

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Kalli Damschen for the degree of Master of Arts in English presented on May 16, 2019.

Title: Queering Ever After: Temporality, Magic, and Endings in Victorian Fairy Tales.

Abstract approved:

Megan Ward

This thesis analyzes two Victorian fairy tales that feature queer endings, or endings that offer alternatives to the heteronormative fairy-tale tradition that idealizes heterosexual marriage and the biological family. In both George MacDonald's *The Wise Woman* (1875) and E. Nesbit's "The Island of the Nine Whirlpools" (1901), I argue that magic enables queer modes of being in time, motivating relationships between women and creating possibilities outside a life dictated by patriarchy that endure through the story's ending. Chapter 1 focuses on *The Wise Woman*, using Jack Halberstam's theory of queer temporality to show how the novella complicates linear narratives of development from childhood to adulthood, thereby challenging heteronormative understandings of life stages. While many fairy tales' endings uphold the family, *The Wise Woman* concludes with a disruption to the family, and in this disruption, provides new ways for women to claim agency and relate with one another. Chapter 2 shifts to "The Island of the Nine Whirlpools," which, conversely, is queer because of the way the story's ending upholds the family through its idealization of a queer, polymaternal family. Throughout the story, magic enables the

separation of reproduction from both biology and marriage, which results in a queered time of inheritance as well as a significant relationship between two women. Together, these chapters suggest queerness is a potential escape from the heterosexist patriarchy and the life narratives it demands from women, while providing an alternative genealogy of the fairy tale that makes greater space for subversion and non-normativity.

©Copyright by Kalli Damschen
May 16, 2019
All Rights Reserved

Queering Ever After: Temporality, Magic, and Endings in Victorian Fairy Tales

by
Kalli Damschen

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Arts

Presented May 16, 2019
Commencement June 2019

Master of Arts thesis of Kalli Damschen presented on May 16, 2019

APPROVED:

Major Professor, representing English

Director of the School of Writing, Literature, and Film

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Kalli Damschen, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank Megan Ward for her support, encouragement, and guidance. She did an excellent job of shepherding this project from a fledgling interest in fairy tales and queer temporality, which first reared its head in her Victorian Collections class last year, to the completed thesis it is today. I'd also like to thank Evan Gottlieb and Tara Williams, whose early input at my prospectus meeting helped this thesis take shape. Thank you also to Susan Shaw, who kindly offered her time to serve as my Graduate Council Representative.

I owe a special thank you to my fellow OSU graduate school survivors. To Brooke and Austin, thanks for being great sounding boards and letting me think through my thesis aloud. I hope it wasn't always as painful for you as it was for me. To Colleen, especially: thank you for putting up with nearly two years of long-winded, half-nonsensical texts about queer fairy tales and for helping me singlehandedly keep Starbucks in business.

I also couldn't have made it to or through grad school without the support of my family and friends. To Mom and Dad, thank you for your unending encouragement and support, and for providing me with lots of fairy-tale inspired Halloween costumes to demonstrate the formative influence of fairy tales on children's lives. That one really came in handy. Thank you to Ashley and Casey, whose friendship was my anchor throughout this entire process. You guys are the light of my life. Finally, Bhisma: you challenge me to be a better person and a better thinker, so I have to conclude that this thesis is better now than it would have been without your influence. Thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1 Introduction.....	1
Magic and Time.....	7
2 In a “Peculiar Country”: Queer Magic, Temporality, and Desire in George MacDonald’s <i>The Wise Woman</i>	20
The Queer Time and Space of <i>The Wise Woman</i> ’s Setting.....	23
Challenging Heteronormative Narratives of Development.....	26
Women’s Queer Futurity, Agency, and Relationships.....	33
Conclusion	43
3 And They All Lived Happily: Motherhood, Temporality, and Magic in E. Nesbit’s “The Island of the Nine Whirlpools”.....	45
The Legitimacy of the Nonbiological Family.....	48
Female Marriage as a Refuge from Sexism within the Heterosexual Family.....	54
The Exclusion of Queer Magic.....	61
Validating Polymaternalism and Intergenerational Priority.....	63
Conclusion.....	68
4 Conclusion	70
Works Cited	73

Introduction

The realm of fairy-story is wide and deep and high and filled with many things: all manner of beasts and birds are found there; shoreless seas and stars uncounted; beauty that is an enchantment, and an ever-present peril; both joy and sorrow as sharp as swords.
—J.R.R. Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories”

For my own part, I do not remember life before “once upon a time.” Like many children, I grew up listening to fairy tales and watching Disney’s *Cinderella* (1950) and *Snow White* (1937). In fact, I had dressed up as the titular characters from both stories for Halloween by the time I was ten years old. Around the same age, some of my favorite novels were fairy-tale retellings, including Shannon Hale’s *The Goose Girl* and Gail Carson Levine’s *Fairest*. My experience upholds Jack Zipes’ suggestion that “the fairy tale may be the most important cultural and social event in most children’s lives” (1). Nearly from infancy, it seems, fairy tales in their many forms were pervasive in my life, as they pervade modern culture en masse. They not only influence the stories we continue to tell but the way we think about the world: references to fairy-tale concepts such as Prince Charming and happily ever after pervade our cultural consciousness. As may be clear from these last two examples, fairy tales’ enduring influence is perhaps most stark in the realm of romance. Countless online articles advise women on the best ways to find their own Prince Charming, while the #happilyeverafter tag on Instagram currently features 1.8 million posts, the majority of which showcase a wedding or engagement. The fairy-tale romance of marrying Prince Charming and living happily ever after is held up as the paragon of romantic love in Western society.

In the popular consciousness, then, the fairy tale represents a highly normative space—a narrative that suggests heterosexual marriage is the ultimate goal for women and that their happiness is contingent upon it. Various scholars have pointed out the presence of sexism in

traditional fairy tales, along with the fairy tale's normative depiction of the family, romantic love, and sexual desire. Maria Tatar writes that "The family (more specifically, the nuclear family) furnishes the basic configuration of the tale's characters" and fairy tales commonly recount the development from the "dissolution of one nuclear family to the formation of a new one" ("From Rags to Riches" 31). Through this preoccupation with the nuclear family, and with the unilinear movement from biological family to marital family, the fairy tale reinscribes heterosexual definitions of the family rooted in biological reproduction and monogamy. Tatar also elaborates on fairy tales' problematic depictions of women, speaking particularly about the Grimms' tales; female villains, taking the form of evil stepmothers or witches, outnumber any other kind of fairy-tale villain ("From Nags to Witches" 139). Alexandra Cordiano points out how the depiction of the evil stepmother reinforces the notion that the only valid or stable familial bonds are based on biological kinship (402). The evil stepmother also shows antagonism as characteristic of relationships between women, as Lily Clerkx and Mira Yamaoka argue; these antagonistic relationships between women thereby disallow solidarity, diminish the importance of female friendship or kinship, and reaffirm heterosexual marriage as the "greatly desired ultimate goal" (83), particularly since marriage to a man often figures as an escape from the antagonistic relationship between women.

As we can see, the ways in which fairy tales conform to sexist conceptions of gender and heteronormative understandings of the family have been well established. In recent years, however, some scholars have turned away from what Rita Felski would term "suspicious" modes of reading fairy tales (2), instead seeking to unearth sites of subversion within these narratives. This mode of scholarship is now common in queer fairy-tale criticism, but it first appeared in feminist projects such as Edith Lazaros Honig's *Breaking the Angelic Image: Woman Power in*

Victorian Children's Fantasy (1988), which focused on reclaiming Victorian children's fantasy for women by pointing out unexpectedly positive portrayals of female characters and the power they exercised. Interestingly, Honig's feminist analysis includes an aborted queer reading of George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin*, which, I argue, demonstrates an early iteration of a trend that later rises in queer fairy-tale scholarship. In her book, Honig turns her attention to mothers, spinsters, girls, and magical women in Victorian fairy tales to conclude that these stories presented readers with powerful female characters, standing in stark contrast to the passive heroines common in the fairy-tale tradition typified by the Brothers Grimm (132).

Honig's project does not draw upon queer theory or seem particularly invested in questions of sexuality, but she does present a queer reading of MacDonald's novel. Honig's primary focus is on the figure of old Irene, a magical woman who serves as a mentor for the younger Princess Irene within the novel, and she dedicates a single page to analyzing the "overtly sexual encounter" between old Irene and young Irene: "While Briar Rose pricks her finger in the fairy's chamber and then falls into a protective sleep which will preserve her from sexual encounters until she is old enough to handle them, Irene spends the night with Old Irene and undergoes further sexual initiation" (127). Here, Honig first differentiates sexual development within the Victorian fairy tale from the classic fairy-tale tradition, contrasting MacDonald's Irene with the Grimms' Briar Rose, before elaborating on the same-sex, cross-generational queer relationship between old and young Irene. However, after analyzing the erotic language MacDonald uses in this scene, Honig concludes with what amounts to a dismissal of the queerness she has uncovered, stating that "children of both sexes often have playful homosexual encounters during adolescence, with one partner taking a male role and the other a female one. It is a form of sexual initiation and practice" (127). With this interpretation of the

scene, queer desire exists only in service of heterosexuality, as homosexual “play” is merely training for later heterosexual relationships, such as the implicit happily-ever-after ending implied between Princess Irene and the young Curdie at the end of the novel.

I dwell at length on Honig’s normative reading of this queer encounter because it bears marked resemblance to many more contemporary and intentionally queer readings of fairy tales, which often locate queerness exclusively within the middle of the narrative as a transitory stage on the path to heterosexuality. For example, in “At Home in the Realm of Enchantment,” Kay Turner presents a queer reading of the Grimms’ “Frau Holle,” in which a young girl descends a well and discovers the land of a magical woman named Frau Holle. Turner argues that Frau Holle is a queer figure, analyzing the “lesbian maternity” in her relationship with the young girl (59). However, after living with Frau Holle, the girl returns to her original home and continues living with her stepmother and stepsister. Turner concludes that “Her move from ‘once upon’ to ‘happily ever’ is made possible by a temporal detour into Holle’s subterranean haven” (47). As in Honig’s analysis of *The Princess and the Goblin*, Turner’s reading of “Frau Holle” locates queerness within the story’s middle, and the queered relationship between Frau Holle and the girl is ended in service of developmental transformation. While the queer relationship in “Frau Holle” is not directly in service of heterosexuality, as the story includes no male love interest for the girl and her reunification with her “earthly family” is not particularly happy, the story’s queerness is still largely excluded from the ending, and meaningful relationships between women are foreclosed. Turner does essentially acknowledge this, asserting that “The fairy-tale surface story may be obviously moralistic, socially restrictive, and gender or sexuality normative, but the tale’s deeper secondary story—often told in the middle—can be antimoralistic, agency oriented, and gender or sexuality expressive” (46). Here, Turner does

suggest that the “antimoralistic, agency oriented, and gender or sexuality expressive” elements of the tale might exist beyond the middle in other tales, but she does not elaborate on the implications of the link between the secondary story and the middle, as Turner’s chosen example, “Frau Holle,” returns to normative confinement with the story’s conclusion.

This trend crops up a number of times.¹ Its multiple incarnations are particularly notable considering how few queer readings appear in feminist fairy-tale criticism, a lack which Turner and Pauline Greenhill have already identified: “in contrast to the wealth of feminist material, queer and trans fairy tale interpretations, beyond reinventions and new tellings (see, e.g., Donoghue 1997), are rare” (10). As an illustrating example, they cite Donald Haase’s collection of essays *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches*, in which only one article mentions queer interpretations and does so only with examples from the late twentieth century (Turner & Greenhill 3). So far, within the fledgling field of queer fairy-tale scholarship, queer expressions of gender may exist throughout the duration of the story, but any possible queer relationship is almost exclusively expelled from the fairy tale’s iconic happy ending. Non-normative experiences and desires are rarely allowed to persist and are instead subjugated by the heteronormative fairy-tale ending. This process overlaps with the normative narrative of childhood innocence which, as Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley point out, “opens up a space for childhood queerness... as long as the queerness can be rationalized as a series of mistakes or misplaced desires” (xiv). Of course, this space for queerness does nothing in actuality to help queer children, whose queer experiences or identity must be marked as “mistakes” along the inevitable path to heterosexuality. In queered fairy tales’ kinship with this narrative, they might

¹ See also Lewis C. Seifert’s “Queer Time in Charles Perrault’s ‘Sleeping Beauty’” and Kevin Goldstein’s “Nurtured in a Lonely Place: The Wise Woman as Type in ‘The Goose Girl at the Spring’” in *Transgressive Tales: Queering the Grimms*.

unintentionally perpetuate the idea that youthful queerness is a phase that is easily reabsorbed by heteronormative expectations of marriage and reproduction.

As a result, I argue for the importance of locating examples of fairy tales with an “antimoralistic, agency oriented, and gender or sexuality expressive” secondary story that persists throughout the story’s ending. In this thesis, I endeavor to locate such queer endings by identifying stories in which non-normative relationships, identities, families, and modes of being survive beyond the middle. For this project, I turn away from the classical fairy-tale tradition of Perrault and the Grimms, instead focusing on Victorian fairy tales by children’s authors, which several scholars have argued prove a more fruitful ground for radical imaginations and subversive thinking. For example, in his discussion on the fairy-tale writings of George MacDonald, L. Frank Baum, and Oscar Wilde, Zipes claims that “In essence, the literary fairy tale was becoming more and more a political weapon used to challenge or capture the minds and sensibilities of the young” (136). Comparing Victorian fairy tales to older variants, Michael Newton similarly notes that the Victorian fairy tale takes a more progressive stance; though older tales commonly feature female protagonists, the Victorians’ heroines are “increasingly strong, independent figures” (Newton xxvi).²

However, this is not to say that the vast majority of Victorian fairy tales do not ultimately offer similarly heteronormative happy endings as the older tales. Of those that end happily, many still conclude with a heterosexual marriage or the reunification of the nuclear family unit in ways that foreclose the continuance of queer possibility. Within this tradition, however, I offer two exceptional examples of fairy tales with queer endings: George MacDonald’s fairy-tale novella

²Honig presents another related argument, suggesting that Victorian children’s fantasy provided much more space for positive depictions of women than adult fiction, and that this “foster[ed] a quiet rebellion fueled only by pen and ink” that actively contributed to the feminist movement and the future equality of the sexes (8-9).

The Wise Woman (1875) and E. Nesbit's "The Island of the Nine Whirlpools," a short story from her collection *The Book of Dragons* (1901). While MacDonald and Nesbit are some of the most popular and enduring Victorian fantasy writers, both of whom helped influence later authors such as C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and J.K. Rowling, neither of the texts I examine is particularly well known in academic or popular contexts. However, both *The Wise Woman* and *The Book of Dragons* are well worth excavating: Both prominently feature female protagonists and offer meaningful relationships between women, moving beyond the antagonistic relationships common in so many older fairy tales. In both stories, these meaningful and, I argue, queer relationships between women also disrupt the normative happily-ever-after ending, providing space for the survival of queer relationships and modes of being.

