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Beyond the Glass Slipper: The Endurance and Metamorphosis of Fairy Tales in Children's Literature

What are fairy tales?

For many people, the first exposure to literature comes in the form of fairy tales. These typically moralistic fables can be useful for teaching children basic rules of safety, such as “don’t talk to strangers” (*Little Red Riding Hood*) and the consequences of theft (*Goldilocks and the Three Bears*). But in recent years, many fairy tales have morphed into something more, at least in middle grade and young adult literature. Authors have taken the seeds of these stories and expanded them into full-length novels, often sacrificing the idea of a moral in favor of a recognizable yet fresh story with new and exciting plot elements, while still retaining several recognizable components of the tales. Anyone who doubts the popularity of retellings in children’s literature needs only to visit the book website Epic Reads, which features a printable chart of 162 retellings in young adult literature. Of these, 74 are based on fairy tales (the rest comprise myths, classics, and Shakespeare). Clearly, there is a demand for and interest in these stories. But what is a fairy tale, exactly?

According to scholar and creative writing instructor Kate Bernheimer, creator of the journal *Fairy Tale Review*, fairy tales are characterized by four elements of form: 1) flatness, 2) abstraction, 3) intuitive logic, 4) normalized magic (64). Various fairy tales may have little in common in terms of plot or style; rather, Bernheimer posits that it is these four components that

make a story a fairy tale, at least in the traditional sense. But do modern retellings also rely on these aspects of craft/form? To determine that, one must first understand what Bernheimer means with regard to these elements.

Flatness refers to the idea that there is often little character depth in fairy tales; in some instances, the characters do not have names and are barely even people. Instead they are defined only by their roles: Evil Stepmother, Big Bad Wolf, Princess, etc. These characters are one-dimensional. The Evil Stepmother's only purpose is to kill the princess. The Big Bad Wolf's goal is to eat Little Red Riding Hood. Character backstory is absent and unnecessary.

Abstraction works in tandem with flatness and suggests a lack of detail. For instance, Sleeping Beauty is often described as "beautiful" with no indication of what that means. What does she look like? What is beautiful about her? Her physical appearance? Her disposition? We do not know. Her beauty is both flat and abstract. As Bernheimer points out, these two characteristics flagrantly break the rules. She writes:

This absence of depth, this flatness, violates a rule writers are often taught in beginning writing classes: that a character's psychological depth is crucial to a story. In a fairy tale, however, this flatness functions beautifully; it allows depth of response in the reader (66-67).

With regard to abstraction, Bernheimer states, "Here we have another very exciting violation: this time of ye olde 'show don't tell' rule. Fairy tales tell; they do not often show" (67).

Intuitive logic is the idea that readers take what happens in fairy tales at face value. There is rarely an explanation of the facts; fairy tales proceed in a "this happened, then that happened" manner, when "this" and "that" are not necessarily related. That is to say, the narratives of fairy

tales tend not to rely on plot, yet readers inherently understand and accept this unusual structure.

Bernheimer describes it thusly:

This associative quality is also a sort of violation, a violation of the rule that things must make sense. Many fairy tales rely on the sensed relationship of words to story—the art of putting words together in a strange yet marvelous order that simply feels right, no matter how difficult it is to take it apart and try to put it back together again with everyday logic. A fairy tale is a Humpty Dumpty (69).

Finally, there is the concept of normalized magic. This is simply the acceptance on both the part of the reader and characters that magic exists within the world of the story. No one questions the talking animals in *Little Red Riding Hood* or *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*; no one finds it strange that Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty are visited by fairies. Magic is normal.

According to Bernheimer:

In fairy tales, the magical and the real coexist— this is a technical element. This is craft....You can call this [normalized magic] “suspension of disbelief” if you want, but I prefer the idea that fairy tales require no suspension on the part of the reader; they are already suspended, expanded, enraptured with normalized magic.

In fairy tales there is not much ado about fantastic occurrences (69-70).

As specified by Bernheimer’s analysis of form, fairy tales are stories with little characterization, depth, or detail and they may not follow narrative flow. These are stories in which the characters and readers must accept the fantastical as normal. She very clearly states that these aspects of form blatantly violate many traditional writing rules. But if modern novels must adhere to these rules (and most do), then how do authors successfully retell these stories? How do they take tales that are flat and lack detail and transform them into stories full of depth

and character arcs? Perhaps these retellings are no longer fairy tales at all. Perhaps the act of retelling them using modern writing conventions transforms them into something else altogether. But if that is the case, then what are these retellings, and why do authors choose fairy tales as the source material? If these novels are no longer fairy tales, then how would they be classified? To address that, one must consider literary categories and genres.

