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THE FAIRY TALE IN MODERN DRAMA

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THE FAIRY TALE IN MODERN DRAMA

by

DAVID NICHOLSON

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1982

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Abstract

THE FAIRY TALE IN MODERN DRAMA

by

David Nicholson

Adviser: Professor Daniel Gerould

This study of the uses of fairy tales and their motifs in modern European drama begins with the symbolist reaction against realism and naturalism in the last decade of the 19th century. In the vanguard of a second romantic revolution, Maeterlinck, Strindberg, Hauptmann, Sologub, Ibsen, Hofmannstahl, and Yeats all turned to fairy tales and other anti-realistic forms to bring poetry and spiritual meaning back into the theatre. Elements from the folk tales of Perrault and the Grimms and from the literary tales of H. C. Andersen can be found in their plays, as well as allusions to a tradition of fairy lore and legend about contacts between the human world and a numinous Other World of spirits and the dead.

Fairy-play plots typically take one of two forms, either the "Undine-pattern," which envisages the conflict of two worlds as a tragic relationship between a human being and a fairy lover, or the A-B-A "Visit to Fairy-land," a pattern of enchantment and disenchantment like that in A Midsummer Night's Dream. These two structures can be made to carry a great variety of tones and meanings, ranging from sunny optimism to the darkest pessimism. Cocteau, Giraudoux, and Lesya Ukrainka, for example, have written fairy plays of spectacle and high theatricality. Ibsen, Hauptmann, Hofmannstahl and others see in the opposition of two worlds an allegorical

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conflict between art and life. Ironists like Barrie, Bergman, Gombrowicz, and Audiberti, following Maeterlinck, invert their tales and the expected happy ending to produce disillusionment and despair. Evgeny Shvarts applies the melodramatic fairy-tale moral scheme to modern totalitarian politics and produces emancipatory parables of heroism, defending the right of the community to define itself in the face of the dragon-tyrant.

The symbolists and playwrights after them have amply demonstrated the importance of simple folk forms as literary resources. Writers turn to fairy tales not merely because, as fundamentally dualistic structures, the tales are ready-made for adaptation, but also to take advantage of their fantasy, magic, and symbolism. Most of all, playwrights are challenged by the standing invitation to reinterpret their archetypal structures, to discover new ways to make them speak from the stage to each new generation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Fairy tales traditionally end with an affirmation of new life, a symbolic revival, recognition, marriage, or coronation which has always proven deeply meaningful to interpreters of the form. This affirmation acquires yet another meaning when we consider the use of folklore in literature, where fairy tales and their heroes and heroines take on a new dimension of existence. In their natural state, as folk narrative forms, fairy tales remain remarkably stable and constant; even across cultural boundaries they vary within strict limits according to anonymous laws that preserve their stereotyped qualities.[1] Subjected to a writer's conscious reinterpretation, fairy tales enter the domain of art, where their elements are subsumed, as means to an end, by the artist's personal vision. Translated onto the stage, they undergo yet another sea-change, from the narrative to the theatrical mode. Each artistic reincarnation of fairy tales illustrates their power to survive in new contexts and to inspire new generations with their archetypal imagery.

The living spirit of fairy tale has animated a long history of changing artistic forms. The literary adaptation of folklore is, of course, very ancient. J. A. MacCulloch, in The Childhood of Fiction (New York:

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[1]These stereotyped qualities and the laws that dictate them are described by Axel Olrik in his essay, "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," Zeitschrift für Deutsches Altertum 51 (1909):1-12, reprinted in The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 129-41.

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Dutton, 1905), cites the Circe episode in the Odyssey as "an excellent example of the literary use of an already existing Greek Märchen" (p. 150). Artists in other media, composers and painters in particular, have dipped again and again into folk culture for inspiration when their usual sources have run dry. The use of myths, tales, and legends on the stage is only a special case of a widespread and long-standing cultural practise.

Though folklore first enters the drama in classical times in the form of tragic myths drawn from Homer, the fairy drama proper begins with Shakespeare in England and Carlo Gozzi, who wrote his plays between 1761 and 1765, in Italy. Both A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Tempest have been widely influential among playwrights interested in fairy tales. It was the fantastic and satirical tradition begun by Gozzi, however, that flourished on the continent and led, first to the romantic fairy tale, then to the modern fairy-tale play. Influenced by Gozzi, all the German Romantics wrote fairy tales, and many of them, following Tieck, wrote them in dramatic form.[1] The folk tales collected by the Grimms, first published in 1812 and 1815, and the literary tales of Hans Christian Andersen, which first appeared in 1835, reinvigorated interest in the romantic fairy tale. During the 19th century this tradition moved onto the popular stage all over Europe, and it flourishes still in opera, bal-

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[1] On Gozzi, see the Introductory Essay by John A. Symonds in The Memoirs of Count Carlo Gozzi, trans. Symonds, 2 vols. (London: John C. Nimmo, 1890). His influence in Germany is studied by Hedwig Hoffmann Rusack in Gozzi in Germany: A Survey of the Rise and Decline of the Gozzi Vogue in Germany and Austria (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930; reprint ed. New York: AMS Press, 1966). On the German Romantic fairy play, see "Tieck and the Romantics," in Marvin Carlson's The German Stage in the Nineteenth Century (Metuchen, N. J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1972), pp. 23-37. James Trainer also comments on the drama in his chapter, "The Märchen," in The Romantic Period in Germany, ed. S. Prawer (New York: Schocken, 1970), pp. 97-120; see also Roger Paulin, "The Drama," pp. 173-203 in the same volume.

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let, and children's theatre.[1] The 20th-century revival of Greek myth in the serious drama, much remarked upon, was preceded in the 1890s by a much less noticed resurgence of interest in the romantic fairy tale among the symbolists, where it constituted an important part of the anti-realistic tradition in the modern theatre. This interest has continued, as we shall see, up to the present day.

What follows is an investigation of the forms and functions of fairy-tale elements in the Western drama of the last one hundred years. It consists of (a) an analytical description of the various structures and motifs which dramatists have adapted from fairy tales, and (b) a critical evaluation of how these elements have been made to carry a great variety of meanings. I will focus on close readings of about thirty representative plays, many of them works in the mainstream of modern drama, and will glance in passing at others of the more than one hundred plays that have so far come to my attention. I have set out to produce as comprehensive an idea as possible of the uses of the fairy tale on the modern stage.

Fairy tales being a kind of mythology,[2] the task envisaged here falls in the category of archetypal criticism. Recognition of this fact does not commit us to any particular methodology--the approach is non-theoretical and eclectic--but it does suggest an important caveat. In his study of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," Charles Moorman insists

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[1] On the popular fairy play, especially in France, see Paul Ginisty, La Féerie (Paris: L. Michaud, 1910); Katherine Kovács, "A History of the Féerie in France," Theatre Quarterly 8 (Spring 1978):29-38; and Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo (1958), s.v. "Féerie," by Paul Blanchart.

[2] "Mythology" is defined here as a body of stories and motifs known to audiences and arranged for systematic allusion.

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that the proper use of myth in criticism requires going beyond merely pointing out a myth or ritual pattern in a work. The critic must "concentrate not on the identity of the myth, but on its function, not on its closeness to the known pattern, but on the changes which the poet effects in that pattern, not on origin, but on use." In short, says Moorman, the critic must show how the myth "itself becomes a tool of creation."[1]

This caution seems especially appropriate for criticism dealing with fairy tales, because of their inherent idealism. A fairy-tale playwright does two things: first, he evokes memories and associations with a particular fairy story or a familiar fairy world of magic and idealistic aspiration, identifying the specific content of his work with archetypal characters and events; second, he either affirms or denies the expectations that follow from these mythic references, treating them sincerely or ironically, according to his personal vision of the world. The question of whether fulfillment and transcendence are possible always goes with the serious literary use of fairy tales. Every dramatist dealt with here shows himself to be an optimist or a pessimist. In each case I will attempt to go beyond merely pointing out allusions to fairy tales--they are mostly obvious anyway--to grapple with the larger problem of how the playwright uses the tale to delineate a philosophical image of reality.

Though fairy tales are a kind of myth, there are differences between the familiar magic tales of childhood and the stories we ordinarily think of as myths. A clue to these differences can be seen in the fact

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[1]Charles Moorman, "Myth and Medieval Literature: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," Medieval Studies (Toronto) 18 (1956):158-72. Reprinted in Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practise, ed. John B. Vickery (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 171-86, where the quoted passage may be found on p. 175.

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that, of the twenty-two items in Lord Raglan's biographical pattern of the traditional hero (e.g., Oedipus, Jesus), only the central four appear in fairy tales:

> (j) On reaching manhood [the hero] returns or goes to his future kingdom
> (k) After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon, or wild beast
> (l) He marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and
> (m) Becomes king.[1]

The biographical pattern as a whole falls into three parts, associated with the hero's birth, accession, and death, corresponding to the three phases of a rite de passage.[2] Fairy tales cut off the preparatory part and the tragic aftermath to focus on the initiatory sequence itself: the quest, the contest and victory, and the marriage and enthronement. These are the triumphal stages in the hero's life, celebrating his challenge and fulfillment in the promise of a happy future.

In addition to these differences of content and tone, fairy tales and myths may be said to relate differently to belief. The folklore scholar Stith Thompson says that "myth has to do with the gods and their actions, with creation, and with the general nature of the universe and the earth." Fairy tales have human beings as heroes, and while they have been variously allegorized, they are not usually thought of as explanatory in function. The tales "generally function as pure fiction and are not the subjects of real belief."[3] Expanding on the distinctions made by Malinowski

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[1] Lord Raglan, "The Hero of Tradition," Folklore 45 (1934):212-31; reprinted in The Study of Folklore, ed. Dundes, pp. 142-57. The quoted part appears on p. 145.

[2] Ibid., p. 151.

[3] Thompson, "Myth and Folktales," in Myth: A Symposium, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), pp. 173-4.

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in his research on Trobriand folklore, Francis Fergusson describes the fairy tale as "told only for fun, without reference to truth, on occasions when the tribe was gathered simply for entertainment."[1] Since western civilization has been de-christianized, we no longer have genuine religious myth, despite Wagner's attempt to create one in Tristan and Isolde. In our rationalized times, says Fergusson, even myths are treated as fairy tales--that is, allegorized in a half-playful manner. According to Fergusson's categories, then, true religious myth invites belief and fairy tales invite make-belief.[2]

Fergusson's idea of the fairy tale reminds us of the burlesques and extravaganzas on classical myths and fairy tales written by J. R. Planché, whose comic allegorizing of his source tales diminishes them through genial parody. Perrault's moralizing has a similar, though less drastic effect. But in their natural state (approximately as represented in the collection of the Grimms)[3] the tales have a grave, distanced qual-

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[1] Fergusson, "'Myth' and the Literary Scruple," in Myth and Literature, ed. Vickery, p. 140.

[2] In Greek Tragedy: A Literary Study (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1950), H. D. F. Kitto notes that even in the hands of a debunking Euripides, the Homeric myths are alive in some sense. The Greek poets found in their native mythology a means of expression which they animated with their thought. But as soon as Greek myth was exported to Alexandria and Italy, it died: "It became an ornament, a peg for rhetoric, an outlet for pedantry, sometimes a mere substitute for thought, and an intolerable bore" (p. 106). This distinction corresponds roughly to Fergusson's idea of the differences between true myth and fairy tale.

[3] The Grimms extensively reworked the material they collected, creating "a subtle blending of folklore and literary craftsmanship," according to Alfred David and Mary Elizabeth David in "A Literary Approach to the Brothers Grimm," Journal of the Folklore Institute 1 (December 1964): 180-96. But they held great respect for the oral tradition. They strove to "retain the flavor of oral narrative and indeed, felt it was their duty to purify the stories of any corruptions or artificialities that might have crept in in the process of oral transmission" (ibid., p. 189). To Arnim's objection that they must have perfected the stories, Wilhelm Grimm

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ity that C. S. Lewis describes as "Mythic": they too offer the awe-inspiring and numinous experience of Otherness.[1] They are deeply serious comic structures, ending in what we might call a catharsis of joy.

From this point of view myths and fairy tales are more alike than different: both have a natural mysterious quality, and both can be diminished through parody or rationalization. Stith Thompson treats both categories with skepticism, reminding us that some primitive cultures do not bother to separate myths and folktales.[2] Their forms flow into each other, and their social functions are nowadays distinctions without a significant difference. For our purposes it is necessary only to remember that fairy tales imply and validate an optimistic view of the world. Their optimism is instantly recognizable in the familiar dramatis personae and the quest for personal happiness that usually ends in marriage.

When it comes to literary adaptation, myths, legends, and tales are not essentially different from historical materials for the writer; in all cases the adapted story is simply a springboard, a creative stimulus. Susanne K. Langer comments on this point in a crucial passage in Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art (New York: Scribner's, 1953):

> Legend and myth and fairy tale are not in themselves literature; they are not art at all, but fantasies; as such, however, they are the natural materials of art. . . . A legend presented as story is as new a creation as any work whereof the plot has just been invented; for apart from the telling, the action or 'plot' is not a 'work,' it creates no complete and organized illusion of something lived, but is

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replied that, yes, they had; but that they had worked always from a conception of "fidelity" to the essence of the tales. See André Jolles, Einfache Formen (Tübingen: Max Niemayer, 1930), translated as Formes Simples (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972) by Antoine Marie Buguet, p. 179.

[1] C. S. Lewis, "On Stories," Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), pp. 8-9.

[2] Thompson, "Myth and Folktales," pp. 174-5.

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> to literature what an armature or a roughly shaped block of wood is to sculpture--a first shape, a source of ideas (p. 274).[1]

Translated onto the stage, a fairy tale is no longer myth or ritual, but art, a simulacrum of myth. Philip Rahv points out that "the one thing [myths] cannot impart is ethical enlightenment: the question of good and evil is beyond myth and becomes crucial only with the emergence of the individual, to whom alone is given the capacity at once to assent to the gift of self-knowledge and to undergo its ordeal."[2] Since man seeks ethical enlightenment above all in his drama, it is clear that what we should look for in these fairy-tale plays is *not* myth so much as points of view toward myth: folk tales processed, shaped, and pointed toward interpretations of life. Whether or not they are consciously allegorized, both myths and tales find meaning in art as statements about reality.

The term "fairy tale," as used here, refers primarily to the tales classified in the Aarne-Thompson Types of the Folktale, 3rd ed. (Helsinki, 1961), particularly to those called "Ordinary Folktales," types 300-1199.

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[1] C. S. Lewis also thought that myth-making, far from being an exclusively literary art, is not literary at all, but pre-literary, in that its peculiar power does not depend on a certain arrangement of words or on narrative attractions such as suspense or surprise. Fantasy empowers the imagination to create in any symbolic mode. "What really delights and nourishes one is a particular pattern of events, which would equally delight and nourish if it had reached one by some medium which involved no words at all--say by a mime, or film" (Preface to George MacDonald: An Anthology, ed. Lewis [London: Bles, 1946], p. 15). See also An Experiment in Criticism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), especially chaps. 5-7. Apropos of MacDonald, W. H. Auden, another critic deeply interested in myth and fantasy, agrees with Lewis that the art of fantasy has only an external and accidental connection with the "art of words." See his Afterword to George MacDonald's The Golden Key (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967), pp. 81-86. Northrop Frye also views the folk tale as "abstract story-pattern"--see "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement," Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), p. 27.

[2] Philip Rahv, "The Myth and the Powerhouse," in Myth and Literature, ed. Vickery, pp. 113-14.

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These include the well-known magic and romantic stories that appear in the collections of Perrault, the Grimms, and Afanas'ev, the sources most frequently used. Also included as source tales are literary renderings of these stories such as those by Hans Christian Andersen. The term "fairy-tale play," then, refers to plays related to these tales in any of three ways: (a) dramatizations or adaptations of the tales for theatrical production, whether or not actually produced; (b) plays which allude not to a particular story but to the genre of fairy tale as a whole, using any of the motifs which appear in Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen, 1955-58); and (c) a special case of the above, plays which create a world of magic and enchantment--a "fairy-tale world"--which stands in opposition to the world of reality.

Feodor Sologub's The Triumph of Death (1907), for example, falls in the first category. It is a theatrical rendering of the legend of Bertha Big-Foot, mother of Charlemagne, itself a variation of tale no. 89 in the collection of the Grimms, "The Goose Girl" (tale type 870A). In the second category, Strindberg's The Ghost Sonata (1907) and Hjalmar Bergman's Mr. Sleeman Is Coming (1917), while not adaptations of particular tales, both have figures that correspond to a fairy-tale prince and princess, the reminder of which crystallizes in the audience a desire and expectation for a typical happy ending. In both plays this expectation is disappointed because, it turns out, the characters live in a fallen world very different from the ideal imaginary realm in which one's fate is decided by one's goodness of heart. The third category, that of the "fairy-tale world," is exemplified in the plays of J. M. Barrie, which frame a realm of magical probabilities with a world of realistic ones and turn on the typical issue of enchantment and disenchantment.

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All the plays I will discuss have narrative sources, either known stories or ballads or a whole story-telling tradition, and their relations to their sources can be traced in the structures of the plays. Even when structural relationships are not obvious, plays labeled fairy tales by their authors--e.g., Ghelderode's Christopher Columbus (1928)--are assumed to have some connection with fairy tradition, if only in the minds of the dramatists. In short, this is an operational and commonsense definition, not intended to be consistent with any particular theory of literature or folklore, but merely to include all the plays that might prove useful for the purposes of the study.

However, the definitions of "fairy tale" and "fairy-tale play" have been made dependent on the Aarne-Thompson Types of the Folktale and on Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature in order to satisfy the concerns of folklorists that literary study involving folk material be appropriately defined.[1] All folklorists agree that a minimum definition of "folk literature" requires that a tale so described be proven to have had folk currency.[2] The appearance of a tale or motif in one of the indexes cited above does not guarantee folk origin, since without independent proof we cannot say which items may have passed into folklore from literature. The Grimms once collected from a folk source a story that had actually been written by H. C. Andersen.[3] However, it is enough that a tale have some history

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[1]Alan Dundes, for example, insists that folklorists must interpret and critics must take care to identify folk elements in literary works by recourse to methods of folklore scholars. Neither approach by itself can be fruitful. "The Study of Folklore in Literature and Culture: Identification and Interpretation," Journal of American Folklore 78 (1966):136-41.

[2]Francis Lee Utley, "Folk Literature: An Operational Definition," in The Study of Folklore, ed. Dundes, p. 15.

[3]Iona Opie and Peter Opie, The Classic Fairy Tales (London: Oxford

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of oral transmission to be accepted as a true folk tale. From the standpoint of the purist, "print is a contaminator, a reverser, and a freezer of versions,"[1] but the relations between literature and folklore are actually more complex. George R. Foster, in his article, "What Is Folk Culture?", proposes a circular and mutually replenishing symbiosis of a rural folk culture and a sophisticated urban culture. Folk forms in Latin America, he points out, show clear signs of descent from contact with pre-industrial Europe. Folk cultures contribute to sophisticated cultures too, especially in sculpture, painting, literature, theatre, and dance.[2] Picasso's interest in African masks and Bartók's use of folk tunes are good examples, and so are all the plays cited in this study. In a 1957 symposium on folklore in literature, Daniel G. Hoffman said, "Folklore offers literature . . . a repository of shared social symbols, conserving important cultural values in incipient dramatic or literary form."[3] The literary development of a fairy tale, therefore, not only brings to birth an invention that has been fertilized by a folk form, but also carries through to completion a half-realized idea, complete in itself in its folk context, but existing only as a set of potentials for the artist, who can bring to bear sophisticated techniques and a unique point of view forbid-

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University Press, 1974), p. 27. Another commentator says that many of the Grimms' best-known tales came not from the primary tradition of story-telling but from Perrault, having "passed through French-speaking families and Ludwig Tieck's romantic fairy theatre"--Walter Scherf, "Family Conflicts and Emancipation in Fairy Tales," Children's Literature 3 (1974):80-81.

[1]Utley, "Folk Literature: An Operational Definition," p. 15.

[2]George R. Foster, "What Is Folk Culture?" American Anthropologist 55 (1953):159-73.

[3]"Folklore in Literature: A Symposium," Journal of American Folklore 70 (1957):21.

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den to the folk narrator. Susanne K. Langer writes, "The embodiment of mythology in poetry is simply its perfected and final form."[1]

A detailed description of the fairy tale as a genre would be out of place here, but it will perhaps be helpful to point out some of its salient features. As defined by Alexander H. Krappe in The Science of Folklore (London: Methuen, 1930), the traditional fairy tale is a serious narrative that "is essentially melodramatic in tone and character. Its protagonists are types and few in number: the hero (or heroine), the kindly helper or helpers, and the villain or villains" (p. 15). The hero's qualities are simple and attractive: courage, cleverness, presence of mind, generosity, humility, kindliness, and common decency. In quest stories such as those outlined by Lord Raglan's biographical pattern (see above, p. 5)--for example, the Grimms' dragon-killer tale, "The Two Brothers," no. 60—the hero either passively accepts the services of a supernatural helper or a talking animal, or actively performs his tasks himself with their aid. The villains in a fairy tale may be close relatives (aunts, stepmothers, stepsisters) or supernatural monsters (ogres, dragons, witches); they are either outwitted or defeated in a fair fight. The hero is invariably successful. According to Krappe, the "happy ending, without which a fairy tale is unthinkable, likewise approximates this type of fiction to the modern melodrama. A fairy tale with a tragic ending is unknown" (p. 22). The ending punishes the villain, sometimes quite cruelly, and rewards the hero with a wife and often a crown. Following the logic of a wish-fulfillment dream, all these events take place in a world

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[1]Susanne K. Langer, "Life-Symbols: The Roots of Myth," Philosophy in a New Key: A Study of the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art, 3rd. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 200.

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defined by solid objects, sharp edges, and saturated primary colors,[1] and irradiated throughout with the clear light of a transcendent principle of justice.

Besides the quest tale, which usually features a villainy and an active male protagonist to balance it, there are tales with passive, suffering heroines--e.g., "The Goose Girl" (Grimm no. 89) or "Cinderella" (no. 21)--which center on the restoration of something lost or missing. A third type, according to Krappe, is the wooing adventure, in which the hero wins his bride through an ordeal or a contest.

Magic is an essential factor in virtually all the tales. In addition to talking animals and magical talismans, the typical tale includes a transformation, an improbable recognition, or a resurrection from the dead at its climactic point. According to Tolkien, this "Eucatastrophe," the turn toward the happy ending, "is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. . . . It denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is <u>evangelium</u>, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief." In what Tolkien calls the "Consolation of the Happy Ending," the fairy tale finds its whole point and reason for being.[2]

The tales' style, as well as their melodramatic structure, recommends them to the dramatist for adaptation, for several reasons. First, fairy-tale style emphasizes a steady progress of the action. Max Lüthi reminds us, in <u>Once Upon a Time</u>, that folk tales do not stop to describe

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[1]Max Lüthi, <u>Once Upon a Time: On the Nature of Fairy Tales</u>, trans. Lee Chadeayne and Paul Gottwald (New York: Ungar, 1970), pp. 47-57.

[2]J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," <u>Tree and Leaf</u> (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 68.

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except when descriptive details are important to the plot. Characters are defined in action, not words, and they tend to be doers rather than thinkers or observers (pp. 50, 141-2). Second, fairy tales tend to externalize meanings and relationships in concrete objects, places, and events. Cinderella's ashes, the tree she plants on her mother's grave, the little white bird representing the mother's protective spirit, the slippers, the stepsisters' envious mutilation of their feet--in these things the story is given both structure and substance (p. 51). Eric Rabkin notes that in fairy tales no one ever says "I love you" to another; instead, one person feeds the other.[1] Third, for maximum clarity and definition, the fairy-tale world is ordered according to extremes and contrasts (pp. 50-51). Fairy tales love to set opposed qualities side by side, as we see in some of their titles: "Beauty and the Beast," "The Frog-King," "Snow-White and Rose-Red." These extremes and contrasts extend to a melodramatic view of the world, with a highly polarized sense of good and evil. All these concretizing characteristics of fairy-tale style heighten the clarity, precision, and firmness of the traditional tales, making them vivid and easily playable.

In the light of their intensely dramatic qualities, it seems strange that the usefulness of fairy tales for theatrical purposes has not been widely noticed, except by playwrights and teachers of creative dramatics for children. As a glance at the appended bibliography (below, p. 392) will reveal, there is not much scholarship on the subject. The monographs by Hedwig Hoffmann Rusack and Andrew Cincura both start with Gozzi and end before the modern period. The studies by Margarete Kober and Herman

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[1] Eric S. Rabkin, Fantastic Worlds: Myths, Tales, and Stories (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 31.

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Babson are both limited to German drama and cover only the beginning of the modern period. There are isolated studies of this or that playwright and his use of fairy tales, but nothing has been done in a comprehensive or systematic manner, including within its purview all or most of the fairy-tale plays written during the modern period.

One reason for this neglect is no doubt the traditional depreciation of all things having to do with children and childhood:[1] fairy tales are associated with the nursery and thought unworthy of the serious attention of adults. Fairy tales are also forms of popular literature, just barely respectable as subjects of scholarship. Only in folklore, mostly in Europe, and in psychology have they been receiving the attention they deserve. In literary criticism fairy tales have sometimes been glanced at as a kind of myth, but myth critics are usually after larger game, primitive rituals and the heroic stories of Greece and Rome or the Bible, in comparison to which fairy tales are small fry and not very interesting.

But the history of the drama shows that fairy tales have proven very useful to playwrights, even those writing for adults, and are therefore well worth studying. This is especially so in the modern period, when perhaps one would least expect it. As we have seen, fairy tales constitute a kind of mythology, a store of archetypal structures and motifs held in reserve for the use of the writer and his public. Like myths and fables, they are "open forms"--abstract structures which invite reinterpretation and therefore reflect the special concerns and artistic solutions of each age and each writer that takes them up. The modern contribution, the inverted or aborted fairy tale, often hidden beneath

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[1]Brian Sutton-Smith, "Psychology of Childlore: The Triviality Barrier," Western Folklore 29, no. 1 (1970):1-8.

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a realistic or fantastic surface (e.g., Ibsen's The Master Builder, Strindberg's The Ghost Sonata), is uniquely modern in tone and philosophical outlook. The "adult fairy tale" of our times proves that, far from being limited to the theatrical equivalent of nursery story-telling, the genre can be made to carry all kinds of meanings and tones, including the ambiguities of tragicomedy and the darkest irony and satire, values completely opposed to the light romanticism customarily associated with fairies on the stage. In the hands of modern dramatists the fairy tale serves the modern temper.

Chapter II, "The Symbolist Fairy-Tale Play," will focus on works of Maeterlinck and other dramatists of the turn of the century who were influenced by the symbolist aesthetic. These were the first modern playwrights to use fairy tales for serious literary purposes. Seeking an other-worldly, spiritual, and evocative art, the symbolists turned from the scene of realism, with its social concerns and materialist point of view, to the unreal, abstract world of the fairy tale. Drawn to the form by a common interest in occult effects, the symbolists, like the German Romantics before them, used the fairy tale in individual ways, reflecting their personal obsessions and idiosyncracies. I will examine five playwrights--Maeterlinck, Strindberg, Hauptmann, Sologub, and Valle-Inclán--with the purpose of clarifying their use of the fairy tale to project their views of the world.

Chapter II is set within a historical frame, following the spread of symbolist ideas from Belgium and France to Scandinavia, Germany, Russia, and Spain around the turn of the century. After this period the fairy tale becomes common property, part of the repertoire of an international drama. Modern fairy plays, written in at least a dozen languages, come

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from every corner of the western world.[1] This proliferation is, of course, consistent with the nature of fairy tales themselves, which, despite their local features, show common characteristics across national and cultural boundaries.

Chapter III, "The Conflict of Two Worlds," will drop the historical approach to examine two typical fairy-play structures. These plays depict the collision of a human and a fairy world. The first of these structures I have called the "Undine pattern," after the fairy romance written in 1811 by Baron Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué, which represents the attraction between two alien worlds as the tragic love affair of a fairy creature and a human being. The tension between the opposed worlds usually pulls the lovers apart, destroying one or both of them at the same time, often, as in Giraudoux's Ondine (1939), rendering a critique on the meanness or sterility of human existence. When the opposed realms are identified as "art" vs. "life," as in Ibsen's The Master Builder (1893) and Hauptmann's The Sunken Bell (1896), the dramatist can use the Undine pattern to explore the dilemma of the artist and his vocation. The other typical pattern among these plays is the A-B-A pattern illustrated by Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. In this "Visit to Fairyland" structure, the fairy world exists not alongside but within the real world, enclosed and framed by it, and the plot describes a linear movement into fairyland and then out again. The fairy world is often experienced as a

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[1]The bibliography lists plays in fifteen languages. In addition to English, French, and German, fairy-tale plays have been written in Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Spanish, Hebrew, Dutch, Hungarian, Polish, Italian, and no doubt in other languages. Dealing with all these plays in the original languages would obviously be impossible. Fortunately, the major texts have been translated (except for the plays of Jacques Audiberti, which still await English versions).

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literal or figurative dream, and the contradictions between the two worlds are felt as a shocking "awakening to reality," a disenchantement or disillusionment. Jean Cocteau's The Knights of the Round Table (1937), for example, brilliantly exploits fairy-tale-like effects of enchantment and disenchantment, fitting to them meanings derived from the author's own experience.

The popularity of the Undine pattern and the A-B-A structure illustrates modern playwrights' fascination with the encounter with the numinous Other, a common feature of fairy lore. Most fairy-play plots take one or the other of these two forms. We see their usefulness in the variety of meanings that can be attributed to the two opposed realms. Folklore shows that man is both attracted to and repelled by the fairy world: the playwright can highlight the attraction or the repulsion, making fairyland either an ideal realm in contrast to which reality seems limited and worthless, or a demonic realm in which one loses sight of true values. Either the human or the fairy world can stand for life or death. But in every case fairyland is an inverted mirror of ordinary human existence, serving the purposes of social or philosophical criticism.

Chapter IV, "The Ironical Fairy-Tale Play," will consider not structures but tone and intention, focusing on the problem of the parodied fairy tale. It is in an ironical light that the fairy tale commonly recommends itself to modern dramatists. A philosophical pessimist can make his point in a devastating manner by using fairy tales to set up a world of idealistic expectations which he then subverts, destroying the naive world-view of the fairy tale in order to say, in essence, "Reality is not like that." The ironized fairy tale implies a point of view of ethical realism, a disillusioned and tough-minded attitude which the fairy tale

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in turn reveals as a pose masking an agonizing sense of loss. Representing the modern playwrights whose pessimism could be expressed in no other way, Jacques Audiberti, Witold Gombrowicz, Hjalmar Bergman, and August Strindberg use fairy tales in this cynical manner, affirming a deep human desire to live in a world of innocent, ideal values even as in their despair they annihilate the structures which carry visions of such a world.

Chapter V, "The Political Fairy-Tale Play," examines fairy plays with social and political themes. In contrast to the Jungian or Freudian approach illustrated in books by Erich Neumann, Joseph Campbell, and Bruno Bettelheim, the critical method demanded by these plays is one that takes cognizance of historical and sociological context. Moral and religious meanings are here elaborated in the sphere of totalitarian politics. The dragon, witch, ogre, shadow, or evil stepmother represents not a threatening parental figure but the power of the state. The evil figure is opposed by a dragon-killer who may or may not be successful in the end, but whose heroism always stands in contrast to the slavish cowardice of others. The issue is the danger of being consumed by a terribly threatening power vs. the liberating possibility of asserting one's individuality and autonomy against it. Fairy plays of this sort are best represented in the work of Evgeny Shvarts, a Russian dramatist who also wrote for children, and in Brecht's The Caucasian Chalk Circle (1944). For both men the unrealistic forms of the fairy tale provided an Aesopian method, a "slave language" which allowed them to express their social and political meanings even in an atmosphere of official or unofficial repression. Jack Zipes' Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk & Fairy Tales (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979) offers a critical frame-

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work for dealing with these themes.

The larger question running through the entire investigation is, why do dramatists take up the fairy tale? In Chapter VI I will address this question directly; in the meantime several preliminary answers suggest themselves. First, any writer who is interested in fantasy will be attracted to fairy tales. Their removal from the external surfaces of everyday life implies a concern for significance as opposed to appearance; this conflict is, in fact, a typical theme of fairy stories. Second, dramatists are surely attracted to fairy tales by their magic. As oneiric forms akin to both the nightmare and the wish-fulfillment dream, these stories naturally admit marvelous objects, creatures, and events. Introducing the factor of the marvelous has the effect of opening up the world of realism, giving free play to the imagination, which follows its own rules. The creative possibilities that this opening-up releases are no doubt as interesting to modern dramatists as they were to earlier playwrights and theatre artists who exploited it for startling effects of scenic transformation and the like. A third aspect of fairy tales that makes them useful is their thorough-going dualism. Dramatizing the tales, a writer can bring into play the polarities inherent in them as folk artifacts: good/evil, here/beyond, real/fantastic, self/double or shadow, enchantment/disenchantment, and so forth. Polarized structures contain conflict and obviously lend themselves to dramatic treatment. Fourth, the idealism of fairy tales makes them uniquely suited for effects of disillusionment, especially as carriers of an ethical world-view of pessimism. Using their sources in a cynical way, modern fairy dramatists move into the mainstream of literature in a disenchanted age.

Finally, dramatists are no doubt attracted to fairy themes by the

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challenge of making new the familiar old stories. Like myths and fables, fairy tales are ready-made for dramatizing, but their plots and characters remain inert forms until the dramatist energizes them with his personal vision. Gepetto, in Carlo Collodi's Pinnochio (1880), faces a similar creative task. Each writer's response to this challenge is his comment on the fairy tale in an ever-continuing dialogue on the possibilities of the genre.

In his essay, "On Fairy-Stories," J. R. R. Tolkien makes a statement that we have to deal with before proceeding any further. He insists that fairy tales, as he understands them, cannot be put on the stage, because to give audible and visual expression to an imaginary world is to destroy it. Fantasy for Tolkien is "sub-creation," the invention of believable imaginary worlds that have qualities of an arresting strangeness. Fantasy is at home in literature but not in the drama, an art fundamentally different from story-telling with words because it uses real people, objects, and theatrical machinery as its means. Tolkien disapproves of the illustration of fairy tales for a similar reason. The literal representation of a fantasy world in the theatre not only substitutes a particular concrete form for a universal verbal image; it also fails to enduce belief. "Men dressed up as talking animals may achieve buffoonery or mimicry, but they do not achieve Fantasy."[1] Furthermore, a successful drama already creates a quasi-magical secondary world; to introduce a fantasy within the fantasy, he says, is to expect belief in one world too much.

It should be evident that if Tolkien is right, the whole basis of this or any similar study is eroded, since the playwrights, whether or not

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[1]Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," p. 49.

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they think they are dramatizing fairy tales, must be doing something else. If fairy tales are defined basically by their magic, then transferring them onto the stage without their unique qualities of enchantment would result only in diminishing them, just as Planché diminished his tales by parodying them. Fairy-tale plays in that case would be indistinguishable from plays adapted from legends, myths, animal fables, or, for that matter, any simple narrative form. We will see, in fact, that there is something unique about them. If Tolkien is wrong, then either his conception of fairy tales is at fault or his idea of what theatre can do has been limited through prejudice or inexperience. Since his theory is essential for any meaningful discussion of the genre, the latter of these two conclusions is by far the preferable. As revealed in his comments about the pantomime, Tolkien's hostility to theatre is essentially a Platonic-Romantic suspicion of its ability to convey spiritual meanings through sensuous means. He would agree with Charles Lamb that only the shell of a great poetic achievement like King Lear or Macbeth could be realized on the stage:

> In Macbeth, when it is read, I find the witches tolerable; they have a narrative function and some hint of dark significance; though they are vulgarized, poor things of their kind. They are almost intolerable in the play. They would be quite intolerable, if I were not fortified by some memory of them as they are in the story as read.[1]

A conclusive answer to Tolkien's argument will have to wait until we have seen enough plays to adduce the best examples. In the meantime it should be stated at the outset that my view of the drama is a theatrical one. I believe the plays amply demonstrate their power to work on the stage in

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[1] Ibid., p. 50. For Charles Lamb's essay, "On the Tragedies," written in 1811, see Four Centuries of Shakespearian Criticism, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Avon, 1965), pp. 356-66.

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the manner intended by the playwrights. Tolkien puts his objections to the notion of a fairy drama in terms of a theoretical deduction, which can easily be refuted, leaving the theory untouched, by a view of what fairy-tale playwrights have actually accomplished.

At the end of A Midsummer Night's Dream Puck steps forward to say that the audience has "but slumber'd here/While these visions did appear" (V.i.414-15). Puck reminds us that there is something fairy-tale-like about the theatre itself. The play is like a dream, and the dream is like the fairy vision, evanescent and alluring. It miraculously transforms the ordinary world of the stage into a numinous Other World, re-creating before our eyes the lives of persons long dead or never alive except in the imagination of the playwright. In fairy-tale style the theatre incarnates, concretizes the imaginary intangibles of the playwright's mind, giving "to airy nothing/A local habitation and a name" (V.i.16-17). Furthermore, the theatre event has its own folklore and is governed by conventions that confer upon it some of the qualities of folk narrative performance: it is an interpretive art that depends for its life on a spontaneous interplay of energies between performers and audience.[1] We awaken from its spell, from the dream of the performance, as from an enchantment to re-enter the world of ordinary reality.

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[1]Some modern folklore studies emphasize the dynamics of folk performance. Melville Jacobs, in The Content and Style of an Oral Literature: Clackamas Chinook Myths and Tales (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), compares primitive folkloristic performance to Western theatre rather than to literature proper. Another folklore scholar, Bruce A. Rosenberg, defines oral genres in the light of performance-centered dynamics, saying that "the oral performer is in large measure an actor for his audience," creating his tale with the cooperation of his listeners in an intimate theatre-in-the-round--see "The Genres of Oral Narrative," in Theories of Literary Genre, ed. Joseph P. Strelka (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), pp. 150-65. Shakespeare offers us the literary obverse of this idea.

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These reflections suggest that fairy tale and theatre, despite the evolutionary distance between them as cultural products, are cousins rooted in a primeval expressive matrix. In Language and Myth Ernst Cassirer says that art and myth began with language "as a concrete, undivided unity, which was only gradually resolved into a triad of independent modes of spiritual creativity." Their ideal unity is reasserted at a higher level, where the creative act of the poet continually rejuvenates both myth and language in "a sensuous and spiritual reincarnation."[1] In myth the theatre rediscovers and renews its essence and its past. A study of the fairy tale in modern drama finds justification in this immensely important fact.

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[1]Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Harper, 1946; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1953), p. 98.

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CHAPTER II

THE SYMBOLIST FAIRY-TALE PLAY

The roots of the symbolist fairy-tale play are found in German Romanticism, whose writers, after Shakespeare, were the first to use fairy tales for serious literary purposes. The fairy tale became "the favorite form of its time" for the Romantics,[1] and all the writers of the school used it, stimulated by the example of Goethe's story, "Das Märchen," written in 1795.[2] Tieck, Novalis, Hoffmann, de la Motte-Fouqué, Chamisso, and other practitioners of the Kunstmärchen used folktales as literary models and as sources of materials to be put to sophisticated use.[3] To their names must be added those of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, whose Kinder- und Hausmärchen (first published in 1812 and 1815) founded the science of folklore and proved a magically inexhaustible treasure-hoard of inspiration for later writers.

"The fairy tale stands out in romantic literature as the ideal form for the opening of new domains."[4] Seen in this light, the fairy tale can

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[1]Marianne Thalmann, The Romantic Fairy Tale: The Seeds of Surrealism (Detroit: University of Michigan Press, 1964), p. 14.

[2]James Trainer, "The Märchen," in The Romantic Period in Germany, ed. S. Prawer (New York: Schocken, 1970), p. 98. See also Waltraud Bartscht, Goethe's "Das Märchen": Translation and Analysis (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), p. 68.

[3]Ruth Michaelis-Jena, The Brothers Grimm (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 3.

[4]Thalmann, The Romantic Fairy Tale, p. v.

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be described as the prototypical romantic form, in two senses. First, as a mode of fantasy, which breaks up reality and reassembles it in new ways, the fairy tale served as an ideal means of challenging classical forms and categories and the view of the world embodied in them.[1] Second, through its connection with myths, dreams, and the occult, the fairy tale opened access to the Nachtseite of life, putting its authors in touch with experiences that lay below the level of waking consciousness and rational thought.[2] At a crossroads of cultural history, the fairy tale provided the Romantics with "new aesthetic categories" with which to assert more meaningful attitudes toward life.[3]

In the vanguard of a second romantic revolution, symbolist writers were drawn to the fairy tale for the same reasons. Just as the writers of romanticism rebelled against classicism with its (to them) cold, static, dead forms, so the symbolists sought artistic means to escape the positivistic embrace of realism and naturalism and to restore poetry and color to the theatre. That symbolist playwrights should have taken up the fairy tale now seems inevitable. It satisfied their requirements for a poetic form, being abstract and unrealistic in style and content, and evocative of strange mystical effects in tone and feeling. Like myths, dreams, and religious experiences, fairy tales opened the way to a spiritual inner world where meanings of the deepest importance are intuited. Pursuing these oneiric visions, the symbolists turned their backs on the

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[1] Ibid., pp. 14, 17.

[2] Trainer, "The Märchen," pp. 97, 99.

[3] Thalmann, The Romantic Fairy Tale, p. 121. See also Jack Zipes, "The Revolutionary Rise of the Romantic Fairy Tale in Germany," Breaking the Magic Spell (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), pp. 41-92.

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brightly-lighted, public, social world which, according to the aesthetic of realism, the artist must objectively describe in all its banal detail.

Drawn to the form by a common interest in expressing a sense of another world mysteriously coexisting with our world of waking reality, the symbolist writers, like the German Romantics before them, used the fairy tale in individual ways, reflecting their personal obsessions and idiosyncracies. In this chapter I will examine how five of these writers, Maeterlinck, Strindberg, Hauptmann, Sologub, and Valle Inclán, used fairy tales in their plays.

Maeterlinck's Princess Maleine (1889)

"All that is poetic must be legendary and symbolic." In this fragment, according to one commentator, Novalis bequeathed to Maeterlinck a poetic programme.[1] Maeterlinck's translation of Novalis' Disciples of Sais and the Fragments, published in 1895, attests to his esteem for the theories of the earlier poet, who equated the fairy tale with nothing less than the poetic imagination itself.[2]

Maeterlinck admired the German fairy tale itself no less. His debt to the Grimms in particular, and to the tradition of legend, myth, and folktale which their famous collection represents, is clearly established by his adaptation of a Grimm tale for his first play, Princess Maleine (based on "Lady Madelaine," no. 198 in the Kinder- und Hausmärchen); by his use of the medieval legend of the Seven Sleepers in Seven Princesses (1891); by the unmistakable presence in Pelleas and Melisande

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[1] Paul Gorceix, "La Parenté entre le Symbolisme Français et le Romantisme Allemand à travers l'Oeuvre de Maurice Maeterlinck," Etudes Germaniques 31 (July-September 1976):305.

[2] Thalmann, The Romantic Fairy Tale, p. 11.

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(1892) of motifs from such tales as "The Frog-King" (Grimm no. 1) and "Rapunzel" (Grimm no. 12), as well as a plot which resembles the story of Tristan and Isolde; and by his retelling of medieval saint's legend in Sister Beatrice (1902) and The Miracle of Saint Antony (1919). Maeterlinck also read widely in English literature. His philosophical fairy play, Joyzelle (1902), is Shakespeare's Tempest rewritten; and The Blue Bird (1908), his most famous play, owes its inspiration to the example of J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan and the novel from which the latter was adapted, The Little White Bird.[1] Of his early plays, only Ariane and Blue Beard (1902) draws upon the more rationalistic French tradition,[2] and it is perhaps significant that this work allegorically puts a period to Maeterlinck's early interest in exploring the effects of mysticism in the theatre.

Deeply influenced by the German Romantics, Maeterlinck may be said to have brought their work to fruition in the drama. Although Tieck and others did attempt to transplant their fairy tales onto the stage, their plays, like those of Gozzi, whose example they followed, were sterile hybrids. The soil in which the Kunstmärchen produced its beautiful and exotic blooms was narrative fiction.[3] Maeterlinck's achievement was to

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[1] W. D. Halls, Maurice Maeterlinck (Oxford: Clarendon), p. 84.

[2] Ariane and Blue Beard is based on the Bluebeard legend, which first appeared in Perrault's Histoires ou contes du temps passé in 1697, though an analogous tale of wife-killing, "Mr. Fox," was known in England by the time of Shakespeare. See Opie and Opie, The Classic Fairy Tales, pp. 103-4.

[3] In his essay on the Tempest, "Shakespeare's Treatment of the Element of the Wonderful" (written in 1793, published in 1796), Tieck notes that the repetitive presentation of fantastic elements in the closed magic circle of the work builds up a convincing sense of illusion. In his prose tales Tieck creates such a world, but in his plays he deliberately breaks the illusion in a theatricalist manner, using the stories of Perrault that

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create the first viable symbolist drama by putting fairy tales to work in the theatre in a truly romantic spirit.

In so doing he created the first important drama since Shakespeare to use fairy tales for purposes other than comic and satiric. His early plays are pervaded with a sense of the absolute and inescapable finality of death. His one theme, according to James Huneker, is "the fear of Fear."[1] This numbing sense of the demonic aspect of life determined his dark interpretation of the fairy tale and opened the way to hitherto unknown realms for the exploration of modern fairy playwrights who followed him.

In the Grimms' "Lady Madelaine," on which Princess Maleine is based, the heroine, in love with another, refuses the suitor urged upon her by her father, who then walls her up in a dark tower. At the end of seven years of imprisonment she and her maid-in-waiting dig their way out to discover the kingdom destroyed and all the people slain. After a long journey they arrive at the palace of her former sweetheart, who, thinking the princess dead, is about to marry another girl, "as ill-favored of face as she was evil of heart."[2] There the heroine, unrecognized, is taken in-

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he adapted as devices for satire and literary parody, after the example of Gozzi. His plays essentially destroy themselves. Puss in Boots (1796), for example, ends with a scene in which the stage is emptied of scenery and a fictive "audience" pelts the "author" with rotten fruit (Der gestiefelte Kater, trans. Gerald Gillespie [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974]). For commentary see Trainer, "The Märchen," in The Romantic Period in Germany, ed. Prawer, pp. 97-118; and Paulin, "The Drama," pp. 173-203 in the same.

[1] James Huneker, Iconoclasts: A Book of Dramatists (New York: Scribner's, 1905; reprint ed., New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), p. 374.

[2] The Grimms' German Folk Tales, trans. Francis P. Magoun, Jr., and Alexander H. Krappe (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960), p. 639.

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to service. Ashamed of her ugliness, the false bride sends the beautiful girl to church in her place. On the way she speaks of her grief three times, to a nettle plant, to the church bridge, and to the church door, and receives a precious jewel from the prince. Unmasked after the wedding by her ignorance of these events, the false bride suffers the fate she had planned for Madelaine, decapitation; and the prince joyfully recognizes his former sweetheart, now his wife.[1]

Maeterlinck follows the story-line of the Grimms' tale closely up to the heroine's arrival at her sweetheart's palace (though the "Shakespeareanizing" of several scenes gives the play a very different feeling).[2] After this point he diverges from the story, with its fairy-tale happy ending, to give us a horrific tragedy in which the poisonous atmosphere is finally cleared only by convulsions of bloody violence. In the original tale the injustice rights itself in a typical way: the false bride sets up her own destruction and tastes the consequences of her own malice. Maeterlinck redoubles the force of evil by adding a second antagonist, a stepmother-witch, Queen Anne, mother of the rival bride.

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[1]The tale belongs to Aarne-Thompson tale type 870, "The Princess Confined in the Mound"--in most versions an earthen mound replaces the dark tower of the Grimm version, thus underlining the mythical motif of death and resurrection--and was widespread in Scandinavia, Finland, and Germany. It is related to similar tales describing the deception of a groom by a false bride (a sister, servant, or, as here, a rival) and the true bride's eventual triumph. See Stith Thompson, The Folktale, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963), pp. 117-20.

[2]We are reminded of Hamlet in the opening scene on the parapet, of Romeo and Juliet in the quarrel between Maleine and her father, of Macbeth by the murderous Queen Anne, of King Lear by the white-haired old King Hjalmar, and of Hamlet again by the soul-sick Prince. Maeterlinck himself said, "When I wrote Princess Maleine, I said to myself: 'I am going to try to write a play in the manner of Shakespeare for a theatre of marionettes.'" Quoted by May Daniels, The French Drama of the Unspoken (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1953; reprint ed., Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 56.

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Against this monstrous figure of evil Maleine has no defense. Driven from her own kingdom for some unspeakable crime, Queen Anne has gained a sexual hold on the old king, the father of Prince Hjalmar, the hero, and seems bent on gaining a similar hold on Hjalmar through her daughter. As soon as Maleine's presence in the palace is known, Queen Anne begins poisoning her in secret, all the while giving motherly advice about staying out of the dank air of the marshes. Then, since the poison is not working fast enough, she and the old king strangle Maleine in an excruciatingly painful scene. Distracted by guilt, the old king confesses and accuses Anne; Hjalmar stabs her and then himself, falling dead beside Maleine's corpse.

So described, the play reminds us more of Webster or Poe than of the Grimms or even--despite Maeterlinck's Bardolatry--of Shakespeare. In King Lear, it is true, such things are allowed to happen, and for a similar reason: the absence or indifference of providential powers. It is in this respect that Maeterlinck departs most radically from his source. Fairy tales are comic structures, bringing their heroes through trials and suffering to a renewal of the spirit. The trials are not destructive but constructive: they are tests, intended to prove the hero's steadfastness, his ability to suffer, or simply his foresight and common sense. Sometimes they prove only that a good heart deserves good fortune. Evil is a means to an end in fairy tales and is banished after it serves its purpose--hence the dispatch and seeming ruthlessness with which dragons are killed, false brides executed in spiked barrels, and stepmothers danced to death in red-hot iron shoes, proving in every case that, as Lüthi says in Once Upon a Time, "evil consumes itself" (p. 64). The hero's trials conclude, as they must in a providential universe, with

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coronations, marriage, and festivity. Having brought the hero out of isolation into new, creative relations with the world, the tale leaves him at the outset of a happy but less dramatically interesting reign and fatherhood.

Maeterlinck permits no such optimistic conclusions. In Princess Maleine the turn away from joyful eucatastrophe comes pointedly at the recognition scene (act 2, sc. 6). When Hjalmar realizes that Maleine, whom he had thought dead, has come back to him, he experiences great relief: "O God! O God! O God! O God! What have I escaped today! What a stone you have rolled away this night! O God! From what tomb have I risen this evening!"[1] As the reference to resurrection suggests, the author clearly knows that here is the traditional turning point, beyond which a fairy tale drives swiftly toward new life. But what follows, as if in mocking answer to Hjalmar's hopes, are omens of death: the fountain "sobs and expires"; Maleine's nose begins to bleed; she is frightened by a mole and by the lightning, then showered with grave-earth which Hjalmar throws at the owls. Finally the two of them, a latter-day Adam and Eve discovering death, are driven from the garden, and from this point on the action describes an unbroken curve downward.

Like all Maeterlinck's early dramas, this play is remorselessly pessimistic. In The Death of Tintagiles (1894) he describes the killing of a child by an unseen monster while the boy's sister listens helplessly outside a thick iron gate. In Alladine and Palomides (1894) a girl's pet lamb is swept away in an underground river to drown in a dark cavern.

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[1]Maurice Maeterlinck, "Princess Maleine," Plays, trans. Richard Hovey (New York: Duffield, 1906), p. 78. Quotations from the play are hereafter cited in the text.

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One awakens from the world of these plays as from a nightmare, with wet palms and pounding heart and a new awareness of the possibilities of evil.

Maeterlinck's landscapes of forests, lakes, and castles reflect the scenery of the Grimms' tales, but they are darkened and weighted with the fear of death. Huneker strikingly compares Maeterlinck's crumbling castles, undermined or surrounded by stagnant pools that smell of death, with Poe's House of Usher.[1] In Princess Maleine the inescapable presence of the dead is envisioned as a kind of corrosive corruption: "There is not a window but looks out on the graveyard; it eats into the very gardens of the castle, and the last graves come down as far as the pond" (p. 53). The air is unhealthy; the light is dim and sombre; the very stones of the castle are poisonous. In this world we are constantly pulled downwards, everywhere reminded that the earth and water from which we sprang will one day reclaim us, just as the pestilential underground lake in Pelleas and Melisande will one day swallow the castle. Maleine's tower is, in essence, an earthen mound, a burial place from which she can never really escape.

These images endow the force of gravity itself with the meaning of death and dissolution. Though in Ariane and Blue Beard (1902) Maeterlinck is able to break the bonds of fear, his imagination did not find true release until he wrote The Blue Bird (1908), with its cloud-like palaces and airy, light-filled scenes. In the early plays detail after detail insists on the sheer weight of physical mortality. Melisande plays with Golaud's ring and drops it down, down into the fountain, at the bottom of which Pelleas' body is found at the end. The morning after Maleine's

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[1] Huneker, Iconoclasts, p. 372.

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murder a flock of swans take flight (a folkloristic motif suggesting the departure of the soul after death)[1]--except for one which remains, blood on its broken wing, floating dead under her window.

Maeterlinck adds to this Poe-esque scene another tragic element, that of enclosure and inaccessibility. Maleine is like a naive creature from a prelapsarian world who has somehow strayed into a dangerous land full of blockades and barriers to happiness. The fairy world where she belongs is a human world created for man as a haven and a stage for action (cf. Genesis 1). Its heights and depths are open and freely available. The four winds, the sun, the moon, and the stars can be sought out for help; friendly animals from ants to eagles respond freely to the hero's need. There are no impassable barriers: caverns yield up their secrets, mountains are to be climbed, doors to be unlocked.[2] In the Grimms' "Briar-Rose" (no. 50) the hawthorne hedge blossoms out and opens of itself when the true hero approaches. Maeterlinck would cut short the tale to contemplate the fate of the unfortunate princes who arrived before the appointed time for the princess' awakening, tried to break through, and remained stuck fast in the thorns where they died miserable deaths. We think of the iron gate in The Death of Tintagiles, the glass partition in The Seven Princesses, the gate that locks out Pelleas and Melisande, the barred door behind which Maleine dies. "Constantly there reappears the impenetrable barrier between the known and the unknown,

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[1]This is motif E732 in Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature. For a commentary see Thompson, The Folktale, p. 258.

[2]"The fairy-tale hero is essentially a wanderer. . . . the fairy tale again and again sends its heroes out into the world. . . . This wandering, or soaring, over great distances conveys an impression of freedom and ease that is strengthened by other characteristics in the fairy tale which also convey a feeling of freedom." Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 140-1.

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the wall, the door, the window . . . an effective concrete expression of humanity's frustration in the presence of the unknowable and the unattainable."[1] This insight gains force when we realize that Maeterlinck's impenetrable barriers are a direct inversion of the open universe of the fairy tale.

Creatures from another world, Maleine and Melisande both find themselves trapped in dark places where they can neither know nor act. Ignorance too, like darkness, is a barrier. Bewildered, paralyzed, the victims of fate can only wait passively. Here too Maeterlinck inverts the fairy tale, which typically subordinates everything to a rapid consummation of the action;[2] he dwells lingeringly on atmospheric effects of fear peaking in terror. In the killing of Maleine, for example, time seems to stretch intolerably. The poisoning drives Queen Anne to impatience and the old king to paroxysms of pity and guilt, while Maleine herself suffers sickening intimations of mortality. The strangling scene is a lento tone-poem of terror to the accompaniment of thunder, hail, and lightning. Once in Maleine's room, Queen Anne speaks tenderly, saying she has simply come to pet her a little, passing a cord around her neck as she does so. Maleine screams, but the storm drowns out her voice. She follows Anne around the room on her knees, pleading pathetically for mercy; as she struggles, Queen Anne asks the king to pull on Maleine's feet to end it quickly.[3] The wind blows open a window and sends a vase

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[1] Daniels, The French Drama of the Unspoken, p. 72.

[2] Peter Brooks, "Toward Supreme Fictions," in The Child's Part, ed. Brooks (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 12.

[3] Jethro Bithell thinks the murder of Maleine was probably suggested to Maeterlinck by the strangling of Snow-White in the Grimms' tale (no. 53)--see Life and Writings of Maurice Maeterlinck (London: Walter Scott;

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crashing to the floor. A madman appears at the window, chuckling grotesquely, and is killed by the king. Then the two murderers are trapped in the room by people passing in the corridor and knocking on Maleine's door. The nuns pass by, chanting a psalm. Little Allan bounces his ball against the door and, hearing the king's chattering teeth, thinks there is another child inside. By the time they escape, the king's hair--and the audience's--has turned white!

These grand-guignolesque effects remove us even farther from the streamlined abstraction of the folk fairy tale toward what folklorists call "local legend," a primitive oral narrative form reporting some shocking uncanny event such as an apparition or a particularly frightening murder. In true fairy tales decapitations and the like are bloodless and reversible. In the Grimms' "The Two Brothers" (no. 60), for example, the hero's head is put on backwards, so he is killed again to get it right. Whereas the fairy tale distances us from reality in order to create a self-contained imaginary world, local legend uses realistic details to shock and confuse us with the horror of some supposedly historical event.[1]

Maeterlinck does this in Princess Maleine by insisting on the physicality of the deaths. Maleine's body is not the figure of a body waiting to be reanimated, like a statue that comes to life or a cartoon figure on the screen that changes color and begins to stir. It is emphatically a corpse. After the murder scene the king is horrified that

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New York: Scribner's, 1913), p. 36n. This may be true, even though Snow-White is not exactly strangled (the queen tries three times to kill her: by lacing her bodice-lace too tightly, by offering her a poisoned comb, and by feeding her the poisoned apple). The poisoning and the sexual jealousy make the Grimms' tale an appropriate model in other respects.

[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 85-86.

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someone among the crowd might step on Maleine's fingers. The nurse wants to close her eyes and fold her hands, but it is too late: she is cold and stiff. Later Prince Hjalmar, having stabbed himself, chokes on blood. This sort of detail never occurs in fairy tales, where death is functional, not an end in itself. The fact of death, like all the dark and heavy elements that go into a fairy tale, is sublimated, "become transparent and weightless."[1] For Maeterlinck, on the other hand, earth and water, our physical clay, remain insistently unredeemed and final.

In Princess Maleine Maeterlinck moves his story far from its folk origins.[2] Its deterministic universe is a direct inversion of the universe of the folk fairy tale, in which one's fate is decided not by an outside force but by the goodness or evil of one's heart. So is the radical materialism of its view of mortality. By turning his tale into a kind of local legend, Maeterlinck demonstrates that he has not yet learned to use fairy tales in a truly romantic manner--i.e., in a way that takes best advantage of their inherent qualities.

Maeterlinck's Pelleas and Melisande (1892)

Pelleas and Melisande brings us through the same fear to the same pessimistic conclusions, but by a more sophisticated route. Here death is

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[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 93.

[2] Una Taylor, in her study of Maeterlinck, neatly states his inversion of the Märchen in the following passage: "Irrationally secure in the optimistic confidence that fortune proves in the end faithful, the Märchen-makers went on their way. Their creed, the happy belief of the poor in earthly goods that the future will pay all arrears of joy to the Luck-child, is a birth-mark of the genuine folk-tale.

"It is a faith the poet-dramatist of Maleine in no wise shared. From the first scene to the last, the terror of fate holds imagination hostage; terror is the all-pervading atmosphere." Maurice Maeterlinck: A Critical Study (1915; reprint ed. Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat Press, 1968), pp. 22-23.

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not so much the threat of physical dissolution as a metaphysical principle to which all mankind is subject, the Void, or, as Melisande puts it, "the great cold."[1] As a symbolist "static drama," judged by Maeterlinck's own criteria, Pelleas and Melisande is much marred by its conventional plot, a love-triangle issuing in violent action and death; but its numinous qualities and various fairy-tale-derived tableau effects move it closer to Maeterlinck's picture of the "old man, seated in his armchair, waiting patiently . . . giving unconscious ear to all the eternal laws that reign about his house, interpreting, without comprehending, the silence of doors and windows and the quivering voice of the light, submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and his destiny."[2] At the end of act 3 Pelleas and Melisande are seen through the window, not on the bed as Golaud had expected, but standing apart from each other against the wall, waiting. In this and similar static moments in the play intimations of mortality are sublimated, in a fairy-tale manner, into tragic apprehensions of destiny.

This story of two brothers divided by a woman's love has no recognizable source in folklore, but it is obviously endebted to the romance of Tristan and Isolde. Like the romance, the play is conceived as a tragic fairy tale. Before us is the same Grimms'-tale landscape of forests, springs, and medieval castles, darkened and weighted by Maeterlinck's pessimism. The castle is crumbling; an air of oppressive gloom pervades

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[1]Maurice Maeterlinck, "Pélléas and Mélisande," Plays, Second Series, trans. Richard Hovey (New York: Duffield, 1908), p. 158. Quotations from the play are hereafter cited in the text.

[2]Maurice Maeterlinck, "The Tragical in Everyday Life," in Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski, ed. Bernard F. Dukore (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1974), p. 729.

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the scene. Melisande, a reincarnation of Maleine, enters this hostile world as a stranger from another land, bearing a secret sorrow. That other land is, of course, the unfallen world of the folk fairy tale, where the princess's loving heart would have earned her happiness. Why she has been ejected from that world remains a mystery, deepened by the only clues we have, her tears, the crown in the forest pool where she is found, and the large unknown ship that appears out of the fog. She is "not of this place" (p. 65). She is beautiful, like her crown, but doomed. Golaud pities her, marries her, and brings her home, and so begins the tale.

A plot summary makes Pelleas and Melisande sound like the most banal love-tragedy, and so it was apparently taken by Sarcey, who wrote in Le Temps (22 May 1893):

> This drama, my goodness! . . . It is the incestuous love of a married woman for her brother-in-law; the outraged husband surprises the guilty ones, kills the one and wounds the other, who dies afterwards.[1]

Like the German Romantics, Maeterlinck uses his fairy tale to challenge forms and ways of thinking and perceiving that could no longer satisfy. The conservative critic, tied to his conventional categories, missed everything that was new about it. Already made remote by its legendary period, the scene was further softened and blurred in Lugné-Poe's production by a thin gauze curtain covering the entire proscenium opening, intended to give the action a sense of mysterious unreality.[2] In like manner the

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[1] Quoted by Halls in Maurice Maeterlinck, p. 37. The play was produced by Lugné-Poe on the afternoon of 17 May 1893 at the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens.

[2] Halls, Maurice Maeterlinck, p. 39. One critic traces the inspiration for Maeterlinck's early dramas to the picture-books of Walter Crane, which he collected. He may have owned the 1882 Macmillan edition of the Grimms' Household Tales with illustrations by Crane. He covered the walls of his study with Crane illustrations framed under green-tinted glass to

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dramaturgy veils the story with a sense of mystery through which Pelleas and Melisande, attuned to other-worldly emanations, slowly become aware of the approach of their fate. This all-important mysteriousness is made possible by the fairy-tale mode in which the play is written.

Fairy tales, we have said, typically subordinate everything to the straightforward progress of the action. The narrative makes no pause; the tale itself does the work.[1] How could such a thoroughly Aristotelian form, then, permit the effects demanded by Maeterlinck's theory of static drama? The answer lies in the mythic qualities of its abstract, unreal persons and events.

Fairy tale characters move through their mythic world unimpressed by its special qualities, because they belong there.[2] We who are permitted to visit their world do so with a sense of suspended wonder. Identifying with the hero, we join his adventure and follow it to the end, desiring only his just reward. Once finished, the tale leaves its images imprinted in our minds, glowing, as it were, with numinous power.[3] These

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enhance the effect (Bithell, Life and Writings, pp. 31, 64). Lugné-Poe's device was anticipated in the theatre by Samuel Phelps in his much-admired production of A Midsummer Night's Dream at Sadler's Wells in 1853 (see the review of Henry Morley, quoted in A. M. Nagler, A Source Book in Theatrical History [New York: Dover, 1959], pp. 478-9).

[1] Brooks, "Toward Supreme Fictions," p. 12. See also Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 50.

[2] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 46.

[3] By "numinous" I mean essentially mysterious, the quality of "arresting strangeness" that Tolkien finds in all true fantasy (see above, p. 21). Fairy tales are not normally numinous in the sense intended by Rudolf Otto, who coined the term (from Latin "numen": divine will, power, or being) in 1917 in his The Idea of the Holy (2nd. ed., trans. John W. Harvey [London: Oxford University Press, 1950])--that is, evocative of deep feelings of dread in the face of the sacred, "'the holy' minus its moral factor or 'moment', and . . . minus its 'rational' aspect altogether" (p. 6). But a fairy tale can indeed be invested with this sense

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images provide adults with their memories of fairy tales read in childhood and the artist with inspiration for his pictures. Recalled in tranquillity, they are the visual poetry of the fairy tale, rooted in the nature of the genre.[1] For though it does not stop to describe, the fairy tale appeals first to the visual sense in externalizing its meanings in concrete things, places, and events. This appeal explains the prominence in the tales of rings, golden balls, crowns, swords, and other talismanic objects. The primary colors of the genre are vivid and saturated. Its tendency to repeat like elements, especially in threes, has the added effect of isolating individual episodes and scenes, so that they seem to stand out in the story as a succession of related tableaus.[2] Its two-dimensional characters, distanced and universalized, remind us more of figures on a tapestry than of persons in real life.

Perhaps these effects are what Maeterlinck had in mind when he described the German fairy tale as "the tapestry of life, seen the right side out."[3] The fairy tale, a visual genre, found fertile ground in his essentially visual imagination.[4] His first published work in France was

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of the mysterium tremendum, as we shall see when we consider Feodor Sologub's fairy tragedy, The Triumph of Death (below, pp. 92-108).

[1]According to Axel Olrik, at the peak of action of a fairy tale, myth, or legend we always have a tableau scene that frequently conveys "not a sense of the ephemeral but a certain quality of persistence through time. . . . These lingering actions--which also play a large role in sculpture--possess the singular power of being able to etch themselves in one's memory." See "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," in The Study of Folklore, ed. Dundes, p. 138.

[2]Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 53.

[3]Gorceix, "La Parenté entre le Symbolisme Français et le Romantisme Allemand," p. 304.

[4]Halls, Maurice Maeterlinck, p. 170.

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"The Massacre of the Innocents" (1886), a narrative transposition of Brueghel's picture.[1] In Princess Maleine the guilty king is confronted with an actual tapestry depicting this subject; underneath it is another depicting the Last Judgment. We find such literal tableaus translated into stage pictures throughout Maeterlinck's work. Frequently associated with doors or windows, they present wordless moments of portent, throbbing with meanings that strike the characters dumb with astonishment or fear. King Hjalmar says, "I believe death is beginning to knock at my door" (p. 90) and after a knock the door opens to reveal Maleine in long white bridal robes.[2] Announcing the death at the end of The Intruder (1890), the nun opens the door and, without speaking, makes the sign of the cross. Pelleas and Melisande has many such portentous moments, among them the apparition of the three sleeping beggars in the grotto; the discovery at the end of act 3, sc. 1 that Pelleas and Melisande have been weeping in the dark; and the scene in which the lovers are observed standing apart from each other against the wall, looking at the light. "They are not doing anything, little father," says Yniold to Golaud; "they are waiting for something" (p. 120).[3] We are not told why they weep or what they are

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[1] Ibid., p. 16.

[2] This moment anticipates Ibsen's similar device in act 1 of The Master Builder (1892), when Hilde knocks on Solness's door. Ibsen could conceivably have read Princess Maleine. A direct influence seems unlikely, however, as Ibsen is known to have detested Maeterlinck's work and did not even read Pelleas and Melisande to the end (Michael Meyer, Ibsen: A Biography [Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1971], p. 700). The coincidence, if it is that, points up the symbolist undercurrents in The Master Builder which Maeterlinck recognized in his essay, "The Tragical in Daily Life," The Treasure of the Humble, trans. Alfred Sutro (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1916), pp. 114-19. The Master Builder is analyzed below, pp. 180-90.

[3] This effect is artfully accomplished. We do not see what Pelleas and Melisande see; indeed, we do not see them at all; neither does Golaud. We are watching him react primarily to what he sees in his mind (the lovers

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waiting for. The scenes end in anticlimax, opening onto vistas of implication.

Alternating intuition with action, the play presents a mixture of pure symbolist stasis and conventional romantic tragedy. Pelleas and Melisande, childlike fairy-tale figures attuned to spiritual harmonies, represent the symbolist poem; Golaud, the outraged husband, drives the plot. "Made of iron and blood," with nothing other-worldly about him, Golaud represents a conventional point of view. In the spying scene he is looking at the lovers; they are looking at their fate (the light). He expects, wants them to be on the bed, and is brought up short, with the audience (which, like Golaud, expects the predictable), when they are not. The fairy tale is a tragedy because Golaud has been given the power to define the world of the play as a conventional romantic stage on which passions are played out to their usual violent conclusions. He kills the lovers, he says himself, "simply because it is the custom" (p. 129). In act 5 he awakens to the knowledge that he has been blindly playing a part (the jealous husband, a theatrical cliché) as the agent of destiny.[1] Yet without him the lovers would have had no destiny to anticipate, and therefore no fateful apprehensions to experience. Thus the romantic triangle adulterates and debases the symbolist poem of pure feeling; at the same time, by presenting Pelleas and Melisande with their deaths, the plot

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coupling). What the lovers see we apprehend vaguely at two removes, through Yniold's report and Golaud's crazed reactions. Maeterlinck preserves the mystery by revealing it through its disorienting impact on human consciousness.

[1]Bithell notes that Pelleas and Melisande, trysting at the Fountain of the Blind, are themselves the blind (Life and Writings, p. 64). This true, of course, of all the characters, including Golaud and the King, whose literal blindness is obviously symbolic.

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makes the poem possible.

Overwhelmed by what they intuit, Pelleas and Melisande remain passive in the face of Golaud's growing jealousy. The totally passive hero, able to feel but not to act, is rare in fairy tales. Occasionally characters sit down and weep because they can't think what to do next, but then a magical helper--an old man, a dwarf, a talking animal--always appears, symbolic perhaps of the inner resources one always discovers when driven to the wall by difficult circumstances.[1] Fairy tales generally require active heroes and heroines, able to leave home and make their way in the world: "The fairy tale depicts its heroes not as observing and fearful but as moving and active."[2] This picture of the hero contrasts strongly with Maeterlinck's doomed heroines, bewildered and paralyzed in the shadow of death.

But there is a further difference. The fairy-tale hero or heroine, whether active or passive, is blessed. He or she may not understand the world in its totality, but is led safely through its dangers in such a way as to inspire confidence in its ultimate goodness.[3] Maleine is not totally passive. Up to the recognition scene she behaves in every respect as forthrightly as her prototype does, but her loyalty and courage are not blessed and therefore do not regain her her rightful place. Melisande too

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[1] Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales (New York: Knopf, 1976), pp. 97-102.

[2] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 141. In Tales from Eternity: The World of Faerie and the Spiritual Search (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973) Rosemary Haughton points out that the shrewd, witty, resourceful "Real Princess" is more frequently encountered than the pre-Raphaelite victim-princesses that we usually associate with fairy tales. But even the passive heroine, the Sleeping Beauty type, actively "releases powers in the hero which would otherwise remain unused" (p. 78).

[3] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 141-5.

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acts, by lying to Golaud; and in a fairy tale even so minimal an assertion of one's rights ought to suffice to bring about a turn toward a happy issue. Maleine's and Melisande's passivity matters less than the nature of the world they live in. No magical helper appears when they sit down and weep; the universe seems indifferent or hostile to their fate.

Maeterlinck's heroes are not blessed but damned, a fact which they intuit in those moments in the play most characteristic of the symbolist static drama--silent pictorial moments akin to the luminous images imprinted in our minds by fairy tales. These scenic balance-points remind us of the tableaus of 19th-century melodrama (which, like the fairy tale, inspired a parallel genre of graphic art in its theatre posters). The comparison is worth pursuing. Both kinds of tableau are "freeze-frame" effects that catch the movement of the play or tale at a peak moment--in the melodrama at a peak of action, in Maeterlinck's fairy plays at a peak (or depth) of stillness. In melodrama the implications of the tableau are immediately made explicit, discharged in the physical event (disaster or rescue); in the symbolist play the implications are left to echo disturbingly unvoiced, to be felt in the moment of anticlimax. Both genres deal in emotions attendant upon peril and threat: melodrama brings them to a climactic consummation; symbolist drama contains them, ending in anticlimactic apprehension. The symbolist peril is other-worldly; the peril of melodrama, though it can have satanic overtones, is this-worldly. Focusing on danger and loss, the melodrama has striving heroes who actively oppose the threat, embodied in a mere human villain. The symbolist play, focusing on the dark other world and the numbing dread of having to enter it, has passive anti-heroes unable to oppose what is, after all, inevitable.

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Behind its veil of phantasmagoric symbolist effects, Princess Maleine is merely a Jacobean melodrama whose hero fails to react in time to prevent the disaster.[1] Pelleas and Melisande, despite its fourth-act climax of violent emotion (not at all, however, cathartic in effect), is essentially symbolist in its conflict. Golaud is a villain, true, but a victim as well, the agent of a metaphysical force of destruction which he himself cannot oppose. Melisande dies not of her tiny wound but of Death itself, of the all-powerful Necessity that Maeterlinck has made us feel throughout the play, conceived in the end in transcendent images of sunset and winter, the "great cold." Unlike the typical doomed heroine of melodrama (e.g., Little Eva in Uncle Tom's Cabin), Melisande at the end is not even an individual. She is "the human soul" (p. 161), whose passing evokes the pity of death for all living creatures.

Pictorial effects manifestly influenced by fairy tales abound in the play. Toying with Golaud's ring over the fountain, Melisande drops it in the deep water, just as her counterpart in "The Frog-King" (Grimm no. 1) loses her golden ball.[2] We have already seen her weeping beside the forest pool, at the bottom of which rests her crown. Later Yniold's golden ball rolls out of his reach under a heavy stone, yet another reference to "The Frog-King." The scene in which Pelleas stands under Meli-

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[1] Otto Heller has described Maeterlinck's "well-equipped arsenal of thrills and terrible foreshadowings," the apparatus of Gothic melodrama: "the crash and flash of thunder and lightning, the clang of bells and clatter of chains, the livid light and ghastly shadows, the howling hurricane, the ominous croaking of ravens amid nocturnal solitude, trees illumined by the fiery eyes of owls, bats whirring portentously through the gloom--so many harbingers of dread and death." Prophets of Dissent: Essays on Maeterlinck, Strindberg, Nietzsche, and Tolstoy (New York: Knopf, 1918; reprint ed., Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat, 1968), pp. 32-33.

[2] Bithell, Life and Writings, p. 64.

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sande's tower window making joyous love to her hair refers, of course, to "Rapunzel" (Grimm no. 12). Maeterlinck points the allusion by having Melisande sing as she combs her hair:

> My long locks fall foaming
> To the threshold of the tower,--
> My long locks await your coming
> All along the tower,
> And all the long, long hour,
> And all the long, long hour. (p. 101)

All these references to fairy tales are ironical, as we would expect in a fairy-tale tragedy. Melisande's hair gets caught in the willow branches as Golaud approaches, and her frightened doves escape to be lost in the dark. No supernatural agent appears to lift the heavy stone for Yniold. And though Melisande's frog (Golaud) does indeed turn into a prince (Pelleas), she cannot marry him, nor can they live happily ever after.

Fairy-tale objects, those ubiquitous rings, swords, knives, coins, apples, and the like, are also turned from their proper functions in Maeterlinckian fairy drama. In the precise, sharply outlined imaginative world of the folk tale, "feelings and relationships congeal into objects, so to speak, and thus become outwardly visible."[1] The function of objects in the fairy tale is simply expressive: to clarify meanings by exteriorizing them.

Maeterlinck uses symbolic objects for the opposite purpose: to mystify meanings by interiorizing them. The two different uses can be illustrated with Melisande's ring. Given her by Golaud, the ring serves as a token of faith binding her to her husband and her husband to her; dropped into the well, it represents her half-conscious wish to break the bond,[2]

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[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 51.

[2] Daniels, The French Drama of the Unspoken, p. 75.

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and her act of dropping it initiates the events of the romantic tragedy. So much any fairy tale might admit. But other meanings follow, spreading over the play like widening circles in still water. When miles away Golaud's horse inexplicably throws him and falls on his heart at the precise instant the ring is dropped, we move into a different universe of meaning, one in which correspondences between apparently unrelated events suggests the occult influence of malevolent powers. Something huger and more fearful than a husband's jealousy has been set in motion. Melisande feels this thing coming at her, though she cannot see it. Weeping, she says, "I do not know myself what it is . . . if I could tell you, I would tell you. . . . It is something stronger than I. . . ." (p. 85). Its mysteriousness is then reaffirmed by her disorienting glimpse of the three beggars in the grotto, whom Huneker describes as "sleeping symbols": "They represent something, of course, though they do not awaken" to tell us what.[1]

Melisande's sunken crown sleeps in this sense too. Unlike a fairy-tale crown--e.g., the revealing glimpse of gold that shines through the enchanted prince's torn bear-skin in "Snow-White and Rose-Red" (Grimm no. 161)--it raises more questions than it answers, giving Melisande herself an air of strangeness that clings to her throughout the play.[2] Thus even the characters in a symbolist play take on an indefinable inner dimension, hinting at a demonic spiritual duality, the sense of another world mysteriously impinging on the world of the play. Maeterlinck's symbols face

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[1] Huneker, Iconoclasts, p. 403.

[2] Huneker describes Melisande as "touched by a singular atmosphere of the remote." Like Rautendelein in Hauptmann's The Sunken Bell (discussed below, pp. 190-7), she has "strange Undine airs." Ibid., p. 402.

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away from us, so to speak, concealing rather than revealing. His scenes are customarily sunk in darkness for a reason. The use of a front scrim to soften and blur the action--an effort to mystify rather than clarify that runs directly counter to the impulse of the fairy tale--may be said to have answered the needs of the play.[1]

Removing the expressive function from fairy-tale objects deepens their mysteriousness and converts them from structural to textural elements. As we have seen, Maeterlinck relies heavily on atmosphere. Fairy tales, in contrast, are firmly structured, especially by their tendency to repeat objects and episodes in sets of three.[2] In the tale Lady Madelaine speaks of her plight three times on the way to church, and the false bride has to ask her three times what she said. In elaborating his version of the tale, Maeterlinck drops this naive device in favor of increased psychological realism. However, we do find repetitions, often three-fold, in the dialogue, especially at moments of emotional intensity. Here is an example from Princess Maleine:

Hjalmar: What are you thinking of?
Maleine: I am sad.
Hjalmar: You are sad? What are you thinking of, Uglyane?
Maleine: I am thinking of Princess Maleine.
Hjalmar: What did you say?

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[1] "For the mystic, from time immemorial, the symbol has served two distinct and converse purposes. It has been the language of the secret-keeper; it has also, and in modern days more frequently than of old, been the language of the secret-teller. . . . Maeterlinck's imagery is . . . a continued attempt to withdraw the screen, to raise the curtain, which holds the unseen realm of the spirit from view. But conversely, with regard to things tangible, visible, substantial, to what dogmatic materialism is pleased to denominate the real, Maeterlinck utilizes the symbol as a mask." Taylor, Maurice Maeterlinck, pp. 40-41.

