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Since Bruno Bettelheim reminded us in 1976 that "fairy tales depict in imaginary and symbolic form the essential steps in growing up and achieving an independent existence" (73), feminists have turned to myths, fairy tales, and children's stories to discover the gender-related developmental paradigms that Bettelheim leaves out of his analysis. When we do so, we find emblematic representations of gender stereotypes; as Ellen Rose puts it: "In fairy tales, boys are clever, resourceful and brave. They leave home and slay giants, outwit ogres, solve riddles, find fortunes. Girls, on the other hand, stay home and sweep hearths, are patient, enduring, self-sacrificing. . . . They marry and live happily ever after" (209, 210). The tales' economical form and clearcut message has tremendous usefulness for the feminist critic. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, for example, begin their analysis of a "feminist poetics" with a reading of "Snow White," stating that "myths and fairy tales often both state and enforce culture's sentences with greater accuracy than more sophisticated literary texts" (36). As we search for an understanding of female oppression in the familial and social structures that define our culture, as we consider models of female responses to social and psychological constraints, we have a great deal to learn by reading fairy tales.

Theorists of narrative also traditionally turn to fairy tales to illustrate, by means of these paradigmatic and economical texts, how the structures of narrative function. Thus, in his recent book *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, Peter Brooks offers a new psychoanalytically based theory of narrative. In this model, plot is the "logic and dynamic of narrative" and its primary attribute is its inherent temporality. Brooks turns to a Grimms' fairy tale, "Allerleirauh" or "All-Kinds-of-Fur," in order to illustrate how temporal unfolding operates to reinforce narrative's function of understanding and explanation. His discussion, a purely formal, narratological analysis of the tale, is very instructive for the feminist critic for,

through Brooks's reading, we can discover not how fairy tales represent women, but how analyses of narrative form can contribute to "culture's sentences."

Brooks summarizes the story of a queen who, before her death, extracts the king's promise that he will not remarry a woman who does not equal her in beauty, a king who can find no one but his own daughter to fit this description, and a princess who, to avoid marrying her father, makes several demands she hopes he cannot meet and, when he does, resorts to fleeing, disguised in a coat made of the furs of a thousand animals. After she serves as a kitchen maid in another kingdom, her beauty is discovered by its young king, who marries her.

For Brooks, the tale offers a perfect example of narrative functioning. Typically, the story "takes on the central issues of culture—incest, the need for exogamy—without commentary" (9). In its progression through several triply repetitive actions (she asks for three dresses, one like the sun, one like the moon, one like the stars; she appears at the king's ball three times; and she cooks into the king's soup three objects brought from home), the story, according to Brooks's reading, "works through the problem of desire gone wrong and brings it to its cure" (9). Temporal progression and generational transmission are both worked out not discursively but in the indirect form of "thinking" that narrative, especially in its emblematic fairy-tale form, exemplifies. "Like a number of Grimms' tales," Brooks asserts, "it seems to ask the question, 'Why do girls grow up, leave their homes and their fathers, and marry other men?' " (9).

In Brooks's reading of this tale, a tale he takes to be an example of narrative functioning in a much broader sense, the subject of desire, therefore the protagonist, is the father. It is *his* desire that has gone wrong and must be cured; it is *he* who must hand on his knowledge and possession to another, and presumably younger, king. The narrative model developed here is oedipal and the daughter, "Allerleirauh," for whom the story is named, is an "overly eroticized object" who "loses all erotic and feminine attributes, becomes unavailable to desire, then slowly, through repetition by three, . . . reveals her nature as erotic object again but now in a situation where the erotic is permitted and fitting" (9). Brooks relegates his explana-

tion of the story's "female plot" to a footnote, defining female plot as "a resistance and what we might call an 'endurance': a waiting (and suffering) until the woman's desire can be a permitted response to the expression of a man's desire" (330).

Clearly, from Brooks's perspective (and the rest of his book bears this out) woman's role in narrative is to be the object who waits to be exchanged and passed on at the right moment. As he sees it, the experience of learning and development is not hers but the father/subject's: *he* must learn about giving her up to another man. It is clear that such a reading ignores the girl's central and active role in this tale: after all, the father disappears after the first scene and the other king's part is minor. Yet for Brooks the story's unfolding in time, its plot, depends on the female character's collusion and participation in a process motivated by a male dynamic, on her willingness to wait and endure until it is appropriate for her to respond to male desire. In order to develop his narrative theory, Brooks depends on such female compliance. What he deemphasizes is that Allerleirauh *is* the protagonist. Although her name demonstrates that she depends for her identity on her disguises, her animal skins do not conceal her role as agent in the tale.

Interestingly, another recent book also uses "Allerleirauh" as an initial illustrative example. Judith Lewis Herman's *Father-Daughter Incest* suggests a very different reading of the Grimms' tale, a reading centered on the daughter and on the story's theme rather than its form. Here Allerleirauh and one of her literary ancestresses, Saint Dympna, are seen as versions of Cinderella, heroines who "warn young girls that it is dangerous to be left alone with a widowed father, for a widowed father must remarry, and the daughter's fate depends upon his choice of a wife. In some variants of the tale, the daughter suffers because the father replaces her mother with a cruel stepmother. In others, the daughter suffers because the father wishes to marry her himself" (1).

