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■ Introduction

A handsome youth emerges from a pig's body and three lovely women step out of the rind of pomegranates; soot, animal skin, and vegetable peel are shed to reveal beauty beyond compare; healthy young people become as light as feathers and are carried off by the wind, or grow as heavy as lead and sink into the earth; Catholic saints acquire the appearance and skills of magical helpers—metamorphosis, at the heart of the fairy-tale genre from its very beginning, moves the modern Italian fairy tales collected in this volume. Sometimes the metamorphosis is quite literal and complete: a man turns into a lion, into a dove, into an ant. Sometimes the change is only partial: peach-smooth skin becomes green and scaly as a snake's, a little girl's eyes are made unnaturally, awesomely bright. Other times the transformation resides in the eye of the beholder, who was previously unable to see beyond the veil of dirt or fur or comprehend the inert nature of a wooden doll. More hidden still are the changes that occur within, as when a self-absorbed princess learns about manners if not about compassion, a melancholy prince finds joy in living again, a complacent young woman discovers the transformative power of gratitude—but she also discovers what happens to those who are thankless toward their protector, even if it is the all-loving mother of God. Personal change unites all the tales collected in the present volume and, more than that, personal change allows each of their narratives to

unfold. The story of the murderous pig prince would hold little interest without his transformation into a man thanks to the gentleness of his third bride; and if the kind sister's good character were not rewarded with the ability to produce a pearl with every word she says, this heroine would continue to be abused by her relatives, and no story about her would be told.

Political, social, and cultural change also marks the historical time when the tales in this collection were published in Italy, between 1875 and 1914. Very many small states were transformed into a single large one, not without considerable bloodshed; regional identities were painfully turning into a national one; speakers of dialects were becoming speakers of Italian; listeners to stories were changing into readers thereof; out of a solid literary corpus intended for adults a new genre had sprouted, that of literature written expressly for children. The political unification of Italy had been announced in 1861 (with Rome added in 1870, and some Italian cities only decades later), but the inhabitants of the Italian peninsula had not by that time yet acquired a sense of national belonging, much less the certainty of being Italian. "Italy has been made," writer and politician Massimo d'Azeglio is often quoted as saying, "and now it is time to make Italians." In the absence of magical potions or spells, practical measures had to be taken to effect full unification, but disseminating a sense of national identity to subjects who identified with a region instead was difficult in a nation that was for the most part unable to read and write. Nor did Italians share a common language: in 1861, only a small fraction of Italians, 2.5 percent, could read and write in the national language, and standard Italian at the time was experienced by most as a foreign tongue (Boero and De Luca, p. 11). Mandatory schooling was instituted, then, to impel the transformation of a variety of dialects into a shared language,

and of an illiterate people into one able to read and write. The growth of schools led to the increased production of textbooks and other readings appropriate to young audiences—and books for children published in these years, therefore, had a clear educational purpose.

Whether through the reading of books or through oral transmission, there was a sense that “Italian-ness” might be achieved through exposure to regional cultures other than one’s own. With this goal in mind, what could be more enjoyable, about regional cultures, and more easily shared, than folk and fairy tales? Many such texts were collected and published primarily in the decades following the Italian unification, in a two-pronged effort that would not only spread information about each region across the peninsula but also preserve through print those vulnerable regional identities that were believed to now be at risk because of the unification. Early examples of these publications in the field of folklore were Vittorio Imbriani’s volumes of Florentine and Milanese folk tales and Giuseppe Pitrè’s collection from Sicily—the latter, a contribution to the gathering and preservation of folklore that, for its sheer size and range, and for how accurately it reflects Sicilian folk traditions, has been described as “more important than the Grimms’ tales” (Zipes, p. 16). Both Imbriani and Pitrè employed ethnological methods, carefully avoiding personal interventions and painstakingly recording the oral narratives as they heard them from their informants—who were almost exclusively women (as was also the case of folk-tale informants in other European countries, such as the Grimms’ in Germany). Both Imbriani and Pitrè aimed at preserving with their work the traditional, individual culture of each region they studied, a culture that they believed risked extinction in the newly unified Italian nation. Published in 1870 and recently translated into

English are the tales gathered from peasant women in Sicily by the Swiss fairy-tale collector Laura Gonzenbach. Her contribution was different: collected in the informants' Sicilian language, these narratives were then published in Gonzenbach's German translation. Largely for this reason, their reception was lukewarm at best: Pitrè praised them but also inveighed against the fact that these Sicilian stories were being published in a distant and foreign tongue.

