

Into the Woods

Book by James Lapine

Music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

DRAMATURGY

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Pennsylvania State University | *Spring 2023*

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DEAR READER,

Hello! Thank you so much for taking the time to read the dramaturgy research packet for our production of *Into the Woods*! Before beginning, I would like to note that references to the text of *Into the Woods* were made to Theatre Communication Group's 1989 edition of Lapine and Sondheim's book. At times, the musical, *Into the Woods*, is referred to, simply, as *Woods*. Citations were made per *The Chicago Manual of Style*. As always, please reach out to me at ajg6360@psu.edu if you have any questions about the text, context, or meaning of our production; if you have any questions about the contents of this packet; or if you would like to request additional dramaturgy materials!

– ARUSHI GROVER, *Your Production Dramaturg*

I. PRODUCTION HISTORY

American Musical Theatre in the 1970s–1980s

During the 1970s, John Kenrick asserts that American musical theatre “saw a heated three-way battle for stylistic dominance in the musical theatre among rock musicals, concept musicals, and the conventional post-*Oklahoma!* book show.”¹ Rock musicals and musicals with other popular music included *Hair* (1968), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971), *Pippin* (1972), *Grease* (1972), *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1973), and *The Wiz* (1975).² Concept musicals began with Hal Prince and Sondheim’s *Company*; the duo went on to make *Follies* (1975), *A Little Night Music* (1973), and *Pacific Overtures* (1976).³ Other notable musicals from the decade include *Cabaret* (1975), *A Chorus Line* (1975), and *Annie* (1976).⁴ Kenrick posits a difference between two models of musical theatre for the end of the 1970s, epitomized by (1) the 1979 *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, a conventional book but psychologically dark, by librettist Hugh Wheeler and composer Stephen Sondheim, and (2) composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and librettist Tim Rice’s *Evita* (1979).⁵ Simply put, Kenrick praises the former for substance over the latter’s style, identifying *Evita* as the model for the “mega-musical.”⁶

The 1980s saw the spread of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, or AIDS, wiping out theatre professionals and lovers.⁷ Kenrick notes the formation of two organizations that eventually joined as one: Broadway Cares and Equity Fights Aids.⁸ Kenrick concludes, “But the initial terror, as a legion of friends and colleagues died terrible deaths, left a lasting impression on all who were part of show business at that time.”⁹

The 1980s also saw the rise of the “megamusical” template. Kenrick defines the megamusical form: “Megamusicals are sung through, with little if any dialogue; the songs and emotions are big, loud, and bombastic; characterization is often explained rather than dramatized; characters tell you who they are rather than showing who they are by their actions; the music is rock-pop, but can incorporate various styles; it does not reflect the sound of any particular era; the plots are melodramatic, with minimal humor; [and] all major professional stagings are carbon copies.”¹⁰

Kendrick elaborates:

¹ John Kenrick, *Musical Theatre: A History* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 319.

² Ibid, 319-325.

³ Ibid, 325-329.

⁴ Ibid, 330-337.

⁵ Ibid, 339-340.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, 343.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, 340-341.

Cats marked the rise of the megamusical form first established by *Evita*. Few noticed that these British and French megamusicals were pop-flavored descendants of a form thought long-dead: operetta. It was no accident that megamusicals often replaced their pop-voiced original casts with singers who had operatic training. No one else could deliver the big melodies and gushing emotions eight times a week.¹¹

Many megamusicals were European-born; productions of the 1980s include *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (1982), *Starlight Express* (1984), and *Les Misérables* (1987).¹²

The 1987–1988 Season

In Gerald Bordman's *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*, he sums up the offerings of the 1987–1988 season of theater in New York:

It was another busy season, towered over once again by another importation. And what did American writers offer their own audiences? Precious little. Only two new native works had appreciable merit, although both were nearly drowned out by the thundering ballyhoo accorded London's latest contribution. Revivals of earlier Broadway hits provided some small compensation.¹³

Bordman notes that the following productions were presented during this time: *Dreamgirls* was revived (20 December 1981).¹⁴ The New York City Opera mounted *The Student Prince* (originally premiered 2 December 1924) on 7 July 1987 and *The Desert Song* (originally premiered 30 November 1926) on 25 August 1987, two Romberg works, in addition to *Sweeney Todd* on 29 July 1987 and *Die Fledermaus* on 26 September 1987.¹⁵ According to Bordman, "The season's first novelty was *Roxa* (1 October 1987, Royale), which told of how a Polish concentration camp survivor (Georgia Brown) moves to Paris and befriends the dregs of the city's society."¹⁶ Bordman notes that *Mort Sahl on Broadway* (11 October 1987, Simon), a one-man show, provided a full evening by an artist that might have "flourished in those bygone forms" of "classic revue" and "vaudeville."¹⁷ Bordman establishes that the season's most successful revival was of *Anything Goes* (24 November 1934) at the Vivian Beaumont.¹⁸ A revival of *Cabaret* (20 November 1966), with Joel Grey reprising his role as the master of ceremonies, "ran out the season."¹⁹ Further, according to Bordman, "South Africa gave us a protest musical, *Sarafina!* (25 October 1987, Newhouse), in which black high school students put on a play attacking apartheid and praising Nelson Mandela, the leader of the rebellious ANC."²⁰

¹¹ Ibid, 348.

¹² Ibid, 352-355.

¹³ Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 782.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Bormand notes, “*Don’t Get God Started* (29 October 1987, Longacre) might have been called an evangelical revue, with sermonizing sketches and gospel songs interwoven.”²¹ Bormand characterizes *Into the Woods* as “not a children’s musical.”²²

Regarding Off-Broadway fare, Bormand notes that in *Oil City Symphony* (5 November 1987, Circle-in-the-Square Downtown), “[f]our high school graduates form a band to present a concert in honor of a favorite teacher.”²³ Set to songs by John Philip Sousa, *Ted and Alice* (12 November 1987) told the story of Teddy Roosevelt and his daughter, Alice.²⁴ There was a magic show, *Penn and Teller*. Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *The Phantom of the Opera* is characterized as the season’s “runaway hit.”²⁵ *The Gospel at Colonus* (24 March 1988, Lunt-Fontanne) retold Sophocle’s *Oedipus at Colonus* with in an evening of “black evangelical fervor.”²⁶ *Oba Oba* (29 March 1988, Ambassador) was a Brazilian revue of native song and dance.²⁷ *Mail* (14 April 1988, Music Box) depicted an unpublished writer returning to his apartment after four months to read his missives, acted out by “writers, whether dinners, bulk-mail advertisers, his agent, or his sweetheart.”²⁸ Featuring the popular young pianist, *Michael Feinstein in Concert* (19 April 1988, Lyceum) performed well-known songs.²⁹ *Chess* (28 April 1988, Imperial), “with lyrics by Tim Rice and music by members of Sweden’s ABBA rock group, had been a smash hit in London,” and came to Broadway with a “toned-down book” that retained the rivalry between “a tantrum-throwing, nasty American chess champion...and his better-behaved Russian opponent.”³⁰ *Romance, Romance* (1 May 1988, Hayes), was “a double bill of unexceptional but beguiling little musicals”; “*The Little Comedy* was based on an Arthur Schnitzler piece in which rich lovers pretend to be of a lower social class in order to forward their courtship, [and] *Summer Share*, based on Jean Renard’s *Pain de Menage*, told of two married couples who contemplate switching spouses.”³¹ According to Bormand, the season closed with “an unmitigated disaster”, a musical version of Stephen King’s horror novel, *Carrie* (12 May 1988, Virginia), featuring “high school brats slaughtering pigs (while stereophonic speakers screeched out the animals’ death cries and red disco lights flashed).”³²

Borland concludes of the business of theatre for the year:

There were more pleasant aftershocks at season’s end when Broadway grosses were reported to have risen 21 percent to a whopping \$253 million. Theatre moguls credited the rash of hit musicals—especially such foreign spectacles as *Cats*, *Les Mis*, *Me and My Girl*, and *Phantom*

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid, 782-783.

