Cinderella and Other Fairy Tales as Secular Scripture in Contemporary America and Russia

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By Kate Christine Moore Koppy

Entitled
Cinderella and Other Fairy Tales as Secular Scripture in Contemporary America and Russia

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Is approved by the final examining committee:

Charles Ross

Shaun Hughes

Jeffrey Turco

John P. Hope

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Approved by: Charles Ross 10/07/2015

Head of the Departmental Graduate Program Date
CINDERELLA AND OTHER FAIRY TALES AS SECULAR SCRIPTURE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA AND RUSSIA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Purdue University

by

Kate C. M. Kopy

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2015

Purdue University

West Lafayette, Indiana
for the lovers of story
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It takes a village to bring a dissertation to defense, and I am grateful to everyone who has been part of my village. The late Dr. Joseph Warren started calling me Dr. Koppy before I even dreamed a PhD for myself, and when I balked, Dr. Paul Matychuk, Dr. Bruce Closser, and Dr. Meredith Jones-Grey helped me see the possibility as a reality.

Without the advice of Dr. L. Monique Pittman, I would not have found the Comparative Literature Program at Purdue University, where the dedication to interdisciplinary work provided fertile ground for my wide-ranging research. My committee; Dr. Charles Ross, Dr. Shaun Hughes, Dr. Jeff Turco, and Dr. John Hope; have been both patient and demanding as the need arose. Charlie listened to me ramble about fairy tales until he heard a thesis statement and then sent me to the library to consult Northrop Frye. Conversations with Shaun have led me to texts and sources I would not have thought to look for, and my bookcase is the richer for it. Jeff’s willingness to read my shitty first drafts and comment with praise, humor, and insight made revision more bearable and me a better writer. John’s collegiality and his willingness to join a dissertation committee in his first year at Purdue is the reason the fourth chapter of this dissertation exists.

As exciting as it is to work in the dynamic space between traditional academic disciplines, it is isolating to be a cohort of one. I am grateful to the faculty and graduate
students of Comitatus for allowing me to find an intellectual and social home with them while at Purdue. Dr. Dorsey Armstrong has been a pearl-without-price role model and mentor despite my never having taken a class with her. Dr. J. Case Tompkins, Dr. Chad Judkins, Dr. Hwanhee Park, and Dr. Erin Kissick enthusiastically agreed when I proposed creating a writing group, and all of our research is the better for having worked to advance one another. In the late stages of this project, David Sweeten’s insightful commentary helped to transform a jumble of ideas and insights into a cohesive document. In the years during which writing this dissertation in absentia further isolated me, the virtual Centre for Textiles and Conflict Studies enabled connections to an international network of scholarly support and encouragement. Countless friends and colleagues have also been able to solve conundrums of style and word choice through the magic of social media. Throughout this process, Delayne Graham helped me to understand and to navigate the university’s systems as my status evolved over the course of my time at Purdue.

Graduate school is the sort of work that bleeds over into personal life, and my family and friends have done their best to be supportive of the bizarre endeavor that is the dissertation process. My late husband Adam believed that I could complete this PhD even when I did not, and he supported my efforts wholeheartedly. My best friend Erin stepped up to keep me going when unexpected widowhood nearly stopped me in my tracks. My children Anna and Sofia learned to recognize and avoid the frenzy brought on by inspiration and also to cook for themselves.
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GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATU### - refers to the tale type in *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, recently revised by Hans-Jorg Uther.

contemporary – for the purposes of this dissertation ‘contemporary’ refers to the time period from the second half of the twentieth century to the time of writing.

### - refers to the tale index number in Heide Anne Heiner’s *Cinderella Tales from Around the World*.

hero – a gender-neutral term, ‘hero’ refers to the character in a tale who completes a quest or passes tests

IMDb – Internet Movie Database. http://www.imdb.com

move – according to Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, a move is a plot unit containing a conflict and a resolution. The simplest tales contain just a single move, but more complex tales are built out of multiple moves.

variant – refers to an innovative branch within a tale type tradition. “Cendrillon” and “Aschenputtel” are different variants of the 510A tradition.

version – refers to an edition, translation, or retelling of a specific variant, though it may or may not blend elements from multiple variants. Disney’s 1950 *Cinderella* film claims
to be a version of Perrault’s “Cendrillon” variant, but also includes elements of Grimms’ “Aschenputtel” variant (See Chapter 2 of this dissertation).
ABSTRACT

Koppy, Kate C. M. PhD, Purdue University, December 2015. Cinderella and Other Fairy Tales as Secular Scripture in Contemporary America and Russia. Major Professor: Charles Ross.

The fairy tales of the Grimm-Disney canon are prevalent in every medium of creative expression in contemporary American popular culture. They can be found as while plots adapted for a contemporary audience, as brief allusions that new versions of canonical tales make to older ones, or as motifs used to build wholly new tales. This dissertation examines the ways that contemporary adaptations in literature and film both perpetuate and innovate on those canonical fairy tale stories, resulting in a secular scripture that provides a common language of allusion and metaphor for an increasingly diverse audience. Recent adaptations of Russian heroic epics (bylini) are also considered.
CHAPTER 1. PREFACE

The stories we tell produce and find us in the past,
and enable us to live through the present's uncertainties
by projecting us into the future. –Cristina Bacchilega

I want you to think for a minute about being with your extended family at a big family meal like Thanksgiving, Christmas, or the 4th of July. If your extended family is anything like mine, at some point the telling and re-telling of family stories will start: stories of childhood silliness, of crises averted, of teenage rebellion. At any given family gathering, a subset of the total corpus of family stories will be told, but over the course of many gatherings, as the members of the family tell and retell these stories, the narratives remind those who star in the stories who they have been, and they communicate the history of this community to the newest members, who may be added by birth, marriage, or association. Often the youngest members of a family can tell stories about events that happened long before their births as though they had been there. The ability to recognize family stories as familiar stories and to participate in the maintenance of the community through storytelling strengthens one’s sense of belonging. Relating complete narratives,

however, is not the only way to reinforce belonging. Allusion to family stories through key phrases or punch lines works just as well. These pieces of narrative taken out of their original context and applied to new situations, help the members of a community to make sense of the world they live in through reference to the narratives they know, and to easily communicate their ideas about this world to others who know the same narratives.\(^2\) These pieces of narrative excerpted from their original context, however, also serve as shibboleths that separate the members of a community from the non-members. If one does not laugh at the joke when everyone else does, like the most recent spouse to marry in or the child who is just becoming aware of the stories, one knows that one has not yet achieved full member status within a given community.

In the same way that these family stories participate in the maintenance of family identities, narratives help to create and maintain larger communities. In any given community a group of core narratives reinforce communal bonds by serving as shared stories, like the family stories above. Once the corpus of shared narratives becomes a cohesive unit, they constitute the building material for new narratives. Creators of other texts allude to, draw from, or rework the material presented by the core group with purposes ranging from satire to reverence. The experience of recognizing an allusion in a text reinforces the consumer’s sense of membership in the same community with the creator and with other consumers of that text who also recognize the allusion.

\(^2\) For example, in my mother’s family to say that one “can’t say ‘supersonic’” is to say that one is unaware of one’s own abilities. This refers to the time when my then-four-year-old aunt, the fifth child who is seven years younger than her next elder sibling, wanted someone to read her the cereal box. One by one, she asked each of her elder siblings, and one by one they reminded her that she could read. She insisted that she couldn’t, and they insisted that she try. In exasperation, she pointed to the words on the cereal box and shouted, “But I can’t say ‘supersonic’!” Clearly, they were right. She could.
In the classroom, I have been confounded by my undergraduates’ inability to decode the system of allusions in the oldest texts on my world literature syllabus. The problem, I finally realized, is that although most students have some familiarity with the biblical scripture these texts draw from and allude to, they lack fluency with its stories and images because biblical scripture is not their core narrative. This dissertation posits that in contemporary America this core narrative function is fulfilled by fairy tales, particularly those tales from Perrault’s *Côntes du Temps Passés* and the Grimms’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* from which the Disney Animation Studio has drawn to create the majority of its animated features, heretofore referred to as the Grimm-Disney canon.

I am aware that in twenty-first century America, the fairy tale has a less than stellar reputation. A story too good to be true is “just a fairy tale,” and skeptics tell us that readers should not believe in fairy tales if we don’t want to end up with our hearts broken. And yet, this much-maligned form remains a powerful narrative force. On American pages and screens, the deep structure of the literary fairy tale is widely replicated in a variety of genres and media. In recent years, Red Riding Hood, Snow White, and Brynhild have graced the silver screen; television programs inspired by fairy tales continue to be popular; and Disney is remaking its animated fairy tale canon with live action films. It is my contention that the narratives of the traditional fairy tale canon are

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3 For the purposes of this project, “contemporary” will be defined as the second half of the twentieth century to the time of writing.
the core story from which contemporary American society builds other stories, including that quintessentially American fairy tale, the story of the American Dream. In *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*, Jim Cullen notes that “amid the greatest surge of immigration in our history, one that brings more people from more of the world than ever before, we don’t always speak the same language. At a time like this, the American Dream becomes a kind of *lingua franca*, an idiom that everyone […] can understand.” Disney was able to capitalize on this need for a new *lingua franca*, forging a connection between the American dream and fairytales, “It is the repetition of [...] the core of American mythology, [...] that enabled [Disney] to strike a chord in American viewers from the 1920’s to the present.” Thus, as sacred scripture provided the corpus of core narratives for previous generations, the fairy tale now acts as the *lingua franca* of allusion in art and literature, as the basis for typological reinvention, and as a shared story that reinforces notions of culture and community. Fairy tales have become our secular scripture, our primary narrative tools of cohesion.

Indeed, in contemporary America, fairy tales are often “the first poetic form with which people come in contact in their lives” and they function as “essential and substantial stories which offer paradigmatic examples of conflicts in decisive life

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Scholars in a variety of fields have written about the impact of fairy tales on the lives of children. In *Enchanted Hunters: The Power of Stories in Childhood*, folklorist Maria Tatar examines “how literature touches us when we are young, moving and transforming us with its intoxicating, enthralling, and occasionally terrifying energy,” and she argues that these stories met in childhood “serve as companions and compass roses, offering shocks, terrors and wonders, as well as wisdom, comfort and sustenance.” To Tatar’s list, literary scholar Elizabeth Harries adds inspiration. In her examination of Anne Sexton’s poetry in *Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale*, Harries draws a direct line between the poet’s experience of fairy tales as a child and the art she creates as an adult. Meanwhile, psychologist Bruno Bettelheim goes beyond merely attesting impact to insist on the necessity of fairy tales to successful development, as his book *The Uses of Enchantment* “attempts to show how fairy stories represent in imaginative form what the process of healthy human development consists of, and how the tales make such development attractive for the child to engage in.” Because childhood is the point of contact with fairy tale narratives and because they are largely sanctioned by the adult authority figures in children’s lives, the fairy tales of the Grimm-Disney canon have a significant impact on contemporary American children’s perceptions of the world.

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This association of fairy tales with children is not entirely a positive one for fairy tales. In his essay “On Fairy Stories,” J. R. R. Tolkien points out, “Fairystories have in the modern lettered world been relegated to the ‘nursery,’ as shabby or old-fashioned furniture is relegated to the playroom, primarily because the adults do not want it, and do not mind if it is misused.” The labeling of fairy tales as childish in the same way that crayons and blocks are childish things to be given up once one reaches maturity leads to a devaluation of this corpus of stories among critics. Indeed, some parents and educators even view fairy tales with suspicion and discourage children from reading them.

This suspicion is sometimes motivated by an association of fiction with lying, and at other times by a perceived mismatch between the world of the stories and the real world. For example, Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, in *Truth, Fiction, and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), argue that the veracity of fiction is a relative concept, and that stories can be true in different ways and for different reasons. They point out that even the most realistic and verisimilar stories are not necessarily true in the same sense as non-fictional accounts.

times by criticisms of fairy tales as misogynistic. Such mistrust of fiction seems, however, misplaced and myopic. Indeed, C. S. Lewis asserts that frequent forays into the discursive space of Story “strengthen our relish for real life. This excursion into the preposterous sends us back with renewed pleasure to the actual.” Tolkien concludes that tales of the marvelous in particular offer the audience “Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, [and] Consolation,” which help readers to cope not only with the challenges of modern mechanized society but also with the challenge of accepting human mortality.20

In scholarly literature, the study of fairy tales has been both marginalized and fragmented. The phenomenon of modern American culture denigrating the content and messages of fairy tales while simultaneously reworking fairy-tale forms and motifs to create new stories is particularly underexamined. In the academic world, the study of contemporary fairy tales and retellings has not been part of mainstream literary studies in English or Comparative Literature. Nor do fairy tales have a reliable home in cinematic studies. In fact, Jack Zipes criticizes The Oxford History of World Cinema for not mentioning fairy tales: “Even in the chapter on animation, the term ‘fairy tale’ does not

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19 Tolkien, Tolkien On Fairy-stories, 59.
20 Tolkien, Tolkien On Fairy-stories, 74-75.
appear at all.”

Rather, academics who wish to turn their scholarly acumen to this topic are fragmented across disciplines and subfields like folklore studies, popular culture, children’s literature, French, German, Italian, and Russian. While scholars in all of these fields contribute compelling work to academic discourse about fairy tales, the fragmentation makes the conversation among them more challenging. Because of their function as secular scripture, fairy-tale texts, literary and cinematic, must be studied alongside and in conversation with the stark and dark texts, which generally appear in anthologies and surveys of modern literature. This dissertation is an argument for the inclusion of fairy tale narratives, in both literary and cinematic media, in the academic canon of contemporary literature.

The second chapter “Once Upon a Time There Was a Story” functions as an introduction to this project, offering definitions of the concepts “fairy tale” and “scripture” as well as an overview of the theoretical ground upon which I build my argument. Attention is given to the role of sacred scripture as core narrative for maintaining community historically, competing critical theories of fairy tale origins, the dynamics of tradition, and theories of adaptation.

One of the functions of secular scripture is the maintenance and dissemination of cultural values. A close look at the trend of revision within the tradition of a single tale type can therefore help to illuminate the values of the cultures for which each variant was produced. The third chapter focuses on “That Story: Cinderella Transformed in the

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Twenty-first Century.” Analysis of the changes in the Cinderella tradition over time exemplify the arguments outlined in the first chapter regarding the way that familiar narratives become the cohesive glue that a community uses to define itself. The Cinderella tale is one of the most widely attested and widely studied tale types, with versions of the tale recorded as early as ancient China and Greece. The variants which I will discuss here begin with Giambattista Basile because it is to this period that scholars generally trace the beginning of the fairy tale genre as we know it today in the Western world. In this discussion, I am interested in the Cinderella character’s social status at the beginning of the text, in the qualities or actions for which the text seems to be rewarding her, and in the portion of the narrative on which emphasis is placed through extended description. It is the changes in these aspects of the narrative, which I argue will be most salient to understanding our love affair with this tale type. The longevity of the Cinderella story is a testament to the conservative aspect of fairy tales. Readers tend to think “that story” is one story when in reality it has been many stories united by a critical mass of common motifs, dramatis personae, and motivations. This chapter also serves to establish a methodology for reading fairy tales as secular scripture which can then be generalized to other tale type traditions.

The fourth chapter “Old Wine in New Wine Skins: Contemporary Fairy Tale Pastiche on Film” will consider the more innovative narrative possibilities of fairy tales. The recent films Brave and Enchanted are contemporary fairy tales which do not claim participation in the tradition of a specific tale type, but which are nevertheless recognizable as fairy tales. Each of these simultaneously participates in the broad fairy tale tradition while also commenting on some of its norms: pastoral image of nature,
patriarchal control of the family, and marriage without real choice. The purpose of this chapter within the overall project is to examine the way that the motifs, dramatis personae, and functions of the fairy tales of the traditional canon have become an inventory of building blocks, which can be mixed and matched to create wholly new stories, disconnected from the tradition of any one tale.

*Brave* and *Enchanted* engage with fairy tales norms in strikingly different ways. The Disney animated feature *Brave* presents a coherent fairy tale story while shifting the focus from the creation of a relationship with the gendered other to the maintenance of relationships within the nuclear family. This story focuses on the matriarchal power structure within the family and challenges the fairy tale norm of marriage without choice. The film *Enchanted*, meanwhile, interrupts the fairy tale it begins presenting by transporting the characters from an animated green world to the middle of Manhattan. In this case, the female hero makes a valiant effort to uphold fairy tale norms in the face of twenty-first-century New Yorker skepticism. The film concludes with the fairy tale maiden and the Manhattan lawyer having negotiated a middle ground between belief in fairy tales and skepticism.

The fifth chapter will offer a counterpoint to the discussion of fairy tales as secular scripture in contemporary America with a consideration of recent Russian animated children’s films based on the bylini of the Илья Муромец (Ilja Muromec) corpus. I will consider imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet use and adaptation of these stories. Felix Oinas’s work on Soviet folkloristics and folklorists’ interactions with the government points toward a conscious use of secular and folk narrative to replace the
sacred scripture which had been exiled with the royal family. I am aware that bylini are not fairy tales, since they are grounded in specific geography, assert themselves to be factual, and tend to align the super-natural with villains. Nevertheless, I have chosen to focus on these texts in this chapter because of the popularity of the recent film reproductions and the role that the main characters of these texts play in contemporary Russian ideology.

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CHAPTER 2. ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STORY

_We are, as a species, addicted to story._

_Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories._

–Jonathan Gottschall

2.1 Introduction

John Niles argues that it is our use of story that separates man from other animals, and he identifies several functions of narrative including transmission of current knowledge, celebration of a community’s core values, and the creation of a ludic discursive space. Northrop Frye posits that every society has stories of at least two kinds: the mythical and the fabulous. Although mythical and fabulous narratives may have similar structures, the critical difference between them is the authority and social function they carry. The mythical narratives are the “more important group,” as they occupy the central ground of a society's verbal culture are considered to be revealed text,

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27 My thanks to Charles Ross for introducing me to Frye’s concept of secular scripture.
offer cosmic wisdom, and include secular stories of national origin.\textsuperscript{29} The fabulous folktale narratives, in contrast, are the peripheral group of narratives, which provide entertainment and have a more nomadic existence, crossing the boundaries of language and culture, though “as literature develops, ‘secular’ stories also begin to take root in the culture and contribute to the shared heritage of allusion.”\textsuperscript{30} Over time, individual mythical narratives coalesce into a mythology and inhere within a culture in response to social forces.\textsuperscript{31} Once established, mythologies can absorb fabulous material, through a sort of mythological imperialism, as with the history books of the Old Testament having become sacred.\textsuperscript{32} Jack Zipes argues that this has happened with fairy tales as the classical fairy tale makes it appear that we are all part of a universal community with shared values and norms, that we are all striving for the same happiness….We need only have faith and believe in the classical fairy tale, just as we are expected to have faith and believe in the American flag as we swear the pledge of allegiance.\textsuperscript{33}

This dissertation posits that in contemporary America the core narrative function that Frye describes is fulfilled by the fairy tales of the Grimm-Disney canon, though not only in their classical forms to which Zipes refers, and I will argue that their presence in

\textsuperscript{29} Frye, \textit{The Secular Scripture}, 6-8. Frye’s position is not, of course, universally shared. In his introduction to \textit{The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), George S. Williamson offers a balanced overview of the widely varying theoretical attitudes toward mythology from the eighteenth century to the present. He cites the work of Ivan Strensky and Bruce Lincoln, both critical of the value of myth (5), in opposition to the work of those like Frye, Bettelheim, Jung, Levi-Strauss, and Zipes who argue that mythological art and literature have some inherent value for the people who both produce and consume it. For the purposes of this dissertation, we shall agree with Frye, et. al.

\textsuperscript{30} Frye, \textit{The Secular Scripture}, 7-9.

\textsuperscript{31} Frye, \textit{The Secular Scripture}, 9-13.

\textsuperscript{32} Frye, \textit{The Secular Scripture}, 13.

\textsuperscript{33} Zipes, \textit{Fairy Tale as Myth}, 5.
contemporary American culture is deeper and more pervasive than the flag. This chapter will establish the significant role that sacred scripture has had in the formation of American cultural expression, offer a working definition of the fairy tale, sketch the process by which sacred scripture’s role in American public life has declined, and bring theoretical perspectives of formalism, tradition, and adaptation to bear on the contemporary fairy tale.

2.2 Sacred Scripture

Sacred scripture is text that provides an origin story, enumerates rules for living, and offers positive and negative examples of interaction with those rules. The Tanakh (or The Old Testament, scripture considered sacred by both Jews and Christians) does all of these things. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 offer creation stories. Rules for living can be found in the Ten Commandments, which appear in Exodus (20:1-17) and Deuteronomy (5:6-21), as well as in the guidelines for daily life and worship in Leviticus. The books of history, poetry, and prophecy abound with examples of lives lived well and ill in the stories of Moses, Ruth, Esther, Solomon, and David, among others.

Shared belief in the sacredness of these particular texts provides cultural cohesion. Indeed, the Torah, the five books which are attributed to Moses and which appear at the beginning of the Tanakh, occupy the center of Jewish intellectual life, and over millennia scholarly interaction with these texts has produced a rich tradition of argument and story, collectively Talmud, that further cement the Jewish community. Christian interaction with these same sacred texts from the time of Christ to the Early Modern Period produced a rich tradition of visual arts in Byzantine mosaics; medieval cathedral windows, statues, and icons; and Early Modern paintings as well as philosophical and literary texts. At
some points in history, common regard for these narratives has united Jews, Christians, and Muslims.\textsuperscript{34} In \textit{Peace Be Upon You: Fourteen Centuries of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Conflict and Cooperation}, Zachary Karabell notes for example that “Judaism was central to the formation of Islam, and for a millennium and half, until the end of World War II, Jews under Muslim rule enjoyed more safety, freedom, and autonomy than they ever did under Christian rule.”\textsuperscript{35} The common recognition of one another as people of the book has at sometimes and in some places superseded political animosity among these groups.

For a millennium, however, the political power held by the Christian majority in the Western world meant that their sacred scripture, the Christian Bible, was also the secular scripture, and many of our great works of literature depend on a thorough knowledge of biblical narrative in order to be fully understood.\textsuperscript{36} In the twenty-first-century Western world, the Bible no longer holds this status. In a recent world literature course I taught, for example, the undergrads were unable to make the connection between the prologue to Goethe’s \textit{Faust} and the Old Testament Book of Job, in which God allowed Satan to destroy Job’s life in order to test his faithfulness to the God who had always protected and prospered him (Job 1:9). Job, unconscious of this bargain, remained


\textsuperscript{35} Karabell, \textit{Peace Be Upon You}, 8.

\textsuperscript{36} In some periods, particularly Early Modern and Modern, a thorough knowledge of classical myth is also necessary as Biblical allusions share the page with classical ones. See, for example, the poetry of Anne Bradstreet, which mixes Puritan theology with classical imagery. On the mélange of Christian and classical traditions in Early Modern literature, see Isabel Rivers, \textit{Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry: A Student's Guide}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (New York: Psychology Press, 1994).
faithful to God despite the hardships visited upon him by Satan, and was ultimately rewarded (Job 42:10-15). In Goethe’s play, in contrast, God allows Mephistopheles to attempt to lure Faust away from the right path (Prologue). Mephistopheles’s efforts take the form of a bargain with Faust that Mephistopheles will give him a continuous stream of new experiences but claim his soul the moment Faust is content (ll. 1473-1479). Faust is aware of the bargain he has made with the devil and participates fully in the range of experiences, both good and bad, that Mephistopheles offers him. This contrast between Job’s and Faust’s levels of participation in the destruction of their own lives offers fertile ground for conversation in the classroom, but only if students come to the latter text equipped with knowledge of the biblical story. In my experience they are able to discuss Faust’s interactions with Margarete, Wagner, and Mephistopheles in terms of morality, but their lack of familiarity with the Job narrative blinds them to the complexity of Goethe’s presentation. Although most students have some familiarity with biblical scripture, and some even attend worship services every weekend, they lack fluency with biblical stories and images because these are not the core narratives at the heart of their community.

The communicative efficacy of Goethe’s allusion to Job and other biblical allusions that pervade Western literature from the medieval period through the Enlightenment has depended upon the reading public’s habit of daily contact with biblical text through personal devotional reading and/or attendance at corporate worship more than once per week.37 By the fifteenth-century in England, this Biblical scripture was

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made even more accessible by the flourishing of commercial production of books of hours, that tool through which devout lay people were able to participate in the sort of daily worship carried out within cloistered communities. In his introduction to *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life*, Roger S. Wieck notes that from the late thirteenth to the early sixteenth century, the Book of Hours was the medieval best-seller, number one for nearly 250 years….because it was on the pages of Books of Hours that the best artists created some of the most beautiful pictures of the period, and because the words that were also on these pages offered their medieval reader an intimate conversation with one of the most important people in his or her life: the Virgin Mary.\textsuperscript{38}

As a consequence of their bestseller status, these books survive in much greater quantities than the manuscripts containing hagiography, romances, and love lyrics, which were also kept in medieval homes. In *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers 1240-1570*, Eamon Duffy reports “almost 800 manuscript books of hours made for use in England are scattered in libraries all over the world, and surviving printed versions produced for the English market in the two generations before the reformation are even more abundant.”\textsuperscript{39} (3). According to Wieck, this abundance reflects both the laity’s envy of the clergy’s prayers, their books, and their direct relationship with God and the cult of the Virgin Mary.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{40} Wieck, *Time Sanctified*, 27.
Horae were generally used privately, or within domestic worship settings, and they were often bespoke manuscripts, therefore varying greatly in their level of customization and illumination. They are, however, surprisingly consistent in their contents across time and geography, containing most often the Hours of the Virgin, the Litany, a calendar of saints’ feast days, the Penitential Psalms, the Gradual Psalms, and the Office of the Dead. Such a book may also include the Hours of the Holy Spirit and the Hours of the Cross. This constancy created among the people who used horae a reading community for whom the texts of the prayers and the visual program of the miniatures became a common idiom. These texts and illuminations focused the users’ experience on the person of Mary and on the necessity of penance and repentance. The repetitive reading of these texts over time inscribed the language of these passages on the minds of the reading community and created an inventory of responses to the vagaries of daily life in the same way that regular repetition of our family stories burns them into our memories.

Even after the Reformation when the use of hours declined sharply, biblical scripture continued to be prevalent in daily life. The 1662 Book of Common Prayer offers members of the Church of England structured liturgies for morning and evening prayer,

41 Duffy, Marking the Hours, 5-6; Wieck, Time Sanctified, 27-28.
42 Wieck notes that “if the Book of Hours can be compared to a Gothic cathedral, the Hours of the Virgin would be its high altar, placed at the center of the choir and surmounted by an elaborately carved and painted altarpiece on top of which would be mounted, at a height close to the soaring vaults of the church, a radiant statue of the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child” (Time Sanctified 60). The Hours of Virgin rehearse the important events of Mary’s life at assigned hours of the day: annunciation at matins, visitation at lauds, nativity at prime, etc. (Wieck Time Sanctified 60).
43 Even Horae that do not include a complete psalter often contain the Penitential Psalms, traditionally attributed to King David as part of his penance for adultery and murder (Wieck, Time Sanctified, 99), and these invite the user to use David’s words to repent his or her own transgressions. The Litany, which generally follows the Penitential Psalms, is a “list of saints with each invocation followed by ‘Ora pro nobis’—‘Pray for us’” (Wieck, Time Sanctified, 101), and it is a means by which the user of the Book of Hours enlists the intercession of the saints.
each of which includes the reading of psalms according to a set schedule that guides the reader through all 150 psalms over the course of a month. This kind of constant and repetitive exposure to biblical passages creates a familiarity with the language and the content that bleeds over into everyday discourse. When, for example, Mary Rowlandson writes the memoir of her captivity during Metacom’s War (1676), she frames her story as one of being made abject like Job, and Biblical scripture is her constant companion, offering her hope that God will deliver her as he delivered Job.  

Furthermore, in Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know – And Doesn’t, Steven Prothero notes that even outside of Anglican communities in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America “basic literacy and religious literacy were one. Americans acquired, as they learned to read, at least the rudiments of a Protestant worldview, which (because of widespread literacy) was by no means confined to elites or, for that matter Protestants.” In Early America, piety was intertwined with public life, and the Protestant Bible, catechisms, and sermons provided shared narratives of cultural cohesion. This cohesion worked to bind into community the many religious groups represented in the American colonies. Although the New England Puritans often get the

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44 In describing the relationship of her captor’s to her, Rowlandson quotes Job 16:2 “This was the comfort I had from them, miserable comforters are ye all, as he said” (italics original; Mary Rowlandson, The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together with the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed: Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlansdon and Related Documents, ed. Neal Salisbury [Boston: Bedford St. Martins, 1997], 74). In describing a conversation she has with her son who was also taken prisoner, “We had Husband and Father, and Children, and Sisters, and Friends, and Relations, and House, and Home, and many Comforts of this Life: but now we may say, as Job, Naked came I out of my Mother’s Womb, and naked shall I return: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, Blessed be the name of the Lord” (italics original; Rowlandson, The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, 82).  
most coverage in American history classes, they did not hold a monopoly on the American colonies. In *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*, David Holmes highlights the religious diversity of the late colonial and early federal periods, enumerating the myriad sects who found this New World to be safe space for living out their vision of the early church and also noting that the first census in 1790 “counted 1,234 Jews in a total American population of almost three million” whose synagogues were present in many major port cities. Indeed, despite their diversity of denominational affiliation, the signatories to the Declaration of Independence invoke the Creator in their justification for action.

In early America the Biblical scripture that was sacred to some was also simultaneously a secular scripture whose stories were familiar to all educated members of the society because of the way education happened and because of the prevalence of Biblical allusions in art and literature. It performed the functions of origin story, rules for living, and models of life lived well and ill as well as serving in the role of narrative corpus around which community coalesced.

By contrast, twenty-first century piety is separated from American public life by the rise of secularism, which has transformed the statement in the Bill of Rights that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” to mean something more along the lines of ‘government shall not talk about God.’ Even Christian conservatives who seek to bring American culture

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49 According to ProCon.org, ‘As of Aug. 2006, the United States Code contained 68 mentions of ‘God.’ 46 of these references were in shipping and environmental codes that discussed ‘acts of God.’ The remaining twenty-two references refer to personal allegiance to God among citizens and to ceremonial references to
closer to their interpretation of Biblical scripture do so without overt references to God in the laws they write. Before we delve too deeply into the process of how this loss of status took place, we need a working definition of the fairy tale.