Examining genre

For marketing purposes, publishers and industry professionals organize books into both categories and genres. Categories are boundaries; fiction and nonfiction are categories, as are adult, young adult, and middle grade. Genres are styles of writing that often cross these boundaries. For instance, science fiction is a genre that appears in the categories of adult, young adult, middle grade. Libraries and bookstores generally divide books first by their categories; the titles are then subdivided into genres, both of which help consumers find and purchase the stories they want.

In order to understand what genre(s) fairy tales may be, one must first understand the distinctions among the many genres of young adult and middle grade literature. Generally, novels will fall under one of two umbrella headings: contemporary/realistic, which are believable stories set in the real world that lack fantastical elements, and speculative, which tackles the extraordinary. Both contain sub-genres; realistic includes mystery, romance, and the like. Speculative fiction deals in “what if” questions: What if scientists could bring dinosaurs back to life? What if aliens invaded Earth? What if people could live for hundreds of years? Science fiction, fantasy (urban, high, and low), and magical realism all fall under the scope of speculative fiction.

The aptly named science fiction approaches these “what if” questions in a scientific way. Although the elements in the work may be fantastical, there should be a scientific basis (or at least a scientific-sounding one) at the root of their explanations, even if the explanation isn’t true science. That is, the theories given might not hold up in the real world, but the author should make some attempt to explain the situation in a scientific way *within the story*. For example, in her YA novel *Across the Universe*, author Beth Revis describes a colony of people who have been on a spaceship for hundreds of years. She makes their extended lifespans believable in scientific terms because she developed (fictional) solutions to problems of modern cryonics to explain how this occurred. Her theories may not be currently possible, but they at least seem plausible. The Gunn Center for the Study of Science Fiction further expands on this definition, stating:

Science fiction is the literature of the human species encountering change, whether it arrives via scientific discoveries, technological innovations, natural events, or societal shifts.... It provides the tools, tropes, and cognitive framework within which we can explore ideas and safely run thought-experiments where we cannot or ought not in real-world experiments.

Fantasy, by contrast, does not rely on scientific explanation. Instead, magic and the unexplained run rampant. In the *Complete Guide to Writing Fantasy*, authors Darin Park and Tom Dullemond write:

Fantasy is...a creation in the mind of an author of worlds or events that could not possibly exist in the scientific realm...Fantasy uses devices such as magic, fantastic creatures that fly—no matter how improbable in the real world—historical setting, modern settings, and so on....There is no scientific explanation

of how these things are achieved. Instead, the author creates a base of rules that are used entirely in the world of his devising that would not apply to the normal everyday world (7-8).

There are multiple types of fantasy, each with its own set of rules. Urban fantasy may contain all the classic elements of fantasy—magic, fairies, elves, etc.—but it is always set in the real world (think Melissa Marr’s YA *Wicked Lovely* series). By contrast, high and low fantasy are recognizable by their strange, unreal settings—Tolkien’s Middle Earth is an example of this. While high fantasy tends to be more serious in tone, low fantasy relies on humor; it turns the fantastical on its side. This can be expressed in funny languages, ugly fairies, miniature dragons, and more.

Finally, there is magical realism, which is something of a paradox: how can something be both magical and realistic? As a genre, it is easy to recognize, but difficult to define. In stories of magical realism, the real and the fantastical collide. These stories are almost always set in the recognizable world, but magic is an accepted part of the story. This differs from urban fantasy; typically in urban fantasy, the fantastic is not easily accepted by the characters and may exist on the fringe, whereas in magical realism, it is usually in plain sight. In magical realism, plants may have personalities, characters may be able to taste emotions...many strange things are both possible and accepted, though this does not mean that the characters do not question them to a certain degree. The librarian website Stacked explains magical realism thusly:

Magical realism is a genre that flirts with a number of genre lines and expectations. It’s not fantasy, nor is it science fiction. It’s not wholly realistic and it’s also not entirely historical. It blends all of these things and it touches on none of them at the same time. David Carr, in an article written for *Novelist*, notes that

magical realism "contradicts the reader's normal expectation of time, space, or gravity, unexpectedly recounting secular miracles and human enchantments as everyday occasions." In other words, the world within a novel defined as magical realism is as real as ours and the magical things that happen within that world feel real because they're just part of that world. Things we might otherwise find weird or jarring are normal within the pages of the story.

