

Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Figs 1-2 Binette Schroeder,
in *The Frog Prince, or Iron
Henry* (North-South
Books, 1998).

‘Iron is Stronger than Grief, but Love is Stronger than Iron’: Reading Fairy-Tale Emotions through Words and Illustrations

Maria Nikolajeva

The various perspectives employed in the study of fairy tales, including structural, socio-historical, psychoanalytical and educational, open up different dimensions of the tales in general, as well as of particular tales. All these approaches would, however, probably agree on one point: fairy-tale characters are not associated with a rich internal life. Moreover, fairy-tale agents' clear-cut narrative roles and their unequivocal allegiance to good or evil do not encourage, but rather impede, our affective engagement. In other words, we may be glad that fairy-tale heroes and heroines achieve their goals, or that villains receive their deserved punishment, but we do not empathise with them the way we empathise with a novel's characters. We do not consider that they have feelings which motivate their actions. Even psychoanalytical approaches deal with symbols rather than actual emotions, and we tend not to endow fairy-tale figures with a complex consciousness.

Cognitive poetics, a field of inquiry at the crossroads of literary criticism and cognitive science, offers a new way of thinking about fictional characters and about readers' or listeners' emotional involvement (see e.g. Stockwell 2002). Cognitive poetics, or at least one particular direction of it focusing on empathy and emotions (Zunshine 2006, Keen 2007, Vermeule 2010, Hogan 2011), utilises concepts from cognitive psychology, particularly empathy and theory of mind, to explore how they can illuminate readers' cognitive and affective engagement with fictional characters who appear to have no thoughts, emotions, intentions, motivations, beliefs nor ethical values. However, cognitive poetics does not simply bring back the psychological dimension of fictional characters, dismissed by formalism and structuralism. Instead, it employs recent achievements of brain research to explain how human brains can, through mirror neurons, respond to fictional events and characters as if they were real, and how fiction can stimulate such responses through various narrative devices. Using theory of mind (the ability to understand other people's thoughts, beliefs and intentions) and empathy

(the ability to understand other people's emotions), it becomes possible to discern the implicit interiority of fairy-tale characters, which makes us care about them but also allows us to infer their motivations and ethical choices entirely on the basis of their external actions.

Since cognitive poetics is a relatively new direction of inquiry, there are thus far hardly any studies of fairy tales with a cognitive approach (see e.g. Nikolajeva 2014). The above-mentioned literary cognitive studies focus predominantly on novels featuring complex, round, dynamic characters with a rich internal life. However, some scholars, Lisa Zunshine in particular (2006, 2012), have also examined popular culture, which, like fairy tales, is repeatedly identified as deliberately lacking psychological depth. True, in reading fairy tales or crime novels we align with heroes merely on account of their being heroes, and either do not care about or feel aversion toward characters who prevent heroes from obtaining their goals. However, as cognitive critics point out, the attraction of any kind of fiction is that it can satisfy our curiosity about other people's minds. Paradoxically, while the minds of fairy-tale heroes are seldom transparent in the same way that the minds of a novel's protagonists often are, our real-life experience is closer to fairy tales than to novels. Novels deliberately expose their characters' interiority to readers. In real life, however, we can only make inferences about other people's minds through their behaviour, facial expressions or body language. Misreadings can cause all sorts of problems. The straightforwardness of fairy tales allows us to test our theory of mind without running the risk of real-life consequences. This is at least one of the many possible explanations why we remain fascinated by fairy tales long after the emergence of the novel. Obviously, we become deeply engaged with fairy-tale heroes, albeit differently from how we engage with characters in a novel. Yet we cannot avoid making guesses about fairy-tale characters' interiority even though, or perhaps especially because, there are no visible expressions of their thoughts and emotions in the text. Cognitive criticism would claim that fairy tales have a strong potential for creative mind-reading and empathy, even though it may not be self-evident. The cognitive approach prompts questions about interiority well-hidden beyond the surface.

In this article, I have chosen to test the cognitive approach on 'The Frog King, or Iron Heinrich'; not only because it is the opening tale in the Grimm collection, but because it is rather atypical for a fairy tale, focusing significantly more on inner conflicts, ethics and empathy, which are the foremost targets of interest in cognitive criticism. Moreover, the numerous illustrated versions of the tale allow the exploration of how visual representation of emotions takes the reader's perception in different directions. I will refer to the recipient of the tale as a reader, since illustrated versions engage recipients with a material page rather than in a purely auditory form. For the verbal text, I primarily use Philip Pullman's recent retelling (Pullman 2012) and, where helpful, two other translations (Grimm 1884; Grimm 2012), as well as two original German versions of 1812 and 1857. Such comparative close reading is necessary since the verbal nuances

can be decisive in understanding emotions. I have also used a representative selection of innumerable illustrated versions to reflect some central points of my argument.

For a fairy tale, 'The Frog King' displays an amazing range of emotions. All five basic emotions identified within affective psychology – joy, distress, fear, anger and disgust (Oatley 1992; Evans 2001) – are not merely present, but remarkably prominent and explicitly expressed: the princess is distressed when she has lost her favourite toy; she is happy when she gets it back; she is frightened when the frog comes to the castle; she is disgusted when the frog eats from her plate; and she is angry when the frog demands that he sleep in her bed. Moreover, the story also displays, explicitly or implicitly, such social emotions as surprise, guilt, love, and grief (Evans 2001; see also Hogan 2011). Not least, the story invites the reader to engage with it cognitively and affectively, that is, to understand what the characters think and feel, and what they know and feel about each other's feelings.