Magic and Time

In both texts, magic centers temporality in these queer relationships and modes of being by enabling strange, atemporal identities, motivating relationships between women that cross barriers of age and class, and allowing for unique forms of kinship along nonbiological lines. To explore these issues, I turn primarily to Jack Halberstam's conception of queer temporality as "queer uses of time" that develop, "at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction" (1). Although *In a Queer Time and Place* does acknowledge that not all queer people inhabit "queer time and space," the book develops these ideas to focus on queerness as a way of life, rather than exclusively a way of defining sexual identity (1). As Halberstam elaborates in "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion":

Queer time for me is... the perverse turn away from the narrative coherence of adolescence–early adulthood–marriage–reproduction–child rearing–retirement–death, the embrace of late childhood in place of early adulthood or immaturity in place of

responsibility. It is a theory of queerness as a way of being in the world and a critique of the careful social scripts that usher even the most queer among us through major markers of individual development and into normativity. (182)

While many theories of queer temporality focus on troubling linear narratives of History³ or exploring the temporal dimensions of sexuality's formation and/or experience,⁴ Halberstam instead emphasizes narratives of development, reminding us of the figure of the queer child who may exist only so long as they mature "into normativity" (Bruhm and Hurley xiv). In this way, we can chart some clear connections back to the question of middles versus endings; narrative, like life, seems to follow this social script. Even the queer fairy-tale readings mentioned above conclude with development into normativity. Halberstam's theory of queer temporality also stands out for its foregrounding of family, a trait which makes it particularly well suited to this project, as the fairy tale is consistently preoccupied with the family (Tatar, "From Rags to Riches" 31). Because of these productive overlaps between Halberstam's queer temporality and the issue of normative fairy-tale endings centered on the family, Halberstam serves as a key focal point of this thesis.

While Halberstam's conception of queer temporality has influenced many different areas of scholarship, including queer fairy-tale criticism⁵, some scholars have pushed back against Halberstam's definition, particularly through the way it positions queerness as oppositional to the family. Duc Dau and Shale Preston explicitly oppose Halberstam in their introduction to *Queer Victorian Families*: "we and the contributors of this collection reject claims made by queer theorist Judith Halberstam in her study *In a Queen Time and Place: Transgender Bodies*,

³ Examples include Carolyn Dinshaw and Carla Freccero.

⁴ Examples include José Esteban Muñoz, Annamarie Jagose, and Roderick Ferguson.

⁵ For example, see Lewis C. Seifert's "Queer Time in Charles Perrault's 'Sleeping Beauty'" and, in a more minor way, "At Home in the Realm of Enchantment" by Kay Turner or *Transgressive Tales*, edited by Turner and Pauline Greenhill.

Subcultural Lives that the family and reproduction are aligned with middle-class heteronormativity and conservative kinship.... by maintaining a dichotomy between family and queer life, Halberstam maintains ahistorical notions of families and queer experiences” (4). Similarly, Holly Furneaux rejects Halberstam’s conception of queerness, which she describes as an “unpalatably prescriptive pattern for queer life (antisociality, antidomesticity, and regret for the increasing number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and transgendered parents who have been unable ‘to resist the appeal of futurity, or refuse the temptation to reproduce’)” and suggests that Halberstam affirms far-right definitions of family, which are not ahistorical in the way Halberstam treats them (26). While acknowledging the validity in these criticisms, I maintain that Halberstam’s original definition of queer temporality is a useful starting point for recognizing queerness as a way of life and critiquing the way heterosexual institutions, such as family and reproduction, structure people’s lives according to societal mandates.

In the two fairy tales I analyze, it is magic that plays a key role in enabling existences unscripted by these mandates. Magic provides women with a means to power that they would not have in a “real” context, and this power consistently motivates relationships between women and provides them with greater agency, which is not limited to the contexts of marriage and sexual reproduction. Many other scholars have discussed the importance of magic and the fantastical for the subversive possibilities of the fairy tale: In *Breaking the Angelic Image*, Honig claims that the Victorians’ magical woman diverges from the path of the evil witch and is a figure “unique in her combination of almost godlike power with feminine grace, in a completely positive way” (113). For Honig, magic is key to this positive depiction of female power, particularly because it “could be readily dismissed as only magic, only nonsense, not real,” and it was this possible dismissal that allowed for the depiction of non-subservient women (114). Jack Zipes has also

written about magic, not only in the context of how it enables subversion, but also the role of magic within the fairy tale. Speaking about folk tales specifically, Zipes argues that magic represents “the conscious and unconscious desires of the lower classes to seize power” (*Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 8). Extracted to the context of the fairy tales I analyze, this idea shows how magic is consistently linked to questions of power, and particularly power claimed by those marginalized in reality. In my chapters, I will demonstrate how power, through magic, is deployed to enable queer modes of relating and being in time.

In my first chapter, I utilize Halberstam’s conception of queer temporality to analyze MacDonald’s *The Wise Woman*. This novella tells the story of an ill-behaved princess named Rosamond whose parents ask a magical wise woman, a queer figure who exists apart from the institutions of marriage and family, for help reforming their daughter. Instead, the wise woman kidnaps the princess, spiriting the girl away to her home in the woods, where she undertakes the task of teaching Rosamond to be good. Throughout this process, however, the novella problematizes conceptions of linear development and life stages that are founded in heteronormativity, as Halberstam has argued: “respectability, and the notions of the normal on which it depends, may be upheld by a middle-class logic of reproductive temporality.... so, in Western cultures, we chart the emergence of the adult from the dangerous and unruly period of adolescence as a desired process of maturation” (4). Magic is one of the key ways the novella enables these disruptions to linear development, as the wise woman physically assumes different forms, appearing first as an adult woman and then as a young girl before assuming a timeless body with “the old age of everlasting youth” (MacDonald 95). The wise woman’s queer experience of time also enables the culmination of her relationship with Rosamond: After various tasks and challenges, Rosamond faces her final test when she encounters the wise

woman in the form of a young girl. In a scene laden with desire and erotic language, the two girls' interactions serve as the novel's apotheosis, with Princess Rosamond finally learning to love others.

From this cursory summary, *The Wise Woman* may seem to follow the same pattern as some of the fairy tales I mentioned above, as the relationship between the princess and the wise woman serves as an integral step on Rosamond's journey to maturity. However, MacDonald's ending breaks the pattern in unexpected ways: While a more traditional ending might see Princess Rosamond reunited with her parents, who would exult in her transformation into a "good" daughter under the wise woman's guidance, the princess instead returns only for the wise woman to use her magical powers to interrupt the family's reunification and, in this disruption, to claim power over the future that would traditionally be denied to her within the context of monarchy and patriarchy. In this disruption and the open-ended conclusion that follows, I locate queer possibility in perpetuity. Princess Rosamond's relationship with the wise woman is not severed upon her return home; indeed, it is the normative family that is disrupted in order to prioritize her ongoing relationship with the wise woman. In *The Wise Woman*, queer desire and experiences may serve to further the protagonist's development, but they are not relegated to a finite phase that is reabsorbed by heteronormativity. Instead, the fairy tale's ending allows queer modes of being in time and relating to others to continue ever after.

In Chapter 2, however, I complicate Halberstam's conception of queer temporality by showing how queerness as a way of life may exist *within* the family. Nesbit's "The Island of the Nine Whirlpools" ends not with a disruption to the family, but with the reunification of a family that is, through its composition and experience of time, queer. The story begins when a Queen visits a witch to request a baby—not because she and the King are having difficulties conceiving,

but simply because that is what people do when they wish to have a baby within the story's universe. Together, the Queen and the witch create a child. In this story, Nesbit divorces reproduction from marriage and biology from family; neither the Queen nor the witch is the child's biological mother, but I argue that the story presents both, to varying extents, as valid maternal figures. Meanwhile, nonbiological reproduction queers inheritance, one of the elements of queer temporality that Halberstam addresses, as the child inherits features from the Queen in a process that actively involves the Queen's agency while entirely excluding the King. Moreover, the loving and devoted relationship that develops between the Queen and the witch far supersedes the antagonistic relationship between the married royals; the Queen ultimately abandons the abusive confines of her heterosexual marriage and, in the story's happy ending, she maintains her relationship with the witch alongside the Princess and her (male) love interest. By including the two maternal figures in the Princess's happy ending, the story also queers intergenerational time, as most fairy tales present a unidirectional progression from the biological family of origin to the family created by marriage (Tatar, "From Rags to Riches" 31). "The Island of the Nine Whirlpools" troubles this developmental narrative, instead allowing both generations to endure alongside one another in the story's happy ending.

By presenting these readings side by side, I apply and complicate Halberstam's queer temporality to show two possibilities for the queer ending: In *The Wise Woman*, the openness of the ending leaves space for the possibility that Rosamond's relationship with the wise woman will endure instead of serving as a concluded phase along development to heterosexual maturity. Significantly, the novella's ending also shows the expansion of the wise woman's magical powers, which are not confined to the secluded space of her cabin but which allow her to claim power in the rest of the world as well. This expansiveness of magic further enables the story's

queer ending, as the wise woman's temporal queerness, illustrated most clearly through her appearance as both adult and child, is not confined to a particular space within the narrative. This queerness persists through the story's ending, particularly through suggestions that Rosamond might become the wise woman's successor. In the end, the triumph of the wise woman's magic allows her to disrupt the family, continue the meaningful relationship she has developed with Rosamond, and maintain queer modes of being in time.

Meanwhile, "Nine Whirlpools" presents a more defined happy ending, but one significantly lacking in magic. The Princess marries her love, and the couple lives happily ever after in a palace with the Queen and the witch. However, this happy ending is only enabled by the forfeiture of magic; in order to help the Princess and demonstrate her love for the Queen, the witch must sacrifice her magic, thereby giving up her power and her queer existence outside social strictures. This concession ultimately allows other modes of queerness to survive: The witch and the queen's relationship is cemented through this moment of sacrifice, which also paves the way for the story's ending—a conclusion that centers a polymaternal family, meaning a family with more than one maternal figure, and prioritizes intergenerational bonds. Magic and, with it, certain forms of queer being *are* consigned to a constrained location in "Nine Whirlpools," as might be expected according to Halberstam's original conception of queer temporality, but the family that flourishes in the happy ending maintains queerness through its relationships and modes of being in time on a collective level.

Throughout this thesis, I invoke the multifarious, evolving, and slippery word "queer," whose very definition seems to be based on defying definition. Following in the footsteps of Dau and Preston, I attempt to define the term on multiple levels: First, "in the way the Victorians used it, to denote something unusual or strange" (7). This definition emerges primarily through the

Victorian texts themselves, which may use the word “queer” in this sense. Second, in the specific context of non-normative genders and sexualities, meaning those that do not conform to the gender binary and/or heteronormative expectations about love, desire, and institutions such as marriage and the biological family created through heterosexual reproduction. Third, in the broadest sense, based on David M. Halperin’s idea that “Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant” (62). As similarly defined by Turner and Greenhill, “Queerness, then, embraces more than sex/gender/sexuality to deal with the problematics of those who for various reasons find themselves outside conventional practices” (4), meaning queerness pertains both to non-normative sex/gender/sexuality and non-normativity in other contexts. While I most often utilize the word “queer” specifically in reference to gender and sexuality, the other definitions apply at various times as well. Ultimately, all three definitions inevitably mingle and overlap: Queerness in the context of gender and sexuality was labeled queer because of its perceived strangeness. Meanwhile, broader “concerns about marginalization, oddity, and not fitting into society” (Turner & Greenhill 4) are of particular importance to queer people, and many examples of “conventional practices” are linked to issues of gender and sexuality in complex ways; Halberstam’s conception of queer temporality is one example of the ways these latter two definitions overlap, as Halberstam suggests that non-normative understandings of what defines adulthood, for example, are linked to heteronormative expectations for an individual’s life. As a result of these overlaps and linkages, all three definitions of “queer” may apply throughout the thesis.

“Fairy tale” is similarly difficult to define, with little clear consensus among scholars about where to draw the borders of the genre. Andrew Lang’s “Coloured” Fairy Books, published between 1889 and 1913, demonstrate the difficulty of pinning down the term even for

the Victorians, as the series includes not only what scholars would unanimously identify as fairy tales, but also stories that might better be termed legends, fables, and mythology. As a helpful starting point, Ruth B. Bottigheimer emphasizes the distinction between folk tales and fairy tales, which are often conflated; folk tales “reflect the world and the belief systems of their audiences” and are often populated with characters such as husbands and wives, peasants, doctors, lawyers, priests, etc. (4), while fairy tales typically include royalty, magic, and heroism (6). Perhaps more importantly, folk tales often do not have a happy ending, while Bottigheimer identifies the happily ever after marriage as a key aspect of the fairy tale genre (6). What may be the field’s most recent definition of the fairy tale comes from Marina Warner’s *Fairy Tale: A Very Short Introduction* (2018), in which Warner offers a much more detailed definition of the fairy tale by identifying six core characteristics. Among them are that a fairy tale is a “short narrative,” and therefore novels cannot be considered fairy tales (xxiii); that a fairy tale is a “familiar” story, either because the story itself has been repeated over the years or because it is composed of familiar elements from other fairy tales (xxiii); that the fairy tale presents a magical world that leads to wonder and astonishment (xxvii); and that “fairy tales express hopes,” namely through happy endings (xxviii).

While there are many interesting insights in Warner’s definition, I find it unnecessarily restrictive in places. For example, through my labeling of a novella, *The Wise Woman*, as a fairy tale, it may be obvious that I cast aside Warner’s assertion that fairy tales must be short in length. While her ideas about magic and happy endings’ centrality to the genre are useful for our understanding of the fairy tale, particularly given the centrality of both to this thesis, I do not adhere consistently to Warner’s definition of the fairy tale. Instead, this thesis uses a more

expansive definition, favoring that laid out by J.R.R. Tolkien in his landmark essay “On Fairy-Stories”:

“The definition of a fairy-story—what it is, or what it should be—does not, then, depend on any definition or historical account of elf or fairy, but upon the nature of *Faërie*: the Perilous Realm itself, and the air that blows in that country. I will not attempt to define that, nor to describe it directly. It cannot be done. Faërie cannot be caught in a net of words; for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible.” (16)

In some ways, the definition of the fairy tale, like the word “queer,” depends upon its very indefinability. However, all the definitions offered here notably foreground the presence of magic, and, in Tolkien’s definition, the magic of the world itself—a key aspect of my discussion throughout this thesis.

Having established what this thesis does, I would like to spend a moment clarifying and acknowledging what it does *not* do: it does not assert that Victorian fairy tales are necessarily more queer than older fairy tales, such as those by the Grimms, Hans Christian Andersen, or Perrault. While Zipes and Newton have pointed out the ways in which Victorian fairy tales seem to allow more political subversion than earlier iterations, queer endings doubtlessly exist somewhere among the thousands of classical fairy tales and were not invented by Victorian writers. Indeed, I do not even argue that Victorian fairy tales, on the whole, are subversive when it comes to relationships between women, though the increase in female characters’ agency in Victorian fairy tales (Newton xxvii) suggests this might be the case. Within the scope of this project, I am not making any overarching claims about the genre of the fairy tale or of Victorian children’s stories. Certainly, intriguing questions remain along these lines: Do “queer endings” exist in older fairy tales? If so, how might they be different from the endings I identify here? Within the genre of Victorian fairy tales, how unique are the two texts I have identified? If there is some increase among the Victorians in depicting not only stronger, more independent female

characters but also more positive, enduring relationships between women, why is this the case? This development may seem logical, in light of changing perspectives on women and their role in society, as well as the changing dimensions of relationships between women throughout the Victorian period, as elaborated by Sharon Marcus, but solid answers to any of these questions fall outside the bounds of this project.

