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CRISTINA BACCHILEGA

> Now, the movement in and out of gender as ideological representation, which I propose characterizes the subject of feminism, is a movement back and forth between the representation of gender (in its male-centered frame of references) and what that representation leaves out or, more pointedly, makes unrepresentable. . . . The movement between them . . . is the tension of contradiction, multiplicity, heteronomy.
>
> Teresa de Lauretis

This special issue of *Western Folklore* focuses on the "Innocent Persecuted Heroine" fairy tale, a sub-genre which includes "Rapunzel," "Sleeping Beauty," "Cinderella," and "Snow White"—among the most well-known tales today—as well as less popular(ized) tale types like "The Supplanted Bride," "Born from a Fish," "The Maiden Without Hands," and "The Innocent Slandered Maiden." The project of this collection is two-fold: classification and interpretation. Against the background of Steve Jones's structural and thematic definition of the "Innocent Persecuted Heroine" genre, all the essays—each from its individual perspective—seek to outline not the innate qualities of the Innocent Persecuted Heroine, but her features as *shaped* by narrative as well as by ideological desires and constraints; in turn, the essays' probing of how and why these fairy-tale protagonists are victimized sheds light on the appeal of "their" narratives. In the process, new readings of specific tales—"Cinderella"/"Cap o'Rushes" (AT 510A/510B) in three essays and "Rumpelstiltskin" (AT 500) in one—emerge. Our contributors' interpretations vary, of course, but they

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can be understood along the lines of a few shared hypotheses: the "Innocent Persecuted Heroine" fairy tale inscribes not only variable social norms but conflicting ones; gender is understood within the frameworks of class and social order; and the heroine's innocence and persecution are ideologically constructed. What follows in this Introduction is my reading of the project, with an emphasis on its exposure of the naturalization of the Innocent Persecuted Heroine.[1]

"Careful the wish you make, / Wishes are children." The second line of the witch's warning in Stephen Sondheim's musical *Into the Woods* makes explicit that in many tales of magic a couple's or a woman's verbal wish for a child is equated with the conception of that child. While I enjoy the child-like simplicity of what could be perceived as a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* logic, I recognize that the *ergo* is symptomatic of the active work of *desire* in this metaphor as well as in my response to it. For one, sexual desire implicitly advances the plot even as it is verbally repressed, and yet these miraculous births in the *Märchen* are not just euphemistic. The performative use of language (where an utterance accomplishes what it refers to, as, e.g., in a wedding ceremony and other rituals) also signals a desire for highly artificial fiction, the successful conditions for which are narrative (suspension of disbelief in a world where words have material power) as well as gendered (women's wish for children is so natural that it comes true). The wonder child, then, in these tales is the product of desires which are simply but artfully made to appear "natural." It takes the power of language, an artificial system, to make nature take its course, as perhaps is best exemplified by the most well-known beginning of "Snow White" (AT 709), which frames the Queen's expressed wish as apparently producing the desired result of procreation. Hence, my satisfaction with the metaphor has everything to do with its (re)productive power, so effective that it seems unquestionable.

But as I reflect on the metaphor, the problem becomes: whose desire is at work? Is the woman's wish the expression of her desire?

1. My title " 'The Innocent Persecuted Heroine' Fairy Tale" plays off Angela Carter's *The Old Wives' Fairy Tale Book,* published in England as *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1990). Tongue-in-cheek as always, Carter exploits "fairy tale" as both narrative genre and untruth to modify our understanding of "old wives" and their relationship to these tales.

In my Introduction I capitalize Innocent Persecuted Heroine to mark it as a construct (like Woman) rather than a reality, and I use quotation marks to indicate the genre that produces such a construct.

Carol Mitchell's paper "The Male Heroine: The Innocent Persecuted Protagonist," presented at the 1992 American Folklore Society meeting, reformulates traditional definitions of "hero" and "heroine" in ways that are relevant to the project pursued in this issue of *Western Folklore.*

Could the motifs of eating (seeds, fruits, leaves) or spilling blood, which often accompany the conflation of wish and conception, be interpreted not only as "suggestive of the actual sexual act of procreation" (Jones 1990:40) but also as symbolic of "immasculation" or the assimilation of patriarchal ideals of femininity? If so, the authority of the metaphor rests on figures and narrative strategies which work to present cultural assumptions, particularly gender-related ones, as natural. Consenting to heterosexuality and motherhood is portrayed as natural for women, and this naturalizing process is achieved through verbal construction. The metaphor I have unmade is an example of how verbal "creation" in many fairy tales simply and effectively naturalizes the process of gender construction by referring to sexual procreation.