We are told that the basic emotions are evolutionarily conditioned in our brains and therefore universal: we recognise their external signs within any culture, including facial expression, gestures, body posture, and movement. Illustrations are an excellent way to enhance our engagement with fictional characters' emotions because we recognise these external expressions from our real-life experience. Cognitive science has demonstrated that visual stimuli are stronger and quicker than verbal ones: an image of a person in distress has a stronger and more immediate impact on the reader than the verbal statement, 'She was upset'. Without going into technicalities, the explanation in brain research (e.g. Evans 2001, 25ff) is that our brains are evolutionarily wired to respond to emotional stimuli in two ways: through the very quick 'low path', short-cutting the rational part of the brain; and a slower, but more accurate, 'high path' where, among other things, language is situated. The difference is measured in fractions of seconds, yet the initial affective response seems to take the shortcut. If so, an image is processed a split second quicker than the corresponding verbal statement. With examples of illustrated versions of the tale, I will show how images can guide our engagement in different directions.

I will go through the tale episode by episode, examining what it encourages the reader to do, cognitively and emotionally. For instance, the opening sentence invites the reader to invest in the protagonist, that is, to become sufficiently interested in her to go on reading. The cognitive operations involved are attention and imagination.

One fine evening a young princess ... went out to take a walk by herself in a wood. (Grimm 2012)

Es war einmal eine Königstochter, die ging hinaus in den Wald ...
[There was once a king's daughter, who went out in the woods ...]
(Grimm 1812)

I skip the more elaborate 1857 version and its rendition by Pullman since they are of no consequence for my argument. The initial situation establishes the princess as the central character and thus governs our attitude to the narrated events. Here, the illustrations are crucial, since most of the information we receive about the character is carried through images. The German original does not mention that the king's daughter is young; we infer it from fairy-tale convention: fairy-tale heroines are young by default. In this inference, we bring in our previous experience of similar texts.

Yet how young is young and how does our perception of the princess's age affect our understanding of her motivations? As cognitive psychology tells us, adolescents' brains are different from adults'; for instance, they are poor at decision-making, taking responsibility or predicting consequences of their actions (see Blakemore and Frith 2005). If the princess is thirteen or fourteen, she will unconditionally prioritise the immediate gratification of getting back her ball, rather than considering the implication of her promise. If, on the other hand, she is twenty or older, she should be psychologically mature enough to be responsible for her actions. We do not, of course, expect a fairy-tale princess to have a brain, or consciousness; yet the illustrations can clearly lead us in different directions in our assessment of the princess's actions. Most of the classical illustrators, such as Walter Crane (1874), Arthur Rackham (Grimm 1909), Katharine Cameron (Chisholm 1909), Charles Robinson (Jerrold 1911), Margaret Evans Price (Bates 1921), Anne Anderson (1935), and a few contemporary, for instance, Jane Ray (Doherty 2010), portray her as a grown-up young woman; in fact, it is inexplicable that this young woman would be playing with a ball rather than practising the piano or doing embroidery. Binette Schroeder's version (Grimm 1998, Fig. 1) portrays the princess's sisters playing tennis, possibly more appropriate for young ladies, but the protagonist stands aside as if the game is too demanding for her; and in the next image she is throwing the ball on her own. In contrast, modern mass-market retellings and digital apps present the princess as a little girl, for whom not only playing ball is natural, but also forgetting her promises.

The princess is unequivocally central in the text and illustrations, which prompts the reader to select her as the 'object of identification'. Here, however, cognitive criticism makes its first objection to this conventional response. Immersive identification, that is, aligning with the character's perceptual and conceptual point of view, precludes empathy and mind-reading, and thus impedes any ethical judgement of the princess. In contrast, empathic identification implies that, although we do not necessarily share the princess's perspective and her ethical values, we are still curious about her thoughts and feelings, and able to evaluate them. The omniscient, non-focalised perspective of the illustrations assists us in adopting this independent subject position.

To pass the time she had a golden ball, which she used to throw up in the air and catch. It was her favourite game. (Pullman 2012)

Sie hatte eine goldene Kugel, die war ihr liebstes Spielwerk,
die warf sie in die Höhe und fing sie wieder in der Luft und hatte
ihre Lust daran. [She had a golden ball, which was her favourite toy,
which she threw up high and caught again in the air and it gave her
much pleasure.] (Grimm 1812)

As already mentioned, playing with a ball is a strange pastime for a young girl of marriageable age. For my purpose, however, it is important that playing with a ball is pleasurable, which amplifies her distress when the ball is lost.

She began to cry, and she cried louder and louder, inconsolably.
(Pullman 2012)

The text does not say explicitly that the princess is upset, but we have no difficulty making this inference, since we know from our real-life experience or from previous reading that being upset frequently results in crying. The various illustrations support the inference through the princess's face and body posture. Schroeder's image, however, expresses fright rather than distress (Fig. 2).

She ... saw a frog who'd stuck his big ugly head out of the water.
(Pullman 2012)

Wie sie so klagte, steckte ein Frosch seinen Kopf aus dem Wasser. [As
she was thus complaining, a frog stuck his head out of the water.]
(Grimm 1812)

... erblickte sie einen Frosch, der seinen dicken häßlichen Kopf aus
dem Wasser streckte. [she caught sight of a frog, who was stretching
his fat ugly head out of the water.] (Grimm 1857)

The strongly evaluative and emotionally charged word 'ugly', absent in the 1812 edition, can be interpreted in two ways. It can be an omniscient narrator's objective statement: the frog was ugly. However, through our emotional alignment with the princess, we rather view it as her subjective perception: she thinks that the frog is ugly, while it can, arguably, be rather sweet. This subjective judgement anticipates her negative reactions later in the story. The illustrations can support or contradict the subjective perception with a literal point of view, that is, make us look at the frog together with the princess. Schroeder's sequence of images emphasises surprise rather than disgust (Fig. 2).

