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The three petals : a modern literary fairy tale in the classical tradition

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The Three Petals:
A
Modern
Literary Fairy Tale
in the
Classical Tradition

By
Amy Lipman

Mentor
Sal Vascellaro

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
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The Three Petals: A Modern Literary Fairy Tale in the Classical Tradition
By Amy Lipman

Abstract

“The Three Petals” is an original story, written and illustrated in the style of the Golden Age of fairy tales. The story includes sixteen original collage illustrations and is a coming-of-age tale about a young girl who embarks on a journey to seek her fortune. Travelling through a hostile world, she encounters benevolent creatures, whom she helps, using magic talismans from home, and who, in return, help her to liberate a hostage prince and destroy a force of pure evil.

The tale follows many conventions of style, structure, theme, and content of traditional folk and fairy tales, which I trace and examine in the supporting analysis. The pictures are inspired by the art of the Golden Age of fairy-tale illustration and the brilliant artists whose work was enabled and enhanced by technological advances in printing in the nineteenth century. The work served a growing demographic consisting of a literate and affluent, child-centered public, for whom, as has been the case in our time, the traditional material was adapted and edited to suit contemporary mores and tastes. I also examine recent trends in the pop culture of fairy tales over the last fifty years that have inspired my work both negatively and positively.
This thesis is dedicated to

Miriam Cohen

and

Sal Vascellaro

Acknowledgement:
Permission to use various images in my illustrations generously granted by the artists P.J. Lynch, Antony McCallum, David Muench, Santiago Muñoz, Paul Nicklen, and Joel Sartore
(See Appendix One for permission correspondence)
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### APPENDIX ONE

Letters from artists granting permission to use images in collage illustrations

### APPENDIX TWO

Letters seeking permission to use photographs in collage illustrations

### REFERENCES

(Including source information for photographs in collage illustrations)
PART I
The Tale
The Three Petals

Amy Lipman
The Three Petals

by Amy Lipman
The Three Petals

For Mick
(a sleeping prince)
Lying in the center of this remarkable pink blossom was an enchanting baby girl.

One afternoon, a fine lady approached the old couple’s doorstep.

The petal began to grow larger and thicker until it became a warm and luxurious blanket.

In no time they made land, perfectly safe, but a little bit soaked from so much splashing water.

Soft as eiderdown, yet firm as a moss-covered grove, the plump, pink mattress cradled Rose and the kid, as they finished the last of Rose’s food from home and settled down for the night.

Rose didn’t recognize the mysterious lady who had visited her parents’ cottage a little over a week before.

“Water or ‘Air?’ thought Rose, and with a slight shrug and a resolute toss of her head, she turned left and walked toward the sound of the water.

As she gazed down into an enormous cylindrical room, she saw below her on the floor of the tower, hundreds of giant flowers, planted in concentric circles radiating out from a central fountain that provided the plants with enchanted water.
Directly opposite the floating cloud, there was a surprisingly small crack in the wall through which an enchanted wind blew a sufficient supply of air to keep the cloud aloft, and the boy, asleep.

On a gust of arctic wind, the witch blew in from the North and landed on the wall above the fanciful gate just above the spot where Cloud was hiding.

Lowering its head and carefully aiming its hard little horns, the goat butted the witch squarely on her backside sending her hurtling over the rocky cliffs.

Using its large hind legs and feet, the rabbit aimed a well-placed kick and propelled the witch several yards out over the river.

Suddenly the witch froze in terror as the field mouse, with which Rose had so amiably spent the first night of her journey, emerged from a hole in the ground.

The next morning, Rose walked Cloud and his mother to the edge of the wood that now seemed a little bit less deep and dark than it had merely five days before.

The tea rose bushes growing by the water’s edge, rendered benign by the Rose Fairy’s peaceful and loving reign, were coerced and cultivated to form an ornately flowering bridge across the raging river.
Lying in the center of this remarkable pink blossom was an enchanting baby girl.
Once upon a time, at the very edge of a deep, dark wood, there lived a kind old woodcutter and his very old wife. They had lived a long and happy life together and their only regret was that they had not been blessed with a child.

One afternoon, as they were gathering wood in the forest, they stopped to rest for a moment under a large tree.

“Do you smell something?” the old woman asked her husband.

“Yes, I believe I do,” he answered. “It smells like bread baking and crushed vanilla beans.”

“No, darling,” said the old woman. “I believe it smells of freshly fallen rain and sun-bleached river stones.”

They began to follow that delicious scent deeper and deeper into the wood until they came upon a most unusual sight. In the center of a small glade, surrounded by the tallest trees in the forest, an enormous and perfect rose grew straight from the ground. Lying in the center of this remarkable pink blossom was an enchanting baby girl. She had hair as black as midnight and sparkling eyes that looked like sunlight dancing on the sea.

“Do you think she is a fairy child?” asked the old woman.

“No, my dear,” said her husband. “I think she is our child.”

The old woman and the old man picked up the enchanting girl and took her home with them. They named her Rose and raised her as their own.

In their excitement over the foundling, they never thought to take the rose, and this was just as well, for it was a deeply enchanted flower. The memory of that flower and its odd scent lingered in the back of their minds, their heart’s desire just out of reach. Meanwhile, Rose grew up to be a lovely young girl, as kind and brave and wise on the inside as she was beautiful on the out.
One afternoon, a fine lady approached the old couple’s doorstep.
One afternoon, a fine lady approached the old couple’s doorstep. She wore an enormous pink rose tucked into her delicately embroidered bodice, and the flower’s fragrant aroma preceded her into the cottage.

“What is that wonderful fragrance?” the old lady wondered. “Could it be cinnamon and spun sugar?”

“Or fennel flowers and crushed moss?” mused the old man.

They opened the door and were amazed to see this mysterious woman and what appeared to be the same flower from so many years ago, the flower that had given them their lovely child, the flower for which they had secretly yearned. They graciously offered the stranger food and drink, but could barely keep their eyes off the ever-blooming rose that the stranger wore so prominently.

“What can we give you for that marvelous flower?” the old couple asked, for they had fallen under its enchantment, and without the distraction of a beautiful foundling child, they were finding it impossible to resist.

“I couldn’t part with it for anything,” replied the mysterious woman. “It is my dearest possession.”

The old couple grew foolish under the rose’s spell and offered the lady everything from their cow to their cottage. Finally as the aroma of the flower intoxicated them beyond bearing, they offered their daughter, Rose, for it had come time for her to go out into the world, and the lady seemed kind and well-to-do. They didn’t know it, but this was exactly what their guest had had in mind.


And the deal was done. They arranged for Rose to journey in a week’s time to join the woman in her palace and there to live as her apprentice, ward, and lady in waiting. The trip would take about three days time, and Rose would have to travel through a dark forest, across a raging river, and over a rocky wasteland. The Lady gave the girl careful instructions on how to find her realm. A trail of budding rosebush saplings would line the path to point Rose along the way.

“But whatever you do,” the Lady warned Rose, “do not pluck any of the tea rose buds from the bushes for they are enchanted in a different way from the giant blossom for which I have bartered your service. They will bring terrible consequences.”

Rose promised to obey her, and that evening, the elegant stranger disappeared as mysteriously as she had arrived. At the end of the week, as Rose finished her preparations for her journey, the old couple had a moment of remorse.

“Here, take three petals from our precious flower. They may prove useful on your journey,” the old woman said, and she plucked the three most tender, pink petals from the center of the giant flower and gave them to her adopted daughter.

“But use them wisely, for I believe they may possess a powerful charm,” the old man added warily.

Rose carefully folded them into her pocket. The old man and woman waved a fond farewell from the cottage door, and tears would have clouded their eyes, if the flower’s scent hadn’t overwhelmed all of their senses.
The petal began to grow larger and thicker until it became a warm and luxurious blanket.
Rose set out early the next morning filled with excitement about the adventure ahead of her. She walked carefully through the forest following the trail marked by the lovely tea rose saplings. The woods grew darker and colder than Rose had ever imagined possible. The dappled patches of light that had found their way through the thick canopy of leaves overhead grew smaller and farther apart. When the sun went down on the first evening of her journey, Rose could barely tell the difference between day and night.

She sat with her back against a large tree to eat the meager meal she had brought from home and she drew her clothing about her for warmth. Gradually, Rose realized that she was able to dimly see her surroundings. A pinkish light seemed to emanate from the buds on the nearby rosebush and with it came the faint smell of the purest rose perfume. She sat thinking about the unusual-smelling rose that had so disturbed and intoxicated her parents; the scent of these smaller blooms seemed comforting and sweet by comparison. The light from the flowers provided solace as well.

Suddenly she felt a soft nuzzling at her elbow, and in the pale light she saw a tiny brown field mouse shivering at her side.

"These woods are so cold," said the mouse. "How I wish I had something to keep me warm."

Rose stroked the mouse’s soft, brown fur and held it in her lap trying to warm it and stop its pathetic shaking, but to no avail.

"Those tea rose buds are magic, you know," said the mouse gesturing toward the faintly glowing flowers. "If you pluck one, it might be able to keep us both warm somehow."

Remembering the mysterious lady’s warning, Rose refused to do this, but offered one of the petals her parents had given her as a parting gift. She wrapped the poor mouse in the large soft petal, and as she did, the petal began to grow larger and thicker until it became a warm and luxurious blanket, as soft as the surface of the petal it had been a moment before. Rose shared her meal with the little mouse, and they spent the night nestled in this large, soft blanket. They awoke in the morning refreshed and happy.

"You must keep this wonderful blanket," Rose told the mouse, "for I surely won’t be needing it where I am going."

In exchange the mouse insisted on giving her one long, thick whisker from its twitchy little nose. Rose wondered to herself, "what in the world will I do with that?" But she thanked her tiny friend graciously and went on her way.
In no time they made land, perfectly safe, but a little bit soaked from so much splashing water.
The woods began to grow thinner, the trees a little smaller and farther apart, until Rose emerged on the bank of a wide, rushing river. She stood for some time watching the dangerous currents surging past her and wondered how she would get to the other side, where she saw the trail of rose saplings dotting the path that led up into the rocky wasteland beyond the distant shore.

As she sat deep in thought, a large rabbit came up beside her, laying its sweet face on her forearm.

“This river is so ferocious,” it said, “How I wish I had some way to cross it.” He explained that he had family on both sides of the river and could get back and forth only when the waters receded in midsummer or froze in midwinter. As it was springtime, he would have to wait several months more to cross.

Rose had been considering trying to ford the river, or swim to the other side, and she offered to help the rabbit across, but they decided that this would surely end in disaster.

They sat together in thought until the rabbit pointed to the rose bushes beside the path and said, “Those tea rose buds are magic, you know. If you pluck one, it might be able to get us both across the river somehow.”

Of course Rose refused to do this, but she offered the rabbit the second of the large rose petals her parents had given her instead. As she took it from her pocket it seemed to grow larger and firmer, until it lay solidly on the riverbank looking, for all the world, like a sturdy little, pink raft. With only the slightest trepidation, Rose and the rabbit pushed the raft off the bank and into the relatively still, shallow waters near the shore. No sooner had they both jumped aboard, than the raft took off straight across the river, making a steady course for the opposite side. As the little raft navigated huge rocks and swift eddies, water sprayed up from the river making a lovely, cool mist around them, glittering and shimmering with little rainbows of iridescence. Trusting the course to their enchanted craft, they relaxed and shared a light meal from Rose’s meager provisions.

In no time they made land, perfectly safe, but a little bit soaked from so much splashing water.

Rose said to the rabbit, “You must keep this wonderful raft, for I surely won’t be needing it where I am going.”