As a discourse (logos) producing (techne) representations of gender, tales of magic are clearly, and powerfully, what Teresa de Lauretis calls "technologies of gender" (1987). More specifically, as I have argued in "The Fruit of the Womb: Creative Uses of a Naturalizing Tradition in Folktales," some of these narratives participate in a figurative process which serves to mask the construction of a certain kind of fairy tale protagonist, the Innocent Persecuted Heroine, as quasi-natural (1992). Descriptive, thematic, and metaphoric ties with nature (often enacted through the metamorphosis of woman from/into plant, fruit, or animal) are the necessary means by which the construction of the Innocent Persecuted Heroine is made to appear as her "coming to life." And when Snow White, Rapunzel, Cinderella, and so many other Innocent Persecuted Heroines undergo trials and endure hostility (rather than accomplish tasks and seek competition), the woman-as-nature metaphor contributes to their plausibility and, at the same time, encourages readers/listeners to think of these "heroines" in pre-cultural unchangeable terms, which in turn ensures these characters' innocence as well as the reproduction of their persecution.

What makes the "wishes are children" metaphor particularly suggestive is that the success of the Innocent Persecuted Heroine's construction greatly depends on how the narrative discourse which inscribes her also limits her experience, focusing on her as "child" and "mother." The artful naturalizing of this heroine's initiation process (from being a child to being with child) conceals the narrative prescription of her dependence on patriarchy and heterosexuality as well as the proscription of her independence. "Good mothers give birth to

innocent children and good children mature into symbolically innocent mothers": to this earlier statement (Bacchilega 1992:160), I want to add that, in what can be seen as a distinctive sub-genre within the *Märchen,* the Innocent Persecuted Heroine's suffering is the prerequisite for her naturalized initiatory pattern.

In the now classic essay "Desire in Narrative," Teresa de Lauretis reverses and complements Laura Mulvey's point by arguing that *story demands sadism* as it "depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and end" (1984:132–133). She comments on how "the difficult journey of the female child to womanhood" takes her "to the place where the boy will find her, like Sleeping Beauty, awaiting him, Prince Charming. For the boy has been promised, by the social contract he has entered into at his Oedipal phase, that he will find a woman waiting at the end of *his* journey" (1984:132 and 133). De Lauretis, then, remarks:

> Thus the itinerary of the female journey, mapped from the very start on the territory of her own body . . . , is guided by a compass pointing not to reproduction as fulfillment of *her* biological destiny, but more exactly to the fulfillment of the promise made to "the little man," of his social contract, *his* biological and affective destiny—and to the fulfillment of his desire. [1984:133]

In other words, this "story" has as its subject man rather than woman and narrativizes his desire, not hers. De Lauretis goes on to call for feminist work which will self-consciously grapple with how desire mediates meaning in narrative, so as to construct alternative positions of identification and desire. While her perspective on narrative might seem to disempower women, it identifies the "naturalizing of woman" in narrative as one, and not the only, possible result of a power struggle. This shift from assuming sexual identity to analyzing its construction in narrative implies, on the one hand, the question of how "women" are seduced into consenting to "femininity" and, on the other hand, the need not to limit that struggle to sexuality, reproduction, or, for that matter, gender alone. Desire is not understood in limited psychoanalytical terms, but as framed by a social contract and reproduced through institutions, among them narrative discourse.

While much of de Lauretis's discussion focuses on the story of Oedipus and the place of the Sphinx in it, her shorthand examples are fairy tales, and specifically those which can be seen as "Innocent

Persecuted Heroine" narratives (e.g., AT 410). Her reference to Sleeping Beauty confirms the folk and popular association of the passive heroine with fairy tales; however, rather than to essentialize the Innocent Persecuted Heroine herself, de Lauretis's approach seeks to unmake "her" narrative construction. Because she emphasizes that "femininity" does "not refer so much to qualities or states of being inherent in a person [or narrative representation], as to positions which she occupies in relation to desire" (142), her observations point to how certain fairy tales, which share structural and thematic paradigms, have, as narrative institutions, contributed to essentializing the Innocent Persecuted Heroine, and not vice versa.