'You're crying so bitterly, you'd move a stone to pity.' (Pullman 2012)

Pity is a social emotion that makes us acknowledge others' suffering. The frog is showing strong empathy with the princess, which she ostensibly is unable to appreciate; but here the reader is asked to detach themselves from the princess's subjectivity and instead assess the frog as capable of empathy. At this point we do not know yet that the frog is a human being in disguise and as such possesses empathic skills. However, we see that the frog is not wholly altruistic and can negotiate, promising to get the ball in exchange for being accepted as the princess's playmate.

The princess thought, 'What is this stupid frog saying? Whatever he thinks, he'll have to stay in the water where he belongs.' (Pullman 2012)

So far, the princess's emotions have been represented through embodiment: she is happy when she is playing with her ball, and she cries when she is distressed. Here we are allowed to enter her mind. She doesn't seem to be surprised that the frog can talk; she may be too preoccupied with her distress; or she may, as we do, accept it as a feature of the fictional world. Cognitive science points out that anthropomorphisation of animals and inanimate objects is the brain's way of making sense of the world. Acknowledging the frog as a sentient being, we expect it to have thoughts, feelings, intentions and motivations similar to those of humans. However, the princess makes several cognitive and affective mistakes that we are asked to contemplate. Firstly, she neglects the fact that, if the frog is sentient, he perhaps has intentions and knows what he is asking for. Secondly, the phrase 'whatever he thinks' shows that she views herself as cognitively superior. Thirdly, she does not consider that by giving a promise she does not intend to keep she is acting unethically. She does not care whether the frog's feelings will be hurt if she deceives him. In short, the princess behaves irresponsibly. Yet, empathising with the princess immersively, we perhaps decide that she acts rightly, since who cares for a frog's feelings?

The princess was so happy ... forgot all about the poor frog ...
(Pullman 2012)

... sie ... war so froh [she ... was so happy] (Grimm 1812)

Die Königstochter war voll Freude ... hatte bald den armen Frosch vergessen [The king's daughter was full of joy ... soon had forgotten the poor frog] (Grimm 1857)



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

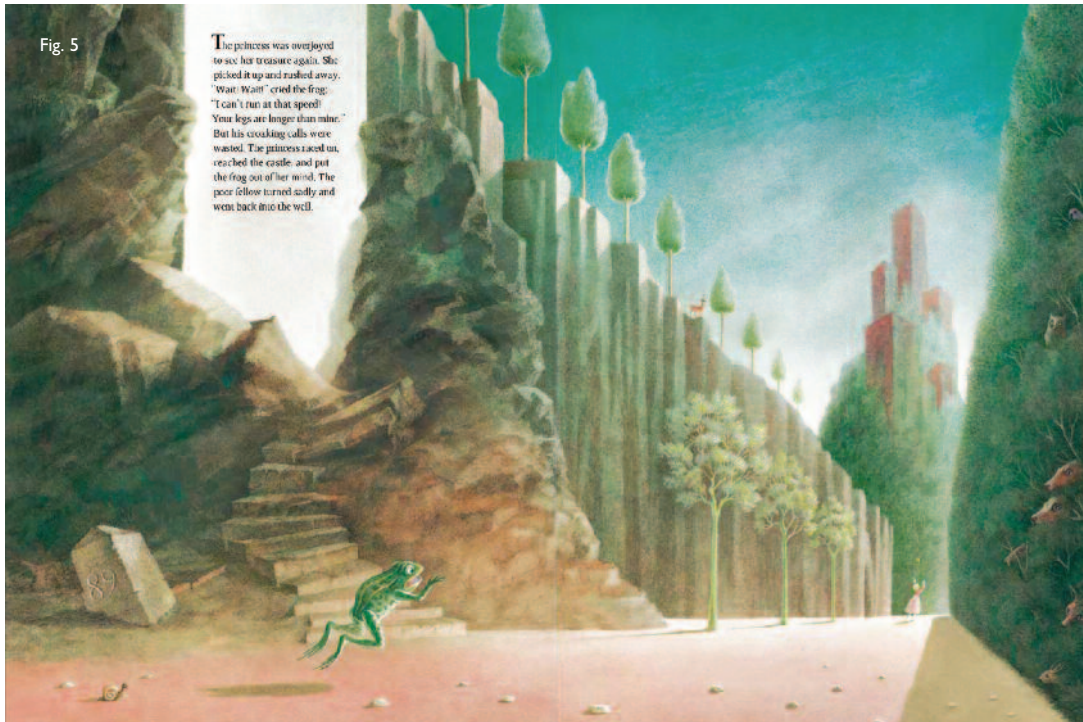


Fig. 5

The princess was overjoyed to see her treasure again. She picked it up and rushed away. "Wait! Wait!" cried the frog. "I can't run at that speed! Your legs are longer than mine." But his croaking calls were wasted. The princess raced on, reached the castle, and put the frog out of her mind. The poor fellow turned sad and went back into the well.

Fig. 3 Charles Folkard, 'The Frog Prince', *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (Black, 1911).
 Fig. 4 Warwick Goble, in Dinah Maria Mulock Craik's *The Fairy Book* (Macmillan, 1913).
 Fig. 5 Binette Schroeder, in *The Frog Prince, or Iron Henry* (North-South Books, 1998).

This is one of the rare occasions in the 1857 version where the intrusive narrator makes an appearance. The princess is happy because she has achieved her goal of getting back her toy. She does not care about the frog's feelings, yet the narrator, by using the word 'poor', momentarily shifts perspective from the princess onto the frog, illuminating his state of mind and encouraging the reader to feel pity for him rather than sharing the princess's joy.