In exchange the rabbit insisted on giving her a small tuft of downy, white fur from its fluffy, little tail. Rose wondered to herself, “What in the world will I do with that?” but she thanked the rabbit graciously and went on her way.
Soft as eiderdown, yet firm as a moss-covered grove, the plump, pink mattress cradled Rose and the kid, as they finished the last of Rose’s food from home and settled down for the night.
Rose scaled the rocky slope away from the river, following the tea rose saplings and bushes as she went. The sun climbed higher in the sky and the heat began to radiate up from the rocky path, but Rose remained refreshed and invigorated by the river water that seemed to stay on her skin and clothing all afternoon.

As the sun began to go down, Rose looked for some place where she might be able to spend the second night of her journey, but there was nothing as far as the eye could see except rocks, boulders, and craggy outcroppings.

As night began to fall and the small flowers began to glow faintly in the dark, Rose came upon a small goat that looked lost and forlorn.

"These rocks are so uncomfortable," it said. "How I wish I had someplace nice and soft to spend the night."

Rose sat down on the sharp jagged surface of a rounded ravine near the path and held the small kid in her lap. But the goat couldn't find a cozy position in which to sleep, and poor Rose was already feeling quite sore from the rough terrain.

"Those tea rose buds are magic, you know," said the kid gesturing toward the bushes by the rocky trail. "If you pluck one, it might be able to give us a soft place to sleep."

As we already know, Rose would not do this, but she offered the last of her lovely rose petals instead. As she took it from her pocket, it began to grow and puff up until it filled the small ravine entirely. Soft as eiderdown, yet firm as a moss-covered grove, the plump, pink mattress cradled Rose and the kid, as they finished the last of Rose's food from home and settled down for the night. When they woke in the morning, they felt strong and energetic.

Rose turned to the little goat and said "You must keep this wonderful mattress, for I surely won't be needing it where I am going."

In exchange the goat insisted on giving her a large shard that had splintered off one of his hard, little horns. Rose wondered to herself, "What in the world will I do with that?" But she thanked the goat graciously and went on her way.
Rose didn’t recognize the mysterious lady who had visited her parents’ cottage a little over a week before.
Toward the end of the third day of her journey, Rose began to see in the distance a shimmering light. As she got closer, she realized that she was approaching a gleaming castle set on the top of the highest of three rolling hills. The closer she got to the castle the more she began to realize that something wasn't right. The air was still. Not a sound came from that huge, glistening building and there was not a soul in sight for as far as the eye could see. Rose had been expecting some kind of welcome, but as she walked up the hill toward the castle gate, all she heard was a faint sound of splashing water and less distinctly, behind that, a light hissing sound, like air rushing through a small opening.

Just then an old woman seemed to appear out of nowhere. Rose didn’t recognize the mysterious lady who had visited her parents’ cottage a little over a week before.

“Where are you going, Missy?” the old woman asked in a gravelly, but not unfamiliar voice.

“I have come to live with a beautiful lady, whom I suspect may actually be the Rose Fairy,” replied Rose, who was beginning to realize that things were not exactly as they seemed.

“Well you’ll not find her here,” said the old woman. “This is now the castle of her sister, the evil Sky Witch, who has enslaved her fair sister and taken over much of the Rose Fairy’s domain. At the witch’s bidding, the Rose Fairy must coerce unsuspecting parents to barter their babes for magical roses and each morning the Sky Witch eats the babes with treacle and rose-petal jam for a tender breakfast.”

Rose listened with horror as she tried to comprehend her role in all of this.

“And why is the Rose Fairy unable to prevent this?” she asked.

The old lady explained, “Years ago, the witch kidnapped the Rose Fairy’s infant son and holds him hostage to this day. The Sky Witch cast a powerful spell on her sister making it impossible for her to oppose her horrid demands. Unable to resist, and in order to save her son, the Rose Fairy must do as her sister commands. Her good magic bent to her sister’s terrible purpose; her most beautiful flowers cultivated and used for deceit, treachery, and murder.”

“How can I help?” Rose asked bravely, although her stomach quaked with fear.

“If you are brave enough and clever, you will know what to do,” the old woman replied and she seemed to vanish, leaving behind only the faintly familiar aroma of the purest rose perfume.
“Water or Air?” thought Rose, and with a slight shrug and a resolute toss of her head, she turned left and walked toward the sound of splashing water.
Rose entered the castle and fearfully began to explore the enormous central courtyard and the surrounding chambers, saving the two large turrets on either end for last. At the very back of the castle, Rose found a large archway barred by an intricate wrought-iron gate designed to look like curling vines, swirling leaves, and twirling tendrils. In spite of its delicate appearance, the gate was securely locked and impossible to scale.

Rose examined the fine workings of the lock, and thought, "With the right, very thin, very pliable instrument, I might be able to open it," and, reaching into her pocket, she found the long, thick whisker the little field mouse had given her. She took it out and carefully inserted it into the lock. Twitching it in almost the same way in which the mouse had twitched its little nose, Rose was able to gently shift the delicate mechanisms of the lock and open the gate.

She found herself in the middle of a long hallway that connected the two turrets. From the end of the hallway leading to the Western Tower, Rose could hear, quite a bit louder than before, the rush and splash of water. At the other end of the hallway coming from the Eastern Tower, Rose could hear that the light hiss of air was more like a continuously blowing gust of wind.

“Water or Air?” thought Rose, and with a slight shrug and a resolute toss of her head, she turned left and walked toward the sound of splashing water.
As she gazed down into an enormous cylindrical room, she saw below her on the floor of the tower, hundreds of giant flowers, planted in concentric circles radiating out from a fountain that provided the plants with enchanted water.
At the end of the hallway, a circular stairway rose and wound its way around the Western Tower. She climbed slowly up and reached the top just as the sun was sinking on the horizon casting a luminous pink light on the Western-most edges of the realm. Rose cautiously entered the turret through a low wooden door and was nearly overcome by a powerful smell that she couldn’t identify. As she gazed down into an enormous cylindrical room, she saw below her on the floor of the tower, hundreds of giant flowers, planted in concentric circles radiating out from a fountain that provided the plants with enchanted water.

The aromas that wafted up from that garden were nearly intoxicating, and Rose wondered how she could prevent the scent from overwhelming all her senses.

“If only I had something with which I could cover my mouth and nose,” she thought. And with that, she took the tuft of the rabbit’s tail from her pocket and held it in front of her face, filtering the flowers’ enticing smell.

She searched for some time until she found the valve that stopped the fountain and drained out all of the enchanted water. Almost immediately the flowers began to droop. Rose watched in riveted disgust as they wilted, shriveled up, and died. Finding a rake leaning against the fountain, and carefully keeping her nose covered with the little tuft of fur from the rabbit, Rose worked furiously through the night to uproot and destroy all of the enchanted blossoms, but the cloying smell of rotting leaves and flowers followed her down the darkened hallway as she ventured toward the Eastern Tower.
Directly opposite the floating cloud, there was a surprisingly small crack in the wall through which an enchanted wind blew a sufficient supply of air to keep the cloud aloft and the boy asleep.
Rose climbed the circular stairs that wound their way up around the outside of the second tower toward the sound of gusting air and reached the top to see the sun rising in the distance, casting its golden, pink glow on the Eastern-most edges of the realm. Entering a low doorway, she looked down. Halfway between the floor of the turret and the ramparts on which she stood, was a fluffy, white cloud floating silently and softly in the middle of the air. On that cloud lay the most beautiful boy she had ever seen. He had skin the color of copper and hair of pure sunlight. He slept as peacefully on his cloud as if it had been a feather bed.

A stair in the stonework led down the inside of the tower, and, as Rose descended, she quickly found the source of the gusting wind. Directly opposite the floating cloud, there was a surprisingly small crack in the wall through which an enchanted wind blew a sufficient supply of air to keep the cloud aloft and the boy asleep.

“If only I had just the right-sized piece of something to block up that hole,” thought Rose as, in her pocket, she found the small shard from the goat’s horn and began to wedge it into the tiny air hole. With the air supply stopped, the cloud drifted slowly down to the floor and as it did, the boy woke up to see Rose’s lovely face looking down at him with concern and affection. He looked back up at her, and it seemed to both of them to be love at first sight.
On a gust of arctic wind, the witch blew in from the North and landed on the wall above the fanciful gate just above the spot where Cloud was hiding.
Rose helped the boy stand and hurriedly told him about the evil Sky Witch, and his mother, the Rose Fairy's, unwilling role in his long imprisonment. The boy told her that his name was Cloud, for that was what the witch had called him, and it was the only name he had ever known.

Rose looked around nervously. “I'm afraid we haven't much time before the Sky Witch returns,” she whispered.

They climbed up the stone stairs and gazed down from the parapet at the lands of the realm below. Indicating the trail of rose saplings lining the paths down the rocky landscape and continuing on the other side of the raging river and into the dark forest, Cloud exclaimed, “I have an idea!”

Being the son of the Rose Fairy, he had some innate knowledge of the rare species and how it could be used to their advantage. He explained his idea to his new friend. Agreeing that the Sky Witch would be enraged enough by the destruction of her lethal crop, they decided that Cloud should remain hidden unless Rose sorely needed his help.

They took up positions in the little courtyard in the center of the castle and didn't have long to wait. On a gust of arctic wind, the witch blew in from the North and landed on the wall above the fanciful gate just above the spot where Cloud was hiding.

“Who has been meddling in my affairs?” she shrieked. “And what has happened to my beautiful Death Roses?” (For that is what she called the Rose Fairy's powerful blossoms.)

Rose caught Cloud’s eye from the opposite side of the courtyard and signaled for him to stay hidden.

“They are all perished,” said Rose, bravely diverting the witch's attention from the newly awakened captive.

The witch nearly exploded with rage, but Rose appeased her with rueful apologies, feigned flattery, and false regrets. As she began to win the witch's trust (and this wasn't hard to do as witches are often quite vain and easy to deceive) she made this innocent suggestion:

“All along the path over the rocky wasteland, on each side of the raging river and all through the deep, dark wood are baby Death Roses.” Rose lied, knowing full well, as Cloud had explained to her, that the tiny tea rose buds were another species entirely. “You could uproot hundreds of small bushes while I stay here and repair the fountain and till the soil to prepare the garden for the new crop. When you return, we can transplant the bushes and grow an entire plantation of Death Roses.”

The Sky Witch seemed delighted with this idea and summoned Rose to fetch her the largest basket she could find to hold the uprooted plants.
Lowering its head and carefully aiming its hard little horns, the goat butted the witch squarely on her backside sending her hurtling over the rocky cliffs.
I'll leave immediately,” the witch cackled, and clutching the basket greedily to her bony chest, she set out from the castle. Rose and Cloud followed silently, hiding behind rocks along the way. The witch found the first tea rose saplings growing by the edge of the rocky wasteland. She frantically ripped up the plants by their stems and loaded them into the basket. The thorns tore at her scrawny arms, but she didn't seem to notice. However, with each bloody armload, the witch seemed to shrivel and shrink just the tiniest bit. As she climbed down through the rocky wasteland, she had become about the size of a small goat.

Barely daring to breathe, Rose and Cloud watched from behind a rocky ledge as the little kid, with whom Rose had so cozily spent the night, suddenly appeared from a hidden cave. Lowering its head and carefully aiming its hard little horns, the goat butted the witch squarely on her backside sending her hurtling over the rocky cliffs. She bounced and battered from each craggy outcropping to the next until she came to rest beside the raging river. After frantically gathering the blossoms that had scattered widely in her precipitous decent, the bruised and bloodied witch stood erect, unaware that she had shrunk to the size of a large hare.

