

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 302

“When You Wish Upon a Star”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

Once upon a time, fairy tales were simply stories, tales that might or might not be true, but were thought plausible.

When science made them implausible, they became material first, for the folklorists, and then for the children. But the modern world would find a whole new use for them.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 302. When You Wish Upon a Star.

What image comes to your mind when I say the word *fairy*?

Most people would answer that question by describing a creature that in human in appearance but smaller than a human being—perhaps much, much smaller than a human being—equipped with wings and capable of casting magic spells. In short: Tinker Bell, a character that originated in J.M. Barrie’s 1904 stage play *Peter Pan*, but you probably visualize based on the character in the 1953 animated film of the same title, produced by Walt Disney.

The English word *fairy* is a borrowing from French. The older Anglo-Saxon word is *elf*. *Elf* and *fairy* are essentially synonyms, and folklore about these beings goes back at least as far as the cultures of medieval Germanic-speaking Europe, and may be rooted the much older Indo-European cultures. But the elves of medieval times were not cute little creatures like Tinker Bell. As Exhibit A, I direct you to the Green Knight in the celebrated medieval English poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. You may be more familiar with the character from the 2021 film, *The Green Knight*, written and directed by David Lowery and starring Dev Patel.

In the poem, the Green Knight is a fearsome warrior, wielding a monstrous ax in one hand and a sprig of holly in the other, and he is characteristic of elves as medieval Europeans thought of them. Human in size and scale, they live in the forest and are supernatural beings. Not evil, for

the most part, but powerful, fickle, and dangerous if provoked. They are able to grant humans valuable favors, although they not often inclined to do so, and even when they are, there's usually a catch. In folklore they are often accused of causing sickness in humans or of stealing human children and replacing them with children of their own kind, called changelings. Alas, there are in the historical record numerous cases of children beaten or killed on suspicion of being changelings.

I mention all this because I want to talk today about fairy tales, and I begin by pointing out that the term *fairy tale* literally means a story about elves. Medieval Europeans believed the dense forests of northern Europe were in fact inhabited by elves and that humans who wandered alone in the woods might well encounter an elf or two, and that encounter might not go well for the human. Medieval fairy tales were cautionary tales, meant to be taken seriously, and the message usually was this: Don't go wandering into the woods on your own. The woods are a place of danger and enchantment. This warning is embedded in the subtext of most fairy tales.

In our time, we treat fairy tales as a subset of the literary genre we call fantasy. I'd define modern fantasy as stories that draw on the folklore of earlier times to tell new and often modern tales about magical or supernatural beings or phenomena to entertain an audience *not* expected to take the story seriously in the way medieval audiences were. Fantasy might be about elves, or other traditional folkloric elements such as ghosts, witches, talking animals, and so on.

The main difference between fantasy fiction and realistic fiction is that realistic fiction means to explore reality: ourselves, our society, the larger world we live in. Fantasy means to explore our fantasies: our fears and anxieties, our dreams and desires.

But in the early years of the twentieth century, fantasy was not widely recognized as a literary genre, and much of what we would call *fantasy* they would have called *fairy tales*. And they would have used that term dismissively.

In medieval Europe it was not unreasonable to believe there might be strange humanoid creatures lurking in the deep of the forest. But as Europe modernized and populations grew, the forests shrank, while better roads and railroads made travel through the forest easier and more frequent, and the consistent refusal of the elves to show themselves to modern folk inevitably cast doubt on their existence.

The failure of the fairies to show themselves led to them being recast in human imagination as smaller creatures, no longer human in size, but small enough to hide behind flower petals, ride insects as their mounts, or even become invisible. Perhaps the fairies *were* lurking in the forest, but we busy modern humans were simply overlooking them.

Does this sound silly to you? As recently as 1920, no less a figure than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, best remembered for his Sherlock Holmes stories, published an article in the December issue of *The Strand* magazine arguing that fairies actually existed and there was photographic evidence to

prove it. The photographic evidence came from two very naughty little girls in West Yorkshire who faked it using paper cutouts of fairies. You see, there were people even in the twentieth century who still believed in various supernatural phenomena and held out hope that modern technology would prove their existence, even people as prominent as Conan Doyle. This is a topic worthy of its own episode, and it's been on my mind for a long time, but it hasn't quite gelled yet. Someday.