[2] "Nothing distinguishes the great bulk of folk narrative from modern literature and from reality as much as does the number three. Such a ruthlessly rigid structuring of life stands apart from all else." Olrik, "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," pp. 133-4.

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Maleine: I am thinking of Princess Maleine.
Hjalmar: Do you know Princess Maleine?
Maleine: I am Princess Maleine.
Hjalmar: What?
Maleine: I am Princess Maleine.
Hjalmar: You are not Uglyane?
Maleine: I am Princess Maleine.
Hjalmar: You are Princess Maleine? You are Princess Maleine? But she is dead!
Maleine: I am Princess Maleine.
(The moon comes out between the trees, and reveals Princess Maleine.) (pp. 77-78)

This passage, almost dreamlike in its simplicity, represents Maeterlinck's best writing in this play. Sad, lost in her thoughts, Maleine softly and monotonously insists on the fact of who she is. Hjalmar, stupefied by the enormity of what she is saying, repeats phrases in a fumbling attempt to absorb this fact and to reorder his mental world around it. The recognition takes on the slow, dawning impact of a miracle, seconded by the movement of the light, that seems to release him, at least temporarily, from the sense of living in a world of death.

We find similar repetitions whenever Maeterlinck's characters try to comprehend some insistently real fact or situation, usually a dreadful one. In Pelleas and Melisande repetitions of this sort are used more sparingly; the impact of truths too huge and weighty to be grasped is revealed by silence. The lovers, looking at the light, do not speak at all. The silence, like the repetitions, shows the characters' mental paralysis as well as the inadequacy of language and its rational categories to contain the truth which they face.[1] In his essay, "The Structural Study of

[1] "In language, anecdote, intellectual meaning and logical shape are eliminated, with the result that language is reduced almost to a pure cry. It is, rather than it represents, the sheer emotional reaction to mysterious presences sensed intuitively" (Daniels, The French Drama of the Unspoken, p. 58). Here Maeterlinck may be said to anticipate the drama of German Expressionism, which carries this use of language to a logical extreme.

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Myth," Claude Lévi-Strauss says that the function of repetitions in folk literature is to make apparent the structure of the myth or tale.[1] For Maeterlinck, repetitions have disorganizing rather than organizing effects. Elaborated as atmosphere, they reveal the destructive, disorienting impact of the mysterious other world on the world of the characters.

Several other inversions of typical fairy-tale elements unmistakably show Maeterlinck's intentions in these plays. One has to do with the role of animals. In fairy tales animals are threatening creatures like dragons, magical helpers as in Perrault's "Puss in Boots," or enchanted human beings who soon shed their subhuman form. Maeterlinck uses them as helpless victims (the dead swan, the sheep driven to slaughter) or, like children and old people, as "resonators"—that is, non-verbal beings especially sensitive to intimations of fate. Thus, rather than protecting his mistress, Maleine's dog Pluto cowers in a corner when Queen Anne and the king enter her room, and Golaud's horse responds violently to Melisande's dropping of the ring miles away.

Another inverted element is the traditional role of princes and kings. Hjalmar and Pelleas, lacking the strength or nerve or commonsense to be able to save their imperilled maidens, become anti-heroes.[2] Kings in fairy tales are usually parental figures who enforce the demands of justice. The detective-like old king in "The Goose Girl" (Grimm no. 89), for example, discovers the secret of the impersonation and condemns the false bride by her own sentence. Maeterlinck's kings, by contrast, are weak and submissive, unable to defend the children entrusted to them.

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[1] Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," in Myth: A Symposium, ed. Sebeok, p. 105.

[2] Bettina Knapp, Maurice Maeterlinck (Boston: Twayne, 1975), pp. 34-35.

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Enslaved by Queen Anne, old King Hjalmar even participates in the murder himself.[1] Arkel, who loves and pities Melisande, stands by helplessly as Golaud mauls her in a jealous rage and unwittingly contributes to the disaster by preventing Pelleas from leaving. Even the wise Arkel can see "only the reverse of destinies" (p. 71).

Finally, Maeterlinck inverts the meaning of the fairy-tale hero's traditional isolation. In folk tales the hero usually leaves home to wander freely in an open universe, isolated, except for his magic helpers, so that he can eventually establish social connections as king, husband, and father--or, if female, in equally productive relations with others.[2] Maeterlinck isolates Maleine and Melisande for different reasons. Both enter the world of the play from the outside. Maleine follows the footsteps of her prototype as she wanders, as if led, from her own devastated kingdom to that of her betrothed. Melisande comes out of nowhere. Her isolation amplifies her other-worldly resonances and makes her a numinous figure. Furthermore, unlike their prototypes, Maeterlinck's heroines end as well as begin in isolation. Maleine, unable to achieve marriage and motherhood, dies horribly behind a locked door. And though surrounded by people, Melisande dies alone, as must all human beings: "We must speak softly now.--She must not be disturbed. . . . The human soul is very silent. . . . The human soul likes to depart alone" (p. 161).

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[1] "Maeterlinck's kingly figure is antipodal to the usual monarch. Kings, generally speaking, symbolize the governing principle in man, the reasonable, virtuous, and judging factors; supreme consciousness. When such wisdom wavers or becomes ill, as is the case with King Hjalmar, it indicates a negative or destructive orientation. A sick king stands for the decline or end of a prevailing society, attitude, or frame of reference." Knapp, Maurice Maeterlinck, pp. 32-33.

[2] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 143-4.

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Maeterlinck's most important change in his source tales is, of course, the inversion of the happy ending. His use of what might be called a "dynamic of disillusionment" or disenchantment, while rejecting fairy-tale transcendence by reversing the expected course of events, obviously depends on the optimism of the source tale for its effect. The stories he chooses to adapt all imply happy endings. The Seven Princesses (1891) is as good an example as Princess Maleine. This fairy drama calls upon the ancient saint's legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, martyrs who were walled up in a cave during the persecution of Decius (A. D. 250) and emerged alive two centuries later to reaffirm the original miracle of Christianity.[1] Maeterlinck's seven princesses sleep behind a glass partition that blocks every effort of the frantic King and Queen to awaken them. A Prince arrives and finally gains access through an underground passageway. Six princesses awaken, but Ursula, the eldest, sleeps the sleep of death. By invoking the saint's legend, Maeterlinck implicitly invites us to look forward to its miraculous ending, only to confirm the irrevocable facts of separation and death.

Though Pelleas and Melisande contains a tragic contradiction from the beginning, it too encourages our sympathies for the young couple. Except for the story of Tristan and Isolde, the tales to which the play alludes have the usual happy endings. The witch in "Rapunzel," for example, subjects the lovers to terrible punishment, including separation and blindness, if not death; yet Rapunzel's prince eventually wanders into the

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[1] Butler's Lives of the Saints, Complete Ed., edited by Herbert Thurston and Donald Attwater (New York: P. T. Kennedy, 1963), 3:193-6. See also Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 37-41. The legend of the Seven Sleepers is tale type D1960.1, which also includes the story of Rip Van Winkle. For a comment, see Thompson, The Folktale, p. 491.

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wasteland where she waits for him, and her tears wet his eyes and restore his sight. Arkel thinks of Melisande as a fairy princess and wants the play to follow the lines of a tale containing such a blessed creature: "I have always seen that every young and beautiful being creates about itself young, beautiful, and happy events. . . . And it is thou who wilt now open the door for the new era I have glimpses of" (p. 126). His disillusionment has long since been prepared for at Blind Man's Spring, a place once thought to have had miraculous healing powers, but to which, "since the King has been nearly blind himself, no one comes anymore." Arkel's hopes remind us that Maeterlinck's plays are not tales in which doors to happiness open or the blind can be made to see again.

Strindberg's Swanwhite (1901)

To think of Strindberg as a realist before his Inferno crisis and a symbolist or expressionist after it is to oversimplify the development of his art. He wrote unrealistic plays using fairy-tale motifs at every stage of his career, starting with Lucky Per's Journey (1881), a satirical fairy play modeled on Peer Gynt. Nonetheless, his post-Inferno style moved away from the predominantly realistic and rational forms of his earlier period toward fantasy and supernaturalism, the qualities which had made the fairy tale especially useful to the German Romantics. The Virgin Bride (1900) and Swanwhite (1901), his two plays most thoroughly influenced by folklore, helped to refine the dramatic style inaugurated by To Damascus in 1898. All the later plays, including the more realistic ones like Easter (1900), discussed below, are touched in some way by fantasy and supernaturalism, whether or not they refer explicitly to fairy tales.

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Though conceived beforehand, Swanwhite was completed under the influence of Maeterlinck, whom Strindberg had first read and rejected in 1894 but with whom by 1901 he found himself much in sympathy.[1] Haskell Block says that Swanwhite represents his most deliberate attempt to work in forms patterned on symbolist drama. "The trappings and decor of medieval legend as well as the plight of Strindberg's fairy princess, caught in the power of a wicked stepmother, suggest Maeterlinck's La Princesse Maleine as a model."[2] Strindberg was perhaps more inspired by Maeterlinck's occult philosophy than by his dramaturgy. In January 1901 he discovered The Treasure of the Humble (published in 1896), which he declared in a letter "the greatest book I have ever read."[3] Like Maeterlinck, he was deeply affected by mystical ideas, especially the thinking of Swedenborg and the theosophist Joséphin Péladan.[4] These facts and circumstances make Swanwhite, modeled on Princess Maleine, a central text in any effort to understand Strindberg's conversion to a quasi-symbolist point of view.

Nevertheless, Strindberg makes it clear in Open Letters to the Intimate Theatre that he knew he could follow Maeterlinck's example but had to write his own play:

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[1]Elizabeth Sprigge, The Strange Life of August Strindberg (New York: Macmillan, 1947), pp. 195-6. See also Haskell M. Block, "Strindberg and the Symbolist Drama," Modern Drama 5 (1962):315.

[2]Block, "Strindberg and the Symbolist Drama," p. 321.

[3]Martin Lamm, August Strindberg, trans. Harry G. Carlson (New York: B. Blom, 1971), p. 381.

[4]Block notes that "the probing into the meaning of dreams, mysteries, and the supernatural in the post-Inferno dramas undoubtedly has its roots in Parisian occultism of the 1890s" ("Strindberg and the Symbolist Drama," p. 316).

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> For a long time I had thought about skimming our most beautiful ballads about knights . . . and using them in plays. Then Maeterlinck got in my way, and under the influence of his marvelous marionette plays, which were not intended for the stage, I wrote my Swedish stage play, Swanwhite. One can neither borrow nor steal from Maeterlinck; one can hardly become his disciple . . . because there is no free admission into his world of beauty; but one can be inspired to hunt for gold in one's own refuse heaps, and in that I admit my ties with the master. . . .

Rummaging through Scandinavian fairy tales, then, he found

> princes and princesses to excess. I had already discovered the stepmother motif as a constant (in twenty-six Swedish folktales); awakening from death was there (as is found in Queen Dagmar's story too). So I put everything into the separator with maidens and the Green Gardener and the young king, and so the cream was tossed out, and in this way it has become mine![1]

As Strindberg's account of its genesis suggests, Swanwhite is based not on any one tale, but on a composite of elements. According to Martin Lamm, "Strindberg's heroine's name, Svanevit, was obviously taken from the fairy tale written by Gunnar Olof Hyltén-Cavallius and George Stevens about the virgins Svanvita and Råvrumpa, in which the stepmother tries to marry off her ugly daughter to the king and destroy the stepdaughter Svanvita, with whom the king is in love."[2] The story is a variation on the False Bride motif,[3] used by Maeterlinck in Princess Maleine and by Sologub in The Triumph of Death. In Strindberg's version, however, the false bride never appears on the stage. Our attention is directed instead to

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[1] Strindberg, Open Letters to the Intimate Theatre, trans. Walter Johnson (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1966), p. 305.

[2] Lamm, August Strindberg, pp. 381-2. Hyltén-Cavallius (1818-1889), following the lead of the Grimms in Germany, began the collecting and modern study of folklore in Sweden. Like the Grimms he refashioned the tales he gathered according to his literary tastes. See John Lindow, Introduction to Swedish Legends and Folktales (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 21-22.

[3] The False Bride motif is K1911 in Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature. For a commentary see Thompson, The Folktale, pp. 117-20.

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the awakening of the heroine's love for the Young Prince and her conflict with the Stepmother, who wants the Prince to marry her daughter instead of Swanwhite.

The play is sufficiently like Princess Maleine to permit some revealing comparisons of Maeterlinck's and Strindberg's methods and purposes. Both show themselves interested in the tendency of fairy tales to order the moral world by opposed extremes: Maeterlinck uses this moral patterning to set up a kind of horrific Jacobean melodrama; Strindberg uses it as the basis for a Christian morality play. Evil is embodied in the envious Stepmother, a witch with terrible powers of destruction, and good in the loving and innocent Swanwhite. The drama describes the Stepmother's defeat through the white magic of Swanwhite's love, which proves strong enough in the end to break the witch's bond to evil and to restore the drowned Prince to life.

We see the differences between Maeterlinck's tragic fairy-tale world and the providential universe of Strindberg's play as soon as the curtain opens. The scene is an apartment in a medieval castle, the walls and ceiling painted white. At the back three arches open onto a balcony, a rose garden, and a vista of white beach and blue sea overhung by golden clouds. Alongside the arches a door conceals three closets, one inside another, and the three maids are discovered in them. Swanwhite's bed is white with a rose-colored canopy and a coverlet of pale blue silk. In the center stands a gilded dining table with a single rose in a vase; beside it on the floor is spread a lion's skin. A vase with a white lily stands on the mantle-piece. Two swallow's nests are visible over the doorway to the closets, a peacock sleeps on a perch in the left arch, and in the right arch a golden cage holds two white doves.

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The setting announces Strindberg's intent to remain faithful to the style and the purposes of the folk fairy tale. In contrast with Maeterlinck's murky, stifling atmosphere, the scene is open and filled with light. The vista of seascape and sky reminds us of the traditional unblocked, accessible universe of the fairy tale. Maeterlinck's scenic palette is limited to blacks and grays and pallid whites; Strindberg uses the cartoon-like colors of the fairy tale to heighten the vividness and clarity of the fantasy. The arches, closets, and the maids are scenic motifs developed in triads. In fairy-tale fashion, meanings and relationships are given concrete expression. The Stepmother's panther-like walk and steel whip, Swanwhite's dirty feet (like Cinderella, she is forbidden to wash), the eyes of the peacock's tail spying on the lovers, the bright vista which darkens whenever evil gains the ascendency, the two white doves in the golden cage, and later the queer figure of the Gardener, green on one side and blue on the other, and the white, red, and blue flowers of the magical Flower Test--all these elements serve to clarify rather than to obscure the story. The symbols, immediate and direct, do not disturb us with implications echoing in the unknown. Strindberg's open, colorful, light-filled scene physicalizes on the stage the providential universe of the folk fairy tale. Always in responsive motion, the setting conveys a lively sense of the abstract in the concrete that is typical of fairy-tale style.

The magic of the play seconds this impression. All the elements in Maeterlinck's plays acquire a disturbing duality, the sense of a demonic Other World behind the world of the play. The physical realm in which the characters exist is a veil that both reveals and conceals the spirit-

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ual realm.[1] The world of the folk tale, however, is not set apart from the real world; it is the real world raised to a higher power, ennobled and spiritualized by enchantment.[2] Even its black magic has no dark, occult overtones, because magic in a fairy tale is purely functional and enabling. Cinderella's mother, for instance, in the Grimms' tale (no. 21) dies promising to look down from heaven and protect her child as long as she remains devout and good. Every day Cinderella prays at her mother's grave. Her stepsisters demand clothes and jewels when their father goes abroad; Cinderella asks for the first twig that brushes against his hat when he returns. Planted on the grave and watered with her tears, Cinderella's twig grows into a hazel tree where a little white bird sits and throws down the golden slippers and three fine dresses that she wears to the ball. The Other World here, concretized in the magical bird, grows directly out of the character's devotion and goodness and exists wholly within the world of the tale. The image is numinous, suggesting dreamlike possibilities of fulfilling Cinderella's desires, but there is nothing hidden or disturbing about it, as in the plays of Maeterlinck. "The magic in fairy tales is seldom elaborate or even remarkable. It is used only to create the fear and to grant the wish, and these, not the magic, are always what is most important."[3]

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[1] Una Taylor, Maurice Maeterlinck, pp. 40-41. See above, p. 49.

[2] Tolkien's observation on this point: "Faërie contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants, or dragons; it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and all the things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted." "On Fairy-Stories," p. 9. See also pp. 57 and 59.

[3] Roger Sale, Fairy Tales and After (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 38.

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The magic of Swanwhite is obviously of this sort. Here too the loving child is guarded by the spirit of the mother, who returns to earth in the form of a swan.[1] In act 2 the mother appears on stage in human guise to wash Swanwhite's feet as she sleeps and to pray for her happiness. "O foolish cruel woman," she says of the Stepmother, "who believes that lovers can be parted!"[2] We are reminded of the spirit's watchful presence whenever Swanwhite calls upon her mother and swans fly past outside. The white magic of the play easily triumphs over its most Maeterlinckian moment. At the end of act 1 the Prince is sent to the Blue Tower. The physical separation of the lovers is no bar to the union of their souls, as illustrated in Swanwhite's dream-pantomime of playing chess with an imaginary Prince. When he returns in person, gray and pale, having suffered in the Tower where "there is neither sun nor moon" (p. 268), they find themselves separated by the locked gate. Two doors slide shut, preventing them from seeing each other. But then, when they pray, the swallows above the door drop down a key in the form of a little white feather. Thus the benevolent powers, figured forth in these responsive symbols, overcome separation (and later death), illustrating André Jolles' concept of the folk fairy tale as a form that responds naively to hopes and expectations of a happy issue.[3]

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[1] "Cinderella" is one of the many fairy tales that contain the motif (no. E323) of the return of the dead mother to succor her persecuted children (see Thompson, The Folktale, p. 256). Strindberg uses the motif in Swanwhite to reinforce the sense of a benevolent universe.

[2] Strindberg, "Swanwhite, A Fairy Play in Three Acts," Five Plays of Strindberg, trans. Elizabeth Sprigge (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1960), p. 266. References to this edition will henceforth appear in the text.

[3] The world of the folk fairy tale is governed by a "naive ethic of justice" according to which things happen as we wish they could hap-

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Strindberg's characters too, though transplanted from their folk soil to the hothouse of his imagination, resemble fairy-tale figures more than Maeterlinck's. Unlike the frail Maleine with her waxen face and white eyelashes, Swanwhite is a healthy, vigorous girl. She is innocent and loving, charming rather than mysterious. At the end her love for the Prince makes her the agent of a miracle. Eleonora in Easter, her earlier incarnation, was also inspired by the elvish Harriet Bosse, whom Strindberg had first seen on the stage playing Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream.[1] Idealized creatures of love, both Eleonora and Swanwhite achieve redemption for others through their own suffering, and in so doing they fulfill a common function of active heroines in fairy tales.[2] Swanwhite's Prince and the Duke, her father, also play their proper fairy-tale roles. Though he finally has to be rescued by the heroine, the Prince sets out to defend her with his life. The Duke, unlike Maeterlinck's helpless kings, stoutly protects his daughter, giving her a magical horn which she is to blow if in great peril. He serves as a framing device and a deus ex machina held in readiness for Swanwhite's vindication. His love and strength, instantly recallable over a distance, guarantee that no harm will come to her.

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pen in the real world, as they ought to happen there. "The idea that things must transpire . . . according to our hopes and expectations is central . . . to the form of the fairy tale: it is the mental disposition of the fairy tale" (Jolles, Formes Simples, p. 190).

[1] Sprigge, The Strange Life of August Strindberg, pp. 188, 190.

[2] Swanwhite is an example of the active, striving Real Princess discussed by Rosemary Haughton in Tales from Eternity (see above, p. 44). In "The Seven Ravens" (Grimm no. 25), for example, the heroine, after journeying to the end of the world to find her enchanted brothers, has to cut off her finger to unlock the Glass Mountain in which they live. Joyfully recognizing her, the brothers immediately regain their human form and return home with her. For a commentary on tale type 451, "The Maiden Who Seeks her Brothers," see Thompson, The Folktale, pp. 110-11.

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Thus the setting, the magic, and the characterization place Strindberg's tale in the providential universe of its folk origins, in strong contrast to the fallen universe of Maeterlinck's tales. There is, however, another aspect to the evil which confronts the lovers. The spirit of Swanwhite's mother foretells that "their love will be tested in the fires of suffering" (p. 266). They easily defeat the Stepmother's attempt to separate them, but paradoxically, as soon as they are together again, they find their souls alienated from each other: "Bride and bridegroom are we in the Land of Dreams--but here we are not" (p. 270). This is the real test of their loyalty to each other, the suffering of disillusionment. Can their ideal love survive the quarrels, the selfishness, the test of time? Having awakened from their dream of a fairy-tale love, they find themselves

> down below on earth. . . . Where the clouds gather and the ocean rages, where each night the earth sheds its tears upon the grass, waiting for the sun to rise. Where the hawk destroys the dove and the swallow kills the fly, where leaves fall and turn to dust, where hair grows white and cheeks grow hollow, where eyes lose their lustre and hands lose their strength. Down here on earth below. (p. 270)

This line of thought suggests a darker kind of tale, anticipating The Ghost Sonata (1907). The Gardener sows "seeds of discord," and when he leaves, Swanwhite and the Prince quarrel about what color he was, speak angry words, and part. To love really means to overcome one's selfish point of view; to be happy, according to the passage quoted, would require being liberated from time and space.

The idea of disillusionment introduces a second antagonist, reality, into the story, in effect breaking the fairy tale by opening it to issues that are alien to its nature.[1] To keep his tale afloat, Strindberg has

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[1]This is not to say, of course, that drama cannot be made of a

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to resort to giving the Gardener, a personified abstraction, a psychology: feeling guilty for having parted the lovers, he returns in act 3 to show Swanwhite his both sides and to release the Prince from prison. When the lovers make up in act 2, Strindberg has them lie down on the bed with a sword between them and return to the Land of Dreams. Both conflicts, that with the Stepmother and that with reality, raise the possibility of separation and death: the former is resolved in fairy-tale fashion; the latter can only be side-stepped.

In performance this break in the fairy-tale scheme of the play probably passes unnoticed alongside the Stepmother's spectacular wickedness. Strindberg animates his setting to serve the purposes of evil as well as good. In act 1, as Swanwhite and the Prince fall in love, their growing happiness is overshadowed by more and more menacing signs of the witch's displeasure. The eyes on the peacock's tail watch the lovers. Like Sleeping Beauty, Swanwhite pricks her finger winding yarn. The three maids spy upon the pair from the closets; one brings in the Stepmother's steel whip and lays it between them. Listening in the hollow of the Prince's helmet, Swanwhite hears the Stepmother's threatening voice. Discovering a magic mirror on the ceiling, she knows that the witch has seen everything. In the hearth is a queerly-shaped mottled pumpkin that looks like an ear: the witch has heard everything too. The lovers are driven apart. As the landscape darkens, Swanwhite asks, "Is this the judgment

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conflict between fairy-tale ideality and disillusionment based on a realistic point of view. The Ghost Sonata is a good example, as we shall see, and so are the plays of J. M. Barrie. But for Strindberg to take satisfactory account of such issues in Swanwhite would turn it into something very different from what was apparently intended--"a betrothal gift for his third wife, Harriet Bosse" (Sprigge, Foreword to "Swanwhite," Five Plays of Strindberg, p. 238).

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of heaven upon us?" (p. 259) The sweat of fear is on her brow; she can hardly breathe. The rose on the table droops and lets fall a petal as the Stepmother enters with her panther-like walk.

These scenic manifestations of threat remind us of the even more disturbing scene in Princess Maleine in which Maleine and Hjalmar are driven from the garden. Strindberg removes much of the menace, however, by the elaborateness and ingenuity of the effects, multiplied far beyond the economical means of folk tales. Whereas the Stepmother in the Grimms' "Snow-White" (no. 53) needs only her mirror to spy out her rival, this stepmother apparently needs a magical pumpkin too, in order to listen. Strindberg seems less interested in the sense of menace than in the theatrical realization of it. The witch's transformation in act 3 provides an even more impressive stage-effect. Having falsely accused Swanwhite of fornication and been found out, the Stepmother is herself sentenced to die in the spiked barrel. At mention of the hated Prince, she

> stops on the balcony as if turned to stone, and opens her mouth as if pouring out venom. The peacock and the doves fall down dead. Then THE STEPMOTHER begins to swell. Her clothes become inflated until they hide her head and shoulders; then they seem to be on fire, flaming in a pattern of snakes and branches. The sun begins to rise. The ceiling sinks slowly into the room. Smoke and flame pour from the hearth. (p. 290)

After the drowned Prince is brought in, "the bewitched shape of THE STEPMOTHER bursts and she resumes her own form" (p. 291). The impact of the transformation in performance would depend on the inventiveness of a special-effects technician. Maeterlinck keeps his fearful events off-stage (as in The Death of Tintagiles), where they are accessible only to the audience's imagination. Terror is apprehended in stillness. Rather than concealing it, Strindberg reveals his threat, putting the scenery into motion.

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Strindberg's use of triads also keeps his fairy tale closer to folklore than Maeterlinck's. The arches, the closets, and the maids give physical structure to a familiar fairy-tale world. The scenic triads extend into the action: Swanwhite's three blasts on the magic horn, the three-part Flower Test, the three whispers with which she awakens the dead Prince, along with other ritual events such as the funeral procession, complete with bells, priest, and crucifix, confer upon the action a grave mythic quality, distanced and dreamlike, that marks Strindberg's closest approach to symbolist ideals.

Furthermore, as in A Midsummer Night's Dream, the characters seem to be falling asleep all the time. The ghostly foot-washing, the dream-pantomime, the lovers' deliberate return the the Land of Dreams, and the like give us characters who seem to be enacting the strange events of a dream world. Even the Stepmother sleeps on her feet, dreaming of her happy youth as she watches the lovers sleeping. For Maeterlinck sleep is anaesthetic: his characters are shocked awake by nightmares or the sudden intrusion of nightmarish reality. For Strindberg, it seems, sleep is restorative and rejuvenating. The dead Prince, like Sleeping Beauty and Snow-White, remains young and beautiful, with rosy lips and cheeks. His resurrection, a traditional event in folklore, is a joyful awakening to new life. Thus the style of the play, faithful to the simple mythic qualities of true fairy tales, makes the eucatastrophic ending seem inevitable and necessary.

Mention of the ending brings us to the Christian framework of the play. References to a Christian world-view are scattered throughout, in talk of the Savior, the Angelus, the hand of God, and so forth, and in the iconography of white-winged spirits carrying harps, the dropping of

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the key in answer to a prayer, and the ritual panoply of the funeral procession. Swanwhite's mother washes her child's feet with her tears, recalling for us a familiar New Testament idea. These images and the parents' role as loving protectors place the events in a poetic world very close to the providential universe of Christianity.

This universe is itself near neighbor to the world of the folk tale,[1] so when Strindberg breaks his fairy tale once again, this time to reinterpret it as a parable of loving forgiveness, the effect is not to shock us out of an ideal world, but to deepen its meanings with those of the Christian myth. Admonishing Swanwhite to obey her Stepmother in everything, the Duke sets her her task in the beginning, saying, "She is a hard woman, but your father loved her once, and a sweet nature may melt a heart of stone" (p. 246). At the end Swanwhite forgives her and begs the Duke not to burn her as a witch, but to have mercy. At the word, the Stepmother is released from the evil powers that have held her in their spell. Swanwhite thus vanquishes her enemy by an act of Christian love. As the author wrote,

> The symbolism relates to Caritas, the great Love, which suffers everything, overcomes everything, forgives, hopes, and believes however much it is betrayed. This is illustrated by the Stepmother's change of character, but most of all by the final scene: love is stronger than death.[2]

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[1] Tolkien sees in the fairy tale "a far-off gleam or echo" of the Christian evangelium. "The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories" ("On Fairy-Stories," p. 71). For G. K. Chesterton, Christian doctrine makes explicit the magical views of the world contained in fairy tales--see "The Ethics of Elfland," Orthodoxy (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1959), pp. 46-65. In Tales from Eternity, Rosemary Haughton reads the tales in a similar way. These readings I think of as attempts to appropriate for Christianity the spiritual function of myths and tales, which was discovered in romanticism but is ancient and pagan in origin.

[2] Quoted by Sprigge, Foreword to "Swanwhite," p. 239.

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Here, if anywhere in the play, the figure of the Gardener, representing the interests of self, is countered. Denying her human impulse to seek revenge in justice, Swanwhite overcomes childishness and fulfills her loving nature, as forecast by her father. Having suffered, she redeems the Prince from death and the Stepmother from wickedness.[1]

Ultimately, of course, Swanwhite redeems herself. Fairy tales, like myths, dreams, and primitive rituals, may be said to function as initiations.[2] If, as Bettelheim suggests, the wicked stepmothers and witches in fairy tales are simply the mother in her aspect of rival and antagonist,[3] then we can describe the play as a developmental convulsion within the soul of Swanwhite, who only at the end is able to accept her mother's claims to affection and respect, not as challenges to her own claims, but as prerequisites to their fulfillment. Addressing the Stepmother-Witch as "mother" for the first time, Swanwhite disenchants her from the demonic role of rival for her father's love.[4] Dying to her childish self,

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[1] The Virgin Bride (1901), Strindberg's folk play based on a ballad, also contains the theme of redemptive suffering. Kersti and Mats secretly have a child before they are married, but in order to wear the Bridal Crown at her wedding (only pure virgins qualify), Kersti suffocates her baby and hides the corpse. When the crime is discovered, Kersti is manacled and condemned. In the stocks she has an enlightenment about guilt and the necessity for suffering. Though her sentence is commuted, later she drowns on her way to do penance, and her sacrificial death reconciles the feuding families. As in Swanwhite, the setting is magically animated: visions appear and objects move under their own power. The Virgin Bride is a folk legend rather than a fairy tale, but its supernaturalism (as well as its theme) obviously makes it relevant to Strindberg's fairy drama.

[2] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 61. See also Mircea Eliade, "Myths and Fairy Tales," Myth and Reality, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 201.

[3] Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment, pp. 66-70.

[4] Relevant to a Freudian interpretation of the play is the fact that no False Bride actually appears on the stage: Swanwhite is herself the False Bride until she accepts the Prince as a worthy replacement for her

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Swanwhite is reborn as an adult ready to take up an independent life. These processes of acceptance and renewal have the perpetually astonishing qualities of miracles, expressed in the resurrection of the Prince in a swell of music, praise, and thanksgiving.

Justice is primitive in folk tales; the spiked barrel is always put to its proper use.[1] The evil represented by the antagonist must be totally banished from the world, says Bettelheim in The Uses of Enchantment (p. 147). Having broken and enlarged his fairy tale by opening it to the possibility of loving forgiveness rather than punishment for the villain, Strindberg achieves in the final event an ending with the power to move us to tears of joy and wonder. The escape from death, says Tolkien, is mankind's oldest and deepest dream, and to make it believably possible is the highest function of the fairy tale.[2] But far from wishing away the realities of our unregenerate mortal existence, the play shows us what we must do to be saved. If loving each other is actually harder than Strindberg makes it seem, we must remember that it is in the nature of his form to idealize life for the hope and consolation of mankind. Only as a fairy tale would this happy parable be possible.

The fairy tale served for the expression of some of Strindberg's

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father. Emanuel K. Schwartz, like Bettelheim, views fairy tales as psychic problem-solving mechanisms that focus on the story of growing up. The reading of fairy tales "escorts the child . . . to a satisfactory heterosexual adaptation." See his "A Psychoanalytic Study of the Fairy Tale," American Journal of Psychotherapy 10 (1956):740-62.

[1] The justice of such a punishment is emphasized when, as in Swanwhite, the villain is made to pronounce his own doom. Many fairy tales end in this thoroughly satisfying way, and the device seems characteristic of tales on the False Bride theme. In "The White and Black Brides" (Grimm no. 135), for example, the evil stepmother unwittingly sentences herself and her daughter to death in the spiked barrel. See Thompson, The Folktale, p. 130.

[2] Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," pp. 67-68.

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obsessive themes, in particular his concern for the meaning of suffering and the problems of evil and guilt. Einar Haugen, in his article, "Strindberg the Regenerated," says that the fairy-tale witch answered his need for an image to carry his often nightmarish vision of life. We find this figure in the recurrent vampire characters, embodiments of hate, "whose looks are venomous and whose very thoughts can kill."[1] Compensating for this image is that of the virginal fairy princess--Eleonora, Swanwhite, Indra's Daughter--whose self-sacrificial suffering achieves redemption for self and others from evil and guilt. The opposition, only temporarily reconcilable, between these two female archetypes, one loving and beautiful, the other demonic, points out the deep contradictions in Strindberg's psychosexual makeup that made it impossible for him to live happily married to any woman. These contradictions made his life an agony in the most fundamental sense of the word; but at the same time, clothed in imaginative forms and set forth upon the stage, they made possible his vivid and compelling art.[2]

Thus the fairy-tale play, Swanwhite, has both formal and thematic importance in the development of Strindberg's post-Inferno drama. It presents his moral concerns in their most direct and hyperbolical expression, and it clearly demonstrates the theatrical possibilities of fantasy and magic, qualities inherent in the genre of fairy tale.

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[1] Einar I. Haugen, "Strindberg the Regenerated," Journal of English and Germanic Philology 29 (1930):259.

[2] Serving as projective screens for the play of obsessive psychic conflicts, fairy tales and similar imaginative forms became almost inevitable for Strindberg. If he had not had them ready to hand in folklore and mythology, he would surely have had to invent them. Their fantastic qualities, their animism, and their hyperbolized melodramatic nature uniquely suited them to his imagination.

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Strindberg's Easter (1900)

Strindberg never again wrote a fairy-tale play as such, but he used symbolist techniques in all his post-Inferno plays, and some of these, particularly Easter and The Ghost Sonata, can be profitably studied in terms of the fairy tale. Haskell Block writes, "His conscious efforts to approximate symbolist ideals are far less important than his plays marked by mixed dramatic styles, wherein symbolist elements are but one part of the playwright's intricate orchestration."[1] The Ghost Sonata, as I have suggested, is a good example of the fairy tale of disillusionment and will be dealt with in Chapter IV. Here let us look at Easter as an example of a drama of mixed styles.

Whereas Swanwhite is frankly fantastic, in Easter Strindberg uses fairy-tale motifs to provide symbolist undercurrents beneath a realistic surface. The manifest content of the play, Elis's coping with the consequences of his father's embezzlement, seems ill-suited for treatment as a fairy tale. The story itself is autobiographical and has no source in folklore.[2] However, the opposition between Eleonora, the fairy princess, and Lindkvist, the demonic figure, is made explicit in the imagery. As in Swanwhite, the hateful antagonist is disenchanted by the end. The title of the play forecasts its happy conclusion. The creditor Lindkvist, "the giant from Skinflint Mountain,"[3] proves to be a gentle giant sent to

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[1] Block, "Strindberg and the Symbolist Drama," p. 322.

[2] Lamm, August Strindberg, pp. 367-8.

[3] August Strindberg, "Easter," Three Plays, trans. Peter Watts (Baltimore: Penguin, 1958), p. 173. Hereafter cited in text.

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frighten children, not to eat them. His figurative transformation releases Elis and his family from a spell of fear and resentment that was crippling their lives.

There are three strands of imagery in the play, in addition to the obsessive talk in commercial and legal terms about the father's disgrace. These are, first, the Christian imagery of the Passion and Resurrection, figured in the title and the incidental music from Haydn's "Seven Words from the Cross"; second, nature and the change of season, visually present in the flowers on stage and the play of sunlight through the window; and third, the submerged fairy tale. These lines of imagery, moving in parallel toward an optimistic conclusion, give the literal story of moral debts and credits a kind of inner music, making it glow with a wonderful symbolist light.

Eleonora, the primary source of these poetic effects, has more than a touch of the uncanny about her. In his famous essay on this subject, Freud says that the uncanny is simply the familiar made strange.[1] Eleonora partakes of this quality because of the socially unacceptable behavior that has gotten her declared insane and sent off to an asylum. Her queerness, like the father's misfortunes, embarrasses Elis and his mother. Elis loves his sister but says in act 1 that she is the last person he would like to see walk through the door. Yet when she appears, her sweet nature brings a sense of calm and well-being to everyone else in the troubled family. Having accepted the necessity to suffer, she can meet with equanimity whatever comes; and out of this acceptance springs

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[1] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," On Creativity and the Unconscious: Papers on the Psychology of Art, Literature, Love, Religion, ed. Benjamin Nelson (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 148.

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the optimistic faith that brightens the Heyst home. "She seems to have a spirit of peace about her, as if there were an unseen angel who brought tranquillity with her" (p. 146). The angel does not actually appear on the stage (as it does in Kleist's Käthchen of Heilbronn, in which the heroine is also protected by heaven and serves a redemptive function), but the effect is much as if it did.

Strindberg uses Eleonora's insanity as a realistic cover for her kinship to the fairy princesses of folklore, blessed creatures who bring blessings. Like Maleine and Melisande and their folkloric prototypes, she is at first isolated from the world (in the asylum) so that she can re-establish relations with it. Not only does she come back into the home and take up her role in the family, she also feels herself bound by wider spiritual sympathies to her sister in America and her father in prison, suffering with them when they suffer. "We're the same person, he and I," she says of her father. Like a supernatural creature, she is "everywhere and eternal." Benjamin is surprised to meet Eleonora because the family has never talked about her; she reminds him that "people never talk about the dead" (p. 135).[1] Only sixteen, she feels as if she was born old. Her intuitions about religious problems give her the wisdom of a learned elder. At one with nature, she understands the singing of the starlets and the silent language of the flowers. Like the Student in The Ghost Sonata, she enjoys the gift of second sight (by which certain mor-

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[1] One theory of the origins of folk belief in fairies traces them to the dead, i.e., the souls of evil persons, of the heathen, or of unbaptized infants. Other theories trace them to fallen angels or devils and to elemental spirits. In An Encyclopedia of Fairies (New York: Pantheon, 1976) Katharine Briggs says that belief in the fairies as the dead may have originated in pre-Christian antiquity (p. 319). See also C. S. Lewis, The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 135-8.

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tals are privileged to penetrate fairy glamor),[1] symbolizing the magical gift of faith by which she can "see" the stars in broad daylight, the sun hidden in the mist, and the dawn of Easter day reflected in the Easter moon. Strindberg wrote in a letter,

> Family tribulations have reduced Eleonora to the mental state--called illness by some--wherein she makes contact (telepathic), sometimes with her relatives, sometimes with all of humanity, and finally with higher creation, so that she suffers along with every living thing and is a materialization of "Christ in man." Therefore she is kin to Balzac's Séraphita, Swedenborg's niece.[2]

Lamm comments: "Séraphita, too, is thought to be deranged, but is actually a member of a higher species, a visitor from another world who only partially shares earthly pleasures and sufferings."[3] Such an other-worldly

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[1] One way that fairies can be seen unawares by humans is "by the use of the well-known Fairy Ointment, compounded of four-leafed clovers, which disperses the Glamour that fairies can cast over human senses. Once a human eye has been touched by the ointment it can penetrate fairy disguises, and this power is removed only by a blast of fairy breath or the more vindictive blinding of the seeing eye, as occurs in one of the Midwife to the fairies stories.

"There are, however, certain people who have permanent or sporadic power of seeing fairies without fairy permission. These are the 'second-sighted' Highlanders, or those called 'gifted' in Somerset or the south-west, and 'sighted' in Ireland." Briggs, Encyclopedia, pp. 350-1. These folk ideas are not confined to the British Isles, of course, but can be found world-wide (Thompson, The Folktale, p. 260). The gift of Second Sight is motif D1821.4 in Thompson's index.

[2] Quoted in Lamm, August Strindberg, p. 368.

[3] Ibid. Séraphita is an androgynous character, supposedly the nephew/niece of Emanuel Swedenborg, invented by Balzac as a spokesperson for the mystical ideas explored in his short novel of the same name. Eleonora shares several other-worldly qualities with this character. Only 17, Séraphita claims to be more than a hundred years old. He/she has second sight, and at one point even claims to be a fairy. He/she possesses intuitive religious wisdom, not gained through books, and is thought to be quite mad. As a superior being with a transcendent point of view on the world, Séraphita, like Eleonora, starts out isolated from human society and finally achieves a sense of community not by sharing the sufferings of others but in being assumed into heaven as a reward for cutting him/herself off from the world. Thus, though Balzac evokes the imagery of mystical Christianity, Séraphita ends very far from Strindberg's Christ-figure, in that his/her holiness is private and self-centered, and could never have served Strind-

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creature can be seen as a mystical version of the High Fairy of Celtic legend and French romance set forth by C. S. Lewis in The Discarded Image, who in the medieval view of the world had an ambiguous place of residence somewhere between heaven and earth. They were associated with angels or the dead, or were thought to be "a third rational species distinct from angels and men."[1] Though invested by Strindberg with a moral function foreign to the medieval belief in fairies, Eleonora can be considered a distant descendant of these figures.

The other fairy-tale figure in Easter is Lindkvist, the feared creditor. His arrival is anticipated all through the play. In Act 2 an ominous stage-image of him grows surrealistically out of an ordinary realistic scenic effect, shadows on the curtains of passers-by outside. Elis says, "Look,--he's back again. Heaven help us! (On the curtain appears the shadow of a man gradually approaching. It grows larger and larger till it is gigantic. They are all utterly terrified.) It's the giant--it's the giant come to eat us up!" (p. 153) This is the Stepmother's transformation in Swanwhite, exaggerated by the fearful imagination but subdued by the demands of realism. Once Lindkvist enters the house, of course, he turns out to be a perfectly normal elderly man with graying hair, black eyebrows and whiskers, dressed in black, with a fur coat, a top hat, a cane, and leather boots that squeak. He looks stern,

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berg's purposes of sacrificial reconciliation. Other of Balzac's images have found their way into Easter: Séraphita can see the stars in the daytime; with him/her, one can miraculously pick flowers on the mountain in midwinter. The play shows how deeply the figure of Séraphita impressed itself on Strindberg's imagination. The translation of G. Burnham Ives appears as vol. 2 of Balzac's Novels (Philadelphia: George Barrie & Son, 1899.

[1] Lewis, The Discarded Image, p. 134.

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even grim, but the ominous qualities of the shadow-apparition are gone. "When he appears," says Lamm, "the spell is broken."[1]

Nevertheless, Lindkvist does not lose all his other-worldly power. As the scene proceeds, this ordinary man begins to seem more and more like a figure conjured up out of Elis's tortured imagination. His purpose, we discover, is not to attach the furniture or to claim the money owed him, though he makes use of this threat. Elis says he has to do as Lindkvist says or "you'll plague the life out of me." Lindkvist replies, "Not your life, but I would force out your pride and your malice" (p. 171). As scourge and scapegoat, Lindkvist sets out to break the young man's pride and then to take his misfortune upon himself by foregoing repayment. "There is a charity that contradicts the law and supersedes it--and that is mercy" (p. 168).

Such motives in an everyday creditor would be unrealistic enough, but more improbabilities follow. Strangely, Lindkvist knows everything that was said in the house and even seems able to read Elis's mind. He knows the family spoke of him as a fearsome giant. He knows all of Elis's thoughts about Peter, his disloyal pupil, and about the despised Governor. He knows what Elis doesn't know about his fiancee's intentions in going out with Peter. Like Eleonora, he knows that good deeds come back as well as evil deeds, and his confrontation with Elis has no other purpose than to teach him just that lesson. Lindkvist has never met Elis before, yet he mysteriously speaks directly to the young man's sins and failings.

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[1] Lamm, August Strindberg, p. 370. This is actually the second such "disenchantment" in the play. A parallel moment is that which follows Eleonora's dreaded appearance.

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Since he can be seen by others, Lindkvist is not an apparition, like Macbeth's dagger or the ghost of Duncan, but neither is he a fully objective realistic character. Despite his carefully described exterior, he is at core a "personified thought," a projection from within Elis himself, serving to dissolve Elis's bitterness and to reconcile him to life. These are the functions of Jung's "helpful old man," a father-figure in fairy tales representing wisdom and insight who compensates for spiritual deficiencies and acts as a guide in the hero's quest for psychic wholeness.[1] Disenchanted as a cannibalistic giant, the creditor turns out to be a figure of enchantment after all, one of far greater poetic power than a mere childhood bogeyman.

Eleonora shares this archetypal function of helper, a fact emphasized for us by the special connection between the two fairy-tale characters at the end. When they meet, Lindkvist sees her father's kind eyes in Eleonora's eyes, and the child, in a flash of insight, divines Lindkvist's good intentions. They seem to greet each other almost as kindred spirits, affirming what Elis had to be made to suffer to see: that the house is protected from within and without by benevolent powers, like those in Swanwhite, which intend the best for everybody. The thorough Christianizing of the tale, again as in Swanwhite, reaffirms the providential nature of a poetic universe in which "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28).

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[1] C. G. Jung, "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairy Tales," The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), pp. 217-18. Richard Schechner applies this phrase to characters like the Rat-Wife, Ella Rentheim, and Irene in When We Dead Awaken, who have functions in Ibsen's drama similar to Lindkvist's. See "The Unexpected Visitor in Ibsen's Late Plays," in Ibsen: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Rolf Fjelde (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 159.

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Yet Strindberg's achievement in this play embraces the fallen nature of man as well. Elis wins his reward only after a severe struggle with the dark powers of his own self-centeredness: fear, bitterness, jealousy, and most of all pride. Early in Easter (once again as in Swanwhite) a white bird drops down a token of peace--which the chastened Elis later identifies with the birch branch, the lenten scourge that arrives in an anonymous package. As in Shakespeare's Tempest, a fairy play that comes to similar conclusions about the perfectibility of mankind, the ending promises that they can indeed live happily ever after, but only as long as the birch is not thrown into the fire. Einar Haugen thinks that in this happy ending we can recognize "an ultimate force which can neutralize its opponent, hate, and restore to life its rightful joy."[1] This force is love, expressed in Swanwhite's acceptance of the witch as "mother" and in Lindkvist's forgiveness in answer to the mercy shown him years before by Elis's father. In his optimistic moments Strindberg could say that good deeds too "come back."[2]

Hauptmann's Hannele (1893)

Central to the criticism of fairy-tale plays is the question of how the fairy world relates to reality. The playwrights as well as critics have taken up the question; A Midsummer Night's Dream illustrates Shakespeare's interest in it at the very beginnings of the genre. Hermann Hettner, commenting on the Märchenlustspiel in Das moderne Drama (1852), points to Shakespeare's fairy play as an example of those which juxtapose a real world and a spirit world so as to portray the latter as the source

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[1] Haugen, "Strindberg the Regenerated," pp. 268-9.

[2] Ibid., p. 269.

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of superior truth.[1] Such plays posit the existence of a numinous idealistic realm essentially to criticize social reality or the limitations of a rationalistic view of life.

This opposition to reality we find everywhere in fairy tales. Structuralist critics insist that fantasy has no meaning or function apart from the real world which it reflects. "Fairyland is the world inverted, the other side of the mirror, the opposite"; its "architecture of inversions" reacts upon reality to provide a deeper vision of it.[2] Thus, while the fairy tale easily serves writers for purposes of romantic escape, at the same time it can be a means of protest and criticism, possibly even revolutionary in implication. Such was its covert meaning for the German Romantics, as we have seen. On the stage the dualism at the heart of fairy tale is reinforced by the equivocation between make-believe and reality that we have noted at the end of A Midsummer Night's Dream (see above, p. 23). Dramas that set a real world and a fairy world side by side within the play itself are merely making explicit an opposition that is always implied in the fairy tale, whatever form it takes.

Hettner's prescription reflects the historical truth that premodern dramatists have generally used fairyland as Shakespeare did, to comment on the real world. When we come to modern realism, however, we will have to revise this notion to take account of the superior truth of reality. The positivistic premises of realism rule out the existence of a fairy

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[1] Hermann Hettner, Schriften zur Literatur, ed. Jürgen Jahn (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1959), pp. 244-6.

[2] Michel Butor, "On Fairy Tales," in European Literary Theory and Practise: From Existential Phenomenology to Structuralism, ed. Vernon W. Gras (New York: Dell, 1973), p. 352. See also Jolles' chapter on the Märchen in Formes Simples, pp. 173-95.

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world altogether, except as ironical figure of speech. In the case of naturalistic drama, which denies freedom and the possibility of transcendence (both essential in the fairy tale), Hettner's formulation, it seems, would prove even more awkward to apply.[1]

In considering Hauptmann's Hannele as a fairy play, therefore, we have to start with the question, how does a naturalist approach a poetic form like the fairy tale, which seems so alien to a naturalistic point of view? The example of Strindberg suggests the obvious answer that such a playwright ceases to be a naturalist. Hauptmann, in his most famous fairy play, The Sunken Bell (1896), does indeed create a wholly self-contained symbolic universe peopled with figures from Germanic myth.[2] But Hannele he sets firmly within a harsh and brutalizing environment like that of The Weavers (1892), his naturalistic masterpiece, in which one must struggle merely to survive. Noting the similarities of their worlds, one

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[1] In the "Author's Preface to Thérèse Raquin" (1873) Emile Zola includes fairy plays among those types of popular drama that have become falsified and dead. Naturalism, he insists, means "the abandonment of all legendary tales; it is the living drama of characters and their environments, purged of all nursery tales, historical rag bags, magniloquence, trivialities, and conventional heroics" (From the Modern Repertoire, Series Three, ed. Eric Bentley [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956], p. 516). Zola's own compromise with audience expectation in Thérèse Raquin--Suzanne and her fairy-tale Blue Prince--proves his point by diluting the typically naturalistic atmosphere of claustrophobia. Interestingly, our stern prophet of naturalism delighted in the poetry, music, and spectacle of the féerie, the popular fairy play of the French stage--but only because, he said, it did not pretend to portray the truth. On this last point see Lawson A. Carter, Zola and the Theatre (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 96-97.

[2] The Sunken Bell, an Undine play, is discussed below as an example of fairy dramas on the conflict of art vs. life. In addition to Hannele and The Sunken Bell, Hauptmann wrote a third play that uses fairy-tale imagery, And Pippa Dances (1906). Also set in the Silesian mountains, it moves from a seamy naturalism into a symbolic universe identified with the icy heights. It thus has affinities with both earlier plays, but the idealistic hero's blindness in the end suggests a more ambiguous relation to reality.

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critic has called Hannele "the second part of . . . [The Weavers]."[1] There can be no question here of achieving a fairy-tale-like transcendence and living happily ever after. The very idea of a naturalistic fairy tale seems a paradox. Such a play, if it could exist at all, would have to reverse Hettner's prescription, showing the superior truth of reality by annihilating the fairy world altogether.

How could two such antagonistic realms be artistically integrated? Following Shakespeare, Hauptmann achieves unity in Hannele by means of the dream. Theseus' famous lines in A Midsummer Night's Dream (V.i.2-22) may be taken to explain the play: like the lunatic, the lover, and the poet, poor Hannele dreams (or, more accurately, hallucinates) her fairy tale. Her seething brain "bodies forth/The forms of things unknown" and so gains for her what she never had in reality, a secure place at the center of attention of loving and powerful protectors. Reassuring images from fairy tales and the Bible fill her imagination. The playwright takes us inside her mind where we too can escape, for the duration of the dream, the ugliness and brutality of her world.

The play alludes to well-known fairy tales and is rooted in Silesian folklore. It is based on a legend which Hauptmann used earlier in a ballad, "Die Mondbraut," first published in Das bunte Buch (1888), a volume of poems. "The poem tells the story of a child driven forth by a cruel guardian into the snow and the night to collect wood and, lured by the moon, climbing a fir tree in an attempt to reach heaven and her parents, only to fall to her death at its foot."[2] In transferring the idea into a

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[1]Quoted in H. F. Garten, Gerhart Hauptmann (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 30.

[2]Margaret Sinden, Gerhart Hauptmann: The Prose Plays (Toronto: Uni-

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realistic setting, Hauptmann retains the tragic thrust of the legend and elaborates the heroine's delusions, using material from fairy tales. The play recalls Hans Christian Andersen's famous tale, "The Little Match Girl" (1848) as well.[1]

The beginning introduces us to the ragged inmates of a poorhouse in winter, a typically naturalistic scene. The paupers curse each other and squabble bitterly over money, food, and other things begged or stolen during the day. In a room with bare walls and a few rickety furnishings they huddle around a small stove or crouch on a straw pallet for warmth. The winter wind literally blasts Pleschke and Hanke through the door in a swirl of snow, suggesting the unremitting pressure on them of the harshness of their world.

Hannele is brought into this inhospitable environment from a worse one, the house of Mattern, her stepfather, who, like the cruel guardian in "Die Mondbraut," sends her out into the cold to beg for him. She is found to be covered with bruises like her mother, who was apparently beaten to death by Mattern six weeks before. Hannele is very much a melodramatic victim, as one commentator has pointed out.[2] In this play of mixed means Hauptmann draws freely upon different styles and dramatic traditions.[3] The villain pursues the child even into her dreams. The first

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versity of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 172.

[1]Always an admirer of Andersen, Hauptmann used one of his stories, "The Bell Deep" (1858), as a source for The Sunken Bell also. See Martin Schütze, "Hauptmann's Die versunkene Glocke," Americana Germanica 3, no. 1 (1899):60-95.

[2]Otto Heller, Studies in Modern German Literature (Boston: Ginn, 1905), p. 172.

[3]As pointed out above (see p. 12), fairy tale and melodrama are forms of romance and have certain common features, including a strong story

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apparition shows him with a drunken, disheveled look and a villain's tangled red hair, threatening Hannele with a cord wrapped around his wrist.

Hannele is pathetically helpless in this hostile world, without a hero to rescue or avenge her. Powerless to change her life in actuality--she is even prevented from drowning herself--Hannele withdraws into fantasy where her needs can be served, and there she acts heroically to redeem her tormented existence in the only way she can.

For Tolkien, escape from the brutalizing conditions of life, from hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, sorrow, injustice, and the Great Escape from Death, are among the highest functions of the fairy tale.[1] Bettelheim adds the escape from isolation and loneliness into creative union with others.[2] Hannele's flight into fantasy enables her to elude reality in all these senses. Her thwarted suicide was an attempt to escape her life; her dream-visions are successful attempts to escape its meaning. For the fact is that Hannele, having no connection with any person in her world, is totally exposed to whatever danger should threaten her. Her mother is dead. Mattern, in whose charge she remains, is her true father in neither the genetic nor the moral sense. Abandoned before birth by the strong parent who should have taken care of her--it is implied that Berger, the magistrate, fathered the girl and married off the

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line, a clear opposition of good and evil, and a benevolent providence that brings about a happy ending. These parallels are explored by Krappe in The Science of Folklore, pp. 1-44. In France a combined form, the "mélodrame-féerie," flourished from 1800 to about 1820--see Katherine Kovács, "A History of the Féerie in France," Theatre Quarterly 8, no. 29 (Spring 1978):29-38.

[1]Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," pp. 55-70.

[2]Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment, pp. 145-6.

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mother to Mattern--she becomes a pariah, mocked and scorned by her classmates, ignored by everyone in the village who knew she was being abused yet did nothing about it. Her place of shelter is appropriately a house for social misfits and rejects. The traditional isolation of the fairy princess, out of which she achieves creative union with husband and family,[1] here receives an ironical naturalistic twist, reflecting the conditions of life in the poor mountain villages of Silesia that Hauptmann knew first hand.[2]

Hannele escapes this hell of isolation, even as she dies of it, by means of fantasies that place her at the center of attention. The relevant tales are "Cinderella" (Perrault's version, with the glass slipper)[3] and later, in her imagined death and resurrection, "Snow White." Hannele plays the title role in both. People of the village, her classmates, her mother's spirit, angels, a fairy-tale prince, and Christ himself come to mourn, console, and praise her in the fairy play that is staged in her head.

The fantasies proceed, as dreams do, by suggestion and association. A hat and coat upon a chair evoke the apparition of her stepfather. He

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[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 135-46.

[2] In 1891, doing research for The Weavers, Hauptmann undertook a ten-day trip to Silesian villages in the Eulengebirge to refresh his memories of the people. He met there a lovely young girl who may have been a real-life model for Hannele (Sinden, Gerhart Hauptmann, pp. 54, 172-3).

[3] "Cinderella" is one of the oldest and most popular fairy tales. A Chinese version goes back to 850-60 A. D. The main features of the tale--Cinderella's degradation, the magic helper identified with the spirit of the mother, the recognition by means of the lost slipper--remain remarkably constant in its hundreds of world-wide variants. But in only one, Perrault's, is the slipper made of glass. See Opie and Opie, The Classic Fairy Tales, pp. 117-21.

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orders her out of bed to light the fire; she collapses among the ashes where the nurse finds her unconscious. In Act 2 a quaint hump-backed tailor arrays her for death in a white silk bridal gown and a pair of crystal slippers, "the smallest in the land." The dress and slippers raise Hannele from the ashes to a position of highest favor, that of Princess and True Bride. Turning on the recognition of hidden inner worth, the tale of Cinderella naturally expresses Hannele's feelings about the injustice of her real-life fate.

The fantasies also allow Hannele to face death. All along she has thought of death as a deliverance. She desires it, yet she fears it. The apparition of her mother, dressed like the nurse but more beautiful and wearing great white wings, helps to prepare her for the event.[1] She protects Hannele from the terrifying Dark Angel with his sword, thus abolishing all the frightening aspects of death and leaving all the pleasant ones. Lying in a crystal coffin in her beautiful dress, Hannele enjoys being the center of attention at her own funeral. The school children humbly beg her pardon for teasing her. The villagers pay their respects, revealing in their conversation that angels have appeared in the village declaring her a saint. Best of all, Gottwald, the handsome teacher whom she admires, becomes in her mind a bereaved suitor who weeps at the thought of parting from her.

Perhaps the most satisfying fantasy about dying is imagining its judgmental effect on those who have injured one. To bring Mattern to book, Hauptmann introduces imagery from the Gospels, which to the naive mind constitute a kind of fairy story (see above, p. 66). Here again the ad-

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[1]We recall that in Swanwhite the heroine's deceased mother appears on stage with a pair of white swan's wings (see above, p. 60).

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mired Gottwald is the key figure. Dressed in sandals and a rough brown robe, he confronts the defiant Mattern as Hannele imagines Jesus would confront a sinner, asking him to repent. Finally Mattern flees, shouting, like Judas Iscariot, that he will hang himself. The melodramatic villain and the fairy-tale ogre must be not only defeated but totally abolished from the world. The fantasy accomplishes this result without Hannele's having to open her mouth, through the Jesus-figure and the crowd of outraged witnesses, through natural signs of the anger of heaven, and, most conveniently of all, through Mattern's own intransigence. Thus are the injustices of reality firmly corrected by the fairy-tale dream.

Hannele's final consolation is the denial of death, the ultimate correction of reality. In the fantasy's joyous ending the biblical imagery and the fairy-tale imagery join forces. The crystal coffin has two meanings: first, that Hannele is not to be buried but installed in a reliquary in church as a saint; second, that she is not really dead at all, but like Snow White will awaken when her prince appears to carry her away. The dream-figure of Gottwald likewise has two functions. As Jesus, he brings Hannele out of the coffin, speaking the well-known line from the story of the raising of Jairus' daughter: the child "is not dead, but sleepeth" (Luke 8:52). His brown robe falls from his shoulders to show a gown of white and gold that is, on the one hand, the splendid attire of Christ revealed in his glory and, on the other, a wedding garment matching Hannele's bridal dress and veil. Gottwald becomes Prince Charming and Divine Bridegroom at once. Fairy tale and Gospel meld with erotic daydream in the child's excited mind to bring about a striking and deeply persuasive example of Eucatastrophe.

Thus the play illustrates the transforming power of the imagination.

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The fact of Hannele's death is not disputed: she leaves this world for a better one, as she had intended. Similarly, the facts of her life--her abandonment, isolation, and suffering--cannot be denied, but they can be redeemed. A liturgy of initiation forms the climax of the play:

> THE STRANGER [Laying his right hand on HANNELE's head.] Thy shame I take from thee. [He lifts her face gently and touches her eyelids.] I fill thine eyes with everlasting light. Thy soul shall be all sunshine. Eternal brightness shall be thine, from dawn till eve and then till dawn again. Receive all radiant things, and feast thine eyes on all the glories of the deep blue sea and azure sky and fair green trees, forever and forever. [He touches her ears.] Let thine ears be opened to the music of millions upon millions of God's angels. [He touches her lips.] Thus do I loose thy stammering tongue and quicken it with the life of thine own soul and my soul, and the soul of God Almighty.
>
> [HANNELE . . . sobs and buries her head in THE STRANGER's robe.]
>
> With these thy tears I cleanse thee from the dust and stain of earth. I will raise thee high above the stars of God.[1]

In this anointing of the imagination the naturalistic scene is also redeemed. The poorhouse is transformed by radiant angels strewing flowers and spreading rich stuffs on the floor. Their incense covers even the smell of poverty, as their harps and singing voices cover the sounds of its quarrels and complaints. The rough, broken prose becomes poetry full of dreamlike images of transcendence describing the flight of winged creatures upward into light-filled regions. Hauptmann's earth-bound world opens and expands to allow his heroine access to the heaven of her dreams.[2]

Thus Hannele's death becomes a ritual transition to a higher world, a death indeed, but meaning the opposite of defeat and despair. Hannele

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[1] Hauptmann, The Dramatic Works, ed. Luwig Lewisohn (New York: Viking, 1927), 4:67-8.

[2] There is a similar scene in Balzac's Séraphita, in which the heavens open gloriously to receive the soul of the mystic hero. Balzac's character achieves his/her good death; Hauptmann's heroine is mercifully granted it. Hauptmann no doubt knew Séraphita, since he was deeply interested in mysticism--see F. W. J. Heuser, "The Mystical Hauptmann," Germanic Review 7 (1932):32-44.

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is not blessed like the fairy princesses of folklore, but she has a blessed imagination. Of the shapers of fantasies mentioned by Theseus, the lunatic, the lover, and the poet, Hannele is all three, but preeminently the poet. Hauptmann wrote, "Wish and desire are indeed the earliest and best poets, and I was able to let them work with me on the fairy tale as the heart desired."[1] In Hannele's hour of need he has placed all his creative power at her disposal.

Like Shakespeare, Hauptmann returns us to the world of waking reality when the dream ends. Mercifully Hannele does not awaken before her death, but the audience does, forced out of her mind, so to speak, by the darkening of the dream. The final tableau, showing the doctor and the nurse bent over Hannele's corpse, restates the fact of what has happened. Framing scenes of dream and fairyland vision with scenes of cool rationality, both A Midsummer Night's Dream and Hannele follow the A-B-A pattern typical of dramas that set off a "real world" from a "fairy world" depicted in the play itself.[2]

The relation of these two worlds in Hannele is the question with which we began. Hannele's dreams are clearly pathological from one point

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[1]From a letter written in April 1894 to the critic Max Kalbeck. The text can be found in Felix A. Voigt's Hauptmann-Studien: Untersuchungen über Leben und Schaffen Gerhart Hauptmanns (Breslau: Maruschke und Berendt, 1936), 1:87-88.

[2]Two other modern fairy plays with one foot in dreamland and the other in the world of naturalism are J. M. Barrie's A Kiss for Cinderella (1916) and Pär Lagerkvist's Midsummer Dream in the Workhouse (1941). Barrie's naturalism serves romance: he makes his dying street urchin, drawn from Andersen's "Little Match Girl," the focus of strong sentimental effects. Lagerkvist, like Hauptmann, maintains a tension between the realistic and idealistic points of view. His poorhouse is as wretched a place as Hauptmann's. The play's middle section, the dream of an old pauper whom life has disappointed, accentuates the bitter reality that frames it. Lagerkvist's young girl, however, is a figure of hope rather than pathos.

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of view.[1] As soon as she speaks of being "called by Jesus," Gottwald and Berger send for the doctor. Her gradual entrance into the visionary state, so carefully prepared, prevents us from thinking of it as anything other than delusion. Yet the dreams are so passionately wished-for and sincerely felt that we suspend disbelief, as if by an act of will to make them true. The final tableau sharpens the disappointment almost unbearably, yet it is necessary. The fairy tale aspects of the play, far from simply conflicting with the realistic aspects, are rooted in them. Not only do the visions draw their material from real life, reshaping and transforming it as dreams do; but also they are called forth, demanded, by the hopelessness of Hannele's situation.

This dynamic relation of reality and dream goes to the heart of the play. Like Andersen's "The Little Match Girl," Hannele has been called sentimental. Hauptmann gets so interested in elaborating the dying child's beautiful visions, it is claimed, that he neglects to protest her fate.[2] This criticism has some justice, especially for the original audience, who might have been expected to care about real-life conditions in the Eulengebirge; but in the end it is beside the point, for two reasons. First, the dreams are Hannele's, not the poet's, and they draw their power to convince precisely from the fact that all possibilities for external action have been closed off. Had anyone protested her fate, she would have been that much less isolated. Second, the reality judged and found wanting in the mirror of Hannele's fairy vision is ultimately existential, not social

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[1] "As the doctors would tell you, all [Hannele's] visions are susceptible of a purely pathological explanation. They might be mere hallucinations." Hauptmann, quoted in John Jacob Weisert, The Dream in Gerhart Hauptmann (New York: King's Crown Press, 1949), p. 53.

[2] Sinden, Gerhart Hauptmann, p. 177.

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reality.[1] In death she becomes an Everyman, a poignant image of human finitude. Our wish for a just solution moves beyond the immediate facts of her situation to a universal yearning for transcendence, for the closing of the gap between desire and reality that defines our very existence. Locked in tension with an unyielding law of natural necessity, Hannele's romantic escapism, naive but human and true, makes her a figure of intense tragic pathos. Thus the naturalistic frame supplies the motivation and rationale for the dreams by which the poet integrates the play's disparate elements into an artistic unity.[2]

The A-B-A structure distinguishes the play from Strindberg's kind of dream play, which is dreamlike throughout. Like Strindberg, Hauptmann uses fragmentation, doubling, and other effects of Freudian dream work; Gottwald's multiple roles in Hannele are a good example. The dreams pick up various elements from reality and weave them into the vision. But, on the surface at least, Hauptmann's dream images are both more coherent and more conventional than Strindberg's. As Weigand puts it, they are not the subjective experience itself (as Strindberg's images purport to be), but poetic counterparts of the subjective experience--i.e., Hauptmann's idea of the pictures that would fill a young girl's head at such a time.[3] Allardyce Nicoll likens the dream sequences to a play-within-a-

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[1]Garten, Gerhart Hauptmann, p. 64.

[2]According to Nesta Thompson, the naturalism and the dreams are integrated stylistically as well. Hannele's mental wanderings "are as psychologically correct and true to nature as the details of her sordid surroundings." See "Naturalism and the Dream Motive as Observed in the Work of Gerhart Hauptmann," Washington University Studies 8, no. 1 (October 1920):81.

[2]Hermann J. Weigand, "Gerhart Hauptmann's Range as Dramatist," Monatshefte 44, no. 7 (1952):323.

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play.[1] They are more similar to fantasies than night dreams, serving the ego rather than the subconscious. Moreover, their sources in fairy tale and scripture are common property. The conventionality of the images, not demanding too much of an ordinary audience, helped to make the play a popular success,[2] whereas Strindberg's dream plays are difficult to follow and have never been popular. Nevertheless, because the audience is drawn into Hannele's dreams, the play does mark a technical advance in the treatment of subjective material on the stage. Weisert calls Hannele "a forerunner of expressionistic dream plays in which the parallel reality falls away altogether."[3]

A Midsummer Night's Dream is also a dream play, but Theseus's lines referred to above apply better to Hannele, in which waking reality safely contains the dream. Theseus's own play, after all, proves him wrong, for though he does not believe in the fairies, they enter his house to bless his marriage. Shakespeare leaps his fairy world over the real world, framing it in turn to make an (A-B-A)-B structure. In the epilogue he goes another step beyond Hauptmann to suggest that the "real world" of Athens and the court is itself unreal, that the audience has been dreaming the play and all its characters.

As a naturalist Hauptmann could not follow Shakespeare very far in this direction, since the basic premise of his drama would be destroyed if its "real world" were not taken as equivalent to reality itself. In The Sunken Bell he moves beyond naturalism to create a mythological world

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[1] Allardyce Nicoll, World Drama from Aeschylus to Anouilh (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), p. 580.

[2] Heller, Studies in Modern German Literature, p. 169.

[3] Weisert, The Dream in Gerhart Hauptmann, p. 53.

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that applies allegorically to reality. But in Hannele, "the second part of The Weavers," Hauptmann goes as far as he can in saying that the dying child's dream is real for her and the audience for as long as it lasts, and that its reality is far preferable to the reality that asserts itself when the dream is over.

I started with the question of the fairy tale's relation to reality. Let me conclude on Hannele by considering the problem of portraying a fairy tale as a dream. Tolkien excludes from the category of fairy tale all fictions that use the machinery of dreams to explain what are apparently marvels. In "On Fairy-Stories" he writes:

> It is true that Dream is not unconnected with Faërie. In dreams strange powers of the mind may be unlocked. In some of them a man may for a space wield the power of Faërie, that power which, even as it conceives the story, causes it to take living form and color before the eyes. A real dream may indeed sometimes be a fairy-story of almost elvish ease and skill--while it is being dreamed. But if a waking writer tells you that his tale is only a thing imagined in his sleep, he cheats deliberately the primal desire at the heart of Faërie: the realization, independent of the conceiving mind, of imagined wonder.[1]

Tolkien writes here as if he had Hauptmann's naturalistic fairy tale in mind. In A Midsummer Night's Dream the breaking of the dream evokes wonder and amazement. In Hannele it makes the heart sink. Hauptmann's point of view, firmly anchored in the naturalistic world, creates the effect of deliberate cheating that Tolkien describes: the dream cannot get free of the conceiving mind. Thus, while we experience with Hannele the transformation of the poorhouse into a paradise, we cannot forget that she is deceived, and this knowledge both sweetens and saddens her fate for us. No real fairy tale would admit the idea of which the ending so forcibly reminds us, much against our will, that her victory over the crushing cir-

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[1]Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," pp. 13-14.

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cumstances of her life was "only a dream."

Sologub's The Triumph of Death (1907)

Writers of the Russian avant-garde, Feodor Sologub among them, were deeply influenced by the French and Belgian symbolists around the turn of the century. Maeterlinck and other symbolist poets became widely known in Russia no later than 1892, when Maeterlinck's first play, The Intruder, was translated and an important study of the Parisian school appeared in a journal.[1] As Sologub knew French very well and belonged to a circle that proved itself responsive to literary events in Europe,[2] we can assume that he read the works of Maeterlinck as soon as they made their way east. Moreover, during his association with Meyerhold at Vera Kommissarzhevskaya's theatre in St. Petersburg in 1906 and 1907,[3] Sologub was in a position to share the director's enthusiasm for Maeterlinck's plays and theories, and to observe closely his productions of Sister Beatrice and Pelleas and Melisande.

Thus it is not surprising to Sologub's fairy tragedy, The Triumph of Death, produced by Meyerhold on 6 November 1907, bears certain resemblances to Maeterlinck's legendary plays. Most obviously, the play is characterized by dark and shadowy scenes, a sustained unity of tone, and tableau-like pictorical effects. Though Sologub permits the human will to play a heroic role, as Maeterlinck does not, he seems equally fascinated with the fateful power of death. It is the ambiguous conception

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[1]Georgette Donchin, The Influence of French Symbolism on Russian Poetry (The Hague: Mouton, 1958), p. 12.

[2]Ibid., p. 25.

[3]Daniel Gerould, "Sologub and the Theatre," The Drama Review 21, no. 4 (December 1977):79-80.

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suggested in the title that gives his play a richness of thought lacking in his models. The characters in The Triumph of Death are paralyzed not by fear of death, but by triviality, convention, meanness, and stupidity; and in the end physical death becomes for the heroic individual the only possible escape from a life that has become a deadly prison of the spirit. These striking paradoxes are made possible by the most important revision of the folk fairy tale suggested to Sologub by Maeterlinck's example, the tragic inversion of its comic structure.

According to Sologub's note appended to the text,[1] the play is based on a legend told about Queen Bertha the Long-legged, mother of Charlemagne. Sent to France to marry King Pepin, the crippled Bertha (one of her legs is longer than the other) installs a servant girl in the bridal bed to deceive the king. The next morning when Bertha creeps in to take her place, the servant girl wounds herself and accuses Bertha of attacking her. Believing the imposter, Pepin orders the true queen led away into a wood, where she wanders for a long time and eventually takes up with a miller. Years later King Pepin goes hunting in this wood, gets lost, and at dusk finds himself in the miller's house, where he spends the night with Bertha, thinking she is the miller's daughter. She tells him who she is and how she came to be there. Convinced this time by her long leg, Pepin takes her back, punishes the usurper, and gives Bertha her rightful place at his side.

The legend is a variation of the "substituted bride" theme,[2] which

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[1]The English version, translated by John Cournos, appeared in The Drama 6 (August 1916):346-84. References to this edition will henceforth appear in the text.

[2]Motif K1911 in Thompson's Motif-Index. For a commentary see Thompson, The Folktale, pp. 117-20.

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Maeterlinck used in Princess Maleine and of which the Grimm tale of the Goose Girl (no. 89) is perhaps the most familiar version. Sologub reinterprets the legend by telling it from the point of view of the substituted bride, Algista. Using a familiar fairy-tale equation, he gives the crippled, freckled Bertha an ordinary and unworthy soul, and the beautiful Algista a wise and noble one.[1] By thus reversing the True and False Brides while retaining the outline of the events, Sologub turns the tale into a tragedy, which proceeds as follows.

Algista and her mother successfully carry out their plan "to crown beauty and depose ugliness" much as described in the legend. King Khlodoveg soon loves Algista for her beauty and wisdom, and their son grows tall and straight. Ten years later Bertha returns to the palace, bringing with her "a consumptive hybrid" of a son, the fruit of her one night's tenure as Khlodoveg's wife. Faced with this challenge but thinking that by now the king must surely love her for herself, Algista confesses that she is indeed the imposter. But rather than accepting her as his wife in recognition of what she has come to mean to him, the enraged king orders her and her son executed and takes Bertha back. In the last act, by a superhuman act of will, Algista returns from death to confront the king. Forgiving his evil deed, she lays before him a choice between life with her in an ideal world where there are no masters and slaves, and a living death with Bertha and her son in the ordinary world of rigid forms and traditions. But the king refuses to give up his crown to follow her, and

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[1] Focused on action, fairy tales typically do not pause to describe, but they do tend to externalize relationships and meanings in concrete objects, places, and persons. Bertha's ugliness and Algista's beauty thus make outwardly visible their inner qualities of soul. See Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 50-51.

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he and the whole court turn to cold stone as Algista once more falls dead at his feet, never to rise again.

Being turned to stone, says Bettelheim in The Uses of Enchantment, is a folkloric motif that means not death but "a lack of true humanity, an inability to respond to higher values."[1] Joseph Campbell explains it as one of the consequences of the refusal of the call to adventure:

> The myths and folktales of the world make it clear that the refusal is essentially a refusal to give up what one takes to be one's own interests. The future is regarded not in terms of an unremitting series of deaths and births, but as though one's present system of ideals, virtues, goals, and advantages were to be fixed and made secure.[2]

The psychological meaning of the refusal, says Campbell, is a desire to remain fixated at a lower stage of development where "one is bound in by the walls of childhood."[3] As a fairy tale Sologub's play reflects an initiatory structure, but by treating the theme of development and maturation from the point of view of Algista, already married and ten years a mother by the time the crisis occurs, he adds to it another level of meaning. Beyond adulthood is a higher stage of spiritual development, which Algista has reached but Khlodoveg and the mass of humanity cannot.[4] Called

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[1] Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment, p. 77.

[2] Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), pp. 59-60.

[3] Ibid., p. 62.

[4] "The agony of breaking through personal limitations is the agony of spiritual growth. Art, literature, myth and cult, philosophy, and ascetic disciplines are instruments to help the individual past his limiting horizons into spheres of ever-expanding realization. As he crosses threshold after threshold, conquering dragon after dragon, the stature of the divinity that he summons to his highest wish increases, until it subsumes the cosmos. Finally, the mind breaks the bounding sphere of the cosmos to a realization transcending all experiences of form--all symbolizations, all divinities: a realization of the ineluctable void." Ibid., p. 190. Only the heroic spirit penetrates to the secret truth of things.

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to this higher life by her faith in the power of the spirit to break free of unthinking conformity, Algista stakes everything on the possibility of enfusing Khlodoveg with her values. His inability to follow her into a transcendent realm, or even to understand what she is talking about, dooms him to ordinariness and mediocrity, a death-in-life symbolized by the powerful image of being fixed in stone, and brings Algista's aspiration to a tragic conclusion. Both are victims in what might be called a Tragedy of the Refused Call.

In presenting the tale, Sologub, like Strindberg in Swanwhite, attempts to duplicate some of the formal qualities of folk fairy tales. He imitates certain narrative devices for distancing and intensification, making the impact of the final scene starkly powerful. First and most obviously, offstage narrators, either singing or speaking, frame the events and provide continuity. A drinking song from the banqueting hall opens the play:

> There is strong wine in the cup,
> 'Tis bitter, bitter, bitter!
> The Queen is under a veil,
> Keen-eyed behind a cloud.
> There is a fold in her veil
> For the King to draw aside;
> To kiss his wife's lips he'll find
> 'Tis sweet, 'tis sweet, 'tis sweet. (p. 357)

Hinting at foreknowledge of the tragedy, the song gives Algista's story the status of a legend. At the end of Act 1 "A Dispassionate Voice" summarizes the passage of ten years' time. The second act also begins with a song from offstage, sung by Ethelwold, Bertha's brother, disguised as a minstrel visiting the court. This song summarizes the events from Bertha's point of view and introduces the counter-movement, the true queen's return. The Dispassionate Voice also ends the play, bringing home to us the mean-

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ing of the final tableau in which we see Algista and her son dead on the floor and the king and courtiers frozen in the attitudes of stone statues.

The dialogue also has a distanced, narrative quality, sounding in places like a Reader's Theatre production of the story. In Act 1 Algista, heavily veiled, stands beside her mother in the hall listening to the singing and drunken laughter from the banqueting room. They talk quietly, reviewing their plan and the previous events:

> I stood there for a long time alone, hiding in a dark corner behind the columns. Here, before me, after the wedding ceremony, the knights who conducted Bertha bade goodbye to the King. They have taken their leave, and driven away, and now only we two remain with her. Then I saw how the king of this place, and Bertha, and the guests went into that hall and took their seats at the table. They are sitting there and feasting, and I stand here alone and look on. From where I stand I can see the King's face, and Bertha beside the King. (p. 358)

Having decided their course of action, they give voice to their thoughts as they wait. The effect of the monologue is that of a narrative preface, a tense stillness before the storm.

In his programmatic essay, "The Theatre of One Will" (1908), Sologub calls for "an even transmission of the text, word by word,"[1] and evokes as his ideal performance the image of an author-narrator seated at the side of the stage calmly reading aloud the stage directions, introducing the actors, even supplying lines when they are forgotten. The performance becomes "a literary reading, accompanied by speech and movement" (p. 92). This is a poet's idea of theatre, intended in part to ensure that his text remains intact. Sologub admits that it turns the actors into "speaking marionettes" subject to the will of the author (p. 92); and we are reminded that Maeterlinck too thought of his early plays, from Princess Maleine to

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[1]Feodor Sologub, "The Theatre of One Will," trans. Daniel Gerould, The Drama Review 21, no. 4 (December 1977):94. References to this essay will henceforth appear in the text.