Instead, I am interested in how reading these two particular texts might illuminate the role of the fairy tale in providing normative ideals of family and romance and in offering alternatives to this tradition. Both *The Wise Woman* and “The Island of the Nine Whirlpools” show how magic enables queer modes of being in time that motivate and enable significant relationships between women and create possibilities outside a life dictated by the patriarchy, which constrains women to the realm of marriage and reproduction. As a result, these fairy tales suggest queerness is a potential escape from the heterosexist patriarchy and the life narratives it demands from women, which end with the idealized happily ever after as a wife and mother. *The Wise Woman* and “Nine Whirlpools” alter this ending in different ways, but both allow queer temporality and its associated female relationships to endure beyond the story’s conclusion.

Through these queer readings, I contribute to a field of scholarship dedicated to showing that “queerness is central rather than marginal to the literary heritage” (Abate & Kidd 1-2) by locating an alternative genealogy of the fairy tale—one that challenges the monolithic body of popular fairy tales with its more extreme representations of heteronormativity and patriarchal definitions of gender and that makes space for historically excluded readers to see themselves and/or their families represented. I also hope to uncover “submerged, marginalized, and alternative stories” (Dau & Preston 3) from the Victorian period—stories that may have been submerged in favor of other variations which follow a more expected, and therefore more

palatable, path—in order to demonstrate the “lasting power of the fairy-tale genre” (Turner & Greenhill 10), as I find meaning in these tales from the late nineteenth century that has value and significance today. While many forms of literature and art can reach across history in this way, I agree with other fairy-tale scholars who suggest there is something distinctive about the genre through fantasy’s ability to open up space for imagination and change (Zipes, “Once There Was a Time” 3; Turner & Greenhill 22; Honig 3). Though Judith Butler was not speaking specifically about fantasy as a genre, her words from *Undoing Gender* ring true in this context as well: “Fantasy is not the opposite of reality; it is what reality forecloses, and, as a result, it defines the limits of reality.... Fantasy is what allows us to imagine ourselves and others otherwise; it establishes the possible in excess of the real” (29). Through fantasy, fairy tales provide a space for radical imagination. However, as Zipes has argued, fantasy does not do this work on its own. Only when “used actively” can fairy tales “harbor and cultivate the germs of subversion and offer people hope in their resistance to all forms of oppression and in their pursuit of more meaningful modes of life and communication” (Zipes, “Once There Was a Time” 21).

Through its active use of the fairy tale, this thesis also serves to reclaim the genre for the modern queer reader. Many contemporary writers have attempted to do the same through their queer rewritings.⁶ However, although these rewritings may provide new ways for queer readers to experience the realm of faerie, they do not remove the bars that preclude them from classical fairy tales and, through hegemonic narratives, from history itself. While *The Wise Woman* and *The Book of Dragons* may not share a space in the fairy-tale canon alongside famous, traditional favorites such as “Cinderella” and “Snow White,” I believe there is value in this alternative

⁶ Some examples include *Kissing the Witch* (1993) by Emma Donoghue, *Ash* (2009) by Malinda Lo, *The Sleeper and the Spindle* (2013) by Neil Gaiman, and *The Seafarer’s Kiss* (2017) by Julia Ember.

genealogy of the fairy tale to better serve the modern queer reader. These stories provide a reminder that history is not an easily defined monolith and that even one's own cultural traditions are often more complex and diverse than we imagine. Moreover, changing our conception of these traditions can further change the ways they are deployed in modern culture, when the fairy tale is still held up as the paragon of normative romantic ideals, as we can see from Hollywood to Instagram. Fairy tales have been the domain of heteronormativity and traditional gender roles for years, and they will likely remain so without any intervention. It is up to us to give them a second look, to "entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past... could have happened differently from the way that it actually did" (Sedgwick 146), in order to locate new happy endings for generations of queer readers.

Chapter 1

In a “Peculiar Country”: Queer Magic, Temporality, and Desire in George MacDonald’s

The Wise Woman

When it comes to subversive readings of fairy tales, George MacDonald’s popular children’s fantasy stories have proven a particularly promising site for feminist interventions, as they often feature multiple female characters who play prominent and active roles in the narrative. Scholars, including Jack Zipes and Edith Lazaros Honig, have addressed how MacDonald’s fantasy stories subvert gender and class, but I argue that MacDonald may also offer us new ways of thinking about the fairy tale’s engagement with heteronormative institutions and sexuality—particularly through his largely neglected novella *The Wise Woman* (1875). Scholars have tended to focus on MacDonald’s most well-known tales, including “The Golden Key” (1867) and *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), and, in the process, have overlooked *The Wise Woman* despite all the ways in which it is remarkable. To start with, unlike most of MacDonald’s fantasy stories for children, *The Wise Woman* contains exclusively female main characters. In the majority of his other children’s stories, including “The Golden Key,” *The Princess and the Goblin*, *The Day Boy and the Night Girl*, and *The Light Princess*, the female protagonist has a male counterpart and love interest, and the story often ends with their marriage or implied romantic union. This formula does not hold true in *The Wise Woman*, in which the only significant male characters are the female protagonists’ fathers, both of whom remain in the background for the majority of the novella. All the central characters—Rosamond, Agnes, and the titular wise woman—are female, and there is no hint of a male love interest for any of them within the text, which instead prioritizes the relationship between Rosamond and the wise woman.

Despite the unusual prominence and power of women in *The Wise Woman*, the novella has historically been read in ways that emphasize its moralism over anything else. In a 1981 book review for the *School Library Journal*—one of the few scholarly sources that even mentions *The Wise Woman*—Anita C. Wilson concludes that *The Wise Woman* “is overly long and too obviously didactic” (129). For better or for worse, “didactic” seems to be a common impression of the general reading public as well. On *Goodreads*, many negative reviews of the book complain that it is preachy, while positive reviews often praise its power as a Christian allegory or an invective against bad parenting. This latter reading is echoed by Osama Jarrar in his article “*The Wise Woman, or the Lost Princess: A Double Story: A Critique of Victorian Parenting*,” published in the George MacDonald journal *North Wind*. Jarrar focuses on MacDonald’s religious ideology to argue that the fantastical in *The Wise Woman* serves as an avenue for MacDonald to moralize about proper parenting methods without sermonizing. Meanwhile in “Duality Beyond Time,” Melba N. Battin similarly reads *The Wise Woman* as a Christian parable charting the spiritual growth of two young girls.

On the surface, these perspectives seem like a wholly accurate reflection of the narrative. Originally published as *The Wise Woman: A Parable* in 1875, roughly in the middle of MacDonald’s publishing career, *The Wise Woman* tells the story of two poorly behaved children: a princess, Rosamond, and a shepherd’s daughter, Agnes. The titular wise woman, who possesses unexplained magical powers, intervenes to reform the girls, teaching them kindness, self-control, and humility. Although *The Wise Woman* does emphasize the importance of learning moral virtues, as Jarrar, Battin, and others have previously noted, the narrative also creates space for previously unnoted subversion, particularly through the role of magic, which empowers characters who would have limited agency in a “real” setting. As MacDonald himself

wrote in *A Dish of Orts*, fantasy creates space for possibilities that contradict the conditions of reality: “The natural world has its laws, and no man must interfere with them in the way of presentment any more than in the way of use; but they themselves may suggest laws of other kinds, and man may, if he pleases, invent a little world of his own, with its own laws” (314).

Within the fantastical world of *The Wise Woman*, magic empowers women to live by laws unstructured by patriarchy and heterosexuality. As a result, the novella’s women are able to claim more power than they could in the natural world of Victorian England. Part of this female empowerment arises through queer temporalities, to use Jack Halberstam’s theory that queer uses of time develop in opposition to the institutions of family, reproduction, and heterosexuality (1). As a mysterious woman with magical powers, for example, the wise woman is able to live on her own in an isolated cabin, with the novella making no mention of any husband or family, nor suggesting that this absence is a lack. Her identity and experience of time are unbounded from patriarchal, heterosexual institutions which also dictate ways of relating to the self and to others. New modes of understanding identity arise as the novella upsets linear temporal progression and conceptions of development, which Halberstam argues are tied to heterosexuality, by complicating the divide between childhood and adulthood. Magic ultimately embodies this complication: the wise woman, who appears as an adult throughout the majority of the novella, assumes the form of a child before transforming into an ageless figure, demonstrating that maturation is not unidirectional and unbinding identity from age. This temporal queerness also plays a key role in the bond that forms between Rosamond and the wise woman, as their relationship reaches its climax during the scene when the wise woman appears as a little girl; magic thereby enables women to form emotional and physical bonds with one another across time, and these bonds ultimately serve to disrupt the traditional, heterosexual

family unit at the story's end. Through this final disruption, the novella further challenges heterosexual conceptions of time by shifting the priority away from marriage and the family, neither of which is the ultimate goal in *The Wise Woman*. Instead, through their independence from these institutions, both the wise woman and Rosamond are able to claim more agency within a patriarchal society by prioritizing queer forms of kinship and claiming authority, even when disadvantaged in terms of age, gender, or class. *The Wise Woman* thereby offers alternatives to the heteronormative futurity which prioritizes sexual reproduction, enabling new modes of existence, relation, and power for women and, most critically, allowing the possibility of their continuation beyond the story's conclusion.

The Queer Time and Space of *The Wise Woman's* Setting

Before introducing Halberstam's conception of queer temporality to *The Wise Woman*, I would like to point out the ways in which the novella's temporal setting is already queer according to the word's most basic definition as that which is "strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric" (Oxford English Dictionary). Although my focus is ultimately on the novella's potential for queer temporality using the more specific definition of "queer" which focuses on the expression of non-normative gender and sexuality, beginning with the broad definition provides an interesting entryway to the text and highlights MacDonald's fascination with the unusual, which paves the way for the novella's depiction of unusual temporalities, gender dynamics, and desire. Notably, synonyms of queer appear repeatedly to describe the world of the novella throughout the first chapter: "oddly" (1), "peculiar" (1, 4), "strange" (3), "odd" (3, 4), "oddities" (3), and "different" (4). The very first line introduces the idea that this is a queer world, and this strangeness is inextricably linked to time: "There was a certain country where things used to go

rather oddly” (1). In this reinvention of the classic fairy tale opening, “Once upon a time,” MacDonald places his story in an unrooted past: the sentence’s verb tense locates *The Wise Woman* in the past, while the vague references to “a certain country” and “things” that went oddly refuse to root the story in a specific historical context. At the same time, the narrator, who speaks in first-person a handful of times throughout the text, speaks in the present tense as he tells the story (2), and the narrator’s intermissions are often pronounced to emphasize this disruption to the temporal flow of the narrative.

The temporal setting of the novel is complicated by this blend of tenses; the narrator speaks from an undefined “now” to describe an ahistorical past. This denies the story a sense of cohesive atemporality common to many fairy tales, which tend to be narrated only in the past tense. For example, in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s “Rapunzel” (1812), the omniscient narrator relates the entire story in the past tense and has no real presence in the story, instead speaking of the characters from a distance. Many fairy tales model this style, in which the narrator does not participate in the narrative or participates only in a limited sense, such as in Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Little Mermaid” (1837) which begins with the narrator describing the ocean and using the first-person plural to address the readers: “We must not imagine that there is nothing at the bottom of the sea but bare yellow sand” (119). Aside from this brief address, however, the narrator maintains distance throughout the narrative, which takes place in the ahistoric past after this brief introduction.⁷ Contrast this temporal setting with that of *The Wise Woman*, in which the narrator intermittently interrupts the ahistoric past tense of the narrative in ways that do not merely remind the reader that they are reading a story but actively stop the story

⁷ For examples of the ahistorical fairy-tale setting described here which are more contemporaneous with *The Wise Woman*, see *Old-Fashioned Fairy Tales* (1882) by Juliana Horatia Ewing or “The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde” (1880) by Mary de Morgan.

to make space for the narrator's voice. On several occasions, the narrator revises his own narration, such as when he interrupts a description of nature with, “—but stop! I am stealing, I find, and not that only, but with clumsy hands spoiling what I steal” (2), or when the narrator again interrupts the description to say, “—no, I am all wrong: there was nothing out yet but a few furze-blossoms” (3). These and similar interjections disallow continuity within the ahistoric past tense of the narrative, instead creating a temporal setting that is muddled across multiple levels of time—peculiar to say the least. This unusual temporal setting calls attention to the construction of time within the storytelling, while also paralleling the queer temporality exhibited within the narrative, in which characters' lives proceed according to timelines that depart from the cohesive progression mandated by heteronormative structures, as we will explore later in this chapter.

The physical setting of the novel echoes the temporal setting's strangeness and ambiguity. While the presence of magic makes it clear that the unnamed kingdom does not exist in the so-called “real world,” the narrator references Samuel Taylor Coleridge (2), thereby placing the novel within the bounds of reality. Although the narrator does refer to the story *as* a story (108), admitting the possibility that the narrator may inhabit the real world while the story is set in a Coleridge-less fantasy realm, the narrator also implies that the story and its characters exist independently of the narrative: “If you think [the story] is not finished—I never knew a story that was. I could tell you a great deal more concerning them all” (108). Through such descriptions, MacDonald establishes the setting, both physical and temporal, of *The Wise Woman* as queer, defined by Roderick McGillis as “that which does not conform to convention, that which departs from expectation, that which in its very form puzzles and confounds” (89). Through this puzzling construction of the world as a place that is real and not-real, historical and

ahistorical, magical and nonmagical, *The Wise Woman* begins to trouble understandings of normalcy right off the bat, drawing attention to different ways of experiencing time and reality beyond traditional understandings of these concepts.

Challenging Heteronormative Narratives of Development

Halberstam's conception of queer temporality illuminates another way in which *The Wise Woman* demonstrates experiences of time outside the norm through the novella's depiction of development, which ultimately challenges the boundaries between child and adult. As Halberstam points out, a middle-class reproductive temporality, which is necessarily grounded in heterosexual institutions, leads to "the emergence of the adult from the dangerous and unruly period of adolescence as a desired process of maturation" (4), meaning the idea that a child undergoes a period of development before becoming an adult, who is stable and mature by contrast, is rooted in a heterosexual logic of temporality. Because *The Wise Woman* charts a child's growth and development, its representation of this process might be expected to affirm normative understandings of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Instead, I argue that the representation of adults ultimately challenges this narrative, erasing the stark divide between child and adult, as well as complicating the idea that maturation is a linear process. However, since Halberstam's theory of queer temporality is based in contemporary definitions of life stages, we must first historicize the definitions of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood based on Victorian conceptions.