But for the most part, by the 19th century, modern scientific understanding of the natural world had advanced to the point where there was no longer room for magic or ghosts or even fairies, no matter how tiny we might guess they were. By the Victorian era, fairy tales were regarded as no longer a fit subject for adults, and they were demoted to entertainments meant for children.

The British academic and writer C.S. Lewis made the provocative observation that society had done to fairy tales what a household does with a surplus piece of furniture. If you have an old bed or dresser or desk that you no longer have any use for, what do you do with it? In most families with children, the answer is, they put the surplus furniture in the children's rooms. And so it was with fairy tales.

Speaking of children, in this podcast, I try to be attentive to the history of non-Western nations and cultures, of marginalized groups, of women and LGBT people, but there is one large subset of the human race I've hardly talked about at all in 300 episodes: children. So today, let's consider children's literature.

I talked about children's literature a little bit in episode 287, when we were considering the development of newspaper comic strips. These evolved in parallel with children's literature, and we can see traces of that connection when we consider how many comic strips have children as their protagonists. Many comic strip artists also wrote and illustrated children's books and vice versa. As I told you then, the very first books written and published specifically for a readership of children began to appear in the mid-18th century. Children's books were relatively rare at first, but they became increasingly common from say 1750 to 1850, which reflects the Industrial Revolution, which made books cheaper to produce, and a rising middle class that could afford such a previously undreamt-of luxury item as a book for the children.

One of the earliest books published specifically for the entertainment of children was John Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, published in England in 1744 and in North America in 1762. Since 1922, the American Library Association has awarded the Newbery Medal, named for John Newbery, for distinguished contributions to American literature for children.

In this first century of its existence, children's literature was conceived as entertainment, but also as didactic. It was meant to teach children proper behavior. One popular example from the period is Swiss author Johann David Wyss's 1812 novel *Swiss Family Robinson*, which was intended as a children's adaptation of Daniel Defoe's 1719 adventure novel *Robinson Crusoe*. *Swiss Family*

Robinson is also an adventure tale, but includes lessons about the natural world and the importance of family and working together.

By the Victorian age and the Belle Époque, as children's books became increasingly accessible, didacticism gave way to stories meant to appeal to children's imaginations and with a sympathetic portrayal of a child's worldview. Two important examples from this time are American author Mark Twain's 1876 novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, a work grounded in the real world but which taps into childhood fantasies, and the straight-up fantastic *Alice in Wonderland* by English author Charles Dodgson, writing under the pen name Lewis Carroll. *Alice in Wonderland* is not only a milestone in children's literature but a milestone in fantasy literature. An important feature these books have in common is that while intended for younger audiences, they can be read and enjoyed by older people equally well, and perhaps even with a different level of meaning.

The Belle Époque era was something of a golden age for children's literature. The year 1869 saw the publication of American author Louisa May Alcott's semi-autobiographical *Little Women*, and in 1872, Scottish author George MacDonald published *The Princess and the Goblin*. In 1880, American folklorist Joel Chandler Harris published the first of his Uncle Remus collections of African-American folk tales, and Swiss author Johanna Spyri published the first part of the two-part novel *Heidi*.

The following year appeared Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. In 1883, Italian author Carlo Collodi published *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, which became hugely popular worldwide and one of the most translated works of fiction of all time, in fact the only novel more widely translated is also a children's book, albeit a more modern one—1943's *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

And while I'm on the subject, the next most widely translated novel after *The Little Prince* and *Pinocchio* is also a children's book, *Alice in Wonderland*. You have to go down to fourth place on the list of most translated novels to find the first work intended primarily for an adult readership, which, if you're curious, is *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*, published in two parts in 1605 and 1615 by Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, which also has a claim as the world's first modern novel. But I digress.

English writer and poet Rudyard Kipling published *The Jungle Book* in 1894, and in 1900 American author L. Frank Baum published *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. In 1902, English author Helen Beatrix Potter published *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, which is a landmark work as much for its illustrations as its text. Children's books typically included illustrations, far more than what you'd expect in a novel for adults, and they boasted more and more illustrations, and more and more color illustrations, with every passing decade.

Scottish writer James Matthew Barrie wrote the 1904 stage play *Peter Pan*, and in 1911 adapted it into a novel titled *Peter and Wendy*. In 1908, fellow Scot Kenneth Grahame published *The*

Wind in the Willows. English-born American Frances Hodgson Burnett published *The Secret Garden* in 1910. Such good years for children's literature.