It is out of the volumes compiled by these and other nineteenth-century folklorists that Italo Calvino several decades later conjured up his own *Italian Folktales* (1956), transforming what were by then obscure ethnological texts from the previous century into the first collection of Italian tales appealing to the general public. That Calvino's should be the earliest popular Italian collection of fairy tales seems like an especially late event considering that the oldest printed European stories that we can easily recognize as fairy tales come from Italy. In sixteenth-century Venice, Giovan Francesco Straparola wrote seventy-five short narratives, *The Pleasant Nights*; most are realistic short stories, but several of them revolve around magic and include the earliest versions of such classics as Perrault's "Puss in Boots" and "Donkey Skin." Almost a hundred years later, in Naples, Giambattista Basile published *The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones*, made up of fifty fairy tales written in a baroque Neapolitan tongue, addressed to a courtly adult audience, and including the oldest Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White tales in Europe. The Italian fairy-tale tradition slowed considerably following this rambunctious start, and after the intermezzo of Carlo Gozzi's eighteenth-century theatrical fairy tales (some of which have been made famous through opera: *Turandot* and *The Love of the Three Oranges*), it picks up again in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the stories gathered by folklorists

or invented by writers. The tales in the present collection are representative of the tales published in Italy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in that they include translations from the French; more or less literary variants of common folkloric types—identified by scholars through the ATU Index of Tale Types, which catalogues hundreds of different tale cycles; and more original and eclectic literary tales that combine motifs from different tale types without being recognizable variants of a single one. This abundance and variety of published fairy tales was not unique to Italy during this time period; on the contrary, the second half of the nineteenth century especially witnessed a fairy-tale boom throughout Europe, most famously expressed in the Grimm brothers' project of German nation-building through their *Children and Household Tales*. Not unlike their Italian counterparts, the better-known Grimms believed that their folk tales would help to provide the shared culture necessary for the birth of a cohesive nation. Thus, although the Grimms' first edition in 1812 was addressed to scholars, the popular success of their collection led the brothers to repackage their book as family edutainment. In the publishing trajectory of the Grimm brothers' work, we also see some of the changes in the fairy tales' readership more generally: from sophisticated adults to a more general and increasingly young audience.

In Italy, however, it wasn't until Calvino's *Italian Folktales* that we find a popular book of fairy tales believed to embody a national storytelling tradition and appealing to a wide readership. Calvino draws several of his tales from the collection of Italian folk stories *Novelline popolari italiane* (Popular Italian short stories, 1875), by classical philologist Domenico Comparetti, of which three volumes were planned but only one published. Like Calvino, and unlike the

other folk-tale collectors of his era, Comparetti includes stories from many regions of Italy, instead of focusing on a single area like Pitrè, Imbriani, and Gonzenbach. Furthermore, and again like Calvino, Comparetti translates his tales from the local dialect of each region into standard Italian, which he calls “the common language” (“la lingua commune,” p. v). Both Calvino and Comparetti, then, were willing to transform each tale’s original language—and in so doing sacrifice its “purity”—for the sake of producing an edition readable and enjoyable by all Italians even as they preserved what they saw as the essence of each tale. Comparetti’s tales, considerably less literary than Calvino’s, follow the cadence of spoken speech, with ungrammatical switches between verb tenses, the frequent use of “and” to start a new sentence, and phatic communication with the audience especially at the end of a tale: “Go check,” the narrator invites his audience at the end of the pig prince’s tale, “because the dances have begun.” This type of interactive ending is typical of orally transmitted stories, and it is also present in some literary fairy tales—forming one of the many threads that link literary fairy tales with their oral counterparts. Thus, the narrator in Luigi Capuanà’s Cinderella-like story “Sunbeam” ends his tale with the bittersweet statements: “That evening the wedding was celebrated, and the prince and Little Charcoal lived a long and happy life. While we instead stay here and grind our teeth.”