Rose and Cloud whispered their thanks to the little goat and continued their stealthy descent down the rocky slope.
Using its large hind legs and feet, the rabbit aimed a well-placed kick and propelled the witch several yards out over the river.
From behind a tree by the river’s edge, Rose and Cloud watched as the witch struggled furiously with her enormous load and contemplated the rushing stream. Meanwhile, the rabbit, with which Rose had enjoyed such a pleasant river crossing, appeared from a deep furrow beside the water. Using its large hind legs and feet, the rabbit aimed a well-placed kick and propelled the witch several yards out over the river. Grasping and grappling to maintain her hold on her ill-gotten basket of rosebud saplings, the resourceful witch froze the river with an arctic blast of wind and slid the rest of the way across. Seemingly unaware that she was the size of a small mouse, the witch entered the forest, desperately pushing her enormous basket before her.

As the sun began to sink, Rose and Cloud whispered their thanks to the helpful rabbit and slid across the ice, following the witch into the wood.
Suddenly the witch froze in terror as the field mouse, with which Rose had so amiably spent the first night of her journey, emerged from a hole in the ground.
In the dimming evening light the tiny blossoms had begun to glow faintly. As the children hid behind the trees, they watched the witch – dripping wet, freezing cold, her tiny body bruised and bloodied – still greedily pulling at magical tea rose plants, tugging in vain on the lowest branches. Able to manage only one giant budding stem at a time, she jumped futilely in the air trying to toss it over the edge and into the basket high above her head.

Suddenly the witch froze in terror as the field mouse, with which Rose had so amiably spent the first night of her journey, emerged from a hole in the ground. Looming above the cowering witch, the mouse twitched its little nose once or twice and charged, tossing the witch up into the air and sending her right into the center of the enormous basket of enchanted tea rose buds. Stepping out from his hiding place, Cloud used a long stick to push the tiny, thrashing witch down among the deadly plants. Her piercing shrieks diminished to a high-pitched whine as she continued to shrink until there was nothing left of her. The sudden stillness of the wood in the deepening twilight was a welcome relief.

The grateful children showered their thanks on the tiny mouse and set to work digging a deep hole in which to carefully bury the toxic bounty. As they packed the moist dirt into a small mound over the rose buds, the basket, and what may – or may not – have remained of the greedy witch, they finally had a moment to look around. Recognizing the familiar surroundings near the edge of the forest where she had been raised, Rose suggested that she and Cloud could continue through the wood by the light of the enchanted saplings, to the home of her adopted parents.

“They can give us food and shelter while we try to find your mother,” said Rose.
The next morning, Rose walked Cloud and his mother to the edge of the wood that now seemed a little bit less deep and dark than it had merely five days before.
At the woodcutter's cottage, Rose and Cloud found the old man and woman in a mildly intoxicated state from the scent of the still-blooming rose, but the sight of their daughter and her striking companion led to a joyful reunion. The exhausted children fell asleep after a hasty repast and woke late the next day to the smell of breakfast cooking on the hearth.

Over a simple meal, Rose and Cloud told of their adventures until they were interrupted by a light step on the porch followed by a familiar and bewitching aroma.

“Why, I do believe I smell freshly cut grass and newly mown hay,” sighed the old man.

“No, my dear,” contested his wife, “I believe it's freshly laundered, line-dried linen and a sweet babe's breath.”

To Rose, it smelled like the scent of the finest rose perfume, while to Cloud, it just smelled like home.

They warily opened the door, and there stood the mysterious lady who had visited them less than half a fortnight before. She immediately revealed herself indeed to be the Rose Fairy and tearfully embraced her long-lost son. She thanked Rose profusely for breaking the Sky Witch’s terrible spell and destroying her so irrevocably.

The Rose Fairy explained how, many years ago, she had been able to rescue a single child, Rose, from the Sky Witch. Before the Rose Fairy could convey the good news, to Rose's real parents, a local king and queen, they had died of broken hearts having awoken from the stupor of the Death Rose only to realize what must surely have been Rose's fate at the hands of the witch. Following that tragedy, the Rose Fairy had looked after the infant, hiding her deep within an enchanted glade, and, while fearing for the life of her own son, she had acted as Rose's godmother until she was finally able to lead the elderly couple to discover their long-desired foundling child.

The old woman and man, the Rose Fairy, and the two lovely children stayed up most of the night eating and drinking and getting better acquainted.

The next morning, Rose walked Cloud and his mother to the edge of the wood that now seemed a little bit less deep and dark than it had merely five days before. After a fond farewell, mother and son returned through the wood, across the river, and over the rocky wasteland to the enchanted castle, where they purged the palace of the Sky Witch's lethal presence and resumed their life as mother and son.
The tea rose bushes growing by the water’s edge, rendered benign by the Rose Fairy’s peaceful and loving reign, were coerced and cultivated to form an ornately flowering bridge across the raging river.
Epilogue

Over the years the Rose Fairy and Cloud cultivated the powerful giant roses, using the magical petals to heal and bring pleasure to their neighbors and the subjects of their realm. The rocky wasteland was transformed into a lush and verdant terraced garden and the tea rose bushes growing by the water’s edge, rendered benign by the Rose Fairy’s peaceful and loving reign, were coerced and cultivated to form an ornately flowering bridge across the raging river. The path through the dark forest, illuminated at night by the glowing flowers became a well-worn road that both Cloud and Rose traveled frequently, visiting all the friendly creatures that lived along the way.

In the years to come, Rose became a lovely young woman and assumed the reign of her lost kingdom, bringing her elderly, adoptive parents to live with her. Cloud also grew up to reign at his mother’s side. When they were old enough, they married and combined their kingdoms. Soon they had many beautiful children and they all lived happily ever after in a peaceful land that was known far and wide for its enchanting smell of the finest rose perfume.
THE END
Note:
Return to normal one-page format
PART II
Introduction
Growing up in the early 60s, I was raised on fairy tales. In the first five years of my life, before we owned a television, my mother read constantly to me and my older brother. Later, after I could read perfectly well on my own, I loved to listen to her read to my two younger brothers. My mother was a college English professor and a former actress, so she favored the literary and the classical even where children’s literature was concerned. And she read beautifully. We owned many children’s books, some of which were, or have become, classics, but among my favorites were the collections of fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm (1945) and by Hans Christian Andersen (1958). Other favorites like Peter Pan, Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz and the Chronicles of Narnia, while arguably also fairy tales, take place in specific other lands (Neverland, Wonderland, Oz, and Narnia) as opposed to the generic fairy tale land found in the stories of the Grimms and Andersen, and while these longer books also played an important role in my literary upbringing, I am going to focus on these two anthologies of shorter stories. It was many years before I came to understand the differences between these two collections of stories by Grimm and Andersen, and even longer before I began unravel what I found so deeply and disturbingly compelling about the tales in general.

I would have to say that the process began nearly twenty years ago when I first read Bruno Bettelheim’s The Uses of Enchantment (1975). I was instantly fascinated by the idea that these tales could be used therapeutically to help understand different aspects of one’s psyche and to help explain certain themes and motifs in a child’s development. I
began to understand why, for instance, “Hansel and Gretel” (and later Peter Pan) informed my brother and my dramatic play so significantly. Influenced by Bettelheim, I wondered what had resonated so intensely for me, even then. Perhaps it was something about a lack of parental supervision, being lost in a beautiful but potentially malevolent paradise, a brother and sister overcoming obstacles and life-threatening situations but eventually returning to a better home – but that is another tale.

While many details in the Grimm stories are disturbing and, well– grim, the themes in Andersen of self-sacrifice, mutilation, misplaced trust or devotion, and the vagaries of love, indifference, and betrayal seem much more disturbing to me now. A.S. Byatt (in Tatar, 2004) calls Andersen a “psychological terrorist” whose tales “twisted your spirit with sick terror” (p. xvii) and, while some might argue that his are not truly fairy tales, they were among my favorites. I ask myself now, why the tragic but redemptive death of the Little Match Girl inspired me to read that story over and over and brought me to tears nearly every time. Why was the Little Mermaid’s terrible sacrifice so compelling and her selfless demise so riveting? I am still haunted by the thought of the tiny shard of glass that caused Kai and Gerda such misery in the “Snow Queen” or Thumbelina’s dark and terrifying odyssey through a looming natural world. Karen’s dance toward mutilation and death in her red shoes, the steadfast tin soldier’s fiery apotheosis, and the single wing in place of an arm on the youngest prince in the “Wild Swans” were among the images that have lingered in my heart and in my mind all these years and still trigger associations both disturbing and exhilarating. There is rarely a
happily-ever-after in my favorite tales, and while the beatific Christian interventions at
the end of many of the tales seemed quite beautiful and poetic, the stories were
nevertheless extremely confusing to me in my secular Jewish upbringing.

The idea of what constitutes a fairy tale has intrigued me for years, and it was
without any indecision that I attempted to write one to fulfill the final assignment for Sal
Vascellaro’s wonderful children’s literature class. In thinking about this Integrative
Masters Project, I began to do research on the fairy tale in support of my story. My
research pointed me in many directions, and I came to think about the tales in two broad
categories – the traditional tale and the literary or authored tale.

The Grimm tales fall into the former category. They are a collection of stories
derived from oral tales handed town for hundreds of years, shaped and morphed over
time by the skill of anonymous storytellers in response to the fashions and tastes of both
their time and their specific audience. As fairy tale collectors like Charles Perrault or the
Grimm brothers began to transcribe the tales in the later part of the seventeenth through
the nineteenth centuries, they infused them, whether consciously or unconsciously, with
their own personal moral, social, or political agendas, as well as the prevailing moral,
social, and political codes of their day (Tatar, 1992, 2004; Zipes, 1986, 1991; Warner,
2002). I came to understand that the traditional tale cannot be created; it must be inherited
or discovered and painstakingly researched and transcribed. To create one was a practical
oxymoron.
My story, “The Three Petals,” is possibly a tale without a genre. The whole endeavor of writing a fairy tale felt forced and futile. It was only when I began to focus on the great authored tales of the nineteenth century, most specifically the work of Hans Christian Andersen, that I was able to reconcile this dilemma and justify my own story. In the hallowed context of some of the great tales by Andersen, Oscar Wilde, George McDonald, and others, my story had a reason to exist. It began to make a certain kind of sense, at least within a frame of reference of the past hundred years or so ago.

That being said, as a genre, did the literary fairy tale actually had a place in the modern world? Were its structures, themes, and conventions obsolete in this day and age? There is a kind of innocence and earnestness about the literary tales of the nineteenth century. Would a modern fairy tale in the classical tradition hold any interest for today’s children, or have we become too sophisticated and jaded to appreciate the moral themes and nearly predictable outcome of many of these stories? Was the form obsolete? I optimistically decided that genres do go out of style, but they might also be able to make a comeback.

With the blessing of Professor Vascellaro and renewed conviction, I showed a first draft of my work to our mutual friend and my wonderful mentor, the prolific children’s book author, Miriam Cohen. This award-winning writer of over 30 children’s books, all firmly grounded in a modern-day child’s real life experiences, made no pretense of the fact that she felt that there was no point in writing a traditional fairy tale in today’s book market. She only half-jokingly suggested that my story should include time
travel to a recent Lower Eastside where my protagonist, Rose, would start a punk band and perform at CBGBs with her friend Cloud on drums. She did agree that, as an academic exercise, the story might be acceptable. By contrast, Miriam was wildly enthusiastic about my illustrations that had begun to take form and felt that there was definitely a place in the modern world for them. She has strongly supported and championed my illustration work for almost twenty years. In spite of her doubts about my tale, she has encouraged me to continue working on this and other illustrated stories.

My thesis is dedicated to Miriam for her warmth, enthusiasm, encouragement and her good-natured, if ambivalent, support of this work; and to Sal, for his patience, wholehearted enthusiasm, and guidance of this project and my work in general.
PART III
Recent Trends
When I had my son, in the late 90s the children’s book market was booming. Among the thousands of books to choose from, there seemed to be many modernized fairy tales including ones in which the original premises and themes were subverted, sanitized, satirized, and saccharinized. An unscientific poll of my mom friends led me to the theory that I was among a small minority of people who actually knew the tales in their entirety, warts and all, so-to-speak.