²³ Ibid 783.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid, 784.

³² Ibid.

—for the increase, ignoring the fact that a new \$50.00 top for musicals meant more money but not necessarily more playgoers.³³

Composition

Meryle Secrest explains that after working together on *Sunday in the Park with George*, James Lapine and Stephen Sondheim were looking for a new idea for a musical that was “bright, light-hearted, and funny.”³⁴ Initially, they intended to write a new fairy tale from scratch, but eventually settled on bringing a group of familiar fairy tale characters into one story.³⁵ Lapine and Sondheim envisioned something close to a “freewheeling English pantomime” in which a base story would act “as the barest pretext for a madcap romp full of local jokes [and] slapstick humor.”³⁶ The end-result was a familiar and funny first-act, with a self-reflexive and darker second-act, in *Into the Woods*.

Original Productions (1986-1987)

According to the front matter of the book of the musical, *Into the Woods* was workshopped at Playwrights Horizons in New York City; subsequently it was produced at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego, California, in December 1986.³⁷ The musical began previews on Broadway at the Martin Beck Theatre (now known as the Al Hirschfeld Theatre) on September 29, 1987.³⁸ According to Richard F. Pender, “After forty-three previews, it opened on November 5, 1987; after 765 performances, it closed on September 3, 1989.”³⁹

The original Broadway production won three awards at the 1988 Tony Awards: Best Book of a Musical for James Lapine, Best Original Score for Stephen Sondheim, and Best Actress in a Musical for Joanna Gleason.⁴⁰ (It also had seven nominations at the Tony Awards for: Best Featured Actor in a Musical (Robert Westenberg), Best Scenic design for Tony Straiges, Best Costume Design for Ann Hould-Ward, Best Lighting Design for Richard Nelson, Best Choreography for Lar Lubovitch, and Best Direction of a Musical for James Lapine.)⁴¹ The original Broadway production also won five awards at the 1988 Drama Desk Awards: Outstanding Musical, Outstanding Book of a Musical, Outstanding Featured Actor in a Musical for Westenberg), Outstanding Featured Actress in a Musical for Gleason, and Outstanding Lyrics for Sondheim.⁴² (The production also received eight nominations at the Drama Desk Awards.)⁴³

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Meryle Secrest, *Stephen Sondheim: A Life* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 352.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine, *Into the Woods* (New York, NY: Theatre Communications Group, 2019).

³⁸ Richard F. Pender, *The Stephen Sondheim Encyclopedia* (Lanham; Boulder; New York; London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2021), section on *Into the Woods*.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

*Artistic and Production Team*⁴⁴

Composer	Stephen Sondheim
Lyricist	Stephen Sondheim
Book-Writer	James Lapine
Director	James Lapine
Scenic Designer	Tony Straiges
Costume Designer	Ann Hould-Ward
Lighting Designer	Richard Nelson
Choreographer	Lar Lubovitch
Orchestrator	Jonathan Tunick
Musical Director	Paul Gemignani

*Original Cast*⁴⁵

Narrator/Mysterious Man (Tom Aldredge), Witch (Bernadette Peters), Baker (Chip Zien), Baker's Wife (Joanna Gleason), Little Red Riding Hood (Danielle Ferland), Grandmother/Cinderella's Mother/Giant (Merle Louise), Cinderella (Kim Crosby), Jack (Ben Wright), Jack's Mother (Barbara Bryne), Wolf/Cinderella's Prince (Robert Westenberg), Rapunzel (Pamela Winslow), Rapunzel's Prince (Chuck Wagner), Cinderella's Stepmother (Joy Franz), Florinda (Kay McClelland), Lucinda (Lauren Mitchell), Snow White (Jean Kelly), Sleeping Beauty (Maureen Davis), the Steward (Phillip Hoffman), and Cinderella's Father (Edmund Lyndeck).

Reviews & Criticism

According to Richard F. Pender, "*Into the Woods* was recognized by most critics as Sondheim's most accessible show. Howard Kissel in the New York Daily News praised the 'spellbinding score' and termed it as 'an evening of total enchantment.'"⁴⁶

William A. Henry III of *Time* magazine assessed *Into the Woods* as "the best show yet from the most creative mind in the musical theater today. It is also that joyous rarity, a work of sophisticated artistic ambition and deep political purpose that affords nonstop pleasure."⁴⁷ In an age when many hits on Broadway were exports from London, Henry further praised the work:

What *Into the Woods* does, gloriously, is make the case for what musicals might be, blending innovation and old-fashioned storytelling into an elixir of delight. It makes audiences think of Freud and Jung, of dark psychological thickets and sudden clearings of enlightenment, even as they roar with laughter. Its basic insight, plainly influenced by the revisionist scholarship of Bruno Bettelheim, is that at heart, most fairy tales are about the loving yet embattled relationship between parents and children. Almost everything that goes wrong --

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ William A. Henry, III, "Theater: Some Enchanted Evening INTO THE WOODS," *Time*, November 16, 1987

which is to say, almost everything that can—arises from a failure of parental or filial duty, despite the best intentions.⁴⁸

Henry notes that Lapine's book is "at times self-consciously literary and deconstructionist, [and] does not play fair. He encourages audiences to laugh at violence visited on unpopular characters in the first act, then chides them for doing so during the second."⁴⁹

Frank Rich of *The New York Times*—who Pender notes "fervently supported" *Sunday in the Park with George*—was "less enthusiastic."⁵⁰ Rich illustrates, "To understand how much 'Into the Woods' disappoints, one must first appreciate its considerable ambitions and pleasures."⁵¹ Rich applauded some of Sondheim's songwriting and the basis of the characterization.⁵² Rich criticized the book, characterizing it as "as wildly overgrown as the forest."⁵³ He summarizes: "The interlocking stories, coincidences, surprise reunions and close calls...the various narrative jigsaw pieces often prove either cryptic or absent, and, with the aid of a sort of post-modernist anti-narrator (Tom Aldredge), they must finally be patched together to achieve a measure of coherence."⁵⁴ Rich criticizes Sondheim's songs:

Too many of the other songs bring the action to a halt, announcing the characters' dawning self-knowledge didactically ("You've learned . . . something you never knew") rather than dramatizing it. And sometimes the soliloquies describing psychological change are written in interchangeable language, as if the characters were as vaguely generic to Mr. Sondheim as they are to the audience.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Pender, *The Stephen*, section on *Into the Woods*.

⁵¹ Frank Rich, "Stage: 'Into the Woods,' From Sondheim," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), sec. C, 5.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.



