the major motif in the "Bluebeard" fairy tales (Tatar 1987: 166, 2000: 56). It is clear that Aarne and Thompson did not share this view, due to the allocation of "The Hare's Bride" to type 312, and the fact that this motif does not occur therein.

If anything, the Aarne-Thompson index's greatest utility and its greatest flaws come because it is modelled upon the operations that take place in the human mind. When watching Disney's *Pinocchio*²⁰ anyone who has heard the story of Jonah and the Whale automatically recognises the similarity between the two stories, just as the reader of fairy tales recognises similarities between Odysseus' theft from Polyphemus and Jack's theft from the giant. The AT index assigns these events a motif number to formally link the tales, where the human mind makes the link in a more ineffable manner, recognising the similarity between the two tales without having to bridge them

²⁰ The Disney revision of Collodi's serial/ novel, makes this reading more obvious to the modern day viewer substituting a whale for the original story's 'terrible fish'. However, what popular belief specifies as a 'whale' is referred to in the book of Jonah as a 'great fish', a description that most whales would object to, being as they are, fully-paid-up members of the mammalian club (Wunderlich and Morrissey 2002).

with the thought “ah motif number G610”. The mind is able to recognise the patterns in one story and another, just as we are able to recognise film re-makes, or dramatic versions of novels. Pattern recognition is increasingly stressed in modern psychology of the type practiced by MIT professor Stephen Pinker, and which suggests that the human brain is uniquely engineered by natural selection to recognise patterns, an ability that facilitates what Noam Chomsky called the Language Acquisition Device (Pinker 1994: 15-24). But it is the mind's superior ability to recognise patterns that also shows the faults with the AT index. Andrew Lang recognised the similarities between “The Robber Bridegroom” and “Bluebeard”, but as we have already noticed, the AT index is obliged to place them at opposite ends of the book due to one tale featuring a robber and the other featuring an “ogre”. Likewise, Marina Warner recognises KHM 3, “Mary’s Child”, as related to “Bluebeard”, despite it featuring the Virgin Mary in the role of “Bluebeard” and therefore appearing as type 710 (Warner 1994a: 244).

It is not only folklorists who attempt to chart relationships between texts by identifying patterns. A common strategy in literary criticism is “revealing” the influence of text a upon text b, or recognizing text a as an update of text b. So it is not surprising when we see, for example, Sherrill Grace referring to John Fowles’ *The Collector* as an update of “Bluebeard”. It shares certain themes (the murderous and rich man, the secret room, the isolated location) but in other ways it lacks some features that have been seen as the definitive (such as the prohibition to enter the secret room, the previously murdered wives, the bloody key as sign of disobedience). Casie Hermansson gets around this problem by reducing Bluebeard to two key elements, the murderous male and the secret chamber, much like a folklorist identifying the motifs that they consider to be most important to a tale (Hermansson 2003).

Despite problems with the Aarne-Thompson index, it is possible to use it in order to show the similarities (or differences) in structure between one fairy tale and another. It is also useful for highlighting structural similarities between a novel and fairy tale, as the following table comparing “Bluebeard” and *Babel Tower* shows.

Motif	"Bluebeard"	<i>Babel Tower</i>
G.81 Unwitting marriage to cannibal G400. Person falls into ogre's power	After being courted, the protagonist marries Bluebeard	Frederica marries Nigel
S621.1. Bluebeard	The husband's unusual blue beard	Nigel's blue stubble
C611. Forbidden chamber.	"Open them all; go into all and every one of them, except that little closet, which I forbid you, and forbid it in such a manner that, if you happen to open it, there's nothing but what you may expect from my just anger and resentment."	Frederica invades Nigel's "secret places"
C311.1.1 Tabu: looking at ghosts (!)	The slaughtered wives: "Coming to the closet-door, she made a stop for some time, thinking upon her husband's orders, and considering what unhappiness might attend her if she was disobedient; but the temptation was so strong she could not overcome it. She then took the little key, and opened it, trembling, but could not at first see anything plainly, because the windows were shut. After some moments she began to perceive that the floor was all covered over with clotted blood, on which lay the bodies of several dead women, ranged against the walls. (These were all the wives whom Bluebeard had married and murdered, one after another.) She thought she should have died for fear, and the key, which she pulled out of the lock, fell out of her hand."	Frederica finds Nigel's stash of Sadoomasochistic pornography in a suitcase inside his wardrobe; "It is like finding trunks of butchered limbs, she tells herself wildly, hands and feet under the floorboards." (101)
C913. Bloody key as sign of disobedience	After several goings backward and forward she was forced to bring him the key. Bluebeard, having very attentively considered it, said to his wife, "How comes this blood upon the key?" "I do not know," cried the poor woman, paler than death. "You do not know!" replied Bluebeard "I very well know. You were resolved to go into the closet, were you not? Mighty well, madam; you shall go in, and take your place among the ladies you saw there."	N/A
C920. Death for breaking Tabu.	Bluebeard sentences his wife to death	Nigel rapes Frederica and when she runs away threatens her with an axe which he hurls at her. The flat of the axe hits her ribs, but gashes her leg as she and it fall to the ground. (121)

K551. Respite from death granted until prayer is finished	Wife delays death by asking to pray. Calls her brothers.	Frederica telephones her friends for assistance, though she claims she is going to the chemists (124)
G551.1 Rescue of sister from ogre by brother	"At this very instant there was such a loud knocking at the gate that Bluebeard made a sudden stop. The gate was opened, and presently entered two horsemen, who, drawing their swords, ran directly to Bluebeard. He knew them to be his wife's brothers, one a dragoon, the other a musketeer, so that he ran away immediately to save himself; but the two brothers pursued so close that they overtook him before he could get to the steps of the porch, when they ran their swords through his body and left him dead."	Frederica, with son Leo, is rescued by her "brothers" from Cambridge (129)

The above table shows both the strengths and weaknesses of the Aarne-Thompson index. For example, although I believe it helps to show similarities between the two stories on the structural level, several of the comparisons are clearly problematic. A collection of pornography is not objectively the same thing as a chamber of dead women, even if symbolically it may serve as a metaphor for Nigel's Bluebeard-like misogyny. Furthermore, as the page references demonstrate, the AT index has here acted like a filter, focusing on certain events that occur in the first 130 pages of a 600 page novel. However, it does provide a way to externalise the process of recognition that a reader undergoes when reading, and works better to show the similarities in structure between two texts than close reading, or by synopses of both texts written by a (hardly impartial) critic. The above table, I think, helps highlight the structural similarities between "Bluebeard" and *Babel Tower* in an effective way, providing a point-by-point comparison between the two texts.

In cases like these, Genette's metaphor of the palimpsest is particularly apposite. A palimpsest is a piece of writing that is *on top* of a previous piece of writing, the term derived from the medieval practice of having a piece of parchment that was reused over and over again to prepare early drafts. Genette adapts this term to apply to intertextuality, denoting the original text the *hypotext* (hypo from underneath) and the

text that supersedes it the *hypertext*. Just as one can sometimes see the traces of a piece of writing that has been scribbled over by indentations in paper, critics often look below the surface of a text to remark upon the pre-existing structures, thereby discerning a particular intertext as what lies “beneath” the new text.

4.6 The unconscious of the text

If we accept the possibility of the palimpsestic text, a story that borrows its structure from a previously existing intertext, then we have to accept the possibility that texts can have a “hidden meaning”. This viewpoint is so commonsense that it has entered the critical lexicon; we speak of text’s “deeper” meaning, or having a “deeper” understanding of a work, as though reading was a form of archaeology where the skilled reader is the equivalent of the diligent and knowledgeable archaeologist reconstructing the past from pottery fragments.

Indeed, the idea of the intertext owes a great deal to the absorption of Freudian theory into everyday thought. Just as the latent meaning of dreams may be “unearthed” through careful analysis of condensation and displacement, so critics argue that a text’s “real” meaning can be discovered through the same techniques:

Freud, in his analysis of dreams, argued that they tend to focus through *condensation* and *displacement*. In condensation one sign collects into itself a host of meanings or signifiers; in displacement a sign from another area of signification stands in for the real content of the dream. A ring in a dream might symbolically condense ideas and desires concerning a host of aspects of life: marriage, religious faith, sexual desire, economic stability or instability. A surreal dream centring on a cake might be a symbolically displaced working-through of the dreamer’s desires for a person associated in the unconscious with cakes. Condensation and displacement can, then, be seen as two operations in the semiotic process. Kristeva, in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, styles intertextuality as a third operation within the semiotic process. Intertextuality is thus understood as ‘the passage from one sign system to another’ which involves ‘an altering of the thetic *position* – the destruction of the old position and the formation of a new one’ (1984a: 59). Keen to avoid the reduction of intertextuality to the traditional notions of influence, source study and simple ‘context’, Kristeva now drops the term intertextuality in favour of a new term, *transposition* (*ibid*: 59-60).

(Allen 2000: 52-3)

In constructing a reading of *The Collector* as a work that is structured upon Bluebeard we may draw parallels that help illustrate how these Freudian concepts work when ‘revealing’ the unconscious intertext. We may suggest that *The Collector*’s epigraph “*que fors aus ne le sot riens nee*”, (rough translation: “no one but them knew

about it”) which is from a thirteenth century French Romance, *La Chastelaine De Vergi*, is exceptionally important in reading the text because it is from a tale of the type of *La princesse lointaine*, “the princess in a tower”, a classic fairy tale motif found in the popular fairy tale “Rapunzel” (Foster 1994: 24, Loveday 1985: 13). In doing this, we are suggesting that, like in a dream, condensation has taken place. We privilege one part of the work above the rest of it due to it being perceived as the “key” to the meaning of the text as a whole. There is a fairy tale incorporated within *The Collector* (a version of Beauty and the Beast told by Miranda) and it uses Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* as an overt intertext, and yet, Sherrill Grace, Casie Hermansson and Marina Warner talk of its relation to a fairy tale that is not explicitly mentioned anywhere in the text. Again, we could argue that this is an example of *displacement*: both narrator-protagonists are choosing to mention the fairy tale of the princess in the tower because the alternative (that Clegg may see himself for what he is, a Bluebeard, or that Miranda may recognise the menace in her captor) is too distressing.

Through the techniques of condensation and displacement critics can argue that a text has a hidden, or unconscious, meaning. The literary critic then becomes the psychoanalyst whose insight allows them to discover “deeper” or hidden meaning, whether that meaning is to do with the psychology of the author, the reader or even the social systems that are unconsciously represented in the text. Riffaterre is quite explicit about this when he writes, in a chapter tellingly titled “The Unconscious of Fiction”:

It should be clear by now that the intertext of the narrative acts as the unconscious of fiction and that readers recover or discover that intertext because the narrative itself contains clues leading back to it. This is in no way different from the process that leads the analyst from anomalies, inconsequences, and non-sequiturs in the analysand’s monologue to a *key* to the latter’s symbols and symptoms. It must also be clear that the narrative is produced by repressing and displacing the intertext, and that the visible sign of this repression or displacement at the surface of the fictional text is the loss of narrative.

(Riffaterre 1990b: 91)

It is understandable that this should be the case. Literary critics have a hard job justifying their role even to university bureaucrats, let alone to the general public. The idea of hidden meaning gives the critic an almost mystical power, like a medieval

fortune-teller, viewing through arcane arts the secret signs hidden in the mundane. Just as Freudian psychoanalysis changes the arbiter of meaning from the originator of an utterance to the critical listener, locating “hidden” intertexts shifts the balance of power from the author to the critic; it does not matter whether the author mentions the intertext explicitly or not, the critic can locate the hidden text through a kind of literary dreamwork. By extending this line of argument we might even say that it doesn’t matter whether an intertext is explicitly mentioned: the author may have used the intertext unconsciously, without being aware of the relevance of the intertext. This argument is used by Harold Bloom in his discussion of the intertextual ‘family romance’ between writers when he suggests that a poet need not have actually read the work of a predecessor for it to impact in ways upon his (because Bloom’s cosmogony is concerned mainly with male poets) own writing (Bloom 1973).

4.7 The two approaches to intertextuality: centrifugal and centripetal

There are ultimately two ways to approach intertextuality; either to suggest the impossibility of any single meaning, reducing the status of the author as the source of all meaning; or to suggest that the author still controls the reader’s response to the text through the use of intertexts. This clash of ideas is demonstrated within the study *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* where two opposing views about this question in are demonstrated in two consecutive essays. The first suggests that:

[T]he identification of an intertext is an act of interpretation. The intertext is not a real and causative source but a theoretical construct formed by and serving the purposes of a reading. There are no moments of authority and points of origin except those which are retrospectively designated as origins and which, therefore, can be shown to derive from the series for which they are constituted as origin.
(Frow 1991: 46)

According to this statement, the intertext is a subjective supposition, determined by the reader. The source of the intertext is to be located in the reading process, and a reader does not ‘miss’ intertexts that an author has consciously or unconsciously ‘put into’ his or her own text, rather the reader creates intertexts through the process of reading. The direct opposite point of view is expressed in the following essay by Michael Riffaterre –a critic who has devoted much of his career addressing the problem

of intertextuality –who begins his essay with the statement “An intertext is one or more texts which the reader must know in order to understand a work of literature in terms of its overall significance” (Riffaterre 1990a: 56).

Here, intertextuality is not something that the reader *puts in* to the text, but something inherent in the text, which if the reader is not aware of, he or she cannot fully understand the text. The article is titled “Compulsory Reader Response: the Intertextual Drive” which suggests that the reader has no choice but to recognise intertexts, and to respond to them either in terms of activating a knowledge of the recognised intertexts in their reading of this text, or in being aware that they are missing a piece of the jigsaw that gives meaning to the text.

[W]e must distinguish between the actual knowledge of the form and content of that intertext, and a mere awareness that such an intertext exists and can eventually be found somewhere. This awareness in itself may be enough to make readers perceive the text's literariness. They can do so because they perceive that something is missing from the text: gaps that need to be filled.

(Riffaterre: 56-7)

The question of intertextuality has become tied in with debate about the source of meaning in literature. On the one side of the debate are critics who wish to preserve the author as the source of meaning, and the possibility of definitive meaning: Riffaterre, Bloom and (perhaps) Genette. On the other side are critics who wish to point to the plurality of meaning: Barthes, Kristeva and Derrida. Graham Allen uses the language of Barthes and Kristeva to typify these antithetical viewpoints, terming the former group centripetal, and the latter centrifugal, which highlights how one group uses intertextuality to enshrine the work as the centre of all interpretation, and the other suggests a more diffuse process wherein the reader and other texts have as much control over a text's meaning than the author. For one group, we may suggest, intertextuality is a literary *technique* and like metaphor or rhyme, is a tool utilised by the author that increases the 'literariness' of his or her work. For the other group, intertextuality is a phenomenon that is an essential part of language. When Barthes says that every text is a tissue of quotations, he is not disparaging the author as 'unoriginal' but highlighting the paradoxical nature of language; that it always “other”, as

Bakhtin points out in “The Problem of Speech Genres”; even everyday utterances take the form of “well worn words”, so that even the most intimate and personal utterances (“I love you” being a prime example) is a quotation of a quotation of a quotation (Bakhtin 1994).

The difference between explicit and implicit intertexts is the difference between author-sanctioned intertextuality and critic ‘discovered’ intertextuality. Where the intertext is explicit, as in Atwood’s *The Robber Bride*, the importance of the fairy tale intertext is impossible to deny, but when an intertext is implicit, as in Fowles’s *The Collector* it is impossible to definitively confirm its importance.

This is an important paradox. Those texts which are explicit about their intertextuality are the ones that seem to be most limited in terms of interpretation, and therefore are also the texts where the author has delimited the possibilities of reading. In other words, in fictions that are explicitly intertextual the explicit intertext “put in” by the author reduces the possibilities of alternative readings. And yet, in explicitly utilising intertextuality the author also effaces his or herself as Allen points out, “explicitly intertextual forms of literature, Kristeva and Barthes argue, foreground the fact that they are not original works written by unique authors of great genius, but rather that they are the product of split subjects” (Allen 2000: 50). Rather than being the sole creator of meaning, the genius coming up with new stories, authors explicitly naming their intertexts acknowledge their debt to other stories, especially when the other stories they acknowledge are mythic or folkloric. In becoming a storyteller rather than an “author”, they emphasise their place in a tradition of storytelling as old as humankind itself. On the other hand, those authors who do not explicitly “authorise” intertexts, by denying the influence of others in their work also allow their text to be analysed through a myriad of possible intertexts²¹.

²¹ It is perhaps for this reason that Joyce worked so hard to circulate his own ideas about *Ulysses*. After removing the chapter titles that were used in serial publication (e.g. “Oxen of the Sun”) and that linked Joyce’s work with its Homeric hypotext, he made sure that his ideas about the text were circulated by writing anonymously to various critics who then disseminated these ideas about the importance and relevance of the Homeric intertext to the public in general. What Joyce takes away with the one hand, he gives with the other. It is also interesting that Fowles feels the need to “reveal” his source, thereby giving

Graham Allen hits upon this very problem when he writes:

[I]t is one thing to examine the hypertextual relations and functions of a text which explicitly foregrounds its reliance on and transformation of a hypotext; it is quite another to deal with a text which hides its hypotext or depends upon a hypotext no longer available or known by modern readers.

(Allen 2000: 111)

Where we can feel quite safe about commenting on the relationship between hyper- and hypo- text when we *know for a fact that such a relationship exists* and that meaning can be gleaned from this analysis, it is quite another thing to create an intertextual reading of a text that does not have this position of certainty. Hidden or coded meanings are always open to debate and contention.

One of the most fascinating and contentious cases of intertextuality, Saussure's anagrams, could be an example of steganography. Saussure argued that certain examples of Greek and Latin poetry "worked on non-representational levels in which groups of letters and phonemes (sounds), such as the first and last letters of consecutive lines, arranged themselves into deep textual units, often the names of gods or heroes" (Allen 2000: 43-4). So, in analysing one of Livy's poems, Saussure discovers the name Apollo even though the sun god is never explicitly mentioned by name in that poem (45). Saussure's reading of these poems assumes that he has rediscovered a hidden meaning within these poems, an intertextual element that exists at the level of the structure. Here, signifiers do not relate to stable signifieds but are linked to an endless chain of further signifiers, a view of intertextuality that both Derrida and Kristeva recognised as foreshadowing their own work (44).

Saussure's anagrams are a good example of the problems we find when attempting to locate an implicit intertext: the impossibility of "proving" the thesis. Saussure never published his work on anagrams, as he never proved the case to his own satisfaction.

his own authoritative view of the text. Genette in *Paratexts* suggests that the function of the preface is that it allows the author to control the reader's reading of a text, and he points to interviews that act as a preface to a text: this was certainly my experience of Fowles's *The Collector* which I read *after* the interview with Newquist *because* I was researching novels with fairy tale intertexts, and which therefore orientated my reading towards finding points of similarity between Fowles's text and its supposed predecessor.

5. Revision

Element 5 covers texts where the hypertext is mainly concerned with revising the hypotext with all that this implies in terms of structural similarities between the two tales. Any “new” version of a fairy tale counts as a revision, whether it is the Disney version of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* or whether it is Donald Barthelme’s *Snow White*. Fairy tales have been revised over the centuries for any number of reasons; Zipes (1988), Tatar (1987) and Bottigheimer (1987) all document the way that the Brothers Grimm revised the tales they published to make them more suitable for the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie. Zipes also highlights the way that Walt Disney’s *Snow White* revises its fairy tale “hypotext”²², (KHM 53) “*Sneewittchen*” (usually translated as “Little Snow White”) in order to make a version of the tale that reflects American values (Zipes 2001: 84-5).

In *Fairy Tale as Myth: Myth as Fairy Tale*, Zipes suggests a definition of revision that is helpful here:

According to the *Oxford Universal Dictionary*, revise means “To look or read carefully over, with a view to improving or correcting 1611,” “To go over again, re-examine, in order to improve or amend.” The purpose of producing a revised fairy tale is to create something new that incorporates the critical and creative thinking of the producer and corresponds to changed demands and tastes of audiences. As a result of transformed values, the revised classical fairy tale seeks to alter the reader’s views of traditional patterns, images, and codes. This does not mean that all revised classical fairy tales are improvements and progressive. Revision for the sake of revision is not necessarily a change for the better or stimulating. However, the premise of a revision is that there is something wrong with an original work and that it needs to be changed for the better.

(Zipes 1994: 9-10)

The term revision, then, can be applied to Hollywood remakes or to subversive short stories alike, although as we will see, just because a text is a revision, this does not necessarily make the link between the two texts an explicit one. Particularly important to this study are the revisions of fairy tales that started appearing in the 1970s and which coincided with the increasing importance of the second wave feminist movement²³.

²² The title credits refer to it as “The Brothers Grimm’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*”.

²³ It is impossible to overstate to which this study is indebted to feminist revisions of the fairy tale. It is the rise of feminism which led to the first socio-political criticism of the fairy tale, and the patriarchal messages that are embedded within it. The feminist correctives to fairy tales which placed women in

Element 5, the re-visioning of “old” fairy tales is best represented by Angela Carter’s short story collection, *The Bloody Chamber*, perhaps the best known book of contemporary fairy tales revisions. The story which begins the collection, “The Bloody Chamber”, is a good example of revision, as it retells the story of “Bluebeard” with few deviations. Although told in the first person and in Carter’s characteristically opulent prose, it is possible to recognise the tale as a version of “Bluebeard” because the events in the two tales are almost identical.

In the case of re-visions the question is always *why*. Why re-write “Bluebeard” with a layer of psychological complexity and in a greatly lengthened form? In this case, we already have a gamut of explanation, given the reams of critical material on Angela Carter. Although Carter’s relationship with feminism was always uneasy, as evidenced in her still controversial *The Sadeian Woman*, the book has been ascribed an intent in line with that of second wave feminism; to reclaim fairy tales for women by highlighting the underlying misogyny of certain stories, or the way in which these stories have been used against women.

There was a great spate of feminist revision of fairy tales by women during the 1970s, a sample of which is represented in Jack Zipes’s collection *Don’t Bet on The Prince* (1986) and also *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (1993). Some of these re-workings were meant to displace the patriarchal originals, others to criticise and subvert those originals by putting women in a more active role, although despite the merits of the Merseyside Fairy Story Collective version of “Little Red Riding Hood” it has not supplanted the Grimms’ version as “the” fairy tale. In fact, the revision most often takes the stance of a supplement, as Still and Worton observe, “[e]very literary imitation is a *supplement* which seeks to complete and supplant the original and which functions for later readers as the pre-text of the ‘original’” (Still and Worton 1990: 7). Therefore even revisions which have successfully supplanted their hypotexts, like

stronger roles, in addition to the criticism of the fairy tale form led to the contemporary criticism of Zipes, Warner, Tatar *et al* which have proved invaluable to my thesis. It is not a coincidence that Hutcheon considers feminism and other types of counter-cultural theory that grew in prominence in the latter half of the twentieth century the force that created postmodernism.

the Disney fairy tale movies that function as “the original” for most modern children are supplementary in nature.

Carter’s version of “Bluebeard” is not intended to displace the original in every sense. It is novelistic, with dense description and significant attention paid to making the characters psychologically realistic, and is obviously not supposed to replace Perrault’s version in modern fairy tale collections. But it is a supplement because it relies to a large part for effect upon the reader’s knowledge of a pre-text.

One of the most interesting things about Carter’s re-vision of “Bluebeard” is the tenuous way in which it is explicitly connected to the original. Its title is of the writerly type (element 2), able to be decoded by those who *already know* the tale that is famous for its “bloody chamber” but liable to remain cryptic to those who do not²⁴. This is an important point, because re-visions that intend to replace or supplement an original usually signal this intention in the title. The Merseyside Fairy Story Collective and Roald Dahl used the title of their revisions of “Little Red Riding Hood” (“Red Riding Hood” and “Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf” respectively) to signal to the reader that this is intended to replace, or conflict with the version they already know (Levorato 2003: 151). Jane Yolen’s *Sleeping Ugly* signals its relationship with “Sleeping Beauty” in its title by clever use of the “opposite” antonym. As in all cases, the title is the best place to identify an intertextual relationship between one text and another, whether the example is *Ulysses* or *Faust among Equals*. Margaret Atwood’s “Bluebeard’s Egg, where the intertextual relationship between the two texts (hypo/hyper) is authorised by its title, and which incorporates a synopsis of “Fitcher’s Bird” is an example of a short story that signals clearly its status as a revision of the fairy tale.

The plot of “The Bloody Chamber” is almost identical to Perrault’s “Bluebeard”, although transplanted to the early twentieth century, and without siblings. Sister Anne, that strangely redundant figure in Perrault’s version, is absent although an ineffectual piano tuner (to whom the narrator is later affianced) provides companionship for Bluebeard’s bride. Likewise it is the mother, not the brother, who rides in to the rescue

²⁴ In fact, the only title that acts as an ‘authorised’ intertextual element is the story “Puss in Boots”

and slaughters the monstrous husband. These alterations do not significantly alter the underlying structure of the tale, although we can already see the obvious difference in meaning. In other words, this re-vision is implicit, rather than explicit. Students I have taught have been unaware of the hypertextual nature of this version, a fact arising from the implicit nature of the title and the increasing rarity of “Bluebeard” in modern fairy tale collections. To be fair, this is not the only tale in the collection that has a writerly, rather than an authorised title, but the average (intended) reader would have no trouble in figuring out the hypotext of “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” when the protagonist is called “Beauty” and Mr Lyon is called “Beast”²⁵. It is safe to say that those who are unaware of the existence of the fairy tale “Bluebeard” will not have their attention called to its pre-existence.

One explicit reference to “Bluebeard” occurs in “The Bloody Chamber” and this is almost a passing aside that occurs at the dénouement of the tale and does not leap out at the reader²⁶. When the protagonist’s mother rides in to rescue the daughter,

You never saw such a wild thing as my mother, her hat seized by the winds and blown out to sea so that her hair was her white mane, her black lisle legs exposed to the thigh, her skirts tucked round her waist, one hand on the reins of the rearing horse while the other clasped my father’s service revolver and, behind her, the breakers of the savage, indifferent sea, like the witnesses of a furious justice. And my husband stood stock-still, as if she had been Medusa, the sword still raised over his head as in those clockwork tableaux of Bluebeard that you see in glass cases at fairs.

(Carter 1992: 40)

And that’s it. The one, solitary allusion to the model of the tale occurs at its climax, and is overshadowed by the description of the mother. It’s Medusa versus Bluebeard and Bluebeard doesn’t stand a chance. But this throwaway line (one among dozens of intertextual allusions in the story) is the “key” to the text, the one moment where an uninformed reader is informed of the hypotext, and the fact that this key is so diminished is of the utmost significance to how Carter uses Bluebeard. For if the

²⁵ As we saw above, some allusory character names are more explicit than others.

²⁶ There is an earlier reference to “the Castle of Murder”, a tale of the Bluebeard genus but which is obscure enough for me to discount here. Only a folklore enthusiast would know that this is the title of one of the tales that was featured in the first edition of the Grimms’ *Kinder Und Hausmärchen* to be discarded in the later editions (Carter: 33).

protagonist knows the tale of Bluebeard, we may wonder, why does she still open the forbidden chamber?

The traditional reading of "Bluebeard" propagated in nineteenth century editions was that it was a tale of the ill-effects of female curiosity, indeed it was often subtitled "The Fatal Effects of Curiosity" or "The Effect of Female Curiosity" (Warner 1994a: 244). This tradition presented it as a variant of the story of Pandora or Eve, where female curiosity causes all the evil in the world, and Carter playfully invokes this reading in her tale through allusions and foreshadowing. Carter's heroine while looking through her husband's library finds books with titles like *"The Initiation, The Key of Mysteries, The Secret of Pandora's Box"*, and a pornographic tome featuring a naked prostrated woman and an oriental man with erect penis and scimitar that bears the caption "Reproof of Curiosity" (16-7). When she is in the bloody chamber she feels "the eye of God—his eye" upon her (29). Considering her fate she compares her discovery to "the secret of Pandora's box" (34) and on the eve of execution when she discusses her fate with the blind piano tuner, and objects that she was being punished for only doing what her husband knew she would, he responds, "Like Eve" (38).

So why, if she is aware of all this precedent, if she knows the story of Bluebeard, does she enter the bloody chamber? It is not a question you can ask, as Maria Tatar explains:

Prohibition/violation: these paired functions stand as one of the fairy tale's most fundamental plot sequences. As soon as we learn about the dire consequences that will attend the mere touching of a spindle, we know that Briar Rose will somehow search out and find the only spindle left in her father's kingdom. When the dying monarch in "Faithful Johannes" tells his servant to show his son every room save "the last room on a long corridor, where the portrait of the Princess of the Golden Roof is hidden," it is almost certain that that particular room will be the only one to pique the curiosity of the young prince. The mother of the Goose Girl has only one word of advice to give her daughter on her journey to a foreign kingdom: to guard with care a snippet of white cloth stained with three drops of her mother's blood. Needless to say, the first event of consequence on the girl's journey is the loss of the cloth. In fairy tales, violations of prohibitions are the order of the day.

(Tatar 1987: 165)

And, if we take a closer look at Perrault's "Bluebeard", we begin to see that the heroine is not exactly punished for her curiosity. The scimitar does not fall, the protagonist escapes the fate of her predecessors and inherits a castle through her

husband's death, as Marina Warner puts it, "'Bluebeard' is a version of the fall where Eve gets away with it" (1994: 244). Carter's version accentuates the complicity that Warner detects between Perrault and his heroine, and reclaims the feminist nature of the tale. It is, after all, a tale in which the male plot of subjugation is defeated. Those who suggested the tale was a warning to women got it wrong, oversimplifying the prohibition/ violation pairing into a tale that hinges upon the woman's act of disobedience rather than the man's rather more serious habit of immolating his wives. We feel little sympathy for the violation of the ogre's right to privacy, and it can hardly be suggested that it would be better to ignore the fact that one's husband is a serial killer. It is for this reason, then, that Carter throws the line in a position where it is overshadowed. The heroine is aware of precedent, but leaving the door unopened is not a real choice, and ignoring the secret door would not lead to "happily ever after" as some readers of the tale have implied. Vladimir Propp, in fact, suggested that the interdiction fulfils *exactly the same function* in the folk tale as the "order", a fact highlighted by Carter, as her Bluebeard almost draws his wife a map to the chamber.

All is yours, everywhere is open to you – except the lock that this single key fits. Yet all it is is the key to a little room at the foot of the west tower, behind the still-room, at the end of a dark little corridor full of horrid cobwebs that would get into your hair and frighten you if you venture there. Oh, and you'd find it such a dull little room! But you must promise me, if you love me, to leave it well alone. It is only a private study, a hideaway, a "den", as the English say, where I can go, sometimes, on those infrequent yet inevitable occasions when the yoke of marriage seems to weigh too heavily on my shoulders. There I can go, you understand, to savour the rare pleasure of imagining myself wifeless.

(Carter 1992: 21)

The heroine of this tale is strangely passive and acquiescent and not, we might think, a suitable candidate for a feminist story at all and the numerous references to Pandora show how she is locked into a patriarchal way of seeing herself. She does not resist her husband, and literally puts her own head on the block when he commands. She also internalises "Bluebeard's" faults, speculating that "he might have chosen me because, in my innocence, he sensed a rare talent for corruption" (20), an acknowledgment of the husband's perversity, but also a phrase suggests that it is the heroine's *own fault*, her hitherto unknown "talent for corruption" that singled her out. The passive heroine is reminiscent of those women who blame themselves for their

husband beating them, and comparing this protagonist with those in Carter's novels or in the other stories in this collection leads us to the conclusion that Carter's revision, rather than being a feminist re-vision that empowers the heroine as a modern woman, draws out the feminist implications of the original tale. No-one reading the tale correctly can believe that it is the woman's fault, and drawing parallels between Bluebeard, Pandora and the story of the Fall allows Carter (an avowed atheist) to return to a theme she has written about previously, the unfairness of God's role in the fall, and the way women are blamed for something entirely God's own fault. The only major change in Carter's revision is that her *deus ex machina* is not the brothers but the tiger-slaying mother on a white charger who represents the "new woman" found in Carter's other works²⁷. So, although this re-vision seems to change very little, it in fact accentuates and re-presents the feminist nature of Perrault's original. Though the new-woman is the usual protagonist of Carter's later works (*Nights at the Circus*, *Wise Children*), whether this would have worked in a revision of this particular tale is doubtful (supposing she had the bad sense to marry a murderer, such a heroine would doubtless kill him as soon as she had opened the chamber, leaving the story bereft of its memorable tension), here by highlighting the heroine's absurd passivity and stressing the analogy between Bluebeard and God, Carter reinstates the tale of Bluebeard as one that has meaning for feminists²⁸.

As the above discussion of revision shows, revision is not different in technique from any other type of intertextuality. "The Bloody Chamber" utilises a writerly title, allusive character description, and borrows its plot directly from its hypotext, with a few minor differences. The main difference between a revision and any other intertextual usage of fairy tales is to do with the extent to which a revision draws upon the structure

²⁷ Lorna Sage points out that the "new woman" has always been part of Carter's work: "New Woman had been on the margins of Carter's picture since the beginning; there's a minor character, Emily, who walks away unscathed from the murderous mess at the end of *Shadow Dance* and she does it because she's already an adept, she knows the story in advance: 'I found this key in one of his trouser pockets, see, and I thought, you know, of Bluebeard'" (Sage 2001: 234)

²⁸ It is a matter of interest that Carter prefers to use the tales of Perrault as intertexts, where Atwood prefers the Grimms. Though Atwood prefers the resourceful heroines of the Grimm tales, Carter seems to see a subversive playfulness in Perrault that she identifies with.

of a pre-existing tale, whether this is explicit or implicit. For example, I would not call *Babel Tower* a revision of “Bluebeard”, even though it has significant structural similarities with the fairy tale and, later in the text, explicitly signals the intertextual relationship between itself and the fairy tale because despite these structural parallels, the “Bluebeard” intertext takes up only part of the first 130 pages of a 600 page book. For this reason, the importance of structure, most revisions of fairy tales tend to be short, approximating the fairy tale in comparative length²⁹. This is another reason why Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* is an excellent example of how revision operates with regards to the fairy tale. Nevertheless, I believe revision deserves separate study from elements one to four, because I see a revision of a story that draws intensively from one pre-existing story as a phenomenon quite different from intertextuality that draws from innumerable sources. Fairy tale revision is the creation of new fairy tales that are based upon old ones, and as such, deserves a category of its own, just as the creation of entirely new fairy tales (fabulation) does.

Re-vision is an interesting testing ground for one aspect of the use of fairy tales. Genette noted that plagiarism is a kind of intertextuality, and he covers it under the category of “Kristevan”, along with Quotation and Allusion. But what is plagiarism other than when the new version (hypertext) is identical to the old (hypotext)? The controversy over Graham Swift’s *Last Orders* focused around the fact that its subject matter and structure was “stolen” from Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*. More recently, Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* (2002) was criticised when the author admitted that the idea for the book’s story was pilfered from a review he had read of a book by a Brazilian author (which he had not read). The inane brouhaha over these two texts shows that it is not only the surface of the text that matters, but even structure and subject matter (for the texts concerned are not word for word facsimiles of the earlier texts but share only structure or subject matter).

Yet the same critical reaction, bemoaning a book’s lack of originality is *not* found when the “theft” is from fairy tale. In the vast amount of negative criticism of *The*

²⁹ Revision of other oral forms, such as myth, can be considerably longer.

Bloody Chamber, none of it brought up the fact that Carter had “stolen” material. This reaction did not arise, even though one of the tales (“The Snow Child”) – though not the *Snow White* familiar from Disney – had hardly been changed from the source³⁰. The idea of plagiarism does not seem to extend to fairy tales, a fact that made the fairy tale popular amongst nineteenth-century publishers as a hack writer could be employed and costly authors’ royalties avoided (see Zipes 1997a). The fact that obvious fairy tale intertexts do not generally lead to the author being castigated as a plagiarist shows that fairy tale intertexts are still regarded as fair game for re-telling.

6. Fabulation

Up to this point we have seen intertextuality primarily as a relationship between two identifiable texts, what Genette termed the hypertext and the hypotext. Elements one through five talk of the intertextual relationship between two works, whether that relationship is made clear explicitly through an **authorised element** or **incorporation** or whether the relationship between two texts is more implicit, **writerly** or **allusive**.

Element 6 the fabulation of a “new” fairy tale is where we see what Genette called **architextuality** arise. Genette defines architextuality as the relationship between the individual text and its genre. We recognise a “new” fairy tale precisely by these generic markers. The following exercise helps one to understand what Genette means by the “Unconscious” or “Tacit” nature of architextuality.

Imagine that you have been asked to write a fairy tale. The temptation would be to start the first line with the customary distancing devices used in fairy tales, “Once upon a time”. If you did not you would be *consciously* avoiding it, probably to avoid the clichés that we see so often. Your newly crafted fairy tale is also likely to be short in length, to take place in an unspecified archaic world rather than the modern day, and feature motifs that occur in traditional fairy tales, such as having 3 sisters, magical helpers and a happy ending connected with great wealth or marriage.

³⁰ This version of “Snow White” is summarised by Bettelheim (1976: 200), and first appeared in a letter written by Jacob Grimm to Friedrich Carl Von Savigny and his daughter, affectionately referred to as Pulettechen, on April the tenth 1808. Marked by Jacob as “Another Beginning for Snow White” (Kamenetsky 1993: 43-44)

These are the architextual features that we use to recognise the fairy tale, and we can say that a tale is “new” if it does not closely follow the plot of a previous fairy tale. The practice of the ‘literary fairy tale’, an original artistic work which is *written* by a historically recognisable individual, falls under this category, and Oscar Wilde’s “The Happy Prince” belongs here as much as Margaret Atwood’s *Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut*.

For the purposes of this study, architextual intertextuality in the form of “new” fairytales is only of interest if they are fulfil the criterion of being postmodern in some sense. A good example of this can be seen in Jeanette Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*. At key stages, the narrative shifts from the realistic portrayal of the narrator’s evangelical, Lancastrian upbringing to fantastic stories which bear all the hallmarks of the fairy tale that do not have anything to do with Jeanette’s story, but relate to it in a more allegorical manner.

The first of these “new” fairy tales occurs early in the novel, and can be easily recognised by its opening paragraph, “Once upon a time there was a brilliant and sensitive princess so sensitive that the death of a moth could distress her for weeks on end” (Winterson 2001 [1985]: 9). We know that we are entering the world of the fairy tale by the customary opening “Once upon a time” and its *dramatis personae*, a troubled princess and an old hunchback. The tale relates how the princess loses her sensitivity after she takes over the role of the hunchback as advisor and friend to a nearby village, goat-milker, and song-composer. With this work, and the perks of a stool, the hunchback’s books, and her harmonium, the princess soon forgets her previous hyper-sensitivity.

This brief fairy tale occurs shortly after Jeanette gives the story of her mother’s conversion to evangelical Christianity. More importantly, it occurs sandwiched between her mother as a child wondering what to do with her life, and a paragraph in which she decides to “get a child, train it, build it, dedicate it to the Lord” (10). The tale therefore seems to serve as an allegory, accounting for Jeanette’s mother’s conversion from her

frivolous, piano playing, French-speaking (sensitive) youth to the missionary zeal she displays as an adult.

This is the first of three fairy tales within the novel, and the shortest in the sequence, each of which is longer than the last. The second tale is about a prince who searches for the perfect woman, and becomes so bound up in the philosophy of perfection that he forgets what the search was about in the first place (58-65) and finally, a story about a young girl who is tricked by a sorcerer (137-144, 148-9, 154-5).

In *Oranges* these invented fairy tales occur at key points thematically linked to events in the first-person, realistic narrative and serve to break up the realistic text and place it in an polyphonous intertextual environment. These invented fairy tales occur in a book that has chapter names derived from Old Testament book names (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth) and which quotes liberally from the religious sources. The ever escalating complexity of the fairy tales that occur in the narrative reflect Jeanette's ability to question the grand narratives that most children are subjected to in childhood (the Bible and fairy tales). In his early work, Jack Zipes suggested that the fairy tale has been used to 'civilize' children, punishing the indolent and rewarding the good characters, who by broad coincidence tend to have the values that make children easier to look after (see Zipes 1979, 1991). The above extract also shows the young Jeanette's awareness of some of the latent issues of sexuality embedded in the fairy tale which have been edited out over the centuries in order to make fairy tales suitable for children, and which will become increasingly important to the main narrative as Jeanette falls in love with her best friend, Melanie. It is highly significant that none of the protagonists in the three fairy tales end up married or living 'happily ever after'.

This use of invented fairy tales as an allegoric mirror of the main diegetic layer of the story is a technique also to found in A.S.Byatt's *Possession* where the love story between Roland and Maud is punctuated by four invented fairy tales supposedly written by the fictional character Christabel Lamotte. The effect is in one sense metafictional, used to highlight the way in which we use stories to interpret experience,

or to make particular experiences transmissible to other people. The other effect is to highlight the way in which we read, what Barthes would call the hermeneutic code (Barthes 1974). If we encounter textual fragments that are not part of the main story, whether these are embedded tales or snippets of poetry written by fictional characters, then, the reader puzzles over their significance. We do not like to think of such ‘extras’ as mere padding, or pointless pages, but try to attribute a meaning to them. Why, the reader must ask, is this fairy tale appearing in a narrative that has been otherwise realistic? Why does the narrator not say, “I wrote a poem”, in for example, John Fowles’ *The Magus* rather than writing out the poem in full? If it is there, we reason, it must be there *for a reason*.

There is another type of “invented” fairy tale, as we shall see in Chapter 3 – the fairy tale of someone’s life. The fairy tale told by Crick’s mother in *Waterland* is one that has been invented, real experience converted into fairy tale. This sort of “new” fairy tale draws attention to the way in which humans understand the world through stories, and the need to make experience transmissible. The battle between language and experience is here played out, as the storyteller uses the well worn words of the fairytale, an architext used for hundreds of years in mainland Europe, in order to make their own story understandable.

One final point must be made about fabulation with regards to its relationship to revision. There are areas where the line between the two is hard to distinguish, simply because of the nature of the fairy tale. The fairy tale is, as we have seen, a highly formulaic genre, and therefore the structure of any new fairy tale will most likely be very similar to that of its precursors (which is exactly what architextuality demands). Furthermore, the typical characters and typical elements are all already documented, so having a prince, princess, or tailor protagonist comes with its own motif number, making it very hard to imagine a truly “new” fairytale. We can see this in John Fowles’ *The Collector*, when Miranda attempts to enlist the sympathy of her captor by telling him a fairy tale, beginning “Once upon a time” (187). On the one hand, this is a fairy tale that the character has made up in order to reflect her current dire predicament, but

on the other hand, it is also recognisably a version of “Beauty and the Beast”, where the ugly monster turns into a handsome prince. Therefore, I would suggest that this particular example is actually a revision, which shows Miranda’s attempts to change her own situation with the power of words by offering up a corrective story.

Similarly, the fairy tales that punctuate Byatt’s *Possession*, and which are reprinted in *The Djinn in the Nightingale’s Eye* also toe a thin line. “The Glass Coffin”, has a tailor protagonist, contains recognisable motifs of testing, where the protagonist must impress a donor character into providing aid, and the glass coffin of the title. All of these are traditional and recognisable fairy tale motifs, but they are brought together in a sequence that is a “new” combination of the formula. That is, they do not replicate a pre-existing fairy tale in its entirety, and therefore this can be seen as an example of fabulation.

7. Metafictional

Metafictional intertextuality occurs when a fairy tale is commented upon, or when the fairy tale is analysed in a critical way. This ‘criticism in the text’ is what Genette would categorise as metatextual, the type of intertextuality we usually find between commentary or criticism and the text it comments upon. This type of intertextuality can be related to a specific tale, therefore approximating the link between hyper and hypotext above, like the narrator’s thoughts on “Little Red Riding Hood”, or about fairy tales in general, approximating the link between text and architext as Genette suggests when he defines it, “[Metatextuality] unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (without summoning it), in fact sometimes even without naming it” (Genette 1997a: 4).

An example of the metafictional use of a fairy tale intertext, can be seen in *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*, where the narrator considers fairy tales about marrying beasts:

In this story, a beautiful young woman finds herself the forfeit of a bad bargain made by her father. As a result, she has to marry an ugly beast, or dishonour her family forever. Because she is good, she obeys. On her wedding night, she gets into bed with the beast, and feeling pity that everything should be so ugly, gives it a

little kiss. Immediately, the beast is transformed into a handsome young prince, and they both live happily ever after.

I wonder if the woman married to a pig had read this story. She must have been awfully disappointed if she had. And what about my Uncle Bill, he was horrible, and hairy, and looking at the picture, transformed princes aren't meant to be hairy at all.

Slowly I closed the book. It was clear that I had stumbled on a terrible conspiracy.

There are women in the world.

There are men in the world.

And there are beasts.

What do you do if you marry a beast?

Kissing them didn't always help.

And beasts are crafty. They disguise themselves like you and I.

Like the wolf in 'Little Red Riding Hood'.

Why had no one told me? Did that mean no one else knew?

Did that mean that all over the globe, in all innocence, women were marrying beasts?

[...] If only there was some way of telling, then we could operate a ration system. It wasn't fair that a whole street should be full of beasts.

(Winterson 2001: 70-1)

This quotation, comparing “happily ever after” fairy tale marriage to the rather more depressing and realistic institution Jeanette is familiar with, occurs straight after the ironic fairy tale of the prince who is in search of the perfect woman (and who has her executed after he finds her). In the same section of the book we discover that Jeanette's experience of *Jane Eyre* — a novel whose plot has been compared with “Bluebeard”, “Beauty and the Beast” and “Cinderella” — has been very different to most readers because Jeanette's mother has removed the final section of the book, and left the text at the point where it looks like Jane will marry St John Rivers, to go to glory (and death) in India as a missionary. This metafictional discussion of a particular fairy tale then, is tied thematically with the events that surround it within the text and helps highlight that the fabulated fairy tale which precedes it enacts the concerns of the realistic primary narrative on an allegoric plane that serves to heighten the metafictional and philosophical tone of the novel. The metafictional relationship between a text and a fairy tale it comments upon or criticises can be as short as a sentence or can be a running concern throughout the text. Margaret Atwood's “Bluebeard's Egg contains a good example of metafictional commentary upon the fairy tale when Sally is considering how to write the assignment she has been given, to transpose “Bluebeard” into modern setting:

At first she thought the most important thing in the story was the forbidden room. What would she put in the forbidden room, in her present-day realistic version? Certainly not chopped-up women. It wasn't that they were too unrealistic, but they were certainly too sick as well as being too obvious. She wanted to do something more clever. [...] [I]t comes to Sally that the intriguing thing about the story, the thing she should fasten on, is the egg. Why the egg? From the night course in Comparative Folklore she took four years ago, she remembers that the egg can be a fertility symbol, or a necessary object in African spells, or something that the world hatched out of. Maybe in this story it's a symbol of virginity, and that is why the wizard requires it unbloodied. Women with dirty eggs get murdered, those with clean ones get married.

(Atwood 1996a:156-7)

These examples make clear exactly which fairy tales they are commenting upon, and could be seen as specific to those texts. Other examples of the metafictional/metatextual use of fairy tale intertexts are less concerned with individual stories, but the practice of storytelling that is typified by the fantastic, formulaic fairy tale. "What is the use of stories that aren't even true?" asks one character in Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, a question that bugs not only Haroun but all literary critics from the days of Spenser's *Defense of Poesie* to modern times (1991: 20). *Haroun* is an engaging example of the metafictional link between text and fairy tale. Though it also has several explicit fairy tale intertexts including a parody of "Rapunzel" (73), the novel sets about answering the question posed above, and the final answer seems to stress the subversiveness of tale-telling. When Haroun finds himself in a fantastic world, and in confrontation with Khatam-Shud, who is attempting to destroy all stories, the key lines are spoken:

'But why do you hate stories so much?' Haroun blurted, feeling stunned.
'Stories are fun ...'

'The world, however, is not for Fun,' Khatam-Shud replied. 'The world is for Controlling.'

'Which World?' Haroun made himself ask.

'Your world, my world, all worlds,' came the reply. 'They are all there to be Ruled. And inside every single story, inside every Stream in the Ocean, there lies a world, a story-world, that I cannot Rule at all. And that is the reason why.'

(Rushdie 1991: 161, capitalisation replicated)

As *Haroun* demonstrates, it is possible for there to be a metatextual relationship between a fiction and the fairy tale without this being portrayed as a long critical aside about a specified text. A metafictional examination of a certain fairy tale can take place on the diegetic or narrative level; it can be integral to the story or it can be an aside by the narrator that does not directly further the plot.

8. Architextual/ Chronotopic

In elements one through to five we saw intertextuality as a relationship between 2 identifiable texts. We have noted events in various fictions that remind us of a particular fairy tale, “Bluebeard”. This is not possible for the more nebulous nature of intertextuality that I have termed here chronotopic. This element occurs when we recognise “fairy tale-like” qualities in a fiction, without knowing a *specific fairy tale to which this text relates*. This is a type of intertextuality that leads the reader to recall a genre, rather than specific examples of that genre.

Element 8 is evoked every time a critic remarks upon the “fairy tale” qualities of a work, whether they refer to its tone or to the type of world presented in a text. We noticed when discussing the fabulation of “new” fairy tales that there are certain architextual features that we associate with the fairy tale, such as the traditional opening, the indeterminate time and place of its setting, the dramatic personae and the presence of magical items or events. Another term, similar in essence to Architextuality in its necessarily fuzzy definition, but this time from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, helps describe this kind of intertextuality.

The chronotope is a term coined by Mikhail Bakhtin in the essay “Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel” and is used by Bakhtin to investigate the representation of time in literary writing. The term means, when translated from the Greek “space time”, and is derived partially from Einsteinian mathematics (Bakhtin 1994: 84). It is used by Bakhtin, as by Einstein, to stress the fundamental interconnectedness of time and space.

It is for this reason that the concept of the chronotope can be difficult to understand. As Sue Vice explains, “[t]he concept of the chronotope may be puzzling or hard to grasp because it seems omnipresent to the point either of invisibility or of extreme obviousness” (Vice 1997: 201); Vice suggests the easiest example to grasp of the chronotope is the road movie, where movement along the road is also movement in time. In chronotopic situations like this, “Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh,

becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history” (Bakhtin: 84).