Few if any of my friends knew that Cinderella’s stepsisters willingly mutilate their own feet in their desperation to fit the shoe and secure the hand of the prince, not to mention that they pay for their vanity and cruelty by having their eyes plucked out by Cinderella’s vindictive avian avengers. (I have actually come to judge the integrity of the versions of the tales that I encounter by their inclusion of these macabre and grisly elements – a kind of fairy tale litmus test.) I wasn’t really surprised to learn that many of my peers and their children had no idea that neither of the first two little pigs nor Red Riding Hood and her granny (in some versions) survive the wolves’ home invasions but are ruthlessly and irredeemably devoured by their predators. Most young adults are shocked to learn that the Little Mermaid chooses an unretrieved death devoid even of heavenly salvation, rather than take the life of her beloved prince, and furthermore, have no awareness of the deus ex machina and undeniably religious ending in which she is saved from an existential fate of becoming soulless sea foam and is granted the
A redemptive proposition of becoming one of the “Daughters of the Air,” who can gain an immortal soul by giving relief to the suffering of the living.

Much of what people think of as fairy tales, especially lately, has come from Walt Disney’s feature length animated versions. Beginning with “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” in 1937, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have come to know many of the tales by these sweetened, simplified – albeit beautiful and entertaining – versions of the stories. Replete with singing woodland creatures and crooning wooden princes, these films spawned a gigantic and insipid princess industry and culture, and generations of young girls have grown up with Cinderella backpacks and Ariel (Disney’s name for Andersen’s unnamed mermaid) toothbrushes.

The Disney princesses seem to have evolved over the years from the childlike, pure-as-the-driven-Snow White; the prim, personalityless Sleeping Beauty; and the ditzy Cinderella; to the sexier, more spunky and rebellious heroines of the 90s – Jasmine, Ariel, and Belle and their multicultural counterparts Mulan, Pocahontas, and Tiana (the African-American princess in “The Princess and the Frog”). Individually and as a cohort, these princesses are relentlessly marketed to girls all over the world. Ironically this commoditization seems to have occurred in spite of, or maybe in reaction to, all the efforts of the women’s movement of the 70s.

Thanks to Disney’s films and other modern interventions, the older versions of the tales – what some of us think of as the classical fairy tales – are no longer part of the general consciousness. Young adults today refer to these Disney films as “the classics,”
completely unaware of the more traditional versions that inspired them. Only the
most commercially prolific stories in adapted form are widely known, while many
beautiful and strange stories have been completely expunged from modern
consciousness. Where popular and commercial tastes, as well as widespread ideas about
moral or developmental suitability left off, modern trends of pop culture took over. In
the second half of the twentieth century, in tandem with Disney’s saccharine
proliferation, an alternate, post-modern zeitgeist began to develop, decrying innocence
and advocating a hipper, more ironic sensibility.

In the early 1960s, Jay Ward produced the “Fractured Fairy Tale” segment on the
Rocky and Bullwinkle Show, a program that made a scathing farce of the then current-
day cold war. In keeping with the show’s overall ironic, irreverent tone, the fairy tale
segment satirized and modernized many of the best-known tales. Perhaps in reaction to
Disney’s artistically rendered, yet thematically vapid movies, Ward created entertaining
cartoons in a much coarser, more humorous graphic style that deviated just as widely
from original tales as Disney’s films, but went in an entirely different direction. Ward’s
story lines are altered in strange and arbitrary, presumably humorous (or “fractured”)
ways. In order to marry an invisible prince (!), Cinderella must describe his clothing (!),
while Gretel rescues Hansel by teaching the witch how to fly on a broomstick (!)
unwittingly sending her into a permanent orbit of the moon (!!). Each five-minute
segment ends with either a very bad pun or an odd and random moral. As a well-read
child, I found these departures hilarious, but my enjoyment was definitely predicated on a sound prior knowledge of the tales.

At around this same time, social and political movements began to focus a more earnest and critical lens on the fairy tale. The classic fairy tale structure was critiqued by feminists and other social reformers and was thought to be dangerous to society’s growth and progressive evolution. Feminists like Andrea Dworkin and others were critical of what they saw as the passive role of women in the tales. Focusing, I believe, too narrowly on Disney’s earlier princesses so prolific in the media and the zeitgeist, they overlooked the industrious, clever, and kind heroines actually found throughout the classical genre. Meanwhile, the witches and stepmothers, also prolific in the tales, who wield considerably more power than their passive prey, are reviled as evil incarnate. Many feminists feel they represent society’s mistrust and condemnation of the powerful female (Dworkin, 1974).

In a parallel socio-political movement, social critics like Jack Zipes (1986, 1991) began to explore how the tales expressed and critiqued the iniquity and ultimate instability of the class structure of feudal Europe. They observed that many of the tales tell the story of protagonists of humble origins winning a fortune, a kingdom, or a royal marriage through their wit, honesty, or kindness, enabling them to gain entry to a higher class otherwise inaccessible to them. They saw in the heyday of the tales the early signs of political and social unrest that may have expressed in artistic form the same trends that manifested themselves in the bloody revolutions of the eighteenth century.
Both the feminist and the Marxist critics inspired a flood of presumably socially responsible versions of the tales giving us stories like Robert Munsch’s *The Paper Bag Princess* (1980), and later gender-swapping stories like Mary Pope Osborn’s *Kate and the Beanstalk* (2005) and *Sleeping Bobby* (2005), or Babette Cole’s *Prince Cinders* (1988). Whether these stories exist to shed light on traditional gender stereotypes, to overturn the social order, or simply to entertain, they have none of the power and beauty of the real tales. Many feel either flat and wooden or transparently didactic.

Zipes himself edited an anthology of modern tales and literary criticism entitled, *Don’t Bet on the Prince* (1986). This collection includes stories by authors like Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood, and a few others, and some of these resonate with strange beauty, a quality that I have come to consider a prerequisite of the Fairy Tale. However, many of the stories feel either dull and lifeless or stridently preachy. Burdened by the weight of a socially redeeming message, many of these modern retellings fail miserably and come to feel either as pious and leaden as the cautionary tales of the nineteenth century or as rigidly symbolic as an allegory or a parable.

In some ways it was refreshing when the Eighties gave us Shelly Duvall’s *Faerie Tale Theatre*, a weekly television series that brought to life many of the classics from both Grimm and Andersen. Modeled after a similar show hosted by a grownup Shirley Temple in the early days of television, Duval’s program was notable for its brilliant casting and preeminent directors, including work by Robin Williams, Francis Ford
Coppola, and a young Tim Burton. The lavishly produced tales were artfully designed to reference famous fairy tale illustrators like Arthur Rackham and Maxfield Parrish. For the most part, the segments were somewhat sanitized versions of the classic stories, interpreted with a slightly ironic twist or a tongue-in-cheek modern sensibility.

Continuing this trend, around the Nineties there began to be a proliferation of post-modern renderings of the stories including satirical shifts of perspective that made victims out of villains and vice versa like The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig (1993) by Eugene Trivizas or The True Story of the Three Little Pigs (1989) by Jon Scieszka. Perhaps most famous among these is Gregory Maguire’s Wicked series, which spawned the award-winning musical by the same name. The first book, published in 1995, presents the story of The Wizard of Oz (oddly titled as it is obviously more Dorothy’s story than the Wizard’s) from the perspective of a young Wicked Witch of the West. The story portrays her as being the misunderstood victim of circumstance – more political activist than supernatural practitioner.

Moving in a more meta-literary direction, the brilliant David Wiesner’s The Three Pigs (2001) gives and an even more jarring shift in perspective when his illustrations seem to bring the characters right off the page and into the reader’s lap. The pigs go “off-script” to explore the margins of the book and literally deconstruct the plot, moral, format, and the very typeface of the story along with the physical book itself. In Wiesner’s hyper-real style, the pigs are depicted constructing paper airplanes of the book’s very pages and flying right out at the reader.
In 1995, HBO brought the animated series *Happily ever after: Fairy tales for every child*. Like Duval’s earlier show, this one made use of well-known and acclaimed writers, actors, and directors to bring updated retellings of the tales often reinterpreted through an arbitrary or irrelevant multicultural lens. Using popular artists as varied as Tamara Janowitz and Dolly Parton, the well-intentioned series bent many of the stories to suit their educational agenda. Their version of “The Little Mermaid” is set in some generic Asian kingdom with vaguely Korean, Japanese, and Chinese motifs. Using clichéd pentatonic music; predictable, exaggerated accents; and racial stereotyping, the cartoon, and others in the series, predictably eliminates the grimmest elements in tales in favor of a conventional happy ending.

In contrast to contrived versions like *Happily ever after*, it must be said that the Multicultural trend of the Nineties also brought a more sincere interest in exploring the folklore of other countries and cultures resulting in a proliferation of fairy tales from around the world. Many of these stories share the themes, imagery, and plotlines of the European tales engendering discussions of Jungian archetypes, a collective unconscious, or some vastly universal cultural exchange. These books are beautifully printed and illustrated by award-winning artists. Books like Gerald McDermott’s *Anansi the Spider* (1987) and Verna Aardema’s *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* (1992) seem to have all the integrity that many recent retellings of the European tales lack, but being unfamiliar with those cultures, it is hard to say. It might be interesting to learn if the
folklore of non-Western cultures has been subject to a similar kind of editorial sanitization and subversion in modern times, as have the European tales.

In the first years of his life, as my son and I watched shows like *Happily Ever After* and read books like many of the ones I’ve mentioned above, I realized that he only knew the tales through these modern interpretations, especially the more ironic or subversive versions, which we actually enjoyed and were drawn to. I don’t really object to any of these modern developments, but I realized that they only have meaning when understood in reference to the originals. I had enjoyed the “Fractured Fairy tales” of my childhood in contrast to the tales I knew so well. What could all this mean to a child who had yet to experience the tales in their true form? This seems to be a curse of his generation. As the result of hipster parenting, many children only experience the classics in irreverent parody, if at all. I decided at that point to begin to read him the tales in their classic form, and dug out the old collections of my childhood.

Trolling libraries and bookstores, I discovered a trend that showed a renewed integrity where the tales were concerned. With technological advances in publishing, including computer-generated, four-color separation printing, the turn of the last century brought commercially viable, lavishly illustrated, glossy storybooks of a single tale. Perhaps in reaction to some of the trends I’ve discussed, many of these books actually remain true to the original stories. Featuring Caldecott winning illustrators like Trina Schart Hyman and Paul O. Zelinsky, these books abound with full page, gorgeous pictures that appear on every spread with images representing each scene and detail of the
story. This is a relatively new convention in the publishing of the tales. In the
nineteenth century, the stories were usually included in anthologies where perhaps a
picture or two would represent each tale. In those days beautiful color plates were few
and far between because of printing costs. Later in the twentieth century, single tales
appear in picture books, but the mid-century stories tend to be quite sanitized, and their
production values can’t compare with the lavish contemporary books I had discovered.

While some critics feel the tales require no illustrations and purport that the
reader’s personal connection and the story’s intrinsic power are actually undermined by
the too specifically rendered image, I disagree. Critics like Bruno Bettelheim (1975)
believe that the therapeutic value of the story is “robbed” by its pictures, (p. 60), but I
find these illustrated stories to be truly enchanting, and, in *The Three Petals*, it is this type
of book that I have tried to create. Just as words do, pictures can resonate in their own
very personal and profound way, especially for the visual learner. I’m sure that many of
these beautifully illustrated books have created strong personal connections in the
children of my son’s generation who have been lucky enough to encounter them.