As I see them, the essays collected in this issue of *Western Folklore* bring de Lauretis's critical approach to bear on fairy tales "featuring" the Innocent Persecuted Heroine. First, with different individual emphases, these essays recognize narrative as both the process and the product of a power struggle which constructs gender; their common concern, then, is to de-naturalize these tales, by focusing on both the unmaking and the remaking of their narrative representations of gender. Second, while the essays do not share de Lauretis's specific focus on the sexual or reproductive aspects of competing desires at work in these tales, they do show how structural, social, and political contracts shape those desires. Third, in order to unmask the naturalization of the Innocent Persecuted Heroine, the essays explore the reasons for and appeal of her persecution, thereby questioning her position as simply passive victim. This critical analysis of victimization and victim can contribute to our understanding of not only classic fairy tale heroines, which still have high cultural visibility today, but also their modern media-produced simulacra, which reproduce similarly powerless representations of women. Fourth, while the collection as a whole, to a certain extent, systematizes the features of the "Innocent Persecuted Heroine" fairy tale, this process participates in the deconstruction of a genre which has served to essentialize such a representation of the feminine.

Steven Swann Jones identifies structural and thematic patterns which the "Innocent Persecuted Heroine" tales share and which serve to construct the narrative image of this "heroine"-type. For me, this formalization of an apparent genre plays an integral and necessary part in the deconstruction process outlined above. Jones includes twenty-one tale types, but this list is not meant to be final; rather his systematic analysis of very popular fairy tales ("Rapunzel," "Sleeping

Beauty," "Cinderella," "Snow White," etc.) also enables us to read other tales and some of today's popular mass-media narratives as enacting and reproducing similar patterns. Furthermore, Jones outlines the historical conceptualization of this sub-genre in folkloristics, and, then, uses the data generated by his own classificatory scheme to address the double, and contradictory, gender-related project these narratives have fulfilled. As he reads them, the "Innocent Persecuted Heroine" tales are mirrors which reflect and refract (young) women's images, with both therapeutic and normative effects. The perspective of young girls and that of patriarchy are both activated as the narratives chart problems and solutions. Jones concludes that the psychological "portrait" of the Innocent Persecuted Heroine, as inscribed within specific narrative and socializing patterns, is the dominant theme of these stories and, to a large extent, authentically represents young women's maturational experiences. While the other essays in this volume do not regard the psychological theme as dominant or as legitimate, and while I fear that reliance on the narrative mirror as predominantly a figure of reflection can result in naturalizing our Heroine once again, I find Jones's description of the genre's duality of point of view quite suggestive. In particular, acknowledging this duality shakes the (sub-)genre loose from the ideological straitjacket that some feminist critics have confined it to[2] and turns the question of power over to the analysis of specific, localized performances, where editors/storytellers and audiences negotiate dynamically between the two points of view.

Jack Zipes's interpretation of eighteenth and nineteenth-century versions of "Rumpelstiltskin" (AT 500) focuses specifically on their inscription of changing social attitudes toward spinning, as a social and economic activity that had symbolized women's creativity and also given women some material control of marriage possibilities. Since it identifies a previously unrecognized persecuted heroine without essentializing her, Zipes's essay well exemplifies a systematizing and deconstructive double reading strategy. In particular, Zipes argues that, in contrast to earlier versions, the Grimms' 1857 narrative moves away from women's productivity to their reproduction, thus naturalizing the protagonist's persecution to the point that scholars have seen

2. Patricia Dunker, for instance, criticizes Angela Carter for having fallen into "the infernal trap inherent in the fairy tale, which carries its ideology in its own form" (1984:6). This kind of approach does not allow for the significance of historical and social contexts or for the variable ideology of individual performances (Bauman and Briggs 1990).

the villain in this tale as her "helper." By refocusing our critical attention on the value of spinning and the changing conditions for women spinners during the industrial revolution, this essay identifies a relevant socio-economic context shaping the protagonist's persecution. While privileging this politically symbolic approach, Zipes also remarks on how different narrative strategies, in turn, produce readings of gender which may or may not be founded in nature. In addressing the protagonist's persecution without naturalizing her innocence, his own reading highlights the occupational-specific construction of gender in various "Rumpelstiltskin" narratives.

In "Why Tell Stories about Innocent Persecuted Heroines?" Bill Nicolaisen seeks to understand these tales' "undoubted popularity among both storytellers and audience" by placing the protagonists' genre-specific portrayal and trajectory within a socially-charged script. As the innocent girl in several AT 510B variants learns to cope with and eventually subvert her persecution, Nicolaisen argues, the narrative restores the traditional social order of its world. The narrative privileges her individual quest to reproduce a social contract. Both plots are reassuring and both "invent"—I would say, construct—"illusions of identity" (the heroine) and "traditions" (hierarchical, yet seemingly just, former societies). Nicolaisen's emphasis on the reality-making, rather than reflecting, function of stories as well as his playful juxtaposition of characters' values and modern-day readers' values allow us to de-essentialize the alliance of these plots, though this possibility is not pursued in the essay. The genre-specific project of these tales, enacting the desire to reinforce social structures (gender among them, but not primarily), is indeed conservative; and yet the appeal of these tales can, perhaps, be understood in more historically and ideologically diverse contexts. Yes, these tales are about the disruption and the restoring of social order, but their reproduction of the principle of order does not necessarily endorse one and the same order.