The illustrations that follow the princess accentuate her happiness, while those corresponding to the verbal statement 'had to go back down into his well' focus on the frog's distress. This is an effective way of preventing immersive identification, instead making the reader assess the princess's emotional shortcomings and lack of empathy. In the illustrations by Charles Folkard (Grimm 1911, Fig. 3), Warwick Goble (Craik 1913, Fig. 4) and most prominently Schroeder (Fig. 5), we stay with the frog, sharing his point of view and watching the princess run away.

We now move on quickly through the plot to the moment when the frog knocks on the door and the princess has to open it.

Frightened, she slammed the door shut at once and ran back to the table. The king saw that her heart was pounding, and said, 'What are you afraid of, my child? Is there a giant there at the door?'

'Oh, no,' she said, 'it's not a giant, it's a horrible frog.' (Pullman 2012)

... ganz erschrocken warf sie die Thüre hastig zu und setzte sich wieder an die Tafel. Der König aber sah, daß ihr das Herz klopfte, und sagte: »warum fürchtest du dich?« – »Da draußen ist ein garstiger Frosch«. [... quite startled she hastily slammed the door and sat down at the table again. The king saw, however, how her heart pounded, and said 'Why are you afraid?' – 'There is a disgusting frog outside.'] (Grimm 1812)

sie ... setzte sich wieder an den Tisch, und war ihr ganz angst. Der König sah wohl, daß ihr das Herz gewaltig klopfte, und sprach »mein Kind, was fürchtest du dich, steht etwa ein Riese vor der Tür und will dich holen ?« »Ach nein,« antwortete sie, »es ist kein Riese, sondern ein garstiger Frosch.« [she ... sat down at the table again and was full of fear. The king saw clearly that her heart pounded violently, and spoke, 'My child, what has scared you, perhaps a giant stands at the door wanting to carry you away?' 'Oh no,' she answered, 'It's no giant, but a disgusting frog.'] (Grimm 1857)

In Walter Crane's illustration of the princess by the door, she looks upset, even gloomy rather than frightened (Fig. 6). Neither her face nor body posture expresses fright, while the text states explicitly that the princess is frightened. Yet the reason for her fright is not the frog as such. Fear is a basic emotion, evolutionarily conditioned, since it is essential for survival: in encountering something unfamiliar we need to decide quickly whether to flee or fight. It is not accidental that the king suggests a giant as a possible source of danger. Why would a small, harmless animal be threatening? Rather, the princess is frightened by the possible consequences of her own actions. She finds the frog disgusting (the German 'garstig' can also mean nasty, abominable, hateful, detestable; Pullman's 'horrible' is too generic). Disgust is perhaps the most interesting and elusive of the five basic emotions. Its evolutionary function is to prevent us from eating poisonous food. Animals such as rats, spiders, snakes and frogs typically cause disgust because they are inedible and may be poisonous (culinary fascination with frogs is a recent phenomenon). Disgust is closely connected to fear and signals the brain to command the body to move away. The imminent proximity of the frog to food on the table makes him particularly disgusting.

The king said, 'If you make a promise, you have to keep it. Go and let him in.' (Pullman 2012)

This is an interesting moment from the cognitive point of view, when readers need to employ embedded mind-reading. The king's reaction is logically unexpected. He could dismiss his daughter's story as a fib, or simply ask a servant to remove the frog. He knows that the princess is disgusted by the frog, yet he forces her to keep her promise, taking the risk that she will think he does not love her any more. The tale does not claim that the king loves his daughter at all, nor even that he loves his youngest daughter more than the older ones; yet we assume that he loves her, and his endearing and concerned address 'What are you afraid of, my child?' confirms it. The princess ostensibly knows that her father loves her, and she seeks his support in telling him about her encounter with the frog. She must be disappointed by his lack of support; and she may think that he does not love her anymore, which is distressing. Do we empathise with the princess? She has broken her promise, which we may see as immoral, but then the frog is undeniably disgusting. Let us remember that, if the princess is a very young girl, her immature brain does not allow her to reconcile contradictory information: that her father loves her and still makes her do something that she finds disgusting.

... everyone could see that she wasn't enjoying [the food] ... every mouthful seemed to stick in the princess's throat. (Pullman 2012)



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

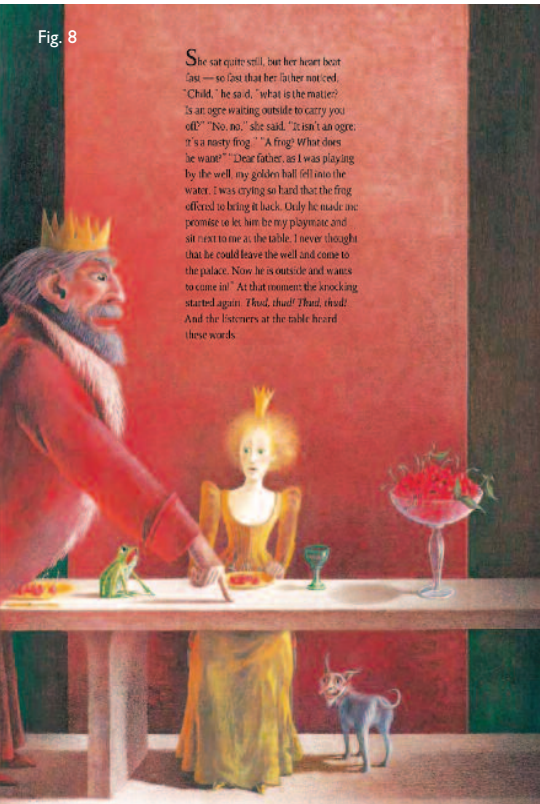
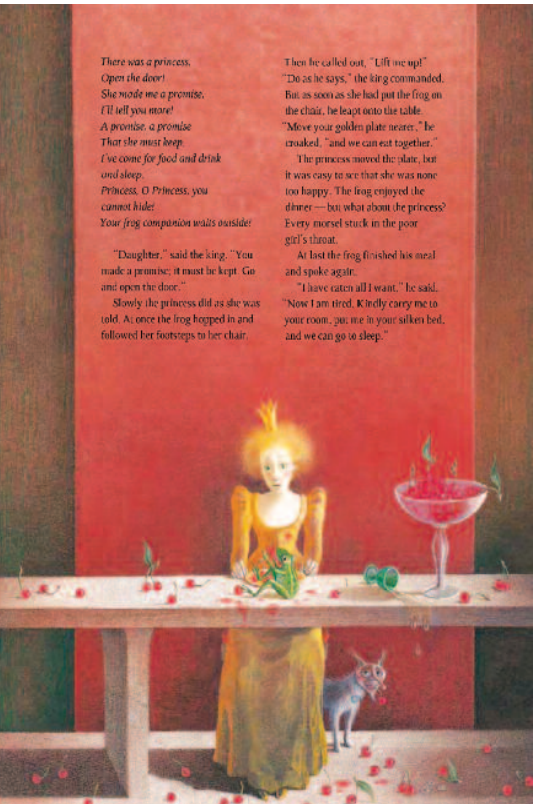