The retellings in the Epic Reads chart fall into all of these genres and more. Furthermore, retellings of the *same story* can easily be classified into different genres, depending on how they are written. In order to understand how that is possible, one must simply choose a popular fairy tale and explore all its variations. The prime example for this is Cinderella, a fairy tale that is known around the globe and has been retold hundreds of times in various forms.

Exploring Cinderella

The original version of Cinderella is rooted in French folktale, but like many fairy tales, the Grimm version is often considered the standard. In the Grimm tale, Cinderella plants a hazel branch on her mother's grave. A sapling springs forth, and magical birds live in it. Cinderella relies on these birds to help her with chores and provide dresses and transport to and from the king's festivals. In the end, when Cinderella's foot fits in the magical slipper and she leaves her home to marry the prince, the birds also pluck out the eyes of her traitorous stepsisters, each of whom tried to deceive and steal the prince (this last bit is the morality thread one expects in classic fairy tales; the sisters are punished for being selfish and cruel).

This version of the tale walks the line between fantasy and magical realism, and all of Bernheimer's elements of form are present. The stepsisters are described as beautiful and fair of

face, but there are no details that illustrate this beauty; it is abstract. Cinderella weeps over her mother's grave every day, remaining "pious and good," which is both abstract and flat. Intuitive logic is present in the way the tale skips over details and the passage of time: "When the winter came the snow spread a white sheet over the grave, and when the spring sun had drawn it off again, the man had taken another wife" (Grimm 74). And of course, the story contains normalized magic in the way Cinderella attends the king's festival: "Thrice a day Cinderella went and sat beneath [the hazel tree], and if Cinderella expressed a wish, the bird threw down to her whatever she had wished for" (Grimm 75).

Modern retellings (or reimaginings) of Cinderella span multiple genres: contemporary (Robin Palmer's *Cindy Ella* and Kelsey Macke's *Damsel Distressed*), historical (Gregory Maguire's *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*), multicultural (AJ Paquette's *Nowhere Girl* and Donna Jo Napoli's *Bound*), and action-adventure (Sarah J. Mass's *Throne of Glass*, though this has fantasy elements as well), to name a few. However, most Cinderella retellings seem to fall under the umbrella of speculative fiction. This is because of the nature of this particular fairy tale—it contains fantastical elements, including magic and fairies. Two modern versions of the tale, Malinda Lo's *Ash* and Gail Carson Levine's *Ella Enchanted*, are both considered fantasy, although they are different types of fantasy. A third, *Before Midnight*, by Cameron Dokey, contains many of the hallmarks of magical realism, which, as described above, differs in small but important ways from fantasy. Finally, a fourth, Marissa Meyer's *Cinder*, transforms the narrative into a believable science fiction story.

Cinderella is possibly the most famous fairy tale in the world, and these retellings manage to keep many core parts of the tale, while expanding upon the characters and setting. But in so doing, they violate Bernheimer's four elements of form. Novels, especially those for

children and teens, are generally not intended to be flat and abstract. Instead, most authors strive to create—as in the stories discussed below—richly drawn characters and ripe details. These books show rather than tell. Sometimes the magic is normalized, but often it is questioned or altogether absent. Intuitive logic is also missing; these novels—like most commercially successful fiction—rely on a string of related narrative events to move and clarify the plot. And yet, the novels discussed herein are quite clearly inspired by the tale of Cinderella. If fairy tales are not constrained by form or genre, then what are they? How can these novels break Bernheimer’s rules and still be fairy tales? Are they merely unrelated stories that contain similar elements?

In each of these four retellings, five classic elements of the Cinderella story appear. However, it is through the differences in which these elements (as well as other parts of the story, of course) are handled that the genre distinctions emerge. Each of these tales includes: 1) the absence of Cinderella’s father; 2) Cinderella’s stepmother and stepsisters; 3) a character who fulfills the fairy godmother role; 4) Cinderella attending a royal ball or festival; and 5) Cinderella meeting the prince. These elements are also present to some degree in the Grimm version; therefore the argument can be made that each of these modern stories is a retelling of the classic, though they differ in style.

Ash

Ash contains all the hallmarks of a classic fantasy. The story seems out of time; the characters ride in carriages and carry lanterns, both of which suggest the past, but no specific era is implied. The world is similar to our own but not, and both magic and fairies are quite real. In this story, as with the others, the five elements mentioned above affect the genre of the novel.