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The Death of Tintagiles (1894), as written for a theatre of puppets,[1] and for similar reasons of distrust. It also suggests, for both poets, a fatalistic view of man. As illustrated in The Triumph of Death, such an idea of theatre distances and objectifies the story, turning it into a trance-like ritual action, thus conferring on it something of the numinous power of a folk tale.

In his essay Sologub also speaks of the pictorial quality of ritualized theatre. The drama should unfold slowly and evenly as "a calm reproduction of the situations, picture after picture" (p. 94). We have seen that this visual quality, also found in Maeterlinck, derives ultimately from the folk fairy tale (see above, pp. 40-41). As in Pelleas and Melisande, there are tableau-like moments in the mise-en-scene throughout The Triumph of Death. After the narrative prelude Algista's scream brings the king and Bertha and all the court into the hall: we see a grotesque tableau of knights standing "in warlike and somewhat ridiculous attitudes, sternly rolling their eyes; their faces are red from wine drunk in plenty" (p. 361). The stage picture conveys a strong impression of the viciousness and violence of the king's retainers, and puts Khlodoveg among them as one of them. At the end of Act 1 the king again stands in the center of the stage surrounded by his court, this time to choose between the lame and freckled Bertha on the one hand and the beautiful Algista on the other. In Act 2 Bertha's entrance with her son, followed by twelve knights, sets up a similar pictorial composition.[2]

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[1]See his Preface, The Plays of Maurice Maeterlinck, trans. Richard Hovey, 2nd series (New York: Duffield, 1908).

[2]These scenes were beautifully realized by Meyerhold on his simple and functional set of steps extending the full width of the stage. See Edward Braun, The Theatre of Meyerhold: Revolution on the Modern Stage (New

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The lighting effects described in the stage directions enhance the play's visualization. Sologub's scenes, like Maeterlinck's, are dark and shadowy.[1] We see a hallway in the castle, dimly lighted by torches in iron rings. The stage grows brighter or dimmer as the crowd enters or leaves, bringing more torches with them. In Act 3 dramatic lighting makes possible the apocalyptic impact of Algista's resurrection. It is night. "The full moon casts a bright streak of light on the upper steps and on the edge of the landing, leaving the rest of the place in darkness" (p. 375). Her mother carries in the bodies of Algista and the boy, and places them on the moonlit spot; when Algista raises herself and calls out, rousing the castle, we see their face and bloodstained clothing in the light of the moon. The shocked crowd gathers around them as the light brightens for the entrance of Bertha and Khlodoveg, dressed lightly but wearing their crowns, he with a sword in his hand. Here another tableau puts Khlodoveg in the position of having to choose between Algista and Bertha. As the scene proceeds, no one moves until Algista and her son fall dead and the light changes suddenly to give the stage picture a cold, flat, frieze-like effect, described by the Dispassionate Voice (p. 382).

The pictorial qualities of the play serve to heighten our sense of watching not a play but a story as it is told. On the stage we seem to see figures in our minds moving and speaking as we hear or read the words. The absence of objects contributes to this effect. Unlike the cluttered scene of Strindberg's Swanwhite, this fairy setting is a gray neutral space;

York: Drama Book Specialists, 1979), p. 83, for a description.

[1] Sologub's poetry, too, presents a dark and shadowy world. "His colors are subdued, almost lifeless, dull and greyish. He hates the sun, and his nature is always nocturnal, damp and muddy, moonlit"--Donchin, The Influence of French Symbolism on Russian Poetry, p. 148.

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the stage-pictures consist of actors arranged in this space. We visualize objects, such as Algista's veil, the knights' weapons, or the king's crown and sword, only when they are carried or worn, just as in reading we see only what is mentioned. In "The Theatre of One Will" Sologub insists that settings be kept austere, "so that there is nothing superfluous before the spectator's eyes, nothing beyond the absolutely necessary" (p. 97). The gray neutral space on the stage corresponds to the blank in the mind which is peopled with images when one reads:

> Perhaps the spectator should be shown only what he is required to see at any given moment, and everything else should be submerged in darkness--just as in our consciousness everything pending, to which we do not at present turn our attention, falls below the level of consciousness. It is, and at the same time it is as though it were not. (p. 97)

Sologub envisions objects and people being picked out of a depth of darkness by moving, sculptural light. Both his essay and his play demonstrate that the revolutionary ideas of Adolphe Appia had penetrated to Russia by 1907 at the latest.[1]

The sound effects are also part of the theatre-poetry of the piece. The crowd surges aggressively on and off the stage to provide a setting for King Khlodoveg and an image of the violent life which he is unable to transcend. Their songs, exclamations, and coarse laughter from behind the scene remind us of their constant presence and give the castle extension in space. Algista's confession and the uproar that ensues, for example, begins offstage, then bursts through the scene, so to speak, as the mob rushes her onstage and then off to execution. Before her resurrection we

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[1]The playwright's close relationship with Meyerhold was no doubt his means of access to Appia's ideas about stage lighting. Braun argues that Meyerhold's production of Andreyev's The Life of Man, 22 February 1907, demonstrated knowledge of the theories of Appia, well before the production of The Triumph of Death in November of that year. See Braun, The Theatre of Meyerhold, pp. 76, 78.

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hear the faint calling of the watch, the moaning of dogs, and eerie rustlings and whisperings that fill the castle as Algista cries out, slowly growing into a wild, confused din of shouting and clanging of weapons as the crowd gathers for the last scene, which ends in a preternaturally quiet stillness. This carefully described sound plot, almost musical in its expressiveness, with the voice of the disembodied narrator, adds a dimension of depth to the stage picture without removing its narrative qualities or making it more realistic.

The characters too are conceived pictorially and functionally. In the manner of fairy tales, Algista and Bertha express their qualities of soul in their outward appearance. Ethelwold, like his sister, is a red-haired monstrosity. The knights are defined by the ridiculous picture they make as they rush in with their weapons, their faces red, their eyes rolling. Characters in fairy tales also tend to be types rather than individuals, figures rather than persons. Sologub conforms his play to folk style in both respects, giving his characters only the traits required of them by the action and expressing those traits visually in a clarifying manner.

These folkloric qualities in the treatment are not merely ornamental. The organic relations of style and content become clear when we consider Khlodoveg, who appears at the end wearing a crown and holding a drawn sword, like a proper monarch in defense of his realm. Khlodoveg is a king, no more, no less. He never forgets his kingly function in the play, never speaks an unkingly word or does an unkingly deed. Moreover, he defines his role in the most obvious way, accepting the idea of kingship sanctioned by tradition and popular expectation. As Algista discovers, he can do nothing but "wage war, judge, and reward" as his ancestors did

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(p. 368). A totally stereotyped character, with no mind of his own, Khlodoveg must resist Algista's attempt to remake him. Offered the chance to choose a different way, he can only affirm, "Your speeches are mad. I am the king" (p. 381). In his conventionality he may be said to represent the conservative pull of the folk material of the play, opposing the revision of the legend proposed by Algista as if to protect the ending that ought to be the happy one. Sologub achieves his fairy-tale tragedy by putting an enlightened, idealistic, self-aware heroine into a traditional world in which the other characters react by reflex, as it were, according to accustomed roles. Algista's fate is the fairy-tale genre itself.

The Triumph of Death also resembles folk literature in its emphasis on plot. Sologub tightens and clarifies the action even more than the source tales do.[1] Whereas the Bertha-legend and the Grimm tale of the Goose Girl start with the true bride still at home, the play starts just before Bertha is led in to the king's couch the evening of the wedding. This shift makes possible a strict unity of place--as in Maeterlinck's one-acts--and heightens our sense of the unity of the action, which Sologub makes a desideratum in "The Theatre of One Will." The drama, he insists, must have a single focus, one hero, one point of attention (p. 93). The reason for this emphasis is ultimately metaphysical: only through a unified action can the audience be brought to see the true unity of experience behind its veil of fortuitous multiplicity (p. 89).

Algista, the only character with the freedom to choose, provides the "unity of volitional striving" that the author seeks. Each of the three

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[1]Though episodes may freely repeat, plots in fairy tales are highly unified. "The presence of loose organization and uncertain action in the plot structure is the surest mark of cultivation." Olrik, "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," p. 138.

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crises results from one of her choices. In the legend Bertha places the servant girl in the bridal bed herself, but in the play Algista takes the initiative by cutting her breast and lying down in the shadows outside the king's bedroom, where she is discovered. Her beauty and her mother's perjured testimony accomplish the deceit according to plan. In Act 2 Sologub again shifts the focus onto Algista. Having recognized Ethelwold, the true queen's brother, she has a premonition of defeat; but rather than be discovered in the lie, she decides to trust Khlodoveg's love and tell him who she is. But Khlodoveg, not being free to choose, is not free to love. In Act 3, overcoming death by sheer force of will, Algista becomes the voice of his destiny. When once again he cannot respond, she pronounces his punishment. By means of a series of tableaus, the play focuses our attention, act by act, on the three critical points in the plot: the deception, the discovery ten years later, and Algista's return and final defeat. The simple unity and clarity of this action are effects typical of folk tales.[1]

Both Maeterlinck's and Sologub's plays end in death. Sologub's conception of death, however, is both richer and more ironic. He uses death in the first place as a metaphor for the stolid immovability of brutish man. Frozen into statue-like attitudes at the end, Khlodoveg and his court are images of a deathly sterility of spirit:

> Behold--a spectacle of life turned to stone has become a flat picture, the moon has grown dim and every light is running from this place,--the immense proud chamber has become hidden behind the black cloud of death. (p. 382)

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[1] Olrik further notes that in folk literature "everything superfluous is suppressed and only the essential stands out salient and striking." The greatest law of folk tradition is Concentration on a Leading Character: "Protagonist and plot belong together" (ibid., pp. 138-9). Except during the offstage scene, Algista is always before our eyes.

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Algista literally dies while Khlodoveg remains alive, but such an unfree life is a kind of death. At the same time, however, Sologub conceives of death as "the happy, free world . . . where there are no masters or slaves" (p. 381) to which Algista would lead Khlodoveg if only he could follow. Denied fulfillment in her life on earth, Algista seeks refuge in an ideal transcendent world. No such world really exists, of course, except in the imagination. It is simply death, which receives its positive valuation in the play as a consequence of the author's flight from the imperfections of life, a flight which can end only in an irreconcilable contradiction.

Here we arrive at the crux of the play. In his essay Sologub describes tragedy as a kind of sacrificial rite on the themes of Love and Death, which are eternally opposed and eternally one. "The tragic muse discloses before us the eternal contradictoriness of the world, the eternal identity of good and evil and other polarities" (p. 94). It tears the veil off the ordinary world of chaos and chance which the average man takes for reality, to reveal a deeper, truer reality of tragic necessity. Driven by an uncompromising will to achieve freedom from chaos and chance, the autonomous individual like Algista strives to enter this transcendent realm and is both fulfilled and destroyed by it, leaving us with an impression of heroic nobility (p. 88). "Burning love consoles, and as it consumes, it is consumed--and the final consoler is Death" (p. 97). Maeterlinck's idea of death as an irrational principle of destruction gains overwhelming force from its simplicity and its hiddenness. Sologub's ideas of life as deathly and death as tragically consoling give his image of destiny a richness of conception that complements its affective power, thus rounding out a more satisfactory view of experience.

The theory of tragedy exemplified in The Triumph of Death also im-

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plies a theory of art. In seeking to transcend chaos and chance, the tragic hero becomes an artist, forever pursuing beauty in the kingdom of ideal order. After the first performance of the play Sologub added to it an allegorical prologue that helps to clarify these meanings. In it we see Don Quixote's Dulcinea, called Aldonza, unrecognized for the Queen of Beauty that she is and made to carry water as a servant. A kind of Cinderella, she meets three men, the King, the Poet, and the Lover, all of whom refuse to recognize her: "Again the true beauty of the world, of the enchantress Dulcinea in the form of the serpent-eyed Aldonza, shall remain uncrowned, unsung, unloved" (p. 355). Nevertheless she will continue to strive in order that ugliness may be deposed and beauty crowned. In the play we see her as Malgista, sending her daughter "to do a great deed," then as Algista herself.

As a symbol of the creative impulse forever seeking to be realized in a transcendent realm of beauty and death, Sologub's Dulcinea proposes a Platonic function of art, delineating ideals and urging mankind to aspire to them.[1] The play illustrates perfectly the conflict inherent in such a philosophy. If we can see Algista as an artist-hero who, grappling with intractable materials, fails to achieve form for her inspired vision, we we can also see her as the symbolist aesthete who recoils from reality into a life of the imagination. In 1911 Sologub wrote, "Art must recreate the world, in body and soul. The first stage--is to set up a new world within the vision of art, in defiance of reality and life."[2] Thus the play includes as one more powerful paradox both the confrontation of art

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[1]John Cournos, "Feodor Sologub as a Dramatist," The Drama 6 (August 1916):331.

[2]Quoted in Donchin, The Influence of French Symbolism on Russian

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with life and the withdrawal from it into a self-contained realm.

Besides Dulcinea, another of the mythical figures standing behind the character of Algista is Christ, also a superior individual, lowly born, who aspired to kingship for altruistic purposes and suffered tragically. Allusions to Christian mythology are especially prominent in the latter half of the play, where Algista is betrayed, stripped, spat upon, scourged with whips, and led out to "a cruel and ignominious public death" (p. 374). Her resurrection, announced in apocalyptic tones, is also a Second Coming: her thrice-repeated shout of "Sleepers, awaken!" (pp. 376-7) causes the people to think the dead have risen and the archangel's trumpet has called them to judgment. Forgiving Khlodoveg his sin because she loves him, Algista then presents him with the claim of a redeemer:

> With all the power of my immeasurable love, with all the strength of my unendurable torments, with all my will exulting over life and over death, I have bought you from the earth, the heavens, and the dark underground world, your body, your soul, and your midnight shadow. (p. 379)

As church bells sound, she offers him a choice between life and death stated in terms familiar to us from the Gospels: "If you love me, give up all you have and follow me" (pp. 380-1). In rejecting her once again and choosing Bertha, who stands by all the while urging him to cut down Algista with his sword, the King espouses Antichrist and becomes spiritually cold and dead. Like Christ, Algista can overcome death itself, but not human intransigence. Khlodoveg's "rigid, unequivocal self-certainty . . . which excludes transformation and all creativity, including revelation, is a thing of the Devil."[1]

Poetry, p. 94.

[1]Erich Neumann, "Creative Man and Transformation," Art and the Creative Unconscious: Four Essays, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 162.

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Far from merely outlining a Christian allegory, however, these powerful images carry many meanings, ethical and social-political as well as religious. Algista is a Promethean figure who decides for herself the rules she will live by and offers to lead others to a better life, whether it be fulfillment of self, an enlightened polity, or spiritual salvation. Sologub speaks in this play of the individual genius who aspires to change the course of history, and his heroine reminds us of Socrates, Jesus, St. Joan, and all other doomed heroes of our race who have called upon the mass of mankind to transcend their limitations. The allusions to Christian myth function subliminally to give the action a cosmic resonance. When, in effect, Algista says to Khlodoveg, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," she challenges him to fulfill his humanity. Her aspiration affirms human values that give her heroic stature and the play its tragic seriousness.

Like Strindberg, Sologub finds stage-equivalents for some of the formal characteristics of folk tales, but like Maeterlinck, he deliberately inverts their spiritual qualities. The princess's blessedness, her life-giving connection with her world, has been broken. Algista takes on fearful numinous power in her resurrection, when she speaks with the voice of destiny, but even then she is powerless to move Khlodoveg's heart. As in Maeterlinck, the nightmarish realm in which the heroine moves is projected on the stage in shadowy, flickering images which themselves invert the saturated primary colors, sharp edges, and stable structure of the folk fairy tale. Algista cannot drag Khlodoveg out of this darkness into the light. Her scene of demonic epiphany, the exposure and execution, is no less cruel than the equivalent scenes in Maeterlinck, illustrating the sadism which for both playwrights is an attribute of fate. The Triumph

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of Death is more a proper tragedy than Maeterlinck's dramas of passive suffering, because Algista finds heroic dignity in her strength of purpose, if not in the manner of her death. She is indeed blessed, with wisdom and courage as well as beauty, but unlike the true fairy-tale princess, she lives in a fallen universe. Hers is the tragedy of the superior individual crushed by a brutal, insensitive world which she cannot redeem.

Valle Inclán's The Dragon's Head (1909)

In "On Fairy-Stories" Tolkien defines the genre as one that creates believable imaginary worlds that have a quality of enchantment, what he calls "arresting strangeness" (pp. 47-48). This special quality is evoked in the tales by their marvelous objects, creatures, and events: magic is the basic defining characteristic of the world of fairy tale. To this definition Tolkien adds the proviso that "if there is any satire present in the tale, one thing must not be made fun of, the magic itself" (p. 10).

With this proviso the foremost theorist of the fairy tale raises an objection to a considerable body of fairy drama that uses magical elements as the focus of satire and social criticism. For an example we can turn to any of the extravaganzas of J. R. Planché, who wrote prolifically and successfully for the popular stage during the middle of the 19th century.[1] His fairy plays, mostly adapted from Perrault and Mme. D'Aulnoy, show a strong sense of self-consciousness that often turns to burlesque

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[1] On Planché, see Harley Granville-Barker, "Exit Planché—Enter Gilbert," The London Mercury 25 (March and April 1932):457-66, 558-73; and three articles by Dougald MacMillan, "Planché's Early Classical Burlesques," Studies in Philology 25 (July 1928):340-45; "Planché's Fairy Extravaganzas," Studies in Philology 28 (October 1931):258-66; and "Some Burlesques with a Purpose, 1830-1870," Philological Quarterly 8 (January 1929):255-63. A more recent study is P. T. Dircks' "James Robinson Planché and the English Burletta Tradition," Theatre Survey 17 (May 1976):68-81.

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and parody. In Riquet with the Tuft (1836), for example, Mother Bunch, the fairy godmother, is treated rather like the hero's old nanny. He calls her "godmama," and when she disappears after bestowing upon him a magic cloak, he says to the audience with a wink and a smile, "Gone!--excellent little woman--it would be a glorious thing for the world if all godmothers would take their pattern by you--never come till they're called--then give us a handsome present and vanish."[1] Planché satirizes the myths and tales he adapts by treating their heroic, romantic, marvelous, and serious elements in terms of the ordinary, domestic, and trivial everyday world, thus creating an amusing incongruity between the responses suggested by the fairy tale and the whimsical interpretation with which we are actually presented. Punning and clever topical comments are his most important means of parody. Such treatment makes the tales too familiar to strike us with wonder, and thus illustrates Tolkien's reasons for objecting to a satirical treatment of fairy-tale magic.

Planché's comic drama lies outside the purview of a study of modern fairy-tale plays, but Ramon del Valle Inclán's The Dragon's Head, a satire of the symbolist fairy drama, raises the same theoretical issues. Though not intended for the popular stage, The Dragon's Head self-consciously uses methods of burlesque and thus, in Tolkien's view, disqualifies itself as a true fairy tale. In examining the play, let us consider to what extent the audience can respond to the play as a parody of itself and at the same time appreciate its qualities of fairy-tale enchantment.

The play's folkloric credentials are impeccable: it is based primarily on the tale of the Dragon Slayer (Type 300), a story of French origin,

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[1] Planché, Extravaganzas, ed. T. F. Dillon and Stephen Tucker, 5 vols. (London: Samuel French, 1879), 2:230.

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collected in many versions, that has been placed among the oldest tales of the European tradition.[1] A reconstruction of the hypothetical original tale or Ur-type includes the following elements. After the death of his parents a boy inherits three sheep, which he exchanges for three magical dogs. Leaving home with his animals, he meets an old man or woman who gives him a magic sword or stick. He travels farther and finally arrives at a town draped all in black, where he learns that the princess is to be sacrificed the next day to a fierce seven-headed dragon. Whoever can kill the dragon and rescue the princess will inherit her hand and half the kingdom. The hero arrives at the place of sacrifice, kills the beast with his magic weapon, and removes the seven tongues. But rather than marrying right away, he and the princess make plans to meet after a certain time, and the hero proceeds on his travels. In the meantime a false hero, a servant who has observed this episode, threatens the princess with death if she will not acknowledge him as her rescuer. Taking the dragon's heads as proof, the false hero escorts the princess back to town and claims the reward. The princess, however, is able to delay the marriage for a year, at the end of which the true hero is back in town, with the dragon's tongues, to challenge the false hero and take his place at the princess's side. The two are married and the villain is punished.[2]

In his adaptation Valle Inclán has kept the main part of the story,

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[1] Thompson, The Folktale, p. 32.

[2] The Grimms' tale of "The Two Brothers" (no. 60, type 303) contains the whole of The Dragon Slayer, and the latter also occurs by itself. In Die Zwei Brüder, Folklore Fellows Communication No. 114 (Helsinki, 1934) Kurt Ranke examines the two forms together to arrive at the Ur-type here outlined, from which, according to Thompson, all the thousand or so variants that have been collected have derived. See Thompson, The Folktale, pp. 24-25.

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the fight with the dragon and the rescue of the princess together with the imposture and unmasking, but he has replaced the preliminary part with material from the Grimms' tale no. 136, "Iron Hans." The title character in this tale is a fierce wild man dwelling at the bottom of a lake in the forest, who is finally captured and imprisoned by the king whose land he has been ravaging for years. One day the king's son, playing in the courtyard, loses his golden ball in Iron Hans's cage, and in order to get it back he must steal the key from under his mother's pillow and unlock the door. To save the boy from a beating, Iron Hans carries him into the forest and becomes his magic helper when the boy later sets out to find his fortune. When the hero finally marries his princess, the wild man turns out to be a king who had been bewitched, now disenchanted by the hero's success.

The dramatist appropriates this story for his comic purposes by making the fearsome wild man into a mischievous wood-sprite, a satyr whose forehead "still bears the marks of the horns with which he was first discovered by the poets, long ago, in the ancient groves of Greece."[1] Rather than murdering people, the Sprite plays impish tricks such as stripping petals from the royal roses and shaking dew onto the Queen as she walks under the trees. After suffering many such pranks, the ill-humored King Mangucián has finally captured the Sprite and plans to execute him the next day. The hero, Prince Verdemar, takes the key from his mother's belt in order to keep his promise to free the Sprite in return for the golden ball. Discovering that the goblin has escaped, King Mangucián blusters that he

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[1] Valle Inclán, "The Dragon's Head," trans. May Heywood Broun, Poet Lore 29 (Winter 1918):533 (page references hereafter given in the text). Valle Inclán uses a creature similar to the Sprite, a Goat Goblin with magical powers, in his tragicomedy, Divine Words (1913).

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will "eat the raw, unsalted heart" (p. 537) of whoever let him out. With his mocking laugh and roguishly twinkling glance, the Sprite provides an appropriate punishment for the fatuous king, who takes himself much too seriously. By the end he makes the king literally eat his words.

Having fled his father's wrath to a neighboring kingdom, Prince Verdemar in his turn finds a suitable antagonist not in the dragon, which he easily defeats with the diamond sword provided him by the Sprite, but in the bully, Señor Espandián, who takes the role of the false hero. Verdemar meets this ruffian, a notorious local bully with a price on his head, in a realistic inn-scene probably suggested by a similar scene at the end of the Dragon Slayer tale. Besides introducing the villain, this scene serves primarily to characterize Verdemar as a strong, sympathetic hero. He invites poor people to eat with him; he wants to rescue the princess as soon as he sees her beauty; and most important for Valle Inclán's comic purposes, he challenges and defeats Espandián as soon as the latter comes crashing into the inn abusing his woman and demanding a free meal. Though we laugh at almost everything else in the play, we vigorously applaud Verdemar's heroism because we do not like to see violent intimidation gain its object, especially at the expense of the poor and weak.

Like Evgeny Shvarts' satire, The Naked King, discussed below, The Dragon's Head is in large part a Plautine comedy celebrating the triumph of youth and love over two heavy fathers and a Miles Gloriosus figure who, in his role of false hero, becomes more important than the canonical villain, the dragon. Furthermore, the presence of the roguish Sprite turns this comic reinterpretation into an ideal vehicle for satirical effects.

The tongue-in-cheek tone of the fairy tale is established from the start by the setting, which, Valle Inclán tells us, "is a castle of pure

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fancy such as children see in their dreams, and, God be praised, it has not yet been restored by the royal architects" (p. 531). "It might be built of bronze, of diamond, or of mist." Storks stand among the pointed towers listening in ecstasy to the Sprite's song, and "the attitudes of the storks proclaims that they are admirers of Richard Wagner" (p. 532). The Queen at her first entrance is virtually a piece of fairy-tale scenery in motion. She wears her crown and a long train held by a page; a greyhound leaps at her side and a falcon sits on her wrist. But later, when she discovers the theft of the key, we read:

> She is beside herself with rage and the crown dances upon her head. The falcon upon her wrist spreads its quivering wings, while the greyhound breaks out into sharp and strident barks. The page who bears her royal train pants wearily, his tongue hanging out parched. (p. 537)

"Traitors in the palace!" she shouts; "we live in Russia." Here is an example of Planché's method of parody, which comically deflates the romance of the tale with a topical comment. There is no Russia in the ideal realm of Fairy Tale, only the nameless archetypal Kingdom; likewise, there is no Richard Wagner. By making us aware of the smiling presence of the author, this sort of comment explodes our sense of having escaped into another world. Earlier, chortling over having at last snared the Sprite, King Mangucián commands a medal to be struck in honor of the day; his Prime Minister suggests "rather a postage stamp. It would commemorate the happy event quite as well and at the same time augment the humble resources of the treasury" (p. 536). If we have to be recalled from the satisfactions of vengeance by such considerations, we are obviously not in that ideal world in which nothing matters but what we most desire and fear. Instead, as in the extravaganzas of Planché, we have one foot in our own complex world, and in that position we look at the fairy tale from the self-

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conscious point of view of the satirist.

As if to prove this point, in the first scene Verdemar's brother says, "I have never seen a Sprite and I do not believe that such things exist. Sprites and witches and goblins do not belong to our time" (p. 533). He is both right and wrong. The Sprite is there, of course, to prove him wrong. At the same time he is right simply by virtue of being able to say such a thing. Characters in true fairy tales never question the reality of the magical creatures that populate and define their enchanted worlds. On this point Max Lüthi writes,

> The real fairy-tale hero is not astonished by miracles and magic; he accepts them as if they were a matter of course. Supernatural figures endowed with magical powers appear, to oppose or help him, not to bear witness for a completely different, supernatural world which makes us shudder with horror or ecstasy. The miracle is the vital substance in the fairy tale; it permeates the entire tale and is no longer told for its own sake.[1]

To make a fairy-tale character a skeptic with a rationalistic point of view is to add an edge of self-consciousness to the tale that either subverts the enchantment altogether, replacing it with the charm and cleverness of the satire (as in the case of Planché, whose characters are amusingly aware of the nature of the stories in which they appear), or sharply sets off the supernatural element so that when the magic does reveal itself the skeptic is emphatically disproved. At the end of A Midsummer Night's Dream Theseus, the rationalist, refuses to believe the lovers' testimony about their strange adventure in the wood, yet the fairies appear in his house once everybody is asleep. In The Dragon's Head, soon after the skeptical sentiment quoted above is expressed, the Sprite himself appears at the window of his prison. Yet, whether the supernatural element is af-

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[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 46.

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firmed or denied, a point of view of skepticism highlights it in a manner foreign to the unself-consciousness of the folk fairy tale. The play's awareness of its own genre could hardly be more explicit than in a later comment: "This sounds . . . too much like a fairy story" (p. 546). The skepticism, expressed in the author's own words in the stage directions, in the treatment of the scenery, and in the characters' self-conscious comments, makes the play's form part of its content. Thus The Dragon's Head can not only criticize rationalism as a partial and inadequate view of the world;[1] at the same time it can satirize the symbolist fairy tale through a parody that has its own sophisticated charm.

The setting for Scene 3, reminding us of Strindberg's Swanwhite and every other romantic fairy tale we have ever read, can be seen in its tongue-in-cheek perfection as Valle Inclán's comment on the vogue of fairy tales among symbolist poets, dramatists, and painters:

> A garden of roses, with marble stairs, where peacocks spread their tails. A lake and two swans, perfect in stillness. In a labyrinth of myrtle, at the foot of the fountain, the daughter of the King sits weeping.[2] (p. 547)

The characters' romantic behavior shows their appreciation of the exquisite artifice of their world. Disguised as a fool, the hero consoles the prin-

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[1] Ibsen, in his early fairy play, St. John's Night (1853), also uses a Goblin to criticize rationalism. The skeptic in the play rejects the beliefs of the folk, saying, "I regard goblins and fairies and the like as symbolic concepts which in the past wise men used to express ideas for which they did not have the correct abstract terminology." The Goblin hoots at him, demonstrating the attitude of the play toward such positivistic reductionism. The Oxford Ibsen, ed. and trans. James Walter McFarlane and Graham Orton (London: Oxford University Press), 1:218.

[2] The setting for Scene 5 is equally evocative of a symbolist ideal beauty: "The Royal Gardens. A peacock, with fanlike tail spread in a heavenly rainbow, stands on a rose-covered staircase of marble. At the foot floats a silver gondola with canopy of ivory; and at the prow a pair of swans, whose perfect curves evoke celestial harmonies." (p. 555)

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cess in her sadness. We read: "From a rosebush all flower and fragrance that is tossing its branches in the wind, Prince Verdemar plucks the most perfect rose and kneeling before the Princess, like a jester of Watteau, offers her the flower" (p. 547). Bidding the king her father farewell, the Princess says, "Leave me, my father! I fulfill my destiny, a flower whose unfolding petals are scattered by the wind" (p. 553).

The prominence of birds and flowers in the imagery gives these scenes a lyrical, decorative quality that is summed up in the reference to Watteau and completed by the figure of the dragon. To see this beast, half-serpent, half-horse, with batlike wings and seven rows of gleaming teeth, is to be put in mind of a Chinese New Year celebration: we are immediately intrigued with how it works and how it was made. The dragon ceases to be a threat and becomes an ingenious stage-property. No such beast could ever eat a princess. A charming irony follows the rescue. The Princess, whose aching feet could carry her no farther, who could not flee the dragon because she had no shoes, then shows her gratitude by putting on golden, jewel-encrusted slippers offered her by Verdemar, remarking delightedly that "they are like slippers worn by a princess in a fairy tale" (p. 554).

The self-consciousness and artificiality I have been pointing out contribute also to a moral satire focusing on selfish and dishonorable behavior.[1] Prince Verdemar and the Sprite are the only ones in the play who honor their commitments and keep their promises. In the preliminary

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[1]Tolkien would agree that this sort of satire is congenial with the spirit of fairy tale, not being directed against itself: ". . . fairy-stories as a whole have three faces: the Mystical towards the Supernatural; the Magical towards Nature; and the Mirror of scorn and pity towards Man" ("On Fairy-Stories," p. 26).

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scene Valle Inclán gives the hero two older brothers to make just this point.[1] As the princes play, three times their ball bounces in the window of the Sprite's prison: both older brothers get it back by promising to open the door; neither keeps his word. Reprimanded for his lack of honor, Prince Ajonjolí answers, "You are becoming disrespectful to me as a Prince of the Blood. One calls a farmer an honest man, or a winegrower or a tradesman, but no one is so insolent as to apply such a term to a prince" (p. 534). After Verdemar keeps his promise and releases the Sprite, his brothers further show their character by betraying him to their father.

With the outstanding exception of Verdemar himself, all the royal and aristocratic characters conduct themselves according to the self-serving ethic implied in Prince Ajonjolí's words. In despair for his daughter, King Micomicón secretly escapes the palace and proposes to abjure his throne and flee with her to a far-off land where there are no dragons; but in the next scene he proves willing to execute her himself rather than ally his family to Verdemar, who is dressed in the jester's cap and bells. Espandián would have been acceptable, "for a bandit may become the sire of a noble line, as history tells. . . . But a fool cannot become the prop of the kingdom" (p. 561). Neither royal fool perceives his own foolishness. All generous emotions in this world of anti-chivalry prove false or hollow. Escorting the Princess to her rendezvous with the dragon, the Master-of-Ceremonies cares more about the protocol of the occasion than

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[1]Here Valle Inclán makes sophisticated use of tripling, which in folk narrative is a common means of developing and varying the stereotyped elements of a story. Commenting on the significance of the Law of Three in folklore, Axel Olrik says, "Nothing distinguishes the great bulk of folk narrative from modern literature and from reality as much as does the number three. Such a ruthlessly rigid structuring of life stands apart from all else." See his "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," pp. 133-34.

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about the Princess's feelings and aching feet. The Duchess begs her pardon for leaving in haste, saying that she would die of mortification if night surprised her in the woods alone with the Master-of-Ceremonies. As in Sologub's The Triumph of Death, the courtiers who surround the aristocratic characters offer a visual representation of their lack of true humanity. They have "the foolish air of puppets whose movements are controlled by strings. They courtsey and smile with round bright eyes as expressionless as the beads of a necklace" (p. 549).[1]

Added to the literary parody, the moral criticism implies a realistic and debunking point of view, the chief spokesman for which is the Fool. When Verdemar first meets him in the inn, he has prudently fled the doomed princess's service and is about to embark on a lecture tour of the Indies. Chided for abandoning his mistress in her hour of need, the Fool explains that jesters are very much like poets:

> When a poet writes a sonnet, all tenderness and sighs, a tissue of fine frenzy and tears, doubtless his wife is lying at home in bed with a broken leg, for which his stick is responsible. He affects a sweet disorder in his verses, but he is more practical from day to day than a court officer. . . . When the music of verses palls, like the jingling of our bells, and the purse at home is empty, poets and fools alike take ship with one accord and lecture in the Indies. (p. 539)

After Espandián is exposed, the Fool offers consolation by reminding him

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[1]The obvious way to achieve the effect described here would be to use real puppets, which raises the possibility of doing the whole play that way. Except in Scene 2, which seems too realistic, beautifully designed and crafted puppets or marionettes would give the play exactly the air of elegant artificiality that it needs. We recall that Tolkien says that a true fairy tale cannot be put on the stage because to give audible and visible expression to an imaginary world is to destroy it (above, p. 21). But the fantasy he is talking about has already been destroyed by the author's parodic point of view, the theatrical expression of which would be parodies of actors, or puppets. We have to see the dragon to savor the deliciousness of the satire. If Tolkien is right, here is proof that The Dragon's Head is something more than, if not something other than, a true fairy tale.

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that it is the Princess's husband who "will enjoy a monopoly of her ill-humor" (p. 562). Needless to say, such a sentiment would have no place in a true fairy tale, which does not look behind the drawn curtain of the happy ending. Valle Inclán further gives Espandián a motive that cuts comically through the naivety of the simple form: he wanted to find a well-paying job to secure his old age.

Verdemar, though called a sentimentalist by the Fool, largely escapes this debunking, but even he is no Cyrano de Bergerac.[1] After challenging Espandián in the inn, he undertakes a most unheroic evasion to save himself when the bully returns with reinforcements. "My sword will clear the way" (p. 545), he boasts, but when the Fool suggests exchanging clothes, he snaps up the idea. At the end the Sprite takes on the role of debunker. His trick of serving King Mangucián the raw, unsalted heart of a sheep at the royal wedding banquet shows both kings the reality behind their inflated images of themselves:

> Dogs and lions and tigers and wolves and cats eat raw and bloody meat, because their stomachs are provided with large quantities of hydrochloric acid which facilitates digestion. Kings, in remote ages, did the same, but, today, in the course of evolution, they have lost the power. With their prerogatives they have forfeited digestive ability. Constitutional kings are vegetarians at heart. (p. 564)

The memorable figure of the dragon suggests what we most admire about this play: the cleverness of the parody, the elegant theatricality and color, and the clarity and deftness of the writing. Is the play a true fairy tale? Satirizing itself in order to satirize other fairy tales, the

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[1] Carlo Gozzi, whose influence on the European fairy drama proves long-lasting, maintained a strict separation between the romantic characters who enacted the fairy tale and the low-life characters (in his plays the commedia masks) who parodied it, thus providing a recipe for the mixture of seriousness and satire in the same form. See John A. Symonds' Introductory Essay to The Memoirs of Count Carlo Gozzi, trans. Symonds, 2 vols. (London: Nimmo, 1890), 1:163-4. Valle Inclán varies the recipe.

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play destroys the naive air of enchantment of its folk sources, but the structure remains and is still potent. Mention of Russia and Richard Wagner and references to its own genre are like delightful little shocks, flashes of wit that suddenly light up this or that corner of the larger universe outside the closed world of the fairy tale. Each of these sallies surprises us in an unexpectedly apt context provided by the story; together they add up to a richly comic reinterpretation not only of the Dragon Slayer story but also of life itself.[1] We are invited to see the world anew through the defamiliarizing imaginative coupling of items never before associated. Watching his men struggling to bring in the dragon's head, Espandián remarks, "It is as weighty as a doctoral dissertation" (p. 558). The charm of the play lies in gems such as this that set the mind going in a hilarious whirl.

Yet even as we anticipate the next such flash of wit, the strong story line pulls us along. The typical fairy tale's focus on sheer narrative event creates a powerful enducement simply to find out what happens next; in literary and theatrical redactions of folk tales for adults we have the added enducement to find out how it can happen, how the familiar events will work themselves out. It is this interest that all truly crea-

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[1] As an example, consider the discussion of the Fountain of Forgetfulness. After the rescue and before Verdemar reappears in his proper guise as hero, the Princess seeks diversion from her unfulfilled memories:

> Princess.--There is a fountain, they say . . .
> Prince Verdemar.--The fountain is at the other end of the world. One must travel many years to reach it.
> Princess.--After drinking of its waters, tell me, is it true that one forgets?
> Prince Verdemar.--One forgets without drinking. Time works the miracle; it is not the fountain. If the journey is long, one always forgets.

Verdemar's point is that the Princess seems already to have forgotten. She does not recognize him dressed as the jester: "A gallant knight proclaims himself your savior, yet you know him not. When the heart forgets, the eyes forget also." (pp. 556-7)

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tive adapters of fairy tales try to engage as they combine and permutate in new ways the stereotyped motifs of a conventional genre. True, Valle Inclán's solution means the loss of certain folkloric effects: the power and charm of the play are literary, and they put the magic of the story to work as means to an end beyond empowering the events themselves.

Yet the events demand our attention. We take Verdemar's idealistic heroism seriously, just as we despise Espandián's brutal egoism and the arrogance and fatuity of King Mangucián, who threatens to eat the heart of his own son. Verdemar's success is a happy event mostly because we like to see bullies put down, pretensions punctured, and the right people married. When King Mangucián accepts the Sprite's rebuke and admits that he is only a constitutional king and could not eat anyone's raw, unsalted heart, the parody and the fairy tale converge in a moment of delight because of the rightness of things, not the least part of which is the cleverness of the playwright in making up an ending that so neatly closes his comic form.

Finally, we can make sense of how the play works by thinking of the Sprite as the whimsical presence of the author himself. As the vice-figure or architectus of the action,[1] he defines the world the characters are living in, regardless of what they think. His magical powers reflect the creative will of the author. The Sprite makes the ball bounce in the window and so chooses the third brother, the one worthy of saving the Princess. He serves as Magic Helper by removing the tongues which expose the imposter. He offers King Mangucián his foolish boast on a silver platter. His dancing and singing and the sly twinkle of his eye catch the tone of the parody;

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[1]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 173-4.

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Northrop Frye calls his type "the spirit of comedy" and sees it best exemplified in Puck and Ariel, spiritual avatars of the Plautine tricky slave.[1] He seems to say, "You can believe this is not a fairy tale if you want, but I am the one who decides. Verdemar knows it is, and that is why he is my favorite. On the other hand, don't forget that we live in the era of constitutional kings." If we should press him to settle the question, his only answer would be a smile and a wink.

Other plays and playwrights of the turn of the century could be included here, but Maeterlinck, Strindberg, Hauptmann, Sologub, and Valle Inclán give us an adequate sample of the symbolists' methods and purposes in dealing with the fairy tale. These authors represent the different stages and geographical centers of the international symbolist movement and illustrate together how the fairy tale became a common property in the drama at the beginning of the 20th century. All the major early modern dramatists were touched in some way by the symbolist aesthetic, including, of course, Ibsen and Chekhov, and most of them made use of fairy tales or folklore somehow in their work.[2]

The symbolists took up the fairy tale because its fantastic, supernatural qualities enabled them to present unrealistic images of reality and to open access to unconscious sources of artistic meaning. Unlike the writers of the popular féerie and pantomime, the symbolists did not use

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Even Shaw, the rationalist, drew upon folk tradition for Androcles and the Lion (1913), based upon Aesop's literary rendering of a folk fable. The story of Androcles is included in the Aarne-Thompson Types of the Folk-Tale as Type 156, "The Splinter in the Lion's Paw." Shaw's version has been called a fairy-tale play by Berthold Viertel in "Androklus und der Löwe: Märchenspiel von Bernard Shaw," Schriften zum Theater (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1970), p. 112.

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their tales, myths, and legends merely as excuses for conventional parody and spectacular display. By taking the tales seriously, Maeterlinck and his followers discovered alternatives to the prevailing forms of their time, and in so doing they charted new directions for the anti-realistic drama of the 20th century.

This does not mean, of course, that they did not change the tales they adapted. Their plays are products of sophisticated art that could never actually be mistaken for folklore, and not only because they are presented in an entirely different medium. In moving from the universe of anonymous myth to that of self-conscious art, the stories take on an entirely different ontological status, and the effects of this transformation are everywhere evident in the works themselves. The reinterpreted tales of the symbolists vary from their source stories chiefly with respect to their imaginative worlds, the qualities attributed to their heroines, and their tones and endings. Let us summarize each of these developments.

(1) The world of the symbolist fairy-tale play. The universe of the folk fairy tale is a prelapsarian universe in which "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28). The landscape of such a world, created for mankind, is open rather than closed, presenting an unblocked field for heroic endeavor. It is light rather than dark, with all its "mortal grossness" purged, its weight of physicality sublimated and spiritualized. Its objects have talismanic meaning. Its saturated primary colors and sharp edges give the traditional stories the super-real qualities of dreams.

Laying aside The Dragon's Head for the moment--Valle Inclán's attention seems to be focused on images drawn not directly from folklore but from the work of other playwrights, poets, and artists--we can say that

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symbolist drama presents two contrasting versions of this fairy-tale world. Its naive qualities are best rendered in both scenic and moral aspects by Strindberg. The setting of Swanwhite places before our eyes the fairy-tale scene itself. Its colors and objects, its light-filled vistas, and most of all its responsiveness to the fears and desires of the heroine describe, in the fairy-tale manner, a world defined by childish "omnipotence of thought." Strindberg's scene varies from that of his sources in the degree to which its images are elaborated and multiplied far beyond the simple economy of style typical of fairy tales. In the words of R. J. Kaufmann, his world is "de tropistic."[1] As a quasi-realistic play, on the other hand, Easter does not attempt to present a visual image of a narrative fairy-tale world, but its economy of means, combined with its benevolent universe, actually places it closer to folklore, in feeling at least, than Swanwhite.

At the other extreme, the dark, crumbling, stagnant worlds of Princess Maleine and Pelleas and Melisande present what one critic has called "demonic modulations" of their archetypal patterns.[2] For Maeterlinck physical barriers and human mortality are absolute blocks to happiness, and images alluding to the downward pull of gravity always resist man's desire to transcend his earthly, death-bound existence. Sologub uses the idea of being fixed in stone to say the same thing. Equally dark, shadowy, and inhospitable to hopes of a better life, the world of The Triumph of Death also presents a demonic revision of its source tale.

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[1] R. J. Kaufmann, "Strindberg: The Absence of Irony," Drama Survey 3, no. 4 (1964):472.

[2] Horst S. Daemmrich, "The Infernal Fairy Tale: Inversion of Archetypal Motifs in Modern European Literature," Mosaic 5 (1972):88.

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In Hannele we are shown both versions of this world in contrasting images. Hannele's dream world corresponds to the providential universe of the true fairy tale; like the scene of Swanwhite, it is open, colorful, and full of light streaming down from above. The other world in the play, that of Hannele's waking reality, corresponds in import, if not in its naturalistic imagery, to the tragic universes in Maeterlinck and Sologub. It is a realm fundamentally opposed to the naive ethic of fairyland that adjusts our fate to what we desire and deserve.

(2) The characters of the symbolist fairy-tale play. A key question for all adapters of fairy tales is, What is my hero's relation to his world? In true folk tales a fairy princess like Maleine, Melisande, or Algista renews the whole kingdom when she achieves marriage with the prince or king. In the Grimms' "Sleeping Beauty" (no. 50), for example, all the inhabitants of the sleeping castle, from the king to the kitchen boy, awaken and resume their lives along with the princess. For Maeterlinck and Sologub, as we have seen, this life-giving connection between the fairy princess and her world, by virtue of which we can describe the hero or heroine as "blessed,"[1] is broken. Like Maleine and Melisande, Algista can neither understand nor influence events in her world; all three are defeated by a malevolent fate.

The fairy-tale heroine's blessedness is not really a matter of character but of her relation to her world. Maleine, Melisande, Hannele, and Algista are just as good at heart as Swanwhite and Eleonora, equally loving and graced with beauty; yet their fates are not the same. They differ from true folk figures in their sophisticated characterization and the degree

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[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 141-5.

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of individuality they enjoy. But with respect to moral qualities, all are heroines that might have come out of a folk tale. Even Algista, whose idealism is a conscious philosophy, wants only to fulfill the traditional role of True Bride in renewing her kingdom.

The characters do vary with respect to their numinous qualities, but this difference of treatment seems to have no greater effect on their fates than their moral qualities. Maleine and Melisande partake of the mystery of their origin. Eleonora and Swanwhite are given charm, like Miranda in The Tempest, by their innocence, compassion, and love. For the audience, if not for the others in her play, Hannele takes on some of the "possessed" qualities of the shaman as she establishes connection with spiritual forces in her ecstatic delirium. Similarly, Algista acquires fearsome numinous power in her resurrection, when she speaks to Khlodoveg with the voice of destiny.

The characters also vary from active (Swanwhite, Eleonora, Algista) to passive (Hannele, Maleine, Melisande). But Algista, the strongest of the heroines, suffers a fate no less terrifying than that of Maleine, one of the weakest. Like their moral qualities, such differences seem to have no effect in determining success or failure.

Excepting Valle Inclán's princess once again as a special case, we can say that only Strindberg's heroines share that blessed connection with benevolent powers by which the fairy princess succeeds in bringing peace and fulfillment to everyone in her world. The heroines in all these plays represent human hopes for transcendence in their most fragile and delicate form. What becomes of these hopes seems to depend directly on the optimism or pessimism of the dramatist. The optimist (Strindberg on one of the sunny slopes of his life) can see his own faith reflected in the idealism of the

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fairy tale and find ways to realize visions of happiness in his own work. The pessimist breaks the heroine's connection with her world in order to show mankind cast out of the Eden that is his proper home, cut off from the sources of renewing power, adrift in a sea of hostile forces. For the symbolists the image of the fairy princess serves as a philosophical Rohrschach Test. The fundamental differences in point of view that it reveals, cutting across all the modern fairy drama, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter IV.

(3) The tone and typical endings of the symbolist fairy-tale plays. The symbolists' third revision of the fairy tale, that of its tone and ending, further reveals these philosophical differences. The folk tale ends happily because its purpose is to inspire and console mankind with a vision of life as it ought to be. Every such tale re-establishes for its hero a just equilibrium between desert and reward. Hannele best illustrates the consoling power of the form and the naively instrumental function of its magic (here equated with poetic imagination). Swanwhite and Easter illustrate the more difficult Christian idea that one must suffer in order to be redeemed, but here too marvelous improbabilities correct the injustices of reality to make the redemptive ending possible.

But the characteristically modern revision of the fairy tale, exemplified in Maeterlinck and Sologub, is the ironical ending of tragedy. In Einfache Formen André Jolles discusses a genre he calls the tragic fairy tale or "anti-conte." In real life, he says, it is rare for the course of events to follow our hopes and expectations to re-establish a state of justice. In the anti-conte (e.g., Ovid's myth of Actaeon) we find a "naively immoral universe" which resembles the fallen world of reality in its resistance to human happiness. "These stories correspond to a tragic universe

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and the tragic course of things is summed up in them in a 'verbal gesture' which is 'the river too deep' or 'the lion' [a reference to Pyramus and Thisbe] and which carries the idea of separation and death."[1]

Though Jolles has folk forms in mind, his description and even his metaphors fit Maeterlinck's literary tales perfectly. True fairy tales pose tragic facts and situations in order to annihilate them;[2] Maeterlinck's use of such tales implicitly sets up hopes for happiness which he then undercuts. His princesses end in an isolation far more terrible than that from which they sprang. Northrop Frye best describes their fate in his sixth or most ironical phase of the Mythos of Winter, wherein human life is presented against a background of "prisons, madhouses, lynching mobs, and places of execution."[3] In such works of unrelieved bleakness we arrive, according to Frye, at points of "demonic epiphany." The locked iron gate behind which Tintagiles is killed is a clear example; in Princess Maleine it is the fountain in the garden or the poisonous castle itself, in Pelleas and Melisande, the pool beneath the castle. If transformations and resurrections and the like reveal a divine order of things in true fairy tales, points of epiphany in these ironical works manifest a demonic order. As inverted fairy tales, Maeterlinck's plays of separation and death reflect the happy ending as nightmare reflects wish-fulfillment dream.

Hannele too is an anti-fairy tale, but a more complex one. Even as it demonstrates the energy of Hannele's imagination, it ends in a pathetic disappointment for the audience that shows the superior force of physical

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[1] André Jolles, Einfache Formen, pp. 190-1.

[2] Ibid., p. 192.

[3] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 238.

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reality. The Triumph of Death follows the same general pattern, confronting its heroine with an immovable obstacle that defeats her idealistic project. Algista's connection with transcendent powers, rather than releasing those around her from enchantment, has the contrary effect of solidifying Khlodoveg and his court in their unwillingness to change. While not an anti-fairy tale in Jolles' sense, The Dragon's Head too inverts its source tale through parody and satirical effects. Made disingenuously naive by self-consciousness, this symbolist fairy tale satyr-play reveals perhaps better than any other the double perspective of all works adapted from folk materials, demonstrating how a change in point of view can alter the meaning of a poetic structure.

The most interesting symbolist fairy plays are those that radically revise the form and spirit of the folk stories they are based on. Their characters, individualized versions of anonymous folk-tale figures, partake of the same numinous qualities but lack the blessed connection with fateful powers; and because their spiritual universes are indifferent or even hostile to their interests rather than benevolent, they fail to achieve a rewarding sense of community. The irony of this conclusion echoes the dominant note of the literature of our century.

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CHAPTER III

THE CONFLICT OF TWO WORLDS

Most of the plays already described have offered a unified vision of a fairy world, related somehow to a "real world" in the minds of the author and audience, but whole and unbroken within the play itself. The tales on which the plays are based themselves present unified worlds. A large number of fairy dramas, however, are not adaptations of Grimm or Perrault, and so do not present their unified imaginary worlds. Rather they are drawn from a tradition of myth and legend reaching back to ancient times about human contacts with the Other World of fairies, gods, spirits, and the dead. Plays based on this folk tradition show both worlds in order to demonstrate the impact of spiritual powers on human life.

In Greek myth the conflict of two alien realms of experience often takes the form of a love relationship between a human and a supernatural being. The story of Daphne in Ovid's Metamorphoses, who was transformed into a laurel tree while fleeing the embraces of Apollo, is a good example. In folklore the theme is illustrated from a rich store of motifs including changelings, fairy lovers, ghosts and hauntings, enchantments, the fairy ointment, trips to fairyland, the supernatural lapse of time in fairyland, and similar magical events.

Fairy lovers and brides, for example, are common in Celtic folklore. The ancient Irish knights of the Fianna had constant dealings with fairies

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and took mistresses and wives from among them.[1] Oisin, the last survivor of that fighting band, sojourned for hundreds of years with the fairy Niamh in Tir-Nan-Og (the "Land of the Young"); his idyll ended when, visiting the land of the living, he broke a taboo by dismounting, whereupon the enchanted horse Niamh had given him fled and Oisin suddenly grew gray and stooped with age.[2] In most tales making use of these motifs there persists something of the medieval notion that fairies were fierce and powerful beings, akin to devils, with whom intercourse was dangerous at best.[3] The beautiful mermaid might just as well drag the man who rescues her into the depths as consent to grant him his three wishes. If the fairies did not destroy a man at first encounter, they would eventually withdraw their favors, leaving their human lovers cut off from sources of spiritual sustenance they had grown to depend on.

"Cupid and Psyche," from Apuleius' The Golden Ass, ancestor to the modern "Beauty and the Beast" tale, demonstrates that not all such tales end tragically. But the most familiar stories on this theme, such as the ballad of Thomas Rhymer and Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," show the destructive effect of demonic powers. In like manner the dramas based on this theme are not all tragic, but most affirm either the implacable mal-

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[1] Katharine Briggs, An Encyclopedia of Fairies, Hobgoblins, Brownies, Bogies, and Other Supernatural Creatures (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), pp. 174-5.

[2] Ibid., p. 315.

[3] Lewis, The Discarded Image, pp. 114-5. Yeats' version of the myth, "The Wanderings of Oisin" (1889), illustrates the conflict not only of the fairy idyll versus the world of human striving, but also of pagan versus Christian values. St. Patrick, to whom Oisin tells the story of his adventure in fairyland, condemns both his "dalliance with a demon thing," Niamh, and his former life of making love and war with godless companions who are now in hell. Yeats accepts the medieval valuation of fairies but rejects Christianity by having Oisin seek out his companions in death.

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evolence of the inhabitants of the Other World or the impassability of the barrier between our world and it. They end, as Jolles' formula for the anti-conte leads us to expect, in separation and death.

Plays depicting the collision of a human and a fairy world follow two patterns. A work based on what I have called the "Undine-pattern" presents the two opposed worlds simultaneously, so that the tension between them pulls the two lovers apart, destroying one or both of them at the same time. The tragic conclusion affirms the incompatibility of the two worlds, often, as in Giraudoux's Ondine, criticizing human life from the standpoint of the ideal fairy realm. When the two opposed worlds are identified as "art" and "life," as in Hofmannstahl's early plays, Ibsen's The Master Builder, and Hauptmann's The Sunken Bell, the writer can use the Undine-pattern to explore the dilemma of the artist in his vocation.[1] Though these plays end tragically, others end happily, either by having a threatened character successfully resist being drawn into the demonic world (Ibsen's The Lady from the Sea, Giraudoux's Intermezzo) or, more rarely, by integrating the two opposed worlds (Hofmannstahl's The Woman Without a Shadow, Sologub's Night Dances).[2]

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[1]Taking the story on which Keats' famous poem is based as a key to all literary treatments of the "fairy mistress" theme, Barbara Fass notes a significant ambiguity in the phrase "sans merci," which can refer to the fairy's lack of pity for the mortal she seduces or to the fairy's damned condition as a demonic creature. In Fass's view writers use this ambiguity to express a wide range of meanings, all of which she interprets as responses to the romantic artist's sense of social and spiritual isolation—see her extensive study, La Belle Dame Sans Merci & the Aesthetics of Romanticism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974). I see this as only one of several valid readings but one that is especially important in plays that focus explicitly on the predicament of the artist.

[2]Following "Cupid and Psyche," Cocteau demonstrates a third kind of happy ending in his film, Beauty and the Beast (1946), by having his transformed lovers withdraw from the human world into a transcendent realm.

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The other typical pattern among these plays is the A-B-A pattern, already illustrated for us by Hauptmann's Hannele. In this "Visit to Fairyland" pattern the numinous world exists not alongside but within the real world, enclosed and framed by it, and the action describes a linear movement into fairyland and then out again. The fairy world is often experienced as a literal or figurative dream, and the contradictions between the two worlds are felt as a shocking "awakening to reality," a disenchantment or disillusionment. Several plays of J. M. Barrie illustrate this pattern. A Kiss for Cinderella contains a literal dream much like Hannele's; Mary Rose and Dear Brutus contain dreamlike fairy tale experiences, both pleasant and nightmarish. In his Knights of the Round Table Cocteau uses the King Arthur material to explore fairy-tale-like effects of enchantment and disenchantment. With Sologub's Night Dances, a remarkable play by A. V. Lunacharsky called Vasilisa the Wise provides an example of the "Visit to Fairyland" play that ends happily.

We see the usefulness of both structural patterns in the variety of meanings that can be attributed to the two opposed worlds. The folk stories show that man is both attracted to and repelled by the fairy world. The dramatist can highlight either the attraction or the repulsion, making his fairyland either an ideal realm in contrast to which reality seems limited and worthless, or a demonic realm in which one loses sight of true values. Either world can stand for life or death. But in every case fairyland is an inverted mirror of ordinary human existence, serving the purposes of social or philosophical criticism.

Yeats' The Land of Heart's Desire (1894)

The Undine-pattern can be traced in simple form in W. B. Yeats'

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one-act peasant drama, The Land of Heart's Desire. In this little play, a tragic version of Ibsen's The Lady from the Sea, the heroine, a young wife, rejects the secure human world of adult responsibilties and domestic happiness for the wild fairy world of freedom and eternal youth.

The juxtaposition of the two realms is envisaged in the scene. At rise we see a comfortable peasant cottage lit by the glow of a fire, but through the open door we see the numinous forest: "The moon or a late sunset glimmers through the trees and carries the eye far off into a vague, mysterious world."[1] The warm glow of the fire inside contrasts with the cold silvery light of the forest. Associated with ancient pagan spirits, the fairy powers surround the human world, lying in wait, kept at bay by Christian magic and the family's acceptance of values of work, love, and social responsibility, which the fairies despise.

The power of the Fairy Child to enter the house is explained in terms of Irish peasant superstitions, according to which those within are made vulnerable when Mary, the young wife, gives milk and fire to the Good People. Once inside, the Fairy Child gains control over the family when they feed her and give her presents; and when the crucifix is taken away and she dances, her power is complete.

Yet the fairy does not abduct Mary by force. Like Ellida in The Lady from the Sea, she chooses her fate. Yeats explains her choice by suggesting that Mary shies from taking up her adult role as a married woman. The mother-in-law, Bridget, represents what Mary does not want to become. The Fairy Child speaks Mary's secret fears in her invitation:

Come with me, newly-married bride,

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[1]W. B. Yeats, The Collected Plays, New Edition (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 34. Cited hereafter in the text.

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> For if you hear him, you grow old like the rest;
> Bear children, cook, and bend above the churn,
> And wrangle over butter, fowl and eggs,
> Until at last, grown old and bitter of tongue,
> You're crouching there and shivering at the grave. (p. 45)

The prospect of becoming a Bridget destroys her dreams, her sense of possibilities, the intoxicating taste of freedom she gets from reading of the adventures of Edain, the mythical princess who fled home and husband with her fairy lover. It is not only to spite Bridget's cross tongue, but also to reject her life as a pattern for her own, that Mary gives the house into the power of the spirits.

If Bridget represents what Mary fears to become, the Fairy Child is the self-image to which she flees. Like Eleonora in Easter but lacking her benevolence, the Fairy Child brings a numinous presence into the house. A young, birdlike girl dressed in white, she makes everybody love her and give her presents. Only Mary is undeceived by the child's beauty and charm: she knows that "the unholy powers are dancing in the house" (p. 43). The fairy reveals her demonic nature when she admits that, despite her youthful appearance, she is older than the oldest thing under the moon. A spirit of nature, subject to the cycle of the seasons but to no human law of either time or social responsibility, she personifies Mary's inchoate idea of freedom from human restraints and offers to lead her to the Land of Heart's Desire, an ideal realm populated by Ireland's mythical heroes, "Where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood,/But joy is wisdom, time an endless song" (p. 45). Her offer and her very being answer the yearnings in Mary's heart, which, like that of all young brides, is "wild,/ As be the hearts of birds, till children come" (p. 35).

Yeats plays up the seductive quality of the fairy call. The beauty of the Fairy Child moves all their hearts until they realize who she is,

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and the poetry describing her world expresses a horror of growing old and a deep desire to escape time and mortality that everyone has felt. The meaning of Mary's death is ultimately ambiguous, according to one critic; yet it is clear, he thinks, where the author's sympathies lay: "To the youthful Yeats, decrepitude and senility were worse than death. He is obviously on the side of the fairies; he abruptly ends the play without giving the others an opportunity to show any human reaction of grief to Mary's death."[1]

Yet Mary's choice seems clearly tragic. Rather than leaving the cottage with the Fairy Child, she dies on stage in her husband's arms, thus underlining the human cost of her decision to enter the fairy world.[2] The father-in-law's description of human life paints an idyllic picture of what Mary has given up:

> We have a hundred acres of good land,
> And sit beside each other at the fire.
> I have this reverend Father for my friend,
> I look upon your face and my son's face--
> We've put his plate by yours--and here he comes,
> And brings with him the only thing we have lacked,
> Abundance of good wine. Stir up the fire,
> And put new turf upon it till it blaze;
> To watch the turf-smoke coiling from the fire,
> And feel content and wisdom in your heart,
> This is the best of life; when we are young
> We long to tread a way none trod before,
> But find the excellent old way through love,

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[1] John Rees Moore, Masks of Love and Death: Yeats as Dramatist (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 67.

[2] At the climactic moment Yeats calls upon the Fairy Changeling motif to explain Mary's death. According to Briggs, when a child or wife was stolen away by the fairies, a "stock," or rough piece of wood, was often transformed by magic and left as a substitute (Encyclopedia of Fairies, p. 382). As the Fairy Child departs and Mary collapses in her husband's arms, Bridget says, "Come from that image; body and soul are gone./You have thrown your arms about a drift of leaves,/Or bole of an ash-tree changed into her image" (p. 46).

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> And through the care of children, to the hour
> For bidding Fate and Time and Change good-bye. (pp. 38-39)

Here is an idea of domestic happiness sheltered by God's peace, beyond which is only "maddening freedom and bewildering light" (p. 40). Again like Ellida in Ibsen's play, Mary seems unable to accept this life because she is crippled in her ability to love. Had she been able to respond to the binding love extended her by the doting men in the play, she might have managed the crucial leap into maturity that would have put her out of danger.

Yeats' The Shadowy Waters (1911), which also uses fairy-tale elements, takes the opposite position on the relative values of the human versus the spirit world. Though they go to death, Forgael and Dectora "grow immortal" as dreams of an unearthly love, as of some everliving woman at the world's end, begin to live in them. Guided by spirits in the form of birds with human faces, Forgael is not the victim but the master of the magical harp, which at the end, like the harp in Swanwhite, begins to play of itself. He spurns the best the mortal world has to offer in choosing not to return to land with Dectora and the treasure. Such goods are suitable for men of lesser vision, like Aibric, who are not driven by an idealistic vision. Finally, Dectora's decision to go with Forgael reinforces our admiration, if not our sympathy, for his project. Unlike The Land of Heart's Desire, the play does not end with death. In fact, after the rope parts between the two boats, the lovers are already in a mythic realm, transported there by the passionate poetry with which the curtain falls. They are cut off from the world, animated by dreams.

Sharp's The Immortal Hour (1900)

Something of this quality of mythic exaltation can be felt in The

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Immortal Hour, by William Sharp, a Scotsman who also wrote Celtic romances and poetry under the pseudonym of Fiona Macleod. The play dramatizes the ancient legend of Edain (or Etain), the reading of which so absorbs Mary in The Land of Heart's Desire. In Sharp's version Etain, the undine-figure, is a fairy married to Midir, King of the Hidden People. Forgetting Midir for the time being, Etain wanders from home into the human world, where she meets and marries Eochaidh, High King of Ireland. They live happily together for a year, at the end of which time Midir appears to reclaim his wife. As he sings to her of fairyland, Etain remembers her previous life, then follows Midir home, leaving her human husband desolate and bereft.

Prefaced in the 1911 edition by a symbolist statement obviously influenced by Maeterlinck and Yeats,[1] the play most resembles The Shadowy Waters in its use of mythic characters, its impassioned lyrical language, and a tone of exaltation approaching religious ecstasy. The play seems intended to force home the philosophical differences between living in the natural versus the supernatural world. Impossibly, Eochaidh wants his idyll never to end: "My heart's desire . . . is to know there is no twilight hour/Upon my day of joy."[2] As Etain withdraws from him into the fairy world, he frantically calls her back as if she were human and in dan-

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[1]It notes the difficulty of expressing "emotions of the inevitableness of destiny" by scenic carpentry and calls for musical methods of suggestion and symbol in creating "dream-coloured dramas of the mind/Best seen against imagined tapestries"--Poems and Dramas (New York: Duffield, 1911), pp. 297-313. One critic takes special note of Sharp's preoccupation with Maeterlinck, saying that it retained its hold on him long after it loosed its hold on Yeats. See Cornelius Weygandt, Irish Plays and Playwrights (1913; reprint ed. Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat Press, 1966), p. 253.

[2]Sharp, Poems and Dramas, p. 37.

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ger. But being a fairy, Etain is not prey to time and mortality as he is. Eochaidh's loss, followed by his death, confirms the limited condition of human existence.[1]

The Immortal Hour echoes other plays discussed here as well. Identified in the Cast of Characters as a Lost Princess, Etain reminds us of Melisande, numinously alien in the human sphere, and equally dangerous to the unfortunate man who loves her. With only the vaguest memories of her fairy origins, she wanders into the world half-asleep, as if led by dreams. The use of ballad-like songs at key points in the story reminds us of Maeterlinck and Sologub as well as Yeats; such usage clearly suits an intent to evoke the sense of a mythic environment.

Finally, by design or by unconscious influence, Sharp has reconceived in his play several situations from A Midsummer Night's Dream. There is a Puck-figure who drugs the lovers in the woods, making each forgetful of previous attachments, then brings them together to meet and marry. In the end Eochaidh is a kind of tragic Bottom, waking to a realization of mortality. The final effect of The Immortal Hour is very unlike that of Shakespeare's comedy, of course. Sharp's play is supposed to be serious, and his characters are the old High Fairies, his world the world of medieval romance.[2]

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[1]Yeats took up the legend of Etain again in his narrative poem, "The Two Kings" (1914). Here Etain rebuffs her fairy husband, arguing that human love is better than the eternal pleasures of fairyland even though--indeed, because--it is brief, imperfect, and tragically doomed. Yeats' conclusion, according to Barbara F. Fass, was that "human joy . . . can never be severed from its obverse, human sorrow, and the unambiguous fairy realm cannot tolerate this admixture." See her article, "The Little Mermaid and the Artist's Quest for a Soul," Comparative Literature Studies 9 (September 1972):290.

[2]Shakespeare's scent can be traced even so, as the author admits in trying to warn us off it: "It should be noted that with the ancient Gauls

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Fitzmaurice's The Linnaun Shee (1924)

It seems appropriate to round off this discussion of Celtic fairy plays[1] with a satyr-play also modeled on the Undine-pattern. We have several such plays in the work of George Fitzmaurice, Yeats' compatriot, who wrote highly original dramas, both realistic and fantastic, of County Kerry folk life. The Linnaun Shee, published in 1924 but not produced until 1949, was apparently conceived by its author as "a satire on Yeats and his cult of fairies."[2]

The plot is hardly more than a single incident. Jamsie Kennelly, a hardworking and prosperous farmer, happily married and a father, one May Eve goes off with the Linnaun Shee, a fairy he claims to have loved since youth. The Shee is presented on stage as a wrinkled old crone who whines a grotesque come-hither song, but Jamsie sees her as a "Queen of

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. . . the Hidden People . . . were great and potent, not small and insignificant beings. 'Mab' long ago was the terrible 'dark' queen, Maive (Medb, Medbh, Mabh): and the still more ancient Puck was not a frolicsome spirit, but a shadowy and dreadful Power." Sharp, Poems and Dramas, pp. xi-x.

[1]One more such play is Marie Josephine Warren's The Twig of Thorn (Boston: Walter H. Baker, 1910), set, like The Land of Heart's Desire, in an Irish peasant cottage and governed by similar superstitious beliefs. Oonah, a young bride-to-be, opens the door to the fairy host when her lover, who is poor, says he cannot marry her. Aileel, a wandering poet, saves her by taking her curse upon himself. Here the fairy realm is unambiguously evil. It is only Aileel's sacrifice of himself that turns its malevolence for humans into good luck for Oonah and her lover.

[2]After the successful production at the Abbey of his first play, The Country Dressmaker, in 1907, Fitzmaurice's association with Yeats' theatre was not a happy one. Two later plays failed, probably because their innovations were not understood, and other plays were not accepted for production. It may or may not be true that Yeats thought of Fitzmaurice as a rival and rejected his plays out of jealousy. This suggestion is advanced by Austin Clarke in his Introduction to The Plays of George Fitzmaurice: Dramatic Fantasies (Dublin: The Dolmen Press, 1967), p. x. See also Howard K. Slaughter, "Fitzmaurice and the Abbey," Educational Theatre Journal 22 (May 1970):146-54. For a summary discussion see Carol Gelderman, George Fitzmaurice (Boston: Twayne, 1979).

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Loveliness" and compares her voice to the sound of silver bells. Given a healing ointment by an old countryman, he leaves the house with the fairy, but soon returns, evidently having rubbed the ointment on his eyes to break the spell, and immediately proceeds about his customary business. All thoughts of the Linnaun Shee have been banished in a comic anticlimax.

Unlike Yeats, Fitzmaurice knew the life of the folk first-hand, having been raised among them.[1] Jamsie's fairy lover is a parody of a creature out of the stories Fitzmaurice might have heard at home. The "Lhiannan-Shee," according to Briggs, is a kind of lamia or vampire that haunted wells and pools.[2] She "attaches herself to one man, to whom she appears irresistibly beautiful, but is invisible to everyone else. If he yields to her seductions, he is ruined body and soul."[3] The other important item of folk belief in the play, the magic ointment, refers to the salve, said to be made from sprigs of four-leafed clover, that enables one to penetrate fairy enchantment and see things as they really are.[4]

By the simple expedient of making the fairy visible as an ugly old woman, Fitzmaurice turns the traditional belief, mysterious or frightening in its folk context, to his comic purposes. Jamsie's "Queen of Loveliness" is an image of the absurdity of his situation: hardworking, suc-

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[1]Gelderman, George Fitzmaurice, p. 15.

[2]Katharine M. Briggs, The Fairies in Tradition and Literature (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 127.

[3]Briggs, Encyclopedia of Fairies, p. 266.

[4]Human midwives brought to attend fairy births would sometimes rub some of the ointment onto one of their own eyes by mistake, whereupon the impish nature of the fairies would be revealed. In retaliation the fairies would then blind the midwife's seeing eye. Ibid., pp. 156, 191.

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cessful fifty-five-year-old farmers do not fall in love with fairies. The neighbors are incredulous:

> A man of his years, sobriety and beard! Let there be truth or fancy in the old people's stories about the Linnaun Shee, 'twas always, whatever, some airy-going youth they'd make out as having a truck with her. But my father of a big family, my whiskered block of a solid farmer![1]

When footsteps are heard outside after Jamsie leaves with his sweetheart, the neighbors, despite their loudly-proclaimed skepticism, refuse to open the door. Their fear proves them equally subject to the spirit's power to enthrall the imagination, and equally vulnerable to comic disenchantment: when they do open the door, in comes Jamsie himself, "looking queer and haggard," so embarrassed that he's not even willing to relate what happened outside. And the numinous fairy ointment, traditionally the property of the fairies themselves, possession of which by humans is cause for blinding or worse, becomes here a country cure, one "antidote" among many others--"for the culligreefeens and the garradhuv"--owned by Old Den, a decrepit old uncle, thought of no account by the others, who sits in the corner chuckling as he observes the uproar.

We are a long way from the high seriousness of Yeats and Sharp. The key to the satire is the Shee, representing the fairy world and, by extension, the whole body of Irish myth glamorized in the great poet's work. Jamsie is Yeats, entranced by a vision that is as far from reality as Yeats himself from the folk, but a disenchanted Yeats, one who suffers a comic corrective. Old Den, whose ointment does the trick, is Fitzmaurice, the despised poor relation who sits chuckling in the corner and has the last word.

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[1] The Plays of George Fitzmaurice: Dramatic Fantasies, p. 48.

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Such a reading would have delighted Fitzmaurice, if his remark about Yeats and his cult of fairies was offered as a true guide to his feelings. The only thing wrong with it is the author's evident sympathy for Jamsie, as for all his visionary anti-heroes who are cut off from their families and oppressed by society. Jaymony Shanahan, in The Magic Glasses (which failed at the Abbey in 1913), is another good example. Jaymony lives as a recluse in the cottage loft, engrossed in the beautiful wish-fulfillment visions he sees in the nine magic glasses given him by a fairy woman. His withdrawal into a life of the imagination is strenuously opposed by his family and, by implication, the whole town, which is unwilling to tolerate a useless poetic existence in a practical world. The play's dark ending no doubt accounts for its failure with the public. When Jaymony loses heart for the "cure" forced upon him and retreats upstairs, the family pull down the loft with him in it; he dies in the wreckage, his throat cut by the broken glasses.

For all his fantasy, Fitzmaurice was a cruelly realistic playwright. In his works the artist, the dreamer, the social nonconformist, all are rejected or destroyed by a relentless utilitarianism.[1] Jamsie Kennelly in The Linnaun Shee can stand for Yeats and earn the author's contempt, but in the larger context of the author's works as a whole he stands for the artist oppressed by society--in a word, for Fitzmaurice himself[2]--and so earns our sympathy. Fantasy here is more than a dramatic

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[1] Other examples of such figures are Leum Donoghue in The Pie Dish, which failed at the Abbey in 1908 and was published in 1914, and Roger Carmody in The Dandy Dolls, published in 1914 and not performed until 1945. Of these characters one critic writes, "The intention is always to badger the visionary into conformity and to stifle his independent vision" (Gelderman, George Fitzmaurice, p. 101).

[2] Ibid., pp. 43-44.

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technique: it is both the hero's escape from life and a trap laid for him by fate. Behind its illusory salvation waits, at best, a comeuppance, at worst, death.

Ukrainka's Forest Song (1911)

The fairy-lover plays examined so far focus on the human partner's call to enter the fairy world. Plays based directly on the myth of Undine, as it appears in Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué's famous version (1811), add the question of whether or not a fairy creature can live in a human world.

The plots of these plays follow a typical pattern. Somewhere near the boundary between two worlds a human being and a fairy creature, usually a water spirit, meet and fall in love. They are allowed to marry, with the warning that, should the human lover violate a taboo against revealing their relationship or otherwise betraying his fairy bride, the marriage is void and he must die. Taking his bride home, the human lover finds that he cannot live comfortably with her because, as an extraordinary creature, she does not fit into ordinary human society. When he rejects her for another, breaking the taboo, she leaves him and later returns as the agent of his death. This is the story of Melusine, Undine, Rusalka, and their variously-named descendents, derived from medieval legend by Paracelsus in his book on nature spirits.[1]

In Lesya Ukrainka's Forest Song the fairy bride, Mavka, is a tree-

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[1] Paracelsus [Theophrastus von Hohenheim], "A Book on Nymphs, Sylphs, Pygmies, and Salamanders, and on the Other Spirits," Four Treatises of Theophrastus von Hohenheim: Called Paracelsus, trans. and ed. Henry E. Sigerist (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1941). For a summary of the story and a survey of its uses by later writers, see Elizabeth Frenzel, Stoffe des Weltliteratur (Stuttgart: Alfred Kroner, 1970), pp. 757-8.

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spirit rather than a water-sprite; and as in Hauptmann's The Sunken Bell a primeval forest, governed mysteriously by the changing seasons, takes the place of the fountains, rivers, and lakes of the Undine legend. Except for these changes, the structure of the conflict remains essentially the same.

The play is full of motifs drawn from Ukrainian folklore,[1] interpreted literally for the most part. The fierce Water Goblin, an old man with long hair and beard, wears a mass of weeds, garments the color of mud, and a crown of shells. Will-o'-the-Wisp is "a handsome youth, dressed in red, with a shock of reddish hair blown about by the wind."[2] When Mavka tries to reap in Act 2, a Field Sprite jumps up and begs her to spare the rye; the sprite wears a green dress under her long golden hair, in which are twined daisies and other wild flowers. These masque-like characters become almost allegorical in places. Rejected by her lover in Act 2, Mavka is carried away by "He Who Dwells in Rock," a black-robed figure of death. In Act 3 the human beings are set upon by vicious imps called Starvelings, "small wizened creatures, in rags, their faces seamed with signs of eternal hunger" (p. 242), that fight among themselves for scraps of food and gain access to the house at mention of the words "famine" and "starvation." At the end we meet a phantom figure of Destiny.

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[1] Taking the pen-name of Ukrainka ("the Ukrainian"), Larysa Kosacheva (1871-1913), born of a well-educated literary family, wrote in her native tongue rather than in Russian and sought in the wider European culture the themes that allowed her to champion the cause of Ukrainian cultural nationalism. Forest Song, one of the few of her poems and plays that deal directly with native subjects, is considered her masterpiece. See Introduction to Spirit of Flame: A Collection of the Works of Lesya Ukrainka, trans. Percival Cundy (New York: Bookman Associates, 1950), pp. 13-14, 33.

[2] Spirit of Flame, p. 191. References to the play will henceforth appear in the text.

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But despite the allegorical quality of some of the imagery, the author creates a feeling of mystical sentience in the forest. Act 1 ends with a quietly magical effect:

> The moon sinks behind the dark mass of the forest. The darkness, velvety black, envelopes the glade. Nothing is now visible except the dying coals of the fire, but by the fireflies which she is still wearing in her hair, Mavka can be traced as she wanders among the trees. Her headdress at times shines out as a complete circlet, then again in separate sparklings until it is completely lost in the gloom. A deep midnight silence falls, broken occasionally by the rustling of leaves in the forest, a sound as though someone were sighing in his sleep. (p. 211)

The romantic tendency to spiritualize nature, inherent in the Undine myth, here achieves its full potential.

A vegetation spirit, Mavka sleeps all winter under the branches of a willow tree identified as her mother. She dresses in bright green, like a proper fairy,[1] and her long black hair has a greenish sheen. Her eyes change color from moment to moment, like a forest pool reflecting the sky. She stops her lover, a young peasant named Lukash, from cutting down live trees, her brothers and sisters, instead bringing him wood that's already dead to build with or to burn. In the fall, as Queen of the Forest, Mavka puts on a splendid crimson robe embroidered with gold. In Act 3 she feels an overpowering drowsiness, the impending sleep of winter.

As a nature spirit Mavka reminds us of Yeats' Fairy Child; as a young girl in love, she reminds us of his Mary. During her sojourn in the human sphere her fairy side reveals itself as a love of music and song and a desire to pursue her lover without respecting any of the rules of deco-

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[1]Fairies were all colors, but green was their favorite, especially in Celtic folklore. See Briggs, Encyclopedia of Fairies, pp. 108-11. Green is most appropriate, of course, for a tree-spirit.

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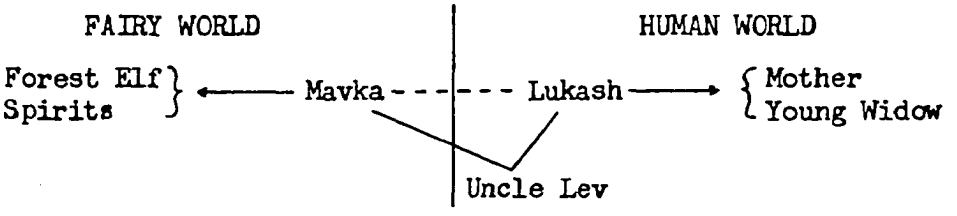
rum. Attracted to Lukash by his melodious piping, she follows him about with flowers in her long, loose hair, begging him to play when he should be working. The character corresponding to Yeats' Bridget is Lukash's mean-spirited mother, who sees life solely in terms of duty, correct behavior, and hard work. She calls Mavka a witch and a lazy good-for-nothing, and nags her son for his foolish attachment. The betrayal comes at the end of Act 2 when, after being introduced to a vigorous young widow, Lukash spurns his poetic relationship with Mavka in favor of a practical, worldly marriage. Mavka immediately dies.