The chronotope is not, however, solely a device of analysing temporal representation within fiction. Bakhtin also claims “it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time” (85). He goes on to argue, “any and every literary image is chronotopic. Language, as a treasure-house of images, is fundamentally chronotopic” (251). In this immense essay, he sketches out the evolution of different chronotopes, from the “road” chronotope that characterises folklore to the chronotope of the sitting room that began to dominate in the early nineteenth century.

8.1 Chronotopic Objects (Castles)

An example of a chronotopic image is **the castle**. Lucie Armitt suggests in *Contemporary Women’s Fiction and the Fantastic* that:

The chronotope is, in its simplest terms, a fictive spatio-temporal framework. At its most formulaic it might, say in the context of the gothic, crime fiction, the classical quest narrative, be summed up as a nineteenth century haunted castle, a contemporary metropolis and an ancient Greek citadel respectively
(Armitt 2000: 35)

When we think of genres where castles play a major role our mind inevitably goes to the medieval romance, the fairy tale, and the gothic, it does not, generally speaking, remind us of realistic narratives of domestic violence set in the mid 1960s, which is why the presence of a castle in Byatt’s *Babel Tower* suggests that we are not dealing with traditional literary realism. Richard Todd, in his study of Byatt mistakenly calls “Bluebeard”, “Bluebeard’s Castle” emphasising how important the castle is in the fairy tale (1997: 41). The title of Bartók’s opera, *Duke Bluebeard’s Castle* and George Steiner’s polemic *In Bluebeard’s Castle* both attest to the importance that suitably gothic real-estate plays within the fairy tale³¹. The castle is an image that attests to the power of the chronotope, a solid object which usually signifies a particular genre.

³¹ It could be argued that this is for purely pragmatic purposes, after all, where would you hide all the bodies in a bijou open plan apartment?

Nigel Reivers lives in a country house with a moated grange named “Bran House” that has been in his family for several generations. It is not, in any literal sense, a castle, and yet it is described as such. “Bran House, the sinister Bluebeard’s castle”, writes Richard Todd, connecting the house with the fairy tale (66). The power of the castle chronotope is such that, like literal murder, including it in the narrative of *Babel Tower* would lead readers to have a significantly changed perception of the novel’s genre. Rather, a castle is suggested through the imagery. Bran House is, like a feudal lord’s home, hereditary. It is encircled by a moat, isolating those within from the outside world.

The use of imagery that links a home with the castle chronotope is not a new technique. In *Jane Eyre*, the narrator is anxious to point out the gothic architecture of Mr Rochester’s ancestral home, Thornfield, its “battlements” and “grey front” and “seclusion” (Vol I Ch XI). If we had not fathomed the connection between Thornfield and Bluebeard’s castle, then Brontë soon clarifies this link:

Mrs Fairfax stayed behind a moment to fasten the trap door; I, by dint of groping, found the outlet from the attic, and proceeded to descend the narrow garret staircase. I lingered in the long passage to which this led, separating the front and back rooms of the third story: narrow, low, and dim, with only one little window at the far end, and looking, with its two rows of small black doors all shut, like a corridor in some Bluebeard’s castle.

(Brontë C 1996 [1847]: 122 Volume 1 Chapter 11)

In *Jane Eyre*’s case, the allusion to Bluebeard foreshadows the later revelation that Mr Rochester’s home contains a bloody chamber, only in this case the previous wife is still alive and kicking. The description both heightens the sense of menace that lies beneath the surface at Thornfield and gives the reader an indication of Jane’s character. The castle as a chronotope, however, is particularly important to reading Rochester, as it is to Nigel. The “castle” marks its owner out as respectable, or at least at a high level in society. It suggests the isolation of the “squirearchy” from the peasantry, “old” country money and inheritance against new “city” wealth. It links the modern day aristocrat with his feudal forebears, linking current social formations with patriarchy and primogeniture in its purest, most brutal form.

The castle is an example of a physical object that carries symbolic baggage (to the extent that our reaction to the physical object is determined by its fictional representations) there are also chronotopic events, or actions that remind us of the fairy tale. It is these *events* that Tzvetan Todorov concentrates on in his attempt to define the fantastic in his seminal study *The Fantastic* (1973).

8.2 Chronotopic Events (Magic)

Todorov proposes a three-fold division between types of fantasy, which can briefly be summarised as:

1. The uncanny, where an unusual event is a one-off supernatural happening in an otherwise realistic world.
2. The marvellous, a world that is not our own, where the supernatural is the norm.
3. The fantastic, in which the reader cannot decide whether the events described fall under the category of the uncanny or the marvellous.

Under Todorov's groupings, the fairy tale would appear in the category of the marvellous. It is a world that appears to have different rules from the everyday rational world. This is not a one-off unusual event, like the transformation of Gregor Samsa in Kafka's "Metamorphosis", but an entirely different world that defies quotidian expectations of realism.

Or is it? Todorov's categories are predicated upon an entirely western and rationalist expectation of what reality is:

In a world which is indeed our world [...] a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions [...] Either the devil [or vampire] is an illusion, or an imaginary being; or else [s/]he really exists [...] The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty.

(Todorov 1973: 25)

This framework assumes that magic is an outmoded concept that has been entirely suppressed by the rise of empiricism and science. But not everyone believes in this strictly rational world. To take the obvious example, Todorov precludes the

existence of the devil in “our” world, something that I might agree with him on, but we might speculate that some Christians would not.

Wendy B Faris suggests a similar objection to the Todorovian binary when she discusses Todorov’s idea of the pure fantastic occurring when a reader hesitates between the uncanny and the marvellous; “some readers in some cultures will hesitate less than others” (Faris 1995: 171). She later reinforces this opinion when, in her ten point scheme of “accessory specifications” of magic realism she makes point seven, “In magical realist narrative, ancient systems of belief and local lore often underlie the text” (182). We hardly need reminding that the fairy tale represents both ancient systems of belief and local lore.

Many of the texts that I will discuss in later chapters have been classified as magic realist narratives. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, Graham Swift’s *Waterland* and Angela Carter’s *Nights at the Circus* all feature as examples in the essays of *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (1995). As Fredric Jameson remarked, the term “magic realism” despite its theoretical vagueness and shortcomings still “retains a strange seductiveness” (1986: 302) a statement that becomes increasingly apt as magic realism becomes a buzz word used to describe fictions that fit unproblematically in Todorov’s influential categories of the uncanny, fantastic or marvellous. Anyone reading the newspapers will have seen the increasingly imprecise usage of the term, with *Harry Potter*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and even the *Lord of the Rings* being labelled magic realist.

However, many of those texts that are not accounted for in Todorov’s system, that question the margins between what is ‘real’ and what is ‘magic’, also tend to utilise the fairy tale as an intertext. I believe that it is no coincidence that the books by Rushdie, Swift and Carter which have been claimed as magic realist also feature fairy tale intertextuality. The fantastic events described in these texts, whether a Will o’ the Wisp, educated chimps or Saleem’s remarkable sense of smell are portrayed in a matter of fact manner, which has been suggested is the characteristic style of the folk tale. De Vos and Altmann condense this neatly when paraphrasing Max Lüthi:

Lüthi suggests that in the folktale, though not in other genres of oral tales, the supernatural is naturalized into the secondary world of the story by detachment. Although it is entirely mysterious, it evokes no shudder of dread, often not even surprise. [...] Within the folktale, the numinous and magical become a matter of course, and for this reason Lüthi calls the folktale one-dimensional. There is no gap between the sphere of the otherworldly and the sphere of the human; they exist in the same spiritual dimension.

(De Vos and Altmann 2002: 14)

This “one dimensionality” explains the feeling of recognition we sometimes feel in texts as seemingly fantastic events occur in realistic narratives. It is a matter of fact that, unlike Lewis Carroll’s Alice, fairy tale protagonists rarely express wonder at what is happening. Talking Wolves, Fairies, Witches and Gingerbread Cottages are all greeted as though they were everyday occurrences (in the same way that children aren’t *really* sure that their toys don’t have their own lives in the toybox at night) and this entirely relaxed and accepting attitude to the numinous, when it is encountered in otherwise realistic text, is reminiscent of the fairy tale.

Conclusion

Having defined 8 types of intertextuality it is now time to admit to a certain sleight of hand. All of these types are based upon the division between explicit and implicit intertextuality. Furthermore, this division itself is arbitrary and we can question where the margins between explicit and implicit lie.

I therefore make no great claims for the 8 categories of intertextuality that I have sketched out, except they help me make out some kind of order from the chaotic nature of intertextuality and help me define which types of intertextuality that are particularly important for this study. Though I began categorising the ways fairy tales could be used as intertexts with the title, as the most prominent position a text’s relation to a previous hypotext could be mentioned explicitly, this is not a hugely important factor to my study. Granted, those fictions that contain an intertextual reference in the title such as “Bluebeard’s Egg”, *Bluebeard*, *Briar Rose* and *Sleeping Beauty* are a great help for anyone scouring a library archive for books that contain intertextual references to fairy tales. Until the entire contents of books are contained in searchable library catalogues, a computer search of the library archive with popular fairy tale names in the title will be

the most reliable way to detect fairy tale intertexts³², especially given the title's prominence.

For this study, the emphasis is also on those texts where the fairy tale intertext is explicit, rather than implicit. The problem of ever proving the importance of an implicit intertext makes concentrating on 'revealing' hidden intertexts seem fairly pointless. This is not to say that I will never suggest that allusion is an important factor to a text, rather that allusion on its own is not enough for me to include a text in this study, it must be combined with other features that are explicit. Similarly, I will not devote significant further space to examining the practices of revision or fabulation: the revision of fairy tales has already been the subject of much academic criticism, from Zipes' *Don't Bet on the Prince* and *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* to the more recent studies such as Hermansson's *Reading Feminist Intertextuality through Bluebeard Stories* and Levorato's *Red Riding Hood-centred Language and Gender in the Fairy Tale Tradition*.

As my idea of postmodernism owes much to Linda Hutcheon's idea of historiographic metafiction as defined in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, the use of a fairy tale intertext that leads to features linked with postmodernism such as magic realism, or metafictional discussion about the possibility of representation, are those that are most important to my study. The most important elements for my study, therefore, are elements 7 and 8. Element 7, the metafictional approach to the fairy tale is important because of how metafiction has been linked with postmodernism. In all of the texts that I analyse, I endeavour to point out a metafictional aspect, even if this layer of self-consciousness isn't immediately evident. In the example of *Babel Tower*, the "Bluebeard" intertext demonstrates the way in which Frederica (and, by implication, the reader) organises experience according to predetermined intertexts. At the end of the novel, we even begin to feel that despite his flaws, Nigel is perhaps not *quite* the ogre this intertext makes him, his jealousy and rage being caused by his love for his son as

³² And even then, implicit intertextuality would be impossible to detect with this kind of search.

much as anything else. A nasty piece of work maybe, but a metaphorical, not a literal Bluebeard.

This is similar to the way in which Sharon Rose Wilson describes Margaret Atwood's use of fairy tale intertexts. Wilson attempts to call attention to the metafictional aspect of fairy tale intertextuality in the work of Margaret Atwood, and her thesis is summarised in the following quotation:

Atwood's intertexts serve at least five connected purposes in her work: 1) to indicate the quality and nature of her characters' cultural contexts [...]; 2) to signify her characters'—and readers'—entrapment in pre-existing patterns; 3) to comment self consciously on these patterns—including the embedded fairy tales, myths, and related popular tradition stories—often by deconstructing constricting literary, folkloric, and cultural plots with “transgressive” language [...] and filling in the gaps of female narrative; 4) to comment self-consciously on the frame story and other intertexts; and 5) to structure the characters' imaginative or “magical” release from externally imposed patterns, offering the possibility of transformation for the novel's characters, for the country they partly represent and for all human beings.

(Wilson 1993: 34)

Note the importance of the “self consciousness” of the usages of these intertexts in this passage. Wilson's thesis depends upon the idea that these intertexts are used in a self-conscious manner to reflect metafictionally on the text *even if this metafictional level is not immediately evident*. So, she argues, “[s]ome of the psychic pain that Atwood characters, notably Marian MacAlpin [...], Joan Foster (LO), Circe (YAH) and Offred (HT), experience seems to derive from their unquestioning ingestion of old stories or an already written plot line [...] that threatens to limit their life choices” (Wilson: 11). The treatment of the fairy tale is here metafictional in those books where fairy tales and storytelling are explicitly discussed like *Alias Grace*, “a novel about the ideological power of storytelling” according to Armitt (2000: 91) as well as *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Lady Oracle* and *The Robber Bride* but also in those where the metafictional aspect is not fore-grounded like *Life Before Man* and *Surfacing* because the texts show how the already-written patterns of the fairy tale affect the protagonists. Wilson finds the metafictional aspect of these fairy tales where sometimes they are not immediately apparent.

I agree that this is possible, but because my thesis is not centred on the work of one author I will tend to choose texts where I feel that this metafictional quality is at

least close to the surface if not immediately obvious. The metafictional treatment of the fairy tale is most prominent in those texts that foreground the process of storytelling, and therefore chapter 3 will examine these texts that foreground element 8 in close detail.

Element 8, the intertextual use of the fairy tale chronotope or architext is an area that has been little developed before, and to my knowledge no critic has carried out an in-depth analysis of the ways in which texts considered magic realist use the fairy tale as an architextual model. Todorov's categories suggest that the fairy tale is always in an entirely different world to our own world, a fact that clashes with Bakhtin's view that:

[T]he fantastic in folklore is a *realistic* fantastic [...] Such a fantastic relies on the real-life possibilities of human development [...] in the sense of the needs and possibilities of men [*sic*], those eternal demands of human nature that will not be denied. These demands will remain forever, as long as there are men [*sic*]; they will not be suppressed, they are real, as real as human nature itself, and therefore sooner or later they will force their way to a full realization.

Thus folkloric realism proves to be an inexhaustible source of realism for all written literature, including the novel.

(Bakhtin 2000: 150-1).

Where events of the fairy tale chronotope mean that a text belongs to a marvellous unreal world to Todorov, to Bakhtin this chronotope is realistic, because it reveals the demands and aspirations of those who imagined it. Issues of realism are especially important for postmodernism (as its 37 index references in Hutcheon's *Poetics* attest), and the combination of fairy tale (realistic fantastic?) and realism leads to some interesting special effects, that lead me to suggest that the mixture of a large amount of fairy tale chronotopic images or events with traditional realism results in a form of magic realism. Chapter two will concentrate on the use of element seven in Kate Atkinson's *Human Croquet*, which I will argue, is a magic realist novel precisely because of its use of fairy tale intertexts.

Chapter Two: Architextual/ Chronotopic Intertextuality and Magic Realism in Kate Atkinson's *Human Croquet*

In chapter one, I claimed that there was an element of intertextuality best defined as chronotopic or architextual. I also pointed out the vagueness of both these terms – Bakhtin's chronotope referring to the way certain words and literary symbols are associated with certain genres: sitting rooms with the novel of manners, cities with the realist novel, the road with the picaresque. I also hinted that this type of architextual feature is the cause of one "special effect" in the postmodern novel, namely the phenomenon of magic realism¹.

In order to discuss what I mean by magic realism, I will take the time to discuss Tzvetan Todorov's categorisation of fantasy so that I can explain why these categories may be helpful in analysing this, and, by implication, other magic realist texts, but also to prove that magic realism cannot be easily absorbed into any of his categories. This link between the fairy tale, metafiction and magic realism is an important item to address, due to chapter three's use of canonical "magic realist" texts in order to talk about how the fairy tale is used metafictionally to suggest the way in which we make sense of our own lives according to formulaic plot structures.

Despite its theoretical vagueness, the term "magic realism", as Fredric Jameson noted, "retains a strange seductiveness". It is also a term that seems to become ever more vague because, like postmodernism before it, it has become a label utilised by newspapers and magazines as much as by literary critics. Unlike the "traditional" term fantasy, which has been theorised in great depth over the years in studies such as Todorov's seminal *The Fantastic* (1973) the definition of magic realism is somewhat

¹ There are two formulations of this term that are usually used interchangeably to mean the same thing. Zamora and Faris's collection of essays is called *Magical Realism*. Others use the form magic realism, which is the form that I prefer. Where the -al suffix seems to suggest that magic realism is a *type* of realism, the alternative suggests, to me, an unresolved binary. We usually separate the terms magic and realism. In combining the two, next to each other, we sense the paradox that magic realism engenders. Where "magical realism", by having magic in the adjectival slot subordinates the magic to the realism, the alternative, despite its seeming ungrammaticality suggests a satisfying paradox.

less definite. Indeed, many now simply use the term magic realism where terms such as “uncanny” or “marvellous” would be better suited.

This chapter is dedicated to explaining the way in which the introduction of certain events from the chronotope of fairy tale into the chronotope of realism creates a kind of magic realism². To do so, I have chosen to analyse a text that alludes frequently to fairy tales and that therefore highlights the points of linkage between fairy tale and magic realism, Kate Atkinson's *Human Croquet* (1998: hereafter referred to as *HC*). *HC* is a complicated, though rewarding, object of study, and in order to fully take account of the way it uses the fairy tale chronotope, it is necessary to look at its other features. In chapter one I stressed that the more intertextual elements a text displays, the safer it is to say that the intertext is an important one, and this can be seen in the way that *HC* utilises its fairy tale intertexts. Although the primary purpose of this chapter is to investigate the importance of element 8, the fairy tale chronotope in relationship to magic realism, *HC* is also typified by the use of element 4, or allusion, and element 7, the metafictional. Furthermore, these elements are not separate entities, but form a kind of *gestalt*, so that the chronotopic use of fairy tales, the allusion to fairy tales, and the metafictional discussion of fairy tales are inseparably intermeshed.

The beginning(s), heteroglossia and chronotopic events

Kate Atkinson's first novel *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* (1995), parodying Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, signalled its metafictional intent by writing before the beginning and having the first-person narrator narrate from the instant of conception rather than the more traditional moment of birth. The problem of “beginnings” is also a concern in *HC*; the first line reads, “Call me Isobel. (It's my name). This is my history. Where shall I begin?” (11) before going on to begin, once again, before the beginning in its realistic sense, starting instead with a grander opening:

² Some events have this effect more than others. For example, marriage as a happy ending and travel are features of the fairy tale chronotope, but they do not cause any “special effects” when they turn up in realist fiction.

Nothing will come of nothing, unless it's the beginning of the world. This is how it begins, with the word and the word is life. The void is transformed by a gigantic fire-cracker allowing time to dawn and imagination to begin.

The first nuclei arrive — hydrogen and helium — followed, a few million years later, by their atoms and eventually, millions more years later, the molecules form. Aeons pass. The clouds of gas in space begin to condense into galaxies and stars, including our own Sun. In 1650, Archbishop James Usher, in his *Annals of the World*, calculates that God made Heaven and Earth on the evening of Saturday, October 22, 4004 BC. Other people are less specific and date it some four and a half billion years ago.

(HC: 11-12)

The narrator goes on to describe the evolution of trees from the enormous ferns of the carboniferous era, and the vast forests that covered the world, before finally humans begin to make their impact on the forest in the Bronze Age:

[...]Chop! Trees were transformed into other things—into clogs and winepresses, carts and tools, houses and furniture. The English forests sailed the oceans of the world and found new lands full of wilderness and more forests waiting to be cut down.

But there was a secret mystery at the heart of the heart of the forest. When the forest was cut down, where did the mystery go? Some say there were fairies in the forest – angry, bad tempered creatures (the unwashed children of Eve), ill-met by moonlight, who loitered with intent on banks of wild thyme listening furiously to the encroaching axes. Where did they go when the forest no longer existed? And what about the wolves? What happened to them? (Just because you can't see something doesn't mean it isn't there.)

(13)

The first two or three pages are worth analysing closely because of the sheer variety of discourses represented. The conventions of the realist novel, represented by the opening line's parody of Melville's *Moby Dick*, are quickly dismissed in favour of a panoply of beginnings, where the competing beginnings of various discourses such as Judaeo-Christian mythology, astrophysics, biology, natural history, history and folklore clash with each other .

This is a form of what Bakhtin calls **heteroglossia**. Bakhtin lauds the realist novel as the home of heteroglossia because it depicts an entire society and therefore incorporates numerous different types of speech, from the marketplace to the legislature. But what we have in "Streets of Trees", HC's introductory chapter, is the use of heteroglossia on the diegetic level; the level of the narrator, rather than the characters. This introduction therefore works as a form of metafiction because it defamiliarises the **monologic** conventions of the narrative style utilised by the realist

novel³. By mixing different languages (each carrying their own chronotope), Atkinson draws attention to the different methods of telling a story, and how the background assumptions of these discourses affect the way in which the story is perceived. All of the originary discourses utilised in this introductory chapter — religion, history, art and science — claim a privileged relation to “truth”. By putting novelistic beginnings in competition with those posited by other forms of discourse, we can see a linguistic self-consciousness that will run throughout *HC*.

The introduction of fairies and wolves, the *dramatis personae* of the fairy tale whose very mention invokes the fairy tale chronotope, is only a hint of the novel’s allusion to the fairy tale. Soon after this taster, the reader is given a history of Lythe, the novel’s setting:

In 1580, or thereabouts, a stranger rode into Lythe, one Francis Fairfax, as dark and swarthy of countenance as a Moor. Francis Fairfax, lately ennobled by the Queen, was in receipt, from the Queen’s own hand, of a great swathe of land north of the village, on the edge of what remained of the forest. Here he built himself Fairfax Manor, a modern house of brick and plaster and timbers from his newly owned forest oaks [...]

Some also said that he had a beautiful child wife, herself already with child, locked away in the attics of Fairfax Manor. Others said the woman in the attics was not his child wife but his mad wife. There was even a rumour that his attics were full of dead wives all of them hanging from butcher’s hooks. There were even those who said (this even more unlikely) that he was the Queen’s lover and that the great Gloriana had borne him a clandestine child which was being raised in Fairfax manor. In the attics, naturally.

(14)

After chapter one, we obviously recognise the room full of dead wives as an allusion to “Bluebeard”, amongst other colourful folkloric rumours about the mysterious stranger, alongside a nod towards *Jane Eyre* with the mention of the mad woman in the attic. Again, we witness a clash of discourses: this time between history — the type of writing that claims absolute realism — and folklore.

Soon, Mary, Francis’s wife “appears” in a suitably fairy-tale-like manner, arriving at the manor door on a wild, storm-driven night, naked, yet with “not a drop of rain on

³ Monologism is a term used by Bakhtin to refer to types of authoritarian discourses, but it is never truly satisfactorily defined, rather it functions as the opposite of ‘dialogism’, which is viewed as democratic and a liberating function of certain works such as Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*. In *The Problem of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* Bakhtin defines monologism as “words that expect no answer” (1973: 63), and this is certainly a feature of the omniscient narrator utilised in realist fiction, where self consciousness over the medium of language is typically sublimated in favour of seeing words as an unproblematic way of representing reality.

her, nor one red hair on her head blown out of its place" (15). Later on, another fairy tale allusion is made when the delivery of Mary Fairfax's first child is related. As in the fairy tale titled "The Fairy Nurse" in Andrew Lang's *Lilac Fairy Book*, the midwife is blindfolded in every room other than the birth-chamber, and instructed never to relate what happened that night, which she never does, for she is conveniently struck by lightning whilst lifting a tankard to wet the baby's head (16).

This fantastical strain in the introduction continues for as long as the life of Mary Fairfax is described. Elf-like, she is dressed always in green, wandering solitary in the forest with only her hound for company, sitting under the lady oak and singing "an unbearably sweet song about her home, like a Ruth amid alien green" (16). In a moment that recalls the task of the hunter in "Snow White"⁴ we are told that the estate's game steward is afraid of mistaking her for a timid hart and accidentally shooting her. And then she vanishes, coincidentally on a day that her husband returns from the hunt with a freshly caught doe. In a final folkloric twist to the tale we are told that a kitchen maid saw Lady Fairfax disappearing from underneath the Lady Oak:

[F]ading away until her green brocade dress was indistinguishable from the surrounding trees. As Lady Fairfax had grown dimmer, the girl reported, she had placed a dreadful curse on the Fairfaxes, past and future, and her monstrous shrieks had echoed in the air long after she herself was invisible

(16)

From this point on, the introductory chapter details the decline and fall of the Fairfax family in a more realistic manner, briefly detailing the fire that destroyed Fairfax Manor and the loss of the family's land during the South Sea Bubble until the family is all but forgotten, "except for Lady Mary who was occasionally sighted, dressed all in green, disconsolate and gloomy, and occasionally with her head under her arm for good effect" (17).

Fantastic events and rumours cease to be relayed as the narrator charts the Fairfax family fortunes, through an abortive renaissance in the mid-nineteenth century

⁴ It is the hunter's job in most versions of "Snow White" to go into the forest and murder the king's daughter and cut out her heart and liver for the queen to eat. In the Disney animated version, following Perrault, the animal killed by the hunter instead of the girl, and whose heart and liver are served up to the queen, is a deer rather than the boar found in the Grimm version.

to their eventual home in the new suburbs of the early twentieth century, in the middle of what used to be the Lythe forest, in fact, to a new house built on the foundations of their ancestral manor. Concluding the introductory chapter is the revelation of the link between the narrator and the family story:

Eliza will be my mother. I am Isobel Fairfax, I am the alpha and omega of narrators (I am omniscient) and I know the beginning and the end. The beginning is the word and the end is silence. And in between are all the stories. This is one of my mine.

(20)

This introductory sequence, with its heteroglot mixture of history and folklore, and its inference that the life of an individual is effected in real and tangible ways by events that seem to be 'ancient history' is reminiscent of Swift's *Waterland*, where a similar history is told of the rise and fall of a local family alongside folkloric rumours about that family, which eventually becomes necessary for understanding the life of its protagonist.

Isobel's story

The introductory chapter sets the scene for the novel, and the novel refers back thematically to this introduction at key moments. In its metafictional nature, its concern with history and folklore, and most of all its foregrounding of the storytelling process, whether that story is the family narrative or the grand narratives of science and religion, it paves the way for the novel to come.

Isobel Fairfax's story begins (in the more conventional, realist sense) on a specific date:

It's the first day of April and it's my birthday, my sixteenth - the mythic one, the legendary one. The traditional age for spindles to start pricking and suitors to come calling and a host of other symbolic sexual imagery to suddenly manifest itself

(23)

As this quotation makes clear, there is a significant narrative shift between the first chapter "Streets of Trees", mostly narrated by a distanced, third-person narrator, and the second "Something Weird", manifested by the use of first person pronoun. The first allusion in Isobel's own first-person narration is therefore, an implicit reference to "Sleeping Beauty" in the novel's second paragraph.

This paragraph however segues into a world that is suburban, traditionally realist rather than fantastic, with mentions of school corridors, buses, and neighbours. It introduces key characters at a rapid rate, rooting the protagonist in a family tree, but also within a recognisably real social structure— a short brother, absent-minded father, missing mother, best friend, kindly neighbour — all within a few pages.

And yet, an element of the fantastic still pervades this quotidian world; Isobel, at five foot ten in height, considers herself “[a] gigantic English oak (*quercus robustus*)” (25), and calculates that if she were to keep growing at her current rate she would be eleven feet tall by the time she was 70. Her shorter brother is described as a “storybook dwarf” even though we have previously been told that Charles is, at five foot four, rather tall for a dwarf (24). On being told that her missing mother had no relations, the narrator speculates that she must have had them once, unless, like Helen of Troy, she was hatched from an egg (27). In other words, we might take the fairy tale exaggerations as evidence of a narrator’s colourful imagination and a certain linguistic self-awareness, a mismatch between the style of narration and what is actually being described. This comes to particular light in her reflections upon everyday phrases and dead metaphors. For example, being told that her mother was “off her head” results in her speculating:

As opposed to ‘on her head’? But then if she was on her head she would be upside down – and therefore also mad, surely? Perhaps ‘off her head’ as in no longer being attached to her head? Perhaps she is dead and wandering around on the astral plane with her head tucked underneath her arm like a music-hall ghost, exchanging pleasantries with the Green Lady.

(29)

The early fairy tale allusions can therefore be viewed as part of the narrator’s style rather than being indicative of any fantastic element pervading the real world represented. It is not unreasonable to expect a well-read narrator to invoke comparisons to Leda and the Swan, or *As You Like It*, and we are always given a realistic explanation alongside its fantastic comparison so that the fairy tale exaggeration always has a realistic alternative, and the fantastic turn of phrase can be seen to indicate a more mundane reality. It is this quality that Wendy B Faris terms

“defocalization”, because the narrative “seems to come from two radically different perspectives at once [...] [a] special narrative situation that seems to me to characterize magical realism as a genre” (Faris 2004: 43)

With this in mind, we can take the following quotation as a perhaps exaggerated description of one character’s possessive nature by comparison to “Rapunzel”:

If Audrey does develop womanly curves and wiles then Mr Baxter will probably lock her at the top of a very high tower. And if boys ever start noticing those womanly curves and wiles then it’s a fair bet that Mr Baxter will kill them, picking them off one by one as they attempt to scale the heights of Sithean’s privet and shin up the long golden-red rope of Audrey’s beautiful hair.

(26)

It is in this vein that we are given some later fairy tale allusions: Gordon, Isobel’s father’s taking of a new wife is compared to Abenazaar’s cry in “Aladdin” “New wives for old!” (30); Malcolm Lovat is “a prince out my star”, whose mother is an ogress (38); Debby’s compulsive cleaning links her to Aschenputtel when Isobel imagines her “separating lentils from the ashes”; and Mrs Baxter’s garden features “beanstalks that touch the clouds” (46).

The impression that this is a realistic novel with a very self aware and allusive narrator prone to flights of fancy is shattered when the first fantastic event occurs, and Isobel is transported back in time to 1918. Her first reaction “I am mad, I think” is quickly given an alternative by Charles’s science (fiction) based suggestion, “you must have been in a time warp” (51).

Explaining the unreal: Uncanny or Marvellous?

Isobel’s uncertainty about her sanity recalls familiar territory for literary theorists. It reminds us of the novella around which Todorov seems to have based his entire theory of the fantastic, Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*. According to Todorov, the genre of fantasy can be largely separated into two distinct categories. The first is the uncanny, where the explanation of supernatural events is just that, that they are *super-natural*, one-off instances that can be explained by reference to the laws of reality, but do not cause us to question these laws. Examples of the uncanny can be found, for example, in *Alice in Wonderland*, where Alice’s fantastic adventures are to

be explained by the fact that she was asleep and dreaming. The other major area of fantasy is the marvellous, in which fantastic events are simply accepted as natural. The result of this is to create a “world” that subscribes to a set of beliefs and laws of operation quite distinct from the rationale of the real world. These are the types of fantasy that Tolkien termed “Secondary Worlds” in his influential essay “On Fairy Stories” (Tolkien 1965) and which are best represented in literature by the works of Tolkien himself. *Lord of the Rings* makes no direct claim to represent the reality of a twentieth century author or audience.

However, on the border-line, the margin that separates the uncanny from the marvellous, Todorov posits a type of fantasy literature that he rather confusingly calls the “pure” fantastic. The pure fantastic is a text that the reader cannot place as either marvellous or uncanny, and which therefore means that the reader maintains a sense of uncertainty which is never resolved. There are very few texts that Todorov designates as pure fantastic, but the theory seems to be built around *The Turn of the Screw* which has long been a battleground between critics who attempt to explain the text using the explanation of ghosts, and those who go in for a psychological explanation⁵.

This is not the place for a re-treading of the arguments over what constitutes fantasy or the fantastic. However, it is relevant to bring up these theories, precisely because, in *Human Croquet*, a similar dilemma is explicitly poised between explaining Isobel’s coming loose in time as something that can be explained as ‘uncanny’ or ‘marvellous’, to use Todorov’s terms. A “strange Quint-like figure” (HC: 143) glanced through a window is an allusion that reminds us of James’s riddling text, a fact that

⁵ As Christine Brooke-Rose points out, however, the possibility of psychoanalytically reading *The Turn of the Screw* is one that antedates the text itself by a considerable length of time. As she astutely observes, “[its] very undecidability was for a long time unperceived, or, when perceived, seems to have exacerbated critics into taking up positions for or against one of the interpretations” (Brooke-Rose 1983: 128). In fact, it was not until 1924, 26 years after the tale’s publication, that Edna Kenton suggested that it was more than a simple ghost story, and it was Edmund Wilson in 1934 who set out the debate that we are now familiar with, with his essay on “The Ambiguity of Henry James” (129)

suggests that Atkinson, no stranger to the works of Todorov or James⁶, is deliberately creating the effect Todorov associates with the pure fantastic. Todorov also suggests three requirements for the pure fantastic, which Brooke-Rose summarises as:

(1) The reader's hesitation (produced of course by the ambiguity of the text) between natural and supernatural explanations of apparently supernatural events must be sustained to the end. (2) This hesitation may also be shared by the leading character, i.e., it may be 'represented', become one of the themes; the reader, at least the naïve reader, then identifies with the leading character. (3) The reader must adopt a certain attitude toward the text, he must reject a poetic reading and an allegoric reading, both of which destroy the pure fantastic (i.e., the hesitation).

(Brooke-Rose 1983: 63)

I have already mentioned that Isobel questions her sanity, which we can see as fulfilling Todorov's second requirement; the hesitation over explaining the supernatural event is shared by reader and protagonist. This is not to say that *HC* is an example of the "pure fantastic", as we will see *Human Croquet* refuses to sit easily into any of Todorov's categories, and it is my contention that this is due to the use of heteroglossia that puts fairy tale chronotopes alongside realistic chronotopes. Before I can advance this argument however, it is necessary for us to delve further into the narrative and analyse further events that make us question what, precisely, is real.

Further Fantastic Events

Time-travel is a chronotope more commonly associated with science fiction than with fairy tale. Disparities in time that are found in folklore are more commonly of the type where a protagonist spends a day in the world of the fairies, or elves, and returns to find a disproportionate amount of years have passed in real time (Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" being a good literary example). Maria Nikolajeva argues that "time shift fantasy is the most intellectually demanding of all types of modern fantasy, for both writers and readers" and that "more than any other fantasy motif, [it] is influenced by contemporary scientific thought, especially the theory of relativity" (Nikolajeva 2003: 141-2).

⁶ Atkinson wrote a PhD on the Contemporary American Short Story at Dundee University. Her awareness of critical thought is thoroughly demonstrated in *Emotionally Weird*, in the impenetrable but eerily credible academic discourse spouted by the "young, trendy" lecturer.

In the chapter “Experiments with aliens”, a science fiction chronotope is introduced when a UFO visits the conservatory, prompting Isobel to ask, “What was that? The past? The future? My people from another planet come to take me home?” (229). However, this science-fiction chronotope carries within it an allusion to fairy tale; one effect that the UFO has is to make an ancient cactus to turn green and flower, and when Isobel reaches out to touch the miraculous cactus flower she pricks her finger on a spine, another allusion to “Sleeping Beauty”⁷. At this point the chronotope of science fiction is linked with the time-shift in a more conventional manner (reminiscent of the ‘missing minutes’ that apparently accompany a UFO close-encounter), as there appears to be an ‘explanation’ for the quantum disparity which is not the case with Isobel’s other, random-seeming time-shifting.

Isobel experiences more extreme time-shifts on a further 3 occasions: once when she is transported back to Elizabethan times, the second time when she finds herself in a prehistoric forest (158), and again when she goes back in time to see her aunt Vinny at around her own age (221). Like the film *Groundhog Day*, she also lives through the same day twice; Christmas eve is repeated, with Isobel making different choices each time: for example, the second time (chapter “Killing Time”) she knows to avoid the disastrous party (of chapter “Theartofsuccesfulentertaining”), but still ends up in the middle of a tragedy nonetheless.

Time-shifting⁸ is, in fact, one of two broad “types” of fantastic events that occur in *Human Croquet*; the other type being metamorphosis, or shape-shifting.

Metamorphoses: humans becoming dogs, insects and trees

The first metamorphosis to occur in Isobel’s narrative is, by her own admission, a product of an overactive imagination. It occurs after an observation about rooks flying

⁷ Remember that sixteen is the age for spindles to start pricking, and a whole host of other symbolic sexual imagery to suddenly manifest itself.

⁸ I use this term mainly because of the more scientific connotations of “time travel” which implies sci-fi gadgetry such as amazing alien spaceships disguised as old style blue police boxes and retrofitted Deloreans that have an 88mph sweet spot. The point being that travel seems to imply a mechanical methodology, where one can decide what time one is going to through ingenious futuristic machinery, where time shift seems to better encapsulate the randomness of the events, and the protagonist’s lack of control over the shifts. *Doctor Who*, I would say, represents time travel, *Quantum Leap* time-shifts.

home, where Isobel speculates that they might be afraid of being transformed or “shifting into human shape” if they do not get home before the sun sets (68), an allusion to the type of fairy tale classified by Aarne and Thompson as “The Brothers who were turned into birds” (AT 451), a common European tale type, of which “The Twelve Brothers” (KHM 9) is a good example.

A few short pages later, after her father has speculated about the whereabouts of her missing brother, and her aunt Vinny has used her seemingly psychic ability to tell when there’s someone (or something) at the door, Isobel discovers a dog lying “sphinx like on the threshold” which looks strangely familiar:

[...] There’s something in its expression ... the clumsy paws ... the big ears ... the bad haircut...

‘Charles?’ I whisper experimentally and the dog cocks one of its floppy ears and thumps its tail enthusiastically.

I suppose a better sister would have set about weaving him a shirt from nettles and throwing it over his furred-over body so that he could be released from his enchantment and resume his human form. I give him some cat food instead. He’s absurdly grateful

(72-3)

This imaginary metamorphosis is an allusion to tales in which the protagonist’s brother is subjected to an enchantment, which she can undo by dint of hard effort and skill in womanly crafts. “The Six Swans” (KHM 49) has the protagonist weave a shirt made of aspen to free her transformed brothers back into humans; nettles are the unlikely textile used in Hans Christian Andersen’s version of this tale, “The Wild Swans”.

This first metamorphosis is revealed as a whimsical comparison, in the vein of Isobel’s earlier poetic exaggerations when within a few paragraphs she explains: “Of course I know the Dog [*sic.*] isn’t really Charles under an enchantment and anyway he comes back from wherever he’s been in time to drink Horlicks with Gordon” (73). This imaginary metamorphosis, with its allusion to fairy tale metamorphoses, foreshadows some later transformations which are not immediately written off as imaginary.

The next transformation occurs shortly after the house lodger, an unpleasant travelling shoe-salesman named Mr Rice, has indecently exposed himself to Isobel. In a passage composed entirely of italics and free-indirect discourse, Mr Rice wakes up to

discover he has been turned into a fly (144-5). There is some ambiguity this time, over whether this is a supernatural event, or another poetic and allusive explanation for the lodger's disappearance from the self-proclaimed omniscient narrator, this time recalling Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and the fate of Gregor Samsa. Debby and Vinny both assume that Rice has simply done a runner to avoid paying rent, and the free indirect discourse representing Rice's thought processes make it clear that he was indeed planning to do so, having deposited his clothes and suitcases in a left-luggage locker ready to make his escape. The fact that Vinny "brushes a bluebottle away" (145) and that Debbie terms the escapee "[a] real insect" (146) while clearing up the pornographic debris that the lodger has abandoned can be seen as either explanations as to why Isobel has described the flight of the lodger in a fantastic manner, or as ironic jokes that the reader is party to because they know the real (fantastic) reason for Rice's disappearance.

At one point Isobel explains that for Latin homework she has to translate from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where "you can't move for people turning into swans, heifers, bears, newts, spiders, bats, birds, stars, partridges and water, lots of water" (163). The story that she picks is that of Phaeton's sisters, who mourned so much for their charred brother that they turned into trees. The incorporation of this intertext (an example of element 3, for Isobel's translation is briefly recounted) will become important when we happen upon the third extreme case of shape-shifting in the novel, and one which is depicted without ambiguity as an event of irreducible magic.

At a drunken and rowdy party, Isobel is accosted by a group of dangerous men, friends of the repulsive Richard whom she has previously rejected: "Where's a time warp when you need one?" she asks when he tries to kiss her, "Or the Dog? Or a woodcutter?" (227). Tellingly compared to wolves, this "baying pack" of threatening men forces Isobel to flee the party "running for [her] virtue" (261). Just when it appears that Isobel is in most danger, the third transformation occurs:

I'm done for. All I can do is stand and try and get my breath back, I feel sick from exertion and can't raise a scream no matter how hard I try. It's like being trapped in a nightmare. I lean against the trunk of the silver birch gasping for air

like a dying fish and send up a small silent plea for help. Why do I have no protector in this world, someone watching over me?

I can't even move, my legs feel as though they're full of lead shot and my feet are rooted to the ground. One of the boys, Geoff, I think, runs straight up to me and stops, the mad Dionysian light in his eyes turning to confusion. He seems to look right through me. The other one, Clive, runs up to join him, and then bends over double to get his breath. 'Where'd she go?' he asks, panting. 'This way, somewhere.' Clive says, looking around everywhere except at me. 'Fucking little prick-teaser,' he adds and puts his hand out on to my left shoulder and leans his weight against it as if I'm just part of the tree.

But when I glance down at his hand, I see that where my left shoulder should be, where my right shoulder should be – where my entire body should be, in fact – is the silvery, papery bark of the birch. My arms are stiff branches sticking out from my sides, my previously bifurcated legs have turned to one solid tree trunk. I would scream now, but my mouth won't open. Call me Daphne.

(262)

Unlike the previous transformations, which can be viewed as definitely imaginary and possibly imaginary in that order, this is clearly depicted as a fantastic event.

If we accept Nikolajeva's argument that time-shift fantasy is linked with twentieth century scientific discourses, and is therefore a modern approach to questioning time, then shape-shifting is something altogether different. As the explicit intertextual references to Ovid in *Human Croquet* demonstrate, shape-shifting is one of the oldest and most widespread motifs of fantasy literature which is evident in fairy tale, folklore, and mythology. The first truly impressive class that Harry Potter attends at Hogwarts is Professor McGonagall's transfiguration class, and turning one thing into another is a classic form of magic. Nikolajeva attempts to distinguish between fantasy and the fairy tale, but this is one chronotope that fantasy literature and the traditional fairy tale share, though it is hard to argue with her when she says:

One element that we immediately recognize as characteristic of the fantasy chronotope is the presence of magic, or any other form of the supernatural, in an otherwise realistic, recognizable world.

(Nikolajeva 2003: 141)

Magical structures

Fairy tale intertexts are the reason for much of *Human Croquet's* magic realism. The example above, where Isobel's transformation seems to be verifiably real (one of her pursuers mistakes her for a tree!), seems to suggest that strange things *are* happening to Isobel, and to discount the possibility of madness. It is one thing to hallucinate that you have turned into a tree, it is quite another for other people to

mistake you for the tree that you have hallucinated. We will see below, that this does not resolve the hesitancy experienced by Isobel or the reader, for this provisional acceptance of the supernatural transformation is followed by Isobel waking up to find that it is Christmas Eve (again), with the possibility raised that the previous events were some kind of dream, "Perhaps I'm dreaming my life" (275). What is certain is that these metamorphoses become linked with the frequent allusions to fairy tales occurring throughout the narrative. Not only does Isobel allude to tales where brothers become animals, and women become trees, the magical chronotope of metamorphosis carried by these allusions ends up being represented as part of the events actually happening to Isobel.

The link between fairy tale intertexts and the magic realist nature of Isobel's story is at its most evident in the chapters in which Isobel lives and relives Christmas Eve. The first of these, "Theartofsuccessfulentertaining" has allusions and significant structural resemblances to the tale of "Cinderella" (KHM 21); the second, "Killing time", alludes to "Thousandfurs" (KHM 65) and other tales of familial violence.

You shall go the ball . .

The first time Isobel undergoes a Christmas Eve tragedy is when she attends a birthday party hosted by Malcolm Lovat's girlfriend, Hilary Walsh. The party, at a nice middle-class home, soon descends into teenage Bacchanalia, attempted rape, and eventually, a house fire. The main motifs that remind the reader of Cinderella in the retelling of this tragic day consist of the fairy godmother, the dress, the missing shoe, the ball, and of course the prince.

Isobel is established as a "Cinderella" figure early in the text in an allusion where she compares herself to the "perfect" Walsh sisters, Hilary and Dorothy: "Next to them, I'm a chimney sweep, a walnut-skinned beggar girl" (44). As I pointed out in chapter one, the name Cinderella is a kind of metonym, that signals the way she is linked to the mundane drudgery of housework, hence the name that evokes cinders, ashes, or as we will see in chapter five, embers.

Isobel's neighbour, Mrs Baxter is an obvious contender for a fairy godmother, a connection first made when she makes Isobel make a wish on her birthday "like a demented fairy godmother" (49) and later when, "Oh, one day," she says, turning a Disney song into a fairy tale prophecy "'your prince will come [she almost breaks into song] and you'll fall in love and be happy' But what if the prince that came looked like Mr Baxter [...]" (160). As previously mentioned, her garden is described with magic overtones (beans that go up to the clouds), (190) and, when Isobel despairs of going to the party, it is Mrs Baxter who volunteers to make Isobel a dress, linking her with the *haute couture* fairy of "Cinderella". Mrs Baxter is connected with female creativity, through the fecundity of her garden, her dressmaking abilities and through the following scene which talks of her storytelling:

Mrs Baxter knew the same stories as Eliza but when Eliza had told them they had frequently ended badly and contained a great deal of mutilation and torture, whereas in Mrs Baxter's versions, the stories all had happy endings. Mrs Baxter's Red Riding Hood, for example, was rescued by her woodcutter father who butchered the wolf and slit it open to reveal a grandmother as good as new and, needless to say, everyone lived happily ever after. In Eliza's version, on the other hand, everyone usually died, even Little Red Riding Hood.

Sometimes when they got to the end of a story, where everything had been put right and justice done, Mrs Baxter would sigh and say, 'What a shame that life's not really like that.' Mr Baxter didn't know about these reading sessions – Mr Baxter disapproved whole-heartedly of fairy stories ('stuff and nonsense') although whether he *had* a whole heart was debatable.

(192)

The party, needless to say, stands in for the courtly ball of the familiar "Cinderella", and the role of Malcolm Lovat, who is introduced to the reader as "a prince out of my star", is obvious when Isobel complains: "I'm supposed to be waltzing rapturously in Malcolm Lovat's handsome arms not running for my virtue" (261). Isobel also loses a shoe in this mad chase across the garden, an event which reminds us of her mother's missing shoe (see below) but also the key motif of "Cinderella"; the shoe lost by Eliza sparks allusions to Cinderella: "If we found its partner would it help us to find the true bride ('it fits, it fits!')" (62).

It is during this chapter that the most extreme metamorphosis takes place, and Isobel turns into a birch-tree. Although this is not immediately reminiscent of "Cinderella", this is mainly because the Disney film of the tale, "the original" to many

people, resembles Perrault's "*Cendrillon*", the version which first introduced the glass slipper, amongst other things. The Grimm version "*Aschenputtel*" (KHM 21)⁹, which is alluded to early in the book¹⁰, features a 'magic tree' in a prominent position. After the death of Aschenputtel's mother, and her substitution with the wicked stepmother, she plants a hazel tree on her mother's grave which she waters with her tears when she visits three times a day to pray until it grows into a handsome tree, visited by a tame white bird who throws down to the protagonist whatever she wishes for.

This tree plays a major role in "*Aschenputtel*"; after fulfilling her step-mother's trial of separating lentils from ashes, with a little help from tame pigeons and turtle doves (which are, of course, linked to the white bird that visits the hazel tree), the step-mother reneges on her promise to allow Aschenputtel to the ball¹¹, because she has no clothes and cannot dance. So Cinderella goes to "her mother's" tree and cries "Shiver and quiver, little tree,/ Silver and gold throw down over me" (Grimm J and Grimm W 1998: 124) and the bird throws down a gold and silver dress to her, with slippers embroidered with silk and silver. She goes to the ball, she dances, the prince falls in love, and when she leaves he pursues her (it is significant that Aschenputtel not only flees the amorous royal, but "escapes" him by springing into a dovecote). The prince tells Aschenputtel's father that an unknown maiden has hidden in his pigeon house and the father wonders if it could be Aschenputtel, but when they destroy the pigeon house together, they find it empty. This process is repeated on the next day, Aschenputtel visits her mother's tree and wishes for a dress, which is more beautiful than the last and astonishes all at

⁹ The name *Aschenputtel* is a Germanic rendering of "Cinderella", and some translations of the Grimm's tales ditch this Germanic naming in favour of the more recognisable "Cinderella" of French origin. See for example the Routledge version cited in the bibliography.

¹⁰ "Soon I expect we'll find Debby in the hearth separating lentils from the ashes" (46). This alludes to the trials that the wicked-stepmother puts Aschenputtel through, and which she accomplishes with the help of the magic tree, and its associated animals. It is interesting to note that Debbie is here associated with the victim, Aschenputtel, rather than the oppressor, the step-mother, given that she is Isobel's stepmother, and that Isobel takes up the role of Cinderella later in the text.

¹¹ In fact, the King has set up a festival lasting three days to which all the beautiful girls of the kingdom are invited, for the purpose of allowing his son to choose a bride. The famous '12 o'clock' deadline, at which point the enchantments of the Perrault's fairy will fade, is not the reason *this* Cinderella runs away. Rather, this prince, once he has lain eyes on her refuses to let loose of her hand, and wishes to "bear her company" when she wants to go home. The flight, like the flight in *Human Croquet*, is more to do with keeping chaste until marriage (which in this case has the effect that Cinderella keeps being chased until marriage) than with shoddy conjuring skills.

the ball. Again she escapes the prince, this time by climbing a magnificent pear tree, and again, her father and the prince destroy her hiding place to find that she has disappeared. The third repetition of Aschenputtel's wish produces the most splendid dress anyone had ever seen, and a pair of golden slippers. However, forewarned is forearmed and this prince has set a trap, smearing the whole staircase with pitch, and it is this crafty manoeuvre that yields the golden slipper and allows him to go house to house with the famous doorstep slipper challenge.