In a Queer Time and Place relies on the modern, Western assumption that childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are all defined and distinct stages, with adolescence commonly beginning at puberty and continuing through the teen years before adulthood legally commences

at age eighteen. During the Victorian period, however, these categories were still developing. Indeed, as Marah Gubar points out in *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature*, Victorians debated not only the boundaries between life stages but also whether adolescence, as a distinct life stage, existed (152). Deborah Gorham and John Gillis have located the emergence of adolescence as a concept at the very end of the nineteenth century, while Michael Brooks asserts it “was not fully evolved until the American psychologist, G. Stanley Hall, published his two volumes on the subject in the early twentieth century” (93). However, the Victorians did still differentiate between child and adult; for example, “Victorian mothers were told that in infancy and early childhood girls and boys should be treated in much the same way” until the onset of puberty (Gorham 85). This early lack of gender differentiation shows that Victorian children were not treated exclusively as miniature adults; even within debates about the nature and duration of childhood, Victorian culture at large separated childhood from adulthood. Though lacking a clearly demarcated conception of adolescence, the Victorians also largely conceived of a murky, in-between time of development. Gorham states that after puberty, the purpose of a girl’s life “was defined as preparation for the adult feminine role” (85); after puberty, then, the Victorian girl was differentiated from the relatively genderless infant and young child, but she was not yet adult, either. The term “girl,” which “generally applied to ages thirteen to nineteen” (Brinks 147) then becomes a marker of this life stage, in which she was expected to mature in preparation for the adult feminine role. As Chris R. Vanden Bossche notes, the Victorians may not have explicitly demarcated the life stages of development in the way modern terminology does, “but one can recognize in social and literary history an implicit set of conditions for achieving the culminating condition of adulthood” (83). Therefore, although the Victorians did not conceive of adolescence in the same terms and with the same

starkly delineated boundaries as a more modern application, the essence of Halberstam's statement still makes sense within a Victorian context: a Western understanding of life posits linear development from immature child to mature adult, and this narrative of development is a product of heterosexual hegemony (Halberstam 4).

On the surface, *The Wise Woman*, as a story about children's development under the guidance of the wise woman, does seem to uphold such a narrative of growth. The novel begins with Rosamond's parents, the king and queen, summoning the magical wise woman to their palace in hopes that she can reform their ill-behaved daughter. The wise woman undertakes this task in a way the royals did not expect: she kidnaps the princess, spiriting her away to an isolated cabin in the woods, where the wise woman presents her with a series of household tasks designed to teach Rosamond moral virtue. Meanwhile, the wise woman disappears and kidnaps a shepherd's daughter, Agnes, who exhibits similar behavioral issues. While she is gone, Rosamond discovers a magical painting in the wise woman's house, and stepping through the painting brings her to the shepherd and his wife, who care for Rosamond in place of their own kidnapped daughter. A series of interventions and strange tests from the wise woman spur Rosamond's moral growth (while Agnes is relatively neglected by the narrative), until she eventually returns to the wise woman's home, where, in one of the novel's most significant and queerly laden scenes, Rosamond demonstrates her capacity for goodness. Once satisfied with Rosamond's growth, the wise woman finally allows her to return to her parents' castle.

During this final scene, the king and queen complicate the traditional narrative of maturation, giving rise to new modes of understanding life's timelines. For MacDonald, it is not only children who need to mature. The "desired process of maturation" can extend through adulthood as well, as the wise woman shows at the end of the novella. When Rosamond returns,

her parents do not initially recognize their own daughter in her now-ragged clothes. Once they finally realize who Rosamond is, they prepare to embrace her, but their action is immediately interrupted by the wise woman. With the queen and king “half-way down the steps of the dais,” the wise woman enters the hall and commands them to stop (105). They both freeze, still apart from their daughter, and the wise woman declares them “unworthy” of Rosamond: “That you did not know her when she came to you is a small wonder, for you have been blind in soul all your lives: now be blind in body until your better eyes are unsealed” (106). By describing the king and queen as blind “all their lives” and placing them on the same level as Rosamond at the start of the book, MacDonald divorces aging and development: maturity, represented here by spiritual vision and understanding, is not inherently linked to adulthood and therefore does not adequately distinguish between child and adult as the logic of reproductive temporality suggests.

As the one main character in the book who does not undergo any sort of development, it might be easy to read the wise woman as the book’s only true adult, to conclude that the king and queen had simply never grown up, but that they, too, would eventually progress linearly from immature to mature, as Rosamond does. However, the wise woman’s role in the novella challenges heteronormative conceptions of adulthood, along with the idea that development is linear regardless of the life stage in which it occurs. From her introduction in the first chapter, the wise woman’s version of adulthood diverges from that which Halberstam identifies as defined by “respectability, and the notions of the normal on which it depends” (4). Though Halberstam describes a modern conception of respectable adulthood, the description here overlaps with Victorian understandings of the adult who was “independent, mature, and cultivated” (Bossche 82) and who had reached normative landmarks, such as leaving school, choosing a vocation, getting married, and establishing a household (83)—the latter half of which

are clearly predicated by heteronormative societal expectations. The wise woman's departure from these and other notions of normalcy is perhaps obvious: like the many witches and fairy godmothers who fulfill similar roles in fairy tales, she wields magical powers and lives alone in the woods, seemingly lacking any of the familial relationships that bind a person to society. She does not appear to have a husband or children, nor is her background ever referenced in the text. This independence, along with her use of magic and the level of mystery surrounding her, immediately mark the wise woman as unusual. In fact, it is her very refusal of normalcy that first leads the king to summon her to the castle, as "her fame was spread through all the country" (7) for her magical powers. While these powers do endow the wise woman with respectability in the sense that she commands the respect of those around her, she refuses respectability in its more social sense, both through how she dresses and how she interacts with those in authority. The wise woman arrives at the castle "muffled from head to foot in a cloak of black cloth" (7) and refuses when the king requests that she sit (7); then, after listening to the king and queen's concerns about their daughter's misbehavior, the wise woman scolds them, to the royals' shock. Both "glared with indignation" and the king calls her polite "with royal sarcasm" (8).

Throughout this exchange, the wise woman displays a disregard for the standard codes of interaction which would demand she defer to the king and queen based on both gender and class. Her power enables her to disregard these standards of adult respectability as it is linked to systems of governance, claiming a respectability of her own in her refusal to submit to the kingdom's rulers—an action which perhaps had some real-life political undertones for the Scottish MacDonald. At the very least, MacDonald's politics did "take the form of safeguarding the natural rights and autonomy of individuals whose own responsibility was to create the moral and ethical fiber of good government" (Zipes 110-11)—an idea certainly evident in *The Wise*

Woman, which shows that MacDonald's conception of an individual's moral and ethical responsibility extended to women, and perhaps more importantly, unmarried women, as well. Although *The Wise Woman* does ultimately maintain the monarchy, while also adhering to relatively conservative definitions of an individual's moral and ethical duties, the queerness of the wise woman demonstrates how an individual might question and challenge systems of governance, as well as heteronormative social codes regarding respectability, maturation, and relationships.

No matter how the wise woman does or does not conform to conceptions of adulthood as defined by the logics of heterosexual reproduction, her physical experience of time explicitly contradicts traditional understandings of life stages. The wise woman defies the narrative that a child unilaterally develops into an adult by physically moving back and forth between these two stages and by embodying an existence that is entirely removed from the experience of time. Near the novella's end, the wise woman, who has always appeared as an adult, manifests in the form of "the loveliest little girl" (MacDonald 88-89), a beautiful child who possesses the ability to make flowers grow and claims the loyalty of a Pegasus. Although MacDonald does not demonstrate until the end of the scene that the little girl is actually the wise woman in another form, this reveal further contradicts the conservative narrative of maturation, since the wise woman's "inner child" maintains her power and moral virtue, meaning that the wise woman's movement from adulthood to childhood does not constitute a regression, but rather a lateral move.

This scene also suggests that childhood, however it is defined, is not a finite stage—that the child might endure throughout adulthood. After the wise woman resumes her regular appearance, Rosamond asks if it was her all the time. "It always is me, all the time," the wise

woman responds (96). The “real” wise woman is “this or that,” or “a thousand others,” as she tells Rosamond (96)—a thousand possibilities for self-expression and modes of being that are unrestricted by traditional narratives. This is a particularly radical depiction of identity. Although *The Wise Woman* is situated in a long history of fairy tales that are fascinated with people who assume different appearances, such as the wicked queen from the Grimms’ “Snow White,” who assumes a series of disguises in her attempts to kill her stepdaughter, there is an essential difference between such disguises, which serve as temporary masks for a person’s true self, and the wise woman’s variety of appearances, all of which are acknowledged as true in this scene. In this way, magic in *The Wise Woman* enables a multiplicity of identity that is denied by most fairy tales’ use of magic. The wise woman is not an adult disguised as a child or a child disguised as an older woman; she is all of them at once.

The wise woman refuses singular definitions of identity, particularly identity bound by “the conventional binary formulation of a life narrative divided by a clear break between youth and adulthood” (Halberstam 153). In fact, the wise woman’s reveal at the end of the scene moves away from clear articulations of time and age entirely. After Rosamond’s encounter with the little girl, the wise woman transforms, not into her standard shape but something new entirely: “Quickly through every gradation of growth she passed, until she stood before her a woman perfectly beautiful, neither old nor young, for hers was the old age of everlasting youth” (MacDonald 95). In this passage, MacDonald explicitly combines old and young to create something that is neither, an existence that is not defined by time, made possible by the wise woman’s magic. The wise woman now becomes one of the “strangely untimed queer beings” Kay Turner identifies as a common feature in the Grimms’ fairy stories (45). By enabling the wise woman to exist in a fantastical temporality that removes her from the passage of time,

MacDonald situates the wise woman within a much larger tradition of witch figures, many of whom share important relationships with young women, as the wise woman does with Rosamond. As Turner points out, this would be impossible without “the realm of enchantment” (45). It is only through magic that MacDonald’s wise woman is able to subvert normative understandings of our relationship to time through both her identity and experience of the world. However, the wise woman also differs from this tradition of magical women as “untimed queer beings” because her queer existence is not confined to the realm of enchantment, as we shall see in the following section on *The Wise Woman*’s queer ending.

Women’s Queer Futurity, Agency, and Relationships

In addition to complicating a linear narrative of development, *The Wise Woman* departs from tradition to offer futures for its female characters that are unscripted by patriarchy and heterosexuality. Through the wise woman’s magic, she is able to claim control of the future in situations where she would otherwise stand powerless; significantly, the wise woman uses her magic to intensify her relationship with Rosamond, most notably through the previously mentioned scene when the wise woman appears as a little girl. This relationship between two women continues to be the novella’s focus throughout the ending, departing from a tradition in which heterosexual institutions are idealized as the protagonist’s reward. In most fairy tales that end happily, the ending affirms these institutions in one way or another, primarily through the form of a heterosexual marriage (e.g. “Cinderella” or “Beauty and the Beast”) or by preserving the traditional family unit (e.g. “Hansel and Gretel” or “Rumpelstiltskin”).⁸ At first, it seems like

⁸ The four examples presented here all predate the Victorian period (though they were all translated and published for a Victorian audience in Andrew Lang’s *The Blue Fairy Book* [1889]), but Victorian fairy tales that are less commonly known today present similar happy endings. For example, see *The Rose and the Ring* (1854) by William

this is the trajectory MacDonald plans to follow in *The Wise Woman*, as the entire story progresses towards Rosamond's return home. Since the novella begins with her parents' concern for their daughter's behavior, the expected ending would involve a reunion between them; Rosamond's sojourn with the wise woman would be nothing but an intermediary interval, a necessary—but temporary—deviation in order for Rosamond to participate in family life as a good daughter. This would follow the standard path of other fairy tales that include similar relationships between a young girl and an older, magical woman, such as the Grimm's "Frau Holle," analyzed by Turner, in which "homoerotic bonding [is presented] as a stage on the way to heterosexual maturity" (Halberstam 178). MacDonald has followed this path before, as Honig suggests in *Breaking the Angelic Image*. In her analysis of MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin*, which I described in the introduction, Honig identifies homoerotic elements in the relationship between Princess Irene and her magical great-great-grandmother, also named Irene, who functions as a "strangely untimed queer being" (Turner 45) in some of the same ways as the wise woman. Ultimately, Honig asserts that the homoerotic dimensions of Irene's relationship with her grandmother serve as an education in sexuality designed to prepare Irene for her eventual heterosexual marriage—an assessment that is supported by Princess Irene's budding relationship with the novel's male protagonist, Curdie, whom she does eventually marry in the sequel, *The Princess and Curdie*.

However, *The Wise Woman* does not adhere to this formula modeled by older fairy stories and MacDonald's other writing, nor does it choose the other common path for a fairy-tale ending: tragedy. Many fairy tales that do not end by affirming the heterosexual family end in the

Makepeace Thackeray, which ends in happy marriages, and "The Magicians' Gifts" from *Old-Fashioned Fairy Tales* (1882) by Juliana Horatia Ewing, which ends with a happy reunion between a father and his children.

protagonist's death, such as in Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" or Oscar Wilde's "The Selfish Giant"—a trend that suggests the only way to survive is to conform to normative expectations and institutions. *The Wise Woman* instead offers an open ending through a new disruption to the family: As we saw earlier, Rosamond returns home only for the wise woman to intervene and declare that the princess's parents are just as bad as their daughter was. The wise woman then blinds the king and queen and asks Rosamond to bring them to her (106). Within this scene, the wise woman's magical power enables her to act as a disrupting force, denying the normative happily-ever-after ending. Unlike Frau Holle, who stays in her home beneath the well, the wise woman goes beyond her secluded cabin, showing the extension of her powers. After all, it is the wise woman's magic that establishes her authority within the final scene in the palace. When she first enters, she speaks in a "voice of command" (105) before addressing the king and queen "in words they alone could hear" (105). In this private exchange, she takes liberties with the royals that would not be possible publicly before their subjects, as she calls them "miserable man and woman" (105) who are unworthy of their now-improved daughter, thereby claiming moral authority and assuming a position of judgment over the king and queen—a position that an unmarried, untitled woman with no connections to the crown could not claim in a realist novel.

The wise woman further uses magic to claim authority in the scene through her appearance: "She threw her cloak open. It fell to the ground, and the radiance that flashed from her robe of snowy whiteness, from her face of awful beauty, and from her eyes that shone like pools of sunlight, smote them blind" (106). In this passage, magic is depicted as inherent to the wise woman as it manifests through her body, through the unusual light in her eyes and "awful" beauty of her face. At the same time, comparisons to nature, such as the "snowy whiteness" of her robe and her eyes "like pools of sunlight," emphasize that the wise woman's magic is not

unnatural. Although the novella never directly addresses the source or form of the wise woman's magic, these descriptions suggest that her powers originate in nature in some way, an association which helps align the wise woman with forces of imagination and goodness within the Romantic tradition and which distances her from more negative depictions of magic as supernatural, which might be condemned by religious traditions. It is also important to note that it is this demonstration of magic, channeled directly through the wise woman's body, that effects the blinding of the king and queen. The radiance the wise woman emits "smote them blind" (106): it is this natural magic, expressed through the wise woman's very being, that enables her to claim moral and physical authority over the king and queen to disrupt their reunion with their daughter and redirect the futures of each character.

