

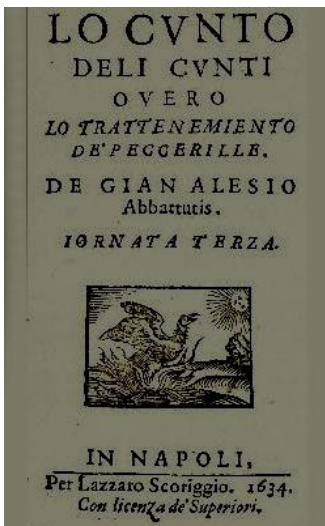
ITALIAN FAIRY TALES *Once upon a time....*

Introduction

History

The sources of the Italian fable tradition go back to the 16th century with the first collection of known fairy tales : “ *The pleasant nights* ” by Giovan Francesco Straparola published in **1550** with 25 short stories.

A century later, between **1634 and 1636**, one of the most important works relating to the history of the fairy tale was published in Naples : the five volumes of *Lo cunto de li cunti* signed by **Giambattista Basile**. This work, first in this genre in Europe, consists of an entirely fairy-tale collection: 49 fairy tales, plus a frame story.



The work was written in the Neapolitan dialect with the sole purpose to entertain the Neapolitan courts and salons but had a planetary success for the time: Perrault probably used it as a source, the Grimms translated some fairy tales, and the work was translated into Bolognese, Tuscan, German and English.

Then in Italy nothing more happened for centuries . When the success of the Grimms in the nineteenth century invested the whole of Europe, in Italy there was research and recognition of Italian traditional fairy tales.

Only with the end of the 1800s the first collection of Italian fairy tales were published as , the result of local and regional research and studies : there **was no collective work that represented the entire country**

THE 20th CENTURY

In 1956 an Italian Journalist and writer of short stories Italo Calvino collected and published his **work** *Italian fairy tales* containing over 200 Italian fairy tales from the different Italian regions. Some region are more represented other much more scarce

From Calvino Introduction

"The Italian fables are all taken together, in their always repeated and always varied case of human events, a general explanation of life, born in ancient times and kept in the slow rumination of peasant consciences up to us; are the catalog of destinies that can be given to a man and a woman, above all for the part of life that is the making of a destiny...."

FEATURES OF ITALIAN FAIRY TALES-

Many of the Italian fairy tales are closely linked to the history of the country and how it has influenced people's way of life and thinking.

From the end of the Western Roman Empire - 5th century DC - Italy has been for many centuries invaded and occupied by foreign populations (Longobards, Franks, Byzantines, Normans) and has found itself divided into many small states often in struggle with each other; these states often relied on some foreign kingdom (eg France, Spain and then Austria) and so many of the European wars were fought on Italian territory, with terrible consequences for the population.

In this context, to defend themselves and survive, **people** have learned to deceive the new ruler on duty with all sorts of tricks and, above all, **have always considered the law not as a tool to live well together, but as a weapon in the hands of the oppressor** ; here are the famous Italian stratagems to find all the ways to circumvent a law often considered unjust. There is also, in this regard, the **proverb "made the law, found the deception"**, that is the way to circumvent it without having to respect it.

The Italian fairy tales, therefore, rarely see princes, princesses, luxurious castles, but often have **as protagonists the very smart people, who can use very well the only weapon in their possession: intelligence.**

Among the most famous collections of traditional Italian fairy tales the work of **Italo Calvino**, and in more recent times - the **didactic fairy tales for children by Gianni Rodari** “*FAIRY TALES on the phone by Gianni Rodari* .

Gianni Rodari is the most famous Italian children's book author. He received the Hans Christian Andersen Prize in 1970

Traditional Tales:

Tale from Friuli Venezia Giulia **THE GOLDEN GOOSE / THE WOMEN OF CABIA**

Tale from Trentino **THE ELVES AND THE SHOEMAKER**

MODERN TALES

“*FAIRY TALES on the phone by Gianni Rodari* .

-To buy the city of Stockholm - The palace of ice

ITALO CALVINO “*Italian Folktales* “

The astrologer peasant

Tales from Friuli Venezia Giulia (from the district CARNIA)

Some hints

Many fairy tales recall the Grimm and La Fontaine. Cinderellas and Italian Snow White, mixed with the oldest Vasilissa. Their evocative power marks the path of emancipation and growth, with simple and direct language, typical of fairy tales. The universe portrayed by the Friulian fantasy appears rich and varied, closely linked to the real geography of the earth, from the mountains to the caves, pushing to the Adriatic. Protagonists gnomes and elves and aganas . Many have as protagonist an outcast or a poor man who saves his life by deceiving a bad ogre with his fine intelligence and perspicacity. The stepdaughter, disowned by the family, shows generosity and good heart and for this is rewarded by fate. Magical geese break spells giving the smile to depressed princesses while greedy pigs, who seek freedom, they invent all the colors to be able to get it. These are just some of the most typical protagonists of these stories set in Friuli Venezia Giulia.