Comparetti’s tales translated in this volume connect the Italian folk-tale tradition gathered in the late nineteenth century with the literary fairy tales that preceded it in print: “The King’s Son, A Pig” is clearly a version of Straparola’s sixteenth-century “The Pig Prince”—both classified as ATU 425A, The Animal Bridegroom, and related to the “Beauty and the Beast” tales; Comparetti’s “Bad Pumpkin” belongs to the same type as Perrault’s “Donkey Skin”

(present in this volume through Collodi's translation), Straparola's "Doralice," and Basile's "The She-Bear" (ATU 510B, The Persecuted Heroine, Donkey Skin); and "The Pomegranates" is an instance of the Mediterranean tale type of The Three Oranges (ATU 408)—first printed in Basile's "The Three Citrons" and also appearing, in this volume, in Gabriele D'Annunzio's "Song of the Bloodied Ricotta." The presence of two or more versions of similar stories and the recurrence of fairy-tale motifs in this volume is meant to emphasize both the impressive persistence of certain narrative elements and how the changed details make a difference. Take, for example, Deledda's and Gozzano's tales by the same name, "The Three Talismans"—both versions of ATU 563, The Knapsack, the Hat, and the Horn. Deledda's three brothers, in a tale firmly anchored in Sardinian folklore, receive their talismans from local fairies as recompense for their kindness; whereas in the similar literary version by Gozzano, it is the young men's father who bequeaths them the magical objects at his death; and while in Deledda's version the antagonists are politically powerful prelates, explicitly described as connected to the Inquisition, it is with a cunning princess that Gozzano's single protagonist must contend—he does not marry her, as one might expect, choosing instead a fellow village woman, but in Deledda's story there is no marriage at all at the end of the tale.

At the same time as oral versions of classic tales appeared in volumes by folklore scholars such as Comparetti, canonical French fairy tales were being published in Italian translation. The most enduring and influential of these were by the Tuscan children's author Carlo Lorenzini, best-known as Collodi and famous the world over for his children's novel *Pinocchio* (1883). Just a few years before writing the beloved puppet's adventures, in 1876, Collodi was

commissioned to translate a French anthology from 1853, made up of fairy tales from the previous two centuries. This book was titled, simply, *Contes de fées*, which Collodi translated literally as *I racconti delle fate* instead of the more Italian “fiabe.” And although this very set of tales had already appeared in Italian in 1867, in a translation by writer and journalist Cesare Donati, it is Collodi’s eponymous titles from 1876 that endured. Perrault’s unforgettable “Petit chaperon rouge” (“Little Red Riding Hood”) and “Barbe-bleue” (“Bluebeard”) are still known today in Italy with Collodi’s “Cappuccetto Rosso” and “Barba-blu,” and not with Donati’s “Berrettina Rossa” and “Barba Turchina.” Collodi’s brief preface to his translation is often quoted for the insight it provides into this author’s ambiguous and often downright contradictory translating practices:

In translating these *Fairy Tales* into Italian I tried, to the best of my abilities, to remain faithful to the French text. Freely paraphrasing them would have felt somewhat of a sacrilege. In any event, here and there I allowed myself some slight variants, in terms of word choice, sentence rhythm, and idiomatic expressions; and I wanted to make a note of this fact right from the start, so as to avoid comments, sudden astonished reactions, and grammatical or lexical misgivings. A sin that is confessed is half forgiven: let that be true for me. [p. 5; my translation into English]

Collodi does in fact modify and thoroughly domesticate the French tales, for his audience is the Italian middle and working classes rather than French courtiers: in place of Perrault’s aristocratic tone, Collodi employs a language close to the spoken word and to his own Tuscan speech; and the philosophical morals that Perrault appends