Thus one of the meanings of the play is that suggested by the conflict of two points of view toward life, an aesthetic attitude associated with love and creativity--Lukash's piping in Act 1, like the arrival of the Prince in "Sleeping Beauty," awakens Mavka from her winter sleep and makes the woods blossom out--versus a grimly ethical attitude identified with the mother's need for a sturdy, hard-working daughter-in-law who will support her in her old age. Leaving her own world to live with her lover among strangers, Mavka dies when her lover proves to be a stranger himself. Implicit in the Undine-legend is the image of the stranded water-spirit or mermaid. The grandfatherly Forest Elf alludes to this image when he blames Mavka for betraying herself: "You gave up dwelling in the high tree tops/And came down low to walk in baser paths" (p. 232).

The opposition of the two worlds and the lines of tension between them can be schematized as follows:



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This scheme illustrates the typical conflict of the Undine-pattern. Drawn out of their proper spheres by a mutual attraction, Mavka and Lukash are protected at first by Uncle Lev, a wise old man who acts as mediator between the two worlds. After he dies, the lovers are tragically pulled apart by what appear to be superior claims of family and kind. In this tug-of-war the fairy powers ultimately prove stronger. Lukash rejects Mavka, but then is transformed into a wolf by the Forest Elf and condemned to wander in the forest, while his mother and wife are set upon by destructive sprites.

The last act proves, however, that love is stronger than separation, if not death. The author arranges a spectacular Liebestod for the couple by means of fairy-tale metamorphoses and resurrections. Having awakened from death and disenchanted Lukash, Mavka seeks him near his house in the forest. It is late autumn; she is heavy with sleep. Before he arrives, she suddenly transforms into a willow tree. Later Lukash plays a pipe cut from the tree and is shocked to hear it sing a song that Mavka sang in Act 1. When she is threatened with an ax--the mercenary mother and wife have already cut down and sold the ancient oak under which Uncle Lev was buried--Will-o'-the-Wisp swoops down in a shower of sparks and ignites the tree as if to save Mavka from destruction. There is a spectacular fire in a snowstorm that burns the house as well. Left alone, Lukash sees judgmental apparitions, among them the ethereal spirit of his betrayed lover. Again she begs him to play, and as he does so, the wintry landscape responds to the power of the music: flowers bloom and the snowstorm miraculously gives way to a clear, moonlit spring night. As in Act 1, Mavka "flashes out in all her former beauty with the starry crown alight" (p. 260), and the lovers embrace. The final stage-effect is worth quoting

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in full:

> The wind lashes the white blossoms off the trees. The blossoms fall and fall until the pair of lovers are completely covered over, then the blossoms change into thick flakes of snow. When the snowfall ceases, the landscape is again a winter one, with snow clinging thickly on all the branches of the trees. Lukash is sitting alone, leaning against the birch, with the pipe in his hands, his eyes closed and his lips set in a happy smile. He sits motionless. The snow falls over him like a thickening robe until his form becomes indistinguishable, and keeps on falling, falling endlessly. (p. 260)

The ambiguity of this ending is continuous with the ambiguity of fairyland in lore and legend. After his punishment and repentance, Lukash plays his pipe and the world responds to his hopes and desires as Jolles says the naive world of the true fairy tale must respond.[1] Mavka's reappearance amid the torrent of spring blossoms suggests a new beginning, the kind of total forgiveness of the past that the real world does not permit. Embracing his tree-spirit lover, Lukash becomes assimilated to the forest, giving up his treacherous humanity altogether. But when the storm of blossoms clears, we see that he is alone, dead, being buried in snow. He is assimilated to nature in a different sense.

Does this final image mean that, despite the patently marvelous qualities of the world we have been looking at for three acts, Lukash is deceived at the moment of death, that Mavka's reappearance and the promise of a new beginning are illusory, like the visions of heaven in Hannele's dream? It would seem so. Here again a corpse at the end reminds us of the incompatibility of the two worlds and the limitations of the human state. Yet the smile on Lukash's face preserves the ambiguity of the image. Hauptmann's fairyland, framed as a dream in a naturalistic setting, is tightly sealed off from the world of ordinary reality. Ukrainka's

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[1] Jolles, Formes Simples, pp. 189-90.

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forest-fairyland, on the other hand, though set in opposition to ordinary reality, so interpenetrates it that we can entertain the possibility, at least, that Mavka could become a human wife, though we know enough about human nature to foresee that she will be made to fail. Lukash is dead at the end, but he is united with the very substance of his beloved. The close connection all through the play between the fairy world and nature achieves great persuasive force in the end, not only making it seem inevitable that winter comes, as it does, but also suggesting the promise of spring, when the lovers' union will bear fruit. Perhaps this is the secret of Lukash's smile.

Giraudoux's Ondine (1939)

With Giraudoux's masterpiece we come to the best-known of the dramas on the Undine-pattern. Ondine bears some obvious resemblances to Ukrainka's Forest Song, despite its very different folkloric background. Both plays contrast the human and spirit worlds by means of a romantic triangle. Both end tragically with the disruption of the human-fairy romance by a rival sweetheart, followed by the death of the human lover. The main differences in effect stem from the brilliant play of Giraudoux's wit--Ukrainka treats serious issues seriously throughout--and his interest in moral and philosophical criticism.

A comparison of Ondine with its immediate source, Fouqué's novella, Undine, makes Giraudoux's intentions clear.[1] The playwright remains faith-

[1]Giraudoux first read Undine as a student in 1909, when he wrote a commentary on it, the draft of which has been preserved. Robert Cohen, in Giraudoux: Three Faces of Destiny (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), calls this draft "the first preparation for Ondine" (p. 64), thus supposing that the play was nurtured in the author's imagination for thirty years. Undine was extremely influential during the 19th century and well into the 20th. Many translations and adaptations have been made

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ful to a rough outline of the events, to the capricious character of the heroine, and to the strong sense of spiritual presence in the story; but otherwise his version represents a complete rethinking of the idea.

Most obviously, Fouqué's story is a romance, a literary elaboration of a local legend told to explain the strange encirclement of the hero's tomb by the stream, mentioned in the text. Like many similar stories, it focuses on the double nature of the spirit world, seductively attractive in the person and naive love of Undine, who acquires a soul by marrying a human being, and at the same time demonic in the antagonism of Kühleborn, Undine's water-spirit uncle, who pursues the human lover relentlessly to make him abjure his bride, consequently to die by her hand on the day of his second wedding. Fouqué makes much of the dread of allying oneself with a fairy creature and becoming involved with forbidden, unholy powers. A great deal of the action--the ride into and out of the haunted forest, the flight and pursuit into Black Valley, the final voyage on the Danube--plays on fear and terror of local legend, the philosophy of which is that the human and fairy worlds are irreconcilably opposed to each other.[1] In having his hero say, "This comes from like not being linked with like, from a man uniting himself with a mermaid," Fouqué declares his intention not to go beyond the folk idea.

In contrast, Giraudoux emphasizes the double nature of the human

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of it, beginning with the author's own libretto for the opera by E. T. A. Hoffmann (Berlin, 1815). Through George Macdonald, who took Fouqué's story as his favorite fairy tale, it has had an impact on the thinking of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien--see "The Roots of Tolkien's Tree: The Influence of George MacDonald and German Romanticism upon Tolkien's Essay, 'On Fairy-Stories'," by Frank Bergmann, in Mosaic 10, no. 2 (Winter 1977):5-14.

[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 85-86.

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world, as reflected in Ondine's attraction to Hans and her unshakable fidelity to him even in the face of betrayal. Like a wise Miranda, Ondine understands both the beauty and the bestiality of mankind from the beginning: she sees in Act 1 that Hans is good-looking but fully capable of poaching a trout. Yet she loves humanity, gives up her fairy nature to embrace it in the person of her sweetheart, and thus becomes "the most human being that ever lived, because she was human by choice."[1] The love affair mirrors the duality of human nature: Hans, human by birth, proves most human in his meanness and weakness; Ondine, human by choice, proves most human in the purity and strength of her love.

In adapting the story for the stage, Giraudoux makes the most of his medium. In place of Fouqué's anonymous intrusive narrator, he uses an ingenious theatricality motivated by the Ondine King's magic. In Act 1, for example, the ondines try to prevent the marriage by tempting Hans with erotic visions. In Act 2 the Ondine King, posing as a traveling magician, brings Hans and Bertha, the rival lover, together in a series of fantastically contrived scenes played on a stage-within-a-stage for the amusement of the eavesdropping courtiers. These scenes make dull life theatrically interesting by speeding up time and cutting away the random clutter of reality. Their purpose, like that of the visions in Act 1, is to prove Hans unworthy, but they also demonstrate the existential differences between life and art. Much of Act 2 is a discussion of these differences. At the end of the act the Chamberlain discovers to his horror that he is wrinkled and bald and has lost his teeth, because "ten years have passed in an hour" by the Ondine King's magic. The fairy

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[1] Plays: Amphitryon, Intermezzo, Ondine, trans. Roger Gellert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 259 (hereafter cited in text).

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magic suspends natural laws only to confirm them. Just as surely as time produces wrinkles, Ondine will lose her Hans. Treachery is in the nature of the human beast.[1]

A literal play-within-a-play, the interlude in which the Ondine King reveals Bertha's humble origin, points the climax of Act 2. Following his source, Giraudoux uses the fairy changeling motif to suggest that Bertha and Ondine are sisters, since the one owes her birth and the other her upbringing to the old fisher couple. But whereas Ondine honors her human parents--when she describes them as natural royalty, "golden crowns seem to light on their heads" (p. 244)--Bertha, having been raised as a princess, despises them. This revelation advances the Ondine King's project of separating the lovers, since Hans, himself imbued with the false values of the court, sympathizes with Bertha. He is discovering that one cannot live in society with a wife who can read minds but cannot keep her mouth shut.

Thus the play reverses the usual A-B-A structure of dramas that contrast fairyland and human reality. Rather than framing his fairyland with scenes depicting the ordinary world, Giraudoux has Ondine emerge from her proper world in Act 1, encounter the hypocrisy, flattery, and snobbism of the court in Act 2, and retreat from these false values in Act 3. In the more common pattern human beings experience fairyland and find it too much for them; here Ondine is drawn to live with humanity but

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[1]Here we touch on a familiar theme in folklore. Fairies are impervious to the passage of time; and so are human beings in fairyland, but the moment they break their vows, as they inevitably do, their years suddenly rush upon them. Ondine is fifteen, she says, but has been alive for centuries and will never die. Giraudoux makes a moral statement of what in folklore would remain an existential fact: Ondine's freedom from time also releases her from the reality that human beings do not keep faith.

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cannot sustain the effort. For all their beauty, human beings are too flawed, too real. Their souls are too small.

In either version of the A-B-A structure a great gulf is fixed between the two realms. This is the point of the trial scene in Act 3. Trials, like plays-within-a-play, are means of theatricalizing the events of a story. We might expect to find a witch-trial, full of the lore of demonology, in a dramatization of a romance like Undine; but here again Giraudoux shows he wants to focus on mortal limitations rather than on the strangeness of fairyland. The judges think they are condemning Ondine for being a witch; the Ondine King is actually condemning Hans for being human. Both are guilty: Ondine has indeed loved too much and too well, and Hans has broken faith as had been foretold. But the judgment of the spiritual authority proves superior. Left alone with Ondine, who is to be beheaded, the Ondine King transforms the Executioner into a blood-red snowman with a wave of his hand. Since humanity itself has been condemned, a necessity higher than the human order must execute the sentence. In Fouqué's version, as in similar stories in folklore, the betrayed fairy lover herself returns to kill the hero on the day of his wedding. Giraudoux arranges for Ondine to lose her memory at the moment of Hans's death. Since fairies cannot die, the Ondine King takes away Ondine's human traits; both lovers are punished for being human. Mankind is confirmed in its fallen state and the order of nature remains intact.

This conclusion denies the ambiguously happy ending suggested in Ukrainka's Forest Song, in which the human lover's death is conceived as assimilation into the realm of his nature-spirit beloved. A schematic representation of the conflict in Ondine shows the structural similarity

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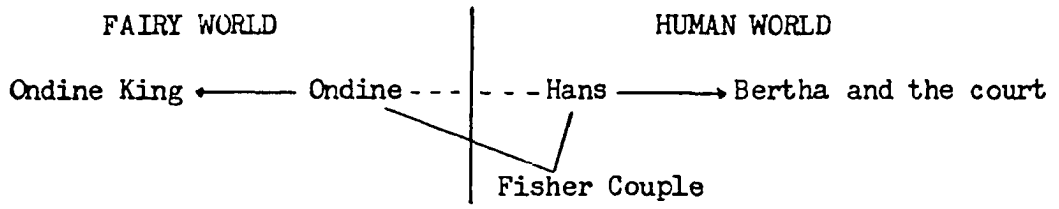
of the plays, even down to the mediating role of the Fisher Couple:



But Giraudoux could hardly reward his representative of flawed humanity after finding him guilty. Moreover the philosophical qualities of his play give it a very different effect from Forest Song, despite the similar stories. Set in a magical forest responsive to the passing of the seasons, Ukrainka's play emphasizes a sense of vegetable spirituality. Giraudoux sets his central scene at court among reflective, talkative, sophisticated characters. For him nature and the rural way of life led by the Fisher Couple represent a pastoral ideal from which man, fallen into civilization, is forever cut off. The sense of spiritual presences in the play is expressed through stage tricks (the Ondine King's posing as a magician suits this aspect of his role perfectly) and conceptually, through brilliant talk. In the trial scene, for example, we learn in the debate that

> every human action, from the basest to the most noble, is surrounded by a prancing audience of goblin mimics, who have hurriedly slipped into carcasses or velvet skins, with their snouts to the ground or their bottoms in the air, to imitate our eating or praying for miracles. (p. 253)

The human world is overshadowed by inhuman powers whose function, as illustrated in the play, is to administer man's fate, not to share it. This is the lesson that Ondine must learn.

At the center of the play is the fairy princess herself. Ondine enjoys marvelous powers, performing witty magical tricks like turning pewter plates into gold or instantly removing the armor that takes Hans

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fifteen minutes or more to get on and off. She can read minds. She has no soul of her own but partakes of the "world's soul" that "breathes in and out through every bird and fish and animal" (p. 237). Like Mavka and Yeats' Fairy Child, she is an ageless nature spirit in human form. When her parents found her by the lake, the ground around her cradle "had the marks of bodies all over it, like loving couples leave in the sand . . . as if thousands of couples had been making love by the lake, and Ondine was their child" (p. 202). The lake itself was her parent, her womb, as well as her world: the Fisher Couple say they often found her floating face up in the water sound asleep.

But all the fairy lore is only a background for Ondine as represented on stage, an impulsive, passionate, intensely alive young girl with whom one could hardly avoid falling in love. One critic calls her "Giraudoux's most sublime creation of destiny; in this one character he combines the vision of absolute sexuality with the beauty and terror of the jeune fille."[1] In respect of her sexuality, Ondine's numinous fairy qualities are simply human qualities pushed to a higher power. Her ideal attributes, on the other hand, those traits that make her Hans's nemesis, are positives that invert all the negative qualities of his human nature: where he is flawed, she is perfect; where he is mortal, she is ageless and undying. In this way Ondine mirrors what is highest and best about humanity as well as what is lowest and worst.

Richardson and Berney's Dark of the Moon (1949)

Dark of the Moon, by Howard Richardson and William Berney, intended for a popular audience, illustrates the Undine-pattern in simple and clear

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[1] Cohen, Giraudoux, p. 67.

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outlines. Based on the ballad, "Barbara Allen," the play describes the doomed love of a pretty but promiscuous Appalachian girl and a witch boy she meets on the mountain. The Conjur Woman agrees to make John, the witch boy, human, on the condition that Barbara Allen remain faithful to him for one year. But after she produces a misshapen baby, which is immediately burnt by the superstitious people of the valley, Barbara Allen is forced to have sex with another man at a revival meeting in order to break the relationship. In the end she dies and John reverts to his fairy nature, flying off into the night on the back of an eagle.

Here the male takes the role of the supernatural lover, but otherwise the play demonstrates the typical use of the Undine-pattern. The two opposed realms are located topographically: the fairy world is associated with the mountain-tops and the human world with the valley. A mediating figure, the Conjur Woman, initially sponsors the lovers, but other characters firmly fixed in both realms pull them apart, as if to protect the integrity of each world. The crisis comes when the human partner breaks the taboo that has sealed the relationship, and in the end the betrayed fairy lover returns to attend the death of the human partner.

All the Undine plays draw their animating energies from a deep human fascination with Otherness, invested with numinous qualities by association with the Supernatural. We are both attracted to and repelled from the Other World. The plays' typical tragic endings affirm the separation of the two realms and the radical finitude of humanity.

Barrie's Mary Rose (1920)

The A-B-A or "Visit to Fairyland" pattern differs from the Undine-pattern by setting the two opposed worlds not side by side but one after

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the other. As in A Midsummer Night's Dream (the model for this kind of play)[1] and Hannele, the pattern allows a wish-fulfillment suspension of the laws of reality. Experienced as a dream, the visit is often equivalent in time to one night's passing; we feel the thrill of fairyland as a liberating darkness, suggesting Dionysian release,[2] then wake up with the dawn, which re-establishes the normal light-filled world. After the disenchantment we see the effects of the visit in lives once again bound by the laws of ordinary reality.

Fairyland is usually located in a forest, on an island, under the sea or underground, somewhere set apart from the scene of everyday life.[3] In Rip Van Winkle (1864), a fairy melodrama adapted by Dion Boucicault as a vehicle for Joseph Jefferson, for example, the scene of enchantment is high in the Catskills. As in most stories about visits to fairyland, we meet here the "supernatural lapse of time" theme. Rip sleeps twenty years because he shared the liquor offered him by Hendrick Hudson.[4]

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[1]While the A-B-A pattern defines the main plot of A Midsummer Night's Dream, the lovers' flight into the woods, there is another line of action that conforms to the Undine-pattern: Bottom's affair with Titania.

[2]A darker archetype for the A-B-A play is Euripides' Bacchae (406 B. C.). As a demonic fairy, Dionysus is associated with fertility, the night, and the numinous mountainside, as well as with the charming of the sight through enchantment. He bewitches Pentheus as well as his mother. The A-B-A pattern of the play climaxes in the cruelty of Agave's awakening to reality and the knowledge that she has hunted and killed her own child.

[3]See H. R. Patch, "Some Elements in Medieval Descriptions of the Otherworld," PMLA 33 (1918):604-5.

[4]Rip should have known better than to drink Hudson's liquor. In doing so he violated a taboo, widespread in folklore, against partaking of fairy food or drink, an act which puts one in the fairies' power (see Briggs, Encyclopedia of Fairies, pp. 345-6). The best-known example of such a violation in myth is Persephone's eating the seven pomegranate seeds and having to spend seven months of every year in Hades' kingdom.

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In the real world many years pass in what seems only a moment, a few hours, or overnight in fairyland; or vice versa. Time in the two worlds runs on different scales.[1] In folklore the enchanted visitor often returns to the real world as an old man or woman; this is the case with Rip, who slept only twenty years. Other visitors, like Oisin, sojourn in fairyland for hundreds of years and return to the real world to die. Some forbidden act--dismounting from a horse, eating human food, hearing prayers in church--triggers the revenant's sudden death. "The suggestion behind all these stories is that Fairyland is a world of the dead, and that those who entered it had long been dead, and carried back with them an illusory body which crumbled into dust when they met reality."[2]

J. M. Barrie's variation on this theme, in Mary Rose, puts on the stage a ghost that cannot rest because her stay in fairyland has cheated her of her child. The scene of the enchantment is a small island off the coast of Scotland which Mary Rose and her father visit on holiday. Left alone on the island to sketch while her father fishes, Mary Rose simply disappears at the age of eleven. Given up for dead, she reappears a month later in perfect health, with no awareness of having been gone or of time having passed. This mystery is never solved. Ten years afterward, as a young wife and mother, she returns to the island, hears the demonic call of the fairies or spirits, and disappears again, this time, it seems, for good. Her son grows up and runs away to sea. Mary Rose comes back 24 years later, still a young woman and again with no awareness

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[1]Briggs, Encyclopedia of Fairies, pp. 398-400. On this topic see also E. S. Hartland, "The Supernatural Lapse of Time in Fairyland," chs. 7-9 in The Science of Fairy Tales: An Enquiry into Fairy Mythology, pp. 161-254 (London: Walter Scott, 1890; reprint ed. London: Methuen, 1925).

[2]Briggs, Encyclopedia of Fairies, p. 400.

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of time having passed, bewildered by her parents' decrepitude and her husband's grey hair. She dies soon afterward, but her ghost haunts the house, yearning for her lost child. The story is told as a flashback, through the mind of the grown-up son, who returns to visit the house. At the end the forlorn ghost appears and they finally meet, the son older than his mother by several years, and Mary Rose walks out of the window to the sound of heavenly music.

In his essay, "On Fairy-Stories," Tolkien cites Mary Rose as an example of the only kind of fairy drama that can succeed, because, rather than attempting to represent imaginary creatures by flesh-and-blood actors, it keeps the spirit powers unseen and focuses on their impact on the lives of human beings, who can be so represented.[1] What happens to Mary Rose is the same sort of disaster that happens to Rip Van Winkle: the passage of time robs both of the most important years of their lives. Such a disaster is worse than death because the victims are made aware of their loss. As on Ondine, the suspension of natural laws in these plays serves only to confirm these laws. We watch Mary Rose step out of time, to be reminded that in the real world time does not stop, and it's a good thing it does not.[2]

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[1] "On Fairy-Stories," p. 81.

[2] Peter Pan (1904) treats this theme for children. Wendy and her brothers visit Never Land and return with no ill effects, except for being missed. The play emphasizes family values: having left home, the children create a family on the island, with Wendy as the mother and Peter as an uneasy father, then bring the pretend family home to be integrated into the real family that was broken by their departure. Thus the play reverses the meaning of Mary Rose. Peter himself, unwilling to grow up, resists the pull toward real life and returns to a preconscious existence. Never Land, which serves as a scene of melodramatic adventure while the children are on the island, becomes at the end an image of autistic withdrawal. "Rather than an escapist play, Peter Pan is a comment on the stasis and delusion of fantasy. The strength of the play is the tension

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Barrie's Dear Brutus (1917)

Barrie adopts a similar strategy of inversion in Dear Brutus, a play about the "might have been." Here the Other World of magical possibilities is represented by a mysterious wood that appears in a different place in the countryside every Midsummer Eve. It is said that the wood offers anyone who enters it a second chance in life, a chance to make what might have been come true.

A group of people unknown to each other are invited to the country house of the very strange Mr. Lob, where they are surprised to discover, on Midsummer Eve, great trees outside the house in place of the garden. In the middle act each of them ventures into the moon-lit wood and finds that his or her dreams have come true. A servant with criminal tendencies becomes a wealthy tycoon, adored by a blue-blooded lady who formerly had scorned him. A philanderer finds himself married to his former mistress, pursuing his former wife. A man unhappily married, embittered by loneliness and a sense of failure, sheds his wife and acquires a lovely young daughter on whom he dotes. But, as in Mary Rose, the disenchantment makes the point. In Act 3 they all return to the house, where we watch them suffer an awakening to the actual state of their lives. The dreams-come-true prove to have been dreams after all. The fantasy in the wood inverts reality in order to confirm it.

In Mary Rose the return becomes material for a ghost story; in Dear Brutus it makes an ironical comedy. The characters see themselves as they really are. Mr. Purdie is no great lover, only a petty philan-

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between the desirability of Peter's fantasy-making power and the knowledge of the impossibility of using it without losing one's humanity"—Lynette Hunter, "J. M. Barrie's Islands of Fantasy," Modern Drama 23 (March 1981):70.

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derer, chasing any woman who is not his wife. Matey, the butler who dreams of wealth and position, remains "a butler . . . wrapped in fur";[1] once back in the house, as soon as he sees a tray, his hands reach out automatically to take it. Coade, a gentle soul ashamed of himself because he never wrote the great book he spent years researching, discovers in his second chance that he never really wanted to write it. "We can't change," he says (p. 541). Each character's pretences are exposed in a series of realizations that are by turns rueful, comic, happy, and sad, but most of all disillusioning. The light of day brings not wonder and amazement, as in A Midsummer Night's Dream, but a sobering dose of self-knowledge.

The play is full of allusions to Shakespeare, most obviously in the title[2] and in multiple references to A Midsummer Night's Dream. We can think of Dear Brutus as an ironical reconception of Shakespeare's fairy comedy, duplicating its A-B-A structure, the Midsummer Night escape into the enchanted wood, the imagery of dreaming, the comical exchange of partners, and especially the crucial role of Mr. Lob, the host. He is a small, delicate person who looks like an old man but behaves at times like a spoiled child. He has a special fondness for flowers. Lob, the ladies recall, is another name for Puck: "He is . . . what Puck might have grown into if he had forgotten to die" (p. 482). Like his progenitor, Mr. Lob functions as the architectus of the comic action,[3] enducing

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[1]The Plays of J. M. Barrie (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. 530. Page references hereafter cited in the text.

[2]From Julius Caesar: "Men at some time are masters of their fates:/ The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,/But in ourselves, that we are underlings" (1.1.138-40).

[3]Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, pp. 173-4.

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the characters to undertake the adventure and gleefully observing their discomfiture as they return in Act 3. In Frye's terms he plays "eiron" to their roles of "alazon": he is the artist manipulating his predestined victims for the purpose of unmasking.[1] By the end the guests, none of whom understood why they were invited, realize that what they have in common is simply the human desire to have a second chance and, granted that second chance, the even more human inability to change. Barrie, continually nudging the reader in the ribs through his stage-directions, apparently wants us to imagine Lob thinking, "Lord, what fools these mortals be."

Most plays about the collision of the human and fairy worlds have a character, like Uncle Lev in Forest Song or the Fisher Couple in Ondine, who mediates between the two worlds. Lob is surely the oddest of these figures. Shakespeare's Puck exists wholly within the world of his play and is hardly detachable from it; in a sense he personifies the forest, giving its magical possibilities life and independent motion. Lob is a Puck removed from his world, if we can imagine such a thing, wearing dinner clothes and living in a house.[2] He enjoys gardening, but that does not make him a nature spirit. Unlike his guests, he is not even willing to enter the forest, but rather stands voyeur-like at the door, "staring out upon the unknown . . . terrified still; yet quivers of rapture are running up and down his little frame" (p. 501). This is an odd Puck in-

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[1] Ibid., p. 40.

[2] I have already applied Frye's term architectus to the Sprite in Valle Inclán's The Dragon's Head (above, p. 121). Like Puck, the Sprite belongs in the world of his play—he even defines it—whereas the oddity of Mr. Lob follows from the fact of his Otherness as a character in a realistic world.

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deed. He reminds us a little of Peter Pan, another of Barrie's young-old characters, who also stands at a momentous threshold and cannot bring himself to cross it.[1]

Cocteau's *The Knights of the Round Table* (1937)

That self-knowledge is the goal of disenchantment is the formative idea also of Jean Cocteau's brilliantly theatrical fairy play on the King Arthur material. The castle and all Britain lie under a spell cast by the sorcerer Merlin, who has been asked by Guinevere to distract Arthur's attention from her affair with Launcelot of the Lake. Merlin obliges by introducing Ginifer, a shape-shifting demon, into the castle so that Arthur conceives an all-consuming infatuation with him. The hero, Galahad, arrives to oppose Merlin; the deceit fails when the sorcerer is defeated and reveals everything to Arthur. In a jealous rage the king kills Launcelot, his best friend, and watches Guinevere commit suicide, then is astonished to see the two lovers reincarnated in the persons of Segramore and Blandine, his son and daughter. For willingly embracing reality, no matter how painful, Arthur is rewarded with a vision of the Grail in its indescribable glory, granted only to those who have achieved inner harmony through self-knowledge.

Cocteau's use of the A-B-A pattern is more complex and subtle than Barrie's. He leaves the initial movement (A) implied and focuses entirely on the arrival of Galahad and the subsequent disenchantment (B-A). Fairyland itself is identified with the elfin lake from which Launcelot sprang and to which he and Guinevere retire after their deaths. These

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[1] "If he could get the hang of the thing his cry might become 'To live would be an awfully big adventure!' but he can never quite get the hang of it, and so no one is as gay as he" (*Plays*, p. 94).

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benevolent fairies do not appear on stage, but their voices are heard calling the lovers, as in Mary Rose. The middle movement in the pattern focuses not on them but on the grey enchantment of Merlin; and rather than exiting from this demonic fairyland, as in Barrie's plays, the characters stay where they are and the enchantment leaves them. As Merlin and his helper go into exile, behind them the light of day pours over the land, rolling away the mist and transforming the shadowy scene into a bright spring landscape. This arrangement makes the A-B-A structure in the play harder to discern, but it is undeniably there.

The play is undoubtedly a dream play, at least metaphorically. The enchantment is compared not only to winter but also to a state of sleep or intoxication, "a sad twilight which is neither day nor night."[1] As in dreams, time seems suspended. Several characters have the moral sensitivity to see that this state of anesthesia has become a means to fend off reality. Launcelot himself says,

> Has a single one of us asked himself if his own deeds were not the real reason for this change? Has a single one of us reformed his life? Has a single one of us cared to consider the possibility that he might be responsible for this disaster? (p. 205)

Once he knows the truth, Arthur too desires to be released from Merlin's twilight sleep: "I would rather have true deaths than a false life" (p. 284). Cocteau links self-knowledge with a thrust toward moral responsibility and therefore with freedom. There is something bracingly life-giving, if painful, about the choice to face the truth, as shown by the return of spring and the appearance of the Grail.[2] Barrie's disenchant-

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[1] "The Knights of the Round Table," trans. W. H. Auden, The Infernal Machine and Other Plays (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 206. Page references hereafter cited in the text.

[2] It is helpful to know that the author has recorded in this play

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ment ends in cynicism; Cocteau's goes beyond the mere destruction of illusions to make a positive moral statement.

The state of enchantment inverts moral reality. Cocteau ingeniously uses doubles, literal mirrors, to point up the absence of honesty and responsibility in the castle. Merlin's demon, Ginifer, never appears on stage in his own body. He seduces Arthur's affections as a perfect double of Gawain, Arthur's nephew and future son-in-law, while the real Gawain lies imprisoned in Merlin's castle. Later Ginifer appears as a false Guinevere and a false Galahad. His accent and his boorish behavior give him away to the audience, who are in on the secret, but shock and confuse the characters on stage. In Act 2, for example, Launcelot watches in dismay as Ginifer, doubling for Queen Guinevere, gets drunk and starts talking like a street whore. The clever but simple trick of having the same actors play both the true and the false characters effectively catches the required sense of moral ambiguity.[1] Merlin also invents a false Grail and a false Quest, sending the knights off on a wild goose chase that further confuses the situation. Cocteau's point follows naturally from his inventive use of a fairy-tale ethic: evil requires ig-

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his own victory over opium addiction. "He chose vision as King Arthur had, and not the veil: active participation in the experience of life, which includes both pleasure and pain, rather than a state of unnatural repose"—Bettina L. Knapp, Jean Cocteau (New York: Twayne, 1970), p. 110.

[1]The magic in the play reminds us of Ondine. Merlin is a magician like the Ondine King; his stage tricks startle and confuse the characters by revealing the presence of demonic spirits. In his castle doors open by themselves, a feast pops out of the walls, and one character plays chess with the devil, who is invisible. The reincarnation mentioned above is engineered by having the actors playing Segramor and Blandine enter the alcove where the bodies of the lovers are hidden; there they exchange clothes with the actors playing Launcelot and Guinevere. Thus "the dead have passed into them" (p. 286). In his Production Notes the author writes, "The whole supernatural element of the drama must be staged with absolute care, so as to give the impression of realism" (p. 185).

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norance and bewilderment to work its ends.

The hero, Galahad, who alone is pure in heart, cuts through all the confusion to defeat Merlin. Though unknown to the court, he is the son of Launcelot and Melusine (the fairy lover whom Launcelot left to follow Guinevere) and thus has elfin blood. He arrives in Britain from over the sea in a stone trough to undertake the Quest for the Grail, and proves his worthiness by sitting in the Siege Perilous without harm.

As soon as he announces himself, Merlin knows he is beaten. Galahad's real purpose, then, is to assist the king in the painful process of the disenchantment. He warns Arthur:

> You have been living under a fatal spell. Where you were, nothing real could exist. Now everything is alive, everything can bleed. Nothing will act as a cushion or a drug to make life easy. Reality is beginning. Reality is harsh. Waking up will hurt. (p. 283)

In his article, "The Quest Hero," W. H. Auden says that the literary quest draws its validity from a close metaphorical correspondence with subjective experience of real life.[1] Cocteau makes this correspondence explicit when he has Galahad say that the Grail "is within you. Each of you sees it as soon as he is in harmony with himself" (p. 289). Thus Galahad's function as spiritual guide fits his role of perfect hero. Pursuing the High Adventure, he travels continually and may never stay with those who love him. He is without blemish and therefore can keep in touch with no one.[2] When the Grail appears and he asks the others to

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[1] W. H. Auden, "The Quest Hero," in Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J. R. R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 44-45.

[2] One version of the Dragon-Killing Hero, the St. George type, is called upon to rescue maidens and kingdoms without enjoying the usual rewards of marriage and kingship. This knight-errant is an ascentic or world-renouncer, described by Joseph Campbell in The Hero with a Thousand Faces as one who has abandoned love and hatred and other human passions

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describe it, we understand his final sacrifice: he can never see the Grail himself, but can only make it visible for others. In the real world everyone, even Galahad, must pay, "pay in his person and in his actions" (p. 290).

Two familiar fairy-tale motifs at the end serve to point up the moral meaning of the disenchantment. One is the phenomenon of second sight (already met with in Strindberg's Easter), by means of which certain human beings are blessed with the ability to penetrate the veil that ordinarily overlays spiritual truths.[1] This motif explains the vision of the Grail: the impenetrable veil is equivalent to the enchantment; the Grail itself is an image of reality. The other is the same sort of gift of insight. Segramor, the child of Guinevere and Launcelot, has fairy blood and from birth is able to understand the language of the birds.[2] As Life returns to the realm at the end, he hears the birds sing loudly,

> They're saying . . . Yes, I've got it now. They're saying: Pay, pay, pay, pay, pay, pay, pay. You must pay, you must pay, you must pay. Pay, pay, pay, pay, pay, pay, pay. You must pay, you must pay, you must pay. Pay, pay, pay . . . . (p. 291)

The truth, kept at a distance during Merlin's spell, asserts itself in the vision of the Grail and in the birds' singing. It is a hard truth

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and therefore does not pursue human fulfillments; his ego is burnt out (pp. 354-6). Like Galahad, Evgeny Shvarts' hero in The Dragon (1943) partakes of this selfless heroic quality. Albee's Young Man, in The American Dream (1961), is a demonic inversion of the archetype.

[1] Briggs, Encyclopedia of Fairies, pp. 350-1; Thompson, The Folktale, p. 260.

[2] The Knowledge of Animal Speech, an ancient and widespread motif, appears in "The Three Languages," Grimm no. 33. Siegfried (Sigurd in the Volsungasagas) also understands bird speech. See Thompson, The Folktale, pp. 83-85. Strindberg's Eleonora, a redemptive figure like Galahad, enjoys this power of knowledge as well as that of second sight (see above, p. 72). Self-knowledge is an important theme in both plays.

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about the cost of learning to live in the real world.

Even so, the ending must not be construed as tragic.[1] The rebirth of Launcelot and Guinevere in the children, a brilliant coup de théâtre, stands in place of a literal resurrection; the lovers' union in death is celebrated as a wedding rather than mourned. A new society of moral responsibility is signalled by the arrival of spring: "The old life is dead, long live the new" (p. 283). Though they have a double edge of pleasure and pain, these are positive images and should be celebrated as such. Cocteau's ending most resembles that of Strindberg's Easter: both plays comprehend a realistic view of life within a romantic form, and thus demonstrate the usefulness of the fairy tale for artistic statements of serious ethical import.

Rip Van Winkle illustrates the simplest use of the A-B-A pattern; The Knights of the Round Table illustrates its most sophisticated use. Other plays written according to this pattern interpret the Visit to Fairyland in a variety of ways. Barrie's Peter Pan, already mentioned, describes Never Land as a childhood realm of make-believe adventure, forbidden us by adulthood, but informed with a keen sense of nostalgia. Alan Jay Lerner's Brigadoon (1947, with music by Frederick Loewe) contrasts life in 20th-century urban America with an idyllic existence in an 18th-century Scottish mountain village which magically appears out of the mist every 100 years. Like Peter Pan, Lerner and Loewe's musical

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[1] Cocteau wrote a fairy tragedy in Renaud and Armide (1943), a play based on the Undine-pattern. Armide, a fairy whose nature is so different from that of humanity that she cannot even appear to human eyes except as a blinding burst of light, falls in love with Renaud, King of France. She must give up her immortality and her fairy garden, a paradise of unending summer, to establish a relationship with him; yet the first kiss she receives from him will kill her. The lovers' natures are too alien for any but the most tragic ending.

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comedy appeals to our yearning for a simpler, clearer way of life, located not in childhood but in the past.[1] In Evgeny Chirikov's Forest Secrets (1909) and Ibsen's early play, St. John's Night (1853), outsiders are introduced into a fairy world mystically co-existent with the normal world of nature.

In all plays illustrating the Visit to Fairyland, normal time is suspended, stretched, or interrupted.[2] The fairy vision usually occurs overnight and is equated with a dream. Those who suffer the vision awake to a very different reality and must somehow cope with its changed meaning. Providing both ordeals and insight into hidden truths, the experience in fairyland constitutes the initiatory movement that Mircea Eliade and the Dutch folklorist, Jan de Vries, see in all myths and fairy tales.[3] In this way the plays may be said to replicate not only the surface features--fairy figures, supernatural objects and events, and other motifs--but the deep structures as well of the legends and tales on which

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[1] An interesting point of contrast: unlike Barrie, Lerner and Loewe do not keep their fairyland inaccessible after the initial visit. Wendy returns to Never Land once or twice for spring-cleaning of Peter's house, but as she grows older, her size begins to bother Peter and she has trouble flying. Back in New York, the hero of Brigadoon finds himself haunted by memories of the enchanted village and the girl he met there. He returns and is allowed to re-enter the Other World to stay. This ending, appropriate to romantic fantasy, has none of the demonic overtones of Mary Rose's return to fairyland or of the gradual effacement of Peter Pan's memories as he pipes forever in the treetops.

[2] Eliade's concept of mythic time may be compared to the folkloric idea, so important in the plays examined here, that time in fairyland runs on a different track. In reading or enacting a myth, says Eliade, "one ceases to exist in the everyday world and enters a transfigured, auroral world impregnated with the Supernaturals' presence" (Myth and Reality, p. 19). Eliade sees this movement out of historical time as a life-giving transcendence, reminding us of Tolkien's notion that the most important functions of fairy tales are Escape and Recovery ("On Fairy-Stories," pp. 55-70).

[3] Eliade, Myth and Reality, pp. 195-202. See also Jan de Vries,

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they are based.

Hofmannstahl's Death and the Fool (1893)

Both the Visit-to-Fairyland pattern and the Undine-pattern can be used by dramatists to illustrate themes relating to the conflict of art and life. Identified with figures representing opposed realms of experience, art and life have different values. The artist-heroes of Hofmannstahl, Ibsen, and Hauptmann, attempting to stand in two worlds at once, are either pulled apart or crushed between them.

Once again Shakespeare serves as a guide. In The Tempest Prospero makes an explicit equation between his white magic and art, and opposes both to reality. Having once neglected his duties as ruler to study his art, and suffered the consequences, Prospero now uses his art to straighten out his life. The conflict is illustrated in small in Act 4, scene 1, when, engrossed in the magical masque he puts on for Ferdinand and Miranda, Prospero forgets, then suddenly remembers the conspiracy of Caliban and the clowns. "Your father's in some passion/That works him strongly," observes Ferdinand. Prospero is angry more with himself than with Caliban, for almost having fallen into the same disastrous error that brought him and Miranda to the island twelve years before. At the same time he must withstand the impulse to take revenge that would turn his art into black magic. Only when wisdom disciplines art is the power of art made moral.

Shakespeare managed to reconcile art and life. The modern playwrights who take up this theme are mostly unable to do so. Barbara Fass points out that "the nineteenth-century writers who turned their attention

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"The Problem of the Fairy Tale," Diogenes, no. 22 (Summer 1958), pp. 1-15.

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to the fairy stories did so with a conscious realization that such tales could be personal myths. They found a symbolic correspondence between the world's relation to fairyland and their own to art."[1] In particular, the seductive yet demonic figure of the Fairy Mistress served as a symbolic focus for the romantic artist's ambivalent, conflicted feelings about society, which rejected him and his values. The symbolists likewise saw a deep incompatibility between the values of art and life, usually leading in their works to a tragic or paradoxical resolution.

Claudio, in Hofmannstahl's Death and the Fool, for example, feels an inner conflict between an urge to be actively involved in life and a tendency to remain passive and detached, an observer rather than a participant. Fragmented, emotionally frozen, he feels unloved and unloving. Though not an artist, he equates his withdrawal with an attitude of aesthetic contemplation; life for Claudio has become a book, "all words and lies and metaphor."[2] When Death calls for him, he protests that he has not yet begun to live. The play shows the "disharmony between the aesthetic joys of looking at beauty and the actual enjoyment of life itself."[3]

At first glance Hofmannstahl's sophisticated and world-weary playlet seems to have little to do with the naive fairy tale. His early plays, like Maeterlinck's, are static dramas, meditative and lyrical where folktales are active and terse in their use of language.[4] Yet the conception

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[1]Fass, La Belle Dame Sans Merci, p. 45.

[2]Hugo von Hofmannstahl, Poems and Verse Plays, ed. Michael Hamburger (New York: Pantheon, 1961), p. 119. Page references hereafter cited in the text.

[3]Martin Lamm, Modern Drama, trans. Karin Elliot (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), p. 247.

[4]On Hofmannstahl's links to the French symbolists and to Maeterlinck see Haskell Block, "Hugo von Hofmannstahl and the Symbolist Drama,"

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of death (or the devil) as a caller, sometimes as a skeleton or with a violin, and the image of the Dance of Death clearly originate in medieval legend.[1] Moreover, the play's paradoxical ending can be read as a kind of disenchantment similar to that in The Knights of the Round Table. As a boy Claudio was full of enthusiasm for life and suffered none of the symptoms of alienation that now depress his spirits. Death's violin stirs him deeply, so that he momentarily re-experiences his youthful joy of life, never feeling more awake and alive than during his last moments. Like Galahad guiding Arthur through his painful disenchantment, Death teaches Claudio to honor life, and he dies to seal his victory:

> This poor and faded life will not be missed:
> Dying, I feel at last that I exist.
> When a man sleeps, often his dreams will break
> With too much dreamed emotion, dream's excess;
> So from the dream of life I now may wake,
> Cloyed with emotion, to death's wakefulness. (p. 135)

The play employs the form, if not the imagery, of the A-B-A fairy play, describing Claudio's awakening from enchantment at the point of death.

Hofmannstahl's The Mine at Falun (1899)

Elis Fröbom, the hero of The Mine at Falun, is similarly estranged from life, and, like Claudio, he is confronted with a figure of fate that brings his existential problem to a crisis. However, the solution that Elis finds heads him in the opposite direction, away from active involvement in real life. Unlike Claudio, he dies without an awakening or an enlightenment.

Based on a story by E. T. A. Hoffmann (itself based on a real event, the discovery of a miner's preserved corpse in the silver mines at Falun,

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Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy 48 (1959):161-78; and Steven Sondrup, Hofmannstahl and the French Symbolist Tradition (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1976).

[1] Thompson, The Folktale, pp. 45-47.

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Sweden, reported in 1809),[1] the play uses both the Undine-pattern and the Visit-to-Fairyland to examine the lure of "pre-existence," Hofmannstahl's term for the introverted and solipsistic state of passive contemplation that he associated with symbolist aesthetics.[2] This preconscious state is equivalent to a dream or trance or, as in The Mine at Falun, an enchantment; the hero is caught up in it as he sinks into the earth to meet the Queen of the Mountain, and still more so as he passionately seeks a way to Falun where he will once again meet the Queen in her subterranean fairyland.

But the dream as a solution to the existential crisis leads only to death. In Hoffmann's story the hero gives up the sea to become a miner, lured by the figure of the Queen. On the day of his marriage to an earthly sweetheart he goes alone into the mine and is killed in a cave-in; fifty years later his petrified corpse comes to light and his fiancee, now an old crone, falls upon it and dies. This ending is clearly prefigured in Act 1 of Hofmannstahl's play. Whereas Death and the Fool ends in a healthy disenchantment, leading to a wholehearted embrace of life's values, The Mine at Falun ends with the state of demonic enchantment intact, confirming the author's judgment of pre-existential aesthetics as delusory and dangerous.[3]

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[1]Michael Hamburger, Introduction to Poems and Verse Plays, p. lv.

[2]Ibid., pp. xxxii-xlv.

[3]Ibsen's John Gabriel Borkman, written in 1896, three years before Hofmannstahl's play, uses similar imagery to make a similar point. Entranced by his dream of the precious metals to be dug up out of the earth, Borkman buries himself in bitter isolation in his house, to awaken only when Ella Rentheim arrives to remind him of the human cost of his fairy vision. In her article, "John Gabriel Borkman and the Miner of Falun," Eva Marie Fleck offers the play's imagery as evidence that the Miner of Falun legend lies at the source of the play and gives it a symbolic sub-

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Hofmannstahl included the first act only of The Mine at Falun among his lyrical plays, feeling dissatisfied with the direction the plot was taking toward pre-existence.[1] Act 1 has formal unity without the rest of the play, however, partly because Elis's destination is so strongly implied in his setting out, and partly because the A-B-A structure gives it a sense of balance and completeness.

The Visit to Fairyland in the play is dreamlike but not a dream as in the story. Elis speaks aloud a bitter wish for death, conjuring the earth to open, and the scene changes around him to a gloomy, silver-black hall suggesting the mountain's interior. Fantastic experiences occur that both frighten and delight him. In Agmahd, the Queen's page-boy, he sees apparitions of earthly figures, a drowned friend and an abandoned sweetheart, representing ties to ordinary life that Elis still must break. Torbern, the old miner whose place Elis will take as the Queen's lover, appears magically to describe how time slowed for him and he became estranged from humanity. The dark walls of the cavern flash occasionally; both Agmahd and the Queen seem to glow. A romantic fairy-tale landscape appears and disappears behind a transparent rock face:

> Enormous trees overhang pale yellow, shining waters, now assuming glowing colours, now delicate shades. In the far background vast gloomy chasms and rock faces exchange a mysterious metallic glint. (p. 339)

These events deeply impress Elis with the strangeness of the world, which in his state of depression had seemed sterile and meaningless. Having drunk from the Queen's goblet (like Rip Van Winkle he partakes of fairy

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strate. She does not think that Ibsen knew Hoffmann's story but perhaps that he heard the tale first-hand from a miner. See Scandinavian Studies 51 (1979):442-59.

[1] Hamburger, Introduction to Poems and Verse Plays, pp. lv-lvi.

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liquor and so binds himself to the fairy's power), he is intoxicated with a sense of dreamlike wonder.

Hofmannstahl describes the Queen's first appearance with an image from the iconography of symbolist painting, a female figure "that sways imperceptibly like a flower on a long stalk" (p. 331).[1] Yet the simile seems out of place in this fairyland of rock and darkness and silence. The Queen of the Mountain is more a spirit of the elements than of nature. As pure spirit she stands outside the flow of time, not even subject to the periodic flux of the seasons. Like Ukrainka's "He-Who-Dwells-in-Rock," she is an image of death, a projection of Elis's wish to unite with his dead mother in the earth. The enclosed underground chamber, by implication the tomb of his mother, also stands for the womb to which he would retreat. It becomes his tomb as well.

Elis sees right away that he and the Queen "are not of the same world" (p. 335). He is a creature of biological nature, bound by time; she is a glorious emanation of the elements, transcendent and eternal.[2] While living with her, Torbern stepped out of time, or into a slower stream alongside that of our world. He is Elis's double, a mirror con-

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[1] Gustave Moreau's Mystic Flower (c. 1875), for example, depicts a queen-like figure, holding a cross, as the bloom of an other-worldly plant, the base of which is surrounded by miniature haloed figures. Many symbolist paintings combine human or animal figures with natural forms, such as waves, trees, clouds, plants, etc., to endow nature with soul. Redon's La Fleur de Marécage, using a Pierrot's head and tiny skulls as seeds, is another example.

[2] As a fairy lover the Queen stands closest to the High Fairies of Celtic legend and French romance described by C. S. Lewis in The Discarded Image (pp. 130-4). These human-sized fairies are beautiful, grave, and splendidly numinous, often portrayed as living in "a blaze of wealth and luxury" that is meant to suggest admirable qualities of graciousness, nobility, and courtesy. Vital and passionate supernatural creatures, these fairies seek out human beings, usually for the purposes of amor.

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fronting him with the image of what he will become. Like Oisin, who became old and bent the moment he dismounted, Torbern steps back into time and dies, and so will Elis. Hofmannstahl uses the supernatural lapse of time as folklore does to assert the separation of the human and spirit worlds and to confirm man's subjection to the laws of his own kind.

As in Death and the Fool, the subjectivity of the play gives it the feeling of monodrama, a play of thought and dream performed in the hero's head for an audience of one. Accordingly it is full of mirrors, doubles, and inversions such as Torbern. Agmahd "is an amorphous, insubstantial thing:/A mirror; showing to each one the secrets/Deep in his heart" (p. 353). The Queen too is a projection. Her elemental, timeless nature inverts Elis's world of birth and death; her sexual disgust reflects his Hamlet-like alienation from life. Hofmannstahl locates the action at the beach of a small harbor, a border between two realms. In the play's imagery the fixity of the land answers the flux of the sea: adrift, Elis seeks stability, roots, an anchor, and finds what he seeks in the rocky depths.

The subjective point of view is especially obvious at the end, when events in the world of the beach and the tavern, that is supposedly real, mysteriously answer Elis's secret needs. The Fisherman's Son seems to rise from death to ferry him across to Falun; the wind changes direction to make the trip possible. A shooting star falls, just as it did for Torbern, to light him on his way. A typical "chosen hero" of fairy tale and romance, Elis feels that he cannot fail in his quest:

> And if this boat should split before we've crossed,
> Why, the green wave will freeze and bear my weight.
> My senses quiver, and incessantly
> Evoke new visions of her glittering face . . .

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Whatever happens now, I cannot die,
Free of the law that rules this earthly life. (p. 363)

Thus, unlike Claudio in Death and the Fool, Elis never awakens from his enchantment. His fairyland vision of the Queen rises before him and leads him across the water, like the beacon of God leading the Israelites to the Promised Land. Mythological resonances like this one permeate the play, which as a whole follows the A-B-A scenario of the rite of passage: "a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return."[1] For the adventure to be a creative act, according to Joseph Campbell, the hero must not refuse to return. Yet Elis, locked into his private vision, proceeds to isolate himself even further by going to Falun to bury himself in the mine. In this image of reversion, Hofmannstahl's form and meaning merge. Since Elis cannot really cut himself "free of the law that rules this earthly life," especially the law of love and social responsibility, he will die.

The close relationship of symbolist drama and German romanticism is illustrated in Hofmannstahl's use of Hoffmann's story.[2] Hoffmann's bizarre and kaleidoscopic fantasies expressed his sense of the power of the imagination, which he viewed, in part, as a means of escape from

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[1] Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, p. 35.

[2] Horst S. Daemmrich, in The Shattered Self: E. T. A. Hoffmann's Tragic Vision (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), uses Hoffmann's tale as an example of what he calls "the infernal fairy tale," an inversion of the folk form. His description of the story applies as well to Hofmannstahl's adaptation: "Hoffmann inverts the motif of the young hero who climbs to the top of a mountain of glass, gains his princess, and lives happily ever after. In Hoffmann's version the hero descends to the core of the mountain in search of the truth of life, the mysterious red almandine, but discovers the ultimate truth--death." Thus the story presents "a symbolic narration of man's confrontation with death on his journey into his subconscious" (p. 83). See also Daemmrich's article, "The Infernal Fairy Tale: Inversion of Archetypal Motifs in Modern European Literature," Mosaic 5 (1972):85-95.

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oppressive rationalism and conformity to bourgeois values. Anselmus, in "The Golden Pot" (1814), for example, gives up a civil service career to live in Atlantis with his fairy lover, and so escapes the dessication of his creative potential.[1] In developing the doctrine of "Art for art's sake" and cultivating their sensibilities behind walls decorated on the inside, as it were, by the imagination, the symbolists exalted art into an alternative mode of existence, as if following Hoffmann's tale as a programmatic statement.[2]

Hofmannstahl began his career in the embrace of this view of poetry, then fought his way clear of it. He found that he could not accept a philosophy that required the artist or lover of beauty to retire within himself and cut off all ties with fellow human beings. His modification of one of Hoffmann's images will illustrate his change of heart.

In his dream Hoffmann's Elis sees shining metallic plants and flowers growing out of the depths beneath the transparent floor of the cavern; and below them are many beautiful young female figures, their arms around each other, in whose hearts are buried the roots of these

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[1] According to James Trainer, Hoffmann sees reality as "something oppressive from which we may be delivered by seeking out the fairy-tale world contained in it" (The Romantic Period in Germany, ed. S. Prawer, pp. 115-16). In Breaking the Magic Spell Jack Zipes provides a reading of "The Golden Pot" that relates it to the revolutionary thrust of the German Romantics, who used the fairy tale as a means of utopian protest against the forces of commercialization and conformity on behalf of the oppressed artist-hero (see pp. 37-39, 86).

[2] Maeterlinck's master, Novalis, also held that the fairy tale, equivalent to creative imagination itself (see above, p. 27), was more real than reality. "Only art is real," he wrote. "For him the role of the imagination is central as creator of the external world." Thus the poet is charged with a priestly and prophetic role, and the fairy tale is the highest literary form, since it "poeticizes poetry" (Trainer, The Romantic Period in Germany, pp. 105-9). The philosophical idealism of the symbolists, rooted in romanticism, makes the genre of fairy tale what George MacDonald called the "Golden Key" to the secret of life.

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marvelous plants. Hofmannstahl essentially reverses the meaning of this image of the beauty of spiritualized nature. In describing what horrifies her about human life, the Queen says,

> I know you never sleep for long, but when
> You do lie down to seek unbroken sleep
> You are no longer you: the depth of earth,
> That like a resonant shell encloses me,
> Dissolves your limbs, estranged from one another,
> And from your breast great trees rise up, and corn
> Strikes root within the hollows of your eyes.
> And those who live above are nourished by
> This crop that's sprouting from their brother's bodies.
> (p. 337)

As a spirit the Queen is revolted by what she calls "this battening of flesh on flesh," but the necrophagy, seen from another point of view, is a metaphor for the law of love that ties men to their brothers and ensures that the race lives on. Every human being, and especially every parent, must nourish others out of his heart. These are the ties of obligation that Elis must break if he is to live with the Queen in her utter loneliness; having already broken them, Claudio finds himself unloving and unloved. Both plays bring their heroes to a death that is only a symbol of the deathly lives they had been living.

Hofmannstahl reverses symbolist ethics more clearly in The Emperor and the Witch and The Woman Without a Shadow, two other plays that will be considered below. In both cases an ideal of social responsibility wins out over the hero's temptation to make himself all-sufficient by withdrawing into a state of pre-existence.[1] By thus subordinating aes-

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[1] If Hofmannstahl felt dissatisfied with Acts 2-5 of The Mine at Falun because the hero was headed into pre-existence (see above, p. 175), he succeeded in countering that tendency in The Emperor and the Witch, whose hero rejects pre-existence (represented by the beautiful witch), and especially in The Woman Without a Shadow, where the fairy world is conceived not as a pre-existential realm but as a transcendent realm of ethical value. Hofmannstahl wrote that it was only in the latter that

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theticism to traditional Christian ethics, Hofmannstahl set himself against the idea of the function of art that was most popular among his fellow symbolists.

Ibsen's The Master Builder (1892)

Though not a symbolist, Ibsen wrote realistic plays with symbolist undercurrents during the period in which the drama of this school came to the fore. The Master Builder was recognised by Maeterlinck himself as a drama in which unknown powers of the soul had been set free, making the play "so strange, so profound, and so disquieting beneath its trivial surface."[1] Moreover, by making his hero a kind of artist who is agonized by the demands his career has made upon his home and family life, Ibsen declares his intention to explore a conflict similar to that in The Tempest. Solness can be seen as a Prospero who falls victim to his own illusions.

The play makes use of the "Baumeister" (Masterbuilder) legend, a folk story associated with many cathedrals and other awe-inspiring man-made structures in Europe.[2] Henning K. Sehmsdorf describes two legends about St. Olaf, King of Norway from 1015 to 1028, who was supposed to have built the Seljord church and Trondheim cathedral with the aid of trolls

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he finally managed to "reverse the theme of The Emperor and the Witch and the Mine: the love for a demon is transmuted into love for a human being, instead of appearing as its antithesis" (quoted by Hamburger, Introduction to Poems and Verse Plays, p. lvi).

[1] Maeterlinck, "The Tragical in Daily Life," The Treasury of the Humble, trans. Alfred Sutro (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1916), p. 115.

[2] R. T. Christiansen, Folktales of Norway (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 5-7. The more common story on this theme employs a giant rather than a troll or demon. See motif F531.6.6, "Giants as Builders of Great Structures"; for a commentary consult Thompson, The Folktale, pp. 249, 445.

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which he afterwards tricked.[1] St. Olaf "allies himself with a demonic power to transcend his human limitations,"[2] just as Solness calls upon, or thinks he calls upon, supernatural powers to accomplish his aims.

A more immediate source in folklore for the play, attested to by Ibsen himself, is another version of the Baumeister legend. Helene Raff, one of the dramatist's young female friends, described the following conversation:

> On 22 April [1890] I met Ibsen in the Maffeistrasse [in Munich]. He asked me why I was looking so pensive, and I told him of my distress: for I was in the middle of completing my first picture for the Glaspalast exhibition. He strolled up and down the Promenadeplatz once or twice with me, and enquired of me what church studies I had made for the picture in question. I happened to mention the story of the builder of St. Michaelskirche, who apparently had thrown himself down from the top, fearing that the barrel-vault of the dome would not hold. Ibsen listened attentively and said: 'The story must originate in Scandinavia--at least, we have a very similar one, several even, I think.' I answered that this might very well be the case; in Germany, all famous cathedrals had their builder stories [Baumeistersage]. 'Do you know why?' he asked. Naturally I said 'no.' He was silent for a moment, lost in thought, and then said: 'People rightly feel that nobody builds so high and goes unpunished.'[3]

In this version of the legend, recalling the myths of Prometheus and the Tower of Babel, Nemesis returns upon the head of the builder. Sehmsdorf speculates that Ibsen called his hero "bygmester" (masterbuilder) rather than "arkitekt" because he wanted the archaic flavor of the older word

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[1] Henning K. Sehmsdorf, "Two Legends about St. Olaf, the Masterbuilder: A Clue to the Dramatic Structure of Henrik Ibsen's Bygmester Solness," Edda 54 (1967):263-71. Ibsen may have heard these legends or similar ones in 1862, when he had a stipend from the state to gather Norwegian folklore (Meyer, Ibsen: A Biography, pp. 196-7). There is no mention of the legends in his notes, which were never published, but we do find there a reference to hearing harps in the air, an item of folklore which has found its way into the play (Sehmsdorf, "Two Legends," p. 267).

[2] Ibid., p. 266.

[3] The Oxford Ibsen, ed. and trans. James Walter McFarlane and Graham Orton (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 7:569-70.

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and its associations with the legend.[1] Having defied God atop the tower at Lysanger by declaring that he would use his talents to build homes for human beings rather than churches to His glory, Solness now climbs another tower, this one incongruously attached to the new home intended for Aline, and is flung down to destruction. The mythical resonances give him the heroic aura of the archetypal tragic Masterbuilder. His story becomes an allegory of the Promethean artist.

Though he does not mention these legends, Solness thinks of himself as the hero of a fairy tale. Like Prospero, he is a magician who calls forth spirits to do his will. All his good fortune, he thinks, has stemmed from some occult power within himself, an ability to bend external circumstances to his unspoken wishes. Aline's family home burned to the ground to give him his start as a builder. Kaja Fosli came to work for him because he willed it so. Unable to recall the details of his previous encounter with Hilde, Solness thinks he has willed her into his life as well; thus he identifies her by inference with those "helpers and servers" that come, as they came to Faust, to obey him for good or evil. Solness' reference to these inner powers as trolls provides us with an explicit link to folklore and in particular to the Masterbuilder legend.

The play's autobiographical implications will help us to understand Hilde's role as a demon or attendant spirit. If the dry, sterile marriage depicted in The Master Builder truly reflects Ibsen's feelings of bitterness and guilt toward his wife, as was widely assumed when the play was published,[2] then the dramatist's interest in the young girls

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[1] Sehmsdorf, "Two Legends," p. 269.

[2] Meyer, Ibsen: A Biography, p. 698.

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he made friends with toward the end of his life is easily understood. Hilde stands not only for Emilie Bardach but for all these girls,[1] and the currents of passion that run between Solness and Hilde express the revitalizing effects their company had on the playwright.

These biographical parallels further suggest an understanding of the play as an allegory of the artistic process.[2] Solness' fear of Ragnar and his emotional impasse with his wife correspond, on this view, to a state of "dryness" or a failure of the creative faculty. Tensions from the artist's life invade his art, making it impossible for him to function productively. Enfusing him with energy and a sense of purpose, Hilde represents inspiration or the Muse; Ragnar, Brovik, and Kaja Fosli are the earthly helpers and servers, "the artist's imprisoned energies awaiting the entrance of what Hilde symbolizes."[3] It is significant that just before Hilde fills him with enthusiasm for acting out her dream of the triumphant hero, Solness has expressed his doubts that he will ever build again. His climbing the tower, then, represents the achievement of a crowning masterpiece, the fruit of the Muse's visitation.

The play is much more than an allegory, of course, but this interpretation helps to clarify, among other things, the symmetrical opposition of Hilde and Aline. Most of the Undine plays have symmetrically opposed figures who contend for the soul of the hero. Hilde speaks for

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[1] Emilie Bardach, whom Ibsen met in 1889 and with whom he later corresponded, has often been identified as the model for Hilde. But the date mentioned in the play, September 19, was celebrated as a friendship anniversary by Ibsen and Hildur Andersen. He gave her an inscribed ring and a copy of the play with a dedication. See The Oxford Ibsen, 7:571-2.

[2] See Rolf Fjelde's introduction to his translation in Henrik Ibsen: The Complete Major Prose Plays (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978).

[3] Ibid., p. 782.

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the ideals of the master builder's Promethean vocation; his wife speaks for the hard reality of his life. They are set off against each other by contrasting personalities: where Hilde is vital, impulsive, and affectionate, Aline is cold and suspicious, always motivated by a sense of duty. Married to a spiritually sterile woman, Solness is locked into a prison of guilt and self-recrimination--even a solitary confinement, for whenever he approaches Aline, she flees from him. Simply having Hilde to talk to is a relief for Solness; that she is young, attractive, and very interested in him charms him all the more. Their intense rapport culminates in his symbolic act of climbing and wreathing the tower while she watches in a state of increasing excitement that becomes almost orgasmic as she bursts out wildly, "Hurrah for Master Builder Solness!"[1] Ibsen pointedly mentions that the wreath is green and decorated with flowers and ribbons, as if to suggest that Solness' symbolic union with his fairy lover, in contrast with his marriage, is a life-affirming, spiritually creative event.

What it creates is a symbolic rededication to the ideals of his vocation. Clinging to the hope of earthly happiness, Solness is paralyzed by an overwhelming sense of obligation to his wife.[2] But one who

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[1] Hermann J. Weigand, in The Modern Ibsen (New York: Dutton, 1960), thinks that Hilde is a study in arrested sexual development: she makes Solness climb the tower in an effort to recreate the circumstances of her first orgasm ten years before (p. 291). For the quote see Ibsen: The Complete Major Prose Plays, p. 859 (hereafter cited in the text).

[2] He feels his sense of guilt as though it were a wound: "a big piece of skin . . . stripped, right here, from my chest. And the helpers and servers go on flaying the skin off other people to patch my wound. But the wound never heals--never! Oh, if only you knew how sometimes it leeches and burns" (The Oxford Ibsen 7:831). This wound, symbolic of Solness' punishment, is equivalent to Prometheus' daily ordeal of being gnawed at by the vulture of Zeus. Guilt is the negative aspect of those ties to common life that Solness must break if he is to unite with Hilde.

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would bring the fire of enlightenment to mankind through his art must give up all hope of finding comfort and solace in family life like everybody else. The artist is an observer and consumer of life, not a participant. Thus Hilde presents him with a prior claim, the unfulfilled commitment to himself. The new house he had intended as payment of the debt of guilt becomes, through her intervention, the fairy castle he had promised her ten years before, a monument to his own indomitability.[1]

As in Hofmannstahl's The Mine at Falun, this heroic quest takes shape in an extremely subjective atmosphere. Ibsen's success at echoing or shadowing the exterior dialogue between Solness and Hilde with an interior dialogue seems to be what most impressed Maeterlinck about the play. It can be viewed as a monodrama or an interior monologue with several speakers; all the characters, especially Hilde, are thus aspects of the hero's consciousness.[2] Hilde's fateful knock on the door suggests the kind of dreamlike probability that we find in myths and fairy tales. Like the Stranger in The Lady from the Sea, Hilde is, in Richard Schechner's phrase, a "personified thought," a real character who functions uncannily as an embodiment of an aspect of Solness' divided self.[3]

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[1] In his essay, "Psychology and Literature," C. G. Jung interprets artistic creation as a supra-personal process. "The artist's life cannot be otherwise than full of conflicts, for two forces are at work within him--on the one hand the common human longing for happiness, satisfaction, and security in life, and on the other a ruthless passion for creation which may go so far as to override every personal desire. . . . There are hardly any exceptions to the rule that a person must pay dearly for the divine gift of creative fire." Modern Man in Search of a Soul, trans. W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1933), p. 169.

[2] Egil Törnqvist, "Individualism in The Master Builder," in Contemporary Approaches to Ibsen: Reports from the Third International Ibsen Seminar, Bergen, 1975, ed. Harald Noreng et al. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), p. 145.

[3] Richard Schechner, "The Unexpected Visitor in Ibsen's Late Plays,"

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He asks her how she became what she is; she answers, "How have you made me what I am?" (p. 856) He has created her in order to recreate himself. In this Maeterlinckian "atmosphere of the soul" Hilde seems to offer Solness the opportunity to become the fairy-tale hero that she has dreamed of, thus conforming his life to the outlines of a myth.

Reading the play as an allegory of the creative process helps us to plumb its numinous depths, but leaves out of account one all-important fact--Solness' death. He climbs the tower to make Hilde's vision of him come true, in other words, to give his life the form and meaning of a work of art. His fall proves that such a mythical project is impossible in the realm of fact: once again, as in Hannele, a corpse signifies the sudden darkening of a dream. On this view Hilde's power to inspire, like that of all the Undine figures we have been considering, is ambiguously demonic as well as divine.

This conclusion suggests a comparison with Hofmannstahl's The Mine at Falun. At first glance these two works, one a realistic play in prose, the other a legendary drama in verse, look very different. Hofmannstahl's central image is the cavern, Ibsen's the castle in the air; yet both images are associated with death, by burial or by falling.[1] Fairyland in The Master Builder is not so much a place as a state of mind: we are in fairyland with Hilde and Solness, in a kind of waking

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in Ibsen: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Rolf Fjelde (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 159. Schechner borrows the phrase from Jung's "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairy Tales," The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), pp. 207-54.

[1] Note furthermore that Solness falls into a quarry, a kind of cavern, but also a source of stones for building, perhaps intended to represent the emptiness that remains in his life as a result of his artistic activities.

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dream, whenever they discuss their kingdom. We have an Undine figure in both plays. Hilde, purportedly a real person, comes from Lysanger, the scene of Ibsen's The Lady from the Sea, whereas the Queen emerges fully formed from Elis's dream-life. Yet the Hilde that matters, the one that sends Solness to climb the tower, is not the girl of flesh and blood, but the fairy princess that she convinces Solness to believe in. She draws her special powers from the subjective point of view, which gives her access to the blocked sexual energies that are building up in Solness' psyche.

Thus The Master Builder too is a play of enchantment based on the familiar Undine-pattern. Solness is as alienated from normal pleasures and concerns as Elis; his marriage and his children died long ago, and as for his work, "Nothing, nothing--it all comes to nothing" (p. 855). Like the typical hero of fairy tale and romance, both are cut off from society and exist in a state of readiness for adventure; both meet a figure of Nemesis; both, unlike the conventional hero of romance, end their adventure in the permanent isolation of death. The threat in Hilde is part of her fascination. She seduces him with a self-image of strength and creative potency that an erotic relationship between them would imply--a powerful spell because, like the Queen's enchantment of Elis, it answers his deepest psychic needs, yet deadly because the vision of himself that she offers him has no correspondence in reality. He dies in a burst of enthusiastic belief in an illusion. In actuality he is not and perhaps never was the Promethean hero that she wants him to be.

The allegory is not complete without an understanding of how Solness' fall affects his perfect work of art. Without a "firm foundation" in concrete reality, the castle remains a fantasy, a dangerous il-

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lusion if taken for real. Unlike Prospero, who remembers in time that he must deal with Caliban, Solness never wakens from his dreamlike vision. In this sense the allegory describes the failure of creativity: inspiration fails to achieve form, turns demonic, and consumes the artist in an infernal version of the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. Prospero is in charge of his dreams; Solness' dreams somehow take charge of him.

But in another sense the hero's death is a necessary step in the creative process. As Erich Neumann insists, creativity is transformation: whatever is removed from reality and put into a work of art must take on a new and different kind of existence. It can no longer be what it was.[1] Like Daphne in Ovid's tale, who escaped from Apollo's embrace by being turned into a laurel tree, Solness has made himself living material for a work of art; so he must die and be reborn. At the end Ragnar and the others see the physical fact of his death as the final reality, but Hilde continues to wave her shawl, hailing her image of Solness atop the tower, not in ignorance but in defiance of this fact. For her he has achieved rebirth, as mythic hero and heroic mythmaker, into a realm of existence outside of time and space, where his triumph is sealed by death.

The ending never resolves the tension in the play between Hilde's benevolent and demonic aspects or between inner and outer realms of experience. Hilde and Solness live on two levels at once, in space and time as well as in the mind. They are real characters who exist in a physical world like our own, and a fairy prince and princess who enact a mythical adventure. This ambiguity is sustained into the irony of the ending, which can be taken as either a triumph or a defeat for Solness,

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[1] Erich Neumann, "Creative Man and Transformation," Art and the Creative Unconscious, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 202.

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but is best understood as both at once. In no other way can we keep firmly in mind both terms of the irreconcilable conflict of the play: the "symbolizing mind" versus the world of realistic values by which it is judged.[1]

If this formulation accurately describes Ibsen's intention, then it is clear that the fairy-tale mode was an especially suitable choice. Jan de Vries sees the essential nature of the form in just such a conflict. The European fairy tale arose, he thinks, at a moment in cultural history when idealistic, optimistic views of the world collided with the harsh nature of reality, diverting simple stories of adventure into the arena of dream.[2] The genre itself is a product of a dialectic like that in The Master Builder. It is appropriate that the fairy tale in the play, far from being peripheral or decorative, lies at the heart of its meaning.

Hauptmann's The Sunken Bell (1896)

Hauptmann's The Sunken Bell also uses fairy-tale elements to explore the conflict of life and art. The parallels between this play and The Master Builder have often been noted.[3] Like Solness, Master Heinrich

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[1] John Northam, "Ibsen--Romantic, Realist, or Symbolist?" in Contemporary Approaches to Ibsen (1977), p. 161. Every good commentary on the play takes account of this tension. Eric Bentley, for example, insists that in looking for Ibsen the visionary we do not overlook Ibsen the realist. "If the symbolism and the realism of The Master Builder are imperfectly fused . . . one realizes that Ibsen could have 'perfected' his work by simplifying his problem, by writing a narrowly 'symbolic' or a narrowly 'realist' play. Surely one prefers a heroic failure." See his "Ibsen: Pro and Con," in Discussions of Henrik Ibsen, ed. James Walter McFarlane (Boston: Heath, 1962), p. 18.

[2] Jan de Vries, "The Problem of the Fairy Tale," Diogenes, no. 22 (Summer 1958), p. 11.

[3] K. M. Gunvaldsen, "The Master Builder and Die Versunkene Glocke," Monatshefte 23 (1941):153-62; Martin Schütze, "Hauptmann's Die versunkene Glocke," Americana Germanica 3 (1899):60-95.

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thinks of himself as an artist-hero who must not be bound by ordinary ties of human obligation. He too suffers a spiritual desolation and then is inspired by a young girl whose mysterious airs betoken a connection with the Other World. By leaving his wife and sons to live with Rautendelein and dedicate himself to a Promethean project, Heinrich acts out the desertion that for Solness remains figurative; again like Solness, he is disabled by guilt. In both plays the central image is a work of art, projected but never completed, that symbolizes both transcendence and retribution, containing within itself the opposed forces that tear the hero apart. Both playwrights, in short, see the position of the artist as deeply problematic.

The Master Builder, published only four years before, is obviously one of the many sources for The Sunken Bell.[1] Nevertheless, the formal differences between the plays go deep. Set alongside Ibsen's play, The Sunken Bell may be said to prove the value of a realistic perspective in dealing with fairy-tale fantasy. Its imagery, drawn mostly from Greek mythology and Germanic folklore, tends to be literal and decorative.[2] There is a subjective quality to the hero's experience, but Rau-

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[1] See Hermann J. Weigand, "Gerhart Hauptmann's Range as Dramatist," Monatshefte 44 (1952):313-32; and Henry Wood, "Literary Adaptations in Gerhart Hauptmann's Versunkene Glocke," Germanistic Society Quarterly 3 (March 1916 and June 1916):1-13, 45-141; in addition to Schütze and Gunvaldsen, cited above. The immediate source for the scenic mechanism and poetic form of The Sunken Bell is Grillparzer's fairy play, Melusina (1823), itself based on an earlier Undine play, K. F. Hensler's Das Donauweibchen (1798). The fountain, the scene of the hero's meeting with the fairy lover, his reunion with her, and his death all come from Grillparzer's play, as does the fairy atmosphere of forest and mountain. The hero, Raimund, is "tormented, like Heinrich, by a romantic yearning for something indefinite, which for him is embodied in the mysterious maiden, Melusina"--Schütze, "Hauptmann's Versunkene Glocke," p. 68.

[2] The pipe-smoking Wood Sprite is really a transplanted satyr or faun, but the other night-creatures associated with Rautendelein are deni-

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tendelein and the other fairy creatures have objective existence outside his mind.[1] Moreover, the human characters are not dehumanized in this fairyland; rather the fairy creatures are given human motivation.[2] Without the subjective pole, the vision of fairyland loses the ironical relation to reality that acts as the mainspring in The Master Builder and, by different means, in Hannele.

Nevertheless, like Ukrainka in Forest Song, for whom his play provided a model, Hauptmann has created a living world of enchantment for his fairy princess. Otto Heller writes that the real value of the play lies not in its Faustian meanings but in "the wondrous atmosphere suffusing the whole and transporting us by its magic into the heart of the old romantic land of Tieck, Eichendorff, and Fouqué. . . . Never yet has a poet stood in a more intimate sensuous relation to nature; at least no poet has been more successful in vivifying her."[3] Hauptmann found his

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zens of Germanic forests, including the most realistic and convincing of them, Old Wittichen, a half-human, half-supernatural figure out of Grimm, who serves as the mediator between the two worlds. The pitcher of tears, the sunken bell, and the cups of red, white, and yellow wine are all from folklore. On Old Wittichen, see Schütze, "Hauptmann's Versunkene Glocke," and J. A. Walz, "The Folk-lore Elements in Hauptmann's Die Versunkene Glocke," Modern Language Notes 16 (February and March 1901):45-53, 65-71. Shakespeare, Tieck, Andersen, Wagner, and other literary sources have also helped to people Hauptmann's fairy world.

[1] John Jacob Weisert, The Dream in Gerhart Hauptmann (New York: King's Crown Press, 1949), p. 57.

[2] The dwarves, for example, resent Heinrich's mastership, the Wood Demon is malicious, the Nickelmann jealous. These creatures remind us of mythological figures painted by Böcklin: except for their exotic outsides, they are recognizable stage-types playing traditional roles, creatures of dream treated as real. See Weisert, "Critical Reception of Gerhart Hauptmann's The Sunken Bell on the American Stage," Monatshefte 43 (1951): 221-34.

[3] Otto Heller, Studies in Modern German Literature (Boston: Ginn, 1905), p. 180.

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proper sphere in the poetic evocation of the magic of nature.

The charming, enigmatic Rautendelein is the focus of these animistic effects. Heinrich recognizes in her "the very soul of fairy fantasy."[1] As a nature spirit, she is variously identified with the water, the forest, light and air, and even the depths of the earth.[2] Her origin is appropriately mysterious. She knows only that she was found one day "lying in the moss and weeds" (p. 137), having been nursed by friendly animals.[3] Like her sister, Mavka, she enjoys magical powers and consorts with spirits large and small. The Vicar calls her a witch, but she is clearly a fairy creature, not human. Her descent into the well after being cursed by Heinrich and her discovery of tears in Act 1 suggest that, like Fouqué's fairy heroine, Rautendelein longs to acquire a human soul and sees in her lover a means to that end.[4] Like Undine, she returns from her watery element to administer the hero's death.

The Sunken Bell is a tragedy, yet the primary function of the fairy princess, as in folktales, is to renew life. At the climax of his ecstatic hymn to the sun in Act 3, Heinrich describes how the spring sun resurrects Christ on the cross:

Then shall we all draw near to the Cross

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[1] Hauptmann, The Dramatic Works, ed. Ludwig Lewisohn (New York: Viking, 1927), 4:90. Page references hereafter cited in the text.

[2] Walz, "Folklore Elements," p. 52. In Act 4, like Hofmannstahl's Queen of the Mountain, Rautendelein invites her lover to flee with her into an underground kingdom where "vast halls shall strive with dazzling light" (p. 178). At home in her world, the fairy has access to its farthest reaches, its depths and heights.

[3] The "Animal Nurse" motif (B535) is widespread in folklore; see Thompson, The Folktale, p. 264. Giraudoux makes marvelous use of this idea in Ondine: the living lake itself is Ondine's mother.

[4] Walz, "Folklore Elements," p. 52.

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> And, still in tears, rejoice, until at last
> The dead redeemer, by the Sun set free,
> His prisoned limbs shall stir from their long sleep,
> And, radiant with the joy of endless youth,
> Come down, Himself a youth, into the May! (p. 160)

Heinrich generalizes his personal experience of healing into a cosmic nature myth, seeing himself as a persecuted and dying Christ and identifying Rautendelein with the life-giving sun. A pattern of death and resurrection underlies the first half of the play. At first Heinrich wishes to die, since he thinks God hurled him off the mountain, along with the bell, to express displeasure in his handiwork.[1] Rautendelein miraculously restores his life and his spirits. Her red-gold hair and her affinity for heights and light, emphasized throughout in the imagery, establish her figurative kinship with the sun; Heinrich sees in her an incarnation of Freya, goddess of love, light, and fertility. She shares with Hilde these Eddic associations as well as her vitalizing, rejuvenating function for the hero. Solness might easily have said what Heinrich says to Rautendelein: "I feel so blessed, so wrapped in thy strange loveliness" (p. 180).