2.3 Fairy Tales

“Fairy tale” is a collocation that resists definition. This pair of words has been applied to all sorts of texts from oral narratives of the heroic and miraculous to highly wrought belles lettres novels. Despite the name, however, these tales rarely take place in fairyland, and the main characters are merchants, rich families, nobility, and royalty rather than fairies. Early twentieth century efforts at definition focused on the search for the origins of all tales in an Ur-tale, and inquiry into origins and transmission patterns has dominated discussions within fairy tale studies for much of the last hundred years. As a corollary to the search for origins, the predominant scholarly opinion has long been that literary fairy tales found in framed collections like Straparola’s The Pleasant Nights and Basile’s Tale of Tales as well as in anthologies collected and edited by folklorists like the Grimms and Afanasyev were the written variants of oral tales, which had been in


51 Fairy tales are not folk tales. Though the two are often grouped together in anthologies of Folk and Fairy Tales, in contrast to fairy tales, folk tales offer brief, linear plots concerning village people of low station. Often lacking a happy ending, folk tale narratives are “not about the joys of getting married, but about the difficulties of being married” (Ruth B. Bottigheimer, Fairy Tales: A New History [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009], 4). They reflect the setting and beliefs of their audience without recourse to the marvelous. Folktales offer the audience solidarity rather than wish fulfillment.
circulation among the folk for an unspecifiable number of centuries.⁵² According to this model, each of the upper-class urban men who included fairy tales in his books first heard some variant of those fairy tales from a peasant informant. Although contemporary scholars have increasingly been interrogating the model of folk generation, it persists among the reading public.

In part, the persistence of this model of folk generation is perpetuated by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimms’ claims of folk informants, but Bottigheimer’s thorough examination of Wilhelm’s own notes in the first edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, the prefaces of early editions, and letters and diaries from the Grimms’ circle of acquaintances show that the Kassel informants were not earthy peasant folk, but rather middle class women who had always been urban, and Bottigheimer finds no evidence for the putative nursemaids for whom these women are mouthpieces. When the tales in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* are matched with their sources, the ones that can be attributed to actual folk tellers are generally folk tales.⁵³

Despite these challenges to its integrity, the folk origin model persists in part because it strengthens the interpretation of fairy tales as distilling a national cultural mood into narrative.⁵⁴ In *Breaking the Magic Spell*, Jack Zipes argues that folk and fairy tales “bridge a gap in [the audience’s] understanding of social problems in a language and

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narrative mode familiar to the listeners’ experiences.” Furthermore, the diffusion of the creative force behind the tales to the mass of folk coheres the folk together. These centuries-old, orally circulating tales among the folk are the putative source that bleeds recognizable folktale motifs into medieval lais and romances. However, the folk origin model fails to account for the disappearance of such oral production when, as Rudolph Schenda notes, other forms of oral communication, such as the legend, the jest, and the recital of daily events, have continued to exist symbiotically with print.

Recent scholarship by Ruth Bottigheimer posits an alternative, textually-based origin model for fairy tales, which is grounded on research into social and political history and codicology which “converge so unerringly on 1550's Venice and Giovanfrancesco Straparola's newly created tales.” In this model, the early authors of fairy tales draw on the tales of magic which had existed among the larger body of folk tales but adapt them with regard to the audience’s concerns about class mobility, wealth, and new interactions with the marvelous, thanks to expanded exploration of the world at macro and micro levels. This author and text model of fairy tale origin contextualizes and historicizes the narratives rather than universalizing them.

The textual origin model posits that the fairy tale is, however, not only literary but also urban and male. The rise tale pattern, in which a poor protagonist first marries a royal spouse under marvelous circumstances and then becomes wealthy, “address[es] the aspirations of an urban artisanal readership” in the up-and-down economy of mid-

56 Schenda, “Telling Tales—Spreading Tales,” 89.
sixteenth century Venice.” Furthermore, Bottigheimer argues that recent anthropological and social research shows that country folk did not have the requisite knowledge to invent fairy tales. Urban dwellers, on the other hand, had a greater degree of literacy as well as interaction across the lines of class and ethnicity that would have allowed them to create and consume fairy tale narratives. Among urbanites, men like Giovan Francesco Straparola (c. 1480-c. 1557) in Venice and Giambattista Basile (1575-1632) from Naples were the ones with the resources to compose and to publish.

To account for the spread of fairy tales beyond their putative origin in Italy, Bottigheimer uses codicology and literary analysis to establish the availability of Straparola and Basile’s narratives to the four French fairy tale compositors in the salons of late seventeenth century Paris, concluding that “Straparola created the form. Basile provided much of the content that later authors adopted.” Not merely translating, Perrault, d’Aulnoy, and others also adapted the material to clean up the tales and make them less bawdy, though not necessarily less violent. Perrault's tales in particular showcase this pattern of cleaning up and polishing source material from Basile and Straparola. This argument depends on Perrault, d’Aulnoy, Lhériter, and collectors such

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58 Bottigheimer, Fairy Godfather, 2.
60 The French Foursome is made up of “the most well known names in an explosion of fairy tale publication in the years around 1700” (Bottigheimer, Fairy Tales: A New History, 56). They are Charles Perrault (1628-1703), Mlle Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier de Villandon (1664-1734), Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy (c. 1650-1705), and Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve (1695-1755). For a brief discussion of the interactions among their fairy tale publications, see Bottigheimer’s Fairy Tales: A New History, chapter three “The Late Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Layers: Perrault, Lhériter, and Their Successors,” 53-74.
61 Bottigheimer, Fairy Tales: A New History, 74.
63 For specific examples of cleaning up the tales, see Bottigheimer’s Fairy Tales: A New History 68-69. Bottigheimer's evidence for Perrault's access to Basile is somewhat speculative, depending on the presence of a copy of the text in Neapolitan in Paris, the availability of this text to Perrault, and his ability to muddle through the Neapolitan and simply get it or to rely on his Italian-speaking brother for help (Fairy Tales: A New History, 66-67).
as Charlotte-Rose Caumont de la Force (1650-1724) sharing a common source text to which no one else had access at that time so that their tales became the source for the next generation of variants in the tradition in English and German.

Though the narrative of Italian creation, French editing, and German re-editing is temptingly tidy, it leaves many questions without satisfactory answers. Bottigheimer’s codicological trail from Straparola and Basile through French intermediaries like Perrault and d’Aulnoy to the Grimms is certainly convincing, as the overview of the Cinderella (510A) tale type in Chapter 2 will show. However, Bottigheimer’s model does little to account for the presence of similar stories recorded elsewhere. In eighteenth-century Russia, for example, Perrault’s “Cendrillon” was first published in 1697 with the title “Золушка” (Zolushka). This tale, which is still available in Russian picture books today, is considered by the reading public to be distinct from the more complex 510A tale “Василиса прекрасная” (Vasilisa the Beautiful), which appears in the collection of Александр Николаевич Афанасьев (Aleksandr Nikolayevič Afanas’ev), a project similar in scope to and contemporary with the Grimms’ Kinder- und Hausmärchen. Though Vasilisa’s story begins similarly to Basile’s “Cenerentola,” Perrault’s “Cendrillon,” and the Grimms’ “Aschenputtel,” with a merchant’s daughter subject to the tyranny of a stepmother, this text differs markedly from those three as the stepfamily are not the only ones who force Vasilisa to work for them.

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65 According to Maria Nikolajeva, “Afanasyev, Aleksandr,” The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales: The Western Fairy Tale Tradition from Medieval to Modern, ed. Jack Zipes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4-5 at 4, Afanasyev’s contribution to the field of fairy tale studies is his “collection, description, and classification of material.” His eight volume collection draws on stories Afanasyev himself collected but also represents the work of other folklorists and the archive of the Russian Geographic Society.
Баба Яга (Baba Yaga), the witch in the woods, is the one who sets Vasilisa to seemingly impossible tasks; however, unlike the stepmother, she rewards Vasilisa for their completion. Furthermore, Vasilisa is not in competition with her stepsisters for the hand of the tsar. Vasilisa’s escape from the control of her stepmother is completed in the first move of the tale before she is recognized by the tsar for her superior spinning, weaving, and sewing skills in the second move. Thus, the first move of the tale rewards the younger Vasilisa for her obedience to her mother, to her stepmother, and to a magical doll with freedom from the household of the stepmother, who is burned to ashes along with her daughters by the coal she sent Vasilisa to get. Then, the second move rewards an older Vasilisa for her own skill and diligence. Piety and compassion, traits central to the Perrault and Grimm versions of the tales, are not mentioned in this variant of the Cinderella tradition. Other tales that are recognizable as variants in the 510A tale type while not being obviously derivative from the Western European Straparola-Perrault-Grimm line of descent appear even earlier in China and India. Thus, Bottigheimer’s argument that narratives spread with colonization is unconvincing.

Beyond the questions Bottigheimer’s model leaves unanswered, though, a book-and-author origin for fairy tales has far reaching repercussions for their interpretation. The peasant storytellers of Basile’s frame tale and the folk informants claimed by Jacob

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66 Baba Yaga’s role of setter of tests and bestower of rewards is similar to that of Frau Holle in the German canon. However, Baba Yaga’s presence in the Russian canon is more widespread. In addition to her appearances in reward and punishment tales like “Frau Holle,” other Vasilisas and Ivans encounter her in their own tales.


68 See Bottigheimer, Fairy Tales: A New History, 106 for this argument.
and Wilhelm Grimm exemplify the veracity topos that adds weight to a text by claiming an origin beyond that of the author. Ostensibly, the text framed by such a claim is not the mere fancy of the author, but the author’s transmission of a narrative created by someone with more authority to tell the story.

In each case, these women who tell stories are strongly associated with the local folk culture, and the male compilers of tales act as a bridge between the local culture and the broader, more educated, more cosmopolitan audience of the book. Basile’s storytellers, for example, are “the best of the city” chosen from “all the women of the land” who responded to his summons, and the prince asks them to tell tales “of the sort that old women usually entertain little ones with.”

“Best” here does not mean prominent or beautiful or wealthy. These women are earthy and deformed: “lame Zeza, twisted Cecca, goitered Meneca, big-nosed Tolla, hunchback Popa, drooling Antonella, snout-faced Ciulla, cross-eyed Paola, mangy Ciommetella, and shitty Iacova.” By diffusing the authorship of the tales in their collections, Basile and the Grimms aid the formation of national identities because they can claim that these stories represent the ideas and ideals of the broader culture from which the putative tellers are drawn rather than representing only the imaginative prowess of the authors themselves. Without this connection to the authority of the broader public, stories do not function as well as national rallying points. Furthermore, later interpretation of fairy tales based on the folk origins model, such as Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell’s psychological and archetypal interpretations of fairy tales narratives as representations of the human psyche, take on overtones of

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69 Giambattista Basile, *The Tale of Tales*, 41-42.
70 Giambattista Basile, *The Tale of Tales*, 42.
propagandistic manipulation of the masses by elites once the stories become the tools of “canny suppliers [who] recognize and respond to…people's conscious or unconscious incorporation of tales that suit their needs.” Although Bottigheimer’s literary origin model is better supported, the folk origin model is probably what has informed our interpretation and adaptation of these stories since the nineteenth century. Certainly, the mere fact of the persistence of the model of folk origins is no reason to leave it unexamined. However, Bottigheimer’s proposed alternative is insufficiently convincing to merit the radical repercussions it precipitates.

It seems to me that Zipes and Bottigheimer are standing at the extremes of a pendulum’s arc, and each is overstating the case. Taking a more moderate stance in their introduction to Out of the Woods: The Origins of the Literary Fairytale in Italy and France, Nancy Canepa and Antonella Ansani articulate a view that gives credit to Straparola and Basile for the invention of the literary fairy tale while still allowing for the idea of folk participation in the formation of the tales as well as the idea that tales-as-such were in circulation for centuries before Straparola and Basile. Thus, Basile can be credited not with the invention of anything, but with “the decision to rewrite the fairy tales”.

71 Bottigheimer, Fairy Tales: A New History, 107. Carl G. Jung, Aspects of the Feminine, trans. R/F. C. Hull, Bollinger Series (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) discusses fairy tales in terms of the self’s quest for union with the gendered other (144-51). Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, 2nd ed., Bollinger series 17 (1949. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) identifies the fairy tale protagonist with the hero of the monomyth, everyself’s quest for individuation and maturity. If fairy tales are a project of the folk, then they are reflective of the zeitgeist of that folk, an artifact of the collaboration of the people who read/hear and retell them. If, however, as Bottigheimer argues, fairy tales are the tools of producers driven by profit, they are untrustworthy vessels for the zeitgeist, and may become prescriptive models, rather than descriptive.

This kind of literary appropriation of folkloric material (whether whole tales or motifs) participates in a widespread seventeenth-century “appropriation of material that had previously been relegated to a heterogeneous spectrum of popular genres such as street theater, broadsides and chapbooks, festivals (such as Carnival) and, of course, folktales.” Such appropriation can be traced back even further thanks to Jan Ziolkowski’s analysis of analogues to contemporary tales like “Little Red Riding Hood” in medieval Latin poetry. Thus, the symbiotic interplay of textual and oral traditions sharing motifs and plots extends from at least the medieval period to the present.

For me as both a reader and a scholar, one of the biggest problems with the foregoing theories of fairy-tale origins is the sharp divide which they create between the written narratives of Basile, Straparola, and the Grimms and the written narratives of earlier periods. Both the folk origins model and Bottigheimer’s model regard the fairy tale as distinct from earlier and later forms of published narrative. In contrast, I see fairy tales as one step in a continuum that reaches back into medieval romance, saga, and epic poetry and reaches forward into twentieth-century Westerns and contemporary romantic comedies.

My broad definition of the term “fairy tale” has two key components. The first is the formalist description of wonder tales in *The Morphology of the Folktale* by

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74 Canepa and Ansani, “Introduction,” 16.
Владимир Яковлевич Пропп (Vladimir Jakovlevič Propp, 1895-1970). Propp outlines thirty-one functions that are the building blocks from which fairy tales are made. Not all functions are necessarily present in all tales, but the ones that are present generally occur in the order Propp has laid out. Propp himself acknowledges that his model maps best, of course, onto, the corpus of Russian fairy tales with which he worked, but he also asserts that “the very same structure is exhibited, for example, by certain novels of chivalry.” Furthermore, Propp’s model remains a useful for examining the structure of contemporary retellings and adaptations, which, even when represented as realistic stories, adhere to the pattern of functions defined by Propp: a harmonious initial situation is marred when villainy occurs or a lack (or interdiction) manifests, the hero sets out to fix what is wrong and is aided by a donor and/or magical helper who tests the hero and provides aid themselves or through magical objects, the hero struggles with and defeats the villain and/or ameliorates the lack. Upon the hero’s return home, the hero’s identity may be challenged by a false hero, but ultimately the hero is recognized, is transfigured, achieves union with the other, and takes on some higher or greater role than in the initial situation. Functions may be trebled, and whole sections may be repeated, creating multiple moves within a larger tale.

The second component of my broad definition of the term fairy tale is a recognition that the marvelous, the magical helpers and magical objects in Propp’s model,
can be manifested in many forms. Within the Grimm-Disney canon, marvelous elements like a fairy godmother, an enchanted pumpkin, or the use of magic help create a discursive space for the tale by moving the characters into an extraordinary setting that makes exploration possible or by challenging the hero to perform beyond his or her normal capacity. In earlier narratives along this continuum like the medieval romances, marvelous elements are interpreted in symbolic ways that bring them into the realm of the miraculous, like the holy grail or the Green Knight’s beheading game.79 Those contemporary adaptations which claim the label of fairy tale generally preserve marvelous elements, as we shall see in the remaining chapters of this dissertation. However, contemporary novels and films that appear to be verisimilar and yet are built on Propp’s structure, often lack magic entirely. The super-natural and the miraculous are almost entirely absent from this body of texts. Instead, the magical objects of the Grimm-Disney canon have been replaced by coincidence and technology, like Google and the smart phone.80 Meanwhile, the role of the magical helper, endemic to the traditional canon in the form of the fairy godmother or talking animal, has been occupied by the wise outsider: sometimes an older woman and other times a token minority character in an otherwise homogenous cast.81 Although these modern substitutes are no longer magical, they do continue to fulfill the same narrative roles previously occupied by glass slippers and enchanted mice. As in Straparola’s tales, the marvelous in modern fairy tales

80 In the 2008 romantic comedy 27 Dresses, for example, the role of magical object is filled by the protagonist’s Filofax which contains her personal calendar, contacts, and records of interactions with other characters. In the 1998 romantic comedy You’ve Got Mail, the then-cutting-edge system of chat rooms and e-mail via America On-Line creates the discursive space in which two characters meet and fall in love.
81 In Universal Picture’s 2011 romance Leap Year, the wise outsider role is filled by three older men: the boat captain, the station master / B&B owner, and the priest. In Lionsgate’s 2001 drama Chocolat, the wise outsider role is fulfilled by both an elderly woman and a gypsy handyman.
“hold[s] out a promise of fortune before the eyes of the unfortunate.”

Elements of the modern marvelous aid the protagonist in overcoming obstacles on his or her journey, act as tokens of recognition, reward success, and sometimes punish the villain.

The reading (and viewing) public’s attitude toward the real and the marvelous has varied over time. In “Marvelous Realities: Reading the Merveilleux in the Seventeenth-Century French Fairy Tale,” Lewis Seifert draws on Todorov and Flahault to argue that the marvelous, as a defining feature of the fairy tale, is highly variable and “adapted to the cultural contexts in which it is evoked and, particularly, to its prevailing cultural discourses of the “real.” Suzanne Magnanini concurs. In her discussion of Fairy Tale Science, Magnanini regards the marvelous in Giovanni Francesco Straparola’s tales of The Pleasant Nights in sixteenth-century Italy as a response to the “steady erosion of facts on which Early Modern European society founded various beliefs,” an erosion happening in the sciences just as the Reformation begins to fragment the Christian church. Magnanini asserts that Straparola and, later, Giambattista Basile wrote during unique historical moments characterized by the pervasive presence of the marvelous in everyday life: previously unknown objects arriving from far off lands, microscopes and telescopes opening the limina of the known world, and the proliferation of scientific areas of knowledge. In this environment, wonders would have been legitimate subjects for inquiry, and fairy tales were "actively engaged in dialogue with the scientific tradition" of their

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82 Bottigheimer, Fairy Godfather, 35.
84 Suzanne Magnanini, Fairy-Tale Science: Monstrous Generation in the Tales of Straparola and Basile (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 11.
In contrast, Ruth Bottigheimer regards the marvelous in Straparola’s fairy tales as a means of escape offering the possibility for upward mobility to a “newly emerging reading public” of “literate urban artisans and craftsmen” who struggled with economic instability in sixteenth-century Venice because their prosperity was threatened by increasing industrialization and a sharp divide between rich and poor. The description of the audience in Renaissance Italy offered by Magnanini and Bottigheimer is remarkably similar to the American audience of the twenty-first century who, judging by movie theater marquees and book shop displays, have a similarly strong appetite for the marvelous. Both are largely urban or suburban, have “deep hopes for material improvement,” daydream of a better life, and, therefore, enjoy fairy tales as “illusions of happiness to come.” Both audiences also live amid the swift advancement of scientific theory.

For the purposes of this work, fairy tales can be defined as fictional narratives that simultaneously transmit cultural values and offer the audience discursive space to imagine “a future that differs from what now exists” as they observe the main character’s struggle to ameliorate the lack that was the impetus to action. Like metaphors, fairy tales enrich the audience’s understanding of that which they describe through

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85 Magnanini, *Fairy-Tale Science*, 9. In support of this thesis, Magnanini offers the argument that it would not have been unusual for men of letters to participate in scientific debate, nor for scientists to be also literary (see discussion of Renaissance men, *Fairy-Tale Science*, 16), especially since it is only in the seventeenth century that doing science shifts from a philological process of mining the classical texts to an experimental/experiential process based on observation.

86 Bottigheimer, *Fairy Godfather*, 31-32. This line of reasoning leads Bottigheimer into speculative territory: “In such an economy, marrying into great wealth was just about the only way to avert the fearsome prospect of poverty, and that, clearly, could only be achieved by magic” (*Fairy Godfather*, 34).


analogy. In some cases, however, longer fairy tales can be made up of one move after another, as with Mme. d’Aulnoy’s “Finette Cendron” which brackets the Cinderella story at its core with something like Hansel and Gretel at the beginning and ends with a move reminiscent of Jack and the Beanstalk. Tales can also be nested within one another, as with Scheherazade’s narrative style in The Thousand and One Nights. In many contemporary retellings and adaptations, fairy tales have taken on the complex narrative patterns made possible by forms like novel and film, but their underlying Proppian structure marks them as fairy tales nonetheless, as they, like all fairy tales, narrate the “ending of two people's difficulties and the beginning of happily ever after” Increasingly, as we will see in Chapter 3, the two people may not be a romantic pair, and happily ever after may not refer to wedded bliss.

2.4 The Formation of a Secular Scripture

In the twentieth century the functions of sacred scripture (origin stories, rules for living, examples of lives well lived, and social cohesion among believers) were divided. Scientific theory provided the origin story while fairy tales, widely available since the

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89 Niles, Homo Narrans, 4.
91 Scheherazade’s opening story “The Merchant and the Jinni” does not come to a close as the night approaches the dawn. Rather, the jinni within Scheherazade’s story has agreed to hear another story, and the Sultan in Scheherazade’s life agrees to hear that next story on the next night. The Arabian Nights. Tales of 1001 Nights, trans. Malcolm C. Lyons and Ursula Lyons, 3 vols. (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), 1: 10-36. This nested narrative pattern is repeated throughout the collection.
92 This complexity is built through the presence of multiple points of view, backstory, subplots, and parallel events, all of which are made possible in novels by *mise en page* norms such as chapter breaks, the *** marking across the page within a chapter, and date or location information set off in bold or italics. Cinema offers an even greater repertoire of possibilities for signaling complexities of plot as the visual cues of setting and costume help the audience stay oriented.
93 Bottigheimer, Fairy Tales: A New History, 6.
Victorian period in anthologies and picture books and now from the multi-media Disney empire, currently offer positive and negative examples of human interaction and the cohesion of a shared narrative as a cultural reference point. Neither the Grimm-Disney canon nor current scientific theory offer rules for living as concisely stated as those of Judeo-Christian scripture; however, both fairy tale norms and scientific theories can become codes of behavior. Social Darwinism, for example, applies the evolutionary principal of the survival of the fittest to human economic and political interactions to argue that those who have more resources and power have achieved such because they are somehow better or stronger. Furthermore, fairy tales and scientific theories are both necessary because, while the Big Bang and the theory of evolution could function as common explanations of origin, these describe processes, rather than relating narratives. They do not offer a hero with whom we can identify, just the clinical description of the interaction of atoms and molecules, predators and prey. Narrative is, however, a critical element of social culture, and this lack in scientific theory is significant. The phenomenon of the fairy tale’s proliferation in our popular culture, I would argue, is not a process of the fabulous being appropriated by the mythical as Frye describes in his discussion of Secular Scripture, but rather the fabulous supplanting the mythical (biblical) narratives that are no longer able to serve as socially cohesive stories. Because they do

94 This theory advanced by 19th century sociologist Herbert Spencer in The Principles of Biology (London: William and Norgate, 1864).
95 The power of these scientific origin stories in contemporary America is evidenced by recent pushback from conservative Christians that denies the validity of current scientific theory. See for example, the Answers in Genesis website, which describes itself as, “an apologetics ministry, dedicated to helping Christians defend their faith and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ effectively. We focus on providing answers to questions about the Bible—particularly the book of Genesis—regarding key issues such as creation, evolution, science, and the age of the earth.” Ken Hamm, the CEO of Answers in Genesis, recently held “The Debate at the Creation Museum” with Bill Nye, the well-known science-educator, viewable here: https://answersingenesis.org/countering-the-culture/bill-nye-debates-ken-ham/
not claim to be literal truth, and therefore do not compete with scientific theory in the way that literalists have forced biblical scripture to do, fairy tales are well suited to replace biblical narrative as a shared cultural reference point. In contrast to early nineteenth-century Germany, in which the Grimm fairy tale project was part of the larger, overt movement on the part of Romantics to create a national mythos grounded in German mythology (rather than the Semitic mythology of Judaism and Christianity), in American society, the fairy tale has become our secular scripture while no one was looking.

The Bible’s loss of status is the result of a perfect storm of challenges to its authority in the last two hundred and fifty years, beginning with the movement away from an allegorical understanding of biblical narrative and toward an insistence on literal interpretation in the nineteenth century. Indeed, the strident voices of contemporary Christianity’s conservatives claim that true believers must embrace the Bible as a literally true and accurate representation of past events. This insistence, however, has not always been the case. In his introduction to Christian Fantasy, Colin Manlove labels literalist

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96 Fairy tales even become a framework for creating narratives about the people who do science. The idea of the lone underdog scientist who happens upon a discovery that changes the world keeps discouraged graduate students working in labs all over America. The stories of tech giants like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs are also framed in terms of the self-made man, rags-to-riches story, a close relative of the Cinderella story, as discussed in Chapter 2.

97 See Williamson, The Longing for Myth in Germany, Chap. 2.
interpretations of the Bible as something belonging to Victorians and fundamentalists. At the same time the Victorians tended toward literalism, Darwin provided “an external criticism of ‘truth to fact’ by which to assess” the Bible. The conflict between the desire to regard the Bible as a literal account of the creation and early history of the world and the increasing challenge from scientific theory thus eroded the Bible’s traditional place in Western society.

The ongoing competition between biblical narrative and scientific theory is further complicated by the increasing diversity of world religions present in contemporary America. The Biblical canon of stories is no longer a reference point shared by all the people who interact with each other on a daily basis, and it, therefore, ceases to function as a means of social cohesion. This separation of religion from civic community has resulted in “Americans [who] are both deeply religious and profoundly

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98 Nevertheless, Manlove notes that in the backlash against the supernatural, which began in the seventeenth century, there was initially tolerance for continued use of the Christian supernatural, and a co-opting of the pagan supernatural to figure the Christian (Christian Fantasy, 3). In today's world, however, realistic narrative does not tolerate even the Christian supernatural. Miracles do not happen on Main Street, USA. Recently, “the tendency has been towards desupernaturalising the Bible: but also towards remythologising it” (Manlove, Christian Fantasy, 2) and recognizing biblical narrative as mythology that draws on other mythological traditions. Even as we recognize that the Bible is not historical or scientific truth, some Christians are able to embrace the mythological numinousness of the text while embracing scientific theory, but this shift has not returned biblical narrative to the foundation of mainstream society. On the miraculous in protestant theology, see Spinoza’s Ethics.

Williamson offers a more complex narrative. “While some reformers challenged traditional beliefs and practices, others introduced theological rhetoric and modes of thought into the emerging institutions of art, scholarship, and politics….Such influences could flow in both directions, however, and in some cases a reformulated concept of the sacred was reimported from secular disciplines like aesthetics, philosophy, or philology back into the field of theology. The upshot of this was not a unidirectional secularization, but rather a process in which nonecclesiatical institutions and individuals competed with the churches and clergy to address the central theological and religious concerns of the German educated classes” (The Longing for Myth in Germany, 9-10). In this model, church and the arts are mutually influential even at a time of increasing secularization in general.

99 Manlove, Christian Fantasy, 156.
ignorant about religion.” In their 2010 report on the *U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey*, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life supports this assertion.

The Pew Forum’s religious knowledge survey included 32 questions about various aspects of religion: the Bible, Christianity, Judaism, Mormonism, world religions, religion in public life, and atheism and agnosticism. The average respondent answered 16 of the 32 religious knowledge questions correctly. Just 2% of those surveyed answered 29 or more questions correctly (including just eight individuals, out of 3,412 surveyed, who scored a perfect 32); 3% correctly answered fewer than five questions (including six respondents who answered no questions correctly).

Not only do Americans in general not know much about religion in general, but American Christians don’t know much about their own scripture. Pew notes, for example, that only 41% of Christians surveyed could “identify Job as the Biblical figure known for remaining obedient to God despite extraordinary suffering.” Thus, my students are not alone in their lack of knowledge about religious texts.

Although 37% of Americans surveyed by Pew reported reading sacred scripture outside of worship services at least once per week, few people outside of the cloistered life continue to mark the hours with daily Psalter reading, and the psalms have ceased to

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be the poetry that underpins our lives.\textsuperscript{104} The increasing diversity of religious belief among Americans, including secular humanism and atheism,\textsuperscript{105} means that the Bible no longer serves as a means of cultural cohesion. Although one might argue that sacred scripture has recently been making a comeback in political discourse, there is still a sharp divide between Biblical narratives and the production of twenty-first century texts, be they high-brow art and literature or popular culture. Contemporary texts like Madeleine L’Engle’s \textit{Certain Women}, which is a modern retelling of the story of King David, must overtly broadcast their intertextual references with direct quotes and names borrowed from biblical scripture.\textsuperscript{106}

This decline of Biblical scripture in American popular culture and the concomitant ascendance of fairy tales as American society’s secular scripture have taken place against the backdrop of modernity. In \textit{All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity}, Marshall Berman writes that while modernity may “promise us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world,” it also

\textsuperscript{104} On the Psalms as liturgical poems, see Kathleen Norris’s \textit{The Cloister Walk} (New York: Penguin, 1996), particularly, “The Paradox of the Psalms,” in which she writes: “In a monastic choir [the psalms] inevitably pull a person out of private prayer, into community and then into the word, into what might be termed praying the news. Psalm 74’s lament on the violation of sacred space: ‘Every cave in the land is a place where violence has made its home’ (v. 20) has become for me a prayer for the victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Watching television footage of the Los Angeles riots of early 1992 gave me a new context for the words of Psalm 55 that I encountered the next morning in the monastic choir: ‘I see nothing but violence and strife in the city’ (v. 9)” (100). Norris’s experience of the psalms becoming a framework for interaction with the world was also my own experience when I read them according to the morning and evening schedule of \textit{The Book of Common Prayer: 1662 Standard Edition}.


“threaten[s] to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.”