Now in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the current trend in fairy
tales seems to be television shows and feature films that focus on the tales’ grimmest
details. Created for more mature audiences (as were the original oral tales) they extend
the most disturbing themes and imagery of the stories with the brutal enhancement of
modern computer-generated imagery that leaves nothing to the imagination. In the
feature film, *Snow White and the Huntsman*, the witch’s body dissolves into a cloud of
swooping black crows. Taking reckless, but inspired, liberty with the well-known storyline, the witch sucks the beauty and vitality from hapless young women, visibly restoring her own youth, leaving her victims withered and decrepit. Her enchanted army cracks and crumbles into shards of black crystal, while a mystical white stag who inhabits an enchantingly lush, albeit gratuitous fairyland forest, when shot with an arrow, dissolves into a swarm of pale butterflies.

In the movie, *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*, a grown up Hansel and Gretel, no doubt motivated by childhood trauma, hunt witches using high-powered crossbows and an anachronistic Gatling gun. While in *Jack the Giant Slayer*, the special effects and 3-D technology look pretty thrilling when a two-headed giant’s enormous hand seems to plunge right off the screen and into the theater.

I actually enjoy the sensationalism of some of these films and find them quite entertaining and even aesthetically beautiful. The imagery in many of these films is exquisite, and they seem to embrace the violent themes and cruel motivations behind many of the tales without shying away from the disturbing or the harsh. While totally over the top and seemingly a far cry from the Grimm’s intent, in some kind of reactionary swing, they are actually truer to the tales’ original aesthetic and thematic intent than anything we have seen in almost a century.

Re- or misinterpretations of fairy tales seem to abound these days. In the current television season, NBC’s *Grimm* and ABC’s *Once Upon a Time*, feature modern-day characters who encounter and interact with witches, ogres, trolls and goblins in storylines
contrived to fuse the contemporary with the classical. In *Grimm*, a young detective finds he is descended from the Grimms and is charged with policing the witches and other malevolent spirits who have always existed among us.

In another recent addition to the modern day fairy tale canon, and one that my nine-year-old niece adores, *The Sisters Grimm* books by Michael Buckley rely on a similar premise. I confess to only reading the first in the nine-volume series about two young girls who are also descendents of the illustrious brothers. In a convoluted set up, the Grimm family has been charged with solving crimes and presiding over the town of Ferryport Landing where the Everafters – the real life characters from the tales – are interned by a witch’s spell. The stories are contrived, and with the exception of the feisty girl protagonists, the characters seem to be drawn straight from films and cartoons. A party at Prince Charming’s (a name apparently derived from Disney marketing as he is usually simply referred to as The Prince in the original tales) includes The White Rabbit, the Queen of Hearts, Mowgli and the panther Bagira, as well as Beauty and the Beast, and the three pigs. The scene feels like a casting call from Disney. Beyond watching these animated films, it doesn’t seem as though Buckley has done his homework or even read many of the tales at all. Disingenuous and affected, this book would have the brothers Grimm turning grimly in their graves.

On the other hand, the book *A tale dark and Grimm* (2010) by Adam Gidwitz, seems much truer in style and content to the actual tales. Brilliantly splicing together several of the grimmer fairy tales, Gidwitz intersperses the comments of an engaging
narrator, who provides warnings and spoilers, advising the young and the squeamish to leave the room during the grisliest scenes. This book exposes children to the real tales in a form that is much closer to their true intent, including a narrator whose interruptions imitate the interactive feel of an oral storyteller. Gidwitz brings the tales to life in an honest reinterpretation that stays very true to the originals.

As I have witnessed over and over in the half-century of my own consciousness, the fairy tale is continually evolving in response to the needs and the proclivities of its time. It always has, and it always will. In some cases, we might feel that the tales have suffered indignities and abuses at the hands of these contemporary interpretations, but at least in the case of the classic fairy tales, this has always been true. Like the work of Disney, Ward, Duval, and all the others mentioned in my brief contemporary history, the original stories arose from and responded to a specific time and circumstance. Each storyteller, anthologist, or author adapted or created tales for a particular audience and to serve a particular social, moral, political, or artistic purpose. Our time is no different in many ways. There have been critics of the tales in their many versions for centuries, perhaps since their very origins when they may have evolved irreverently from ancient myths, legends, and bible stories.

In a sense there really is no such thing as a truly classical fairy tale, and, as disturbing as it might feel, in the end, the truest thing about any version of the tales may be the very mutability and prolific variety of both its form and content.
PART IV
Analysis of the story
In writing *The Three Petals*, I tried to conform to as many of the classic fairy tale conventions as possible. I wanted both the form and the content to feel as though the story had come down through the ages. I hoped that it would resemble either the classical tale derived first from the storyteller’s oral performance and later transcribed in the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, or the literary one, created in the nineteenth century under the spell of those early collections. I wanted my story to fit solidly into the fairy tale genre with none of the agendas or trends I discussed earlier. Scrupulously avoiding both didacticism and irony, I wrote *The Three Petals* hoping it would feel familiar while being completely original.

The narrative arc of many of the tales involves the coming of age of the young protagonist. Stories often begin with a girl or boy expelled into a hostile world, and end in their financial independence and/or marriage. I wanted my protagonist to evolve during her story through a series of life-changing events and encounters. I tried to include many fairy tale conventions in my story beginning with the old, childless couple encountering an enchanted foundling and including the inciting incident of the appearance of the mysterious stranger leading to a life altering journey or quest through a dark forest or another kind of inhospitable landscape. The odyssey includes the beneficent intervention of nature or the natural world; acts of simple kindness rewarded; the magic talisman used unexpectedly with clever resourcefulness; lies or trickery used in the service of the retribution of a force of pure evil; attainment of a better life, harmony,
marriage; and a happy ending. I have used these well-known tropes of the classic fairy tale, elements that, while familiar and often predictable, I hope will somehow feel new while they establish the tale within a specific tradition.

In addition to these narrative conventions, I have come to believe that there must be one vivid image of strange beauty in the tale that makes it memorable and compelling. A gingerbread house; an isolated, doorless tower; a giant beanstalk; a glass slipper, – coffin, -mountain; a single swan’s wing – each of these somewhat surrealistic images is at once familiar, yet surprising or haunting in some significant detail. They stand out, whether in scale, material, context, or design – an edible, or otherwise architecturally anomalistic edifice; an oversized plant; an uncharacteristically transparent object; a trans-species limb. As central images, they defy reality, establishing the tales firmly and undeniably in the realm of fantasy while they linger in the imagination and resonate in certain very primal ways. They engage elements of the reader’s unconscious and go to work attaching themselves to associations of our deepest feelings. These strange images come to represent the tale in which they appear in an iconic, archetypal way. In our mind’s eye, each has the ability to conjure up an entire tale – to become the story’s visual touchstone, to represent the tale itself.

The gingerbread house in “Hansel and Gretel,” a favorite of many young readers, satisfies the physical and emotional hunger of the children and represents every child’s fantasy of ultimate indulgence and excess. It speaks to the desire in all of us for extravagant nurturing. As an object of supreme desire, an edible home provides all of
life’s sustenance – nourishment and shelter in the very sweetest form imaginable. The gigantic, sky-high sprout in “Jack and the Beanstalk,” transports us along with Jack to a world where we can fulfill our potential and literally rise above our station in life. Rapunzel’s circular tower, with no stairs or point of entrance or egress, feels like an ivory tower, a stone edifice, representing the temporary and desperate preservation of childhood innocence. The jealously guarded fortress can be seen as a giant, stone chastity belt especially when its breach results in Rapunzel’s pregnancy (a detail often omitted from many modern retellings). Her expulsion from the tower puts an end to childhood’s protective shelter.

In The Uses of Enchantment (1975), (especially in the second section) Bruno Bettelheim explores the psychosexual significance of several of these wonderful images. He imposes a rather strict Freudian interpretation in which every tale represents a child’s unconscious sexual awakening, putting a perverse emphasis on taboo themes of masturbation and incest, with oblique allusions to bestiality, necrophilia, and rape. As much as I love much of Bettelheim’s analysis of the tales in the first half of his book, I find that later on he relentlessly and narrow-mindedly pursues these symbolic interpretations, attaching rigid sexual associations to almost every magical detail. Oedipal complexes lurk behind every phallic beanstalk, with penis envy and castration anxiety thrown in for good measure. The glass slipper represents the vagina; Cinderella’s foot fitting perfectly within – intercourse. Frogs represent sex organs, and blood – menstruation or the loss of virginity. In my opinion, there are dangers in pursuing a
symbolic analysis of the tales too rigidly or universally. Each image resonates for us in a specific and personal way and loses something in a one-size-fits-all interpretation.

So, with all this in mind (or not), whether consciously or unconsciously, I chose to use a giant rose as my touchstone image. For me the rose represents a complicated and alluring form in nature. I have always loved the contrast between the velvety petals and the piercing thorns that add a dangerous edge to the delicate, supremely ornamental bloom. I find the scent of rose to be lovely for a brief moment, and then to turn sickly, cloyingly sweet. I felt that these qualities denote ambiguity, and, to further complicate the imagery, I chose to include different rose species. Each species has a different magical property, and they vary in scale. The first giant flower and its three petals are the most memorable, I think. Upon reading my story, a lesbian feminist friend of mine, unwittingly channeling Bettelheim, was convinced the rose represented the protagonist’s budding sexuality, and saw the flowers as anatomical symbols in the tradition of the paintings of Georgia O’Keefe. I found this a little bit hard to take, but an image is in the eye of the beholder.

*The Three Petals* makes use of many other classical fairy tale conventions and themes. I think one of the first such elements that children become aware of is the fairy tale’s frequent use of the number three. Bettelheim (1975) would have us believe, for strangely anatomical reasons, that three is “the number most closely associated in the unconscious with sex” (p. 202). I feel the power of the number has more to do with balance or stability, the mysticism of the pyramid, the establishment of a non-binary
organization – more than two, but not by much. There are often three siblings, three
wishes, three magic talismans, and we all know about the three little pigs, the three bears,
and the three billy goats gruff. Jack climbs up the beanstalk three times, while
Rumplestiltskin gives the miller’s daughter three chances to guess his name, and, in the
original version of Cinderella, she actually attends the ball three times in three different
gowns. Among lesser known stories there are three hairs of the devil, three feathers, three
little men in the woods, and countless other groupings of three.

I started my heroine’s journey by giving her three petals from a magic blossom.
These petals feature in each of three encounters with gentle animals (a mouse, a bunny,
and a goat), which are in need of help along the way, and three corresponding acts of
kindness and generosity. The act of unselfish generosity and its unexpected reward, as
well as its opposite – intentional cruelty or selfishness and its relentless retribution – are
themes that appear frequently in the tales. The little girl in “The Three Men in the
Woods” shares her meager portion of bread with the men and is rewarded with beauty,
gold that falls from her mouth when she speaks, and a royal wedding. Her selfish
stepsister withholds the bread and is punished with ugliness, toads that issue from her
mouth, and an unhappy end. A similar situation occurs in “Mother Holle,” where the kind
and industrious sister is showered with gold while the selfish, lazy one is covered in
pitch.