Further differences remain between this version and the conventional tale, which are still tied to the motif of the magical tree. When the prince visits Aschenputtel's household, he presents the shoe to both step-sisters in turn. The first finds her toes will not fit, and hacks her toe off to get the shoe on. The prince, fooled, takes her "on his horse as his bride and rode away with her". They ride past the hazel tree however, where the pigeons on the tree sing to the Prince, warning him "Turn and peep, turn and peep,/ There's blood within the shoe,/ The shoe it is too small for her,/ The true bride waits for you" (126) ¹². He returns the first sister and asks the second to try the shoe. This sister's heel will not fit, so it is lopped off, and the guileless prince rides off again, only for the pigeons in the hazel-tree to point out that once again, he's got the wrong woman and the proof is in the bloody shoe. The Prince returns, and on the third attempt Aschenputtel puts on the shoe, and they ride away together. Two doves sing approval "the true bride rides with you" this time, as they pass the hazel-tree before flying over to Cinderella's shoulders. Finally, in an ending that was absent from the first published version of the Grimms' collection but added later, when the step-sisters attend Aschenputtel's wedding, the pigeons peck out both step-sisters' eyes as punishment for their deceit (see Tatar 1987 for more discussion of the difference between the first and second version of "Aschenputtel").

Isobel's transformation into a tree is therefore highly significant, as it ties in with the "Cinderella" allusions as well as the mythical ones earlier discussed.

¹²Note how the symbolism seems to tie the false-brides with unchastely behaviour, marking their opposition to Cinderella.

Aschenputtel's escape, like Isobel's, seems to be connected to keeping her virtue, and the frustrated college boys, much like the prince, chase her to find she has disappeared (in this case, not *up* a tree but *into* one). Moreover, the transformation occurs when Isobel "sends up a small silent plea for help", almost as though her wish has been fulfilled. The tree, in the Grimm version, represents the influence of the dead-mother; as Warner points out " [Cinderella] variants from all over the world give the mother's ghost some kind of consoling and magical role in her daughter's ultimate escape from pain" (1994a: 205). Isobel's dead mother, Eliza, is implied here due to comments throughout that link her to trees and the wood in general. Like Isobel's ancestor, Lady Fairfax, she appeared out of nowhere, and vanished as abruptly: "(Eliza) is an unreal woman [...] slipping the bounds of reality the day she walked off into a wood and never came back" (25), and she is often described in otherworldly ways as if she were a witch, which reminds us of early in the narrative when Gordon, in woodcutter mode, is about to fell a tree. "He should be careful," Isobel comments "witches have been known to disguise themselves as elders" (48-9). Through a network of similes and intertexts, this moment of irreducible magic can be seen as a magic realist variant of the folkloric motif that Aarne and Thompson designated D950, or "Magic tree".

You shan't go to the ball (or anywhere else for that matter)

The second time Isobel lives through Christmas Eve, the events depicted again recall a particular fairy tale intertext. In this chapter the "mystery" of the baby that was left on Arden's doorstep is resolved. It is, as was plainly obvious for quite some time, the child of Audrey Baxter, Isobel's friend. The shock is that it is Audrey's father, the vile-tempered and sadistic Mr Baxter, who fathered the child. When this is revealed, Mrs Baxter furiously stabs her husband to death, and the rest of the chapter documents Isobel and her friends Carmen and Eunice's attempts to dispose of the corpse.

If the first Christmas Eve highlighted Mrs Baxter's role as a substitute mother figure (or fairy god-mother), the second undermines it. The fact that she created a dress for Isobel's party highlights her creative qualities, but the fact the dress fails to

magically transfigure Isobel into a ravishing beauty (she complains that she looks rather like “a huge pink amoeba”) points to her flaws. Isobel complains that she might have done better to go and wish under the Lady Oak for “three dresses (one is never enough) – the first as silver as the moon, the second as gold as the sun and the last one the colour of the heavens, sprinkled with silver sequin stars” (231).

The wishing under the tree linked with a mother figure for three dresses reminds us once again of “Aschenputtel”, and it may be seen that this is a moment where the two tale types are compared, and Isobel finds that she would prefer the Cinderella version with the tree to the one with the fairy godmother. However, the colour of the dresses is also an allusion to a central motif in the fairy tale “*Allerleirauh*” (KHM 65), and labelled tale type AT 510B “The Father Who Wanted to Marry his Daughter”, in the Aarne-Thompson index. The allusion is particularly pertinent at this point, as this is a fairy tale that explicitly addresses the problem of incest¹³.

In this fairytale, a king undertakes to marry his daughter, after promising his wife on her deathbed that he should marry no woman “not quite as beautiful as I am, and who has not just such golden hair as I have” (Grimm J and Grimm W 1998: 326-7). Despite the protestations of his counsellors, the King puts the idea to his daughter who tells him he must first provide her with three dresses: one as golden as the sun, one as silvery as the moon and one as bright as the stars. She also challenges him to make her a mantle made up of a thousand different types of fur joined together. By doing so, she hopes that her father will realise the impossibility of these tasks and finally grow out of his transgressive desires. But the king achieves all these tasks and so the heroine runs away to another kingdom taking with her the three dresses (stowed in a nutshell), a golden ring, a golden spinning-wheel and a golden reel. Disguising her beauty by covering herself with soot and wearing the cloak of all furs, she walks deep into a forest owned by a neighbouring king where she is discovered by a party of

¹³ See Ashliman’s 1997 essay “Incest in Indo-European Folk Tales” on this tale type at his personal website for further details.

huntsmen, and mistaken for an animal. The huntsmen capture the princess but when she pleads for her life, offer her work in the castle kitchens.

After a long time, on the day of a great feast Thousandfurs asks the cook if she can leave the kitchen to watch the festivities, and the cook agrees. She then washes the soot off her face, and puts on the golden dress, dazzling all at the feast with her beauty, and dancing with the king, then vanishing before anyone knows who she is, slipping back into her role as kitchen hand. When she arrives back at the kitchen, the cook orders her to cook soup for the king, and she cooks him the best soup he has ever eaten, slipping the golden ring she took from home into the soup bowl. When the king discovers the ring, the cook is summoned and questioned, and she is tricked into telling the king that Thousandfurs made it. The cook is dismissed and Thousandfurs summoned, but the king does not recognise her in her animalistic garb, she feigns ignorance of the ring and is sent away.

This feast sequence is repeated two more times, as Thousandfurs shows off the dress as silver as the moon and the one as bright as starlight, before going back to the kitchen and re-disguising herself as a servant, cooking the same meal for the king, and depositing the golden spinning wheel and reel in the king's soup dish. On the third occasion, the king secretly slips the golden ring onto Thousandfur's finger while they dance and tries to hold on to her after the dance is over. She eventually escapes, but in her panic leaves on the star-bright dress below her cloak and doesn't manage to quite cover all of her aristocratically-pale skin with soot. When the king interviews her for the third time about the mysterious appearance of a gold *objet d'art* in his meal he notices the white skin, and the ring he has planted, and when she tries to run away the dress gleams from underneath the cloak. The king realises he has found the mysterious and beautiful maiden and they are married immediately.

Alluding to this fairy tale in connection with a dress that Mrs Baxter is creating both foreshadows the forthcoming revelation, and also shows the ways in which Mrs Baxter's passive femininity is not enough: Isobel expresses a preference for the three dresses over the single dress provided by the fairy godmother in "*Cendrillon*", which is

perhaps a comment on the passive Mrs Baxter's inability to protect her own daughter from Mr Baxter's incestuous desires.

This allusion also reminds us of the way in which Cinderella and Thousandfurs are linked. Aarne and Thompson believe the tales so related that they consider "Thousandfurs" to be a variant of the "Cinderella" tale type (Cinderella is 510 and 510A, "Thousandfurs" is 510B). Both can be seen as tales of "oppressed daughters", though the agents of oppression are different. Cinderella is subject to repression by other women, and this fairy tale is particularly relevant for Isobel, because as Marina Warner notes, the way that patriarchy worked in the time these tales were told led to households containing more than one woman, creating a hotpot of simmering tension (Warner 1994: 238). In the past section, it is Eliza's main wish that Gordon would move out, so that she could be away from Vinny and Charlotte, Gordon's mother. The household is still a complex system of petty intrigues and rivalries when Isobel grows up particularly in the relationships between Isobel, Debby and Vinny.

Audrey and Mrs Baxter however, are subject to the type of male tyranny depicted in the tale type 510B. Throughout the book it is clear that Mrs Baxter could use a fairy godmother herself, as it is made clear that Mr Baxter beats her, but the sexual abuse of Audrey is only revealed in this chapter.

The earlier references to Mr Baxter gain added significance when this chapter is taken into account. Above, on page 79, we saw that Mr Baxter is compared to the Sorceress in "Rapunzel". It is at this point that we would do well to remember early versions of "Rapunzel" (for example that in the Grimms' first edition) in which the heroine's forbidden liaisons with the prince are revealed not by her asking why the prince weighs more on her hair than the sorceress, but why her clothes no longer fit (answer: she is pregnant)¹⁴. The difference here is that the ogre's attempt to keep the girl locked away from the world is for entirely selfish reasons. Mr Baxter even shears

¹⁴ Other, earlier, recorded versions of the tale are even more explicit about the heroine's sexual activities, the most notably bawdy version being the story of "Petrosinella" in Basile's *Pentamerone* (Tatar 1987: 45-46)

off his daughter's hair as "punishment" for having been with boys, as though she really were Rapunzel and the removal of her locks would solve the "problem".

Just before his death, Mr Baxter is described in comparison to another telling fairy tale. After punching Isobel in the face, and waving around his revolver he walks over to the mantelpiece and begins to smoke his pipe. The smoke surrounds his face in a blue haze, and Isobel wonders "How can he be so calm in the face of so much domestic mayhem? But then I expect that Bluebeard probably locked up his secret butchery and went and made himself a cup of tea afterwards" (282). This comparison to the ogre-husband is telling, as we later learn that it is Mr Baxter who killed Isobel's mother in the woods.

The two chapters that document Isobel's repeating Christmas day are both linked to two closely-related fairy tale intertexts. Both days also have a significant death toll, with Richard and Hilary dying in a house-fire unintentionally caused by Isobel the first time round, and Mr Baxter dying in the second iteration. These deaths could be related to the fairy tale allusions, given the violent ends that fairy tale villains meet. The death that ends both of these chapters is, however, one that cannot be seen as a form of retributive justice, because in both chapters Malcolm Lovat dies in a car accident, raising questions of free-will and predestination.

The chapter following the two just described, "There is another world but it is this one" (297), is set on Christmas day rather than Christmas eve, but this is a world in which Eliza and the Widow are still alive and Malcolm Lovat is actually Isobel's boyfriend and even proposes to her. This time, Isobel warns Malcolm to stop his car, but even this cannot save him from his fate as another car careens into them and kills him once again. "Perhaps this is an ordeal I have been set -", speculates Isobel, "perhaps I am Janet to Malcolm Lovat's Tam Lin. Perhaps the Queen of Elfland – instead of turning him into a snake in my arms, or a lion, or a red hot bar of iron – is trying to wrest her human tithe from me by constantly killing him. Again and again" (305).

Significantly, these two chapters, which are perhaps the most fantastic and dramatic in the book, and certainly feature the most striking and pertinent fairy tale intertexts, occur directly before an explanation that would seem to explain all the fantastic events realistically. Before I can further elaborate on this explanation however, it is necessary to look at those sections of the book that are more conventionally novelistic.

History (repeating)

Human Croquet is not constituted entirely by the Isobel's first person. It is possible to see two different narrative styles in the book, the self conscious, allusive and highly postmodern narrative of Isobel which is always preceded by a page headed with only the word "PRESENT" and the sections of the book headed "PAST" (89-134), (167-208) (239-247), (313-341) (359-367), which contain realist depiction of events that occurred before Isobel's birth and in her childhood where the narrative voice changes appropriately to the traditional omniscient narration of realistic fiction¹⁵. The "Past" section of the book relates analeptically the historic events that eventually come to influence Isobel's life, covering the events briefly sketched out in the first chapter "beginning" but in greater detail, filling in the gaps. This realist approach to covering the history of the Fairfax family in fact takes up over a third of the total length of *Human Croquet*, and so cannot be omitted from any critical discussion of the novel.

It is necessary to remember Faris's assertion that magic realist texts are "defocalized" because they "seem to come from radically different perspectives at once". Here, we have a text where there seems to be two radically different perspectives: Isobel's self aware and metafictional narrative clashing with the distanced, omniscient voice that narrates the historical 'past' chapters. Faris says that

¹⁵ However, this appellation is wrong if we take into account the claim at the start of the book that Isobel Fairfax is the novel's omniscient narrator. As these narratives are linked with Isobel's own, we can see that she is still the focus of these "past" sections, even if she is not apparently the narrating agent. It could be argued that these sections are part of Isobel's own narrative, and that the narrator is simply adopting a more traditional and familiar style in which to narrate these historic events (for we question the reality of the events that are told in the omniscient style a lot less than we do those told by first person narrators, 1). Though the events in the "Past" section of the book could be considered unlikely, for example the baby-snatching that echoes both *Waterland* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, we do not question them in the same way as we question the events narrated by Isobel.

one of the advantages of the term defocalization is that it “has the advantage of differentiating its qualities from the narrative perspective within realism that Gerald Prince characterizes as “non-focalized” or as having “zero focalization,” which designates omniscient narration” (Faris 2004: 43). Faris uses this coinage in order to describe the “strangely indeterminate nature of magical realism’s generic narrative stance”, and we will see evidence of this indeterminacy in the way we end up regarding the “realist” sections of the novel.

One of the important things to note about this third of the book is that although it does not contain events of a truly fantastic nature, it does contain numerous events that are redolent of the fairy tale. Isobel’s mother Eliza makes a wish for her daughter reminiscent of those made by the fairies in “Sleeping Beauty”: “*I wish, Eliza said softly, that she will blossom and grow.* ‘What a silly thing to wish for,’ Vinny said.” (100). In a rare moment where Vinny’s thoughts are directly represented, Eliza is compared to the numerous fairy tale mothers who are accused of eating their own children “Why, Vinny wondered, was Eliza always trying to eat bits of her children? *What a tasty little morsel*, Eliza murmured in Isobel’s ear while Vinny patted butter aggressively, imagining it was Eliza’s head. If Eliza wasn’t careful, Vinny thought, she’d look around one day and discover she’d eaten them all up” (121). This picnic is also a major turning point in the plot, as it goes badly wrong when Vinny goes to relieve herself in the undergrowth and Eliza chooses this moment to go for a walk, swiftly pursued by her hapless husband. After some length of time, Charles and Isobel decide to follow them, first finding one of their mother’s unsuitable shoes, which recalls the evidentiary footwear in “Cinderella”¹⁶. They then become lost in a wood, a moment that is obviously “Hansel and Gretel”:

¹⁶ This shoe is found years later in Vinny’s wardrobe, and therefore fulfils the same function as a piece of material evidence for the children’s mysterious, disappearing mother. It recalls Cinderella’s footwear in other ways too. Not only is it made of brown suede (before Perrault’s *Cendrillon* the slipper left behind by the put-upon daughter was made of fur), but it has a mink pom-pom, and also features a rhinestone. The shoe seems to recall therefore all the features of Cinderella’s slipper, in what is either a deliberate allusion, or a function of the shoe being so impossibly glamorous that it features pretty much every type of material a shoe can be made of.

[...] Charles said he wished they'd brought the uneaten sandwiches with them. 'We could scatter the crumbs,' he said, 'and find our way back.' Their only blueprint for survival in these circumstances, it seemed, was fictional. They knew the plot, unfortunately, and any minute expected to find the gingerbread cottage – and then the nightmare would really begin.

[...] [Isobel] was so hungry that she would have eaten a gingerbread tile or a piece of striped candy window-frame, even though she knew the consequences.

(130-131)

The lost and terrified children are disturbed by the noises of the dark and wild woods, and when an owl swoops overhead, the children's fairytale expectations are again invoked "It's not the owls we have to worry about,' Charles muttered firmly, 'it's the wolves'" (131).

The "Past" section of the book seems at first to fulfil the straightforward role of giving the reader details about Isobel's family history in an authoritative and reliable manner. If Isobel's narration is allusive, elliptical, self-aware and showy, the "past" sections come as a more traditional account of things that happened, told in a conventionally realist sense. However, the conclusion of the book causes us to question this seemingly straight-forward division between realism and fantasy, history and fiction.

The explanation, and why it doesn't explain anything

It is at the end of the "perfect Christmas" that the reader receives an "explanation" for the fantastic events of the novel: "The cosmic journey I took was the world of the comatose" (309). It turns out that the elder felled by Gordon early in the novel actually landed on Isobel, and that all subsequent events were actually dreamt by her in her comatose state (346)¹⁷. At first sight, this appears to be a traditional conclusion in which the fantastic events are explained rationally, and are therefore seen as delusional, and not much different to Alice waking up to find that she had dreamed her

¹⁷ An explanation that may make the "Sleeping Beauty" allusion at the start of Isobel's narrative either a mise-en-abyme or at the very least, an in-joke. It is also notable that the chapter when Isobel fully awakes begins with a kiss, but one which seems to come from her mother (Eliza has the gift of speaking in italics in Isobel's narrative), "*You go to sleep now, darling*" (345).

experiences in Wonderland¹⁸. According to Todorov's typology, this conclusion would place *Human Croquet* firmly in the category of the uncanny.

However, the world that Isobel wakes up in has many strange similarities to her dream world that cannot be easily explained. Rather than discovering a baby on her doorstep, Debbie is unwittingly pregnant and delivers soon after Isobel returns home. Coincidentally, she gives birth in exactly the way that Isobel conjures up as an excuse to cover the mystery appearance of the doorstep baby, "Debbie *is* fat enough to have had a baby without anybody knowing and you do hear about people giving birth without expecting to - standing at the cooker heating milk one minute, the next - a parent" (155). The mystery dog did in fact turn up on the doorstep. Mr Baxter has met a violent death. As in the dream, Debbie is playing a part in a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* although it is Hermia rather than Helena: "It's these little differences that are the most puzzling to me, like having permanent *déjà vu*" (352).

If the fantastic events in the novel can be written off as the dream-fantasies of the protagonist, we would also expect them to stop happening when she awakes and rejoins the real world. Yet in the last chapter of the "Present" sequence, when Isobel is watching the play at the lady oak from her bedroom window, Shakespeare appears in Isobel's bedroom.

The magic events that have been witnessed in the main narrative are therefore no longer contained within Isobel's coma, an explanation which would normally seal off the supernatural from the real world. The magical nature of Isobel's narrative survives even rational explanation, and ends with the fitting sentiment "Only the imagination can embrace the impossible - the golden mountain, the fire-breathing dragon, the happy ending" (356).

The realist nature of the "Past" sections is also infected by uncertainty because of the conclusion of Isobel's narrative. After waking from her coma, Isobel realises that there is another patient in the room:

¹⁸ On waking in the hospital, Isobel asks rhetorically "How long have I spent in the underworld?" evoking Alice's descent into the rabbit hole as much as Persephone's time in Hades when she later explicitly comments that she feels like "Alice waking up and finding she dreamt the looking-glass world." (351)

After days, possibly weeks, maybe years, I realize that she's telling me a story. She is my own Scheherezade, she knows everything, she must be the storyteller from the end of the world. But how does it begin? Why it begins, as it must, she says, with the arrival of the baby –

(309)

Immediately following this quotation is a "Past" chapter, which begins, as it must, with the arrival of a baby. This chapter finally reveals the story of the enigmatic Eliza, but it does so in a way that causes the reader several moments of recognition. Eliza, if we are to believe this chapter, was born "Esme de Breville" offspring of an English aristocrat and his Argentinean cattle heiress wife. The de Breville baby suffers the misfortune of being snatched from its pram by Maude Potter, who, returning from hospital after delivering a still-born child walks through the park where Esme is momentarily unattended:

Maude Potter thought she would just lift it out and give it a little cuddle. The baby opened its eyes and smiled at her. 'Oh,' said Maude Potter. Her breasts ached, her womb contracted. This baby didn't really belong to anyone, she thought, lifting it gently out of its covers, had maybe been abandoned? Had maybe been put in this park by God himself, to give Herbert and herself the child they deserved (Maude was very religious)? Yes the baby had come down to earth like a fallen cherub. Or, now Maude becomes very fanciful, a gift child, like little Thumbelina, a present from the fairies ... nightclothes tumbled from the Gladstone to make room, a little nest, a walnut shell ...

(HC: 320 ellipses in original)

This chapter explains realistically some of the mysteries, but it does so in a way that doubles events we have seen previously in Isobel's narrative, so that the chapter is haunted with a sense of déjà vu. When the baby's nursemaid returns to the pram, a page follows with only two words printed upon it in large type capitals, "NO BABY!", which inevitably reminds us of when Isobel earlier discovered the baby on the doorstep, where a page is taken up with only the words "A BABY!" in large type capitals. Herbert Potter goes out into the yard to burn the baby's incriminating finery, just as Vinny disposes of the doorstep baby's shawl on the bonfire. The reference to Thumbelina reminds the reader of tales told about "found" babies, just as Isobel commenting on "the doorstep baby" suggests that "the baby isn't just a mysterious mis-delivery by the baby shop, it brings with it myth and legend - Moses and Oedipus and the fairy's changeling" (153).

Other events that happen to Esme, now renamed Victoria Angela by the Potters, also seem familiar. When she is 12 years old, Herbert Potter begins to sexually abuse her, reminding us of the mistreatment of Audrey Baxter. She runs away from home at the age of 14, and after a couple of years waiting as a waitress, ends up working as a prostitute. It is the gangster who sets her up as a prostitute that gets her a new identity, Eliza Jane Dennis, and who “shapes her” into a “high class tart”, taking on the accoutrements of the aristocracy that will later make her so attractive and exotic to Gordon. It is this gangster who disposes of her child when she accidentally falls pregnant; he sells it to a “Dr Lovat”, raising some serious issues over Isobel’s later obsession with “the prince”, Malcolm Lovat. This unsettling thought is compounded by the fact that one of Eliza’s regular clients is Sir Edward De Breville, who swears that there is something “familiar” about her. The chapter also explains Charles’s ginger hair as a product of Eliza’s brief encounter with an RAF airman. Fate steps in when the gangster is killed by the Luftwaffe and Eliza is rescued by Gordon Fairfax, where her story joins up with events that we have already heard told.

The conclusion to this chapter returns to the pivotal moment of the picnic, retelling events that explain Eliza’s mysterious disappearance. Eliza’s vanishing into the woods is explained here by the fact that she has been having an affair with Mr Baxter, who follows her into the woods and murders her with her own shoe in a jealous rage¹⁹. Finally, we learn from the omniscient narrator that “[o]f course she wasn’t really the de Breville’s daughter”, Sir Edward had bought a baby, from “gypsies probably”, to appease his infertile bride, once again raising the idea of the changeling.

This rounds off the narrative in a convenient manner, but the fact that the reader comes across numerous motifs that we have found before in Isobel’s comatose world causes the reader some epistemological consternation. The fact that the chapter occurs immediately after Isobel speaks of encountering her own Scheherezade, seems to suggest that this chapter is the narrative told by the woman in the next bed, especially as both tales begin with a new baby. But it turns out, that the woman in the

¹⁹ A fact that reminds us of the way that Mr. Baxter was a Bluebeard figure in Isobel’s dream world.

bed next to Isobel's is also a hallucination; when Isobel asks the nurse about this mysterious storyteller the nurse informs her that there hasn't been anyone in that bed (345).

Previously up to this point, it would be quite possible to suggest that *Human Croquet* is novel where magic and realism are handily separated into two different sections. The fantastic and magical events take place in Isobel's dream imagination, while real events are charted in a separate section of the book. But this easy distinction is challenged at the end of the novel. This chapter seems to fill in the gaps far too neatly to be truly realistic, and describes some rather sensational events normally associated more with the Gothic than with realistic fiction (adultery, baby-snatching, incest, prostitution, more incest, more adultery, and finally murder).

In the end it is impossible to say whether the "past" section is actually a realistic account of what happened, or whether it is part of Isobel's comatose phantasie²⁰. The way in which this chapter seems to be loaded with intertexts, from *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Pygmalion* and "Thumbelina" to *The Winter's Tale* suggests that it could be the product of the hyper-literate Isobel's imagination. A further example that could be raised where the distinction between the "realistic" past and "magic" present is problematised can be seen when Charles is sent out for adoption by Vinny after Gordon's disappearance. In a page of italics that visually recalls the transformation of Mr. Rice into a housefly in the "Present" section, Charles is described metamorphosing into a Werewolf, which is not the sort of thing that we expect in a realistic narrative (196). The magic in *HC* cannot be confined to the sections of the book where its influence can be designated "uncanny" and delusional. Realism is thoroughly destabilised not only by fantastic events, but also by the way in which "real" events are compared with fairy tale intertexts. If the fantastic events of the novel cannot be described as examples of the Todorovian marvellous, nor the uncanny, then according to his typology, it can only be an example of the "pure" fantastic. However, Todorov's

²⁰ Undoubtedly a psychoanalytic reading of *Human Croquet* could make much of this aspect of the novel. This, however, is both beyond my remit and not to my taste.

first requirement, that the reader's hesitancy between a natural and supernatural explanation be sustained beyond the end of the narrative, is not fulfilled satisfactorily because a rational explanation exists within the narrative, and also, that rational explanation turn out to be unsatisfactory and supernatural events occur which cannot be safely contained by the explanation. Throughout *HC* the reader and protagonist do share the hesitancy between supernatural and natural explanation of events that Todorov feels is the major feature of the pure fantastic. But by the end of the novel, we find that it refuses to be contained safely within Todorov's theoretical genres. However, I feel that the best way to explain the effects of Atkinson's novel is to situate it within the genre of "magic realism".

Magic realism, antinomy, fairy tale chronotopes

Wendy Faris, in her essay, "Scheherezade's Children", attempts to draw up a checklist of magic realism, which it is useful to quote at length. Her first 5 primary "features" of Magic Realism follow:

- 1) The text contains an "irreducible element" of magic, something we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as we know them [...]
- 2) Descriptions detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world – this is the realism in magical realism, distinguishing it from much fantasy and allegory [...].
- 3) The reader may hesitate (at one point or another) between two contradictory understandings of events – and hence experience some unsettling doubts. Much of magical realism is thus encompassed by Tzvetan Todorov's well-known formulation of the fantastic [...]
- 4) We experience the closeness or near merging of two realms, two worlds [...] Another related boundary to be blurred is the one between fact and fiction.
- 5) These fictions question received ideas about time, space, and identity. [...] As Fredric Jameson sets out the project of realism, one thing it achieves is "the emergence of a new space and a new temporality". Its spatial homogeneity abolishes the older forms of sacred space; likewise the newly measuring clock and measurable routine displace "older forms of ritual, sacred, or cyclical time." Even as we read Jameson's description, we sense the erosion of this program by magical realist texts

(Faris 1995: 163-174)

Human Croquet receives a rather large tick next to all of these check-boxes. Irreducible magic is represented by the last minute arrival of Shakespeare in the present, the phenomenal world is represented by documentation of the minutiae of everyday life, the reader and protagonist hesitate between contradictory explanations

of supernatural events, we see the merging of two realms and the boundary between fact and fiction eroded by the combination of the spurious histories and the time-travel chronotope, and the “past” chapter following the “explanation” seems to suggest a form of cyclical time because it provokes a feeling that history is repeating.

Faris goes on to add a list of “secondary or accessory specifications”, which she admits is “more provisional” (175) and which again we may find useful when considering this novel:

- 1) Metafictional dimensions are common in contemporary magical realism: the texts provide commentaries on themselves, often complete with occasional mises-en abyme [...]
 - 2) The reader may experience a particular kind of verbal magic—a closing of the gap between words and the world, or a demonstration of what we might call the linguistic nature of experience. This magic happens when a metaphor is made real. [...] This linguistic magic, which runs through magical realism thrives on the pervasive intertextual nature of much postmodern writing and the presence of intertextual bricolage [...]
 - 3) The narrative appears to the late twentieth-century adult readers to which it is addressed as fresh, childlike, even primitive. Wonders are recounted largely without comment, in a matter-of-fact way, accepted-presumably as a child would accept them, without undue questioning or reflection.
 - 4) Repetition as a narrative principle, in conjunction with mirrors or their analogues used symbolically or structurally, creates a magic of shifting references.
 - 5) Metamorphoses are a relatively common event
 - 6) Many of these texts take a position that is antibureaucratic, and so they often use their magic against the established social order.
 - 7) In magical realist narrative, ancient systems of belief and local lore often underlie the text [...]
 - 8) [...] a Jungian rather than a Freudian perspective is common in magical realist texts; that is, the magic may be attributed to a mysterious sense of collective relatedness rather than to individual memories or dreams or visions.
 - 9) A carnivalesque spirit is common [...] Language is used extravagantly, expending its resources beyond its referential needs.
- (Faris 1995: 175-190)

This list of specifications serves to remind us just how many of these features that *Human Croquet* possesses. In fact, of these 9 “accessories”, we may note that only number 3 and number 6 are absent in Atkinson’s novel, and these two absences are fairly easy to explain.

Magic realism in its original Latin-American form shares with the fairy tale the sense of ‘matter of fact-ness’ described by Max Lüthi

The real fairy-tale hero is not astonished by miracles and magic; he accepts them as if they were a matter of course. Supernatural figures endowed with

magical powers appear, to oppose or help him, not to bear witness for a completely different, supernatural world which makes us shudder in horror or ecstasy.

(Lüthi 1976: 46)

No-one wonders if they are mad if they can hear the speech of animals in the fairy tale, these things are taken for granted, just as the ascension of Remedios the Beauty in Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is described without characters questioning what they saw. Alejo Carpentier in one of the early essays on what he calls "the marvellous real"²¹, invokes the fairy tale as a way of describing the way that magic realism operates when he praises Perrault as one of the greatest influences on the genre of the marvellous: "Perrault says something that defines the marvelous. He speaks of fairies and tells us fairies would just as soon spew diamonds from their mouths when they are in a good mood as reptiles, snakes, serpents and toads when they are angered" (Carpentier 1995: 101). We can see how this marvellous logic is used in magic realism in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, when Ursula, finding a pot of milk is taking too long to boil, raises the lid and finds it full of worms and immediately and correctly deduces that her son has been killed.

The term [magical realism] implies a clearer opposition between magic and reality than exists within those texts. For the characters who inhabit the fictional world, and for the author who creates it, magic may be real, reality magical; there is no need to label them as such.

(Zamora and Faris 1995: 3)

As demonstrated above, this unquestioning acceptance of fantastic events as real is not the case in *HC* where such moments cause Isobel to question her sanity but I do not believe that this questioning excludes the novel from the category of magic realism. In fact, critics of magic realism do not all agree about this particular aspect. Faris, as we have seen above, suggests that much magic realism can be encapsulated in Todorov's formulation of the fantastic, which is primarily concerned with the tension between natural and supernatural explanation. Amaryll Chanady, on the other hand, denies the importance that Todorov attributes to hesitation, suggesting instead that magic realism demands precisely that the reader does *not* hesitate. Chanady suggests

²¹ Carpentier's formulation "marvelous real" arises in contradistinction to the fact that the term Magic Realism was a term originally used to describe the works of expressionist art during the Weimar republic.

that magic realism is characterised by “authorial reticence” which is when the author does not allow us to question the events depicted in the text, no matter how unusual they are.

Authorial reticence has a less complex function in magical realism than in the fantastic, where it creates suspense, uncertainty, and greater reader participation and acceptance of the contradictions in the text. In magical realism, it serves the purpose mainly of preventing the reader from questioning the narrated events, as no attention is drawn to the strangeness of the world view. The unnatural is naturalized by commenting as little as possible on it, and reducing the distance between the narrator and the situation he is describing. This use of authorial reticence to eliminate distance is quite different from that in the fantastic, where the narrator stresses the singularity of the events and the fact that he cannot integrate the supernatural within his conventional perception of reality, while at the same time withholding certain details in order to arouse the reader's interest.

(Chanady 1985: 160)

The reader is given no choice but to accept the supernatural as natural because the narrator is their only source of information, and we are given no reason to suspect they are unreliable. Chanady's description of the matter-of-fact way the reticent narrator of magic realism tells their story is reminiscent of the narration of fairy tales, where magical events are described as though they needed no explanation. The reader of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* does not hesitate between attributing the supernatural events as natural or supernatural because they are described in a matter-of-fact way by the narrator, and there is no alternative 'rationalist' viewpoint embedded in the text that would allow us to question it. Rather, the suspension of disbelief that Coleridge described in his *Biographia Literaria* takes over (Swinfen 1984: 4), and we accept the supernatural as real, something that Chanady describes as akin to taking up a belief system that is not our own. This is the position that the reader of the fairy tale must assume. In fact the main difference between the fairy tale and magic realism in Chanady's thesis is the co-presence of the two codes; for a text to be magic realist it must include as much commonplace happenings as magical ones:

A fairy tale in which monsters, witches and elves appear in a fictitious world totally removed from our conventional view of reality is obviously different from a story in which a human protagonist in an everyday world suddenly encounters an apparently supernatural being. In the former, nothing surprises the characters, since magic is the norm, while in the latter, the protagonist is surprised and often terrified by a situation that his culture has taught him to reject as impossible. The fairy tale belongs to the mode of the marvellous, which has its own laws of verisimilitude that differ from those of accepted logic, but the second example belongs to the fantastic, since the world view coincides with our own, and is

threatened by an event which does not fit into the logical code expressed by the rest of the text.

(Chanady 1985: 2-3)

As we will see in chapter three, supernatural events in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* come with attendant disbelief and questioning, and though these archetypal examples of British²² magic realism begin by questioning the marvellous, they end with plunges into the fantastic, such as Fevvers spreading her wings, or in *Waterland* Dick Crick disappearing eel-like into the river, a trend repeated in *Human Croquet*, with the appearance of Shakespeare. It seems that British magic realism is more disposed to raise questions about the nature of reality than its Latin counterparts, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, and therefore the specification that Faris labels number 3 is less common in British fiction²³.

It is the constant references to fairy tales that gives *Human Croquet* its magic realist effect. Chanady writes:

A narrative in which a ghost is briefly introduced at the end, without any previous indication of such an outcome, can appear humorous or inconsistent. The absence of a convincing realistic framework usually prevents the reader from being disconcerted by a supernatural event, since there is no obvious contrast between the plausible and the impossible.

(Chanady 1985: 15)

The fairy tale allusions that abound within *HC*, mean that the introduction of irreducible magic events (the fairy tale chronotope *par excellence*²⁴) does not seem inconsistent. Allusion (element 4) brings within it the seed of chronotopic intertextuality, something that works to destabilise the chronotope of realism which is monologic as it can abide no competitors – a realist novel that features aliens or UFOs is no longer

²² There is an obvious problem in using the term “British” in conjunction with Rushdie, but as we will see in chapter 3, his most analysed work of magic realism, like Carter's, features a voice of dissent that actually questions the magical events within the narrative.

²³ The other “accessory specification” not present in *Human Croquet* is number 6, or the subversive facet of magic realism. The type of subversiveness we find in British Magic Realism is less overtly and traditionally political than fiction reared in the unstable political climes of South America, but this is not to say that it is apolitical. Theo L D’haen points out that Carter refers to feminism in terms of “decolonisation” (1995: 202), and a type of politics where the personal is the political is evident in *Human Croquet*, to the extent that it criticises the idealised “nuclear” family. This coincides with Wendy B Faris’ assertion in *Ordinary Enchantments* that magic realism contains a strong feminine thread whether or not the author is a woman (2004: 170).

²⁴ The fairy tale is still the genre that most people will think of when it comes to miraculous transformations. Though *HC* highlights that metamorphosis has a history stretching back into classic mythology, most contemporary readers will recognise magic as a fairy tale element. This is reflected in the current favoured term for fairy tales used by folklorists – “magic tales” (Ashliman 2004: 38-40).

realist. As Zamora and Faris point out, “realism intends its version of the world as a singular version, as an objective (hence universal) representation of natural and social realities – in short [...] realism functions ideologically and hegemonically” (Zamora and Faris 1995: 3).

The introduction of a second chronotope, or “code” as Amaryll Chanady calls it, creates what she calls an “unresolved antinomy”, and it is the “antinomy of the text that produces the ambiguity of the fictional world and thus the disorientation of the reader” (Chanady 1985: 12-14). The co-presence of these two codes, which are usually mutually exclusive, means that the supernatural phenomenon remains inexplicable (Cornwell 1990: 22). In the case of *HC*, the fairy tale code being placed alongside the realist one means that when the rational explanation of the supernatural fails, the tension between trying to pick a natural or supernatural explanation vanishes, and we simply accept the novel for what it is, a story. Though the novel does seem to resemble Todorov’s idea of the pure fantastic for quite some time, when the natural explanation is debunked, so too is concern over whether to attribute the story to a coma or the supernatural. It is in cases like this that we can feel secure in using the term magic realism. Todorov admits that his categorisation applies mainly to nineteenth century texts, and Brooke-Rose highlights the way Todorov has problems trying to account for Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, where the shape-shifting is presented as both unusual *and* normal at the same time (Brooke-Rose 1983: 66), and the “dream” explanation is debunked on the first page, “It was no dream” (Kafka 1999: 9). It should come as no great surprise that the surrealism of Kafka has been posited as a major influence on magic realism by critics such as Angel Flores (Flores 1995: 113). The allusion to Kafka that is Mr Rice’s transformation into a bluebottle is therefore significant.

In the case of *Human Croquet*, we have a good example of a text where the introduction of a fairy tale chronotope alongside a realistic chronotope creates the effect of magic realism. In the final “future” chapter that briefly relates events that happen after the end of the narrative, we find Isobel explaining matter-of-factly that:

Mrs Baxter met a mysterious end, the only person who truly disappeared – walking, they say, into the side of a green hill one day. Some say that at the moment she vanished she was transformed into the Queen of Elfland and wore a dress of greenest green and a crown of glittering gold. But that was just rumour.

(376)

The novel has come full circle from the first chapter, where the historiographic (realist) portrayal of the Fairfax family competes against folkloric rumours. The last chapter of the “past” series, which is the novel’s penultimate chapter, goes back in time four hundred years instead of documenting events that happen to Isobel’s immediate family. It gives a realist version of Lady Fairfax’s mythic disappearance that suggests that she simply rides away with her lover instead of any magical ending, but this chapter is undermined by the fact that it creates an uncanny sense of déjà vu. Francis Fairfax is described as yet another sadistic Mr. Baxter figure, who sexually abuses his ward, Margaret who falls pregnant, and Lady Fairfax vanishes into the woods that have been such a feature of all the interlocking narratives. Here, in the world of events unknowable to any narrator that has not taken up the conventional mantle of omniscience, are depicted events that resemble other motifs that recur prominently in the fabric of this text.

This tension between realism and magic, history and folklore which leaves the reader finally unsure how to explain the supernatural events, or even the “realist” events in the text can be seen as another form of historiographic metafiction. Faris, citing a chapter in Brian McHale’s influential *Postmodernist Fiction* suggests that through magic realism’s blurring of fact and fiction that “magical realism is central to postmodernism” (Faris 1995: 173). This point of view is reiterated in Theo L D’Haen’s essay “Magical Realism and Postmodernism”, where after reading Carter’s *Nights at the Circus*, Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* he boldly proclaims “the cutting edge of postmodernism is magic realism” (D’haen 1995: 201).

Many of the features that make *HC* a magic realist text can be derived from its intertextual use of the fairy tale, and the problematic co-presence of a fairy tale chronotope with the realist one. In its usage of the fairy tale, but also myth, and

mythical patterns in literature²⁵ we can see the way it destabilises realism by the inclusion of other, older forms of storytelling, and it is for this reason that I agree with Zamora and Faris when they suggest that:

[W]e may suppose that the widespread appeal of magical realist fiction today responds not only to its innovative energy but also to its impulse to re-establish contact with traditions temporarily eclipsed by the mimetic constraints of nineteenth-and twentieth-century realism.

(Zamora and Faris 1995: 2)

Faris talks of “the magic *of* fiction rather than the magic *in* it” (Faris 1995: 173).

The metafictional nature of Atkinson’s text, and its usage of fairy tale intertexts seem to suggest a similar thesis, that storytelling itself is a magical process. Todorov himself observes “the supernatural is born out of language [...] not only do the devil and vampires exist only in words, but language alone enables us to conceive what is always absent: the supernatural” (1973: 82). Todorov is quite correct that language itself is a medium that facilitates the supernatural, but wrong to suggest that the supernatural exists only in words. The introduction to Angela Carter’s “The Werewolf” explains how these “words” that indicate the “always absent” have a power over our perception of reality:

To these upland woodsmen, the Devil is as real as you or I. More so; they have not seen us nor even know that we exist, but the Devil they glimpse often in the graveyards [...] At midnight, especially on *Walpurgisnacht*, the Devil holds picnics in the graveyards and invites the witches; then they dig up fresh corpses, and eat them. Anyone will tell you that.

(Carter 1992: 108)

Todorov’s discussion of fantasy has a very particular relationship with realism. Todorov betrays his underlying assumptions of what is “real” when he explains the fantastic thus: “In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained” (Todorov 1973: 25). The pronoun that he uses to bond critic and reader belies his twentieth century, rationalist worldview. The world “we” are presumed to live in totally discounts folkloric creatures such as vampires and witches. Armitage notes the

²⁵ The fairy tale is not the only intertext in Atkinson’s novel, but the other texts it alludes to can be said to have mythical or folkloric aspects to them. The Shakespearean intertexts are those that are Shakespeare’s most fantastic, such as the fairy-laden *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and the literary intertexts, especially the important ones like Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* tie in with the novels concern with metamorphoses.

implication of a world without devils is that this is a world without angels either, and so presumably without God because, "the deity and the diabolic gain meaning in terms of each other" (Armitt 1996: 34). As Faris reminds us, this post-enlightenment conception of the "real" is entirely historical and subjective, and "some readers may hesitate more than others" over what is real and what is fantastic (Faris 1995: 171).

Therefore, when Chanady writes that:

Magical realism does not occupy a distinct area of literary production separate from that of mimetic writing, as does the marvelous domain of fairy tales, where the laws of logic and verisimilitude are constantly infringed without affecting our "normal" perception of reality, in a temporary suspension of disbelief

(Chanady 1995: 130)

She buys into the notion that the fairy tale *is* purely a flight of fancy that has nothing to do with the real world, something that Carter's evocation of the belief system of rural France in "The Werewolf" denies. Though Chanady is correct to point out that magic realism is ultimately a mode of writing that would be unimaginable without the prior establishment of codes of realism, she is wrong to suggest that the fairy tales do not affect our perception of reality, and *HC* shows just how much of an effect that fairy tales have over our imagination. As Max Lüthi writes:

It is not only the real world that has an effect on us; the story-book world, with its invisible images, is absorbed by our mind more easily and imperceptibly; this world is preformed and predestined to enter the treasury of our imagination and thus to take part in the building of our world view.

(Lüthi 1976: 67)

Fairy tale intertexts have long been used in the novel, and some of the chronotopes of the fairy tale can be successfully absorbed by the realist novel without causing any of the effects noted above. But the introduction of the fairy tale chronotope of irreducible magic causes problems due to the rationalist assumptions underlying the realist novel and leads to the "special effect" of magic realism. Scott Simpkins suggests that the magic in magic realism acts as a supplement, and there is a certain undeniable logic to this assertion: magic realism relies just as much on its drawing of the 'phenomenal world' as it does on irreducible magic (1995: 145).

But the fairy tale chronotope acts as a supplement in the way described by Derrida. In *Of Grammatology* Derrida argues against Rousseau's definition of the

supplement as “an inessential extra added to something complete in itself”, by pointing out that anything complete in itself cannot, by definition, be added to. A helpful analogy can be made by thinking of the weekend newspapers that come with ‘supplements’: they are not a part of the paper proper (and are even bound separately), yet any newsagent attempting to charge extra for them would find themselves with angry customers.

Therefore, if “magic” is a supplement, it works precisely to highlight the way in which realism establishes itself precisely by suppressing older forms of storytelling. The fairy tale represents archaic forms of communal storytelling that thrived before the availability of print and general literacy. Elizabeth Deeds Ermath in *The English Novel in History* suggests that the realist novel is responsible for propagating and creating ideas of ‘community’ and ‘history’ that we now take for granted as commonsense and timeless. Element 8, or the intertextual use of the fairy tale chronotope works as a supplement because it brings to the fore alternate, older, ways of viewing the world. As Linda Hutcheon argues of magic realism, “this kind of realism was less a rejection of the realist conventions than a contamination of them with fantasy and with the conventions of an oral story-telling tradition” (Hutcheon 1988: 208)

HC’s metafictional and postmodern effect is in no small way formed by the way that by the end of the novel, we even view the ‘omniscient’ sections of the novel with suspicion. Realism is just another way of telling a story, and is ultimately, no more reliable than the first person fairy tale. *Human Croquet* works to show the way in which we utilise pre-existing stories to try and explain the world, as Isobel at one point makes clear: “I’ve been cheated by my own imagination. The imagination unbound, unconfined by cause and effect. But then how else can we make things work out right? Or find redemption? Or real right justice?” (*HC*: 351)

The imagination’s role in making sense of the world is a major feature of the texts that will be examined in chapter three. Chapter three will look in more detail at novels which use fairy tale intertexts to create a metafictional effect (element 7), specifically those novels which highlight the process of storytelling, and the way in which the fairy

tale provides a way to understand the narrator's own life. These texts, like *HC*, have magic realist effects that can be linked to their usage of fairy tale intertexts, and as we will see, they also raise questions about the stories that we live by, especially that "grand narrative", history.

Chapter Three: Metafictional Intertextuality: Defining the “Storyteller” Chronotope

... we are all poets, though not many of us write poetry; and so are we all novelists, that is, we have a habit of writing fictional futures for ourselves.

(Fowles 1996 [1969]: 339)

I was born in the city of Bombay ... once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Dr. Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947.

(Rushdie [1981] 1995: 9)

In chapter one, I suggested that there was an element of intertextuality that could be defined as metafictional, which approximated the category of intertextuality that Genette called “metatextual” or the type of intertextual relationship usually found between criticism and its object. This chapter is concerned with the metafictional use of fairy tale in postmodern fictions.

The type of metafiction utilised here is different from the examples of Element 7 we saw in chapter one, where the criticism of fairy tales was mostly specific, like the criticism of “Bluebeard” in *Bluebeard's Egg*. In this chapter, the criticism-in-the-text is less oriented towards a single fairy tale, but the process of storytelling itself, for which the fairy tale serves as a paradigm. This chapter will therefore define a specific formal feature that I will label “the storyteller”, and highlight the ways that this formal feature causes metafictional effects that are derived from the way that they utilise their fairy tale intertext.

The intertext that all the postmodern narratives I will be examining play with is that famously ‘other’ fairytale *alf laila wa-laila*, or as it is usually translated *The Thousand and One Nights*¹. Referring to the *Arabian Nights* as a fairytale raises further problematic issues. Firstly I must acknowledge that it raises a problem of definition for my study, especially the term ‘fairy tale’: If anything, the *Nights* sequence is surely, an *ifrit* (or Genie, Djinn, or Jinnie depending on your translation) tale. Celtic and European folkloric creatures, like fairies to pick an example entirely at random, are notably

¹ This collection is known variously as *The Thousand and One Nights*, *The Arabian Nights*, and the *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. I will refer to this collection of eastern fairy tales however as the *Arabian Nights*, borrowing Muhsin Mahdi's solution for referring to this text which flags up both its “oriental” origin, and the part of the title common to all English versions.

absent. On the other hand, the *Nights* is a model of a perfect postmodern, postcolonial text. As Muhsin Mahdi points out, the collection lacks an author, and is a fluid and polymorphous entity, without even a single 'master' text for us to privilege with the reassuring label of 'authenticity'. Its place of origin is unknown despite decades of research, with some tales attributed to Iranian folklore, others to Indian, and still others that originate in Europe. The very unity of the Arabian *Nights* is even questionable, with many of the tales seemingly 'tacked on' in an attempt to make the text live up to its title and contain a thousand and one tales. Mahdi suggests that the *Nights* as we know it could almost be said to have been fabricated in Paris and Cairo in the early eighteenth century (Mahdi 1995: 1).

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* [1981 hereafter *MC*], Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* [1984 hereafter *NC*], Graham Swift's *Waterland* [1983], Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* [1985 hereafter *HT*], A.S. Byatt's *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* [1994 hereafter *TDITNE*] and Kate Atkinson's *Emotionally Weird* [2000 hereafter *EW*] are united in the emphasis that they present upon the storyteller and the process of narration. Furthermore, not only do these texts focus intensively on the figure of the storyteller, they are also heavily marked by fairy tale and folkloric intertexts that draw attention to traditional storytelling.

This may not seem a particularly striking insight, until we realise that in each of these novels the stories being told are the life-stories of the fictional protagonists. The question must be asked, why do these authors find it necessary to portray the *act* of storytelling in such great detail? Why are we presented with characters seeking to find meaning in their own lives by telling them in terms that we recognise as deriving from fairy tale discourse? I would like to suggest that these novels rely for a great deal of their effect upon 'fairy tale' storytelling. They incorporate an oral narrative including recognisable fairy tale motifs addressed to a physically present narratee. Calling this 'fairy tale' storytelling may be viewed as problematic because my primary definition, an oral narrative told to a physically present narratee describes a multitude of possible narrative types: jokes, psychoanalysis (analyst/ analysand), explanations, legal

testimony, phatic communion, standard everyday conversation, countless types of speech acts take place within the framework I have just described, and terming it the basis of 'fairy tale' storytelling could be seen as a naïve and ahistoric view of the transmission of folklore, ignoring storytelling in groups, in ritual or the countless other means of transmission. This may be the case, but I would like to point to the emergence of a similar 'storytelling' motif in film. For example, Rob Reiner's *The Princess Bride* (1987) and Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) both begin by framing the main narrative within a storytelling context, the former a grandfather reading his sick grandson his favourite childhood story, the latter an old woman telling her granddaughter a story from her youth (which, like all Burton's films, resembles a fairy tale in content). These framing devices act as a motif indicating the genre of film is fantastic, rather than realistic², and perhaps more importantly, simulate the traditional oral transmission of fairytales, as though these films were in some way part of folk tradition despite being Hollywood manufactured commodities.³

To begin analysing the reappearance of storytelling, and its effects, it is necessary to first define exactly what we mean by a novelistic 'storyteller', differentiating this new breed of storytellers from its literary ancestors. First of all, I will explain my use of the term 'Storyteller'. This would seem to be a step back from the accepted terms of literary criticism where 'narrator' is the usual, if not canonical, term for any narrating agent: Katie Wales in her *Dictionary of Stylistics* defines the narrator as any 'person who narrates, who tells a story, whether factual or fictional' (Wales 1997: 316). In order to avoid the use of a term that covers such a wide variety of applications, I will use storyteller to give a degree of specificity to a particular type of narrating agent, operating within a specific type of narrative context.