One of the hallmarks of modernity’s artistic and cultural movements has been a persistent demand for verisimilar representation of the realities of life. Films like the 1927 Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt (Berlin: Symphony of a Great City) present the mechanistic movement of people through the urban space over the course of a day. While this representation is beautiful, it is also dehumanizing. There is no one person with whom the viewer is invited to identify. No one is named. The perspective is so broad that all the people are merely cogs in the machine of the greater whole. In contrast, some realist modernist authors like Virginia Woolf offer the world stark representations of the day-to-day realities of modern life, zooming in to the minds of characters, and focusing on the ennui of decisions. Will we go to the lighthouse? Who will buy the flowers? Both the broadly impersonal and the intimately individual texts are truly verisimilar and very masterfully written, but they do not invite the audience to imagine the possibility that things can be different. Discourse about how we would like things to be is supplanted by depictions of how things are. In these texts (as well as others that populate anthologies and syllabi of modern literature surveys) there is no escape, and no consolation.

Ultimately, texts of this sort do not fill society’s need for narrative as discursive space, and two artistic responses to the starkness of the verisimilar developed. One type of response was that which focuses on the despair inherent in starkly realistic

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representations of life in the fin de siècle period. This response led to surrealist art (Picasso, Dali, Magritte, et. al.) and absurd literature (Beckett, Camus, Kafka, et. al.), which have joined realism in the canon. The second response, which has been left out of the canon of the long twentieth century, was an escape from realism into the fantastic, which led to the corpus of fairy tales, science fiction, and fantasy that flourished in the popular literature and cinema at the same time.

The texts produced by each of these responses to the realism of modernity are legitimate and worthy of study; however, only the former have been regarded by scholars and critics as elite texts and shelved under the label “Literature.” The latter, in contrast, have been labeled popular culture or genre fiction and segregated to their own sections of libraries and bookstores under the labels “Romance,” “Fantasy and Science Fiction,” and “Horror.” In his introduction to Film and Fairy Tales, Kristian Moen elaborates on Tolkien’s assertion that fairystories offer “Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, and Consolation,” noting that early twentieth-century fairy tale films were “especially conducive to contending with the effects of modernity; while often set in far-off realms of fantasy, they nevertheless helped articulate the ways in which we might see, understand and feel the effects of a changing modern world.”109 The neglect of texts representing an escape into the fantastic in response to modernity in surveys and scholarship on modern literature constitutes a scholarly lacuna.

This neglect is not surprising, though. In his discussion of the lack of critical insight among consumers of texts in his introduction to The Disney Middle Ages: A Fairy

109 Moen, Film and Fairy Tales, xvi.
Tale and Fantasy Past, Tison Pugh points out the dynamic by which these cultural artifacts avoid scrutiny

Disney claims for itself the realm of children’s fantasy and cloaks itself within this mantle: as children’s innocence is seen as a prized virtue within many discourses of Western thought, so too does Disney itself become camouflaged under a veneer of innocence, despite the commercial nature of its endeavors.  

Like the image of old furniture relegated to the nursery offered by Tolkien, fairy tales thus become objects that remain beneath our notice even as they are the space in which our children grow up and the foundation on which our future is formed. Like that furniture in the nursery, fairy tales are the heritage of the past even as they become the playthings of the next generation.

This capacity on the part of fairy tales to balance conservative preservation and creative adaptability means that they can easily continue to evolve with their cultural context. In her discussion of the simultaneous creativity and formulaic nature of folk and fairy tales, Anna Tavis draws on Juri Lotman to posit that creativity functions differently in “different types of texts in different cultures.” According to Lotman’s schema, unlike texts such as the nineteenth-century novel which are inherently heteroglossic and tend to “deconstruct what is perceived by the readers as their origins,” texts like folk and fairy tales follow a single system of rules which govern both form and content, such that

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all information is familiar to the audience.\textsuperscript{112} Rather than deconstructing what is known or believed, folktale creativity comes from I-to-me auto communication that serves as a mnemonic self-reminder of things already known.\textsuperscript{113} Each new encounter with a fairy tale reminds the audience of previous encounters with variants of that tale type as well as with other fairy tales, and even as tales adapt and change, they retain some of the motifs of previous variants in the tradition.

The world ‘tradition’ is often used in conjunction with fairy tales to talk about the many variants of a single tale type, which have been created through time. However, if we consider Michael Drout’s analysis of \textit{How Tradition Works}, we can see that each new variant of a fairy tale participates in that fairy tale’s tradition in the same way that each new Thanksgiving dinner participates in that holiday’s tradition.\textsuperscript{114} According to Drout, “The repetition of actions across temporal boundaries” forms a tradition.\textsuperscript{115} Thus, each time a tale is read and enjoyed, or each time it is rewritten and appreciated, it becomes more likely that the tale will be read or rewritten again. Further, Drout argues “the successful practice of a traditional behavior depends upon the previous successful practice of that behavior, and the continued maintenance of the tradition depends upon a series of successful enactments of the behavior in question.”\textsuperscript{116} From one iteration to the next, there must be a critical mass of sameness in order for the tradition to be recognizable as such, though there is inevitable variation introduced by the growth and

\textsuperscript{112} Tavis, “Fairy Tales,” 196.
\textsuperscript{113} Tavis, “Fairy Tales,” 197.
\textsuperscript{115} Drout, \textit{How Tradition Works}, 1.
\textsuperscript{116} Drout, \textit{How Tradition Works}, 9.
change of the participants, the passage of time, and changes in cultural context.\textsuperscript{117} However, there is “no one formal characteristic that can be singled out to determine whether or not one action is indeed a repetition of another. When some critical percentage of possible similarities, or some key similarity is attained, our minds classify the two things as fundamentally similar.”\textsuperscript{118} As is evident when one reads multiple variants of the same fairy tale, they are recognizable as being related despite the changes in the protagonist’s name, the different means of access to the marvelous, and the treatment of the stepmother and sisters in the endings. The search for similarity goes only as far as the previous iteration of the tradition,\textsuperscript{119} such that over time small changes in each iteration can become large changes in the long history of the tradition.\textsuperscript{120} Nevertheless, “behaviors marked as traditional are often less subject to change than other behaviors.”\textsuperscript{121} Thus tradition is simultaneously conservative (less subject to change) and variable (adaptive to changes in the environment).

In her monograph \textit{A Theory of Adaptation}, Linda Hutcheon concurs with both Tavis and Drout.\textsuperscript{122} Hutcheon writes, “Like ritual, [adaptation’s] repetition brings comfort, a fuller understanding, and the confidence that comes with the sense of knowing what is going to happen next.”\textsuperscript{123} Hutcheon goes on to argue, that the familiarity Tavis emphasizes is only one aspect of the audience’s enjoyment of an adaptation. The other important aspect is the way in which “the dialogue with the past, for that is what

\textsuperscript{117} Drout, \textit{How Tradition Works}, 11.
\textsuperscript{118} Drout, \textit{How Tradition Works}, 25.
\textsuperscript{119} Drout, \textit{How Tradition Works}, 28.
\textsuperscript{120} Drout, \textit{How Tradition Works}, 27.
\textsuperscript{121} Drout, \textit{How Tradition Works}, 28.
\textsuperscript{122} Linda Hutcheon, \textit{A Theory of Adaptation}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013). My thanks to Ellen Rees for recommending Hutcheon’s work.
\textsuperscript{123} Hutcheon, \textit{A Theory of Adaptation}, 114.
adaptation means for audiences, creates the doubled pleasure of the palimpsest: more than one text is experienced and knowingly so.”

Sometimes changes made to a text in the process of adaptation are dictated by a shift in medium. No feature film, for example, can faithfully reproduce every word in a novel in the time allotted. This space between the adapted text and the adaptation, however, can also put to a variety of purposes ranging from humor to social commentary. The most masterful adaptations use the humor or dislocation of the changes in the new text in service to social commentary.

The masters of fairy-tale adaptation in contemporary America are arguably Walt Disney and the multi-media empire that is his legacy. Disney’s adaptations strengthened the fairy tale’s place in American culture by infusing the tales he chose with values representative of his early twentieth-century audience between the world wars and during the Baby Boom. As Pugh notes,

Fairy tales look to a simpler and “medieval-ish” past to create a time of romance, adventure, and magic, and Disney’s genius was to couple this nostalgia with a liberal dose of futurism, blending the two diametrically opposed temporalities into a seamless whole.

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125 Hutcheon’s concept of adaptation is broad, encompassing a wide variety of intertextual interactions. Julie Sanders offers a more nuanced definitions of intertextual interaction in her introduction to *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006): “Quotation can be deferential or critical, supportive or questioning; it depends on the context in which the quotation takes place. Citation, however, presumes a more deferential relationship; it is frequently self-authenticating, even reverential, in its reference to the canon of ‘authoritative,’ culturally validated texts….But citation is different again to adaptation, which constitutes a more sustained engagement with a single text or source than the more glancing act of allusion or quotation, even citation allows. Beyond that, appropriation carries out the same sustained engagement as adaptation but frequently adopts a posture of critique, even assault” (4).
126 Pugh, “Introduction: Disney’s Retrograde Medievalisms,” 5. On Disney and the dynamics of sentimental modernism, see also Stephen Watts, *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American Way of Life* (Columbus, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997), also Kristian Moen argues that sentimental modernism is not unique to Disney’s fairy tale films, *Film and Fairy Tales*, xvi.
Not all scholars of fairy tales are so appreciative of Disney’s project, however. In *Fairy Tale as Myth, Myth as Fairy Tale*, Jack Zipes is critical of the Disney empire’s “cultural stranglehold on the fairy tale” noting that “Walt Disney cast a spell on the fairy tale, and it has been held captive ever since….Disney employed the most up-to-date technological means and used his own “American” grit and ingenuity to appropriate the European fairy tales.”\(^{127}\) The language Zipes uses (stranglehold, held captive, appropriate) casts Disney’s interaction with fairy tales as violence enacted upon them. Such criticism of the changes inherent in the process of adaptation implies that the narratives somehow rightfully belong only to the place in which they originate, that there is some right way to adapt fairy tales and Disney has gone beyond the pale.

And yet, Zipes has written extensively about the changes that the Grimms themselves made in the narratives as they moved from notes to the first volume of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, and thence to further editions over the course of the nineteenth century.\(^ {128}\) The Grimms certainly adapted the tales to suit the cultural demands of their print audience. Indeed, this sort of adaptation is inherent in the dynamics of the fairy tale as tradition: each new instance of enacting the tradition by telling tales orally or reprinting them or adapting them for the screen changes the tales themselves. Kay Stone points out that “The changes Disney makes [including downplaying royalty and magic] are similar to those made by traditional American storytellers, who also had to adapt

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\(^{127}\) Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth*, 72.

European tales to the new demands of this continent.” When authors and editors make changes as they adapt fairy tales, their own aesthetic principles are not the only driving force. Pugh asserts that despite all of the criticism the Disney Corporation receives for its commercial imperialism, “the recreational desires of Disney’s consumers are fulfilled through these commercial transactions.” Kay Stone concurs that the films’ “continuing success reveals something about adult reactions to fantasy and about Disney’s understanding of these reactions.” Thus, although the fairy tales offered by Walt Disney and the Disney Animation Studio may not offer the most complex plots or the most nuanced commentary on social issues, they fulfill the roles that our impersonal scientific origin stories and our dark modern and post-modern art and literature do not: Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, and Consolation. In a society that is increasingly diverse in terms of both culture and faith, the corpus of fairy tales that constitutes the Grimm-Disney canon serves as the secular scripture of contemporary America, the body of narratives common to all members and from which we build other stories.

\footnote{129 Kay Stone, \textit{Some Day Your Witch Will Come}, 29.}

\footnote{130 Pugh, “Introduction: Disney’s Retrograde Medievalisms,” 2.}

\footnote{131 \textit{Some Day Your Witch Will Come}, 25.}
CHAPTER 3. THAT STORY
CINDERELLA TRANSFORMED IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

You always read about it:
the plumber with the twelve children
who wins the Irish Sweepstakes.

From toilets to riches.
That story.

Or the nursemaid,
some luscious sweet from Denmark
who captures the oldest son's heart.

from diapers to Dior.
That story.132

3.1 Introduction

That story is nearly universal. That story of the righteous being lifted from abjection to prosperity appears in the corpus of fabulous stories of almost every culture around the world. Indeed, the Cinderella tale is one of the most widely attested and widely studied

tale types. Marian Roalfe Cox, the first folklorist to publish a catalog of variants, came up with 345 in 1893. Later researchers have expanded that catalog as they have looked in areas not accessible to Cox. In 1951, Anna Birgitta Rooth’s *The Cinderella Cycle* analyzed 700 variants, focusing on the ones that “blur the lines between tale [sub]types,” and R. D. Jameson’s research in China in the 1980’s revealed a rich tradition of this tale type, rivaling the western world’s 345. The pervasive longevity of this tale type is evidence of the conservative nature of fairy tales and how the thread of tradition unities many different versions and variants under the singular umbrella of *that story*.

When we really pay attention to what we’re seeing on the page (or the screen) in front of us, we can see that the vast majority of variants in the Cinderella tradition start with the daughter of a man who has both wealth and status. The hero’s hard work and magical help are not pulling her up from the poverty into which she was born; they are restoring her to the position of rank and privilege from which she had been forced. Nevertheless, more recent retellings of the tale place greater socio-economic distance between Cinderella and the prince, and American idiom continues to use the phrase ‘Cinderella story’ as shorthand for a rise from poverty and servitude to wealth and privilege. This chapter seeks to interrogate the contemporary American love affair with the Cinderella tale type. The first half of the chapter offers an overview of the variety of

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133 Cox Cinderella.
stories in the Cinderella tradition with a précis of available schemata for grouping tales into subtypes and brief definitions of the common subtype labels. These are followed by an examination of three significant shifts in Cinderella’s evolution in contemporary American popular culture: elision of the undesirable marriage and love-like-salt subtypes in favor of the punishing stepmother subtype, evolution from complex to compact tales, and transformation of the punishing stepmother subtype from a restoration tale to a rise tale. As Julie Sanders notes, “it is usually at the very point of infidelity that the most creative acts of adaptation and appropriation take place,” and the second half of this chapter will offer a close examination of significant changes in the tale type in order to elucidate how the Cinderella story has become conflated with the American dream.

3.2 Cinderella’s Subtypes

As researchers grapple with the astounding number of tales within the Cinderella tradition, they have created differing schemata for grouping Cinderella tales into subtypes:

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<tr>
<td>A. Cinderella</td>
<td>Type B</td>
<td>ATU 510A</td>
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<td>B. Catskin</td>
<td>Type B1</td>
<td>ATU 510 B</td>
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<td>C. Cap o’ Rushes</td>
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<td>[ATU 923]</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Indeterminate</td>
<td>Type A</td>
<td>ATU 511, ATU 510B*</td>
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<td>E. Hero Tales</td>
<td>Type C</td>
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<td>[Da. &amp; Db. Indeterminate]</td>
<td>Type AB</td>
<td>ATU 511 + ATU 510A</td>
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Figure 3.2 Comparative Chart of Cinderella Story Schemata (Heiner, Cinderella Tales, 4)

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136 Sanders, Adaptation and Appropriation, 20.
The divisions within these schemata reflect, of course, the differing projects of the researchers, and they have had differing degrees of usefulness to the broader scholarly community. The schema of Uther’s *Types of the International Folktale* is the most widely used with its three categories: the punishing stepmother (ATU 510A), the undesirable marriage (ATU 510B), and love like salt (ATU 510B and ATU 923). Additionally, I would argue that the maiden without hands (ATU 706) also belongs in this constellation of tales. Like those of subtype 510B, the 706 daughter is forced into abjection by an undesirable marriage, although the nature of her grotesque abjection is severed hands rather than a coat of untanned skins.\(^{137}\) In each of these subtypes the hero is made abject through her loss of some critical ingredient for success in the society in which the fairy tale is set.

The 510A Cinderella retains her identity and her connection to her ancestral home, but is cut off from the social class in which she grew up by being forced to do the work of a household servant, and this punishing stepmother subtype is the story that most Americans associate with the name Cinderella. In this tale, a widower remarries, and his new wife forces the daughter from his first marriage into abjection and servitude within the household. Her restoration is accomplished with the intervention of a magical helper (fairy godmother) who enables her to attend a ball where the prince falls in love with her. The villainy here is generally laid at the feet of the stepmother as the father is either himself dead or absent from the home.

\(^{137}\) On the “Beauty and the Beast” page of *The Cinderella Bibliography* http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/cinder/cinintr.htm Last updated: November 23, 2011. Last accessed September 5, 2015, Russel A. Peck argues that stories of that type should considered alongside Cinderella stories, particularly those of type 510B, as the Beast’s disguise within the animal form is a gendered reversal of the untanned skin.
Subtype ATU 510B, while also the story of a girl suffering abjection, implicates the widowed father directly. In these stories, the father, often acting on his late wife’s order to marry only a woman as beautiful as she, or with hair like hers, or who can wear her ring or her glove, decides to marry his daughter. When her efforts to put him off by demanding the impossible fail, the hero flees this undesirable marriage, makes herself abject by donning a garment of untanned skins (“Peau d’Âne” (H227), “Allerleirauh” (H221), “Prinzessin Mäusehaut,” “Catskin”(H242)), and hides as an outcast servant in another castle. In many variants of this sub-type, the girl’s value is ultimately recognized through her exquisite cooking or her textiles. In contrast to a Cinderella who is forced into abjection at the hands of the members of her own household, the 510B hero is a Cinderella who chooses to hide in abjection and then chooses to reveal herself later through her service. The daughter of the undesirable marriage and love-like-salt subtypes is cut off from her community and made abject by her chosen disguise and her adoption of menial work.

In tales of the love like salt sub-type (ATU 510B, 923), the implication of incest is subtle, with the king, like Shakespeare’s Lear (H321), trying to figure out which of his three daughters loves him the most. When he throws the youngest out of the kingdom for saying that she loved him like salt, she disguises herself as an old woman (“Lu Scartozze de Sale” (H307), “Occhi-Marci” (H305), “Like Good Salt” (H302), “Die Gänseheirtin am Brunnen” (H308)) or makes herself a garment from the rushes outside the castle (“Cap

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138 Allerleirauch (“All Fur,” Zipes, Complete Fairy Tales 259-63, H221) cooks better soup than the palace cook, and leaves golden tokens of a ring, a spinning wheel, and reel in the bowls on three different nights. Perrault’s Peau-d’Âne (H227) makes cake for the prince, also leaving a ring inside the cake. When the 510 B hero sheds her untanned skins to attend the ball, she dons unreal dresses: woven of sunbeams, the color of the noontide sky, the color of moonlight (e.g. H222, H228).
O’Rushes: The Suffolk King Lear” [H323], “Cap O’Rushes” [H324]). The plot then follows the 510B model of the hero’s abjection, recognition, and marriage in a different kingdom. In this variant, it is the protagonist’s outspokenness that reveals her worth to the king whose household she joins as a servant. The wedding feast often includes reconciliation with the princess's father as well as a restoration to her appropriate social station.

Though Uther places it in a different category entirely, I would argue that “The Maiden Without Hands” (ATU 706) also belongs with this subtype. In this tale, a father cuts off the hands of his daughter when she will not marry him (or the devil). Though she does not become a servant, she is usually presented as a pitiable creature similar to Allerleirauh or Catskin. The women of the undesirable marriage subtype wear their abjection in the form of untanned skins that make them repulsive to polite company. These cloaks of anonymity can, however, be removed at will, and it is the hero’s choice to remove the garment that allows her to be recognized as a worthy member of society. The maiden without hands, in contrast, retains all of the visible markers of her former station in life. She is, instead, made grotesque by bloody stumps where her wrists should be. This hero is separated from her community and is unable to do women’s work (textiles, cooking, etc.), but is still able to participate in polite society in a new kingdom, and she remains desirable as a wife despite her missing hands. Collectively, all of these tale subtypes are all concerned with how the hero responds to her own abjection and how she eventually regains both her station and her ability to be a fully functioning member of her society.
Although all four of these subtypes of Cinderella tales can be found throughout that story’s history, their distributions relative to one another is not constant. In medieval romance, for example, the undesirable marriage and maiden without hands subtypes dominate with stories like the Breton lai *Emaré,* Marie de France’s *Lai Le Fresne,* Griselda in Chaucer’s “The Clerk’s Tale” and Boccaccio’s *Decameron* “10:10,” and Constance in Book Two of Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* and Chaucer’s “The Man of Law’s Tale.” The early Western European fairy tale collections of Basile, Perrault, and

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139 *Emaré* is a late fourteenth century Breton lai composed in Middle English, which appears in the Auchinleck Manuscript (NLS Adv MS 19.2.1). In this story, the wrongfully lustful father presents his daughter with a tapestry-woven coat depicting scenes of famous lovers from antiquity, and the poem spends ninety-five lines on the description. This coat is as grotesque in its opulence and subject matter as Allerleirauch or Peau d’Âne’s are in their untanned filthiness. She is cast out of her father’s house into a boat without oars and first taken in by a kind knight and then married to a king who recognizes her worth through her kindness and her talent at silk embroidery. After being cast out of her husband’s house due to her mother-in-law’s duplicity, *Emaré* is reunited with both father and husband on their separate pilgrimages to Rome. “Emaré,” *Middle English Breton Lays,* eds. Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 1995).

140 In *Lai Le Fresne,* a late twelfth century romance in Anglo Norman by Marie de France, a mother abandons one of her twin daughters in order to save face after she criticized a neighbor for giving birth to twins. This daughter becomes servant and mistress to a powerful lord in the region. Despite his inclination, he is unable to marry her because of her lack of station. *Le Fresne* prepares the marriage bed for her lord’s bride, and before the marriage is consummated, the bride’s mother recognizes the coverlet as the fabric in which she had wrapped the twin she abandoned. The mother comes clean, *Le Fresne* is reunited with her birth family, and her restoration to the social rank into which she was born allows *Le Fresne* to marry her lover. Marie de France, *The Lais of Marie de France,* trans. Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante (Ada, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1995).

141 Griselda’s story takes place entirely within the marriage household, so she does not share the undesirable marriage threat from her father with 510B and 706 heroes. She does, however, share in the persecution that they, 706 heroes in particular, experience within the husband’s household. In both Chaucer (13th c. Middle English Hengwrt (NLW MS Peniarth 392D) and Ellesmere (Huntington MS EL 26 E 9) Manuscripts) (Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer,* ed. Larry Dean Benson [New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1987]) and Boccaccio (14th c. Florentine Italian) (Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron,* eds. Peter E. Bondanella and Mark Musa [New York: Signet, 2010]) Griselda is lifted from the abjection of poverty to marry into the landed aristocracy, agreeing to live according to her husband’s wishes. To test this promise, her husband hides both of the children she bears, letting her believe they have died. He later brings them back to the household, presenting the daughter as a bride to replace Griselda, who is threatened with a return to abjection. When all is revealed, she rejoices, and they live happily ever after.

142 The stories of Constance told by both Gower ( *Confessio Amantis* Book 2, 14th c. Middle English) (John Gower, *Confessio Amantis, Vols. 2,* ed. Russel A. Peck [Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 2004-2013]) and Chaucer’s “Man of Law’s Tale” add the valance of race to the basic plot as Constance is a Christian woman whose undesirable marriage is betrothal to a Syrian sultan. After she is cast out of his house, like Emare onto the sea, she comes ashore in the lands of a pagan king who converts to Christianity and marries her. Cast out again, Constance sojourns in Rome until she is reunited with her husband.
the Grimms each contain versions of multiple variants. Basile includes “Cenerentola” 1:6 (510A, H16), “L’Orza” 2:6 (510B, H195), “La Penta Mano-Mozza” 3.2 (706). Perrault wrote both “Cendrillon” (510A, H38) and “Peau d’Âne” (510B, H227). Madame d’Aulnoy writes only a 510A “Finette Cendron” (H39). The Grimms’ 1857 edition includes “Allerleirauch” (Grimm 65; 510B, H221), “Aschenputtel” (Grimm 21; 510A, H30), “Das Mädchen ohne Hände” (Grimm 31; 706), and “Die Gänsehirtin am Brunnen” (Grimm 179; 923, H308). This breadth of narratives in all the subtypes offers the early modern audience a variety of Cinderella heroes who respond to abjection in a range of ways from pitiable passivity to brilliant cunning.

Later adaptations from these foundational European collections, do not maintain this level of variety. In twenty-first century American popular culture, tale type 510A predominates. I would argue that this is due to the personality of the main character in the Perrault and Grimm variants and subsequent adaptations. As the close reading undertaken later in this chapter will show, 510A Cinderellas are usually rewarded for goodness, patience, piety, and diligent work, which makes them excellent role models for both male and female members of the American lower and middle classes who dream that hard work will raise them up to a better life, *that story*. At the same time, 510A Cinderellas’ diligence is carried out despite the mistreatment they receive at the hands of those in power, thus they reinforce the image of the obedient female subordinate who does not rock the boat. This narrative does not seek to subvert the system, but to restore the system to its proper functionality, removing the corrupt (stepmother) from power and rewarding the righteous (Cinderella). Thus, Cinderella’s disobedience, like Robin Hood’s theft, is
subversion in response to decay within the system, not subversion that seeks to overthrow the system itself.

In contrast, the main characters of 510B tales almost always engage in manipulation and deception. They first attempt to deflect the father’s undesirable marriage through manipulation, asking for impossible things (dresses like the sun, moon, and stars [H227] or a coat to which every animal in the kingdom has contributed a piece of flesh [H222]) or precious things (the skin of the king’s prize donkey [H228]). Once out of the father’s house, these Cinderellas work to mask their own identities, deceiving the people who offer them shelter and sustenance by claiming the place of a servant rather than that of a princess. While Charles Perrault’s 510B variant “Peau d’Âne” continues to be produced in picture books for French children to this day, this tale type is relatively obscure in contemporary American popular culture. “Donkeyskin” does appear in Andrew Lang’s *Grey Fairy Book*, a classic fairy tale collection in English, but the incest motif is obscured by making the girl an adopted daughter and having the king married to a widow before their reconciliation at the end.143 Fantasy authors Robin McKinley144 and

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144 Robin McKinley’s *Deerskin* (New York: Ace Books, 1993) was nominated for the Mythopoetic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature. Unlike most of McKinley’s other retellings, *Deerskin* was published and marketed as adult fantasy for adults rather than as a young adult book, despite which it was reviewed by Cathy Chauvette, “Book Reviews: Adult Books for Young Adults,” *School Library Journal* 39.9 (September 1993): 261. This 510B variant is remarkable in its stark and graphic depiction of the father’s violence and the daughter’s recovery. WorldCat lists *Deerskin* as having 799 library holdings for its eight editions, Robin McKinley’s Newberry-award-winning *The Blue Sword* (New York: Greenwillow Books, 1982), in contrast, is listed as having 2,249 holdings for thirty-one editions. McKinley’s more recently published *Pegasus* (2010) has 967 holdings for eight editions.
Mercedes Lackey\textsuperscript{145} each have a full-length adult fantasy novel based on the Donkeyskin variant, but these are among the least well known of these authors’ works.

One striking exception to this elision of 510B is Jean Webster’s 1912 epistolary novel \textit{Daddy Long Legs} and its film adaptations of the same title in 1919, 1931, and 1955.\textsuperscript{146} In each of these, an intelligent and diligent orphan girl, is given tuition, room, and board at a private school by an unnamed benefactor to whom she writes regular letters. Because of these letters, the benefactor meets and woos the girl without disclosing his identity to her. While both novel and film are adaptations of the 510B subtype, each minimizes the role of incest in the story. Beyond shifting the relationship from father-daughter to benefactor-ward, the novel has Judy meet and fall in love with her benefactor while she remains unaware of the position of power he holds in her life.\textsuperscript{147} The 1955 film adaptation starring Fred Astaire and Leslie Caron further works to minimize the transgressive nature of the relationship between benefactor and ward: she is of age when he first sees her, her French-ness and the stereotype of French licentiousness excuse her from censure, and he is personally uninvolved in her care and does not read her letters for most of the time that he is responsible for supporting her. In both the novel and the film, the girl and the benefactor father-figure marry, having fallen in love despite the social

\textsuperscript{145} Mercedes Lackey \textit{Unnatural Issue: An Elemental Masters Novel} (New York: DAW, 2011), is Book 7 of her Elemental Masters series, in which each book is based on a different fairy tale. This variant of 510B adopts the distancing trope by which the father is absolved of some culpability because he does not meet his daughter until she is already an adult. WorldCat lists \textit{Unnatural Issue} as having 830 library holdings for nine editions. Meanwhile, \textit{The Gates of Sleep} (New York: DAW, 2002) (Elemental Masters Book 3), based on “Sleeping Beauty,” is listed as having 1051 library holdings for nineteen editions, and \textit{The Serpent’s Shadow} (New York: DAW, 2001) (Elemental Masters Book 2), based on “Snow White,” has 1046 listings for twenty editions.


\textsuperscript{147} On the issue of guardian-ward incest in literature, see Ellen Pollak. \textit{Incest and the English Novel, 1684-1814} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 92 ff.
tabs against such a happily-ever-after. The marginalized presence of 510B tales in contemporary American popular culture suggests that this subtype still has some relevance for today’s audiences despite our apparent discomfort with it. Perhaps the 510B type is marginalized because manipulation and deception are sins generally reserved for the villains of fairy tales, perhaps because American heroes of either gender are expected to be beautiful, or perhaps because the threat of incest carries too strong a taboo.

Michael Drout’s meme-based concept of word-to-world fit may be a helpful way to view the elision of 510B stories. According to this theory, a text’s concepts and ideas “fit the world they are describing,” including physical, social, and cultural worlds.¹⁴⁸ In an America of third-wave feminism, women are expected to be able to support themselves, as are all individuals. In the 510B memeplex, the daughter’s sense of being under duress is predicated on her dependence on the father figure for maintenance, and her abjection is a foregone conclusion once she leaves his house. In contrast, in the 510A subtype, the Cinderella character has a transactional relationship with her stepfamily. Although she is dependent upon them for the meager food, shelter, and clothing they offer her, they are equally dependent on her for the service work she does within the household. Viewing the 510A Cinderella in this way problematizes the tendency to regard women in fairy tales as passive objects.