Fig. 8

She sat quite still, but her heart beat fast — so fast that her father noticed. "Child," he said, "what is the matter? Is an acre waiting outside to carry you off?" "No, no," she said. "It isn't an acre, it's a nasty frog!" "A frog? What does he want?" "Dear father, as I was playing by the well, my golden ball fell into the water. I was crying so hard that the frog offered to bring it back. Only he made me promise to let him be my playmate and sit next to me at the table. I never thought that he could leave the well and come to the palace. Now he is outside and wants to come in!" At that moment the knocking started again. *Thud, thud! Thud, thud!* And the listeners at the table heard these words.



*There was a princess,
Open the door!
She made me a promise,
I'll tell you more!
A promise, a promise
That she must keep
I've come for food and drink
and sleep.
Princess, O Princess, you
cannot hide,
Your frog companion waits outside!*

"Daughter," said the king, "You made a promise; it must be kept. Go and open the door."
Slowly the princess did as she was told. At once the frog hopped in and followed her footsteps to her chair.

Then he called out, "Lift me up!" "Do as he says," the king commanded. But as soon as she had put the frog on the chair, he leapt onto the table. "Move your golden plate nearer," he cried, "and we can eat together."
The princess moved the plate, but it was easy to see that she was none too happy. The frog enjoyed the dinner — but what about the princess? Every morsel stuck in the poor girl's throat.
At last the frog finished his meal and spoke again.
"I have eaten all I want," he said. "Now I am tired. Kindly carry me to your room, put me in your silken bed, and we can go to sleep."

Figs 6-7 Walter Crane, in *The Frog Prince* (Routledge, 1874).
Fig. 8 Binette Schroeder, in *The Frog Prince, or Iron Henry* (North-South Books, 1998).

The table scene is central in all sets of illustrations that I have examined, since it is gratifying in capturing the emotional tension between the characters. It is by far the most popular scene in the illustrated versions, even compared to the scene by the well. The princess's distressed face, the king's harsh face and authoritative body posture, the sisters' and guests' curious, suspicious, derisive and disgusted looks convey a wide range of emotions not mentioned directly by the text. In fact, the text does not mention any table guests, yet some illustrators, notably Crane, choose to depict them, presumably to create a fuller, period-anchored environment through clothes and tableware, but also to amplify everybody's attention on the princess. Other illustrators focus on the trio of the king, the princess and the frog, or even just the princess and the frog. Such choices clearly affect our engagement with the character. In Crane's image, for instance, the princess is placed in the centre, across the table from the viewer who thus becomes one of the spectators of the scene (Fig. 7). Schroeder's double-spread is particularly powerful, portraying the princess twice on the facing pages, which reflects both the flow of time and the change of mood. On the verso, the king points his finger at the frog, expressing his order to the princess to obey, while the princess looks at him with incredulity and horror. On the recto, the lonely princess stares at the frog in front of her, evoking her sense of helplessness and confusion, which is amplified when the frog demands to be taken to bed (Fig. 8).

The princess began to cry, because the frog's cold skin frightened her.
She trembled at the thought of him in her sweet clean bed. (Pullman 2012)

Die Königstochter erschreck, wie sie das hörte, sie fürchtete sich vor dem kalten Frosch, sie getraute sich nicht ihn anzurühren und nun sollte er bei ihr in ihrem Bett liegen ... sie mußte thun, wie ihr Vater wollte, aber sie war bitterböse in ihrem Herzen [The king's daughter was terrified when she heard that, she was frightened of the cold frog, she did not dare to touch him and now he should lie with her in her bed ... she had to do as her father wished, but she was terribly angry in her heart]. (Grimm 1812)

Here, all three emotions are blended: distress, fear and disgust. In Rackham's illustration (see front cover of this volume), the princess is depicted carrying the frog upstairs, holding him by the leg between finger and thumb. In the 1812 edition, however, the princess already felt angry in the table scene, her anger directed toward her father as much as toward the frog. Yet it is when the frog demands to sleep beside her in the bed that the princess loses her temper.