But this Belle Époque period was not only a golden age for original children's stories, especially fanciful ones with talking toads or talking marionettes or what have you, it was also the era when traditional fairy tales became recast as children's literature. The beginning of modern interest in old fairy tales is rooted in the rising romanticism and nationalism of the 19th century. Folklorists strove to collect and publish traditional stories of their native lands as a way of preserving their cultural identity; an early and notable example were the folklorist brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, known universally as the Brothers Grimm. Their collection of German folk tales included stories quite familiar to us today, including "Cinderella," "Snow White," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Little Red Riding Hood."

The first edition of their collection, published in 1812, preserved the traditional stories in all their harsh and violent glory. Over the next 45 years, they published a series of newer and larger editions with more and more stories, but also, in response to public pressure, increasingly softened the violence and cruelty in the stories' traditional versions to make them more suitable for children.

A major figure in English-language fairy tales, one not well remembered today, is Scottish writer and folklorist Andrew Lang. In 1889, Lang published *The Blue Fairy Book*, a collection of 37 illustrated fairy tales. It included a number translated from the Brothers Grimm, but also "Beauty and the Beast," several Norwegian fairy tales, an excerpt from *Gulliver's Travels* and stories from the *Arabian Nights*, including "Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp" and "The Forty Thieves."

The Blue Fairy Book was a big success and from 1890 to 1913 Andrew Lang published 24 additional collections of stories and poems, many of which were titled after *The Blue Fairy Book*. That is to say, *The Red Fairy Book*, *The Green Fairy Book* and so on even unto *The Olive Fairy Book* and *The Lilac Fairy Book*—presumably he was running out of colors by then. Later books ranged beyond European folklore to retell stories from Chinese, Japanese, Native American, Persian, and Indian traditions. And all these stories were judiciously purged of their violent or sexy elements to make them kid friendly.

After the Great War, you saw something of a revival of children's literature, especially in Britain; less so in the United States. English author Hugh Lofting published *The Story of Doctor Dolittle*, about a physician who treats animals because he can speak to them in their own languages. Many sequels would follow. Fellow Englishman Alan Alexander Milne published stories and poems for children, most notably 1926's *Winnie-the-Pooh*, a collection of fanciful stories about his son, Christopher Robin Milne, and his collection of stuffed toys come to life, including the titular teddy bear. Its huge success led to a second collection published two years later, *The House at Pooh Corner*.

The 1930s saw the publication of some major children's books. There was Australian-born British writer Pamela Lyndon Travers' 1934 *Mary Poppins*, about a magical nanny. Travers would write seven sequels, the last published in 1988. In 1938, English author Terence Hanbury White published *The Sword in the Stone*, a fantasy about the boyhood of the future King Arthur, known as Wart in the book, which used an Arthurian setting as a vehicle to deliver some sly commentary on current events. White would add to the story over the years that followed, which ultimately led to the collection titled *The Once and Future King*, published in 1958.

[music: Saint-Saëns, *The Carnival of the Animals*]

I described to you the rise of Walt Disney and his animation studio a while back, in episode 288. By the mid-Thirties, Disney was the undisputed master of animated short films, but Disney was never one to rest on his laurels. He was constantly plowing his profits back into the studio, refining and improving the process. One clear example of this was Disney's development of the multiplane camera. It cost \$70,000 and stood fourteen feet tall, but what it did was allow the camera to look down through four different planes. Drawings could be put on each plane and moved independently, creating a 3-D effect. The camera could even zoom in through the scenery to close on the character in the middle.

The price Disney paid for all this innovation was that his studio was becoming more creative than a six or seven minute short cartoon could bear. For example, in one short, Pluto the Pup spends a good amount of time sniffing around a hat. It's cute and clever and well executed, but it takes up a big chunk of a short cartoon. Disney's shorts were losing the loose and casual anarchy of his earlier work.

But Walt Disney was already thinking beyond short cartoons. In 1934, he announced that his studio would create an animated feature film based on the fairy tale "Snow White," number 53 in the Brothers Grimm collection. The Italian-born Argentine director Quirino Cristiani had already made a couple of feature-length films using cutout figures animated with stop motion, but Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* would be the first-ever feature film using the now-standard cel animation process. Disney budgeted \$250,000 for the film, about ten times what he spent on one of his animated short films.