at the end of his tales assume in Collodi a more practical and bourgeois attitude. Collodi's beautiful translation of Perrault's "Donkey Skin," for example, simplifies both the content and the style of the original, even as some of the French author's statements are rendered with exquisitely Tuscan tones: the king and queen are described by Collodi as "due anime in un nocciolo" (literally "two souls in a fruit pit," which I have translated here as "two peas in a pod"), whereas Perrault had simply said that they "lived in perfect union" ("vivaient dans une union parfaite"); and if Perrault prosaically states that life's ups and downs ("les vicissitudes de la vie") extend to kings as well as to their subjects, for the Tuscan Collodi such reversals of fortune are roof tiles ("tegoli") that fall on the heads of kings as well as their subjects. Also translated here because of its influence on Italian tales from this time is "The Fairies," included in every edition of Collodi's book since 1944 although it is actually absent from his original collection (and from the 1853 French book he translated). It was instead turned into Italian by Collodi's friend Yorick (the pen name of Pietro Coccoluto Ferrigni) in his 1891 translation of Perrault. We see another version of this same tale in one of Gozzano's stories included in this volume, "The Dance of the Gnomes," which, like Perrault's "The Fairies," belongs to ATU 480, The Kind and the Unkind Girls. A cruel twist on its central motif of sisters' rivalry appears in Perodi's "Lavella's Stepmother"—where the sister who, according to the logic of the tale, dies a painful death at the hand of Providence, has no other fault than that of being ugly and favored by her evil mother.

Both the folk tales gathered by ethnologists and the translations from beloved volumes of the French *contes de fées* influenced the creation of new literary fairy tales by late nineteenth-century professional writers working to a greater or lesser extent within

the parameters of the oral folk-tale genre. Fairy tales are notoriously difficult to define: despite their name, they often have no fairies; they may be published in print or orally transmitted, have a named author or be anonymous, feature psychologically flat characters or ones filled with intense emotions; most fairy tales are short and have a happy ending—but not every single one; all have magic, but this element may be defined in a variety of ways. The tales collected in this volume all have a named author, but while some are original and free-standing creations, others were collected from oral sources. Regardless of their origin, these tales all share several traits: the central role of magic in a short narrative where the protagonists rise from rags to riches or regain their lost high status; villains are punished and virtues such as generosity and kindness, as well as resourcefulness and shrewdness, are rewarded; and a happily ever after that often includes a wedding closes the plot. Some of the authors in this volume drew explicitly from regional folk stories, disseminating these otherwise inaccessible narratives through a transformation of the local dialect into standard Italian. In addition to Comparetti, this is the case with Gabriele D'Annunzio, who in 1886 published in a literary magazine two short fairy tales from his home region of Abruzzo, “The Doves” and “The Song of the Bloodied Ricotta,” translating them from the Abruzzese and, with an ethnological move, even specifying in a subtitle their city of origin—S. Eusanio del Sangro and Aquila, respectively. D'Annunzio's regular literary production is marked by a fascination with Abruzzese beliefs and legends, which he incorporates in his otherwise realistic fiction; a well-known example of this is his verse play, *The Daughter of Iorio* (1903), which includes proverbs, rituals, and traditional rhymes from Abruzzo. “The Doves” and “The Song of the Bloodied Ricotta” read like folk tales and follow

the simple vocabulary and paratactic structure of orally gathered stories: they could easily have appeared in Comparesetti's own volume. Almost twenty years later, D'Annunzio published a much longer fairy tale, titled "The Borea's Daughter." This story shares with "The Song of the Bloodied Ricotta" elements of ATU 408, The Three Oranges, including a dark-skinned impostor bride who is explicitly racialized in the older tale as "that ugly Saracen," and more generically disparaged in the later tale because dark skinned. "The Borea's Daughter" is also an example of the Rapunzel tale type, ATU 310, The Maiden in the Tower, with its powerful mother figure and captor, a beautiful maiden's imprisonment in a tower, the surreptitious entrance of a prince, the lovers' treacherous escape. "The Borea's Daughter," unlike D'Annunzio's previous two narratives, bears the stamp of what this author became known for in the twentieth century: the exuberant style of Italy's foremost decadent writer, a style evident from the very first paragraph for its poetic lists and rarefied atmosphere (a court made up of wise knights, monks, astrologers, and alchemists), antiquated words ("vecchiezza" for old age, instead of the more standard "vecchiaia"), and obscure cultural references (the medieval compendium of mythological gem-lore known as the *Lapidary of Bishop Marbod*).