Instead of affirming heterosexual institutions, this disruption brings relationships between women to the forefront by demonstrating female agency and emphasizing the love and trust between Rosamond and the wise woman. An emphasis on female agency is not revolutionary in Victorian fairy tales; several other scholars have asserted that Victorian fairy tales accorded women more agency than their previous iterations. Michael Newton claims the Victorians presented heroines who were "increasingly strong, independent figures, though also still marked by an unfashionable passivity—with its endorsement of patience, of the necessity of relatedness, of holding still" (xxvi). Meanwhile, Honig's *Breaking the Angelic Image* focuses on the idea of "woman power" in Victorian children's fantasy, including the specific figure of the magical woman. Interestingly, although Honig dedicates most of her chapter on magical women to an analysis of MacDonald's magical women, she barely mentions *The Wise Woman*. Honig suggests that MacDonald's magical women "follow a clear line of development... beginning to swell with the gentle and beautiful grandmother of *The Golden Key* (1867), cresting with the very powerful

North Wind of *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), and ebbing with the fading Old Irene of *The Princess and Curdie* (1883)” (122). According to this analysis of MacDonald’s writing, *The Wise Woman* would fall near the tail end, when MacDonald’s magical women apparently grew less powerful as changes in MacDonald’s personal life caused him to feel “the ineffectuality of all mortals” (Honig 122). However, this is not the case; in the novella’s conclusion, the wise woman exhibits magical powers that enable her to seize control over the future, establishing her not as an independent but passive figure, as Newton represents many powerful women of Victorian fairy tales, nor as a marker of MacDonald’s ebbing belief in the power of women, or any human, to enact change.

The wise woman exerts control over the future, both personal and political, in ways that were traditionally claimed by men, thereby depicting queer temporality as an alternative to the patriarchal, heterosexual model of history that progresses through female maternity and male agency. In a traditional conception of history, women’s control over the future is primarily determined through reproduction, as Elizabeth Freeman argues in “Time Binds, or Erotohistoriography” (62)—an idea that builds upon Halberstam’s theory of queer temporality, as women’s agency is therefore tied to institutions of heterosexuality and reproduction. MacDonald’s wise woman subverts this idea, wresting away control of the future throughout the novella. During the final scene, she changes the course of each characters’ future, using her magic to blind the king and queen, whom she deems “unworthy” of their reformed daughter (MacDonald 106). When Rosamond begs the wise woman to restore her parents’ sight, the wise woman promises she will “one day,” and tasks Rosamond with being “their servant” in the meantime (106). Throughout this exchange, the wise woman redirects the personal futures of the king, the queen, and Rosamond herself, who exhibits her trust in the wise woman, first by asking

her to change her mind, and then by respecting the wise woman's explanation and following along with her plan. Simultaneously, the wise woman seizes control of the kingdom's future, since she has personally judged and condemned its leaders, who must now leave their throne room to reform themselves in the wise woman's home. In this way, the wise woman crosses boundaries of both class and gender by creating a future outside the standard lines of maternity, claiming a control that would usually belong to the "male body" of the king, which "supposedly engenders national history" (Freeman 61).

Of course, it is important to note that the wise woman is not ultimately overthrowing the monarchy; she is not truly claiming national history for herself or for the people. Indeed, by insisting on the king and queen's reformation, she seems to affirm monarchy. Although the novella's conclusion does erode the barriers between royalty and the common people through its depiction of Agnes's father, the shepherd, the wise woman's actions preserve the monarchy, and the scene's finale shows Rosamond standing between her parents on the dais, with their thrones in the background to remind the reader of her eventual, assumed ascension. *The Wise Woman* ends with the wise woman's queerness serving to disrupt heterosexuality and the rule of the king and queen, but this conclusion also suggests that this disruption may not be permanent. The narrator interjects to remind the reader that the story is not truly finished—"I could tell you a great deal more concerning them all" (108)—and the presumed arc of the narrative would include the king and queen's reformation, like Rosamond's, and their ultimate return to their thrones, with their daughter at their side—the eventual preservation of both monarchical power and the heterosexual family. By ending when it does, however, the novella lingers in an enduring sense of queerness through the final alliance between Rosamond and the wise woman, while also

de-centering marriage and the family, as the fulfillment of either ideal is removed from the narrative's conclusion.

These concessions aside, magic enables the wise woman to claim agency in ways and situations where it would usually be limited for women, as we have seen. Though unmarried and childless, she is able to lay claim to the future, even using her power to change the future of men, including the king and a shepherd, as well as the political future of the entire kingdom.

Admittedly, the Victorians often depicted women as the idealized "angel in the house," the moral guides of both the home and the nation. In some ways, that is precisely the role that the wise woman fulfills. However, the way in which the wise woman seizes control supersedes the normative, moralizing role of women: unlike the ideal Victorian woman, who should "be comforting and compassionate and provide a safe haven [for her husband] from a turbulent outside world" (Langlais 84), the wise woman uses magic to physically attack the king and queen. She does not merely wield spiritual power over them, and MacDonald's descriptions in this section emphasize her physical control: "Rosamond saw [her parents] give a great start, shudder, waver to and fro, then sit down on the steps of the dais; and she knew they were punished, but knew not how" (106). Setting the final scene in the throne room also emphasizes the political dimensions of the wise woman's power; although she is intervening in the royals' family life, she does not appear in their personal quarters or in Rosamond's bedroom. Instead, she comes to the throne room, the primary site of monarchical power, and subdues the king and queen as they stand on their own dais. In this way, the wise woman transgresses both class and gender, physically subduing the king and queen in order to bring her ideal future into being. Meanwhile, the wise woman's complex relationship with Princess Rosamond begets another type of futurity, extending beyond the immediate future which the wise woman changes by

blinding the king and queen at the end of the novella. By casting Rosamond as the wise woman's successor outside matrilineal lines, *The Wise Woman* allows a female character to exist in and claim power over temporalities outside of the hegemonic heterosexual and patriarchal temporality in which the woman's only control over the future is through reproduction (Freeman 62).

It is also important to note how this scene foregrounds the wise woman's relationship with Rosamond, who becomes an embodied figure of the wise woman's futurity. Although the scene's expected focus is the relationship between Rosamond and her parents, her intimacy with the wise woman is more pronounced. While Rosamond holds her blinded parents' hands and promises to ask the wise woman to forgive them, MacDonald emphasizes the disconnect between Rosamond and her parents; Rosamond addresses them directly, but they do not acknowledge her words, saying only, "Oh, I am blind! I am blind!" (106). In contrast, when Rosamond leaves her parents to kneel at the wise woman's feet and ask her to let them see, the wise woman bends down and addresses Rosamond directly "so that no one else could hear" (106), demonstrating an intimate and reciprocal relationship that is entirely lacking between Rosamond and her parents. By placing these two interactions side by side, MacDonald prioritizes the cross-generational, nonfamilial relationship between Rosamond and the wise woman.

Although the wise woman may seem to play a maternal role, as she intervenes in the princess's upbringing to teach her virtues and even refers to Rosamond as "my child" near the novella's end (108), the relationship between the wise woman and Rosamond is much more complicated than that. From the beginning, the wise woman rejects a nurturing mold; when the princess refuses to follow the wise woman through the woods shortly after she is first kidnapped, the wise woman does not stop or "coax her to go on," but instead continues alone at the same

pace, refusing even to look around and leaving the frightened princess to run after her through the dark woods (MacDonald 15). Later in the book, the scene when the wise woman appears as “the loveliest little girl” (88-89) further disrupts any association between the wise woman and motherhood, both because it presents Rosamond and the wise woman as peers and because of the scene’s sensual dimension. In this scene, Rosamond steps into a magical room in the wise woman’s house, which makes it seem as though she has stepped into the woods. There she finds a beautiful child “with her lap full of flowers of all colors” (89). As Rosamond watches, the girl tosses flowers to the side, but the flowers magically take root where they land. The prevalence of magic in this scene establishes an air of possibility; in a space where flowers magically take root and, later, a Pegasus arrives, Rosamond and the little girl are able to exist for a time outside the bounds of the normal.

The entire scene with the little girl is heavily laden with desire. Within this scene, Rosamond’s desire is centered on the girl’s flowers and then on her Pegasus: First, when Rosamond asks the girl for a flower, the child suggests that they are all for Rosamond, but she tells Rosamond she cannot pick them or they will wither. This is not enough for Rosamond, as her desire is to touch: “They can’t be mine, if I’m not to touch them,” she says (90). Similarly, Rosamond insists on touching the Pegasus, “caressing him in the rough way which, notwithstanding her love for them, she was in the habit of using with animals” (91) and causing the Pegasus to kick her.

Through these two exchanges, this scene first establishes the danger of desire and of improper touch. However, the entire scene culminates with the little girl teaching Rosamond how to touch properly in an erotically descriptive encounter. After Rosamond acknowledges that she should not have touched the Pegasus as she did, the two girls declare their love for one another,

and Rosamond “stroked the little girl’s bare feet, which were by her, half buried in the soft moss, and as she ended, she laid her cheek on them and kissed them” (94). This is the first instance of non-destructive touch in the scene, and immediately after, the little girl teaches Rosamond how to touch the flowers without causing them to wither:

Timidly she stretched out her hand and touched it. The flower trembled, but neither shrank nor withered.
 “Touch it again,” said the child.
 It changed color a little, and Rosamond fancied it grew larger.
 “Touch it again,” said the child.
 It opened and grew until it was as large as a narcissus, and changed and deepened in color till it was a red glowing gold. (95)

In this exchange, the child facilitates the fulfillment of Rosamond’s desire, displaced onto the flower, using erotic language and imagery. This physically and emotionally charged moment between two girls is the apotheosis of the novella: after Rosamond strokes the flower, the wise woman takes on her ageless form and tells Rosamond that she “must set out for [her] father’s palace immediately” (96). This sensuous and loving exchange between girls is the ultimate good, and also serves as an interesting contrast to the scene directly preceding it, in which Rosamond’s goodness was tested through her interactions with a “lovely little boy” (85). Unlike the scene with the little girl, which ends in Rosamond’s final transformation, the scene with the little boy ends with the two children fighting over a flower, which they both desire to possess, and Rosamond’s struggle to claim the flower for herself results in the little boy’s death. Rosamond’s connection with the “lovely little girl,” with whom she exchanges significantly more words and physical affection, becomes even more prominent by contrast, and it is this exchange that marks Rosamond’s inner transformation and seals her connection with the wise woman.

In the final scene, their relationship is cemented in a different way: Rosamond assumes a new role as the wise woman’s equal and successor, thereby establishing a sense of queer kinship

between them. At the novella's end, the wise woman places herself and Rosamond on an equal level by stooping to speak to her, a sentiment she underlines by asking Rosamond to be her blinded parents' servant, "as I have been yours" (106), suggesting that Rosamond is now equipped to step into the role the wise woman has played throughout the novella. Rosamond becomes the figure through which the wise woman enacts her version of the future, as well as the inheritor of the wise woman's legacy. In this way, Rosamond becomes what Freeman refers to as a "queer successor" (61). Although it is not entirely clear what Rosamond's position in her parents' journey will be—for example, whether she will someday have access to the wise woman's magical powers, which play such an important role in enabling the wise woman's queer existence, or how that might happen—this passage does suggest that the wise woman might pass the mantle on to Rosamond, enabling her to continue the wise woman's "queer lifeworld" without her (Freeman 61).

Conclusion

Throughout *The Wise Woman*, then, MacDonald prioritizes relationships between women and all the different dimensions they may contain: instructive, respectful, comforting, loving, sensual. These relationships illuminate new modes of relating and being in time for both Rosamond and the wise woman, who exist outside temporalities of development and life stages defined by the institutions of heterosexuality. The "peculiar country" of *The Wise Woman* where magic exists creates space for women to assume power traditionally denied to them—power to live outside the bounds of time, to forge relationships with other women, and to claim control over the future. Moreover, *The Wise Woman* breaks the pattern of other fairy tales, in which queer desire and relationships between women exist in the middle but are necessarily elided by

the story's ending. Instead, the open ending of *The Wise Woman* allows for the reading of queer survival; at the novella's conclusion, the wise woman's power continues to exist and is not confined to a singular space, unlike the Grimms' Frau Holle or Old Irene in *The Princess and the Goblin*. Her relationship with Rosamond endures, too, and the suggestion that Rosamond might become the wise woman's successor insists on the continuance of queer modes of being in time. In the "peculiar country" of *The Wise Woman*, "things used to"—and continue to—"go rather oddly" (MacDonald 1).

Chapter 2

And They All Lived Happily: Motherhood, Temporality, and Magic in E. Nesbit's "The Island of the Nine Whirlpools"

The family is central to most stories in the fairy tale tradition, as we saw in chapter one. While George MacDonald's *The Wise Woman* is queer, I argue, in part because of the way it concludes with a disruption to the family, I would like to turn now to a fairy tale that is queer in the way it upholds the family: E. Nesbit's "The Island of the Nine Whirlpools" from *The Book of Dragons* (1901), a collection of short fairy tales about dragons. Like *The Wise Woman*, *The Book of Dragons* has been largely neglected by both academia and the general public in favor of Nesbit's more popular books, including *The Railway Children* (1906) and *Five Children and It* (1902). However, I argue that *The Book of Dragons* and, in particular, "The Island of the Nine Whirlpools," merits a second look, not only for its charming use of voice and creative world-building, but also because its depiction of family challenges normative understandings of romantic love, motherhood, and familial temporalities. Many stories in *The Book of Dragons* feature interesting family configurations in which parents are often absent with no explanation, and in their place, nursemaids or grandmothers play a validated maternal role. In this way, *The Book of Dragons* on the whole affirms alternative forms of motherhood, or nonbiological motherhood. This marks a stark divergence from the fairy-tale tradition, in which the most notable archetype of alternative motherhood is the evil stepmother. However, among all the stories in *The Book of Dragons*, "The Island of the Nine Whirlpools" stands out for its depiction of a meaningful relationship between women, as well as its conception of familial temporality—two aspects that make it a particularly interesting point of study after our discussion of *The Wise Woman* in chapter one.

Although “Nine Whirlpools” does follow the fairy-tale tradition in its family-based happy ending, the happy family shown in this ending takes a new and unique form. I argue that in “The Island of the Nine Whirlpools,” Nesbit presents an intimate and significant relationship between a young woman and a magical woman, as MacDonald does in *The Wise Woman*, and that through the witch’s active involvement in the Princess’s birth and her inclusion in the ending, Nesbit depicts a queer, polymaternal family, thereby validating nonbiological kinship and, in the process, presenting new modes of being in time for the family unit. The relationship between the Queen and the witch emphasizes the women’s equity and devotion, which contrast sharply with the abusive, heterosexual marriage between the Queen and King. Through this contrast, the story critiques the ways in which sexism might debase heterosexual marriage and presents relationships between women and queer kinship as an escape from the abuses of the patriarchy. This escape becomes permanent when the Queen and the witch establish a lifelong partnership, akin to the female marriages Sharon Marcus describes in *Between Women: Friendship, Marriage, and Desire in Victorian England*. The story’s happy ending concludes with the Queen and the witch living happily ever after together in the palace, alongside the Princess, the child they created together. Their relationship creates a queer, polymaternal family, which is validated as real through its survival at the story’s conclusion.