"You couldn't possibly realize all the things we had to learn, and unlearn, in doing *Snow White*," Walt would later say. One of the things they had to unlearn was the fast pace of a short cartoon. An animated feature had to be slower. It had to have a wider range of tempo, of subject, of mood. The animators realized immediately the comic potential of the seven dwarfs and their interactions with Snow White, but early attempts to make the Queen a comical figure were abandoned. In the end, they settled on a plan in which the story of the human characters, Snow White, the Queen, the Huntsman, and the Prince, would be played seriously and the characters would be drawn realistically, while the dwarf characters would be drawn with more exaggerated

features and would play for laughs. And of course, Disney would employ his multiplane camera to enhance the realism.

The production ran way over budget. Like six times the budget. The final cost was just under \$1.5 million dollars, making it one of the most expensive films made up to that time, and some in Hollywood thought Disney was making a huge mistake, including his own brother, Roy, who ran the business end of the studio. Sure, cartoon shorts were fun for the whole family, but they were no more than brief diversions between the feature films. Children have notoriously short attention spans. A six-minute *Silly Symphony* was one thing; what child would sit through a cartoon that lasted an hour and a half? For that matter, could a mere cartoon keep an adult occupied for that long?

It turned out that both children and adults could and did find *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* entertaining. The film was a smash, both domestically and internationally, setting a new earnings record for a sound film, until 1939's *Gone With the Wind* overtook it. It was a critical success as well; *Variety* declared that so “perfect is the illusion, so tender the romance and fantasy, so emotional are certain portions of the acting of the characters striking a depth comparable to the sincerity of human players, that the film approaches real greatness.”

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was a milestone in motion picture history, comparable to *Birth of a Nation* or *The Jazz Singer*. Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein declared it the greatest film ever made. A month after its release, and with the audience for fairy tales on the screen firmly established, MGM announced it would be making a live-action adaptation of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, while Paramount Pictures gave the green light to Max Fleischer's own long-simmering feature animation project, *Gulliver's Travels*.

Apart from the huge box office receipts, the music from *Snow White* was released as the first soundtrack album for an American film, becoming another source of income for Disney's studio, and three of the film's songs—“Heigh-Ho,” “Whistle While You Work,” and “Someday My Prince Will Come”—became popular music standards. Disney also racked up \$8 million in sales of related *Snow White* merchandise, marking the beginning of Disney's amazing ability to find new ways of making money off existing creations, something his company is still remarkably adroit at doing, even in our time.

Walt Disney himself, of course, was already moving on to the next thing. The next thing was an animated feature film adaptation of Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. The film was a bit longer than *Snow White* and technically superior, though perhaps not as emotionally engaging. It cost \$2.6 million, substantially more than *Snow White*.

In developing the story, Disney felt that the puppet in the book was rude and unlikeable and too passive. To correct this, the film expands the role of a talking cricket into a major character, Jiminy Cricket, assigned the task of serving as Pinocchio's conscience. Jiminy Cricket's song, “When You Wish upon a Star,” became another huge hit, winning an Academy Award for Best

Original Song, and over the decades it has evolved into something like the anthem of the Walt Disney Company.

Pinocchio was released in 1940 and critics hailed it as a masterpiece, equal or superior to *Snow White*. The box office returns...well, the box office returns told a different story. The studio only earned about a million dollars from the film in its first year of release, less than 40% of what it had cost to make, which had to have been a huge disappointment after the success of *Snow White*. The poor performance at the box office is usually attributed to the Second World War, which sharply limited rentals from other countries, but even the domestic box office was disappointing. I can't help but think that a story about bad little boys running off to an island where they can drink beer and smoke cigars and play pool, then getting turned into donkeys and sold into slavery is...how shall I put this? Not exactly the family-friendly fun-for-all-ages production it was billed as. And I can't be the only little kid who had trouble keeping straight that Geppetto and Jonah were two completely different people. Carlo Collodi got away with that kind of stuff in 1883, but even by 1940, it was a little dark for a kids' movie.

Not many expected what came next: *Fantasia*, an anthology film of seven animated segments set to the music of eight classical works performed (mostly) by the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. It's less surprising when you think back to those *Silly Symphonies*, and indeed the genesis of this film was an elaborate *Silly Symphony* short that Walt intended as a comeback vehicle for Mickey Mouse, his favorite creation, who was no longer the big box office draw he had been a few years ago. The film would be based on the 1797 poem "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, set to the music of French composer Paul Dukas, who had composed an orchestral piece inspired by the poem in 1897. Dukas passed away in 1935, by the way.