The story opens with Aisling (Ash for short), the protagonist, standing at her mother's grave. A greenwitch (a village woman in tune with nature's magic) is conducting the funeral in an effort to protect Ash's mother's soul from the fairies. Shortly thereafter, Ash's father remarries, and then dies. Ash's stepmother Isobel is now saddled with his debts, and moves Ash and her stepsisters to a new home, far away from the life Ash has always known. Isobel is angry about the debt she has inherited, and to save money she fires most of the house staff and forces Ash to work instead.

When Ash can find time to sneak away, she roams the woods, the place she feels most at home. It is there that she often encounters a beautiful fairy man named Sidhean, who grants most of her requests. In fact, when it is announced that the king is holding a royal ball, it is Sidhean who provides Ash with the proper clothing and transportation. But his gifts are not without condition; he wants Ash for his own, and in exchange for his help, she must promise to one day stay with him forever.

As in the traditional version of the tale, Ash attends the royal ball and meets the kingdom's (in a twist, rather fearsome) prince. But here things take a turn—a plot element emerges that modernizes the story completely: lesbian romance. Though Ash has promised herself to her fairy godfather, she truly loves Kaisa, the king's huntress, whom she seeks out at the ball. The disguised Ash does crash the ball and dance with the prince, as in most versions of the tale. However, in this story, she wants nothing to do with him. She's there for Kaisa, and in the end, the two women thwart Sidhean and end up as a couple—something very different from most Cinderella retellings. All five elements of the fairy tale are there, but the fairies, magic, and spells make the story a true high fantasy.

Ella Enchanted

In contrast to *Ash*, *Ella Enchanted* falls more along the lines of humorous or low fantasy. Its intention is to entertain readers, rather than to enchant or transport them. Although it is probably the most classical version of the stories discussed here, the entire tale is tongue-in-cheek.

Ella has a mostly happy life, except for one thing: she has been cursed by Lucinda, a misguided fairy, to be obedient. She must follow any order given to her, which creates a growing series of problems, although she tries (somewhat unsuccessfully) to keep her curse a secret. When Ella's mother dies, her father remarries a horrible woman to gain her wealth, but then promptly leaves for extended business trips. Ella's stepmother has no interest in raising an extra child, so she sends Ella to boarding school. There, Ella is tormented by her stepsisters, who know she must follow their every order. Determined to break her curse, Ella runs away, but nothing goes quite as planned. She is kidnapped by ogres, crashes a giant's wedding, and is drugged with mystical mushrooms. Eventually she must accept defeat and return home.

Throughout it all, her father is mostly absent, because he cannot stand his new bride, Olga. Olga, in turn, is horrible; she forces Ella to become her maid and live in a cold room at the top of the house. The only person in the household who cares for Ella is Ella's fairy godmother Mandy. Mandy is not beautiful and sparkly; she has frizzy gray hair, works as the house cook, and refuses to do magic. Mandy is the only person in the house who knows that Ella regularly corresponds with Prince Charmont, her childhood friend. Ella and Charmont are in love, but Ella knows her curse could put both the prince and kingdom at risk, so she breaks things off with him. Heartbroken, he allows his father to host a series of royal balls so that Charmont might meet

someone new. With Lucinda's help, Ella disguises herself and sneaks into the balls, where she and Charmont fall in love all over again.

Throughout the story, funny elements are sprinkled in, which is what helps distinguish this tale from something more high fantasy. Ella might be sad, but the story never feels oppressive or gloomy; it maintains a lighthearted tone. Olga and her daughters have thin hair and wear wigs, the fairies tend to make bumbling mistakes, and the fantastical languages are ridiculous, including the sibilant language of the ogres, who say things such as "Ssyng lahlFFOOn, haZZ liMMOOn. lahlFFOOn eFFuth wAAth psySSahbuSS" which translates to "One should eat more vegetables, not humans, because vegetables taste more delicious" (Levine 101).

Before Midnight

Before Midnight is a sumptuous, magical realism version of the fairy tale. In this story, the main character is called Cendrillon, meaning child of ashes, because she was kept warm in the hearth the night she was born. Although the specific setting is never stated, the geography and character names suggest France, or a version of it, which makes sense given the origin of the tale. Most of the story stays within the boundaries of reality: the godmother is not a fairy and no spells are cast. However, magic lurks on Cendrillon's property, most notably in the gardens:

The lands of my father's estate were beautiful and fertile. But, as if the lightning bolt that struck my mother's grave had somehow planted the seed of my father's unrest within our soil, what our fields and orchards might yield could never quite be predicted ahead of time.