This queering of the family in “Nine Whirlpools” complicates Jack Halberstam’s conception that “queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, *in opposition to* the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction” (1, emphasis added) and that queer time “is also about the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing” (2). While queer temporalities may surface in opposition to the family, as I demonstrated through my reading of *The Wise Woman* in chapter one, “Nine Whirlpools”

demonstrates how queer temporalities may *also* arise within the family, so long as the definition of family is not limited exclusively to traditional heterosexual models. Holly Furneaux presents a similar critique of *In a Queer Time and Place* in her book *Queer Dickens*, arguing that Halberstam “perpetuate[s] the appropriation of the meaning of family by the far right, erasing wider, and historically discernable, formations of kinship” (26). Although I maintain that Halberstam’s conception of queer temporality is an important starting point for discussions about the normative ways family and marriage are utilized to delineate the structures of people’s lives, it is also necessary to point out Halberstam’s limited definitions of family and queerness, as Furneaux has done, and to complicate queer temporality as it exists *within* and *alongside* the family—as we see in “The Island of the Nine Whirlpools.”

Indeed, queer temporality in “Nine Whirlpools” manifests primarily on the level of the family. While the witch, as a magical woman whose life experience bears some resemblance to MacDonald’s wise woman, does exist outside and even in opposition of the institutions of marriage and sexual reproduction, this existence is foreclosed by the events of the story as she sacrifices her magic for the Queen. Unlike in *The Wise Woman*, magic is not allowed to exist outside limited boundaries. However, before its expulsion, magic motivates the relationship between the Queen and the witch, and through their magical, non-sexual reproduction, enables a queering of the “time of inheritance,” or the generational time in which children inherit values, morals, wealth, and goods from their parents and which connects children with both the past and future of the nation (Halberstam 5). Meanwhile, the demise of magic seems to be that which allows the witch to participate fully in the story’s family-focused happy ending, and the inclusion of both the witch and the Queen in this conclusion contributes to the queering of intergenerational time—what I would describe as a subset of the time of inheritance, which

suggests unidirectional movement from one generation to the next and demands the prioritization of the family created by marriage, rather than the family of origin. In these ways, “Nine Whirlpools” demonstrates how families themselves might exist according to queer temporalities, thereby simultaneously revising and expanding Halberstam’s conception of queer temporality and its relation to the family by suggesting queer forms of “family, inheritance, and child rearing” (Halberstam 2).

The Legitimacy of the Nonbiological Family

The queer depiction of family and motherhood that we find in “Nine Whirlpools” diverges sharply from the fairy-tale tradition, which suggests that blood ties are the only legitimate measure of kinship outside the bounds of heterosexual marriage. As established in the previous chapter, the most common happy endings in classic fairy tales include a marriage (thereby establishing a new family unit) or the reunification of a previously existing family. Similarly, fairy tales’ conflict is often rooted in the family, most often through the figure of the stepmother, who is “always bad and immoral” (Cordiano 400). For example, in the Grimms’ “Hansel and Gretel” (1812), the two siblings only get captured by the witch because their heartless stepmother convinces her husband to abandon them in the woods. In variants of “Cinderella,” the orphaned Cinderella is treated cruelly by her stepmother and stepsisters until she escapes her faux-family to create a new family with the prince. In Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Wild Swans” (1838),⁹ an evil stepmother turns her stepsons into swans and banishes her

⁹ The popular examples featured here were published during the first half of the nineteenth century—or earlier in the case of some versions of “Cinderella.” However, several of these examples were also translated and published for a Victorian audience in Andrew Lang’s *Fairy Books* (“Hansel and Gretel” and “Cinderella” were both included in the 1889 *Blue Fairy Book* and the Grimms’ version of “The Wild Swans” was published in the 1894 *Yellow Fairy Book*). For additional examples of the evil stepmother trope in Victorian fairy tales, see “The First Wife’s Wedding

stepdaughter. In each of these examples, the conflict originates from instability in the family (e.g., the introduction of someone who is not-family, the stepmother who is never depicted as a real mother to her stepchildren), and the resolution hinges on regaining stability, either by ousting the external force (as in “Hansel and Gretel,” which reunites the children with their father after their stepmother’s death), by creating a new, stable family (as in “Cinderella” through her marriage to the prince), or through some combination of the two (as in “The Wild Swans,” in which the banished stepdaughter saves her brothers *and* marries the king of a neighboring kingdom). Countless other fairy tales demonstrate a similar preoccupation with the dangers of familial instability, most often revolving around women who are not biological mothers. Indeed, in her analysis of the Grimms’ tales, Maria Tatar identifies women as the most common type of ogre, with many stories representing cannibalistic stepmothers or mothers-in-law (“From Nags to Witches” 139), who demonstrate “the obverse of all the positive qualities associated with mothers” by denying children nourishment and consuming, rather than producing, children (140). Through this repeated emphasis on stepmothers’ villainy, fairy tales’ conclusion is clear: alternative forms of motherhood are a site of danger.

Of course, while addressing the depiction of alternative forms of motherhood in fairy tales, it is important to note that the evil stepmother is not the only alternative maternal figure. Many fairy tales also include benevolent fairy godmothers who play an important role in guiding and protecting their human godchildren. For example, in Charles Perrault’s version of “Cinderella” (1697), translated by Andrew Lang in 1889, the fairy godmother serves as a contrast with the evil stepmother, as she provides Cinderella with all she needs to attend the

Ring” from *Old-Fashioned Fairy Tales* (1882) by Juliana Horatia Ewing and Dinah Mulock Craik’s retellings of “Cinderella,” “Graciosa and Percinet,” “Brother and Sister,” and more in *The Fairy Book* (1870).

prince's ball. However, the fairy godmother never becomes a "real" mother in these stories; most commonly, she intervenes early in the narrative but does not assimilate into the family itself. The godmother rarely appears in the happily-ever-after ending and instead serves as a facilitator of that end; instead of becoming a true part of the protagonist's family, the godmother helps the protagonist regain a family or find a new one.

A few fairy tales also depict another alternative to biological motherhood: adoption. For example, two of Hans Christian Andersen's most beloved fairy tales involve adoptive parents. In "Thumbelina," the tiny Thumbelina is born from a flower and raised by a peasant woman, while in "The Ugly Duckling," a gosling is raised in a family of ducks. However, the adoptive family is not depicted as a "real" family in either of these stories, as both revolve around the protagonists' journey to find a place where they belong. Indeed, the happy ending of each involves the protagonist finding a family that is biologically like themselves: Thumbelina finds other tiny people and marries a tiny prince, while the ugly duckling discovers the truth of his heritage when a flock of swans welcomes him to their ranks. All these examples serve to illustrate a consensus about family and, in particular, motherhood within the fairy tale tradition: the biological family created through heterosexual marriage is the only *real* family. More specifically, monomaterialism, or what Shelley M. Park defines as "the ideological assumption that a child can have only one real mother" (3), is reinforced through these narratives. Stepmothers and adoptive parents are "reduced to a secondary status due to a lack of blood ties" (Park 5) and therefore introduce instability and danger to family life. While alternative figures such as the godmother may serve a positive role, the ultimate goal in the majority of fairy tales is the idealized biological family unit: a husband, a wife, and their biological offspring.

For modern readers, fairy tales therefore reinforce conservative definitions of family that might have real negative consequences in a time when “blended families” and other non-traditional familial configurations are increasingly common (“Parenting in America”). These limited definitions of family and motherhood contribute to the challenges many mothers might face in the context of blended, lesbian, adoptive, or polygamous families, such as the favoritism Stephanie Fairyington recounts in her *New York Times* article “Can There Really Be Two Moms?” Fairyington explains how her three-year-old daughter Marty frequently displays overt favoritism for her wife, Marty’s biological mother. While Fairyington has been advised that children’s display of favoritism is a normal stage in the developmental process, she worries that Marty’s favoritism is rooted in her biological bond with her other mother. The article also references Marty’s difficulty classifying her non-traditional family as she attempts to refer to Fairyington as “Daddy.” At the age of three, Marty already seems to have been influenced by normative depictions of the family, such as those reinforced by many fairy tales which suggest that a family may only have one legitimate mother figure.

It is within this fairy tale tradition, with its still influential conceptions of the family, that Nesbit’s “The Island of the Nine Whirlpools” brims with radical potential. The story begins with a King and a Queen who want a child which, according to Halberstam’s conception of queer time, places them squarely within heterosexual existence through a focus on the institutions of marriage and reproduction. However, “Nine Whirlpools” abruptly complicates the link between heterosexuality and reproduction by divorcing reproduction from marriage. In the world of the story, “when Kings and Queens want children, the Queen always goes to see a witch” (101), thereby removing the site of reproduction from heterosexual marriage and placing it within an exclusively female context. This dislocation moves reproduction from the heterosexual space of

marriage to the queer space of the witch's cave—a space whose non-normativity is emphasized by the live snakes who gather near the entryway and who, interestingly enough, are described as ill-mannered, refusing to conform to social conventions (101). Of course, the space is further made queer by the inhabitation of the witch, who, like MacDonald's wise woman, lives alone, unmarried, far removed from the institutions of family and heterosexuality that often structure people's lives.

The removal of reproduction from marriage entirely excludes male involvement in reproduction, as the witch does not merely aid the King and Queen through the natural process of reproduction as a healer or midwife might by offering herbal concoctions or recommending practices to aid in conception and a healthy pregnancy. Instead, the King is entirely excluded. The story's opening paragraph foreshadows this removal, describing the Queen's entry to the witch's cave well before the story so much as mentions the King. After the Queen explains how the King sent her to ask for a child, the witch herself further removes the King. The witch cuts off the Queen, saying, "Oh, yes... I know all about *him*" before redirecting the conversation to the child and the partnership forming between the Queen and the witch (102, emphasis in original). The man, who is supposedly the child's father, matters little to the child's creation; the narrative, and the witch, both prioritize the Queen and her developing relationship with the witch.

It is not merely the King's presence that is negated, however, but also his agency. After the above exchange, the King is barely mentioned again, and then only when the Queen says he would be "very much annoyed" if she returned without a child (102). Beyond this, the scene includes no information about the King's desires; aside from providing the impetus for the Queen to visit the witch, his desire plays no role in the creation of a child. It is instead the Queen

who exercises her agency, first by insisting that she wants the child despite the witch's assertion that it will bring her "great sorrow" (102), and then by offering up all her jewelry and accessories when the witch asks what she will give for the child (102-3). Through this exchange, the King is ejected from another element of reproduction as well, and one that often signifies family belonging: the child does not derive any of its features from him. The witch tells the Queen, "Your child will have hair as golden as *your* crown, eyes as blue as *your* sapphires. The red of *your* rubies will lie on its lips, and its skin will be clear and pure as *your* pearls. Its soul will be white and sweet as *your* lilies, and *your* diamonds will be no clearer than its wits" (103, emphasis added). The child's characteristics, both physical and mental, are determined by its mother. This scene thereby demonstrates the queering of inheritance: The child inherits its mother's traits, but this inheritance is unlinked from heterosexual reproduction. This enables the introduction of choice to the concept of inheritance; the Queen is allowed to choose which items she would be willing to hand over, meaning her choices directly impact what her child does and does not inherit from her. By separating inheritance from reproduction, the story also shows the transmission of inheritance through two women's collaboration. Indeed, the witch has a share in this process. Although she does not seem to add anything of her own to the child's features, she already has "stuff" in the cauldron before she stirs in the Queen's belongings (103); the witch, too, makes a material contribution to the creation of the child.

The witch also actively participates in transferring the above-mentioned qualities from the Queen to the child; instead of instructing the Queen to cast each item into her cauldron when the time is right, the witch demands them from her—crown, necklace, bracelets, clasps, lilies, and diamonds—and it is the witch, rather than the Queen, who throws them into the cauldron. This magical reproduction process requires both women to collaborate and engages both their

bodies: the witch's cauldron, like a womb, serves as a vessel in which the baby is created, while the Queen not only contributes her accessories but also drinks the witch's potion. The narrator never explains the effects of the potion; curiously, it does not make the Queen pregnant, as the baby is instead waiting for her when she returns to the castle. However, it serves to emphasize the active engagement of the Queen in the reproductive process (particularly alongside the King's total absence), while also continuing the cycle of exchange between the Queen and the witch: the Queen gives the witch her valuables, and in exchange, the witch provides the Queen with a potion (not to mention a baby). Through their active involvement and collaboration in the process, this scene emphasizes the Queen and the witch's agency in the nonbiological reproductive process; together, outside the bounds of heterosexual institutions such as marriage and sexual reproduction, they are able to lay claim to greater influence over the reproductive process—agency that would have been denied to the Queen, in particular, within her marriage, as we will see in the next section.

Female Marriage as a Refuge from Sexism within the Heterosexual Family

“Nine Whirlpools” consistently emphasizes the equality, collaboration, loyalty, and even devotion between the Queen and the witch, and their positive relationship only develops as the story proceeds; meanwhile, the positive characteristics of their relationship all stand in stark contrast to the emotionally abusive relationship between the Queen and the King, who proves to be a controlling husband and father. Through this contrast, “Nine Whirlpools” presents relationships between women as a potential escape from the abuses of patriarchy. This is a sharp reversal from the dynamic many other fairy tales present; as I mentioned in the introduction, many fairy tales present heterosexual marriage as an escape from antagonistic relationships

between women, such as the common antagonism between the female protagonist and her evil stepmother. “Nine Whirlpools” instead focuses on antagonism between the sexes, particularly motivated by the King’s misogyny. Marriage is not a guaranteed site of safety but instead threatens instability, and safety is instead found in equitable, loving relationships between women.

One of the ways “Nine Whirlpools” demonstrates equity in the relationship between the Queen and the witch is through the cycle of exchange mentioned above. Notably, the exchange is never monetary in nature: after the Queen accepts the witch’s potion, she attempts to offer the witch some sort of remuneration, like “a country, or a sack of jewels,” or a title (104). The witch expresses disinterest in these offers but admits there is one thing she desires, leading to an effusive emotional and physical exchange between the two women:

“I should like someone to love me,” said the witch.

Then the Queen threw her arms round the witch’s neck and kissed her half a hundred times. “Why,” she said, “I love you better than my life! You’ve given me the baby—and the baby shall love you, too.”

“Perhaps it will,” said the witch, “and when the sorrow comes send for me. Each of your fifty kisses will be a spell to bring me to you.” (104)

Effusive declarations of love and physical intimacy such as those displayed here were not necessarily beyond the realm of normal affection between female friends in the Victorian era. In fact, such intimacy was often encouraged in the name of heterosexuality, as Sharon Marcus argues in her book on the various dynamics of women’s relationships during the Victorian period, *Between Women*: “Victorians accepted friendship between women because they believed it cultivated the feminine virtues of sympathy and altruism that made women into good helpmates” (26). However, this scene includes significant elements far beyond the normative affection between female friends. Note how the

Queen invokes the baby, drawing attention to the witch's role in the baby's creation and the baby's inevitable love for the witch. The Queen seems to suggest that her baby will love the witch for her involvement in its birth—that the baby will naturally love the witch as a child loves its mother, creating a loving triad between the Queen, the witch, and the child they created together.