Even as 510A elides the other subtypes, however, it does not itself remain unchanged. Over time, popular versions of this story have tended to shift from complex to compact and from restoration to rags-to-riches. In the introduction to *Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairytale*, Elizabeth Waning Harries

identifies the distinction between complex tales—heteroglossic and intertextual—and compact tales, which display a sort of constructed simplicity and claiming foundational status.\(^\text{149}\) The summaries in the previous section emphasize the compactness of the tales under discussion, and they reflect perhaps the broad market share enjoyed by Perrault’s and the Grimms’ tales. The Grimms especially revised to create increasingly compact tales, favoring simplified plots even as the tales got longer over the course of editorial revisions throughout the nineteenth century.\(^\text{150}\) Harries reminds us, however, that “the literary fairy tale has taken a number of shapes in its history, shapes now often seen as aberrant or subversive.”\(^\text{151}\) The early French conteuses, who were contemporary with Perrault, offered complicated plots, and it was in their complexities that these stories offered a discursive space for subversion of the patriarchal social model. D’Aulnoy’s “Finette Cendron,” for example, is complex both in terms of plot structure and in terms of characterization. This variant combines the 510A Cinderella motifs—ashes, hard work, help from the fairy godmother, and identification via a slipper lost at the ball—with the Hansel and Gretel motif of abandonment by the mother and also with the Jack and the Beanstalk motif of climbing into the ogres’ realm.

Beyond the complex plot, the complexity of the characters in “Finette Cendron”\(^\text{152}\) is also noteworthy. The entire royal family loses its status in an economically driven fall as they “managed their affairs badly” and then sold their things

\(^{149}\) Harries, *Twice Upon a Time*, 18-19.

\(^{150}\) For an overview of revisions to editions of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* over the course of the nineteenth century, see Siegfried Neumann “The Brothers Grimm as Collectors and Editors of German Folktales,” *The Reception of Grimms’ Fairytales: Responses, Reactions, Revisions*, ed. Donald Haase (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 4-40. For brief analysis and examples of changes, see Jack Zipes’s introduction to *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, xvii-xxxi.


\(^{152}\) D’Aulnoy, “Finette Cindron,” *Beauty, Beasts and Enchantment*, 400-16.
to support themselves. When they run out of assets to sell, they create a plan to work “catch[ing] birds in the woods and fish in the sea.” The parents then decide to get rid of all three daughters because “they are lazy minxes” and the king and queen are unable “to give them the fine clothes they would desire.” In contrast to the step-family of many Cinderella stories, this group is a nuclear family: father and mother plan to lose the children they have in common, and two of the sisters abuse their third sister.

Thus, the third sister, Finette, is made further abject by the punishment inflicted on her by her own family, and d’Aulnoy’s presentation of this hero combines active and passive character traits. She gathers ingredients for cake and meats for a feast as gifts for her godmother, to whose house she travels on her own for advice. Finette also warns her sisters of their parents’ plans and helps them to return home even after her godmother has warned her not to, and she outsmarts the ogre and the ogress. Finette, however, stays with the sisters who abuse her, motivated in part by their suspicion that the father loves her best. She is ever truthful and kind to her family, and this character even shows evidence of interiority with her remorse over having killed the ogre and ogress. In contrast to such a tale the milquetoast Cinderellas of the Kinder- und Hausmärchen or the Disney film or Anne Sexton’s poem seem passive indeed. D’Aulnoy’s presentation does not exhibit the sort of interiority one would expect from twentieth- and twenty-first-century novels, but Finette’s reflections on her own choices (to give information to her sisters or withhold it, to kill the ogres or not) is evidence that fairy tale narratives in the early modern period

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153 In other words, this family regresses to increasingly primitive states of socio-economic existence: from non-working nobility, to members of the mercantile class (buying and selling), to hunter gatherers. My thanks to Jeff Turco for this insight.
are not necessarily the simplistic, patriarchy-inscribing tales commonly found in later editions of _Kinder- und Hausmärchen_ and Lang’s colored fairy books.

The second major change to the 510A sub-type is a shift from restoration tale to rags-to-riches tale. In _Fairy Godfather_, Bottigheimer defines restoration tales as those in which a royal or noble character is first made abject by villainy and then restored to his or her original social station through magic.\(^{154}\) Rags-to-riches tales, in contrast, feature a protagonist who begins in a low social station and is able to rise out of abjection thanks to some combination of piety and pluck. It was a shock the first time someone pointed out to me that “Cinderella” is not a rags-to-riches story.\(^{155}\) We Americans tend to think of it that way. In that form, after all, it is the story of us, the fairy tale version of the American dream. In her article “America’s Cinderella,” Jane Yolen argues that what most Americans consider Cinderella to be is out of sync with the long tradition of this tale type. In response to Rosemary Minard’s criticism of Cinderella as insipid, Yolen writes:

Ms. Minard reads the fairy tales incorrectly. Believing—rightly—that the fairy tales, as all stories for children, acculturate young readers and listeners, she has nevertheless gotten her target wrong. Cinderella is not to blame. Not the real, the true Cinderella. Ms. Minard should focus her sights on the mass market Cinderella. She does not recognize the old Ash-Girl for the tough, resilient heroine. The wrong Cinderella has gone to the American ball.\(^{156}\)

\(^{154}\) Bottigheimer, _Fairy Godfather_, 1.

\(^{155}\) My thanks to Alina Israeli for this conversation.

Yolen’s alignment of old tales with true tales and new mass-market, American versions with false or aberrant tales is problematic. As she herself notes, every culture adds its own bits to the story,\(^\text{157}\) and the way in which Cinderella receives reward and recognition from society for her long-suffering walk on the moral high ground is as much a part of the Americanness of the story as is the rags-to-riches shift of focus. In *The American Dream: The Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*, Jim Cullen looks to the dogged persistence of Puritan colonials to find “the cornerstone of what became the American Dream. Things […] could be different.”\(^\text{158}\) The Puritans were, of course, looking to God for their reward in this world and the next, but even as their dream became the dream of upward mobility for succeeding generations, the means of reward remained external. Hard work in the “realms of human aspiration” like industry, education, and the arts\(^\text{159}\) must be recognized, valued, and rewarded by consumers in order to result in material success.

For what, then, is Cinderella being rewarded? Yolen’s answer is “Hardy, helpful, inventive, that was as the Cinderella of the old tales, but not of the mass market […] The mass market books have brought forward a good, malleable, forgiving little girl and put her in Cinderella’s slippers.”\(^\text{160}\) Like their sisters in the 510B subtype, early Cinderellas in the 510A tradition do indeed display both cunning and agency. This cunning, however, often depends upon deception, a tool more commonly associated with villains in contemporary American popular books and films. Being a woman who is both hard working and honest, the more recent 510A Cinderella often appears to also be a passive

\(^\text{157}\) Yolen, “America’s Cinderella,” 22.  
\(^\text{158}\) Cullen, *The American Dream*, 15.  
\(^\text{159}\) Cullen, *The American Dream*, 60.  
\(^\text{160}\) Yolen, “America’s Cinderella,” 25.
woman “waiting for something external to transform [her life].” Patience—enduring the fickle demands of overbearing step-mother and step-sisters—is not, however, a personality trait. It is a pattern of behavior that results from repeated choices to respond to violence with kindness. One can be both active and patient.

Quoting Elizabeth Cook’s *The Ordinary and the Fabulous*, Yolen describes Cinderella as a story about “the stripping away of the disguise that conceals the soul from the eyes of others.” This beautiful image fits the restoration tales Yolen focuses on, but I would argue that it is applicable to rags-to-riches tales as well. If one believes in meritocracy, being born into unprivileged circumstances may be a “disguise that conceals the soul from the eyes of others.” If all souls have the potential for greatness, then abjection in any form is a disguise.

### 3.3 Cinderella Variants and Versions

Before moving to contemporary examples of updated American Cinderellas, it would help to consider the variants of 510A published by Perrault and Grimm, since they constitute the source material for most contemporary retellings as well as Basile’s variant, which is, as Bottigheimer suggests, a potential source for Perrault and Grimm. From the many changes rung upon the 510A tale type in these variants; the most salient for understanding the contemporary love affair with this tale type are, first, the Cinderella character’s social status at the beginning of the text, second, the qualities or actions for

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which the text seems to be rewarding her, and third, the portion of the narrative on which emphasis is placed through extended description.

Cinderella is the daughter of a prince in the earliest extant text in the Western canon to associate the Cinderella character with ashes and a step-family, Giambattista Basile’s “Cenerentola,” which appears as tale six on day one of the telling in his frame-story collection *Il Pentamerone, or Lo Cunto de li Cunti*, first published in Naples in 1634. This variant of the story has our Cinderella character as the daughter of a prince. Cenerentola colludes with her seemingly wonderful governess to murder her first abusive stepmother, thereby paving the way for that governess to marry her father. Once the governess achieves the status of princess, though, this new stepmother begins
to raise to all heights six daughters of her own whom she had kept secret up until then. And she worked her husband over so well that as his stepdaughters entered into his graces, his own daughter fell from his heart, and from one day to the next Zezolla ended up being demoted from the royal chamber to the kitchen and from a canopied bed to the hearth, from sumptuous silks and gold to rags, from the scepter to the spit.

Basile emphasizes Cenerentola’s fall here with four phrases in series contrasting the station which she was born; royal chamber, canopied bed of of state, sumptuous silks, scepter; to her abject state; kitchen, hearth, rags, spit. Basile does not, however, work his descriptive magic to illuminate Cenerentola’s period of abjection for the reader. After this

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165 The first edition of the 5 vols., 1634-1636 only has the title *Lo Cunto de li Cunti*. *Il Pentamerone* is first used in the Naples edition of 1674.
166 To avoid ambiguity in the comparative discussion of these many Cinderella characters, I have chosen to retain their original-language names even though I am quoting their stories in translation.
emphasis on Cenerentola’s initial station in life and the process of her relegation to the ashes, the narrative advances directly to an explanation of Cenerentola’s access to the Dove of the Fairies in the Island of Sardinia through an enchanted date tree and her use of this magic to attend balls at the king’s palace three times. Throughout the text, Cenerentola participates actively in the narrative, killing her first stepmother, making the match between her father and the second stepmother, asking her father to convey her regards to the Fairies of Sardinia,¹⁶⁸ and distracting the servants who try to follow her home from the evening parties. Thus, the cunning Cenerentola learns from her governess/stepmother brings first her abjection and then her restoration. At first this cunning is a means of transgressing social and moral order, as Cenerentola and her governess commit murder and then the governess turns against her student to advance herself. Once Cenerentola has been made abject, however, her cunning becomes a tool for the restoration of social order. With the help of the Fairies of Sardinia, she disguises herself in order to regain her place as a lady at court. After Cenerentola has been recognized by virtue of the high-soled cork slipper, the stepsisters are neither punished nor rewarded because when Cenerentola is crowned as the new queen, “the sisters nearly died of anger, and, not having the stomach to stand this heartbreak, they quietly stole away to their mother’s house.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ As we will see later, in Disney’s animated Cinderella, it is the magical helper who reaches out to the motherless child in her moment of need. In contrast, the Fairies of Sardinia make contact with Cenerentola before she needs their help. It is her remembrance of them via her father that brings their gift of a date tree, and it is her nurturing of the tree that brings the gifts of the magnificent dresses she wears to three balls on three nights. Thus, their help is not a gift, but a reward for Cenerentola’s having acted appropriately toward them in the absence of need.

¹⁶⁹ “The Cinderella Cat, The Tale of Tales 89.
Charles Perrault’s 1695 “Cendrillon,” translated as “Cinderella or The Glass Slipper,” makes Cendrillon the daughter of a gentleman living in the prince’s city. Not only is Perrault’s version arguably the most famous of the Western Cinderella stories and more popular for translation and retelling than variants of Cinderella from other cultures, it has eclipsed its French contemporaries, such as Mme. d’Aulnoy’s complicated 1697 story of female compassion and cunning “Finette Cendron.” Perhaps, as Canepa and Ansani have suggested, “Cendrillon” and Perrault’s other tales have become the most canonical because he is the least subversive. The social situation is muted, because Perrault

did not use his tales to comment so explicitly and in such detail on the culture in which they were written and, above all, to the fact that the content of his tales was (and is) more in line with the dominant ideology of the time.¹⁷¹

Cendrillon is the daughter of a gentleman living in the prince’s city. From the beginning of the story, she is described as devout and good, just like her late mother. Patient, genuinely helping her sisters to prepare for the ball despite their ill treatment of her, she is also “a thousand times more beautiful in her shabby clothes than her sisters.”¹⁷²

Perrault’s Cendrillon lacks any cunning of her own, and once the fairy godmother arrives to transform ordinary objects like pumpkins and mice into coach and horses, Cendrillon cedes her agency, following the fairy’s instruction to bring her a pumpkin, although she was “unable to guess how a pumpkin would enable her to go to the ball.” Thus, she

¹⁷² “Cinderella or The Glass Slipper,” Beauties, Beasts and Enchantment, 25.
allows the fairy to take as much charge of her restoration as the stepmother had of her abjection. Yet, Cendrillon also retains some agency. She is the one who thinks of a rat to become a coachman, for example. Throughout the tale, she also retains a commitment to exercising compassion. Perrault tells us that she “offered to dress their [her sisters] hair for them” when anyone else “would have messed up their hairdos,”¹⁷³ She sat with them at the ball unrecognized and shared the gifts the prince had given her, and after her success, she brings them with her to the palace and has “them married the very same day to two great noblemen of the court.” Perrault’s narrative rewards Cendrillon for her goodness, patience, and compassion, and with this shift in the qualities for which the main character is praised, the Cinderella tradition moves toward the didactic.

The bloodiest narrative in the Western Cinderella tradition, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s story “Aschenputtel” appears in the first 1812 volume of Kinder- und Hausmärchen.¹⁷⁴ In this tale, Aschenputtel is the daughter of rich man living in the king’s city. She is a resourceful Cinderella, actively drawing on the help of the birds and climbing through pigeon houses and pear trees to get home from the ball on time, but she does not have the sometimes sinister cunning of Basile’s Cenerentola. On her deathbed, Aschenputtel’s mother instructs her to be good and pious, and the narrator tells us that she remained so. This text offers a detailed catalog of the sorts of tasks Aschenputtel was set to, emphasizing the hard work of her abjection, getting up before dawn to do tend the fire and get water and sleeping on the hearth because there was no bed for her. In contrast to Perrault’s silently suffering Cendrillon, Aschenputtel makes her desire to go to the ball

¹⁷³ “Cinderella or The Glass Slipper,” Beauties, Beasts and Enchantment, 26.
known to her stepsisters, who set her the interminable tasks of sorting first lentils, then seeds, then peas. Despite Aschenputtel’s successful completion of the task with the help of pigeons and turtledoves, the stepmother does not allow her to attend the festivities. Three nights in a row, however, the doves tell her to shake the tree growing from her mother’s grave, and the clothes that fall out of the tree enable her to dress in splendor and go to the ball in a waiting carriage. This is repeated the third night when Aschenputtel looses track of the time and loses one of her golden slippers before as she flees to beat her midnight curfew. These same doves help the prince discover the stepsisters’ feet bleeding from freshly trimmed toe and heel. In the revised version in the 7th edition of 1857, the text contrasts Aschenputtel as the true bride with her false sisters. She is rewarded for her goodness and piety while her sisters are punished with not only the lameness resultant from their missing bits of feet but with the blindness that results from the doves’ feasting on their eyes. The text does not dirty the hands of Aschenputtel and the prince with this columba ex machina punishment, which is jarring from the olive-branch-wielding symbol of peace. From a secular perspective, the reward of one sister

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175 The stepmother’s violation of a verbal contract with the Cinderella character and of an implied contract with the father (that as his wife, she will care for his family and home as he would) is a recurring idea. This adds to the Cinderella character’s claim on the moral high ground as she continues to provide the service, which she has agreed to do (under duress) even without receiving the promised remuneration.

176 A connection with nature in some form seems to be a common motif to the Cinderella tradition. Cenerentola’s access to the Fairies of Sardinia is via a date tree, Cendrillon’s transportation comes from the garden, and this green world as locus for contact with the marvelous continues into contemporary variants of this sub-type. In “The Juniper Tree,” another of the Grimms’ Kinder- und Hausmärchen, the tree functions as marvelous space throughout the plot. G. Ronald Murphy, The Owl, the Raven, and the Dove: the Religious Meaning of the Grimms’ Magic Fairy Tales (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) examines the connections between the marvelous in Christianity and in the Grimms’ fairy tales based on Wilhelm’s notes “in his personal copies of the Bible and in his texts of the medieval epics which he taught” (vii). Murphy notes, “In a very strong polemic, Calvin argued for the soul’s continuing consciousness, something that could easily have prompted the Grimms’ insertion of the mother’s promise to look after her child after death, and justifying the depiction of the mother’s abiding awareness of her daughter in the symbolic tree growing above the grave” (101). My thanks to Jeff Turco for suggesting this tale and Murphy’s book to me.

and the punishment of the others might be said to reflect their relative levels of honesty. Aschenputtel does not represent herself as other than what she is, and when she is dressed for the ball by the magic of the date tree, she occupies the station in life to which she was born. The stepsisters, meanwhile, lie directly to the prince in claiming to be the woman with whom he danced at the balls. G. Ronald Murphy sees the contrast between Aschenputtel as true bride and her sisters as false brides as the “spiritual problem” of the text.

Which human being is the right human being for the love of the King’s son? Whom does the slipper fit? [...] The dominance of the idea of only certain souls being the “right” ones to be the brides of Christ, and the punishment of the others may reflect a Calvinist emphasis on predestination from the Grimms’ Reformed upbringing.¹⁷⁸

Murphy’s reading of the Kinder- und Hausmärchen as a product of Reformed Calvinism is dissonant with the Romantic project identified by George Williamson in his introduction to The Longing for Myth in Germany, which positions the Grimms' collection as part of a broader project to create a mythology from Aryan and German sources. Despite the tensions between these two perspectives, both are valid, and the juxtaposition of the nationalistic impulse and the Calvinist heritage in the tales is evidence of how difficult it is to read fairy tales in only one way or to identify and excise certain kinds of influence on the narratives.

¹⁷⁸ Murphy, The Owl, the Raven, and the Dove, 149.
These three early iterations of tales in the 510A tradition all place the protagonist at a sufficiently high station in life that she would be a viable candidate for the hand of the prince/king. They then, to varying degrees, emphasize the distance she falls in terms of her status, her drudgery, and the degree of marvelous involvement in her restoration to her former station. These tales are inherently conservative, working to restore the social order that was broken by the punishing stepmother. In contemporary retellings and adaptations, in contrast, there is a trend toward lowering Cinderella’s initial station in life relative to her stepfamily and the prince along with a foregrounding and extension of the period of her abjection and her work. Concomitantly, she is lifted from abjection less by steadfast piety and goodness than by personal character development and individuation. Thus the story becomes more progressive as it depicts Cinderella moving up the socioeconomic ladder from lower to higher station. Nevertheless, even these more progressive tales reinforce the value of the structure itself. Most contemporary Cinderellas do not destroy the ladder, they merely manage to climb it.

Americans’ love for this story is exemplified by its continual replication in poplar fiction beginning with dime novels in the nineteenth century and continuing through contemporary serial genre fiction, especially romances, though also westerns and mysteries. Horatio Alger’s *Ragged Dick*, first published in 1868, tells the rags-to-respectability story of a bootblack whose honesty lifts him out of poverty. The vast majority of Alger’s hundred-plus subsequent “bouncy little books for boys” are variants of this story that emphasize “honesty, hard work, and cheerfulness in adversity.”

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Standing in counterpoint to these books are the romantic novels of Grace Livingstone Hill, which generally feature a hard-working and pious young woman who is lifted from poverty when she is met by a wealthy, often slightly older, man who decides to woo and to marry her. A contemporary equivalent to this earlier formula fiction is the serial romance genre published by Harlequin Press, whose online catalog lists 332 titles including the word “Cinderella” published since 2001. There may indeed be more Cinderella adaptations that are not titled as such in their catalog. Judging by our reading habits, that story is one that Americans will choose to hear (read) over and over.

For many in contemporary America, the canonical version of the Cinderella story is Disney’s 1950 animated film, and Disney reinforces the idea that there is a true version of the fairytale with the claim in the opening credits that this film is from “the original classic by Charles Perrault” (00:16). Though it does largely follow the plot outlined by “Cendrillon,” it also includes some elements from the Grimms’ “Aschenputtel,” like the tree, which serves as the site of magical transformation (42:02), and Cinderella’s relationship with the helpful birds, whom she speaks with like friends (04:25). Disney also adds new elements to the story. In Perrault’s “original classic,” Cendrillon has an ongoing relationship with her godmother, who happens to be a fairy, but the mice, rats, and lizards who are transformed into horses, footmen, and coachmen are strangers to her. In this film, however, Cinderella has an ongoing relationship with all of the wild and domestic animals at the chateau. Not only do they ultimately become the horses, driver,

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180 For more on Hill’s life and her oeuvre of 119 books published between 1877 and 1949, see Jean Karr Grace Livingstone Hill: Her Story and Her Writings (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1948).
181 http://books.harlequin.com/search/?p=Q&lbc=harlequin&uid=708645843&ts=ajax&w=cinderella&method=and&view=grid&af=&isort=date
182 Here and throughout this chapter, film scenes will be referenced in the following way: (hour:) minute: second. For more on Cinderella and film, see Zipes, The Enchanted Screen, 172-92.
and footman to take her to the ball (45:00), but they have been her daily companions, constructed a ball gown for her (31:10-38:22), and worked together to free her when the step-mother locked her in the tower (1:03:44, 1:05:17-1:11:50). While the film does display Cinderella’s work ethic as she completes all the chores set for her (22:55, 26:35-27:52) and patience as she tolerates harsh treatment at the hands of her step-sisters without retaliation (30:40-31:10, 32:55-33:10), much more narrative time and space is spent on establishing Cinderella’s kindness and connection with these animals. In contrast, the appearance of the fairy godmother on the bench under the willow tree is a surprise to the despairing girl, and the fairy godmother’s bumbling (can’t find her wand at first, nearly forgets that Cinderella needs a new dress) minimizes the power of magic, and brings this variant of the tale into a form more in harmony with the verisimilar art and literature of its American post-war cultural context.

Even as Disney’s Cinderella has remained a beloved film since 1950, the number and variety of contemporary retellings of the 510A sub-type have grown exponentially since Cox’s catalog of 345, and each of these contemporary variants depends on the audience’s knowledge of the 510A sub-type. An exhaustive catalog is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but I would like to highlight three representative variants. The 1998 Newberry Honor recipient Ella Enchanted invites its audience to spend time with a familiar source of hope and entertainment and achieved sufficient public regard to be adapted for film in 2004. In contrast, the novel Ash challenges its audience with an innovative commentary on the tradition, and has not achieved widespread regard.

183 Cox, Cinderella. For an overview of “some of the better known treatments by authors and other artists,” see Heide Anne Heiner’s “Modern Interpretations of Cinderella” SurLaLune Fairy Tales. Last updated 7/25/2013. For an exhaustive compendium, see Russel A. Peck’s The Cinderella Bibliography: A Robbins Library Digital Project.
Disney’s live-action *Cinderella* (2015) capitalizes on the success of the Disney brand to reclaim authority over the tale.\textsuperscript{184} By making a few key changes to the narrative, the studio has been able to tell a story that is much the same as the 1950 film in plot and visual program.

In Gail Carson Levine’s 1997 novel *Ella Enchanted*,\textsuperscript{185} Elinor (Ella) is the daughter of a merchant who frequents the king’s court in the city of Frell. As a member of the court community, she is, like the earliest Western Cinderellas, an appropriate bride for the prince. Levine, however, makes two major narrative innovations in her contribution to the Cinderella tradition. The first is Ella’s fairy gift-cum-curse of obedience,

> Anyone could control me with an order. It had to be a direct command, such as “Put on a shawl,” or “You must go to bed now.” A wish or a request I was free to ignore “I wish you would put on a shawl,” or “Why don’t you go to bed now?” But against an order I was powerless. If someone told me to hop on one foot for a day and a half, I’d have to do it. And hopping on one foot wasn’t the worst order I could be given. If you commanded

\textsuperscript{184} The 2015 live-action *Cinderella* follows on the success of the live action *Maleficent* feature film, which tells the *Sleeping Beauty* film’s story from the villain’s point of view. In its opening weekend, June 1, 2014, *Maleficent* grossed $69.4 million in the US and £6.6 million in the UK. As of February 28, 2015, the film had grossed $241.4 million (*IMDb*). In its opening weekends in March 2015, Cinderella grossed $67.8 million dollars in the US and €259 thousand in the Netherlands. As of August 23, 2015, the film had grossed $201 million (*IMDb*). Audiences can expect that, with these successes on the books, Walt Disney Pictures will be releasing more such live action fairy-tales films.

me to cut off my own head, I’d have to do it.

I was in danger at every moment.\textsuperscript{186}

This curse makes it possible for her stepmother and stepsisters to turn Ella into a scullery maid who does their bidding. Levine’s second narrative innovation is to intertwine Ella’s quest for control of her own choices with a romance based on a mostly epistolary courtship with Prince Charmant, who, lacking his own quest, takes on the role of beloved object and becomes the prize at the end of Ella’s quest to break the curse of obedience. By shifting the hero’s motivation for remaining in service to her stepfamily from Cinderella’s piety and goodness to Ella’s compelled obedience, Levine transforms the tale into a narrative of personal development rather than one of recognition.

Tommy O’Haver’s 2004 film of the same title goes even further in adapting the canonical Cinderella narrative by pairing Ella’s personal development with a parallel quest for Prince Charmant (Char). Like many contemporary American adaptations, O’Haver creates distance between his female hero’s initial situation and the prince’s by turning Ella’s hometown of Frell into a backwater a great distance from the royal city of Le Mere and citing economic difficulties as the widowed father’s reason for remarrying (7:35). Ella and Char meet as young adults when Char and his regent-uncle stop in Frell as they are touring the kingdom, and Prince Char becomes a literary foil for Ella. The latter is constantly conscious of being compelled to be obedient to everyone who issues a direct command, while the former is obedient to the wishes of his uncle, who serves as regent, because he is unaware of that man’s duplicity and unconscious of his own ability to lead. Ella uses the venue of Char’s presentation to the populace to stage a protest of the

\textsuperscript{186} Levine, \textit{Ella Enchanted}, flyleaf.
regent’s mistreatment of ogres and giants within the kingdom (14:43), which Char had up to this point accepted as the way of things. Ella’s quest to no longer be obedient initially takes the form of a search for her godmother, and this search moves the action of the film through the entire kingdom, which opens Char’s eyes to the unfavorable conditions under which the regent has forced ogres (38:45), giants (42:48), and elves (41:20) to live since the last king died. Though it is not until the final moments of the film that Char embraces the quest to rescue the country from the ruthlessly power-hungry regent (1:24:30), the personal connections he made during this journey become critical assets in the confrontation. Each of these paired protagonists has a quest to complete that requires character development, and their individual quests are interdependent such that each is advanced as the two help each other. Furthermore, Ella and Char’s personal quests for individuation enable the oppressed groups within their society to break free of compelled obedience to the tyrannical regent. Although it presents a veritable revolution of outcasts, the film is nonetheless conservative as the revolution restores the former, harmonious order, which had been damaged by the regency.

In both the novel and the film, much of the narrative space is consumed by Ella’s quest to find the fairy who cursed her with obedience and convince her to take back the curse. It is, however, the adventures which befall her along the way that give her the opportunity to develop the autonomy to break the curse for herself, and the climax of Ella’s quest is the moment that she looks into her own soul and orders, “You will no longer be obedient.”¹⁸⁷ (1:15:38). Ultimately, Ella, in novel and in film, is rewarded for her persistent pursuit of her independence while also showing compassionate to for others.

¹⁸⁷ Levine, Ella Enchanted, 226.
She is a new kind of Cinderella who represents the American values of independence and personal responsibility.

Malinda Lo’s 2009 novel *Ash*\(^{188}\) is a largely conservative retelling of the 510A Cinderella story in terms of setting and plot structure. Lo is, however, radical in her presentation of two potential romantic partners for Ash, one a malevolent fairy, and the other a human woman. Like O’Haver’s film variant of the tale, Lo places Ash and her family in a small village remote from the king’s city, and financial instability is one of the reasons her father remarries (57). It is her father’s posthumous debts that her stepmother cites as the reason for replacing the cook and scullery maid with Ash and for moving the family to her own house near the royal city (57, 79). In the first half of the novel, Ash’s drudgery is made bearable by her unusual friendship with a fairy whose love for her keeps him from drawing her to her death in fairyland (125-6). In the second half of the novel, Ash’s friendship and budding romance with Kaisa, the king’s huntress, sustains her. Throughout, when these two friendships interfere with Ash’s duties, she suffers punishment and physical abuse at the hands of her stepmother (70-1, 224-5).

Though the fairy has a sort of godfather role in providing Ash the means to attend several court functions, his gifts come at the price of Ash’s future. He tells her, “There is a price for everything….You shall be mine. That is the oldest law between your people and mine.”\(^{189}\) It is only when she boldly attends a ball as herself that Ash is able to break free of the fairy’s control, leave her stepmother’s household, and begin a happily ever after with Kaisa (252-5). Lo’s Ash breaks free not only of the stepmother’s unjust control and


\(^{189}\) Lo, *Ash*, 162.
the fairy’s steep bargain, but most importantly of the expectations of a society that push her toward a life and a romance that is untrue to her self. Thus, this Cinderella is not rewarded for repairing or upholding the social order into which she had been born, but for having the courage to break out of that order entirely.

Walt Disney Pictures’ live-action *Cinderella*, is, in many ways, a faithful retelling of the story they told in the 1950 animated *Cinderella*. Many familiar elements are present: the helpful mice, the feisty cat, Cinderella’s attic bedroom. Three key changes to the presentation of Cinderella’s character, however, update the story for a twenty-first century audience. The first is an extended depiction of young Ella and her parents as a happy family, including a deathbed scene in which her mother tells her to “have courage and be kind” because “you have more kindness in your little finger than most people possess in their whole body. And it has power, more than you know. And magic” (05:26-05:40). This parting wish is compelling not because it emphasizes the inherent values of courage and kindness but because it validates the person that Ella already is and encourages her to be true to herself. The second change to the story is Ella’s meeting the prince in the forest before they meet at the ball (27:35). Rather than showing their encounter at the ball when she is enchanted and he is surrounded by the trappings of power, it is their anonymous conversation with one another here that ignites the spark of attraction between them. The third key change to the presentation of Cinderella’s character in this live-action film is her words of forgiveness to her stepmother as she walks out of the house. Ella looks at the twice-widowed Lady Tremaine, all of whose plans for supporting herself and her children have fallen to pieces around her, and says simply, “I forgive you” (1:37:05). By making courage and kindness Ella’s guiding
principles, this film turns *Cinderella* into the story of a woman who stayed true to herself despite being made abject by the circumstances of her life.