Another writer whose fiction is inflected by a close bond to her home region is Grazia Deledda, the only Italian woman to have received the Nobel prize in literature. Her most famous works are realistic novels and short stories intimately tied to the island of Sardinia: these otherwise realistic texts contain multiple references to local beliefs and folklore. In addition to fiction, Deledda wrote ethnological articles and recorded a number of legends from her region. These were written with clear authorial interventions, starting

with the fact that, like D'Annunzio, she published them in standard Italian rather than in the Sardinian language in which they were told—thus making them readable outside their region of origin. Some of Deledda's folklore-inspired texts were introduced as legends by Deledda herself but read today much like fairy tales, including "The Three Talismans" and, above all, "Our Lady of Good Counsel." The latter is by far the longest among Deledda's tales of magic. It can be said to loosely belong to the Persecuted Heroine tale type (ATU 510B): an incestuous male relative's desire impels the protagonist's flight from home, as for Perrault's "Donkey Skin" (with whom it also shares the presence of a fairy godmother of sorts) and Comparetti's "Bad Pumpkin"; also like these tales, the narrative is ultimately resolved by the transformed and thus unrecognizable heroine's timely use of her wits. Unlike the majority of fairy tales, however—which at most speak of gods and goddesses, like "Donkey Skin," and not of the Judeo-Christian god or Catholic saints—Deledda identifies the heroine's helper as Mary, the mother of Jesus in the Christian scriptures. In her representation as Our Lady of Good Counsel (a reference to a miraculous medieval fresco of Virgin and Child in Genazzano, near Rome), Mary appears in this tale as a blend of fairy and Queen of Heaven, a Catholic intercessor from the spiritual realm and a magical creature with practical powers over nature.

The seamless blend of magic and Catholicism is not unique to "Our Lady of Good Counsel," for it is also central to many tales by the prolific Tuscan author Emma Perodi. Her *Novelle della nonna* (Grandmother's tales, 1893) comprises forty-five fairy stories set in the Casentino region, in eastern Tuscany, during the Middle Ages. Despite certain anachronisms, such as the occasional appearance of corn fields in the countryside, Perodi's tales include numerous

historical references, and her writing effectively evokes a medieval atmosphere with haughty feudal nobility and serfs who know their place, herbal poisons and aristocratic jousts, and a magically inflected Catholicism that does not distinguish between fairies and angels, between saints and magical helpers—not to mention the devil and the deadly pacts he makes with desperate humans. Perodi's tales are not derived from the oral tradition, despite their many debts to it, but instead are the author's own creation; these stories draw from noncanonical genres including the gothic, popular legend, and literature for children, but are entirely the invention of an author who knew folk tales so intimately as to produce works that were new yet sounded traditional. All the tales are told within a narrative frame reproducing an oral setting around the hearth of a Tuscan, late nineteenth-century family, whose supposedly real-life events we read about in between the fantastic tales told by the family's elderly matriarch, Nonna Regina. The latter is a fictional character who perfectly embodies contemporary ethnologists' paradigmatic informant: she is elderly, female, and peasant. But Nonna Regina is an idealized sort of peasant, and her cultured and refined language allows Perodi's tales to reach a wide audience extending beyond her own region to all of newly united Italy. Catholic belief blends easily in Perodi's work with fairy-tale magic and folk superstition, as it does in Deledda's. Thus, for example, Lavella, who like Snow White is the object of her stepmother's murderous intentions, is consoled by her fairy-like guardian angel, who saves her life with a miraculous ointment; the Madonna's veil, much like the rosary in Deledda's "Our Lady of Good Counsel," not only protects Lisa from the devil's assaults but also allows her to magically heal the sick and control the forces of nature; in both of these tales, the ultimate antagonist is the devil himself; and it was Saint John the

Evangelist (who is oddly confused, in this book, with John the Baptist, by being described as Herod's victim and represented with a decapitated head) who sent the feisty white mule that rescues the Abbess Sofia, kills her enemies, and lives a supernaturally long life. Sofia, like Straparola's Costanza and Basile's Belluccia, is a gender-bending heroine who, in the absence of a capable brother, has acquired manly skills with horses and weapons in order to defend her family, and whose fearlessness undermines the stereotype of the passive fairy-tale female protagonist.