As an allegory of art, The Sunken Bell raises questions and conclusions largely anticipated by The Master Builder. Rautendelein, like Hilde, represents will, inspiring the artist-hero to create a masterpiece that symbolizes his Promethean vocation. Both heroes are assisted by attendant spirits--Solness' demonic "helpers and servers"; the dwarves and others working for Master Heinrich--that, like the fairy princesses, can be understood as personifications of the heroes' creative faculties. Chief among the opposing characters are wives representing human obliga-

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[1]This line of thought reminds us of The Master Builder, through the "Baumeister" legend. Like Solness, Heinrich feels his powers waning and contemplates stepping aside for the younger generation.

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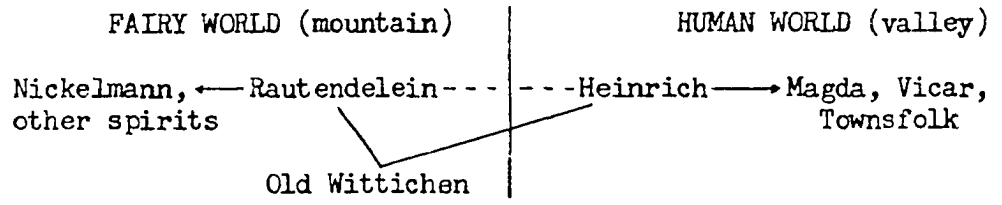
tions from which, it seems, the heroes must free themselves if they are to pursue their creative projects wholeheartedly; neither is able to do so. The artist is viewed, not without irony, as a kind of Nietzschean superman who stands somewhere outside normal social boundaries. In The Sunken Bell especially there is the suggestion, derived from Ibsen's Brand, that this superior position confers on the hero a prophetic, even messianic role in relation to the rest of mankind. Like Brand, both Solness and Heinrich are opposed in this role by characters whose intellectual and moral darkness cannot be enlightened. Finally, through their use of the fairy tale both playwrights imply that there is something mystical about artistic creativity. In a sense all works of art are castles in the air built on a solid foundation. The poetic process lies somewhere beyond the reach of the rational mind, in the arena of fantasy, dream, and fairy-tale transformation.

The conflict can be summed up in the following schematization:



Like The Master Builder, the play presents the Undine-pattern later used by Ukrainka in Forest Song and Giraudoux in Ondine. The hero in all these plays suffers death at the hands of a demonic lover.

But unlike Solness, Heinrich does not sense any threat in his fairy princess. Except in the climactic moment of the cursing, he thinks of her solely in terms of health-giving light and air. He thinks his enemies are the Vicar and the townspeople, who oppose their rigid orthodoxy to his nature worship and their prejudice and hypocrisy to his gospel of

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freedom. But his routing of the lynch mob in Act 4 does not end the play. Nor is Magda really his opponent. Her sin against him is not a deathly sterility of spirit, like Aline's in The Master Builder, but simply ordinariness. Rautendelein excites him; she does not. Behind Heinrich's Promethean rhetoric about eagles' claws stroking a sick child's wet cheek lies something unpleasantly like adolescent self-inflation and irresponsibility.[1] He puts Magda off too easily, before and after her death, to feel sincerely the deep sense of guilt that the author imputes to him. In short, Heinrich is a fragmented and vulnerable character, easy prey to his fairy lover.

Rautendelein's demonic aspect lies in her kinship with the Wood Sprite and the Nickelmann, dark creatures who are hostile to mankind. Critics have questioned her descent into the well at the end, reasoning that as a spirit of light and air, she ought rather to fuse with the sun.[2] E. Allen McCormick argues convincingly that she is equally identified with water and dark underground spaces all through the play. She is a compound of opposed impulses. Like Maeterlinck's doomed fairy princesses, she aspires upward toward the light and air, yet is pulled down into earth and water. Her unconsciously divided impulses add to her mysterious charm, but more important, says McCormick, they reflect her lover's inner division. Heinrich falls because he recognizes only the qualities in Rautendelein that attract him and ignores the demonic creature that eventually emerges from the well to hand him his cup of death. Like Elis

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[1] Schütze labels him a coward and a cad for leaving his wife and children ("Hauptmann's Die versunkene Glocke," p. 82). His speeches are full of bombast and old ideas, Schütze says further, and his great moment of insight, the tolling of the bell, evokes contempt rather than terror.

[2] Ibid., p. 88.

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in The Mine at Falun, Heinrich suffers a deadly enchantment. He is really his own enemy; Rautendelein manifests those opposed impulses within him that finally tear him apart.[1]

Returning to the allegory of art, we can conclude that Ibsen and Hauptmann, like Sologub in The Triumph of Death, have described the artist's failure and its consequences. But whereas Algista's undivided will, contrasting sharply with Solness' and Heinrich's inner division, give her tragic stature as she stands against the philistine mob, the view of the artist-hero in The Master Builder and The Sunken Bell can be described as ironic at best. Heinrich's bell, intended for the heights to call the people to enlightened worship, tumbles into the mere where its tolling summons him to judgment. Ibsen and Hauptmann see the artist attacked from within as well as without. Their heroes are unable to integrate art and life as Prospero does. Disabled by guilt and delusion, both fall victim to their own magic.

Ibsen's The Lady from the Sea (1888)

The tales of Grimm and Perrault are comic structures, typically concluding with marriages and coronations amid general rejoicing. The Consolation of the Happy ending, says Tolkien, is of the essence in the true fairy tale: its denial of universal final defeat, even in the face of much evidence to the contrary, "gives a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief."[2]

Plays written on the Undine-pattern and the Visit-to-Fairyland,

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[1]E. Allen McCormick, "Rautendelein and the Thematic Imagery of the Versunkene Glocke," Monatshefte 54, no. 6 (1962):322-36.

[2]Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," p. 68.

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on the other hand, juxtaposing an ordinary human and a numinous fairy world, tend to have unhappy endings. The legends and myths on which they are based arrive at a confirmation of the dangerous alienness of the fairy realm. Such plays can end happily in two ways. If the fairy world depicted in them proves truly demonic, the human character drawn toward destruction can be restrained or disenchanted before committing himself to that world. As in Easter and The Knights of the Round Table, the enchanted characters are released and the threat banished after tests, suffering, and struggle. If the fairy realm proves not demonic but benevolent, the conflict can end happily when the questing figure gains access to that realm and its treasures, and returns with artifacts symbolizing enrichment and new life.

Whether of rescue or reconciliation, the happy endings of these plays reassure us with images of human life made clearer, more coherent, and more orderly, like the happy endings of folk fairy tales.[1] Their central figures move out of isolation into fruitful relations with others. Suffering is not denied in them but transcended, and their endings teach us what we must do to be saved.

As Undine-plays, both The Master Builder and The Lady from the Sea are linked to folklore through Ibsen's early explorations of the dramatic possibilities of the magic ballad.[2] This form of legend, usually tragic,

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[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 135-46.

[2] Ibsen used ballad material in The Feast at Solhaug (1856) and in Olaf Liljekrans (1857), stimulated by the publication of M. B. Landstad's Norwegian Folk Songs in 1853. Maurice Gravier has studied these plays in "Le Drame d'Ibsen et la Ballade Magique," in Contemporary Approaches to Ibsen: Proceedings of the Second International Ibsen Seminary, Cambridge, August 1970 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971), pp. 140-60. For further information about Ibsen's use of folk motives, see A. M. Sturtevant, "Some Phases of Ibsen's Symbolism," Scandinavian Studies and Notes 2

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describes a conflict between a human world (Beijarland) and a fairy world (Elfarland) through a romantic triangle. A man or woman, falling under the power of an elf, a water-spirit, or a king or queen of the mountain, is separated from his or her human sweetheart. Given a potion which erases memories, the victim is espoused to the fairy power, and they may even have children. A tragic episode sometimes follows, in which the enchanted one escapes back to the human sphere and then is torn away for the second time. According to Maurice Gravier, these fairies represent chthonic forces closely linked to nature. "Seductive, terrifying, and corrupting, they practise on their victims an ambiguous action, attracting and frightening at the same time."[1]

This scheme describes very well the tensions in The Lady from the Sea. Ellida is pulled between the Stranger, with whom she has contracted a marriage of nature, and Dr. Wangel, her husband according to law. The conflict between the sea and the land, the numinous sphere and everyday social reality, is visualized in the mermaid of Ballested's painting.[2] Such an otherworldly figure, demonic in folklore, here serves as an image of Ellida's divided and warring impulses. The conflict is within her soul. The "mermaid" we see in the heroine is the upper half of this meta-

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(1914-15):25-49.

[1]Gravier, "Le Drame d'Ibsen," p. 143.

[2]Ibsen's original title for the play, "The Mermaid," indicates the importance of the image as a controlling metaphor. Fjelde notes that "the present Fruen fra Havet retains a strong overtone of the earlier Havfruen, with the sizable distinction that a word denoting a fairy-tale character in a static state of being has become a flesh-and-blood woman in transit from one place to, presumably, another, and thus in process of growth and development." See his "The Lady from the Sea: Ibsen's Positive World-View in a Topographic Figure," Modern Drama 11, no. 4 (December 1978): 379-92. I read Ibsen's change of title as a statement of intent to make his play conform to the symbolic maturational scenario of the fairy tale.

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phorical figure, the anguished human being who feels herself drawn against her conscious will, as if by a powerful undertow, into the vast, dark sea of her own lower self.

Ellida is aware of her mermaid nature as a sense of malaise, a yearning that can be neither satisfied nor, at first, clearly defined. Francis Fergusson points out that, like Ibsen's great male heroes, she is driven by a romantic longing for union with the infinite.[1] In some other context her restlessness, like that of Solness, might be seen as a sign of creative power seeking to realize itself; here it is simply an inability to become acclimatized: a stranded mermaid, Ellida has wandered in from the open sea and cannot find her way out again.[2] Her daily trips to bathe in the fjord, as if to remind herself with its tepid waters of the great cold sea of her youth, prove that she feels out of her element, "expiring in the tide-pools."[3]

The arrival of the Stranger brings Ellida's disabling conflict to a crisis. This shadowy, ambiguous figure, both real and mysteriously symbolic of Ellida's projected wishes, comes from Finmark, a distant northern place associated with the old pagan gods. He is a murderer, a pariah, like Cain or the Wandering Jew. His nationality is obscure; he has no name. Lyngstrand's description of his sculpture, depicting a sleeping

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[1] Francis Fergusson, "The Lady from the Sea," in Contemporary Approaches to Ibsen: Proceedings of the First International Ibsen Seminary, Oslo, August 1965 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1966), pp. 55-56. Ibsen gives her the name of a legendary Viking ship said to have been possessed of a soul to emphasize, through pagan associations, her drive to plunge into new experiences in an unexplored world.

[2] Her origins in the lonely northern lighthouse give her something of the mysterious aura of a fairy-tale Maiden in the Tower (as in "Rapunzel," Grimm no. 12) and at the same time identify her with the sea.

[3] Ibsen: Plays, trans. Fjelde, p. 594. Hereafter cited in text.

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woman and her drowned husband returned from his grave in the sea to reproach her for infidelity, makes him a dead man, a ghost from the past, come to accuse Ellida, with her dead child's changeable, sea-colored eyes, for betraying him by marrying Wangel.[1] He is demonic, like the elfin spouse in the magic ballads;[2] yet the horror of it is, when he asks Ellida to go with him, she feels drawn to do so. Like the sea, he both terrifies and attracts. His ambiguity reflects and greatly amplifies her own sense of internal division.

Ellida is able to pull back from the abyss which swallows Elis and Solness partly because she comes to understand the danger that threatens her. The Stranger's connection with her subconscious gives him an obsessional hold over her that resembles a power of enchantment; yet the same healthy life-instinct that led her to reject the Stranger and marry Wangel years ago now enables her, with Wangel's help, to break the enchantment once and for all. She recognizes the Stranger for what he is when she says, "There's no threat here from the outside. The horror goes

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[1]The Stranger's intense, hypnotic eyes remind Ellida of the sea, and his bluish-white scarf pin reminds her of the eye of a dead fish. Ibsen's use of the image of the accusatory eye, prominent here and in Little Eyolf, has been traced back through Peer Gynt--in the Hall of the Mountain King Peer turns down the offer of an operation to give him troll-vision--to the folk motif of Second Sight or the Magic Salve which enables human beings to see inner, spiritual truths. This idea appears in The Feast at Solhaug and in St. John's Night, where the Goblin's eye-opening magic herb reminds us of Puck's magic flower juice in A Midsummer Night's Dream (Sturtevant, "Some Phases of Ibsen's Symbolism," pp. 27-30).

[2]Here is another kind of demonic lover. The folklore source for Lyngstrand's sculpture is the widespread legend of husbands or lovers returning from the dead to claim unfaithful wives or sweethearts (motif E215; tale type 365, "Lenore"--see Thompson, The Folktale, pp. 41, 256). Ibsen's use of the legend has been studied by Pavel Fraenkel in "Fruen fra Havet og Nordisk Folketro," in Ibsen Aarbok 1954 (Skien, 1955), pp. 10-11, 15-16. See Orley I. Holtan, Mythic Patterns in Ibsen's Last Plays (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1970), p. 79.

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deeper, Wangel. The horror--is the force of attraction in my own mind" (p. 666). The subjectivism in The Lady from the Sea, unlike that in The Mine at Falun and The Master Builder, is held firmly in control, defined and limited by the characters themselves.[1]

The doctor attempts to define it as a "sickness" to be diagnosed and cured, but it is the patient, not the doctor, who finds the cure. By Act 4 Ellida has realized that her sense of being out of place has a psychological explanation. Rejected by her husband's children, she has no real function in the household. Having married for security rather than love, Ellida feels as if she has sold herself into an intolerable bondage, and now she insists that Wangel set her free.

Here we touch on a theme of importance in folklore as well as in the playwright's philosophy. Ibsen's repeated insistence, in all his works, on the autonomy of the individual echoes the fairy tale's emphasis on freedom. The fairy-tale hero typically wanders freely so that he can establish relations wherever he is chosen to do so; if, like Ellida, the heroine stays in one place (e.g., Cinderella), she is somehow cut off from family or community and thrown on her own resources. Transcendence then emerges from the confrontation of the individual with the self.[2]

The folk pattern suggests that Ellida must first be set free if she is to be integrated with her world (i.e., "acclimatized"). Her intuition that this is so explains the Stranger's hold on her imagination. Roving over the world, unattached to any person or locality, the Stranger

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[1] Fergusson, "The Lady from the Sea," p. 56.

[2] "The most different types of folk narrative, not only the Märchen, tend toward . . . a fateful self-encounter." Lüthi, "Aspects of the Märchen and the Legend," in Folklore Genres, ed. Dan Ben-Amos (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), p. 25.

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points up the traditional symbolic meaning of the sea. He personifies Ellida's deep wish, unspoken--indeed, not understood up to Act 4--to be released from a marriage in name only that ties her to a house in which she has no duties or responsibilities. Since her need to be free and her attraction to the symbol of freedom are two sides of the same coin, Wangel's gift of release also banishes her obsession with the Stranger, who is seen now in his true light as representative of a constraint far more limiting than her marriage.[1] She is finally free to choose what she wanted all along, a position at the center of the family as Hilde's mother and Wangel's true wife. Her yearning to be free really expresses her need to belong.

Thus, like many fairy-tale princesses whose troubles can be rationalized as reluctance to let go of childhood ties and accept adult responsibilities to husband and family,[2] Ellida finally negotiates a transition to mature relationships. Her healthy instincts are revealed in Act 1, when she goodnaturedly falls in with the pretence that the girls' memorial birthday celebration is for her. At the end of Act 4 she realizes that Hilde's hostility to her is only a cover for starved affections which she could nourish (as in Strindberg's Swanwhite, the ending integrates a stepmother into the family by reconciling her with her stepchild). The last piece falls into place when Wangel signals his willingness to sacrifice

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[1] In fact she never feels free around him, but rather robbed of her will. All along she senses the ambiguity of the sea as a symbol of freedom. Her perception that to follow the Stranger would mean giving herself up to utter formlessness and death accounts for the fear that accompanies her wish.

[2] See, for example, Bettelheim's interpretation of the Goose Girl tale (Grimm no. 89), subtitled, "Achieving Autonomy," in The Uses of Enchantment, pp. 136-43.

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his own happiness for her, recognizing her autonomy as a freely-choosing human being: from that moment the Stranger is truly a dead man, with no more power to terrify or attract. He does for her exactly what Torvald refuses to do for Nora. The Lady from the Sea can thus be read as a fairy-tale version of A Doll's House: here at last is Nora's long-awaited "miracle." Unlike the tragic princesses of the magic ballads, Ellida works her way free of the enchantment--loses her fish's tail, so to speak, in the metaphorical transformation implied in the title--and takes the place reserved for her in the family.

Giraudoux's Intermezzo (1933)

The happy ending in Giraudoux's Intermezzo also takes place by means of the heroine's disenchantment and reintegration into human society. There are some obvious parallels between Giraudoux's comedy and The Lady from the Sea. Isabelle's thirst for knowledge of the Other World of the dead is a kind of enchantment, like Ellida's fascination with the sea. The Ghost and the Stranger represent the attractions of death, from which both heroines must be saved; the characters who rescue them, the Controller and Dr. Wangel, are human lovers standing for ordinary values of life and family. Both Isabelle and Ellida miss out on the great adventure into the unknown, but their reintegration into human society promises an adventure in itself.

There are similarities of technique between the two plays as well. The unknown demonic figures, both murderers thought to have drowned, appear at dusk next to a symbolic pool of water; both figure in a climactic confrontation with the protector-hero. As in all these plays, nature is important as a field of metaphor expressive of the mysterious spiritual

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realm. A mediating figure in both plays links the two worlds: Ballested by preaching the idea of acclimatization, the Druggist by stage-managing transitions so that Isabelle can meet the Ghost in Act 1 and return from death in the end. The titles of both plays imply transition. "Intermezzo" suggests Isabelle's untenable position between two worlds and adds a connotation of theatricalism as well.[1] Ellida undergoes a fairy-tale transformation, Isabelle a resurrection. Both plays debate the possibility of supernatural manifestations in a realistic world, and while they come to different conclusions, both debunk a shallow rationalism that rejects the possibility out of hand.[2]

The major difference in emphasis and tone follows from the importance in Intermezzo of the Inspector, the rationalist skeptic. In her intimate relation to nature and the shades that populate it, Isabelle represents an intuitive spirituality that the Inspector must oppose. Relentlessly practical-minded, he aims always "to separate man from that rabble we call the Cosmos"[3] by means of government decrees, aggressive

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[1]Cohen, Giraudoux: Three Faces of Destiny, p. 54.

[2]Ibsen reserves judgment on the question of occult influences, having Wangel say, "I neither believe nor disbelieve. I simply don't know. So I leave it open" (p. 658). Giraudoux presents a frankly magical universe. The spirits attracted to the town have had a congenial influence in all aspects of life, correcting the mischances of fate and making everybody uncharacteristically honest. Isabelle teaches her pupils to respect the wholeness of nature by postulating a power she calls the "All-Rounder" ("l'Ensemblier"), which is responsible for major catastrophes such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. "Arthur" is the mischievous spirit, recalling Puck, that knocks off the Inspector's hat. Life reverts to normal after Isabelle's awakening, but for a while the town lives in a spiritualized universe that Giraudoux got from romanticism and later elaborated in Ondine. Laurence LeSage says that Intermezzo, though lacking a German subject, was promptly recognized as a "German romantic fantasy"; see Jean Giraudoux, Surrealism and the Romantic Ideal (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1952), p. 32.

[3]Giraudoux, Plays, trans. Gellert, p. 154.

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technological improvement, and authoritarian education. He is comically defeated all through the play, most pointedly in Act 2 when he has Isabelle's so-called Ghost killed, only to see a real Ghost arise from the corpse.

Besides giving a focus for the satire, the Inspector's presence in the play allows Giraudoux to defend a position midway between a dry, rigid rationalism that leaves no room for imagination and love, and the dangerous openness to irrational experience advocated by Isabelle. The Controller of Weights and Measures, who represents the compromise, wants to contain mystery, not to penetrate it. In the final scene he and the Druggist save Isabelle by investing everyday reality with the kind of poetic weight and vividness that she had despaired of finding in life and had sought in death.[1] In her resurrection the play depicts a victory of life over death and at the same time the triumph of the spirit over those forces that would dessicate and destroy it.

The Lady from the Sea moves toward a healthy rationality; Intermezzo moves toward a healthy spiritualism, demolishing the Inspector's sterile world-view in order to suggest that reality can be made livable by the imagination without introducing demonic forces. Both heroines achieve a happy ending that brings them into mature creative union with society (the family for Ellida, the town for Isabelle). When he comes to propose, the Controller is wearing his father's tail-coat and his great-uncle's watch-chain and carrying his grandfather's cane, illus-

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[1] "He does not seek an unattainable ideal, but injects reality with imagination, turning dull routine into poetry and adventure. . . . Ordinary human life and love are transformed by imagination into an attainable ideal." S. M. Kershw, "Giraudoux's Intermezzo: A Celebration of Human Life," Modern Languages 59 (December 1978):187.

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trating in his dress the proper role of the dead in life: to be invoked with honor on momentous occasions such as this. "The only safe road, the normal progression towards death and the dead,"[1] is life with a provincial civil servant, whose poetry Giraudoux very properly crowns with laurels.[2]

Hofmannstahl's The Emperor and the Witch (1897)

The Emperor and the Witch, an early one-act monodrama, also depicts a successful disenchantment, but in a medieval atmosphere closer to the world of romance in The Knights of the Round Table than to the middle-class milieu of Ibsen and Giraudoux. It resembles Cocteau's play thematically too, treating the enchantment as a kind of addiction. For seven years Porphyrogenitus, a fictional emperor of Byzantium, has been in thrall to his own sensuality projected in the form of a beautiful shape-shifting witch. Isolated by his passion from family and subjects, cut off from knowledge of the world and himself, the Emperor breaks the enchantment by resisting, for seven days, the temptation to touch his demonic lover. By the seventh sundown he achieves autonomy and renews a life-giving

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[1] Giraudoux, Plays, p. 154.

[2] Something like this idea of normalcy is the conclusion of Anouilh's Léocadia (1939), translated as "Time Remembered" by Patricia Moyes in his Five Plays (New York: Hill & Wang, 1959) 2:71-130. This comedy recalls "Cinderella" in its love-match between a milliner and an aristocrat, but it is really an Undine play. The demonic lover is Léocadia, a girl whom the Prince had known only three days before she died years ago, but whose memory has held him in a melancholy enchantment ever since. His fairy-godmother-like aunt, the Duchess, brings in Amanda, who looks just like the Prince's lost love, to awaken him to reality; the disenchantment succeeds when he accepts Amanda for herself and not because she reminds him of Léocadia. Taking the place of fairy-tale magic, the aunt's great wealth enables her to construct in the park of her estate exact replicas of the places the Prince visited with Léocadia before she died. Like Giraudoux in Intermezzo, Anouilh tells a realistic love-story but fills it with a poetic glow through evocation of fairy-tale fantasy.

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connection with his world.

Though not based on any particular tale, the play uses a number of folk motifs. The witch appears in folklore either as a human female in league with the Devil or as a spirit or demon, sometimes taking the form of a beautiful woman who entices lovers and then abandons or destroys them (motif G264). Figures of this sort abound in literature, from Circe to La Belle Dame sans Merci and beyond. Shape-shifting is a power common to fairies, wizards, and witches;[1] here it is used to emphasize the nature of the Witch as a projection of the hero's divided impulses. Though forthrightly supernatural, the Witch is the same sort of figure as Ellida's Stranger, a "personified thought":[2] both Ellida and the Emperor must free themselves from something within.

The subjectivism of the play follows from the abstract, parabolic nature of folk forms.[3] A fairy-tale king is a royal figure whose absolute powers give him a clear field in which to act, just as within the mind one is freed from external constraints to confront one's own demons. Like Elis in The Mine at Falun, the Emperor sees himself wherever he looks. The chamberlain Tarquinius, the blind old emperor, the condemned prisoner Lydus, all are mirror images. The Witch is free to assume any shape to

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[1] Briggs, Encyclopedia of Fairies, p. 36.

[2] Schechner, "The Unexpected Visitor in Ibsen's Late Plays," p. 159.

[3] In Varieties of Parable (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965) Louis MacNeice defines the genre of fantasy to include writers as diverse as Spenser, Bunyan, Kafka, Beckett, Pinter, and Golding, all having in common the creation of a "special world" that is "true to the inner life of man rather than to his life in an objective context" (pp.5, 76). He says further that fantasy is more concerned with theme than with character, and that the theme is often embodied in a very strong story line with an Everyman as hero (p. 77). So defined, the genre includes virtually all the plays we have been discussing.

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test him because the power he must resist is in his mind. Hofmannstahl departs from fairy-tale style in his meditative concentration on his hero's inner life, but his method of externalizing a spiritual struggle in concrete forms is a basic principle of all folk literature.

Moreover, the folk image of the king has specific relevance to his theme. As parables of the inner life, fairy tales suggest that the highest goal is nothing more or less than self-mastery. To win a crown means to realize completely one's potential as a person, to achieve the autonomy of adulthood.[1] When he meets Lydus, fettered and under guard, the Emperor realizes that something, someone, within himself must be chained up too, because the only way to achieve freedom is to subdue one's lower nature, painful though it be. Once he discovers in his own will the power to break the obsession, he is rewarded with divine help:

> God has tipped the scales!
> Every step that you may take
> Now goes against you. Out of every
> Cleft and road and forest glade,
> From earth itself, and out of air,
> Angels have sprung to rescue me![2]

These figurative angels bespeak the same impulse that in folktales produces for the hero magical helpers of all sorts, from animals (especially horses) to devils and demons.[3] Such supernatural aid, signifying that the Emperor is not really alone in his struggle, can be read as a foreshadowing of the vision of a new community at the end. Following the pattern of the folk fairy tale, the Emperor fulfills his kingship by moving

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[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 138-9; Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment, p. 127.

[2] Hofmannstahl, Poems and Verse Plays, pp. 215-17.

[3] Such helpers are found in tale types 500-559. For commentary see Thompson, The Folktale, pp. 47-67.

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out of self-absorption into creative union with family and kingdom. He finally discovers what it means to be an emperor--i.e., to be able to create one's own destiny, just as an absolute monarch creates the destiny of his subjects.

Written in 1897, The Emperor and the Witch precedes The Mine at Falun by two years, but moves beyond it thematically by means of the happy ending. Even with the successful self-rescue, however, The Emperor and the Witch keeps the two worlds separate. In his search for a way to reverse the meaning of these two plays, so that "the love for a daemon is transmuted into love for a human being, instead of appearing as its antithesis,"[1] Hofmannstahl finally arrived at a solution in The Woman Without a Shadow, a fairy-tale play that was written as a libretto for Richard Strauss.

Hofmannstahl's The Woman Without a Shadow (1913-14)

In his later plays Hofmannstahl abandoned the Maeterlinckian monodrama for more expansive forms. Following the tradition of the Viennese Zauberoper, The Woman Without a Shadow tells an elaborate two-stranded story, mixes comic and serious scenes, and moves its characters all over a multi-leveled world. Grand spectacle and scenic transformations place the fairy tale in a magical universe, as in the plays of Carlo Gozzi, the grandfather of this tradition.[2]

Like The Magic Flute (1791), a more famous example of the genre,

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[1] Hamburger, Introduction to Poems and Verse Plays, p. lvi.

[2] Gozzi's plays combined romantic stories with satirical commentary by the traditional commedia masks. In The Woman Without a Shadow the romantic roles are taken by the Emperor and the fairy Empress (the heroine), and Barak and his wife and brothers represent the comic and grotesque line of action formerly played by the commedia figures.

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the play describes a quest, a testing, and an initiation. The title character is the fairy Empress, daughter of the god Keikobad, who for almost twelve months has lived with her human lover, the Emperor, in a paradisical fairyland halfway between the earth and the realm of the gods.[1] The Emperor has been unable to give her a shadow or a child (i.e., he has not been able to make her fully human). Undertaking the quest for a shadow herself to prevent him from being turned to stone, the Empress descends to earth, where her Mephistophilian Nurse tempts a Dyer's Wife to give up her shadow in exchange for illicit sexual adventures. The initiation has two aspects. The Dyer's Wife enters into womanhood when she resists these temptations and returns to her husband, and the Empress enters humanity when she abjures the Nurse, refusing to take the shadow that is not her own.

The Undine-plays examined so far, with or without the happy ending, all recognize a deep gulf fixed between the two worlds. The pervasive importance in The Woman Without a Shadow of images of access--bridges, thresholds, gates, and the like--signals the author's intention to reverse the traditional meaning ascribed to the Undine-pattern. Just as the human world, thought corrupt, proves to be a realm of goodness and love, so Keikobad's fairy world, thought demonic, proves to be a realm of justice in which goodness and love are blessed. Unwilling to destroy the Dyer's Wife's marriage, even to save her own, the Empress refuses to take

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[1] The location of this fairyland recalls C. S. Lewis's definition of the "Longaevi," the medieval fairies, as creatures occupying an ambiguous place of residence somewhere between heaven and earth (The Discarded Image, p. 122). He describes the High Fairies of Celtic legend and French romance as spirits endowed with supernatural powers but shaped after an idealized and perfected humanity (pp. 130-4). With the addition of an ethical component, Hofmannstahl's Empress fits this description very well.

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her shadow, and so gains the reward that Undine and all her sisters have been denied. The integrity of the human world is preserved, as usual, but this time with the blessing of the fairy realm. A complex and heavily symbolic drama conceived on a grand scale, The Woman Without a Shadow nonetheless follows the movement of the simple folk fairy tale toward transcendence and new life.

Besides the Undine-pattern, which focuses on the desires of a fairy figure to gain a soul, the play also uses the plot of the shadow-sale, which focuses on a human character's temptation to sell his humanity in the form of his shadow.[1] In Chamisso's famous story, "The Wondrous History of Peter Schlemiehl" (1814), the exchange of the shadow (for an inexhaustible purse of gold) isolates the hero from the rest of mankind. For Hofmannstahl the shadow-sale has a similar meaning. The Dyer's Wife, a young woman married but childless for three years, deeply resents having to humble herself to Barak and cook for his three boisterous brothers. Like Mary in Yeats' The Land of Heart's Desire, she cannot accept the role of wife and mother thrust upon her by adulthood, and is given the chance to escape it by demonic means:

> Must your body become a highway,
> And your slenderness a beaten path?

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[1]The two plots fit neatly together because, according to tradition, fairies have neither souls nor shadows, being inhuman creatures. Otto Rank, in The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study, trans. and ed. Harry Tucker, Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), says that spirits, elves, daimons, ghosts, and magicians associated with them have no shadows because they were originally shadows themselves, i.e., the dead (pp. 61-62). Rank also cites the Swedish legend of a pretty girl who fears the loss of her youth and beauty through childbirth. After a witch rids her of her seven unborn children, her husband notices that she has no shadow and drives her out. The legend has been treated poetically before Hofmannstahl. "Die Kinderlose," a ballad by Ludwig August Frankel, in his Gesammelte Poetische Werke (Vienna, 1880) 2:116, may well have been one of Hofmannstahl's sources for the play.

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> And must your breasts shrivel up,
> And their beauty soon vanish?
> (Act 1, scene 2)

Speaking thus, the Nurse offers her a life of sybaritic pleasures and conjures up a handsome young lover before her eyes. The example of The Emperor and the Witch tells us what Hofmannstahl thinks of such a proposition. By denying her husband his bed-rights, the Wife risks placing herself outside humanity. The Nurse's vision of narcissistic sexuality is a sterile parody of marriage, just as her words quoted above parody the metaphors of connection and access at the end of the play.

The Undine-pattern and the shadow-sale converge at the end. Both the Dyer's Wife and the Empress undergo the testing flames. The one refuses to give up her shadow and the other refuses to take it: both thereby gain full membership in the family of mankind. The happy ending is signalled by magical scenic events. The Emperor is depetrified and the contested shadow is transformed into a golden bridge symbolizing the passage to life of the Unborn Children, whose ecstatic voices end the opera.[1]

As a morality play, The Woman Without a Shadow thus outlines an answer to the question of the meaning of life. Barak is a kind of Every-

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[1] The Voices of the Unborn Children are anticipated in Maeterlinck's allegorical fairy play, The Blue Bird (1909). Seeking "the great secret of things and of happiness," the children Mytyl and Tyltyl, accompanied by magical animals and objects and the Fairy Bérylune, pursue the Blue Bird into dreamlike otherworldly realms. In the Kingdom of the Future they meet the souls of the unborn and witness the departure of souls when Time arrives to convey them to earth. At the end the children find the Blue Bird in their own home. Like Hofmannstahl and J. M. Barrie in Peter Pan, Maeterlinck here emphasizes family values, especially the continuity of human life as it embraces the living, the dead, and those yet to be born. The Blue Bird was followed by a sequel, The Betrothal (1917), which uses the same kind of imagery in tracing the quest of Tyltyl, now old enough to marry, for his destined wife. Maeterlinck's later plays are different in both thought and form from his early symbolist works.

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man--it is through observing him that Empress learns what it means to be human — but the questing figure is the Empress herself. Her sexuality remains narcissistic and sterile as long as she remains suspended in her womb-like fairyland. Sojourning on earth, however, she loses her innocence and gains a moral perspective. She realizes, watching Barak's bewilderment, that she has sinned in allowing the Nurse to attempt to corrupt his wife. This knowledge in itself makes her human; the gift of the shadow at the end merely recognizes an accomplished fact. Her moral growth fulfills her sexuality too, making her a fit person to raise children. The meaning and purpose of life on earth, we learn with the Empress, are centered in the nurturing of the human family.

Thus, like most fairy tales, The Woman Without a Shadow describes a process of development in symbolic terms. Despite its exotic imagery, the play arrives at a view of life that is thoroughly Christian, not only in its evaluation of sex and marriage, but also in its idea of the relation of the divine and human spheres. In the blessed person of the Empress, the divine power penetrates and fertilizes humanity, validating its ethical ideas and enfusing every daily act of human caring with a cosmic significance.

Sologub's Night Dances (1909)

A similar idea underlies the happy ending in Night Dances, written by Sologub for Evreinov's Gay Theatre for Grown-Up Children.[1] The Russian symbolist praises the love of beauty rather than of humanity, but he too suggests that the wall between the human and the transcendent worlds can

[1] Daniel Gerould, "Sologub and the Theatre," The Drama Review 21 (December 1977):82.

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be breached by the hero who is called and willing.

Night Dances is an adaptation of "The Secret Ball," a tale in the famous collection of Russian folktales by A. N. Afanas'ev.[1] A widowed king has twelve beautiful daughters who disappear every night, no one knows where, and wear out a new pair of shoes. A needy nobleman offers to uncover the secret in the hope of marrying one of the princesses and receiving half the kingdom as a dowry, as promised. Outside the palace he comes upon an old woman, who gives him a cap of invisibility and warns him not to drink the sleeping potion the princesses will offer him. So prepared, he follows the princesses through a concealed passageway into the realm of the Accursed King, where he observes them dancing all night amid surroundings of great splendor. The next morning he tells his story, offering as evidence a flower plucked from a golden tree and a goblet from the underground palace.[2] The grateful king seals up the passageway and gives the hero the hand of his youngest daughter.

Sologub follows the tale closely, but breathes into it a whimsical spirit of his own. The idea of multiplying the figure of the enchanted princess by twelve no doubt appealed to his comic imagination; he places the princesses all in a row facing the King, their backs to the audience, commenting that "the esteemed audience must not be upset by this."[3] In

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[1] See Russian Fairy Tales, trans. Norbert Guterman (New York: Pantheon, 1945), pp. 224-6. Readers of Grimm will recognize this tale as a version of "The Danced-Out Shoes," no. 133.

[2] These are archetypal symbolic objects. In the pre-biblical Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh the hero passes through a tunnel into a subterranean fairyland, a garden with trees that bear jewels instead of fruit (motif F811.2.2). See Thompson, The Folktale, p. 277; and Theodor H. Gaster, The Oldest Stories in the World (Boston: Beacon, 1952), pp. 48-49.

[3] Unpublished translation by Peter Goslett, p. 1. Hereafter cited in the text.

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filling out the action to make it substantial enough to play, he peoples the stage with delicious oddities. Responding like puppets manipulated simultaneously, the guests--kings, princes, and commoners of various ranks, usually in multiples of three--speak and act in unison. The Princesses laugh and speak some lines together and others individually, by rank and in order. When the King announces that he is grieved by their mysterious nocturnal excursions, we read:

> Father, you are our ruler, Politvian King, how have we angered you? (As the Princesses begin to weep, so do all the women at the tables and in the foyer become sad, cry, sob bitterly, bathe in tears. The Kings and Princes wipe their moustaches, blow their noses on red silk handkerchiefs, and the other Guests sigh and blow their noses politely into whatever they can find). (p. 5)

Dismissed, the Princesses float off, winking conspiratorially. Elsewhere they laugh like the sound of reeds in the wind, like warbling birds, like tinkling bells, like the jingle of a tambourine, like the ringing of glass chimes, like baby birds chirping, like scattering pearls, like eddies of splashing water; they cry like turtle doves, sob like white beluga whales.

Translated into stage effects, these poetical qualities give the play lightness and abstraction in performance, a freedom from the weight of reality that seems most appropriate in a fairy tale about dancing. Mental events like dreams and fears are personified and objects are playfully animated in an atmosphere of ceremonious gaiety.[1] As in The Tri-

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[1] As in Valle Inclán's The Dragon's Head (see above, pp. 108-22), written in a similar vein, the comical tone permits satire and topical reference. In the realm of the Accursed King, for example, the Princesses "perform dances in the style of the famous Isadora Duncan, to the music of great composers of different times and peoples" (p. 24). Sologub had met the American dancer in 1907. His desire to memorialize the impression she made on him accounts for his alteration of the motif of the worn-out shoes. In the production the actresses performed in bare feet (see Gerould, "Sologub and the Theatre," pp. 81-82); the King is

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umph of Death but in a different way, the author has attempted to duplicate in the theatre some of the effects of folk narrative. Max Lüthi sums up the bright, transparent, dematerialized quality of fairy tales with a phrase--"the sublimation of matter"[1]--that precisely describes the spirit of this buoyant fantasy.

Having followed his source tale in fulfilling its tonal possibilities, Sologub departs from it by giving his version specific meaning as an allegory of art in keeping with the theory in his essay, "The Theatre of One Will."[2] The generalized "needy nobleman" of the tale becomes a Young Poet, and the hero's adventure is made to symbolize the artist's quest for ideal beauty.

Many details support this interpretation. The Magical Helper--not an old woman but a painted figure who steps out of a picture frame, of whom the Poet says, in ecstasy, "Here is the triumph of art" (p. 16)--advises the hero as in the original, but suggests also that he declaim verses to distract the Princesses while pouring the potion into his bed. This tactic cannot fail, he says: "Believe in the magic of words, and they will believe in the words" (p. 18). The music and dancing and the elegant grace of the Princesses in their dreamlike underground setting become the signs of an otherworldly beauty which the Poet will try to

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made to complain that they wear out their nightgowns instead.

[1]Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 146.

[2]The essay has relevance to Night Dances as well as to The Triumph of Death. Like Socrates in The Symposium, Sologub insists that comedy and tragedy are one. His theory focuses on the sublimity of man's confrontation with death, but begins with an evocation of the joy of childhood play and ends with an image of theatre as tragicomic dance. For a commentary see Andrew Field, "The Theatre of Two Wills: Sologub's Plays," The Slavonic and East European Review 41 (December 1962):80-88.

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describe in his next work. In the meantime he has brought back a golden flower, so cunningly made that it actually smells sweet, certified by the Critic as "the creation of a superior art" (p. 29). This flower and the Grail-like inscribed goblet, says the Accursed King, will remind the Poet of what he has seen:

> And you, having come unseen,
> Lover of the earthly day,
> Seek me untiringly,
> And lock my grief into my heart.
> And if memory forgets
> (Earthly flowers are made of taffeta)
> My flower will forever
> Remind you of what you saw.
> And if the heart becomes still
> (There where the diadems are only silverplate)
> The shine and ring of the goblet will remind you
> Of the mysterious news.
> Leaving the Accursed Kingdom,
> Do not believe in the holiness of the evil day
> And read forever the golden inscription:
> "Love me!" (pp. 30-31)

The Princesses confess that the Poet has told the truth. He may not understand it, they say, but he must preserve it: "Pass it on to the new generations, that golden flower and the golden goblet with the inscribed eternal commandment" (p. 31). His marriage to the princess of his choice represents a fertilizing union with the world of imagination and ideal beauty; his coronation implies the anointed role of the poet in the world as the hieratic bearer of eternal truths.

In structure Night Dances combines the Undine-pattern and the A-B-A pattern. The Young Poet may be said to rescue the Princesses from fairy enchantment, despite their reluctance, in the sense that penetrating their secret and walling up the passage enables them to mature in the real world. Absorbed in their nightly visits, the Princesses, like Hofmannstahl's Empress in her Edenic fairyland, are locked into regressive,

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solipsistic experience; and like the Empress, they must come to terms with real life. Their intuitive oneness with the Other World remains useless until the Poet, observing and reflecting on what they can only feel, gives it social form and value. Ambiguous in their function, they make possible both the rescue and the reconciliation of the happy ending. In the allegory they are mystical guides who lead the Poet to the secrets of the ideal world. Without them his art would have remained uncrowned.

The Visit-to-Fairyland orders the plot. As in all the A-B-A plays, the middle movement, focusing on the events of the night, is a dreamlike experience of wonder, described in the Accursed King's words of greeting:

> All the flowers have opened their little eyes.
> Hover, spin in a light dance,
> Begin caresses--tales,
> Forget the daytime dream
> There, under the sun are only masks.
> Here the ties are untied,
> Holy faces, unmasked,
> All that is holy is before me.
> Hover, sisters in the light dance,
> With us tales dance
> Under the magician moon. (p. 30)

The Young Poet experiences a vision of all that is holy, true, and beautiful. His awakening is not a disillusionment, as in the plays of J. M. Barrie, but an affirmation of these values, like that at the end of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Entering the court in Act 3 with a proud, bright, and happy look, the Poet carries with him the golden flower and goblet. Like the golden bridge in The Woman Without a Shadow, these talismanic objects denote an inspiriting connection between the divine and human spheres, brief and rarely to be repeated, but, in Sologub's view, of the highest importance to mankind.

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Lunacharsky's Vasilisa the Wise (1919)

In Vasilisa the Wise, written by A. V. Lunacharsky as a respite from his labors as first Soviet Commissar of Education, we have another play that brings both the A-B-A structure and the Undine pattern to a happy conclusion.

Vasilisa and Ivan Tsarevich, traditional figures in Russian fairy tales, marry and have a son. Unable to rest content in his happiness, Ivan travels to the Land of the Moon, where he meets the queen and has a child with her. He lives there "benumbed in a strange blue dream." During his absence Vasilisa consents to marry Merodakh, an avatar of the Babylonian god Marduk, in order to bear his son, prophesied to be a messiah. After several years the hero is rescued from enchantment. After his return Merodakh withdraws into heaven, leaving Ivan and Vasilisa, now reunited, to raise the three children.[1]

Like The Woman Without a Shadow, the play combines folk motifs and oriental myth in a panoramic fantasy with ethical, social, aesthetic, and religious meanings. Ivan is the familiar third son, a poet and a dreamer. Vasilisa rejects his older brothers and chooses him, just as Cinderella's prince seeks out the one who does not presume to be counted worthy.[2] The title character is the blessed fairy princess, a kind of

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[1] Translated by L. A. Magnus and K. Walter, the play was published with an author's preface in Three Plays of A. V. Lunacharsky (London: Routledge; New York: Dutton, 1923).

[2] The author uses this traditional device for satirical patriotic thrusts. Churilo, the first son, is a pompous posturing fop, the child of the Tsar's first wife, a Frenchwoman. Seredin, the second, is dour and selfish, the child of his second wife, a German. Ivan, on the other hand, is the son of a young Tatar woman who comes to warm the Tsar in his old age. Each son is subjected to a soul-revealing vision put on by Vasilisa in the court for the Tsar's amusement.

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ideal universal mother, the perfected image of what Hofmannstahl's Empress strives to become. With her magic powers she grants Ivan a vision assuring him that destiny is on his side. Their reunion after his adventures in Moonland confirms our sense of the benevolence of providence in the play, as in folk fairy tales and in all these plays with happy endings. Lunacharsky creates the marvelous qualities appropriate to such a universe by means of music and verse, spectacular transformations, and a theatricalist interlude in which an androgynous creature of unearthly beauty steps before a curtain to introduce us to the Land of the Moon and its queen.

Ivan's sojourn in this enchanted country constitutes the middle movement of the A-B-A pattern. As in Night Dances, the hero undergoes a dreamlike experience of wonder. Time is suspended among slender towers of many-colored glass, glittering blue horizons, marvelous plants and creatures, and exquisite silver music.[1] Ivan's Undine-lover, the queen, sits as still and mute as a sphinx, responding out of her dream only to dance for him to show her love and to mourn his departure with wordless melodic groans. But he is able to leave only after Vasilisa's nurse, armed with a poisoned apple like the witch in "Snow-White" (Grimm no. 53), kills the queen to break the spell.[2] With his baby daughter Ivan makes

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[1] Motifs D2011, "Years thought Days," and D2012, "Moments thought Years," refer to the supernatural lapse of time in fairyland. Time seems frozen during Ivan's hypnotic experience, but, unlike the usual victim of folkloric enchantment, he emerges from the Land of the Moon the same age as he would have been had he not gone in.

[2] Another spectacular transformation follows: the nurse flings her basket of apples into the scene and Moonland is destroyed in an explosion. Ivan, holding his daughter, then watches the Moon people disappear into a gloomy abyss, following the coffin of their queen. An image of Vasilisa arises with a warning gesture to prevent him from plunging in after them.

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his way back to Russia, where he is eventually recognized by Vasilisa.

The Undine-pattern, describing the reconciliation and fertilizing union of the human and the divine, has several aspects, corresponding to each of the three children born in the play. At the end each child tells a story that reveals his or her mission in life. Svetozar, the child of Ivan and Vasilisa, narrates a comic battle with a dragon in defense of the good people. Yalya-da, the daughter of the Moon Queen, describes a scene of beautiful flowers and butterflies like the fairy-tale land of her birth. Mitra, the son of the god, casts himself as a Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53), the innocent who accepts punishment intended for others.[1] The children represent in their origins the social-ethical, the aesthetic, and the religious principles which together comprehend the sources of meaning in human life. Each principle implies a quest, the happy ending of which will depend on the survival of the children, protected by Ivan and Vasilisa, their earthly parents, who are themselves blessed by destiny for this task.

Thus, though the Moon Queen dies and Merodakh withdraws into heaven, both live on in their inspired children, who will carry out their quests on earth. This is the way of immortality. Despite its symbolist imagery drawn from myth, fairy tale, and the Bible, the philosophy of the play is focused on this world.[2] It ends on a statement that Hof-

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[1] Other references to Christian mythology underline this idea. On his way home Ivan meets three sages on camels with long shepherds' crooks. Bearing gold, frankincense, and myrrh, they are traveling to Russia to see Mitra, "who is on earth the god incarnate" (Three Plays, p. 282). Quotations from the Gospels are scattered throughout.

[2] If the author's Marxism finds its way into the play at all, it is perhaps in Vasilisa's (Mother Russia's) preference for Svetozar, her first child, who represents a pragmatic spirit of heroic action and could be taken as a model of a vigorous and positive-minded young communist. In

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mannstahl, at least, could agree with as it stands:

> We must live for the children! We must love for the children! The race of man will be wise and happy, when children live for joy, and the elders live for children. . . . And man's divinity on earth shall be the child.[1]

The tempered optimism and the sense of a joyful, purposeful future implied here would require very little modification to make such a statement acceptable to the writers of all these plays with happy endings.

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this regard it is significant that he is the child of earthly parents, in contrast to the other two. The gentle Moon People and their Queen perhaps represent the symbolists or the culture of the Old Regime, destroyed by the bombs of revolution so that Ivan (Everyman) can return to active involvement in life. Merodakh's ascension suggests the obsolescence of the church, no longer relevant in the new millenium; Mitra is the new Christ who sacrifices himself for the collective good. In the preface Lunacharsky includes the play in a projected trilogy which, he says, "will delineate in fabulous form a periphrasis of . . . my social philosophy" (Three Plays, p. xiii). The reductive quality of my interpretation, however, seems to indicate that no simple allegory was intended.

[1] Lunacharsky, Three Plays, pp. 298-9.

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CHAPTER IV

THE IRONICAL FAIRY-TALE PLAY

To approach the ironical fairy tale, the characteristic form of the 20th century, we have to go back to the plays of Maeterlinck, the beginning-point of the modern fairy drama. With the help of André Jolles, whose concept of the anti-conte or the tragic fairy tale describes these plays precisely, we found in Maeterlinck an inversion of idealistic values that aims at disillusionment, a sinking of the heart. Standing in opposition to the naive universe of the fairy tale, in which the course of events naturally follows hopes and expectations to re-establish the equilibrium of justice, Jolles says, is another folklore universe in which events naturally evolve according to fears and dreads, ending in catastrophe and disaster.[1]

Furthermore, he says, the universe of these tragic tales resembles that of real life, whose plots so seldom have happy endings or fully satisfy our sense of justice.[2] Though one might want to argue that real life in all its indeterminacy and ambiguity is morally neutral or at best tragicomic when it comes to plots and endings, still, this idea suggests a point of departure for our look at the ironic fairy tale. The plays examined below are all fairy tales written from a point of view of realism. In the words of Northrop Frye, they are "attempts to give form to the

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[1] Jolles, Formes Simples, p. 192.

[2] Ibid., p. 190.

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shifting ambiguities and complexities of unidealized existence":

> As structure, the central principle of ironic myth is best approached as a parody of romance: the application of romantic mythical forms to a more realistic content which fits them in unexpected ways. No one in a romance, Don Quixote protests, ever asks who pays for the hero's accomodation.[1]

Thus all these playwrights are parodists using naive romantic forms for the purpose of subverting their idealistic worlds, as if to say, "Real life is not like that." This cruelest kind of disenchantment has proven deeply persuasive, indeed inevitable, to many modern writers as the only way to convey their profoundly pessimistic views of life.

Before examining these parodists' methods, however, we should first have a clear idea of what kind of moral world they are turning upside down. By and large, folk fairy tales urge traditional Judeo-Christian values. One must keep one's promises ("The Frog-King," Grimm no. 1). One must be humble, devoted to God, and faithful in respect to one's parents ("Cinderella," no. 21). In one well-known Grimm tale (no. 64) we find illustrated the Christian directive to be generous to those in need. Three brothers chopping wood in the forest are approached one by one by a dwarf begging for food. The older brothers refuse and receive cuts from their own axes. The third brother shares his lunch and makes his fortune by the next tree he cuts down, for among its roots he finds the Gold Goose. "Give and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 6:38). Richard Le Gallienne writes:

> Be kind, the fairy tales seem to say, always be kind,--and in your extremity your kindness to the unfortunate, powerless things of the earth will be returned to you a hundredfold. Superficially tests of insight, the tests in fairy tales are always either tests of goodness or of courage. Whatever menaces you, whatever tempts you, be brave, be good,--and all will be well. The true insight is goodness. Equip-

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[1] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 223.

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> ped with goodness, there is nothing for you to fear, in spite of all the illusory terror of the world. . . . Be good and brave, and even your wicked stepmother or your ugly sister will get the worst of it in the end.[1]

G. K. Chesterton sums up his idea of the tales' ethical nature in defending them against the charge of immorality: "One idea runs from one end of them to the other--the idea that peace and happiness can exist only on some condition. This idea, which is the core of ethics, is the core of the nursery tales."[2]

More important than the content, however, is what Lionel Basney calls the "meta-ethical" aspect of the tales. In describing the moral world-view of Tolkien's epic romance, The Lord of the Rings (1954-55), Basney concludes that the genre of fantasy romance functions morally simply by offering "a vehicle for imaginary worlds full of ethical value.

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[1] Richard Le Gallienne, Attitudes and Avowals (New York and London: John Lane, 1910), p. 31.

[2] G. K. Chesterton, "Fairy Tales," All Things Considered (London: Methuen, 1908), p. 188. The violence and vengefulness of folk fairy tales have frequently been criticized by educationists and others concerned about their possibly harmful effects on children. See A. A. Brill, "Fairy Tales as a Determinant of Dreams and Neurotic Symptoms," New York Medical Journal 99 (1914):561-7; J. Langfeldt, "The Educational and Moral Values of Folk and Fairy Tales," in Suitable for Children? Controversies in Children's Literature, ed. Nicholas Tucker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 56-63. Jolles takes the view that, strictly speaking, the tales are not moral at all, though they have often been moralized. Rather they are amoral or, better, premoral (Formes Simples, p. 189). Freud would agree that, as fantasies of self-fulfillment, the tales do not compromise personal interests for anything: the hero pursues his object with a singlemindedness that makes the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount irrelevant. In Perrault's "Puss in Boots" (1697), for example, the hero gains his good fortune by most sinful means, acting through his helper. "The Master Cat can be acclaimed as the Prince of 'con' men, few swindlers having been so successful before or since" (Opie and Opie, The Classic Fairy Tales, p. 110). Freud's view that all literature is a kind of wish-fulfillment daydreaming has special cogency for romance, in which the hero is always "His Majesty the Ego." See his essay, "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming," On Creativity and the Unconscious: Papers on the Psychology of Art, Literature, Love, Religion, ed. Benjamin Nelson (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), pp. 44-54.

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. . . Its crucial object is to assert the general possibility of ethics, of ethical action, in an imaginative world specifically designed for displaying them."[1]

A world full of ethical value, such as fairy tales share with fantasy romance, presents an inverted mirror to reality, reflecting an image of the moral universe we wish we lived in. This world is simplified and clarified by selection and omission. Ambiguous shadings, complications, paradoxes, and contradictions have been left out, so that the hero can have no doubts about what is good and what evil. Further, fairy tale ethics are concrete and objective. Values are imaged as figures and objects whose appearance clearly reveals their inner nature.[2] In such a world the Good and the True are Beautiful, their opposites ugly. As a result there need be no disabling gap between perception and choice, and choice and action. There is an immediate resonance of values between the hero and his world: to perceive the Good means to move toward it by whatever means possible. Finally, an all-powerful principle of justice, acting through magical creatures or objects, guarantees the hero his happy ending. All these characteristics describe a moral universe that serves modern readers as a spiritual refuge. We turn from the complex, difficult conditions of our own existence to the clear innocence of the fairy tale with a sense of relief and reassurance.[3]

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[1]Lionel Basney, "Tolkien and the Ethical Function of 'Escape' Literature," Mosaic 13 (Winter 1980):27.

[2]Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[3]Ibid., p. 34. This meta-ethical function becomes especially important for readers and adapters who live in a moral world that has been demythologized by science and psychology. Basney notes that "ours is not a world to be good in--we cannot decide what being good means, much less how to be good in the dilemmas we face" (p. 26).

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However, the playwrights we are about to discuss--Bergman, Gombrowicz, Audiberti, and Strindberg--are not seeking reassurance in the fairy tales. Failed idealists, they seek a means of expressing a deep disappointment in the lost promise of transcendence. Following Maeterlinck, therefore, they turn their fairy tales upside down, inverting all their values. Where Tolkien finds Recovery, Escape, and Consolation in the fairy tale, the ironists look for Estrangement, Bondage, and Despair. For the Consolation of the Happy Ending, we have the dénouement of disaster; for Eucatastrophe, Dyscatastrophe. Like folk tales, the ironical fairy plays replicate initiatory structures, but they bring their initiants--innocent spirits all--into an evil, fallen world. This world may be ruled by some malevolent providence, as in the plays of Maeterlinck, in which case the initiant becomes a sacrificial victim to a demonic god; or the sense of a transcendent principle may be lacking altogether, in which case the initiant finds herself (they are usually young girls) in an ethical wasteland at the mercy of evil persons who have the power to define the world as they wish.

In either case we witness a disheartening loss of hope through the undermining of ideals. So inverted, the moral universe of the fairy tale can no longer offer a spiritual refuge; rather its demonic and infernal qualities express in hyperbole the same moral complexity and difficulty from which we would flee.

Bergman's Mr. Sleeman Is Coming (1917)

The "gray, gloomy dawn" in Hjalmar Bergman's grotesque fairy one-act sets the tone for all these plays and clearly illustrates their moral inversions. Anne-Marie, the heroine, lives with her two aunts in a middle-

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class household supported by Mr. Sleeman, her guardian, an old man of wealth and high social position. Having reached the age to marry, Anne-Marie has made friends with Walter, a young hunter who works in the forest which is visible in the distance through the windows. But, in order to arrange a proper marriage for her and to lessen their household costs, the two aunts betroth her to Mr. Sleeman, who is seeking a companion and nurse for the years of debility that lie ahead. Transfixed with horror at this prospect, Anne-Marie can do nothing but escape to the forest one last time with her young lover. The next morning Mr. Sleeman arrives, presenting a dry, cadaverous aspect, moving toward her with the grotesque stiffness of a tabetic.[1] Anne-Marie's horror is fulfilled when he declares his love in the same words she had heard the night before on the lips of her sweetheart.

Like the other plays to be considered here, Mr. Sleeman Is Coming does not retell any particular tale from folklore. In fact, the plot just related would be served very well by a realistic treatment. The scene is a middle-class parlor "filled with all sorts of knick-knacks, bric-a-brac, whatnots, pedestals, etc.,"[2] revealed in all its ugly tastelessness the next morning when the slipcovers are pulled off. The aunts' scheme to sacrifice Anne-Marie's happiness for their own comfort is motivated in a naturalistic manner--essentially they sell her to Mr. Sleeman--and the criticism of conventional values and the over-riding importance of a "proper" marriage would not be out of place in a drama by Ibsen--

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[1] A tabetic is one who suffers from a pathological condition of progressive emaciation and decay related to Tabes Dorsalis, syphilis of the spinal cord, which leads to paralysis and loss of control in walking.

[2] Four Plays of Hjalmar Bergman, trans. and ed. by Walter Johnson (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), p. 274. Hereafter cited in text.

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who was, in fact, one of Bergman's favorite writers.[1]

But he also knew and learned from Maeterlinck and from Strindberg, his countryman,[2] and it is safe to say that the symbolist effects he gets out of the story would have been impossible without their examples. Anne-Marie's loss of will and her inability to protest her fate remind us especially of Maeterlinck's early plays of waiting for death. She is almost hypnotized--the word occurs several times in the stage directions--by the dreadful prospect of marrying Mr. Sleeman, and her sense of isolation is increased by the smiling incomprehension of Walter, her lover. Since no real action is possible, the dramatist elaborates Anne-Marie's feelings of horror by a series of parodic anticipations. To teach her how to receive her suitor, the aunts rehearse his entrance, and Aunt Mina giggles as Anne-Marie shudders. Left alone, she begins to loosen the slipcovers "but stops, stares straight ahead, hypnotized" (p. 286), and rehearses the scene again in her mind. All during Walter's visit she half-listens for Mr. Sleeman's footsteps, and later, when she dances, her light movements slowly become heavy and stiff as she thinks involuntarily about what it will mean to be his "respectable wife."

This incapacitating dread suggests a Maeterlinckian pessimism and a conception of an evil, all-powerful fate. Bergman too took the marionette as a philosophical image, and published his play, with two others, in a volume he titled Marionette Plays.[3] Explaining his pessimism, he

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[1]Walter Johnson, Introduction to Four Plays of Bergman, p. vii.

[2]Ibid.

[3]"I have called my plays Marionette Plays since they belong to a group of my plays which embody a common basic idea. In them I look upon my people as marionettes directed by a power behind them of which they themselves are unconscious. In one case it is their own past which de-

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wrote: "We are born people, but we become marionettes when we are forced to give up. We struggle and struggle to hold on to our youth, our health, and our vital existence. But Mr. Sleeman comes."[1] The demonic epiphany of this string-pulling fate comes at the end, when Anne-Marie finds herself repeating with Mr. Sleeman the dialogue she had had with her lover, as if a ventriloquist were speaking her lines:

> SLEEMAN: I love you, Anne-Marie. . . . You have been in my thoughts for a long time during the day when I have been working and at night in my dreams.
> ANNE-MARIE (moves away a little, very slowly): Oh-h--
> SLEEMAN (smiling): I want you, Anne-Marie, to be my dearest friend, the only one I have. (Short pause. Anne-Marie takes a couple of steps toward him and stares at him in horror.)
> ANNE-MARIE (her voice about to choke): How beautiful. Did you read that in a book?
> SLEEMAN: I read it in my heart. (Short pause)
> ANNE-MARIE (with anguish): Can you--can you say anything more?
> SLEEMAN: What else is there to say? I want you by my side all through my life, Anne-Marie. I want to die the same day, the same hour, the same second as you, Anne-Marie. (Short pause)
> ANNE-MARIE (tonelessly, but without anguish): That sounds very beautiful. But very, very sad. (p. 297)

The original exchange is a sacred ritual: Anne-Marie is wedding Walter and bidding him goodbye at the same time. This is its demonic inversion. She listens to her words and his with helpless, deepening dismay. At the end she weeps, as she had the night before, but this time her weeping is interpreted ironically: "Happiness, too, has its tears" (p. 298). An utter loss of hope paralyzes Anne-Marie, like Maleine and Maeterlinck's other sacrificial victims. Rather than the benevolent universe of her

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cides their fate, in another the force of circumstances, and in still another it is a strong person who has arranged his environment according to his own purposes like a stage director. And finally the greatest power of all, Death, makes his appearance." Hjalmar Bergman, quoted by Stina Bergman in her "Introduction to Mr. Sleeman Is Coming," in Four Plays of Bergman, p. 269.

[1] Ibid., p. 270.

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dreams, she intuits a malevolent one, deathly and all-powerful, that reaches into the soul and cuts off any impulse of escape or self-defense at the root.

The inversion of the moral universe is only the most basic of the ironies made possible by the play's submerged fairy tale. Though he uses no particular source story in folklore, Bergman is obviously drawing on motifs associated with "Cinderella," among others. Anne-Marie's humble and dependent status, the harsh behavior of her aunts, and the high position of Mr. Sleeman to which he raises her up in the "happy ending," together outline the familiar tale. Anne-Marie is even made to bring in the coffee and remove the slipcovers; and though these servant duties are realistically appropriate to her age and her position in the household, they also remind us of Cinderella's tasks. Her mother's death has put her in this exposed position without a fairy godmother to balance it, other than Aunt Mina, who, voyeuristically yearning after Anne-Marie's sexual opportunities, permits her to run free at night. Her ball takes place at the pavilion in the forest with Walter, who should have been her prince, but whose low origin and lack of money disqualify him in a society dominated by wealth and class distinctions. The function of the magic wand (in Perrault's version) and the little white bird in the tree (in the Grimms' version) is served by Mr. Sleeman's letter, which drops out of the blue, carrying with its reference to Anne-Marie's photograph the unmistakable meaning that her good fortune has nothing to do with the recognition of hidden spiritual worth, as in "Cinderella," and everything to do with her sex, her youth and attractiveness, and her domestic and musical talents--i.e., her salable skills. The ironical treatment of the Cinderella tale carries out a devastating critique of bourgeois social

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and commercial values, the deathly nature of which is summed up in the grotesque figure of Mr. Sleeman.[1]

This character's function as a Monster Bridegroom who will not be disenchanted makes relevant another tale type, of which "The Frog-King" (Grimm no. 1) is the best-known example. Anne-Marie is everyone's idea of a bright, life-loving young girl, optimistic and eager for happiness. Innocent despite her nights in the forest, she is still a child, full of beautiful dreams, playing at life. Like the princess with the golden ball in "The Frog-King," she must accept the responsibilities of marriage and adulthood before she feels ready, and is fully as deserving as the princess of a magical transformation of what looks so ugly and grim. And Mr. Sleeman is indeed a monster, not a frog but a trained monkey, or like one: "It's dressed like a gentleman and walks very slowly and with much dignity on its back paws" (p. 288). Anne-Marie imitates the monkey's walk, thinking of Mr. Sleeman. At his entrance we read:

> He walks as Anne-Marie has described, bent backward, slowly and mechanically raising his legs. Even the movement of his arms seems automatic--approximating the movements of a tabetic, although without being genuinely characteristic. His voice is flat and petulant. He is bald. His eyes seem dead but light up occasionally when he observes Anne-Marie. (pp. 295-6)

Like a machine or a monstrous puppet, he seems animated from the outside. His sickness and his age make him a dead man, Walking Death. Stith Thompson mentions the folk tradition of the "living dead man, who merely wanders

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[1]Gozzi, writing in the 1760s, was the first to put fairy tales on the stage for the purposes of satire in a thorough-going way; following him, the German Romantics focused their satirical attacks on middle-class values by imagining utopian alternatives to exploitative and alienating social conditions created by the dominant class (see Zipes, Breaking the Magic Spell, pp. 34-40). Bergman's irony, though typical of a modern disillusioned point of view, thus continues a traditional use of the fairy-tale genre.

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about waiting for final death (motif E422)";[1] this is Mr. Sleeman's archetype. His syphilis makes the marriage a parody of a generative and life-giving union.

The key motif of the Monster Bridegroom cycle, the disenchanting kiss, signifies the transforming power of loving acceptance. Anne-Marie's greeting, a rehearsed parody, has no such effect.[2] The hoped-for prince turns out to be an ogre indeed, and the point is driven home to Anne-Marie as she re-enacts with him the final parody, last night's dialogue with her true love. The inversion of the Monster Bridegroom pattern also suggests a meaning for the heroine's agonized helplessness: she is the enchanted one, not Mr. Sleeman. Marrying Death, she submits to his power, the same thralldom which Ibsen's Ellida escapes when she rejects the Stranger in The Lady from the Sea.

A third fairy-tale pattern echoed in the play is the A-B-A structure. Like the cabin in Yeats' The Land of Heart's Desire, through the open door of which we can see the mysterious wood where dwells the Fairy Child, Bergman's scene suggests a meaningful polarity between the parlor and the forest. Anne-Marie's talk with Walter and their noctural flight are a visit to Fairyland--not to a realm of magical transcendence, of course, but (as in Barrie's Dear Brutus) to a temporary refuge from reality. In the forest is the brightly-lighted dancing pavilion, surrounded by fairground entertainments, where the young people dance all night. Anne-

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[1] Thompson, The Folktale, p. 256.

[2] She does not actually kiss him; rather she extends her hand for him to kiss. The aunts earlier decide that her kissing his hand would emphasize his age too much. This is an example of what Northrop Frye calls "displacement," a process whereby a writer makes mythological motifs plausible by adjusting them to the demands of realistic probability. See his Fables of Identity, p. 36.

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Marie wants to retreat deeper into the forest, all the way in, where they could be alone. As a hunter (a popular figure in folktales), Walter is dressed in green and identified with the forest, like Anne-Marie's father, who had been a common laborer there. Anne-Marie loves this place, as apparently her mother did. The forest is the locus of life-affirming values of naturalness and freedom opposed to the false and deathly values represented by the parlor.

In an A-B-A play that is not treated ironically, the experience in Fairyland should somehow correct reality, so that the A-situation returns in a modified form (A'). But here A controls B, not the other way around. Even when she is with Walter, Anne-Marie's thoughts obsessively turn toward the approaching Mr. Sleeman. A clue to the inversion is Bergman's treatment of the supernatural lapse of time associated with the Visit to Fairyland. We are reminded of this motif by Walter's stopping of the clock when the lovers flee into the forest. But the meaning of the gesture contradicts tradition, for though the clock stops, time does not. Anne-Marie knows she must be back by 8 a. m. Mr. Sleeman, Chief of the Secretariat, is prompt; he is already on the train. Magical suspensions of time do not occur in a world ruled by such people. The carnival glitter of the dancing pavilion dissolves in a gray, gloomy dawn. Anne-Marie's wish-fulfillment Visit to Fairyland does not correct reality, but rather sets it up as inevitable and unchangeable.[1]

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[1] If Mr. Sleeman is Walter grown old, the obverse of her youthful dream of love, as suggested by Stina Bergman in her introduction to the play (Four Plays of Bergman, p. 272), then how could her greeting disenchant him? No kiss or handshake can reverse the flow of time. Opposed to youth, maturity means here not a growing into fulfillment, as in folktales, but diminishment and loss. In this light we can view the play as an existential tragedy of time, with its supernatural lapse of time realistically displaced to accentuate the irony.

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The opposition of the parlor and the forest falls into line with certain other polarities in the play. Like the Stepmother in "Hansel and Gretel" (Grimm no. 15), the aunts kick Anne-Marie out because they think they don't have enough to live on. According to folkloric tradition, this act identifies them as witches, just as Hansel and Gretel's coldhearted Stepmother reappears as the cannibalistic witch in the forest.[1] The aunts say that Anne-Marie is a "burden" to them. This metaphor is developed pantomimically as well as verbally. Thinking of herself as "heavy," Anne-Marie feels weighed down, and her dancing is slowed by the thought. In contrast to the dead, stiff Mr. Sleeman, who has offered to take up the aunts' "burden" but who in fact must lean on Anne-Marie in the final scene, Walter is lively and supple in his movements, and he effortlessly lifts Anne-Marie over the window-sill as they flee to the forest. But, as in the plays of Maeterlinck, the heavier elements win out over the lighter. In the final scene Anne-Marie holds herself stiffly, and when Mr. Sleeman kisses her hand, her arm "sinks down heavily" (p. 296). Both Walter and Mr. Sleeman are visual images of what they represent. Lightness, suppleness, and youth, at home in green nature, give life to the spirit. Heaviness, stiffness, and old age, at home in the aunts' ugly parlor, bring death.

Nothing better sums up the play's inversion of idealistic values than Aunt Mina's fragment of a song, which occurs twice in the play:

> When the linden turns green
> The hunter gets his queen
> In the forest. (pp. 286, 294)

This verse, with its archetypal imagery of spring and renewal, should en-

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[1] Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment, pp. 162-3.

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courage expectations of a happy ending. But coming from a frustrated and envious old woman, it acquires pornographic meaning. Aunt Mina reveals her demonic vision of Fairyland when she hints to Anne-Marie that it will be a lot easier to slip out to the forest once she is a married woman. Thus the life-giving union implied in the verse becomes an adulterous sexual escapade which, Aunt Mina leeringly suggests, Anne-Marie will be ready enough to accept after she has lived with Mr. Sleeman for a while. Her marriage is an initiation into an adult world of blasted values, typifying the movement in these ironical plays from idealism to disillusionment.

Gombrowicz's Ivona, Princess of Burgundia (1935)

Gombrowicz's Ivona is another Cinderella figure who, figuratively speaking, marries Death. Her story inverts the fairy-tale quality of "blessedness," whereby the heroine's inner qualities harmonize with and renew her world. Ivona is a mismatch with the society depicted in her play, and her qualities perversely bring out the worst in everybody around her. Rather than renewing her world, she is rejected and crushed by it in a re-enactment of the archetype of the Scapegoat.

The story is simple in itself but complex in its relations to folklore. Prince Philip, heir to the throne of an imaginary European kingdom, becomes engaged to an ugly and unappealing girl he meets in a park. Bored with easy sexual conquests, he acts on a cruel whim and brings Ivona into the palace, where her silence and unsociability put a pall on court life. He mocks and reviles her with his friends, but when he discovers that she loves him, he feels bound to try to return her love. In Act 3 "Ivona's natural lack of charm sets off dangerous associations of ideas, everyone

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finding in it a sort of reflection of his own imperfections or those of others."[1] She reminds the King of his sins. The Queen realizes that the poems she writes in the utmost secrecy horribly resemble Ivona. The Prince finally understands that he has put himself in an absurd position. He tries to extricate himself by breaking off the engagement and taking up with a lady of the court, but finds that he is trapped; he "knows that Ivona will always think of him, that she will have her own mental picture of the happiness of the young couple. Ivona has a hold over him" (p. vi). He realizes that he will have to kill her to get free. Others have come to the same conclusion. In the last act the King, the Queen, and the Prince make absurd attempts on Ivona's life, which fail. They finally arrange for her to choke to death on a fish bone at a state banquet. She does so and, the problem being solved, the play ends.

The derisive, sadistic tone of this tragicomedy resembles nothing in folklore,[2] but its structure is clearly another inversion of the Cinderella myth. The Prince reaches down from his exalted position to raise this worse-than-ordinary girl to his level. The reaction all around is like the scornful incredulity of Cinderella's stepsisters in Perrault's tale when Cinderella asks to try on the slipper: no one in the court knows what to make of it. The King thinks it is a tiresome playboy joke. Philip argues that it is a gesture of freedom: he refuses to be bound by the law of nature that says one cannot be attracted by ugliness. The Queen decides

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[1] Author's plot-summary, Ivona, Princess of Burgundia, trans. Krystyna Griffith-Jones and Catherine Robins (New York: Grove Press, 1970), p. v. Quotes from the play hereafter cited in the text.

[2] Jan Kott calls Ivona a "cruel, perverse little play" and traces its spiritual ancestry to Jarry's Ubu Roi: "Something of a schoolboy's vindictiveness, of a schoolboy's obsessions and jokes remain in it." See Kott, Theatre Notebook: 1947-1967 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), p. 127.

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he must be acting out of misguided generosity, and so they plan to humor him.

No one considers the explanation offered in the Cinderella tale itself--the recognition of hidden inner worth--because Ivona is too plainly what she seems to be. Once she is in the palace they all try and fail to bring her out, to elicit the Cinderella in her. But Ivona is not a Monster Bride; no act of kindness or cruelty transforms her. Her character follows a law of folklore, here viewed as a law of nature, which decrees that inner qualities be revealed in one's appearance and behavior.[1] In Ivona the court "encounters essence and finds it intolerable, since essence reveals truth in a society where everyone is frantically trying to hide it, both from themselves and from others."[2] Her clarity and truth to herself reveal the others as monsters of secrecy and deceit. The incipient Cinderella story in the play finds itself aborted, as it were, in favor of a more realistic and ironical treatment of the conflict between the inner and outer aspects of the self.

Who is Ivona? How could her mere existence have such disastrous effects? In herself she is nothing, but her fate decrees that she cannot live apart from others. Ewa Thompson, in her study of the playwright, says that Ivona lacks a social self: "she personifies those situations and circumstances in which we look at others without having prepared 'a face to meet the faces that we meet.'"[3] When she is introduced into the court

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[1] In folktales feelings and relationships are externalized; they "congeal into objects, so to speak, and thus become outwardly visible"--Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 51.

[2] Lucien Goldmann, "The Theatre of Gombrowicz," The Drama Review 14 (1970):102.

[3] Ewa Thompson, Witold Gombrowicz (Boston: Twayne, 1979), p. 47.

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and required to observe the most elementary social rules, she does not respond. The Prince and Chamberlain try to get her to curtsy to the King and Queen; she just stands there. "Ivona is silent" is the most frequently repeated stage direction in the play. Her behavior is more than mere boorishness; it is a kind of absolute self-possession. Whatever Ivona is positively, she exists wholly within herself and apart from others. She is a social negative, a vacuum.

This quality in itself runs counter to the tendency of the fairy tale, which always reaffirms the bond of the community. The drama too being a social art, the basic problem Gombrowicz faced in writing the play must have been the same as that faced by the court: what to do with a character who refuses to interact. Folklore provides an analogue for his solution in the Shadow or Double, defined by Jung as a projection from within that poses a moral challenge: "To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real."[1] This formula certainly describes Ivona's effect on the court. Thus Gombrowicz solves the problem of a protagonist who refuses to relate to others by making her a mirror in which the others must confront themselves.

The self-recognitions start with Ivona's appearance in the park, but it is the false world inside the palace that is exposed in this baleful mirror. First the ladies of the court find themselves mocked in her ugliness and awkward behavior: each has a face lift, false teeth, a wig and padded bust to cover up the deficiencies that Ivona shows plainly. Ivona then reminds the King of the little seamstress he and the Chamberlain had raped some years ago, who afterward drowned herself. The Queen

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[1] C. G. Jung, Psyche and Symbol, ed. Violet S. Laszlo (Garden City: Doubleday, 1958), p. 7.

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recalls her own secret shame: she is a closet poetess and sees in Ivona an image of her private flights of fancy, now revealed in all their raw awkwardness: "I see the likeness . . . I do . . . as she slobbers, gropes, stumbles. She is herself a terrifying allusion to my poetry. She is the informer, the betrayer" (p. 67).

The Prince finds in Ivona a revelation of the cruel and brutish behavior of which he and his friends are capable. His first line to her begins, "Do you know that the moment one looks at you, one is tempted to harm you in some way?" (p. 9) Later he realizes that her apparent lack of personhood removes an internal restraint and permits one to obey the most vicious impulse:

> Believe me, you can do absolutely anything you like with her. She is made for it--for anything. She is too shy to protest, too disagreeable. One can do anything. One can be stupid, idiotic, cynical, horrid. . . . You can let yourself go with her, anything goes! (p. 51)

Ivona is a "universal irritant" (p. 9). She serves as a Shadow for everyone who encounters her, mirroring their secret shames and vices; and in so doing she destroys the dissembling social structures by which the royal family and the courtiers had protected themselves from exposure.[1] Confronted with images of their own nakedness, they cannot live in peace until they purge her from their midst.

Proof that Gombrowicz is thinking of Ivona as a Shadow may be found in his use of a common feature in stories of shadows, doubles, mirrors, and the like. In Poe's fantastic tale, "The Oval Portrait," the narrator

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[1] Goldmann interprets Ivona as a social satire that describes "modalities of inauthentic existence within a specific social group," the European ruling classes between the wars or "the dominant strata of any more or less bourgeois society." The criticism, he says, is presented from the author's aristocratic and Christian point of view. "The Theatre of Gombrowicz," p. 102.

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reads an account of the painting of a portrait of startling realism which he sees hanging on the wall before him. The account describes the painter's realization that his work owes its extraordinary lifelikeness to some mysterious process by which the sitter has given her own life to the image: at the instant the portrait is finished, the sitter falls dead. The story illustrates the folk idea that the shadow, double, or mirror has the power to capture or entrap. Gombrowicz places a version of this idea at the turning-point of the play. Prince Philip has just broken the engagement at the end of Act 3 when he realizes, "She has still got us, We are still in her, the trap" (p. 55). The Prince sees that Ivona will never stop thinking about him; he will have to kill her to free himself entirely of her poisonous influence. This is the final revelation. "You can let yourself go with her, anything goes"--even murder.

The sadism follows from Gombrowicz's use of a real person, even one so unappealing as Ivona, as the Shadow.[1] By displacing the mythic function onto one who suffers for it through no fault of her own, he turns this cruel comedy into a tragedy of the Scapegoat. In the light of the fairy-tale tradition, with its redemptive heroes and transcendent endings, we can see that Ivona is a strange, twisted kind of Christ-figure, a bitter Eleonora, to compare her to Strindberg's suffering heroine. The Prince asks her, "Do you believe in God? Do you pray? Do you kneel? Do you believe that Christ Our Lord died on the Cross for you?" (p. 24) Ivona answers "(contemptuously): Yes." Her contempt can be read as a recogni-

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[1]What must life feel like for Ivona? She describes it in one of her few speeches: "It is a wheel, it goes round and round in circles. . . . It is going round and round, always, everybody, everything, all the time" (p. 22). The Prince calls this a vicious circle, a hellish combination, an infernal dialectic. "Inside everything is spinning, as if a mad dog were chasing its own tail, and outside, a deathly stillness" (p. 23).