The golden goose

Once upon a time there was a king who had a beautiful daughter, but always sad; in fact he never smiled. The king issued a ban, promising a great reward and the princess's hand to anyone who could make her laugh.

Clowns, acrobats, actors and storytellers of all kinds arrived at court. But the princess did not laugh. Meanwhile, not far away, there lived a young farmer, whose only wealth was a goose with golden feathers. Many had tried to convince him to sell it, but the boy had never given up. In fact it would have been useless: the goose was magical and anyone who tried to tear off a pen was condemned to remain there with his hand attached.

Overcome by curiosity, a neighbor of the house tried it and her hand remained glued. After hearing her screams, her husband and her children intervened to free her, but they were also attacked, because it was enough to touch the body of one of the victims of the goose to suffer the same fate. The farmer, after hearing of the king's banishment, intended to go to the palace and had to do so carrying the goose and the other 4 people attacked. As they passed among the people, others inadvertently touched either the goose itself or the victims of its magic. So the poor farmer entered the courtyard of the palace with all that queue of people behind him. The princess, seeing that decidedly uncommon scene, laughed with gusto. And the peasant had the reward and the princess in marriage.

And how did it go with the goose? The princess's laughter had the magical power to undo the spell and everyone was free. The goose lived for the rest of his days in the yard of the building, since thanks to her the farmer had found his fortune.

The women of Cobia

" On the mountain of Cobia in Carnia, one day the pagan women took to mocking a cowherd who was grazing his animals ... They concluded by inviting him to a bet: on another fixed day, the cowman had to return with his cart and his oxen ; the women would have loaded all their belongings on the cart. If the cart had moved, the cowman would have had everything, otherwise the witches would have held the cart and the oxen too. The farmer accepted the pact and fixed the day. At the dawn of this, before swallowing the oxen, he divided a grain of broad bean between them, prepared and welded the yoke well and went to the appointment. The pagans were all busy bringing out rags, furniture, dishes, and loaded everything on the cart, well sure to win the bet. When it was time, the farmer grabs the goad, traces with it a cross mark on the ground in front of his beasts, then lashes them shouting: " *Go ahead in the name of God,*

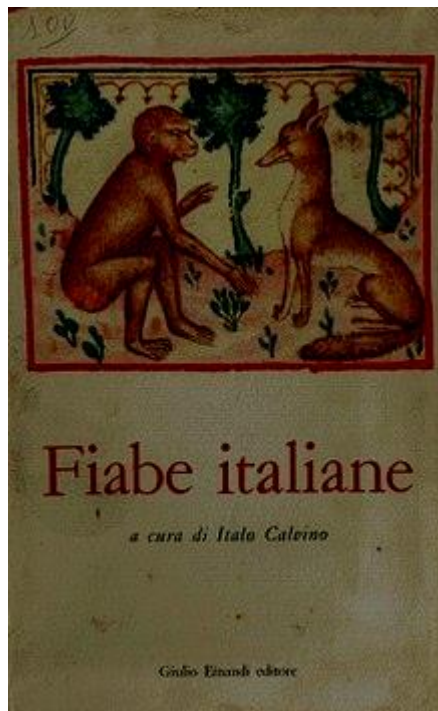
because no one can hurt you." And the oxen lifted the weight of the cart as if it were a feather, and dragged it straight to Cabia, leaving the pagan scorned to scream and complain to have foolishly lost the good and the best of all their possessions.

TALES FROM TRENTINO

THE ELVES AND THE SHOEMAKER

The sun was now slipping behind the slender spiers of Val Badia and poor Toni was waiting to prepare everything necessary to make a new pair of shoes on the table ... After this operation he tiredly got up from the stool, closed the door and he went home. But the next morning, when he reopened the shop early, he discovered, with great surprise, that the shoes were ready. The thought of this strangeness did not abandon her throughout the morning and came home, told the story to his wife. This, with a stern mutter, looked him straight in the eye. Then, reassured that her husband had not stopped at the inn to drink a few glasses of too much, he urged him to spend the night in the shop to try to solve the mystery. But we must know that the good Toni was a man of little courage and so, he did not even have time to strike midnight, which already rushed out of the store in the grip of a tremendous fear. To tell the truth, nothing strange had happened, but the poor man's mind had begun to fantasize about witches, ghosts and who knows what other spirits yet. Thank God, the wife was made of a completely different pasta and took her place hidden behind the stove. At one point, the silence was lacerated by the sinister creak of the door and two small gnomes appeared with the lantern in their hands. They sat down at the table, took tacks and hammer and began to work hard. This fact deeply touched the two consorts who decided to buy a pair of pretty dresses and put them in plain sight on the counter. Also that night the gnomes did not miss the appointment. They put on their clothes, made a new pair of shoes, but never came back.