The loving, intimate relationship between the witch and the Queen stands in stark contrast to the royals' tumultuous marriage and violent family life. From the moment the Queen returns to the castle, the King establishes himself as the antagonist. He belittles her, calling her "silly" and wishing he had married a "clever lady" (105) before issuing a vague threat: "And make the most of your daughter, while she *is* a child" (105, emphasis original). Notably, the King here expresses his own removal from the reproductive process, referring to the Princess only as the Queen's daughter and not his own. While he does later refer to himself as her father, he does so only in an attempt to justify his punishment, when he banishes her to an island surrounded by nine magical whirlpools, allegedly in order "to teach her to respect her father" (107). The only time the King seems to claim the Princess as his child, it links directly to him casting her off, removing her both from the physical space of his home and from her inheritance through his family line, since the Princess could only ascend to the throne upon her marriage. In this action, the King seems to reject both the idea of nonbiological kinship and nonbiological inheritance; because he was not directly involved in the Princess's birth, he can eject her from the royal family and everything that such family belonging means. Fully expecting that the Princess will never be rescued, the King banishes her to rid himself of a daughter he never wanted, a daughter who was never truly his child.

The King's authoritarian practice of making claims and issuing commands, both in his interactions with the Queen and the Princess, further differentiates the King and Queen's marriage from her friendship with the witch. There is no equality or exchange in their marriage. The Queen is effectively silenced in the first scene with her husband; during his diatribe, he scolds her for failing to specify that the child should be male, then assumes the Queen's desires without allowing her to articulate them herself: "You never even thought to tell the witch what kind *you* wanted! Did you now?" (105, emphasis added). The Queen is then disallowed the opportunity of speaking for herself, as the narration delivers her response through indirect dialogue. Within the marriage, the King is the one who speaks, while the Queen is silenced, belittled, and commanded in his shadow, demonstrating the ways marriage may fall short of the Victorian ideal as a result of sexism.

It is worth pointing out that Nesbit does not always depict marriage with a critical eye. *The Book of Dragons* on the whole assumes a more optimistic stance on marriage. As Marcus notes, the Victorian period saw "a shift in the spiritual and emotional definition of marriage from a hierarchical bond dictating that inferior wives obey their superior husbands to a more egalitarian conception modeled on friendship" (26), and this is a more accurate description of the majority of marriages shown in the book. Examples include the parents in "The Deliverers of Their Country" and even the Princess and Nigel who get married at the end of "Nine Whirlpools"—all married couples who demonstrate a much greater degree of love, trust, and even collaboration than the King and the Queen of "Nine Whirlpools."

However, within “Nine Whirlpools,” the instability introduced into the King and the Queen’s marriage as a result of sexism challenges many fairy tale’s unquestioning presentation of marriage as the ultimate goal, while also elevating the relationship between the Queen and the witch by contrast. Of course, this contrast only increases as the narrative proceeds, with the unloving King becoming the force that separates her from her child, while the witch returns to reunite mother and daughter. As many fairy tales establish the stepmother as antagonist in order to underline her unreality as mother, “Nine Whirlpools” casts the King, who is supposedly the Princess’s father, as villain to once again demonstrate his lack of belonging in the family. In place of nonbiological kinship, sexism becomes the biggest threat to the family, as demonstrated by the King’s mistreatment of his wife and disavowal of the Princess because she is not the son he desired.

On the topic of gender, it is interesting to note how many of the human villains in *The Book of Dragons* are male family members, perhaps revealing tensions about men’s role in the family and the threat they may pose to children, in particular. While a majority of the stories feature non-human antagonists, primarily dragons, one-third of the stories cast male family members as adversaries: “Uncle James, or the Perfect Stranger” and “The Fiery Dragon, or The Heart of Stone and the Heart of Gold” both feature conniving uncles, in addition to the evil King of “Nine Whirlpools.” Michael Newton has suggested that in fairy tales, “uncles get as bad a press as stepmothers” (xxii), and that their role is often connected to questions of inheritance—a claim clearly supported by *The Book of Dragons*, as the male villains in all three stories mentioned above are villainous primarily for excluding their female relative from her rightful claim to the throne. Still, it is

interesting to note that there are not only no evil stepmothers in *The Book of Dragons*, but no human female antagonists whatsoever. On questions of inheritance, then, *The Book of Dragons* seems to position men as the guardians of a conservative conception of inheritance, particularly one that disavows women's right to inherit their family's power or status, while women, at least in "Nine Whirlpools," are instead associated with validated inheritance along maternal and/or nonbiological lines.

In contrast to the villainous King, the witch becomes a key ally to the protagonists, returning to stabilize the family by reuniting mother and daughter. Her return at the Queen's hour of need demonstrates her loyalty and devotion, while also showing how the witch becomes absorbed into their new family unit. She demonstrates her kinship to both the Queen and the Princess through her sacrifice, happily turning herself to stone indefinitely alongside the Queen to wait until the Princess is rescued and, in the process, sacrificing her magical powers. As the witch says to the Queen:

I can do one or two other little things for you. Time shall not make the Princess sad. All days will be like one till her deliverer comes. And you and I, dear Queen, will sit in stone at the gate of the tower. In doing this for you I lose all my witch's power, and when I say the spell that changes you to stone, I shall change with you, and if ever we come out of the stone, I shall be a witch no more, but only a happy old woman. (109)

It is this act, most of all, that transforms the relationship between the Queen and the witch; while their relationship at the start of the story may be described as an ideal of female friendship, though of course with complicated queer undertones because they physically create a child together, their relationship now becomes a life partnership, "which some Victorians described as marriages between women" (Marcus 44).

As Marcus asserts, “Sexual relationships of all stripes were most acceptable when their sexual nature was least visible” (49). This idea is echoed by Newton, who claims that although love and marriage are central to the fairy tale genre, desire is “in most cases strikingly chaste” (xxvii). To identify the queer, romantic dimensions of the Queen and the witch’s relationship, I therefore turn to alternative characteristics that Marcus identifies as distinguishing female marriages from platonic friendships, such as cohabitation and fidelity (49). The witch and the Queen live side by side as stone statues, and later, it is implied they both live in the “beautiful palace” built at the end of the story (Nesbit 123). Meanwhile, they display fidelity both in the sense that the witch is faithful to her promise to help the Queen, while the Queen is faithful to her promise that both she and the child will love the witch, and in the sense that neither ever expresses similar devotion to another. Another signifier of Victorian women’s life partnerships is the language they use to address one another: “To call one woman another’s superlative friend was not to disavow their marital relationship but to proclaim it in the language of the day” (Marcus 51). Although neither the Queen nor the witch specifically refers to the other as her “superlative friend,” there are notable aspects of the language they use regarding the other. In the passage quoted above, for example, the witch refers to the Queen as “dear Queen” (109)—phrasing soon echoed by Nigel, the Princess’s love interest, who addresses his love as “dear Princess” (118).

Additionally, the act of becoming stone statues who will stand side by side, perhaps eternally, demonstrates a greater level of devotion than was common in platonic Victorian friendships. I liken this to one of the examples of female marriage that Marcus provides in *Between Women*: “Without even hinting that Bonheur and Micas had sex,

Hird showed that they had higher levels of involvement and intimacy than even the closest of female friends, who rarely lived together for long periods of time and almost never pooled their wealth or arranged to be interred together” (50). By turning to stone alongside the Queen to await the Princess’s salvation, the witch not only demonstrates the depth of her devotion by sacrificing her magic, and by risking eternity as a statue, but also establishes that she and the Queen will live together “for long periods of time,” and will essentially be interred together in stone. Their time on the island of the nine whirlpools thereby solidifies the queer relationship between the Queen and the witch, presenting their intimacy, devotion, and self-sacrifice as a significant upgrade from the abusive marriage the Queen has left behind.

The Exclusion of Queer Magic

With the sacrifice of the witch’s magic, we can see how significant relationships between women are both enabled and expressed by magic in “Nine Whirlpools,” similarly to the role of magic in *The Wise Woman*. As in MacDonald’s novel, it is the magical woman’s magic that brings her and the protagonist together: Rosamond’s parents seek out the wise woman because of her abilities, as the Queen of “Nine Whirlpools” seeks out the witch for her magical child-making prowess. Similarly, the wise woman and Rosamond’s relationship reaches its peak in the enchanted room, where the wise woman teaches Rosamond how to properly touch the magical flowers; in “Nine Whirlpools,” the ultimate expression of devotion between the witch and the Queen is when the witch uses her magic to turn both women to stone, forever binding them together through their resulting immobility.

However, while the possibility of magic suggests a way for Rosamond's relationship with the wise woman to endure, as Rosamond is cast as a potential successor for the magical wise woman, magic is ultimately depicted as a barrier between the Queen and the witch. The witch herself suggests that someone who loves her is "hard to get in my trade" (104), meaning her dealings in magic somehow limit her ability to form loving relationships with others. Indeed, although the Queen swears that she loves the witch "better than my life" (104), she and the witch go their separate ways until the Princess is grown, when necessity brings them together once more and the witch surrenders her magic to help the Queen and the Princess. After all, the significance of the witch's act is not only that she can magically preserve herself and the Queen as stone statues, but that in doing so, she gives up her magic to become "only a happy old woman" (109). In order to participate in the family-based happy ending, the witch must leave behind her identity as witch, must abandon the non-normativity of her magical existence in the queer space of her secluded cave. The life partnership between the Queen and the witch endures through the story's ending, as does the loving triad between Queen, witch, and Princess, but the queerness of magic must be left behind in service of those relationships. Here, "Nine Whirlpools" approaches magic in a vastly different way from *The Wise Woman*, in which it is magic that enables the relationship between Rosamond and the wise woman at the novella's conclusion. In "Nine Whirlpools," it is instead the *sacrifice* of magic that enables queer relationships and familial configurations.

In this way, part of Halberstam's formulation that queerness is antithetical to the family holds true: Magic in "Nine Whirlpools" seems to represent a non-normative way of being in the world, as demonstrated through the queer space of the witch's cave; if, in

order to participate in the family, the witch must surrender her magic, the family establishes itself as oppositional to queer ways of being. Non-normative relationships and families persist in the story, but they do still, to a certain extent, conform to societal norms and expectations through the eviction of magic. In other words, the family-based happy ending seems to demand the foreclosure of queer modes of being in time on the individual level: the witch must forever leave the queer space of her cave, and the temporally queer space of the island of the nine whirlpools, where “all days seemed like one day to the Princess” (111), must be freed from its magic until it is an island like any other. Without magic, the queer temporality that survives at the end of the story is experienced less on the individual level and instead focuses on the family in its entirety, as we will see in the following section.

Validating Polymaternalism and Intergenerational Priority

Once all the characters have moved past magic, not merely through the witch’s sacrifice but also by escaping the enchanted island, “they all lived happily as long as was good for them” (123), with “all” clearly indicating the four central characters. The happy ending of “Nine Whirlpools” edifies the family, but the family it presents is itself queer, both polymaternal and multigenerational in a way that is strikingly different from many fairy tales. To create the polymaternal family, “Nine Whirlpools” frees the Queen and the witch from stone, allowing them to reunite with the Princess, who marries Nigel. Together, these four form a new family. The witch may never be explicitly acknowledged as a mother figure within the text; however, she helps create the child, establishes a life partnership with the Queen, and demonstrates affection and devotion to the Princess as

well. By the end of the story, the witch seems a more legitimate parent to the Princess than the King, who is dead long before the story's conclusion. The "fake" family member, usually the stepmother but in this case the King, is excised from the family, and only the true family remains—but with two nonbiological mother figures, a daughter, and a son-in-law, this true family is unusual within the fairy tale tradition. Indeed, the polymaternal family, to use Shelley Park's terminology, is still a rare configuration today, as a "queer family structure that requires the queering of intimacy in a triangulated—or even more complex—relations of mothers and child(ren)" (1). Interestingly, Nesbit herself was part of a polymaternal family, as she and her husband's mistress, Alice Hoatson, "shared their household in a tacit *ménage à trois*," with Nesbit helping to raise Hoatson's two children by her husband (Foster and Simons 129-30). Nesbit's experience mothering two children who were not biologically her offspring may help account for the radical portrayal of motherhood in "Nine Whirlpools," in which two women may play distinct roles of mother to a child, with the text delegitimizing neither mother figure as less real in comparison to the biological mother figure, as the story rewrites the process of reproduction to eliminate blood ties entirely, effectively queering inheritance by complicating the relationship between inheritance, marriage, and sexual reproduction.

The story's polymaternalism also challenges the monomaternal notion that motherhood is tied to biological reproduction, that "maternal reality" involves "participation in a particular set of biological processes such as pregnancy, birthing, and lactation" which are thought to form a "special bond" between mother and child "such that loving and caring for that child is natural, a matter of 'maternal instinct'" (Park 4). The basis of motherhood in these biological processes argues for the invalidity of

alternative forms of motherhood, such as adoptive, lesbian, or stepmothering, in which the mother might be unable to participate in these processes and would therefore lack the “special bond” with their child, as demonstrated by Fairyington’s concerns about her daughter’s superior bond with her biological mother. By separating motherhood from these processes, then, “Nine Whirlpools” presents a counterargument to these monomaterial claims. The Queen does not experience pregnancy or childbirth, nor is there any indication that she breastfeeds the infant Princess. While she does raise the Princess from infancy, her role as mother lacks all the biological processes that usually signify motherhood, but she still displays the “maternal instinct” to protect her child, first intervening when the Princess disrespects the King (Nesbit 106), then summoning the witch to find her child after the King traps her on the island (108). Indeed, one of the central themes of the story is a mother’s love, exemplified most clearly when the Queen tells the witch she would be stone for a thousand years “if at the end of them I could see my Dear again” (108). The Queen is, without question, a “real” mother to the Princess, even though her daughter is not her biological offspring and she does not undergo any of the “natural” processes of motherhood that are believed to form a bond between mother and child. A mother’s love, it turns out, does not need them.

The same is true in the case of the witch. While the witch does play a more active role in the Princess’s birth, she is still not the Princess’s mother in a realistic biological sense, and she is even further removed from the biological processes of motherhood than the Queen. In fact, the witch never lays eyes on the Princess until she arrives on the island of the nine whirlpools, but both witch and Princess seem to love one another instantly. Without hesitation, the witch is welcomed into the tearful reunion between

Queen and Princess: “the *three* kissed each other again and again” (109, emphasis added). At the same time, the witch displays her own “maternal instinct” through her magic, casting not only the spell that turns her and the Queen to stone but also a spell that eliminates the Princess’s awareness of time, so it “shall not make the Princess sad” (109). Through this spell, the witch displays an acute concern for the Princess’s emotional wellbeing, an entirely maternal desire to comfort and protect. As a magical helper figure in a maternal role, she initially appears comparable to a fairy godmother; however, her involvement in the Princess’s birth, her relationship with the Queen, and her inclusion in the happy ending all supersede the standard role of the fairy godmother and allow her greater validity within the family.

The delayed onset of the witch’s maternity illustrates another queer facet of the polymaternal family: the way “polymaternal families queer intimacy by destabilizing the domestic space and time in which intimacy is lived, thus propelling us away from a notion of home as a safe haven from the challenges of public life” (Park 10). In her discussion of polymaternal families, Park refers explicitly to Halberstam’s *In a Queer Time and Place*, using Halberstam’s definitions of queerness and queer temporality to articulate the ways in which polymaternal families (which might result from lesbian, adoptive, foster, or stepmothering) become queer “because of the ways in which they live outside the normative familial time and space” (Park 12). Park’s formulation of queer temporality in the polymaternal family thereby presents one mode of intervening with the restrictive definitions of marriage and family in Halberstam’s original theory. However, Park’s idea that the polymaternal family destabilizes the notion of home as safe haven is not entirely evident in “Nine Whirlpools.” While the Princess’s home becomes a site of

danger when she is banished to the island of the nine whirlpools, this disruption of the home is a result of a cruel father rather than the queered motherhood of either the Queen or the witch. By contrast, the Queen and the witch both represent support, stability, and safety for the Princess, keeping her company as stone statues until Nigel rescues her.