In a flash of anger she scooped up the frog and threw him against the wall. (Pullman 2012)

... statt ihn neben sich zu legen, warf sie ihn bratsch! an die Wand; »da nun wirst du mich in Ruh lassen, du garstiger Frosch!« [instead of putting him beside her, she threw him bang! against the wall; 'now you will let me be, you detestable frog!'] (Grimm 1812)

Da ward sie erst bitterböse, holte ihn herauf und warf ihn aus allen Kräften wider die Wand, »nun wirst du Ruhe haben, du garstiger Frosch.« [Then she got terribly angry, picked him up and threw him with all her might against the wall; 'now you will get your rest, you detestable frog!'] (Grimm 1857)

In this scene, the emotion has changed from fear and disgust, emphasised in both German versions through direct speech, to explicit anger, appearing in the 1812 version already in the previous scene with the same word, 'bitterböse', 'terribly angry'. Anger is a basic emotion that results from a goal being encumbered. The princess's goal is to get rid of the frog. She is no longer afraid of the frog, nor too disgusted to touch him. Cognitive psychology notes that, in adolescent brains in particular, strong affects override reason. The princess acts on anger rather than considering the consequences. Interestingly, in the sets of illustrations that I have examined, the scene of rage is omitted, with the exception of Schroeder's that conveys it through a sequence of panels, in the first of which the princess's facial expression clearly shows disgust, while in the subsequent panels we do not see her face as she scoops and throws the frog away from us, her body movement light and gracious (Fig. 9). The reader is thus encouraged to infer the princess's feelings rather than given a clear picture of them.

But when he fell back into the bed, what a surprise! He wasn't a frog any more. In fact he'd become a young man – a prince – with beautiful smiling eyes. (Pullman 2012)

Aber der Frosch fiel nicht todt herunter, sondern wie er herab auf das Bett kam, da wars ein schöner junger Prinz. [But the frog did not fall down dead, but rather when he was back on the bed he was a handsome young prince]. (Grimm 1812)

Als er aber herabfiel, war er kein Frosch, sondern ein Königssohn mit schönen freundlichen Augen. [But when he fell down he was no frog but a king's son with beautiful kind eyes]. (Grimm 1857)

Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Figs 9-10 Binette Schroeder, in *The Frog Prince, or Iron Henry* (North-South Books, 1998).

The word 'surprise' is not used in the German versions, and in Pullman's retelling it is probably added to underpin the conversational tone of the narrative. Yet the word provides a verbal label to an emotion that in the original is only implied. Surprise is a social emotion that can be equally connected to the basic emotions of joy and distress: it can be a pleasant surprise or an unpleasant one. Surprise is the most likely response to a magical transformation. We have no real-life experience of frogs transformed into human beings, and neither has the princess. We do not know that the frog is an enchanted prince because the narrator has failed to tell us so. Some magical groom stories provide this information in a frame story, giving the reader privilege over the heroine. The Disney version of 'Beauty and the Beast', for example, not only provides the background for Beast's curse, but presents it as a moral lesson, as well as setting a deadline for redemption. This makes the viewer superior to Beauty since we possess valuable information that she lacks and can therefore anticipate the outcome. 'The Frog King' does not offer any explanation. We learn eventually that he was put under a spell by a witch, but whether there was any reason for the spell remains unclear. Yet at the moment of transformation, neither the princess nor the reader is prepared for it.

The illustrations, however, if they portray the transformation at all, tend to focus on the frog rather than on the princess. Schroeder's version (Fig. 10) offers a magnificent multi-panel image of the transformation, conveying the pain and horror that the frog experiences. Naturally, there may be physical pain, but the frog is not surprised by the metamorphosis. He has been expecting it; he has been working hard toward it, and he knows that it is beneficial for him. The princess has no clue. She must be scared out of her mind. And yet ...

[The princess] loved him and accepted him as her companion.
(Pullman 2012)

Der war nun ihr lieber Geselle, und sie hielt ihn werth wie sie
versprochen hatte. [He was now her beloved companion, and she
valued him as she had promised.] (Grimm 1812)

Der war nun nach ihres Vaters Willen ihr lieber Geselle und Gemahl.
[He was now according to her father's wish her beloved companion
and spouse.] (Grimm 1857)

Pullman has taken considerable liberty in emphasising love rather than keeping promises or obedience toward patriarchy, as in the original. Love, in terms of affective psychology, is a social emotion that implies that two people have an identical goal, to be happy and to see the counterpart happy. The transformed frog is happy because he has achieved his goal of becoming human. We do not know whether the frog already loved the princess before the meeting by the well. In some versions only she can break the spell; in others, any maiden. If he truly loves

her; his ultimate goal, to be happy, can only be achieved if his love is reciprocated. At the well, the frog says, in Pullman's version: 'if you love me and take me as your companion and your playmate', while in the 1812 version he merely says: 'if you take me as your companion'.

It is a common point of departure for all magical groom stories: the moment the maiden realises the beast's true form, she immediately accepts him as a suitable partner. In Western culture, the trope of instant mutual love is firmly established; therefore we are not surprised that the princess is instantly in love with the handsome prince. The established cultural icon of the magical kiss is more perplexing. Why indeed would the princess be suddenly so charmed by the disgusting frog that she would want to kiss him, whatever the kiss stands for? It is much more logical that she first develops the affection when she sees his true nature. From the evolutionary point of view, mutual affection is necessary for procreation, and in this scene the princess is assessing the strange male's reproductive potential. Young, handsome, kind, rich and powerful – thus acceptable.

As already mentioned, illustrations focus on the transformation, shifting our attention from the princess onto the frog. As a result, we do not contemplate the princess's feelings, losing an important emotional aspect of the tale.