*Chip Zien, Joanna Gleason, and Bernadette Peters [in Into the Woods].*⁵⁶



*Danielle Ferland, Ben Wright, Kim Crosby, Chip Zien, and Bernadette Peters [in Into the Woods].*⁵⁷

NOTE TO READER: For more photos of the original Broadway production of *Into the Woods*, visit: <https://playbill.com/article/celebrate-into-the-woods-with-a-look-back-at-3-decades-of-the-beloved-show>.

⁵⁶ Martha Swope, *Chip Zien, Joanna Gleason, and Bernadette Peters*, photograph, *Playbill*, November 2020.

⁵⁷ Martha Swope, *Danielle Ferland, Ben Wright, Kim Crosby, Chip Zien, and Bernadette Peters*, photograph, *Playbill*, November 5, 2020.

Adaptation: 2014 Film

A NOTE FROM YOUR DRAMATURG: Typically, in dramaturgy research, I include information about the original productions of a work, and then notable subsequent productions that have defined contemporary understanding of the work. For *Into the Woods*, the 2012 Shakespeare in the Park and 2022 Broadway revival may be notable subsequent productions. However, more important, I think, is the 2014 filmic adaptation of *Woods*, a commercial success that is likely part of audiences' cultural memory of Sondheim and Lapine's musical. Thus, I include information about this adaptation for the screen for comparison with the original stage musical.

Director Robert Marshall became interested in adapting *Into the Woods* for the screen from President Obama's speech on the twelfth anniversary of 9/11, in which he said, "Know this, that you will never be alone. Your loved ones will never be forgotten."⁵⁸ According to Mark Eden Horowitz, "Obama seemingly echoed the essential phrase from the *Woods* song, 'No One Is Alone.'"⁵⁹ Marshall explained:

I remember hearing that and it hit me in such a powerful way because, to me, it's such an important message for today, and it's the central message, for me, of *Into the Woods*, that song "No One Is Alone." And I thought, "Wow, what an important message for children of today, especially, but families as well, because I feel like children are dealing with a much more unstable and fragile world than existed when I was growing up."⁶⁰

According to Horowitz, "Soon after hearing the Obama speech, Marshall sought approval from Sondheim and Lapine to pursue making the film."⁶¹ (Efforts had been made twice before to adapt *Woods* to screen.)⁶²

Notable changes between the film and stage versions of *Woods* include the following: The narrator was excised, and his lines were given by the Baker (who has an identifiable voice) over voiceover instead.⁶³ Horowitz assesses, "There was no question that the Baker would double as the Narrator."⁶⁴ Lapine reportedly observed, "It's always been his story."⁶⁵ Additionally, the costumes drew anachronistically from many periods; for example, Rapunzel was styled medievally and the Princes from Renaissance Europe.⁶⁶ Of the four "I know things now" songs, sung by Red, Jack, Cinderella, and the Baker's Wife, many were originally written to have the character address the audience. Jack's

⁵⁸ Mark Eden Horowitz, "Into the Woods from Stage to Screen," in *The Oxford Handbook of Musical Theatre Screen Adaptations* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 108.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid, 110.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 115.

“Giants in the Sky” and Red’s “I Know Things Now” were addressed to the Baker, with minor lyric changes, as Jack and Red recount their experiences, with intercuts of their adventures.⁶⁷ Cinderella’s “On the Steps of the Palace” was changed from Cinderella recounting her story after having run away to Cinderella walking through her indecisive thought process in real-time, as time stands still for a moment while she stands on the steps of the palace; once again, minor lyric changes were employed.⁶⁸ Most notably, Rapunzel was asked to be spared from inclusion of the deaths at the beginning of the second act. According to Horowitz, “At this point in the stage version, Rapunzel runs toward the Giant and we hear the ‘squish’ offstage; her Prince verifies her demise with a shake of his head. Her survival in the film is believed to be one of the changes requested by Disney.”⁶⁹ Horowitz postulates: “one presumes in the film that Rapunzel and her Prince are still together.”⁷⁰ (In the film, Rapunzel is also not shown to have given birth to twins presumably out of wedlock, like she does in the musical.⁷¹)



Above, the poster for the 2014 film, Into the Woods.⁷²

⁶⁷ Ibid, 117-118.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 119.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 120.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Poster for *Into the Woods* (2014 Film), photograph, Disney.

Creative Team

Director Robert Marshal
Screenwriter James Lapine

Cast

Chris Pine (Cinderella's Prince), MacKenzie Mauzy (Rapunzel), Emily Blunt (Baker's Wife), Billy Magnussen (Rapunzel's Prince), Christine Baranski (Cinderella's Stepmother), Tammy Blanchard (Florinda), Meryl Streep (Witch), Johnny Depp (Wolf), Anna Kendrick (Cinderella), Simon Russell Beale (Baker's Father), Daniel Huttleston (Jack), Frances De La Tour (Giant), Lilla Crawford (Red), Lucy Punch (Lucinda), Annette Crosbie (Granny), Joanna Riding (Cinderella's Mother), Tracey Ullman (Jack's Mother), James Corden (Baker), Richard Glover (Steward)

II. THE WRITERS: SONDHEIM & LAPINE

Stephen Sondheim: Composer and Lyricist

Biography

Stephen Sondheim (1930–2021) was born to Herbert and Janet “Foxy” Sondheim on March 22, 1930.⁷³ Herbert was the grandson of German-Jewish immigrants, and Foxy was the daughter of Lithuanian-Jewish immigrants.⁷⁴ Herbert worked in the garment trade, founding his own dress house, and Foxy—described as “the most pretentious, self-centered, narcissistic woman [Myra Berzoff has] ever known in [their] life—was a designer.⁷⁵ Herbert Sondheim played popular show tunes on the piano in their house, and Stephen Sondheim took up piano lessons at age seven.⁷⁶ When Stephen Sondheim was a child, his father fell in love with another woman, Alicia Babé, and Herbert and Foxy divorced, on bad terms with each other; Stephen was sent to military school.⁷⁷

Post-divorce, Foxy “began to act very strangely”, holding Sondheim’s hand in the theatre and staring at him during a play.⁷⁸ Sondheim reports that she was apparently trying to seduce him as well, “Well, she would sit across from me with her legs spread. She would lower her blouse and that sort of stuff.”⁷⁹ The understanding was that Stephen would become the man of the house, in his father’s absence.⁸⁰ Foxy Sondheim did introduce the Hammersteins into Sondheim’s life, becoming friends with Dorothy and her husband, musical theatre lyricist and librettist Oscar Hammerstein II.⁸¹ Their son, Jamie, was friends with Sondheim.⁸² Sondheim was said to be reduced to tears by Foxy, at which he would ride his bicycle over the Hammersteins who would comfort him; Sondheim said: “They never, never, *never* undermined my mother to me. I won’t say they defended her, but they tried to make me understand, you know, that it was difficult and she was upset.”⁸³ Oscar Hammerstein would be a surrogate father for Sondheim.⁸⁴

Sondheim attended the college preparatory school, the George School, in Bucks County, for four years.⁸⁵ Sondheim first attempted writing songs there, working on a piece about life at the school, *By George*, in 1945.⁸⁶ In 1947, Sondheim became a “glorified office boy” on the set of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Allegro*; the musical would be a formative experience in his life, and many of his later