² The frame of storytelling and the participants (an old person telling a story to a young person) can be seen as an entirely different chronotope from other forms of framing, for example the suspect telling a story to a detective framing device used in *The Usual Suspects* (1995).

³ This may be compared to the classic Disney style of opening, as in *Snow White* where the viewer is presented with a wonderfully illustrated book accompanied with a voiceover into which the camera slowly zooms until we are, as it were, inside the book. This opening is memorably parodied in *Shrek*, where instead of going 'inside' the book the pages are ripped out to be used as lavatory paper as the voice of the ogre lampoons fairy tale clichés.

I take storyteller to mean a character who is personified within a text, and who orally narrates his or her stories to a narratee, who also appears as a character within the text. If we imagine the text as constituting a 'world'⁴ we can view this as analogous to the situation of the storyteller in the 'real' world, where a narrating agent relays an oral narrative to one or more listening narratees. This particular form of narration has traditionally been described as a 'framed' narrator where the 'frame' metaphorically delimits the epistemological boundaries of each embedded narrative. *Frankenstein* [1818] and *Wuthering Heights* [1847] are nineteenth century examples of this practice and useful as a point of contrast that highlights the unsuitability of the 'frame' when talking about postmodern novels. In both of these novels the frames act to make the reader aware of who is telling each embedded story, so that each story is attributable to a particular character and a relatively unproblematic storytelling situation. We can easily distinguish the narration of Lockwood from the subordinate frame of Nelly Dean in *Wuthering Heights*, just as the boundaries between Walton's narrative and Victor Frankenstein's are clearly marked.

However, the use of 'frames' that allow the reader to distinguish easily between different layers of narration is, as we shall see below, just as problematised as any conception of worlds as hermetically sealed ontic spaces, in postmodern fiction.

Another reason for using the term 'storyteller' when referring to specific types of narration in postmodern fiction is that the use of this term constantly reminds us of Walter Benjamin's ideas about the storyteller which will be addressed in the next chapter, and links the storyteller in postmodern fiction with the folkloristic storyteller of the oral tradition.

Discussion of the 'storyteller' as a formal feature of a certain set of texts can be further enhanced by use of narratological theory, especially the typology of narrators categorized initially by Gerard Genette and furthered by Mieke Bal and Shlomith

⁴ Referring to the "world" of the text is an increasingly popular practice as evidenced by the rise of "possible worlds" theory which draws on philosophy and new physics in order to discuss the literary text and its ontological relation to "our" world (c.f. Ronen 1994). However, the increasing popularity of this metaphor is fundamentally incompatible with the novels which I am discussing where the hermetically sealed concept of a world is radically challenged by incessant intertextuality.

Rimmon-Kenan. The terminology used by Genette, and adapted by Rimmon-Kenan and Bal, as presented in Rimmon-Kenan's *Narrative Fiction* [1983] and Genette's *Narrative Discourse* [1972] and *Narrative Discourse Revisited* [1988] will help us define the storyteller even more specifically. These texts propose models of narrational levels and voices considerably more precise and useful than traditional terms such as 'omniscient narrator', but have the disadvantage of sometimes opaque and overcomplicated terminology.⁵

The following diagram, reproduced from Genette's *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, presents a graphical version of embedded narration which would not be incompatible with traditional notions of 'framing', where each level of narrative can be further embedded *ad infinitum* in the manner of Russian dolls.

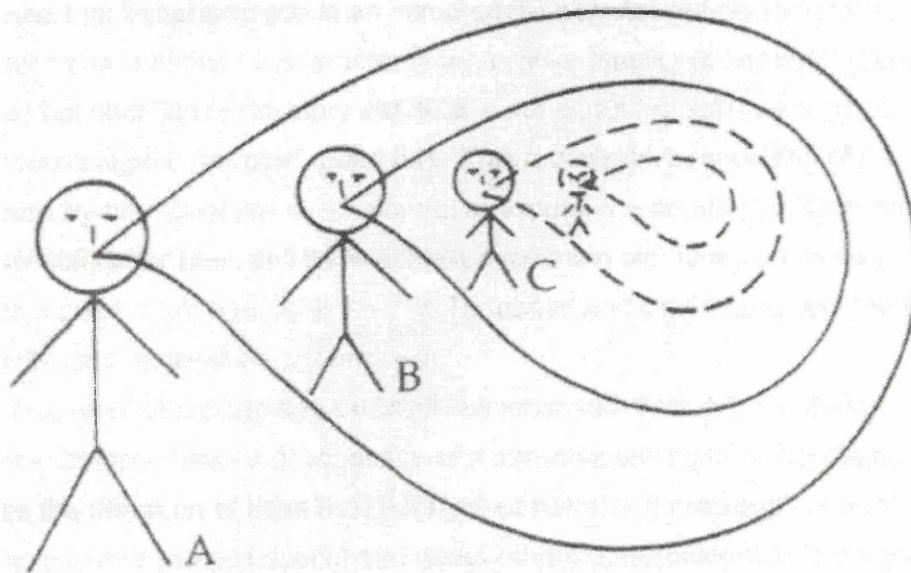


Diagram A (reprinted from Genette 1988: 95)

For our purposes, the most important point about this diagram is the fact that the storyteller would be represented by position B. He or she is a character telling a story *within* a story. An archetypal example of a narrator in position B would be Scheherezade, the narrator of the *Arabian Nights*. Scheherezade, before she even opens her mouth to speak, is a character within the narrative of the *Nights* sequence, an intelligent and talented Vizier's daughter who is able to overcome the perverted

⁵ It would be entirely possible to label a narrator an "extra-intra-homodiegetic external focalizer" (as is for example Saleem Sinai in *Midnight's Children*) using Rimmon-Kenan's model. It is easy to see why the use of these terms has not caught on.

desires of the murderous sultan Scharyar by getting him addicted to plot. Due to the way that Scheherezade is introduced in the third person and as a character, it is obvious that she is not the narrative agent of the text held (/heard) by the reader (/listener)⁶, known as the extradiegetic narrator. As a character in an oral narrative she is constituted only with words; as character in literary fairy tale she is written text. The above diagram is useful in helping us visualise the position of the storyteller within the text, for we generally only know of his or her existence via the voice of what narratologists designate the 'first-degree' narrator, or through the words of the narrator occupying the superior ontological position. In the case of the *Nights*, this first degree narrator is an unnamed external narrator: both extradiegetic (taking no active part in the narrative) and heterodiegetic (the narrative is not about this narrator). Any character telling a story within a story is, in narratological terms, a second-degree or intradiegetic narrator.

The Arabian *Nights* is also a good text for explicating embedded storytelling because the depiction of storytelling does not end with Scheherezade. For example in the famous tale "The Fisherman and the Jinnee" Scheherezade tells the story of how a malevolent jinnee is tricked back into the bottle that imprisoned him by a cunning fisherman, but then in order to explain his imminent clemency in freeing the jinnee, the fisherman tells the jinnee "The Tale of King Yunan and the Sage Duban" in which the king tells his vizier "The Tale of King Sinbad and his Falcon", "The Tale of the Husband and the Parrot" and the vizier tells the king "The Tale of the Prince and the Ogress" at which point the fisherman stops pontificating to the jinnee and the narrative of the first frame continues (Zipes 1997b:35-69).

⁶ With this example, it is easy to justify this terminology by thinking of the *Nights* sequence in its original folkloric form. When orally narrated, it would be obvious to the physical narratee(s) that the storyteller, the physical narrator telling the story of Arabian *Nights* was not Scheherezade but a real person occupying an ontologically superior universe to that of the story. Thinking about the term diegesis in this manner complies with Genette's definition of diegesis as "not the story but the universe in which the story takes place - universe in the somewhat limited and wholly relative sense in which we say that Stendhal is not in the same universe as Fabrice" (Genette 1988:18). This makes the definition of diegesis far more lucid as a term about the ontological "universe" in which the story takes place, and allows us to see the oral narrator as extradiegetic.

After his liberation, the jinnee leads the fisherman to a lake where the fisherman catches marvellous speaking fish, which he takes to the king. In attempting to get to the bottom of the conversational fish enigma the king goes to the lake and encounters a young sultan whose lower half was turned to stone, who then proceeds to solve the riddle of the garrulous pisceans, and the King helps him get the use of his legs back, at which point, we could say, reverting to the metaphor of the frames, that this particular frame tale is closed. Looking once more at the diagram A we can identify Scheherezade in position B, the fisherman and young sultan in position C and the King/ Vizier would be in position D if we had room to extend the diagram infinitely. Each of the narrational levels is discrete, and we are never in any doubt of each story's originator, who are all classed as hypodiegetic narrators (they exist at a level 'below' another level of diegesis).

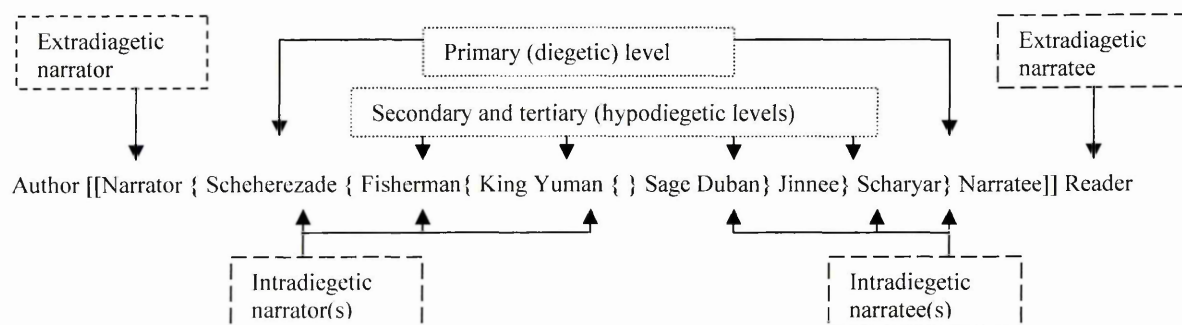


Diagram B: embedding in *Arabian Nights*

Using Genette's diagram to analyse the *Arabian Nights* however, soon leads us to the revelation that it is insufficient in one major respect. In all the levels of narration of the *Nights* we are aware not only of the sender but also of the receiver in each communicative situation, as the following diagram illustrates, a particularly large oversight when the narrator and narratee switch role.

Therefore I would like to propose that the diagram be amended as below:

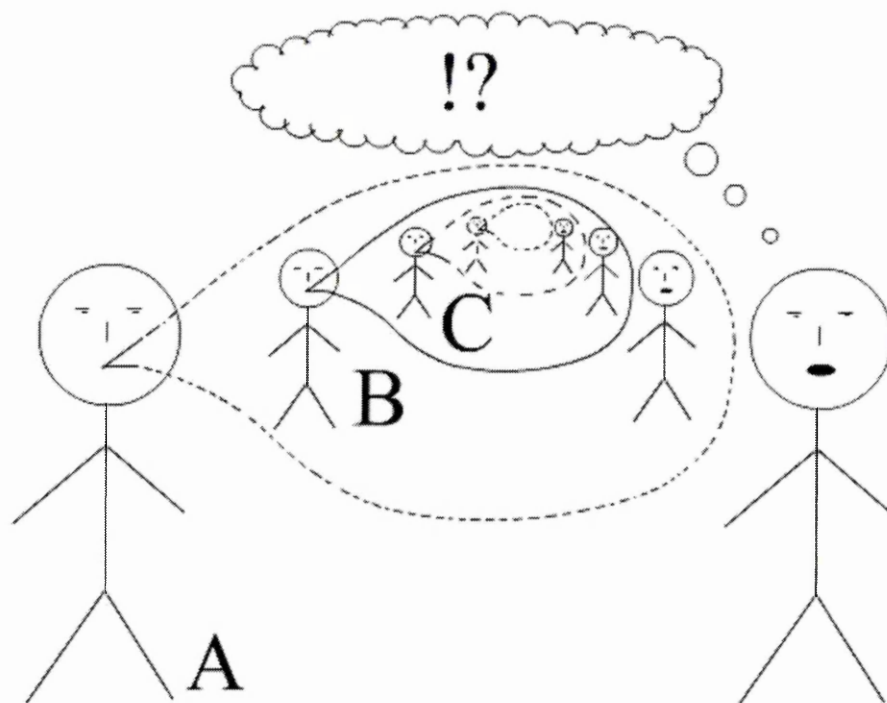


Diagram C: revision of Genette's diagram

Of importance here is the addition of a narratee in each frame. The advantage of this slight amendment is that it depicts both agents of the communicative situation, and that it doesn't prioritise the sender, because, as we shall see below, the receiver is just as important in any narrative. It also shows which parts of the narrative are heard by which listener: we wouldn't expect King Yuman to know anything about the frame of the fisherman, but we can see graphically that the jinnee can hear (and know) of the subordinate tale. I will discuss further revisions in more detail below.

The above diagram more accurately represents the embedded or layered nature of the narrative situation of the *Arabian Nights*, if only because of the inclusion of the narratee. However, what cannot be accounted for within the diagram is the relation of the story to the narrator. For example, there is a marked difference in the epistemological possibilities of a story about oneself when compared to a story about another. We can rely on narrators whose narration relates their own past because they have interior access to their own emotions, knowledge and perceptions at the time. Conversely, when a narrator attempts to relay the narrative of another and lays claim to the same "interior access" then the question "How do you know?" must be asked

(discussed below on page 124). Therefore, further distinctions are necessary to reveal the relation of the narrative to the narrator: a narrator who does not participate in the story is termed "heterodiegetic" whereas the one who takes part in it, at least in some manifestation of his/her self is "homodiegetic" (Genette 1980: 255-6). Using these terms we can see that Scheherezade is an intradiegetic narrator 'because before uttering a single word she is already a character in a narrative that is not her own' but also 'since the story she tells is not about herself, she is at the same time a heterodiegetic narrator' (Genette 1988: 84). This distinction is vital, because, as we shall see below, the fairy tales told in the texts we are analysing are *not* about others, but about the self. *They are all fictional autobiographies told as though they were fairy tales.*

To conclude my definition of what I term 'the storyteller' I would like to make reinforce the following four points.

1. The storyteller is **intradiegetic**: they are characters telling a story within the text.
2. The reader is at some point forced to consider the **context** in which the transmission of the narrative takes place: whether this due to the presence of a narratee as in *MC*, *NC*, *Waterland* or *TDITNE* or a more unorthodox technique, as in *HT* or *EW* is of minor relevance.
3. The text **intertextually** alludes to or incorporates fairy tale intertexts.
4. The narrative is **homodiegetic**: that is, about the narrator

Having outlined these major features I will now study each of these features in turn. The final feature of "the storyteller", that the narrative is homodiegetic, will only briefly be mentioned in this chapter, because it raises more questions about the nature of storytelling and autobiography than could fit into a single chapter and because many of the unusual effects caused by the storyteller stem from the ontological issues raised by this fact.

1. The Storyteller is intradiegetic: A Storyteller within the text

It is no coincidence that my exposition of the storyteller relied upon an analysis of Scheherezade and the *Nights*. This text is used by both Gerard Genette and Shlomith Rimmon Kenan in their analyses of the narrator and embedded storytelling, and therefore my selection fits into a critical tradition of using the *Nights* to explain certain features of narration. More pertinently, the Arabian *Nights*, is one of the intertexts used explicitly in *Midnight's Children*, *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* and *Nights at the Circus*. It is the palimpsestic foundation (the hypotext) underlying the structure of these texts, and by drawing attention to this fact by naming their model explicitly, the *Nights* works as a parallel to, and metafictional comment upon, the storytellers in these novels.

In all of these texts we witness characters orally narrating their life stories to another character who acts as narratee, arguably the reader's surrogate in the world of the text. In *Midnight's Children* we have Saleem Sinai reflecting upon his similarity to Scheherezade as he tells his story to the incredulous narratee, Padma, while simultaneously writing his 'autobiography'. In *Nights at the Circus* the famous winged *aerialiste* Fevvers relates her life story to an equally sceptical journalist, Jack Walser.

As detailed above this form of framing is not a recent innovation and is not even restricted to the novel, as we have seen it is used in the Arabian *Nights*, not to mention *The Odyssey* when Odysseus relates his adventures to King Alcinous, so I would therefore not wish to extend my use of the term 'storyteller' retrospectively over the entire history of literature for, as I will argue in chapter four, the trope is important because of a particular set of contingent historically grounded set of circumstances. Or, to suggest a tautological truism, postmodern effects are due not to immanent features in the text itself but to postmodern (or late capitalist) society.

If we have a story told by a character within the text, we can instantly start talking about reliability. Wayne C. Booth's invention of the 'unreliable narrator' in his *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) has proved one of the more enduring and popular instruments in the 'common sense' critical toolbox. I use the term common sense

because calling a narrator 'unreliable' seems on the surface of things ideologically neutral, and yet it exists only in a set of circumstances where we see subjective viewpoints as questionable, as though there were such thing as 'objective' viewpoints. The ideological implication that there is such a thing as verifiable external truth, a staple of enlightenment philosophy that remains part of western ideology, underlies the blanket assumption that subjective narrators are always unreliable, and that conversely omniscient narration is implicitly reliable and thus privileged. In the following chapter I will therefore refer to the 'unreliable' narrator only in quotation marks in an attempt to both defamiliarise this term and highlight the unreliability of the term as it is commonly used.

The 'unreliable' narrator arose in almost dialectical opposition to the conventional omniscient narrator in the nineteenth century and reflects the fascination with epistemology evident in fiction of this period⁷. Epistemology, or "the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion" (OED) was a major issue of concern in the nineteenth century due to the loss of faith in providential plots and the rise of science as a paradigm for truth. Both history and science attempt to answer the basic question of epistemology "what can we know for certain about the world?", and then attempt to create procedures to root out subjective opinion by establishing rigorous tests of 'proof'.

The problem of how reliable any narrator can be is posited in all texts featuring the storyteller situation, as we can see by looking briefly at a few representative texts. Saleem from *Midnight's Children* constantly confounds the reader's suspension of disbelief by taking up the mantle of the omniscient narrator and narrating events *that he could not possibly have been a witness to*⁸: for example, the story of his grandfather meeting his grandmother, which he describes as though he could account for

⁷ This can easily be seen by comparing the embedded narration of *Frankenstein* with that of *Wuthering Heights*: unlike Walton, Lockwood is immediately identified as unreliable when he mistakes a heap of dead rabbits for a cushion full of cats. This immediate flagging of the subjective observer as unreliable is not evident in *Frankenstein* precisely because at that historical time the omniscient narrator was not as fully developed as it later became in 1847 as we shall see below.

⁸ This, as we have seen in the discussion of *Human Croquet*, has metafictional consequences.

everything from the weather to the inner thoughts of the protagonists even though the 'source' of his information is the scant evidence found by opening an old tin trunk:

Most of what matters in our lives takes place in our absence: but I seem to have found from somewhere the trick of filling in the gaps in my knowledge, so that everything is in my head, down to the last detail, such as the way the mist seemed to slant across the early morning air ... everything, and not just the few clues one stumbles across, for instance by opening an old tin trunk which should have remained cobwebby and closed.

(MC: 19)

Omniscient narration is a purely literary form of discourse (it does not and cannot exist as a speech genre) and is usually accepted as trustworthy by the reader as it is normally used by hetero-extradiegetic (omniscient) narrators⁹. However, when it is appropriated by a fallible, intradiegetic and 'unreliable' narrator as it is by Saleem who gets dates muddled and occasionally lies to the reader, the device of 'omniscience' is defamiliarised. As a character in a text attempting to claim the discourse of authors who can only exist *outside* of the text, Saleem breaks the typical rules of homodiegetic narration as described by Genette:

Homodiegetic narration, by nature of convention [...] simulates autobiography much more closely than heterodiegetic normally simulates historical narrative. In fiction, the heterodiegetic narrator is not accountable for his information, "omniscience" forms part of his contract and his motto might be this retort by a character of Prevert's: "What I don't know, I guess and what I don't guess, I make up." As for the Homodiegetic narrator, he is obliged to justify ("How do you know that?") the information he gives about scenes from which "he" was absent as a character, about someone else's thoughts, etc., and any breach of that trust is *paralepsis*.

(Genette 1988: 78)

Genette's point that homodiegetic narrators are obliged to account for their information highlights the reason why we so often view intradiegetic narrators as unreliable. Their accounts will always necessarily be subjective and personal, and if they attempt to use the omniscient mode, well, that only makes them more suspicious. Paradoxically, in trying to make his account more 'true' by appropriating the devices of realist literature, Saleem succeeds only in making the reader distrust him more. Rushdie's comment on *Midnight's Children* is revealing on this score: 'I tried to make it as imaginatively true as I could, but imaginative truth is simultaneously honourable and suspect' (reprinted in Grant 1998: 9).

⁹ Indeed, we may speculate that the 'somewhere' Saleem has found the trick of omniscience from is in fact the novel, the only place it can exist.

In this way *MC* dramatises the clashing of oral versus written discourses, which we witness even in the first line of the novel (see epigraph) where the typical distancing motif of fantasy, 'once upon a time', clashes with the specificity of historical discourse 'August 15th 1947'. The clash between fairy tale and historical discourse is also a major feature of *Waterland*. The first person narrator of *Waterland*, Tom Crick, fittingly a history teacher, conflates history and fairy tale, reports regional folklore and sightings of supernatural phenomenon alongside natural history, dates and history on the grand scale such as the French revolution and the First World War.

Accentuating the 'unreliability' of the fictional narrator is something that all of the texts that I have identified as united by the trope of the storyteller do to some degree. The first 'volume' of *Nights at the Circus* in which Fevvers plays the role of Scheherezade is focalized by the 'rational' journalist Jack Walser, who consistently expresses doubt or disbelief at her story. Interior access to the thoughts of Walser whether via direct thought representation or free indirect thought representation has the effect, typical of free indirect thought, of making the reader feel close to and sympathise with the character (Short 1996: 315).

This prioritisation of Walser's thoughts in the "London" section of the novel means that the reader's viewpoint is indelibly coloured by Walser's focalisation. Walser is out to prove Fevvers a 'humbug merchant' and therefore, our typical reaction to a narrator presented as a character within the text (that of distrust) is reflected within the narrator/ narratee situation. Walser's sceptical and 'rationalistic' viewpoint on Fevvers' narrative is a metonymic function of the reader's own introduction to the world of the text; like Walser, the typical reader shares expectations of realism in the text, and Walser's determination to prove the 'artifice' behind what he perceives as the confidence trick appears to be the motivating force behind the storyline. Walser casts himself as an objective observer (Peach 1998: 133). He has 'the professional necessity to see all and believe nothing' and this 'habit of suspending belief extended even unto his own being' (NC: 10).

2. The context of transmission: narratees

The sense of unreliability in *Nights at the Circus* is augmented considerably by the presence of a sceptical narratee whose thoughts constantly interrupt and question the narrative of the storyteller. This, in itself, is a marked departure from the Arabian *Nights*, or the *Odyssey*, where the narratee seems to fade away after the narrative begins proper; in the Richard Burton translation of the *Nights*, Sharyar's role is reduced to merely giving Scheherezade permission to continue at intervals in the middle of stories.

In fact, the presence of a narratee is one of the major features of what I call the storytelling situation, and to explain its importance I will use the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, whose theories address the difference between written and spoken language and the political nature of all language use. My use of multiple Bakhtinian terms such as heteroglossia, polyphony, dialogism, and the chronotope is due to the tendency of these elements to congregate together, as noted by Sue Vice:

The equality of voices in the polyphonic level is realized dialogically, as being on the same plane means they can hear and respond to each other. The three elements dialogism, polyphony, and the chronotope work together, *the latter facilitating the other two categories by placing the voices in the same space.*

(Vice 1997:56 my emphasis)

We will see the truth of this statement after we examine the ways in which Bakhtin's terms apply to the works we are addressing. We have seen above that a storyteller attempting to utilise a discursive feature of a written or 'complex'¹⁰ genre, omniscience, is problematised due the reader's awareness that an 'unreliable' intratextual narrator should not be able to do so. We can see this clash between discourses as a postmodern reflection on what Bakhtin terms heteroglossia. We can therefore reinterpret the attempted use of privileged discourses such as the historiographic mode and omniscient narration by subjective narrators like Crick from *Waterland* and Saleem from *Midnight's Children* as demonstrative of the underlying rules that govern our language use. The artifice behind these seemingly impersonal and objective discursive formations is laid bare by the attempt to utilise them by

¹⁰ Complex is the term that Bakhtin uses in "The Problem of Speech Genres" (Bakhtin 1994: 62)

subjective consciousnesses who are not familiar enough with the language of power to suppress the subjective origin of the text, or the types of discourse that do not usually occur in historiography such as rumour, folklore and hearsay: *spoken* genres every one¹¹. Once this is established, Bakhtin's comments in "Discourse in the Novel" can be linked to the struggle these narrators have trying to claim this language in the service of their own stories.

Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process.

(Bakhtin 2000: 294)

This raises an interesting point: if, for Bakhtin, the novel's importance can be traced to its ability to incorporate heteroglossia then shouldn't oral narration negate this advantage, a regression to a less democratic and representative type of storytelling? The short answer is no. We must never lose sight of the fact that the storyteller is *not* the same thing as a real oral storyteller. Nothing can erase the fact that our contact with the storyteller is through a printed text, and the texts that I have chosen for analysis all self-consciously draw attention to the artifice that is required in writing and reading any literary text. The storyteller is a metafictional trope, it draws attention to and highlights the process of narration and the complexity of the boundaries between speech and writing.

In fact, *Midnight's Children*, *Nights at the Circus* and *Emotionally Weird* all depict the struggle of turning oral narration into written biography. The Scheherezade of NC's first volume, Fevvers, views her narratee Walser as an amanuensis who, as a journalist, with access to the privileged modes of discourse, can translate her story from its unmistakably low origins to the realm of socially acceptable discourse, a lasting and legitimate document. Similarly, MC is supposedly Saleem's autobiography; the time of writing and details of his conversations with his narratee only exist because he chooses to write them. He is not only orally narrating, but also writing, using both the ulterior

¹¹ Anecdotally this can be seen in the 'rumour' columns of tabloid newspapers where the writers are identified with pictures, address the reader conversationally and spend a great deal of time talking about themselves. The pretence of conversationality is kept up at great effort.

mode of narration (narration after the fact, typical of omniscient narration and autobiography) and also the simultaneous mode (the time taken to narrate the story is dramatised as in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*) (Rimmon-Kenan 1999: 89-90). The reader is first made aware of this paradox when Saleem discusses the events he has previously described as if he were an entirely oral presence, "these events which have tumbled from my lips ... Let me be direct now, and say" (MC: 30), despite having previously highlighted that he is writing when he documents the illiterate Padma's objections: "But what is so precious [...] to need all this writing-shiting?" (24). This description, which could be seen as a metaphoric pretence of immediacy used to place author and reader within the same imaginary world space as folkloric storyteller/listener, is reinterpreted in light of the next page, where the reader first becomes aware of Saleem's double presence as narrator within-the-text and narrator-of-the text:

I have been interrupted by Padma, who brought me my dinner and then withheld it, blackmailing me: "So if you're going to spend all your time wrecking your eyes with that scribbling, at least you must read it to me." I have been singing for my supper - but perhaps she will be useful, because it's impossible to stop her being a critic.

(MC: 32)

This is the first exposition of the narrative situation, and although it clears up any confusion that may have been engendered in the reader caused by Saleem's appropriation of verbs connected with oral narrative, it also instantly alerts the reader to the 'unreliability' of Saleem as a narrator: the first thing Padma does is force Saleem to correct a mistake he made when he introduced her: 'Things are always getting her goat. Perhaps even her name: understandably enough, since [...] she had been named after the lotus goddess whose most common appellation [...] is "The One Who Possesses Dung"' (24).

"What do you know, city boy?" she cried - hand slicing the air. "In my village there is no shame in being named for the Dung Goddess. Write at once that you are wrong, completely."

(32)

Like Walser in *Nights at the Circus*, the presence of Padma here causes the reader to question the veracity of the narrative and its narrator. In fact, the narratee in

the text generally has one of four functions each of which I have endeavoured to represent in my revision of Genette's diagram depicting embedded narration on page 120:

- 1) To **question** the narrator (this is generally the case when the narrator is also the focalizing consciousness of the text as in *Midnight's Children*, *Waterland* and *The Handmaid's Tale*). Often the questions are answered, interrupting the narrative and creating a digression, at other times the questions may have no effect on the primary narrative itself. This function is represented in Diagram C by the question mark within a thought bubble.
- 2) As an agent of **focalization**, where the narratee's consciousness determines how we view the narrator and his or her narrative. This particular type of narratee sometimes ends up becoming the narrator, as in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* or Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, and this is the motive behind Fevvers' narration in *Nights at the Circus*. For this reason I thought it particularly important that the narratee in Diagram C has a mouth, not only to represent their conversational interjections but also to represent the potential for retelling. This also explains why in each separate frame there exists a narrator and narratee: as Bakhtin highlights in "The Problem of Speech Genres" every utterance is geared towards a certain response and is itself a 'rejoinder' to previous utterances. No-one speaks just for the sake of speaking, all communication is inherently responsive and, ultimately, there are always two participants in any utterance, even if the only person attentively listening to the embedded story is the narrator (as in Balzac's *The Wild Ass's Skin*). Representing a narratee in every frame helps highlight the motivation of the hypodiegetic narrator(s) and accentuates the physical context in which the story is told.
- 3) To **motivate** the narrative (provide a reason for the retelling) or to **expedite** it. This function can be fulfilled simply by the presence of the narratee, as in the *Arabian Nights*, where Scharyar's presence is the motive for storytelling and we can therefore say that this function is fulfilled in any text where the narrator must

tell his story to a particular narratee. There are also narratees whose presence shapes the direction of the text more overtly. Padma, for example, cajoles Saleem into resolving unsatisfying plot-lines "'What happened to the plumpie?" Padma asks, crossly. "You don't mean you aren't going to tell?"' (61) and hurrying along the narrative:

But here is Padma at my elbow, bullying me back into the world of linear narrative, the universe of what-happened next: "At this rate," Padma complains, "you'll be two hundred years old before you manage to tell about your birth."
(MC: 38)

This function is represented in diagram C by the semi-permeable nature of the narrator's utterance (or, in English, the dashed line that makes up the speech bubble). This stresses the fact that the narration takes the expectations of the narratee into account, that the narrative is not hermetically sealed and separate from the actual physical situation in which it is portrayed but is instead indelibly coloured by the place and time of the telling and the narratee's responses. As Vice notes, this 'mixing of intentions of speaker and listener' (Vice 1997: 45) is a characteristic of dialogism, which we shall discuss in more detail below.

- 4) The fourth type of function fulfilled by the narratee is that of a **criticising** the narrative, the type of criticism-in-the-text that we saw in chapter one defined as metatextual intertextuality, or the relation between commentary and its object (element 7). This may be as simple an act as questioning the credibility of a certain event, or stretch to criticism of rhetorical style as exemplified by the following quotation from *Emotionally Weird*:

While the kettle was coming to the boil I went to the toilet—
~ In the same sentence? Nora objects, it's been nothing but ringing phones and boiling kettles, doorbells and toilets, since you began.
(EW: 104¹²)

This function may be seen to share features with the first and second functions. Often the criticism takes the form of questioning, and sometimes the criticism interrupts the narrative only figurally, as objections placed inside the thought representation of the

¹² In this and all following quotations from *Emotionally Weird* I will retain the distinct typographical differences between different sections from the original hardback edition. Different typefaces signify different authors and different 'worlds', and play a huge part in the novel as a whole.

focalising character that do not interrupt the process of narration in the world of the text but nevertheless interrupt the reader's perception of that process. In diagram C this function is represented by the exclamation mark within the thought bubble¹³.

This function is particularly important in postmodern novels because the effect of having an active critic portrayed within the text heightens the metafictional qualities already present by portraying the storyteller attempting to relate their life story. Again, *EW* supplies illuminating examples, notably when the narrator/ narratee tables turn and (Elea)Nora, the critical narratee for most of the novel, begins to tell her own life story:

Donald set about replacing his lost children, first with a girl, Deirdrie, who went to be Honoria's playmate almost straight away, then a boy, Lachlan, followed swiftly by Effie and then, finally, fourteen long years later, the after-thought that was Eleanora—

'You mean you? I think you should tell this in the first person.'

~ Why?

'To make it more real.'

~ I would prefer it if it was less real.

(*EW*: 188)

'I think I see. If Mrs Macbeth died *now*, or indeed if Aileen Grant died now, Watson Grant would get the money. But if Aileen divorces him he won't get any money when Mrs Macbeth dies?

~ I like this exposition, Nora says, everything being explained in black and white, you should do more of it.

(*EW*: 208)

These examples work to break the frame of the main story and remind us of the context in which the story is being told. Due to the constant questioning, interrupting, and thought representation *about the narrative itself* we never lose sight of the originating subject (the storyteller) or the immediate storytelling situation. This foregrounds the process of storytelling considerably, as can be seen when we compare a text with constant interruptions to one that breaks the frames only rarely. In the *Arabian Nights* the actual storytelling context melts away and the frame story of Scheherezade seems to become only a conceit binding the collection of stories rather

¹³ Obviously, my use of a thought bubble can be itself questioned. As we see below, often the criticism is voiced. However, in my opinion representing this, and the function of questioning the narrative, with a thought bubble is more appropriate because these functions are essentially the narratee's *thoughts* on the narration and as *Nights at the Circus* demonstrates, these objections can be presented to the reader through the focalization process and remain unvoiced.

than its organising principle or the primary narrative.¹⁴ It becomes possible to forget that Scheherezade is the primary narrator; that the voices of all the hypodiegetic narrators are actually Scheherezade's voice and that the storytelling has a purpose in itself, identified by Rimmon-Kenan:

Some hypodiegetic narratives maintain or advance the action of the first narrative by the sheer fact of being narrated, regardless (or almost regardless) of their content. [The Arabian] *Nights* is a classic example. Scheherezade's life depends on her narration, and the only condition her stories have to fulfil is to sustain the Sultan's attention.

(Rimmon-Kenan 1999: 92)

It is significant that ABC's 2000 television reinterpretation of the *Arabian Nights* featured interruptions by the sultan, objections to the fantastic nature of some of the tales and further narrative at the level of the main frame, much like we see in *Midnight's Children*, or Rob Reiner's film, *The Princess Bride* (1987). The effect gained, unsurprisingly, is to foreground the importance of Scheherezade's narration and strengthen the allegory about the importance of storytelling that is the primary frame tale.

At this point, I would like to direct attention again to diagram C. My aim was to make Genette's diagram more reflective of the active position of the narratee in the texts under analysis, but it is worthwhile quoting Bakhtin's reflections upon the practice of presenting "speech diagrams" at length:

Still current in linguistics are such *fictions* as the "listener" and "understander" (partners of the "speaker"), the "unified speech flow," and so on. These fictions produce a completely distorted idea of the complex and multifaceted process of active speech communication. Courses in general linguistics (even serious ones like Saussure's) frequently present graphic-schematic depictions of the two partners in speech communication—the speaker and the listener (who perceives the speech)—and provide diagrams of the active speech processes of the speaker and the corresponding passive processes of the listener's perception and understanding of the speech. One cannot say that these diagrams are false or that they do not correspond to certain aspects. But when they are put forth as the actual whole of speech communication, they become a scientific fiction. The fact is that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it. He either agrees or disagrees with it (completely or partially), augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution and so on. And the listener adopts this responsive attitude for the entire duration of the process of listening and understanding, from the very beginning – sometimes literally from the speaker's first word. Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive, although the degree of this activity varies extremely. Any

¹⁴ This may be due to the myth of a version that actually contained a thousand and one nights, which led many editors and publishers into forging additional tales and treating the frame story as a repository (or dumping ground) for any oriental story that didn't have an identifiable author (Mahdi 1995: 11).

understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker. A passive understanding of the meaning of perceived speech is only an abstract aspect of the actual whole of actively response that is actually articulated.

(Bakhtin 1994: 68)

Whilst I cannot possibly claim that the diagram is perfect, I believe it does succeed in representing the important role of the narratee and more accurately depict the storytelling situation in the texts I am studying. The importance of the narratee's place within the formal structure of the novel can be further explained using Bakhtin's concept of **dialogism**, as this type of narratee dramatises a situation where 'every utterance, every sentence, is orientated towards an implied response, is in "dialogue" with utterances that have already been made and interacts with the social situation around it.' (Wales 1997: 123). For Bakhtin dialogism is an inherent feature of language, a view most evident in "The Problem of Speech Genres" where Bakhtin describes written forms as secondary speech genres, stressing the similarities between written texts and utterances. Writing, like speech, needs to be understood as part of a continual chain of utterances, a scientific paper, although it may seem to be autochthonous is in fact written in response, as a rejoinder to previous theories and when viewed in this way we can see how for Bakhtin all communication is dialogic. However, some forms are more dialogic than others, and Bakhtin also uses the term monologic (even though it seems hard to imagine a truly monologic utterance) which he defines as "words that expect no answer" (Bakhtin 1973: 63) but the nature of his definitions seem to suggest a sliding scale rather than a binary opposition between monologic and dialogic discourses.

This dialogic quality is evident when we compare the nature of these texts where the truth is in question and no one has the final or authoritative word with the written genres which, as we have seen above, some of the narrators attempt to utilise. The omniscient narrator generally has the final word when assigning meaning to texts as there is no-one to question their assignation of certain qualities to characters or their representation of events. Although a reader can question the likelihood of, say, spontaneous combustion in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* there is no voice of dissent

incorporated *within* the text itself¹⁵. Compare this to the disbelief articulated by Padma, Nora or Walser at unlikely or fantastic events in the narratives of Saleem, Effie and Fevvers. By incorporating dialogism to the extent where a narrator's version of events is constantly interrogated by the expectations of the listener, these texts highlight the importance of the listener, and by implication, the reader, in the creation of meaning. This of course opens up the text to a variety of possible readings and interpretations, for if the storyteller's narrative is questioned within the text then the reader already has two alternative ready made viewpoints on 'what actually happened' to choose from, and can decide which, if any, of the versions they believe.

The reader's ultimate power, to believe or not to believe, to read or not to read, is in fact highlighted when Saleem makes direct addresses to the reader, reminiscent of early metafiction such as *Tristram Shandy* (see Waugh 1993: 70).

Please believe me that I am falling apart.
I am not speaking metaphorically; nor is this the opening gambit of some melodramatic riddling, grubby appeal for pity ... I ask you only to accept (as I have accepted) that I shall eventually crumble into (approximately) six hundred thousand and thirty million particles of anonymous and necessarily oblivious dust. This is why I have resolved to confide in paper, before I forget.

(MC: 37)

This passage carries with it an implied dialogic response, namely that a reader would automatically presume that Saleem is 'speaking metaphorically', and is typical of other addresses to the reader within the text. However, these addresses have the effect of further undermining any trust that the reader has in the narrator, as Saleem overtly attempts to control the reader's understanding of the narrative, to reduce possible interpretations to a single monologic explanation that is always undermined by the dialogism of the narrative situation. Again, the idea of authorship, is highlighted. Foucault claims in "What is an Author?" that the author, rather than a genius who generously puts 'an inexhaustible world of significations' *into* the text, as we usually see him/ her, actually functions to *limit* the number of possible interpretations (Foucault 1979: 158-9). We will examine this claim further in chapter 4, but for now we can see

¹⁵ This is a simplification; Dickens's August 1853 preface to the novel edition of *Bleak House* famously appeals to the historical accounts of spontaneous combustion in response to George Henry Lewes' criticism of its unlikelihood. However, whether a preface counts as part of the text itself is another argument entirely.

how Saleem is attempting to limit the possible interpretations a reader could make of his text, but is thwarted by the clumsiness of his authorial style.

The attempt to shift from a spoken first-person account of one's life to a written genre dramatises what Bakhtin calls the shift from a **primary speech genre** to the novel. He calls this a **secondary speech genre** where 'primary genres lose their immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others' (Bakhtin 1994: 62). This accounts for the non-referentiality of fiction, but also the abstraction that occurs when a text is written in more monologic forms of discourse, where the utterances of others may exist on the diegetic level but the narrator's final godlike judgement is unchallenged.

Finally, a further effect of dramatising storytelling is that a chronotope of storytelling is established, and it is the presence of the narratee that creates this chronotope of storytelling. By constantly bringing us back to the moment of storytelling, the immediate context of the communication, a depth of field¹⁶ is brought upon the 'present' of the novel. Again, comparison with the *Arabian Nights* reveals this chonotopicity for, as we have already seen, the primary frame of storytelling does not melt away as it does in that fairy tale; it is impossible to forget about the 'actual' storyteller and his or her audience. Also, if one thinks of the novels, we are aware where and when the storytelling takes place; whether it is in a London dressing room, a Bombay pickle factory, a hotel room, a Hebridean island, a classroom or even an anonymous place on "The underground female road". With this sense of space, inevitably comes the sense of time:

Like the duration of the act of narration, the place in which it occurs need not be mentioned, nor does the reader feel the need for such specification.

(Rimmon-Kenan 1999: 91)

Because physical space in which the narrative takes place is represented, the duration of the narration is also inevitably represented. Again, this leads to the unusual effect of foregrounding the act of storytelling itself; we are not presented with the narrative as *product*, as it inevitably appears on the shelves of a bookshop, but as

¹⁶ I am indebted to Damian Grant's discussion of 'Tessellation' for this term (Grant 1998: 39).

process. The physical presence of the narrator and the narratee combined within a specified physical context ultimately reminds the reader of what is missing from his or her own experience of narrative in its reified 'commodity' forms; the novel, movies, television serials. Linda Hutcheon calls this emphasis on process rather than product "Process Mimesis" and identifies it as one of the features of metafiction, which I will return to when analysing the metafictional effects of the storyteller below (Hutcheon 1984).

The importance of the chronotope of storytelling is one of the main reasons why I believe the narrator Offred, in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, can be viewed as a storyteller, even though in that text there is no physically present narratee. Offred is not writing her story, like Saleem or Effie, nor is she 'telling' in the traditional sense to another human being. Indeed for much of the text, it seems as though we have a fairly traditional (but highly self conscious) first person narrative. This view of the narrator can be held until the final chapter when the primary story ends, and we are left with a commentary upon Offred's narrative conducted by future historians. At this point we learn that the text we have been reading has been reconstructed, possibly not in the correct order, from audio-cassettes. The whole narrative must be reinterpreted in the light of this information; instead of a planned, whole and written testimony we have unplanned, fragmented and oral storytelling.

Given this situation we may tenuously suggest that the tape-recorder acts as the narratee. Although this may seem a contrived attempt to make *The Handmaid's Tale* fit with my previous criteria, it can be seen that the medium on which Offred's narrative is transmitted gives the text characteristics shared by narratives that feature a more conventional storytelling situation. Narrating to a tape-recorder intensifies the implied dialogic response in the narrator's voice, where the narrator speculates as to how the reader is interpreting the narrative¹⁷. Likewise, the dialogic responses that occur as interruptions in *Nights at the Circus* and *Midnight's Children* here take place in the "Historical Notes" chapter. Here we see all four features of the narratee deferred in

¹⁷ Something that, of course, would be unnecessary if the narratee was actually physically present.

time: questioning the narrator, providing an alternative point of view from which to see the narrator (an ironic 'historical perspective'), criticizing the narrative (for its value as historical testimony) and, arguably 'moving the narrative along'. Although it might seem odd to say that this chapter moves the narrative along, it does affect the way we see Offred's narrative because it denies the reader any form of closure. The future historians simply do not care what happened to Offred in the end (she is not an 'important' or historical character, as perhaps the commander is), as the reader does, but simply about her tale's value as a historical document.

Although until the last chapter we have no idea that Offred is narrating her story to a tape recorder, the revelation of the way in which the narrative was told infuses the entire text with a chronotopic depth. Moments of self consciousness, direct addresses to the reader like "this is a reconstruction" (*HT*: 144) and "You can mean thousands" (50) suddenly become more important when we realise that this novel too is depicting the process of narration, in a way that highlights the alienation forced upon the storyteller; the "you" that means thousands is the same "you" addressed by song lyrics, a stand-in that indicates the absence of the other, the receiver, the listener.

Likewise, the fact that the story is tape-recorded also highlights the place and time in which the story is told. After learning of "the Underground Femaleroad" the claustrophobia of the text is intensified; the narrative voice is not 'looking back' on danger and captivity, but this danger is sustained even in the telling itself. Anecdotally, I recall my first reading of the text was permeated by concerns over the time and place of writing. Offred's narrative is relayed in the present tense, and this is one of the reasons why the captivity and ordeals she undergoes seem so powerful. This use of the present tense is a feature *The Handmaid's Tale* shares with *Ann Frank's Diary*, where atrocities are described in the present tense, heightening their emotional impact and their perceived temporal 'nearness' to the speaker. Again, the effect heightens the significance of the oral method of transmission: after reading the final chapter, we can speculate that the reason for the story being told in the present tense is because the ordeal is not yet over, there is no point where she has escaped captivity, where she

can narrate in safety. Offred's narrative resists closure because it is obvious that she has not been able to relay her experiences in writing. "The Pen between my fingers is sensuous, alive almost, I can feel its power, the power of the words it contains," says Offred, recalling a moment where she breaks the Gileadan taboo against women writing at the prompt of the commander, who plays the wolf to Offred's Little Red Riding Hood (196). The oral transmission of her tale makes clear to the reader that she still is alienated from the pen that is power in patriarchal society.¹⁸

It is important that Offred's tale is spoken not written, because it places her in a continuum of female storytelling. As Marina Warner notes, women's voices have long been seen as dangerous by men, and much fairy tale content is in fact barely masked protest against the institutions of patriarchy (Warner 1994a: 27-51). For centuries women, denied education or even literacy, were able to voice their discontent in the tales told to their peers. Denied access to forms of "serious" writing, the voice of the repressed can be seen in fairy tales that condemn arranged marriages, like "Beauty and the Beast" which, significantly occurs in many redactions by various 'bluestocking' French fairy tale writers during the first 'fairy tale' boom in the salons of Louis XIV. Warner highlights the *realism* of this fairy tale, which describes a situation that the contemporary female audience would find familiar; fathers giving away (or on some occasion selling) their daughters to men who might well strike them as monsters (278). The importance of the oral means of transmission; the resonances that Offred's voice strikes with the voices of the repressed, expressed in fairy tales for centuries combines with the distanced, supercilious questioning of the historians to create a chronotope as distinctive as any of the other texts. The time of storytelling; the method; the *context* and purpose of storytelling becomes clearly important. As a final, shining example, the appearance of Elvis Presley lyrics in chapter ten suddenly becomes more significant

¹⁸ Also, the pen is overt in a way that recording onto cassettes is not. Writing produces a visible artefact, which is physical evidence, and whose contents can be appraised in a short amount of time by skim-reading. Audio recording on the other hand requires long periods of attention; you can not easily appraise the contents by running the tapes at quadruple speed, for example. It is significant that the future historians, however, encounter the narrative in manuscript form. A stable, 'fixed' form is the first thing that the historians impose upon the chaotic fragmentation of the illicit tape recordings.

when we realise that one of the tapes Offred is recording onto is labelled "Elvis Presley's Golden Years" (314). In novels that feature the storyteller, as Offred continually reminds us, context is everything.

3. The Intertextual allusion or incorporation of fairy tale intertexts

We come now to the fact that these fairy tales are about the teller's own life, only to discover that fairy tales have always been about the teller's own life. Marina Warner in *From the Beast to the Blonde* delves into what Jameson would call the 'political unconscious' of fairy tales to expose their historic foundations and what she finds is the lore of the oppressed, women and the peasantry, disguised in dream-like metaphors easily interpreted by their listeners but not so easily today. The fairy tales of many of the French courtesans, such as Madame D'Aulnoy, rail against the injustices perpetrated by society upon women such as arranged marriage and treatment of women as chattels. These fairytales are politics and allegory mixed together to create in the listener an understanding of the wrongs of the political system. The fairy tales of the storytellers too inevitably portray historically contingent political circumstance: if, as Jameson claims, "history is what hurts", the storyteller reminds us of the way in which the modern reader experiences narrative as a commodity (Jameson 1981: 102).

"What hurts" in these circumstances is the alienation of the subject in postmodern society, where the individual's relationship to the world is uncertain. Understanding the self as more than part of a cog in the globalised machinery of late capitalism, indeed understanding the self in relation to history, requires the technique of narrativisation: the documented boom in popularity of genealogy over recent years can be seen as an attempt to understand 'self' by understanding one's life in relation to one's ancestors, creating a family narrative in which to understand one's own life and eventual death.

This is only one political area that the storyteller foregrounds; the different texts under analysis vary in the other political concerns they manifest, from the feminism in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Nights at the Circus* to the postcolonialist overtones of *Midnight's Children*. The storyteller, by foregrounding the process of narrativisation and a storytelling situation vastly different to the readers own experience, brings our

attention to the means of production that govern contemporary storytelling. Indeed, by the juxtaposition of a form that is generally held to be the property of a 'folk' culture, the fairy tale, and written forms that are always legally the property of the author, the storytellers can be seen to bring attention to these ideas of 'ownership'. This is a particularly important point to emphasise because it is generally held that fairy tales lack any real political or social significance and are mere escapism. As the studies of Marina Warner and Jack Zipes make clear, this has *never* been the case, and it is not the case in postmodern fairy tales either.

The use of fairy tale motifs within fictional autobiography is, like the formal device of the storyteller, not a new occurrence. Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* are both laden with allusions to fairy tales and folklore, from "Bluebeard" and "Cinderella" to the *Arabian Nights*. However, I would suggest that the way in which these intertexts are used in the postmodern novels that are my focus is radically different.