3.4 Cinderella as Shorthand

*Ella Enchanted, Ash,* and the 2015 *Cinderella,* each innovate on the 510A tale type while retelling the complete story from beginning to end. As discussed in reference to family stories in the preface of this dissertation, however, narratives can function as powerful tools of social cohesion even when not told in their entirety. Anne Sexton’s fairy tale poetry, penned in the 1970’s offers an excellent literary example of the ways in which the narratives we encounter in our consumption of texts become the building blocks for our own expression. Elizabeth Harries notes that “Sexton returned to the Grimms’ fairy tales repeatedly. And [...] she had known them since childhood, when her great-aunt read them to her.” Sexton uses this familiarity with the Grimm fairytale material to turn narrative into discursive space, in this case reframing 510A as a challenge to the happily-ever-after ending. Sexton’s 1971 poem “Cinderella” offers a condensed version of the Grimms’ “Aschenputtel” interspersed with wry commentary. This shortened tale skips over the injunction to goodness and piety from a dying mother and offers no description of the kind of work or criticism Cinderella must bear. Instead, Sexton shifts the focus entirely to the getting of the prince and extends the ending of the story in the last stanza of the poems, which tells us that

*Cinderella and the prince*

lived, they say, happily ever after,

like two dolls in a museum case

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190 Harries, *Twice Upon a Time,* 122-23.
never bothered by diapers or dust,
never arguing over the timing of an egg,
ever telling the same story twice,
ever getting a middle-aged spread,
their darling smiles pasted on for eternity.

Regular Bobbsey Twins.

That story."^{191}

This explication of “happily ever after” makes it a state that seems stiflingly static and wholly unappealing. It might be preferable to sleep “on the sooty hearth.”^{192}

Sexton’s last line refers the reader back to the first four stanzas of the poem, which each present another variant of “that story”: a plumber who wins the lottery and goes “from toilets to riches,” a nursemaid who marries into the family “from diapers to Dior,” a milkman who goes “from homogenized to martinis” thanks to some real estate deals, and a charwoman who goes from “mops to Bonwit Teller” after the insurance settlement from an accident. Although in the main narrative of Sexton’s poem, Cinderella is the daughter of a rich man, in these prefatory narratives, the Cinderella characters begin at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder and are carried to the top, and the brief mention of Cinderella’s father’s wealth is overshadowed by the parallelism of these stories with her own, leaving the reader with the overall impression of a rise from poverty to wealth, “That story.”

^{191} Sexton, Complete Poems, 258.
^{192} Sexton, Complete Poems, 256.
This conflation of the canonical Cinderella restoration tale with everyday rags-to-riches stories is widespread in American parlance. Indeed, Cinderella has gone beyond the status of a mere fairy tale character to become a word, although common usage completely elides the beginning of the story, and the fact that Cinderella began her life in a high station is not part of the idiom as we use it in America today. Our story, the American dream story, is one of upward mobility, and the phrase “Cinderella story” is commonly applied to texts which themselves make no claim to the Cinderella tradition, but share the rags-to-riches elevation of Sexton’s prefatory narratives. One such is The Blind Side, Michael Lewis’s biography of Michael Oher, which reviewer Janet Maslin describes as a “strange Cinderella story” that takes Oher from his poor black family on one side of Memphis “into the bosom of the white Tuohy family on the other side of town” and transformed him into an “Ole Miss football hero.” This biography garnered sufficient public interest to be made into a film of the same title in 2009. Similarly, the label of Cinderella man has been applied to Walt Disney himself. Jack Zipes argues Disney felt drawn to fairy tales because they reflected his own struggles in life. After all, Disney came from a relatively poor family, suffered from the exploitative and stern treatment of an unaffectionate father, was spurned by his

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193 The American Heritage Dictionary defines Cinderella as “One that unexpectedly achieves recognition or success after a period of obscurity and neglect.” The etymology is listed as “After Cinderella, the fairy-tale character who escapes from a life of drudgery and marries a prince, translation of French Cendrillon.”

194 The rags-to-riches Cinderella story is particularly common in the film genres of musicals and romantic comedies. See Russel A. Peck’s “Movies and Television” page in his online Cinderella Bibliography for discussions of Like Water for Chocolate, Love Actually, Maid in Manhattan, My Fair Lady, An Officer and a Gentleman, and The Wedding Planner.

early sweetheart, and became a success due to tenacity, cunning, and courage and his ability to gather talented artists and managers like his brother Roy around him.\footnote{Zipes, \textit{Fairy Tale as Myth}, 81. Stone also discusses Disney’s life in fairy tale terms (\textit{Some Day Your Witch Will Come}, 26).} Other and Disney’s personal stories are remarkable, possibly even marvelous. Though these are not the story of Cenerentola or Cendrillon or Aschenputtel, they are American Cinderella stories which, typically, have no use for the Cinderella of tradition, fallen from her formerly exalted station.

The Grimm-Disney canon offers contemporary American culture a wealth of narratives to serve as a secular scripture with which to maintain our social cohesion. These function as the shared stories from which we build new stories and within the discursive space of which we engage in debate about what it means to be American in the twenty-first century. Among the narratives of this broad corpus, Cinderella has been one of the more widely adapted and excerpted tales.

Like all longstanding, human traditions, as described by Drout, the Cinderella tale type has had great staying power over time because the narrative has adapted and changed to appeal to the audience it meets. The 510B sub-type is rare in contemporary American popular culture, and the 510A sub-type has over time become increasingly compact while also morphing from a restoration tale to a rags-to-riches tale. Particularly striking are the changes made to the hero’s initial station relative to the prince and the treatment of the (step)family in the end of the tale. Each of the retellings examined here
blends conservation of social structures and values with innovation in response to social issues within the communities where they find their respective audiences.
CHAPTER 4. OLD WINE IN NEW WINE SKINS:
CONTEMPORARY FAIRY TALE PASTICHE ON FILM

The cinema screen is the modern miracle placed within everyone’s means.
This luminous picture window opened in the wall is the will-o’-the-wisp, the clearing in which fairies dance. It is the place of dreams in a prosaic existence; it is a refreshment of the eyes after the fatigue of withering labor. - Émile Vuillermoz

4.1 Introduction
The late twentieth century saw pushback against the traditional Grimm-Disney canon of fairytales for their perceived misogyny and their Eurocentricity, and this hostile environment among critics, parents, and educators has led to experimentation and innovation within the genre of fairy tales narratives for adults, picture books for children, and animated family films. Rather than rejecting fairy tales outright, some authors interrogate them, creating inversions of the traditional canon by shifting the point of view or the patriarchal alignment of the narratives while remaining faithful to the traditional plot of the tale type they claim. Anne Sexton’s 1971 Transformations claims to be a book of “odd tales / which transform the Brothers Grimm” in its search for answers to

197 Quoted in Moen, Film and Fairy Tales, xiii.
unspecified questions in the minds of both the author and the reader. In her 1979 collection of short stories, *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter brings canonical fairy tales forward in time and juxtaposes their marvelous elements with modern technology like trains and telephones creating an uncanny atmosphere for these familiar narratives.

Children’s books like Ellen Jackson and Kevin O’Malley’s *Cinder Edna* and Jon Scieszka’s *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* are fun to read and can be used to as teaching tools to generate discussion and critical thinking in the classroom. None of these, however, has achieved mainstream blockbuster status. None has become an acclaimed film or a bastion of popular culture. Meanwhile, the creative teams at the Disney Animation Studio have, with moderate success, reached into other cultures to tell stories like *The Lion King*, *Brother Bear*, and *Mulan*, which place the characters’ fairy tale journeys outside of the imagined European medieval of films like *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*. These films reject the familiar characters and settings of the canon while maintaining the underlying wonder tale structure, and they refresh the fairy tale canon by moving the emphasis away from princesses, balls, and weddings.

The edgy experimentation begun by authors like Carter and Sexton in the 1970’s has come of age in the twenty-first century. In contemporary popular culture, interaction with fairy tales goes beyond faithful adaptations and inversions of canonical tale types like those innovative Cinderellas examined in the previous chapter in order to imagine “a future that differs from what now exists.” Indeed, artists and authors working in a

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variety of creative media are appropriating dramatis personae, motifs, and plot sequences to create wholly new tales that problematize the definition of fairy tale even as they remain within the genre. These texts are able to simultaneously participate in the broad fairy tale tradition while also commenting on some of its norms: pastoral image of nature, patriarchal control of the family, and marriage without real choice.202

If the fairy tale is our secular scripture, the cinema screen is our stained glass window. Kristian Moen closes his monograph Film and Fairy Tales with a discussion of DreamWorks Pictures’ Shrek series, Paramount Pictures’ Sleepy Hollow, and Warner Brothers’ Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban. Of the Shrek franchise, Moen notes, Shrek celebrates an earthy, folkloric set of fantasies, such as the pleasures of the grotesque body, the bonds of friendship and high spirits. A certain idea of the old-fashioned and sentimental fairy tale becomes the subject of parody and ridicule: iconic fairy-tale characters are rounded up and exiled from their magic kingdom by an evil lord, the archetypal plot of a prince saving a princess is made to seem less a rite of passage and more an unwelcome task, and the climactic scene of transformation celebrates beastliness over beauty.203

Much like the critics of modern literature and art who focus on the stark and dark, however, Moen does not discuss contemporary fairy tale films that feature princesses as the main heroes and are marketed primarily to young children. Because this scholar

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202 The dynamic of secular scripture differs from that of the closed canon of Judeo-Christian sacred scripture. Although literary texts can draw on biblical narrative for plots, motifs, and themes, even texts as brilliant as Milton’s Paradise Lost cannot become members of the corpus of sacred scripture. In contrast, the Grimm-Disney canon continues to be open to the inclusion of newer adaptations, sometimes even preferring newer versions to older ones, as with the dynamic by which contemporary Americans tend to be more familiar with the animated films than with the Kinder- und Hausmärchen.

203 Moen, Film and Fairy Tales, 211-12.
believes that princess films marketed to children are critical to understanding contemporary American textual culture, this chapter will offer close readings of two films, *Enchanted*\(^{204}\) and *Brave*,\(^{205}\) which engage in the creative and critical process of pastiche while also offering their audiences “Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, and Consolation.”\(^{206}\)

In *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film, Literature*, Ingeborg Hoesterey offers a comprehensive overview of the tradition of pastiche from its roots in early modern Italian “genre of [imitative] painting of questionable quality”\(^{207}\) to the “rebirth of pastiche in the spirit of postmodernism [that] has taken place across the spectrum of the arts”\(^{208}\). Hoesterey describes the early-twentieth century concept of Proustian pastiche as “the coming to grips of a writer with the work of revered authors. […] It is this dialogical mode of pastiche that becomes a major focus of cultural production in postmodernism,”\(^{209}\) wherein “pastiche is about cultural memory and the merging of horizons past and present.”\(^{210}\) In her chapter on cinematic pastiche, Hoesterey examines the way that film in the end of the twentieth century marks a departure from what we have come to consider, *mutatis mutandis*, the “classical” Hollywood film […] a visual narrative that created as fully as possible the illusion of reality on the screen, an illusion in which the viewer remained caught up from beginning to end. Continuity editing rendered all junctures

\(^{204}\) *Enchanted* is a 2007 Disney film starring Amy Adams and Patrick Dempsey, directed by Kevin Lima. It grossed $127 million in theaters over a four-month run (*IMDb*).

\(^{205}\) *Brave* is a 2012 Disney animated feature voiced by Kelly Macdonald, Billy Connolly, and Emma Thompson. It grossed $237 million in theaters over a six-month run (*IMDb*).


\(^{208}\) Hoesterey, *Pastiche* ix.


\(^{210}\) Hoesterey, *Pastiche*, ix.
invisible, which resulted in a tight, self-absorbed work that did not refer to itself as a medium or constructed artifice.\textsuperscript{211}

The pastiche films of the contemporary era break through the illusion of reality on the screen by self-reflexively “quoting the tradition and rewriting it” and by “comprising a complex medley and layering of different styles and motifs.”\textsuperscript{212} Fairy tale pastiche, I would argue, creates a specific subset of cinematic pastiche because in quoting and rewriting its tradition, fairy tale pastiche also must contend with the vexed status of fairy tales themselves (see Chapter 2). In some ways, choice of this unprivileged genre might be said to allow for greater creative freedom because less is at stake. Although fairy tales have always been written for adult audiences as well as children’s audiences, the term “fairy tale” carries a strong association with children’s literature and media. This association with the disenfranchised demographic of children brings with it labels like “unimportant” or “less than,” like the comparison Tolkien has made between fairy stories and furniture relegated to the nursery.\textsuperscript{213} This marginalization, however, means that the fairy tale is also a ludic space that allows for experimentation even when a new pastiche is not intended for children. Social commentary that is too pointed can be dismissed by those whom it has made uncomfortable because it is, after all, just a fairy tale, an artifact belonging to the nursery, not the salon.

\textsuperscript{211} Hoesterey, \textit{Pastiche}, 45.
\textsuperscript{212} Hoesterey, \textit{Pastiche}, 46.
\textsuperscript{213} Tolkien, \textit{Tolkien On Fairy-stories}, 44.
The creative genre of fairy tale pastiche exists in multiple media today: children’s picture books; novels for young readers (The Sisters Grimm series\textsuperscript{214}), teens, and adults; television series for adults (Once Upon a Time and Grimm\textsuperscript{215}); and films (Shrek, Brave, Enchanted). Across these media, the genre of the fairy tale pastiche has four common elements. First, it references the fairy tale canon broadly, including scholars like Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm among the dramatis personae of the new stories, and drawing characters, motifs (the glass slipper, the finger pricked on a spindle), or constellations of motifs from different ATU tale type traditions. Some, like Brave, as we shall see, do this in a limited way. Others like The Sisters Grimm and Once Upon a Time delight in mashing up elements from as many tales as possible.\textsuperscript{216} Second, while making use of fairy tale plots and motifs, the pastiche is also critical. This criticism might be directed toward a particular tale type or a theme common to the genre such as gender inequity in a patriarchal system, or the lack of character development for both male and female heroes, or the operability of magic. Third, the fairy tale pastiche imports contemporary American values into the fairy tale genre. This interpolation is sometimes in service to the criticism of fairy tale genre, but criticism may also be aimed at the twenty-first century values. Fourth, the characters of the narrative may not correspond one to one with the Proppian dramatis personae of the traditional fairy-tale canon. Someone who carries out the


\textsuperscript{215} ABC Studios’ Once Upon a Time television series, which is not marketed to children, brings together a cast of characters drawn from fairy tales around the world to deal with issues of gender and power, reality versus fantasy, and honesty. In NBC’s Grimm series fairy tale characters add complication to an otherwise classic detective drama.

\textsuperscript{216} Once Upon a Time has even kept up with current animated releases, adding new characters as they become popular in other media. Elsa, a character from Disney’s late 2013 film Frozen, arrived in Storybrooke in September of 2014 and remained for twelve episodes of the 2014 broadcast season.
functions of the donor or helper may also be the love interest. The role of villain is often unclear, as someone who appears to be a villain may be redeemed when new information is revealed, or as some other character may carry out an act of villainy while also occupying another role.

4.2 Enchanted

Disney’s 2007 *Enchanted* is an excellent example of fairy tale pastiche that criticizes both contemporary American norms and fairy tale norms. In some ways this film is like any other romantic comedy as it tells the story of a woman and a man who fall in love despite mutual misunderstanding and vastly different worldviews, changing the course of their lives in the process. On the way to telling this story, however, *Enchanted* engages directly with issues about fantasy and reality, especially with regard to skepticism about or belief in fairy tales. *Enchanted* is an overt pastiche, which celebrates its allusions to other fairy tale films and makes use of hybrid spaces to engender conversations about cultural norms. The narrative begins in an animated space when the voiceover narrator leads the viewers into a pop-up storybook. Then we meet half of the cast of characters in the animated land of Andalasia, where we watch as the maiden Giselle meets Prince Edward, but before they can marry, Edward’s wicked stepmother Narissa pushes Giselle into a wishing well that transports her to Manhattan, “a place where there are no happily ever afters” (10:02). Giselle is followed first by Edward who wants to find her, Nathaniel who is sent by Narissa to keep them apart, the chipmunk Pip who wants to thwart Nathaniel’s plans, and ultimately by Queen Narissa herself when

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217 Here and throughout this chapter, film scenes will be referenced in the following way: (hour:) minute: second.
Nathaniel fails. Once in Manhattan, the Andalasian characters interact with New Yorkers on the streets of the city in general, but they draw one particular family into the fairy-tale plot: Morgan, a young girl without a mother, her father Robert, and his fiancé Nancy. It is not by chance that the bulk of the plot is set in New York City or that Robert, the male lead in this film, is a high-powered divorce lawyer who believes in neither love nor fairy tales. Just as Andalasia is a caricature of fairy tale space, Robert’s Manhattan is a caricature of contemporary American space, and ultimately the film concludes with the fairy tale maiden and the Manhattan lawyer having negotiated a middle ground between skepticism and belief in fairy tales.

Independent of each other, Andalasia and Manhattan are each viable settings for what Hoesterey describes as a “classical” Hollywood film in which “the illusion of reality of the screen” is total,\(^\text{218}\) and each of these settings comes with its own set of expectations for plot and characters. In this film, however, the characters move from animated Andalasia into live-action Manhattan, a reversal of the conventional pattern of characters moving from urban space into a discursive natural space. The concept of the green world is well documented in literary criticism,\(^\text{219}\) and it is usually used to describe plots in which the urban characters move into a natural space, like a garden or a wood, which robs them of the strict social and societal structures that normally constrain their behavior, e.g. the four lovers in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* encounter fairies and

\(^{218}\) Hoesterey, *Pastiche*, 45.
love potions in the wood. By transporting the characters from the animated woodland of Andalasia to the middle of a very live-action Manhattan and forcing the Manhattanites to interact with the fairy tale characters, however, _Enchanted_ creates a discursive space that questions the norms operational in both Andalasia and Manhattan. In being transported to Manhattan, the Andalasians experience not only a spatial shift but also a profoundly physical one. As Giselle falls through the wishing well space toward the manhole cover, bits of glitter in the air adhere to her animated body (10:20). Giselle is shocked by this and shies away from the sensation it creates, but ultimately the process overwhelms the animated maiden and she is transformed into the corporeal Amy Adams (10:42).

As they navigate this new space with new skin, the fairy tale characters respond to their dislocation differently. Nathaniel and Narissa, who have the most complex and selfish motivations, are quickly able to make sense of navigating Manhattan, and Prince Edward succeeds by the sheer power of his ego. Giselle, the most naïve and trusting of the Andalasian characters, struggles to make sense of this urban space. Accustomed to the community in Andalasia (not without dangers, i.e. the troll and the wicked queen), she expects people to help her with information and advice. When Giselle first arrives, however, the crowd ignores her despite the oddness of her dress and behavior, and she is swept down into the subway and out again in a different part of the city. When a homeless man makes eye contact with her, Giselle assumes he will be helpful because he is old, but instead he steals her tiara (13:52-14:30). She also approaches a dwarf for help, but he rebuffs her (12:55). Her valiant effort to uphold fairy tale norms in the face of twenty-first century New Yorker skepticism repeatedly marks her as other, as possibly
mentally unstable, and puts her in danger, as when she walks into traffic in the middle of Times Square because she doesn’t know not to (12:20).

Overall, the structure of *Enchanted* is a canonical animated fairy tale opening, a messy middle, and an evolved ending. Within this macro structure, several fairy tale tropes are presented in a similar pattern: a traditional instance in which the trope occurs as expected in Andalasia, a failed occurrence in Manhattan, and an evolved occurrence where Andalasian and Manhattan norms have achieved some kind of harmony. One such trope is that of the female love interest being caught by the hero after falling. This trope is particularly endemic to films because it provides visual evidence of their confirmation to gendered body standards of male strength and female willowy thinness. The first instance of this trope in *Enchanted* occurs in Andalasia when Giselle is being chased by the troll. She drops from the tree and Price Edward catches her (6:45-6:50). Giselle falls again in Manhattan, but while Robert breaks her fall, labeling this “catching” would be generous (19:05-19:10). The third time, it is Giselle who catches Robert as he falls from the Empire State Building (1:35:05). The connections among these moments in the film are made clear first by the director’s choice to make the visual presentation of the character in danger the same all three times: she or he is hanging from a cylindrical object with only the fingers bearing the body’s weight. Then, the film makes a self-referential comment on the evolution of this trope in the voice of the evil queen, “Oh, my. This is a twist on our story. It’s the brave little princess coming to the rescue. I guess that makes you the damsel in distress, huh, handsome?” (1:32:49). Thus, it is clear that the creative team responsible for *Enchanted* had were consciously experimenting with their presentation of fairy tale tropes.
Similarly, the trope of the wicked stepmother recurs in the pattern of traditional, failed, and evolved. In Andalasia, the audience sees Queen Narissa for the wicked stepmother that she is, though Prince Edward and Giselle do not become aware of her embodiment of this trope until the end of the film. The failed instance of the wicked stepmother is Nancy, Robert’s newly-minted fiancé. When she learns of the engagement, Robert’s daughter Morgan is immediately worried about Nancy’s potential embodiment of this trope. The film does not give Nancy and Morgan an opportunity to try out this relationship because for the five years that Robert and Nancy have been dating, he has kept her at a distance from Morgan. Giselle, however, steps into a surrogate mother role in relationship to Morgan long before she is romantically involved with Robert, and the film shows Giselle cleaning the apartment, telling Morgan a bedtime story, and sharing a family meal with Robert and Morgan. The positive (step-)mother-daughter relationship between Giselle and Morgan is cemented when they spend the day shopping in preparation for Giselle to attend the ball. Rather than an exploitative relationship in which the powerful step-parent tries to advance herself at the expense of the child, as with Queen Narissa and traditional fairy tale stepmothers, this relationship is one of mutual benefit as Morgan guides Giselle through Manhattan’s foreign-to-her environment, and Giselle’s embodiment of fairy tale love and kindness tempers Robert’s skepticism, allowing him to become closer to his daughter by engaging with the stories Morgan craves. In its closing musical montage, *Enchanted* presents Giselle as the lead designer at Andalasia Fashions, where bluebirds and rats work alongside Giselle’s human employees and where Morgan and her friends are having a princess-themed party (1:37:30-1:37:50).
Two other fairy-tale tropes, the hero’s ability to communicate with animals and the ability of song to embody magic, receive extended treatment in *Enchanted*. Like Disney’s animated Cinderella, Giselle has a strong affinity with all the animals of her community. When the audience meets her in Andalasia, the powerful magic of Giselle’s song brings friendly animals to help her build her mannequin prince.

In the domestic space of Giselle’s cottage, communication with the animals of Andalasia is reciprocated, and the animals are able to speak in words that both Giselle and the audience can understand. Beyond being friendly with Giselle, the animals are at peace with one another within the cottage, and the chipmunk and mice are not threatened by the owl, the fox, and the badger. Once she meets Prince Edward, these animals help Giselle create her wedding dress overnight, putting the finishing touches on as she arrives at the palace (8:22).²²⁰

²²⁰ Visually these scenes reference key scenes in other Disney animated features: Snow White’s dance with dwarves and animals in the role of prince at the dwarves’ cottage, Aurora’s (Sleeping Beauty’s) dance with animals in prince’s clothing in the forest, and Cinderella’s animal companions creating her dress on the dress form in her room.
In Manhattan, Giselle’s use of song to communicate with local animals is somewhat less successful. While she is able to summon animals to help her clean the apartment, these animals are rougher and dirtier than her companions in the animated world, including mice, rats, pigeons, and cockroaches.

Within the space of “A Happy Working Song,” Giselle and the animals thoroughly clean the bathroom; gather laundry; clean up a table littered with newspapers and take-out containers; and wash, dry, and put away more than a sinkful of dishes. In contrast to her inability to navigate the public space of Manhattan, Giselle is able to make sufficient sense of the domestic space of Robert and Morgan’s apartment to accomplish the tasks of cleaning. The power of Giselle’s song to put creatures normally considered to be filthy to work cleaning an apartment makes for good comedy. Indeed, the roaches cleaning the tub parody the old Scrubbing Bubbles commercial (26:35). I am labeling this a failed instance of the trope, however, because the power of Giselle’s communicative magic is limited, and the ultimate result of this cleaning project is increased disharmony with
Robert. Although the animals in Manhattan can respond to Giselle’s instructions with appropriate action, they cannot speak in a way that is comprehensible to her or to the audience. Further, the song that leads them in cleaning the apartment lacks the power to create a safe space for predators and prey to interact, and one of the pigeons munches a cockroach (28:19). Although the pigeons, rodents, and cockroaches help Giselle make the apartment cleaner and tidier than it was when they started, the pigeons break some of the dishes they are trying to put away (27:54), and the rats use the toothbrushes to clean the toilet (26:55). When Robert wakes up to find these animals inside his home, he responds like any New Yorker, immediately ushering all of the disease-ridden vermin out of the apartment (28:37).

It is, however, remarkable that Giselle’s song works at all. She is no longer in her native environment and is unable to function among the people of this new society on her own, yet she can find help from the fauna present in this urban space. The eagerness of the animals’ response and the way that some of the people in Central Park respond to Giselle’s singing suggest that the magic is latent in the space of Manhattan, requiring only that someone believe in it and call it forth. Central Park thus functions as a smaller green space situated within and contained by the urban space of Manhattan. The collaboration with musicians and dancers who join her song in the park gives Giselle confidence in the power of her own magic, as she is able to communicate with a pair of doves, who successfully carry out her instructions to deliver flowers to Robert’s fiancé.

Giselle: (to the doves) Take these flowers to Nancy, please.

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221 My gratitude to Erin Kissick for this insight.
Robert: Are you crazy? They’re birds. They don’t know where she lives. (50:40)

Giselle ignores his skepticism and returns to singing and dancing with the people in Central Park. Shortly thereafter, Robert’s cell phone rings, and Nancy thanks him for the flowers (52:05).

In the next scene Robert and Giselle are in Nancy’s fashion studio

Nancy: I love them so much.

Robert: Really?

Nancy: Yeah. Usually you send those e-mail cards with the digital flowers. These are exquisite. Where do find live doves in New York City? (52:40)

In this instance of the trope, the birds do exactly what Giselle has asked without incident, and the result is the restoration of harmony between Robert and Nancy, who had argued when Nancy found Giselle in the apartment.

*Enchanted* also connects the trope of recognizing one’s true love to the power of song. In Andalasia, Giselle’s song is heard by Prince Edward who is hunting nearby. When he answers her song, the harmony of their duet is a signal to the two of them that they are meant to be together. They sing,

Edward: You’re the fairest maid I’ve ever met. You were made

Giselle: To finish your duet.

Together: And in years to come we’ll reminisce

Edward: how we came to love

Giselle: and grew and grew love

Together: Since first we knew love through true love’s kiss (07:05)
Because of this harmony, Giselle and Edward believe that when they kiss for the first time, they will be bound by true love, another powerful trope. This love is fated, based on external criteria (unspecified beyond the duet) rather than on any kind of deep knowledge of one another. It is their belief in this love that motivates their actions throughout the messy middle of this film while Giselle is waiting for Prince Edward to rescue her from being stranded in Manhattan.

When Giselle explains to Robert that she is waiting for Prince Edward, her prospective groom, to come find her, he is incredulous.

Robert: So what’s the deal with you and this prince? How long have you been together?

Giselle: Oh, about a day.

Robert: You mean it feels like a day because you’re so in love?

Giselle: No, it’s been a day.

Robert: You’re kidding me. A day? One day.

Giselle: Yes. A day. And tomorrow will be two days.

Robert: No, you’re joking.

Giselle: No. I’m not.

Robert: Yeah, you are.

Giselle: But I’m not.

Robert: You’re going to marry somebody after a day because you fell in love with him?

Giselle: Yes. Yes! (44:53)
The lawyer scoffs at planning a life based on a song and a kiss, encouraging Giselle to date Edward and get to know him before marrying (46:35). This conversation in which Robert and Giselle talk at each other but largely fail to communicate is representative of most of the conversations they have in the first day of their acquaintance. Their worldviews are so different that each has difficulty making sense of the other.

The love’s duet trope has two failed instances in the messy middle of the film. The first is while Giselle is singing in Central Park. Even though Prince Edward hears and recognizes her song, he is unable to navigate the unfamiliar space to reach her, in part because the people living their daily lives in the park do not make way for him, as his royal ego leads him to expect they should (50:20). When Edward finally does find Giselle in Robert’s apartment the next day, the duet falters:

Edward: I’ve been dreaming of a true love’s kiss and the miss I have begun to miss. Pure and sweet, waiting to complete my love song. Somewhere there’s a maid I’ve never met who was made…

Giselle: ….

Edward: Who was made…

Giselle: What’s wrong?

Edward: You’re not singing.

Giselle: Oh. I’m not. Well, I’m sorry. I was thinking.

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222 The creative team at the Walt Disney Animation Studios returns to criticism of such instantaneous true love in the 2013 animated feature Frozen, in which Princess Anna plans to marry Prince Hans after knowing him for only one day. Her sister Queen Elsa refuses to grant permission, and Kristoff, a down-to-earth ice cutter, expresses incredulity at her plans: “Wait, you got engaged to someone you just met that day?......Hang on, you mean to tell me you got engaged to someone you just met that day?....Didn’t your parents ever warn you about strangers?” (40:50).
Edward: Thinking?

Giselle: Before we leave, there is one thing I would love to do.

Edward: Name it, my love, and it is done.

Giselle: I want to go on a date.

Edward: A date! What’s a date?