Rose uses her petals to help the animals in distress, and each petal undergoes a
magic transformation into a necessary object. One becomes a blanket, one a raft, and the
last, a mattress. The gift of each of these objects is rewarded by one of three seemingly useless bits of detritus shed from each of the animals (a whisker from the mouse, a tuft of fur from the bunny’s tail, and a shard from the goat’s horn), which Rose resourcefully uses to remove each of three situational impediments when she reaches the castle. The surprisingly useful object or useful piece of information is also a common theme in the fairy tales. Very often these gifts come from the intervention of a stranger, an animal, or a force of nature. In the “Singing Soaring Lark,” the girl receives gifts from the Sun, the Moon, and the North Wind: a box, an egg, and a nut. While seemingly useless at first, each gift serves an important purpose during the story in advancing the girl’s quest to find her enchanted husband. The youngest son in “The Queen Bee” convinces his older brothers not to destroy an anthill, a flock of ducks, and a beehive. The ants, ducks, and bees come to his aid during the story, bringing him wealth and success. Nature provides generously in many of the tales, especially when rewarding acts of kindness.

The fate of Evil, on the other hand, in many of the tales is swift, harsh, and gruesome. The wolves in “The Wolf and the Seven Little Goats” and “Little Red Riding Hood” have their bellies filled with stones. One falls into a well and drowns; the other dies of his own, weighted-down efforts to escape. While unpunished in Disney, the evil queen in the Grimm’s “Snow White” is forced to wear red-hot iron shoes and dance herself to death. The wicked mother-in-law in “The Twelve Brothers” is put in a barrel filled with hot oil and poisonous snakes, while the stepmother and her daughter in “The Three Little Men in the Woods” and the false bride in “The Goose Girl” are put into a
barrel spiked with nails, rolled down a hill and into the river or dragged through the streets. (One wonders whether historically there were such bizarrely creative means of actual executions.)

While witches are often burned to death in the tales (“Hansel and Gretel”, “Little Brother and Little Sister,” “Our Lady’s Child”) as they were historically, my witch’s death is slow, bloody and horrifyingly existential – shredded by poisonous thorns and shrunk to a state of nonexistence. (When babies are being kidnapped and eaten for breakfast with treacle and rose petal jam, the stakes are high and the retribution is relentless.) On the way to her death, the witch suffers humiliating abuses at the hands (horns, hind feat, and nose) of each of the three formerly gentle creatures and is shown to shrink in size three times, until she disappears in her own basket of ill-gotten plunder.

In my story, as in some of the tales, these trios of events correspond with specific phrases that are repeated, with slight variation, three times in the course of the story. The phrases occur with each encounter along the journey and become predictable motifs: “Those tea rose buds are magic, you know;” “for I surely won’t be needing it where I am going;” and “what in the world will I do with that?” They create what I hope to be a lyrical cadence in the rhythm of the story, to echo in the reader’s ear as the refrain of a familiar song.

Many of the classic tales incorporate a phrase, or even a rhyme or a song into the plot. We all know the evil queen’s oft-repeated rhyming query in “Snow White”

Mirror, mirror on the wall
Who’s the fairest of them all?
The couplet punctuates the story and signals the various episodes leading to Snow White’s eventual, albeit temporary, demise.

In “The Juniper Tree” the murdered boy, who has become a bird, morbidly chants

My mother she slew me,
My father, he ate me,
My sister, Marlene,
Gathered my bones,
Tied them in silk,
For the juniper tree,
Tweet, tweet, what a fine bird am I!

(Tatar, 2004, p. 214)

Again, this chant rhythmically punctuates the story’s episodes. Each of the first three times the bird sings it, he earns a reward for his efforts. Later the song signals the reward of his little half-sister, who causes his reincarnation, and father, who was himself a victim when he was cruelly tricked into cannibalism. It also signals the punishment of the boy’s murderous stepmother. I considered including a rhyme or a song in my story, but it felt clumsy and I ended up using the predictable repetitions to suggest a lyrical motif and to lend a rhythm to the journey.

The elderly couple in my story also has a recurring motif. Each time they encounter the scent of the Rose Fairy’s giant bloom they liken it to pairs of fond and familiar fragrances, each humorously at odds with the other – “bread baking and crushed vanilla beans” versus “freshly fallen rain and sun-bleached river stones;” “cinnamon and spun sugar” versus “fennel flowers and crushed moss;” and “freshly cut grass and newly mown hay,” versus “freshly laundered, line-dried linen and a sweet babe’s breath.” I
wanted the contrast and the repetition to be amusing while depicting the heady confusion caused by the enchanted flower. The images also recall traditional gender occupations, and this is an intentional reference to the imagery and industry found in the old tales.

I intentionally chose to make the old man a woodcutter. The character of the woodcutter appears frequently throughout the tales. Hansel and Gretel’s father, most famously, was a woodcutter, as was Tom Thumb’s, in some versions. The brothers in the “Golden Goose” go into the forest to cut wood, and the man who discovers a boy in a tree in the lesser-known “Fundevogel” is also a woodsman. In a time when wood for fuel was a necessary and easily acquired commodity, woodsman was a humble occupation that required little equipment, skill, or training beyond some strength and an axe. It was a crucial and probably widely-held occupation in preindustrial society. The woodsman or woodcutter serves a nice metaphoric purpose as well, particularly in a story where the woods figure as the location for a transformative journey. The forest can be a perilous and disorienting setting, and the woodcutter maintains the status quo and keeps those dangers and primal fears at bay. He can be seen as a force against the threat of the unknown, the wild beasts that lurk, the threat of being separated from society, the risk of exposure and starvation, all very real dangers in the long-ago world of the fairy tale.

I have tried to employ many other classical literary elements incorporated over the years into fairy tales often by way of legend and myth. As in the stories of “King Arthur,” and “Oedipus Rex,” Rose’s humble origins belie a royal birth. Both Rose and Cloud are
separated at infancy from their illustrious families. Cloud, the son of the Rose Fairy, is kidnapped by the Sky Witch. He matures while in a deep, enchanted sleep, and, like Sleeping Beauty (Briar Rose) and Snow White, he is awakened by his future beloved. Rose. Like Moses and Hercules, Rose is fostered for her own protection. In many of the tales, foundlings are discovered by kind but childless couples, but like Oedipus or the boy in “The Devil and his Three Golden Hairs,” they fulfill their royal destiny in spite of all the efforts to thwart them. In other stories, a childless parent receives the gift of an enchanted child (“Thumbelina” and “Pinocchio”). Like Thumbelina, Rose appears as a baby cradled in an enchanted blossom, a gift from the natural world. This was an unconscious reference on my part. I didn’t even remember Thumbelina’s origins until I recently reread the story. It shows how deeply some of these striking details can lie buried in our unconscious.

The giant blossoms and the other varieties of roses that appear in my book have different magical properties. Their force can be intoxicating, driving parents to distraction to the point of bartering their own children or they can be useful, as the three petals prove to be along the journey. They can be comforting and peaceful, as are the tea roses along the path when untouched, but they can also be deadly, as the same tea roses prove to be when plucked and plundered.

The Rose Fairy warns Rose not to touch the small flowers along the trail, and Rose heeds the warning. Many characters in folklore receive seemingly arbitrary directives, which they choose to ignore. Pandora, Bluebeard’s wives, the two older sisters
in “Fitcher’s Bird,” and the girl in “Our Lady’s Child,” ignore admonitions about a forbidden object or room, and suffer disastrous results. This is a common theme in folklore and fairy tales. While many of their siblings perish, there is often one character who either heeds the warning or avoids the curse of the forbidden object by cleverly or unwittingly circumventing the restriction. Rose, unlike her sisters in the other tales, obeys the warning and suffers no dire circumstances. She is ultimately rewarded for her faithfulness and bravery.

Tricked rather than warned, the Sky Witch isn’t as lucky. I wanted my tale to have some truly scary or grim elements – to activate the reader’s emotions in a dramatically cathartic experience. I wanted the story to feel a little bit unsafe or threatening so the reader might be consumed by the urgency of both its pace and its narrative arc. As the witch makes her precipitous and fatal trip down from the castle, the pace increases and the sections grow shorter. I tried to infuse the story with dramatic tension alleviated by the comic image of her greedy scramblings and the indignity of her encounters with each of the formerly helpful creatures.

In writing the story, I strove to use language and terms that might feel slightly archaic, employing unfamiliar, yet evocative vocabulary and somewhat formal-sounding sentence structures. In addition to stock phrases like “Once upon a time,” “It was love at first sight,” and “They lived happily ever after,” I used expressions like “the old couple had not been blessed with a child,” rather than “the old couple didn’t have any children.” Phrases like “If you are brave enough and clever” and “I’m afraid we haven’t much time”
make use of antiquated sentence structures rather than the colloquial, “if you’re brave and clever enough” or “I’m afraid we don’t have much time.” The words “summon” and “fetch” also feel quaint to me in the sentence, “The witch summoned Rose to fetch her the largest basket,” as opposed to “The witch told Rose to bring her the largest basket.” I hope these and other wordings, help to create the feel of a classic tale.

In addition, I used many vocabulary words that may be unfamiliar to my average reader. Words, like intoxicated, foundling, aroma, saplings, tendrils, venture, perished, I hope will be comprehensible through context. Others words like coerce, irrevocably, trepidation, emanate, may require a definition. Reading word-rich literature expands a young reader’s vocabulary. It seems that much of what is written for children today no longer introduces new words in the way the old tales did. There are specific words that I forever associate with the stories in which I first encountered them. Words like chamomile, rampion, treacle, crockery, haughty, foundling, hasten, harken each came from a specific story and to this day brings to my mind images of impulsive cravings, precocious bunnies, a cruel stepsister, a magic fish, and tedious tasks and chores. Words like these, while not immediately familiar to a young reader, start to represent literary language, and more specifically a fairy tale language. Just as the phrase “Once upon a time” immediately thrusts the reader into the familiar narrative world of the tale, these words and phrases perpetuate the illusion of a departure from the real world of the here and now, and help to transport the reader to another time and place where the magic of the fairy tale is the expected norm.
In this magical realm, characters very often are known simply or generically as “the Youngest Daughter” or the “Fairy Godmother.” In addition to the unnamed Woodcutter and his Wife, I chose to give my characters somewhat allegorical names: the Sky Witch, the Rose Fairy, Rose, and Cloud. This is another convention in many of the tales that telegraphs to readers what type of story they are reading. The characters are stock in many ways – the kind and clever girl, the childless old couple, the evil witch, the helpful fairy, and the furry woodland creatures. The only character that is slightly unusual is the sleeping prince. (I have subsequently learned of a little-known Greek tale by that name.) While I didn’t want to stridently reverse the roles of the boy and girl as so many of the feminist-influenced retellings do, I wanted the gender qualities of the younger characters to be less defined or stereotypical than those in some of the familiar stories like “Snow White,” “Cinderella,” and, obviously, “Sleeping Beauty.”

In addition to the elements I chose to include, there were a few things I tried very hard to avoid. While many of the old stories have inherent morals or values embedded within them, many of these have been subverted and influenced over the years, and now convey a kind of moral ambiguity. I wanted my story to illustrate certain values and behaviors without being didactic or preachy – to have an implicit ethical value system without assuming a hit-you-over-the-head morality. Unlike some of the feminist and socialist retellings and recreations, I wanted my tale to feel traditional, but to subtly incorporate some of the social advances we have achieved in more modern times. I strove to avoid any overt political or social agendas, but it was important to me that Rose be a
strong, resourceful character. While Cloud initially has an extremely passive role
(asleep in midair), I wanted him to be an equal participant in the witch’s (literal) downfall
and demise. She has stolen his childhood; the plan to trick her is his, and it is he who
ruthlessly pushes her down among the fatal flowers as she shrinks to nothingness.