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tion of the inversion of values in her anti-fairy-tale world, in which simple life-sustaining functions like eating are perverted to the purposes of murder.

It is suggestive that the instrument of her martyrdom, the fish, is a Christian symbol like the cross. The banquet, given out as the celebration of her betrothal, becomes the occasion of her passion and death. This is a grand deceit, and once again one that reveals what the court would hide. Because they are all too cowardly and absurd to kill her directly,[1] they devise the fishbone scheme and describe it as what it most emphatically is not: "charging at her in full regalia. . . . Splendor, grandeur, and glory, then one battle cry from above and she's had it. She will choke to death for sure. And nobody will be any the wiser because it's too silly" (p. 65).[2]

Thus, as Cinderella, Ivona cannot achieve transcendence. Her qualities make her too different to harmonize with the world of the court; instead she is crushed by it.[3] In her role of Shadow/Christ she does bring the court face to face with its sins. After overhearing the Queen recite her poetry, the King confesses in turn, saying, "You tremble be-

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[1] As in Maeterlinck's Princess Maleine, Ivona in the last act is an innocent princess-victim imprisoned in a malevolent castle. The scene of her attempted murder, especially the Queen's pathetic effort to poison her, reads like a parody of the corridor scene outside Maleine's bedroom.

[2] Thompson says the constant need for dissembling in the court creates a grotesque mismatch between the aristocratic persons and their lower-middle-class talk and clownish behavior (Witold Gombrowicz, p. 42). The quoted passage is an example of clothing an ignoble action in the "full regalia" of romantic rhetoric, a familiar technique of parody.

[3] Ivona's relation to her world reminds us of Algista's fate in The Triumph of Death. The central position of the fairy princess, the Christian symbolism, and the extreme cruelty of Sologub's tragedy are echoed in Ivona. Gombrowicz treats the structure in a grotesquely comic way by making his heroine repulsive rather than attractive.

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fore me for I am a sinner. I am the king of sin, get that, I am the king of rot and sin, of rape and groans" (p. 71). Nevertheless he consents to the murder, for in a world lacking a transcendent dimension, what else does one do with one's sins but cover them up, especially if they are as ugly as Ivona?

In a final gesture of hypocrisy the King, the Queen, and the court kneel down before her body. With the talk of calling Mr. Cadaver, the funeral director, and of ordering a mourning suit for the King, this gesture signifies the re-establishment of the protective social forms, the masks which Ivona's presence had undermined and blown up. The ending is as ironical as it could be. Instead of the Prince, this Cinderella marries Death, and she dies not to redeem the world but simply to free it of her oppressive existence.

Audiberti's The Evil Spreads (1947)

Whereas Anne-Marie and Ivona are passive victim-heroines in their ironical fairy tales, Alarica in The Evil Spreads is an active one. She learns that nothing is what it seems in the world; even those closest to her take part in the subterfuge and deceit that obscure the clarity she seeks. Faced with the destruction of her idealistic values, Alarica decides to be a master, not a victim of evil. Rather than be eaten, she will become the beast.

At first glance the story seems more closely related to history than to folklore. Audiberti specifies "the epoch of Louis XV" (one character mentions the date, December 6, 1762), permitting costumes and decor of the mid-18th century. The action transpires on the border of the great kingdom of Occident, in which political intrigues are directed by a char-

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acter called the Cardinal, an advisor to the king modeled on Richelieu, Mazarin, and Fleury, the great prelate-statesmen of France. Alarica is the daughter of Célestincic, king of an impoverished realm of minor importance called Courteland, located somewhere near Russia. Having traveled with her governess to the border of Occident, she is prepared to enter the great kingdom the next day for her wedding to King Parfait.

Several unexpected events intervene to destroy Alarica's hopes. First a strange young man claiming to be her betrothed pounds on her bedroom door, demanding entry. When she admits him, he embraces and kisses her, but then turns out to be an imposter and is wounded as he tries to escape. Then the real King Parfait appears, with the Cardinal, to tell her that the marriage will not take place after all. The proposal had been a diplomatic feint calculated to bring Parfait a politically more useful match with a sister of the King of Spain. Deeply wounded, Alarica strips and dances provocatively in front of the Cardinal until her sense of shame catches up with her. When King Parfait offers to go through with the wedding anyway, she puts him off by proposing to bring along the young man, whose kiss has already stolen her affections, as her paramour.

When the curtain rises on Act 3 the next morning, we discover that Alarica has made the young man her paramour indeed. More surprises follow. Her lover, whom she calls "Fernand," is really a police agent sent to compromise her in case she had objected to breaking off the match. Spies have sabotaged her coach to make sure that she could never enter Occident. Even her governess, her closest companion for eleven years, is an agent in the pay of the Cardinal. The final surprise is Alarica's response. Having been stripped of her idealism by the spies and deceivers around her, she takes on their evil ethics. When old King Célestincic arrives to comfort

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her, he finds her in the arms of "Fernand"; and when he objects, she coldly deposes him and threatens his life. Entering upon a career of sin and corruption, Alarica will return to Courteland as queen, install "Fernand" as her chief minister and favorite, and take up ambitious plans to develop her poor country and make it great on the model of Occident.

What makes this play a fairy tale? The plot has no particular source in folklore. There is no magic in it, only the intrigue which teaches the princess her lesson. As in the plays already examined in this chapter, the disillusionment centers on a Cinderella marriage, the difference between Courteland and the magnificent kingdom of Occident being almost as great as that between Cinderella and her prince. Despite the disguised historical background, the names--"Parfait," "Occident," "Célestincic," "Courteland"--suggest a toy-kingdom world that has affinities with fairy tale.

But the most important fairy-tale element is the heroine's ethical point of view. Innocent and untouched by the world, Alarica, like Anne-Marie in Mr. Sleeman Is Coming, looks forward to the fulfillment of her childhood idealism. Believing in loyalty, faith, integrity, and truth, she requires that the world be "clear"--by which she means that it must conform to the moral simplicity of fairy tales. It must not be shaded with half-tones of doubts, suspicions, or compromised affections. In her pursuit of this ideal, Alarica shows her character to be that of Kierkegaard's ethical as opposed to aesthetic man: she will sacrifice even happiness and pleasure for it. Once the possibility of such a clear marriage with King Parfait is denied her, she refuses the King's second proposal and foregoes all chance to be Queen of Occident. Acting paradoxically to preserve her sense of moral order, she pretends to be evil by claiming to have

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a paramour before the claim is true; then, because she hates dishonesty, she proceeds to make it true. "I was already your mistress," she tells her lover; "the crime would have been that the King of Occident would have married me in spite of all."[1] Even as late as the beginning of Act 3 she insists, "The world must be clear. If our hearts were clear, the world would be clear" (p. 181).

This idea of harmony between the moral order and the hero's purity of heart is an aspect of the fairy-tale universe described at the beginning of this chapter. Like the other ironists, Audiberti proclaims this harmony only to set up a reversal, which takes place in two stages. The first is Alarica's disillusionment, symbolized in the Kiss of Disenchantment given her by "Fernand."[2] This kiss awakens her to the nature of her fallen world, filled with subterfuge and deceit which she would still resist with her vision of a fairy-tale order. The second stage takes place in Act 3 when Alarica deposes her father and embraces the values she had opposed. If "the world is ignoble" and she "cannot put it right with all [her] tears and clamor" (p. 185), then she will conform her behavior to the world and prove the most ignoble of all.

The fairy-tale analogue to this shocking outcome is an inversion

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[1] Jacques Audiberti, "Le Mal court, Piéce en trois actes," Théâtre (Paris: Gallimard, 1948) 1:181 (my translation). Quotes from the play hereafter cited in the text.

[2] On the Kiss of Disenchantment, see Thompson, The Folktale, p. 259. In a study of the playwright, Constantin Toloudis notes that Alarica's introduction to evil begins with her awakening to sexuality, and traces the meaning of this moment to the author's erotic conflicts, torn as he was between love and sex. "Fairy tale creatures, disintegrated, irreducible to any manner of psychological coherence, the characters of his theatre are tormented by the fixations and traumas resulting from unresolved antagonisms between the two tendencies"--Jacques Audiberti (Boston: Twayne, 1980), p. 79; see also p. 83.

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of the Monster Bride motif: "Fernand's" kiss turns Alarica into an ogre.

> Up to now my life, my so pure, so upright life has served in the end only to mask the present storm of my ferocity. My ferocity is now unmasked. All the evil which I have not done, I am going to do all at once. The plain is opening. What a mountain of black water spouts out of it! (p. 195)

Alarica delivers this violent image with calm insults of her father, calling him a little king of geese, a lozenge-sucking cripple.[1] At the end the old man pathetically mourns the loss of his daughter. Cordelia is transformed into Regan, with Lear at her mercy: "The child destroys the parent" (p. 197).

Corresponding to these reversals are the two stages of Alarica's initiation: the lesson followed by a demonstration or proof. At the end the author has Alarica name "Fernand" her tutor, making the lesson-metaphor explicit. "Fernand" plays the role of disenchanter; in telling her about his mission, the sabotaged carriage, and the governess, he teaches her what the world is really like. Alarica's insistence on moral clarity is a romantic idealism that sets his teeth on edge because it is so blind to reality:

> I see you sunk in a dream, in a cloud, not that you are lying, check that, I did not say that! but because you never cease taking the false for the true, choosing the false, prefering the false,

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[1] Alarica's ruthlessness fulfills the prophecy hidden in her name. Jeanyves Guérin, in Le Théâtre d'Audiberti et le Baroque (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1976), p. 95, points out that the bestiality implied in her use of the word "ferocity" is anticipated in Alarica's whimsical conversation with her governess in Act 1. She is trying to get to sleep by counting sheep; the sheep turn into men, and "among the men there is an animal. . . . A buffalo . . . a buffalo all red, with green horns. What a cute buffalo! It has great black eyes. My God! How sad it seems! It is an animal which is put among men, but men are in him too, men who want to get out. They are calling me. What am I going to do?" (p. 134) Her transformation into a beast is unambiguously forecast in her song in Act 3: "I am the queen of Saba./I am in the pit, in the mire./The serpent eats me. It eats me./I am the serpent. . . ." (p. 186)

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> I long to take your head, your little bell of a May-lily, your dear little cup of doe's milk, and to set it down, crack, before the truth, the truth of truths. (p. 183)

"Fernand's" revelations so shock Alarica that she suffers a complete conversion, saying, "I have done nothing but lie since my first good morning. . . . Never having lied, I have lied without ceasing. . . . All my life has been a sham" (pp. 194-5). She sees now that the world is full of evil, and the evil grows, spreads, runs all over, propagates like a plague.[1] It falls like a thick rain and bursts from underground like a mountain of black water. In these images evil becomes a natural force that cannot be resisted.[2] Alarica says, "The crime would be to try to stop it . . . when it spreads. I will not commit that crime, be sure of that!" (p. 193)

In deposing her father, Alarica demonstrates that she has learned her lesson well. Like King Parfait before him, who also could not believe this charming child capable of evil, King Célestincic must suffer a disenchantment as shocking as Alarica's. She disowns him to provide him with this shock:

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[1] George E. Wellwarth, in The Theatre of Protest and Paradox, Rev. ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1971), considers Audiberti, with his pagan, primordial sense of evil, the most perfect realizer in modern drama of the theories of Artaud. See pp. 85-96.

[2] In The Spoken Opera (earlier titled "La Hobereaute," 1956), Audiberti identifies nature as a realm of unspoiled values set opposed to corrupt Christian civilization. In The Evil Spreads the spokesman for this concept of nature is King Célestincic, who tries to console his daughter with the optimistic thought that spring will come: "Don't torment yourself. [Back home] we have a snow six feet thick. The month of April, by contrast, will be magnificent. Magnificent. A waltz of flowers and butterflies" (p. 189). Alarica counters, "The snow is as deep as a grave and the month of April will never come again," and offers the perverted idea of nature imaged in the spout of black water. Her vision of a Courteland made great involves the destruction of nature by modern technology and bureaucratic systems. Like the Christians in The Spoken Opera, she plans to cut roads through, drain the swamps for crops, and build cities. For Audiberti technological progress was an evil as monstrous and unstoppable as moral depravity.

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> I am not looking for power for power's sake, but it turns out that I am the child of a sovereign and that the reversal of my soul from the side of evil which is goodness, to the side of evil which is the king, I cannot fulfill in a more memorable, more exemplary manner than by claiming power. . . . (p. 197)

For Audiberti, Alarica's deposition of her father constitutes a proof that "evil spreads." Alarica recognizes the sovereignty of the "Savage God"[1] and symbolically takes a new parent, just as before she took "Fernand" in place of King Parfait. Both kings are naive idealists, the younger man an imbecile, the older man an amiable fool. Their confrontations with the ferocious Alarica illustrate the fate of those who would try to live in the real world guided by sentiment and romantic dreams. By contrast, Alarica herself demonstrates the mastery granted by this world to her favorites, those who can learn the lesson of reality, and in so doing she proves Audiberti's point.

As an unmasker, Audiberti joins company with the great dramatists of modern realism, but his ethical point of view is far more pessimistic than Ibsen's or Shaw's. In a sense he is really saying about idealistic values what those who were shocked by Ibsen and Shaw only thought they were saying. Audiberti believes that distinctions between good and evil such as Alarica sought are irrelevant or misleading. There are only two kinds of people in the world, the weak and the strong, the deceived and the deceivers, the fools and the cynics.[2] Moreover, holding to an ethic of goodness makes one vulnerable to the kind of shock that Alarica suffered and administered in turn to King Parfait and her father. Evil is

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[1] This phrase, used by Wellwarth as the subtitle to his chapter on Audiberti (The Theatre of Protest and Paradox, p. 85), originates with Yeats, on the occasion of his first seeing Jarry's King Ubu.

[2] Guérin, Le Théâtre d'Audiberti, p. 131.

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an objective, dynamic force in the world, while goodness has only subjective status, as a state of mind identified with the innocence of fairy tales and the naivety of children who believe in them. In the overturned universe of the play, evil becomes good and good becomes evil, and the moral imperative is to grow up and lose one's illusions as fast as one can.[1]

As an ironist with an especially pessimistic point of view, Audiberti evokes a fairy-tale atmosphere in The Evil Spreads for two purposes. One is the obvious purpose of setting up naive expectations which can then be shattered by a confrontation with "real life." The aborted Cinderella myth which he uses to do this underlies the plays of Bergman and Gombrowicz as well. The other is to provide a poetic means to objectify the sense of evil that motivates this destruction of ideals. The metaphor in the title suggests not just that evil exists objectively but also that it lives and grows: "Evil spreads. . . . If it must stop some day, it will be at the final end of its life, its strength!" (p. 193) Like Maeterlinck, Audiberti uses monstrous figures drawn from fairy tales to represent a principle of evil that, to him, seems so overwhelming that it must live outside and independent of the human mind.[2]

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[1]Toloudis remarks that Audiberti's characters lack psychological coherence (see above, p. 247). Alarica's conversion, intended to illustrate a point rather than to describe human behavior realistically, supports this assessment. Such violent reorientations of the personality are not unknown in the real world, however. Alarica retains the absolutist, all-or-nothing stance of "ethical man": if she cannot clarify the world from the point of view of goodness, she will do so from the other side.

[2]Audiberti further explores this idea in "La Fête noire" (Théâtre, vol. 2), an ironical Dragon-Slayer tale based on the legend of a fierce beast that ravaged the Gévaudan countryside in the 18th cen., devouring many people before it was killed. The strange beast in the play disembowels young girls who wander into the forest. A "prince" who arrives from Paris to kill it proves an imposter (and may even be the beast himself), and a goat is sacrificed in its place to appease the people. The

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Audiberti's ethics have been called Manichean,[1] and certainly the melodramatic dualism of the fairy tale serves as a convenient vehicle to carry a philosophy that divides the world into antagonistic moral principles. In view of the one-sidedness of the struggle, however, it would be more accurate to call his ethics simply demonic.

Strindberg's The Ghost Sonata (1907)

Strindberg's philosophy can also be described as Manichean. If the evidence of his works can be accepted at face value, all his life he vacillated between optimism and pessimism. Critics following his moods can disagree widely about his philosophical position. In "Strindberg the Regenerated" Einar Haugen writes that he arrived in his later years at a sense of redemption and "end[ed] as an exponent of Christian charity."[2] In "Strindberg: The Absence of Irony" R. J. Kaufmann finds his representations of persecution, fear, and suffering to be more aesthetically persuasive, and concludes that "Strindberg's plays rest on a devastated vision of an absurd, divinely abandoned world."[3] Though these views are not mutually exclusive at every point, they are valid recognitions of the two poles in Strindberg's spiritual development, each predominant at different

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play ends with the imposter hero's death. "The beast . . . is evil itself. It is that mysterious, omnipresent, omnipotent force that can be found within each of us" (Toloudis, Audiberti, pp. 64-65). The function of the fairy tale illustrated here is to provide writers with concrete images to objectify a certain idea of evil--to hold it at arm's length, so to speak, in order to see it more clearly.

[1]Toloudis, Audiberti, p. 59; Wellwarth, The Theatre of Protest and Paradox, p. 87.

[2]Einar I. Haugen, "Strindberg the Regenerated," Journal of English and Germanic Philology 29 (1930):269.

[3]R. J. Kaufmann, "Strindberg: The Absence of Irony," Drama Survey 3, no. 4 (1964):475.

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times in his creative life.

The optimistic view is illustrated in Swanwhite and Easter, fairy plays with happy endings. We find the other view in The Ghost Sonata, which exemplifies what Kaufmann calls Strindberg's "chronic sense of anti-climax":

> Constantly he supposes that some person or some experience is going to afford him true insight, true repose, mystic access, or perhaps a final closure with the reality he seeks. His heroes repeatedly cultivate this possibility. But so vigilant is his (and their) critical faculty that he promptly 'sees through' manners, pretenses, social charades and ceremonies, and carries away the limp corpse of this disembowelled hope rather than a healthy sense of moderate participation. . . .[1]

The anticlimax occurs when the hoped-for happy ending is aborted or turned upside down by reality, acting through his vigilant critical sense. With its stereotyped forms and world-view, the fairy tale serves as a compass sensitive to the polar reversals in Strindberg's moral thinking, and so we will use it here. The fairy-tale inversion in The Ghost Sonata reveals the promise of life, the terrible disappointment, and the final consolation offered by death.

The play draws upon the genre of fairy tale as a whole rather than upon one particular tale. Its submerged myth can be glimpsed in a brief exchange between the Student and the Old Man (Hummel) in the first scene:

> THE STUDENT: I don't understand anything that's going on. It's like a fairy tale.
> THE OLD MAN: My whole life, my dear young man, is like a book of fairy tales. But although the stories are different, one thread ties them all together and the same leitmotif recurs constantly.[2]

In "Strindberg's Ghost Sonata: Parodied Fairy Tale," Milton A. Mays starts

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[1] Ibid., p. 469.

[2] August Strindberg, The Chamber Plays, trans. Evert Sprinchorn, Seabury Quinn, Jr., and Kenneth Petersen (New York: Dutton, 1962), p. 112. Quotes from the play are hereafter cited in the text.

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from this hint to explore the play's ironical treatment of a typical quest story, in which the hero goes in search of a prize that promises to solve the problem of the meaning of life, achieves it with the help of supernatural agents, marries and lives happily ever after.[1] My analysis follows his lead, with a closer awareness of the folkloric correlates of Strindberg's reinterpretation.

In the fairy-tale pattern underlying the play, the Student is the Hero and the Young Lady is the Princess in her Fairy Palace, the house. The quest for happiness is defined by the Student when he looks up at the house and says:

> I went by here yesterday, when the sun was glittering on the panes--and dreaming of all the beauty and luxury there must be in that house, I said to my friend, "Imagine having an apartment there, four flights up, and a beautiful wife, and two pretty kids, and twenty thousand crowns in dividends every year" (p. 112).[2]

The Student weeps when he sees the Young Lady, saying, "When I see how far beyond my reach my happiness is, what can I feel but despair?" (p. 117) The Old Man, the hero's supernatural helper, proposes to get him into the house by means that seem magical. Once inside, the Student encounters an Ogress, the vampire Cook who has the fairy princess in her power, and offers to do battle with her. The quest comes to an end when he discovers that the witch's magic is too strong for him; besides, she is secretly allied with Hummel, who is thus revealed as a False Helper. The Young

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[1] Milton A. Mays, "Strindberg's Ghost Sonata: Parodied Fairy Tale," Modern Drama 10, no. 2 (1967):189-94.

[2] This picture of domestic bliss corresponds to the conventional idea of fairy-tale fulfillment. If the Student's vision of happiness should sound too complacently middle-class, the Opies would remind us that a certain realism of values is a trait of the traditional stories: "The rewards sought after are wealth, comfortable living, and an ideal partner" (The Classic Fairy Tales, p. 16).

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Lady persuades him that it is useless to struggle against the evil that these two represent, and then she dies. Instead of the happy marriage he sought, the Student finds wisdom in an illumination exactly the opposite of that offered by Swanwhite and Easter, suggesting that the consolation of death--i.e., the cessation of struggle--is preferable to life, for there is no possibility of redemption from sin and guilt even through sacrificial love.

That Strindberg had a fairy-tale quest-myth in mind as he wrote the play is proven by the number of details that fall into line with this interpretation. Most obviously, the Student's role as Hero is emphasized. The manner of his call reminds us that in folklore heroes are chosen not necessarily through any merits of their own but because they are, in some sense, "heaven's favorites."[1] It was some sixth sense that drew him to the little side street where the house was about to collapse the night before. As a "Sunday child" he enjoys powers of luck and clairvoyance that he does not want to discuss openly. He can see the Milkmaid and the Dead Man, for example, when Hummel cannot. His clearsightedness qualifies him for the philosophical insights waiting at the end of the quest and thus forms part of Strindberg's reinterpretation of the folk material; but it is rooted in a common motif of folklore, the phenomenon of "second sight," whereby mortals whose eyes are touched by a fairy ointment can see things hidden to other people.[2] Strindberg must have had this familiar motif in mind when he has the Student say:

There are poisons that seal the eyes and poisons that open them.

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[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 143.

[2] Briggs, Encyclopedia of Fairies, pp. 350-1. He uses the idea in Easter too, as we have seen (above, p. 73).

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> I must have been born with the latter kind in my veins, because I cannot see what is ugly as beautiful and I cannot call what is evil good. (p. 151)

Even if the Student does not have the Fairy Ointment running in his veins (thus proving that, like Lancelot, he is the child of a fairy), he is symbolically anointed at the beginning when he asks the Milkmaid to bathe his eyes. He is linked with Siegfried (who could understand the language of the birds) through the repeated mention of Die Walküre;[1] even his name, Arkenholz, with its reference to the myth of Noah, identifies him as a heroic figure striving to save souls with the blessing of heaven.[2] As befits a hero in a fairy tale, he is of low birth and social status, but his accomplishments recommend him to the Colonel as an ideal candidate for his daughter's hand.[3]

Besides its emphasis on the Student's heroic aspiration, the play reveals links to folklore through the Milkmaid and her symbolic opponents, Hummel and the Cook. One critic sees the theme of the play as vampirism, outlined by the opposition of "the supplier of milk, who recognizes the

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[1] Evert Sprinchorn, Introduction to The Chamber Plays, p. xix.

[2] Translators' Notes to The Chamber Plays, p. 226.

[3] A similar disparity of social rank between the protagonists is found in Miss Julie, which despite its realism has been related to fairy tales. In Strindberg and the Poetry of Myth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) Harry G. Carlson traces allusions to the Maiden in the Tower theme, citing, among other mythic analogues, a German version of the Swineherd and the Princess story in which, much as in Jean's dream, the hero climbs a tall tree to reach the princess, who is imprisoned in a castle. These allusions lead us to expect a happy union of hero and heroine, but neither Jean nor Julie proves equal to the task. Carlson applies the term "fairy tale manqué" to both Miss Julie and The Ghost Sonata: "it suggests something abortive and unfulfilled. . . . At one and the same time, the fairy tale manqué resonances raise hopes and dash them; promises are made that we sense cannot be kept" (p. 71). So defined, this term precisely describes the disillusioning effect of fairy tales used in an ironical manner.

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Student as an ally," and the vampires, the bloodsuckers.[1] Hummel's imposture as Helper is first exposed by the Milkmaid, the hero's true Helper. Besides being a vampire, Hummel is described metaphorically as a black spider, an insect, a black magician, and the devil incarnate. His role as hypocrite and imposter is thus underlined by mythic identification as a shape-shifter:[2] "He's so many things, and he's been everything" (p. 120). Like Thor with his hammer, he "breaks into houses, sneaks in through the windows, ravages human lives, kills his enemies, and forgives nothing and nobody" (p. 121).

His ally, the Cook, strikes the Student at first sight as a "bloated monster" (p. 143). Her role as vampire, "one of those lamias that suck the blood of suckling babes" (p. 150), is well-attested in legend and fairy lore.[3] A vampire is a ghost who comes out of his grave at night to suck the blood of the living (motif E251).[4] In the play the idea of vampirism is modified from literal bloodsucking to the draining of soup stock in the kitchen and replacing it with water and soya sauce. But this version of the idea too is found in folklore. According to Briggs, the fairies of tradition "are everywhere believed to be nourished upon human food, either in its grosser form or in its invisible essences, which they convey away, leaving the un-nutritious substance to deceive human senses."[5] Hum-

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[1] Sprinchorn, Introduction to The Chamber Plays, p. xxi.

[2] On the shape-shifter, see Briggs, Encyclopedia of Fairies, pp. 360-1.

[3] In The Fairies in Tradition and Literature Briggs says that lamia are vampirish creatures, like succuba, that haunt wells and pools, and ruin the man they attach to body and soul (see p. 127).

[4] Thompson, The Folktale, p. 256.

[5] Briggs, The Fairies in Tradition and Literature, p. 96.

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mel's methods are more various and devious--he gets people into debt and practises usury, another kind of bloodsucking--but he too has a history of draining the soup stock in the kitchen. One character testifies, "He sat there like a vampire, sucking all the marrow out of the house, and turned us all into skeletons" (p. 139).[1]

Strindberg turns all these figures of evil to his philosophic purposes by making symbols of them. In the fairy-tale manner he embodies his antagonistic principle in concrete figures whose traits, derived ultimately from folklore, are simply visual and metaphorical representations of the destructive power of hatred.[2] In his optimistic fairy plays the villains are balanced by loving fairy princesses who suffer for others and redeem them from threat. In The Ghost Sonata no such compensation proves possible, because the villains are really symbols of existential evil. Thinking of himself as the hero and the Young Lady as a captive Maiden in the Tower, the Student interprets her dropping of the bracelet as a romantic signal for rescue.[3] But later we discover that she did not intend it as a signal, that the bracelet slipped accidentally off her emaciated arm. The

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[1]The theme of vampirism is carried over into The Pelican, Opus Four of the chamber plays, also written in 1907. Its hidden fairy tale is a re-enactment of the essential idea in "Hansel and Gretel" (Grimm no. 15). The Mother, recently widowed and always fearful of poverty, denies her children both food and warmth: "She skimmed the cream off the milk, that's why we're poor, miserable children, always sick and hungry" (The Chamber Plays, p. 182). The grown Son and Daughter, guided by the protective spirit of the dead father (manifested on stage in the rocking of his empty chair), seek to expose and punish the Mother. They feed her blue skim milk, then she jumps out the window. The high point of the tale, the feast on the witch's house, translates in Strindberg's version into the children's delirious memories of Christmas dinner as they wait for the burning house to collapse upon them in the apocalyptic ending. (Another archetype in the play is the situation in Aeschylus' Agamemnon.)

[2]Haugen, "Strindberg the Regenerated," p. 259.

[3]Carlson, Strindberg and the Poetry of Myth, p. 194.

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Young Lady's starvation induces a languorous passivity of spirit that Strindberg translates into philosophical resignation, leading by a process of generalization from the concrete to the abstract evil which is the real enemy: the radically limited nature of human life. The supposed call to heroism is really a signal that heroic endeavor is useless in this mortal world. In proposing to get rid of the Cook, the Student does not understand that she symbolizes the suffering by which we atone for being human.

The action of the play is a progressive unmasking of this truth, consisting of a series of discoveries that follows the physical movement through the facade of the house, then from the Round Room to the Hyacinth Room, and thence to the Island of the Dead. The unmasking about the meaning of life is an unmasking of its fairy-tale promise.

The hero seeks a happy marriage inside the house with the Young Lady. We discover first that the house is not the fairy palace that he had thought. After hearing of what goes on inside, Johansson says, "What a horrible house. . . . That poor student thought that when he entered this house he would be entering paradise" (p. 127), forecasting the Student's realization in Scene 3 that the house is haunted. Another promise that is unmasked is the professed intention of Hummel, who is revealed as a vampire and a murderer and sent to hang himself in the closet.[1]

Scene 3 replicates in small the play's progression from promise to

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[1]The Mummy opposes Hummel by stopping the clock when he threatens those in the house with retribution for their sins, saying, "But I can stop time in its course. I can wipe out the past . . . through suffering and repentance" (pp. 137-8). Like Walter's stopping of the clock in Mr. Sleeman Is Coming, this is a reinterpretation of the Supernatural Lapse of Time. Bergman's "stopping of time" serves to confirm man's subjection to time-bound existence. Strindberg's use of the motif adds the meaning of atonement for one's sins through patient suffering.

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disillusionment. At the beginning the Student says, "Put me to the test!" (p. 143), declaring once again his vocation to heroic action. He discovers that this test requires not action but patience, endurance, and willingness to suffer the daily afflictions of spirit that wear one down. The "testing room" is full of imperfections: it's cold, the chimney smokes, the desk wobbles and the ink spills, the shutter bangs in the middle of the night. What's most disgusting here is having to sort the laundry. The enemy is seen to be something much more like Audiberti's malevolent spirit of evil than the idea of a fairy-tale ogre would suggest. It is not a beast that could be killed, but "the drudgery of keeping oneself above the dirt of life" (p. 146).

The Student's final discovery is that the fairy princess, his intended bride, is sick, "infected at the very core of life" (p. 150). If by this phrase Strindberg meant to imply that she had cancer of the womb, as has been suggested,[1] then he is here inverting the symbolic heart of the fairy tale ethic, implicit in which is always the promise of new life. At the end the flowers, the sexual organs of the plants, are rotting, and the Student himself feels sickened, poisoned. These same flowers at the beginning of the scene had stimulated the ecstatic flights of philosophizing with the Young Lady which had made them feel already wedded. Thus images of generation and transcendence become images of death.

The death of the fairy princess means the death of the world around her. The Young Lady is cursed, and so is "the whole of creation, all of life . . . cursed and damned" (p. 150). The world is a penal colony, a madhouse, a morgue; this is the unredeemable world that set free the thief

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[1]Translators' Notes to The Chamber Plays, p. 228; Carlson, Strindberg and the Poetry of Myth, p. 195.

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and crucified the Savior. The Student perceives the futility of his quest: the liberator, the only True Hero in the tale, is Death.[1]

The final image, Boecklin's painting of "The Island of the Dead," transfers all hope of transcendence into the Other World, a fairyland in which the Young Lady will awaken to "be greeted by a sun that doesn't scorch, in a home without dust, by friends without faults, and by a love without flaw" (p. 151).[2] This fairyland offers a wish-fulfillment consolation, but like Hannele's vision of heaven, its promise is ultimately false. The Island of the Dead is not a fairyland that interacts creatively with the world of waking reality, like the fairylands of folklore. It offers neither blessing nor threat. No one comes from it into our world, and nobody from our world goes to it except to stay. The truth is that a world of perfection is a world of deathly stillness.[3]

Thus Strindberg cannot in the end believe in his fairy tale, either in his hero's quest for happiness in this life or in the quest he offers to take its place. Both are illusions which must be recognized as such. The true ending of the play is the Student's realization that this is so:

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[1]This insight means, of course, that the Student is a False Hero and his quest is a False Quest. Mays describes him as a fairy-tale hero ejected from his proper world, an innocent, an Adam trying to believe that the world has not fallen--"Strindberg's Ghost Sonata," p. 192.

[2]A folklorist's description of fairyland seems quite apposite to the end of the play: "Fairyland, populated in great numbers, is like the land of the dead. . . . In fairyland there is no death, no age, no sickness, no ugliness. Time is, as it is to the dead, non-existent. . . . Fairyland and the life of the fairies is in general an untheological heaven." Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, ed. Maria Leach (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1949) 1:363.

[3]Fass describes fairyland as "a static realm, lacking the earthly cycles of birth and death . . . for if the otherworld is, as the Irish put it, the Land of the Living, that is, a world in which no one dies, it also appears that it is a world in which no one is born." Existence there is sterile and uncreative. La Belle Dame Sans Merci, p. 35.

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> Where can one find virginity? Where is beauty to be found? In nature, and in my mind when it's all dressed up in its Sunday clothes. Where do honor and faith exist? In fairy tales and children's games! Where can you find anything that fulfills its promise? Only in one's imagination! (p. 150)

Here, in Kaufmann's vivid phrase, is the "limp corpse of [Strindberg's] disembowelled hope." In Swanwhite, written, like Easter, while the author's mind was "all dressed up in its Sunday clothes," the harp left by Swanwhite's mother several times plays of itself, reminding us of the spirit's benevolent presence. In The Ghost Sonata at one point the harp refuses to play even when plucked. The image is the same; the meaning conveyed is directly the opposite, pointing us away from transcendence, toward a dark parody thereof. Thus the compass of the fairy tale tracks the swing of Strindberg's philosophical point of view.

In style, as well as in theme and structure, The Ghost Sonata starts within the fairy-tale world and then moves out of it. As in Swanwhite, Strindberg here makes an effort to duplicate on the stage some of the effects of folk narrative. Fairy-tale style, as we have seen, is usually clear and concrete.[1] In all his post-Inferno plays Strindberg externalizes meanings in objects and actions seen in a bright, clear light. There is nothing vague or shadowy on stage, nor does any element exist merely for conventional or decorative purposes. As in folklore, his characters tend to be figures--that is, carriers of the action rather than realistic persons with believable offstage lives. In The Ghost Sonata the generic titles--the Milkmaid, the Dead Man, the Cook, the Mummy, the Young Lady, the Student--tell us more about the people and their functions than their names (and not all have names). Finally, there is a certain monodramatic

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[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 50-52.

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and dreamlike quality in all the works of Strindberg's expressionism. The preface to A Dream Play (1902) certainly describes Scene 1 of The Ghost Sonata, in which events transpire as in a daydream of the Student.[1] One critic calls Strindberg's theatre poetry "a new dramatic language . . . in which metaphors assume life";[2] another points out the primitive "animistic" aspect of his visual imagination, in which scenery and objects assume life and move of themselves.[3] They are witnessing to what we can now recognize as the remarkable proximity of his style to that of the fairy tale.

What complicates things, making the world of The Ghost Sonata wierdly surreal, rather than clear and simple, is the absence of a strongly marked narrative line. After the Student enters the house and Hummel is unmasked, the plot sublimates into a lyrical meditation, the conclusion of which is already known. All the talk adds a conceptual level that we do not find in folktales, where heroes act rather than reflect. The philosophizing subjects all objects and characters to a process of symbolic generalization, making their meanings abstract rather than concrete, as they are and remain in folklore. Fairy-tale elements are defined conventionally; Strindberg's meanings are personal and dynamic, not fixed by tradition.[4]

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[1] Kaufmann says, "The more purely felt his plays, the more they tend to approach the monologue as a limit. . . . Similarly, it is rare in a Strindberg play for the protagonist to be excused from the scene, for the action is his experience of being himself" ("Strindberg: The Absence of Irony," p. 474). A fixed focus on the protagonist is typical of folk literature as well, as recognized in Olrik's law of Concentration on a Leading Character: "Protagonist and plot belong together." See "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," in The Study of Folklore, pp. 129-41.

[2] Sprinchorn, Introduction to The Chamber Plays, p. xix.

[3] Kaufmann, "Strindberg: The Absence of Irony," p. 472.

[4] Adapting folklore, "the literary artist either divests his work of conventional quality by avoiding clichés of either form or matter or . . . charges them with new content." Archer Taylor, "Folklore and the Student of Literature," in The Study of Folklore, pp. 39-40.

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Stylistic changes are inevitable in the application of conscious art to anonymous cultural products. The changes in The Ghost Sonata, however, may be said to reinforce Strindberg's parody of the fairy-tale world view. The futility of action is part of his point, but the philosophizing in itself constitutes an inversion of the fairy tale, regardless of its content.

All commentators on the fairy tale describe it as in some sense an initiation. Eliade notes that the initiatory scenario of the tales always comes to a happy conclusion, "passing, by way of a symbolic death and resurrection, from ignorance and immaturity to the spiritual age of an adult."[1] Lüthi points out that Cinderella's symbolic death and resurrection involves the problem of distinguishing semblance from reality, evil from good, falsity from truth.[2] Just as the prince discovers Cinderella's true nature, identifying his fairy princess even in the rags and dirt of her degraded condition, so the good and devout Cinderella discovers that the world is finally responsive to her faith. Iona and Peter Opie, in The Classic Fairy Tales, find a parallel here with the story of Christ, "the man of perfect heart, living in the guise of a poor carpenter's son, [who also] has to be accepted in his lowly estate."[3] This is exactly the point of Christ's being born in a stable (Luke 2:1-20): when the veil is ripped off the world and the Kingdom of God comes in, the sheep on Christ's right hand will be those who recognized the King in his humility; the goats who did not will depart into everlasting fire (Matt. 25:31-46).

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[1]Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 201.

[2]Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 61-62.

[3]Opie and Opie, The Classic Fairy Tales, p. 14.

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The ironical fairy tales of Bergman, Gombrowicz, Audiberti, and Strindberg are also initiations, turning on the recognition of the truth behind a veil of semblance. But their versions of the myth reverse the true and the false. When a modern ironist rips off the veil, the world reveals itself as the godless, demonic universe that the goats had understood all along: it is the sheep who depart into everlasting fire. The nearest thing to a divine force in Mr. Sleeman Is Coming is Mr. Sleeman himself. Ivona's world is almost unbearably banal, spiritually dessicated. Audiberti's Alarica is reborn into a world defined by Yeats' demonic Second Coming, ruled by some "rough beast . . . [that] /Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born."[1] These playwrights parody the Cinderella story to point out that in a desacralized universe it is the goats, the cynics, who win out; and, as in the plays of Maeterlinck, the goats metamorphose into more monstrous beasts who then turn on the sheep.[2]

For Strindberg, too, God is absent or dead. Part of his failure of ironic vision, says Kaufmann, is a too-actively nurtured Nietzschean sense of deus absconditus.[3] The despiritualizing of these fairy tales is summed up in some symbolic manifestation of the superior power of physicality. The "testing room," for example, subjects us to a daily round of physical labor that deadens the soul. The contrast between the Cook's bloated body

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[1]W. B. Yeats, The Collected Poems, Definitive Edition (New York: Macmillan, 1959), p. 185.

[2]Maeterlinck uses exactly this imagery to express the idea. In Pelleas and Melisande, we recall, Yniold watches the sheep being driven to slaughter and wonders where they will sleep that night. In Allodine and Palomides a pet lamb is swept away to drown in a dark underground river. In both cases the defenceless animals represent human beings threatened by overwhelming forces of destruction.

[3]Kaufmann, "Strindberg: The Absence of Irony," p. 475.

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and the emaciation of the Young Lady puts this meaning in a compelling stage-picture. In Mr. Sleeman Is Coming the physical debility of the ogre overwhelms Anne-Marie and the audience with horror. Ivona chokes to death on a fish bone. Alarica's awakening to sensuality with "Fernand" triggers her awakening to reality and truth. These points of "demonic epiphany"[1] reverse the tendency of true fairy tales, which manifest at some corresponding point the breakthrough of a benevolent spiritual force.

Centered on physical existence, all the plays arrive at a death of some sort--in Ivona and The Ghost Sonata at literal death, in Mr. Sleeman Is Coming and The Evil Spreads at a metaphorical death of values. Here we are reminded of Jolles' definition of the anti-conte, which so neatly describes the plays of Maeterlinck: "These stories correspond to a tragic universe and the tragic course of things is summed up in them in a 'verbal gesture' which is 'the river too deep' or 'the lion,' and which carries the idea of separation and death."[2] In acknowledging the priority of the physical over the spiritual, these fairy-tale ironists arrive at a pessimistic position close to that of the naturalists, who held that man is wholly determined by his biological constitution. Death is inevitable and final in such a view, and it will not be redeemed by any spiritual force.[3]

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[1] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 238.

[2] Jolles, Formes Simples, p. 191.

[3] An interesting inversion of fairy-tale values is found in Fernand Nozière's "Beauty and the Beast" (1909) in his Three Gallant Plays, translated by Clarence Stratton (New York: William Edwin Rudge, 1929). Here the Beast becomes a symbol of the joys of physical love, and Beauty's sisters envy her not because she has their father's favor but because their own lovers do not satisfy their sensual needs. A Fairy of Tolerance envies all three girls for their bodies. When the Beast becomes a Prince, Beauty (here called Turquoise) rejects him because he is now ordinary; but when he behaves roughly to her, she is pleased to see that the Beast is not dead after all! Thus Nozière reverses the usual ending, rejecting the spiritual

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For the pessimist the special use of the fairy tale is to set up the promise of something better, so that when the promise shows itself to be hollow, the disappointment that follows is all the stronger. Treated sincerely, the fairy tale nourishes and sustains positive values; treated ironically, it destroys them through the undercutting of hope. Demoralization leads in turn to passivity, which we see carried to an extreme in the menaced characters of Maeterlinck and illustrated also in Anne-Marie and Ivona, neither of whom can gather the will to resist evil. The Young Lady in The Ghost Sonata proposes passivity as a logical inevitability. Alarica in The Evil Spreads waits passively for the fulfillment of her hopes, then becomes active as she perceives that the only way she can protect herself against evil is to become evil herself.[1] Passivity in each case results from the mental trauma of being ripped out of one's world and forced to acknowledge as somehow desirable and true that which one had understood before as repulsive and false.

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transformation. The author's approval makes this a benign inversion, however; the potency attributed to physical nature is not deadly but life-enhancing. This idea may have come from Perrault. Jacques Barchilon, in "Beauty and the Beast: From Myth to Fairy Tale," Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review 46, no. 4 (1959), points out that in Perrault's rendering of the story, "Riquet à la Houppe," the princess expresses a hint of regret at the loss of the Beast. "Ironically, it seems that the young woman would have been happy with the Beast and did not immediately enjoy its transformation into a handsome human" (p. 28).

[1] Shen Te, in Brecht's The Good Woman of Setzuan (1938-40), has this same perception, though she is agonized by it as Alarica is not. In her own role Shen Te passively accepts the demands on her goodness made by the world and waits in the hope of her reward; in the role of Shui Ta she actively rejects the world's demands in order to protect her alter ego's interests. The Good Woman, a moral parable, uses the folk motif of the Double to dramatize what Brecht sees as a tragic ethical dilemma. His heroine's blessed connection with the gods does her no good, since the providence they offer is benevolent but totally ineffectual (in other words, the gods do not really exist). The play makes the same sort of ironical statement as those we have been examining--that is, the naive idealist cannot survive in an unjust world.

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Since the initiations are patterns of maturation, it is an "adult world" that is thus described as repulsive and false. Bergman uses this realm of fallen values as a lens for social criticism, focusing on selfish greed, obsession with the symbols of status, and the emptiness of middle-class life. Gombrowicz attacks the spiritual bankruptcy of the playboy aristocracy depicted in his play. Both Audiberti and Strindberg seem more interested in philosophical criticism, though the values criticized in Audiberti's toy-kingdom world, particularly the heartlessness of the Cardinal's Realpolitik, are easily transferable to contemporary reality. These plays offer no comfort. To become adult, at least for Bergman and Audiberti, means leaving paradise for a wasteland. No wonder the awakening is a shock.

In their paralyzing impact on the initiant, these sudden disillusionments resemble the disorienting effects of "local legend." Focusing on a breakthrough from a demonic Other World--e.g., the world of the dead--these legends nevertheless present themselves as records of events in the real world. The folk fairy tale does not, cannot, present itself as real; Jolles emphasizes that it finds its proper effect only in polar opposition to reality. Having formal status only, the events in a fairy tale can be conceived as happening only within its magic circle.[1]

We have seen that Maeterlinck uses some of the realistic techniques of local legend in Princess Maleine (see above, pp. 36-37). Following his lead, the ironists introduce a point of view of realism into their tales in order to show what happens when an idealist ethic is applied to "real life." The tale is made to seem illusory, childish, and quaint; real life is made

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[1] Jolles, Formes Simples, p. 185.

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to seem particularly vicious and difficult. In thus breaking the magic spell, the ironist deprives the fairy tale of its proper functions of inspiring and consoling mankind. This is his intention, since he wants to express his own disappointment in the promise of life. But the dramatist's disappointment testifies in turn to his deep need to be healed, and so the broken tale reaffirms, at least in the realm of wish and desire, the values that have been destroyed.

In this way the genre of fairy tale proves its usefulness even for the philosophical cynic, comprehending in ironized form both the natural human impulse toward idealism and the inevitable and necessary acceptance of reality.

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CHAPTER V

THE POLITICAL FAIRY-TALE PLAY

As we consider the political fairy tale, we must remind ourselves that fairy tales are a kind of myth, which in its pre-artistic form is only an armature or a blank--"a first shape, a source of ideas."[1] In themselves myths have no ethical status; the question of good and evil is beyond them and becomes relevant only when the individual artist brings to bear his interpretive point of view.[2] Having no inherent meaning, they can just as easily be understood in social and political terms as in the psychological terms to which we are more accustomed. Whereas Bettelheim sees in the Dragon Slayer tale the family drama, a resolution of Oedipal tensions projected in the consoling form of wish-fulfillment fantasy,[3] a playwright like Evgeny Shvarts sees in the same story a social and political drama, a model for revolutionary struggle against tyrannical power. In both cases the goal is liberation. For Freudian critics one must face and defeat internal demons. Shvarts projects this quest outward onto the larger screen of community ethics.

There are certain congruences between the psychological and the social points of view, besides their use of the same figures as _dramatis personae_. Shvarts recognizes that man's ability to act in defense of his

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[1] Langer, _Feeling and Form_, p. 274.

[2] Rahv, "The Myth and the Powerhouse," pp. 113-14.

[3] Bettelheim, _The Uses of Enchantment_, pp. 111-16.

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rights in the public sphere depends on an inner state of readiness, which he describes with traditional moral labels like courage, loyalty, morale, and self-reliance. Nevertheless, he would not be willing to have his social allegory undercut by a Freudian critic who would insist on reducing his Dragon to a projected father-figure, especially if this interpretation denied the possibility of free will. Shvarts' philosophical first principle is that of Aristotle in the Politics: "Man is by nature a political animal." For him all questions ultimately have a political--i.e., communitarian--significance. A good citizen must face down his inner dragons in order to confront the outer ones. To reduce all public and private issues in his plays to a psychological dynamic would, in effect, rob them of their emancipatory potential and thus blind us to the qualities in them that most clearly manifest Shvarts' unique artistic achievement.

"Emancipation" as a literary category applicable to fairy tales derives from Marxist criticism, mostly German, represented by Jack Zipes in his Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk & Fairy Tales. Here the tales are viewed as cultural products endowed by their fantastic nature and the essential element of magic in them with the power to project alternative social models. Implicit in their liberating thrust toward utopia is a revolutionary criticism of the existing social order. Zipes defines their emancipatory essence as follows:

> By relocating the historical origins of the folk and fairy tales in politics and class struggle, the essence of their durability and vitality will become more clear, and their magic will be seen as part of humankind's own imaginative and rational drive to create new worlds that allow for total autonomous development of human qualities.[1]

This idea can, of course, be applied to stories other than fairy tales,

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[1]Zipes, Breaking the Magic Spell, pp. 22-23.

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just as it's possible to imagine fairy tales being treated in non-emancipatory ways. But Shvarts' dramatic tales, written against one of the most brutal tyrannies the world has ever known, exemplify the thesis beautifully. While not endorsing Zipes' Marxist premises--as I assume Shvarts would not--we can accept his specifically political theory of folk and fairy tales as a convenient point of view from which to examine political fairy plays.

Before discussing the modern plays which exhibit a revolutionary thrust, we should glance at some earlier plays on political themes that tend in the opposite direction. Shakespeare's fairy utopias--the forest in A Midsummer Night's Dream, the enchanted island in The Tempest, and the pastoral "green worlds"[1] in the other comedies--are essentially critical mirrors set opposite the corrupt world of the court to highlight and correct its faults. They are not intended to set forth a viable alternative to the existing order. In each case once the correction is accomplished, all thought of continuing to live in them is forgotten. Hermia's and Lysander's flight from the oppressive Athenian law is a leap for freedom and autonomy; but as soon as the Duke rescinds his decree, the lovers are happy to return from their dizzying experience in the forest to a more regular and settled way of life. Anything resembling revolution Prospero ruthlessly puts down; the island, it may be said, is where he finally learns what it means to be Duke of Milan. Oberon's complimentary reference to Queen Elizabeth in A Midsummer Night's Dream (2.1.157-64) may be taken as proof that the function of fairyland, for Shakespeare, is in no sense revo-

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[1]Northrop Frye offers the concept of the "Green World," illustrated in the forests of A Midsummer Night's Dream and As You Like It, in his essay, "The Argument of Comedy," in Theories of Comedy, ed. Paul Lauter (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1964), pp. 450-60.

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lutionary but rather critical and purificatory. He saw no alternative to the existing order.

The plays of Shakespeare and the fairy masques of Ben Jonson are examples of what we may call "sponsored fairy tales," to distinguish them from the emancipatory tales that Zipes describes. In the case of Jonson's masques, the sponsorship was quite literal. His Oberon The Fairy Prince, presented at court on New Year's Day, 1611, is subtitled, "A Masque of Prince Henry's."[1] Jonson's form virtually guaranteed that the political sentiments expressed therein would be conservative. Rooted in disguisings and other occasional celebrations in court, the masque was a lyrical and musical dance-drama intended to laud the monarch with elaborate mythological compliments. Fairy-tale dualism reveals itself in the aspect of the form that Jonson took a special interest in, the antimasque, in which common or low-life characters challenged the ideal order represented by the god or knight who symbolized the king. In the antimasque, if anywhere, is a revolutionary threat, raised only to be banished. In Oberon, for example, the rough satyrs are immediately disciplined by Silenus, their tutor, who guides them to a proper appreciation of Oberon's (i.e., Prince Henry's) noble nature.[2] Then Oberon himself, discovered in perspective, moves forward in a chariot to offer fealty to James, his father. The whole point of this fairy play was to honor the monarch who sponsored it, and to praise in idealized form the moral and political order over which he presided.

Two "sponsored" fairy plays from a different political tradition

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[1]Ben Jonson, "Oberon The Fairy Prince: A Masque of Prince Henry's," Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

[2]Stephen Orgel, The Jonsonian Masque (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 84-85.

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are Kleist's Käthchen of Heilbronn (1810) and Ludwig Fulda's The Talisman (1893). Both affirm the legitimacy of the existing order. Käthchen is a panoramic historical drama based on the familiar False Bride theme. A young peasant girl, protected by heaven for a special destiny, insistently follows the count whom she loves, doing him service even though he repeatedly sends her home. Her doglike devotion causes him to be accused of bewitching her. When mysterious dreams reveal that she is the natural child of the Kaiser himself, she is given a noble title and wedded to the count, and the witch who was her rival is exposed.[1] Embarrassed to be known as the father of a bastard, the Kaiser nonetheless serves as the willing instrument of destiny in raising her, Cinderella-like, to his side and giving her to the count. Thus the play corrects those who rejected Käthchen's aspiration and leaves the social system solidly in place.

Whereas Kleist's play makes its political statement by implication, Fulda's The Talisman focuses specifically on the problem of tyranny. Its serious use of Andersen's satirical tale, "The Emperor's New Clothes" (1836), as a plot-device makes it especially interesting, since Evgeny Shvarts later uses the same tale, much more successfully, in his comical The Naked King. Omar, Fulda's hero, sets out not to expose and embarrass the king but to cure him of the blindness of self-love. Taught by flatterers to exalt himself as one without human flaws, the king finds himself trapped when he realizes that exposing Omar as a fraud would mean exposing himself as one who could not detect true loyalty among his courtiers, since the

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[1] Käthchen's innocence is set off by the malice of her rival, the witch, whose artificial body parts are made to seem attractive by fairy glamor. Like Queen Anne in Maeterlinck's Princess Maleine (also based on the False Bride theme), she tries to poison the heroine, but her evil intent is thwarted by the play's benevolent providence, symbolized in the appearance of an angelic figure who escorts Käthchen out of a burning castle.

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latter all profess to see the invisible clothes. The king's parade in his underwear provokes a rebellion of the people, in the midst of which his chief favorite is killed and shown to be a traitor. These events teach the king that he has no more wisdom than the next man, and the cure of his pride is complete.

Besides the political intrigue, Fulda adds to Andersen's simple tale a didactic reversal of roles between a high courtier and a common basket-weaver. Elevated suddenly to the nobility, the basket-weaver suffers comically under the rigid forms of court protocol and dreams of returning to his baskets, thus serving as a spokesman for the author's criticism of artificial aristocracy and idle wealth from the point of view of the bourgeois work-ethic. But despite this leveling tendency, the play finally affirms the aristocratic principle of every man in his place. Tyranny lies not in the system of monarchy but in the personality of the monarch, and the king finds his right to rule in the destruction of his pride.

Though The Talisman begins with a convincing image of social injustice, setting the castle and the basket-weaver's hut side by side, it ends with a romanticized view of poverty that undercuts its implicit protest. This sort of compromise does not occur in the plays of Shvarts and Brecht, which we will now discuss. Each of these examines the problems of political oppression and the economic distress of an exploited underclass. Each play brings to bear a clear moral point of view derived from the fairy tale but strengthened with an ironical realism. Shvarts concludes with a sense of qualified optimism, Brecht with a sense of despair, but neither makes accomodations for the prejudices of an audience.

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Evgeny Shvarts (1896-1958), four of whose plays we will consider here, achieved his greatest successes on stage with moral and political fables in the form of fairy tales. Starting out as a writer and editor for children,[1] he apparently saw in the fairy tale opportunities for expressing sophisticated meanings more suitable for adults. He adapted his plays from narrative sources, in particular from the ironical and critical tales of Hans Christian Andersen: The Naked King is based on three Andersen tales, The Shadow on Andersen's story of the same title, and The Dragon on motifs from folktales and legends. Little Red Riding Hood, a version of the familiar story of Perrault and the Grimms, makes explicit for children some of the moral and political concerns of the plays for adults.[2]

The dualistic moral scheme of fairy tales matches these moral concerns perfectly. In one sense Shvarts sees evil as external and objective--that is, as the enemy, easily embodied in figures like wolves, witches, and ogres who threaten the good. In another sense he sees evil within the good themselves, in the inevitable falling-off from ideals of courage, solidarity, and loving self-sacrifice for others. In approaching this more complicated moral idea, he starts from the melodrama of the folk tale and ends with structures of disenchantment modeled by Andersen's darker stories. The plays are all comedies--that is, they have happy endings--

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[1] For a while Shvarts was personal secretary to Kornei Chukovsky in Petrograd. He started writing essays, reviews, and humorous verse for children in 1923, and in 1924 he went to Leningrad to work for Samuel Marshak on the staffs of Hedgehog and Siskin, two magazines for children published by the government. See Irina H. Corten, "Evgeny Lvovich Shvarts: A Biographical Sketch," Russian Literature Triquarterly, no. 16 (1979), pp. 222-43.

[2] Among Shvarts' other fairy plays for children are The Snow Queen (1938), also based on a story by Andersen; Cinderella (1947), a screenplay from Perrault's story; and The Two Maples (1953), the only one of his plays to use motifs from Russian folklore.

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but they explore a wide range of tonal possibilities, from untroubled triumph over evil to an ironical victory-in-defeat. My discussion will follow this progression from optimism to pessimism, starting with the simplest and clearest of the children's plays and concluding with Shvarts' most ambiguous and difficult work for adults, The Shadow, which ends by questioning the very possibility of fairy-tale idealism.

Shvarts' Little Red Riding Hood (1937)

Whereas the plays for adults have romantic lovers as central figures, the plays for young people focus on children and affirm values associated with the family. But Shvarts uses a fairy-tale heroic quest to express his anti-authoritarian point of view in all his works. His moral premises are always the same: (1) a conception of evil as brutal, egoistical, insidious, and pervasive; (2) the essential role of selfless love in opposing evil, or, more specifically, what we might label the "heroic imperative," the call on the individual conscience to combat evil by positive acts of moral courage, at whatever cost to oneself; and (3) the solidarity of the good, the requirement that those on the side of goodness keep faith together. This last principle emphasizes that for Shvarts morality is always social, never private. Evil threatens the life of the community, whether it be a family or a commonwealth of citizens, and must be opposed collectively.[1]

Almost everything in Little Red Riding Hood illustrates this point. In Perrault's and Grimms' versions of the story, Red Riding Hood's straying

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[1] According to Georges Soria, "the dramatist's system of values is a system of moral values. With him, morality is ultimately a political question." See his Introduction to Shvarts' Théâtre, ed. Soria (Paris: Editions Denoel, 1969), pp. 8-9.

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off the path to pick flowers is a foolish mistake, interpreted by Bettelheim as an infantilistic giving-in to the pleasure principle.[1] Shvarts' heroine, a tough and competent little girl, would never make such an error. The struggle against the Wolf is a war, and she knows it. Thus she is characterized by her parental manner, not only toward the small animals of the forest, whom she protects and teaches, but also toward her own Mother and Grandmother, with whom she is "very strict." More important, Red Riding Hood is fully aware of the Wolf's threat and has a plan to defend herself. In her pack she carries pepper to throw in his face and matches to light a fire. To avoid being attacked by surprise, she asks the Birds to act as aerial reconnaissance. She loses in the end because she is tricked and overpowered, not from any internal weakness or immaturity. The Forester brings superior force to bear on the side of good, and the play concludes with a song urging vigilance against the "endless evil" of the enemy.

The Wolf and the Fox embody two distinct but complementary ideas of evil. We first meet the Wolf as he sharpens his teeth on a grindstone: as in Perrault and Grimm, he wants to eat the girl, but not merely because he is hungry. Shvarts' Wolf hates Red Riding Hood and everything she stands for: "Let there be an end to friendship! Let there be an end to Red Riding Hood! One person alone will be master of the Forest and that is

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[1] Moralizing the tale, Perrault makes of it a cautionary tale about the fate of young girls who listen to men in the street. His wolf invites Red Riding Hood into bed with him before gobbling her up. There is no hunstman and no resurrection; a versified moral at the end makes the lesson explicit. According to Bettelheim, the Grimms' version deals with the same meanings, the dangers of premature sexuality, in a more deeply satisfying symbolic way (see The Uses of Enchantment, pp. 166-83). This emphasis on sexual morality, a private concern, points up Shvarts' departure from the earlier interpretations of the story. "Little Red Riding Hood" (type 333) is closely related to "The Three Little Pigs" (type 123), in which the antagonist is also an orally aggressive wolf. For a commentary see Thompson, The Folktale, pp. 39-40.

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I!"[1] He too knows that their struggle is a conflict of ideology, that the social principles of the winner will govern in the forest. The Wolf wants to eliminate Red Riding Hood because, with her concern for protecting the weaker animals and teaching them courage, she challenges his ethic of rule by intimidation.

Whereas the Wolf represents brutal, stupid violence, the Fox is clever and treacherous. He poses as Red Riding Hood's friend but tells the Wolf how to trick her by rolling in chalk and passing himself off as a large white dog.[2] But the Fox means to do in the Wolf as well by betraying him to the Forester, so that he alone will be left master of the forest. Both figures may be taken as archetypal Shvartsian villains: the Wolf is one of his egoistical, brutish tyrants, a simpler version of the Naked King or the Dragon; the Fox reminds us of the insidiousness of evil, prefiguring Henry in The Dragon, who spies on his own father, or the Shadow, who offers loyalty to all but proves no one's friend but his own.

Shvarts' interpretation of the Forester is consistent with his social theme. If the forest is a commonwealth, the Wolf the bully on the block, and Red Riding Hood "a child citizen steadfastly determined to make the forest a safe place for everyone to live,"[3] then Comrade Forester is the friendly local policeman. He characterizes himself to the audience:

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[1] Evgeny Shvarts, "Little Red Riding Hood," trans. George Shail, in All the World's a Stage: Modern Plays for Young People, ed. Lowell Swortzell (New York: Delacorte, 1972), p. 258. Hereafter cited in text.

[2] The comedy of this scene comes from the Wolf's irrepressible wolf-nature. He keeps forgetting his disguise as he stares at Red Riding Hood, licking his lips and speaking in his own growl, then remembering and changing his voice. The Birds do not like "this strange dog" because he wags his tail as if he were not used to it!

[3] Lowell Swortzell, Introduction to "Little Red Riding Hood," in All the World's a Stage, p. 240.

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> I stand guard, I watch over all the forest. I see all, I hear all, I look in all directions without hesitation or alarm. If you lose your way, I'll show you where to go. I am Comrade Forester. (p. 262)

A strong figure of order and justice is necessary to balance the threat of the Wolf if Little Red Riding Hood is to remain a play for children. His function in the parable is to justify her optimism. He stands back, so to speak, during the first part of the play to give her room to exercise heroic courage, then steps in to save her from being overwhelmed. Like Shvarts' other child-heroes, Red Riding Hood must be saved by a strong adult; but her rescue demonstrates that, no matter how dangerous the threat, the world is finally responsive to one's faith in the eventual triumph of goodness. As a children's play, Little Red Riding Hood stays within the moral universe of the fairy tale.

Friendly animals are traditional helpers in folklore,[1] although they do not appear as such in Perrault's or the Grimms' versions of this tale. Shvarts puts them in primarily to clarify the meaning of the parable. Beloukh, the timid rabbit, is an example of heroic self-sacrifice motivated by love. At the beginning he is terrified by the squeaking of Red Riding Hood's boots, but later he twice confronts the Wolf to defend her, saying, "I—excuse me—will bite you" (p. 254). Besides the Birds, who can stay out of danger, he alone remains faithful. The Bear and the Snake give in to the pleasure principle (here understood as a selfish preoccupation with

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[1] See "Friendly Animals," motifs B300-599 in Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature. Ubiquitous in folktales, animals have two basic functions, to represent evil in the form of dragons and other threatening beasts, and to represent good in the form of "grateful animals" or animal helpers. In both respects, according to Lüthi, they can be viewed as projections from within the soul of the hero (see Once Upon a Time, pp. 70 and 78). Thus in Shvarts' play the solidarity of the helping animals in opposing the evil threat is the social expression of Red Riding Hood's personal courage.

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private concerns at a time of collective danger) and abandon Red Riding Hood to look for food, with the result that she is eaten.

Shvarts' epilogue points up the importance of keeping faith. After Red Riding Hood and Grandmother are released from the Wolf's stomach, the beast escapes and is recaptured by the Rabbits, who pelt him with pine cones, this time with the help of the repentant Bear and Snake. Before the battle Beloukh exhorts his timid brothers to "attack [the Wolf] and drag him to the people for trial and punishment" (p. 266). The added episode clearly represents the downfall of a hated tyrant in a revolution of the lowly oppressed. The forest is made safe for all when the rabbits' revolt proves Red Riding Hood's principles of courage, friendship, and solidarity more powerful than the brutality and treachery of the villains.

Shvarts' The Naked King (1934)

The Naked King is a satirical comedy for adults rather than a melodramatic fable for children, but it carries many of the same meanings. In it the emphasis shifts from the struggle of the innocent characters to escape harm to the excesses and vanities of the threatening characters, which are destroyed through ridicule. In addition, the political commentary is here explicit and systematic, as in Shvarts' later plays, The Dragon and The Shadow.

The play is based on three stories by Hans Christian Andersen, "The Swineherd," "The Princess and the Pea," and "The Emperor's New Clothes." The last of these, a tale of imposture and unmasking, provides the title and the climax and gives the play the structure of a traditional comedy of intrigue: the Naked King, who attempts to marry Princess Henrietta against her will, is exposed as a fraud by the young man to whom she is betrothed.

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A speech at the end sums up the story:

> At last the young girl has been united with her darling Heinrich! They were going to marry her to an old man, but the power of love overcame all obstacles. We salute your just anger at these grim scenes. Now you in turn salute us, salute love, friendship, laughter, and joy![1]

In the conflict of youth versus age, Heinrich, his friend Christian, and the Princess stand for spontaneity and naturalness of feeling, while the Princess' father and the Naked King and their allies represent heavy-handed oppression and frozen form. By giving specifically political meanings to this traditional conflict, Shvarts turns his comedy of sexual intrigue into an attack on autocratic tyranny.

The play's opposition of naturalness and artificiality comes from Andersen's "The Swineherd" (1842), in which a young Prince disguises himself in order to approach the arrogant Princess who has spurned his courtship. He has offered her a sweet-singing nightingale and a rose that grew on his mother's grave; she rejects these gifts when she discovers that they are real and not man-made. Through the Prince, Andersen sets out to punish her for her false values. Since she had wanted artificial rather than living things, the Prince makes a rattle that plays music and a marvelous belled pot with which one can smell dinners being cooked all over town, and proposes to give her these toys in exchange for one hundred kisses. Her father, the King, catches them kissing and exiles them both. In a tale based on the traditional formula leading to a happy conclusion, the Prince would see that the Princess has learned her lesson, reveal himself, and offer his hand, as in "King Thrushbeard" (Grimm no. 52). But Andersen takes his revenge by having the Prince reject her, saying, "I have come to des-

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[1] Evgeny Shvarts, "The Naked King," in Contemporary Russian Drama, ed. Franklin D. Reeve (New York: Pegasus, 1968), p. 205. Hereafter cited in text.

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pise you. . . . You did not want an honest prince. You did not appreciate the rose or the nightingale, but you could kiss a swineherd for the sake of a toy. Farewell!"[1] Then he goes back to his own kingdom and shuts the door in her face.

Shvarts changes the story to bring it into line with his comic idea, deflecting the satire from the Princess to the King her father and the ladies-in-waiting who represent him in the beginning. Rather than a prince in disguise, Shvarts' hero is a real swineherd, an aristocrat by nature. The natural sympathy between him and the Princess, undercutting the real differences in their social stations, is suggested in their names, Heinrich and Henrietta.

The discomfiture of those who would stand between the lovers begins in the first scene with the chaperones. Pointed toward the ladies' kitchens, Heinrich's magic pot, singing and talking with a nasal twang, reveals embarrassing secrets, such as that the Duchess is not cooking at all but warming up the goodies she stuffed up her sleeves at last night's royal banquet. The entrance of the Princess' father, leaping from the bushes angrily insisting that his daughter cannot marry a swineherd, sharpens the conflict between feeling and form. To Henrietta, who sees her lover's real qualities, "he's not a swineherd, he's Heinrich." Asked why she was kissing him, she replies from the heart, "I felt like it" (p. 149). She is concerned not at all with decorum and noblesse oblige, whereas her father is concerned with nothing else. It doesn't matter that the Neighboring King is a toothless ruin; he hands her over to him, heavily guarded, for a proper royal marriage.

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[1]Hans Christian Andersen, The Complete Fairy Tales & Stories, trans. Erik Christian Haugaard (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), p. 197.

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The rest of the play describes the ridiculous excesses of the Neighboring King and his court, and Heinrich's project to free the Princess by means of the invisible clothing. We are never seriously concerned for the Princess' happiness, in part because the characters are not. The Princess has pluck: her first response to her father's threats is, "Not on your life!" All three sympathetic characters display an appealing verve and insouciance in the pursuit of their natural rights. By the time Heinrich and Christian penetrate the Princess' prison disguised as the gendarmes set to guard her, we know these clever, resourceful fellows will eventually succeed, even if they fail in their first attempt.

But the most important reason we are not seriously concerned for the Princess is the character of the Neighboring King. One of the most monstrous phoneys in comic literature, he is stupid, whimsical, violent, and, above all, self-centered and vain. Shvarts does not miss a trick in ridiculing his pretensions. Having slept on so many feather mattresses that the top of his bed disappears into the flies (an idea borrowed from "The Princess and the Pea"), he makes his first appearance floating down on an umbrella, his "night-crown" held on his head by an enormous ribbon tied in a bow under his chin--an appropriate entrance for one destined to suffer the fate of Andersen's Emperor. Behind his mask of vanity, he partakes comically of the ogreish qualities of the Wolf. He reveals his nature by flinging a dagger at his Valet--an act of mindless violence undercut by his first having to ask the intended target where the dagger is. Lacking all internal restraints, a total egoist, a baby in an adult's body, he is devoted to nothing but the immediate satisfaction of his whims.

As an absolute monarch, living in an insane world defined by his own desires, he also lacks all external restraints; and this circumstance,

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were he not stupid, would make him positively dangerous. The political analogue of total self-centeredness is totalitarian autocracy. Louis XIV made public ceremonies of every event in his daily life for reasons of political expediency; Shvarts' King does it to exalt himself. The Levée, for example, is an extravagant formal burlesque in which his yawns and stretches are announced by a flourish of trumpets. The King's world is like a panorama of mirrors reflecting nothing but his own image. He has a Minister of Tender Feelings to oversee his wooing and a Court Poet to write the dialogue. In contrast with the spontaneous Heinrich and Henrietta, everything about the King, except his emptiness within, is external and imposed.

Thus the Naked King's realm is an anti-utopia of encrusted forms, and the sympathetic characters provide the point of view of naivety by which we judge the extreme behavior considered normal there. Heinrich and Christian are amaze when they first encounter the many-layered court bureacracy: "It took us two hours just to get to you," they tell the Valet; "what a little system!" (p. 167) The Princess is dismayed by the ladies-in-waiting, who march in military file and speak like soldiers on parade. Later she sadly complains:

> It's very difficult and wearisome, living in somebody else's country. Everything here is . . . oh, what's the word . . . mili . . . militarized. . . . Everything is done to the drum. The trees in the garden are lined up in platoons. The birds fly in battalions. And besides that, there are these awful, centuries-old, sacred traditions which make it completely impossible to live. . . . And you can't change it or go against it at all, or else the whole state will perish. (p. 189)

This speech delineates the two opposed worlds of the play: the world of unselfish natural impulse in which life and love are possible, and the ugly, frozen world of imposed form. The latter is oppressive and deaden-

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ing, but the Princess quickly learns how to defend herself. She orders her unwelcome squad of companions out of her presence. Armed with Heinrich's curses, she comically defeats the King in the greeting scene, when the King, stunned by her beauty, can only repeat mechánically the inappropriate phrases written for him by the Court Poet. Confronted with real feeling, the King is paralyzed. Life is subtle, resourceful, responsive; form is top-heavy, stupid, and stiff. To keep the autocratic structure standing requires a great expense of energy, but, as the Princess' speech implies, one need only find its weakest point to bring it down.

This weakest point, the King's pride, is epitomized in his comic hamartia, his love of beautiful clothing fresh from golden needles. Andersen's famous story, "The Emperor's New Clothes" (1836), forms the climax of the play. Unlike Shvarts' King, Andersen's Emperor is neither stupid nor tyrannical; his blinding vice is vanity, his punishment exposure. His courtiers too are dominated by self-regard, and they lie in order not to be shown up as stupid or unfit for office. These meanings make Andersen's didactic moral fable an ideal model for the playwright's satirical purposes.[1]

Shvarts adds political meanings to the tale by making the King a blustering bully and having the courtiers play along out of fear of retribution. In such a realm, as Shvarts well knew, honesty would be the first victim. The courtiers' acceding to the imposture underscores the systematic nature of the tyranny. One by one in ascending order, the court officials show themselves willing to deny the evidence of their senses in

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[1]The congruence of tone between the play and Andersen's fable makes The Naked King a much more successful reconception of "The Emperor's New Clothes," I think, than Fulda's The Talisman, which takes it much too seriously (see above, pp. 274-5).

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order not to lose their places in the system; all are mocked by Heinrich and Christian. The King himself, as much a creature of the system as any of his underlings, does not dare to admit that he cannot see the cloth. The political implications of the crisis are explained in the Prime Minister's key speech:

> I have a feeling today's business will end badly. Fools will see the King naked. That's awful! Awful! Our whole national system, all our traditions depend on and are supported by steadfast fools. What will happen if they start giving way at the sight of the nude sovereign? The foundations will shake, the walls will crack, smoke will rise over the state! No, the King must not be let out naked. Elegance is the great buttress of the throne! (p. 198)

Andersen's ending leaves the Emperor in possession of his throne, if not of his dignity. Shvarts' ending, a successful revolt of the people against the King and his court, brings his political themes to a logical conclusion. The wart and pimple on the King's belly represent the truth, hidden up to now, that the King is the biggest "steadfast fool" of them all. And since, as the Prime Minister says, the autocracy stands or falls on the prestige of the autocrat, this perception by itself brings about a revolution of values and the establishment of a new society, a democracy of natural affection from which the ridiculous kings and courtiers flee, leaving the happy Princess free to marry her swineherd. Celebrating in alternate stanzas the marriage and the deposition of the King, the song underlines the double significance of the ending:

> Darling Heinrich, fierce in fight,
> Heinrich is my own.
> Left--right, left--right
> Now he'll take me home.
>
> Let the earth exult today,
> We chased the King away!
> Let the earth exult today,
> We chased the King away! (p. 205)

Thus, with the help of Andersen's satirical tales, Shvarts has added moral

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and political highlights to his comedy of intrigue and produced a fascinating revision of a traditional formula.

Though primarily a philosophical moralist concerned with the inhumanities of mankind, Shvarts cannot be accused of being insensitive to the particular evils of his time. Even when stated in general terms through fairy tale and fantasy, criticism is always applicable to situations in real life. The authorities would naturally permit no slander of the Soviet state, but Shvarts himself always insisted that the target of his satire was Nazi Germany.[1] There is ample evidence of such intent in The Naked King, most obviously in the racism that pervades the court. The Valet asks Heinrich and Christian if they are Aryans, hinting that one's ethnic background is a matter of some delicacy. Later the King, alarmed by the thought that the Princess might be Jewish, sends his Minister of Tender Feelings to determine this point by means of a test like that in "The Princess and the Pea" (1835), the third Andersen tale to be used in the play. Another of the latest fashions in the court is book burning:

> In the first three days they burned all the really dangerous books. But the fashion did not pass. Then they began burning all the other books indiscriminately. Now there are no books at all. They burn straw. (p. 170)

The tough foreign Governess sent to watch over the Princess speaks in tortured syntax sprinkled with German words. The staged demonstrations of loyalty and the thorough militarism of the court, in the context of the King's comic jingoism and his imperialistic designs on his neighbors, also recall Hitler and his Reich.

But the King does not wear a swastika. Most of these elements could

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[1] Felicia H. Londré, "Evgeni Shvarts and the Uses of Fantasy in the Soviet Theatre," Research Studies (Washington State University) 47, no. 3 (1979):133.

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just as easily have specific application in the repressive regime under which the play was written. Half-Jewish himself, Shvarts had good reason to be sensitive to Soviet anti-semitism.[1] Heinrich and Christian's encounter with the court bureaucracy could have been understood in only one way by the original audience.[2] Sent to spy out the Princess' background, the Minister of Tender Feelings is nothing but a secret policeman. The atmosphere of suspicion at the court suggests "the situation of not being able to trust anyone, not even a loved one--a situation easily understood by those living under Stalin's rule with the constant dread of being denounced for a slip of the tongue or a casual remark among friends."[3] At any rate, when first offered in 1934 by Akimov at the Leningrad Comedy Theatre, the play was perceived as reaching beyond Hitler and was kept off the stage until 1960.[4]

In the Court Poet, who cannot write fast enough to keep his verses current, we have a wistful image of the writer in the service of the totalitarian state, perhaps to be identified with Shvarts himself. He surely could not have written the line, "If worst comes to worst, I'll lie. It wouldn't be the first time" (p. 191), without a wry smile.

Shvarts' The Dragon (1943)

Heinrich and Christian are trickster-heroes whose disingenuous naivety suits their role as comic unmaskers. Lancelot, the protagonist of The Dra-

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[1] Corten, "Shvarts: A Biographical Sketch," pp. 237-8.

[2] Londré, "Shvarts and the Uses of Fantasy," p. 135.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Corten, "Shvarts: A Biographical Sketch," p. 232; F. D. Reeve, Note on "The Shadow," Twentieth-Century Russian Plays: An Anthology, ed. Reeve (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 383.

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gon, is a moral idealist who is aware of his heroic calling and therefore in a position to be taught a lesson about it. By the end of the play he has learned that evil is more "pervasive, tenacious, and subtle"[1] than he had thought, because it dwells not in a beast but in the hearts of men. Rooting it out requires "very tricky and boring work . . . even worse than embroidery,"[2] the kind of labor that seems the very opposite of heroic. All this makes The Dragon a self-conscious fairy tale for adults, one that questions the postulates of its genre and arrives at a moral idea which is both more sophisticated and more realistic than that permitted by the simple melodrama of folklore.

A professional hero, Lancelot is a "distant relative" of the well-known knight-errant of the same name, as well as of St. George and Perseus.[3] These connections put him in the category of the Dragon Slayer, whose tale (type 300) is one of the most ancient in Western mythology.[4] In the Grimm tale of "The Two Brothers" (no. 60) we find the outlines of Shvarts' plot.

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[1] Irina H. Corten, "Evgenii Shvarts as an Adapter of Hans Christian Andersen and Charles Perrault," The Russian Review 37, no. 1 (January 1978): 61. Corten applies these adjectives to The Shadow, but they are just as valid here.

[2] Evgeny Shvarts, "The Dragon," in Three Soviet Plays, ed. Michael Glenny (Baltimore: Penguin, 1966), p. 217. Hereafter cited in text.

[3] The medieval legend of St. George, supposedly a military tribune in the army of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, derives mainly from The Golden Legend (1280), by Jacobus de Voragine. A political interpretation of his story is offered by E. R. Leach in Myth or Legend? ed. Glyn E. Daniel, et al. (London: G. Bell, 1955), in reference to a Chinese dragon-slaying tale. "St. George was a revolutionary republican. The difference between good dragons and bad dragons is simply a difference of political viewpoint. In China proper the Emperor was the father of his people and dragons were good dragons; on the fringes of territorial China the Emperor is remembered as a foreign tyrant and dragons are bad dragons. Stories about bad dragons are all definitely radical" (p. 86).

[4] Thompson, The Folktale, p. 32.

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A wandering huntsman, accompanied by animal helpers, arrives at a town just as the citizens are preparing to hand their princess over to a fire-breathing dragon with seven heads. The dragon demands the annual sacrifice of a pure virgin; the princess is the only one left. When the huntsman proposes to fight the beast, he meets with a pessimistic response but learns that anyone who can save the princess will win her hand and the kingdom. He fights with magical weapons and kills the dragon, cutting off its heads and removing the tongues, but then is killed himself by a dishonest courtier, who makes the princess swear that he is the one who saved her. After exactly a year the huntsman, having been magically resuscitated, reappears in town on the day the princess is to wed the courtier. He fits the tongues back into the dragon's heads, thus exposing the imposter, and marries the princess.[1]

To this outline of events (used also by Valle Inclán in The Dragon's Head--see above, pp. 108-22) Shvarts has added several details from the myth of Perseus, who killed the Gorgon Medusa by means of a pair of winged sandals and a helmet of invisibility, and later saved the beautiful Andromeda, chained naked to a rock as a sacrifice to a raging sea-monster.[2] Bellerophon performs a similar deed on the back of the winged Pegasus;[3] Shvarts gives his hero a flying carpet. Another allusive element in the play is the barber's bowl offered Lancelot to serve as a helmet, borrowed

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[1] In the entry for Shvarts (spelled "Schwartz") in The Concise Oxford Companion to the Theatre, ed. Phyllis Hartnoll (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), The Dragon is described as "entirely original" (p. 507). The similarity of the plot to the Dragon Slayer story is close enough to refute this supposition even without definite proof.