One year, every single squash plant grew tomatoes. We made sauce until our hands turned red, then carried our jars to the closest town on market days to barter for what our fields had been unwilling to provide.

Some years our apple trees actually gave us apples. But their limbs were just as likely to be weighed down by cherries or plums. For three years running we had pears instead, followed by three straight years of oranges, a fruit which had never been known to grow so close to the sea before (Dokey 28-29).

Other bits of magic occur throughout the story, but nothing big enough to push it into fantasy territory. For instance, the weather tends to turn foul on Cendrillon's birthday and no plants will grow over her mother's grave. For the characters, and thus the readers, these incidents are curious but still within the confines of reality.

Again, the same five Cinderella plot points appear. After Cendrillon's mother dies in childbirth, her grief-stricken father Etienne leaves the family home forever, leaving Cendrillon and her adopted brother Raoul in the care of Cendrillon's godmother Mathilde. Mathilde has a knack for making wishes come true; although she is not a fairy, she clearly fulfills that role in the story. When the king forces Cendrillon's father to remarry, Etienne sends his new wife and her daughters to his country home. They are clearly unhappy about being banished to the country, something Cendrillon blames herself for, because she wished for a mother and two sisters for her birthday (another vaguely magical element). Unlike in most Cinderella stories, the stepmother, Chantal, is not unkind to Cendrillon. She treats her well and brings the entire household, Cendrillon included, to the royal ball. It is there that Cendrillon meets and falls in love with the prince, who, in an unusual twist, turns out to be Raoul's twin brother.

Cinder

Although *Cinder* is undeniably a Cinderella story, unlike the others listed above, there are no fantasy elements. Instead, it is pure science fiction. It is set in the future in the Third Era (after the Fourth World War; our current time is the book's Second Era), Cinder is a cyborg, her best friend is an android, and colonists from the moon visit earth via spacecraft.

As a baby, Cinder was adopted by a man and brought to live with his family. After his death, she is treated as a servant, because cyborgs are considered a lower class of citizen. Cinder's stepmother Adri forces Cinder to work as a mechanic to help supplement the family income, while Cinder's stepsisters receive a proper education and live a normal life. Cinder's only real friend is her android Iko, who accompanies her to work each day and counsels her, much as a fairy godmother might. When Cinder meets the emperor's son, Prince Kai, at work, the two strike up a friendship, although Cinder is forced to keep her cyborg nature a secret.

At the end of the book, when Cinder must sneak into a royal ball to warn Prince Kai of a potential threat to his kingdom, her cyborg identity is revealed. She flees, losing both her shoe and her entire foot in the process. These elements—cyborgs, androids, and a futuristic society (it is set in New Beijing, which provides an injection of racial diversity often absent from Cinderella stories)—are what make the novel science fiction. Magic and fairies do not exist in this world, but powerful technology, medical advances, and spaceships are commonplace. And once more, the five essential components of Cinderella are present. They are merely tweaked to fit with the sci-fi nature of the story.

Fairy tales beyond form

It seems clear that these stories are all Cinderella tales, but also that they stray from Bernheimer's elements of form. Perhaps this is because fairy tales are not as easy to define as Bernheimer suggests. In fact, fairy tale researcher and Grimm translator Dr. Jack Zipes argues against some of what Bernheimer says. He claims that it is difficult to define the idea of a fairy tale, because the concept and stories are fluid and ever-changing. He says:

The fairy tale was first a simple, imaginative oral tale containing magical and miraculous elements and was related to the belief systems, values, rites, and experiences of pagan peoples. Also known as the wonder or magic tale, the fairy tale underwent numerous transformations before the innovation of print led to the production of fixed texts and conventions of telling and reading. But even then, the fairy tale refused to be dominated by print and continued to be altered and diffused around the world by word of mouth up to the present...the fairy tale adapted itself...it continues to grow—embracing, if not swallowing, all types of genres, art forms, and cultural institutions, and adjusting itself to new environments through the human disposition to re-create relevant narratives... (21-22).

Zipes goes on to point out that fairy tales are not exactly a genre unto themselves. “Almost all endeavors to define fairy tale as a genre have failed,” he writes (22). He cites author Donald Haase:

Despite its currency and apparent simplicity, the term “fairy tale” resists a universally accepted or universally satisfying definition. For some, the term denotes a specific narrative form with easily identified characteristics, but for

others, it suggests not a singular genre but an umbrella category under which a variety of other forms may be grouped (22).