This shift of emphasis from the father to the daughter, from paternal desire to daughterly resistance, allows us to look at the details of the story and to see them not merely for their formal configuration, but also as factors and stages in a tale relating a young girl's development in a patriarchal world. It is possible, in fact, to read the tale as an emblematic dramatization of female development

in the realm of infinite paternal power, a realm where the father's privilege extends even to include the body of his daughter. In such a reading, Allerleirauh emerges as a particularly female hero. Brooks's description of female endurance and waiting fails to do justice to her ingenious understanding and successful manipulation of the world into which she has been born powerless.

Motherless, Allerleirauh must protect herself. In asking for the three dresses, she not only knows how to enhance her own physical beauty (a supreme value for women in fairy tales), but also enlists the protection of sun, moon, and stars. In asking for the animal skins, moreover, she enlists the protection of the animal realm and also reveals her understanding of the need to hide her beauty, to become sexually unattractive and unavailable until the right mate appears. By disguising herself repeatedly, she manages to overcome the terrible confinement of women in fairy tales, to explore the world, and to try out different identities, even while pretending to hide in a womblike closet under the stairs. In revealing herself to the other king, she again uses her feminine attributes—her beauty, her cooking skills, and her patience. She knows about the economic and political reality of marriage and reveals to her king that she is rich by leaving different gold objects in his soup. She exemplifies not passivity and endurance, but an active and imaginative response to a situation in which she has no power at all, where she is, as she herself repeats three times, "good for nothing but to have boots thrown at my head."

Her rebellion against incest is not by any means a rebellion against patriarchal power. By manipulating the other king into marrying her, she could, in fact, be said to commit a kind of incest: in the terms of Phyllis Chesler, "Women are encouraged to commit incest as a way of life. . . . As opposed to marrying our fathers, we marry men like our fathers . . . men who are older than us, have more money than us, more power than us, are taller than us . . . our fathers" (cited in Herman 57, 58). The road from incest to exogamy leaves unchallenged the assumption of male privilege.

This still leaves the question of the mother in the tale. Why does she extract from the king the promise that he will not marry someone who does not equal her in beauty? How must *her* gesture be interpreted? Does the mother create the problem by insisting on the

resemblance of the new queen to herself? As Judith Herman documents, psychiatric literature most frequently holds the mother responsible for the development of an incestuous relationship between father and daughter. While Herman insists that this judgment must be reinterpreted in light of the powerless position mothers occupy in families, she concedes that "maternal absence, literal or psychological, does seem to be a reality in many families where incest develops" (49).

Rather than seeing the mother's ambiguous request as her collusion in the father's scheme or as a mere assertion that she is of unequalled beauty and thus irreplaceable, it is possible to interpret it more positively, as an enabling gesture for her daughter. In "Peau d'âne," the Perrault tale that is one of the sources for this story, the dead mother is replaced by a fairy godmother who tells the princess how to outwit the father and when to run away. This figure has only limited power; her function is not to offer the princess absolute protection, but to initiate her into her dangerous and subordinate position. By eliminating this figure, the Grimms have not increased the story's psychological complexity, as is commonly argued, but have robbed the growing heroine of any adult guidance, of any female companionship. One could argue that the roles of mother and fairy godmother are conflated. By making sure that the king will not replace her with an evil stepmother but will focus all of his love and attention on the daughter, the mother extends her protection to the years following her death. Beyond that, she leaves the girl to her own ingenuity, to cope in a world where all women are, in a sense, motherless and powerless. The lack of guidance forces Allerleirauh to develop the resources she will need to succeed as a woman in an androcentric world.

Such a feminist reading shifts the emphasis quite considerably away from Brooks's classically psychoanalytic and formalist interpretation. While Brooks's vision of narrative accepts as its foundation woman's position as object of exchange, a feminist reading calls attention to this fundamental power structure and reveals possible responses to it. In so doing, we are enabled to see the ways in which the heroine can nevertheless assume an active, however limited, role—how, beyond total and obedient consent, she can manipulate her fate to achieve at least what her mother had.

In the terms of narratologists like Peter Brooks, repetition is an essential feature of plot, necessary to bind its elements together so that they make sense. Temporal unfolding proceeds through repetition to the conventional culmination, in this case marriage, which guarantees not only the closure of plot but the stability of culture. In feminist terms, this form of repetition and progression signals woman's continued subordination and confinement. Repetition images reproduction, the mirroring of mother and daughter, the impossibility of escaping the mother's early sacrificial death. It is not coincidental that Brooks's literary reading of "Allerleirauh" should focus on formal features, while Herman's feminist reading highlights the story's theme. Not until we bring these two approaches together, revealing the ideological implications of formal structures we tend to take for granted, can we read this tale and others in ways that transcend repetition and lead to transformation and perhaps to innovation.

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