[2] Robert Graves, The Greek Myths (Baltimore: Penguin, 1955) 1: 239-40.

[3] Ibid., 1:253.

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from Cervantes' Don Quixote.

All these elements receive an emphatically rationalistic and this-worldly interpretation in Shvarts' play, as we would expect with a satirical moralist.[1] His most important innovation is to make his hero self-conscious and principled. The typical hero of myth and fairy tale moves unreflectively through his symbolic action with his eyes fixed firmly on the goal, like the third son in the Grimms' "The Water of Life" (no. 97), who, thinking only of the princess, rides straight up her golden driveway and thereby proves his worthiness. Even when noticed, marvels like driveways paved with gold occasion no surprise; everything that happens seems perfectly natural in a world taken for granted.[2] Lancelot, on the other hand, is aware of his world and of his assigned role in it. The book of crimes and other miseries which he and few others consult represents the heroic imperative that motivates his quests: "Once you've seen that book," he says, "you can never rest again. The complaints in that book! They cannot be left unanswered" (p. 150). Like Red Riding Hood, he helps those who need him because he loves them and hates evil for its own sake. Elsa, the maiden to be sacrificed, represents what is purest, noblest, and most lovable about the townspeople, even as the Dragon represents what is worst and most hateful about them, their burnt-out souls. The consummation of

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[1] In contrast, the standard literary reading of quest tales, epitomized by Joseph Campbell in The Hero with a Thousand Faces, is spiritual, i.e., psychological and religious. For Campbell the battle with the dragon or some other beast is one of the tests by which it is assured that no hero unworthy of the name should gain access to the prize which is sought; and the ultimate significance of the prize--be it represented by a precious elixir, Golden Apples, the Water of Life, the fire-theft, or a sacred marriage--is simply enlightenment, "the expansion of consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom)" (p. 246).

[2] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, pp. 140-6.

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the sacrifice would confirm the unredeemable nature of humanity and must therefore be opposed at all costs.

As in Little Red Riding Hood, the conflict is one of principle, over whose ethic will rule in the community. It takes the form not only of a battle but also of a debate. The point at issue is the moral nature of mankind. The Dragon argues that the townspeople are not worth dying for:

> I made them cripples, my dear fellow. I crippled them properly. The human spirit is very hardy. Cut a man's body in half and he pegs out. But break his spirit and he'll eat out of your hand. No, you won't find others like these anywhere. Only in my town. Spirits without arms, without legs, deaf and dumb spirits, spirits in chains, sneaking spirits, damned spirits. (p. 173)

Lancelot insists to the contrary that the people would rather die than remain slaves, and he is willing himself to die to prove it.

The events not only motivate the debate but also serve as evidentiary proof. When Lancelot offers to challenge the Dragon, Elsa and her father discourage him and the townspeople oppose him without exception. Lancelot is sure the Dragon has warped their minds and thinks he can put that right by killing the beast. His optimistic view seems to be borne out at first. In Act 1, for example, Charlemagne surprises himself by objecting when the Dragon decides to incinerate Lancelot right then and there. In Act 2 the Dragon plans to have Elsa herself kill him with a poisoned dagger; instead she throws the dagger down a well. Those closest to the idealistic hero feel renewed hope, and hope inspires courage. Moreover, some of the townspeople do help Lancelot when he finds himself about to go into battle without arms. Although after killing the Dragon he is surprised to find no one in the square to greet him, he decides they must all be at home "gradually coming to their senses and . . . beginning to think straight for the first time" (p. 192).

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Thus by the end of Act 2 Lancelot thinks events have vindicated his optimistic view. However, Shvarts has made him a self-conscious hero not only to have him debate the issues but also to teach him a lesson. There is another aspect to his idealism, as suggested by the barber's bowl that links him with Don Quixote. He returns in Act 3 a changed man, as he admits to Elsa. After a year's recuperation and a month spent walking about the town in his cap of invisibility, he has learned things he had not known about the nature of evil.

The lesson is foreoast when the Dragon first enters in Act 1 and Lancelot is puzzled to find himself face to face with a human being rather than a scaly monster. The Dragon is more than a shape-shifter with three different human "heads" in addition to his own; the shape-shifting is only a symbol for what he really is: the enemy within.[1] Thus the crucial battle does not take place in the sky but in the square below where the people are watching, and the turning-point is not the Dragon's loss of his last head but the people's cowed surrender to the new tyrant. Reminding Henry, his son, that "he trained them to take orders from anybody who holds the whip" (p. 190), the Mayor steps into the power vacuum just as the Dragon's body crashes to earth offstage. When he returns a year later, Lancelot finds that those who had helped him have consented to the new tyranny by allowing themselves to be imprisoned, even though there were enough of them to fight. Without Lancelot, even Elsa and Charlemagne lose hope and submit

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[1]The Witch in Hofmannstahl's The Emperor and the Witch (see above, pp. 207-10) is also a shape-shifter. The usefulness of this folk motif for literary artists seems to be to direct our attention away from an idea of evil as external and objective, a concrete "enemy," and toward an idea of evil as more subtle, multiple, and various, a susceptibility within. Treated as a symbol, the folk motif itself makes the fairy-tale melodrama responsive to a more mature and complex moral view. The idea of enchantment is treated similarly in Cocteau's The Knights of the Round Table.

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to the most outrageous injustice. The outcome proves the Dragon right after all.

Several telling parallels between the old and new tyrannies prove that the Dragon is not yet dead. In Act 3 the Mayor has himself announced as "Lord President of the Free City" in the same formula and tone used earlier for the Dragon. The Mayor will continue the custom of having a maiden sacrificed every year, and plans to start where the Dragon left off, with Elsa. He takes her hand echoing words used by the Dragon in Act 1:

> Elsa, give me your mitt. . . . Ah, you little mischief, you scamp. What a warm little paw you have. Stick your chin up now! Smile! (pp. 152, 208-9)

As before, the maiden-sacrifice is a symbol for a more general pillage. The Mayor and Henry are able to terrorize the town and drain its wealth, just as the Dragon used to do, owing to their perception that "the main thing is to carry on as if nothing had happened" (p. 191).

Further proof follows. Not only have the people learned nothing; they are now worse off than before. Venality, deceit, fear, treachery, and suspicion have been enthroned. The Dragon was powerful enough not to have to worry much about opposition; the Mayor has continually to be on his guard. Whereas before there was only one man in jail, now there are many. Henry and his father spend enormous sums spying on each other, with the comical results that the Mayor's private secretary has changed hands so often that he no longer knows whom he's working for. The Mayor and Henry are themselves proof of the Dragon's cynical view of human nature: they cannot even conceive of decent values like sincerity and selfless love. They are sure, for example, that Charlemagne's unwillingness to approve of Elsa's marriage with the Mayor is nothing but a play for a bigger payoff. In an Orwellian touch, the deceit extends to the rewriting of history.

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In Lancelot's absence the Mayor has appropriated the title and honors of Dragon Slayer, and, as in The Naked King, the people are required to participate in this biggest lie of all by means of a staged demonstration of loyalty.

To sum up the corruption of human values under the Mayor's tyranny, Shvarts uses a chilling image of unnaturalness. Included in the wedding banquet are a fish that laughs when it's cooked, a sucking pig that sits up and begs to be eaten, and a roast turkey stuffed with its own chicks: "Such a touching family scene" (p. 208). Like the Dragon (and the Wolf in Little Red Riding Hood), the Mayor and Henry are eating up the townspeople, starting with Elsa.[1]

All this Lancelot sees when he returns, but what really disheartens him is the spectacle of the people sitting up like sucking pigs, begging to be eaten. Conscious this time of the meaning of their behavior, Elsa and her father agonize over their inability to respond differently. Elsa's speech to the guests states the point:

> I used to think you were all obedient to the Dragon only in the way the bandit's knife obeys the bandit. But it turns out that you, my friends, are bandits too. I'm not blaming you, you're not even aware of it, but I implore you to come to your senses! Can it be that the Dragon did not die, but only turned himself into a man, the way he used to? Only this time he turned himself into many people, and here they are killing me. (p. 211)

This, then, is what Lancelot learns about the moral nature of mankind,

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[1]This symbolic meal, an anti-eucharist, suggests the relevance of other Christian imagery, notably in the role of the hero. According to Leach, "a sixteenth century Christian commentator, Hospinian . . . asserted that 'in allegory, St. George stands for Christ, the Dragon is the Devil, and the citizens . . . are the human race redeemed by Christ'" (Myth or Legend? p. 81). Lancelot's love for the townspeople, his sacrificial death and resurrection (St. George was supposed to have been martyred seven times and miraculously raised all but the last), and his judgmental return (a Second Coming) do suggest the militant Christ of St. John's Revelation, in which the Devil is envisioned as a dragon cast down from heaven (12:1-9).

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the lesson forecast by the initial appearance of the Dragon as a human being: the evil he has to kill is not in the beast; it's not even in Henry and the Mayor, but in each and every one of the people, in their fear, their selfishness, their lack of fight, their craven submission. They are the Dragon because they consent to be eaten. A wiser man, Lancelot returns to judge and to punish the people, and to undertake the non-heroic work of the gardening of souls.

Besides making his hero self-conscious and principled, with the key result that the fairy tale becomes a political and moral lesson, the dramatist has made several other important reinterpretations of traditional elements. The most obvious of these is the figure of the Dragon. Shvarts ingeniously deploys its parts to express the various meanings of his evil principle. Its basic function is to "devour" Elsa and the other sacrificed maidens who stand for the town.[1] This action has both alimentary and sexual connotations--"People say they die of sheer disgust" (p. 144)--and, applied to the town, the meaning of economic and spiritual pillage. In any case the victims' humanity is crushed and they become mere consumable objects. As we have seen, the appearance in Acts 1 and 2 of the Dragon's several human "heads" prepares us for the lesson in Act 3, that this evil is pervasive and insidious, and must be attacked both without and within.[2]

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[1]Compare this traditional idea with the ending of Lady Gregory's clever and amusing redaction of the Dragon Slayer for children, The Dragon (1917). Rather than killing his opponent, the Prince tames him by killing his evil heart and giving him the heart of a squirrel. At the end he throws a cocoanut to the dragon, who, with his new heart, cannot stand the idea of eating a princess! The Collected Plays, ed. Ann Saddlemayer, vol. 3: Wonder and Supernatural Plays (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

[2]Eugene Ionesco's anti-totalitarian play, Rhinoceros (1960), uses the folkloric idea of animal transformation (motifs D0-D699) to make a similar point. The play starts in a banal realistic world, a provincial French town, which is then transformed nightmarishly as one by one the

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The Dragon's fierceness, size, and power describe the menacing qualities of modern totalitarian tyranny, backed by armored divisions and secret police. The child of war, he came crawling up out of the blood-soaked earth on the day of Attila's defeat; the cold blood of dead Huns flows in his veins. He is big as a church, with claws as sharp as knives, fiery breath, and scales like armor plate. He lives right beside the Town Hall in a "huge grim brown building without windows, with [an] enormous iron door from floor to roof" (p. 161), a forbidding pile reminding us of old armories. These militaristic effects are intended to illustrate that tyrannical power intimidates all but one with truly heroic optimism.

The turning-point, the battle scene, demonstrates the usefulness of this image for Shvarts' purposes. The Dragon arrives and departs offstage with sounds suggesting the roaring of huge bombers through the skies; similarly, the battle would appropriately be rendered by war-movie sound effects. The fight takes place overhead, but our attention is focused on the reactions of the watchers. As in The Naked King, the innocent child among them says what they all feel but dare not speak out loud. But as the Dragon loses its heads one by one, the people begin to express their hatred more openly. "I've lost two-thirds of my respect for the Dragon," says

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citizens grow horns on their noses and join the herd of beasts that thunders back and forth in the streets. Like the Dragon, the Rhinoceros turns out to have rich possibilities as a poetic image. The animals are brutish, stupid, and full of power. Their energy, at first frightening, becomes attractive as more and more people "convert," increasing the pressure on those remaining to conform. Ionesco calls upon the tragic myths of Ovid rather than upon the fairy tale; as in Kafka's Metamorphosis (1912), there is no possibility of transcendence. In his preface Ionesco interprets the play in political terms. The rhinoceroses represent Nazism and, more generally, any dominating ideology or ruling passion in the worship of which one is willing to sacrifice rationality and other civilized virtues. See "Preface to Rhinoceros" and "A Note on Rhinoceros," pp. 198-9 and 206-7 in Notes and Counter Notes, trans. Donald Watson (New York: Grove, 1964). As satirists, both Shvarts and Ionesco speak for traditional values.

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one man as the second head falls. Meanwhile Henry and the Mayor are issuing communiqués describing the progress of the battle in bureaucratic doubletalk, ending with the straightforward threat that all who do not obey will lose their own heads. Thus the scene builds to the moment when the people submit, proving that the Dragon is not dead after all, even though its three heads lie on the ground among them.

Two other reinterpreted elements in the play are the animal helpers and nature. The Dragon represents one of the two main ways in which animal images enter fairy tales; the Cat and the Donkey represent the other.[1] Like the helpers in the Grimms' tale of "The Two Brothers," these animals are essentially extensions of the hero's idealism. Though reluctant to encourage Lancelot in the beginning, the Cat is the first to support him and to spread the word about his project. The Donkey brings Lancelot's flying carpet, arms, and cap of invisibility; these and other essential items for the battle represent aid and comfort offered by the craftsmen who have been secretly waiting for generations for the arrival of the hero.[2] In contrast to the barber's bowl and the broken lance offered by the Mayor--Lancelot is not even permitted to take the lance itself, only a certificate signifying that it is being repaired--these gifts indicate that the spirit of the people is not entirely broken, that there are some in the town worth fighting for. Lancelot finds kindred spirits among the dogs in town: "They understand me because they love their masters and wish them

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[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 78.

[2] Among these essential items is a musical instrument which plays itself, which Lancelot places on the carpet at his feet before he takes off. This point is to be interpreted as Shvarts' comment on "the revolutionary role of art, especially music," says Douglas Clayton in "The Theatre of E. L. Shvarts: An Introduction," Etudes Slaves et Est-Européenes 19 (1974): 38.

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well" (p. 165). Shvarts' use of animals helps to demonstrate, then, that Lancelot's motive is essentially Caritas, the love of a great moral hero for the Good.

The animals are, of course, an aspect of nature, which Shvarts also reinterprets in line with his desire to produce a moral parable. Nature for the Grimms partakes quintessentially of the romantic pathetic fallacy: it is a magically spiritualized, numinous realm which both reflects and responds to man's fears and desires.[1] According to Tolkien, fairy stories appeal to man's nostalgia for a closer, more harmonious relationship with this realm and its creatures, from which we feel an alienating sense of separation.[2] Nature, being rationalized, is no longer very mysterious in Shvarts' world, but still it reflects a fairy-tale sense of harmony. Describing to Elsa the happy ending which he foresees, Lancelot says that the trees, the animals, and the birds will talk to them, "because true lovers understand everything and are at one with the whole world" (p. 177). More than that, just as Lancelot is a self-conscious hero, nature too is actively aware of man's evil and so takes part in the eternal struggle. In the book of complaints hidden in the faraway Black Mountains, Lancelot and a few others read of the crimes and miseries of mankind:

> Who do you think does the writing? The world! The mountains, the grass, the rocks, the trees and rivers see what people are doing. They see the crimes of all criminals, the miseries of everybody who suffers for nothing. The complaints of mankind travel from branch to branch, from raindrop to raindrop, from cloud to cloud, and come to that cave in the Black Mountains, and this is how the book is written. If there were no such book in the world the trees would wither away from the burden of all this misery, and the water would

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[1] On this point see Alfred David and Mary Elizabeth David, "A Literary Approach to the Brothers Grimm," Journal of the Folklore Institute 1, no. 3 (December 1964):183-6.

[2] Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," pp. 66 and 82.

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turn brackish. (pp. 149-50)

It is only against this idea of a prelapsarian natural harmony that the tyranny's evil can be truly understood, in that horrifying image of the wedding banquet turkey stuffed with its own chicks. The animal helpers and the heroic children in Shvarts' plays, being closer to nature, are especially inspired by a sense of the natural rightness of things and outraged by its violation.[1] Nature is a moral idea for Shvarts and not a spiritual force, as it is for the romantic Grimms; but his idea is obviously based on theirs and distinguished from it by a clarifying interpretation.

One more modification of a traditional element in the play is important to notice. In the mythic movement underlying the Grimms' tale and similar quest stories, the hero's symbolic or literal death and resurrection constitutes an initiation pattern, a rebirth on a higher plane of consciousness from which the hero restores the world upon his return.[2] Shvarts retains the death and resurrection, along with the canonical one-year absence of the hero,[3] but reinterprets the spiritual illumination as an ethical insight. It is interesting that both the Dragon and the hero die and are born again--the hero to a new understanding that the people are not

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[1] In addition to Red Riding Hood, who is a child only in years and size, these heroic children include Ivanushka and his brothers in The Two Maples, described as "Valiant Knights" inspired to do glorious deeds by their father, Danila-the-Warrior; and Gerda in The Snow Queen, who rescues her friend Key from cold enchantment. Shvarts saw something very admirable in the unspoiled idealism of children.

[2] Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, pp. 245-51.

[3] After the battle Lancelot is carried, weak and failing, up into the mountains by the Donkey. The Cat comes back and reports that he is dead. About his convalescence we learn only that he was nursed by a woodcutter's wife whom he kept calling "Elsa." He claims to have suffered such near-mortal wounds four or five times during his career (like St. George).

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reborn, that their moral regeneration will come only after long, hard labor. In the mythic pattern the hero's absence makes room for the imposter, one who does not suffer the initiatory ordeal and therefore is not entitled to the reward, and prepares for his unmasking. Shvarts goes one better by identifying the imposters, Henry and the Mayor, with the Dragon, treating us to the ironical spectacle of the Dragon's trying to pass himself off as the Dragon Slayer. As an example of the Big Lie, a tactic of modern totalitarian propaganda, this revision of a stereotyped motif of folklore could hardly be surpassed.

The mythic pattern concludes in eucatastrophe, Tolkien's term for the happy ending.[1] The Dragon ends happily too, with Elsa's rescue and the punishment of the evil characters, but not in unqualified joy. The hero has returned, but the world has not yet been renewed. The play's debate on the moral nature of man arrives at a guarded optimism, qualified by Lancelot's insight that, like the ancient Israelites in the desert, "it is a stiff-necked people" (Exodus 32:9).[2]

But puzzling out the situation at the end is only the last of the challenges that confront Lancelot as he tries to clarify the moral world of this self-conscious fairy tale. It is as if no one in the play, except for the animal helpers, is willing to perform his assigned role, from Elsa and Charlemagne, who do not encourage him in the beginning, to the towns-

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[1] Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," p. 68.

[2] Harold Segel interprets the resurrection as still to come: "The long road back to a desire for freedom and the willingness to bear the responsibilities of freedom begins with the resurrection of the spirit. And Shvarts suggests that the miraculous agency through which this will be accomplished is love; this is the balancing optimism in his parables." Twentieth Century Russian Drama: From Gorky to the Present (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 294.

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people, who first try to buy him off and then give him nothing to fight with. The Dragon too declines to play by the rules, most importantly when he refuses to die but lives on in the Mayor and Henry, and must be killed finally where the hero never expected to find him, in the minds and hearts of his victims. The children's play, if there is one here, ends with Act 2. The last act makes the play an adult fairy tale, the originality of which lies in the successful expression of an ethical idea tempered by realism in the vocabulary of childhood wish-fulfillment fantasy.

It was no doubt Shvarts' personal experiences of authoritarian tyranny that gave the play its realistic dimension. That, at any rate, seems to have been the opinion of the censor. The Dragon was produced in Moscow in 1944 but withdrawn after one night, and was not put on again in the USSR until 1962; it was immediately withdrawn again and has not been seen since.[1] Akimov, the producer, said he learned long afterward that some too-vigilant official "had seen in the play what was not there at all."[2] Shvarts' satire, he insists, was aimed at Hitler and Nazi Germany.

Such a view makes sense, as shown by Amiard-Chevrel in her essay, "Le Dragon d'Eugene Schwarz." Among the myriad clues she cites are the names of the townspeople (Müller, Miller, Friedrichson, Weber), the Mayor's title ("Burgomaster" in Russian), the linden-trees along Dragon Street, and

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[1] Segel, Twentieth-Century Russian Drama, p. 291.

[2] Claudine Amiard-Chevrel, "Le Dragon d'Eugene Schwarz," in Les Voies de la Création Théâtrale, ed. Denis Bablet and Jean Jcquot (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1972) 3:292. Corten says that the play was shown to a selected audience of actors, directors, critics, and officials, and quotes Akimov as follows: "During the premiere I was called out to see a very nervous chairman of the Committee who announced to me that the play was to be shown no more. No motive for this decision was given, and how could it be given?" See "Shvarts: A Biographical Sketch," p. 237.

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the Gothic lettering on the door of the Dragon's dwelling ("Humans strictly forbidden"). We encounter racism, as in The Naked King, this time directed against the gypsies. The people are also grateful to the Dragon for protecting the town against other dragons, recalling Hitler's pretext for taking power, to counter the Communist menace. Amiard-Chevrel also thinks that "the alimentary pillage of the dragon echoes the economic pillage of the German people, then of all Europe, by the great German trusts."[1] The war-like aspect of the Dragon refers to the German war-machine, and the apathy of the people suggests the collective responsibility of the German nation for the Hitler regime. The sombre last act is explained by the fact that that Hitler's fall did not come about through a revolution of the people against him, but through the intervention of foreign powers. Accordingly, Lancelot, the professional warrior against evil, is to be identified with the Russian army (we are reminded that St. George was honored in pre-Revolutionary Russia as the patron of a high military decoration).[2]

One may object to this kind of reading, interesting as it is, that if the Naked King does not wear a swastika, neither does the Dragon. Amiard-Chevrel herself points out that Shvarts was mainly concerned, not with the economic aspects of fascism, but with what was typical of all authoritarian regimes, its political manifestations in arbitrary power, cruelty, repression, corruption in ruling circles, and the conformism and demoralization of the people.[3] Stalin was just as big and fierce a dragon as Hitler.

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[1] Amiard-Chevrel, "Le Dragon d'Eugene Schwarz," p. 293.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 292-3.

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The Mayor's pseudo-democratic regime, dedicated to his own aggrandizement, might stand for the corruption of the ideals of the Revolution by the cult of personality, in which case the "L" which appears surreptitiously on the walls of the town in Act 3 would indeed stand for "Lenin," as Amiard-Chevrel supposes.[1]

Whether or not Shvarts' censor pursued the implications of the satire as far as this, he was surely right to feel that the play is something more than, if not something other than, a straightforward attack on Nazism. The Dragon is too rich and suggestive an image to be identified once and for all with any single tyrant, whether it be Hitler or Stalin. What else does the play tell us but that whenever and wherever the people allow themselves to be preyed upon, then and there will the Dragon grow a new head?

Shvarts' The Shadow (1940)

In the dark universe of The Shadow, adapted from the story of that title by H. C. Andersen, it must seem to the hero that almost everybody he meets is an incarnation of the Dragon. This is a world dominated by the principles of Henry and the Mayor; the pervasiveness of evil gives everything a confusion and disharmony that cannot easily be resolved. Nor is the Scholar a hero of mythic dimensions who could be compared with St. George or Perseus, except ironically. He has no magic besides his faith in his principles, and these prove inadequate to save the Princess. The fairy-tale world he wants to live in, one in which the good triumph because

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[1] Ibid., p. 294. Douglas Clayton, in "The Theatre of Shvarts," describes The Dragon as "a play that captures the spirit of Revolution, which the Soviet people were reliving in spectral form during the war, and it is a treatise on guerilla warfare as comic inspiration" (p. 37).

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they are good, bears little resemblance to the way things really are. Only the hero's resurrection and escape at the end distinguish The Shadow from the bitterly ironical plays of Bergman, Gombrowicz, Audiberti, and Strindberg discussed above.

Like The Dragon, this is a highly self-conscious fairy tale. The characters know, or think they know, what kind of a play they are in, and their awareness of the form becomes part of the content. The hero's dream at the beginning and Annunziata's explanation, along with the title and the prefatory quotes from Andersen, set up a complex system of ironical allusions in the play to the source story, to its author, to other stories, to itself, and to the genre of fairy tale. This is a country in which romance becomes reality, and the possibility of a happy ending is much talked-about: "Everything that's told as happening in fairy tales, everything that in other nations seems made up—actually occurs here every day."[1]

The play's reflexivity was no doubt suggested by the story on which it is based.[2] The hero of "The Shadow" (1847), a stand-in for Andersen, is an idealistic young writer visiting a hot southern country from the cold north. One night he sees on the balcony of the house opposite his room a vision of Poetry in the figure of a slender and graceful maiden shining with a marvelous light. Yearning to gain entrance to the magical house, he whimsically sends his shadow through the half-open door of the balcony, and

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[1]Evgeny Lvovich Shvarts, "The Shadow: A Fairy Tale in Three Acts," in Twentieth-Century Russian Plays: An Anthology, ed. and trans. F. D. Reeve (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 389. Quotes hereafter cited in text.

[2]Andersen, the Danish "Ugly Duckling," who titled his autobiography "The Fairy Tale of My Life," characteristically wrote of himself and his own experiences. See Fredrik Böök, Hans Christian Andersen: A Biography, trans. George C. Schoolfield (Tulsa: Oklahoma University Press, 1962), p. 3.

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awakens the next morning to find himself shadowless, like Peter Schlemihl in Chamisso's famous story of the Shadow-sale.[1] Unlike Schlemihl, who refused to sell the Devil his soul in order to get the shadow back, Andersen's hero grows another shadow after a week and returns home.

Hearing a knock one evening years later, he opens the door to a richly-dressed extraordinarily thin man who claims to be his shadow. Astonished and delighted, the scholar wants to know what his shadow had seen in the house of Poetry, but the shadow has nothing to tell him; being a creature of darkness, he knew he would be destroyed if he actually entered the light-filled house. What he did learn was how to lurk in corners and spy in at windows, and discovering in this way "everything that man must not know, but what he most ardently wishes to know--his neighbor's evil,"[2] he went about the world inspiring fear in every town he visited and thereby became a very rich man.

From here on, Andersen's story describes an ironical reversal of roles between the man and his former shadow. The scholar, having devoted his life to ideal values despised by the world, cannot achieve recognition, whereas the shadow, with knowledge of secrets of the lowest sort, is honored and showered with gifts wherever he goes. Down and out, the poor scholar agrees to travel with the thin man and act as his shadow, and at a health resort helps him to win the favor of a beautiful princess. But when the shadow announces that he intends to marry the princess, the scholar cannot

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[1] Shvarts uses Andersen's reference to "Peter Schlemihl" as an epigraph for the play: "And the scholar became angry not so much because his shadow had left him as because he remembered the well-known story about the man without a shadow, a story which each and every person in his native land knew. Just let him go home now and tell his story, why everybody would say that he had started copying others. . . ." (p. 386)

[2] Andersen, The Complete Fairy Tales, p. 340.

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go along with the deception: he will tell the truth about who is the shadow and who the man. The sentries believe the shadow, however, and the story ends with the good man's execution as the bad man celebrates his wedding, having become "as happy and as powerful as anyone can hope to be."[1]

In adapting the tale for the stage, Shvarts moves far beyond merely giving it dramatic form. He retains the ironical tone and the narrative line in general, including the exchange of roles between the man and the shadow, and adds a final reversal in the form of a resurrection to allow his hero to escape, having learned his lesson. More important, Shvarts accentuates the story's self-consciousness by referring to it and its author in the play.[2] The discussions of fairy tales and happy endings make the conflict essentially a struggle to define the world of the play, as either an idealistic world responsive to the needs of the good or a hostile world in which only the most selfish and powerful survive. Like Lancelot, the Scholar has much to learn about the moral nature of mankind. But rather than a sobering and bracing enlightenment, he arrives at a total disillusionment about the rewards of heroism in a fairy tale without a happy ending.

Finally, Shvarts draws out the political implications of the story. For Andersen, born into the impoverished "untouchable" class of Danish society,[3] marriage with the princess represents the highest worldly success, the prize of social acceptance. Shvarts reinterprets the princess as a symbol of political power and moves her from the end of the plot to the

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[1] Ibid., p. 344.

[2] Shvarts' Scholar, visiting the same country that the hero of Andersen's story visited, has taken the same hotel room that his friend Andersen took when he was there, in which, presumably, the idea of the story occurred to him.

[3] Bøgh, Andersen: A Biography, ch. 1.

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beginning, where she motivates the conflict: whoever marries the Princess takes over the kingdom. There ensues a vicious struggle for power which allows us to judge the behavior of those who would do anything to improve their position or protect their interests.

The story begins with the testament of the late king, Louis the Ninth, the Dreamy, written five years before when the Princess was thirteen, in which the world of politics is described as so treacherous as to make happiness impossible. One after another the King's Prime Ministers kill, lie, sneak, and steal so that finally the King gives up governing and turns to the theatre and loose women, which complete the ruin of his health and sanity. "Being a king," we are told, "is such a position that it spoils a man's character" (p. 399). To save his daughter, who has been poisoned by the palace air, he forbids her to marry a prince and sends her into the world to find a husband:

> When you are eighteen, find yourself a little place in town and go looking, looking, looking. Find yourself a good, honest, educated, and intelligent husband. Let him be a commoner. Maybe he'll suddenly be able to do what not one of the noblest has ever managed? Perhaps he'll suddenly be able to rule, and rule well? Eh? Wouldn't that be good? (p. 401)

Like Andersen's hero, the Scholar is a good man, and in an ideal world he would be the answer to the King's hopes for his daughter and his kingdom. In true fairy tales, as we know, the hero's disenchanting of the princess renews the world as well. Shvarts translates this naive notion into an aspect of the hero's character, his conscious idealism. If real life for the Scholar is not as simple and clear as life in fairy tales, he will put it right. Before meeting the Princess, he hears peddlers outside in the street hawking poison and murderer's knives along with watermelons, ice water, and flowers:

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> Our street is bubbling, like a real kettle. How much I like it here! If it weren't for my everlasting restlessness, if it didn't strike me that the whole world is unhappy because I have not yet thought up the way to save it, it would be perfect. And when the girl who lives across there comes out on her balcony, I think I have to make just one, just one little effort and everything will come clear. (p. 393)

Thus the Scholar's falling in love with the Princess is a public moral act, a commitment to save the world and make everyone happy. Like Audiberti's Alarica, he seeks clarity of vision in a world that is muddled and obscure--"shadowed," in the metaphor of the title. To find it, he wants to impose on reality the ethical scheme of a child's fairy tale, according to which murderer's knives and watermelons can be distinguished for what they are.

The villains, on the other hand, interpret his desire to marry the Princess as a power-grab, so they challenge his effort to redefine the world of the play. There are three groups of evil characters. Shvarts begins with the figure of the ogre, a traditional antagonist in fairy tales, then allows the evil principle to proliferate insidiously, as in The Dragon.

The Scholar first encounters the insidious nature of evil in Act 1, when he discovers that Pietro and Caesar Borgia, though they look like men, are really ogres. Whereas the image of the Dragon in Shvarts' later play is much more than a figure of speech, in The Shadow the term "ogre" describes qualities of character. Motivated by lust for money, power, and prestige, Pietro and Caesar Borgia, like the Wolf in Little Red Riding Hood, want to eat up the hero and all smaller fry. A protegé of the Shadow, Pietro comes into his own as a booted-and-spurred Commander of the Royal Watch (i.e., chief of police), a position for which, in Shvarts' eyes, his ogre nature makes him uniquely suited.

Besides the ogres--and there are many such in this country, almost all ex-cannibals, we are told--the Scholar meets the masters and the fellow-

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travelers of evil. The masters include those who have power and use it ruthlessly to arrange all things to satisfy their needs. The greedy Minister of Finance is one. Withered, stringy and lame in both legs, carried about the stage by two husky bodyguards, a bizarre image of the perversity of evil, he is willing to do anything to make more money and thus represents the epitome of self-centered acquisitiveness. By selling poison to a scoundrel who hated him, he ruined his own health and killed off his entire family, but made a clear profit of 200 percent--completely natural behavior, he says, since "business is business" (p. 411).

Characters like the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister, his ally, are at home in the palace, where the Executioner wears white gloves and the block is set up "in the pink drawing room, beside a statue of Cupid, and disguised with forget-me-nots" (p. 445). Starting from opposed moral principles, these villains and the Scholar see things entirely differently. They are alarmed to realize that the Scholar, motivated by idealistic values, poses a more dangerous threat than a blackmailer or a thief, because no one knows what to expect from him. The Scholar, for his part, does not understand them if he thinks they will listen to reason. "They can't even imagine that you're a real man," he is told. "For them you're an obstacle, like a stump or an old log. Believe me, the sun won't have set before you're dead" (p. 428).[1] Once convinced of this truth, the Scholar flees their world, the palace, as fast as he can.

The third group of negative characters, the fellow-travelers, illus-

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[1]Shvarts shares with Shakespeare a vision of evil as an inability to recognize the personhood of others. The idea is best summarized in King Lear, in the words of Oswald when he encounters the blind Gloucester: "A proclaimed prize! Most happy;/That eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh/To raise my fortunes" (4.6.222-4).

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trates further the insidiousness of evil. The Dragon has many heads, among which Elsa recognizes finally the familiar faces of her neighbors. Even in Little Red Riding Hood the Wolf rolls in chalk and passes as a large friendly dog. In The Shadow the list of evil characters who are masked as friends includes Julia, the Doctor, the Princess, and the Shadow himself. The traitors are not all equally malevolent, of course, but their acts or failures to act, whether or not intended, have the same effects.

Julia's example shows how the average person of good intentions falls victim to a selfish concern for one's own interests. She comes to warn the Scholar that something is being cooked up against him and offers to save him by finding out what it is; instead, threatened by the Minister of Finance, she agrees to join the plot.[1] The Doctor is an example of cynical submission to the immoral system. Years before he discovered a stream of miraculous water which cures all diseases, knowledge of which was ruthlessly suppressed in order not to ruin the local health-spa business. "I fought with the Minister like a madman," recalls the Doctor, "and that's when the officials started moving in on me" (p. 434). Now, confronted with the worst injustices, he will do nothing but wave his hands at the world in disgust.

In Act 3 Julia, the Doctor, and the Princess all betray the hero again, sending him to his death. Treachery is the kind of sin that most obscures the clarity of the moral order. In the plays for children Shvarts insists that those on the side of goodness present a common front against

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[1] Shvarts invokes another Andersen tale to define Julia's self-interested betrayal, "The Girl Who Trod on a Loaf" (1859): "Yes, the earth swallowed her [Julia] up, but then she crawled back out again, and ever since she's kept right on walking on good people, on her best friends, and even on herself--all just so as not to spoil her new little shoes, stockings, and dresses" (p. 398).

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evil. Here he restates the idea by showing the disastrous consequences for the Scholar of the repeated failures of his friends to back him up.

The Princess is a special case. In the catalogue of sins offered by the play, her moral confusion is not the worst, but it proves very hard to redeem. She suffers an inability to believe or trust anybody, a "malignant anaemia common to delicate people brought up in a hothouse atmosphere" (p. 406)--i.e., in a palace, for Shvarts always a place of moral chaos.[1] All people are liars, everybody's a scoundrel, nothing makes any difference; to a moralist all these ideas are equivalent to spiritual death, because they imply a total surrender to relativism and indifference. The Princess' inner confusion deeply disturbs the Scholar because she seems so clear and right from the outside. To explain the disharmony between her looks and her character, Shvarts refers us to "The Frog-King" (Grimm no. 1). The Princess inverts the tale: her beautiful young aunt married a scoundrel whose kiss turned her into a cold and repulsive frog, so, fearing a like fate, she distrusts everybody. Seeing the monstrosity of soul that her interpretation implies, the Scholar reads the tale differently, in the hope--vain, as it turns out--that his kiss will bring her to life and turn her from a frog-princess into a beautiful woman. The Scholar's allusion to the kiss that disenchants by the power of love forecasts the happy ending that he thinks he can bring about.[2]

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[1] In The Snow Queen the heroine's visit to a palace ruled by an evil king turns into a nightmare reminding us of The Shadow. Gerda turns white as she walks in the door. Her sense of unease is explained by a friendly crow, who says, "After all, the palace is five hundred years old. Just imagine how many horrible crimes have been committed in all those years! People have been executed, murdered with daggers from behind corners, and strangled" (unpublished translation by George Shail, p. 24). After this visit Gerda vows never to go near a palace again in her life.

[2] The Princess does not actually kiss the Frog in the Grimms' tale

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The problem of ethical confusion and betrayal comes to a point in the figure of the Shadow, the most interesting traditional element in the play. As in Andersen's story, the Shadow comes into existence when the Scholar whimsically sends him through the balcony doors into the house of the Princess. Once installed there, he quickly learns the values of the palace and soon rivals the Scholar for the Princess' hand. The key to his character is Pietro's observation that he is "the exact antithesis" (p. 408) to the Scholar. Their names--Christian-Theodore/Theodore-Christian--are a clue to the inversion of personalities. Whereas the Scholar is open and honest, the Shadow hides his intentions and lies to all those he leaps over on his way to the top. The ultimate betrayal, because it is a self-betrayal, is his posing as the Scholar's ally and then moving in on the Princess. Being a creature of darkness, a cousin of dreams, he mysteriously knows the underside of her feelings about the Scholar, the feelings in the dreams she doesn't reveal: "In that dream it wasn't he was with you, not Christian, but a completely different man with an unfamiliar face, and it was just that that you liked. . . ." (p. 432) This demonic lover, a stranger who comes to take her by force, is himself:

> People don't know the shady side of things, but it's precisely in the shadows, in the semi-darkness, in the depths that there lurks that which gives poignancy to our feelings. In the depths of your soul there is me. (p. 432)

In other words, while the Scholar offers an ideal love associated with light and clarity of understanding, the Shadow tempts the Princess with her

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(she flings him against the wall), but the idea of the kiss can be found in several clearly defined disenchantment legends in which "the afflicted person succeeds in winning the love, or at least the embraces, of a normal human being" (Thompson, The Folktale, p. 259). The motif of the Loathly Lady is found in Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Tale," and the sexes are reversed in stories of the Monster Bridegroom cycle, of which Mme. Leprince de Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast" (1756) is a good example.

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own darkest impulses and wins her by further confusing her. The one calls her to maturity, heightened awareness, and moral discrimination, inspiring dreams of being rescued from drowning in a sea of indifference; the other recalls her to unrestrained self-centeredness and limits her awareness, so that by Act 3 she no longer recognizes anything but his face.[1]

Taking his cue from Andersen, Shvarts makes the Shadow aggressive and totally unprincipled, everything the Scholar is not, in his pursuit of the Scholar's object, and so produces a figure that is both psychologically true and allegorically significant. For just as the Shadow reveals to the Princess her own soul-shadows, serving as an Undine-lover, like the Stranger in The Lady from the Sea, so he reveals himself to the Scholar; and the latter's willingness to acknowledge him--"Shadow, know your place!" (p. 449)—signifies a courageous acceptance of the reality of what he is. According to Jung,

> the Shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge. . . .[2]

The failure in the Scholar that the Shadow reflects is a failure of nerve at the most critical point, when he is persuaded in Act 2, against his judgment, to sign the document abjuring the Princess. Psychologically this

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[1] In The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study Otto Rank defines the double or shadow as a "personification of one's evil impulses--as an attempt to form an ethical contrast" (p. 40n), and outlines the features of the literary motif as follows: (1) the double presents a mirror likeness of the main character; (2) the double works somehow at cross-purposes, as in Robert Louis Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"; (3) the catastrophe occurs in the context of a relationship with a woman; and (4) the conflict usually "ends in suicide by way of the death intended for the irksome persecutor," i.e., the double (p. 33). All these features apply in some sense to Shvarts' play, as to Andersen's story.

[2] Jung, Psyche and Symbol, p. 7.

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act means that even the most rational, clear thinking, and high-minded person may be subject to momentary confusion or inner contradiction, with who knows what evil results. Allegorically it implies a final judgment in the play's debate on the nature of man and his world. Having won the Princess, in Act 3 the Shadow has won the right to define the world of the play as a shifty and dangerous place inhospitable to hopes for a happy ending. "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine," says the Scholar in effect, echoing Prospero's acceptance of responsibility for Caliban in The Tempest (5.1.275-6).[1] In claiming the Shadow as his own, the Scholar admits the intransigence of unredeemable reality, both in the world and in himself,[2] and concedes the defeat of his idealistic project.

But even as he acknowledges weakness and failure, the Scholar proves his heroism by going to his death. Having been betrayed by friends and supposed allies in Acts 1 and 2, he finds himself completely isolated, like Peter Schlemihl in the story by Chamisso; yet he keeps smiling, because he has finally achieved the clarity he had sought in his own mind. In Act 3 he is aware that, to win, he has to be willing to die.

The hero's execution is roughly equivalent to the climax of Andersen's story. The coda added by Shvarts, his resurrection and escape, adds to the play's ringing ironies. First the Shadow invites the Scholar to

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[1] The Tempest is also a fairy-tale play on morality in politics. Like The Shadow, it develops a conflict between the world of contemplation (the Scholar's proper realm) and that of action. The Realpolitik of Antonio and Sebastian can be compared to the ruthless behavior of the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister. Prospero's wizardly power makes him victorious where the Scholar fails, but he too learns that there is something hard and unredeemable in human nature, something that can only be controlled.

[2] Corten agrees that Shvarts' use of the shadow-motif shows that "evil is a latent aspect of the Scholar's own nature which weakens his moral fiber" ("Shvarts as an Adapter of Andersen and Perrault," p. 61).

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sit at the foot of the throne and be his shadow. But he refuses and commands, "Shadow, know your place!" and the Shadow, struggling with himself, walks over to the Scholar and copies all his movements. But the Scholar still does not realize that the persons who hold power in the kingdom do not want a good man as king. As we know from The Naked King, the court system of power and privilege sustains itself very nicely with a figurehead at the top. The old king's testament itself had caused a commercial panic, and when the town got wind of the Scholar's prospects, all the sensible people began sending their gold out of the country. In Act 2 the Minister of Finance refuses to accept the Shadow as king until the latter assures him, in words intended to make it clear that they understand each other: "No changes at all. Let things be as they were. No plans. No dreaming." (p. 435) We are reminded of The Dragon as well: tyrant gives way to tyrant, but the tyranny goes on. So when the Scholar challenges this accomodation by seeking to prove the Shadow an imposter, the system protects itself, and he is hustled off to execution.[1]

But having watched the Shadow copy all the Scholar's movements, we are prepared for the comic shock of seeing the Shadow's head fly off when the Scholar is decapitated offstage. The Princess refuses to have a headless consort, so the Scholar is brought back to life by the application of medicinal waters with magical properties.[2] When the Shadow finally ad-

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[1] "Corruption in the social order parallels and reflects corruption in the governmental order and both fear anything or anyone that threatens reform, for implicit in reform is the end of privilege"--Segel, Twentieth-Century Russian Drama, p. 287.

[2] Revival by means of the Water of Life (motif E80) is the most popular of the various means of resuscitation to be found in myths and folktales (Thompson, The Folktale, p. 255). Shvarts sharpens the irony by having the water drawn from the miraculous stream that cures all diseases, previously discovered by the Doctor, knowledge of which was officially sup-

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mits that he cannot live without his master, the Princess chases him from her side and invites the Scholar to take his place, thus setting up the climactic point of the parable, the Scholar's refusal of the throne and his flight from the palace.

His line at the end of Act 2--"What a sad fairy tale!" (p. 436)--prefigures the moral. The Scholar has finally realized why the people of the country don't want it generally known that fairy tales come true here. It's because they are tales for grownups, with unhappy endings. As in Andersen's story, the moral world of the play is the fallen world of reality, much exaggerated (to make the point) in its selfishness, indifference, and positive malice, but still recognizably the world we live in. The good man achieves his resurrection, but only so that the bad man might live. The hero cannot renew this world; he can only flee from it.[1] The ending is both happy and sad, but most of all ironic, very much the ending of a disillusioning fairy tale for adults.

As for the satire, in The Shadow Shvarts seems to have gone beyond topical reference into a bitter philosophical myth. We recognize a familiar target of criticism in the capitalist Minister of Finance, who, like the Councillor of Commerce in The Snow Queen, takes money as his chief value,[2] and another in the bureaucratic machinery controlled by the Prime

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pressed for commercial reasons. The revivifying water, without the satirical comment, is also found in The Two Maples.

[1] In the equivalent situation Lancelot decides to stay, which shows not only that the Scholar is the less able hero, but also that evil in The Shadow is more insidious and pervasive, if not more violent, than that in The Dragon. Lancelot's moral world is not what he thought it was, but we do feel that eventually it will respond to his idealism. The Scholar's world will not.

[2] Everything but money is "rubbish," the Councillor tells the Grandmother and the children when they refuse to sell their magic roses that

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Minister and taken over by the Shadow with his "order Number 0001" (anything "drawn up and regularized" is an accomplished fact). The ogres find their appropriate places under the Shadow, creating images whose overtones would have echoed resoundingly in Stalinist Russia if the play had been allowed a run:[1] Pietro, the secret policeman, with his intimidating spurs, and Caesar Borgia, the propagandist, orchestrating slanderous attacks on the Scholar through a controlled press.

In a play of inversions it is interesting that Pietro explains the problem of moral chaos from a point of view diametrically opposed to that of the Scholar:

> The people go their own way. . . . Here the sovereign is celebrating his coronation, the gala marriage of noble persons is coming up, but what're the people doing with themselves? Lots of boys and girls are kissing each other just two steps from the palace, having picked out the darker corners. In house number eight, the tailor's wife got the idea of having a baby right now. Such a big event going on in the kingdom, but she just goes right on roaring as if there was nothing happening! The old blacksmith in house number three, up and died. A holiday feast in the palace, but he's lying in his coffin and not giving a damn. It's disorder! (p. 439)

As in The Naked King, life is disorder; order is death: in Act 3, when "life suddenly raises its head" (p. 444), the Prime Minister summons the Executioner.

One critic notes that "associations with life under communism are scattered throughout The Shadow: the frightening knock on the door, fear of conversing with strangers, the corrupting effect of power, the impossi-

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bloom in the winter. The roses, symbolic of the love in their home, were a gift and are not for sale at any price.

[1]Written in 1939-40, The Shadow was first published in a magazine, The Literary Contemporary, in March 1940. Its first production in that year, by Akimov at the Leningrad State Comedy Theatre, was taken off the stage; but the same production was presented again in 1960, with great success, and remained in the repertory for a number of years (Reeve, Twentieth-Century Russian Plays, pp. 383-4).

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bility of being innocent, the need to dissemble, and the use of double-talk by those in power."[1] But whether or not the Shadow is to be taken for Stalin seems beside the point. He is simply a figure of evil whose egoism is allowed the fullest expression in the arena of political struggle, and thus he sums up Shvarts' definition of that arena as a moral wasteland. The negative characters in the play are more dragons, flourishing this time in a fairy tale without a happy ending.

In his essay, "Grimm and Andersen," W. H. Auden points out some of the differences between true folk tales, such as those recorded by the Grimms, and the literary art-stories in the fairy-tale mode created by Hans Christian Andersen.[2] Foremost among these differences is the tendency of the art-story to function as rationalized parable rather than myth. This distinction applies as well to Shvarts' adaptations. In all the plays the conflict develops in parallel lines as thought and action, outlining Shvarts' argument that moral heroism is an admirable but rare and difficult achievement. The undercurrent of pessimism, closest to the surface in the darker comedies, shows that Shvarts shares the dim view of human nature typical of the philosophical satirist.

Yet he never rejects the possibility of heroism, especially in the plays for children. The protagonists are all self-confident moral idealists who, motivated by hatred of evil and compassion for its victims, challenge the power of a fearsome enemy to save their loved ones. In each case the hero ventures into a dangerous realm defined by the selfish principles

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[1] Londré, "Shvarts and the Uses of Fantasy," p. 139.

[2] W. H. Auden, "Grimm and Andersen," Forewords and Afterwords (New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 198-208.

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of the evil power, is threatened, but eventually attains his object and escapes. Moreover, his optimistic faith inspires others, who become his allies. In true fairy tales the hero is blessed, and his animal helpers and friends are, so to speak, condensations of his special quality of being the Chosen One; they are assurances in concrete form that he will be "led safely through the dangerous, unfamiliar world."[1] Shvarts uses these figures in the children's plays to manifest the hero's optimism, making it seem more potent and persuasive. In the less clear and harmonious world of the adult plays, the role of friend and helper becomes problematic in the extreme, reflecting not the force of the hero's idealism but the ambiguity of evil. But Shvarts does not share the cynicism of Hjalmar Bergman or Audiberti; not even the Scholar betrays his heroic quest, even after learning the worst there is to know.

Each play emphasizes a different aspect of the author's vision of evil. The Wolf in Little Red Riding Hood represents brutal, stupid violence; more dangerous is the clever treachery of the Fox, who pretends friendship for the heroine. Behind its mask, evil is monstrous and wants to eat one up--a theme that is echoed metaphorically in the plays for adults. For Shvarts the mortal sin is egoism, an indifference to the autonomy and personhood of others. What better way to sum up such an idea than in the figure of the fairy-tale ogre?

The adult plays present variations on this theme, each epitomized in a controlling image expressed in the title. In The Naked King everybody connected with the court is stripped of his cover by the events; the King is found to be only the foremost of the "steadfast fools" who support the

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[1] Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 142.

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system. Evil is hydra-headed in The Dragon, and each of its heads represents another instance of cowardice or demoralization in the souls of its victims. The Shadow describes an unredeemable world, one in which the clear light of the hero's moral vision proves inadequate to penetrate the masks of his enemies or to brighten the dark corner and depths he must explore. In all three plays for adults there are ogres aplenty; what varies is the hero's ability to oppose and defeat them.

As a moralist Shvarts is concerned not only with the forms but also with the values derived from the fairy-tale melodrama--that is, with the unending war of good and evil, the call to heroism and the ennobling power of love, and the requirement that those on the side of good keep faith together. In myths of the Heroic Quest these archetypal values take on public and collective significance: the hero's success or failure decides the survival or death of the community. In highlighting this aspect of the quest, Shvarts interprets the evil principle in each play as a tyrannical ruler and the hero as a self-conscious liberator, and in so doing he turns the tales into political parables.

In Little Red Riding Hood the political theme becomes explicit in the conflict over whose principles will rule the forest, and this concern for the moral welfare of the community reveals itself in all the plays. As a political playwright Shvarts does not argue for this or that particular form of government, but he is obviously a democrat of the spirit in that he speaks passionately for the freedom of the individual to fulfill himself as he chooses in a self-defining commonwealth. The imagery he uses for his tyrants shows what he thinks authoritarianism in all its forms does to the human spirit. The tyrant is ogreish and monstrous and gains its object by intimidation, though the spontaneous individual is just as

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much oppressed by encrusted social forms and rigid traditions as by straightforward brutality. This oppression ultimately demoralizes the citizens, turning even those who are innocent into victims of their own worst selves. In all three plays we see the evil results of tyranny in a whole catalogue of sins describing man's inability to respect the humanity of his fellows, either individually or collectively. In the end Shvarts remains a moralist. He sees politics as the arena of public ethics, in which both the most monstrous and the most heroic things can happen.

Living under a totalitarian tyranny himself, Shvarts had to mask the most pertinent of his moral and political meanings under fantastic stories that could be interpreted equivocally,[1] and even then he was not able to avoid censorship. The allegorical nature of his plays is amply proven. To what extent do they still function as myths? As we have seen, they all present variations on the quest-pattern, in which resurrections figure prominently. In the plays for children these transformations or resurrections from the dead constitute the turning-point, or Eucatastrophe, which signals the breaking of the spell and the renewal of the world. In the plays for adults these moments are treated more or less ironically. The world of The Naked King is transformed not mythically but by a comic reversal. In The Dragon the transformation (not of the world but of human nature) is still possible but will be a lot harder to achieve than was thought. So far from transforming the evil world of The Shadow, the most

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[1] Segel refers to this function of fantasy--to both mask and reveal--as a kind of "Aesopian language" which writers must resort to in periods of strict literary control (Twentieth-Century Russian Drama, p. 282). In "Shvarts and the Uses of Fantasy" Londré concludes: "As long as fantasy was considered an acceptable means of propounding socialist values, Shvarts gradually expanded his exploration of its potential as a framework for ambiguity" (p. 139).

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the Scholar can do is survive and flee. The children's plays, then, are mythic parables, while the adult plays may be said to preserve the general outlines of the myth but to fill them in with the darker colors of a non-mythical irony.

In all his plays Shvarts "carefully spells out the differences between the world of his fairy tale and the brutal realities of existence."[1] We can even say that the tension between idealism and reality is his constant subject, worked out in each case with varying degrees of success in preserving the outlook of optimism that is part of the hero's "moral weaponry."[2] Clearly, if the fairy-tale genre had not existed ready-made for his purposes, Shvarts would have had to invent its melodramatic forms and child-like spirit. But, just as clearly, he depends for his ironical effects on his audience's prior knowledge of the stories as a body of myth which can be set alongside and judged by their awareness of reality. His plays are the disillusioned parables of one who understood both human nature and the world of politics, but who never lost hope.

Brecht's The Caucasian Chalk Circle (1944-45)

Shvarts is our exemplar for the modern fairy play on political themes, but others interested in politics have exploited the genre. Bertolt Brecht, a realist in point of view but an anti-realist in style, is one of these. In The Good Woman of Setzuan (1943), an ironical tale on the problem of living a moral life (see above, p. 267), and in the plays written after it, Brecht enters what Walter Sokel has called the "never-never land

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[1] Clayton, "The Theatre of Shvarts," p. 29.

[2] Ibid., pp. 28-29.

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of the philosophical parable."[1] Since Brecht never strays very far from questions of political significance, we can consider here what The Caucasian Chalk Circle demonstrates about the usefulness of a dramatic vocabulary of fantasy for expressing his social and political ideas.

The play is only tenuously related to fairy tale--it has no magic, and its genesis lies not in a reinterpreted tale but in a revision of an old Chinese play, "The Chalk Circle"[2]--but its connections with folklore are quite real. Most obviously, the play's frame, in which the story of Grusha and Azdak is "told" to an audience of workers on two collective farms, evokes the setting of folk narration. Or rather, a Brechtian version of it. Our stereotyped image of the telling of folk tales in traditional societies suggests that we have the stories from the toothless mouths of old men or women, seated beside cottage fires surrounded by rapt audiences of villagers.[3] But however the tales were actually passed on, we may doubt that the scene Brecht describes happened very often, if at all. It strains credulity to imagine not only that war-weary peasants could settle their land disputes in such a rational way, but also that they would then celebrate the event by sitting down for a communal story-fest.

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[1]Quoted by Peter Demetz in his Introduction to Brecht: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Demetz (Englewood Cliff, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 7.

[2]Brecht saw a modernization of the old Chinese play in 1925 when it was staged by Max Reinhardt at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. For an analysis of its influence on The Caucasian Chalk Circle, see Bertolt Brecht: Collected Plays, ed. Ralph Manheim and John Willett (New York: Random House, 1975) 7:304-12.

[3]It was, according to Padraic Colum, artificial household lighting, the introduction of literacy, the cessation of household arts, and the rise of standard national dialects that destroyed Europe's oral culture, centered in thousands of such evening scenes. See his Introduction to The Complete Grimms' Fairy Tales, trans. Margaret Hunt (New York: Pantheon, 1944), pp. vii-xiv.

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As Eric Bentley says in "An Un-American Chalk Circle?" the prologue as well as the play is a fantasy, a scene describing a Marxist utopia in Soviet Georgia that Brecht might have wished were real but must have known very well was not.[1] The Singer's tale is an illustration and a celebration of the rational (i.e., socialist) decision-making of the prologue.[2] Its parabolic relation to the prologue is pointed out in the moral at the end:

> But you, you who have listened to the Story of the Chalk Circle,
> Take note what men of old concluded:
> That what there is shall go to those who are good for it,
> Children to the motherly, that they prosper,
> Carts to good drivers, that they be driven well,
> The valley to the waterers, that it yield fruit.[3]

Set alongside reality, both the play and the prologue reveal themselves as wish-fulfillment fantasies.

Besides the narrative frame, other folkloric touches in the play include the realistic dialogue filled with proverbs suggesting folk-wisdom and the ballad-like songs to be found throughout. In describing the sources of Brecht's language, Martin Esslin mentions the influence of the Moritat or street ballad, "as it was sung by balladmongers at country fairs--lurid accounts of murders and executions couched in the strident language of lachrymose sentiment and naive horror."[4] Adopting a proletarian philosophical point of view, Brecht felt drawn to folk art forms.

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[1]The essay is published as the appendix to Bentley's revised English version of The Caucasian Chalk Circle (New York: Grove, 1967), pp. 129-44. In his Introduction to Seven Plays by Bertolt Brecht (New York: Grove, 1961), Bentley wrote: "Set in Georgia, the play is without doubt intended as a bouquet to the most stalwart Georgian of them all, Joseph Stalin, from a future winner of the Stalin Peace Prize" (p. xlviii).

[2]Bentley, "An Un-American Chalk Circle," p. 142.

[3]Bertolt Brecht, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, trans. Eric Bentley (New York: Grove, 1967), p. 128. Hereafter cited in text.

[4]Martin Esslin, "Brecht's Language and Its Sources," in Brecht, ed. Demetz, p. 173.

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Another of his sources, more relevant for the present inquiry, was the tradition of the Austrian and Bavarian folk theatre, the Zauberoper, a genre of fairy-tale drama that originated with the fantasy plays of Gozzi in the 1760s and spread from Venice to Germany in time to be taken up by the dramatists of the Romantic period. Esslin mentions The Magic Flute (1791) as the best-known example and describes its typical structure: alongside the main line of action, a fantastic fairy tale enacted by noble characters, runs a coarsely comic plot that parodies the romantic story from the point of view of the servants.[1] It was the vigorous, earthy, debunking common sense of this comic plot, passed to him directly through the sketches that his friend Karl Valentin performed in Munich beer gardens, that most appealed to Brecht.[2] Despite its lack of a story drawn from the magic tales of folklore, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, with its songs and proverbs, the sardonic humor of the trickster Azdak, and the disillusioned point of view of the common people toward their social betters, finds a place in a dramatic tradition that has also produced many modern plays more directly related to fairy tales as such.

The play is perhaps most closely related to folklore through Grusha, the heroine, and the happy ending it provides for her. Fairy tales are full of lower-class protagonists, though, as in the Grimms' "King Thrushbeard" (no. 52), these lowly figures often turn out to be royalty in disguise. The same is true of the transformed princes and princesses who ap-

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[1] Esslin, "Brecht's Language and Its Sources," p. 174.

[2] Esslin concludes, "Brecht's theatre with its use of fairy tale elements, musical numbers, and broadly comic characters is a continuation of this old and once-despised tradition and has re-established it as a vehicle for the expression of ideas"--ibid., p. 175.

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pear in the form of animals and are disenchanted, such as the bear in "Snow-White and Rose-Red" (Grimm no. 161), whose accidentally torn pelt shows a glimpse of gold underneath. Even the farmers, fishermen, woodcutters and the like who truly represent their class in folk fairy tales turn out to have a royalty of nature that is validated by their marrying the princess and inheriting the kingdom. Tales with common-man heroes can be read as expressions of class envy,[1] but it seems safer to say that winning a crown in fairy tales symbolizes self-fulfillment in general and reflects the tales' mythic structure more than it does class conflict.

But even if the folk fairy tale is not to be construed as a battleground in the war between the classes, Brecht's dramatic tale certainly is. As a peasant heroine Grusha speaks for the underclass. Her courageous act offers an implicit critique of the oppressors that is sharpened and made explicit by Azdak. The climax of this critique comes in the trial scene when Azdak asks if she wouldn't want Michael to be rich and powerful. The Singer tells us what the angry girl thinks but does not have the eloquence to say:

> Had he golden shoes to wear
> He'd be cruel as a bear
> Evil would his life disgrace.
> He'd laugh in my face.
>
> Carrying a heart of flint
> Is too troublesome a stint.
> Being powerful and bad
> Is hard on a lad.

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[1] In Breaking the Magic Spell Zipes describes fairy tales from a Marxist point of view, as reflectors of social and political class struggle. Thus the people were the carriers of folk tales in the 17th and 18th centuries because "the Märchen catered for their aspirations and allowed them to believe that anyone could become a knight in shining armor or a lovely princess. . . . The magic and miraculous serve to rupture the feudal confines and represent metaphorically the conscious and unconscious desires of the lower classes" (p. 29).

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Then let hunger be his foe!
Hungry men and women, no.
Let him fear the darksome night
But not daylight! (p. 125)

In other words, Grusha would rather that Michael remain poor and good, since to have wealth and power means by definition to be bad. The evil forces in the play, personified by the witch-like Governor's Wife and the ogreish Ironshirts who pursue Grusha over the mountains, are representatives of the dominant class and its hangers-on. Looking at the story through Grusha's eyes, from the point of view of the exploited underclass, Brecht reverses the traditional valuation of social rank in fairy tales. As a heroine Grusha amply demonstrates her inner royalty of nature but rejects, as it were, the outward sign of royalty which folk tradition would confer upon her.

Her royalty of nature is, nonetheless, a truly distinguishing quality. Others of her class, aware of how hard the world is on those who do not put themselves first, interpret her goodness as simplicity. After the Governor's Wife flees, leaving the baby in Grusha's arms, the other servants call her "simpleton" and advise her to save herself instead: "You're a fool--the kind that always gets put upon. A person need only say, 'Run for the salad, you have the longest legs,' and you run" (p. 44). This characterization relates Grusha to a common folklore type. The Simpleton or Dummy, the youngest brother who is derided by his clever siblings, appears in a group of tales, referred to as the "Cinderella-cycle," in which the unlikely youngest child, whether male or female, proves victorious.[1] The youngest one wins, says Bettelheim, because, in contrast to the superficial rationalism of his siblings, he has an instinctive per-

[1]Thompson, The Folktale, pp. 25-30.

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sonal integrity and is in touch with his unconscious.[1]

Grusha's simplicity is the same kind of natural, unconscious virtue. Her test, the temptation to save the child amid the flames of revolution, shows that her goodness is an unpremeditated, involuntary, and non-rational caring. Her sense of right and wrong is highly concrete. The "seduction of goodness" is accomplished during the nightlong vigil by the child's soft breathing and small clenched fists, not by abstract reasoning. Grusha knows only that a refusal of the call would disrupt some kind of moral pattern, making it impossible for her to live in the expectation of good fortune for herself:

> Know, woman, he who hears not a cry for help
> But passes by with troubled ears will never hear
> The gentle call of a lover nor the blackbird at dawn
> Nor the happy sigh of the tired grape-picker as the Angelus rings.
> (p. 46)

Further, the moral act is not only instinctive and unthinking; it is downright unreasonable. It is not the smart thing to do. The Governor's head, affixed to the gate by the Ironshirts as she watches, signifies the difficulties she will face and the price she might have to pay. After agreeing to marry the Dying Peasant in Scene 3, she looks back on her decision and says, "Michael, it would have been better had I walked away on that Easter Sunday in Nuka in the second courtyard. Now I <u>am</u> a fool" (p. 68).

In a true fairy tale Grusha's "foolish" act would have earned her the right to look forward to a happy ending. But, like Sologub in <u>The Triumph of Death</u> and Shvarts in <u>The Shadow</u>, Brecht places his hero in an unredeemable world to show what happens to a good person when he or she follows the dictates of conscience rather than the natural law of self-

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[1] Bettelheim, <u>The Uses of Enchantment</u>, pp. 107-11.

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preservation. The social evil from which she flees is monstrous, and the helpers she finds are reluctant or downright hostile: both folk elements delineate a moral world that is brutal, self-centered, hardhearted, grasping, drunken, and cowardly, against which Grusha's loving self-sacrifice stands in sharp contrast. Like the typical hero of myth, she is isolated from the world--even her brother throws her out--as she moves through cruel tests to her reward; but, unlike Shvarts' idealistic Scholar, she has learned not to expect much justice and isn't very surprised when she finally loses both the child and the hoped-for husband. The world of politics is predictable enough: the Grand Duke and his governors have reclaimed power, and the Governor's Wife is back in favor. Reality, delayed but not averted, reasserts itself in the appearance of the Ironshirts come to take Michael back to Nuka.

Thus, by the end of Scene 3, because she was true to herself, Grusha has lost everything. So far The Caucasian Chalk Circle resembles an anti-fairy tale, like the cruel myths of Ovid or the plays of Maeterlinck, very different in tone but equally pessimistic in outcome. But at this point the ironical genius of Brecht reveals itself in the creation of Azdak, his rascal-philosopher.[1] His function in the play is to correct reality and dispense justice for Grusha, a function that would be served automatically in a true fairy tale. The happy ending he arranges is therefore highly ironical.

A sense of this irony comes in our recognition that it's no miracle that saves Grusha, but a fortuitous chain of circumstances produced by the

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[1] Azdak can be considered a distant cousin of the trickster-heroes in African and American Indian animal tales (on which see Thompson, The Folktale, pp. 319-28), but otherwise he has little to do with folklore.

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chaotic political conditions that put Azdak in the judge's seat. During this Era of Disorder, Azdak reverses the corrupted justice by which the rich and powerful put down the poor and maintain their dominant position in society. He is the "poor man's magistrate" (p. 104). The most interesting of his judgments comes in the "Granny Grusinia" episode, in which the robber Irakli, a Robin-Hood type, poses as "St. Banditus" to benefit a poor peasant woman whose sons have all been killed in the princes' wars. He wields his huge ax to bully the surrounding farmers into involuntary acts of charity, such as remitting her rent, giving her food and a cow, and the like. Brecht gets his ironical comment by making the old woman naive and superstitious, so that she can think of this forced charity as evidence of a miraculous change of heart in the farmers:

> Your Honor, that first night I didn't yet know Saint Banditus could work miracles, it was only the cow. But one night, a few days later, the farmer's servants came to take the cow away again. Then they turned round right in front of my door and went off without the cow. And bumps as big as a fist sprouted on their heads. So I knew that Saint Banditus had changed their hearts and turned them into friendly people. (p. 106)

Azdak responds by toasting Irakli (in whom he recognizes an ironist of a kindred spirit), putting Granny in the seat of judgment in his place, and fining the three farmers for godlessness because they don't believe in miracles! The Singer's generalization serves to define the moral world in which Grusha has been seeking a happy ending:

> All mankind should love each other
> But when visiting your brother
> Take an ax along and hold it fast.
> Not in theory but in practise
> Miracles are wrought with axes
> And the age of miracles is not past. (p. 104)

Azdak's reversals of the accepted standards of justice anticipate the final reversal, in which he awards Michael not to his genetic parent,

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the Governor's Wife, but to Grusha, who has proven herself the more motherly. Despite the fact that the judgment is rendered by the test of the Chalk Circle, an episode which, if not genuinely mythical, certainly has archetypal overtones,[1] the social and political criticism is not forgotten. The Governor's Wife wants Michael back only because she cannot inherit her husband's estates without him. Thus the standard that Azdak's justice reverses is the law of private property, here equated with all the brutal cruelties by which the dominant class maintains itself. In context with the prologue, Azdak's judgment suggests Brecht's answer to the problem of human evil: "What there is shall go to those who are good for it," not to those who merely hold legal title. In contrast to Shvarts, who does not advocate any particular form of government in his political tales, Brecht argues for socialism, which he seems to hope would supply whatever is needed to turn our world into a world of true justice.[2]

But there is an implicit paradox here, for Grusha asserts a claim of property too. Michael is "hers," insofar as any child can belong to anyone. Wandering through the world together, both rejected by those who should have taken them in, Grusha and Michael belong to each other, just

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[1] According to Thompson (see The Folktale, p. 266), the well-known motif of "the divided child" (J1171.1) is an item of folklore illustrating legendary kingly wisdom that has attached itself to the cycle of Solomon (I Kings 3:16-28; 4:29-34). The Chalk Circle is an oriental variation.

[2] If Brecht had lived, like Shvarts, under Stalin's tyranny, his plays too might have been full of dragons. Nevertheless his own comments on the prologue suggest that he took seriously the idea that socialism could save the world: "In its joy over good decisions arrived at together, the kolkhoz 'Rosa Luxemburg' wants to perform a play after the discussion ends: the famous 'Story of the Chalk Circle.' In a mirror image [Gleichnis] it shall be told how the claim to a thing depends on the labor which goes into it. And through the presentation all shall be shown what they have just experienced: that it has become possible in the existing social order to find a reasonable law in a reasonable manner and enforce it reasonably." Brecht, "On the Caucasian Chalk Circle," trans. Hugo Schmidt and Jerome

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as Hansel and Gretel do, or the two children in the Grimms' "Brother and Sister" (no. 11), who refuse to abandon each other in good fortune or in bad. This is the meaning of Grusha's adopting the child and christening him in glacier water:

> Since no one else will take you, son,
> I must take you.
> Since no one else will take you, son,
> You must take me. (p. 57)

Brecht's interpretation of this folk idea is his definition of property: "the claim to a thing depends on the labor which goes into it" (page 333, note 2). Hence Grusha sees the Governor's Wife's reclaiming of Michael as yet another expropriation by the ruling class: Simon was taken away to die or be maimed in the wars, and now Michael is to be sacrificed to his mother's greed for the estates. A sense of outrage against the exploiters motivates Grusha's fiery denunciation of Azdak, who she thinks has betrayed his class and made himself a servant of the enemy.[1] This is her simplicity again--the Cook says, "You've gone and spoiled your chances with him" (p. 124)--but Grusha's instinctive goodness and integrity save her, as they save the Dummy in folklore, for such talk is exactly what Azdak likes to hear. After all, this is the man who turned himself in to the police for having sheltered the Grand Duke during the princes' rebellion; Grusha unconsciously does exactly the right thing in excoriating him. But note the further irony: Azdak has the authority to give the child to Grusha only because, having helped the Grand Duke when he didn't

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Clegg, The Drama Review 12, no. 1 (Fall 1967):88-89.

[1] If Grusha has rescued Michael only for princedom, she has done no better than Azdak. Ruby Cohn points out that "Grusha rescues a prince, and Azdak shelters a Grand Duke, both protagonists thus betraying their class." Currents in Contemporary Drama (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 120.

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know who he was, he is now confirmed as judge when that same "Grand Butcher" reassumes power. Brecht emphasizes the irony by having a dust-covered rider arrive with the dispatch just as Azdak is about to be strung up by the Ironshirts, reminding us of Macheath's equally theatrical (i.e., improbable) reprieve in The Threepenny Opera (1928).

This circumstance is a key to the multiple ironies of the ending. In any normal court the Governor's Wife would have won. Grusha wins only because an uncharacteristic act of the Grand Duke puts Azdak in a position to continue the topsy-turvy justice of the Era of Disorder, during which, because the sharks are devouring each other, the poor once in a while get what is due them. Azdak also divorces Grusha and the peasant, so that she and Simon can marry; thus Grusha achieves the usual reward of the blessed heroine of fairy tales, husband and family, but by the back door, so to speak. Her inner royalty of nature is confirmed, though without the traditional symbol thereof--another of the expropriations of the ruling class. The tensions of the trial scene dissolve into the good feeling of Azdak's party, reminding us of the end of Shvarts' The Naked King, a similar celebration of the discomfiture of oppressive imposters and the solidarity of the victorious underclass.

Yet, as in The Shadow, we are not allowed to forget the ironical comment in reality:

> And after that evening Azdak vanished and was never seen again.
> The people of Grusinia did not forget him but long remembered
> The period of his judging as a brief golden age,
> Almost an age of justice. (p. 128)

Grusha is not one of the blessed princesses of folklore. She has endured ordeals and confronted the ogres, and her defeat of the witch is symbolized in the ritual battle of the Chalk Circle; but she neither wins a crown

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nor renews the world. Azdak's advice to Grusha to take her child and flee the city reminds the audience that a wish-fulfillment ending corrects reality only temporarily, for the duration of a "brief golden age." The utopia of justice implied by the ending remains a dream, in the light of which we can never be satisfied with reality.[1]

As philosophical parables, both The Good Woman of Setzuan and The Caucasian Chalk Circle are only loosely connected with folklore. Neither of them offers a story drawn from folklore or attempts to duplicate the magical universe of fairy tales. Nevertheless, they are full of folkloristic motifs and parallels that call to mind the ethical scheme of fairy tales, especially the essential idea that in a just universe the hero who has survived ordeals cannot be denied his reward or the right to see his good fortune reflected in a renewal of the world around him. In The Caucasian Chalk Circle Brecht uses this ethical scheme for complex ironical effects, by training it like a beam of light on events and personages drawn from another world entirely, one in which human nature remains unredeemed and unredeemable. Like Shvarts he sees politics as the sphere of public ethics: the perversity of mankind manifests itself most clearly in the never-ending economic and political struggle between social classes. The problem of evil, he seems to say, will be solved when men achieve a rational sense of community. But Brecht's pessimism undercuts all pos-

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[1] Except for its edge of sentimentality, the following statement by a folklore scholar describes the consolation of Brecht's ending: "When it sinks down to the lower classes, the fairy tale is conceived as a message of how-it-ought-to-be: the world as mirrored in the fairy tale cannot very well be the real one which is full of want and oppression; but one does not want, nevertheless, to be denied the eternal dream of a true, more just world. The fairy tale tells the poor, beaten, and harried people how the pitiful world of men is meant to be and thus, in its true character, really is." Jan de Vries, "The Problem of the Fairy Tale," pp. 14-15.

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sibility of success for any such heroic mission as Lancelot's in The Dragon. By the ironical light glancing off his images of wickedness and selfishness, we can see that the solution is a long way off. It lies in some future golden age as remote from the present as Azdak's "age of justice."

Are the plays of Shvarts and Brecht emancipatory in their effect on the audience? It seems to me that their emancipatory qualities are directly related to their irony. Both playwrights believe, as Zipes would require, in the primary importance of the social struggle. Man's drive to fulfill his autonomy depends on a transformation of the human community from a battleground of class conflict and oppression to a realm of freedom and goodness. Except in The Shadow, Shvarts seems to think that such a transformation, or at least steps toward it, might be possible, and the demonstration of this faith in his plays would certainly galvanize the idealism of an audience who believed as he does. Even in The Shadow we can hope that such heroism as the Scholar's will never be finally wiped out of the world by official intimidators. Brecht's conclusion is less hopeful and less hope-inspiring, perhaps because he recognizes too clearly the roots of social evil in personal selfishness. Grusha's exploiters are her kinsmen and fellows, as well as the sharks sent by the rulers. It is understandable that such loving self-sacrifice as she demonstrates is all too rare, and it does not long survive in the real world.

Both Shvarts and Brecht would reject the strictly psychological view of emancipation, which suggests that

> a magic tale is told only because the listener's stored-away family conflicts have need of it. The narration of the so-called magic tales is a traditional play of figures which are shaped to take the listener's projections. Magic tales are psychodrama of family conflicts which claim to be worked through. And these family conflicts are the

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> various departure situations of individual emancipation. A simple meaning of emancipation is to become adult.[1]

Such a view, limiting the idea to a private, inward struggle with childhood demons, makes sense only in a community in which, as an adult, one is politically free. But we can easily enlarge and extend the psychological view by thinking of the family drama as an anticipatory model of the social drama. If the world of politics is the sphere of public ethics, then the transformation of the community depends most of all on the transformation of the individual. Shvarts and Brecht would agree that no one can be free in the fullest sense who is not free in both respects. Thus the psychological and the social-political views of fairy tales do not rival but complement each other. Shaped to take the individual's projections and record his effort to achieve autonomy, the tales can also record the effort of the community to define itself as a commonwealth of free citizens. The shadow, dragon, witch, or ogre who opposes this effort represents the tyrannical power of the governing class, which maintains its position by continually "consuming" its prey. The heroic individual, the only true adult among us, takes up the quest against tyranny as the community's representative and its conscience.

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[1] Walter Scherf, "Family Conflicts and Emancipation in Fairy Tales," Children's Literature 3 (1974):85.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Up to now we have been mainly concerned with how individual playwrights have approached their narrative sources. The larger question is, of course, why are playwrights interested in fairy tales in the first place? Several possible answers have been obvious from the start, and others have suggested themselves along the way. Having surveyed the modern fairy drama in its rich variety of form and meaning, gathering in the process a comprehensive idea of what a fairy tale is in folklore and can become in the hands of a gifted adapter, we turn now to a summary discussion of this larger question. The six reasons why I believe playwrights take up the fairy tale together constitute the conclusions of this study.

A preliminary excursus is necessary, however. We are now in a position to refute Tolkien's dictum that fairy tales cannot be dramatized at all without losing their special qualities of enchantment (see above, pp. 21-23). In issuing this blanket statement, Tolkien means to affirm something about fairy tales rather than about drama. Nevertheless he raises an important theoretical question about the relation of the two genres, and we cannot very well conclude without attempting an answer.

If Tolkien is simply denying the possibility of a drama based on fairy tales, we can say right off that the facts prove him wrong. Most, if not all, of the plays discussed above solve the artistic problems posed in them, some in quite unusual and striking ways. Dramatists as a rule

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are shrewd enough not to persist in any enterprize that is doomed to failure by definition, and it is a fact that fairy tales have attracted their interest since the time of Shakespeare and before.[1]

Moreover, to deny the possibility of a fairy drama is to ignore the mutually enriching interchanges among the various artistic media that have been taking place ever since Homer. The use of myth and other narrative sources in theatre begins with Greek tragedy. Medieval dramatists rewrote the Bible; Shakespeare rewrote history and romance. Like all artistic media, the drama draws even upon itself, continually revising and consuming its own forms like plants feeding upon decayed vegetation that lived before them. The adapting of fairy tales by modern playwrights is only a small part of the ongoing cross-fertilization and rebirth of all cultural forms.

Yet it is true that a myth or tale put on the stage undergoes a metamorphosis: it dies and is reborn as a different entity. We can rephrase Tolkien's question to read, do fairy tales thus transformed, like persons undergoing initiation, retain their essential identity? Can they be recognized as in some sense the same thing as what they were before? Clearly fairy tales can be dramatized in the most obvious, gross sense: Shvarts' Little Red Riding Hood is recognizably the same general character

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[1] The earliest known appearance of fairy lore in the drama after the classical period is in a 13th-century interlude, Le Jeu de la Feuillée of Adam de la Halle. The play contains an episode that anticipates the cursing of the princess in Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty." Three fairy ladies are invited to a banquet; one of them, angered over the paltry cover set for her, curses their host with baldness. The play has been translated by Richard Axton and John Stevens in Medieval French Plays (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), pp. 207-54. A realistic secular work, it probably satirizes the fairies as figures in a traditional 'show,' thus suggesting that fairies and fairy lore were features of folk drama before the play was written about 1276. See Richard Axton, European Drama of the Early Middle Ages (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), pp. 144-58.