In *Great Expectations* and *Jane Eyre*, fairy tale discourse is used to present a compellingly 'realistic' depiction of the psychology of youth. Both the young Jane and Pip see the world through expectations garnered from fairy tales: this is most tellingly depicted in Pip's mistaken visions of Mrs Havisham as a fairy godmother type figure, beneficently fulfilling his wish to be a gentleman in order to marry Estella; a scenario we recognise from fairy tales as the brilliant metafictional lecture incorporated in *TDITNE* suggests: "The emotion we feel in fairy-tales when the characters are granted their wishes is a strange one. We feel the possible leap of freedom — I can have what I want — and the perverse certainty that this will change nothing; that Fate is fixed" (254).

However, in the case of both these novels, the fairy tale suggests a more immature way of viewing the world. Pip's fairy tale expectations are shattered by the fact that his wealth comes from a more realistic source than the philanthropy of an otherworldly aristocrat, the hard labour of the convict Magwitch. A similar misrecognition of plot is at work in *Jane Eyre*, where Jane's and the reader's expectations

of a plot not dissimilar to Cinderella ('working girl makes good') are confounded by the revelation of Rochester's "Bluebeard" qualities.

Neither *Jane Eyre* nor *Great Expectations* feature a 'storytelling' situation, however, and therefore questions of author, fiction and historiography are absent. These are formative texts of the English *bildungsroman*, and are therefore more concerned with creating an idea of 'development' and 'self' rather than deconstructing it. Likewise, texts that do feature a character that fulfils most of the formal features of the storyteller may not have the same effects outlined above. For example, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's ancient mariner or Joseph Conrad's Marlow both share many features that we have used to define 'the storyteller'. They tell an oral narrative to a narratee within a written text, and that narrative is their own life story which in both cases contains fairy tale motifs. Both these narratives draw attention to storytelling: the ancient mariner's penance is to offload his story on any unsuspecting wedding guest at every opportunity which highlights the way experience can be turned into cautionary narrative and depicts the narrative contract that binds speaker and listener, reader and author. Marlow, on the other hand, shows the problems of narrative, its inability to portray the 'real':

'...He [Kurtz] was just a word for me. I did not see the man in the name any more than you do. Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream — making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams ...'

[...]

'... No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence,— that which makes its truth, its meaning — its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream — alone...'

(Conrad 1995: 50 unbracketed ellipses replicated from original)

The difference between these romantic, modernist and postmodernist storytellers can be seen in the differing self-awareness of the narrators. For Coleridge, narrative can depict truth in an unproblematic manner: the ancient mariner's cautionary tale is successful both in representing the mariner's experiences and in its goal of inspiring god-fearing awe in its narratee. Marlow, on the other hand self-reflexively despairs at the inability of narrative to portray and transmit the 'truth' of experience. We can also

see the way in which the embedded narrative structure depicted on Diagram A breaks down under a modernist storytelling scenario. The frames are not stable as they are in *Frankenstein*, so we cannot disentangle Kurtz's story from Marlow's because of the oral nature of Marlow's intradiegetic homodiegetic narration, and because Kurtz's story has become part of Marlow's. The postmodern storytellers go even further than this, depicting the ways in which narrative structures society, memory and our sense of self.

How then is the fairy tale used in tales featuring the storyteller, and what makes this use different from that of its predecessors? The following four categories highlight effects resulting from the foregrounding of the fairy tale intertext in postmodern 'storyteller texts. The fairy tale in these texts functions:

- i. As an easily recognisable form of discourse used in opposition to written forms.
- ii. A schema or template which moulds one's interpretation of one's own life
- iii. To suggest an alternative view of the world from realism (magic realism).
- iv. Allusively, to suggest parallels between characters.

We will see in chapter four that the fairy tale is used as a form of easily recognisable discourse that opposes written or monologic forms: "Once upon a time", is used in *Midnight's Children* and *Waterland* to denote an alternative way of understanding the world to historiography. This can be seen as a way of understanding self that existed prior to writing and autobiography, both historically and in real terms: everyone has a 'story' of key events in their life, whereas few people have an autobiography. In this guise, fairy tale magical chronotopic events can be perhaps viewed as a product of oral narration: most people's first experience of oral narration comes in the form of the fairy tales which are told to us as children, and perhaps the context of oral narration subconsciously activates this mode of discourse. The "Historical Notes" chapter of *The Handmaid's Tale* also displays this recognition of fairy tale discourse: the historians who reconstruct Offred's tale christen it "The Handmaid's Tale" in homage to Geoffrey Chaucer (*HT*: 313) because the oral, fairy tale like testimony, recalls the narration of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

The second way in which the fairy tale intertext can be viewed is as a schema, or template into which the chaos of events can be fitted. We will see this to be the case in Chapter four when the narrator of *Waterland*, Tom Crick's, mother relates experiences from her own life as fairy tale. For now, it is enough to reiterate that the predictable roles in the fairy tale of hero, false hero, bride, helper, sought after object, etcetera, make the fairy tale an easy way of converting experience into narrative. Indeed, in explaining the importance of schemata for organising the chaos of lived experience into understandable patterns and therefore the tendency towards stereotypes in the press, Roger Fowler suggests:

The world presented by the popular press, like the world we feel we live in, is a culturally organized set of categories, rather than a collection of unique individuals. If we imagined the world as a vast collection of individual things and people we would be overwhelmed by detail. We manage the world, make sense of it, by categorizing phenomena, including people. Having established a person as an example of type, our relation with that person is simplified: we think about the person in terms of the qualities which we attribute to the category already pre-existing in our minds. In so far as we regard the category of person as displaying strongly predictable attributes or behaviour, the category may harden into a stereotype, an extremely simplified mental model which fails to see individual features, only the values that are believed to be appropriate to the type [...]

[...] "groups" such as "young married women", "immigrants", "teachers", "capitalists" and "royalty" are imaginary, socially constructed concepts, almost as fictitious as trolls at bridges and princesses in towers.

(Fowler 1998: 92, 94)

Mick Short notes the way that fictions play a large part in the establishment of our schemas, giving the example that he has never seen beyond the front desk of a police station but has a good idea, from novels and films, of how those arrested are interviewed, charged and put in the cells. (Short 1996: 227) Schema theory is typically related to cognitive psychology, a school of psychology that view the similarities of the human brain to a computer, but Peter Brooks suggests a way in which applying a fairy tale schemata in order to understand ones life might be desirable in more traditional psychoanalytic terms:

It is as if the individual, in order to be able to narrate his life story to himself in such a way as to make it coherent and significant, had to reach back toward the idea of a providential plot which, for better or for worse, would subsume his experience to that of mankind, to show the individual as a significant repetition of a story already endowed with meaning.

(Brooks 1998: 280)

The third effect of the fairy tale intertext is to incorporate a genre that has entirely different rules of representation from historiography, which utilises the same conventions as realism. As we saw in chapter two, the incorporation of fairy tale discourse within the same text as conventional realism can be seen as a cause of what has been called, the 'magic realism' of the texts under analysis. It is an interesting fact that of the texts I have used to define the storyteller chronotope all but one (*HT*) can be called magic realist.

The incorporation of fairy tale discourse also imports fairy tale logic into the discursive structure of the novel as a whole. When Fevvers escapes a Bluebeard-like collector in *Nights at the Circus* by boarding a model locomotive in the second volume, when Dick Crick dives into the water never to resurface in *Waterland*, the incorporation of fairy tale narrative allows the reader to see the events in more than one way: the boundaries of the possible and impossible are shifted.

In *TDITNE*, the logic of the fairy tale dictates that when Gillian Perholt rubs the oriental glass bottle a djinn will appear. Similarly, the different formulaic genres, 'jumbled up like a box of biscuits' that make up *Emotionally Weird*, from Mills & Boon romance and high fantasy to the detective novel, are subsumed in a fairy tale like logic when Effie (the character) reverses a character's death by burning one of the embedded narratives "the expanding prism of J" which parallels the fatal accident, before Effie (the narrator) exclaims metafictionally 'Now that's magic realism' (*EW*: 283). Of course, this again raises the question of ontology, as it is quite obvious that we would not expect such a cure for death to work in our world; this question over which world to place the narrative logic in leads to the effect of magic realism.

The fourth result of intertextually embedding fairy tale narrative, through allusive practices from explicitly comparing characters to recognisable fairy tale characters to more illicit or subliminal references was covered in chapter one. However, for the moment one can think of the dress that Offred is forced to wear when going to market in *The Handmaid's Tale*: "What do you think of when you see someone in red carrying a basket?" says Atwood (Wilson 1993: 271) making plain the reference to "Red Cap" or

“Red Riding Hood”. This allusion on the level of character description is highly relevant because that particular fairy tale has transformed over the years from a cautionary tale about the danger of wolves into an invective against female sexuality, a trend documented in Zipes’ *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* and of course highly relevant to the narrative.

4. The narrative is homodiegetic.

The orality of the [fairy tale] genre remains a central claim even in the most artificial and elaborate versions [...] [they] imitate speech, with chatty asides, apparently spontaneous exclamations, direct appeals to the imaginary circle round the hearth, rambling descriptions, gossipy parentheses, and other bedside or laplike mannerisms that create an illusion of collusive intimacies, of home, of the bedtime story, the winter’s tale.

(Warner 1994a: 25)

Perhaps the most important aspect of the storyteller as a formal trope is that the narrative is about the storyteller, or homodiegetic. I mentioned at the start of this chapter that embedded or framed storytelling is not new, but that nevertheless that this trope has postmodern effects in the novels under analysis. The novels analysed in this and the next chapter depict a scenario where the reader witnesses someone attempting to make sense of their life through narrative, which is inherently a metafictional trope.

The storyteller creates an interesting effect in that it is very hard to talk about this conceit without sounding naïve. Saleem Sinai, Gillian Perholt, Fevvers *et al.* do not exist. They are fictional characters written by authors who remain outside the text, and yet in writing about texts that feature a storyteller, it is very hard not to write that ‘Saleem says this’, or ‘Gillian is motivated by that’. We are all aware that *HT* has not been put together by future historians, but written by Margaret Atwood. However, one must take the “Historical Notes” chapter seriously if only to see how it changes the reader’s perspective on the preceding narrative. This is indicative of how much the storyteller facilitates what Bakhtin calls **polyphony**, Bakhtin notes that some of Dostoevsky’s literary characters are referred to as if they were real by critics ‘as if the character were not an object of authorial discourse, but rather a fully valid, autonomous carrier of his own individual world’ (Bakhtin 1973: 5). Vice’s summation of the

polyphonic novel almost perfectly describes the situation that the storyteller trope engenders:

In a polyphonic novel, characters are represented not as objects, who are manipulated and commented upon by an omniscient narrator, but as subjects, on an equal footing with the narrator (their voices are constructed in exactly the same way as this figure's voice), whose own word about themselves and each other is all that we know about them.

(Vice 1997: 114)

The introduction of a narratee whose voice acts dialogically and polyphonically, combined with the depth of field supplied by the chronotope of storytelling, all leads to a situation that foregrounds the act of authorship, and the fact that we cannot discuss these texts without sounding naïve and seeming to confuse the narrator with the author suggests the extent to which questions of authority and biography are raised.

In the next chapter, I will look further at the autobiographical nature of the fairy tales told by the storytellers and explain the importance of storyteller trope. This chapter defined the storyteller, in the next chapter I will attempt to explain precisely *why* the storyteller chronotope became important at this particular point in history and furthermore, why the fairy tale is such an important intertext in texts featuring the storyteller.

Chapter Four: The Role of the Storyteller in a Postmodern World

... throughout history, stories have been told, chiefly, but not always at bedtime, in order to quell restless thoughts; [children's] need of stories is matched only by the need adults have of children to tell stories to, of receptacles for their stock of fairy-tales, of listening ears on which to unload those most unbelievable yet haunting of fairy tales, their own lives;

(Swift [1984] 1992: 7)

In his influential essay, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov" (1977), Walter Benjamin laments the decline of the art of storytelling. He contrasts the idea of the folkloric storyteller, a social, political and fundamentally physical presence with the idea of the author whom, he argues, is asocial and is able to tell stories without physical presence but also without actively being a part of the everyday world. The crux of Benjamin's argument, as in his "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", rests upon the concept of 'aura', which he argues in that essay, is a quality of immanence and originality that is lost in mass-produced art. Just as we cannot see the surrounding architecture and the physical texture when Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling is photographically reproduced on a postcard, poster or t-shirt, we cannot see the face, hear the voice, of the storyteller in a commodity driven system where the novel is one among many mass produced commodities designed to exploit the public's insatiable desire for narrative.

What then, are we to make of the subset of postmodern fiction that foreground the process of storytelling? If the novel has displaced the storyteller, what are we to make of the storytelling characters who question the primacy of written discourse, and challenge the reader's expectations of generic forms. If the storyteller is dead why does he (or more often, she) refuse to lie down?

In chapter three I formally defined a type of narration that is used metafactively in a number of postmodern novels. These novels model themselves explicitly on the *Arabian Nights* and use fairy tale intertexts to make the reader question the difference between oral and written ways of understanding the self.

This chapter will investigate the effects that the metafictional trope of the storyteller causes, and postulate a theory as to why this intertextual use of fairy tales as a model for storytelling is something that the authors of these texts found important.

Who's telling this story? Autobiography and fiction

One of the major features of the storyteller is that the story told is about the self. This act, creating fairy tales about the self, leads to a foregrounding of authorship. Of course, because the storyteller is an intradiegetic character, telling his or her life story and not the author, the storyteller can be seen as a variant form of the fictional autobiography, an established genre which goes back to Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and *Robinson Crusoe* but one with its own problems. As Paul De Man notes in "Autobiography as De-Facement":

Autobiography seems to depend on actual and potentially verifiable events in a less ambivalent way than fiction does. It seems to belong to a simpler mode of referentiality, of representation, and of diegesis. It may contain lots of phantasms and dreams, but these deviations from reality remain rooted in a single subject whose identity is defined by the uncontested readability of his proper name.

(De Man 1984: 68)

The novel, however, does not remain rooted in a single subject; the proper name on the cover is that of the author, not the character. This small detail makes all the difference in the way that we read the texts, as De Man himself was aware. Imagine picking up a copy of *Midnight's Children* without a cover. How would we know whether it is autobiography or fiction? We generally rely on paratextual features like the cover of the work to equate the 'author' with a real person, a referent outside the world of the text, and if the 'I' in the text does not tally with this real person we read the work as fiction¹.

Texts containing the storyteller problematise the construct of the 'author', which we take for granted in our critical discourse and our 'common sense' understanding of the world to the extent that *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* does not have an entry for the word author, a situation analogous to a dictionary of religions not having an entry for 'God'. This demonstrates the point made by Michel Foucault that

¹ There is always a possibility of oversimplification when talking about autobiography, and there are numerous postmodern attempts to challenge the norms of the genre; notably Philip Roth's *The Facts* and Roland Barthes' autobiography, *Roland Barthes*.

the unit of “the author and the work” *appears* to be fundamental, making other categories such as genre, schools and concepts seem weak, secondary constructs in comparison (Foucault 1979: 141). Foucault claims that the concept of the author came about when authors became subject to punishment, that is, when their discourses could be transgressive (148). Texts featuring the storyteller play with this concept; something that we find whenever talking about the intradiegetic storyteller; Saleem Sinai is a fictional character, and yet the easiest way to talk about *MC* is to play along and pretend that he is real. The frustration of the historians reading *The Handmaid’s Tale* is that inability to find the author, whose identity is hidden precisely to escape possible identification and punishment.

The reason that this causes the historians problems can be seen if we look closely at the meaning of the word ‘author’, its use and its equivalents in the English language. As Foucault points out, the question of the author ties in with the question “What does it matter who is speaking?” (141). This is a question that gives all historians problems and that lies at the very heart of conventional historiography, for this question must be solved in order to say how ‘authentic’ a testimony is. Finding out ‘who is speaking’ matters very much indeed to historians, as evidenced in the division between primary and secondary sources. The historian judges the reliability of a source by his or her relation to the events investigated, and those who were verifiably present at key events are judged to have more valuable (or *authentic*) testimony than those who were not. In historiography, as in fiction, some narrators are more reliable than others.

This leads us back to the question of the ‘unreliable’ narrator. In chapter three we looked at the phenomenon of the ‘unreliable narrator’ and noted its date of birth in the nineteenth century. The significance of this fact can only be seen by examining other pertinent theories about the nineteenth century, the century which saw the development and popularisation of literary realism and invented the novel as a commodity, the century held to be the ‘golden age’ of the novel by critics as diverse as Peter Brooks, Mikhail Bakhtin and Georg Lukács.

Elizabeth Deeds Ermath argues in *The English Novel in History 1840-1895* that the invention of realism and the invention of historiography are inextricably linked. According to Ermath's thesis, "[t]he chief contribution of the nineteenth-century novel is precisely the construction and dissemination of the historical narrative code and its particular accompanying values" (1997: 68). The historical narrative code is something that has been internalised and seems 'natural' to a modern reader and includes such paradigm shifts as the move from providential to historical plots and, more importantly for our concerns, the evolution of the omniscient narrator. For Ermath, the omniscient narrator is the voice of history, providing a unified temporal perspective that resists individualisation to the extent, she argues, that it cannot be called a narrator at all:

'The narrator' is really only a name for the most powerful function of the historical convention: one that – it bears repeating – precisely can *not* be individualized. [...] 'the' so-called narrator is really a discursive function that maintains the link between now and then: a function that maintains a single-point perspective in time.

(Ermath 1997: 88)

Ermath argues that we must use the term 'nobody' rather than the term narrator when talking about this discursive function (77). We have already seen what happens when a storyteller, who cannot *but* be individualized, tries to appropriate the voice of nobody in chapter three's analysis of *Midnight's Children*. To fully draw out the implications of Ermath's argument, it is necessary to break the word nobody into its components: no and body. No-body can not have a voice, as by definition it lacks the physical presence and speaking equipment of the individualised human narrator. 'Nobody' is a discursive function that can only exist in a society that is dominated by writing and its descendant, print, where stories are not told orally by individuals but by 'authors' in mass-produced texts.

Walter J Ong in *Writing and Technology* reminds us that writing is a technology that has changed the way literate peoples view themselves and the world. The fact that we have to be reminded that writing is a technology is proof enough of how much we have internalised it, started to see it as natural. He dates the internalisation of writing and print into the psyche of western society in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, a theory backed up by the creation of the 'nobody' or omniscient

narrator. Ong and Ermath's theses are complementary: by combining them we can see both how writing enables the creation and naturalisation of the historical code, 'nobody' can not exist without writing. We will return to this point when examining the effect of writing upon memory.

For now it is enough to note that the reader's 'common sense' response to the storyteller — viewing them as 'unreliable' and questioning their versions of events according to interiorised historical criteria — is derived from the historic code and omniscient, 'nobody' narrator invented in the nineteenth century due to the interiorisation of writing and print. The storyteller, by foregrounding the fact that writing and speech are not so easily separated, that stories have tellers, problematises any conception of the author as the godlike creator outside of the text. The binary between objective omniscience and subjective knowledge is deconstructed in Graham Swift's *Waterland* where the narrator reports rumour and superstition (elements usually excluded or included only at ironic distance in historical discourse) for example rumours about Sarah Atkinson's prophetic powers (83-4) alongside more traditional historic sources such as court transcripts (110) and most strikingly, folklore about the eel (196-204) alongside reference to learned monographs on the eel in natural history (198-200). The types of discourse usually privileged by historiography are presented alongside those it normally represses, leading the reader to question not only the events portrayed, but also the reliability of the narrator who is misusing the code.

What then is the relation between the author, history and the storyteller? First, the omniscient author is a discursive feature much like that used in history or scientific papers: it effaces the individuality and subjectivity of its originating subject in order to lay claim to some scientific objective realm of knowledge. Just as history pretends not to be an individual's personal interpretation of available facts by adopting a form of discourse where all reference to 'I' is suppressed, so too the originating subject is suppressed in realism where 'nobody' is the narrator. The narratorial function becomes one of voicing the concerns of society; "It is a fact universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a fortune, must be in want of a wife" or, "All happy families

are alike but an unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion" is not an individual's opinion, like those expressed by the narrator of Fielding's *Tom Jones*, but the concretisation of social norms into a 'voice of society'.

Indeed, realism at its height completely eschews personality, as can be seen in Flaubert's aspiration to leave no creator in the text resulting in his use of *style indirect libre* as an attempt of achieving ultimate 'impersonality'. Ermath quotes Baudrillard "There were *societies without the social* [...] just as there were societies without history" as she explains the emergence of the interlinked nineteenth century conceptions of history and society (Ermath 1997: 120 italics replicated from original). The realist novel was instrumental in convincing the reading public that there was such a thing as an integrated society, and spreading the new non-providential view of history, where decisions made could easily have gone the other way and history is essential in charting the key moments at which these divergences occur. George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is a sterling example here, with its constant metaphors relating society to the web, and its panoply of characters whose lives could have been altogether different if they had just made slightly different decisions: such as Dorothea not marrying Causabon, Lydgate not marrying Rosamond or Mary Garth burning Peter Featherstone's will.

These analyses of the omniscient author and realism are important precisely because they are the yardstick by which we instinctively measure anything that does not conform to the norm. The 'unreliable' narrator cannot exist unless you also have some concept of a reliable narrator to oppose it. As we have seen, the 'reliable' narrator is a nineteenth century construct that is inextricably intermeshed with the nineteenth century concepts of history and society. Indeed, the methods we use to judge the reliability of a narrator in fiction are identical to those used to judge the reliability of a narrator in historiography or autobiography: 1) Was the narrator present at the events narrated 2) Is the narrator detached from the narrative, does he or she have a 'stake' in what he or she represents? 3) How distanced is the narrator from the events that took place, was it years or minutes before they recounted their testimony?

Presence is a major factor, therefore in determining the reliability of historic or fictional testimony. Whether the narrator was actually there is judged more important than their particular biases that may colour their recollections: as we have seen above, the reader baulks at Saleem Sinai's impudence at narrating events where he was not present. This reliance on presence is akin to what Jaques Derrida terms logocentrism a term he uses in *Of Grammatology* to deconstruct the traditional binaries of speech and writing, presence and absence. Since Plato, Derrida argues, speech has been judged superior to writing; in the *Phaedrus* Plato points out that writing can not answer questions, it can not be interrogated, but on interrogation dumbly affirms what it said in the first place. We can not ask a written text what it means, or to explain itself better, or question it as we can a physically present speaker. As Culler highlights in his explication of the frequently obtuse and opaque Derrida, Plato's objection to writing is partially motivated as an attempt to set philosophy above language, to claim its arguments are structured by logic, reason and truth and not rhetoric (Culler 1983: 91): "Philosophy defines itself as what transcends writing and by identifying certain aspects of the functioning of language with writing, tries to rid itself of these problems by setting aside writing as simply an artificial substitute for speech" (92). Derrida extends this analysis to show how the father of linguistics, Ferdinand De Saussure, reaffirms this hierarchical binary when he speaks of writing as a means of representing speech that does not need to be taken into consideration when studying language because it is a technical device, or secondary accessory.

This seemingly innocuous move is representative of the western tradition of thinking about language: speech is seen as natural, direct communication and writing as artificial and oblique representation of a representation (100). However, by a series of brilliant logical moves, Derrida shows how Saussure and Plato's arguments are in fact predicated on writing itself, how they contradict themselves even in their setting of speech over writing and presence above absence. These biases are reflected in historiography, where interviews even years after the events are seen to be a reliable

source of information because they come from a 'primary' source who was present at events.

Recent studies of memory actually suggest that presence at an event does not necessarily make ones recollection of it reliable. John Kotre in *White Gloves* recalls how a key witness in the Watergate trials renowned for his powers of recollection and dubbed 'the human tape recorder', in fact gave very inaccurate testimony (Kotre 1995: 36). This case is unusual because everything that the witness, John Dean, recounted had also been recorded on audio tape and so his testimony could be checked against recordings made at the time, but it is illuminating because it shows how human memory is fallible and does not accurately depict events as they really happened. Dean's memories falsely portray him as the centre of events, and with the benefit of hindsight he reverses predictions that turned out contrary to his expectations at the time. However, at the time of his testimony, Dean was so confident in his recollections, so meticulous in detail that it was thought that he could only have exceptional, tape-recorder-like memory. Kotre refers to studies that have demonstrated that if a witness's memories are vivid and full of detail, if the witness is perceived as having nothing to gain, talked despite pain, spoke with emotion, was consistent and confident, and calmly looked questioners in the eye then they are usually judged as truthful and their memories deemed accurate even though research has shown that that these criteria have no bearing on accuracy of recall (37).

These indicators of witness reliability describe an ideal witness who would turn out to be an omniscient narrator: a narrator with nothing to gain (because they are outside the textual world they depict) recalling events that are vivid and full of detail (what Barthes called the "reality effect" of having objects meaningless to the plot being described to signify the realist nature of the work). As we will see below, the topic of memory and its fallibility is one area that the storyteller chronotope brings to the fore because the storyteller depicts characters attempting to transmit their memories (which are sometimes questioned by their narratees. The storyteller raises issues of unreliability because it resituates the transmission of narrative within a context, a

chronotopising of storytelling that makes us realise its importance of storytelling as a way of understanding the world.

Process mimesis

As we noted above, texts that contain a storyteller show not only an autobiography but the *process* of creating an autobiography. The presence of a narratee foregrounds the importance of the listener/ reader and creates a chronotope of storytelling which also foregrounds the originating subject. This concentration on the creation of meaning, the act of authorship that occurs in the process of autobiography is similar to the phenomenon of the 'author' appearing within the text, a phenomenon which David Lodge suggests motivations for:

The foregrounding of the act of authorship within the boundaries of the text, which is such a common feature of contemporary fiction, is a defensive response, either conscious or intuitive, to the questioning of the idea of the author and of the mimetic function by modern critical theory.

(Lodge 1990: 19)

Lodge's argument that the portrayal of the author within the text is a defensive response to the questioning of the idea of the author in critical theory must here be interrogated. As we have seen above, the storyteller operates in a dialogic space where his or her every utterance is in danger of questioning, so attempting to reclaim the status of 'author' in its nineteenth century, Promethean sense, is the last thing that this trope attains². It does, however, remind the reader (and the critic) that the author can not be erased from the communicative situation, and also reminds us that all authorship takes place in a real world political situation and from individual and varying motives.

Luigi Cazzato in his essay "Hard Metafiction and the Return of the Author-Subject" (1995) claims that postmodern texts in which a figure claiming to be the author appears to discuss the text with the reader (notable examples are John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5* and Salman Rushdie's *Shame*) work to relocate the authors' position within his or her own text, to reclaim the link between the originating subject and the end product, defamiliarising language that

² Although, it could be argued that the dialogism on the primary diegetic level is an attempt by the author to control or preempt the reader's own response to the text.

seems to have no originator, faceless and powerful communications like newspaper editorials and propaganda³. He terms this metafictional anxiety and suggests that postmodern authors express metafictional anxiety in order to highlight the central role of the originating subject, which reinforces the view of storytelling as a link in a chain of utterances rather than an act of godlike parthenogenesis (35).

This intrusion of the author into the text has paradoxical effects. According to Patricia Waugh and Brian McHale the more the author appears within the text the less he or she exists, because the barrier between real world author and text is absolute, the “author” that appears within the text is just as fictional as the characters (McHale 1991: 219). Cazzato calls this claim bizarre, saying that of course the author cannot enter the text because the author is real and the text is fictional (a gross oversimplification, as we shall see below). However, the storyteller seems to exist to cause both these interpretations of the ‘author within the text’ problems, precisely by simulating a genre that as De Man highlighted, seems to belong to a simpler mode of referentiality, rooted in a single subject identified by his or her proper name. We have no problems with the author appearing within the autobiography to discuss storylines from the position of narrator or taking part in narrative on the level of character as we do with the novel and its creator. Why does the split subject of the novel (between author and narrator) create such differences?

Perhaps we can attribute this difference in expectations to the question of fictionality. The author in the text causes us more problems in fiction than in autobiography precisely because we take autobiography to be referential in a far less problematic way than fiction. But how do we define what is fiction? Jack Zipes in his treatise upon the brothers Grimm suggests that some of the tales collected in their *Kinder und Hausmärchen* are autobiographical (Zipes 1988: 50, 54-59); arguing that the many tales in which a soldier outwits a malevolent king or the devil are exaggerated versions of real stories, reflecting the common soldier’s distrust of his superiors. Is the

³ Or, as we have seen above “words that expect no answer”, in Bakhtinian terminology: Monologic discourse types. Ermath’s definition of the omniscient narrator as ‘nobody’ suggests that writing creates monologic discourses.

exaggerated autobiographical tale fictional when it is told for the first time by the individual who has converted his or her experience into narrative? Is the tale still referential when told by a person sitting across from you in the room? When exactly does the personal, exaggerated narrative become fictional⁴? I believe Zipes himself provides the answer to this question when he reminds us that the reader must constantly bear in mind that we are dealing with multiple representations and voices within the narrative structure of each tale which can be briefly paraphrased as follows:

- The viewpoint of the informant, most likely (in the case of the Grimms) an educated female who memorised a tale told by a peasant or from a book
- The viewpoint of Jacob or Wilhelm who revised it
- The viewpoint of the submerged creator of tale, probably a peasant, artisan, soldier, or journeyman who sought to represent his or her experience through symbolical narrative at a given time in history
- Finally, the viewpoint of intervening tale tellers who pass on narrative from author to listeners and future tellers.

(Zipes 1988: 51)

These multiple viewpoints muddy the relation of teller to event; the original teller becomes 'submerged'; the point behind his or her original tale may be contradicted by the agenda of the current teller. The extra positions that writing creates, the difference between narrator and author, between implied and real reader lead to an entirely different view of the story. Of course, this question highlights the fictionality of fiction itself. If we go back to historical sources like Geoffrey of Monmouth, the difference between myth (fiction) and history (the real) is entirely neglected and events that we now see as mythical, like the founding of Britain by a descendent of Aeneas is described as an actual historic act. This is a phenomenon that can also be seen in hagiography and folklore where the fictional and historic are often irrevocably intertwined, one needs only think of such examples as Joan of Arc, Robin Hood or Dick

⁴ De Man's discussion of autobiography makes clear that we cannot automatically state that symbolism instantly makes the narrative fictional, Phantasms and dreams are features of many archetypal autobiographies, from Augustine to Rousseau.

Turpin. Fiction has not always been viewed as a separate and inferior genre, and in recent times theorists and philosophers have become increasingly aware that fictionality is not an immanent feature of certain texts, but something that operates to a varying degree in all texts that feature some form of plot (Ronen 1994: 10). Ronen suggests “only as a pragmatically determined property can fictionality distinguish *Anna Karenina* as a fiction from Michelet’s nonfictional *History of France* despite the considerable number of fictional components that the latter contains” (10).

The emergence of fiction as a separate genre to be ghettoised in its own section of the bookstore is evident if we examine the views of the readership at the birth of serialisation in nineteenth century fiction, such as Eugène Sue’s *Les Mystères de Paris*, which was published serially in the *Journal des Débats* from June 9 1842 to October 15, 1843. Peter Brooks notes that the author was bombarded with letters from Parisians who took the fictional for the real and implored Sue to dispatch the hero, Rodolphe, to thwart real criminal designs (1998: 163-4). This confusion between the real and the fictional was no doubt exacerbated by the fact that Sue’s narrative appeared daily on the front page of a broadsheet, an intermingling of fact with fiction unimaginable today. The confusion of these letter-writers was down to the fact that the pragmatic function allowing readers to determine the difference between fiction and non-fiction was less well developed and certainly not taken for granted by the vast majority of the population in this historical period.

It is the spreading of writing and print, and its interiorisation into the western consciousness that permits the creation of the fiction/ non-fiction boundary. The marketing of the novel, the reader’s easy recognition of the standard packaging of the novel compared with the autobiography (the author’s name and a title that only makes sense within the context of the book), is compared with the packaging of the autobiography, with the subject’s proper name, a photograph of the subject and usually, a generic title like “an autobiography”, “my autobiography” or more classically

“confessions”⁵. The absolute separation of autobiography and fiction is however only a recent development; before the Russian formalists and the American new criticism, novels were frequently understood in relation to their author’s life: *David Copperfield* was read in relation to Dickens’s own upbringing, *Jane Eyre* understood in the context of the Brontë children’s own harsh schooling. Fiction was a form of autobiography, autobiography a form of fiction. The lines between the two were blurred, at best, and it is no coincidence that it is only in the nineteenth century (Robert Southey coined the term autobiography in 1809 [Drabble 2000: 53]) that the autobiography became an established genre in the English language.

Tzvetan Todorov suggests autobiography is defined by the author’s identification with the narrator, and the narrator’s identification with the chief protagonist. The second identification helps differentiate autobiography from biography or memoirs; the first distinguishes autobiography from the novel, even if a novel may be full of elements drawn from the author’s life (Todorov 1990: 13-27). This identification separates the referential historical genres from the fictional genres because the reality of the referent is clearly indicated. In this way the speech act of autobiography codifies both semantic properties and pragmatic properties: The character-narrator identification suggests one must speak of oneself and the author-narrator function facilitates one’s claims to be telling truth and not fiction. However, Todorov, interestingly goes on to say that autobiography is a “speech act that is widely distributed outside literature: it is practiced every time anyone *tells his or her own story*” (27). This definition of the autobiographical genre does not negate the problems of defining a story as fictive or not.

In suggesting that genres are pre-existing discursive formations used in everyday language, Todorov is clearly close to Bakhtin’s concept of speech genres. However,

⁵ Recently autobiographies have been released with more novelistic or cryptic titles like Richard Branson’s *Losing my Virginity*. I doubt whether this trend would be the case if the standard bookshop layout were not structured on the lines of fiction and non-fiction (so Biographies are also found in an entirely different area from fictional autobiographies or autobiographical fiction). It will also be interesting if these novels are renamed when the puns on which they are based are not so easily readable by readers of the future (assuming that they are ever reprinted).

as we have seen above, we can only identify people's oral stories about themselves as the same genre as autobiography *because of the existence of autobiography in its written, clearly packaged and commodified form*. Indeed, Todorov's definition of autobiography is an easy target for deconstruction, due to its clearly logocentric biases: it presumes that the written form is an extension of the spoken, and identifies a speech act on the basis of writing⁶. We can therefore recognise its logocentric biases according to Culler's analysis which makes clear that "Logocentrism [...] assumes the priority of the first term and conceives the second in relation to it, as a complication, a negation, a manifestation, or a disruption of the first" (Culler 1983: 93).

The identification of author with narrator, narrator with protagonist is based on writing, not on speech where author and narrator are condensed into one, "I". Ong suggests that the concept of authorship is one that is unthinkable in a primary oral society (that is, any society where writing has not been internalised into the psyche): How can one *own* words? The invention of print, and the easy dissemination of identical copies in their thousand are necessary prerequisites before a concept of authorship is codified into the legal system, and henceforth into the psyche. Furthermore, Todorov's definition depends on the author's intention in claiming to tell 'truth', but as we have seen truth can take many different forms of which historical truth, as we now know it, is only one: what if the narrator's idea of truth is different from our own?

Autobiography is what Bakhtin calls a secondary speech genre, but it does not arise naturally out of writing down one's own life, rather in conjunction with the emergence of the historic code and the internalisation of writing and print into the psyche as we shall see when looking at memory and narrativization below. By referring to written genres as secondary speech genres, Bakhtin highlights the relation between speech and writing, without positing an absolute break between the two.

⁶ Derrida deconstructs Saussure on precisely this basis: after Saussure claims that writing is a technology that does not affect real language (speech) he then goes on to identify the sign by talking about the written phoneme. Despite his claim that writing is external, writing turns out to be the best way for him to explain the concept of the sign.

Although secondary speech genres lose their immediate relation to the real utterances of others, this distancing is, as we have seen, due to the nature of writing.

Metafictive effects caused by the storyteller

The storyteller, by defamiliarising narrative as we are used to experiencing it, and re-familiarising the reader with storytelling in an oral context, causes the reader to think about such commonplaces as the relation of the author to the work and the work to the life, as well as larger scale issues such as the problem of epistemology and the effect of writing upon consciousness. By drawing attention to the devices that we generally ignore when thinking about fiction, and portraying the act of fiction-making in such depth, we can identify the storyteller as a metafictional device.

Metafiction is usually defined as “fiction about fiction” or fiction that draws attention to its own status as fiction (Hutcheon 1984:1, Cazzato 1995: 28, Drabble 1999: 665). *Tristram Shandy* and *Don Quixote* are generally agreed to be early examples of metafiction, and Patricia Waugh argues that metafiction arises at the inception of all new art-forms, from Elizabethan theatre and eighteenth century fiction to early film, precisely because the structures that the writers and audience will later take for granted are still being established and are still obviously arbitrary and strange. This is an intoxicating theory, which convincingly explains both Sterne’s constant playful attempts to highlight the unusualness of the novel and Shakespeare’s incessant stage metaphors. Waugh’s theory allows one to see that metafiction is not new and is certainly not ‘the death of the novel’ as certain critics assumed, plus it highlights the fact that metafiction does not necessarily equal postmodernism, as some critics have assumed. After highlighting the fact that metafiction is a natural occurrence and not a perversion or corruption of art, we need to investigate why metafiction is utilised in these novels

The storyteller, as we have seen, draws attention to problems related to epistemology. By highlighting the originating subject behind all knowledge, and showing how opinion is masked by the technologies that we have invented in writing to efface the subjective, the storyteller relocates historical testimony as a personal story,

and reminds us that individual lives are wrapped up in the grand movements of history: the effects of the First World War upon the Cricks, Indian independence upon the Sinais and the effect of the Gileadan regime upon Offred all bring vast historical movements back to the human scale, where individuals attempt to make sense of them using the fairy tale.

The storyteller also raises questions of ontology. The basic question behind ontology can be summarised as “what type of world are we living in? How real is this world?”. Ruth Ronen points out that literary theorists have always suggested that fiction creates “worlds” as we can see when critics talk about the “world” of the text or separate “worlds” of discourse (Ronen 1994: 1-20). Indeed, Ermath suggests that fiction is at the root of many of our everyday assumptions about the world, as she highlights the way in which the view of society as an integrated unified entity was manufactured in the nineteenth century in the work of authors like Dickens and Eliot (Ermath 1997: 120-130). Both of these viewpoints reflect the increasingly popular idea that fictionality is not an immanent property of a certain type of texts, but a feature of all human constructs, from society and religion to jurisprudence and legislature. An extract from Cazzato’s essay on metafiction reflects this idea:

... fiction “makes (itself) strange” in order to attract attention to its functioning and, by the same token, to put its world in relation to the world of reality. In doing so the author undermines the sacred fictional illusion of reality and makes it difficult for the reader to place him or her self in (or identify with) the world of fiction.

(Cazzato 1995: 28)

As the phrase “sacred fictional illusion of reality” makes clear, Cazzato is suggesting that metafiction operates to highlight the fictionality of reality itself. Cazzato’s standpoint might be dismissed as solipsistic in its approach to ‘the real’, but it is in fact highly political. Jean Baudrillard in *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* claims that the 1990-1 Gulf War did not ‘take place’ like a conventional war, an observation prompted by a CNN live broadcast switching to a group of journalists in the Gulf to find out what was happening ‘on the spot’, only to find that the journalists in the Gulf were watching CNN to try and find out what was happening ‘on the spot’ (1995: 2). This moment for Baudrillard epitomises the hyperreal nature of postmodern life: the news is

producing the “reality” of the war not only for viewers but also for those involved (Lane 2000: 95). Reality is not ‘out there’ being reported by representational media, but actually being created by these representations. It is important to note the title of Baudrillard’s essays. He does not say that the Gulf War did not happen but that they did not take place. The use of the spatial description highlighting place over the temporal description suggests that the war was not fought over territory, like traditional wars, but over the airwaves and television stations. The traditional ‘place’ of war, the battlefield, no longer exists except as a metaphor. No-one can deny the ghastly toll of that particular conflict in terms of human lives and environmental tragedy, but one can point to the fact that both the viewers at home and the generals in the Persian Gulf’s attitudes to the war were shaped by television and mass media, not by the physical circumstances of the war.

If we are to accept that society and reality is, to a degree, fictional, then we must recognise that pointing out the illusory nature of society and reality is a subversive act because it pulls away the curtain to reveal the smoke and mirrors sustaining the illusion. In *Midnight’s Children* Saleem reflects upon this fact in a comment that recalls the potential subversiveness of fairy tales:

Numbers, too, have significance: [...] 1001, the number of night, of magic, of alternative realities - a number beloved of poets and detested by politicians for whom all alternative versions of the world are threats;

(MC: 217)

Fiction is here viewed as a kind of ‘alternative reality’, a point of view that again reminds us of the different “worlds” of fiction and therefore the ontological concerns created by fiction. The question “which world does this story take place in” is one that narratives featuring a storyteller constantly raise. We automatically assume, when reading an autobiography that the narrated events take place in this world, just as we normally assume that fiction takes place in a parallel or possible world, linked to our own but fundamentally separate. Again, let us go back to the cover-less *Midnight’s Children*. We don’t know if the originating subject is split into author and narrator, or whether the author and narrator are one, so we’re not exactly sure if it belongs to fiction

or autobiography. What then are we to make of documented historical personages such as Indira and Sanjay Gandhi appearing within the mystery text?

Brian McHale, who claims that ontology is the distinctive feature that separates postmodernist fiction from earlier modernist fiction, suggests that characters from that other intertext 'history' should be called trans-world characters, highlighting the difficulty readers have when they come across them in situating them, deciding which world they belong in⁷. In tackling this question, McHale argues:

[...] the appearance in fictional worlds of individuals who *have* existed in the real world: people such as Napoleon or Richard Nixon, places such as Paris or Dublin, ideas such as dialectical materialism or quantum mechanics. There are not *reflected* in fiction so much as *incorporated*; they constitute enclaves of ontological difference within the otherwise ontologically homogenous fictional heterocosm.
(McHale 1991: 28)

Tzvetan Todorov and Gerard Genette appear in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec is responsible for the famous poster of Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus*. It is enough to note that when real people occur in a real autobiography, no such ontological questions are raised⁸. McHale's explanation also extends to the vertiginous effects that the representation of historical events has in *Waterland*, *Midnight's Children* and *Nights at the Circus*: the reader is unsure of whether Crick's history of the Fens or Sinai's memories of the invasion of Bangladesh contain any truth. The simulation of historical or scientific discourse by the narrators in these texts is partially responsible for creating this feeling of uncertainty: in *Waterland* we know the First World War really happened, but what about other events, told in the same way? For example, how do we know whether the more obscure events recounted by Crick are true, such as the draining of the Fens by Cornelius Vermuyden, or the Atkinson brewery fire? Which events are fiction, and which are real? These 'enclaves of ontological difference' create a sense of uncertainty where the recognition of certain historical events leads one to wonder if other events narrated are similarly

⁷ It became quite obvious which world Indira Gandhi believed her portraiture in *Midnight's Children* belonged in when she took Rushdie to court for libel in 1984, a suit that raised issues of biographical authority, the relation to historical events narrated in fiction with historic events and people and political accountability. Just as *The Satanic Verses* later proved, the boundaries between fiction and history are fraught with danger.

⁸ Although epistemological questions, such as "did this really happen", are definitely raised.

based in reality. However, it is important that we do not attribute this sense of instability solely to the simulation of historical discourse in these novels, the same effect is demonstrated whenever a recognisable historical event or person is referred to. Indira Gandhi is not mentioned in conventional historiographic terms in *Midnight's Children*; it is not until the end of the novel that we find out that the fairy tale malevolent witch, who Saleem claims has orchestrated his downfall, shares the name of India's then prime-minister. Similarly, events told as fairy tale can cause the same ontological uncertainty as those told in historical discourse. The fairy tale like descriptions of the French Revolution sit alongside fairy tale like descriptions of family history in *Waterland* and create the same effect:

When the children of the French Revolution threw off their tyrannical father Louis XVI and their wicked step-mother Marie Antoinette (who, as it turned out, were only like figures in a puppet show, you could pull off their heads, just like that), they thought they were free. But after a while they discovered that they were orphans, and the world which they thought was theirs was really bare and comfortless. So they went running to their foster-father Napoleon Bonaparte, who was waiting by the old puppet theatre; who'd dreamed up for them a new drama based on old themes and who promised them an empire, a destiny—a future.

(Swift 1992: 335)

Linda Hutcheon in her *Poetics of Postmodernism* suggests the existence of a form of postmodernism that she labels historiographic metafiction (1999: 5). This kind of fiction incorporates concerns about narrative in literature, history and theory and questions the separation of the literary and historical focusing on what the two modes of writing share rather than on how they differ (105). We have seen above that the novels under analysis here all raise questions about the domain of historiography, from the problems of autobiographical writing to the representation of historic events, and the difficulties raised by this trope have forced us to reconsider our prejudices about literary realism, omniscient narration, history and autobiography. Hutcheon claims that *Midnight's Children*, *Nights at the Circus*, and *Waterland* are all prime examples of historiographic metafiction because of the way they question historiography and counter history as a 'grand narrative' with history on the human scale. One of the primary ways that these texts question historiography's status as a grand narrative, separate from fiction, is by incorporating a storyteller, alerting readers to the constructs

that determine how we read a text: the construct of the author, the split subject of author and narrator, the effacement of the individualised subject and subjectivity caused by omniscient narration, the genre of fiction, and the idea of representation.

Cazzato, in his analysis of metafiction argues that contemporary metafiction is the product of postmodern or late capitalist society. By foregrounding the author, texts that Cazzato classes as 'hard' metafiction, act to reinscribe the narrating subject. He suggests that Roland Barthes, in his famous essay "The Death of the Author", had "fallen into the trap of reification", and that metafiction acts to try and remind the reader of the originating subject: by applying a Marxian reading we can see that the story-as-commodity produces the same sense of alienation as any other reified product, it appears to have just magically "appeared" to the reader, who has no sense of who the author really is, or why they write. Surely, only alienation could lead to the suggestion that the author is dead? However, As Walter Ong points out, writing *is* alienation (Ong 1999: 82) and one of the reasons that Plato attacks writing in the *Phaedrus* is because writing is alienated from its "parent", it is an orphan whose originator can not answer questions on its behalf. As Patricia Waugh explains, "To write of "I" is to discover that the attempt to fix subjectivity in writing erases that subjectivity, constructs a new subject" (Waugh 1993: 135).

If writing leads to alienation, then print is reification. Ong points out that the technology of printing can be seen as the model of the industrial revolution and the invention of mass production, with its prerequisites of an assembly line approach, creating thousands of identical complex objects made up of replaceable parts (118-9). "[I]t was print, not writing, that effectively reified the word, and, with it, noetic activity", writes Ong (119) before going on to sketch out the legal implications of the easy dissemination of innumerable cheap copies of an authors work:

Print created a new sense of the private ownership of words. People in a primary oral culture can entertain some sense of proprietary rights to a poem, but such a sense is rare and ordinarily enfeebled by the common share of lore, formulas, and themes on which everyone draws. With writing resentment at plagiarism begins to develop.

(Ong: 131)

Print led to the creation of copyright laws. The availability of printing presses in the nineteenth century meant that many novels were quickly copied and sold at a fraction of the original price, with no money being paid to the author. Indeed, the boom of fairy tales in nineteenth century Britain was partially due to the fact that there is no need to pay authors' royalties for fairy tales.

The Literature of Exhaustion

Metafiction can in some ways be seen as a product of this 'ownership' created by writing. John Barth's 1967 essay on metafiction, "The Literature of Exhaustion" claims that conventional plots have all been 'used up' and this is the reason that authors had turned to telling stories about stories. At first sight Barth's claim is an odd one; human societies have used stories and myths for millennia to understand and explain their sense of self, so how could stories be seen as a finite resource? However, if we look into the workings of copyright Barth's sense that the possibilities of literature have been exhausted seem more and more credible. Consider the case of music: there are only a set number of notes, and therefore a limited number of possibilities of combination. The *langue* or underlying grammar of music means that there are a finite number of possible melodies, so just as the rules of grammar limit the possible sentences one can create, so the *parole* is actually limited. The invention of ways in which to record music, beginning with standard notation paper meant that these possibilities were recorded. This meant that music could be planned, and it became infinitely richer and more complex due to the ability of composers to synchronise dozens of instruments. Just as the invention of writing allowed storytellers greater scope to tell stories about entire societies, so too writing gave the composer of music the ability to create aural works of astonishing complexity. However, it also meant that these combinations of notes now had "authors", or composers who now 'owned' these sequences, even though many classical composers, such as Liszt and Dvorák reworked motifs from folk music. Traditional melodies that had been used for generations were now "owned" purely because someone had written them down.

The invention of ways of recording sound at the end of the nineteenth century consolidated the idea of music copyright, and can be seen as equivalent to the invention of printing — audio recording led to the possibility of thousands of identical products being produced by the techniques of mass production — indeed, records were ‘pressed’, the indentations created in an comparable way to the printing press. This reification of music leads to the phenomenon today where if an artist wittingly or unwittingly records a combination of notes that bears resemblance to a previous recording they risk financial punishment and losing the ‘recording credit’ which identifies them as the creator of the song. Quite literally, music as a reified commodity leads to the possibility of music becoming ‘used up’.

The study of stories by formalist and structuralist critics makes clear that, like music, there are a limited number of possibilities of combination, structured by a grammar or pre-existing code that determines the possible stories that can be told. Critics like Claude Lévi Strauss and Vladimir Propp, highlighted the grammatical structures that lie behind all storytelling by analysing traditional forms of narrative, the folk tale and myth. Northrop Frye, in his *Anatomy of Criticism* highlights the mythic nature of *all* narrative. For Frye, the symbols and narrative patterns of myth recur throughout all literature, and realist literature is no exception;

The more literature distances itself from myth, moving from ‘romance’ through the ‘mimetic modes’, the more ‘real’ it appears; though, as Frye indicates, this appearance is deceptive, as is evident once we reach the self conscious exposure of a device favoured by ‘irony’.

(Coupe 1997: 160)

Frye suggests that there are four modes of literary narrative, which can be placed in temporal sequence: ‘romance’, which covers fairy tale and myth, the ‘low mimetic’ which includes comedy and the novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the ‘high mimetic’ which covers what we typically think of as realism, and the ‘ironic’ which, according to Frye, is characterised by modernist works such as *Heart of Darkness*. Underneath these different modes, however, lies the structure of myth and this is something that ironic modes of narrative, such as metafiction and postmodernism spotlight:

With the final narrative mode [irony] we are forcibly reminded that the first and founding mode, namely myth itself, has been ever-present beneath the apparent realism of literature and we witness the reaffirmation of its 'formal cause'. Just as literature descends from myth, through romance downwards, so does irony return to myth.