Daniela Perco's essay focuses on the specifically *gendered* social function of two different AT 510 sub-types collected during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries in Northern Italy. Within her framework, which establishes the heroine's departure from the home as the crucial difference between sub-types, only some "Cinderella" tales belong to the Innocent Persecuted Heroine genre. The significance of the essay, however, goes far beyond classification. By analyzing differences in title (metafolkloric indicators), narrative structure (permanence/departure), thematic paradigms (passivity/activity),

and uses of clothing (as markers of gender and class), Perco outlines two ways of coping with persecution and points to the socio-economic pressures which shape the heroine's "choice" of one or the other. As one trajectory may be more appealing than the other to an individual woman, Perco's distinction speaks to how the narrative inscription of material conditions and gendered "qualities" contributes to the seduction of women into seemingly differentiated forms of "femininity." As it articulates these different possibilities of gender construction, thus complicating our perception of an essentialized Cinderella, the essay also points to how limited and limiting these constructions are, in their assumption of marriage as their common denominator.

The third essay on AT 510 focuses specifically on the Grimms' literary version of "Cinderella," offering an outright political interpretation of marriage and social order within it. Elisabeth Panttaja argues that psychoanalytic assumptions have limited feminist and neo-Marxist readings of fairy tales by isolating the category of gender, "divorcing" it from political contexts. As an alternative, Panttaja proposes to focus on the mother-daughter plot in "Cinderella" as dramatizing power struggles within the bourgeoisie: Cinderella, her mother, the stepsisters and stepmother are representatives "not of the category of woman, but of a particular social group." This politicization does not exclude gender; rather it scripts gender construction within a socio-political system. For instance, magic and goodness in the Grimm tale serve a dual, intertwined function: they make the Cinderella-mother team appealing as a narrative representation of gender and, at the same time, they camouflage class ambition and violence. Romance and dream produce similar effects in the modern Disney version. Panttaja, then, effectively recasts reproduction as socio-political reproduction of the genteel bourgeoisie in the Grimm version, and of the petit bourgeoisie in the Disney movie. Marriage, clothes, mother-daughter interaction, and body manipulation are gender-specific articulations of this power struggle—and their psychological power rests in their privatization, which Panttaja seeks to undo.

As diverse as these essays' interpretations may be, they cluster around common themes which have been central to the feminist critical tradition: specifically, the mother-daughter relationship, clothing, marriage, and violence. Speaking to the tradition of folkloristics more directly is the critique of motifs, implied in all essays and developed in some. Zipes and Perco most explicitly identify motifs as misleading or inadequate tools for the purposes of classification and analysis.

"Wishes are children." Together, as I conceive of them, these essays pursue a feminist project which de-naturalizes the Innocent Persecuted Heroine by showing her genre-specific construction as well as by recognizing the often contradictory social desires producing her as a powerfully powerless representation of gender. Yet, however much I wish to characterize this issue of *Western Folklore* as undertaking a "critical project," methodological differences within it are symptomatic of competing ideologies. As folklorists well know, editors and tellers do not "tell" the same story. The individual authors in this collection do not necessarily share my interpretation of their essays in this volume just as we do not share a common understanding of the fairy tales here examined. Structuralism and historicism, semiotics and feminism no doubt have different agendas and strategies; and, in turn, individual readers will interpret and retell these essays to serve their own ends. As editors, Steve Jones and I have welcomed such a dialogue, in fact, initiated it ourselves from our own distinct positions, trying to clarify in the process how our interests intersected and why. In the context of the critical project I identified above, we believe that the unconcealed differences among these essays can generate further productive dialogue among folklorists, feminists, and students of narrative.

In closing, I will briefly outline one important dialogue in which our discussion of the "Innocent Persecuted Heroine" fairy tale implicitly participates. The ongoing feminist debate over fairy tales has shaped this volume by developing our awareness of initiation (the underlying theme of all five essays) and social contexts as active ingredients in the production of gender in these tales.