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that we know from Perrault and Grimm. If she could not be so identified, there would be no point in calling her Red Riding Hood and confronting her with a wolf. Yet Shvarts wants us to do more than recognize the fairy tale. He wants us to see it anew, to penetrate its transparent archetypal forms, so to speak, to his liberating vision of a new social order based on courage and solidarity. This ethical vision must be "read into" the folk form of the tale, where it cannot naturally exist, as the dramatist conceives his play. Thus a dramatized fairy tale will retain its former identity and take on a new status as well. The loss of either its generic archetypal aspect or its individuated artistic aspect would invalidate the process of adaptation.

Tolkien's question, however, focuses on what happens to the qualities of enchantment proper to the fairy tale when it is enacted by flesh-and-blood human beings and surrounded by a stageful of painted scenery. There are two answers to the question. As we have seen, it is perfectly possible to subject myths and tales to a rationalizing process that drains off their numinous qualities. The comical parodies of Planché, Gilbert, and Valle Inclán and the ironical parodies of Gombrowicz and Audiberti are good examples. But it is also possible to treat these qualities with respect, preserving their impressive effects, even with the machinery of theatre.

One must not limit one's idea of theatre to what happens in Christmas pantomimes, however. Tolkien says himself that categorizing a story as a fairy tale should not depend on the literal presence or absence in it of fairies, elves, dwarves, or the like, but on the world of magical possibility, reflecting desire and dread, in which such creatures are at home. It is "the nature of Faërie: the Perilous Realm itself, and the air that

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blows in that country"[1] that makes the difference. If we are looking for a drama that creates secondary worlds of enchantment without bringing actors playing fairy creatures on stage or engineering magic tricks of transformation, we have to look no farther than Strindberg's Easter or Sologub's The Triumph of Death, in both of which theatrical means create otherworldly effects that contribute to the playwright's poetic vision. In the pantomime and related forms of entertainment, the theatrical means themselves become the end, because there is no vision for them to serve. When it is well done, a theatre of spectacle has its own enchantment, its own poetry of astonishment. But to deny that theatrical means--color, forms in space, movement and gesture, music, and living light--can serve a higher kind of poetry is to deny the role of the imagination in the theatre altogether. This is an obviously untenable position which was challenged and defeated by the symbolists at the beginning of the century. In the hands of Meyerhold and others inspired by the theories of Wagner and Appia, fairy tales played a key role in the reopening of the theatre to poetry and imagination, precisely because the symbolists found in them the qualities of "arresting strangeness" (Tolkien's phrase) that they were looking for. Tolkien's rejection of the idea of a fairy drama is a poet's mistrust of the theatre's physical means, not valid for anyone who understands how "poetry of the theatre" can work on the imagination.[2]

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[1] Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," p. 10.

[2] Tolkien's position was anticipated by Horace E. Scudder in Childhood in Literature and Art (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1894), who wrote, "Perhaps nothing has done more to vulgarize the fairy than its introduction upon the stage; the charm of the fairy tale is in its divorce from human experience; the charm of the stage is in its realization, in miniature, of human life. If the frog is heard to speak, if the dog is turned before one's eyes into a prince, by having cold water dashed over it, the charm of the fairy tale has fled, and in its place we have only

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To be fair to Tolkien, we must remember that his objections refer "primarily to fantasy of forms and visible shapes." He says further,

> Drama can be made out of the impact upon human creatures of some event of Fantasy, or Faërie, that requires no machinery, or that can be assumed or reported to have happened. But that is not fantasy in dramatic result; the human characters hold the stage and upon them attention is concentrated.[1]

He goes on to give a sensitive reading of Barrie's Mary Rose, which is just such a drama (see above, pp. 157-60). But most of our plays, like most fairy stories themselves, are of this general sort: not about fairies themselves but about "the aventures of men in the Perilous Realm or upon its shadowy marches."[2] It is primarily drama for children that requires an effort to impersonate creatures of fantasy in the flesh. And those plays for adults that do bring dragons and the like onto the stage, such as Valle Inclán's The Dragon's Head and Shvarts' The Dragon, do so for satirical or allegorical reasons unrelated to any effort to maintain belief in a world of magic. Maeterlinck, in The Death of Tintagiles, keeps his monster hidden behind an iron door, so that its menace can gather weight in the imagination, just as Tolkien prescribes. The end of the play shows us the agonies of the child's sister suffering, as does Mary Rose, the terrifying encounter with a demonic Unknown. Thus many of our plays do follow Tolkien's rules, and others, such as the parodies, lie

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the perplexing pleasure of legerdemain. The effect of producing these scenes upon the stage is to bring them one step nearer to sensuous reality, and one step further from imaginative reality; and since the real life of fairy is in the imagination, a wrong is committed when it is dragged from its shadowy hiding-place and made to turn into ashes under the calcium-light of the understanding" (pp. 204-5). Scudder too seems to deny the role of the imagination in the theatre as a consequence of assuming that realism is the theatre's only proper mode.

[1] Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," pp. 80-81.

[2] Ibid., p. 9.

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outside his definition of fairy tale anyway, since they intentionally drain off the numinous qualities of their source-stories.

In one respect Tolkien's argument is unanswerable, because it takes note of basic differences between the narrative and dramatic modes:

> The radical distinction between all art (including drama) that offers a visible presentation and true literature is that it imposes one visible form. Literature works from mind to mind and is thus more progenitive. It is at once more universal and more poignantly particular. If it speaks of bread or wine or stone or tree, it appeals to the whole of these things, to their ideas; yet each hearer will give to them a peculiar personal embodiment in his imagination. . . . If a story says "he climbed a hill and saw a river in the valley below," the illustrator may catch, or nearly catch, his own vision of such a scene; but every hearer of the words will have his own picture, and it will be made out of all the hills and rivers and dales he has ever seen, but specially out of The Hill, The River, The Valley which were for him the first embodiment of the word.[1]

The theatre shows rather than tells. In this defining principle the dramatist finds limits as well as a release of the imagination: what objects, people, and events gain in vivid presence, they can lose in depth and weight.

Yet the drama is a composite art. It uses words in dialogue and often in narrative ways, and thus does not entirely give up the advantages of evocative connotation. This is especially true in some of the fairy plays that try to duplicate the feeling of story-telling on the stage. In The Triumph of Death, using offstage songs and narrative devices, Sologub is able to put words to work in the poetic manner that Tolkien has in view; the verbal richness of the play, apparent even in translation, is only heightened by its non-verbal stage effects. Brecht uses an actual narrator in The Caucasian Chalk Circle to universalize and relate Grusha's story to the didactic point. Lancelot's description in The Dragon of the hidden book of miseries in which the natural world records the complaints

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[1] Ibid., p. 80.

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of mankind gives us an idea of his heroic mission that no more stage-image could convey. Giraudoux's Ondine and Audiberti's The Evil Spreads contain scintillating linguistic imagery. Maeterlinck sensed the poetry even beneath the dry realistic surface of Ibsen's The Master Builder. It seems, in short, that fairy-tale plays show a special interest in poetic and narrative language. While this interest cannot take the place of what is lost in the shift from narration to drama, it does partly compensate for it. The best of these plays are those that use words in a suggestive, evocative manner to create effects that reach beyond what is required merely to make fairy-tale figures talk on stage.

If, as C. S. Lewis thought, myth-making is not an exclusively literary art, but rather pre-literary, in that the power of a myth does not depend directly on a certain arrangement of words, then a myth or tale ought to be realizable in any symbolic mode, including the drama.[1] In taking a tale from a narrative source, a playwright is not so much removing it from its proper context as reconceiving the idea on which it is based. Far from resisting adaptation, fairy tales may be said to invite a reinvestment of meaning. André Gide thought of classical myth in this way, as archetypal material "that had been stripped by the perspectives of time and distance of all but its universality and beauty,"[2] and thus capable of carrying endless meanings attributed to it by generations of poets. In the words of Nathaniel Hawthorne (speaking specifically of myths), "by their indestructibility itself, they are legitimate subjects for every age

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[1] Lewis, Preface to George MacDonald: An Anthology, p. 15 (see above, p. 8).

[2] André Gide, quoted by Hugh Dickinson in Myth on the Modern Stage (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969), p. 332.

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to clothe in its own garniture of manners and sentiments, and to imbue with its own morality."[1]

In carrying our refutation of Tolkien to this point, we have already broached the question of the functions of the fairy tale in modern drama, so let us proceed forthwith.

(1) Modern dramatists turn to the fairy tale because its typical characters, situations, and conflicts are easily adaptable for use on the stage.

Echoing Aristotle's dictum that plot is the soul of drama (Poetics, ch. 6), Thornton Wilder says that the dramatist is essentially a story-teller. "The theatre carries the art of narration to a higher power than the novel or the epic poem. The theatre is unfolding action."[2] The playwright's task is to arrange the movement of the story, and in order to do this successfully, he must have an instinct for story-telling. This instinct cannot be easily explained:

> There is something mysterious about the endowment of the story-teller. . . . It springs, not, as some have said, from an aversion to general ideas, but from an instinctive coupling of idea and illustration; the idea, for a born story-teller, can only be expressed imbedded in its circumstantial illustration. The myth, the parable, the fable are the fountainhead of all fiction and in them is seen most clearly the didactic, moralizing employment of a story.[3]

The seed that flowers into a story may come either from an observed bit of human behavior, an isolated moment of life that takes on special significance--a scene, an image, an incident, a snatch of overheard dialogue,

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[1] Hawthorne, quoted in Dickinson, Myth on the Modern Stage, p. 1.

[2] Thornton Wilder, "Some Thoughts on Playwriting," in Dramatic Theory and Criticism, ed. Dukore, p. 887.

[3] Ibid., p. 888.

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even a newspaper report--or from another story, an already ordered sequence of action. The playwright who starts from another story is engaged in no less creative a task than one who starts from an invention of his own. In either case the seed plants itself in a mind able to draw out its significance, to unfold the implications hidden in it, to see it as it has never been seen before. There is no essential difference in the artistic result. Brander Matthews cites Lope da Vega as a playwright who "abounded rather in invention than in the interpreting imagination"; Shakespeare, on the other hand, preferred to take his plots from anywhere, "reserving his imagination for the interpretation of tales first told by others."[1]

We are concerned here with the latter procedure, the sort of playwriting that reconceives an already existing structure. Like myths and fables, fairy tales present "the idea . . . imbedded in its circumstantial illustration." Moreover, they are especially suitable for dramatization because of their structural and stylistic traits: their emphasis on a steady progression of the action; their tendency to concretize meanings in objects, persons, and events; and their inherent polarities and contrasts. These traits make fairy tales dramatic by definition. Indeed, they are forms of melodrama and thus, according to Eric Bentley, are "drama in its elemental form . . . the quintessence of drama."[2] Their readiness for adaptation is proven in their popularity in children's creative dramatics classes, where fairy tale and similar stories offer roles that can be put on like a costume-piece and familiar scenarios that can be enacted almost without thought. But this fact does not necessarily trivialize them. Just

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[1]Brander Matthews, Introduction to Papers on Playmaking, ed. Matthews (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), p. 2.

[2]Eric Bentley, The Life of the Drama (New York: Atheneum, 1964), p. 216.

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as a good creative dramatics teacher can get inventive and amusing results from children working with fairy tales,[1] so can a mature artist find creative challenge in reshaping simple materials.

Fairy-tale plays are rooted in folk forms, and from this fact certain aesthetic consequences follow. First, being a kind of melodrama, fairy tales contain that indispensable element of a good story, sheer narrative excitement. John Buchan, writing on "The Novel and the Fairy Tale," insists that the novel succeeds only to the degree that it develops the qualities of the folk and fairy tale, and at the top of his list of criteria is narrative interest. Fairy tales contain all the elements of good plots--adventure, reversal, and discovery[2]--and playwrights too have sought to appropriate these narrative qualities for their purposes. All the plays we have discussed tell good stories full of incident, whether single-stranded and highly focused, in the manner of fairy tales themselves, or complex and elaborate, as in the operatic Vasilisa the Wise and The Woman Without a Shadow.

Furthermore, fairy-tale plots have a quality of inevitableness,

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[1] It is probably true, however, that their ease of adaptation accounts for the low artistic quality of many of the fairy-tale plays written for children. Young people are easily pleased, but the best fairy-tale plays are those that take their audiences seriously. Evgeny Shvarts felt that literature for children should be as sophisticated and finished as that for adults, requiring the same creative effort. Good children's theatre likewise should be interesting to parents and children alike. See Corten, "Shvarts: A Biographical Sketch," pp. 230-1.

[2] John Buchan, "The Novel and the Fairy Tale," in Children and Literature: Views and Reviews, ed. Virginia Haviland (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1973), pp. 221-9. On the relations between fairy tales and the novel see also Sara Bershtel, "Fairy Tales and Success in Balzac's Comédie Humaine," Comparative Literature 31, no. 1 (Winter 1979):47-62; Michael C. Kotzin, Dickens and the Fairy Tale, Ph. D. Diss., University of Minnesota, 1968; and Elliott B. Gose, Jr., Imagination Indulged: The Irrational in the Nineteenth Century Novel (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972).

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reproducing "the remorseless sequence of events in nature," says a psychologist writing on the values of fairy tales for children.[1] This "ruthlessness," as it is called, is "a refusal to escape into sentiment, or to side-step into another world, when the logical consequences of the action are unpleasant."[2] The narrative realism of the tales Chesterton viewed as a core of ethical necessity summed up in "the idea that peace and happiness can exist only on some condition."[3]

We can recognize this quality in Sologub's The Triumph of Death, for example, as the inevitability of Algista's terrifying Sparagmos as the other characters in her tale reject the idealistic revision which she has proposed. As in Greek tragedy, a sense of inevitability can accompany any drama that retells a story with which the audience is already familiar. All the A-B-A "Visit to Fairyland" plays put heavy emphasis on the inevitable return of the initial situation. Hauptmann's Hannele, Barrie's Dear Brutus, and Cocteau's Knights of the Round Table exploit this ruthless turn of the plot for their climactic effects. Similarly, in Giraudoux's Ondine and Ukrainka's Forest Song the audience is always half-aware of the approaching separation of the lovers that closes the Undine-plot. Plays that affirm the optimism of their heroes bring about an inevitable transcendence, but never without inevitable suffering. Plays that deny the hoped-for ending do so by emphasizing the inevitability of what is most dreaded in them, as if to illustrate the nightmarish idea that the worst possible result, whatever it is, will invariably come about. This is the

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[1] Catherine Storr, "Why Folk Tales and Fairy Stories Live Forever," in Suitable for Children?, ed. Tucker, p. 66.

[2] Ibid., p. 72.

[3] Chesterton, All Things Considered, p. 188.

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idea that paralyzes Anne-Marie in Bergman's Mr. Sleeman Is Coming.

A second consequence for the fairy-tale drama of its relationship to folk literature is the figural quality of its characters. We do not find in these plays the detailed and rounded character studies that we look for in Ibsen and Chekhov. Persons in fairy tales are functional, rather than ends in themselves; in Aristotelian fashion they serve the plot and have no more individuality than is required of them for that purpose. This figural quality is rooted in the nature of the genre. Fairy tales are abstract patterns, universalized and distanced from historical particularities so that they can be meaningful everywhere and for all time. Their heroes and heroines are Everyman and Everywoman. In Hofmannstahl's The Woman Without a Shadow the questing figure, the Empress, not only has no name of her own; her generic status is emphasized in the title as well. Such figures are not to be thought of as people but as "actants," patterns within the larger pattern of the tale.[1]

Interest in plot and figural characterization together add up to a third folkloric quality of most of these plays, their allegorical transparency. In his lectures published under the title, Varieties of Parable (1965), Louis MacNeice describes a very broad genre which he labels "parable" or "fantasy," and opposes to the matter-of-factness of the journalist, the realist, and the scientist. Parable literature, which can be

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[1] Sometimes a character's realism of personality conflicts with his or her archetypal role. Ibsen's tendency to give depth and detail to his characters may explain why the role of Ellida in The Lady from the Sea offers such formidable problems to the actress. Plays conceived in a symbolist style cannot be convincingly acted in a realistic style--a fact that has surely destroyed many productions of that beautiful but difficult work. Characterization in these plays must start from the functional nature of fairy-tale persons and somehow be limited by it. Anne-Marie and Walter in Mr. Sleeman Is Coming illustrate the possibilities of such an approach, and Giraudoux's Ondine represents its most brilliant success.

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traced back through myth and fairy tale to dream, aims at the creation of "special worlds" such as those we find in the works of Spenser, Bunyan, Kafka, Beckett, Pinter, and Golding. Its special world is "true to the inner life of man rather than to his life in an objective context." It is more concerned with theme than with character, and the theme is often embodied in a very strong story line, with an Everyman as hero.[1]

This large category obviously includes all our fairy-tale plays. Few of them are allegorical in the systematic way of Pilgrim's Progress, but all, as we have seen, delineate philosophical images of the world. The mirror of the fairy tale reflects life, as all literature must, but not by offering a literal rendition of its surfaces and facts. It reflects life by means of doubles and inversions, idealized utopias or grotesque parodies, and its imagery suggests not reality but the meaning of reality in the mind of the playwright. The fairy tale's focus on primitive emotions of wish and dread allows adapters to show what mankind both fears most and most ardently desires. Its subjective images are thus filled with value, and from this fact follows its critical function. In the words of Michel Butor, fairyland "is a world inverted, an exemplary world . . . a criticism of ossified reality. It does not remain side by side with the latter; it reacts upon it; it suggests that we transform it, that we reinstate what is out of place." Butor sees the fairy tale's moral function in its counterposition to the world: it "furnishes the child [and the adult, we might add] the elements of compensatory waking dream."[2]

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[1] MacNeice, Varieties of Parable, pp. 76-77.

[2] Michel Butor, "On Fairy Tales," trans. Remy Hall, in European Literary Theory and Practise: From Existential Phenomenology to Structuralism, ed. Vernon W. Gras (New York: Dell, 1973), pp. 353-4.

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(2) Modern dramatists turn to the fairy tale because its fantastic, symbolic forms provide a means to escape realism.

The parabolic function of fairy tales turns the creative mind inward and allows adapters to pursue interests in spiritual significance over factual truth. Just as earlier it had been important to the romantics in their aesthetic revolution, this function proved vital to the symbolists in their struggle against realism and naturalism.[1]

Eric Rabkin's theory of fantasy helps us to understand the usefulness of fairy tales in this revolutionary function. Fantasy, in his view, is not simply unrestrained imagination, creativity run amok. "All imaginations are restrained at least by the perspectives necessary to create a work of narrative art."[2] Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass (1872) is Rabkin's definitive example of the genre, because it systematically reverses expectations based on mormal reality: "The truly fantastic occurs when the ground-rules of a narrative are forced to make a 180° reversal, when prevailing perspectives are directly contradicted," producing feelings of astonishment, shock, and fear as well as surprise and delight. Pure fantasies, like Alice in Wonderland, may be distinguished from other narratives by their persistent, systematic concern at all levels with the

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[1]Writing in 1911, Lord Dunsany traces the dominance of realism in the theatre to the powerful hold of business and advertising in public life, and calls for poets and other writers to bring back the compensatory dream. "It seems to me that a play that is true to fancy is as true as one that is true to modern times, for fancy is quite as real as more solid things, and every bit as necessary to a man. . . . A writer who turns away from conventions and problems to build with no other bricks than fancy and beauty is doing no trivial work, his raw material is the whims and dreams and the shadowy impulses in the soul of man out of which all else ariseth." See "Romance and the Modern Stage," The National Review 57 (1911):835.

[2]Eric Rabkin, The Fantastic in Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 15.

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problem of human knowing in general.[1] Such works reverse ground-rules in an on-going, continuous way. Fairy tales, on the other hand, generally do so only once, in setting up their mirror worlds; after the threshold of "once upon a time" is crossed, their laws remain predictable for the reader. According to Rabkin, "the world of Enchantment . . . is still a stable world that does not produce continuing astonishment and that does not reverse its own ground rules."[2]

By this definition fairy tales are not very fantastic as fantasies go, but their single reversal of extratextual reality was sufficient to make them useful for both the romantics and the symbolists. Exploring artificial worlds, fairy tales, along with myths, dreams, and visions, become ideal weapons in a war against an outworn aesthetic, not only because, as fantasies, they break up stereotyped images of reality and reassemble them in new and unfamiliar ways, but also because they open connections with the unconscious and non-rational side of the mind from which new images spring.

The symbolists' interest in the fairy tale had several beneficial results. First, it enabled them to bring poetry back into the theatre. The transformation of Hannele's naturalistic scene by music and spectacle, culminating in literal poetry, illustrates this function best. The theatre poetry of sounds and sculptural lighting in The Triumph of Death is another good example. We have seen that fairy plays typically show a great interest in scenic display and spectacular transformation. Loosed by the permission of magic, the imagination can travel all over the world, as in

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[1] Ibid., p. 37.

[2] Ibid., p. 36.

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Hofmannstahl's The Woman Without a Shadow and Lunacharsky's Vasilisa the Wise.[1] More important for the symbolists, it can travel into the inner world of dream and fantasy. Like Hannele, Elis in The Mine at Falun sees a fairy vision empowered by his own imagination. Behind the rock wall of the Queen's cavern appear the shining images of trees overhanging pale yellow waters, glowing with colors amid vast shadows and metallic gleams. Other heroes are granted the boon of this wonderful strangeness when they enter enchanted forests. Hauptmann's The Sunken Bell and Ukrainka's Forest Song follow the example of A Midsummer Night's Dream in peopling the stage with fairy creatures in their own habitat.[2] Even Strindberg's Easter, at least superficially realistic, places a spectacular image, the nightmarish shadow of Lindkvist, the creditor, at an emotionally climactic position and uses music expressively. Whether verbal, scenic, or musical,

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[1]This opening-up of the physical world is typical of folk fairy tales. A tale like "The Seven Ravens" (Grimm no. 25) illustrates that the whole universe is its field of action. To disenchant her brothers, who were turned into ravens at her birth, a girl travels to the World's End, then visits the Sun, the Moon, and the Morning Star before she finds them inside a mountain. Lüthi says, "This wandering, or soaring, over great distances conveys an impression of freedom and ease that is further strengthened by other characteristics in the fairy tale which also convey a feeling of freedom" (Once Upon a Time, pp. 140-1).

[2]The importance of nature and the change of seasons in Forest Song places it in a tradition of similar plays, mostly Russian. Ostrovski's The Snow Maiden (1873), subtitled "A Legend of Springtide," retells the folk tale of a tragic romance between a human and a seasonal spirit with a heart of ice, daughter of Fairy Spring and King Winter, and thus falls into the category of the Undine-plays. Samuel Marshak's Twelve Months (1939), a children's play based on Czech and Slovak folk motifs of the Month Brothers, depicts the magical passing of all four seasons within the space of a few minutes at the climax. Evgeny Chirikov's Forest Secrets (1909) deploys a multitude of mythical forest creatures like those in The Sunken Bell and Forest Song, including a faun, a wood demon, a water nymph, and a water spirit, to describe the destruction of the primeval forest by encroaching civilization. As Tolkien might say, these plays attempt to recover the spiritual meaning of man's existence in time and nature.

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the poetry of the fairy tale led the symbolists and their followers away from realism toward a kind of theatre more satisfying to the senses and the spirit.

A second benefit of the symbolists' interest in fairy tales was the discovery of new theatrical means. Freed from the strictures of imitating reality, Strindberg and Sologub could imitate the devices and effects of narration, and Maeterlinck could find in the fairy-tale tableau the idea for the pregnant pauses most characteristic of his new "static theatre." Several of the plays we have examined make use of ritual and patterned events, affirming the symbolists' view that other things besides psychological conflict, suspense, and climax could give staged action a dramatic quality. Rather than rejecting realism totally, Strindberg found a way to renew it in Easter, by channeling poetic and symbolic currents beneath its surface. Finally, the abstractness of fairy-tale figures and events lends itself to puppetry and shadow play. Both Maeterlinck and Sologub wanted their plays performed by marionettes, and Swanwhite too, with its scenery, props, and lighting continually in motion, has the feel of a puppet play. The dragon in Valle Inclán's The Dragon's Head is clearly conceived as a puppet.

In short, both the style and the content of the fairy-tale play appear distanced from the normal concerns of everyday life. In taking up the form, symbolist playwrights demonstrated an interest in getting at deeper truths not accessible, in their view, to a realistic or naturalistic dramatic method. If, as Eric Bentley says in The Playwright as Thinker, we can divide all of modern drama into two opposed traditions, the realistic and the anti-realistic, then the fairy tale constitutes an important motive source in one whole hemisphere of the modern dramatic

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world.[1] Its liberating influence can be traced long after its initial deployment in the revolt against realism and naturalism.

The symbol played a key role in this revolt. As parabolic structures, fairy tales are fundamentally symbolic: concrete in style and abstract, universalized, in reference, and therefore capable of carrying almost any meaning attributed to them.[2] In A Midsummer Night's Dream Theseus explains how fairy-tale symbolism works. The lovers' tales of their adventures in the enchanted wood he labels "shaping fantasies" and likens to what the poet invents as his eye glances from heaven to earth, and finds in heaven his abstract meaning, fear or joy, and on earth a concrete form to body it forth:

> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> Such tricks hath strong imagination
> That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
> It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
> Or in the night, imagining some fear,
> How easy is a bush supposed a bear! (V.i.14-22)

From actual events of this sort reported in ethnological literature, Ernst Cassirer deduced the grand idea that all language, all myth, and all art sprang from primitive man's perception of the "momentary god," an immediate condensation of meaning in concrete form closely related to emotional

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[1] Eric Bentley, The Playwright as Thinker: A Study of the Drama in Modern Times (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946; reprint ed. New York: Meridian Books, 1955), p. 21.

[2] The abstractness of fairy tales can be explained as a consequence of their emphasis on events. In Propp's theory the characters and their concrete attributes, even motivations, almost disappear behind their acts. He says, "One may observe in general that the feelings and intentions of the dramatis personae do not have an effect on the course of action in any instances at all." Morphology of the Folktale, trans. Laurence Scott, 2nd ed. rev. and ed. Louis A. Wagner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 81. The characters are "actants"; what counts is their deeds.

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excitation of the most elemental sort.[1] Theseus' speech is playful and skeptical, despite its deeply evocative imagery. Cassirer, on the other hand, sees in that "bush supposed a bear" an example of very basic operations of the human mind. This concretizing impulse, the primitive source of all symbolic forms, lies at the heart of fairy tale.[2]

The use of symbols in literature is, of course, anti-realistic. The theory of realism demands total objectivity on the part of the writer and thus rules out underlying myths or symbols, which guide the reader toward an interpretation conceived a priori.[3] The symbolists' interest in symbols in itself implies an anti-realistic manifesto.

Maeterlinck's plays give us the best examples of the symbolist symbol, an image whose undefined meanings echo in a void and can be detected only intuitively.[4] Melisande's crown, the great ship disappearing into

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[1] Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover, 1953), pp. 33 and 37.

[2] Jungian theory supports this view, distinguishing between the archetype, which is formless psychic energy in the unconscious and can never be known directly, and the symbol, which is the concrete manifestation of an archetype. "A symbol is never entirely abstract, but always in some way 'incarnated'. . . . This image-making power of the human psyche . . . cast the archetype of the 'conflict between light and darkness, or good and evil' into the form of the hero's fight with the dragon (a primordial motif of many cosmogonies), or transplanted the archetype of the 'idea of death and rebirth' into representative episodes in the life of a hero, or into the symbol of the labyrinth, and in general created the boundless realm of myths, fairy tales, epics, ballads, dramas, etc. We see this power at work in the great timeless creations of art, which perpetually link the primordial past with the distant future. . . ." Jolande Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/Symbol in the Psychology of C. G. Jung, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 76.

[3] George J. Becker, Introduction to Documents in Modern Literary Realism, ed. Becker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 32-33.

[4] "Symbols carry the mind beyond the finite world of becoming, into the realm of infinite being. They awaken intimations; they are tokens of the ineffable, and like it they are inexhaustible." Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/Symbol, p. 78.

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the mist, and Melisande herself all have a weighty sense of mysterious import, unexplained because unexplainable. Maeterlinck's kind of symbol can be found in many of our fairy plays. The Undine-figures, for example--Hilde, Rautendelein, Mavka, Ondine--carry meanings that really cannot be specified: the Undine is simply the Undine, summing up within herself the qualities of alluring Otherness. The many fairylands in these plays all suggest worlds of fulfillment, nightmarish or desirable, that cannot be fully understood because they themselves are Other, inaccessible to human beings in normal states of mind.

Events too, as well as objects, persons, and places, can be potentiated in the numinous field of the fairy tale. Sologub's Young Poet descends into the Accursed Kingdom and returns with a golden cup and flower that represent an inspiriting connection between our world and a divine Beyond. Night Dances offers a pattern for the symbolist fairy drama as a whole: the talismanic objects can be regarded as fairy tales and their motifs, brought from the dark underworld of myth and folklore into literature, where they energize the poet's vision.[1]

Moving beyond the symbolist period, we encounter the other, more traditional kind of literary symbol, the rationalized, allegorical sort that reveals its meaning rather than conceals it. Fairy tales readily serve this function too. In Strindberg's The Ghost Sonata the Student enters the symbol-laden world of the play like a rationalizing mind entering a dream. He encounters fairy-tale symbols--the Young Lady, the Cook, the

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[1] Ibsen's idea of the usefulness of folklore, summed up in his early essay, "On the Heroic Ballad and its Significance to Literature" (1857), is that writers will turn to this dying folk literature "as to an inexhaustible gold-mine: refined, restored to its original purity and elevated by art, it will once again take root in the people." The Oxford Ibsen, 1:674.

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flowers, the house itself--but he cannot let them sleep, like the three beggars that Melisande glimpses in the grotto. In his quest for meaning he must make them speak; and as he does so, the conventional fairy-tale figures become universals, philosophical concepts in concrete form. Similarly, in respect of their symbols, the plays of Shvarts may seem more like fables than myths. The Dragon's three heads, for example, refer us allegorically to the nature of tyranny. The Wolf's comical stupidity makes a point about bullies. Even the Shadow, in the darkest and most atmospheric of his plays, is a transparent symbol, contributing more to the theme than to the atmosphere. As a satirist and social critic, Shvarts naturally treats his fairy tales and motifs in a rationalizing way, to light up his meanings rather than to obscure them behind a veil in the manner of the symbolists.

All the same, fairy-tale symbols are never devoid of numinous feeling. Lancelot's return in Act 3 of The Dragon partakes of the supercharged impact of Algista's judgmental resurrection in The Triumph of Death. His ritualistic retreat into the mountains, the cap of invisibility with which he walks around town for a month unseen, the spreading fear, the doors that open of themselves at his approach--none of these are effects of realism, and they demonstrate how fairy-tale symbols, even of the non-symbolist sort, move all these dramas away from realistic description toward a mirror world that inverts, exaggerates, or otherwise distorts reality in the service of meaning, and adds an "arresting strangeness."

(3) Modern dramatists turn to the fairy tale because they are especially attracted by the possibilities of magic.

The magic in fairy tales, the transformations, resurrections, and

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other supernatural manifestations, is an aspect of their fantasy-nature, since none of these things can exist in the real world. Therefore this function of the fairy tale is a special case of the preceding one. It deserves special attention, however, because of its fundamental importance for the symbolists, who were all drawn to occultism by their interest in otherworldly qualities and effects.

In their magic, fairy tales once again reveal their kinship to myth in a common ancestry in primitive modes of thought. The Melanisian words "mana" and "taboo" denote a spiritual field of force, a general supernatural power that permeates all things and events in the world of the primitive. According to Cassirer, this free-floating "potency of magico-religious feeling"[1] constitutes an even more elementary religious phenomenon than the "momentary god" that creates the first symbols of myth, language, and art. Its analogue in fairy tales is "Faërie," a word used by Tolkien to refer, not to magical creatures themselves, but to the world of possibilities in which supernatural events can happen.[2]

The tales' kinship to primitive thought explains much of their power. In her article, "Concerning the Problem of Transformation in the Fairy Tale," Hedvig von Beit says that we can best understand enchantments

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[1] Cassirer, Language and Myth, pp. 63 and 72.

[2] Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," p. 10. Fairy tales too create spirits, both hostile and beneficent, like the momentary god, but they lack the compulsive, binding quality of primitive religious thinking. Eliade says that the homologies that assimilate religious man's life to the cosmos "are experiences and not simply ideas" (his emphasis)—see The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York and London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1959), p. 166. Fairy tales banish their demons as easily as they create them. The images of savage religion are embedded in reality; fairy tales are forms of art developing autonomously in a world set apart, where they follow desire and arrive at fulfillment and release.

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and transformations by thinking of them as a kind of natural symbolism. Children and savages accept such marvels naively as concrete events, representing nothing other than what is presented, because they live unconsciously in a world of mystical simultaneity and identity of all things. Animism and fairy-tale transformations are matters of course if all things are secretly one.[1] But as adults, growing out of this magical view of the world, we seek rational explanations for such events and are forced to regard them as symbols, representing "something" which cannot be specified--initiation, perhaps, or sexual maturation, or the reconciliation of the soul with its anima, etc. All such efforts to rationalize fairy-tale marvels are imposed interpretations which explain something but never everything, behind which the magical events themselves remain tantalizingly opaque, full of numinous vibrations.

As dramatists of the occult,[2] the symbolists took a special interest in all forms of visionary experience. They recognized in fairy tales the firmness and stability of their structure, but saw their concrete objects and events irradiated with spirituality. Magical possibilities are felt in them as a sense of strangeness or otherworldliness that adds a dimension missing in everyday life and in plays depicting everyday life. At the heart of every true fairy tale is the miracle that reveals a divine order not perceived by the waking consciousness.

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[1] Hedvig von Beit, "Concerning the Problem of Transformation in the Fairy Tale," in Perspectives in Literary Symbolism, ed. Joseph P. Strelka (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), p. 61.

[2] All the symbolist playwrights studied occultism. Defining "occult" as simply "symbolist," Daniel Gerould and Jadwiga Kosicka offer a typology in "The Drama of the Unseen--Turn-of-the-Century Paradigms for Occult Drama," in The Occult in Language and Literature, ed. Hermine Riffaterre (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1980), pp. 3-42.

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The symbolists' plays likewise all have epiphanies, points of contact with transcendent powers, whether good or evil. In Maeterlinck doors and windows serve this function, as well as trees, fountains, lakes, and sources of light. In Swanwhite almost everything on the stage moves in response to the seen and unseen presence of spiritual forces. Hannele's dream endows the poorhouse and the people around her with marvelous properties; Hauptmann and Strindberg both symbolize benevolent transcendent powers by means of white-winged beings resembling angels. In The Triumph of Death the cosmic order manifests itself in the stunning coup de théâtre of Algista's resurrection: Khlodoveg is paralyzed by the vast emptiness of time and eternity into which he is left staring at the end. The golden bridges and gates in Hofmannstahl's The Woman Without a Shadow, like the cup and flower in Sologub's Night Dances, are images of access, conveying the idea of a life-enhancing penetration to a source of power.[1]

The symbolists' artistic thrust toward the spiritual culminates in their ideas of dramatic action as ritual and the theatre as temple, made explicit in Sologub's theoretical essay, "The Theatre of One Will," and implied by the prominence of Christian imagery in most of their plays. Besides the angels in both Swanwhite and Hannele, we have a Christ-figure in the latter play, Gottwald, who ministers to Hannele in a priestly fashion. Strindberg includes the lenten birch and the white dove, both Christian symbols, in Easter and uses sacred music as well; in Swanwhite he brings the drowned Prince's body onstage in a ritual procession with crucifer and

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[1] See Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces, p. 35. The seven doors in Bartók's symbolist opera, Bluebeard's Castle (1911; libretto by Béla Balázs), open the way to hidden inner truths; in this strange and wonderful play the Beyond is the soul of Bluebeard, violated by the doomed heroine's desire to possess him, to know too much.

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tapers, and so identifies his awakening with the resurrection of Christ. Keikobad in The Woman Without a Shadow is a pagan divinity, used to empower a Christian philosophy of selfless and giving. In Vasilisa the Wise the author actually brings such a divinity (Merodakh) onto the stage; paralleling his withdrawal into heaven is the birth of a divine child who is identified as a Christ.

In none of these plays does the religious theme amount to true mystical experience; rather the plays employ conventional images drawn from mysticism and use them poetically to dramatize the felt presence of a spiritual order behind the realm of reality. The fairy tale itself contains natural rather than theologically organized religious ideas. Nevertheless its spiritualizing tendency gives it a suggestive kinship with true religion, recognized by Tolkien in his equation of its typical turn toward joy with the Christian evangelium,[1] and used expressively by the symbolists for their occultic purposes.

Furthermore, like the insights of seers and prophets, the poetic images in these plays originate in some primordial inward vision rather than from observation and analysis. In his essay, "Literature and Psychology" (1929), Jung distinguished between two kinds of art: the psychological, which draws its material from conscious human experience, what he calls the "vivid foreground of life," and the visionary, which originates in an intuitive insight into hidden truths that reach the poet from the collective unconscious:

> Through our feelings we experience the known, but our intuitions point to things that are unknown and hidden--that by their very nature are secret. . . . That which science calls the "psyche" [is] not merely a question-mark arbitrarily confined within the skull, but rather a

[1] Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," pp. 71-72.

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> door that opens upon the human world from a world beyond, now and again allowing strange and unseizable potencies to act upon man and to remove him, as if upon the wings of the night, from the level of common humanity to that of a more than personal vocation.[1]

Edwin M. Eigner, in "The Bad Tradition and the Romance of Man," echoes Jung in setting apart the method of the realist from that of the writer of romance: the latter pursues an internal vision that is unreal and perhaps not even conscious.[2]

We have a good example in Hannele. In 1891 Hauptmann undertook a ten-day visit to the mountain villages of Silesia to gather material for The Weavers--a typical procedure for the realist writer, who, like his counterparts in journalism and science, must go into the field to observe and collect the impressions that will give his work an air of authenticity. During his trip, we are told, he met a lovely young girl with red-gold hair, who may have been a real-life model for the heroine of Hannele, written soon after The Weavers.[3] While the background detail of the two plays

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[1] Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, pp. 162-3.

[2] Edwin M. Eigner, "The Bad Tradition and the Romance of Man," in Pastoral and Romance: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Eleanor Terry Lincoln (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 256. In romance, art and dream find common ground. Many, most notably Freud, have noticed the kinship of tales and myth to dream imagery. Campbell quotes myths and dreams alike in The Hero With a Thousand Faces, saying that "dream is the personalized myth, myth the depersonalized dream" (p. 19). Géza Róheim speculates that fairy tales and myths actually originated in dreams which were told and then elaborated, and so passed into currency as folk art--"Fairy Tale and Dream," in The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, vol. 8 (New York: International Universities Press, 1953), pp. 394-403. Our fairy plays are full of images of dreaming and sleep. Hannele's consoling vision comes in a literal dream represented on the stage. Swanwhite and her Prince actually talk about the power of dreaming to transcend physical reality, then lie down side by side with a sword between them, seeking each other's soul in the Land of Dreams. Tolkien's objection to presenting a fairy tale as a dream ("On Fairy-Stories," p. 14) would have held no force with symbolist dramatists.

[3] Sinden, Gerhart Hauptmann: The Prose Plays, pp. 54 and 172-3.

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shares a hard, gritty sense of reality, showing that the dream play too profited from the author's research, their origins seem essentially different. The Weavers develops an idea conceived from the outside, so to speak; Hannele does the opposite. We can imagine that Hauptmann's sympathies were greatly excited by the scenes of poverty and misery that he saw on the trip, so that around the striking image of the young girl condensed all at once a compensatory vision that eventually grew into the play. In any case the play elaborates a simple idea that might well have originated in such a creative flash. The realist's method is inductive and analytic; the visionary method is synthetic, proceeding by means of a poetic metaphor. Many of the plays of the symbolists contain similar visions and perhaps had a similar magical origin.

Jung says further that the visionary poet naturally has recourse to a mythological vocabulary, thus reversing the common view that a writer who uses conventional imagery is somehow not being original. "It would be a serious mistake to suppose that he works with materials received at second-hand. The primordial experience is the source of his creativeness; it cannot be fathomed, and therefore requires mythological imagery to give it form."[1]

Without the vision, of course, the mythological imagery loses its soul and reason for being. It can then be allegorized, as in the plays of Shvarts (whom Jung would probably classify as a "psychological" writer), or it can be elaborated for its own sake in a decorative, playful manner, as in the spectacular magic of the féerie and the Christmas pantomime.[2]

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[1] Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, p. 164.

[2] The aesthetic problem in a production of the latter sort is always to find ways to make it new, since its conventional nature makes it predictable and therefore uninteresting except to children.

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Once again we see the range of possibilities suggested by the fairy tale. At one extreme myths and tales and their motifs offer themselves for the deeply serious, quasi-religious purposes of the symbolists; at the other extreme they serve no less readily for sheer fun and excitement.

(4) Modern dramatists turn to the fairy tale in order to take advantage of the possibilities offered by its inherent dualism.

We have found fairy tales and plays based on them to be thoroughly dualistic structures, offering good evidence to support Lévi-Strauss' contention that the basic function of mythology is to mediate extremes.[1] This dualism extends both inward and outward, setting the constituent elements of the tales in opposition to each other and the tales as a whole in opposition to reality. The Undine-plot and the Visit to Fairyland both show how the dualism of the tales lends itself to interpretation as the conflict of worlds and world-views. The tales are dialectical as well as melodramatic: they serve to carry ideas set in dynamic opposition as well as to outline dramatic action.

The advantage of this dualism for adapters is the great variety of meanings that can be attributed to it. Even in their folk context myths, legends, and fairy tales, like proverbs and riddles, are a kind of natural philosophy. In literature their archetypal patterns are like empty vesels awaiting the distillate of the poet's thought. Their contrasts and polarities make them especially useful for criticism, social or philosophical, and it is primarily this function that has concerned us as we have tried to define each playwright's valuation of the world by means of his tale.

Social and philosophical criticism is most obvious in those plays

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[1] Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," p. 99.

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that set a human and a fairy world side by side. Yeats' The Land of Heart's Desire, for example, states in literary terms a traditional fear of fairies in their demonic aspect, and adds praise of ordinary human life as lived "the excellent old way through love,/And through the care of children." This valuation is seconded in Hofmannstahl's three plays, The Mine at Falun, The Emperor and the Witch, and The Woman Without a Shadow, in all of which a human being is tempted by fairy powers to tear up the contract that binds him or her to humanity and to plunge into a realm that is dark and forbidden but seemingly rich with possibilities. In the last of these works Hofmannstahl is finally able to restrain the yearning after transcendence for what is now seen unequivocally as the greater good, and this good is the moral already stated by Yeats: loving self-sacrifice for family and children. In The Lady from the Sea Ibsen explores a similar conflict and brings it to a similar conclusion.

In all these plays the fairy world reflects an inverted image of human life. The allure of fairy strangeness reveals the ordinariness of our world, just as the demonic aspect of fairyland, hidden to the tempted one but evident to everyone else, reveals the positive, life-enhancing qualities of traditional social ways. The temptation in each case is a temptation to solipsism. The playwrights seem to be saying that there are limits beyond which our private aspirations ought not, dare not go without cutting us off from others, and that all those things of proven, permanent value in life--marriage, home, children, an old age enriched with the affection and respect of loved ones--are to be preferred over delusive self-exaltation.

In The Master Builder Ibsen views this choice in a tragic-ironic light. Aline, the hero's wife, who represents the alternative that is re-

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jected in all the tragic versions of the Undine-theme, is made to seem dry, deathly, and spiritually sterile in contrast to the vital and attractive Hilde. We feel that Solness makes the right decision because he makes the one that does not compromise the earlier promise of his greatness. Yet Hilde too proves destructive, of his body if not his spirit. In the real world of time and space that is so powerfully reaffirmed in his fall from the tower, her demonic nature is made cruelly manifest. At the moment of his death she claims him with the words, "My--my master builder!" The fairyland of possibilities which she and Solness have made almost palpably real in the intensity of their rapport evaporates and reforms as a myth inside her head. He can achieve the greatness that she promised him as a figure in a fairy tale, but a person of flesh and blood cannot be assimilated to mythic status without giving up his flesh and blood. Thus the polarities that structure the play are never resolved. The artist is tragically, ironically caught between two extremes that will not be mediated unless, like Ibsen, he can somehow draw from this existential dilemma symbolic materials to create a work as great and lasting as The Master Builder.

Fairy tales describe fantastic worlds and thus set themselves in opposition to real life. That fact is a source of creative tension in Ibsen's play and in Hauptmann's The Sunken Bell, which is in part a restatement of Ibsen's theme. It is also the mainspring in Ondine, another tragedy of conflicting realms of value. Ondine, a perfect creature, longs to achieve humanity in all its imperfection, and her admirable purpose and its frustration reveal the duality of human nature. Ondine's desire to give up her fairy nature to marry Hans makes human life a realm of positive value; even "hay fever and sprained ankles" seem desirable to her because

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they are human. But such loving self-sacrifice proves a burden to Hans which he must throw off: thus Ondine's ideal, perfect love lighlights the reality of his flawed humanity. Here too the Undine-plot ends in separation and death, confirming the incompatibility of the two worlds. But the ending criticizes the nature of humanity rather than the hubris of one who desires something better. At the hands of the Ondine-King the hero's death is a judgment on all mankind.

The plays with happy endings may be said to resolve the dualism of the two worlds, at least by releasing the tension between them in particular cases. The release occurs for Ellida when Dr. Wangel sets her free of her marriage commitment, so that she can embrace the role of wife and mother on her own, rejecting the deathly alternative. The Stranger's banishment thus reflects a resolution of conflict within Ellida's soul. The Supervisor's rescue of Isabelle in Giraudoux's Intermezzo has a similar meaning. Cocteau's Knights of the Round Table and Hofmannstahl's The Emperor and the Witch demonstrate the triumph of sheer will power over demonic fairy forces, conceived in both cases as a crippling habituation to physical delights and pleasures. In throwing off the addiction, the Emperor and King Arthur and his court, like Ellida, assert their autonomy as freely-choosing adults. In all these plays the idea of fairy enchantment serves a moral allegory about the difficulty of growing up and achieving true independence of mind. If Ondine's realm is a Superego Fairyland, in these plays of rescue from enchantment the fairy world is a Kingdom of the Id, a locus of infantile gratification which, carried into adulthood, becomes destructive and must be given up. In the initiatory pattern underlying these plays, the heroes gain self-mastery and become fully human in the process.

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In Sologub's Night Dances the numinous realm is dominated and made to serve the beneficial purposes of art. The princesses' nocturnal escape to the underground palace may be viewed as an addiction to immature pleasures, like the Emperor's fascination with the Witch in Hofmannstahl's play; its effect is to drive suitors away, leaving the princesses unmarried and their maturity unfulfilled. The key to the play is not the breaking of the enchantment, however, but the hero's penetration to the source of power and his life-enhancing return,[1] bearing the magical artifacts that symbolize the success of his art. Sologub's fairyland means more than a solipsistic immaturity. It also represents mysterious springs of creativity in dream and nightmare, without access to which both art and life remain dry and spiritually barren.

In surveying these plays that deal with the conflict of two worlds, we can appreciate the great advantage that fairy-tale dualism makes available to the playwright. Fairy tales are fundamentally dialectical structures. It is in their nature to set in dynamic opposition ethical, religious, and aesthetic categories--good/evil, true/false, beautiful/ugly, spiritual/physical, life/death, enchantment/disenchantment, reality/appearance--which can be defined by the playwright's particular concerns and point of view. These structures thus constitute artistic building blocks in the most basic sense: concrete forms that are abstract and universalized in reference and therefore capable of carrying whatever meanings are given to them.

There are always two levels in a literary interpretation of a folk form, regardless of the polarities inherent in the folk form itself. Irving

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[1] Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces, p. 35.

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Howe views the stories of Sholem Aleichem and other writers who use the materials of Yiddish folklore as providing a double perspective, in which a sophisticated style balances naive traditional qualities.[1] In Sologub's The Triumph of Death a similar duality underlies the conflict of the enlightened, self-aware heroine with the benighted society which she tries and fails to transform. Algista offers the king a chance to rise above his stereotyped nature, to step out of the naive traditional tale into the reinterpreted story that she visualizes as the fulfillment of her quest. Khlodoveg refuses, and Algista's project is defeated. Sologub, on the other hand, produces a brilliant revision of his folk material by making the process of reinterpretation itself the subject of the play.

Nowhere else in the modern fairy drama is the literary/folk dualism so successfully synthesized with the playwright's creative vision. The duality itself can be discovered everywhere we look, however, especially in those plays that attempt to imitate folk narrative style on the stage. In their natural state fairy tales multiply and vary according to set laws in closely restricted ways.[2] Creative writers appropriate the tales and their motifs for literature by bringing to bear an artist's unique personal vision, which, in effect, frees the tales from subservience to anonymous folk laws, releasing them to grow and change in ways that were impossible before. In every successful adaptation the playwright's vision is a "re-vision" of the folk form. The result is literature, not folklore,

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[1] Irving Howe, Keynote Speech, Comparative Literature Conference, the Graduate School of the City University of New York, 9 November 1979.

[2] Olrik refers to folk narrative principles as "laws" to suggest that "they limit the freedom of composition of oral literature in a much different and more rigid way than in our written literature." See "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," in The Study of Folklore, p. 131.

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but it is a complex product that cannot be understood without an awareness of how its folk element submits to the imaginative reconception that claims it for the purposes of art.

(5) Modern dramatists turn to the fairy tale because, typically influenced by a pessimistic world-view, they are especially interested in structures of disenchantment and disillusion.

Since the promise of transcendence is built in by its obligatory happy ending, the fairy tale is uniquely suited for the destruction of hope through the disappointment that follows when the expected happy ending does not come about. Treated sincerely, fairy tales yield idealistic values that inspire and console; ironized, they serve as excellent vehicles of disillusionment.

Here again the dual nature of fairy tales becomes apparent. The sincere use of the tales makes available to the playwright all those values that make the reading of fairy tales a pleasure and a profit. Their situations span the whole range of human experience, touching its critical moments: birth, the struggle of maturation, leaving home, the fight against the Evil One, love and marriage, death and resurrection. Like myths, fairy tales may be said to "deal with the greatest of all problems, the problems which do not change, because men and women do not change."[1] Approaching these life-crises with faith in the world's goodness, fairy tales offer, not only to children, positive exemplars for identification and imitation. Tolkien defines the values of fairy tales in terms of their functions for the reader: to provide Recovery of a fresh, clear view of

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[1]Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 540.

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the world and the simple things in it; to provide a means of Escape from the banal sterility of modern urban life and from existential limitations on man's desire to transcend himself; and to provide the "sudden and miraculous grace" of Consolation, especially the Consolation of the Happy Ending that denies universal final defeat and gives a glimpse of redeeming joy.[1]

Another commentator cites the tales' enduring optimism as their chief value: as "interpretations of life in a hopeful spirit . . . they make the world a happier place because they show it interpenetrated by hope and opportunity."[2] Even if Judeo-Christian values are compromised in them by their wish-fulfillment functions, the tales give us compensatory arenas for ethical action, modeling the interplay of unambiguously good and evil forces.[3]

The proper home of fairy-tale idealism, at least in our century, is in stories and plays aimed at the young. The children's fairy-tale drama (which deserves a critical study of its own) focuses on the adven-

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[1]Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," pp. 55-70.

[2]Buchan, "The Novel and the Fairy Tale," pp. 226-7.

[3]A contrary view on this point is put by Leslie Fiedler. Seeing the tales as records of the ambivalent relations of parents and children, he finds their mainspring of interest in the psychological satisfaction of punishment and revenge. The tales do not idealize children; quite the reverse. "The happy ending of fairy tales (transparent, naive--almost pure myth or communal dream without secondary elaboration) most often involve not just an escape and/or marriage . . . but the incredibly brutal punishment of the Bad Parent surrogate." See his "Child Abuse and the Literature of Childhood," Children's Literature 8 (1980):152-3. For Fiedler their essential subjects are lust, jealousy, and "the son's dream of delivering by parricide his mother (as well as himself) from the real or presumed tyranny of the father." James W. Heisig would also deny the "higher morality" that Bettelheim detects in the tales: the world of the tales is dark, amoral, and uncontrollable; the heroes are often victims of victory as often as of adversity. "Bruno Bettelheim and the Fairy Tales," Children's Literature 6 (1977):93-114.

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tures of children and reaffirms the integrity of the family. Its prototype among the Grimm tales is "Hansel and Gretel" (no. 15), in which family tensions are projected onto the emblematic struggle with the Witch in the forest and resolved when the children burn their image of the "Bad Mother"[1] and return home to their father with her hoard of pearls and jewels. Such tales are emancipatory in effect, since their child-heroes are made to discover previously unrecognized inner resources in their effort to save themselves, even if, like Shvarts' Red Riding Hood, they must finally be rescued by strong adults.

Several of the classic plays for children have been written by playwrights already discussed. In Peter Pan and The Blue Bird, both Barrie and Maeterlinck divide their attention between the children in the audience and the parents watching over their heads. Peter Pan, for example, includes all the elements of adventure that appeal to children: an escape from the bedroom after the lights have been turned out, the magical ability to fly, pirates and Indians on an enchanted island, playing house, the satisfying defeat of evil after a heroic battle, and the safe return home and reintegration of the family. The intrusive stage directions in the printed text, however, are addressed to adults, and traces of a more disillusioned point of view become evident in Peter's refusal to leave his childhood island. Maeterlinck too, with his allegorical meanings, writes over the heads of his audience, though he follows Barrie's lead in bringing the adventuring children home and reintegrating the family.

The idealism of the children's play is more satisfactorily realized in Shvarts' The Two Maples (1954) and The Snow Queen (1939). The former

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[1]Emanuel K. Schwartz, "A Psychoanalytic Study of the Fairy Tale," American Journal of Psychotherapy 10, no. 4 (1956):744.

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traces the adventures of a young boy who pursues his mother on a quest to rescue his older brothers from a witch's enchantment. Inspired by the heroism of their father, who killed the Snake-Dragon, Vasilisa's three sons set out one after another to give battle to villains. The first two "Valiant Knights" forget to take care of their horses and are transformed into maple trees by the witch. Ivanushka, the youngest son, follows his mother without permission when she goes after them. When his identity as a "Valiant Knight" is challenged, he replies, "It's not the size that matters--it's courage!" and proceeds to prove it by actually attacking Baba Yaga,[1] outwitting her with a boy's weapons, a whistle, a fishing hook and line, flint and steel, a slingshot, and a nut, all these things stuffed into his pockets. He forgets to look behind him at the last minute and, like Little Red Riding Hood, another youthful exemplar of courage, must be rescued himself; but his deed and the intended deeds of his brothers are noble versions of their father's exploits, lacking only the circumspection that will come with adulthood. Later Ivanushka helps his mother carry out the difficult tasks assigned her by the witch,[2] and so takes part

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[1]Baba Yaga, "The Bony-Legged One," is a popular figure in the collection of traditional tales (published 1855-64) of Aleksandr Afanas'ev. She usually flies about in a mortar-and-pestle or lies sprawled out in her hut, which is alive and mounted on chicken legs at the four corners, where she waits for people to happen by or to seek her out. In several stories the witch takes human beings as servants, rewarding the industrious and punishing the lazy. Shvarts makes this motif the basis of his plot.

[2]The tasks are those traditionally assigned. Vasilisa must clean the hut, find and dig up three hundred treasures buried in the forest, and separate the rye from the corn and grind both into flour by tomorrow sunset. She accomplishes all this not by magic but by hard, careful work with the assistance of Ivanushka and the animals. Thus Shvarts removes the magic from the traditional motif to make his point: the heroine wins because she is willing to work and because she can love others (the animals whose help she needs); the lazy, selfish witch loses because she cannot love: her own chicken-legged hut carries her off and drowns her in the swamp.

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in the disenchanting of his brothers.

In The Snow Queen, a melodramatized version of Andersen's story of the same title, Gerda rescues her friend Key when his heart is frozen by the cold kiss of the witch. The heroine's self-sacrificial love overcomes many obstacles, though she too is escorted by a protective adult, the Story-Teller. Shvarts does not hold back from children the knowledge (which they surely possess already) that the world really is a difficult and dangerous place. The presence of strong adults in the plays allows the children to exercise their idealism in an arena made safe for them, holding at bay the truly heroic struggle which is yet to come.

Bettelheim says, "In practically every fairy tale good and evil are given body in the form of some figures and their actions, as good and evil are omnipresent in life and the propensities for both are present in every man."[1] Shvarts' plays, like the tales themselves, do not shrink from a serious confrontation with evil. What makes them moral in effect is not some appended lesson (as in Perrault's tales), but the child's identification with the hero in his struggles.[2] Evil is whatever threatens the child through this identification; virtue wins in the end because the magic of the tales, reflecting the "omnipotence of thought" that always obtains in these primitive forms,[3] allows a wish to balance the fear and thus to

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[1] Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment, pp. 8-9.

[2] Ibid., p. 9.

[3] Besides using the Freudian mechanisms of dream-work, fairy tales are characterized by totemism and magic which is closely related to the "omnipotence feelings of childhood"; similar material is found in pathological fantasies but without the structures offered by the fairy tale. Schwartz, "A Psychoanalytic Study of the Fairy Tale," p. 756. While interpreters of different schools may disagree on the symbolic meanings to be found in fairy tales, the Freudians' view of how they work is invariably helpful.

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re-establish the equilibrium of justice.[1]

It is easy to ironize the tales, therefore, either by removing the magic or by making it reflect an alien realm of desire. The former makes the reinterpreted tale realistic; the latter makes it demonic. Gombrowicz and Audiberti, for example, remove the magic entirely, leaving their heroines defenceless in the face of hostile opponents; both playwrights interpret the idea of "realism" in a particularly brutal way. The removal of the magic in Ivona makes the heroine not the center of her world, its soul and reason for being, like the Grimms' Sleeping Beauty (the domain of whose consciousness is entirely encircled by the magic hawthorn hedge), but the opposite, a pariah, an irritating presence which must be cast out. Rather than redeeming society, Ivona exposes and judges it by her unwillingness to play the social game and her strange ability to stir up murderous hostility in everyone around her. Without magic, the princess cannot save the world or even her own life; instead the world turns on her to save itself.

Alarica in The Evil Spreads also finds that the center of her world lies elsewhere. She is not a fairy princess but the daughter of a third-rate monarch, a pawn in an international game of politics. The world is governed by evil, which means absolute self-interest everywhere disguised by deceit and treachery. In the absence of magic to assimilate the world to her wishes, Alarica achieves clarity by accomodating herself to it, making herself by sheer will power the moral center and chief practitioner of its evil.

Maeterlinck, Bergman, and Strindberg ironize their tales by keeping

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[1]Sale, Fairy Tales and After, p. 51.

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the magic but turning it demonic. Maleine's and Melisande's hopes are paralyzed when events in their worlds respond not to their wishes but to some unimaginably hostile spirit brooding over everything. In Mr. Sleeman Is Coming the fear and dread so overpower the wish that Anne-Marie feels herself caught in a waking nightmare, the obverse of Mr. Sleeman's wish-fulfillment dream. In The Ghost Sonata too the hero's happiness is thwarted by forces stronger than himself, defined as simple but absolutely unchallengeable facts of man's existence manifested in concrete figures that seem magically animated for the sole purpose of teaching the Student his disillusioning lesson.

The dynamic of disillusionment works by the same mechanism as in the plays of inspiration. The reader or audience identifies with the hero in his struggles and then shares in the reward, but here the removal or demonic inversion of the magic makes the reward the opposite of what is desired and deserved. The children's plays, like the naive tales they replicate, reassure us that we can defeat our demons and win out in the end; living imaginatively, for however brief a time, in a world where such satisfactions are possible is a heartening experience. The adult plays, on the other hand, fling the initiant into a world of fallen values with a kind of evil glee. Mr. Lob in Dear Brutus takes an almost obscene delight in the unhappiness he makes. Barrie and his fellow disillusioners want to kill our spirits by unmasking reality as deeply hostile to hopes and dreams. Like Mr. Lob's victims, we awaken knowing both the world and ourselves better, but at great cost to our optimism.

In ironizing their tales, fairy dramatists move into the mainstream of literature in our century. In his article, "The Infernal Fairy Tale: Inversion of Archetypal Motifs in Modern European Literature," Horst Daem-

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mrich discusses Maeterlinck in the company of Mann, Hofmannstahl, Kafka, and Ionesco, all writers who have caught the current of disillusionment.[1] Eric Bentley discusses Shaw, another unmasker, in terms that apply to them all:

> The idea of disenchantment . . . is the idea of modern literature, and it is inseparable from an emotion far commoner and far more influential than romantic excitement. There seems to be no name for this emotion--and that, too, is significant. Let us call it desolation.
>
> You cannot be disenchanted without having been enchanted. One is sometimes tempted to believe that our human desolation might have been avoided if only we had not started out so undesolate. It is not the fact that we don't have things that worries us, but that we have lost them--or, rather, have been deprived of them. Desolation is the feeling of having been driven from paradise.[2]

Every age sees myths and fairy tales in its own light. The characteristic world-view of our century seems to be a disillusioned and ironic one. Since fairy tales, better than any other kind of literature, present a picture of man in spiritual harmony with the universe, what better way for a writer to express a sense of radical alienation than by setting a fairy tale hero at odds with the world of his play? Even Shvarts, the most idealistic of our playwrights, cannot sustain his optimism without acknowledging, in The Shadow, a sense of bitter disappointment in the reality of man's spiritual condition. All these plays are displaced versions of the Fall of Man, setting in close juxtaposition images of the paradise we once enjoyed and the barren place we now inhabit. Herein lies the special usefulness of the fairy tale for our time.

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[1] Horst S. Daemmrich, "The Infernal Fairy Tale: Inversion of Archetypal Motifs in Modern European Literature," Mosaic 5 (1972):85-95 (see above, p. 178). The pattern of disillusion can be "covered" by a realistic treatment, as in Ibsen's The Wild Duck (1884), Williams' The Glass Menagerie (1945), and Albee's The American Dream (1961), as well as Peter Ustinov's comedy, The Love of Four Colonels (1951), based on "Sleeping Beauty."

[2] Eric Bentley, Foreword to Plays by George Bernard Shaw (New York: New American Library, 1960), p. xxv.

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(6) Modern dramatists turn to the fairy tale because they are challenged by the standing invitation to reinterpret their perennial archetypal forms.

This function, which contains and summarizes the previous five, presupposes a definition of "myth" different from that we have been using (as denoting a body of archetypal imaginative structures systematically arranged for literary allusion). This definition would imply that fairy tales are static forms artificially animated by the literary adapter but essentially, like the classical Greek myths from the Alexandrian period onward, the husks and shells of a dead language; and it would follow that their creative development as literature should be limited by a concept of fidelity to the folkloric model.

In her article, "Greek Myth in Modern Drama: Paths of Transformation," Eva Kushner cites Gilbert Highet's The Classical Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957) as criticism bound by such a concept. According to her, Highet describes modern redactions of myth in terms of their deviance from the ancient models, pointing out anachronistic characterization, plot variation, and the use of colloquial language as transgressions against an aesthetic norm inherent in the myths themselves.[1] His view of myth, Kushner would say, would blind us to the achievements of the most interesting fairy-tale playwrights, who see their task not as the piecemeal reanimation of dead forms, like the monster of Dr. Frankenstein, but as their total renewal and rejuvenation. In the idiom of fairy lore itself we can say that successful adapters transform their tales,

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[1]Eva Kushner, "Greek Myths in Modern Drama: Paths of Transformation," in Literary Criticism and Myth, ed. Joseph P. Strelka (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), p. 199.

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creating by the magic of art something that refers us to the folk model but in itself constitutes a new, complete, aesthetically unique creation.

The revision of the idea of myth proposed by Kushner and adopted here is even more pertinent for fairy-tale playwrights than for those who adapt classical myths. Fairy tales still lived among the folk only a few hundred years ago, whereas the question of folk currency for ancient myths is very much a matter of deduction and hypothesis, since all we have left are literary records. Writers of the 19th century were close enough to real fairy belief to view the fairies' departure in the face of encroaching civilization as a millenium, the occasion of mourning and nostalgia. In The Fairies in Tradition and Literature Katharine Briggs describes a fairy lyric by Nora Hopper as "the age-old lament for the departing fairies."[1] Briggs finds that note of nostalgia struck in nearly all the fairy stories of our own century as well--"The fairies are everywhere fugitive and in hiding"[2]--but traces such sentiments back to their earliest appearance in literature. Theories of fairy origins connect them with spirits of the dead or memories of conquered races and their deities. At home in the deep past, they are always perceived as withdrawing from us in the present.

In enchantments like that in Cocteau's Knights of the Round Table the fairy power is too much with us, oppressively so, but elsewhere the drama too portrays the fairies as transient, in retreat. In Evgeny Chirikov's Forest Secrets (1909) the gentle creatures of the forest, Baba Yaga, Wood Demon, Water Spirit, Water Nymph, Little Demon, and Faun, all scatter as the sound of axes felling trees signals the passing of their era. Some

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[1] Briggs, The Fairies in Tradition and Literature, p. 171.

[2] Ibid., p. 210.

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will look for new forest habitats; others will live disguised among men. The Faun, a newcomer from the Mediterranean area, testifies that he was chased from his homeland by "people with crosses, wearing glasses, with books . . . they're sorcerers before whom are lost all the secrets of the mountains, the woods, and the seas."[1] Audiberti pursues a similar idea in The Spoken Opera (1956), in which a highway cut through the virgin forest symbolizes the eclipse of Druidic civilization by Christianity (see above, p. 249). Lunacharsky describes a fairy funeral procession in Vasilisa the Wise: the hero watches the Moon People disappear into a dark abyss following the coffin of their dead queen. Creatures of the Other World retreating into the shadows in these and other plays represent, especially by their connection with pristine nature, spiritual values which we ourselves once enjoyed but since have rejected or somehow lost. They are haunting projections of our sense of desolation, and in this respect they differ from the gods and heroes of classical myth, which do not ordinarily evoke nostalgia or the sense of a lost paradise.

This difference gives our revision of the idea of myth special point when applied to fairy tales. An adapter of the tales offers dying forms a chance to live again, to speak to yet another generation of readers or audiences of "those problems which do not change, because men and women do not change." In Kushner's view, far from being a threat to the original integrity of the models, literary reinterpretation of myths and tales is in the very nature of the mythic process. Adaptations based on Highet's kind of criticism would serve only to embalm the stories, for they do not live at all unless they are reborn in each generation. Moreover, this process

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[1]Unpublished translation by Peter Goslett.

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of renewal readily permits, indeed demands, changes in the myths to accomodate changed conditions; for although men and women do not change, the cultures that define their perennial problems do, and an adapter who could take no account of that fact would obviously have nothing to say to his contemporaries, nor could a myth truly live again in his work.

Kushner finds a rationale for a dynamic view of myth in the functional nature of its motifs. In his epoch-making study of Russian fairy tales, Morphology of the Folktale, Vladimir Propp defines functions, "the fundamental [structural] components," as the events which "serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are filled."[1] This definition allows him to observe that the number of functions is quite limited (he discovered in the tales he analyzed no more than thirty-one), that their sequence is always identical even though not all of them always appear, and moreover that "all fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure."[2]

As fairy tales diffuse from their points of origin among the folk, they achieve their amazing surface multiplicity by selecting the functions to be included, by enchaining structural sequences (Propp's "moves") in different ways, and by varying the agents of the functions ("actants"). If the hero must go into another kingdom to pursue his adventure (function

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[1] Motifs of the sort collected and classified by Aarne and Thompson in their multi-volume Motif-Index of Folk-Literature (Helsinki, 1932-36) are not true structural units but rather aspects of content, highly multiple and various. According to Alan Dundes, the fact that motifs can be classified under more than one heading in the Aarne-Thompson index suggests that a typology of folk tales based on its categories would be subjective, shifting, and contingent rather than truly structural. The indexes are essentially catalogues, therefore, and their value is descriptive. See Dundes, "From Etic to Emic Units in the Structural Study of Folktales," Journal of American Folklore 75 (1962):95-105.

[2] Propp, Morphology of the Folktale, pp. 21 and 23.

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no. 11), for example, it makes no difference whether he goes on the back of an eagle given him by the tsar, on a horse given him by an old woman, in a little boat given him by a sorcerer, or on the shoulders of young men who appear out of a magic ring given him by a princess.[1] In each case the structural significance of the event remains the same. The function is a constant; the means of its realization varies widely with respect to all the external qualities that "provide the tale with its brilliance, charm, and beauty."[2]

Propp's theory offers a way to explain how folk tales change and remain stable not only as they diffuse in a folk culture, but also as they make the leap from folklore into literature. One folklorist has pointed out the close similarity between the last nine functions in Propp's sequence and Odysseus' return in the Odyssey.[3] Epic poets, fairy-tale playwrights, and other writers reconceive their tales as folklore does, by varying all their non-structural qualities. The villain in Shvarts' The Dragon, for example, is functionally similar to the villain in "The Two Brothers," its source tale: he threatens the princess, gives battle to the hero, and is defeated in the end. The originality of the play lies not in this element, which remains the same in the reconception, but in the dramatist's brilliant use of the dragon's three heads and of the False Hero (an obligatory element in Propp's scheme) as metaphors for the pervasive

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[1] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[2] Ibid., p. 86.

[3] Alan Dundes, Introduction to Morphology of the Folktale, p. xiv. Functions 23-31 read as follows: the hero, unrecognized, arrives home or in another country; a false hero presents unfounded claims; a difficult task is proposed to the hero; the task is resolved; the Hero is recognized; the false hero or villain is exposed; the hero is given a new appearance; the villain is punished; the hero is married and ascends the throne (pp. 60-63).

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nature of political tyranny. The sublimity of Giraudoux's Ondine follows in large part from his poetic use of language, another of the external aspects that the literary adapter can manipulate as he wishes.[1]

Propp also notes that fairy-tale figures are not much concerned with motivation. "The important thing is not what they want to do nor how they feel, but their deeds as such."[2] Since the function, the event itself, is what matters, the agent in this respect is nothing more than the visualization of an act.[3] Thus the inner life of the characters, their thought and psychology, is another area in which a literary adapter is free to create. Shvarts' Little Red Riding Hood offers the clearest example: the heroine's purpose, to make the forest safe for the community of weaker animals, is a formulation of the author's socio-political philosophy and could not conceivably be traced to the folk tale itself.

Thus the structural nature of fairy tales leaves almost everything that is poetically significant--i.e., the qualities of the dramatis personae,

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[1] The oral narrator is less free in this regard, being limited in his choices to a typical folk style which includes obligatory opening and closing formulas and epic repetitions and tripling of events. Thompson, however, cites three Russian story-tellers whose personal styles were all quite distinct. He concludes: "The skillful raconteur usually handles his material very freely, but within traditional limits. There are certain commonplaces of event or background or of word order so traditional that they are an indispensable part of the manner of the story-teller. If he is gifted, he has a command of all these old, well-tried devices and he adds thereto his individual genius and often the genius of the man or men from whom he learned his art." Thompson, The Folktale, p. 450.

[2] Propp, Morphology of the Folktale, p. 81.

[3] This consequence explains some of the almost casual magic associated with helpers in fairy tales. If a carpet can take the hero home as well as a horse, "it is apparent that objects act in the same way as do living things. Thus a cudgel by itself kills all the enemies and punishes thieves, etc." Propp concludes: "Living things, objects, and qualities, from the morphological point of view, founded upon the functions of the dramatis personae, must be examined as equivalent qualities." Morphology of the Folktale, p. 82.

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their feelings and motivations, and the language and tone of the whole--in the hands of the adapter to dispose as he wishes. In theory only the basic narrative structure is obligatory, and even that is altered by those playwrights who ironize their tales by substituting a sad ending for the happy one. Actually the adapter is free to do anything he likes as long as he somehow puts the audience in mind of the tale or the universe of tales that he is adapting. Since any play based on a myth or tale that is not noticed by the audience is, in effect, a wholly original creation, here is a minimum definition of the adapter's task.

This is what a fairy-tale playwright is free to do, but why must he reconceive his source? What is the aesthetic value of change in itself? An artist pursues a vision that is unique and new; no received form, whatever its source, could carry meanings that in their precise specificity have never been expressed before. In this respect reinterpreted tales and motifs are like the verbal structure of a lyric poem, also unique and closely fitted to the meaning which it expresses. Playwrights must revise their sources in order to say what they want to say.

But there is a further reason, peculiar to the genre, for the reconceiving of the tales. Eric Rabkin points out that, because of their conventional nature, fairy tales have a sameness that eventually causes "aesthetic fatigue," an enervation in the adult reader that makes them begin to seem too simple to be relevant to the real world, even as alternatives to its complexity.[1] To counter this fatigue, says Rabkin, either we read the tales to children, for whom they are still wonderfully new, or we seek out new forms, new inventions based on the old genre. Authors looking

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[1]Eric S. Rabkin, Fantastic Worlds: Myths, Tales, and Stories (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 168.

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for something new to say will sometimes find it in a redefinition of conventions, on the assumption that readers will recognize the old form and treat the redefinition as a new and fresh alternative. Kushner says that "defamiliarization" is the very essence of literary creativity: "Ostranienie arises from the very familiarity of the mythical story made appealingly different by an element of divergence."[1]

Because of their ability to reverse ground rules of reality, fairy tales and similar forms of fantasy allowed the symbolists to renew the serious theatre at a time when prose realism and naturalism had drained off its life's-blood of poetry and spiritual meaning. However, fairy tales can themselves become empty and dead in the theatre. There is nothing more drearily predictable and boring than the perennial tricks of the pantomime, as Tolkien remarks,[2] unless they are treated with an element of novelty. The drama must grow and develop simply to remain alive, and this is especially true of a drama based on stories which themselves do not change. Fairy tales are deeply paradoxical, in that they remain the same but contain the potential for transformation. The adapter may be attracted to fairy tales by their archetypal qualities, but he finds the freedom to reconceive them in their generic readiness to reverse ground rules and so respond to changing historical contexts. The writer applies old forms to new content or redefines the forms themselves; either way he creates an alternative to sameness that serves as an antidote to aesthetic fatigue.

In thus "reaestheticizing" a myth or tale,[3] the writer does not de-

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[1] Kushner, "Greek Myths in Modern Drama," p. 201.

[2] Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," p. 50.

[3] Kushner, "Greek Myths in Modern Drama," p. 202.

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stroy it but rather extends it. Kushner notes that Lévi-Strauss, in "The Structural Study of Myth," finds the essence of myth not in this or that formulation but in all the versions, including the literary ones, that have been put forward: "There is no one true version of which all the others are copies or distortions. Every version belongs to the myth."[1] And further: "A myth remains the same as long as it is felt as such."[2] Having worked all along with a fundamental literary/folk distinction that Lévi-Strauss would not consider essential, we can now redefine our concept of "fairy-tale play" along the lines of his thinking: any clue to the presence of a fairy-tale archetype points to a hypothesis about a play's genre which, if substantiated in the experience of the text, assimilates the play to a "myth" consisting of the source tale, all its folk variations, and all other literary creations based upon it. According to Kushner, a myth understood in this extended sense maintains itself through an "autoregenerative capacity" that is common to all homeostatic systems.[3] It is the functional nature of the tales, the transformability of their agents and attributes, that makes this homeostasis possible. A critic looking at a drama based on a tale or myth should not expect it to replicate its model, as Highet suggests, but rather "to bring back to life, through an interplay of equivalences, that is, by transformation, the sum total of the

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[1] Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," in Myth: A Symposium, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1958), p. 94. Insisting that "all available variants should be taken into account," Lévi-Strauss would include in a study of Oedipus even the account of the myth offered by Freud.

[2] Ibid., p. 92.

[3] Kushner quotes Piaget on the idea that myths behave as structures: "They act as wholes, regulate themselves, and transform themselves." "Greek Myths in Modern Drama," p. 203.

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mythemes that make up the 'standard' myth."[1]

This view of myth defines the terms of an ongoing dialogue among all fairy-tale playwrights, and other adapters as well, on the continually-evolving possibilities of the genre. On the topic of the Shadow, for instance, Chamisso, Andersen, Hofmannstahl, Shvarts, and Gombrowicz have contributed creative ideas that have extended the meaning of the motif. We have followed Dragons from Wagner's Siegfried (1871) through Valle Inclán's The Dragon's Head and Lady Gregory's comedy for children to Shvarts' political allegory for adults. The discussion contains interchanges on ogres, witches, and vampires (the fairy-tale villain in general), heroes, Undines and other fairy princesses, quests and magic. The endlessly suggestive idea of Fairyland is material for a dialogue in itself.[2]

Lévi-Strauss' view of myth also offers a criterion of value for all redactions of mythic structures. In describing some of the specific ways in which a dramatist can "displace" the functions of a myth while still respecting its essential identity, Kushner notes, "What is original and aesthetically satisfying . . . is the very divergence from the classical story, the extreme tension within the familiar."[3] We can say, then, that the best fairy-tale plays, all other things being equal, are those that renew their

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[1] Ibid., p. 203.

[2] This dialogue among playwrights suggests a parallel dialogue among critics focused on tale types and motifs. Such studies as Marian Rolfe Cox's pioneering Cinderella (London: Publications of the Folk-Lore Society, 1893) are well-known among folklorists. Examples of a similar method of research applied in comparative literature are Howard Patch's The Other World: According to Descriptions in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950; reprint ed. New York: Octagon, 1970), and Barbara Fass's La Belle Dame Sans Merci & the Aesthetics of Romanticism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974).

[3] Kushner, "Greek Myths in Modern Drama," p. 208.

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source tales in the most striking and memorable way consistent with the tales' functional identity.

Examples suggest themselves immediately from the plays discussed. Cocteau's Knights of the Round Table strikingly applies the idea of disenchantment to a painful but morally healthy detoxification of the mind and surrounds it with vividly theatrical images by having the true and false characters played by the same actors. Strindberg's achievement in The Ghost Sonata is his philosophical revision, by means of the universalizing symbol, of the motif of the Vampire, here made to suggest existential meanings rooted in but reaching far beyond the simple folk idea. Shvarts' application of fairy-tale imagery to social and political satire deserves special notice. His image of the Dragon, appearing "in mufti" and changing heads, shooting a flame out of his finger as he proposes to incinerate Lancelot in his tracks, then being destroyed head by head and coming back to life in the tyranny of the Mayor and Henry, is unforgettable. Shvarts' Shadow-motif, borrowed from Andersen, takes on new life in such a forceful and unexpected way that even the Scholar is taken back. In The Master Builder Ibsen recreates the dream of the artist and subjects it to a merciless critique by means of his Undine-figure, as alluring and ambiguous in the play as her cousins are in folklore. The Triumph of Death and Night Dances, one a tragedy, one a comedy, demonstrate both the depth of Sologub's understanding of fairy tales and the wide range of ways in which a gifted adapter can inspirit them with theatrical vitality. In Ondine we are offered a stunning tour-de-force of theatricality and poetic language. Who could forget the sight of Hans' armor falling off at Ondine's touch or the Executioner's transformation into a blood-red snowman at a wave of the Ondine-King's hand? Ondine herself, a breathing amalgam of sexuality and

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spirit, will live forever in Giraudoux's invention.

These are perhaps the most striking, memorable revisions--my favorites, at any rate--though many others could be mentioned as well. Lévi-Strauss' theory of myth assures us that more will come. The fairies are everywhere in retreat, but the fairy drama will not die. As long as the tales themselves are remembered, artists will continue to find new and fresh ways to recreate them on the stage.

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[1] In the hope of guiding future research, I have included here all the modern plays I know of, translated or untranslated, which have been called fairy tales by their authors or by critics. Some of them may not, in fact, be fairy-tale plays according to the definition I have been using (see above, pp. 8-9).

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