(Coupe: 165)

So, it is entirely possible that literature could be 'used up' due to writing and the legal institutions that writing and print create. There are only a limited number of possible stories and only a limited number of ways of telling them, and the systems that govern the usage of these stories, the legalistic apparatus that governs production, prohibits the retelling of another's stories as Ong highlights:

[M]odern writers, agonizingly aware of literary history and of the *de facto* intertextuality of their own works, are concerned that they may be producing nothing really new or fresh at all, that they may be totally under the 'influence' of others' texts. Harold Bloom's work *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) treats this modern writer's anguish. Manuscript cultures had few if any anxieties about influence to plague them, and oral cultures had virtually none.

(Ong: 134)

By foregrounding the process of storytelling, and the ways in which the storytellers tell the story of their lives using patterns derived from the fairy tale that Frye would recognise as constitutive of the 'romantic' mode, the storyteller is an 'ironic' mode that returns to the formulaic patterns of what Frye calls myth. A metafictional, or ironic mode of fiction, therefore leads us back to the romantic, mythical sources on which narrative is based, and forces the reader to question the ways in which this origin of narrative is displaced and repressed by written forms of narrative.

It is for this reason that I limit my definition of the storyteller to the era of late capitalism. It is my contention that the storyteller is reflective of a particular contingent historic set of circumstances in which it has become necessary to remind the reader of previous forms of storytelling in order to highlight the artificial nature of contemporary storytelling. Much like Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller", the storyteller as it has been defined in chapter three highlights the ways in which the reader's experience of narrative has changed. In *The Political Unconscious* Fredric Jameson, in the process of historicizing the centrality of 'wish fulfilment' in the work of Freud, points out that there is an "increasing abstraction of experience in modern society" (Jameson 1981: 65) and the storyteller often reflects extensively on this abstraction, as we shall see

below when looking at the totalitarian ego in *Midnight's Children*. Those storytellers who do not have Saleem's sense of self-importance, such as Byatt's Gillian Perholt, have considerably more difficulty in finding a place in history:

'And now,' said the djinn, 'I have told you the history of my incarcerations, and you must tell me your history.'

'I am a teacher. In a university. I was married and now I am free. I travel the world in aeroplanes and talk about storytelling.'

'Tell me your story.'

(Byatt 1994: 226-7)

Not only are we alienated from the traditional experience of storytelling, but there is also a concomitant alienation from the events of history: few people can claim to have truly been key players in historical events, perhaps the reason that autobiographies tend to be published only by the rich and powerful. One of the metafictional effects of the storyteller as a device is that it shows the ways in which humans attempt to find a place for themselves in society and history through the use of narrative.

As we have seen, the primacy of written discourses, monologic or 'nobody' narrators, is subverted by the storyteller. The storyteller forces the reader to consider the originating source of all discourses in a new light, and highlights the centrality of storytelling to human experience. Indeed, Linda Hutcheon suggests that 'the process of narrativization has come to be seen as a central form of human comprehension, of imposition of meaning and formal coherence on the chaos of events' (Hutcheon 1999: 121).

Narrativization as a central form of human comprehension

In depicting the process of narrativization, the storyteller shows how humans attempt to make sense of their lives by explaining it in easily available codes such as the fairytale. It is easy to see the value of the fairytale as a schemata around which to organise experience, it offers well defined roles and structures, and for this reason we often see characters attempt to explain their situation in this way. A good example can be seen in *Waterland* where Crick tells of a story that his mother, Helen Atkinson used to tell him:

My mother told it differently (so I never knew whom she meant or how false modesty was being dismissed): Once upon a time there was a beautiful girl at a parade of soldiers, and the silly soldiers with their rifles bumped into each other and forgot how to march because they all wanted to look at the beautiful girl. And the general turned red, and then he turned purple ...

(Swift 1992: 218)

However, Crick later learns that this story, told by his mother as fairy tale, is actually part of her own life story, a parade meant to inspire patriotism in the public at the time of the First World War that went badly wrong due to her presence. In this example, the characteristic distancing motif of fairy tale discourse "Once upon a time" is used to telescope the story (the beautiful girl is not 'I' or individualised, the parade isn't to drum up support for the 1914-18 war). This motif which is used to differentiate the world of fairy tale from the world of history should mark the story as fictional, and yet, as Crick and the reader learn, there is a kernel of historical and autobiographical truth to the narrative. It is a recollection of real historic events, told as fairy tale. It is enough to recall the seminal study of the fairy tale by Vladimir Propp suggested that the fairy tale was structured like a grammar: a form with fixed easily predictable rules. Perhaps, the reasons why these narrators relate their experiences as fairy tale is because it is the simplest available method of transmission, and does not require vast levels of information about physical details that would slow down and divert a narrative, or well-rounded or extensively described characterisation as a written genre like literary realism.

Hayden White in *Metahistory* suggests that history is intimately related with fiction. His main thesis can be briefly summarised as follows: History, in turning a list of dates and events (a chronicle) into a logically ordered and thematically coherent plot borrows devices from fiction. The choice to plot, say, the execution of Louis XVI as a tragedy or a romance is an entirely arbitrary one and it could be represented either way depending on the personal views of the historian or the society which is interpreting the events. This means that history is not separate from fiction. When White summarises his thesis in his introduction it is clear that he sees the historian as performing an act very much like the novelist when he says 'I believe the historian performs an essentially *poetic* act, in which he *prefigures* the historical field and constitutes it as a domain upon

which to bring to bear the specific theories he will use to explain “what was *really* happening” in it.’ (White 1993: x)

Although the historian, unlike the novelist, is forced to turn a certain set of established data, or the chronicle for the basic ingredients of his or her narrative, White’s claims shake the foundations of historiography, which like philosophy would like to claim that its truth lies outside language on a bedrock of “truth”.

In showing how individuals interpret their own experiences and attempt to tell others about them, the storyteller has much to say on the subject of subjectivity, or the ways in which humans make sense of the universe. Indeed, this depiction of turning experience into narrative can be said to be some of the storyteller’s metafictional effects.

Linda Hutcheon argues that metafiction, or as she calls it process mimesis, is just as important an artistic endeavour as realism, which she terms product mimesis, because narrative is an essential way in which the human subject orients themselves in the real world, how we create a sense of self and of community. And indeed, the storyteller is a form of process mimesis, as it shows how narrators make sense of events by turning to pre-established schemas in order to turn their lives into an understandable narrative.

Recent studies of subjectivity such as Kotre’s *White Gloves* and Mark Freeman’s *Rewriting the Self* suggest that narrative is a fundamental way in which humans interpret the universe, form our ideas of self and organise our lives. Freeman claims “the very act of making sense of ourselves and others, is only possible in and through the fabric of narrative itself” (Freeman 1995: 21). Kotre talks of ‘autobiographical memory’, suggesting that events in our lives take on shape only as part of a larger pattern. Key memories that *seem* momentous may only become important to us in retrospect, when they tie in with our current idea of self. Kotre gives the example of a psychologist named Linton, who, in an experiment on memory wrote notes of what happened to her every day and saved them. When reviewing the notes five years later she was surprised to see that the day she met her future husband was not marked as a particularly important event, the only mention on the card was of her meeting a shy

scholar. The event had taken on importance over the intervening years, until the day's significance in memory far exceeded the status she had given the meeting on the day it occurred (Kotre 1995: 98). Unlike Freud, who at one point believed that memories could be trusted as 'true'⁹, Kotre and Freeman believe that memory is a reconstruction. This view, first posited by Frederick Bartlett suggests that memory is not referential in a simplistic "how a person remembers an event is how it happened" way (Kotre 1995: 34). Just as historical narrative is an interpretation of events that uses fictive modes of emplotment to explain, so memory organises events into a story in order to help us understand and remember them. In Jean Paul Sartre's existentialist manifesto, *Nausea*, the narrator, Roquentin, understands this process well enough:

[F]or the most commonplace event to become an adventure, you must – and this is all that is necessary – start *recounting* it. This is what fools people: a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his own life as if he were recounting it.

(Sartre 1965: 61)

Further reflections on the unreliability of memory are evident in the narrative of Offred:

This is a reconstruction. All of it is a reconstruction. It's a reconstruction now, in my head, as I lie flat on my single bed [...] When I get out of here, if I'm ever able to set this down, in any form, even in the form of one voice to another, it will be a reconstruction then too, at yet another remove.

(*HT*: 144)

The implication of seeing memory as a reconstruction is that the self too becomes yet another construct, as we can see when we look at one of the basic principles that we take for granted when speaking of the self: that of development. Freeman notes that development, despite its usual connotations of moving forwards in time, can only be predicated backwards. From the standpoint of the present, we look back to decisions we made in the past, and explain how we have become the people

⁹ Freud said in the late 1930's "In mental life, nothing that has once been formed can perish", which seems to imply that 'true' memories exist. However, Freud changed his mind a lot during his career, and his beliefs in the case of the "Wolf Man" seem to suggest an entirely different perspective on memory. When he edited the case notes in 1918, Freud reversed his earlier suggestion that the primal scene of The Wolf Man's neurosis — his memory of witnessing parental intercourse at the age of one and a half — was in fact a real memory, and suggests it is more likely a phantasy but ultimately suggests that the case is undecidable, and what is more, it matters little whether the event *really* happened or not because the subsequent history of neurosis remains unchanged (Brooks 1998: 276-7).

we are today, indeed “the concept of development is itself fundamentally inseparable from the process of narrating the past, which, as we have already learned, has a markedly fictive dimension to it” (Freeman 1995: 9).

As an example, Freeman, points to that archetypal autobiography and record of development, St. Augustine's *Confessions* where the outcome of what has happened over the course of Augustine's life, namely his conversion to Christianity, has largely determined what will and will not be recounted (20). In other words, Augustine's conception of self has been formed by his conversion — he is now a Christian, he was lost then — and his recollections of 'development' will therefore be selected to portray this narrative which he has decided best sums up his life. Freeman suggests that Augustine's story is itself a “function of writing” (20) suggesting that *writing itself* accounts for the way in which Augustine views and charts his life. In this assertion, Freeman is close to De Man who has this to say about the matter:

We assume that life *produces* the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer *does* is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and thus determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of his medium?
(De Man 1984: 69)

De Man and Freeman both turn the traditional idea of autobiography on its head: it is not the events in life that are narrated, rather the written form of the autobiography suggests a way in which people can organise their experiences and make sense of their lives.

Storytellers who attempt to write their autobiographies: *Midnight's Children's* Saleem and *Emotionally Weird's* Effie, for example, depict the way in which autobiographical memory works. In a study on the workings of memory, the psychologist Anthony Greenwald said that when it comes to fashioning personal history, the self is a “totalitarian ego”. In a number of experiments, Greenwald found that individuals tended to over-estimate their own contributions to group efforts and that people often overperceive themselves as the intended target of group action, just as leaders of countries often misconstrue the actions of other countries as intended to provoke them personally (Kotre 1995: 113). We need only think of Saleem's

perception of himself as a microcosmic representation of India itself, and the way in which he sees himself as the centre of all events, "Let me state this quite unequivocally: it is my firm conviction that the hidden purpose of the Indo-Pakistani war on 1965 was nothing more nor less than the elimination of my benighted family from the face of the earth" (MC: 338).

Saleem's sense of his own centrality to historic events is simply an especially strong example of the totalitarian ego at work. This narrator is only a particularly exaggerated example of how we all try to understand our lives with reference to history: as Kotre says, "On days of great significance our individual stories are momentarily aligned with history itself, and we say, if only indirectly, 'I was there'" (98). Questions like "where were you when you heard Kennedy was shot" or more recently "where were you on 9/11" show how we relate ourselves to events in the outside world. By telling the story of where we were, the narrative becomes, to a small degree, our own so that we can relate to the world even in the smallest degree. Saleem attempts to place himself in a causal role in his country's history in order to claim a direct relation between his actions and the world at large. Tom Crick's attempt at understanding the concatenation of circumstances that leads to his own present is likewise an attempt to understand the self, and how its role is historically determined. Rather than showing how his choices affected the world, he shows how the world affected the choices available to him, a story that requires over 200 years of history before finally reaching any form of resolution. In both these texts, and Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* the relation between the individual and history is a major focus, and looking at the ways in which the self tells stories in order to make sense of its connection with history is a primary concern of the storyteller. In other texts, such as Carter's *Nights at the Circus*, Atkinson's *Emotionally Weird* and Byatt's *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* history with a capital H, world events like wars, revolutions and the like don't get a look in.

However, in these particular cases, I maintain that understanding the self in relation to history is still a major concern of the storyteller. Hutcheon suggests that historiographic metafiction is a product of both postcolonial and feminist discourse, and

the ex-centric or centrifugal challenges of these discourses (Hutcheon 1999: 57-73). This ex-centricity is reflected in the storytellers themselves: the majority of whom are women (Fevvers, Gillian Perholt, Effie, Offred), and of the two men one is a colonised other (Saleem), and the other is a marginalized teacher with working class roots. None of these characters had any chance of influencing world events, and Saleem's claims seem over-the-top even to his listener, Padma whose presence further de-centres *Midnight's Children* by pushing its male narrator into directions its male narrator had no intention taking (Hutcheon 1999: 69). The storyteller shows how we attempt to construct a sense of self, both by attempting to narrativize our lives, and in our attempts to relate our lives to history through narrative patterns derived from 'romantic' modes of literature.

Making meaning vs. Absurdity and death

Why is this sense of self important? What is the motivation of the storytelling impulse in these narratives? We can answer these questions by again looking at Benjamin's "The Storyteller", where Benjamin suggests that what we seek in narrative is that knowledge of death which is denied to us in our own lives. "Death," writes Benjamin, "is the sanction of everything the storyteller can tell" (1977: 94). Peter Brooks in his Freudian analysis of the desire for plot, and the human need for stories, roundly agrees with this sentiment, and suggests that "narrative has something to do with time-boundedness and [...] plot is the internal logic of the discourse of mortality" (Brooks 1998: 22).

Indeed, in those narratives under analysis, death is a major concern. In *Nights at the Circus* Fevvers' is aware that her life as a performer is strictly limited, the first wish Gillian Perholt makes in *TDITNE* is to reverse her aging, Offred is in mortal peril, and Crick is about to be 'retired' thus ending his working life, due to his infertile Wife's attempt to steal a child. In fact, the threat of death hangs over the whole narrative, as

the nuclear holocaust obsessed narratee, Price, makes clear. It is no coincidence that none of the storytellers in these narratives have any offspring¹⁰.

Perhaps the most explicit and plaintive explanation of this motivation can be seen in Saleem's explanation for his own writing:

... time (having no further use for me) is running out. I will soon be thirty one years old. Perhaps. If my crumbling, over-used body permits. But I have no hope of saving my life, nor can I count on having even a thousand nights and a night. I must work fast, faster than Scheherezade, if I am to end up meaning - yes meaning - something. I admit it: above all things I fear absurdity.

(Rushdie 1981: 9)

The story becomes an attempt to avoid the absurdity of death, and writing is an attempt to 'leave something behind', to once and for all fix an authoritative version of self. The reason that Saleem will crumble into approximately six million pieces as soon as he has finished his narrative is because he will be unable to sustain the illusion of a unitary self that is *produced by writing itself*. The romantic philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, to whom we will return below when considering the ways in which writing changes memory, sees his autobiography as interchangeable with his life, most tellingly summed up in his claim that he will hand his *Confessions* to St. Peter at the gates of heaven. The autobiography has become the definitive version of the self.

The question of identity, claims Rousseau — and this is what makes him at least symbolically the *incipit* of modern narrative — can be thought only in narrative terms, in the effort to tell a whole life, to plot its meaning by going back over it to record its perpetual flight forward, its slippage from the fixity of definition. To understand me, Rousseau says more than once in the *confessions*, most impressively at the close of Book Four, the reader must follow me at every moment of my existence; and it will be up to the reader, not Rousseau to assemble the elements of narrative and determine what they mean.

(Brooks 1999: 33)

'I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well' (*MC*: 9) says Saleem, more than once. Indeed, as we see in all the storyteller narratives, stories of the self are inexorably tied in with stories of the other. We can see that the story of 'the Wiltshire wonder', a fellow inmate in Madame Schreck's freakshow / brothel, as narrated by Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus* (*NC*: 64-68) is actually fundamental to Fevvers' understanding of her own life.

¹⁰ Offred has lost her daughter, presumably for good, so Saleem in *Midnight's Children* could be argued as the only exception to this rule. However, the child he initially calls his son turns out to be the biological offspring of his enemy, Shiva, incidentally the name of the Hindu god of destruction and death.

The 'wonder' who is a 'perfectly formed' (64) woman of under three feet in height, is obviously a key narrative to understanding Fevvers for three reasons: Firstly, she is physically unique, as Fevvers herself claims to be and her physical difference makes her subject to the erotic gaze of men, "I'd rather show myself to one man at a time than to an entire theatre-full of the horrid, nasty, hairy things" (64), says the 'Wonder' at one point reminding us of Fevvers' audience and one Royal observer's meditations 'upon the erotic possibilities of her [Fevvers'] ability to hover' (18). Secondly, her life story is told as a fairy tale, with many recognisable fairy tale motifs, and therefore mirrors Fevvers' own narrative. The narrative of the wonder relies on the listener being willing to believe that her mother was seduced by the king of the fairies, just as Fevvers claims she herself was hatched. Thirdly, Fevvers tells the story of the wonder orally *and* in the first person. Stories about other people are usually told in the third person to ensure that the listener does not confuse the "I" who is the subject of the story and the "I" who is the narrator. Fevvers' use of the first person here betrays the extent to which the narrative of the wonder is in fact relevant to her own narrative as well as demonstrating the problems raised by embedded narratives in speech as opposed to writing. On Diagram C, the Wonder's tale would be represented by position B, but the semi-permeable barrier between worlds is foregrounded here by the way Fevvers' use of the first person pronoun to tell the Wonder's tale subsumes someone else's tale into her own

This unusual use of the first person is made clear further on in the novel, because this framed (hypodiegetic) narrative is later compared with a more 'reliable' frame narrative: the written testimony of Toussaint. Because Toussaint's testimony is written, and has an "all too checkable address" combined with written evidence of Toussaint's existence in the medical journal *The Lancet* (60) a sceptical reader of the same mindset as the narratee, Walser, would be more likely to credit it as reliable than the spoken, and uncheckable narrative of the wonder. Here, because of the medium of writing, the narrating "I" can not assimilate the narrative of the other. This case shows the extent to which the narrating self assimilates the narratives of others in order to

further understand its position in the world, in the same way as the narratives of Crick's ancestors or the rebellious Moira in *The Handmaid's Tale* help those narrators understand their selves further.

The narcissistic nature of memory, its tendency to place the self at the centre of all activity can be seen as another focus of narratives that metafictionally foreground narrativisation through the use of a storyteller. Indeed, Linda Hutcheon's analysis of metafiction leads to some interesting insights into the nature of the storyteller. Hutcheon's objective in *Narcissistic Narrative* is to deconstruct the early criticism of metafiction; that it is narcissistic in the pejorative sense. The implication of those critics who derided metafiction as narcissistic is that it represents the death of the novel, much like self awareness led to Narcissus wasting away in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. However, Hutcheon shows that these critics effectively misread both Ovid's story and Freud's theories about primary narcissism, because Narcissus lived on both in the flower that bears his name and in the underworld, and Freud saw primary narcissism as an essential development in the human psyche.

Hutcheon's re-reading of the myth of narcissus suggests other ways in which the myth can be illuminating when applied to metafiction. For example, in the texts under analysis here, the fact that the narratives construct the narrator's idea of self can be viewed, in the psychoanalytic sense as narcissistic according to Stolorow's definition: "mental activity is narcissistic to the degree that its function is to maintain the cohesiveness, stability and positive affective colouring of the self-representation." (Stolorow 1986: 197). Their narratives, like the pool in which Narcissus is entranced by his own image, reflect the narrators' image of self rather than their external appearance.

The goddess Nemesis, who is the cause of Narcissus' ironic self-awareness in the myth, can be seen to be awareness of mortality: whether it is death as in *Midnight's Children*, *The Handmaid's Tale* or *Emotionally Weird*, the spectre of nuclear holocaust in *Waterland*, or age as in *Nights at the Circus* and *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*. This is a form of motivation not unique to fiction, and was perhaps the classical *raison*

d'être of the autobiography until it recently became yet another product designed to cash in on celebrity, and we can view Rousseau's image of handing over his *Confessions* to St. Peter at the gates of heaven as proof of this view of 'summing up', or finding meaning in ones' life. The motivation of these fictional autobiographers is to be remembered, to leave behind something of their selves and here again we can see points of comparison. As Hutcheon points out, Narcissus is immortalised in the flower that bears his name; his immortality is the consequence of his self-obsession, just as the storytellers hope their own narratives will resound long after their own deaths. Their self reflection has become concretised in the artful autobiographies that will remain. It is as if Roland Barthes' claim that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author," (Barthes 1984: 148) had reached its mythopoeic goal. As Brooks notes, the moment of death is the moment that a life becomes transmissible (Brooks 1998: 28) and Ong too highlights the link between writing and death:

One of the most startling paradoxes inherent in writing is its close association with death. This association is suggested in Plato's charge that writing is inhuman, thing-like, and that it destroys memory. It is also abundantly evident in countless references to writing (and/ or print) traceable in printed dictionaries of quotations, from 2 Corinthians 3:6 'The letter kills but the spirit gives life' and Horace's reference to his three books of *odes* as a 'monument' (*Odes* iii.30.1), presaging his own death. [...] Robert Browning calls attention to the still widespread practice of pressing living flowers to death between the pages of printed books, 'faded yellow blossoms/ twixt page and page'. The dead flower, once alive, is the psychic equivalent of the verbal text. The paradox lies in the fact that the deadness of this text, its removal from the living human lifeworld, its rigid visual fixity, assures its endurance and its potential for being resurrected into limitless living contexts by a potentially infinite number of living readers

(Ong 1999: 81)

In narratives featuring the storyteller, writing is not seen as a mere external technology. The device of the storyteller 'lays bare' the devices of literary communication and such naturalised constructs as the author, omniscience and fictionality, but nevertheless writing is seen as a fundamental way in which humans make sense of their sense of self. The storyteller inevitably reminds the reader and writer of the alienation present in the storytelling situation in postmodern society, but, as Ong highlights, alienation is a necessary step along the road to greater

understanding: without writing and the alienation it brings, study as we now know it would be impossible (82).¹¹

Indeed, rather than reinforcing what Jaques Derrida calls *logocentrism*, or the prioritisation of presence over absence in western metaphysics, the storyteller deconstructs the traditional speech/ writing binary by showing that speech is always already infected with writing. In the chapter "...That Dangerous Supplement..." Derrida deconstructs the speech and writing binary proposed by Rousseau in his *Confessions*. Rousseau condemns writing as a destruction of presence and a disease of speech (Derrida 1976: 142). However, when talking about his shyness around women, Rousseau suggests that his behaviour in their presence does not allow them to know the 'real' him. The implication is that by reading his autobiography the reader will get to know the 'real' Rousseau, a thought succinctly formulated in the following quotation from the *Confessions*:

I would love society as others do if I were not sure of showing myself not just at a disadvantage but as completely different from what I am. The decision I have taken to write and to hide myself is precisely the one that suits me. If I were present people would never have know what I was worth.

(Rousseau in Derrida 1976: 142)

Writing, which Rousseau has previously claimed as a destruction of presence and a disease of speech turns out to be the best way he has of expressing himself. Culler highlights the fact that "Writing can be compensatory, a supplement to speech, only because speech is already marked by the qualities generally predicated of writing: absence and misunderstanding" (Culler 1983: 103). In his *Confessions* Rousseau describes writing as a supplement "Languages are made to be spoken, writing serves only as a supplementary to speech" (Derrida 1976: 144), however Derrida uses the logic of the supplement to point out the flaws in this claim: a supplement may be something that is added on, but the very possibility of adding a supplement indicates that the thing itself is incomplete (Culler 1983: 102).

¹¹ Indeed, although alienation is a product of capitalism and the era of mass production, according to Marxist teleology, it is still a progressive step onwards from feudalism and serfdom. Alienation is, for Marx, on the whole a good thing because it leads one to question their relation to the means of production and find it lacking, thus setting in motion the whole process of self awareness and, eventually, revolution.

Derrida further deconstructs logocentrism in *Dissemination* where he analyses the Platonic dialogue *Phaedrus* where Plato argues against the technology of writing. In the *Phaedrus* Plato has Socrates, acting as a character, argue against writing by reciting an Egyptian allegory in which the god Theuth presents his invention, writing, to the chief god Thamos. In rejecting writing, Thamos argues:

The fact is that this invention will produce forgetfulness in the souls of those who have learned it because they will not need to exercise their memories (...), being able to rely on what is written, using the stimulus of external marks that are alien to themselves [...] rather than, from within, their own unaided powers to call things to mind [...]

(Derrida 1981: 102)

Derrida goes on to argue that the terms in which Plato discusses writing, as poison, have in fact been mistranslated over the years. Translators over the centuries have translated Plato as claiming that writing is a “poison”. However, Derrida goes on to point out that the term *Pharmakos* which has typically been translated over the years as “poison”, can also mean “remedy: and therefore Plato’s discussion of writing is far more ambivalent than has been thought: it is an artificial addition which both cures and infects (Culler 1983: 142). Translators over the years have selected one meaning and placed it over the other, repressing the ambiguity that characterises Plato’s own treatment of writing in favour of privileging one term above the other in a hierarchical binary.

Thamos’s (and supposedly, Socrates’) objections to writing will be familiar to most modern readers as it almost exactly echoes contemporary objections to the use of computers, calculators and other ‘memory’ devices. However, the storyteller reminds us that writing is both poison and remedy: Although writing can suppress subjectivity and by its very nature causes alienation, it gives us new ways to relate our lives to history and understand our selves:

[L]ife histories are indeed artefacts of writing; they are the upsurge of the narrative imagination. This, however, is hardly reason to fault them or to relegate them to the status of mere fictions. We too, *as selves* are artefacts of the narrative imagination. *We, again literally, would not exist, save as bodies, without imagining who and what we have been and are: kill the imagination and you kill the self.* Who, after all is said and done, would want to die such a death?

(Freeman 1995: 223 My emphasis)

The logocentric binary of speech *versus* writing and presence *versus* absence are deconstructed in the novels that feature the storyteller. Here, the stimulus of 'external marks' is intrinsic in the way we see the world. Like Don Quixote or Emma Bovary, the influence of easily recognisable literary genres can be seen to structure the way we see the world, and ourselves. It is not enough for Saleem to simply tell his life story, he must have it in a recognisable authoritative *written* form. Fevvers' tells her story to Walser in the hope that he will create an authoritative biography out of her disjointed and marvellous fairy tale. Crick needs to rely on that seductive master-narrative, history, in order to make sense of his own life story.

Mark Freeman argues that the very idea of self taken for granted in western society is a contingent and historically determined concept, that has been forged by writing, in such autobiographical tomes as St. Augustine's and Rousseau's *Confessions*. He goes on to suggest that "[t]he idea of the self, as we have come to know it, and the idea of history are in fact mutually constitutive" (Freeman: 28).

Writing the self indeed creates the concept of self that we take for granted today. The technology of writing facilitates the invention of written genres which in turn alter the ways in which we perceive both the world itself and ourselves as subjects. Just as Elizabeth Deeds Ermath proposes that realism constructs and promotes the historical code, clearing the path for the view of history today as a cosmic highway which includes everything from Homer to Holographs (Ermath 1997: 69) so too Kotre and Freeman show how our idea of self is forged from the genres of the autobiography and the *bildungsroman*. It is as Ong suggests; writing is a technology and technologies "are not mere exterior aids but also interior transformations of consciousness and never more so than when they affect the world." (Ong 1999: 82)

Ong even suggests that our conception of human psychology has in no small way been influenced by the differences between 'flat' characters that thrive in oral narrative and 'round' ones in written. Freud understands real human beings as psychologically structured, not like an oral hero like Achilles, but like an Oedipus interpreted out of the world of nineteenth-century novels (Ong: 154). "The drift in

human consciousness toward greater individualism” writes Ong “had been served well by print” (Ong: 131) showing how the interiorisation of writing fundamentally shifts the understanding of world and self. By showing the ways in which storytellers attempt to understand their selves through narrative and by problematising constructs such as the author, the self and history, the storyteller leads to a form of metafiction where our ways of looking at the world are shifted.

It may seem contradictory to talk about the storyteller, who, as we have seen typically speaks and is manifested as an oral presence, as causing the reader to think about the extent to which writing structures our consciousness, especially as part of my definition of the storyteller depends upon him or her utilising recognisable fairy tale motifs or devices to relate their life story. However, this structure reminds the reader of the nature of communication; the necessity of the addresser (speaker/ author) the message (speech/ text) and the addressee (listener/ reader)” according to Jakobsen’s semiotic model of communication.

The storyteller deconstructs the binary of speech and writing and shows that speech is always already infected with writing. By depicting a traditional oral storytelling situation within a reified commodity, the novel, those authors who utilise the storyteller draw attention to the differences and similarities between speech and writing. The way in which these storytellers attempt to make sense of their lives, the narratives patterns that they utilise can be seen to comply with expectations that are derived from written discourse: the need to present the self as a unified and single entity, the need to relate ones actions to the wider tapestry of history. Even if one uses the fairy tale to explain one’s life, one cannot escape the structuring impulses that are interiorised along with writing. Indeed, the variety of ways that present themselves to make sense of one’s life (fairy tale/ history) highlight the fact that *there is more than one way* to make sense of self, and show the ways in which more traditional oral methods may differ from contemporary methods.

The storyteller, as it is used in the texts under analysis here, is therefore not simply a nostalgic longing for a prelapsarian world of oral storytelling. Benjamin’s

lament for the decline of the storyteller, and its claim that storytelling loses something by the 'absence' of the storyteller, replaced instead by the shoddy construct of the apolitical author, does not tally with the subversive metafictional possibilities opened up by the textual storyteller. Just as the content of fairytales was often subversive, due to the teller's low social status or sex (Jameson 1981: 105), the textual storyteller is subversive because it points to the arbitrariness of constructions such as the author, history, and fictionality.

Indeed, the fairy tale itself is not a 'pure' oral genre, as Marina Warner notes:

Oral purity is [...] a quest doomed to failure; the material of fairy tale weaves in and out of printed texts, the Greek romances, *The Arabian Nights*, [...] language conducts from mouth to page and back again, and orature, or in the west, oral literature, has not existed in isolation since Homeric times.

(Warner 1994a: 24)

Although the fairy tale is typically seen as a speech genre, and there are all kinds of romantic ideas of the Brothers Grimm going round and listening to peasants narrate their stories inside quaint and authentically dilapidated cottages, the fact remains that the fairy tale has not existed in isolation over the past two hundred years and has been affected by writing. Many of the narratives garnered by the Grimms, for example, were re-worked versions of tales also known from Boccaccio, Basile and Perrault. The Grimms' informants were as likely to be well-read middle and upper class women than the peasantry, and many of the tales they collected to understand better the German *volk* were in fact of French origin (Zipes 1988). Written versions of fairy tales can inspire spoken version which in turn are crafted into new written versions, a process that can be seen in the differing versions of "Cinderella" and "Sleeping Beauty" in the versions of Basile, Perrault and the Grimms.

Furthermore, the fairy tale as we now know it has been crystallised by the act of writing. Investigation of certain tales, such as "Cinderella", for example has proven that the tale has been told in thousands of different forms that have been told in countries thousands of miles apart, from Egypt, China, Scandinavia and Africa to Western Europe over thousands of years (Zipes 1988: 137). Marina Warner notes that the earliest extant version of Cinderella to feature a lost slipper was written down around

AD 850-860 in China, but this version is written in a way that assumes the reader would already be familiar with the story, suggesting that this version is by no means the *ur-text* or 'original' (Warner 1994a: 202). However, the form of "Cinderella" that is dominant today is the result of Charles Perrault's 1697 version '*Cendrillon*'. This version is the first to feature both the fairy godmother, and the glass slipper, which were later immortalised in the 1950 Walt Disney version of Cinderella.

As Zipes notes '[f]olklorists have generally felt called upon to defend the "purity" of the oral genre and its resilient character against the "creeping disease" of literary adaptation and the production of the tales in distorted but attractive forms as commodities to make money' (Zipes 1988: 135) but this view of 'oral purity' simply reinforces a logocentric view of the world, and ignores the fact that seventeenth century (Perrault) and nineteenth century (Grimm) versions of certain tales would be lost forever were it not for the medium of writing. Zipes suggests that '[m]emory is historical, and the oral tales can only retain basic elements of tales from other generations. Literature can thus complement the oral tradition' (136). The logic of the complement reminds us of Derrida's analysis of writing as supplement: a complement is "something that completes" (OED) suggesting that the oral version on its own is *not enough*. It must be studied against a written version, and written versions are necessary in order to compare versions from other sides of the world and over the centuries in order to analyse how tales have changed and how they reflect the society in which they are told.

This brief analysis of the fairy tale's relationship with writing, reminds us that the fairy tale is not unaffected by writing. Indeed, in common with the other forms of writing investigated above that we now see as natural we can even date the fairy tale as we know it as a product of the nineteenth century. This is not to suggest that there were no fairy tales before the nineteenth century; rather that the way we view the fairy tale now has more in common with the way that the Grimms saw the fairy tale, as an agent for socialising children and fostering national identity, than the way Perrault or Basile did.

Therefore, any suggestion of the fairy tale operating in a binary relationship with writing is intrinsically flawed: in any culture where writing has become internalised the whole world of language becomes related to writing, and it becomes impossible to 'go back' to an oral means of understanding the world. Nevertheless, the fairy tale *does* represent a way of understanding the self through narrative that is more commensurate with oral cultures rather than written cultures. Furthermore, the storyteller itself, by utilising 'oral' ways of understanding the world and the self highlights the difference between these oral and written means.

This historical and political context is essential in understanding narratives featuring the storyteller chronotope as what Jameson would call a 'socially symbolic act'. By raising questions related to historiography and metafiction, they highlight the constructs of author, history and fiction which have been internalised in our society. In a society in which the author has become a fundamental principle, and naturalised to the extent that it now underwrites global capitalism in a most insidious way, it is vitally important to challenge the ideological construct of the author. The concept of the author, and the mechanisms of copyright that were created as a result of this idea have become enshrined in late capitalism as the notion of 'intellectual property'. Intellectual Property has become an important area in world politics, to the extent that the UN has created an organisation for enforcing Intellectual Property rights, called The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), an organisation dedicated to naturalising and enforcing the ideological construct of the author, in some cases through international sanctions.

It is for this reason that I do not agree with Cazzato in his claim that Barthes had "fallen into the trap of reification". It is undeniable that the author is far from dead, and has gone from strength to strength over the last fifty years; however, if you look at Barthes' argument in the spirit of 1968 (when it, and Foucault's remarkably similar "What is an Author?" were written) then it displays the same utopian socialist drive manifested towards the end of Foucault's "What is an Author?". Foucault, after showing the author as an ideological construct goes on to say:

I think that, as our society changes, at the very moment when it is in the process of changing, the author function will disappear, and in such a manner that fiction and its polysemic texts will once again function according to another mode, but still with a system of constraint—one which will no longer be the author, but which will have to be determined or, perhaps, experienced.

(Foucault 1979: 160)

This hopeful sentiment, is what I see in Barthes' essay: a recognition of the puissant nature of the author as an ideological construct, but a hope that by revealing the author and intellectual property *as a construct* it will eventually lose its power to limit meaning. The author is the "certain functional principle by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction" (159) and only with the death of the author will the free circulation of all types of ideas and discourses be possible.

Returning to Benjamin's "The Storyteller", I would argue that the texts featuring a storyteller in fact operate against the trend that Benjamin saw as the author being "isolated" and unconcerned with society, as their concern with history illustrates. The omniscient narrator may perhaps seem to be detached from society, but the storyteller resituates narrative within a real world communicative situation, and it does so in the form of fairy tales, which Benjamin so admires. Benjamin noted "the first true storyteller is, and will continue to be, the teller of fairy tales. Whenever good counsel was at a premium, the fairy tale had it, and where the need was greatest, its aid was nearest [...] The fairy tale tells us of the earliest arrangements that mankind made to shake off the nightmare which the myth had placed upon its chest (Benjamin 1977: 102). The storyteller chronotope highlights the importance of storytelling and reminds us of the ways in which we all use narrative in order to make sense of our lives. The fairy tale operates in these texts as a model of storytelling and fictionality, and situates the stories that are told within an endless chain of fairy tales that reflect the experiences and concerns of their speakers.

It is impossible not to notice the difference between the difference between Benjamin's idea of myth and Frye's. Where Frye sees myth in an essentialist and humanist light, as a type of formulaic narrative that underlies all human stories as based upon the same underlying patterns, Benjamin speaks of myth as a nightmare,

which fairy tales are there to liberate us from. For Frye, whose writing bears the influence of the Jungian thought that structures other notable works on the fairy tale of the time, such as Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, fairy tales are another form of the 'romantic' stage and another type of myth. As we shall see in the next chapter, Benjamin's view of myth pre-empts later negative criticism of myth.

Chapter five will examine the interaction between fairy tale and myth, and question whether the fairy tale works to "shake off the nightmare of myth", or whether at some times the fairy tale itself can become myth. To do this, it will be necessary to examine Roland Barthes' idea of myth, and analyse a text that shows the fairy tale both as a repressive force, and at the same time, as a force that acts to rejuvenate the world.

Chapter Five: Battling the Nightmare of Myth, Terry Pratchett's Fairy Tale Inversions

It is customary in academic texts to 'introduce' the works of Terry Pratchett (one of Britain's best selling authors and one of the most popular fantasy writers of all time), or mention that his greatest achievement, the Discworld series, takes place on a flat world carried through space on the back of four elephant caryatids which stand on the back of an enormous turtle. And even though I have ironically just repeated the cycle of introducing the author and his world, it is only because ultimately, those facts are irrelevant: Pratchett's work is important for this thesis because it addresses the nature of the myths we live by and the fantasies that govern our daily existence. Zipes writes that we sometimes refer to myths and fairy tales as lies, but adds "these lies are often the lies that govern our lives" (Zipes 1994: 4).

This chapter will examine the playful intertextual use of fairy tales in a postmodern fantasy text where the fairy tales operate metafictionally in order to comment upon the way that formulaic stories operate. Terry Pratchett's 1991 novel *Witches Abroad* (hereafter referred to as *WA*) is part of his hugely popular Discworld series which is marked by its mix of fantasy and comedy, making it doubly damned as far as 'serious criticism' is concerned. It tells the story of three witches who are forced to venture abroad to save a girl from being married to a prince. As we will see, it combines intertextual elements, from "The Golden Ball", "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Sleeping Beauty", although the main, and most important intertext is "Cinderella".

The strategy used by Pratchett in his treatment of these fairy tales is typical of what, in chapter one, I labelled "revision": his use of the fairy tale is similar to that of feminist revisers, in that his revisions highlight the patriarchal assumptions underlying the classical fairy tale and change the stories in order to make them more equitable. Where in chapters three and four fairy tales have been seen in a positive light,

providing a means by which humans can understand their lives *Witches Abroad* shows how the fairy tale can be a negative force used to make people conform to societal rules.

Witches Abroad

The Discworld series, at 34 titles and counting, has been called “a great experiment” in worldbuilding (Clute 2000: 7). The series can be subdivided into four or five separate categories, depending on their protagonists and subject matter, and all of these different series are concerned with the way humans make sense of the world through stories, but arguably, none more so than the series which follow the adventures of the Discworld’s witches¹..

The earliest of these books, *Equal Rites*, is the first Discworld novel to feature a female protagonist, and tells of the Disc’s first (and only) female wizard. This novel can be seen as only tangentially part of the Witches series, its *Künstslerroman* style makes it more in keeping with other Discworld novels that chart the development of a young protagonist, such as *Mort*, *Pyramids* or *Guards! Guards*. *Equal Rites* develops the rules of the Discworld, specifically drawing out a comparison between male and female magic, which will be enhanced throughout the Witches series, where “headology”, a combination of (un)common-sense and guile is seen to be a superior form of magic to the academic and showy thaumaturgy of the wizards.

It is the second novel in the Witches series that sets the tone for the following instalments. *Wyrd Sisters* introduced the idea of the coven comprising Granny Weatherwax, Nanny Ogg and Magrat Garlick. The coven’s importance is something

¹ *Witches Abroad* is part of a group of Discworld novels that has been labelled the Granny Weatherwax series, after their most important protagonist (Silverberg 1999: 4, Clute 2000: 15). However, it would be more accurate to label them the “Witches” series because although the first of these books features only one witch, the series has expanded over the years, and could now be said to incorporate two novels in which Ms. Weatherwax only plays a cameo role, *The Wee Free Men* and *A Hatful of Sky*. Penelope Hill notes that *Equal Rites* seems to take place in a ‘parallel universe’ to the subsequent novels, as the social reforms hinted at by the end of that novel do not seem to have any effect on the universe at large: Unseen University remains a single sex institution and it seems that there never have been female wizards. Again, this would seem to suggest that titling this novel, and the others the “Granny Weatherwax” series, on the basis that she is in all of them, but Nanny Ogg, Magrat Garlick and Agnes Nitt are not is an untenable position (Hill 2000: 54-55)

that Pratchett attributes to both practical and mythical reasons. The practical one is that when two of the witches fall out, there is a third who will be there to make them patch things up. The mythical reason is the importance of the three *types* of witches, which correspond with mythical representations of the three types of women in patriarchal Indo-European mythology: the maiden, the mother and the crone (Sayer 2000: 92-3). Where Esme Weatherwax, from the outset, fulfils the stereotypical expectations of the crone-witch, Gytha Ogg is introduced as an unconventional mother figure with a brood of affectionate grown-up children and a taste for strong liquor and bawdy songs. Magrat is introduced in *Wyrd Sisters* as the reader's representative, someone just starting out on the road of witchery and who has a distinctly 'new age' view of witching that contrasts with the earthier witchcraft of the two elder witches.

Wyrd Sisters is a parody of *Macbeth* told from the perspective of the witches (the title is a "writerly" intertextual reference to the novel's hypotext), and the most palimpsestic of the Discworld novels. Discworld novels are usually parodies without an incipit (Clute 2000: 10), but this is the first Discworld novel that is actually based upon one particular hypotext, rather than the broader generic use of parody that typifies Pratchett's other novels. Though *Wyrd Sisters* features parodic moments derived from multiple intertexts, from *Hamlet* to the first *Superman* movie, its basic structure is firmly based on the Scottish play. The importance of the Shakespearean intertext in *Wyrd Sisters* is linked to the metafictional nature that will become a hallmark of the Witches series. The usurping king and his manipulative wife in this version of *Macbeth* commission a play from the Discworld's equivalent of Shakespeare in order to change the world and make their new subjects begin to fear the witches who were their midwives and doctors. The novel, like *Witches Abroad* after it, is intensively focused upon the power of the story to structure the world.

The intertextual and metafictional premise of *Witches Abroad* is established very early on, with a long passage worth quoting in full:

[...] stories are important.
People think that stories are shaped by people. In fact, it's the other way around. Stories exist independently of their players. If you know that, the knowledge is power.

Stories, great flapping ribbons of shaped space-time, have been blowing and uncoiling around the universe since the beginning of time. And they have evolved. The weakest have died and the strongest have survived and they have grown fat on the retelling . . . stories, twisting and blowing through the darkness. And their very existence overlays a faint but insistent pattern on the chaos that is history. Stories etch grooves deep enough for people to follow in the same way that water follow certain paths down a mountainside. And each time fresh actors tread the path of the story, the groove runs deeper.

This is called the theory of narrative causality and it means that a story, once started, *takes a shape*. It picks up all the vibrations of all the other workings of that story that have ever been.

This is why history keeps repeating all the time.

So a thousand heroes have stole fire from the gods. A thousand wolves have eaten grandmother, a thousand princesses have been kissed. A million unknowing actors have moved, unknowing through the pathways of story. It is now *impossible* for the third and youngest son of any king, if he should embark on a quest which has so far claimed his older brothers, *not* to succeed.

Stories don't care who takes part in them. All that matters is that the story gets told, that the story repeats. Or, if you prefer to think of it like this: stories are a parasitical life form, warping lives, in the service only of the story itself. It takes a special kind of person to fight back, and become the bicarbonate of history.

Once upon a time . . .

(WA: 8-9)

This metafictional element is a persistent thread throughout the Discworld series, a world where million to one shots always come off (although nine hundred thousand to one shots aren't quite so fortunate). Though the Discworld series is relentlessly intertextual, it is in this novel that the metafictional element that discusses storytelling is most evident, and it is also this novel in which fairy tales are explicitly incorporated and subverted, making it the obvious choice for analysis, although there are many other Discworld novels that could have been substituted².

The original subversive twist utilised in *Wyrd Sisters*, of telling events from the witches' point of view, is reprised in *Witches Abroad*, so that the marginal position of witches in fairy tales becomes significantly expanded. The usage of borderline figures³ has been noted as a particularly postmodern phenomenon, as Linda

² Other Discworld novels such as *Hogfather*, *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents*, *Lords and Ladies* and *Maskerade* all spring to mind.

³ The witches at one point are tellingly described as "borderline cases" (151).

Hutcheon notes in her chapter on the “ex-centric” (Hutcheon 1999: 57-73), and Pratchett uses it to give a new perspective on well known stories.

In this case, the novel begins with the death of a fairy godmother, Desiderata Hollow⁴, and her final act, leaving her magic wand to Magrat Garlick⁵. This is a particularly well executed piece of reverse psychology (or “headology”) because along with the wand she sends a note instructing Magrat the duties of her new job:

‘I niver had time to Trane a replaysment so youll have to Do. You must goe to the city of Genua. I would of done thys myself only cannot by reason of bein dead. Ella Saturday must NOTTE marry the prins. PS This is important.’

[...]

‘PSPS Tell those 2 Olde biddys they are Notte to come with Youe, they will onlie Ruine everythin.’

(WA: 34 deliberate spelling mistakes replicated)

Leaving the wand to Magrat with a note that forbids the accompaniment of Granny Weatherwax and Nanny Ogg provides the necessary impetus to get all three witches to leave their home and begin the unusual task of ensuring that the young girl does not marry a prince, which, as Granny Weatherwax points out “Should be an easy enough wish to grant anyway, [...] [m]illions of girls don’t marry a prince” (39). Little does she know that fairy godmothers come in pairs (the “good” one, and a “bad” one) and that Ella Saturday’s other godmother is using the power of stories to make sure that she marries the prince against her wishes.

From this point, the witches embark upon a long period of travel from their rural home kingdom of Lancre to the distinctly New Orleans influenced city of Genua, a city of voodoo, ‘gators and gumbo. This peripatetic structure is typical of many fantasy works; the road, as Bakhtin notes, is one of the oldest chronotopes, central to Greek Romance, and much utilised in the fantasy genre (Bakhtin 2000: 90). It also allows Pratchett to parody other fantasy works, and to create comic situations in

⁴ An obvious use of allegoric naming that stresses the fairy godmother’s role as donor in the process of wish fulfilment (Desire), and the inevitable complaint that getting everything you wish for isn’t necessarily a good idea (Hollow). Desiderata, literally translated means “things missing and felt to be needed”, which of course, is the basis of wishing (Breebart 2002)

⁵ Fairy godmothers are witches in the novel, a fact which also explains how the malevolent guest in “Sleeping Beauty” is sometimes cursed by a bad fairy godmother, sometimes by a witch: this conflation of the two allows the reader to see how whichever way one looks at it, the malevolent presence in these fairy tales is always an old woman.

which the witches singularly fail to understand and appreciate foreign customs. In addition to increasing the gag quotient, the episodic nature of the road chronotope also allows for some character development, allowing time for the reader to understand the commonsense nature of the witches.

The first striking detail is the lack of real magic utilised by the witches. Apart from riding broomsticks and Magrat's use of her magic wand to turn absolutely everything she points it at into a pumpkin, whether she wants it to become pumpkin shaped or not, there is very little magic done by the witches in the novel⁶. In a section of free indirect thought representation focalised by Magrat, Nanny and Granny's approach to magic is explained:

Sometimes [...] she really wondered about the others' commitment to witchcraft. Half the time they didn't seem to *bother*.

Take Medicine, for example. Magrat knew she was much better than them at herbs. [...] She could fractionally distil, and double-distil, and do things that meant sitting up all night watching the colour of the flame under the retort. She *worked* at it.

Whereas Nanny just tended to put a hot poultice on everything and recommend a large glass of whatever the patient liked best on the basis that since you were going to be ill anyway you might as well get some enjoyment out of it. [...]

And Granny . . . she just gave people a bottle of coloured water and told them they felt a lot better.

And what was annoying was that they often did.

Where was the witchcraft in that?

With a wand, though, things could be different. You could help people a lot with a wand. Magic was there to make life better. Magrat knew this in the pink fluttering boudoir of her heart.

(WA: 80)

On the way to Genua, the mundane nature of most witchcraft is demonstrated. Granny Weatherwax uses her knowledge of dwarfs (spotting mining by-products) to get on the right path after Magrat's poor map-reading skills have got them lost and

⁶ Both the magic wand and the broomstick could be seen more as devices than actual magic, something made obvious in the treatment of these magical accoutrements as commodities in the Harry Potter books, where broomsticks are branded like automobiles. The functioning of these devices may seem magical, but then so does the remote control to anyone who doesn't have a degree in electrical engineering, or the internal combustion engine to non-mechanics. The mundanity of the broomstick is emphasised by the fact that Granny Weatherwax's broomstick is reluctant to fly, and has to be regularly inspected by dwarven engineers. Arthur C Clarke famously claimed that "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic", and Gregory Benford that "Any technology distinguishable from magic is insufficiently advanced". This technological view of the magic wand is confirmed when the working of the wand is described – rather than pointing it and wishing, the fully qualified fairy godmother changes its setting by twisting the gold and silver rings into a new position explaining Desiderata's 'PSPSPS' to Magrat that "it has a tindency to resett to pumpkins" (WA: 34)

then uses her fearsome reputation to gain entrance into the Dwarven tunnels. Admittedly, this practical witchcraft is undermined when Magrat, in what could be regarded as her first piece of fairy godmothering, uses the magic wand to save trapped dwarf miners by transforming a rockslide into pumpkins. However, this episode is indicative both of Magrat's idealistic view of magic and also her lack of control over the wand (or the situation), because the last thing she wants the wand to do is turn rocks into pumpkins. When the dwarves give the witches a boat that follows an underground river to Genua and they are approached by a sinister creature, their response is just as down to earth:

Two pale glows appeared at the edge of the lamplight. Eventually they turned out to be the yes of a small grey creature, vaguely froglike, paddling towards them on a log.