⁷³ Meryle Secrest, *Stephen Sondheim: A Life* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 12.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4, 9.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 24-27.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

works would be seen as responses to this story about a small-town doctor who becomes disillusioned by the big city.⁸⁷

Sondheim attended Williams College, leaving his mother to live with his father, when he was sixteen.⁸⁸ He enrolled as an English major, soon switching to study music.⁸⁹ The music department focused on performance, and he was a key figure in developing musical and theatre life at the college.⁹⁰ Sondheim met Harold Prince, by way of introduction by mutual friend Mary Rodgers, at the opening of *South Pacific* in 1949; both were optimistic about creating theatre in the future.⁹¹ At the start of his career, Sondheim wrote for hire for television.⁹²

Over the course of his career as a writer for musical theatre, Sondheim evolved from working with figures such as Arthur Laurents (book-writer) and Jerome Robbins (director, choreographer), to working with Harold Prince (producer, director), and James Lapine (book-writer). Sondheim eventually established himself, not just as a lyricist, but as a composer. From a production standpoint, his early productions followed the model of having out-of-town tryouts before heading to New York for a Broadway run; his mid-career productions started with runs on Broadway, which were more cost-effective for avoiding the transport of scenic pieces; and his later works often went through new work development Off-Broadway at non-profit theaters before being produced on Broadway, as the cost of mounting a production rose. Sondheim's works were almost never popular hits or commercial successes, the way that, say, Andrew Lloyd Webber's megamusicals consistently were; Sondheim's first productions were oftentimes critically praised.

Sondheim's mother attempted suicide in the summer of 1970.⁹³ By 1972, Meryle Secrest characterizes their relationship: "Foxy Sondheim continued to be in the background of [Stephen Sondheim's] life and made her periodic demands for attention, consideration, and love, using maladroit methods that had long ceased to prompt any reaction from her son except derisive laughter."⁹⁴ She was having dinner parties around New York.⁹⁵ Meryle Secrest compares the death of Dorothy Hammerstein, whose funeral at which Sondheim was overcome with tears twice, with the death of Foxy, whose funeral Sondheim did not attend in 1992; her retirement home took care of the arrangement for her funeral, and Sondheim did not know where she was buried.⁹⁶

⁸⁷ Ibid, 53.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 61.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 65.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 61, 75.

⁹¹ Ibid, 84.

⁹² Ibid, 103.

⁹³ Ibid, 222.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 269.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 370.

Sondheim used to live with Peter Jones, a composer and lyricist for children's theatre, in his 60s.⁹⁷ He eventually married Jeffrey Romley, who as of Sondheim's death in November 2021, survived him.⁹⁸

Major Works

The following details some major works of Sondheim's:

- ***Saturday Night (1955)***: Sondheim's first major work was *Saturday Night*, a musical about a hero trying to "make a killing in the stock market just before the 1929 crash" who would meet a girl "as phony as he is."⁹⁹ The project died with the lead producer, and *Saturday Night* did not get its Broadway premiere in 1955.
- ***West Side Story (1957)***: Sondheim's first Broadway credit was as a lyricist for *West Side Story* (1957), conceived and choreographed by Jerome Robbins, composed by Leonard Bernstein, with a book by Arthur Laurents. *West Side Story* adapted Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, transferring the setting to "Puerto Rican gang violence on the Upper West Side."¹⁰⁰
- ***Gypsy (1959)***: Sondheim worked as lyricist with book-writer Arthur Laurents and composer Jules Styne on *Gypsy*, "a musical based on the memories of the striptease artist, Gypsy Rose Lee," that focused on her mother, Madame Rose's, experience in show business.¹⁰¹
- ***A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum (1962)***: Sondheim wrote lyrics and music for his first Broadway musical in the farcical *Forum*, with a book by Burt Shevelove, based on the writings of the Ancient Roman Plautus.¹⁰² *Forum* told the story of a slave fighting for his freedom, by helping a pair of star-crossed lovers.¹⁰³
- ***Anyone Can Whistle (1964)***: Sondheim wrote the music and lyrics for *Anyone Can Whistle*, with a book by Arthur Laurents, a musical about a corrupt mayoress who invents a miracle to revitalize a dying town; a rational, pragmatic nurse figures it out.¹⁰⁴
- ***Do I Hear a Waltz? (1965)***: Sondheim returned to writing only lyrics to Richard Rodgers' compositions for *Do I Hear a Waltz?*, in which an American tourist lands in Vienna.¹⁰⁵ It was about "what happens when American naivité and romanticism meet European worldliness and disillusion."¹⁰⁶
- ***Company (1970)***: Pioneering the concept musical, Sondheim wrote music and lyrics for *Company* with a book by George Furth, about a man reaching his thirty-fifth birthday and reflecting on the relationships of five couples he is friends with.¹⁰⁷ *Company* was directed by

⁹⁷ Ibid, 372; Bruce Weber, "Stephen Sondheim, Titan of the American Musical, Is Dead at 91," *The New York Times*, last modified December 2, 2021.

⁹⁸ Weber, "Stephen Sondheim," *The New York Times*.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 106-107.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 115.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 132-134.

¹⁰² Ibid, 144-149.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 154.

¹⁰⁴ Pender, *The Stephen Sondheim Encyclopedia*, section on *Anyone Can Whistle*.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, section on *Do I Hear a Waltz?*

¹⁰⁶ Secrest, *Stephen Sondheim*, 174.

¹⁰⁷ Pender, *The Stephen Sondheim Encyclopedia*, section on *Company*.

Harold Prince. According to Sondheim, “*Company* says very clearly that to be emotionally committed to somebody is very difficult, but to be alone is impossible.”¹⁰⁸

- ***Follies* (1971)**: With music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, a book by James Goldman, and Michael Bennet as co-director/choreographer and Harold Prince as co-director/producer, *Follies* takes place in a theatre about to be demolished, as two former showgirls from the interwar period reminisce on their past, accompanied with ghosts of their youthful selves.¹⁰⁹
- ***The Frogs* (1974)**: Sondheim wrote music for Burt Shevelove’s adaptation of Aristophanes’s *Frogs*, set in a Yale swimming pool in 1974.¹¹⁰
- ***A Little Night Music* (1973)**: Sondheim wrote music and lyrics, *A Little Night Music*, with a book by Hugh Wheeler and direction by Harold Prince, a “romantic farce about the lives of several upper-middle-class couples in early twentieth-century Sweden.”¹¹¹ The couples start the night off rather mismatched and, after an evening of “sexual musical chairs”, end with “more desirable partners.”¹¹²
- ***Pacific Overtures* (1976)**: Sondheim wrote music and lyrics for *Pacific Overtures*, which had a book by John Weidman, and was directed by Harold Prince. The musical “chronicled Japanese history, starting with the 1853 arrival of Commodore Matthew C. Perry and ‘gunboat diplomacy’ employed to force Japan out of centuries of isolation.”¹¹³
- ***Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (1979)**: Sondheim wrote music and lyrics for *Sweeney Todd*, with Hugh Wheeler’s book based on Christopher Bond’s play and direction by Harold Pinter. *Sweeney Todd* tells the story of a murderous barber in Victorian London trying to get revenge against a corrupt judge who assaulted his wife.¹¹⁴
- ***Merrily We Roll Along* (1981)**: Sondheim wrote music and lyrics for *Merrily We Roll Along*, which had a book by George Furth and direction by Harold Prince, adapting a 1934 Kaufman and Hart play.¹¹⁵ The story is told as a morality play in reverse, starting with the protagonist, a playwright’s, peak of fame with a “sense of integrity [left] behind”, and ending with the “rosy past” in which he and his friends were dedicated to each other and their muses.¹¹⁶
- ***Sunday in the Park with George* (1984)**: With a book and direction by James Lapine and music and lyrics by Sondheim, *Sunday in the Park with George* tells the story, in the first act, of George Seurat as he paints his 1886 pointillist painting, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, and in the second act, of Seurat’s great-grandson a century later who has “lost his creative impulse.”¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁸ Secrest, *Stephen Sondheim*, 191.