Why initiation? The tale of magic enacts on the level of the imagination and with enjoyable lightness the symbolic initiatory functions of ritual and myth; as such, these tales narratively intertwine physical, psychological, and social processes. Whether explicitly subscribing to Mircea Eliade's understanding of the *Märchen* or not (1958), feminists in the last thirty years or so have addressed women's symbolic initiation in and through these narratives, focusing specifically on the *gendered* socializing function of fairy tales. From different perspectives, the essays in this collection have looked at initiation in and through fairy tales as enacting and concealing the struggles of physical, psychological, and socio-political desires with one another, rather than assuming that they smoothly work together toward a "natural" end. In other words, we concur with the observation that interpreting women's transition "from an asexual world to the world of sexuality"

as the "dominant or sole purpose" of their initiation is impoverishing (Lincoln 1981:102) and conceals its sociopolitical function.

As for the "social contest," its very meaning has changed in the history of feminist interpretations of fairy tales. In her 1986 essay "Feminist Approaches to the Interpretation of Fairy Tales," Kay Stone, herself a pioneer in this field, traces the trajectory by which these studies rehearsed and re-enacted changes within the larger feminist movement. Most feminists writing about the fairy tale in the sixties, for instance, were critical of the passive and submissive heroines as "narrow and damaging role-models for young readers" (Stone 1986:229). Later in the seventies, these heroines were re-evaluated as showing inner strength and undergoing a uniquely female form of development, somewhat antagonistic to men. The third phase of feminist analysis looks to fairy tales and myths as the repository of "feminine" knowledge and strength but also insists "that new perceptions of male and female are needed by all human beings if we are to break the magic spell of gender stereotyping" (1986:233). So if, for instance, Cinderella was first considered to be a passive, masochistic victim, she then became a heroine who attains "independence," and eventually a girl who gains strength from her mother and will seek an equally resourceful man as a partner.

Beginning in the eighties, however, feminist analyses of fairy tales have not concentrated directly on the thematic and psychological aspects of the heroine's initiation, but on the language and context of that process. I will list only a few representative studies. Ruth Bottigheimer's *Grimms' Bad Girls & Brave Boys* (1987) exhibits fine linguistic evidence of how the Grimms' editing silenced their heroines; Karen Rowe, in "To Spin a Yarn: The Female Voice in Folklore and Fairy Tale" (1986), maps out the historical silencing of female storytellers (tale spinners) as perpetrated by male writers appropriating and textualizing their voices; in "A Cinderella Variant in the Context of a Muslim Women's Ritual" (1983), Margaret Mills shows how, when understood as part of women's ritualized petitions to "The Lady of Wishes" in Iran, a specific "Cinderella" story encodes gender norms *and* subverts them in a "socially sanctioned" way; and Kay Stone in "The Misuses of Enchantment: Controversies on the Significance of Fairy Tales" redefines Bettelheim's "problem-solving" tales of magic as "problem-creating" for women readers and listeners who attempt and/or resist identification with the "ideal woman" (1985:143).

One important result of these very diverse studies is that they have highlighted the dynamic differences between and the complex inter-

dependence of "Woman" (the patriarchal images of women in fairy tales, to use Simone de Beauvoir's terminology) and "women" storytellers and listeners/readers, thus shifting the focus away from sexism *in* fairy tales as the most relevant "social context." Also at work in these diverse interpretations is the impulse to de-essentialize the genre by showing how the process of storytelling/narrating in different contexts (from rituals to edited collections to individual tellers, each with *specific* audiences) affects gendered productions and receptions of fairy tales. And, finally, within this dynamically feminist framework, both consensual and critical, it has become possible, rather than rejecting or endorsing the fairy tale wholesale, to study these narratives as sites of competing, historically and socially framed, desires, narratives which continue to play a privileged function in the reproduction of various social constructs, including gender and narrative.

This attention to specific social and cultural interactions is in part responsible for the complexity of today's feminist responses to fairy tales. For instance, Jack Zipes's extensive work to break "the magic spell" of the fairy tale has been important to feminists, as it exposes the normative bourgeois ideology of the "classic" fairy tale: in the modern Western world, telling fairy tales has been a bedtime, desacralized, but powerful initiation into a social class, a class with its own gender values. Nevertheless, the function of fairy tales is not simply normative; and Zipes has deconstructed and historicized in order to activate the politically utopian potential that some of these narratives carry. Furthermore, among the varied socio-political uses that fairy tales serve today, literary rewritings such as Angela Carter's and Salman Rushdie's draw on a variety of folk and fairy tales to unmake and remake gender and political constructs, with a subversive twist. Nothing new, of course. In their multiple retellings and contexts, the double seduction of fairy tales—the normative and the subversive—continues to multiply. By strategically privileging the analysis of textual constructions of the Innocent Persecuted Heroine, this collection proposes to retell, among its other narratives, the story of how such a multiplication follows the rules of *social* production and reproduction.

In Memoriam Jenny (1960–1991)

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