Giselle: Well…we go out to dinner. And we talk about ourselves. Our likes and our dislikes. Our interests. A date. (1:09:18)

In this scene, the fact that Giselle is thinking rather than singing is as bizarre to Prince Edward as Giselle’s singing in Central Park was to Robert, and this is a significant moment in Giselle’s character development. What none of the characters present in this scene seem to notice is the change in Prince Edward’s part of the duet. He sings, “Somewhere there’s a maid I’ve never met.” Clearly, Giselle is not that maid. As Giselle and Edward have their date in New York City, it becomes clear to the audience, and to them, that they are not as well matched as they thought. For the audience, the increasing awkwardness between them is in sharp contrast to the growing ease between Giselle and Robert.

The final instance of the true love’s duet trope in Enchanted occurs while Robert and Giselle are dancing at the ball. Robert, who had earlier in the film asserted that he does not dance and does not sing (49:55), sings to Giselle as they dance:

Now you’re beside me,

And look how far we’ve come!

So far, we are so close. (1:22:02)
Despite never having danced together, they are so well suited as partners and dance so harmoniously that the other couples cede the dance floor to them. This new connection between Robert and Giselle becomes critical when Queen Narissa poisons Giselle with an apple. Prince Edward’s kiss is ineffective, and it is Robert who is able to revive Giselle, revealing himself to be her true love not because of fate but because they have gotten to know one another and each has influenced the other’s personal development.

Over the course of the film, Enchanted’s creative team make allusions to multiple fairy tale traditions, for example Snow White (the wicked step-mother, the poisoned apple, the dwarf), Cinderella (animals making the dress, the glass slipper, the ball), and Sleeping Beauty (Giselle dreams of the prince before she meets him, she meets him in the woods, she is woken by true love’s kiss, the villain turns into a dragon). These pervasive and varied allusion allow the film to be in conversation with the Grimm-Disney canon broadly. Enchanted’s pattern of presenting fairy tale tropes in their traditional form, a failed instance, and a evolved instance allows the film to criticize the canon while still participating in the fairy tale traditions familiar to contemporary American audiences and creating a discursive space alongside Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, and Consolation.

Although Enchanted moves its fairy tale characters from the green world of Andalasia into the urban space of Manhattan and forces them to learn to navigate the rigid rules present there, the film also spends time criticizing contemporary American culture, particularly for its lack of imagination. All of the Andalasian characters accept New York City for what it is: an otherworld to which they have somehow been transported. None of them ever expresses the idea that it must be a dream or an illusion. Giselle sings, “What a strange place to be till Edward comes for me. My heart is sighing.
Still, as long as I am here, I guess a new experience could be worth trying” (27:13) The Manhattanites, on the other hand, think that the Andalasians are delusional. When Prince Edward thrusts his sword through the roof of a city bus in a valiant effort to free the peasants from the “steel beast” (35:02), the only way the driver and passengers can make sense of him is as a person with some sort of mental illness (35:07).

Beyond this disbelief in the possibility of physical otherworlds, Robert discounts the value of imaginative otherworlds. When his daughter Morgan asks for a book of fairy tales, Robert gives her a book of biographies of famous women, telling her, “I know it’s not that fairy tale book you wanted, but this is better. Look at this. See? Rosa Parks. Madam Curie. She was a remarkable woman who dedicated her life to research” (16:12). Robert values rationality over “crazy romantic whim[s]” (15:40), and cannot see how fairy tales can be good for anyone. When they first meet Giselle, Morgan immediately believes her to be a princess and accepts Giselle’s story. Robert, however, cannot comprehend this possibility. Further, Robert repeatedly denies the possibility of things which are already happening: people knowing Giselle’s song in Central Park (48:00), the birds finding Nancy to deliver the flowers (50:44), and Prince Edward finding Giselle (1:04:55). Not only does Robert not believe in fairy tales, he struggles to see the everyday unexpected around him.

The two-part setting of the film in Andalasia and Manhattan allows the creative team to first establish fairy tale norms in the former and then challenge them in the latter. These norms include the hero rescuing the love interest, the wicked stepmother, the hero’s ability to communicate with animals, and love’s duet. In a reversal of literary norms, Enchanted moves characters from an animated natural space into an urban space,
which is the opposite of the conventional dynamic of urban characters moving into a green world. Throughout the film, Enchanted’s creative team uses the tensions between fairy tales and contemporary America to criticize both, ultimately moving its main characters toward a compromise that draws on the best aspects of each. Robert helps Giselle learn to think for herself, to look to real women as role models, and to see the negative in life as well as the positive. Giselle reinfuses Robert’s life with love, dreams, and music. In the inverse of the film’s transformation of Giselle’s story, the ending of Enchanted restores to Prince Edward the canonical story of the prince at the ball. Unexpectedly, he meets a beautiful woman, Nancy, falls in love with her while dancing, takes her back to his kingdom, and marries her. Thus, Enchanted is an excellent example of fairy tale pastiche. It is conscious of its own status as a pastiche, and revels in making allusions to a multiple tale types. The two-part setting, and the resolution that brings Andalasia and New York City into harmony, work to criticize elements of the cultures endemic to each place.

Not all critics share my assessment of Enchanted’s successful criticism of both fairy tale and contemporary cultural norms, and the film has come under fire for being insufficiently feminist and insufficiently radical in its reworking of the fairy tale form. In “Disney’s Enchanted: Patriarchal Backlash and Nostalgia in a Fairy Tale Film,” Linda Pershing and Lisa Gablehouse tar Enchanted with the same brush that criticizes earlier Disney films for their representations of women and reinforcement of the patriarchal structure. Pershing and Gablehouse point out

223 When Morgan asked for a book of fairy tales, Robert gave her a book of biographies of famous women (16:14). Though Morgan is uninterested in this book, Giselle reads it on her second night as a guest in their apartment (1:04:45).
In the film, the female protagonist seeks personal fulfillment through romance. The outcome—a happy ending in marriage—follows the heroine being subjected to a threat or danger, rendered vulnerable, and finally rescued. By no means a self-actualized feminist *Enchanted*’s main character Giselle (Amy Adams) finds her one true love and becomes a heteronormative role model for her future stepdaughter. Nancy (Idina Menzel), her hitherto feminist counterpart and rival for the affections of lawerly—if not princely—Robert (Patrick Dempsey), retreats at the film’s end from the real world to the make-believe realm of Andalasia, giving up her professional career to become a fairy tale princess and a bride.\(^{224}\)

There are several problems with Pershing and Gablehouse’s characterization of the film here. First is their presentation of Giselle as a helpless, “heroine being subjected to a threat or danger, rendered vulnerable, and finally rescued.”\(^{225}\) Although Robert does rescue her from the dangers of Manhattan, a city which is familiar to him and unfamiliar to her, and from the poisoned apple, it is Giselle who rescues Robert from the evil Queen, a villain from her native land, and also, arguably, Giselle who rescues Robert from his own cynicism.

A second problem with Pershing and Gablehouse’s assessment of *Enchanted* is their characterization of Nancy as a feminist who regresses. Throughout the film, Nancy is looking for the romance that Robert refuses to believe in. She enthusiastically gushes over the doves, flowers, and tickets to the ball that Robert sends, noting “this is so unlike [him]” (53:17). She also appreciates Prince Edward’s sincere expression of romance at


\(^{225}\) Pershing and Gablehouse, “Disney’s *Enchanted*,” 138.
the ball (1:19:50). The assumption embedded in the phrase “giving up her professional career to become a fairy tale princess and a bride” is that once in Andalasia, Nancy will become the stereotypical milquetoast fairy tale heroine. The model of partnership with the gendered other that the film has established with Giselle and Robert, however, is one of mutual support and development, so one should expect Nancy to have as much influence on Edward and Andalasia as Giselle has had on Robert’s New York. The Robert depicted in the closing montage of the film, for example, smiles easily, dresses casually, and participates in the games of childhood, none of which the dark-suited, high-powered lawyer of the beginning of the film would have done.

Finally, Pershing and Gablehouse’s criticism hinges on the fact that these two female characters marry in the end of the film. If, however, self-actualization is about the ability to make choices for oneself rather than acting merely on compulsion, criticism must recognize that marriage to the gendered other is a choice that millions of early twenty-first century Americans make every day. Marriage is, in fact, so important in contemporary American culture that gallons of ink have been spent arguing successfully for the extension of this right to millions more couples in which both partners are of the same gender. It should be no surprise that the texts of our popular culture fixate on this very human rite of passage. Should more texts depict couples who are same-gendered or mixed-race? Absolutely, they should! Contemporary American culture needs those texts, but the realities of the commercial marketplace mean that family films aimed at a broad audience will not be the leaders in this area. The texts that do push the envelope do not achieve broad appeal. Malinda Lo’s Ash, for example, is a masterfully told story of a

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Cinderella who goes home from the ball with the prince’s huntress rather than the prince. Although *Ash* has seen some popularity within liberal and LGBT communities, its engagement with the polarizing issue of homosexuality has meant that this text is not included in classrooms and libraries around the country. Indeed, during the writing of this dissertation, I had to ask my local Barnes and Noble to order a copy for me because they did not have it on their shelf. Though it may not be as iconoclastic as Lo’s *Ash*, neither is *Enchanted* the same old Disney. Giselle meets her fairy-tale prince, and then she chooses not to marry him because her character development over the course of the film makes them incompatible with one another. In the end, she becomes not only a wife and a mother but also an artist and a business owner. As Michael Drout argues in his analysis of *How Tradition Works*, “Change within the narrow bounds of elbow room is interpreted as stability,” and in the case of commercially produced fairy tales, stability allows new versions to capitalize on the fame and familiarity of previous ones. Thus, traditions evolve slowly because there must be a critical mass of sameness in order for participants (consumers of written and cinematic texts) to recognize the connection between this iteration and the previous ones. Conversely, “[i]f a traditional meme-plex evolves fairly far...in one direction and another lineage of that meme-plex varies as far as

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227 In a blog post titled “Have your books been banned?” Malinda Lo address this question that she fields frequently. She remarks that although she has experienced few direct challenges to her books, she has had “a number of experiences with a quieter kind of censorship. Over the last five years, I’ve had the opportunity to talk to many teachers...about my books....Teachers often tell me that they are afraid to acquire certain books for their classroom because they’re worried that parents will object. Often, the books they’re afraid to include are mine, or other books like mine that have LGBT characters....If the books never make it into the library or classroom, there’s no way they can be “banned,” but make no mistake: censorship is still happening.”

it can in the second, the overall population of the tradition is primed for speciation.”

There is a limit to the amount of innovation any single version of fairy tale can introduce, and *Enchanted* spends most of its allotted innovation on the ludic play of settings and allusions.

### 4.3 Brave

*Brave*, the other film under consideration in this chapter, is also an example of fairy tale pastiche, but participates in this genre in a strikingly different way. *Brave* presents a coherent fairy tale story, in a fictionalized Scottish highlands setting that constitutes an “illusion of reality on the screen…in which the viewer remain[s] caught up from beginning to end.” Within this cohesive illusion of reality, however, *Brave* spends its allotment of innovation on shifting the focus from the traditional fairy tale goal of creating a relationship with the gendered other to maintaining relationships within the nuclear family. The creative team’s choice of a female hero allows this shift in focus to foreground female power structures within the family and to challenge the fairy tale norms governing marriage: that the father controls the daughter’s hand and that he can bestow that hand to the suitor who triumphs in a test of arms. To accomplish this narrative goal, the creative team behind *Brave* do not overtly reference a single tale type. Rather, they build their story on the foundation of wonder tale quest structure using the fairy-tale building blocks of the princess, the contest for the princess’s hand, the witch’s spell, and the quest to right a wrong, thus creating a new narrative that nonetheless feels familiar to an audience steeped in the Grimm-Disney canon.

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Brave’s initial situation depicts a family in harmony having a picnic outdoors (00:01). Fergus is the strong and powerful king of a group of clans in the Scottish highlands. Elinor, his queen, is a poised and beautiful helpmeet whose levelheadedness maintains order even when Fergus’s impetuosity threatens it. Their marriage exemplifies the happily ever after achieved by harmonious union with the other, and in this scene, their young daughter Merida is eager to learn from both her parents: storytelling and legends from Elinor (03:40), archery and animal husbandry from Fergus (02:20). Their picnic is ruined by Mor’du, a bear who attacks the party and takes Fergus’s leg, setting up the expectation that the conflict of the tale will be human against bear (04:00). Mor’du, however, is not the villain or even the main complication. Brave is a fairy tale without a single villain, and ultimately, the complication is that Merida grows up.

Mor’du’s destruction of the idyllic picnic scene shatters the image of happily-ever-after perfection, and Brave reveals to its audience the tensions in the lives of these characters. Merida’s nuclear family leads a group of clans structured along patriarchal lines, with Fergus as the leader of the clan leaders. The partnership among these clans is new and still tense, and all are looking forward to strengthening the cohesion among them via the peaceweaver-like marriage of Fergus’s daughter to the firstborn son of the other lords who best performs a feat of arms. Merida and Elinor have differing views about the place of women within this patriarchal structure. Merida excels at the activities normally coded masculine: archery, horseback riding, fishing, woods lore, and climbing. Meanwhile, she resents the more traditionally feminine activities and values Elinor tries to impart. As her voiceover narrates our introduction to the family, Merida says,
I can never get away with anything. I’m the princess. I’m the example. I’ve got duties, responsibilities, expectations. My whole life is planned out, preparing for the day I become, well, my mother. She’s in charge of every single day of my life.

(05:28)

In an extended montage the audience observes a litany of interdictions Elinor gives to Merida regarding how to be a princess. A princess should have good posture, be able to speak and be heard in a large space, be knowledgeable about her kingdom, play music, not doodle or chortle, rise early, be compassionate, patient, cautious, clean, and should strive for perfection (6:00-6:48). Although Merida is the protagonist, and the audience is invited to identify with her, the film challenges Merida’s assessment of her mother’s value, clearly showing Elinor using these qualities to guide the family as it leads the clans.

Fergus behaves much like the triplet sons, lacking impulse control and reveling in scatological humor. To his credit, Fergus seems to recognize the need for the balance his wife offers, but Merida resents what she interprets as tight-fisted control for the sake of control.

Merida is an unlikely candidate to join the ranks of Disney princesses. Most fairy-tale princesses, particularly within the Grimm-Disney canon, do not have to struggle to be princess-like. Rather, they inherently live by the interdictions Merida resists. Disney’s 1950 Cinderella, for example, rises early and exemplifies patience and compassion, even in her abject state. Merida, in contrast, occupies the social space of the princess of the realm while actively resisting acquisition of these qualities, as though princess is a job she can choose to do or not to do rather than a position to which she has been born. She
views a day off from lessons as a day off from being a princess, “A day I can change my fate” (7:05). Elinor views Merida’s resistance as a wildness that must be tamed. However, far from the impetuous wild child that Elinor takes her for, Merida can be conscientious and precise. She excels at making difficult shots from horseback while riding at high speed through the woods (07:15), the woodcarving on her bow presents beautiful detail (07:55), and she climbs the challenging Crone’s Tooth crag with agility (08:10).

The mother-daughter battle for control is largely waged on the ground of Merida’s body. When we meet the teen-aged Merida, her hair is wild and her clothing is comfortable.

Here, Merida’s clothing is both modest and feminine, but the fabric and cut of the dress, particularly the sleeves split at the elbow, allow the freedom of movement necessary for the activities Merida prefers. In the next scene, however, Elinor’s efforts to tame Merida’s hair and bind her into formal clothing physically manifest the effort to force her to conform to the role of peacemaker within the patriarchal clan structure.
Elinor: You look absolutely beautiful.

Merida: I can’t breathe

Elinor: Shush! Give us a turn.

Merida: I can’t move. It’s too tight.

Elinor: It’s perfect. (16:50)

For most princesses within the Grimm-Disney canon, the acquisition of the fancy gown is a celebratory moment. They smile, they move with ease, they pirouette simply to watch the dress swirl around them. The clothes that Elinor has chosen for Merida, in contrast, are more constraining than Elinor’s own, even covering more of her body and her hair, and Merida’s movements become effortful.

In the scene depicted above, Merida totters from one foot to the other as she turns, and in the next scene bending to sit down requires concerted thought (17:50). Although no further words are said about the dress, Merida’s distinctive mane of curly red hair continues to be a point of resistance. During the dressing process, one errant curl escapes the wimple, and Elinor tucks it in. Having sat down in the throne room, Merida works the
curl back out, and Elinor again tucks it away (16:50-18:00). This dress will later be ripped apart at the seams as Merida claims the role of champion in addition to that of princess (26:20).

Merida’s resistance of Elinor’s effort at education and control manifests three acts of rebellion which together constitute Merida’s complete rejection of Elinor’s model for femininity, and in the fairy tale structure are the violation interdiction function. Her first act of rebellion is to compete against the other clans’ three suitors for her own hand. When Elinor reminds the lords of the agreement that “only the firstborn of each of the great leaders may be presented as champion. And thus compete for the hand of the princess of Dun Broch” (22:20), the audience sees the beginning of a plan in Merida’s face. Although, the daughter for whose hand the sons are competing gets to choose the mode of competition, Merida’s choice of archery is an unexpected one as the traditional choices for a contest of arms or strength among the highland games would have been something along the lines of caber toss, stone put, or hammer throw. This choice puts the other clan leaders’ sons into competition on turf where Merida feels comfortable. After the three have completed their abysmal shots, Merida, with wild hair flowing, steps out and declares, “I am Merida, firstborn descendant of Clan Dun Broch. And I’ll be shooting for my own hand” (26:15). Beyond violating Elinor’s interdictions regarding princessly behavior, this act challenges the patriarchal structure upon which harmony among the clans has been built since their alliance is to be maintained by the princess’s marriage to

231 This battle on the ground of Merida’s body continued into the merchandising realm of the Disney empire. Shortly after Brave left theaters, the Disney’ corporations redrew all of the Disney princesses, Merida included, blurring the distinctions between animation styles to create a cohesive cadre of women. Each of these re-drawn princesses is depicted in the most fancy of the clothes she wears in her film, Merida included. Brave fans who identified with the wilder, more casual and comfortable Merida protested this change vocally.
one of the sons of the other clan leaders. In this moment, Merida also rends the physical constraints of the dress Elinor has used to bind her when it hinders her ability to move her arm backward to draw the bow. Saying, “Curse this dress!” Merida moves sharply enough to rip the fabric and gain freedom of movement (26:20). Walking along the line of targets, she shoots at each of the backstops the suitors shot at, her arrows landing in the center of each bullseye. The third of these splits that suitor’s arrow in half and is buried in the backstop up to the fletching (27:02).\textsuperscript{232} This first act of rebellion breaks the harmony\textsuperscript{233} within the family and threatens the alliance among the clans.

It is Elinor, not Fergus, who reprimands Merida for this act of rebellion, not only against her parents, but against the traditions of the clans, and their argument in Elinor’s chambers lead to Merida’s second act of rebellion: the destruction of Elinor’s tapestry. This tapestry is a large wall covering, taller than Elinor herself, and the embroidery worked on its surface depicts a young Merida standing between her parents and holding Elinor’s hand.

Merida: Aughhh! This is so unfair.

Elinor: Unfair?

Merida: You’re never there for me. This whole marriage is what you want. Do you ever bother to ask what I want? No. You walk around telling me what to do, what not to do, trying to make me be like you. Well, I’m not going

\textsuperscript{232} This moment is visually reminiscent of Robin Hood’s besting of his opponents in an archery contest. It also, however, calls up allusions to Brunhild’s assertion that she will only marry a suitor who could best her with spear, stone, and leap in \textit{The Nibelungenlied} (Francis Gentrys and James K. Walter, eds., \textit{German Epic Poetry: The Nibelungenleid, The Older Lay of Hildebrand, and Other Works} [New York: Continuum, 2006], 46).

\textsuperscript{233} In most fairy tale plots, it is the villain who is responsible for the breakdown in harmony either through the villain’s own direct action or through coercion of another character. In this case, it is the hero herself who is responsible for this aspect of the villainy.
to be like you.

Elinor: You’re acting like a child.

Merida: And you’re a beast. That’s who you are. [points sword at the center of the tapestry]²³⁴

Elinor: Merida!

Merida: I’ll never be like you. [starts to pierce the fabric]

Elinor: No, stop that!

Merida: I’d rather die than be like you! [slashes the tapestry between the mother and the daughter, cutting through their clasped hands]

Elinor: [gasps] Merida, you are a princess, and I expect you to act like one.

[shakes her, takes away the bow]

Merida: Mum!

Elinor: [throws the bow into the fireplace] (27:40-28:23)

Merida’s tearing of the cloth is an act of unmaking which rends the fabric of the literal family even as it parts the one figured in the stitches, and it is matched by Elinor’s act of unmaking in burning the bow.²³⁵

While Merida’s first two acts of rebellion are carried out by bow and sword, skills her father taught her, it is the belief in magic and fate imparted by Elinor that leads to Merida’s third act of rebellion. When wills o’ the wisp in the woods lead Merida to a

²³⁴ In this scene, it is the interplay of spoken words and actions that furthers the plot, so I have included my own notes about what the characters are doing in the square brackets.

²³⁵ Elinor, however, almost immediately regrets her rash act and pulls the bow out of the fire (28:35). This scene in which the mother and daughter destroy their bond by each destroying the other’s creative labor resonates with Brynhild’s act of unmaking when she destroys the tapestry that she had created depicting Sigurd’s deeds in Chapter 31 of The Saga of the Volsungs: The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer, trans. Jesse L. Byock, (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 85. In this fairy tale film, however, unlike in the saga, the two women are able to work together to mend their bond.
witch’s cottage, she asks for a spell that will change her fate by changing her mother (33:44). She gets more than she bargains for, however, with a spell that transforms her mother into a bear (39:25).\textsuperscript{236} The creative team’s choice of bear for Elinor’s transformation is an interesting one. Bears are able to stand on their hind legs and adopt an approximately human silhouette, and this is how bear-Elinor insists on moving through the world, signaling that though she may look like a bear, she is nonetheless human on the inside. Later in the film, Elinor’s adoption of the more bear-like gait on four paws is a signal that she is loosing the connection to her humanity. Merida, who observed the transformation and knows the reason for it, is able to see her mother inside the bear body; however, Fergus, for whom all bears are mortal enemies to be hunted, is not. The fact that Elinor becomes a bear, as opposed to a deer or a rabbit, works to further rend the bonds of this family unit.

Almost immediately upon Elinor’s transformation, Merida realizes her mistake, and as she attempts to put things to rights, she also realizes the magnitude of having lost her mother’s support.\textsuperscript{237} Not only do Merida’s three acts of rebellion break the mother-daughter relationship, but Elinor’s resulting transformation into a bear threatens all the relationships in the family. Fergus leads the gathered lords hunting his wife, bear-Elinor, through the castle, and the father-daughter bond is also broken when Merida puts herself

\textsuperscript{236} The Disney Animation Studio has explored folkloric idea of kinship between bears and humans before. In the 2003 animated feature \textit{Brother Bear}, after the young hunter Kenai is told that his totem is the bear, he is transformed into one after killing a mother bear who he believes to have killed his brother. At the climax of this film, Kenai has to choose between remaining a bear and staying with the orphaned cub or returning to human form and rejoining his tribe. Kenai elects to stay a bear, but in the final scene, the tribe’s medicine woman and Kenai’s remaining human brother guide bear-Kenai through the tribe’s ritual of adulthood while the orphaned bear cub and the members of the tribe look on.

\textsuperscript{237} This is a shift in Merida’s role with regard to Propp’s assignment of functions to dramatis personae. Her acts of rebellion destroy harmony, a task generally belonging to a villain. Once her quest becomes one to restore harmony, she is acting like a hero. From the beginning, Merida has been the protagonist of the film. This is where she becomes the hero.
between Fergus and this bear. Fergus does not believe Merida’s explanation that this bear inside the castle is his wife (1:11:59).

With the patriarchal structure of the family in shambles, Merida and bear-Elinor must learn to communicate because they are the only two who understand the situation completely. Once mother and daughter are depending on one another out in the forest, each learns to value the other’s knowledge and experience. When Merida despairs at finding the witch because the wisps do not appear when she needs them, Elinor’s take-charge attitude leads them to the right part of the woods for Merida to recognize the path to the cottage, for example. On this second visit to the witch’s cottage, Merida and bear-Elinor learn that at the second sunset, the spell will become permanent, but that until then it can be reversed if they can interpret the witch’s cipher, “Fate be changed, look inside, mend the bond torn by pride.” Merida reasons that this means she must mend the gash in the tapestry in order to transform Elinor back into a human (1:10:00). For all the risk they take to retrieve the slashed tapestry, however, Merida’s mending of it does not reverse the spell (1:20:00).

Rather, it is the interpersonal bond between the two women that they must work to mend, and the audience observes this happening as they two of them work together to navigate the forest and the castle. When Elinor gathers nightshade berries and wormy water because she doesn’t know how to survive outdoors, Merida teaches her to fish for better sustenance. In a moment of despair, Merida sees a childhood memory in which she was scared by a storm and hid under the tapestry depicting the family as Elinor was embroidering. Elinor’s words, “My brave wee lassie, I’m here. I’ll always be right here,” offered her comfort and safety (52:12). In order to get back into the castle to mend the
tapestry, they combine Merida’s knowledge of the castle and Elinor’s bear strength to break through the castle defenses and get to Elinor’s room undetected. In the hall through which they must pass, the lords’ feasting has degenerated into a melee, and because bear-Elinor cannot walk through the melee to stop them. Merida recalls all her mother’s lessons in princessly bearing and walks through the fighting, carrying herself just like Elinor had when the lords arrived, and, just as they had for Elinor, the men cease their brawling and pay attention to Merida’s words (1:04:17). Merida begins by telling a story of the consequences of family disharmony that we had seen Elinor tell her earlier in the film. When Merida’s ideas falter, she is able to channel her mother more directly, reading bear-Elinor’s pantomime from the back of the hall when her own ideas falter (1:07:15). The audience sees the bond between these two women being mended over the course of these adventures even as they continue to disagree. Ultimately, it is Merida’s admission of fault that breaks the curse. As the rays of the second sunset reach them, Merida sobs, “No. I don’t understand. I…Oh, Mum, I’m sorry. This is all my fault. I did this to you. To us. You’ve always been there for me. You’ve never given up on me. I just want you…I want you back, Mummy. I love you” (1:20:30). These powerful words of apology and affection do mend the bond, though, and as the sun’s light bathes them completely, Elinor’s transformation is reversed.

*Brave* also resolves the battle that the women had waged over Merida’s clothing, though this resolution is offered in images rather than words. When Merida finally takes her mother’s lessons to heart and subdues the brawling clansmen, she is wearing her preferred comfortable clothes, and her hair is unbound. Further, the Elinor presented in the final scene has her own hair loose and appears to be more relaxed than she had been
before her transformation. In this final scene, Merida and Elinor are working together on a new tapestry depicting Merida and bear Elinor dancing (1:23:18).

Almost as iconic as the princess in the Grimm-Disney canon is the villain, whose job it is to damage the harmony of the initial situation, to threaten the life of the hero and/or the romantic love interest, and to test the hero’s prowess through combat or tests. Snow White had a wicked stepmother with a magic mirror, a poisoned apple, and the ability to transform herself into a crone; Sleeping Beauty’s villainy was carried out by Maleficent, the fairy who felt slighted by the royal family; and Cinderella’s very human wicked stepmother manages to coerce and control without the use of magic. In Brave, in contrast, the narrative role of the villain is divided among the other characters, who carry out isolated acts of villainy intentionally and unintentionally and with and without regret, much like flesh-and-blood human beings. Merida’s depiction of her own life, places her mother in the role of villain: a person who is coercing her to be a polished princess and a respectable representative of her family. Conversely, if we look at the narrative through Elinor’s eyes, Merida is villainous: selfishly defying her mother’s instructions and breaking the traditions of the clan. In Fergus’s view, bears are the enemy, and for most of the film, his anger is directed toward the bear Mor’du; however, Fergus himself takes on the role of villain when he locks Merida in her chamber and tries to kill bear-Elinor in the castle. This dispersion of the acts of villainy among the characters whom the film otherwise has invited the audience to love and identify with turns them into complex characters rather than the cardboard cut-out stock characters who sometimes dominate the Grimm-Disney canon. In the end, it means that happily ever after does not include the death or exile of the one villain who caused all harm. It is Merida’s apology and her
acceptance of responsibility for the villainy she committed that restores the bonds of harmony within the nuclear family, the next phase of these characters’ interactions includes the memory of the villainies they have each committed.

It seems that, in this case, at least, the Disney Animation Studio has finally heeded the criticisms of scholars like Kay Stone that their canon over-emphasized the romantic aspect of fairy tales when in actuality “the ‘happily ever after’ meaning of fairy tales is not about finding one’s prince or princess, but about finding oneself.” This film uses the fairy tale structure to tell a story about the importance of bonds, the dangers of tearing those bonds, and the necessity of mending them once rent. It is innovative in that it is not occupied with the formation of a new bond between the hero and the gendered other. Rather, it concerns itself with maintaining bonds among the members of a nuclear family and among the families within the larger clan structure, and the words ‘bond,’ ‘tear,’ and ‘mend’ pervade the script. Thus, bear-Elinor’s defeat of Mor’dru, the putative villain from the film’s opening scene, is not the climax, and this film does not end with a wedding. The restoration of the nuclear family structure is the happy ending offered by Brave as it continues the work to create truly modern fairy tales that engage contemporary issues.

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238 Stone, Some Day Your Witch Will Come, 25. Jennifer Rome agrees with me. In her 2013 MA thesis from the University of Nebraska at Omaha entitled Disney Prindess “2.0”: A Feminist Critique of Disney’s Newest Generation of Princesses, Rome argues that Disney’s most recent princesses “move the protagonist in strong, new direction, not with glimpses of girl power but replete with a strong feminist agenda” (abstract).