¹⁰⁹ Pender, *The Stephen Sondheim Encyclopedia*, section on *Follies*.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, section on *The Frogs*.

¹¹¹ Ibid, section on *A Little Night Music*.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid, section on *Pacific Overtures*.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, section on *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, section on *Merrily We Roll Along*; Secrest, *Stephen Sondheim*, 308.

¹¹⁶ Secrest, *Stephen Sondheim*, 308.

¹¹⁷ Pender, *The Stephen Sondheim Encyclopedia*, section on *Sunday in the Park with George*.

- ***Into the Woods* (1987)**: With a book and direction by James Lapine and music and lyrics by Sondheim, *Into the Woods* tells the story of several familiar fairytale characters who run into each other in the woods, on each of their own individual journeys to fulfill their desires; in the second act, they must work together for survival against Jack's vengeful giant.¹¹⁸
- ***Assassins* (1990)**: With a book by John Weidman, music and lyrics by Sondheim, and direction by Jerry Zaks, *Assassins* features nine of the thirteen individuals who attempted to assassinate a U.S. President, who interact with each other and perform songs in their respective period's style.¹¹⁹
- ***Passion* (1994)**: With a book and direction from James Lapine, and music and lyrics from Sondheim, *Passion* tells the story of a handsome officer, Giorgio, having an affair with a beautiful woman, Clara, who becomes the obsession of an unattractive and hysterical woman, Fosca, who eventually overtakes Giorgio's passions.¹²⁰
- ***Road Show* (2008)**: With a book by John Weidman and music and lyrics by Sondheim, *Road Show* was "about brothers Addison and Wilson Mizner, real people [with] shady escapades between 1890 and 1930."¹²¹

A NOTE FROM YOUR DRAMATURG: On the subject of mother figures in *Into the Woods*, a biographical reading of *Into the Woods* might compare Stephen Sondheim's troubled relationship with his mother to the depiction of maternal figures in *Woods*. There are five maternal-type figures: the cheating Baker's Wife, punished for her infidelity with death; the possessive Witch, who loses her daughter and power; the tired, discouraging Jack's Mother, who doesn't believe in her "touched" son; the evil Stepmother to Cinderella, who abuses the girl; and the vengeful Giant, who might be compared to a maternal/romantic figure to Jack through a Freudian lens. The main plot of *Woods* may be about fatherhood, such as in the Mysterious Man trying to correct his lifetime's mistakes, and the Baker trying to learn how to be a father for his own child, but there is a definite motif with complicated mother figures. (Reading this interpretation of Sondheim's biography might erase the contributions of James Lapine, who certainly also shaped the story of *Woods*. Jerilyn Fisher and Ellen S. Silber might also argue that the demonization of the mother figure is rooted in the fairy tales themselves, not just in this adaptation.)¹²²

Writing Style

In his two-volume collection of lyrics, *Finishing the Hat* (2010) and *Look, I Made a Hat* (2011), Sondheim explains that there are three principles he follows for writing lyrics: "Content Dictates Form; Less is More; and God is in the Details—all in the service of Clarity."¹²³ Sondheim professed to write, not autobiographically, but as an actor embodying the perspective of the characters from

¹¹⁸ Ibid, section on *Into the Woods*.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, section on *Assassins*.

¹²⁰ Ibid, section on *Passion*.

¹²¹ Ibid, section on *Road Show*.

¹²² Jerilyn Fisher and Ellen S. Silber, "Good and Bad Beyond Belief: Teaching Gender Lessons through Fairy Tales and Feminist Theory," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2000): 129.

¹²³ Stephen Sondheim, *Finishing the Hat: Collected Lyrics (1954-1981) with Attendant Comments, Principles, Heresies, Grudges, Whines and Anecdotes* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), xv.

which he writes.¹²⁴ Secrest summarizes that “his themes were somber—the essential loneliness of the human condition and the death of illusion.”¹²⁵

James Lapine: Book-Writer

Biography

James Lapine (1949–) was born in Mansfield, Ohio. He majored in History at Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and got an MFA in Design from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia.¹²⁶ He began in photography and took a job designing the magazine for the Yale School of Drama; from here, he was offered a job designing all graphic materials for the Yale School of Drama and teaching a course in advertising.¹²⁷ His first attempt at directing was Getrude Stein’s *Photograph*, a three-page poem in five acts; the production—a huge success at Open Space in Soho in 1977 thanks to his use of “vivid painterly and photography images”—was “enthusiastically reviewed” by *The New York Times*, and Lapine won an Obie Award.¹²⁸ He wrote *Table Settings* and directed *March of the Falsettos*.¹²⁹ Lapine wrote and directed *Twelve Dreams*, “which had to do with the Jungian dreams of a girl on the verge of adolescence.”¹³⁰ He wrote the book for the following shows with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim: *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984), *Into the Woods* (1987), and *Passion* (1994).¹³¹ On Broadway, he has directed *Golden Child*; *The Diary of Anne Frank*; *Amour*; *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*; the 2012 revival of *Annie*; and his stage adaptation of Moss Hart’s autobiography, *Act One*.¹³² Lapine has been nominated for the Tony Awards twelve times, winning three; he has received five Drama Desk awards; and he received a Pulitzer Prize for *Sunday in the Park with George*.¹³³

¹²⁴ Secrest, *Stephen Sondheim*, 329.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 324.

¹²⁶ "Biography," James Lapine, last modified 2021.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid; Secrest, *Stephen Sondheim*, 326.

¹²⁹ "Biography," James Lapine.

¹³⁰ Secrest, *Stephen Sondheim*, 326.

¹³¹ "Biography," James Lapine.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.



Stephen Sondheim (left) and James Lapine (right) working on Into the Woods.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ *Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine working on "Into the Woods"*, photograph, Playmakers Repertory Company.

III. THE MUSICAL: *INTO THE WOODS*

Sources

Into the Woods is based on familiar folktales or fairy tales. The tales of Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, and Rapunzel are derived from the Brothers Grimm’s “Ashputtle”, “Little Red Cap”, and “Rapunzel”, respectively. The Brothers Grimm—Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859)—were German folklorists and linguists who compiled folklore into their famous volume, *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (1812–22), also known as *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*.¹³⁵ (*Into the Woods* also makes reference to the tales of “Snow White” and “Sleeping Beauty”.)