So perhaps, like speculative fiction, fairy tales might have a broader construct and meaning.

Although the exact definition of fairy tale might be debatable, it is clear that in the past, these morality tales served a specific purpose. Zipes argues that fairy tales were not created or intended for children, but admits that the stories “resonate with them, and children recall them as they grow to confront the injustices and contradictions of the so-called real worlds” (20). Child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim’s conclusions take this idea a step further; he claims that fairy tales are extremely important to the psychological development of children, and this is why children love them, even if they do not understand the psychological aspect. Bettelheim says that children use fairy tales to understand the meaning of the world. He writes:

Through the centuries (if not millennia) during which, in their retelling, fairy tales became ever more refined, they came to convey at the same time overt and covert meanings—came to speak simultaneously to all levels of the human personality, communicating in a manner which reaches the uneducated mind of the child as well as that of the sophisticated adult. . . .By dealing with universal human problems, particularly those which preoccupy the child’s mind, these stories speak to his budding ego and encourage its development, while at the same time relieving the preconscious and unconscious pressures (5-6).

Bettelheim also points out that fairy tales are particularly useful to child development because they do not shy away from dark topics such as death.

Modern stories written for young children mainly avoid these existential problems, although they are crucial issues for all of us. The child needs most

particularly to be given suggestions in symbolic form about how he may deal with these issues and grow safely into maturity. “Safe” stories mention neither death nor aging, the limits to our existence, nor the wish for eternal life. The fairy tale, by contrast, confronts the child squarely with the basic human predicaments (8).

It seems as though Bettelheim is suggesting that many people become captivated with fairy tales as children because they instinctively recognize that a need is being met by these stories. Perhaps this early love is the source of the endurance of fairy tales and the booming market for retellings.

Conclusion: fairy tales in the modern market

Based on the four examples discussed above, as well as the opinions of some of these experts, one could conclude that the definition of fairy tale is fluid. As a craft element, it may at first seem meaningless, at least for modern stories. That’s because one rarely encounters books merchandized as “new” or “original” fairy tales. Even the works of authors such as Melissa Marr and Holly Black, who refer to some of their novels as modern fairy tales, are usually marketed as fantasy instead of fairy tale. Moreover, retellings are varied enough that calling them fairy tales seems to have little meaning beyond audience recognition. If anything, “fairy tale” appears to be a category instead of a genre, useful mostly for organizing books in stores and libraries.

As demonstrated by these Cinderella stories, successful retellings rely far less on Bernheimer’s four elements of form and far more on highlighting a handful of recognizable elements from the classic tale. Gone are the fables that teach children what not to do, and in their place are stories full of magic, new technology, and/or rousing adventure. These retellings are populated with characters with whom readers can often relate (as opposed to flat, one-dimensional representations such as Princess), and the themes—such as self-identity, self-

reliance, and self-acceptance—are far more complex than the originals. By taking the essential components of the tales and rewriting them from the perspective of our contemporary sensibilities, these retellings introduce new, fresh stories that challenge the very concepts of the originals.

But if these new stories are so different from the source material, then why retell fairy tales in the first place? Why not simply write something new? Part of it comes back to that notion of marketability, and the idea that readers will recognize these tales with a sense of nostalgia for their childhood. But it must be more than that; recognition is not enough. Just because something is familiar does not guarantee that people will want it. Instead, the answer seems to hark back to Bettelheim's psychology. There is a reason we culturally connect with fairy tales. Although they no longer serve as mere morality stories, something about fairy tales resonates with us. As Bettelheim says, "nothing can be as enriching and satisfying to child and adult alike as the folk fairy tale...more can be learned from them about the inner problems of human beings, and of the right solutions to their predicaments in any society, than from any other type of story within a child's comprehension (5).

The differences between the retellings and the originals show how far our culture has come; in some ways, the retellings serve as a metric for literary advancement. By using deeper themes (self-identity versus "good people don't get eaten by witches") and characters who are far more like real people (people we know, people we want—or do not want—to be) than the originals, these retellings show cultural growth, from who we were to who we now are (or who we wish to be). This creates a dynamic tension that would be impossible to observe in new material. Much as a parent might mark a wall to denote a child's growth, these retellings serve as tick marks to show how our literary culture has grown and evolved.

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