SOME EXAMPLES taken from the collection of Italo Calvino



The astrologer peasant

One day in a country far away from the king's palace there was no longer a precious ring. The king issued a tender with the prize of his daughter's hand for anyone who had discovered where the ring had ended. A certain Gambara, an illiterate peasant, also appeared at the competition, pretending to be a famous astrologer and without saying his name. And he succeeded: he flipped through voluminous codes of the royal library, tracing incomprehensible signs on paper; the whole court, however, believed that it was the alphabet of an unknown language!

Gambara also realized that some of the servants were behaving strangely, as if they had something to hide. So he said to them, "Listen, I will not say anything to the king, if it was you who stole the ring. But you must tell me where you put it, otherwise we are all in trouble, including myself, that I have little time to solve the problem". The servants then confessed. Gambara then gave the order to mix the ring with the food of a turkey in the hive. Then he went to the king and said: "Your Majesty, I found your ring: he swallowed that turkey". The animal was gutted and the ring returned to the king's possession.

The king, to thank Gambara, married his daughter and organized a sumptuous banquet. Among the dishes, there was also a range of crayfish, a rarity in those parts. The king then asked Gambara: "My dear astrologer, are you so wise to know the name of what you have in your plate?" The poor former farmer, sweating cold, muttered to himself: "Ah, poor Gambara, this you can not do it either." But the king, startled by surprise, exclaimed: "Bravo, you guessed this time too! It is precisely shrimp. You're the most knowledgeable astrologer in the world!"

Some examples taken from Gianni Rodari collection

THE PALACE OF ICE by Gianni Rodari Every night a commercial traveler phoned his daughter and told her a story



Once in Bologna they made an ice-cream palace right on Piazza Maggiore, and the children came far away to give it a lick.

The roof was Montana cream, the smoke from the chimneys of cotton candy, the chimneys of candied fruit. Everything else was ice cream: ice cream doors, ice cream walls, ice cream furniture. A very small child was attached to a table and licked his legs one by one, until the table fell on him with all the dishes were chocolate ice cream, the best.

At one point a guard from the City noticed that a window was melting. The glasses were of strawberry ice cream and they melted in pink rivulets

“ Soon” the guard shouted, “ sooner again!”

And all down to lick as soon as possible, so as not to let a single drop of that masterpiece go lost.

“ An armchair” Begged an old woman, who could not make her way through the crowd, “ an armchair for a poor old woman. Who brings it to me? With the armrests, if possible”.

A generous fireman ran to take her an armchair of cream and pistachio ice cream, and the poor old lady began to lick her from the armrests.

It was a great day and by the doctor’s order no one had a stomach ache.

Even now, when children ask for another ice cream, the parents sigh: “ Oh yes, for you you would take the whole building, like the one in Bologna”.

TO BUY THE CITY OF STOCKHOLM by Gianni Rodari : Every night a commercial traveler phoned his daughter and told her a story



At the market of Gavirate you may find some little men who sell everything, and better than them to sell you do not know where to find them.

On a Friday a small man came, selling strange things: Mont Blanc, the Indian Ocean, the seas of the Moon, and he had a wonderful talk: after only an hour he had left only the city of Stockholm. A barber bought it, in exchange of a haircut with *friction*. The barber nailed the certificate that said "Stockholm City Owner" between two mirrors, and proudly showed it to customers, answering all their questions.

"It is a city in Sweden, indeed it is the capital"

"It has almost a million inhabitants, and naturally they are all mine"

"There is also the sea, of course, but I do not know who the owner is"

The barber, a little at a time, put the money aside, and last year he went to Sweden to visit his property.

The city of Stockholm seemed wonderful, and the Swedes were very kind. They did not understand a word of what he said, and he did not understand half a word of what they answered.

"I'm the master of the city, do you know it or not? Have they done the release, have you been informed?"

The Swedes were smiling and saying yes, because they did not understand but they were kind, and the barber rubbed his hands all happy.

"A similar city for a hairstyle and a FRIZIONE! I really paid for it cheaply"

And instead he was wrong and had paid too much. Because every child who comes into this world, the whole world is all his own and he does not have to pay him a penny:

He just has to roll up his sleeves, stretch his hands and take it!