Nina Mankin, who collected the document for the *Performing Arts Journal’s* casebook for *Into the Woods* summarizes the function of the Grimms’ story in their own context:

Even the Brothers Grimm, living in a Germany whose pride had been sapped by the sweep of the Napoleonic Empire, saw their vocation as part of a movement to bolster the German nationalist spirit. Nineteenth-century Romanticism, pitting itself against the stalwart rationalist spirit of the Enlightenment, turned to myth and the folktale as expressions of the pure and naive spirit of humanity.¹³⁶

The tale of “Jack and the Beanstalk” comes not from the Brothers Grimm but is instead native to the British Isles.¹³⁷ (Included in *V. Fairytale: History, Analysis, & Adaptation* are the texts of these four main fairytales: Grimms’ versions of “Cinderella”, “Little Red Riding Hood”, and “Rapunzel”, and Flora Annie Steel’s version of “Jack and the Beanstalk”, chosen because it is a popular version of the “Beanstalk” story.)

¹³⁵ Ludwig Denecke, "Brothers Grimm," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, last modified December 8, 2022.

¹³⁶ Nina Mankin et al., "The PAJ Casebook #2: Into the Woods," *Performing Arts Journal* 11, no. 1 (1988): 48.

¹³⁷ Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat*, 58.

Why This Play Now?

The following is a statement from your production dramaturg on: “why this play now?” Examining the cultural moment in which we are creating theatre, what does it mean to be approaching this text at this moment in time? At the suggestion of director Rick Lombardo, the question of “Why this play now?” is something that every person working on this production—production team, cast, and crew—must decide for themselves. What value do *you* see in doing this work at this moment in time? Below, I suggest some possible reasons; feel free to think about them and reflect on your own reasons.

WHY THIS PLAY NOW?

by Arushi Grover

1. Sondheim died, and we are in a scholastic setting.

The father of the modern American musical, Stephen Sondheim, died in November 2021. The production being composed of a team of students and educators, it is important for us to be acquainted with a key figure in musical theatre history and his works. We can take this moment to reflect on Sondheim’s contributions to the canon and to honor his memory. *Into the Woods* may be the perfect musical for people in university, a scholastic setting where everyone is continuously learning and working towards contributing to the halls of knowledge. Sondheim himself took a note from James Lapine’s wife, Sarah, that the soliloquy songs for each of the familiar folktale figures (Little Red, Jack, and Cinderella) “would be more interesting if they dealt with what the adventures *meant* to the adventurers, rather than simply being narrative descriptions.”¹³⁸ Sondheim linked the four songs—“I Know Things Now”, “Giants in the Sky”, “On the Steps of the Palace”, and “Moments in the Woods”—through the common topic of learning.¹³⁹ How fitting for a group of scholars to depict a story about the journey of learning.

2. The crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic highlights collective responsibility.

Sondheim had suggested that the Giant, the antagonist of the second act, may be seen as a symbol for “a force roused to vengeance by greed, prevarication and irresponsibility.”¹⁴⁰ Little Red Riding Hood, Jack, Cinderella, and the Baker have to put aside their qualms about who is to blame for the crisis in order to work together to counter the force that threatens their survival. In an age of globalization, in which the world is connected physically through travel and commerce, one may interpret the Giant as a symbol for pandemics and disease, something on which humanity must collaborate to counter. “No One is Alone” can be a comforting thought, or a reminder that we live in a world of interdependence; we cannot take actions solely as individuals, when our actions have consequences for others.

¹³⁸ Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat*, 69.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

3. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic draws attention to leaving home.

In years past—say, early 2020 to early 2022—we have been living in a pandemic world. While we cannot say that the pandemic has ended, our world has definitely opened up to an extent where people are leaving their discrete abodes to rejoin society. *Into the Woods* may be interpreted as being about leaving home; each of the characters must leave their dwelling to enter the woods, to enter the world of others; speaking from our moment in time, *Woods* may be about rejoining or reacquainting oneself with community. After a moment of reflection and introspection when we are quarantined at home, how do we enter the world as individuals with new perspectives?

4. The world is undergoing a refugee crisis.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Refugee Agency, as of 2022, more than 100 million people are forcibly displaced “as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.”¹⁴¹ According to the UNHCR: 53.2 million are internally displaced people; 32.5 million are refugees; 4.9 million are asylum-seekers; and 5.3 million are other people in need of international protection.¹⁴² According to the UNHCR, 72% of refugees originate from just five countries: Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and South Sudan.¹⁴³ (Turkey is the country that hosts the largest number of refugees.)¹⁴⁴ *Into the Woods* may be interpreted as speaking to the plight of those who must leave their home; after all, the characters are displaced by the Giant, forced to travel through the woods with what they can carry and each other.

¹⁴¹ "Figures at a Glance," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, last modified 2021; "Refugee Data Finder," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, last modified 2022.

¹⁴² "Refugee Data Finder," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

IV. LITERARY ANALYSIS

Themes

Some of the following themes are developed from Michiko Kakutani's analysis of *Into the Woods*.¹⁴⁵

The Responsibilities of Adulthood

There are four songs in *Into the Woods* that depict the process of learning, through the repetition of the word “knowing” and its variations: Little Red Riding Hood’s “I Know Things Now”, Jack’s “Giants in the Sky”, Cinderella’s “On the Steps of the Palace”, and the Baker’s Wife’s “Moments in the Woods.” For the familiar fairy tale characters, each of their “learning” songs recount, not their adventure or not just their adventure, but what the adventure meant to them, according to Sondheim and Sarah Lapine.¹⁴⁶ These fairytale characters may be understood as young people beginning to understand the world of adulthood; Little Red Riding Hood may be understood as a child, Jack as an adolescent, and Cinderella as a young adult.

In “I Know Things Now”, Little Red Riding Hood learns that maturation and the acquisition of more knowledge can be both “nice” and “not”.¹⁴⁷ In “Giants in the Sky”, Jack learns about the excitement and thrill of adulthood, while wishing for the responsibilities, or lack thereof, associated with childhood, singing “you wish that you could live in between [the ground and the sky].”¹⁴⁸ In “On the Steps of the Palace”, Cinderella learns that leaving home means that one must make decisions for oneself, ultimately making the decision of indecision, “You know what your decision is / Which is not to decide.”¹⁴⁹ Similar to Jack, the Baker’s Wife, in “Moments in the Woods”, decides between the thrill of romantic passion (a dalliance with Cinderella’s Prince) and the dependability of commitment (her marriage with the Baker), choosing to enjoy the “moment” in the wood, and then to “leave the woods.”¹⁵⁰

In each of these situations, a binary is proposed and then broken. As the Baker’s Wife concludes, life is sometimes not an “or”, but an “and”; many contradictory things can be true at the same time. Little Red Riding Hood must acknowledge that the thrill of learning comes with more danger. Jack must find a balance between life’s wish for thrill with life’s necessity for responsibility. Cinderella learns that indecision is itself a decision with consequences. The Baker’s Wife chooses a path that allows for moments of enjoyment among moments of responsibilities. Each character learns how to make peace with contradictory truths in life, acknowledging that life itself is paradoxical.

¹⁴⁵ Michiko Kakutani, "Theatre; Beyond Happily Ever After," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), August 30, 1987, sec. 6, 20.

¹⁴⁶ Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat*, 69.

¹⁴⁷ Sondheim and Lapine, *Into the Woods*, 36.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 44.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 64.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 113.

