



# Fairy Tales: A New History

*Ruth B. Bottigheimer*

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**Fairy Tales: A New History** Ruth B. Bottigheimer

*Overturns traditional views of the origins of fairy tales and documents their actual origins and transmission.*

Where did Cinderella come from? Puss in Boots? Rapunzel? The origins of fairy tales are looked at in a new way in these highly engaging pages. Conventional wisdom holds that fairy tales originated in the oral traditions of peasants and were recorded for posterity by the Brothers Grimm during the nineteenth century. Ruth B. Bottigheimer overturns this view in a lively account of the origins of these well-loved stories. Charles Perrault created Cinderella and her fairy godmother, but no countrywoman whispered this tale into Perrault's ear. Instead, his Cinderella appeared only after he had edited it from the book of often amoral tales published by Giambattista Basile in Naples. Distinguishing fairy tales from folktales and showing the influence of the medieval romance on them, Bottigheimer documents how fairy tales originated as urban writing for urban readers and listeners. Working backward from the Grimms to the earliest known sixteenth-century fairy tales of the Italian Renaissance, Bottigheimer argues for a book-based history of fairy tales. The first new approach to fairy tale history in decades, this book answers questions about where fairy tales came from and how they spread, illuminating a narrative process long veiled by surmise and assumption.

“Bottigheimer's work is as always provocative and interesting.” — *Journal of American Folklore*

“The genius of this slender volume is not so much that it provides a totally ‘new history,’ but rather that it presents not only Bottigheimer's research but also that of John Ellis, Heinz Rölleke, Nancy Canepa, and many others in cogent, persuasive, eminently readable prose ... A fascinating study in intertextuality, this book includes a helpful list of the 77 tales discussed, categorized by the author.” — CHOICE

“Some scholars say that, whether or not one agrees with all of Bottigheimer's conclusions, her work is a useful questioning of popularly held beliefs.” — *Chronicle Review*

“This book will forever change the way that scholars and readers view a genre—the literary fairy tale—that remains vital today.” — Suzanne Magnanini, author of *Fairy-Tale Science: Monstrous Generation in the Tales of Straparola and Basile*

Ruth B. Bottigheimer teaches European fairy tales and British children's literature at Stony Brook University, State University of New York. She is the coeditor (with Leela Prasad and Lalita Handoo) of *Gender and Story in South India*, also published by SUNY Press, and the author of several books, including *Fairy Godfather: Straparola, Venice, and the Fairy Tale Tradition*.

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