In addition to featuring resilient and clever female characters, Deledda's and Perodi's fairy tales explicitly name Gospel figures, historical personages, and the real-world locations where they unfold, along with the cultural information connected to them—be it, in Deledda, the Sardinian village of Nurri with its local witches (*janas*) and typical flute-like musical instrument (*leoneddas*); or, in Perodi, the Casentino area in Tuscany, whose nobility hunted with falcons, practiced jousting, and went to war against neighboring Florence. Luigi Capuana, the most steadily productive of modern Italian fairy-tale authors, also sets his literary fairy tales in his native region, the island of Sicily, but his cultural references are more subtle than Deledda's or Perodi's. The first of Capuana's many volumes of fairy tales, *C'era una volta . . . Fiabe* (Once upon a time . . . fairy tales, 1882), made of stories that are overtly indebted to the oral tradition yet remain Capuana's original creations, came out shortly after the publication of his friend Giuseppe Pitrè's massive ethnological work on the folklore of their common home region and is clearly related to it. But although Sicily can be seen in the landscape of Capuana's fairy tales, the fact that they are written in standard Italian and in a very simple style, including the occasional use of Tuscan terms such as "babbo" (father) and "figliolo" (son), reduces the

effect of otherness and makes them enjoyable to non-Sicilians as well. Princes and princesses in Capuana's tales are called "Reucci" and "Reginotte," according to a Sicilian usage that appears exclusively in the language of fairy tales—terms that are both odd-sounding and generally understandable to every Italian, thus forming a bridge between Sicilian culture and the world of children across the Italian peninsula. Different from the idealized representation of kings and queens in many canonical fairy tales are Capuana's royal figures, portrayed as capricious and self-centered—much as figures of power and authority are in this author's fiction for adults. Thus, the prince in the Cinderella story titled "Sunbeam" spits on the heroine and kicks her in the stomach for no reason other than he disliked her looks: she has the dark skin of one who works with dirt and soot, and the color of her complexion marks her lower social class (this was also the case with "Donkey Skin," whose dirty dark skin contributes to hiding her identity). That in the end Sunbeam marries the prince who abused her speaks to the strength of her desire for social advancement, from baker to queen. All that the spoiled princess Golden Feather seems to learn from her mistake of mistreating a fairy disguised as a poor old woman is to never again eat salt and pepper—after the fairy, in punishment, turns all of her food and drink into those two condiments. Nothing at all is mentioned in this tale about learning kindness to strangers or comparable teachings.

Like Capuana, Cordelia (the pen name of Virginia Tedeschi Treves, taken from that of King Lear's beloved daughter) wrote and directed periodicals for both children and adults. Her tales translated here are "wordier" than those of everyone else in this collection except D'Annunzio's last one—distant, that is, from the oral tradition, which favored a simple and concise style—and, although

like the others they are set in a vaguely medieval era and provide geographical coordinates (Portugal and Japan), these coordinates denote exoticism rather than regionalism. Cordelia's tales make no attempt to capture the cadence of spoken storytelling, and their literary merits are limited, although they are also representative of numerous other fairy tales published during that time. With a tone that is didactic and even at times preachy, Cordelia's "Prince Valorous's Doll" (whose protagonist is melancholy like the prince in "Bad Pumpkin," "Donkey Skin," and "The Bore's Daughter") and "Fiery Eyes" (whose baptismal spell is reminiscent of the Sleeping Beauty cycle) unfold in castles and forests and feature kings and princesses, knights and shepherds, and, of course, fairies. But the tripling that characterizes fairy tales feels in these pages repetitive rather than magical, pedantic instead of incantatory, and the protagonists are unpleasant more than downtrodden—they appear as whiny teenagers more than unjustly persecuted young people, and their transformation into empathetic adults is not really believable even given the suspension of disbelief required by the fairy-tale genre.

Quite different from Cordelia's long-winded fairy tales are the succinct and poetic ones of Guido Gozzano, so whimsical and beautiful and for these reasons appealing even to this day to children and adults alike. Gozzano's narratives unfurl in an imaginary world located outside of geography and history, yet bearing, like the other tales in this volume, the stamp of the European Middles Ages: there are sumptuous castles and mysterious forests, handsome princes and beautiful princesses, righteous kings and queens, unpredictable fairies, dangerous witches, and enduring magic spells of unknown origin. Gozzano's tales fit well within the literary current of *crepuscolarismo*, of which he is considered the most important exponent.