The Tension Between the Individual and the Community

Just as the characters begin to have their own, individual journeys through the woods, as in both the literal paths they take and the process of maturation that they undergo, *Into the Woods* complicates the image of individualism to suggest that individuals must take responsibility for how their actions as individuals have consequences for the collective. In “Your Fault”, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack, Cinderella, and the Baker pass blame for the crisis of survival with a vengeful giant, and in the following song, “Last Midnight”, the Witch takes responsibility for the crisis, while pointing out that the immaturity squabble placing blame does not get rid of the problem at hand.

Following the Witch’s disappearance, the four characters begin to realize that their actions have collectively caused the crisis (“Maybe I shouldn’t have stolen from the giant...”), and they decide to collectively work to solve it, each pitching in with motifs from their individual stories/journeys. Cinderella spreads pitch to trip the Giant and sends her birds to peck the Giant’s eyes out; Jack climbs vegetation (a beanstalk first, now a tree) once more to strike the Giant; and Little Red Riding Hood engages with paths (earlier, one she should not have strayed, and now, ones she directs), intentionally pointing to where the Giant should go to encounter the attack. In between their moment of blame (“Your Fault”) and the attack on the Giant is “No One is Alone.”

Amidst each character’s loss of loved ones (Cinderella for her mother’s grave, Jack for his mother, Little Red Riding Hood for her mother and grandmother, and the Baker for his Wife), the four are reassured by others that they are not alone; however, this reassurance encompasses a double meaning, assuring that humanity will always have company, but that with that company comes responsibility. Individual actions—such as stealing from the Giant, straying from the path, or attending the ball—come with consequences for the community, because life and community is made of a complexly woven web of causes and actions. *Into the Woods* endorses the process of individuation while pointing out the responsibility that one has for the collective.

The Fallibility of Trusting Stories

The European tradition of fairy tales associates the stories with a moralistic purpose, traditionally understanding that fairy tales are to teach morals to children. *Into the Woods* counters this perspective on storytelling, creating a fairytale for a different audience, for adults, and by pointing out the randomness and lack of meaning of life. In some traditions, children’s fairy tales end with a “happy ever after” or a punishment, implicitly or explicitly communicating the moral or what should be learned from the story. In *Into the Woods*, the second act proves that life goes on after resolution, and that one still “wishes” or desires; this characterizes life as unending desire, an aching want. Because most who live life don’t anticipate their death (save for instances such as in terminal illness), life can be understood as a never-ending middle to the story. One cannot trust that things will work out, as in a story; *Into the Woods* is anti-narrative. The end of *Into the Woods* reiterates that there will be more journeys ahead for the characters as they adventure once more “into the woods”.¹⁵¹ In contrast with

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 137.

the childhood-storybook's perspective on their being a moral to learn from every journey, the adult fairy tale, *Into the Woods* posits that some things are not good, nor bad, but simply that they are. We are met with indifference from this universe.

Critical Theories & Readings

The following are snapshots of how different theorists may interpret or have interpreted *Into the Woods*.

Feminism

Feminist scholars have considered how *Into the Woods* may be seen as a feminist work, in addition to how it runs against feminist values. Regarding criticism, Stacy Wolf draws attention to the binary logic imbued in how “[t]he Witch’s beauty and power are mutually exclusive, so that once she drinks the magic potion and regains her beauty, she can no longer cast spells.”¹⁵²

Meanwhile, Kevin Goffard considers the revolutionary trait of the Baker depending on his Wife and realizing her contribution to the journey in “It Takes Two”.¹⁵³ While some have criticized the Baker’s Wife’s death following her tryst with Cinderella’s Prince as punishing her for her sexuality, Goffard draws attention to writers who interpret her death as “a release from a society that is often too strict and dictated”, citing the Baker’s Wife’s lines from “Moments in the Woods”:

Must it all be either less or more,
Either plain or grand?
Is it always “or”?
Is it never “and”?
That’s what woods are for[...]¹⁵⁴

Cinderella’s retelling may also be seen as feminist for granting her agency in *choosing* to leave her slipper on the steps of the palace; to Sondheim’s knowledge, this is the only version of the “Cinderella” story in which leaving the slipper is a choice.¹⁵⁵ Goffard also draws attention to how “not only does Cinderella leave her prince, but she leaves with forgiveness and respect and compassion for the prince.”¹⁵⁶ Goffard points out a quote from an interview with Anna Kendrick, who played Cinderella in the 2014 film:

What’s interesting about this version, and what’s very modern about this one, is that not only does Cinderella leave her prince, but she leaves with forgiveness and respect and compassion for the prince. It’s not black and white for her. It’s not even black and white for the prince,

¹⁵² Stacy Wolf, "Guest Post: Into the Woods," *The Feminist Spectator* (blog), entry posted December 27, 2014.

¹⁵³ Kevin P. Goffard, "'Give Us More to See': A Feminist and Queer Look at Stephen Sondheim" (master's thesis, Illinois State University, 2021), 42.

¹⁵⁴ Sondheim and Lapine, *Into the Woods*, 112.

¹⁵⁵ Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat*, 79.

¹⁵⁶ Goffard, "'Give Us More,'" 49.

who lives a pretty black-and-white life. There's a moment that's basically, "This isn't our path." [Prince Charming says,] "I shall always love the maiden that ran away." [And Cinderella says,] "And I the faraway Prince." There is something extremely relevant and modern about the idea of civility in separation.¹⁵⁷

Goffard concludes with a note on Little Red Riding Hood: "[A]s the show progresses, Little Red shows strength on encountering the woods for herself, not relying on a man or a prince's interpretation or advice. As such, she is using her own thoughts and feelings to decide for herself rather than that of others who are deciding for her."¹⁵⁸

Psychoanalysis

This section will focus on Jungian psychoanalysis, following the ideas of psychologist Carl Jung. (For information on Freudian psychoanalysis, please refer to *VI. Psychoanalysis: Bruno Bettelheim's The Uses of Enchantment.*)

UNDERSTANDING JUNGIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS: Carl Jung asserted that there is a "collective unconscious", that is, "the part of the psyche that retains and transmits the common psychological inheritance of mankind."¹⁵⁹ Archetypes are "identical psychic structures common to all", according to Jung.¹⁶⁰ Anthony Stevens summarizes: "On appropriate occasions, archetypes give rise to similar thoughts, images, mythologems, feelings, and ideas in people, irrespective of their class, creed, race, geographical location, or historical epoch."¹⁶¹ Jung defines "individuation" as a development that extends beyond childhood and adolescence into middle-life and old-age, a process by which the unconscious becomes conscious and the psyche is integrated.¹⁶²

A Jungian approach to *Into the Woods* might focus on how Lapine and Sondheim's work adapts fairy tales that have seen variations in many world cultures. Sondheim writes that James Lapine was drawn to:

Carl Jung's theory that fairy tales are an indication of the collective unconscious.... James and I talked about fairy tales with a Jungian psychiatrist and discovered that with the exception of "Jack and the Beanstalk," which apparently is native only to the British Isles, the tales we were dealing with exist in virtually every culture in the world, especially the Cinderella story. African, Chinese, Native America—there is even a contemporary Hebrew version in which Cinderella wants to dance at the Tel Aviv Hilton.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 50.

¹⁵⁹ Joseph L. Henderson, "Ancient myths and modern man," in *Man and his Symbols*, 1988 ed., by Carl Jung (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 107.