239 The key to breaking the spell that transformed Elinor into a bear is “mend the bond torn by pride.” The agreement among the clans is their bond: “Our kingdom is young. Our stories are not yet legend, but in them our bond was struck. Our kingdoms were once enemies, but when invaders threatened us from the sea you joined together to defend our lands. You fought for each other.” (1:05:45). Merida acknowledges what she has done in terms of this bond: “But I’ve been selfish. I tore a great rift in our kingdom. There’s no one to blame but me. I know now that I need to amend my mistake and mend our bond” (1:06:50).
4.4 A Final Word About Pastiche

As the analysis in this chapter shows, the fairy tale is a generative genre, which allows authors and film studio creative teams use the dramatis personae and motifs of the Grimm Disney fairy tale canon to build new fairy tale narratives. The category of fairy tale pastiche is home to texts that draw on multiple tale types and on contemporary American ideals to tell stories that offer criticism, which may be directed at fairy tale norms, contemporary American norms, or both. In fairy tale pastiche, the correspondence of characters to Proppian dramatis personae is not 1:1. Although they engage in the process of creating fairy tale pastiche very differently, the films *Brave* and *Enchanted* each offer excellent examples of this contemporary genre.

The ways that these two films interact with the Grimm-Disney canon confirms the pervasive presence of fairy tales in contemporary American literature and film. *Enchanted* is able to draw on a variety of fairy tales for humor and commentary because the creative team could depend on the audience’s knowledge of the stories to which they were making allusions. *Brave* is able to tell a new story that can fit into the canon seamlessly because its creative teams made use of the building blocks of that canon. Each of these films engages with the canon in order to place discourse and commentary in the space between the audience’s knowledge about fairy tales and these new pastiche fairy tales. It is by virtue of the fact that the fairy tales of the Grimm-Disney canon have become contemporary America’s secular scripture that the creative teams behind *Brave* and *Enchanted* could accomplish these goals in this way.
CHAPTER 5. PUTTING WORDS IN THEIR MOUTHS:
RUSSIAN BYLINY AS DISCURSIVE SPACE

Ideas are born because they meet the demands of the era.\textsuperscript{240}

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the adaptation of the Il’ja Muromec\textsuperscript{241} corpus of былины (byliny), or Russian heroic epics into animated films for children in which stories of medieval princes, heroes, and villains become the discursive space for the exploration of social issues in post-Soviet Russia. This may seem a departure from the earlier trajectory of this dissertation since byliny are not fairy tales.\textsuperscript{242} However, I will argue that the adaptations made in these most current versions begin to conflate the былина (bylina) canon with the fairy tale canon and that these adaptations of byliny serve


\textsuperscript{241} Generally, I have followed the linguistic or scholarly paradigm for transliterating Russian Cyrillic into the Latin alphabet. A complete chart can be found in Alan Timberlake, A Reference Grammar of Russian (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 25. In the case of quoted text from other scholars, I have silently amended their transliterations to harmonize the presentation of names throughout this chapter. Where personal names and titles, such as tsar, already have standard spellings in English, I have followed them.

for Russian popular culture a similar function to that which I have described for fairy
tales in American popular culture.243

One key difference is the deliberateness with which the byliny have historically
been deployed. In the aftermath of the revolutions in 1917, the new Bolshevik
government wanted to create a new national identity.244 Folkloric material was well
suited to the task of building a new national identity for the Soviet state as distinct from
the tsarist empire. In Essays on Russian Folklore and Mythology, Felix Oinas outlines the
genre of новины (noviny), or ‘new songs,’ which adapt the formulas and norms of the
bylini and historical songs to sing the praises of new leaders and heroes. “In noviny the
Soviet leaders are endowed with the same idealized qualities as Илья Муромец, Добрыня
Никитич, and Алеша Попович—bravery, resourcefulness, and self-sacrifice. Their
adversaries are the “whites” (who correspond to the Tatars in byliny).”245 By 1934 this
new use of the old genre is well established, and in his speech at the First Congress of
Soviet Writers, Максим Горький (Maxim Gorky) affirmed “the close connection of
folklore with the concrete life and working conditions of the people,” and Gorky’s speech
“opened the eyes of the party leaders to the possibilities that folklore would have for the
advancement of communism. And from that time on, we can follow the conscious use of

244 For more on this, see “Nicholas II and the Collapse of the Romanov State” in Zhand Shakibi, Revolutions and the Collapse of the Monarchy: Human Agency and the Making of Revolution in France, Russia and Iran (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007).
245 Felix J.Oinas, “Folklore Activities and Scholarship in Russia,” Essays on Russian Folklore and Mythology (Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, 1985), 131-59 at 143. Илья Муромец, Добрыня Никитич, and Алеша Поповичь are three of the most important heroes in the byliny cycles.
folklore for social and political purposes.” Similarly, in his discussion of the *Bylina and the Fairy Tale*, Alex Alexander quotes “Kalinin, a former Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet: ‘Soviet Patriotism finds its roots in the distant past beginning with the national epos’.” Kalinin’s words describe the “elevation of the *bylini* to the position of a forerunner of Soviet folklore.” Thus it is that the corpus of byliny and fairy tales collected in the nineteenth-century Russian Empire become the hagiography of the twentieth-century Soviet Union.

At the same time that these Soviet adaptations of folklore were being created and deployed, the new medium of cinema was also flourishing. In his preface to *Russia on Reels: The Russian Idea in Post-Soviet Cinema*, Richard Taylor notes that the predominance of cinema as a major twentieth century art form was

Nowhere […] more apparent than in the former Soviet Union, where Lenin’s remark that ‘of all the arts for us cinema is the most important’ became a cliché….In the age of mass politics Soviet cinema developed from a fragile but effective tool to gain support among the overwhelmingly illiterate peasant masses

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246 Oinas, “Folklore Activities,” 135.
248 Alexander, *Bylina and Fairy Tale*, 22. This consciousness of the power of folkloric material on the part of party leaders leads to support for the collection and study of texts and for singers of tales, but also to influence over scholarly study. Vladimir Propp, for example, was reprimanded for the cosmopolitanism of his *Historical Roots of the Magic Tale* and called upon to repent in order to be allowed to continue working (Oinas, “Folklore Activities,” 150-151). The Reference is to Владимир Пропп, *Исторические корни волшебной сказки* (Ленинград: Издательство Ленинградского университета, 1946) (Istoričeskie korni volšebnoj skazki). Two sections from this work are translated in: Vladimir Propp, *Theory and History of Folklore*, trans. Adriana Martin and Richard P. Martin, intro. Anatoly Liberman, Theory and History of Literature 5 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984): “Historical Roots of the Wonder tale: Premises (100-15, 206-07) and “Historical Roots of the Wondertale: The Wondertale as a Whole (116-23, 207-08). For an extended discussion of the notion of folklore in a classless society, as the Soviet Union claimed to be, see Felix Oinas, “The Problem of the Notion of Soviet Folklore,” *Essays on Russian Folklore and Mythology*, 161-79.
in the civil war that followed the October 1917 Revolution, through a welter of experimentation, into a mass weapon of propaganda through entertainment that shaped the public image of the Soviet Union.249 (Beumers vii)

This public image was also a domestic image, a communication within the social group that defined the new nation through a new corpus of cinematic stories. In the introduction to that same volume, Birgit Beumers goes on to say that “Film makers of the 1920s discovered [cinema’s] potential to construct a different reality, to build through montage the perfect Utopia….to raise the spirit of the people, to set moral standards.”250 Films like Броненосец Потемкин (Bronenosec Potemkin, Battleship Potemkin)251 (1925) directed by Сергей Михайлович Эйзенштейн (Sergej Mihajlovič Ejzenštejn) (1898-1948) inspires with references to key historical events and figures, while those like Закройщик из Торжка (Zakrojščik iz Toržka, The Tailor from Torzhok) (1925) by Яков Александрович Протазанов (Jakob Aleksandrovič Protazanov) (1881-1945) celebrate the experiences of the Soviet citizen. With continued state support throughout the twentieth century, cinema became a huge industry with broad appeal for both elites and the masses.252 The industrial nature of Soviet film production meant that film-makers were less pressured by commercial concerns, in the sense of having to respond to market preferences and demands, than their counterparts in Hollywood. Beumers argues that this

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251 Throughout this chapter, titles of Russian texts will be listed in this manner the first time they are referenced: Russian Title (Transliteration, Translation.) In some cases, the English release title will be used instead of a literal translation. For ease of reading in English, translated titles will be used for subsequent references.
252 For more on the establishment and consolidation of Soviet cinema, see the other selections in Russia on Reels and Stephen Hutchings, “Introduction,” Russia and Its Other(s) on Film: Screening Intercultural Dialogue (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).1-22.
lack of commercial concern allowed the film-makers to become producers of myth of the perfect Utopia and to inscribe this myth onto the sense of national identity of their captive audience. David Gillespie takes a more nuanced view noting that subversion of the messages of socialist realism was a constant undercurrent, especially during the Brežnev era (1964-82).

In the creative freedom that began during the era of гласность (glasnost', openness) in the 1980's and continued to flourish through the period of the Soviet Union’s collapse, Russian cinema turned to stark representations of bleak reality. Though powerful calls to social discourse, the literature and film that participate in the чернуха (černuxa, chernukha) genre have little to offer in terms of entertainment or hope. Some sectors of the Russian audience reject “films which offer no positive outlook or spiritual guidance amid the chaos, and have turned instead to Latin American soap operas screened daily on Russian television.” The creative team at the Студия анимационного кино «Мельница» (Melnitsa Animation Studio) offers something different: engaging adaptations of Russian heroic epics and fairy tales that feature familiar characters working through contemporary problems in the safe space of the imagined medieval. In 2004 they released Алешина Поповичь и Тугарин Змей (Alëša

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254 David Gillespie offers a slightly different interpretation of Soviet cinema, which claims subversion of the messages of socialist realism was a constant undercurrent, especially during the Brežnev era (1964-82) (“New Versions of Old Classics: Recent Cinematic Interpretations of Russian Literature,” Beumers 114-24 at 117).
255 Seth Graham, “Chernukha and Russian Film,” Studies in Slavic Cultures 1 (2000): 9-27 at 9-10, offers an overview of development of the černuxa genre, and its long dominance artistic-cinematic conversation from the mid-1980’s to the late 1990’s. Even as some directors begin to create more hopeful films, the visual program of the černuxa genre and the habits of depiction continue to dominate these films.
256 Birgit Beumers, “Introduction,” Russia on Reels, 1. See also Graham’s discussion of the černuxa as an artistic inversion of melodrama, both of which express themeselves through excess (Graham, “Chernukha and Russian Film,” 11).
257 While a faithful transliteration of the Russian word мельница (windmill) in the system I am using would be mel’nica, I have chosen to follow the animation studio’s own transliteration of their name.
Popović i Tugarin Zmej, Alosha) followed in 2006 by Добрыня Никитич и Змей Горыныч (Dobrynja Nikitič i Zmej Gorynyc, Dobrinya and the Dragon), then Илья Муромец и Соловей Разбойник (Il’ja Muromec i Solovej Razbojnik, Ilya and the Robber) in 2007. Capitalizing on the success of the first three movies, Melnitsa brought all three of these heroes together in 2010 with Три Богатыря и Шамаханская Принцесса (Tri Bogatyryja i Shamaxanskaja Princessa, How Not to Rescue a Princess), then Три Богатыря на Дальних Берегах (Tri Bogatyryja na Dal’nix Beregax, Three Heroes on Distant Shores) in 2012, and most recently Три Богатыря: Ход Конем (Tri Bogatyryja: Xod Konëm, Three Heroes: The Horse’s Way) (2015). The folks at Melnitsa have also made a foray into fairy tales with the animated short Маленькая Василиса (Malënkaia Vasilisa, Little Vasilisa) in 2007 and the full-length film Иван Царевич и Серый Волк (Ivan Tsarevisch i Serij Volk, Prince Ivan and the Grey Wolf) in 2011.

Each of these films adapts the corpus of heroic epics to explore social and political issues facing Russia today like the power of money to corrupt, intergenerational interaction, definition of self with regard to the other(s), issues of gender, the power of the church, and the relationship between citizen and state. Each of these ideas can be seen in all of the movies, but each film foregrounds a subset for closer exploration. Alosha uses Alëša’s status as the son of a priest as well as visual imagery of religious artifacts and acts of piety to connect the Orthodox faith to a sense of the Rus’ ethnos as an intergenerational group goes on a quest to regain the city of Rostov’s treasure from the Muslim tribe that took it. Although the society depicted in this film privileges youth, the impetuous young hero and his bride are repeatedly saved by the wisdom of a scrawny old man and a woman bowed with age. Meanwhile, Dobrinya and the Dragon focuses on the
way money complicates the power dynamics related to gender and ethnicity.\textsuperscript{258} The two films which feature the three heroes together emphasize the heroes’ effort toward equality among themselves.\textsuperscript{259}

5.2 The Bylina

Part of the power of Melnitsa’s corpus of films as a discursive space within twenty-first century Russian culture is the status of the films as adaptations of *bylina* texts whose characters and basic plot are familiar to the audience. As I discussed in “Once Upon a Time There Was a Story,” the first chapter of this dissertation, adaptation enriches the audience’s experience of a text. Simply being adapted from another text means that the new text has depth provided by the audience’s prior knowledge, which is activated by the title of the adaptation and the names of the characters. This activation of prior knowledge creates a community of audience members who are consciously aware of the status of this text as an adaptation while also setting up expectations about what this new adaptation will be. When the adaptation somehow violates these expectations, by contradicting them or by moving the characters or plot in a different direction, the mismatch between expectation and experience engages the audience in the text as they evaluate and criticize the changes. In the hands of talented artists, the adaptation has great

\textsuperscript{258} Melnitsa’s corpus of *bogatyry* films is open to criticism regarding the representations of Others. In *Alasha*, the adversaries are overtly identified as being both Tugar (03:35) and Muslim (05:00). The Тугары (Tugars) are a fictional people invented as a stand-in for the historical Tatars. They first make their appearance in the live-action film, *Илья Муромец* (*Il’ja Muromec, The Sword and the Dragon*) from 1956. In *Dobriinya and the Dragon*, the adversaries conform to stereotypes of Otherness (facial features, skin tone, yurts, demands for tribute) and are overtly identified as part of the Crimean Khanate (03:57). Further, they are depicted as lacking both cunning and prowess. In addition, Rus’ space is presented as more lush than non-Russian space as we watch Dobrynya ride out along the border, which is green on the Rus’ side and brown on the other side (02:06).

\textsuperscript{259} In the grand prince’s absence, he has left one of the бояре (*bojar’, boyars*) in charge, and told him to work “с первым богатырем на Руси” (with the first of the Rus’ heroes). Initially, the three heroes argue, “Кто первый? Я!” (Who is first? Me!). Then they each look sheepish, and the narrator says, “Нет первого среди равных.” (There is not a first among equals.) (*How Not to Rescue a Princess* 15:35-16:48). This value for equality follows on the ideals of democracy established in Il’ya’s film.
power for social commentary in the space between expectation and adaptation. Thus, although the film is marketed for children who can certainly enjoy it at the surface level of a good story with engaging visuals, it also exists at a more complex level, which can be appreciated by those members of the audience who have previous experience with the bylina story.

The bylina is the Slavic world’s heroic epic in verse, and the earliest extant written copies date to the 19th century, when folklorists began collecting them, most notably Кирша Данилов (Fl. 1750) (Kirsha Danilov), Пётр Васильевич Киреевский (1808-1856) (Pjotr Vasil’jevič Kirejevskij), Павел Николаевич Рыбников (1831-1885) (Pavel Nikolajevič Rybnikov), and Александр Фёдорович Гильфердинг (1831-1872) (Aleksandr Fjodorovič Gilferding). Byliny, like the world’s other heroic epics (La Chanson de Roland, Beowulf, The Iliad), contribute to a sense of national identity by reporting the adventures of national heroes grounded in a geographical and historical reality. In contrast to the Homeric epics, however, the bylina tend to be shorter, each

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260 In discussing whether adaptations are conservative, Julie Sanders quotes Derek Attridge’s assertion that “[novels] ‘appear to locate themselves within an established literary culture, rather than presenting themselves as an assault on that culture’.” See Derek Attridge, “Oppressive Silence: J. M. Coetzee’s Foe and the Politics of Canonisation,” Critical Perspectives on J. M. Coetzee, ed. Graham Huggan and Stephen Watson (New York: St. Martin’s, 1996), 168-90 at 169. quoted in Julie Sanders, Adaptation and Appropriation 9. Sanders goes on to say that, “as the notion of hostile takeover present in a term such as appropriation implies, adaptations can also be oppositional, even subversive” (9). These acts of subversion may be conscious on the part of the author, but are not necessarily so. Sanders cites Harold Bloom’s “central thesis of ‘misprision,’ the often happenstance or inevitable reinterpretation of texts during the process of adoption, translation, and reworking them into new contexts” (10). Indeed, “frequently adaptations and appropriations are impacted upon by movements in, and reading produced by, the theoretical and intellectual arena as much as by their so-called sources” (13).

261 For more on collusion with a knowing audience, see Linda Hutcheon “Knowing and Unknowing Audiences,” A Theory of Adaptation, 120-27.

262 Кирша Данилов, Древняя российская стихотворения, собранныя Киршею Даниловым (Москва: Типография Семена Селивановского, 1804 (there was a second edition with extra poems in 1818 edited by Константин Федорович, but the first complete edition of Danilov’s manuscript only appeared in 2007, edited by Александр Александрович Горелов); Пётр Васильевич Киреевский, Песни, собранныя П.В. Кирёвским, Вып. 1-10 (Москва: Типография А. Семена, и т.д., 1860-1874); Павел Николаевич Рыбников, Песни собранные П. Н. Рыбниковым (Москва: Типография А. Семена, 1861-1867); Александр Фёдорович Гильфердинг, Очерк жития и бытия, написанного Александром Федоровичем Гильфердингом летом 1871 (Санктпетербург: Тип. Императорской Академии Наук, 1873).
containing a single adventure. Though each богатырь (bogatyr), the Slavic epic hero, may have more than one bylina to his name, his corpus is not knit together into a composite story. More recent adaptations, however, condense the many episodic stories of the oral tradition into coherent films, each of which makes use of plot sequences from multiple adventures. Melnitsa’s 2007 film, for example, combines the narratives of Илья Муромец и Соловей Разбойник (Il’ja Muromeц i Solovej Razbojnik, Ilya and Nightingale the Robber) and Ссора Ильи Муромца с князем Владимиром (Ssora Il’i Muromca s Knjazem Vladimirom, The Quarrel of Il’ja Muromec with Prince Vladimir).

In the nineteenth century, these byliny were recorded at the margins of the Russian empire in the north and in the Ural Mountains, yet their content places the origins of the two major cycles of bylini in the medieval cities of Novgorod and Kiev, each of which was a nexus of geopolitical power in the Rus’ period (roughly the late ninth to the mid-thirteenth centuries). Novgorod the Great, a member city of the Hanseatic League, dominated river trade between the Baltic Sea and the Caspian Sea, while also sending out colonial projects reaching as far as Western Siberia. This northern power operated with an oligarchy and a citizen assembly. Meanwhile, Kiev dominated the trade routes between the Baltic in the north and Byzantium in the south, and between Western Europe and the East. The city of Kiev and its Grand prince occupied the central

position in a constellation of city-states ruled by princes from the same ruling family. However, because the stories are set in a Kiev ruled by a Grand Prince and constantly battling a variety of enemies, they are thought to have originated among the East Slavs during Rus’ period. An analogy is often made between this period and the Western European middle ages, because of their approximate coincidence and also because of the feudal-like distribution of power within Rus’ court society. However, for the Slavs this period does not stand between a dark ages and a renaissance as with Western Europe. Rather, it is held up as a sort of golden age before the advent of the Mongol yoke (the mid-thirteenth century), a time when Mother Rus’ was both powerful and prosperous. The East Slavic cultures of modern-day Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine each trace their heritage to this golden age.

Recording, adaptation, and scholarly interaction with *bylini* have influenced both the presentation and the interpretation of this genre. In the nineteenth century, singers of *byliny* and collectors approached this corpus of stories differently. Scholars regarded the

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265 Although, the narratives of the Il’ja Muromec corpus are firmly anchored in the Kiev of the Rus’ period, they also transcend this time and place. For most of its history, the Grand Principality of Kiev battled local tribes more than eastern invaders (James Bailey and Tatyana Ivanova, ed. and trans., “Pechengs, Khazars, or Polovetsians,” *An Anthology of Russian Folk Epics* [New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998] at 26.), and the Kievan Primary Chronicle spends pages enumerating the neighboring tribes and the borders of their land, while offering relatively little comment on the more distant Mongols. Often, the villains whom Ilya battles, however, represent stereotypes of Mongol adversaries, who conquered the Rus’ in the 1230’s and held sway over them until Moscow gained independence under Ivan III, Grand Prince of All Rus’, in 1480. For a more nuanced discussion of this transformation of adversaries, see Bailey and Ivanova, *Anthology*, xvii-xx.

266 The princes of Rus’ city states in the Kievan period built households of дружина (družina, military retinue) and бояре (bojare, bureaucrats) to control resources and trade. According to Bailey and Ivanova, among the city states there was “complex system of collateral succession by seniority within generations, the senior member of the princely family became the grand prince in the city of Kiev, while other members received ruling positions in other cities” (*Anthology*, xviii).
byliny as a natural class distinct from other types of oral texts, but tellers and their audiences may not have agreed. Indeed, the label ‘*bylina*’ was introduced by the Scholar Иван Петрович Сахаров (1807-1863) (Ivan Petrovič Saxarov) in the 1830’s.\(^{267}\)

Performers, however, called these старинки (starinkи) or старины (stariny) and grouped them together with other forms of song, like mythological epics, religious verses, and historical songs.\(^{268}\) Once recorded, the byliny existed in both oral and literary forms, which were mutually influential as a story was recorded and published, then read and retold, then possibly recorded and published again in a slightly altered form until the mid-twentieth century.\(^{269}\) In the twenty-first century, Melnitsa’s shifting of these legends toward the fairy tale genre is not unlike what the first collectors did in transforming the sung poems of a fading oral tradition into codified artifacts of national identity that appear in multiple textual and visual media.

In nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Russia boasts a rich history of adapting the byliny in the media of the visual arts. Indeed, Il’ja Muromec, Алёша Popovič, and Dobrynja Nikitič, three epic heroes from the Kievan cycle of byliny, are long-standing icons of Russian popular culture. One of the most famous depictions is the well-known 1898 painting of the three men on horseback by Виктор Михайлович Васнецов (1848-1926) (Víktor Mihajlovič Vasneckov).

\(^{267}\) Bailey and Ivanova, *Anthology*, xx.
\(^{268}\) Bailey and Ivanova, *Anthology*, xxvi.
\(^{269}\) Scholars can say with some certainty that in the oral tradition they were sung, without accompaniment, to simple melodies that could be used for multiple songs (Bailey and Ivanova, *Anthology*, xvi). For the broader context of oral heroic epics, see Lord, Albert Bates *The Singer of Tales*. 
This image of the heroes is reproduced so often on prints, souvenir textiles, and lacquer boxes as to have become a commonplace. The State Tretyakov Gallery’s catalog notes connect this iconic image to cultural values of Russianness:

By turning to a pictoral [sic] hyperbole, Vasnetsov imparts to his heroes true qualities of Russian nature. Il’ja Muromec epitomizes solidity, wise deliberate ways and tapping of experience and traditions of the people. Proud fighting spirit and desire to defend the motherland are embodied in Dobrynja Nikitič. And the image of Alëša Popovič reflects a poetical, contemplative streak of the Russian soul, sensitivity to all manifestations of beauty. (The State Tretyakov Gallery)

It is unclear from this description which elements of the painting and which specific attributes of the men and their horses lead the catalog to these interpretations. However, these characterizations could also be applied to these three heroes as they are depicted in Melnitsa’s corpus of animated films in the twenty-first century.
Among these heroes, Il’ja Muromec has been particularly popular for Russian audiences. In their comprehensive *Anthology of Russian Folk Epics*, Bailey and Ivanova report that the adventure Илья Муромец и Соловей Разбойник (Il’ja Muromec i Solovej Razbojnik, Ilya and Nightingale the Robber) appears in 132 versions recorded from oral tellers. They further note that “Il’ja Muromec is the subject of more songs and has a more complete epic biography than any other bogatyr.” One of the more unusual features of Il’ja’s corpus is a prose adventure, which relates how a young Il’ja was struck lame by disease in childhood and spent his days sleeping on top of the oven (a normal place for an invalid in a Russian peasant home) until at age thirty-three he was healed by traveling pilgrims, who predicted that he would become an important national hero. This detail about Il’ja’s young life makes him a more relatable character, indeed a character who has moved from the abjection of invalidism to the exalted station of epic hero thanks to a miraculous healing, an underdog with whom the downtrodden masses of the audience could identify.

The bogatyr Il’ja Muromec, however, is not the only figure in Russian popular culture to have a story like this. Емеля Дурачок (Emelja Duračok, the Fool), hero of the eponymous Russian fairytale, also sleeps on top of the stove, although he is motivated by sloth rather than illness. While gathering water one day, Emelja finds a pike whose

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272 The epic hero Il’ja Muromec is sometimes associated with the Russian Orthodox Saint Илия Печерский (Il’ja Pečorski), who died in 1188 and was beatified in 1643, and whose relics reside at the Киево-Печерская лавра (Kievo-Pečerskaja Lavra, the Kiev Monastery of the Caves). For evidence of popular association of epic hero and saint, see “Ilya Muromets” at *Wikipedia.org* and “Saint Elias (Ilya) Muromets of the Kiev Near Caves” at *Mystagogy*. Bailey and Ivanova do not support this identification (*Anthology* 25).
273 On sloth in “Lazy Boy” tales (ATU 675), see Bottigheimer’s article “Luckless, Witless, and Filthy-Footed: A Sociocultural Study and Publishing History Analysis of ‘The Lazy Boy.’”
life he agrees to spare in return for having his wishes granted. These wishes are generally simple ones designed to support Emelja’s preferred sloth: “ступайте, ведра, сами на гору” (step off, buckets, go up the mountain (home) by yourselves), “ну-ка, топор, поди наруби дровь” (well, axe, go chop firewood), “поезжай-ка, печь, прямо в город” (let’s go, oven, straight to the city). Emelja’s life changes when the tsar’s daughter falls in love with him, and the tsar tosses them into the sea in a barrel. “По щучьему велению, по моему прошенью” (by my wish, by the will of the fish), the two are saved and build a palace on the island where they land.

More broadly, there is a similar phenomenon represented in the Norse *lygisögur*. According to Matthew Driscoll’s “Late Prose Fiction,” in most of these *sögur*, as in most fairy tales and byliny, the hero is generally described in a highly stylized way: he is exceptional from an early age, stronger and more handsome than his peers, surpassing them both in knightly accomplishments and in learning, so that few are his equal. Occasionally, however, the hero is a *kolbítr*, literally ‘coal-biter,’ or male-Cinderella figure, who appears to be lazy or slow-witted, but eventually proves himself.

The Grettir of *Grettir’s Saga* is a slothful and contrary example of the lazy boy. His inactivity is largely motivated by a desire to thwart his father’s directives, and when he can no longer manage to avoid work, Grettir works transgressively: killing the geese and

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274 Translations here and throughout this chapter are mine unless otherwise indicated.
276 My thanks to Shaun Hughes for this insight. For more on the prevalence of kolbítr in Icelandic sagas see Inger M. Boberg’s *Motif Index of Early Icelandic Literature*, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 27 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1966). Motifs L100-199 (188-89).
goslings in his charge and scratching his father’s back with a wool comb (Chapter 14). Unlike the western Cinderellas discussed in “That Story” above, who are made abject by others’ misuse of power, these kolbitr tend to be represented as having chosen sloth and laziness. Although he is like the kolbitr and lazy boys in his transformation from sedentary to heroic, the epic biography of Il’ja Muromec offers a justification for the portion of life spent on top of the stove: illness, which is then healed as part of his becoming a hero.

The 1956 Soviet film Илья Муромец (Il’ja Muromec, The Sword and the Dragon) features the oven-top illness and holy healing part of Il’ja’s story prominently. Perched immobile on top of the oven, this Il’ja watches helplessly as his village is attacked by a band of Tugars who burn the houses and carry off the young women (04:14-06:55). After this tragedy, Il’ja is visited by a group of pilgrims, who in their wanderings had met the aging hero Святогор (Svjatogor) and been tasked by him to find a young hero in need of healing who could take up his sword since “не носит [меня] больше матер-сыра земля” (the lonely land won’t carry me any longer) (2:35). In the next scene, when the the pilgrims talk with Il’ja, they realize that he is one whom they were told to look for, and they share with him the juice of the wormwood plant, which

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278 Илья Муромец (Ilya Muromets; or, The Sword and the Dragon). Dir. Aleksandr Ptushko. Perf. Boris Andreyev, Shukur Burkhano, Andrei Abrikosov. Mosfilm, 1956. To avoid ambiguity, the English title of this film will be used. However, it should be noted that the dubbed (and recut) English language release of this film titled The Sword and the Dragon takes broad liberties with translation. The original Russian-language version of the film with more faithfully rendered English subtitles is available on YouTube as of the time of writing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hooaKxdXbfM
heals him instantly (08:27). After his healing, Ilya asks his parents’ leave to depart from the village “Русь земле служить (to serve the land of the Rus’’) (13:35), which they grant. The remainder of the film is the narrative of Il’ja’s relentless service to the Rus’ motherland despite issues with the other bogatyri and bojare.

Although Il’ja’s protracted period of illness and immobility before excelling as a mighty hero parallels that of the lazy boy tale type (ATU 675), the reason for his sojourn atop the oven sets him apart. Emelya, Grettir, and the other lazy boys of this tale type are generally able-bodied young men who choose inactivity, preferring sloth to participation in the well-being of their households. Il’ja, in contrast, feels shame for his immobility. When the pilgrims tell him about the Tugar’s ravaging of the region beyond his village, Il’ja says, “Кабы сило мне, не дал бы в обиду родную Русь” (If only I had strength, I would not allow such offence to come to mother Rus’) (08:12). Thus, although the structure of the tale is similar to the ATU 675 type, the motivation of the hero is completely different. Rather than the angered sexuality Ruth Bottigheimer finds to be prevalent in this type (260), Ilya exhibits a dedication to duty.