While Park may be right that the polymaternal family queers temporality by destabilizing the time and space of the home, this does not hold true within Nesbit's story. Instead, the queer motherhood in "Nine Whirlpools" primarily queers temporality on the generational level: inheritance, as I demonstrated earlier, as well as an unconventional conception of intergenerational family relations, which allows for a more expansive and changeable definition of the family. The story's ending demonstrates this latter form of queer temporality: While many fairy tales end with a royal marriage, as "Nine Whirlpools" does, parents are often implicitly or explicitly excluded from this happy ending. For example, Charles Perrault's "Cinderella" (1697) ends with Cinderella's marriage to the prince, as well as a reconciliation between her and her repentant stepsisters. Meanwhile, her stepmother is nowhere to be found. The evil stepmother *does* appear at the end of the Grimms' "Little Snow-White" (1812), but she definitively does not partake in the story's happy ending; instead, she attends Snow White's wedding to the prince, where she "was forced to step into the red-hot shoes and dance until she fell down dead." This separation of generations holds true in stories with biological parents as well. In Charles Perrault's "The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood" (1697), which was translated and published in Andrew Lang's *The Blue Fairy Book* (1889), the Princess's parents die long before she is awoken by the Prince. Meanwhile, the Prince's parents are absent from the wedding, and the story ends with his

cannibalistic mother's death. Similarly, Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve's "Beauty and the Beast" (1740), also published in *The Blue Fairy Book*, ends with Belle's marriage to the Prince; the fairy invites Belle's brothers and sisters but makes no mention of her father, even though it was Belle's relationship with him that motivated the events of the story.

In fairy tales that end with a wedding, then, the happy ending is generally reserved for the younger generation only; siblings or stepsiblings might be included, as in "Cinderella," "The Wild Swans," and "Beauty and the Beast," but rarely parents. The inclusion of both the Queen and the witch in the happy ending of "Nine Whirlpools" therefore marks an unusual pairing of parents and children, a prioritization of both generations that suggests a new model of familial temporality in opposition to the narrative of unilateral progression through the family line and reproductive continuance perpetuated by the traditional happy ending.

Conclusion

From beginning to end, "The Island of the Nine Whirlpools" reinvents the standard formula. Rather than restricting the definition of family to the biological family unit or vilifying alternative mother figures, Nesbit validates non-normative configurations of the family, including polymaternal families and devoted life partnerships between women. "Nine Whirlpools" also extends the relationship between child and maternal figure(s) beyond childhood, including the mother(s) in the child's happy ending even once the child has married to create a new family of their own. Nesbit's depiction of family is both expansive and malleable, validating families that are formed through bonds

of love and devotion in place of blood ties. Unlike in *The Wise Woman*, the family is still the mark of a happy ending in “The Island of the Nine Whirlpools” and elsewhere in *The Book of Dragons*, but it is a family that prioritizes equality and agency over any sense of innate identity, biological inheritance, or obligation. Choice—and women’s choice in particular—supersedes birth.

Conclusion

In George MacDonald's *A Dish of Orts*, a collection of sermons and essays "chiefly on" the imagination, he responds to imagined readers' questions about interpretation and authorial intention: "It may be better that you should read your meaning into it. That may be a higher operation of your intellect than the mere reading of mine out of it: your meaning may be superior to mine" (317). That is what I have endeavored to do in this thesis—to find a superior meaning in these fairy tales, a meaning that allows modern queer readers to find a place for themselves in the genealogy of fairy tales, which continue to have an enduring influence on culture's understandings of identity, family, and romance. A meaning that illustrates the complexities of gender and sexuality, both historical and modern. A meaning that shows the value in looking beyond the middle, the sanctioned stage of developmental experimentation, to find the validation of non-normative relationships, modes of being, and families in happily ever after.

At the same time, the meaning I found in *The Wise Woman* and "The Island of the Nine Whirlpools" also intervenes in debates about the definition and significance of queer temporality, as originally defined by Jack Halberstam in *In a Queer Time and Place*. Although Halberstam's theory of queer temporality is situated within the context of transgender bodies and twenty-first century subcultures, chapter one of this thesis demonstrates how an understanding of queer temporality marking lives lived outside the normative institutions of family and reproduction proves useful in many contexts. The queer ending of MacDonald's *The Wise Woman* is made possible through the disruption of the family, preserving alternative modes of existence and aspirations for one's life. Meanwhile, the meaning I find in "The Island of the Nine Whirlpools" complicates this definition, showing how queer temporality manifests within the family, so long as the family is not confined to a heterosexual, biological definition. Within the nonbiological,

polymaternal family of “Nine Whirlpools,” queer temporality arises on the familial level through issues of inheritance and generational progression. At the same time, the consignment of magic to the developmental middle space of the narrative does concede to Halberstam’s initial definition in some way, suggesting that even this unique depiction of the family is not radical enough to make space for other, individual queer modes of existence.

These readings also show the value in continuing to engage with fairy-tale stories, despite fairy tales’ association with conservative gender roles and heteronormativity. Some people have determined to throw the baby out with the bath water, so to speak; for example, in an article published by the *Independent* in late 2018, Olivia Petter’s provides “Five Reasons to Stop Reading Your Children Fairytales Now.” Despite the article’s incendiary, clickbait title, it begins with a quotation from Donald Haase, author of *Fairytales and Feminism*; instead of encouraging parents to cast aside fairy tales, Haase advises them to “read or tell classical tales in ways that intentionally question or subvert the stereotypes,” as this thesis has done. Petter proceeds to provide a list of issues with fairy tales that parents should direct their criticism towards: many fairy tales depict women as damsels who must be saved by men; suggest that marriage is the ultimate form of success in life; show few characters who are not white, thin, straight, and conventionally attractive; and provide only two options for female characters: domesticity or villainy. On the whole, Petter’s list is similar to many of the critiques I have presented of the fairy-tale tradition in this thesis, but the article’s title, “Five Reasons to Stop Reading Your Children Fairytales Now,” is altogether misguided. As Haase suggested, the key is not to cast aside the fairy tale, but to read the fairy tale with an eye directed toward sites of subversion. There are thousands of fairy tales in the world, and, as I have demonstrated in this thesis, they do not all adhere to the same pattern. The genre’s breadth presents many opportunities for us to

branch out, to question which tales have been canonized, and to discover new ways of relating to the fairy tale.

Beyond re-envisioning our relation to traditional fairy tales, it is up to the modern queer fairy tale writer to conceptualize what happily ever after might look like for the non-normative queer family—to consider how to represent the relationship between magic and queerness, define the family, and create endings that allow for the perseverance of different ways of being in time and space. Queering the fairy tale is a vital task to critique heteronormative ideology and allow queer readers to see themselves represented in culturally significant, archetypal stories, but it requires more than simply swapping out a male love interest for a female, or vice versa—a trap some recent queer fairy-tale retellings seem to have fallen into¹⁰. A queer fairy tale must grapple with all these questions of identity, family, development, time, agency, and love. These questions are already central to the fairy tale; they cannot go unasked or unanswered. By engaging with these questions, as MacDonald and Nesbit have, queer fairy-tale writers can finally provide long-excluded queer readers with their own happy endings.

¹⁰ See Jon Michael Wargo's review of Malinda Lo's *Ash* (2009), a lesbian retelling of "Cinderella."

Works Cited

- Abate, Michelle Ann, and Kidd, Kenneth B. "Introduction." *Over the Rainbow: Queer Children's and Young Adult Literature*. University of Michigan Press, 2011, pp.1-14.
- Andersen, Hans Christian. *The Annotated Hans Christian Andersen*. Edited by Maria Tatar, W.W. Norton, 2008.
- Battin, Melba. N. "Duality Beyond Time: George MacDonald's *The Wise Woman, or the Lost Princess: A Double Story*." *For the Childlike: George MacDonald Fantasies for Children*. Ed. Roderick McGillis. London: CHLA and Scarecrow Press, 1992. 207–218. Print.
- Bossche, Chris R. Vanden. "Moving Out: Adolescence." *A New Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, edited by Herbert F. Tucker. Wiley Blackwell, 2014, pp. 82-96.
- Bottigheimer, Ruth B. *Fairy Tales: A New History*. Excelsior Editions/State University of New York Press, 2009.
- Brinks, Ellen. "Two Girls in Love: Romantic Friendship and the Queer Family in Elizabeth Anna Hart's *The Runaway*." *Queer Victorian Families: Curious Relations in Literature*, edited by Duc Dau and Shale Preston. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015, pp. 134-154.
- Brooks, Michael. "Love and Possession in a Victorian Household: The Example of the Ruskins." *The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses*, edited by Anthony S. Wohl. St. Martin's Press, 1978, pp. 82-100.
- Bruhm, Steven, and Hurley, Natasha. "Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children." *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*. University of Minnesota Press, 2004, pp. ix-xxxviii.
- Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. Routledge, 2004.

- Clerkx, Lily, and Yamaoka, Mira. "Family Relationships in Fairy-Tales: A Historical Sociological Approach." *The Netherlands Journal of Sociology/Sociologia Neerlandica*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1987, pp. 79–91.
- Cordiano, Alessandra. "Fairy Tales and Stepmothers: The Extended Families in a Legal Perspective." *Italian Sociological Review*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2015, pp. 399–410.
- Craik, Dinah Maria Mulock. *The Fairy Book*. Mayflower Books, 1979.
- Dau, Duc, and Preston, Shale. "Introduction." *Queer Victorian Families: Curious Relations in Literature*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015, pp. 1–16.
- De Morgan, Mary. *The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde, and Other Stories*. Garland Publishing, 1977.
- Dinshaw, Carolyn & Edelman, Lee & Ferguson, Roderick A & Freccero, Carla & Freeman, Elizabeth & Halberstam, Judith & Jagose, Annamarie & Nealon, Christopher S. (Christopher Shaun) & Nguyen, Tan Hoang. "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 13 no. 2, 2007, pp. 177-195. *Project MUSE*, muse.jhu.edu/article/215002.
- Ewing, Juliana Horatia. *Old-Fashioned Fairy Tales*. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Project Gutenberg, 2005, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/15592>.
- Fairyington, Stephanie. "Can There Really Be Two Moms?" *The New York Times*, 25 Oct. 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/well/family/lesbian-families-children-favoritism-parenting.html.
- Feslki, Rita. *The Limits of Critique*. University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- Foster, Shirley, and Simons, Judy. "E. Nesbit – *The Railway Children*." *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings of "Classic" Stories for Girls*. University of Iowa Press, 1995.

- Freeman, Elizabeth. "Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography." *Social Text*, vol. 23, no. 3-4 84-85, 2005, pp. 57–68.
- Furneaux, Holly. *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Gillis, John R. *Youth and History; Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770-Present*. Academic Press, 1974.
- Gorham, Deborah. *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*. Indiana University Press, 1982.
- Grimm, Jacob, and Wilhelm Grimm. "Little Snow-White." Translated by D. L. Ashliman, www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm053.html.
- Grimm, Jacob, and Wilhelm Grimm. "Rapunzel." Translated by D. L. Ashliman, *Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts*, University of Pittsburgh, 20 Jan. 2012, www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm012.html.
- Gubar, Marah. *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time and Place*. New York: New York UP, 2005. Print.
- Halperin, David M. *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Honig, Edith Lazaros. *Breaking the Angelic Image: Woman Power in Victorian Children's Fantasy*. Greenwood Press, 1988.
- Jarrar, Osama. "The Wise Woman, or the Lost Princess: A Double Story: A Critique of Victorian Parenting." *North Wind: A Journal of George MacDonald Studies*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2013, pp. 61–84., digitalcommons.snc.edu/northwind/vol32/iss1/4/.
- Lang, Andrew. *The Blue Fairy Book*. Longmans, Green, and Co., 1889.

- Langlinais, C. "Framing the Victorian Heroine: Representations of the Ideal Woman in Art and Fiction." *Interdisciplinary Humanities.*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2005, pp. 73–93.
- MacDonald, George. *A Dish of Orts: Chiefly Papers on the Imagination and on Shakespeare*. Norwood Editions, 1977.
- MacDonald, George. *The Wise Woman and Other Stories*. W.B. Eerdmans's Pub. Co., 1980.
- Marcus, Sharon. *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. Princeton University Press, 2007.
- McGillis, Roderick. "'A Fairytale Is Just a Fairytale': George MacDonald and the Queering of Fairy." *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2003, pp. 86–99.
- Nesbit, E. *The Book of Dragons*. 1st ed., Random House, 2010.
- Newton, Michael. "Introduction." *Victorian Fairy Tales*. Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. ix-xxviii.
- "Parenting in America." *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project*, Pew Research Center, 17 Dec. 2015, www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/1-the-american-family-today/#fn-21212-12.
- Park, Shelley M. *Mothering Queerly, Queering Motherhood: Resisting Monomaternalism in Adoptive, Lesbian, Blended, and Polygamous Families*. State University of New York Press, 2013.
- Petter, Olivia. "Five Reasons to Stop Reading Your Children Fairytales Now." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 18 Oct. 2018, www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/fairy-tales-children-stop-reading-parents-body-image-gender-roles-women-girls-sexism-a8067641.html.

“queer, adj.1.” OED Online, Oxford University Press, March 2018,

www.oed.com/view/Entry/156236. Accessed 23 April 2018.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky., and Frank, Adam. “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You’re So Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay Is About You.” *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Duke University Press, 2003, pp. 123–51.

Seifert, Lewis C. “Queer Time in Charles Perrault’s ‘Sleeping Beauty.’” *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2015, pp. 21–41.

Tatar, Maria. “From Nags to Witches: Stepmothers and Other Ogres.” *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*. Expanded 2nd ed., Princeton University Press, 2003, pp. 137-155.

Tatar, Maria. “From Rags to Riches: Fairy Tales and the Family Romance.” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1982, pp. 31–34.

Thackeray, William Makepeace. *The Rose and the Ring*. MobileReference, 2009.

Tolkien, J. R. R. “On Fairy-Stories.” *Tree and Leaf*. George Allen & Unwin, 1964.

Turner, Kay, and Greenhill, Pauline. “Introduction: Once Upon a Queer Time.” *Transgressive Tales: Queering the Grimms*. Wayne State University Press, 2012, pp. 1-24.

Turner, Kay. “At Home in the Realm of Enchantment: The Queer Enticements of the Grimms’ ‘Frau Holle.’” *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2015, pp. 42–63.

Warner, Marina. *Fairy Tale: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Wargo, Jon Michael. “Sexual Slipstreams and the Limits of Magic Realism: Why a Bisexual Cinderella May Not Be All That ‘Queer.’” *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children’s Literature*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2014, pp. 43–50.

Wilson, Anita C. “The Wise Woman and Other Stories.” *School Library Journal*, vol. 27, 1981, p. 129.

Zipes, Jack. "Once There Was a Time: An Introduction to the History and Ideology of Folk and Fairy Tales." *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*. Rev. and expanded ed., University Press of Kentucky, 2002, pp. 1-22.

Zipes, Jack. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2006.