At a chance meeting with the great conductor in 1937, Walt shared his idea for the short and Stokowski was eager to get involved. Together they assembled an orchestra and recorded the music, but the cost of this project soon rose to more than \$100,000. Walt's brother Roy, the finance guy, laid it out for him: there was just no way this cartoon short would ever earn back its cost. So Walt decided to bring Stokowski back, add six more sequences, and expand the project into a feature. All this was going on while the animators were still inking and painting *Pinocchio*.

The result was *Fantasia*, a film which is something much more than seven *Silly Symphonies* strung together. Here Disney rejected the Chaplinesque slapstick that was the bread and butter of most cartoon shorts in favor of fantasies inspired by the music.

This was no ordinary motion picture, and it would not get an ordinary release. Disney recorded the sound on eight separate tracks in a wholly new system developed with RCA and dubbed Fantasound. This would be the precursor to stereo, and later to surround sound. And the film would not be shown in movie theaters, but instead taken on a road tour, like a stage production,

visiting theatres one city at a time, with advance ticket reservations, just like a live show, and at live show prices.

Fantasia was released in November 1940. Again, critics hailed it as something entirely new in motion pictures. But *Fantasia* didn't generate the same kind of mass appeal that *Snow White* had. Some classical music lovers were offended by Stokowski's abridged arrangements of classical masterpieces. The one living composer whose music was featured, Igor Stravinsky, gave Stokowski's treatment of his ballet suite *Rite of Spring* an emphatic thumbs down. And the complex and expensive Fantasound equipment ate into the budget, especially given the wartime demand for electronics components. Disney lost money on this film too, although he remained extremely proud of it. "*Fantasia* makes all our other pictures look immature," he told the press.

Meanwhile, Disney's studio grew and grew. It stopped being an intimate family-style business long ago, but Walt still thought of it that way. Walt knocked himself out for every project and expected the same of his employees, even though they weren't getting a profit share. May 1941 saw the Disney animators go on strike. Some of his best artists had had enough and walked away altogether.

The strike changed things at Disney. It affected the atmosphere of the studio. It affected the output. And it profoundly affected Walt Disney. Previously he had been a New Deal Democrat; afterward he would blame the strike on Communist agitators and vote Republican. He was said to be a secret Hollywood informant to J. Edgar Hoover's FBI in the 1950s.

Disney's response to two money-losing features in a row became his next feature film, *Dumbo*, made for the slimmed down price of \$950,000, far less than any of his previous features, and at an equally slimmed down runtime of barely more than an hour. It lacked the innovative and labor-intensive animation techniques he'd used in his previous features. The look of the film is a lot closer to that of the Disney shorts, but the economizing worked; *Dumbo* was well-received and earned the studio a healthy profit. The "Pink Elephants on Parade" sequence managed to be magical and memorable without breaking the bank. *Time* magazine, tongue firmly in cheek, designated *Dumbo* "Mammal of the Year" for 1941. The film won an Academy Award for Best Original Score.

The following year, 1942, saw the release of *Bambi*, based on the 1923 book by Jewish Austrian writer Felix Salten, who by the way, was living in exile in Switzerland in 1942 after having been driven out of his native Austria by the Nazis. *Bambi* got a mixed reception from the critics, some of whom disapproved of the film's abandonment of cartoon fantasy in favor of a naturalistic depiction of life in the forest. Its naturalistic realism also traumatized two generations of children who had to endure the killing of *Bambi*'s mother.

The box office numbers were disappointing too. By 1942, the United States had joined the war, and the wartime demands on the US economy didn't leave much room for cartoons. Disney and his studio would spend the rest of the war making training films and propaganda films for the

United States government. After the war, Disney would have to rebuild his studio before he could again produce feature films to match the quality of his earlier efforts.

In an age in which science and reason came to the fore, the fairy tales of traditional European folklore receded in importance. The early 19th century saw a revival of interest in them as cultural artifacts from an earlier age. By the late 19th century, these cultural artifacts were removed to the nursery, as C.S. Lewis put it, repurposed as children's entertainment.

In that context, Disney's *Snow White* is also a milestone in the history of fairy tales. *Snow White* was not the first animated adaptation of a fairy tale. Recall for example, Walt Disney's own very popular 1933 *Silly Symphony* version of *The Three Little Pigs*, which we already discussed.