Then they fell asleep side by side. (Pullman 2012)

The illustrators typically omit this scene, and indeed it is not particularly challenging, whether you interpret it erotically or innocently, if it happens after the transformation. In many other versions of the magical groom story, the maiden, often prompted by her evil sisters, breaks the prohibition to see her nocturnal visitor by light, to discover that, rather than a monster, he is a handsome young man. This is a gratifying scene for visual interpretation, laden with emotions. Some versions of 'The Frog King' retain this resolution:

And when the princess opened the door the frog came in, and slept upon her pillow as before, till the morning broke. And the third night he did the same. But when the princess awoke on the following morning she was astonished to see, instead of the frog, a handsome prince, gazing on her with the most beautiful eyes she had ever seen, and standing at the head of her bed. (Grimm 2012)

Further, in some variations of the Frog Prince story, such as 'The Well at World's End' (e.g. in Jacobs 1890), the maiden must not only let the frog sleep in her bed, sometimes three nights running; she must also chop off his head, before the transformation is possible. I will refrain from any psychoanalytical connotations; yet both 1812 and 1857 Grimm versions skip this violent, emotionally charged detail. Instead, both characters fall peacefully asleep, leaving it to our imagination to deduce what exactly happens between the sheets. However, the prince's



Fig. 14

And now the bride and bridegroom
were ready to leave for the
young man's own kingdom.
Faithful Henry lifted each one
into the carriage, then took his place
behind them.

After they had driven a short
distance, a sharp crack was heard.
Startled, the bridegroom spoke:
"Henry, Henry, what's that sound?
Is the carriage breaking?"



Fig. 13

"No, Sir,," she replied, "but behind
My horse when it was aching,
I do now my hand in proof and back,
Joy has made the iron crack."

Then a second time they heard
a crack, and a third time after
that. Each time the groom feared
that the carriage was breaking.
But no — the sound came from the
hoof of the horse facing faithful
Henry's horse.

Grief loosed the bonds of first,
Grief for his lord occurs,
Joy made the bonds so loose.

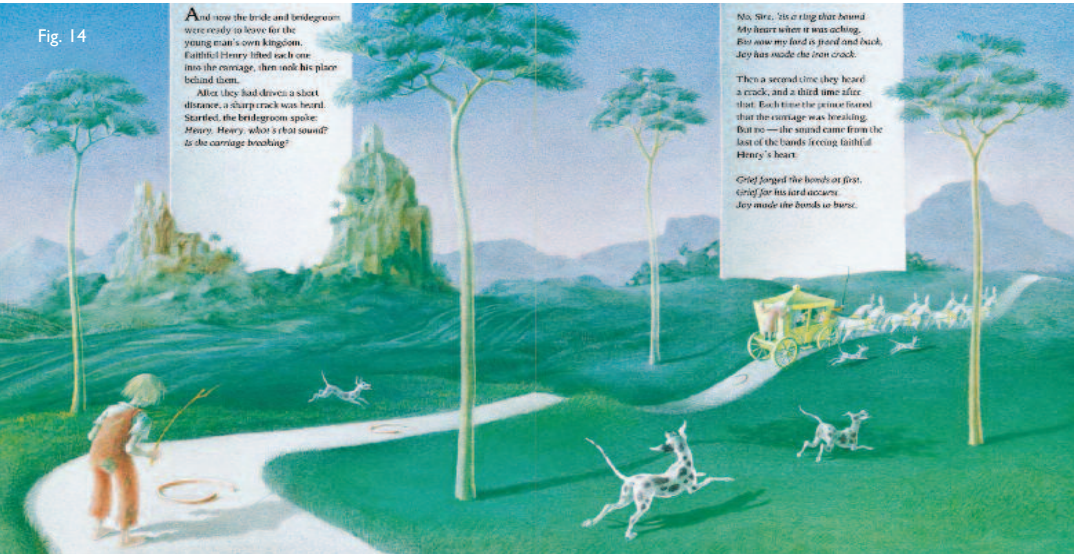


Fig. 11 Walter Crane, in *The Frog Prince* (Routledge, 1874).
Fig. 12 Charles Robinson, in W. Jerrold (ed.), *The Big Book of Fairy Tales* (Blackie, 1911).
Fig. 13 Walter Crane, in *The Frog Prince* (Routledge, 1874).
Fig. 14 Binette Schroeder, in *The Frog Prince, or Iron Henry* (North-South Books, 1998).



Fig. 12

magical appearance in the morning has inspired many illustrations, including Crane's and Robinson's, in which the princess is in bed, clearly just awakened, while the prince in his royal attire bows to her from the bedside (Figs 11 and 12).

The plot is now completed; but then the second title character steps in, the enigmatic Iron Heinrich. All interpretations of the story have pointed out that this figure appears out of nothing and has no other role in the story than to illuminate faithfulness as opposed to the unfaithful princess. Since the coda is often omitted, especially in children's editions, there are few illustrations that focus on Heinrich. Yet in this episode the centre of attention shifts from the emotional tension between the princess and the frog onto that between the prince and his squire. The princess is remarkably absent from the coda, except in the collective 'they': 'they'd gone a little way'; 'they heard ... the noise.' The dialogue and the exchange of emotions is between the master and servant. The princess is hardly visible. Yet the story is doubtless prompting us to contemplate her emotions as she sits beside her beloved on the way to his kingdom.

...when [Heinrich]'d learned that his master had been changed into a frog, he was so dismayed that he went straight to the blacksmith and ordered three iron bands to put around his heart to stop it bursting with grief. (Pullman 2012; the German versions do not mention any blacksmith)

There is something very different in this emotion's representation as compared to the previous ones. The text uses the label 'dismayed' as a synonym to 'distressed' ('betrübt' in German), but it expands into a metaphor: 'his heart ... bursting with grief'. Some cognitive scholars claim that we think in metaphors and that metaphors come before everyday language, both evolutionarily and in individual cognitive development (see e.g. Turner 1996).⁸ If so, the metaphor 'bursting with grief', to the degree that it has to be kept together by iron bands, affects us significantly more strongly than the simple statement 'he was unhappy'. Likewise, the metaphor 'iron is stronger than grief' is a powerful statement. A visual, literal representation of the metaphor would probably result in something bizarre and grotesque, so here, for once, words seems to be more efficient than images. However, the broken bands provide a gratifying image, metaphorically – 'love is stronger than iron' – and visually. Crane's illustration shows the broken bands left behind on the road, while both Heinrich and the prince are watching them in surprise (Fig. 13).