Because I always found the collapsible chronology of some of the tales disturbing
(a child to whom I could relate sets out on a journey, but by the end of the tale is old
enough to wed?), I didn’t want these two children to get married right away and live
happily ever after. I postponed that ending and relegated it to the epilogue, but I did want
the romantic attraction to be evident. “Love at first sight” and “happily ever after,” while
they may have fallen out of favor nowadays, seem like important elements in the tales.
These conventions have always driven the classical world of drama from ancient Greek
to Shakespearian times. Until very recently stories in the Comedic mode have always
resolved in harmony and marriage, while those of Tragedy end in widespread death and
destruction. Traditional fairy tales usually fall into the former category.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I wanted to avoid any whiff of a post-
modernist sensibility including any tongue-in-cheek, hipster irony or meta-literary self-
consciousness. Unlike many of the recent versions and retellings of the tales, I wanted to
capture some of the innocence and optimism of the original stories. I didn’t want my fairy
tale to sound clever or jaded. I wanted the tone to be as authentic as I tried to make the
plot, the language, the themes, and the imagery.
I hope that all of these elements contribute to what I intend to be a truly modern literary fairy tale in the classic tradition.
PART V
Analysis of the Pictures
“...‘what is the use of a book...without pictures’...” (Carroll, p. 13) muses Alice as she begins to drift off into Wonderland. Appropriately enough, Alice herself was memorably rendered in John Tenniel’s marvelous line drawings for the original editions of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. I couldn’t agree more with Alice, and with Charles Dodgson, who worked closely with Tenniel (to Tenniel’s chagrin) and stipulated many of the details for those famous drawings, especially those depicting his beloved Alice (Gardner, 2000). While I enjoyed the color-tinted line drawings in my two-volume edition of the Alice books, I lived for the pictures in other books – the full-color illustration plates that never seemed to appear frequently enough for my tastes in the ancient books I inherited from my parents. Published in the Teens, Twenties, and Thirties, these books were elegantly bound and elaborately designed and illustrated with borders and embellishments on nearly every page. Before I learned how to read, and even after to be perfectly honest, it was the pictures that drew me into literature and taught me how to “see” stories.

As a child my eyes gorged on the beautiful illustrations of Edmund Dulac in my father’s edition of the *Stories of the Arabian Nights* (a book so old that, in that pre-litigious time, it doesn’t seem to have a copyright date) and the adorable plates by Jesse Wilcox Smith in my mother’s 1937 edition of the *Water Babies* by Charles Kingsley. Artists like Arthur Rackham, Maxfield Parish, Milo Winter, Harry Rountree, and Kay
Nielsen, among numerous other illustrators, left me with the lasting impressions that influenced my tastes in art, as well as my choices in illustrating my own work.

These books were beautifully designed, often with graphic details on nearly every page. Elaborate borders drew the eye in to pictures and text in ways that enhanced and extended the themes and imagery of the tales they adorned.

Chapter often began with a *historiated initial*, the decoratively rendered first letter of a chapter or page, a device borrowed from Medieval illuminated manuscripts, and one that can set the tone and provide foreshadowing of the narrative events to follow.

In many books, one or two line-drawings, not necessarily germane to, but supportive of, the story would grace every other page or so, providing visual details to enhance or
extend elements of the story, or simply to reinforce the themes, imagery, and mood of the tale.

Even the title and chapter pages in these books were elegantly designed.

But what I really loved were the relatively rare glossy, color plates, of which there might be only ten or so throughout each of these two- to three-hundred-page, old books. They were usually listed, after the table of contents, identified by page number and an intriguing excerpt from the text that also appeared as a caption beneath or facing each full-page illustration.

*She poured into each jar in turn a sufficient quantity of the boiling oil to scald its occupant to death.*

(Houseman, [no date], p. xxi)
He felt how comfortable it was to have nothing on him but himself.
(Kingsely, 1937, p. 11)

The oak addresses the spirit of the trees
(Maeterlinck, 1911, p. xvi)

Cryptic captions like these alluded to events in the story and, while some would view them as spoilers in this day-and-age of the mandatory spoiler alert, they gave reassurance to a child who enjoyed knowing a bit about the unfolding story in advance. Flipping slowly through the pages of these old books, my fingertips could easily discern the color illustrations, printed on slightly thinner, glossy leaves, and I would always preview these, stopping at each color image to feast my eyes and intrigue and inspire my mind for the story ahead.

The color plates were often protected from the abrasion of the courser print pages by a sheet of light, translucent onion paper. I delighted in the sight of the color plate, initially muted by the thin piece of tissue. I loved the act of carefully lifting this delicate sheet from the longed-for, color picture; the light rustling of the crisp velum; the glorious image finally revealed. Adding to the sensuality of these early reading experiences was the musty redolence of a fifty-year-old book (now, nearly a century-old). The fearful fragility of the ancient tome itself, brought to mind images of childhood versions of my parents sharing the same experience so many years ago, lending an air of time travel or archeological discovery to the drama of the actual story. There was a feeling of something magical, found or discovered, an element of a hidden treasure trove or a doorway into another land that complemented the events in the types
of stories to which I was drawn. These books were glorious, especially compared to the inexpensively printed paperback chapter books of the Sixties with the occasional inelegant, black and white, cartoonish sketch that would suffice as an illustration.

And the pictures in these old books? They were beautiful. The antique look of the settings; the elegantly depicted furnishings and landscapes; the stylized innocence of the children; the elegant dress and carriage of the women; the realistically rendered, yet charmingly anthropomorphized animals – these images established a separate world where the fantasy of the tale came to life. The artists of much of this classic artwork employed a process of outlining their drawings in ink and then overlaying them in watercolor, in several layers. The colors were vivid and variegated, creating complicated and nuanced details and textures.

Because of innovations in the nineteenth century publishing industry that allowed for truer, more brilliant color replication, artists like Dulac and Rackham created their own techniques to achieve the delicate luminosity that it was now possible to reproduce (Manges, 2008). I have observed some of the original artwork in museum exhibits, and the colors in those old books seem quite accurate and have endured well all these years. Many of these stunningly gorgeous images have stayed with me for half a century and were brought back to life as I researched this paper.

In spite of Bettelheim’s (1975) criticism of illustrated versions of the tales, which he felt, as I mentioned earlier, “robbed” the stories of their subliminal power (p. 60), over the years many have disagreed. Walter Crane (in Meyer, 1983), one of the
leading artists of the Golden Age of Illustration felt that the eye “was the chief organ for the reception of ideas” (p. 22), while Arthur Rackham (1983), in my opinion the most magical of that pantheon, felt that “imagination, when stimulated, elevated the child’s intelligence” (p.169). Both believed fervently in the developmental role of fine illustrations. As illustrators themselves, these views are not surprising, however I think most educators today also believe in the illustration’s ability to extend meaning, expand comprehension, and engage young readers.

In creating The Three Petals, I hoped to capture some of the magic that those old books held for me. With more time I would have liked to have been able to add the occasional small black and white images and embellishments that adorned those old picture books. I originally designed my own historiated initials for each page rendered from kaleidoscopic distortions of each facing illustration.

At the end of the hallway, a circular stairway rose…

rose scaled the rocky slope away from the river…

he woods began to grow thinner…

Historiated initials derived from computer-manipulated versions of illustrations on pp. 30, 24, and 22
I also intended to cut a unique border for each page from the same patterned sheets, but I decided against these details because of time constraints.

I did use one of these patterns for the endpapers of my book. It is derived from the image of the infant Rose nestled in the giant flower in the first scene of my story.

In designing my book, I settled for these computer-generated borders and the plain (un-historiated) *initials* that begin each page of text, which are set in green in the more decorative Harrington font in a larger point size. The little flourishes and flowers throughout, I found in the Wingding and Zapf Dingbat fonts. I hope these modest embellishments lend some of the elegance of those old books to my tale.

As much as I love the ink and watercolor drawings of the Golden Age of fairy tale illustration, that is not my strongest medium. I chose instead to render my pictures in collage, a very forgiving form of expression. It can be used effectively with the smallest of children and is a useful tool for artists to experiment with balance and composition without committing indelibly to any single design. The medium of collage, not unlike the literary fairy tales of the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, arose from the industrialization of the printing process itself. A proliferation of printed matter was
suddenly available to the general public and these widely disseminated bits of ephemera were used in the first collages of the early nineteenth century.

Later, in the hands of artists like Matisse or the early Cubists, collage was a means of exploring how their subject matter was composed of interacting shapes and textures. Collage reduced the world to its basic geometric or formal composition. The cut and torn materials also revealed to these artists the flattened, two-dimensionality of the canvas, and modern art began to self-consciously acknowledge the inherent lack of depth in the pictorial surface (Waldman, 1992). Henri Matisse worked mainly in collage at the end of his life when prolonged illness had compromised the sureness of his brush stroke. He used paper cut from enormous, hand-painted sheets to create lyrical, kinesthetic figures, while the Cubists used the same medium to express the fragmentation of modern life.

It is perhaps a little-known fact that Hans Christian Andersen was himself a prolific collage artist (Tatar, 2008; Waldman, 1992). He created many collages and elaborate paper cutouts that featured the extraordinarily lovely imagery of his stories. Swans, ballerinas, skulls, hangmen, and startling characters of all sorts inhabit his whimsical artwork. In accounts by contemporaries, it is said that he would often cut out elaborate designs while telling his stories to an audience. While his collage and cutout work is remarkable, it remained a hobby that he practiced solely for his own amusement and the entertainment of his fans (Brust, 2003). Andersen, like many of his contemporaries found in collage an expressive and facile medium. He and hundreds of
other amateur collage artists of the Victorian Romantic era – anonymous scrap-bookers and card makers – used collage to express the intimate and personal symbolism of their lives and loves. This work has influenced me greatly.

I also revere the artists Max Ernst, Joseph Cornell, Hannah Hoch and later, Robert Hamilton, who created visual narratives in collage using imagery derived from catalogues and newsprint. The juxtaposition of their carefully cut figures, suggests the unexpected or disturbing randomness of modern life. The Surrealist adage of “the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella” (Lautreamont, 1868) best characterizes this work. There is often a mysterious and disturbing subtext or suggested storyline, but it is always implicit, rather than explicit. There is no accompanying textual narrative for these pictures. I like to imagine my illustrations standing on their own, graphically insinuating my tale without the actual words.

Almost defying or ironically contradicting the Cubist’s newly discovered embrace of the two-dimensional picture space, many of the early collage artists I am drawn to actually began to work in three dimensions using found objects to create assemblages, often placed in boxes and vitrines. In my illustrations, I have worked in three dimensions, building out the stonework in the tower to create stairs and draping one character in actual fabric. I also used life-sized, plastic leaves throughout my work to create depth in my forest scenes. I used the leaves, placed around the edges of the picture, to create a kind of intimate view into the events of the story, as if we, the viewers, have stumbled
upon the scenes while wandering on our own journey through the primeval fairy tale forest.

In many ways collage is uniquely suited as a medium for illustrating fairy tales. It can be a fairly rigid medium with many constraints and limitations, as structurally restrictive as the fairy tale is limited by its own literary conventions. Both the medium of collage and the classic fairy tale can seem flat and two-dimensional in a broad sense, while, at the same time, creating a mysterious or startling pictorial space or literary narrative. In my work I had to photocopy my characters and settings to appear in different scenes. The result might seem repetitive or generic at worst, or archetypal and iconic at best. The forests, castles, and creatures are all drawn from an idealized, indistinct past. Mine are stock characters that seem to come straight from central casting. These intentionally call to mind the generic settings and characters we find in the classic tales – the young boy or girl, the witch, the fairy godmother – who often lack names as well as any deeper characterization or psychology.

Most of the images of the characters I have used in my illustrations are derived from reproductions of the Victorian imagery used in those early amateur collages. This imagery is available nowadays, reproduced in glossy collage sheets, which I have used to illustrate many stories over the years. My senior essay in college was on costume design in Shakespeare, culminating in a disco version of the Tempest rendered in collage. I have illustrated Alexander Pope’s “The Rape of the Lock” and Jonathan
Swift’s (arguably pre-surrealistic) four books of Gulliver, as well as some original work of my own.