It reached the boat. Long clammy fingers grabbed the side and a lugubrious face rose level with Nanny Ogg's.

"ullo," it said. "It'sss my birthday."

All three of them stared at it for a while. Then Granny Weatherwax picked up an oar and hit it firmly over the head. There was a splash and distant cursing. 'Horrible little bugger,' said Granny, as they rowed on, 'Looked like a troublemaker to me.'

'Yeah,' said Nanny Ogg. 'It's the slimy ones you have to watch out for.'

(WA: 59-60)

This brief parody of Tolkien's middle-earth novels begins when the witches discover the dwarven mine and ends when they leave it, beginning with a discussion on the point of invisible runes marking the door to the mines (how do you know if they're done correctly?) and ending at the point where a Gollum-esque creature gets short shrift from the witches.

Other non magical events that occur during the section of the novel based upon the traditional 'road' chronotope include the entirely accidental slaying of a vampire (which while in bat form finds itself concussed when the shutters barring a window are violently thrown open, subject to a barrage of garlic sausage and then eaten by Nanny's feral tomcat). Being accidentally in the path of a bull-run in a region that resembles Spain is dealt with by the witches' self-confidence, and the use of the "mystic Horseman's Word"—ostensibly a mythical means used by master blacksmiths to tame even the wildest stud stallion, but in reality a whispered threat of

castration. And finally, as the witches get closer to Genua on the Discworld equivalent of a Mississippi paddleboat, the reader is treated to a masterclass in headology when Granny Weatherwax takes on a group of card-sharps who have previously swindled Nanny Ogg out of the group's travelling money and broomsticks.

This episode is a key point in the novel for two reasons. Primarily it shows the importance of guile and "headology" over magic. Granny does not use magic to win the game, although she does use it to eliminate the unfair advantages that the cheaters utilise: a mirror behind her back which would show the gamblers her cards is smashed by a glass that slips out of the hand of a barkeep that had been rude to her moments earlier. In almost the same instant a contraption holding an ace falls out of the lead gambler's sleeve. It also shows Granny Weatherwax's propensity for breaking rules. Although, as we shall later see, she rails against stories, it is made quite plain that she is working this story to her advantage:

All witches are very conscious of stories. They can *feel* stories, in the same way that a bather in a little pool can feel the unexpected trout.

Knowing how stories work is almost all the battle.

For example, when an obvious innocent sits down with three experienced card sharpeners and says 'How do you play this game, then?', someone is about to be shaken down until their teeth fall out.

(102)

Granny's victory against the cheats is mainly due to the psychological games she plays with her opponents: acting like a helpless old biddy, feigning ignorance of the game's rules, taking out the cardsharp's advantages like mirrors, hidden cards, stacked hands and marked decks, and being deliberately irritating and playing mind games to irritate her hapless opponents, are all, along with raw talent at the game, more important to her victory than any form of magic. This reluctance to use magic where headology will suffice will remain a major theme throughout the novel.

Sleeping Beauty

The episodic period of travel is important to the novel because it allows the reader to get an insight into the ways that Granny Weatherwax works. The witches meet with the challenge of foreign climes as they make their way to their destination,

all of which are surmounted in typical down-to-earth style. The only reference to fairy tale intertexts during this period occur when the focus of the narrative shifts to portray events happening simultaneously in the fairy tale kingdom of Genua. During this section of the novel, the fairy tale intertext is suspended, as the typical fantasy chronotope of the road is dominant.

However, as they near their destination, fairy tale intertexts become increasingly prominent. A page or so after leaving the paddleboat, the witches come across a bramble covered castle. To no one's great surprise, the occupants of the castle are all asleep and atmospherically covered with dust and cobwebs, "There'll be a spinning wheel at the bottom of all this" comments Granny knowingly before Nanny Ogg compares it with the work of Black Aliss:

'Now *there* was a witch who knew how stories worked,' said Nanny. 'She used to be in as many as three of 'em at once.'

Even Magrat knew about Black Aliss. She was said to have been the greatest witch who ever lived – not exactly *bad*, but so powerful it was sometimes hard to tell the difference. When it came to sending palaces to sleep for a hundred years or getting princesses to spin straw into Glod [*sic*], no-one did it better than Black Aliss.

(WA:113-4 deliberate Glod pun included)

We learn that Black Aliss met her end at the hands of two children, pushed into her own oven in the gingerbread cottage she started inhabiting when she latterly became, as the witches politely put it, eccentric, and this leads on to another comment by Granny Weatherwax about stories:

'That's what happens, [...] You get too involved with stories, you get confused. You don't know what's really real and what isn't. And they get you in the end. They send you weird in the head. I don't like stories. They're not real. I don't like things that ain't real.'

She pushed open a door.

'Ah. A chamber,' she said sourly. 'Could even be a bower.'

(114)

In a thicket of rose bushes, the witches find a pretty thirteen year old girl near to a spinning wheel, which Nanny Ogg disposes of by picking it up by its treadle and hefting it through a window. The way that the witches are unfazed by the magical castle is explained by the premise in the introduction about stories repeating themselves, with Nanny Ogg claiming she has seen this story happen before and

heard about it happening events dozens of times⁷. Again, the 'showiness' of the whole story is criticised by Granny: "That's fairy godmothering [...] Always do it *impressively*. Always meddling, always trying to be in control! Hah! Someone got a bit of poison? Send everyone to sleep for a hundred years! Do it the *easy way*" (115).

Subverting the traditional (happy) ending of this fairy tale Granny Weatherwax wakes the castle, but the witches are forced to flee when it seems that the girl recognises her, and a man in fading robes staggers out of a room and seeing her, calls the guards. When they have escaped the castle, Magrat wonders aloud whether they did the right thing —"I'm sure it was a job for a handsome prince"— which leads to leading to a pragmatic reading of the fairytale:

'[...] Cutting your way through a bit of bramble is how you can tell he's going to be a good husband, is it? That's fairy godmotherly thinking, that is! Goin' around inflicting happy endings on people whether they wants them or not eh?'

'There's nothing wrong with happy endings,' said Magrat hotly.

'Listen, happy endings is fine if they *turn out* happy,' said Granny, glaring at the sky. 'But you can't make 'em for other people. Like the only way you could make a happy marriage is by cuttin' their heads off as soon as they say "I do", yes? You can't make happiness . . . '

Granny Weatherwax stared at the distant city.

'All you can do,' she said, 'is make an ending.'

(118)

The logic of "Sleeping Beauty" is questioned by Granny, and rightly so. You never know which kind of prince you're going to get. Will he resemble the genteel prince who wakes the heroine with a kiss in the Grimms' "Little Briar Rose" (KHM50) or will it be the prince who rapes the sleeping beauty while she is still comatose in the older, bawdier version of the tale "*Sole, Luna, e Talia*" in Basile's *Pentamerone* (cf. Warner 220)? This first tale defused by the witches, is one that bears its socialising role quite openly. Jack Zipes suggests that within the classic fairytale is an

⁷ And she has heard of it happening all the time, because it has. "Rural Myth" explains Nanny Ogg, which of course is the equivalent of the Urban myth, which are explained in a footnote early in the novel, "people are wrong about urban myths. Logic and reason say that these are fictional creations, retold again and again by people who are hungry for evidence of weird coincidence, natural justice and so on. They aren't. *They keep on happening all the time, everywhere*, as the stories bounce back and forth across the universe" (WA: 9).

ideological payload that is used to “socialise” children, and make them conform to societal norms. He says of Perrault’s “Sleeping Beauty”:

The princess is actually endowed with the following ‘gifts’ by the fairies: beauty, the temper of an angel, grace, the ability to dance perfectly, the voice of a nightingale, and musicality. In other words, she is bred to become the ideal aristocratic lady. Further, she is expected to be passive and patient for a hundred years until a prince rescues and resuscitates her [...] Such docility and self-abandonment are rewarded in the end when the prince returns to set things right. Perrault then added a verse moral which sings a hymn of praise to patience.

(Zipes 1991 [1983]: 24)

The heroine of this tale is rewarded for her passivity, a state of affairs most conducive to any patriarchal system. This questionable happy ending is subverted by Pratchett, and its dubious logic is challenged. The passive princess is rescued by one of the only types of fairy tale women who can be judged as active and in control of their own destiny: the witch. Witches make their own endings, and looking at most “classical” fairy tales, it is the witches who are in control, and who are usually later punished for their affrontery (among the ‘ogres’ in the Grimms fairy tale collection, Tatar notes three different types: beasts and monsters, social deviants like robbers, and then the most common type of ogre: women (Tatar 1987: 139))

Little Red Riding Hood

The next fairy tale that the witches encounter has also been shown to carry a patriarchal subtext in Jack Zipes’ 1983 study *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*. While navigating a forest, the witches run into a young girl who is wearing a red cloak and carrying a basket to her bed-bound grandmother. The witches, like the readers, recognise the pattern of this story immediately, even if the little girl (and presumably her mother) do not⁸, the little girl is even dubious about the

⁸ Incidentally, the double-nature of this cautionary fairy tale is also parodied by Pratchett. Nanny Ogg, famed for her ‘wanton’ youth, suggests that the red cloak could be a harmless coincidence, as she too had a red cloak when she was fifteen. Denying this possibility, Esme reminds Gytha that she lived next door to her grandmother and didn’t have to worry about wolves. “Except old Sumpkins the lodger” interjects nanny, and later on when they meet the wolf she brings this up again, “Took me right back, seeing a great big hairy slathering thing heading towards me, [...] Did you ever meet old Sumpkins?”. Whether Old Sumpkins was a werewolf, or whether Nanny is just making plain the connection between the predatory wolf and the predatory male that Perrault himself suggests in the rhyme that ends his version of “Little Red Riding Hood” is satisfyingly undecidable.

witches because they might be the wicked witch that her mother *also* warned her about⁹. The distant sound of falling lumber fails to reassure the witches:

'Woodcutters!' said Nanny. 'It's all right if there's woodcutters! One of them rushes in –'

'That's only what children get told,' said Granny, as they sped onwards. 'Anyway, that's no good to the Grandmother, is it? She's already *been* et!'

'I always hated that story,' said Nanny. 'No-one ever cares what happens to poor defenceless old women.'

(WA: 122)

After tricking their way into the grandmother's cottage, Nanny Ogg takes the place of Red-Riding Hood's bewildered grandmother, "Oh blimey, I never realised you had teeth *that* big –" (126), before Granny Weatherwax steps out and clouts the wolf with a cast-iron frying pan, rendering it unconscious. While it is asleep she uses her affinity for "borrowing", or putting her own mind into the mind of other creatures, to find out why it is walking on its hind legs, talking and trying to enter human abodes:

A normal wolf wouldn't enter a cottage, even if it could open the door. Wolves didn't come near humans at all, except if there were a lot of them and it was the end of a very hard winter. And they didn't do that because they were big and bad and wicked, but because they were wolves.

This wolf was trying to be human.

There was probably no cure.

(129)

"Someone" has made the wolf think it is a person, and this inability to be neither one thing nor the other, an outsider amongst both wolves and humans, is the motive force that drives the story. This is one version of the story that has almost as much sympathy for the wolf as the old woman and the little girl. When the woodcutter arrives for the obligatory happy ending, the wolf voluntarily lays its head down on a stump to be executed, after which Granny Weatherwax insists that it is given a full burial. And then after the "happy" ending, Granny talks with the

⁹ This inability of the characters to recognise which tale they are taking part in is, of course, necessary for the plot. Otherwise, all a girl would have to do is wear a blue cloak, and wolves would pose no danger whatsoever. It is also, I suspect, a telling comment on the consolatory nature of the classical fairy tales. The girl, on seeing three women carrying broomsticks, accompanied by a cat, two of whom wearing pointy hats at first suspects witches, but is soon fooled when Magrat says that they are actually flower fairies because that is what she would prefer to believe despite the evidence of her eyes. The grandmother too, is quite easily fooled into thinking that both Nanny Ogg and Granny Weatherwax are flower fairies, and she chastises them for not doing the washing up even after she left a bowl of milk out for them, which goes to show the 'wish fulfilment' nature of belief in fairies which Pratchett goes on to criticise in the next book of the Witches series, *Lords and Ladies*.

woodcutter, and finds out that the wolf has been lurking around the edges of villages for years, but no one had ever tried to talk to it, and that the grandmother was similarly isolated from society because ironically, the villagers mistake her for a witch, “she lives all by herself in the wood right” [...] and . . . she’s got a hook nose and she’s already muttering to herself [...] and she’s got no teeth, right?” suggests the woodcutter (131).

Granny then refabricates the story anew, rearranging it so that some kind of satisfactory ending is given to the old woman who was nearly eaten by a wolf because people were afraid she might be a witch:

‘I bet you can’t wait to be up and repairing her cottage for her, and getting the garden back in good order, and seeing she has fresh milk every day and a good supply of wood, right? In fact I wouldn’t be surprised if you wasn’t generous enough to build her a *new* cottage with a proper well an’ all. Somewhere near the village so she don’t have to live alone, right? You know I can see the future sometimes and I just *know* that’s what’s going to happen, right?’ [...]

‘I knows it can be a dangerous job woodchoppin’. People can get hurt. Trees can accidentally fall on ‘em, or the top of their choppers can suddenly come off and cut their head open.’ The woodcutter shuddered as Granny went on: ‘So what I’m goin’ to do is a little spell to make sure that none of this ‘appens to you. On account of me bein’ so grateful. Because of you helpin’ the old lady. Right? Just nod’

(132-3)

Rather than being the valorous hero who steps in and saves the girl and grandmother, this woodcutter is portrayed as an ignorant yokel, whose stupidity and naïve belief that all old women are witches is what led to the hazardous situation in the first place. The basic premise of this classical fairy tale is taken apart to show the marginalized point of view that underlies and subverts it: why is a bedridden grandmother living alone in woods? Why is it that no one cares what happens to the old woman?

Perrault’s “*Le petit chaperon rouge*” is the first literary version of this tale, and one in which both the grandmother *and* the little girl get eaten. Recent criticism suggests that Perrault’s story was based upon well known oral tales from the south of France and north of Italy in which the young girl is tricked into eating her grandmother’s flesh and drinking her blood, and escapes the (were)wolf through her

own cunning in most versions of the tale, although she does occasionally get eaten (Zipes 1991: 28). Sympathy for the grandmother is hardly evident in these older versions, and it is only in the Grimms' 1812 version "*Rotkäppchen*" that the grandmother makes it through the tale alive, a case where we can see the Grimms making the tale suitable for their bourgeois nineteenth century audience. Bettelheim, unsurprisingly given his belief in the importance of the happy ending, lauds the Grimms' redaction as the one which enabled "Little Red Riding Hood" to become the popular tale it is today (Bettelheim 1976: 167). The Grimm version also significantly desexualises the tale (thereby allowing Bettelheim to pontificate at length on the 'unconscious' ramifications of the text that are on the surface level of Perrault's version). Their protagonist becomes an innocent child rather than a young woman, and Perrault's obvious allegorical level where the wolf is referred to as "a smooth tongued seducer" in the moralistic rhymes that end the tale is sublimated (Perrault in Bacchilega 1997 :56). It is the Grimm version that introduces the saviour figure of the woodcutter, who just happens to be in close proximity to the cottage, and who slices open the wolf's belly to rescue both Red Riding Hood and her Grandmother, an innovation that stresses the inability of women to save themselves which is an obviously patriarchal change when compared to the versions where it is Red Riding Hood's cunning that saves her life. It is nevertheless a constant that the audience's sympathy remains more with Little Red Riding Hood than her grandmother, and that although some versions have granny rescued from the wolf's gullet, she is less likely to survive the ordeal than Red Riding Hood and grandmother being alive is a kind of optional extra in those versions that end happily.

Some feminist critics have argued that the death of the grandmother is essential to the tale. Yvonne Verdier argues that the cannibalism in versions of the tale that predate Perrault's symbolically represents the cycle of life and the girl's incorporation of her grandmother's knowledge, (the grandmother dies and is reborn in the young girl). That the wolf sometimes asks the girl to cook the grandmother's

flesh shows the cultural nature of the consumption and the centrality of domesticity in defining “women” in archaic times. According to Verdier the wolf is “merely a mediator or the representation of an aged woman” (Bacchilega 1997: 56). However, we might think that the knowledge of an old woman who doesn’t know not to open the door to wolves is of dubious value, and in fact the old woman in Pratchett’s version is scrupulous about visitors showing identification before they gain admission.

Witches Abroad’s version of Little Red Riding Hood brings out the hidden voices of the tale. The grandmother becomes important, and the reason for her close brush with death is not due to any mystical notions of the cycle of life, but because of society’s lack of respect for the old and infirm. The wolf here is no sexual predator, but a real predator warped through human interference. The sympathy for the wolf in the novel can also be explained by an insight suggested by Marina Warner:

Perrault’s retelling continues an important aspect: the possibility of confusing wolf and granny. In Perrault’s version, the wolf cannot be clearly distinguished from Red Riding Hood’s beloved grandmother: that is the crucial collapse of roles in his story. (A children’s glove puppet today neatly combine granny and wolf as a Janus-faced head under a single mob cap.)

The wolf is kin to the forest-dwelling witch, or crone; he offers us a male counterpart, a werewolf who swallows up grandmother and then granddaughter. [...] Both dwell in the woods, both need food urgently (one because she is sick, the other because he has not eaten for three days,) and the little girl cannot quite tell them apart.

(Warner 1994a: 181-2)

Pratchett’s version manages to reflect this confusion and the voices that are marginalized in the traditional folktale, specifically the voices of the old and even more unusually, the wolf, become central to his retelling.

Already we can detect a common thread in Pratchett’s use of fairy tale intertexts. They deconstruct the ossified “classical” fairytales in order to question the underlying presumptions that we normally do not pay any attention to when reading the fairy tales. This technique, common in feminist revisions of fairy tales, is utilised for a humanist agenda that values people above stories, in strict opposition to the

way that the “other” fairy-godmother who sees the stories as more important than their people¹⁰.

The fairy godmother

The witches learn from the woodcutters of other odd occurrences in the woods, involving animals acting in human ways. They are told of a family of bears living in a nearby cottage (“Goldilocks and the Three Bears”), and three little pigs (“The Three Little Pigs”), the bear’s neighbours, who were eaten by the big bad wolf but these are only mentioned in passing, to allow an explanation of these fairy tale events:

‘Someone’s been here before us. Passing through. Someone who knows about the power of stories and uses ‘em. And the stories have . . . kind of hung around. They do that, when they get fed . . .’

‘What’d anyone want to do that for?’ said Nanny.

‘*Practice*,’ said Granny.

(WA: 135)

The reader can already guess who is responsible for the crafting of these stories because we are introduced to Lady Lilith de Tempscire before the protagonists proper, as she taunts the dying Desiderata Hollow whose approach to fairy godmothering seems to reflect Granny Weatherwax’s pragmatism more than Magrat’s idealism:

‘[...] Kitchens, mainly. It always seemed to be about kitchens. Balls sometimes, but generally it was kitchens. [...]

‘It’s a big responsibility fairy godmothering. Knowing when to stop, I mean. People whose wishes get granted often don’t turn out to be very nice people. So should you give them what they want – or what they *need*?’

[...]

‘There were two of us. Godmothers go in twos, you know. Me and Lady Lilith? There’s a lot of power in godmothering. It’s like being part of history. Anyway, the girl was born [...] and Lilith wished for her to have beauty and power and marry a prince. Hah! And she’s been working on that ever since. What could I do? You can’t argue with wishes like that. Lilith knows the power of a story. [...] I hear she runs the city now. Changing a whole country just to make a story work!’

(15)

As the witches leave the forest the disagreement between the idealistic Magrat and pragmatic Granny reaches Defcon II when Magrat complains that the only magic

¹⁰ Lilith’s view of the participants of the stories broadly resembles that of structuralist critics. Like Propp, she considers the tales in terms of actants and structure, rather than as a telling of someone’s life, or affecting real people.

they do is headology, glaring at people, tricking them and taking advantage of their gullibility:

'You like people who need help, because when they need help they're weak and helping them makes you feel *strong*! What harm would a bit of magic do?'

'Because it'd never stop at a bit, you stupid girl!'

Magrat backed off, her face flushed. She reached into her bag and pulled out a slim volume which she flourished like a weapon.

'Stupid I may be,' she panted, 'but at least I'm trying to learn things! Do you know the kind of things people can use magic for? Not just illusion and bullying! There's people in this book that can . . . can . . . walk on hot coals, and stick their hands in a fire and not get hurt!'

'Cheap trickery!' said Granny.

'They really can!'

'Impossible. No-one can do that!'

'It shows they can control things! Magic's got to be more than knowing things and manipulating people!'

'Oh? It's all wishing on stars and fairy dust, is it? *Making* people happier?'

'There's got to be some of that! Otherwise what's the good of *anything*?

[...] Haven't you got any romance in your soul?' said Magrat plaintively.

'No,' said Granny. 'I ain't. And stars don't care what you wish and magic don't make things better and no-one doesn't get burned who sticks their hand in a fire. If you want to amount to anything as a witch, Magrat Garlick, you got to learn three things. What's real, what's not real, and what's the difference – '

(137)

There is one final story-based assault on the witches before they reach Genua, which we can anticipate when they first set foot on the yellow brick road that leads to the 'diamond city'. Before long, a farmhouse drops on Nanny Ogg's head, and a group of singing dwarves are gleefully running around the farmhouse that the stunned witch finds herself in until they knock on the door, "Er, [...] is the old witch dead?/'Which old witch?' said Magrat [...] 'Er, [...] can we have her boots? (142)¹¹. It doesn't take long before this incident is attributed to Lady Lilith, who is not very pleased with Nanny Ogg's unwillingness to follow the plot of *The Wizard of Oz*, "Witches ought to be squashed when a farmhouse lands on them [...] All squashed except for their boots sticking out./ Sometimes she despaired. People just didn't seem able to play their parts properly" (146).

In fact, for the first third of the novel, the majority of references to fairy tale are always connected to Lilith, the fairy godmother who controls a city. While the witches circumnavigate the disc, we begin to learn exactly what it is like to live in such a city.

¹¹ Which are red, but in witch fashion have an iron toecap and heavy walking boot practicality rather than the ruby red dancing shoes that feature in the MGM *Wizard of Oz*

Genua was a fairytale city. People smiled and were joyful the livelong day. Especially if they wanted to see *another* livelong day [...] There wasn't a lot of crime in Genua these days. At least, not what would be considered crime elsewhere. Things like theft were easily dealt with and hardly required any kind of judicial process. Far more important, in Lilith's book, were crimes against narrative expectation. People didn't seem to know how they should behave.

Lilith held a mirror up to Life, and chopped all the bits off Life that didn't fit . .
(75)

The contrast between the utopian fairytale world, and the dystopia of enforcing one is harshly highlighted here, in a scene where a toymaker is prosecuted for not whistling, singing, or telling stories to children, a crime which requires him being sent to the dungeons for re-education a fate that had previously befallen an inkeep prosecuted for not being fat and not having a big red face.

Lilith's utopian 'fairy tale kingdom' is reminiscent of nothing else but Walt Disney World, Florida. It is therefore no surprise that the castle from which Lilith governs Genua bears a marked resemblance to Disneyland's "Sleeping Beauty's Castle", "It wasn't a castle like the ones back home, which expressed very clear ideas about inside and outside and were built to keep the two separate. This was, well, a fairytale castle, all icing-sugar battlements and tiny, towering turrets" (WA: 162).

Lilith's Genua is a perfect example of what Jean Baudrillard labels the hyper-real or a third-order simulation. This idea takes a little explaining. Baudrillard defines first-order simulation as a representation of reality, such as a novel, a painting or a map. The theoretical second order simulation blurs the boundaries between reality and representation, Baudrillard gives the example of Borges' "Exactitude of Science" where cartographers create a map so detailed it ends up covering exactly all the territory it charts so that map and reality become indistinguishable. The third order simulation is "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality" (Baudrillard 1983: 2). Baudrillard views Disneyland as a perfect example of this "hyperreality", and we can say the same thing of Genua, a place where "the model precedes the

real”, the model here being the fairy tale stereotypes which Lilith uses to structure the real world (Lane 2000: 86).

Genua itself is a satisfying metaphor for the struggle between reality and hyperreality. The impractical castle¹² that dominates Genua is, like Disney World Florida, improbably situated in the middle of a vast swamp which is as good a symbol for the disconnection between fantasy and reality as can be imagined. It is said of Lilith that “she wants to make it [Genua] a Magic Kingdom, a Happy and Peaceful [*sic*] place”, the “Magic Kingdom” is of course, a registered trademark of Walt Disney World Florida and Disneyland is “the happiest place on earth” (WA: 96).

Lilith’s plan to make a perfect society based upon stories is reminiscent of Walt Disney’s plans for “an Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow” (EPCOT), a utopian community that Disney never saw in his own lifetime that he planned based upon his experiences with Disneyland. This prototype community, a town of 20,000 inhabitants was to “provide the public with a commercial theme park showcasing both technological progress and romanticized 'traditional' American values [...] in which every aspect of life including language was controlled and designed” (Brittain-Catlin 2003). It could be said too of Disney that he was attempting to hold a mirror up to life, and chopping off all the bits that didn’t fit.

Disney’s dream, later realised in the Disney Corporation’s building of the “Celebration” village next door to Walt Disney World in 1996, was to create the perfect American town¹³. The brochure for Celebration plays up to the idea of an imaginary prelapsarian America:

¹² Richard J Lane writes that the Disney castle is a second order simulation “[which] look more real than the real, because [it] embod[ies] all of our childish and romantic notions of what a castle should ideally look like” (Lane 2000: 89). However, he fails to account for the fact that our childish and romantic notions are derived from Disney’s films, so that in fact, the fake castle of “Sleeping Beauty is the *ur*-castle for most children, to which no real fortification can compare.

¹³ It would be anachronistic to suggest that Pratchett was implicitly referring to Celebration, which was not populated until 5 years after the publication of *Witches Abroad*. However, simply reading Walt Disney’s plans for EPCOT reveals as much as you would need to know about the building of this American wonderland and its repressive nature, and more evidence about the sort of regime necessary to make a fairy tale world would be obvious from the rules in place at Disney’s theme parks, where, for

There was once a place where neighbors greeted neighbors [*sic.*] in the quiet of summer twilight ... There is a place that takes you back to that time of innocence ... A place of caramel apples and cotton candy, secret forts and hopscotch on the streets."

(Ross 1999: 18).

Celebration is a pastiche of "Mom's Apple Pie" Americana, with its neo-traditional architecture of clapboard exteriors in fetching pastel shades, along with front porches and picket fences (in PVC of course, because wood rots too quickly in the humid Florida air) just as Lilith's Genua is a pastiche of the world of fairy tales. Celebration is also just as restrictive and conservative as Uncle Walt's vision; to Disney "the residents, like their houses, would constitute a perfectly-maintained tourist attraction. They would be tenants and not landowners, and therefore without voting rights; pensioners and the unemployed were ineligible" (Brittain-Catlin 2003)¹⁴. A similar kind of de-facto segregation is at work in Celebration, where high house prices ensure that the majority of residents are middle class and white. Where Uncle Walt would have had rules to keep out the undesirables like the infirm and unemployed (no beggars or hawkers are to be found on the streets of Genua either), Celebration proves that you can achieve a form of social exclusion simply by allowing residents to "buy" their houses at a high market price which are beyond the reach of the poor or working class. Owning the house does not provide total freedom to do as you wish however; Celebration's image is maintained by a number of by-laws that insist that no more than two people are allowed to sleep in one bedroom, curtains must all be a regulation white, and lawns must be mown regularly (Moran 2003). Moran suggests that these rules are aimed primarily at maintaining property values,

example, it is a sackable offence for the actors playing cartoon characters to remove their cartoon costume heads within sight of the public, even if they are suffering heat exhaustion.

¹⁴ Similarly Celebration has a town hall, because a town-hall is necessary for any pastiche suburban town, even though it has no elected government. The town-hall, appropriately enough is just the headquarters of the Disney Celebration Corporation (the town has no public forums, perhaps a deliberate oversight given the way these could be used for protests and other forms of democratic action). The semiotics of Celebration are fascinating; it has porches to enhance the 'neighbourly' feel, even though the original purpose of the porch in Florida is now outdated – with air conditioning, there is no need to sit outside until the stifling heat within the house becomes bearable. It even has a water tower as you enter that has *no real purpose* and is simply there because water towers are part of the whole expectations of the bygone age. (cf. Kurtz 2000)

but the rules are also a measure of social control that acts to keep the town looking like the American suburbia parodied in *Pleasantville* and *Edward Scissorhands*, and free of over-fecund or bed-swapping reprobates who have a taste for coloured curtains and an aversion to lawn-care. Films like *Pleasantville* show precisely what is missing from the idealistic “picket fence” utopian ideas of an American past: namely that they represent only the white suburbs in an age of segregation¹⁵. Celebration, like Disneyland or Genua is a further example of what Baudrillard calls “the hyperreal”:

What if the nostalgic past Disney is trying to create never actually existed? What if the world was never safe, you only thought it was? What if life was never easier than it is right now? Then the entire town and the images of the past that it evokes are merely simulacra, images referring to what were only images to begin with. Baudrillard writes, “When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a plethora of myths of origin and of signs of reality.” The simulacrum of Celebration appears to us as more real than the real architecture of strip malls and entertainment destinations that replicate throughout American cities: each new city looking more like the next. Celebration is hyperreal because it looks like what a collective memory dictates it should and the myth that surrounds that memory is unwavering.

(Kurtz 2000)

According to Baudrillard, what distinguishes the third order simulation is the way in which reality becomes irrelevant: “Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the “real” country, all of “real America, which *is* Disneyland [...] Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation” (Baudrillard 1983: 25). America is postmodernism incarnate, and Disneyland exists to divert the attention; in the same way that prisons tell citizens that they are free (because they are not in prison), Disneyland tells citizens that rationality holds sway outside its boundaries.

Genua under Lilith is Uncle Walt’s EPCOT: a utopian city that is founded upon exclusion, and which is a third-order simulation based upon an imaginary ideal.

Ironically the high street of Celebration is possibly one of the only places where you

¹⁵ The rise of the suburbs around centres of population (such as the migration of the Italian Americans from New York to New Jersey) was a direct result of the newly prosperous whites attempting to get away from black people.

won't find Disney World memorabilia or a GAP store, because they would be out of place in its conservative setting, substituting instead pastiche nineteenth century stores. No doubt if Lady Lilith were in charge of Celebration the "traditional" stores would be staffed entirely with red faced and flustered shopkeepers.

Cinderella

On reaching Genua, the fairy tale intertexts become focused upon a revision of "Cinderella", with the twist that it is Magrat's job as fairy godmother to prevent her charge from marrying the prince. Magrat finally meets Ella Saturday, nicknamed "Embers" (Emberella) who firmly expresses her wish *not* to marry the prince:

'I'm *not* going to that ball!' she snapped. 'I'm *not* going to marry the prince! Do you understand?' [...] 'He looks slimy. He makes my flesh crawl,' said Embers darkly. 'They say he's got funny eyes. And everyone knows that he does at night!'
[...] 'Well it shouldn't be too much to arrange. I mean, normally it's *marrying* princes that's the hard bit.'
'Not for me it isn't,' said Embers. 'It's all been arranged. My other godmother says I've got to do it. She says it's my destiny.'
'Other godmother?' said Magrat.
'Everyone gets two,' said Ella. 'The good one and the bad one. You *know* that. Which one are you?'
[...] 'Oh the good one,' [Magrat] said. 'Definitely.'
'Funny thing,' said Ella. 'That's just what the other one said, too.'

(WA 178)

Simultaneously to Magrat's conversation with Embers, Nanny Ogg and Granny Weatherwax are discovering the city, and the motivations behind Ella's other fairy godmother. It transpires that Ella is unknowingly the rightful heir of the Baron who once ruled over Genua and died of poisoning one night, leaving behind a suspicious will that granted his estate to the Duc whom, as we have seen earlier, is controlled by Lilith (74-5). By marrying the Duc, Ella would legitimate his rule, little though she knows it. The Witches learn this by talking to Mrs. Gogol, a voodoo lady who lives in the miasmic swamp in a shack-on-legs reminiscent of Baba Yaga's hut, at which point it is also revealed that Lady Lilith is actually Esme's sister, Lily Weatherwax, a fact that Granny has been keeping from the others.

The subversive nature of this anti-Cinderella story can be seen in a few snippets of dialogue between Magrat and Ella:

'What *you* want to do is make a career of your own,' said Magrat encouragingly, to keep her spirits up. 'You want to be your own woman. You want to emancipate yourself,'

'I don't think I want to do that,' said Ella, speaking with caution in case it was a sin to offend a fairy godmother.

'You do really,' said Magrat.

'Do I?'

'Yes.'

'Oh.'

(188)

Though Magrat's proto-feminism is sometimes played up to make her appear a figure of fun, she does have a point. The use of marriage as a happy ending to the fairy tale is often restrictive, and a quick trawl through the pages of any fairy tale book reveals countless women who are auctioned off as a matter of convenience for their parents. The standard fairy tale reward to a hero of 'half my kingdom and my daughter's hand in marriage' hardly seems to take the daughter's feelings into account, and as we saw in the chapter covering *Human Croquet*, the violent actions of the Prince and Cinderella's father seem to be haranguing the poor girl into marriage. Marriage, *Witches Abroad* shows us, is more than just a happy ending, and in fact works as part of a socio-political power network. This fact is often lost upon modern western readers for whom arranged marriage is a relic, but as Marina Warner points out, concern about arranged marriage is at the root of many popular fairytales, most obviously in fairytales like *Beauty and the Beast* where the heroine is given over by the father to another man (Warner 1994a: 273-297).

Ella is forced to do all the housework in a run-down house, and is zealously guarded by two beautiful sisters who are actually snakes transformed into human form by Lilith's magic. The witches go about wrecking Lilith's plot in typical down-to-earth style by destroying the accoutrements that would make Ella stand out at the ball. Nanny Ogg gets the coachmen who were to drive Ella to the ball dead-drunk, Magrat does a hatchet-job on the beautiful dress that Lilith has given Ella to wear and uses her wand to turn the ornate coach to take Ella to the ball into a pumpkin before Granny turns the horses free, leaving Lily with "No dress, no footmen, no horses and no coach [...] I'd like to see *her* get out of *that* one. Stories? Hah!" (201). But

Granny Weatherwax has forgotten about the other godmother who, true to her role in the fairy tale, transforms Ella's raggedy dress into a spectacular one, turns the pumpkin *back* into a coach and replaces the coachmen and horses with mice and rats (after turning the original coachmen into beetles and treading on them).

The witches manage to intercept the coach before it reaches the palace by transforming Greebo, Nanny Ogg's vicious tomcat, into human shape¹⁶. Innate fear of a cat, even in human form stops the rat/horses dead in their tracks, and the witches pack Ella off to Mrs Gogol's shack in the swamp and substitute the similarly sized Magrat to show up at the masque in the fancy dress and the glass slippers (with the help of a two pairs of woolly socks to make them fit).

While Magrat acts the courtier, her confidence bolstered by a spell placed on her by Granny Weatherwax that will last until the clock strikes midnight, Granny and Nanny snoop around the palace. For a brief moment there is the suspicion that the Duc might be a Bluebeard figure when, in his green bedroom, the Witches discover a round wooden portal in place of a bed:

They walked around it. Flies rose up and hummed away.

'I'm thinking of a story,' said Granny.

'Me too,' said Nanny Ogg, her tone slightly shriller than usual. 'There was this girl who married this man and he said you can go anywhere you like in the palace but you mustn't open *that* door and she did and she found he'd murdered all his other . . .'

Her voice trailed off [...]

'Put it like this,' said Nanny, trying to be reasonable against all odds. 'What could we possibly find under there that's worse than we could imagine?'

They each took a handle.

(WA: 222)

The witches discover the Duc's secret and hurry off to the ball to try and make sure that the story the Duc wants to happen does not take place. However, the story

¹⁶ This confirms what we saw earlier on the paddleboat, that witches always cheat. Granny Weatherwax doesn't hold with transforming people into other things, because it is a lot easier to leave someone human but make them someone *think* that they're a frog which has the bonus of providing amusement to passers by. Unlike Lilith's transformations however, this is of a domesticated animal (marginally in Greebo's case), and though for "wolves pigs and bears, thinking that they're human is a tragedy [...] [f]or a cat it's an experience" (220). Or, as Nanny Ogg like all cat lovers insists "Greebo's nearly human anyway" (208). This refusal to follow her own advice is also explained by Nanny Ogg, "when Esme uses words like "Everyone" and "No-one" she doesn't include herself" (280).

seems to have assimilated the witches and their interference into its structure¹⁷.

Granny finds the future disturbingly easy to predict because the usual panoply of choices that can be made in any situation are narrowed down to the story, a “three dimensional cliché”: “‘it’s all got to happen,’ complains Granny, “[...] everything. The kiss, the clock striking midnight, her running out and losing the glass slipper, everything.’ [...] ‘Y’know.’ Said Nanny Ogg. ‘Clocks don’t strike midnight. Seems to me they just strike twelve’” (233-4).

In an effort to prevent the “happy ending”, the witches sabotage the clock, resulting in premature midnight, and Magrat, returning to her old self, realises what she is dancing with and escapes the ball, leaving a glass slipper behind her and taking the other one off so that she can run faster. As the Duc theatrically holds the abandoned slipper up to the light, Granny seizes upon a weak link in the story, steps forward and takes the shoe from the Duc’s hands then drops it on the floor where it smashes into a thousand pieces.

Granny’s overt intervention at the ball creates the first showdown between herself and Lily who steps in to save the story. Taunting a triumphant Granny with the fact that shoes come in pairs, she takes the other slipper forcefully from Magrat who has been intercepted by the snake/sisters before she could leave the palace, telling the Duc, “It’ll fit her”.

In a parody of the traditional search for a bride sequence that ends “Cinderella”, the shoe is forced onto Magrat’s foot and the Duc declares that it does indeed fit but, as a voice at the back of the crowd observes, anything would fit if you were allowed to put on two pairs of hairy socks first. Lilith realises that she has the wrong girl, but proclaims “it doesn’t matter, Esme, because it *is* the right slipper. So all we have to do is find the girl whose foot it fits –” (244).

¹⁷ As illustrated by Lilith’s easy reversal of the witches’ wrecking tactics into a satisfactory crisis solved magically by the fairy godmother.

Once again, the Witches step in to the story and subvert its logic, as Nanny Ogg pushes the way to the front of the crowd and puts on the glass slipper, which fits perfectly¹⁸:

'See? You could have wasted the whole day.'
'Especially because there must be hundreds of five-and-a-half [...] -narrow fit wearers in a city of this size,' Granny went on. 'Unless of course, you happened to sort of go to the right house at the start. If you had, you know, a lucky guess?'
'But that'd be *cheatin'*,' said Nanny.

(245)

The search motif is comically undermined here, reminding us of the convenience with which the prince finds Cinderella. Supposedly, the shoe will only fit the true bride, but, in a defamiliarising, somehow more *realistic* milieu, do we really believe that the Prince simply allows any girl of marriageable age to try on the shoe, or do the pretty ones get the first try? By seizing the initiative, Nanny Ogg takes Cinderella's place (without having to usurp her like the sisters do in the Grimm version, by chopping off their toes or heels¹⁹). It also gives a comedic twist to psychoanalytical readings of the tale²⁰, like Bettelheim's, where the shoe represents a vagina:

¹⁹ The bleeding feet of the false brides is read by Bettelheim in terms of menstruation, which is a disturbing reading when you consider what this implies, namely, that Cinderella is the true bride because she has not menstruated, "[Cinderella] does not bleed from any part of her body" and "she is not aggressive in her sexuality but waits patiently to be chosen. But once she is chosen, she is not at all reluctant" (Bettelheim 1976: 270). There seems to be some confusion over menstruation and sexual unchasteness (the other sisters are "sexually aggressive" and their feet bleed, unlike Cinderella's), and earlier Bettelheim suggests the glass slipper is a symbol for Cinderella's virginity (264). Ultimately, what arises is a problematic reading of the Grimms' version of "Cinderella", "*Aschenputtel*" in order to make it fit Freud's utter failure to convincingly account for the female sexuality in his theory of the Oedipal complex, but due to the concomitant problems of proving this, he seems to suggest Cinderella is all about getting the girl who is too young to successfully procreate. Historically, this might be an insightful reading of "Cinderella", especially given the importance of the female's virginity in the patriarchal system of primogeniture, but Bettelheim ignores any historic readings of the tale in order to push his theory of the magical healing properties of the fairy tale.

²⁰ Pratchett is aware of the psychoanalytic readings of fairy tale symbolism, and these are brought up at several points. "All this for one prick [...]" Granny Weatherwax says about the enchanted castle, bringing up the traditional reading of the spindle in "Sleeping Beauty" before she goes on to say "Gytha [...] I can *feel* you grinning. You can save the tu'penny-ha'penny psychology for them as wants it" (115).

'We know how this bit goes, see. The Prince goes all round the city with the slipper, trying to find the girl whose foot fits. That's what you was plannin' So I can save you a bit of trouble, how about it?'
There was a flicker of uncertainty in Lily's expression.
'A *girl*,' she said, 'of *marriageable* age.'
'No problem there,' said Nanny cheerfully.

(245)

But even though Nanny Ogg is a self-proclaimed "disgusting old baggage", she proclaims that she draws the line at sleeping in the same bed as the Duc because the Duc isn't Bluebeard at all, he a frog that Lilith has transformed into the shape of an attractive prince. Lilith is running two fairytales at the same time, which is another reason why the ball is important: the kiss puts the seal on the Duc's human form in addition to rounding off the Cinderella story²¹.

All this is to no avail, however, as Lily uses her (showy) magic to freeze everyone in the hall before the story spins further out of control, and dismisses the interventions made by the witches as irrelevant, "Whoever will remember who was at the ball? They'll just remember the flight and the slipper and the happy ending" (246). She imprisons the witches in the dungeon, although she expects them to escape because she is the "good" one and the good godmother wouldn't harm her prisoners. *How* the witches escape is another riff on the Cinderella hypotext.

Cinderella, as we saw in chapter two is aided by the spirit of her dead mother in some versions of the tale. Emberella's mother is still alive and kicking in the person of Erzulie Gogol, consort of the Baron that ruled over Genua. It is Emberella's dead father, reanimated as a zombie by Mrs. Gogol's voodoo, who acts to secure her rightful inheritance. Where in "Aschenputtel" the dead mother's benign influence is signalled by the magic birds who give the girl her dress amongst other things, Mrs Gogol's bird of choice is a large black rooster, Legba²² which leads Emberella to her mother's shack in the swamp and signals the approach of Baron Saturday who arrives as the incarnation of carnival to rescue the witches from the dungeon.

²² Legba is the name of the voodoo spirit of the cross-roads, "where the Above meets the Below. He is "on both sides of the mirror". He leans on a stick, and another of his symbols is the macoutte (straw sack). Chickens are sacrificed to him by twisting their neck till they are dead." (Breebart 2002)

The entrance of Baron Saturday at the peak of the carnival outside the palace is the force that finally undoes Lilith's plots. Mrs Gogol's magic has made Baron Saturday more than just an undead ex-lover, she has infused him with the essence of the swamp, he has become the avatar of "what you have to have first, before you get the swamp" (254). Lily's magic, which was powerful enough to keep Mrs Gogol isolated in the swamp away from her child cannot affect him, and in trying to destroy the Baron with her magic she ends the enchantment holding the Duc in human shape before that story is ended when the Baron puts his foot down (on the Duc). Lilith is forced to flee and this ends the Cinderella intertext, but not the story. First there must be two showdowns between witches that reveal the underlying motivation of Pratchett's use of fairytales.

The magic of Myth and Mirrors

In explaining the motivations that led her to take control of Genua, Lilith places herself firmly in the tradition of utopians like Disney:

'You see this country? It's all swamps and fogs. There's no *direction*. But I can make this a great city. Not a sprawling place like Ankh Morpork, but a place that works.'

'The girl doesn't want to marry a frog.'

'What will that matter in a hundred years' time?'

'It matters now.'

(247)

Progress, as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer noted in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is important story, or what Lyotard would call a "grand narrative", the myth that "our own civilized reason[has] the true power to improve the living and working condition of all human beings" (Zipes 1994: 4). Or, as Granny Weatherwax puts it "Progress just means bad things happen faster" (WA: 250). Where Lily Weatherwax tries to make the world a better place by making it conform to fairy tales, Esme Weatherwax suggests a more pragmatic route:

'Mind you,' said Magrat, 'I don't like swamps. If it wasn't for the frog and everything, I'd see Lily's point.

'Then you're nothing but a daft godmother,' snapped Granny [...] 'You can't go around building a better world for people. Only people can build a better world for people. Otherwise it's just a cage. Besides, you don't build a better world by choppin' heads off and giving decent girls away to frogs.'

(250)

Witches Abroad then, can be read as a critique of the hyper-real²³. The cost of living in a fairy tale world is clearly spelled out in terms of repression and exclusion:

'It's so spotless,' said Magrat. 'Makes you wish you were a better person, really.'

[...] 'Amazing, really, needing all these guards in a city where people are so clean and quiet,' said Magrat.

'Perhaps there's so much niceness to be spread around they need a lot of people to do it,' said Nanny Ogg.

(154)

Progress is not the only myth that Lilith believes in. Lilith's rule of Genua can be seen as an example of how fairy tale has become myth. Myth, according to Roland Barthes, is "frozen speech":

Myth consists in overturning culture into nature or, at least, the social, the cultural, the ideological, the historical into the 'natural'. What is nothing but a product of class division and its moral, cultural and aesthetic consequences is presented (stated) as being a 'matter of course'; under the effect of mythical inversion, the quite contingent foundations of the utterance become Common Sense, Right Reason, the Norm, General Opinion, in short the *doxa* (which is the secular figure of the origin.)

(Barthes 1972: 165)

The fairy tales intertextually incorporated into *Witches Abroad* are all the "classical" fairy tales, recognisable to contemporary audiences: "Little Red Riding Hood", "Sleeping Beauty", "Cinderella", "The Frog Prince". The obvious benefit of these fairytale intertexts is that the primary audience recognises them and therefore get the jokes that arise from their subversion. Utilising unknown or obscure intertexts would inevitably reduce the effectiveness of their humorous payload. Perhaps another reason for the prominence of the "classic" fairytales is hinted at in the long quotation from the opening above, where the narrator speaks of stories evolving, "The weakest have died and the strongest have survived and they have grown fat on

²³ I use the term hyper-real here to avoid confusion over terms, especially the term 'postmodern', which can refer to a type of art that subverts a way of life dominated by image and consumer-capitalism or can refer to that way of life and hence can be either a positive or pejorative term.

the retelling" (1996: 8-9), he says, a fact that is self evident when one thinks about the vast diversity of collected folktales, but the relative obscurity of all but a few popular fairy tales. Evolution does not happen in a vacuum; the law of natural selection tells us that adaptation to environment is the key to evolutionary success, and the "classic" fairy tales have all adapted successfully to the demands of an bourgeois capitalist world, surviving the transition from rural and oral culture to and industrial and written one.

As Jack Zipes recognises, the success and perpetual popularity of these tales is due to their becoming myth. They carry with them the societal norms that we wish children to conform to, as though these standards were obvious and eternal, rather than simply reflecting the ideologies that are the construct of a particular historically contingent ruling class:

All the tools of modern industrial society (the printing press, the radio, the camera, the film, the record, the videocassette) have made their mark on the fairy tale to make it classical ultimately in the name of the bourgeoisie which refuses to be named, denies involvement; for the fairy tale must appear harmless, natural, eternal, ahistorical, therapeutic.

(Zipes 1994: 7)

The analysis of the classical fairy tales used in *Witches Abroad* above shows that the values taught by these fairy tales are directed at making their audience view the world in a certain way. Sleeping Beauty is rewarded for her passivity, Red Riding Hood is punished for her disobedience, and, as Maria Tatar notes in *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, women who take on an active role are demonised and sometimes compelled to "put on [the] red-hot shoes and dance the night away" (WA:270)²⁴. We have seen that Granny Weatherwax does not hold with this function, and disapproves of the way that stories predetermine people and make them less than human, and her deconstruction of the stories in each case acts as an intertextual revision which, by giving the narrative point of view to someone typically

²⁴ This comment is from Lily who refuses to admit that she is beaten *because* she used stories. The red hot shoes refers to the ending of *Snow White* that the Grimms used in their later editions of the book, where the wicked queen is forced to attend the marriage, and then compelled to wear red hot shoes as punishment for her wrongs, and dances to her death.

excluded from the fairy tale, exposes and subverts the underlying premises of fairytales which we usually ignore.

Esme's distrust of stories can also be seen as a critique of the hyperreal.

Pratchett makes the link between the hyperreal in our world and his fantasy world very early in the novel when he writes:

All across the multiverse there are backward tribes* who distrust mirrors and images because, they say, they steal a bit of a person's soul and there's only so much of a person to go around. And the people who wear more clothes say this is just superstition, despite the fact that other people who spend their lives appearing in images of one sort or another seem to develop a thin quality. It's put down to over-work and, tellingly, over-exposure instead.

Just superstition. But a superstition doesn't have to be wrong.

* Considered backward, that is, by people who wear more clothes than they do.

(WA: 10 *- represents a footnote in the original text)

In what Guy Debord memorably called the “society of the spectacle”, we instantly recognise that Pratchett is referring to what we now call “celebrities”, about whom so many of the stories we find in daily publications such as tabloid newspapers revolve. The existence of gossip columns highlight the desire for “stories”, just as the phenomenon of reality TV, and its cast of people trying to “be *someone*” helps us understand Debord’s assertion that “The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail prevents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. All that was once directly lived has become mere representation” (Debord reprinted in Lane 2000: 99).