If the emotionally immature princess is still unable to understand other people's suffering, the vivid metaphor of iron bands supposedly invites her to consider, firstly, the suffering her future husband was exposed to under his curse, and secondly, his servant's empathetic pain on the knowledge of his master's suffering. This final passage asks the reader to engage in complex embedded mind-reading: we understand that the princess understands that Heinrich understands his master's pain. What emotions can this new understanding evoke in the princess's

mind? Guilt perhaps, since she, unlike Heinrich, was unable to empathise with the enchanted prince and, moreover, wilfully imposed more suffering on him. Perhaps jealousy, if she realises that somebody can experience such strong love. By shifting our attention from the prince and princess's happiness onto Heinrich's suffering, the tale maintains that the range of emotions involved in the happy ending is far from simple. It is a missed opportunity for illustrators not to expand it visually. In this respect, the extensive symbolism of Schroeder's illustrations contributes to a significantly more complex emotional charge of the narrative. Schroeder's final double-spread shows the carriage heading off toward the edge of the recto, while on the verso a little boy is about to pick up the lost iron band, obviously to play with it (Fig. 14). This image further shifts the reader's attention away from the main characters of the story, instead working with a symbolic representation of happiness and hope.

It may seem that this kind of analysis is a pointless academic exercise, since, of course, while reading or listening to a tale we do not consciously perform these cognitive-affective operations. But then, as lay readers, we do not consciously focus on Proppian functions, Greimasian actants or Jungian archetypes. All professional readings aim to explain what texts do to recipients, how and why; and any new reading hopefully offers a new explanation. The cognitive approach has not only enabled an original reading of this particular tale, but provided a new way of viewing fairy tales. A cognitive reading opens a dimension that explains the irresistible appeal of fairy tales repeatedly noted by scholars. In engaging with a seemingly flat and predictable tale, our brains are stimulated to investigate cracks between the lines into which we can project our imagination and empathy, in order to contemplate the depth of human relationships and thus human emotions behind the superficial plot. Flat and predictable fairy-tale characters are models of complex and ambivalent real people, and although fairy tales do not directly give us access to other people's minds, they can still tell us something important about other people and about ourselves.



Maria Nikolajeva

Bibliography

Primary sources

Anderson, Anne, *Anne Anderson's Old, Old Fairy Tales* (Whitman, 1935).

Bates, Katharine Lee (ed.), *Once Upon a Time: A Book of Old-Time Fairy Tales*, illustrated by Margaret Evans Price (Rand McNally, 1921).

Chisholm, Louey, *The Enchanted Land: Tales Told Again*, illustrated by Katharine Cameron (Jack, 1909).

- Craik, Dinah Maria Mulock, *The Fairy Book*, illustrated by Warwick Goble (Macmillan, 1913).
- Crane, Walter, *The Frog Prince* (Routledge, 1874).
- Doherty, Berlie, *The Frog Prince*, illustrated by Jane Ray (Walker, 2010).
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, Auflage 1 (1812). Retrieved from [http://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Der_Froschkönig_oder_der_eiserne_Heinrich_\(1812\)](http://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Der_Froschkönig_oder_der_eiserne_Heinrich_(1812))
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, Auflage 7 (1857). Retrieved from <http://kfm.li/>
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, *Household Tales*, translated by Margaret Hunt (George Bell, 1884). Retrieved from <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/frogking/index.html>
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, *The Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, translated by Mrs Edgar Lucas and illustrated by Arthur Rackham (Constable, 1909).
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, illustrated by Charles Folkard (Black, 1911).
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, translated by Margaret Hunt and illustrated by John B. Gruelle (Cupples & Leon, 1914).
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, *The Frog Prince, or Iron Henry*, translated by Naomi Lewis and illustrated by Binette Schroeder (North-South Books, 1998).
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, *Fairy Tales*, translated by Edgar Taylor and Marian Edwardes. Project Gutenberg, www.gutenberg.org. Last updated 5 November 2012.
- Jacobs, Joseph, *English Fairy Tales*, illustrated by John Batten (David Nutt, 1890).
- Jerrold, Walter (ed.), *The Big Book of Fairy Tales*, illustrated by Charles Robinson (Blackie, 1911).
- Pullman, Philip, *Grimm Tales: For Young and Old* (Penguin, 2012).

Secondary sources

- Blakemore, Sarah-Jayne and Frith, Uta, *The Learning Brain: Lessons for Education* (Wiley Blackwell, 2005).
- Evans, Dylan, *Emotions: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2001).
- Hogan, Patrick Colm, *What Literature Teaches Us about Emotions* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- Keen, Susanne, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford University Press, 2007).
- Nikolajeva, Maria, 'Do We Feel Sorry for the Older Brothers? Exploring Empathy and Ethics in Fairy Tales through Cognitive Poetics', *Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, Maria Tatar (ed.) (Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- Oatley, Keith, *Best Laid Schemes: The Psychology of Emotions* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- Stockwell, Peter, *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2002).
- Turner, Mark, *The Literary Mind* (Oxford University Press, 1996).
- Vermeule, Blackey, *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).
- Zunshine, Lisa, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (The Ohio State University Press, 2006).
- Zunshine, Lisa, *Getting Inside Your Head: What Cognitive Science Can Tell Us about Popular Culture* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).