5.3 Il’ja Muromec in the Twenty-first Century

The Melnitsa Animation Studio’s third epic hero film, Ilya and the Robber, elides the sojourn on the oven portion of the hero’s bylina corpus in favor of focusing on his quarrel with Grand Prince Vladimir. This adaptation of the Il’ja Muromec corpus allows

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279 As the homegrown variety of the opiate of the masses, Russian Orthodoxy, of course, went out with the tsar in 1917, and in representing the Rus’ of the bogatyri, Mosfilm’s 1956 creative team had to tread carefully. Although characters in the film do use the word “бог” (God) and the travelers who heal Ilya are called “калики” (pilgrims) (07:55), their Christianity is not apparent. Indeed, when Svjatogor speaks to them, he calls them “калики перехожие,” a collocation which transforms them into wandering minstrels. They receive a sword and the prophecy of the coming bogatyry from Svjatogor, just before that aging bogatyry and his horse are transformed into a mountain, and they heal Il’ja with herbs rather than prayer. The pilgrim says that the drink he offers Il’ja is the juice of the wormwood plant, “Встань-трава—всем травам трава” (The rise-herb [wormwood] is the herb of herbs) (08:27).
the studio to present an almost allegorical exploration of the relationship between citizen and state, which is accomplished through presenting the interactions among three characters: И́лья the epic hero, the despotic Великий князь Владимир (Grand Prince Vladimir), and Алёнушка (Alênuška), the plucky chronicler crusading for freedom of the press and freedom of speech.

This И́лья Muromec draws his extraordinary epic hero strength from the earth of his homeland, and his connection with the land is revealed in his attentiveness to his surroundings, his affinity with animals, and his beliefs in superstitions and omens. He respects hierarchy, but excuses himself from participation in the Kievan court when he can no longer respect Grand Prince Vladimir, who is a despot, jealous of his power and motivated by the acquisition of money and personal glory. Kievan society can support the personality types these three characters represent, but as they move further from Kiev on their journey, Alênuška and Grand Prince Vladimir have increasing difficulty navigating the environments of the deep forest and the foreign port city.

*Илья and the Robber* (2007) sets up what appears to be the main conflict, that between hero and villain, with Соловей (Solovej) and a band of thugs attacking a village. И́лья Muromec rides to the rescue, and is able to resist the extraordinary wind created by Solovej's super-power whistle to capture him. In the next scene, however, we learn that Grand Prince Vladimir has released Solovej after И́лья had turned him in, and the resulting argument between hero and prince includes the prince accusing И́лья of being a partisan of democracy and И́лья returning his sword in what looks like the opposite of a sword granting ritual, thereby severing the tie between hero and state. The two must work together, however, when Solovej steals both the treasury and И́лья’s horse. Solovej
occupies the villain space of the narrative in that he breaks the law, preys on the innocent villagers and the horse, and is vanquished at the end, and this black-and-white conflict between hero and villain is the conflict in the surface level story where young audiences or unsophisticated audiences find the entertainment they seek. These events of hero and villain story arc, however, also serve to create discursive space within which the more nuanced conflict between hero and Grand Prince takes place. As the hero and prince spend the rest of the film chasing the villain all the way to Byzantium, the main conflict of the narrative becomes their interpersonal conflict. Indeed, the hero-grand prince conflict is present in nearly every scene in the film, and once the action moves out of Kiev, the journey forces these two characters to interact with each other and their surroundings without the social structures that both constrained and supported them in their home city. The challenges that they face along they test not only these individuals but also the ways of being that they represent.

Even as Melnitsa’s film casts Il’ya Muromec as the Man of the People, he must still be an epic hero, a superlative person whose extraordinary strength allows him to defend the people of his homeland from invaders. This new Il’ja draws his extraordinary strength from a profound connection to the earth of his homeland that sets him apart from other epic heroes as well as from other variants of himself while simultaneously drawing him closer to the people whom he represents. This connection to the earth is first noted by his mother as Il’ja is leaving their village to pursue Solovej and rescue his horse (15:45). Though he had been generally respectful toward his mother, he disregarded her speech here and left without the sack of earth she offered him. This caretaking of Il’ja’s strength is transferred to Alěnuška the chronicler, in what might be viewed as a handoff
from mother to love interest. The two women regard this earth as critically important to Il’ja’s ability to perform as a hero, but Alënuška is prevented from giving this earth to Il’ja by his determination to ignore her. Il’ja, however, does not seem to suffer a failure of his strength until Grand Prince Vladimir points out his separation from his homeland after many miles and minutes of film have passed. In that moment of revelation, Il’ja is left sapped of strength until he finds a horseshoe tucked inside his tunic. This is a problematic scene in a film that seems to be upholding the validity of superstitions. In this case, the stipulation that Il’ja’s bogatyr strength depends on physical contact with the earth of his homeland only bears consequences when another character makes him aware of his break in contact. However, Il’ja eventually realizes that he had the earth of his homeland in his possession the whole time because of the horseshoe that was in his tunic. Thus, in reality, he never lost contact with the earth of his homeland, which explains the perseverance of Il’ja’s bogatyr strength during the journey, but calls into question his loss of strength when the grand prince raised the issue.

In addition to the superlative physical strength of an epic hero, that Il’ja’s connection to the homeland also imparts guiding principles in the form of superstitions, and this aspect of connection to the homeland is more easily portable from village to Kiev to Byzantium. The storytellers at Melnitsa showcase Il’ja’s adherence to these principles in the early scenes of the film as he comes in contact with a series of portents: a black cat nearly crosses his path (05:29), a fly lands in the milk

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280 The Russian word that the characters within the film use to label these beliefs is примета, which generally translates as omens or portents. However, belief in the bad luck of black cats and the good luck of bird feces would generally be referred to as superstitions in English, which in Russian would be суеверия. Because the attitudes of the characters in the film toward the приметы resembles the attitudes I would describe in American English as superstitious or not superstitious, I have chosen to use that word to discuss the beliefs here.
(13:13), a bird in flight defecates on someone (17:08). Like epic strength, Il’ja’s beliefs separate him from most of the other characters in the film. Ilya’s mother and Grand Prince Vladimir both mock Ilya for his superstitions, and the prince orchestrates further bird blessings in an attempt to manipulate the hero. The only other character who shows respect for superstitions is a babushka in Byzantium (48:10) who scolds Solovej for whistling, noting, “Не свисти! Денег не будет. Примета такая.” (Don’t whistle! You’ll lose all your money. There’s a superstition.) (51:40), and Solovej does indeed loose all the riches he had managed to acquire over the course of the film.

Though it is more subtly presented than his adherence to superstitions, Il’ja’s sympathetic connection to animals is critical to his success. Il’ja returns his sword to the grand prince without thinking twice, but pauses when Vladimir demands his horse as well, and it is only Solovej’s theft of this horse that brings Il’ja back to cooperation with Kiev’s government (14:40). While a strong friendship with his horse is not unusual for an epic hero, Il’ja’s affinity for animals is more broad. As Il’ja and Grand Prince Vladimir move through a forest, Il’ja is aware of his surroundings and listens to the background noise of the animals for information about what else is going on nearby (22:50). In contrast, the grand prince seems oblivious. Later, while in Byzantium, Grand Prince Vladimir and Ilya both meet the same elephant but have very different interactions with her. While riding, the grand prince kicks the elephant, making her bolt from her handler (52:28). The elephant knows that she has broken the rules that constrain her life and is frightened when she finally comes to a stop (53:50). While Grand Prince Vladimir continues to act imperiously, Il’ja speaks softly and quietly, treating the elephant as an equal (54:30). Whereas she was obedient to her handler because she feared his whip, the elephant is
helpful to Il’ja because she appreciates his regard. Il’ja’s connections with his horse and the animals he hears in the forest, which are part of his native land, are an extension of his connection with the land. His interaction with the elephant, an exotic creature whom he meets in a land where they are both foreigners, is an argument that the habit for respectful interaction with and regard for elements of the natural world is a habit of being that allows one to adapt to new circumstances.

With the artful presence of these three characteristics (connection to the land, belief in superstitions, and affinity for animals) at key moments in the plot, Melnitsa’s creative team make Il’ja, as the Man of the People, the most sympathetic character in the cast and associate him strongly with the Rus’ folk and the Rus’ motherland. This is not unexpected for an epic hero. Indeed, as Costlow and Nelson note in their introduction to Other Animals: Beyond Human in Russian Culture and History, “a central part of Russians’ narratives about national identity has involved professions of a distinctive relationship to the natural world.” However, this epic hero is also associated with the ideals of democracy through the film’s strategic use of that word and Ilya’s romantic connection with the chronicler, who advocates for freedom of the press.

The ideals of democracy do not appeal to Grand Prince Vladimir, and two of the film’s early scenes work together to establish the relationship of the grand prince to his people in terms of money and of power. The first is a conversation with an unnamed scribe who suggests that there would be more money in the prince’s treasury for social welfare if there were less money for personal expenses.

Великий Князь (VK): Так…Это на социальные нужды….Это—на

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вооружение… А вот это— на прочие расходы.

Писарь (П): На прочие много идет...

ВК: Это да… Это верно… А что, ежели налоги повысит? Скажем, пущай не десятину, а, этак, четвертину платят! Что…что думаешь?

П: А, может, прочее сократить?

ВК: Но - но! А ты, часом, не демократ?!

П: Чур меня! Господь с тобою, князь!282 (04:30-05:15)

This scene presents the exploitative relationship Grand Prince Vladimir has with his people, and the visual ratio here is helpful:

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Figure 5.3.1 The Grand Prince's Treasury (05:15)

On the table, to the grand prince’s right is one bag of money for социальные нужды (social welfare), slightly to his left are two bags for вооружение (military), and in his

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282 Grand Prince (GP): So….This is for social welfare….This is for the military….And this is for sundry expenses.
Scribe (S): That’s a lot for sundry expenses…
GP: Well yes, that’s true…But what if we raise the taxes? Let’s say, they’ll pay not a tenth, but a quarter!
What…What do you think?
S: But, maybe, the sundry expenses could be reduced?
GP: What? You are not, perchance, a democrat?
S: Keep away from me! God be with you, prince!
(translation mine)
arms an uncountable number for прочие расходы (sundry expenses). Because Grand Prince Vladimir views the people as a source of revenue, he ponders raising the taxes from a tenth to a quarter in order to better supply funds for social welfare. Although the prince asks what the scribe thinks, he is appalled at the scribe’s suggestion to reduce the sundry expenses, and accuses him of being a democrat.²⁸³ The scribe, realizing that he has overstepped his role, reacts with horror at the label, offering protective blessings to ward off the danger of the idea of democracy. Here the word-democrat-as-insult is wielded in response to a challenge to the prince’s authority to allocate revenue.

In the second scene that presents the relationship of Grand Prince Vladimir to his people, the hero Il’ja challenges the prince’s decision to release Solovej whom Il’ja had captured. First the grand prince tells Il’ja that Solovej’s release is state business and not his concern, but when Il’ja continues to press him, Grand Prince Vladimir loses his composure, exclaiming, “Не суйся не в свое дело! Я князь! Чего хочу, то и ворочу!”²⁸⁴ (06:20). Then he realizes what he has said and tries to redeem himself, replacing ворочу (undo) with “действую! В интересах державы!”²⁸⁵ (06:24). The prince seems to have some idea of the power and privileges proper for someone of his station, and he expects other people to uphold these norms; however, he does not have a corresponding awareness of the obligations and responsibilities of the ruler toward the people. While Il’ja is motivated by his desire to care for and protect the people of Kiev and surrounding villages, Grand Prince Vladimir is motivated by his own desires for

²⁸³ This word is, of course, an anachronism for a story set in Kiev of the Rus’ period. The use of this word throughout the film raises the question of what democracy (and democrats) mean to a Russian-speaking audience who have lived through the difficult transition from totalitarian communism to unrestrained democratic capitalism.
²⁸⁴ “Don’t intrude in business that is not yours! I’m the prince! I can undo whatever I want!”
²⁸⁵ “Do! In the interests of the state!”
money, and insufficiencies in the treasury lead him to sell Solovej his freedom and then to demand that Il’ja buy his horse because “Животина казённая, на балансе значится” (07:00).

Although the grand prince continues to expect to enjoy the privileges of his station as they journey toward Byzantium, Il’ja has other ideas, and the dynamics of power between the two men quickly begin to shift. First, Il’ja refuses to take the entourage of soldiers and support staff Grand Prince Vladimir has gathered, robbing him of the pomp to which he is accustomed (21:12). Il’ja further separates the grand prince from his own expectations by insisting that they send their horses back once they reach the edge of the forest (21:50). Finally, Il’ja informs Grand Prince Vladimir that they will take turns keeping watch.

Илья: До полуночи ты стоишь в дозоре!

ВК: Я?!

Илья: Ну да, ты! А что такого? Потом я тебя сменю. Здесь все равны, понял?

Де-мо-кра-ти-я! На-ка, держи!

ВК: Демократия ваша до смуты доведет!

Илья: Княже! Чтоб глаз не смыкал! (25:02-25:26)

This series of conversations exhibits several reversals in the expected dynamic of power between grand prince and epic hero. It is Il’ja who makes the decisions about who will go

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286 “Livestock belongs to the treasury, it appears in the accounting.”
287 Илья: Until midnight, you will stand watch!
GP: I?!!
Илья: Yes you! And so what? Then I will spell you. Everyone is equal here, got it? De-mo-cra-cy! Here, take this!
GP: Your democracy will lead to turmoil!
Илья: Prince! Not a wink!
on this journey, when they will stop for the night, and who will take the first watch. It is also Il'ja who declares the terms of their relationship to include equal standing and democracy, although in this case, rather than indicating equal partnership in decision making, the word “democracy” here seems to indicate the epic hero’s usurpation of power. The forms of language each man uses toward the other reinforce this reversal. In the case of hero and sovereign, the expectation would be for the hero to address the sovereign with the formal second-person pronoun, and the sovereign to address the hero with the informal. In this conversation, the reverse is true. The visual imagery further supports the new dynamics of power.

Holding a spear as though he were the monarch bestowing a sword, Il’ja gives the weapon to Grand Prince Vladimir, tells him the first watch is his, and says, “democracy” slowly and deliberately, “de-mo-kra-ti-a,” thereby overtly staking his claim to a new dynamic of power. In this scene, the creative team and Melnitsa visually highlight the differences between the two men. The grand prince’s face expresses shock at the
conversation they are having, and the perspective in the frame above showcases the daintiness of Grand Prince Vladimir’s hands in his white sleeves. In contrast to the hero, the grand prince is practically childlike.

Alēnuška, the plucky chronicler’s goal is initially a journalistic one: to get Il’ja Muromec’s story for the chronicle which the audience sees her working on throughout the film. It is clear, however, from the other characters’ reactions to Alēnuška that they have no idea how to understand her, and she has to explain her chronicle project and show her notebook to Grand Prince Vladimir, Il’ja’s mother, and Il’ja himself as she meets each of them. As a chronicler, Alēnuška regards herself as a member of the press, an anachronism in a plot otherwise peopled by epic heroes and nobility, and she uses this status to claim a place in the grand prince's court. Grand Prince Vladimir, however, is uninterested in a free press. As the conversation with his advisor at the beginning of this scene reveals, he only allows Alēnuška into the audience chamber after the boyar reminds him, “Не пустишь, князь, а они опять гадость каку нацарапуют”288 (07:27). Grand Prince Vladimir nostalgically remembers a time when he would put writers such as these “В кандалы, темницы!”289, “А теперь, вишь, народ правду желает знать!”290 (09:02). It is not, however, is only his own people’s thoughts he’s concerned about, but also, “Что скажут на западе?”291 (09:03). The grand prince tolerates Alēnuška’s presence in the audience chamber briefly, but once messengers bring him news of Solovej’s theft of the treasury and Il’ja’s horse, he realizes that he is no longer in control of the story Alēnuška

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288 “If you don’t allow them (to come in), prince, they will again print some kind of bold lies.”
289 “In chains, in the dungeon!”
290 “And now, look, the people want to know the truth!”
291 “What will they say in the West?” This concern with the west is reinforced later in the film as the grand prince, who claims precedence in his own land expects to be recognized as an equal by the emperor of Byzantium, who instead throws him in jail.
is recording. Grand Prince Vladimir then has her hauled out of his audience chamber for asking too many questions, and her shouts of “Свобода слова! Свобода прессы!”\(^{292}\) (12:11) fall on deaf ears.

Despite the grand prince’s rejection of the chronicle project, Alēnuška appears to be a savvy woman who is able to navigate Kievan society with a mix of bravado and deception. In addition to her first foray into Grand Prince Vladimir’s audience chamber, she visits Il’ja’s village and interviews his mother, where she volunteers to deliver the sac of earth to Il’ja. In order to get Il’ja’s attention, however, she resorts to deception, hobbling her horse and pretending to struggle so that Il’ja will help her. Opportunistically, Alēnuška asks Grand Prince Vladimir for permission to join them in pursuit of Solovej when Il’ja tells her that she can’t come.

Once the grand prince, the hero, and the girl arrive in Byzantium, the differences in the ways they approach the world are cast in striking relief as they navigate the foreign space. Both Alēnuška and Grand Prince Vladimir have difficulty navigating the dangers in the forest and in the city of Царьград (Tsargrad, Byzantium). When she lags behind Il’ja and Grand Prince Vladimir in the forest, she is taken captive by Solovej’s band of thugs, from whom Il’ja frees her. In Byzantium, Alēnuška’s naïve bravado does not protect her from being hoodwinked by a hustler who offers help (50:20), but then sells her to the Emperor as a slave (56:10). The imperious demeanor with which Grand Prince Vladimir interacts with everyone he meets, including the elephant (54:25) and the emperor’s palace guards (59:35), results in his being tossed into prison (01:02:30).

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\(^{292}\) “Freedom of the press! Freedom of speech!”
In contrast to Alënuška and Grand Prince Vladimir, Il’ja is able to navigate all three spaces; the familiar space of Kiev, the wild space of the forest, and the foreign space of Byzantium; equally well. Il’ja’s kindness gains him a powerful new companion in the elephant (01:02:18), and he is able to rescue the grand prince, Alënuška, and his horse from captivity at the hands of the Byzantine emperor. By depicting Il’ja’s positive interactions and his successful accomplishment of the goal to rescue his horse in contrast with the frustrated struggle that Grand Prince Vladimir experiences and the naïve vulnerability of Alënuška, the film ultimately posits that Il’ja’s model of interaction with the world is the most successful.

5.4 Implications

Social conflict and arguments between hero and prince are not themselves new; however, the circumstances here are a change from earlier iterations of the tradition. In the twenty-seven versions of the bylina The Quarrel of Il’ja Muromec with Prince Vladimir, cataloged by Bailey and Ivanova, the arguments relate to honor and face. Il’ja leaves the court because Vladimir does “not seat the hero in an honored place at a feast” or gives him lesser gifts than those he gives to the boyars. In the 1956 Soviet film The Sword and the Dragon, the argument between prince and hero is orchestrated by the boyars who dislike Il’ja for his peasant origins (21:50, 41:00, 44:00). The tension present in each version contributes strongly to the overall tenor of the narrative, and the differences among them reflect the changes in the social contexts for which they were created. Melnitsa’s 2007 adaptation implicates Grand Prince Vladimir’s capricious despotism in the recurring tension between him and Il’ja Muromec. In contrast, the

293 Bailey and Ivanova, Anthology, 70.
nineteenth-century version presents a stable hierarchy of *bogatyr* in service to the court of the grand prince, and the 1956 Soviet film creates tension between hero and prince by adding several meddling boyars, members of a noble class out for their own advantage rather than working in service to leader and nation as the peasant (proletarian) Il’ja does. Thus, the cause of the conflict between grand prince and hero is a highly adaptable moment, which can be made to reflect the concerns of the storytellers and audience.

Melnitsa’s 2007 film *Ilya and the Robber* is the most recent example in a steady stream of adaptation and retelling of *byliny* from the time they were first printed to the present. Along that timeline, there are three moments in which adaptations flourish, and each of these coincides with a crucial moment of redefinition of Russian culture. The nineteenth century recording of these heroic epics was part of the wave of romantic nationalism that drove scholars across Europe to gather folkloric material as the feudal city-states of the medieval period coalesced into more stable nations. The mid-twentieth century brought another surge of adaptation and reproduction as the Soviet government used these heroes to depict good citizenship. The twenty-first century has been another time of redefinition for the Russian nation as those born since the revolution learn what it means to be not-Soviet and those born since *perestroika* grapple with what it means to be Russian. This current grappling is evident in the social unrest that we see on the news: demonstrations about women’s rights, the crackdown on GLBT rights, and uneasiness over Putin’s expansion of presidential powers and national borders. As David Gillespie notes, “the literary heritage remains one of the few bastions of certainty and national identity amid chaos and disruption.”

Melnitsa Animation Studio’s adaptations of old stories have been successful at the box office, as television broadcasts, and in merchandising. Beumers’s discussion of the history of cinema funding in Russia is helpful in understanding Melnitsa’s swift success. In the USSR, cinema production was state funded by a series of government agencies responsible for management and oversight of cinematic production, and films had less need to turn a profit than their counterparts in Hollywood. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the large film studios were broken up and privatized, though Goskino continued to subsidize production with more limited capacity. In 1990 cinema was “a convenient method of money laundering” and production surged, though it then quickly fell. Meanwhile, the public side of cinema was suffering as movie houses wanted for renovation and piracy ran rampant. Things begin to pick up and recover around 1996 with a new law about cinema and the renewal of the Государственный комитет по кинематографии СССР known for short as Госкино СССР or just Госкино (Goskino) as at least a partial funding source. The Melnitsa Animation studio was founded in 1998 “по заказу НТВ-кино” (by order of NTV-film) (“О Студии”). In a speech that same year, Sergei Selianov, CEO of the CTB feature-film production company, bemoaned the commercial nature of Russian cinema in the 1990’s because breaking even is not easy, and “there is no will to be

298 Melnitsa’s own page does not identify its original sources of funding, but a Wikipedia article that is generally in consensus with Melnitsa’s description of itself says that the studio was founded “with funding from ‘Midi-Cinema’ (Миди-Синема) and the film company STV (CTB)” (“Melnitsa Animation Studio”). Midi-Cinema (“О Студии”) is a sound studio, while CTB is a feature-film production company, and they were both founded in 1992. Led by CEO Сергей Михайлович Сельянов (Sergey Selianov), CTB pursues success by experimenting with genre, delivery, and collaboration (“About,” CTB Film Company. Accessed 4 February 2015. http://ctb.ru/en/about/).
artistically creative in Russia at the moment.” Interestingly, he notes that “this has been understood at a high political level, and political advisers have been given the task of creating a national idea through the medium of film.” Melnitsa and Selianov have also been supported by the Российский Фонд Кино (Russian Cinema Fund, RCF), which was established in 2009, but lost some of its autonomy in 2012 when Putin’s (newly returned to power) administration reorganized the RCF to work under the Ministry of Culture, which exercises much more control over content. In Hutchings assessment, though, cinema was not entirely under Putin’s thumb in the late oughties.

In the twenty-first century, cinema is simultaneously a carrier of globalization, the means by which Hollywood exports American culture, and a battleground for resistance as other nations respond by exporting their own nationalist cultural products. In this battleground, adaptations create critical, dynamic space for inter-cultural dialogue as cultural products are replicated in foreign-to-them environments. New things first retain their sense of foreignness, then adapt even as they influence, and may later be exported back (cf. Lotman’s stages). Melnitsa’s Disneyfication of the nineteenth-century byliny offers a prime example of this: as they simplify the casts of characters and add romantic story arcs they make the byliny resemble Disney’s animated features while also making them more able to compete with those imported tales.

300 Selianov, “Cinema and Life,” 46.
301 Originally the Фонд Кино (or in full the Федеральный фонд социальной и экономической поддержки отечественной кинематографии) founded in 1994.
As they draw on the rich tradition of variants within the bylina cycle, Melnista simplifies the cast of characters. In most eighteenth- and nineteenth-century versions of the byliny, the bogatyri, Prince Vladimir, and even the villain Соловей-Разбойник (Solovej Razboinik) each have wives and children whose participation in the plot varies from backdrop to minor character. The situation of these men as settled adult members of society means that the issues of achieving manhood and finding a romantic partner are null. In Melnitsa’s films, however, this is not the case. Solovej has a band of thugs rather than a family, and Il’ja finds romance as part of his journey within the film, as does Alëša in his film, and the grand prince’s love interest is the topic of the group adventure in *How Not to Rescue a Princess*.

This simplification of the cast of characters and addition of romantic story arcs to the films pushes them toward the genre of fairy tale. In his review of the literature related to “The Epos and the Fairy Tale in Russian Literary Criticism,” Alex Alexander affirms the veracity of model of Константин Сергеевич Аксаков (1817-1860) (Konstantin Sergejevič Aksakov) for differentiating epic from fairy tale. In the fairy tale, the magical element “is constantly present and almost all the heroes find support and help from the magical. In songs, on the other hand, although one cannot negate the presence of the supernatural element within, it is always on the side of the adversary.”

Although Il’ja’s superstitions and Dobrynja’s three-headed meditating dragon approach the magical,

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306 Costlow, and Nelson, eds., “Introduction”: “Russian culture has been and remains an imperial project where ‘Russianness’ is infused with and relies on complex patterns of domination, interaction, and codependence with a myriad of non-Russians” (3). In this film, Kiev exists in opposition to both the east and the west. Grand Prince Vladimir would like to dominate the east with the capture of Solovei (and demanding of tribute in the Dobrynja film) while also moving closer to equality with Byzantium. The emperor, however, regards the grand prince as unworthy of attention.

Melnitsa’s corpus of *bogatyri* films largely remains on the *bylina* side of Aksakov’s model, preserving the seminal differentiation: “In songs geography may be inexact…. In folktales, however, the narrator abandons the boundaries of time and space” (380). However, the presentation of Il’ja Muromec as a younger man and the addition of romance and maturation plotlines in these films align them more closely with the genre of fairytales than with the genre of epic. This alignment with fairy tales puts Melnitsa more directly in competition with the commercial hegemon that is the Disney Animation Studio. Melnitsa’s corpus of animated *bylina* and fairy tale films offers a homegrown, nationalist alternative to the Disney canon.

In part the success of Melnitsa’s films is nostalgic. Parents and grandparents fondly remember enjoying these stories as children and are happy to be able to share newer versions of them with today’s children, and *Ilya and the Robber* and the others can certainly be enjoyed on this level. If, however, we watch with a critical eye, we can see that the writers and artists at Melnitsa have used these medieval settings and characters as a backdrop for telling stories about current social issues like the relationship between the state and the people and the role of women in society.

In this version of the story of Il’ja Muromec, Melnitsa ties the epic hero firmly to the Rus’ motherland and then associates democratic ideals with him, forming a chain of associations that connects democracy to Russianness. The characters the audiences is invited to like, Il’ja and Alēnuška, become the bridges that connect modern ideas to the golden age from which contemporary Russian draw their ethnic identity. This connection
creates the implication that the ideals of democracy, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press can be as inherently Russian as love of the motherland and reverence for folk wisdom.
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

This dissertation has shown that fairy tales, in the forms of motifs, constellations of motifs, and complete plots, play a significant role in the texts of contemporary American and Russian literature and film. Indeed, in contemporary America, this corpus of stories constitutes a secular scripture that provides a common language of allusion and metaphor in a society that is increasingly diverse in terms of ethnic and religious identities. Fairy tales pervade contemporary American popular culture. They can be found as whole plots adapted for a contemporary audience, as brief allusions from new versions of canonical tales to older ones, or as motifs used to build wholly new tales.

For most Americans, this use of fairy tales for purposes of creating and maintaining secular culture is largely unconscious. Indeed, even as we are producing and consuming fairy-tale texts in vast quantities, we are denigrating their value and questioning their truthfulness. At the same time, this phenomenon needs more attention from scholars, and contemporary fairy-tale texts must be studied alongside and in conversation with modern and post-modern literature. The Russian example provides a case study in which similar use of folk narratives for social cohesion has been much more overt.

The scope of this dissertation has been broad, possibly ridiculously so. It considers relationships among medieval and modern texts, as well as relationships among
those which are considered high art and those which are derided as popular drivel. The theoretical lens that brings all of these texts into focus has drawn on the functional formalism of Vladimir Propp, the cultural approaches of Jack Zipes and Maria Tatar, and the schemata of Michael Drout, John Niles, and Linda Hutcheon. This broad work is a beginning; opportunities for further research abound.

Even as the broadly-defined genre of fairy tale persists in our the creative artifacts of American culture, the form continues to evolve, and I would also like to examine shifts in the treatment of the love interest from merely the object of the hero’s quest to a necessary partner for success who also has his or her own quest to complete. This shift has been visible within the Grimm-Disney canon over the last decade with films like *The Princess and the Frog* and *Tangled*. There has also been a concomitant shift from plots revolving around union with the gendered other to plots concerned with the restoration of rifts within families or among friends. Both of these shifts are important and deserve further examination in film and in literature.

In “That Story,” I discussed the elision of the 510B undesirable marriage subtype of Cinderella tales, and I stand by the assertion that this tale is largely unknown among contemporary American audiences. However, this and other such less common tales do appear in the adaptations and retellings within subcultures of marginalized groups such as survivors of abuse and members of queer communities. In the current work, I did not feel that I had the requisite grounding in sociology to explore this phenomenon, but I would like to study further or to find a collaborator with whom to pursue this topic.

I have a longstanding interest in the peritextual elements that frame the texts we consume. I would like to revisit the films discussed in this dissertation to examine the
way they position themselves in the fairy tale tradition, particularly with reference to fairy tale books at the beginning and end of the films. The presence of books is particularly thought provoking in the film *Enchanted* because of the presence of Morgan’s book of fairy tales and Robert’s book of famous women in the main plot of the film. The books at the beginning of fairy-tale films are often matched by the songs that play over the credits at the end, which serve to reinforce the core message of the creative team was thinking of.

In future work, I would like to follow up on the implication I raised that many contemporary American books and films which do not overtly claim to be fairy tales nonetheless are built along the model I paraphrased from Propp in “Once Upon a Time There Was a Story.” These include romantic comedies like *Maid in Manhattan* (2002) and science-fiction adventures like the *Star Wars* series. In fact, even the stories we tell about ourselves in everyday conversation often conform to this pattern.
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VITA
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My circuitous path to studies in Comparative Literature via a BA in Russian Studies from the American University and an MA in English from Andrews University has given me a variety of skills for examining texts and their contexts as well as for translating ideas from one language and culture to another. These complementary skills have informed the way I interact with colleagues and students in my work as a researcher, as an instructor, as a public relations coordinator, and as a technical writer.