And Disney wasn't the only animation studio doing cartoon versions of fairy tales, not by any means. Take for example the English fairy tale of Goldilocks. Paul Terry's Terrytoons studio put out cartoon versions of that story in 1934 and again in 1939. MGM would also release a Goldilocks short in 1939, and Warner Brothers would release *Bugs Bunny and the Three Bears*, directed by Chuck Jones, in 1943, and the Warner Brothers version of those three bears would become recurring characters in future cartoons.

But no animation studio would become as closely associated with fairy tales as Disney. The charm of magic spells, of the supernatural, of talking animals and fairy godmothers, and all the wonder and enchantment of fantasy would become Disney's stock in trade. By the end of the twentieth century, the cultural custodians of European folklore—and of other folklores—would no longer be the Brothers Grimm or Andrew Lang. They would be superseded by the board of directors of The Walt Disney Company.

Fantasy will remain the domain of children, for now. In the 1930s, fantasy for adults would have been regarded as virtually a contradiction in terms. But elements of what we call fantasy were already present in literature for adults: in some of the works of Edgar Allen Poe, for example, but the work that comes most readily to my mind is Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*, about a supernatural being from Transylvanian folklore transplanted into Victorian England. If "fantasy" means new stories that draw on old folkloric traditions for the entertainment of modern readers, then *Dracula* fits that description to a T. You can think of it as a Victorian urban fantasy.

Still, stories like *Dracula* or the more supernatural works of Poe draw on the power of fantasy to evoke dread and horror. The other side of fantasy, that sense of enchantment and wonder, remains limited to the realm of children's entertainment. For now.

But this brings me to South African-born English author and philologist John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, who, also in 1937, just weeks before *Snow White* was released, published his first novel, *The Hobbit*, written for children and, coincidentally, also featuring a gang of dwarfs—or dwarves, as Tolkien preferred. *The Hobbit* is plainly influenced by such works as MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* and Barrie's *Peter Pan and Wendy*—and do I detect resemblances

to *The Wind in the Willows* and *Winnie the Pooh*?—but it also borrows from folkloric works such as *Beowulf* and Norse mythology. Yet it tells a story all its own.

By the way, Tolkien and his good buddy C.S. Lewis despised Disney's *Snow White*. They went to the cinema to hate-watch it together. It must have been fun sitting right in front of them. Tolkien thought Disney got the dwarfs—excuse me, dwarves—all wrong.

The Hobbit was critically acclaimed and sold very well. And it's been selling well for 85 years and counting. It's been hailed as the greatest fantasy novel ever written. And just weeks after its release, and in the wake of the success of *Snow White*, Tolkien's publisher was already sounding him out about a sequel. He showed them material from his private project *The Silmarillion*, but the publisher wanted another hobbit story. So he set to work on a sequel, the working title of which was *The New Hobbit*.

It would take him twelve years to write and would not be published until 1954, in three volumes, with a different title and a very different tone. And it would definitely be for adults.

But that is a story for another episode.

We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Robert for his kind donation, and thank you to Bartosz for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Robert and Bartosz help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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Next week is a bye week for the podcast, but I hope you'll join me in two weeks' time, here on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we take our leave of dwarfs and dwarves and return to real-world central Europe, where the picture is anything but rosy and the prospects for a happy ending are bleak. Axis and Anschluss, in two weeks' time, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. The year 1937 also saw the publication of yet another landmark in children's literature, this one written in verse and illustrated by a 33-year-old American artist and cartoonist named Theodor Geisel.

Geisel's manuscript, titled, *A Story No One Can Beat*, was rejected by more than twenty publishers, who told him children's books in verse were out of fashion and that twentieth-century kids weren't interested in fantasy, and were disappointed that the book lacked a clear moral.

In despair after receiving his most recent rejection, Geisel was walking down Madison Avenue in New York City, contemplating burning the manuscript and forgetting the whole thing when he ran into an old college classmate, now working as an editor at Vanguard Press. Geisel told him about the book, and his college buddy persuaded his boss to publish it. They changed the title to *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, and it was released under Geisel's pen name, Dr. Seuss.

The book received good reviews, although it took a while to catch on with the public. But it did catch on, and Geisel began a whole new career as a children's book author. Later in his life, Geisel liked to say, "If I had been walking down the other side of Madison Avenue, I'd be in the dry-cleaning business today."

[music: Closing Theme]