This is the first work I have done since I have had access to the Internet and a very good scanner and laser printer. In addition to the painstaking process of scouring magazines and catalogues for images, the meticulous cutting, arranging, and gluing that have always been part of the process, now, thanks to Google Images, I had infinite material at my fingertips, as well as the ability to shrink, enlarge, flip, and minimally manipulate the images that I acquired. In spite of this, the process was still arduous and time consuming. This project took over a year to illustrate.

Rose was the first character I was able to cast. She was one of several angels in a reproduction from a Victorian Christmas card. I had to borrow folds from the robe of a duplicate figure to cover the holiday objects carried by the original.

Once I had scanned her into my computer, I could shrink her image for various scale requirements, or reverse her orientation for compositional needs. Using simple manipulations of her limbs, cut by hand, I could pose her as needed, adding props or the interaction of another character or animal.
My search for the perfect prince and witch was much more difficult and time consuming, and I began to feel like a frustrated casting agent during the process. I ended up using a witch in an illustration from P. J. Lynch’s beautiful collection of Norwegian fairy tales, *East of the Sun, West of the Moon* (1992), which he has generously granted me permission to use in this context (see Appendix One, p. 104). By using settings on the computer, I was able to shrink her in size to meet the scale of each of the animals that figures in her downfall, and then, by cutting the figure in various ways, I manipulated the image to suit the action – sitting on a wall or falling and tumbling through the final scenes of the story.
The prince is a truly creative composite that I essentially made from scratch. The basic boy is derived from an illustration from the 1940s or Fifties. The boy was too clean-cut and young looking for my purposes, so I cut up bits of his hair to make it look tousled, and I cut out and turned the gaping grin of a duplicate upside down, covering the mouth of the original, to make him look a little less innocent. His body and clothing also had to be completely changed. His pants are cut from a photo of the sky, his boots from the hide of an image of a dog, and his cloak comes from a picture of a super hero. The Prince’s shirtsleeves come from another 1950s image of a boy, while I cut his vest from the coat of another in the same series. In order to make Cloud look asleep in the scene where Rose discovers him floating in the second turret, I painstakingly glued tiny rounded pieces of skin-colored paper over his eyes, leaving only the bottom rim showing to look like the eyelashes on a closed lid. I used the touch up wand in my photo program to smudge the glued seams.
a. Image from collage sheet used as basic template for prince’s face and body
b. Shirt sleeve used as is and in reverse
c. The remains of the jacket used for Prince’s vest

da. Original boy from fifties collage sheet
b. Altered hair and mouth
c. Altered eyes for sleeping prince.

Cloud wearing pants, cape, and boots made freehand

The Rose Fairy was my only character who required a costume change during the story, and, after attempting to create a disguise for her out of cut paper, I used actual fabric draped over her form to create a dark cloak for the scene in which she appears in *cognito*. I enjoyed the effect so much that I gave her a gauzy new dress to celebrate her reunion with her son in the final scene.
Casting and wardrobe complete, I had to finalize my choices for the settings in my tale. To extend the theatrical, or cinematic metaphor, I became a virtual-location scout, scouring magazines and the Internet for the perfect forest scene (Muench, 1993), riverbank (Nicklen, 2010), craggy mountain-scape (Sartore, 2010), and castle (Muñoz, 2006). These all had to be adapted for my purposes. Trees or rocks had to be added and roses strewn along the paths. In order to have a symmetrical castle with two towers separated by a central courtyard, as described in my story, I had to flip the image of Santiago Muñoz’s beautiful, single-turreted fortress and append a mirror image tower to its opposite side. Then I had to patch up the fenestrated stone face with extra bits of stone from discarded sections of the flipped duplicate to create the exteriors of the windowless chambers where Rose finds the death roses and the sleeping prince.

My riverbank began with an image from Paul Nicklen’s breathtaking series on the Spirit Bears of British Columbia, but is almost completely fabricated from several different images. Some of the trees, rocks, and river, as well as the sky itself, come from different landscapes around the world. My stone wall actually comes from much nearer by. It is derived from a photograph I took of the retaining wall in Riverside Park. I pieced together duplicates of the same image in a patchwork to disguise the repeating
pattern of stonework in order to achieve a wide enough expanse of wall with the proper proportion and scale of stonework required by my composition.

Graphic designer, casting director, costume designer, location scout, set designer, artistic director, and Frankenstein doctor (manipulating body parts to create the perfect subject), I played many roles in creating the pictures for my fairy tale. I hope the seams in my work, literally and figuratively, are not too obvious, and that my images support and enhance the characters and the plot of my fairy tale *The Three Petals*, but most of all, I hope they may be able to replicate some of the magic I found in those ancient books of my childhood.
Appendix One

Letters from artists granting permission to use images in collage illustrations
Hi Amy
Thanks for the pics. I like your collage style, so do please use my image. I’m flattered that you like it.
And yes I would like to read your story...sounds nice and grim....Please send it and I will probably get to read it tomorrow.
Best regards
PJ
Hello Amy - thanks for getting in touch. I'm not sure which of several images of Bodiam Castle you might have found. Anyway I'm happy to provide permission for you to use an image of the castle on the basis you've set out - i.e. non-commercial use within academia.

Your Master's sounds fascinating. Have you seen any imagery of Watts Cemetery Chapel? Not directly linked to fairy tales, but with Celtic and romantic influences and often described as magical with an extraordinary range of symbolic imagery. I was so taken with it when I visited many years ago I created a web page - a little dated now, but will give you an idea: [http://www.wyrdlight.com/watts/watts.html](http://www.wyrdlight.com/watts/watts.html)

With very best wishes for success with your Masters, Antony

Antony McCallum
Commissioned photography: [wyrdlight.eu](http://wyrdlight.eu)
Pro Bono photography: [wyrdlight.com](http://wyrdlight.com)
Sales: if made available: [wyrdlight.net](http://wyrdlight.net)
Web search: Wyrdlight Photography
Mobile: 07884055543
Answer Machine: 01276333128
Dear Amy Lipman,

Thank you for your inquiry.

As you will not be using the image for a commercial purpose, no formal permission is needed. We appreciate that you checked with us first.

Best regards,
Cathryn Leon
Senior Manager, Retail Operations
Marc Muench
To: Amy Lipman
Re: Question

Dear Amy

You may use this image of David’s in your masters project, an academic use only, as you suggest.

Sounds interesting and I wish you much success.

Regards

Marc Muench

Muench Photography Inc.
5482 Tolted Dr
Santa Barbara CA, 93111
ph: (805) 689-2825
tx: (805) 689-2826
marom@munenchphotography.com

www.muenchphotography.com
www.muenchworkshops.com
Hi Amy,

I just read your comment on Flickr where you ask me permission to use the photo of Butron Castle. I’m so glad you are enjoying so much. The truth is that it is an impressive castle as it appears when you walk through the forest where the castle. I have no objection to use the picture to illustrate your thesis as you say put my name in the credits.

Good luck with the thesis.

Kind regards,

Santiago Muñoz
smunozb@gmail.com | http://www.santimb.com
Hello Amy,

Thanks very much for your email. So long as the image is used for academic purposes in your thesis, and Paul is credited as you mentioned below, you have permission to use the Spirit Bear Image.

Good luck with your thesis!

Kind regards,

- Myles

Myles Legacy
Studio Manager
Paul Nicklen Photography
Office Phone: +1 250 821 4443
Web: PaulNicklen.com
Email: PaulNicklenOffice@gmail.com
Twitter: @PaulNicklen
Instagram: @PaulNicklen
Hi Amy,

Thank you for further explaining how the image will be used. We can allow you to reference the image in your thesis. Please be sure to credit Joel Sartore. Let me know if you have any questions. Many thanks.

Best,

Grace Young
Assistant to Joel Sartore
www.joelsartore.com
grace@joelsartore.com
402.474.1006
Appendix Two

Letters seeking permission to use photographs in collage illustrations
Dear Veronika Brazdova,

I am a graduate student at Bank Street College of Education in NYC. I have done extensive research into fairy tales and fairy tale illustration, and I'm finishing a master’s essay supporting an original fairytale I have written and illustrated using collage.

I came upon this lovely image of yours of the path up Barbury Hill, which I would love to use in one of my pictures. This project will not be used for commercial purposes, but is only in support of my thesis, which would be digitally available in academic circles. I have, of course, credited you and your image in my supporting material.

I am hoping you might agree to give me permission to use your lovely image. My email is alipman7@nyc.rr.com. I hope to hear from you within two weeks, as my deadline is approaching.

Sincerely,
Amy Lipman
(2/4/14)

Dear DesuDan,

I am a graduate student at Bank Street College of Education in New York City. I have done extensive research into fairy tales and fairy tale illustration, and I'm finishing a master’s essay supporting an original fairytale I have written and illustrated using collage.

I came upon this lovely image of yours of The Castle Acre Abbey archway, which I would love to use in two of my pictures. This project will not be used for commercial purposes, but is only in support of my thesis, which would be digitally available in academic circles. I have, of course, credited you and your image in my supporting material.

I am hoping you might agree to give me permission to use your lovely image. My email is alipman7@nyc.rr.com. I hope to hear from you within two weeks, as my deadline is approaching.

Sincerely,
Amy Lipman
2/4/14

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a graduate student at Bank Street College of Education in New York City. I have done extensive research into fairy tales and fairy tale illustration, and I'm finishing a master's essay supporting an original fairytale I have written and illustrated using collage.

I came upon this lovely image of yours of a cottage in the woods, which I would love to use in two of my pictures. This project will not be used for commercial purposes, but is only in support of my thesis, which would be digitally available in academic circles. I have, of course, credited you and your image in my supporting material.

I am hoping you might agree to give me permission to use your lovely image. My email is alipman7@nyc.rr.com. I hope to hear from you within two weeks, as my deadline is approaching.

Sincerely,

Amy Lipman
(2/4/14)

Dear Raine Pal,

I am a graduate student at Bank Street College of Education in NYC. I have done extensive research into fairy tales and fairy tale illustration, and I'm finishing a master’s essay supporting an original fairytale I have written and illustrated using collage. I came upon an image of yours of a basket (above), which I would love to use in a few of my pictures. This project all not be used for commercial purposes, but is only in support of my thesis, which would be digitally available in academic circles. I have, of course, credited you and your image in my supporting material.

I am hoping you might agree to give me permission to use your lovely image. My email is alipman7@nyc.rr.com. I hope to hear from you within two weeks, as my deadline is approaching.

Sincerely,
Amy Lipman
2/4/14

To whom it may concern,

I am a graduate student at Bank Street College of Education in New York City. I have done extensive research into fairy tales and fairy tale illustration, and I'm finishing a master’s essay supporting an original fairytale I have written and illustrated using collage.

I came upon your a photo of one of your beautiful fountains which I would love to use in one of my pictures. This project will not be used for commercial purposes, but is only in support of my thesis, which would be digitally available in academic circles. I have, of course, credited you and your image in my supporting material.

I am hoping you might agree to give me permission to use your lovely image. My email is alipman7@nyc.rr.com. I hope to hear from you within two weeks, as my deadline is approaching.

Sincerely,

Amy Lipman
References


http://www.oldchildrensbooks.com/books/the-fairy-book-14178

http://fuckyeahbookarts.tumblr.com/post/4395850609/nothing-better-then-good-ole-fashioned-fairytale

**PRIMARY SOURCES**


SOURCE INFORMATION FOR COLLAGE ILLUSTRATIONS


MLP vintage die scraps (commercially distributed/public domain) (Roses and Rose: pp. 7, 8, 9, 11, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 48, 49, 50, 98, 99)


Shackman, B. Novelty paper goods (commercially distributed/public domain) (the Rose Fairy: pp. 18, 26, 42)