Named after the Italian word for twilight (*crepuscolo*), *crepuscolarismo* is marked by a romantic discontent with the present time and by the quest for another world. Gozzano first published his tales in the children's periodical *Il Corriere dei Piccoli* between 1909 and 1914, with a majority dating from 1911—significantly, the same year that he published his major collection of poetry, *I Colloqui* (Dialogues). Thus, the three helpers in “Goldenfeather and Finestlead” that are named with Latinate, poetic names—pieris (white cabbage butterfly), pappus (dandelion puff), and scarab beetle—appear in Gozzano's work for adults with the same unusual names: “pieride,” “achenio,” “cetonia.” “Goldenfeather and Finestlead” shares its central motif with Capuana's “Golden Feather” (in turn based on George MacDonald's “The Light Princess,” 1864), and in the differences between these two stories, both featuring a female protagonist who becomes so light as to float away from home, we see the very differences between the two authors more generally. Where Capuana's protagonist is royal, spoiled, and mean, spellbound as punishment and singlehandedly saved by a brave and kind prince, Gozzano's heroine is as poor as poor gets, with an outer beauty that reflects her inner kindness; her spell has no apparent cause or meaning and it is she who saves a prince—and in saving him, she saves herself. The verses that are regularly repeated in Capuana's version are ominous and vaguely threatening (“With the wind you shall arrive and / With the rain you shall then leave”), whereas those in Gozzano's tale are gentle and contain a soothing promise: “The only one I adore—is Goldenfeather. / O Goldenfeather, / You beautiful child—you will be Queen.” Likewise, though Gozzano's “The Three Talismans” repeats the major motifs of Deledda's tale by the same name—three brothers are given three magical objects that lift them from poverty into a life of comfort—it has none of the Sardinian

writer's regional inflections. Rather, it features the semilegendary geography of the Fortunate Islands that also appear in "Golden-feather and Finestlead" as well as in Gozzano's poetry.

Whether or not the Fortunate Islands correspond, as some have wondered, to the archipelago of the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean, their geography in Gozzano's work is magical, otherworldly: it is a place reachable only by magical flight, a place capable of producing wonder-working fruit, a place of utter enchantment. A similar otherworldliness is present in Cordelia's Portugal and Japan—the latter, a land she calls the "Kingdom of the Rising Sun." Despite the clearly stated geographical coordinates, there is no realistic description of these foreign lands in these two authors' tales. Equally unfamiliar to most Italian readers, however, in spite of their specific (and Italian) geographical localities, would have been Deledda's Sardinian landscape, with its fairies called *orgianas*, its ancient and fairy-tale-sounding name of Arborea, and its vivid memories of the Inquisition; Perodi's Tuscan countryside village, with the unusual name of Poppi and intimately tied to the Camaldolese order and its eleventh-century founder by the unusual name of Saint Romuald; Capuana's Sicilian villages and their spoiled and whiny lords; or D'Annunzio's Abruzzi, with its fairy-tale-sounding locations: S. Eusanio del Sangro, Aquila. The magnifying lens that these modern Italian tales place over details that would have been little-known outside their immediate locations and cultures allows the natural to appear as supernatural, the domestic as foreign, real life as the most unrealistic of settings. The stories that are gathered together in this volume share a time period, a language, a nation, and a genre; they are but a minuscule sampling of the astonishingly large number of Italian fairy tales published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Nevertheless, in their multiple trans-

formations, varied styles, and diverse perspectives; in their wide-ranging geographical settings and borrowings from numerous genres; and in their incorporation of local superstitions and transnational religion, they give readers a taste of an era of change and surprise, of adventure and novelty. The vicissitudes of their brave and flawed protagonists, who steadfastly move into unfamiliar and possibly dangerous territories, parallel the movement of a new nation and of its people into their own uncharted history, into becoming one nation and one people with a shared past, with a shared language, and, especially, with shared stories.