Postmodern societies are characterised by the abundance of stories that surround their subjects and that are to be found in all forms of the mass media. The fairy godmothers of our society are the ones that convert the chaos of events into stories, people in positions of power who use the formula of stories to make the public think about events in ‘mythical’ ways: spin-doctors, PR consultants and editors, all of whom work at the behest of the political elite and the ultra-rich. The formulaic coverage of the ‘fairy tale wedding’ or the ‘political scandal’, not to mention wars, shows precisely how people can become dehumanised by media portrayal that

puts them firmly in a 'role' in a story whether they like it or not. We understand people in terms of their roles in stories, and those in power attempt to manipulate those stories to their own ends²⁵. *Witches Abroad* highlights that stories *especially* ones that seem innocuous like fairy tales, are actually powerful tools in manipulating the way that people understand the world and their place in it. Lilith, with her command of stories and her ability to view everything that is happening in the world creates a dys/utopia reminiscent of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

One of the reasons for this comparison between Lilith and Orwell's "Big Brother" is due to the way that Lilith uses mirrors²⁶. At the top of one of the castle's towers is an octagon of mirrors that acts as a magical panopticon, allowing her to see events from the perspective of any reflection, whether it be a glint on the surface of water or a silvered mirror. Inhabitants of Genua are kept in line by the possibility that they are being observed (Lilith installs lots of mirrors in the dungeon²⁷), and so conformity is the result of the citizens assuming that they are being watched at all times. Mrs Pleasant, the palace cook, for example makes sure that she stays plump and keeps her arms covered with flour so that she *looks* the storybook cook, and on first meeting Nanny Ogg ushers her away from the kitchen, with the explanation that the walls have ears (169). Not only is Genua a hyper-real city, it is also one that is structured, like all modern cities on the panopticon, the device that Foucault criticised in *Discipline and Punish* as a structuralist model of how power operates in society.

²⁵ These formulaic stories are not only fairy tales, but also other genres that have become mythical such as the western. George W Bush's cowboy rhetoric can be seen as an attempt to convert complicated political struggles into the language of the western, where the good guys can be identified by the colour of their hat. Change the story and the heroic CIA-funded mujahadin freedom fighters of yore, defending their homeland against the evil Soviet empire become (quite literally in the case of Osama Bin Laden) the repressive Taliban/ Al Qaeda²⁵ of today

²⁶ Of course, a mirror in a text leads to a Lacanian reading, which is the tack that Sayer follows in her analysis of the novel. Her reading, like most psychoanalytical criticism, elides the political and historical meaning from the novel however, and she even suggests that Granny Weatherwax restores patriarchy (Sayer 2000: 97), a reading that ignores the subversive way that Granny deconstructs the fairy tales.

²⁷ The re-educational dungeon would be the Discworld equivalent of Room 101. Never has being taught how to whistle sounded more sinister.

Lilith's great power is attributed to this mirror magic – at several points in the novel the Lancre witches are stunned by the feats that Lilith is capable of, from permanent transformation of snakes into beautiful women, to the ability to freeze time. The magic mirror is more traditionally associated with “Snow White”, where the witch-queen is, like Lilith, excessively worried about outward appearances. But this is not only a literal mirror, but also a metaphor for all forms of representation. The mirror is a traditional metaphor for art and the idea that art “holds a mirror to life” is a well known cliché²⁸. Lilith's command of the mirror is such though, that she can make the boundaries between reality and fiction break down, so that the reality begins obeying the rules of the stories:

[T]he *stories* . . . to *ride* on stories . . . to borrow the strength of them . . . the *comfort* of them . . . to be in the hidden centre of them . . . Can you understand that? The sheer pleasure of seeing the patterns repeat themselves?

(273)

'What about stories?' said Magrat.

'Lily is using them,' said Granny. '[...] Look, she don't want your Ella to marry that Duc man just because of politics or something. That's just an . . . explanation. 'S not a *reason*. She wants the girl to marry the prince because that's what the story demands.'

'What's in it for her?' said Nanny.

'In the middle of 'em all, the fairy godmother or the wicked witch . . . you remember? That's where Lily is putting herself . . . like [...] Remember that time last year when the circus thing came to Lancre? [...] there was that man in the middle, you remember. With the moustache and big hat?'

'Him? But he didn't do anything much,' said Nanny [...]

'That's why he was the most important one there,' said Granny. 'It was the things going on around him that made him important.'

'What's Lily feeding the stories?' said Magrat.

'People,' said Granny. She frowned.

'Stories!' she said. 'Well, we'll have to see about that . . . '

(194)

Lily's power is the power of representation. Toads become princes just because she says so. She feeds people to the stories and derives power in return,

²⁸ As Nanny Ogg says of the theatre in *Wyrd Sisters*: “It's art, [...] It wossname, holds a mirror up to life.” (Pratchett 1997: 213), an allusion to *Hamlet* where the Danish prince coaches the actors “to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.” III.ii.20-3

much like a modern day spin-doctor (194)²⁹. Explaining Granny Weatherwax's hatred of stories, the narrator explains "She hated everything that predestined people, that fooled them, that made them slightly less than human." (239)

There is ultimately an opposition set up between Lily Weatherwax, who represents everything unreal (and hyper-real), and Esme who, as we saw above suggested that "If you want to amount to anything as a witch [...] you got to learn three things. What's real, what's not real, and what's the difference —"(137). The opposition is further spelt out when Lilith contemplates the idea of the anti-godmother, someone who instead of constructing stories, goes around deconstructing them:

[Lilith] wondered whether there was such a thing as the *opposite* of a fairy godmother. Most things had their opposite, after all. If so, she wouldn't be a *bad* fairy godmother, because that's just a good fairy godmother seen from another viewpoint.

The opposite would be someone who was poison to stories and, thought Lilith, quite the most evil creature in the world.

(146)

This function of the two women "mirroring" one another is accentuated by the fact that physically they are almost identical, "Give or take the odd laughter line and wrinkle, [Lily] was Granny Weatherwax to the life" (231). The first time Mrs Gogol appears in the novel, she says "'Even mirrors have their reflection. We got to fight mirrors with mirrors.' She glared up through the trees to a slim white tower in the distance. 'We've got to find her [Lilith's] reflection' suggesting that Mrs Gogol too, is implicated on bringing Granny to Genua (10). Where Granny wears black, Lily wears white, and in some respects their philosophies are strikingly similar; Lily says she

²⁹ Lilith's power also falters when she becomes a visible part of the story rather than working it from behind the scenes. "That's how it works when you turn the world into stories [...] You shouldn't turn the world into stories [...] but if you *do*, then you've got to know when the story ends" (270). At the time of writing, I cannot help thinking of Alistair Campbell, who, like the Wizard of Oz, lost his position of power when he became part of the story, and not the controller of it. This comparison to the propagandist is also merited by a phrase used by Lilith when she is trying to get the witches to leave, "It's a city far away of which you know little" which echoes Neville Chamberlain's famous speech explaining Britain's refusal to intervene when Nazi Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, "How horrible, fantastic, incredible, it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing". The implications to anyone who recognises that speech are obvious.

killed the Baron because “he didn’t show any respect. If you’ve got no respect, you’ve got nothing”, a phrase previously uttered by Granny in a different context (247). It is for this reason that the long period of travel between Lancre and Genua is so important: it allows us to see exactly how the two witches are opposites in their ideas about magic and wish fulfilment. Where Lily is a utopian and uses her powers freely, Esme is a pragmatist who scarcely uses her magic at all. Where Lily ignores the minute details in favour of the bigger picture, Esme is a humanist who values people more than stories. Rather than using magic to give people what they think they want, Granny’s magic “gives people what they know they really need, not what we think they ought to want” (260).

This is an ironic state of affairs, given the way in which fantasy as a genre is usually critically dismissed for being “escapist”. Eric Rabkin suggested that fantasy and science fiction are similar to the fairy tale because of the importance of wish-fulfilment in those genres, but this is a novel about why wish-fulfilment is a bad thing (Rabkin 1980). *Witches Abroad* not only breaks down the classical fairy tales so that we can see the unpleasant assumptions that underlie them, but also criticises stories (myths) that cause people to view the world inaccurately.

The return of the real

Lilith is finally vanquished after a series of show-downs, the first of which is the appearance of Baron Saturday in the castle. The Lancre witches have done their bit by deconstructing the story-structures that Lily has so carefully plotted, but the intervention of the Baron demonstrates the way that the carnivalesque can challenge authority.

Bakhtin’s concept of carnival comes about in his analysis of Rabelais where he claims that critics have misunderstood and misread Rabelais’s humour because they do not fully understand how it is linked to a kind of folk humour based upon the medieval festivals where fools were crowned as kings, and the whole world enters a period of topsy turvy subversion. Carnival is not a play to put on to amuse an

audience, "while carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it ...it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal (Bakhtin 1984: 7)

Andrew Butler suggests that one of Bakhtin's comments on Rabelais as a literary producer of the carnivalesque could equally be applied to Pratchett:

[His] images have a certain undestroyable non-official nature. No dogma, no authoritarianism, no narrow-minded seriousness can exist with [these] images; these images are opposed to all that is finished and polished, to all pomposity, to every ready-made solution in the sphere of thought and world outlook'.

(Bakhtin in Butler 2000: 47)

It has already been mentioned that Genua resembles New Orleans, and one of the things that the two share, apart from voodoo 'gators and gumbo, is the importance of carnival:

All year the people of Genua were nice and quiet. But history has always allowed the downtrodden one night somewhere in any calendar to restore temporarily the balance of the world. It might be called the Feast of Fools, or the King of the Bean. Or even Samedi Nuit Mort, when even those with the most taxing and responsible of duties can kick back and have fun.

(WA: 195)

Desiderata's notes make plain the importance of Carnival in undermining the strictures of Lilith's utopia:

'But no-one can stop Mardi Gras [...] If anything can be done it be on Samedi Nuit Morte, the last night of carnivale, the night halfway between the Living and the Dead, when magic flows in the streets. If L.. is vulnerable it is then, for carnivale is everything she hates . . . '

(97)

The Baron enters the palace as the spirit of carnival, appropriate given the fact that he is based upon the real voodoo spirit, Baron Samedi. Baron Samedi (French for Saturday) is a trickster figure, typically invoked as part of the Mardi Gras festival, and Baron Saturday, when he enters the palace is wearing the traditional garb of Baron Samedi: the silver tipped cane, and the top hat. Dancing, twirling and leaping across the room, accompanied by the pounding of drums Lilith's magic is unable to stop him because at that point he is, explains Granny Weatherwax, the swamp, the river and the whole world (258).

This explanation only makes sense when we consider what the swamp represents, and we need only look a few pages earlier to guess what that is: "Lily threw up her hands. 'What do you want, then? It's your choice. There's me . . . or there's that woman in the swamp. Light or dark. Fog or sunshine. Dark chaos or happy endings" (247). The swamp, like the carnival, represents chaos. Miasmic, it resists attempts to structure it, and though you might build Walt Disney World on it, some day the swamp will come back and swallow whatever structures have been superimposed upon it.

Witches Abroad can be seen as a carnivalesque work on several levels, above and beyond the actual carnival it depicts. Firstly, Pratchett, as his popularity attests is perhaps the nearest we have to Bakhtin's *written* folk humour (Butler 2000: 47). Parody, the literary device that characterises Pratchett's work, is a carnivalesque device (Vice 1997: 152) and as we have seen, the Witches go about comically undermining those fairy tales that are examples of frozen speech. Though this does not seem to be the parody of "sacred texts" that Bakhtin talks about when he gives examples of monks parodying holy texts such as sermons and treatises, Jack Zipes highlights that even the classical myths are no longer 'Myths' in the strictest sense (that is, as stories that we believe in as explanations to the state of the world – we no longer believe that the sun is towed by a cart and horses, for example). The reason that the parody of sacred texts is important for carnival is because these texts are mythicized and authoritative, and seem natural and eternal. Therefore, the fairy tale *is* a form of sacred text due to the way it has become myth, and therefore "dehistoricized [and] depoliticised to represent and maintain the hegemonic interests of the bourgeoisie. Classical myths and fairy tales are contemporary myths that pervade our daily lives in the manner described by Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*" (Zipes 1994: 6). The fairy tale, originally an oral genre but ossified into a mythical structure is subjected to carnival laughter, which works to revise and subvert it. As Zipes comments, "Only innovative fairy tales are antimythical, resist the tide of

mythicization, comment on the fairy tale as myth" (1994: 5-6). Vice writes that "Carnival is the opposite of a time of terror or purges" which is why Lilith, totalitarian fairy land despot, loathes it, "it was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed" (Vice 1997: 153).

Another carnivalesque feature is personified by Baron Samedi. Vice writes that to Bakhtin, "Death and renewal are central to carnival, represented most often by the carnival act of 'the *mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king*'" (Vice 1997: 152 author's emphasis). Baron Samedi is the gatekeeper of death in Voodoo lore, and Baron Saturday as an undead man granted great power on this, the last night of his un-life (Death comes to claim him after he restores Ella to the throne) is instrumental in handing power over to Ella at the peak of the Carnival, which is itself a renewal for the city.

After forcing Lily to retreat through the power of carnival Mrs Gogol then seems to step in, taking Lilith's place as the power behind the throne, with her daughter as the ruler. This is one of the criticisms of the carnivalesque: the world is turned topsy turvy for a brief while, and then, when the chaos ends, retains its usual shape, almost as though carnival were a safety valve where the oppressed can 'blow off steam' for a limited period, but that period of 'subversion' in fact exists simply to make sure the system is able to cope with its injustices.

Granny Weatherwax intervenes at this point so as to 'end' the cyclical story, where Mrs Gogol and Ella would simply replace Lily and the Duc. "This aint right, you know" she complains:

'She's the one who ought to rule, fair enough. And you used magic to help her this far, and that's all right. But it stops right here. It's up to her what happens next. You can't make things right by magic. You can only stop making them wrong'

(260)

This leads to a show-down between the witch and the voodoo priestess, with the stake set by Granny Weatherwax, "No more magic in the affairs of Genua [...] No

more stories. No more godmothers. Just people deciding for themselves. For good or bad. Right or Wrong. [...] And you leave Lily Weatherwax to me" (261).

Mrs Gogol uses the voodoo doll she created to represent Lilith against Granny Weatherwax to good effect, but "headology" wins out over magic, as Granny thrusts her own arm into a flame³⁰, which causes the voodoo doll to catch light and burn, but leaves her own arm unscathed. Headology here is a form of hyper-critical thinking: if one really *believes* that by controlling a mannequin one has the power to harm a person, then sure enough, harm befalling the person should logically be reflected back on the mannequin. After her defeat, Mrs Gogol vows not to interfere in the affairs of state, even denying her kinship when asked by Ella they know each other. But we are left in little doubt that Ella will be a preferable ruler to Lilith, even if she has had little training for becoming a monarch, because the one wish that Ella makes in the presence of Magrat is to go to the carnival: "that's what Genua ought to be" she says, "Not a few people dancing in palaces, but everyone dancing in the streets" (191). On being declared absolute ruler, the first thing she does is end the ball to go and dance in the carnival, which is what she has always wanted to do, adding that it's not compulsory for anyone else to do the same. Cynically, Pratchett adds, "The nobles of Genua had enough experience to know what it means when a ruler says something is not compulsory./ Within minutes the ball was empty, except for three figures [Baron Saturday, Mrs Gogol and Death]" (266).

This is the end of the main Cinderella intertext, "The wicked witch is defeated, the ragged princess comes into her own, the kingdom is restored. Happy days are here again. Happy ever after. Which means that life stops here" (267). All that remains is to find out what becomes of Lilith, and Lilith's fate highlights the opposition between herself and Granny Weatherwax. A rooftop showdown takes place, where, to stop Nanny Ogg and Magrat becoming targets for Lily, Granny Weatherwax fakes

³⁰ Again, the point of witches not playing by their own rules is proved, as pages before it is Granny who says that "noone who puts their arm into fire is not burned".

her own death by leaping off the tower. But, she returns minutes later, to give Lilith 'a hiding', not with magic or headology, but "with skin". On her return however, Granny accidentally smashes one of the mirrors in Lily's panopticon, which causes Lily to be sucked into a world of mirrors:

Lily Weatherwax looked out at the multi-layered, silvery world.
'Where am I?'
INSIDE THE MIRROR.
'Am I dead?'
THE ANSWER TO THAT, said Death, IS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN NO
AND YES.
Lily turned, and a billion figures turned with her.
'When can I get out?'
WHEN YOU FIND THE ONE THAT'S REAL.
Lily Weatherwax ran on through the endless reflections.
(278)

This is a satisfying conclusion, which ties in with Pratchett's critique of the hyperreal. Ultimately, Lily fails the test because she cannot differentiate between the reflection (or representation) and reality. Esme also ends up in the looking glass world because she tried, unsuccessfully, to save her sister from being swallowed by the mirrors. A sequence occurs that is almost identical to that above. Granny Weatherwax is offered the same decision, with one major difference: instead of running through the infinite reflections, she asks a further question:

'Is this a trick question?'
NO
Granny looked down at herself.
'This one,' she said.
(281)

Esme, grounded in the real, knows enough to recognise that *she* is the only real one. This choice is foreshadowed at multiple junctures during the book, with comments like "Magrat might always be trying to find herself, but Granny didn't even understand the idea of the search" (128). Where Magrat is very much a (post)modern girl, with her self-help books and progressive liberal ideas, Esme is rooted in a more traditional, humanist idea of the self. Again, this is a criticism of Lilith's "spectacular" understanding of the world. Explaining the influence of Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* on the work of Baudrillard, Richard Lane points out "In the

privileging of the human sense of sight, in the society of the spectacle, Debord argues that there is a distancing from the real world accessed most immediately through touch" (Lane 2000: 99). Granny's resistance to the hyper-real comes from being in touch with her physical existence, and it is for this reason that her threat to teach Lilith a lesson with "skin" rather than magic, is significant.

The happy ending of *Witches Abroad* leaves Emberella as ruler of Genua, and after Magrat sees what wishing, and granting wishes, leads to, sees Magrat dispense of the magic wand by throwing it into a river where it passes out of history. The witches head back to Lancre.

Conclusion

Witches Abroad demonstrates that fantasy literature can reflect the concerns of society just as succinctly as realist (or magic realist) literature: the reign of the hyper-real and way that fairy tales can become repressive myths that, like the panopticon, are part of a society's power structures, are all successfully exhibited by Pratchett in this novel.

If the novel takes a critical look at fairy tales, it also shows how fairy tales can be liberatory if they are wrested from the control of the bourgeoisie back into the hands of the subversive folk humour that Bakhtin identified as essential to the carnivalesque (and you don't get much earthier humour than Nanny Ogg's)³¹. Fairy

³¹ Lady Lilith De Tempscire, the ball-organising despot of Genua is a direct descendent of Perrault's fairy godmother whose introduction displaced the mother as the girl's magic helper. Where in earlier versions, represented by the Grimms' "*Aschenputtel*", the girl's dead mother is implicated in her rise, Perrault's tale seems to imply that all it takes to be accepted into the bourgeoisie is a particularly astute fashion adviser and patron (Zipes 1991: 30). It is also particularly relevant that Lilith is depicted as a social-climber:

If you wanted to get anywhere in this world - and she'd decided, right at the start, that she wanted to get as far as it was possible to go - you wore names lightly, and you took power anywhere you found it. She had buried three husbands, and at least two of them had been already dead.

And you moved around a lot. Because most people *didn't* move around much. Change countries and your name and, if you had the right manner, the world was your mollusc. For example, she'd had to go a mere hundred miles to become a Lady.

She'd go to any lengths now . . . (WA: 17-8)

It is interesting that Lilith's assumed name, is merely a French translation of "Weatherwax" with a feudal "De" stuck on for good measure.

tales originated as wish fulfilment from the point of view of the common people until they became a form of (children's) literature and were edited to reflect this new role of socialising children into bourgeois values. Pratchett reclaims the fairy tale by exposing the values that underlie the classical fairy tale, and putting them back in a context where they can be subverted. The story of Emberella turns out not to be the one about the passive girl who a prince chooses to marry, but the girl who ends up ruling a city. By ingraining a kind of earthy realism into the fairy tale, and holding fairy tale solutions up to rational ridicule (what do you know about a prince who chops through bramble other than he'll be handy with the hedge trimmers?), Pratchett breathes life into the classical fairy tale, and renews the power that these formulaic narratives had before they were appropriated by the bowdlerising educators who stripped the vitality from the fairy tale to make them "more suitable for children" or maybe, to make children "more suitable" as citizens.

The various embedded fairy tales in *Witches Abroad* could be seen as examples of element 5, "re-vision", which, as I noted in chapter one, has been successfully utilised by feminist writers to undermine the sexism of some of the classical fairy tales. But Pratchett's use of revisionism can be seen as a mixture between elements 5 and 7, a kind of "metafictional revision". Pratchett uses the fairy tale to highlight the extent to which humans understand their lives through formulaic narratives like fairy tales and how this belief in fantasies structures their perception of the world. *Witches Abroad* is postmodern in the sense suggested by Linda Hutcheon, as a form of art that "questions centralized, totalised, heirarchized, closed systems: questions, but does not destroy [...] It acknowledges the human urge to make order, while pointing out that the orders we create are just that: human constructs" (Hutcheon 1999: 41). A quotation from *The Science of Discworld* confirms this:

Discworld does not run on scientific lines. Why pretend that it might? Dragons don't breathe fire because they've got asbestos lungs – they breathe fire because everyone knows that's what dragons *do*.

What runs Discworld is deeper than mere magic and more powerful than pallid science. It is *narrative imperative*, the power of story. It plays a role similar to that substance known as phlogiston once believed to be that principle or substance within inflammable things that enabled them to burn. In the Discworld universe, then, there is narrativium. It is part of the spin of every atom, the drift of every cloud. It is what causes them to be what they are and continue to exist and take part in the ongoing story of the world.

On Roundworld things happen because the *things* want to happen. What people want does not greatly figure in the scheme of things and the universe isn't there to tell a story.

(Pratchett, Stewart and Cohen 2000: 10)

Pratchett's Discworld series is always pointing out that humans do not live in the real world, but an imaginary one of their own creation:

People don't *live* on the Disc any more than, in less hand-crafted parts of the multiverse, they live on balls. Oh, planets may be the place where their body eats its tea, but they *live* elsewhere, in worlds of their own which orbit very handily around the centre of their heads.

(Pratchett 1998: 9)

These imaginary worlds are inevitably based on stories, whether these are grand narratives such as religion, history or progress, or less grand ones, such as the fairy tale. This is a point of view reminiscent to Louis Althusser's pronouncement that "[i]deology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 1998: 294). But in an ironic twist, these beliefs held by humans actually affect the physical world around them. Just as Althusser pointed out that ideology is not something that is in people's heads but is actually present in the physical world, and manifested in their habits and customs in the famous phrase "[i]deology has a material existence" (296), in Pratchett's world gods, and other anthropomorphic personifications (such as the Grim Reaper) exist only because people believe in them, and die when belief in them ceases. It is easy to forget sometimes that stories have power not just to represent, but to change the world, something that Pratchett is intensely aware of:

[E]ven *ordinary* books are dangerous, and not only the ones like *Make Gelnite the Professional Way*. A man sits in some museum somewhere and writes a harmless book about political economy and suddenly thousands of people who haven't even read it are dying because the ones who did haven't got the joke. Knowledge is dangerous, which is why governments often clamp down on people who can think thoughts above a certain calibre.

(Pratchett 1998: 23)

Ultimately, the fairy tale for Pratchett is used as an example of the fantasy belief that humans use consciously or unconsciously to structure the world. Though Lilith corrupts that element of narrativisation, by taking control of the stories and imposing them on others, this does not mean that Pratchett thinks that fantasy is a mere consolatory nonsense: far from it, though *Witches Abroad* deconstructs the fantastic classical fairy tale, Pratchett presents fantasy itself as something that is a necessary part of human existence:

'All right,' said Susan. 'I'm not stupid. You're saying humans need , , , *fantasies* to make life bearable.'

REALLY? AS IF IT WAS SOME KIND OF PINK PILL? NO. HUMANS NEED FANTASY TO BE HUMAN. TO BE THE PLACE WHERE THE FALLING ANGEL MEETS THE RISING APE.

'Tooth fairies? Hogfathers? Little —'

YES. AS PRACTICE. YOU HAVE TO START LEARNING TO BELIEVE THE *LITTLE LIES*.

'So we can believe the big ones?'

YES. JUSTICE. MERCY. DUTY. THAT SORT OF THING.

'They're not the same at all!'

YOU THINK SO? THEN TAKE THE UNIVERSE AND GRIND IT DOWN TO THE FINEST POWDER AND SIEVE IT THROUGH THE FINEST SIEVE AND THEN *SHOW* ME ONE ATOM OF JUSTICE, ONE MOLECULE OF MERCY. AND YET — Death waved a hand. AND YET YOU ACT AS IF THERE IS SOME IDEAL ORDER IN THE WORLD, AS IF THERE IS SOME . . . SOME *RIGHTNESS* IN THE UNIVERSE BY WHICH YOU MAY BE JUDGED.

'Yes, but people have *got* to believe that, or what's the *point* —'

MY POINT EXACTLY

(Pratchett 1996c: 270)

Conclusion

At this point, to prevent overdue strain on the reader's page turning muscles I will set two quotations from different chapters, originally cited on pages 111 and 233, alongside each other to facilitate easy comparison.

I've been cheated by my own imagination. The imagination unbound, unconfined by cause and effect. But then how else can we make things work out right? Or find redemption? Or real right justice?

(HC: 351)

'All right,' said Susan. 'I'm not stupid. You're saying humans need , , , *fantasies* to make life bearable.'

REALLY? AS IF IT WAS SOME KIND OF PINK PILL? NO. HUMANS NEED FANTASY TO BE HUMAN. TO BE THE PLACE WHERE THE FALLING ANGEL MEETS THE RISING APE.

'Tooth fairies? Hogfathers? Little —'

YES. AS PRACTICE. YOU HAVE TO START LEARNING TO BELIEVE THE *LITTLE LIES*.

'So we can believe the big ones?'

YES. JUSTICE. MERCY. DUTY. THAT SORT OF THING.

'They're not the same at all!'

YOU THINK SO? THEN TAKE THE UNIVERSE AND GRIND IT DOWN TO THE FINEST POWDER AND SIEVE IT THROUGH THE FINEST SIEVE AND THEN *SHOW ME ONE ATOM OF JUSTICE, ONE MOLECULE OF MERCY*. AND YET — Death waved a hand. AND YET YOU ACT AS IF THERE IS SOME IDEAL ORDER IN THE WORLD, AS IF THERE IS SOME . . . SOME *RIGHTNESS* IN THE UNIVERSE BY WHICH YOU MAY BE JUDGED.

'Yes, but people have *got* to believe that, or what's the *point* —'

MY POINT EXACTLY

(Pratchett 1996c: 270)

Though these quotations are taken from very different novels, themselves part of disparate genres, the overall message is the same. Fantasy and the imagination are important parts of being human, and we need stories to understand our place in the world. I believe this study has shown how some postmodern fictions that use the fairy tale as an intertext do so in order to demonstrate the fundamental desire for stories.

The assertion by Linda Hutcheon that "the process of narrativization has come to be seen as a central form of human comprehension, of imposition of meaning and formal coherence on the chaos of events" is central to this study and it is for this reason that the texts I chose to analyse were marked by metafictional features (Hutcheon 1999: 121). "Narrative is what converts knowing into telling [...] and it is

precisely this translation that obsesses postmodern fiction”, Hutcheon continues, and the narratives analysed throughout this study show how the fairy tale is a schema often used in postmodern novels to show this conversion of experience into narrative according to pre-established codes, and can sometimes be seen as the source of some of the fantastic events that occur in postmodern novels.

The reader will have noticed how little “magic” I attribute to the fairy tale itself. I do not believe, as psychoanalysts such as Bettelheim and Jung do, that the fairy tale is timeless and can be seen to show something deep and essential within the human spirit. Over years of research my position has changed from seeing the fairy tale as a form that is universal and ingrained in the psyche, to viewing it as one that is historically determined and, far from being timeless, speaks volumes about the society and historical time in which it was told. And yet, paradoxically, I believe this study has demonstrated why the fairy tale is still relevant. It is the formulaic nature of the fairy tale, combined with the fact that it is so often the first and only experience of oral narrative that we have nowadays (and with CDs of novels readily available, one can wonder how much longer the practice of parents telling their children stories will last) that gives it its lasting power over the imagination. The fact that the fairy tale is the primary oral narrative that people in late capitalist societies encounter also explains its hold over the imagination when subjects attempt to *tell* their stories. The fairy tale is *not* universal across all cultures, as some critics have claimed; the trickster tales of the North American Aboriginal peoples bear little resemblance to the fairy tales of Europe, unless one is willing to make immense generalisations and overlook all of the cultural differences that exist, something that we recognise immediately when we look on a collection of fairy tales that does not represent only numinous short narratives from Europe, but also from around the world, *especially* if these narratives from Africa, Asia and America have not been selected *because they resemble European narratives*. Such a collection is Angela Carter’s *Virago Book of*

Fairy Tales and Carter's introduction makes her dismissal of the fairy tale as a "universal" form quite clear:

I haven't put this collection together from such heterogeneous sources to show that we are all sisters under the skin, part of the same human family in spite of a few superficial differences. I don't believe that anyway. Sisters under the skin we might be, but that doesn't mean we've got much in common. Rather I wanted to demonstrate the extraordinary richness and diversity of responses to the same common predicament – being alive - [...] stories have seeded themselves all round the world, not because we all share the same imagination and experience but because stories are portable, part of the invisible luggage people take with them when they leave home

(Carter 2001b: xiv)

As Carter's comments suggest, it is not the fairy tale, but storytelling itself that is universal. The fairy tale, with its rigid but elegant structure, short length, and the verbal magic that allows things like magic carpets to be conjured up in the imagination without the need for computer generated imagery, is simply the form that best represents storytelling itself. If Chomsky's theory about the faculty for acquiring language being an innate feature of the human brain is correct, and Pinker is correct that this is the result of human evolution, then perhaps the fairy tale still has a grip over the imagination because of its simplicity. Its rules, like the rules of grammar itself, are easy to pick up, and endlessly adaptable, and so it is an easy way to translate experience into narrative. This, I suspect, is the reason for the importance of the fairy tale as an intertext.

The approach to intertextuality in chapter one, by identifying 8 different elements allowed me to specify accurately which elements I was particularly interested in, and then extend my study in the direction of texts which were characterised by the usage of those elements. Any sense of intertextuality being the relationship between *all* texts is too vague and all encompassing to be of potential use when analysing what Genette called palimpsestic intertextuality, but for a literary critic who is concerned with tracing the intertextual relationship between two specific texts, I feel the chapter has much to commend it.

The discussion of magic realism in chapter two is a line of approach that I have not previously encountered, that is, serious discussion of the similarities between

magic realism and fairy tale. Though many early critics of magic realism denied its link to fairy tale, they did so because they misunderstood the fairy tale. For example Angel Flores states that "The practitioners of magic realism cling to reality as if to prevent "literature" from getting in their way, as if to prevent their myth flying off, as in fairy tales, to supernatural realms" (Flores 1995: 116). But, as the sociohistorical analyses of fairy tales by insightful critics such as Jack Zipes and Marina Warner has proven, fairy tales are always grounded in the real: the housework, tailoring, making one's way in the world, these were the pressing real concerns of the fairy tale audience, and these very real concerns are dealt with in the fairy tale, which is always related to our world. I hasten to add that I do not believe that *all* magic realism can be directly attributed to the intertextual use of fairy tale chronotopes alongside realistic ones, but that in certain narratives, especially when they are narrated to us by an intradiegetic storyteller, the link between the fairy tale and magic realism seems to be particularly strong.

The storyteller chronotope which I defined in chapter three is a useful way of analysing embedded narration. As an identification of a formal structure it is useful in the analysis of recent postmodern texts that depict the act of telling fairy tales about one's own life, for example Tim Burton's 2003 *Big Fish*. Burton's film features the storytelling chronotope, and, like those other examples of storytelling I used, *Midnight's Children*, *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* and *Midnight's Children*, exhibits magic realist features that are presented in a matter of fact way. *Big Fish* tells, in flashback form, the tall tales that Edward Bloom (Albert Finney) told to his son William (Billy Crudup) about his life. The film goes through all Edward's oftentold stories, which are characterised by fairy tale features: he meets giants, werewolves, mermaids, and fortune-telling witches and stumbles across an Elysian village that time forgot. Though at the beginning of the film William views his father's tales as lies, by the end he too joins in the narrativization of his father's life, telling Edward, who is dying of cancer in hospital, the tale of his own death, only making it seem an

adventure, a significant moment that involves the characters from all the tall tales Edward has told. Significantly, at Edward's funeral, we find out that the tall tales that made his father so popular during his lifetime, were actually true to some degree. *Big Fish* highlights the way that telling one's life story orally can lead to fairy tale exaggerations, or as we saw in the introduction "It is not always easy to tell, in tales of the marvelous, whether we are dealing with magic or with mere exaggerations of actual qualities" (Thompson 1977: 81). Within each of Edward's stories was a kernel of truth, and the metaphoric, fantastic versions that Edward told lead us to understand, by the end of the film, just how important storytelling is in order to understand one's life.

Chapter four's attempt to explain the importance of the storyteller chronotope is the only time the study leaves the confines of literature and literary theory. Nevertheless, it was important in this chapter to account for modern theories of the importance of narrativization, which, as I demonstrated are linked to postmodernism. The fairy tale, precisely because it is a synonym for "lies", is the ideal representative of fiction itself, and the use of fairy tale structures and allusions alongside the realistic codes generated by autobiography and literary realism has significant effects. T

The subversive revision of fairy tales we encounter in chapter five is the first time in this study that the negative criticism of the fairy tale is encountered. Few texts demonstrate the turning of fairy tale into myth as well as Pratchett's *Witches Abroad* and it is for this reason the novel is given such close analysis. Typically, this type of analysis is used on feminist texts, or those written by authors who are identified as "feminist" in some way or another. The analysis in this chapter shows how revision of fairy tales can be used to make a metafictional point about how we understand our lives through stories, and a political point, about who controls the stories, and the nature of representation in hyperreal societies.

Pratchett's subversive revision of the classical fairy tales is not an isolated use of parody, that most postmodern of forms according to Linda Hutcheon (1999: 35), to

criticise the hyperreality of late capitalist society. Another postmodern fantasy text that acts as a revision of the fairy tale is Dreamworks' animated film *Shrek* (2001), which I will use here to demonstrate the further applicability of the theories that I have used throughout this study.

Shrek depicts a tyrannical Lord who is attempting to evict the fairy tale creatures from his kingdom so that he can put his own sanitised, mechanistic utopia in its place. Unlike Lady Lilith's Genua, this Lord's castle is decidedly *not* Sleeping Beauty's¹, but it is easy to see that *Shrek* is taking a swipe at Disney: Lord Farquaad (voiced by John Lithgow) famously resembles Disney chairman, Michael Eisner. Ironically enough, for a film that has its imagery generated entirely by computers, *Shrek*, like *Witches Abroad*, criticises the hyperreal. Farquaad is getting rid of the real fairy tale creatures, who can be unruly and ugly, and replacing them with animatronic sources of "wonder", which do not have bad moods, and perform without expecting anything in return². The fact that the fairy tale creatures live in a swamp, like Pratchett's Genua, can also be seen to link *Shrek* with Disney whose Florida site is built entirely on swamp land. The citizens of Celebration, in fact, sometimes encounter alligators in their swimming pools, like dinosaurs returning to take back what once was theirs.

I call *Shrek* a revision (element 5) rather than a fabulated fairy tale (element 6) because it explicitly plays upon three well-known fairy tale structures. The first of these is the quest narrative; the large green ogre Shrek (voiced by Mike Myers) makes an agreement with Farquaad to rescue a princess from a dragon-guarded castle in order to keep his shack in the swamp. Princess Fiona's incarceration is

¹ Rather than chocolate box gothic, Lord Farquaad's castle is a skyscraping castle that looks as if it were designed by Le Corbusier (Shrek guesses Farquaad "may be compensating for something"). The modernist nature of the utopian state he is trying to build is reflected by his constant aim for perfection "Is this not the most perfect kingdom of them all", he asks the magic mirror and his final words are "I will have order! I will have perfection!"

² Again, the mirror seems to be a symbol for the hyperreal, because at one point we see Lord Farquaad using it as a television. It is amusing that Farquaad also sets up all the public events he attends like television game shows, the audience prompted into the appropriate reactions by men with cards reading "applause" or "revered silence".

reminiscent of “Sleeping Beauty”. The storybook that begins the film tells of a princess under an “enchantment [...] of the most fearful sort which could only be broken by love’s first kiss”, a motif that associated with the kiss that awakes Sleeping Beauty³, especially as, like in “Sleeping Beauty” many brave knights had perished attempting to get to the princess. Fiona (Cameron Diaz) is very careful to feign sleep, lips puckered, with a bouquet of flowers clasped in both hands, when the man she expects to be Prince Charming enters her tower. Finally, there are elements of “Beauty and the Beast”, made explicit in a musical number sung by Robin Hood “when a beauty’s with a beast/ it makes me awfully mad”, as the beautiful princess begins to learn that the uncouth ogre has his own charms.

As well as this explicit intertextuality, the film also features implicit intertexts that inform its structure, especially “The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell”, a “Beauty and the Beast” verse romance from the fifteenth century, which Marina Warner summarises in *Making Monsters*. Briefly told, King Arthur falls under the power of a Warlock and will die unless he finds the answer to the riddle, “what is it that women truly want”. By coincidence, he comes across Dame Ragnell, described as a foul hag with tusks and “hanging paps”, who promises to provide the riddle’s answer, but only if Arthur will give her Sir Gawain as a husband. Arthur agrees, and is told the answer to the riddle, that women desire “sovereignty”. On their wedding night, Gawain kisses his monstrous bride, and is surprised when she is transformed into a beautiful woman. Dame Ragnell tells Gawain that she is bound by a spell, and asks whether she would have him “fair by night and foul by day or vice versa”?

³ As we have seen, it was not always a kiss that awakened Sleeping Beauty, and Basile’s version, where one of the babies she gave birth to when unconscious sucks the flax out of her finger while searching for her breast, is a particularly memorable awakening. Just the Grimms edited “Sleeping Beauty” to make it suitable for bourgeois sensibilities, other tales have been altered to make a kiss (on the lips) from the prince the thing that breaks the magic spell. For instance, the caveat that it must be “love’s first kiss” that breaks the enchantment on Princess Fiona is identical to the wording in the Disney film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, a large change from the Grimm’s “*Sneewittchen*”, where Snow White is awakened when some clumsy footmen drop the glass coffin whilst transferring it from the forest to the Prince’s lodgings (the prince’s motivation for wanting the glass coffin are somewhat odd, he seems to prize it as an ornament), a jolt which dislodges the poison apple from her gullet, an infinitely more amusing, if less romantic, ending.

Gawain's answer "do as ye list now, my lady gay" by allowing her sovereignty to choose as she wishes, breaks the spell put upon her, and she becomes fair all the time (Warner 1994b: 15-16)

Shrek reverses the enchantment: Princess Fiona is an ogre by night and a woman by day, because of a spell cast on her by a witch: "By night one way/ By day another/ This shall be the norm/ Until you find true love's first kiss/ And then take love's true form". The riddling test is replaced with the more traditional kiss to break the spell, except in this version when the princess finally kisses Shrek she assumes the ogre form permanently. Upon realising that she is still in ogre form after the kiss she sobs "I'm supposed to be beautiful", to be reassured by Shrek, "but you are beautiful", pressing home the moral that one should be comfortable with one's own appearance, and indeed, the movie can be seen in terms of both Shrek and Fiona's becoming comfortable within their own skin, and Fiona especially abandoning the self-loathing she feels for her night-time self.

This is not to say that *Shrek* is an entirely subversive and challenging film. "Be yourself" is not the stuff of radical politics, and yet, *Shrek's* dismissal of always attempting to have the perfect country and the perfect body is charming and just a little subversive, when we come to think about how much advertising expenditure is dedicated to trying to make people think "brand x" will bring them closer to perfection. Indeed, the sequel to *Shrek*, the imaginatively titled *Shrek 2* continues the tirade against "perfection", as we are introduced to Prince Charming (Rupert Everett), who is a handsome but foppish oaf, and his mother (Jennifer Saunders) the Martha Stewart-esque fairy godmother, whose business is based on making people live up to the standards society expects of them (she even sings a song about the benefits of plastic surgery in getting your fairy tale prince).

Shrek 2 (2004) takes place in the land of Far Far away, the country ruled over by Fiona's mother and father, which bears an uncanny resemblance to Los Angeles, the place Baudrillard calls the apotheosis of hyperreality (there's even a sign saying

“Far Far Away” on the hills, Hollywood style). If anything, *Shrek 2* is more subversive than the first movie, showing marriage not as “happy ever after”, but rather “ugly ever after”, as the couple, returning from honeymoon experience their first domestic arguments over the in-laws. But what is important about *Shrek 2* is that it demonstrates the way in which the fairy tale expresses the concerns of a particular historical context. Like *Waterland* and *Midnight’s Children* this text shows the way fairy tale structures are used to reflect the concerns of contemporary society. As numerous commentators have noted⁴, in the case of *Shrek 2* the issue of race relations is layered throughout the movie, which is modelled on *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*, with Shrek taking the place of Sidney Poitier, a fact more than evident when the king (John Cleese) comments, “so your children will be” before Shrek butts in “that’s right, Ogres”. The flaming torches and farm implements wielded by the mobs that threaten Shrek take on a new meaning in this light, making the inhabitants of this fairy tale land seem like members of the Klan. More racially themed elements emerge when Shrek steals a magic potion from the fairy godmother to make him more like Prince Charming, the blond haired blue eyed knight who Fiona (and her parents) always envisioned her marrying. Not only does Shrek take human (and white) form on taking the potion, but Donkey, his all talking, all singing, all dancing sidekick (voiced by Eddy Murphy) becomes a stallion, changing colour from brown to white, and, at one point, doing something that looks suspiciously like the moonwalk, the trademark dance-step of Michael Jackson, whose colour and facial features have become increasingly more Caucasian over the years due at least partially to the use of plastic surgery.

But at the end of the movie, Shrek returns to his old lime green form, as Fiona refuses to give him the kiss that would seal the spell, preferring instead to return to their true ogre forms. As it turns out, the King who was so against Fiona’s marriage to Shrek, was actually not always quite so white himself. As was obvious from the

⁴ See, for example, Guillermo 2004.

moment he mentions “walks by the Lily Pond” to the Queen (Julie Andrews), he was himself once green, because he was originally a frog, a form he resumes when he saves Shrek from the wrath of the fairy godmother by diving in front of a spell hurled at the ogre.

So, what seems to be an essentially populist, popcorn use of the fairy tale, is in fact much deeper than it first seems, promoting a view of racial tolerance, valuing personality above skin colour or surface appearance, and criticising the sterility of the superficial hyperreal world of celebrity. Again, this is not a radically *subversive* use of fairy tale revisions, as perhaps the twentieth century feminist revisions of fairy tales were, but it is another example of how the fairy tale represents events of socially and political significance in the real world. Escapism is one of the charges that has been levelled against the fairy tale, but close analysis of any of the texts covered in this study shows that even as they transport us into realms of magic, they do so in order to enact and address issues that are challenging to the contemporary audience.

It seems inevitable that the fairy tale will continue to interest the producers and consumers of texts for years to come. This may be partially due to the awareness that the fairy tale is a popular form which can be used without having to pay anyone royalties. An episode of the Simpsons called “Tales from the Public Domain” which featured stories from mythology and the Old Testament drew attention to the fact that remaking fairy tales and other works that are definitely out of copyright, has its own financial advantages. *Shrek* too, can be seen as an example of this usage which has paid off: the films have been a huge financial success, far surpassing the box office haul of other popular CGI features like the *Toy Story* films, *Monsters Inc.*, *Ice Age* or *Finding Nemo*, and I believe this is due to Dreamworks’ canny usage of the fairy tale. Where we have to be “introduced” step by step to the marvellous world of the monsters and bogeymen, or the underwater home of the fish, we are all already familiar with fairy tales, and so the *Shrek* films had an immediate advantage over their competitors. This advantage is utilised by all texts that use the fairy tale as an

intertext; the popularity of the classical fairy tale means that it is more likely that the intertext will be understood by a high proportion of the target audience. If postmodernist fiction is associated with intertextuality, then the texts we have studied here are brazen with their intertextual nature by using such obvious intertexts as fairy tales.

It is my hope that this study, by setting forward new theories about types of fairy tale intertextuality, examining the relationship between fairy tales and magic realism, and looking at the way in which authors have used fairy tales to show the *need* for stories, will be of some use for future critics in examining the use of fairy tale intertextuality. Marina Warner demonstrated great perspicacity when she said:

the enlightenment distinction between logic and fantasy has given way in the growing realisation that the structures of the imagination, often highly ordered and internally consistent, themselves form understanding. Pleas for a return to reason, for simply stripping away illusion, ignore the necessity and the vitality of mythic material in consciousness as well as unconsciousness.

(Warner 1994b: 14)

It is this awareness of the need for formulaic texts, the need for *fantasy*, that I see as characteristic of the postmodernist use of the fairy tale. The fairy tale will continue to be used in all media, and for purposes both subversive and doctrinaire, but with the help of the texts studied here, it will be hard to see the fairy tale as an irrelevant or “childish” form of literature ever again.

Glossary

Chronotope a term coined by Mikhail Bakhtin in the essay “Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel” and used by Bakhtin to investigate the representation of time in literary writing. The term means, when translated from the Greek “space time”, and is derived partially from Einsteinian mathematics (Bakhtin 1994: 84). It is used by Bakhtin, as by Einstein, to stress the fundamental interconnectedness of time and space, but in the novel rather than the world. Bakhtin describes the effect of the chronotope as the ‘concretisation’ of time within the novel where:

Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charted and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.

(Bakhtin 2000: 84)

In this immense essay, he sketches out the evolution of different chronotopes, from the “road” chronotope that characterises folklore to the chronotope of the sitting room that began to dominate in the early nineteenth century.

The chronotope is not, however, solely a device of analysing temporal representation within fiction. Bakhtin also claims “it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time” (85). He goes on to argue, “any and every literary image is chronotopic. Language, as a treasure-house of images, is fundamentally chronotopic” (251).

One of the problems encountered with the chronotope is that “despite the recent boom of Bakhtin commentaries and Bakhtinian text interpretations we are still without a systematic concept of “chronotope” (Keunen 2000: 1). As Bakhtin notes, every literary image is chronotopic (Bakhtin 2000: 251) which causes the problem that “the concept of the chronotope may be puzzling or hard to grasp because it seems omnipresent to the point either of invisibility or of extreme obviousness” (Vice

1997: 201). Vice suggests the easiest example to grasp of the chronotope is the road movie, where movement along the road is also movement in time.

Dialogism. For Bakhtin dialogism is an inherent feature of language, a view most evident in “The Problem of Speech Genres” where Bakhtin describes written forms (the novel, scientific papers etc.) as secondary speech genres, stressing the similarities between written texts and utterances. Writing, like speech, needs to be understood as part of a continual chain of utterances, a scientific paper, although it may seem to be autochthonous is in fact written in response, as a rejoinder to previous theories and when viewed in this way we can see how for Bakhtin all communication is dialogic. However, some forms are more dialogic than others, and Bakhtin also uses the term monologic (even though it seems hard to imagine a truly monologic utterance) which he defines as “words that expect no answer” (Bakhtin 1973: 63) but the nature of his definitions seem to suggest a sliding scale rather than a binary opposition between monologic and dialogic discourses.

Heteroglossia is Bakhtin’s term to indicate the heterogeneity of language, and translated from his coinage in Russian of the word *raznorecie* meaning “differentiated speech”. It refers to the huge variety of language types used in a society, from legal jargon to regional dialect, and the social hierarchy that these language types indicate, best illustrated by the prestige status of certain types of language over other; for example English received pronunciation over regional accents. These types of language, (or discourses) might be linked with different occupational and social groups (the jargon of doctors or social workers) or social and regional dialects.

However, the term heteroglossia also indicates the entry of these manifold discourse types into the novel (Wales 1997: 218 Vice 1997: 18). According to Bakhtin, in the essays “Epic and Novel” and “Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel” reprinted in *The Dialogic Imagination* (Bakhtin 2000: 3-40, 84-258) the reason for the supremacy of the novel as an art-form is its ability to incorporate heteroglossia into its very structure: novels can feature the language of the public

square (the *locus classicus* of Bakhtin's carnivalesque: a modern equivalent would be 'from the street') clashing with the language of the social elites. Clashing is here a key phrase, for language is never neutral and different social languages are always in the process of struggling for superiority.

Metafiction is usually defined as "fiction about fiction" or fiction that draws attention to its own status as fiction (Hutcheon 1984:1, Cazzato 1995: 28, Drabble 1999: 665). *Tristram Shandy* and *Don Quixote* are generally agreed to be early examples of metafiction, and Patricia Waugh argues that metafiction arises at the inception of all new art-forms, from Elizabethan theatre and eighteenth century fiction to early film, precisely because the structures that the writers and audience will later take for granted are still being established and are still *obviously* arbitrary and strange. Waugh's theory allows one to see that metafiction is not new and is certainly not 'the death of the novel' as certain critics assumed, plus it highlights the fact that metafiction does not necessarily equal postmodernism, as some critics have assumed.

Monologism is a term used by Bakhtin to refer to types of authoritarian discourses, but it is never truly satisfactorily defined, rather it functions as the opposite of 'dialogism', which is viewed as democratic and a liberating function of certain works such as Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. In *The Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics* Bakhtin defines monologism as "words that expect no answer" (1973: 63), and this is certainly a feature of the omniscient narrator utilised in realist fiction, where self consciousness over the medium of language is typically sublimated in favour of seeing words as an unproblematic way of representing reality.

Polyphony is a term Bakhtin uses for novels which feature 'many voices' especially where the voices of characters are not overridden by a third person omniscient author. He cites the work of Dostoevsky as a supreme example of polyphony, pointing to the numerous debates between characters that run through *Crime and Punishment* as an example of the way that the 'polyphonic novel is

dialogic through and through [...] dialogue penetrates within, into every word of the novel' (1973: 40)

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