¹⁶⁰ Anthony Stevens, *Jung: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), chapter on "Archetypes and the collective unconscious".

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid, chapter on "The man and his Psychology."

¹⁶³ Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat*, 58.

Into the Woods may be interpreted as speaking to universal ideas that all humans encounter in their experience. (For more on the politics of universality and specificity, please refer to *III. The Musical: Into the Woods* → *Why This Play Now?*)

Critical Race Theory

UNDERSTANDING CRITICAL RACE THEORY: Critical race theorists, such as Helen Young, posit that race is socially constructed, one that was once falsely assumed to be biological¹⁶⁴ As Young states, “[t]he legacies of [centuries’ worth of race-based systemic discrimination]... remain.”¹⁶⁵

In *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of Whiteness*, Young addresses how fantasy as a genre “has an ongoing history of being dominated by White bodies, voices, and stories that are widely considered White cultural heritage.”¹⁶⁶ Young asserts that “habits of Whiteness are sustained but not unbreakable, they are, however, often seen as permanent, that is, as innate to the genre-culture.”¹⁶⁷ Young asserts that some stories set in medieval periods are “imagined worlds [that are] dominated by Whiteness, imagined as a (never-extant) pre-race utopia.”¹⁶⁸ Young notes how fantasy creates imperialist nostalgia.¹⁶⁹

Young also notes how philologists like the Brothers Grimm “collected the orally transmitted stories of the *volk*—folktales—in the belief that they could provide access to and recuperation of the essence of the racial group,” the German people.¹⁷⁰ It must be noted that Grimms’ tales were valorized by the Nazis; Linda Dégh explains that: “Ideologists of the Third Reich consciously exploited Jacob Grimm’s idea that tales are direct descendants of German mythology....They demanded that every German household own a copy of the Grimm collection, ‘this most important work among our sacred books.’”¹⁷¹ Both the Grimms and Nazis were “ardent supporters of nationalism—an ideology which, as a number of theorists have argued, is powered largely by the imagination.”¹⁷² Scott Harshbarger connects the utopian aspects of the fairy tale with fascist ideology.¹⁷³ Thus, critical race theorists’ interpretation of *Into the Woods* may point out how the source material for the musical has been used by virulent, anti-Semitic voices in history.

¹⁶⁴ Helen Young, *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of Whiteness* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 8.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹⁷¹ Linda Dégh, "Grimm's 'Household Tales' and Its Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic," *Western Folklore* 38, no. 2 (April 1979): 94-95.

¹⁷² Scott Harshbarger, "Grimm and Grimmer: 'Hansel and Gretel' and Fairy Tale Nationalism," *Style* 47, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 493.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 494.

Young also points out how orcs are the most racialized monster in fantasy.¹⁷⁴ Historically, the depiction of different fantasy species have been racialized, with some species being characterized with caricatures of racial groups. *Into the Woods* features, of non-human species, a Giant and perhaps the Witch (who it is not clear if she was a mortal-turned-witch or if she was born a witch), both antagonists. Of these two figures that are Othered, the story supports the idea that the Witch is “right”, as mentioned in “Last Midnight” with her getting the last word before her disappearance.¹⁷⁵ The Giant is humanized through relation of her grief of the fallen ogre to the griefs of Little Red Riding Hood (losing her mother and grandmother), Jack (losing his mother), Cinderella (losing the memory of her mother in the ruined grave-tree), and the Baker (losing his Wife). There is sympathy for the symbolic Other in the story.

Post-Colonialism

UNDERSTANDING POST-COLONIALISM: Post-colonialism highlights the “political, aesthetic, economic, historical, and social impact of European colonial rule around the world in the 18th through the 20th century.”¹⁷⁶ J. Daniel Elam writes: “Postcolonial theory takes many different shapes and interventions, but all share a fundamental claim: that the world we inhabit is impossible to understand except in relationship to the history of imperialism and colonial rule.”¹⁷⁷

A post-colonial approach to *Into the Woods* may highlight Jack’s stealing of the giants’ resources when he visits their land via the beanstalk. Stealing a harp and golden eggs may be seen as symbolic of European colonization. Curiously, “Jack and the Beanstalk” is also the only one of the four main stories of *Woods* that does not see variations in world cultures. Instead, “Jack and the Beanstalk” is understood to have originated in the British Isles.¹⁷⁸ (There exists other stories in the saga of “Jack”, as well.) Reading the source material as from the Anglophone world, one may interpret Jack’s actions as being representative of British imperialism.

Ecocriticism

UNDERSTANDING ECOCRITICISM: Eco-criticism is a school of thought in literary and cultural studies, examining “the global ecological crisis through the intersection of literature, culture, and the physical environment.”¹⁷⁹ In *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, Timony Morton argues that the barrier to creating an ecological state of human society is our holding onto the idea of “nature”.¹⁸⁰ Morton argues that “Putting something called Nature on a pedestal and admiring it from afar does for the environment what patriarchy does for the figure of Woman. It is a paradoxical act of sadistic admiration.”¹⁸¹ Meanwhile, Dipesh Chakrabarty

¹⁷⁴ Young, *Race and Popular*, 12.

¹⁷⁵ Sondheim, *Look, I Made*, 98.

¹⁷⁶ J. Daniel Elam, "Postcolonial Theory," in *Literary and Critical Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat*, 58.

¹⁷⁹ Derek Gladwin, "Ecocriticism," in *Literary and Critical Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹⁸⁰ Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 1.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

asserts from a post-colonialist approach to climate change, that “that the current conjuncture of globalization and global warming leaves us with the challenge of having to think of human agency over multiple and incommensurable scales at once.”¹⁸² Chakrabarty notes that climate scientists have suggested we now live in the age of the “Anthropocene”, in which humans have affected the current global climate change, making human parts of the natural history of the planet.¹⁸³ He notes that this equates humans to a geophysical force, reflecting the actions and agency of humans at twice their size; he reasons, “human—you have to think of the two figures of the human simultaneously: the human-human and the nonhuman-human.”¹⁸⁴ Chakrabarty concludes: “But in becoming a geophysical force on the planet, we have also developed a form of collective existence that has no ontological dimension. Our thinking about ourselves now stretches our capacity for interpretive understanding. We need non-ontological ways of thinking the human.”¹⁸⁵

Ecocriticism on *Into the Woods* may note how the setting of *Woods* is the mysterious woods themselves, away from civilization and town in which the characters live, and rather existing in the liminal space between destinations. The setting of the woods is where the problems are solved in the first act and from where they arise in the second act. Jack’s action of cutting down the beanstalk causes the ogre to fall to his death, causing the giant, his widow, to pursue revenge, the main conflict of the second act.¹⁸⁶ As mentioned earlier, Jack may be seen as a symbol of British imperialism or generally as a colonizing power that is acting. Some ecocriticism may interpret the symbol of the Giant as Nature’s reaction to humans using natural resources; in response to the polluting of the Earth and pilfering of natural resources, the Earth reacts with climate change, including increasing global temperatures. Jack’s actions being the root of that cause, this may also cast capitalism and globalization as the cause of the Natural world being out of order or, in the case of the Giant, actively seeking retaliation.

One may decide whether or not to think of the Giant as a force, in the vein of Chakrabarty. Perhaps, the second act may be interpreted as humanity collectively responding to the call-to-action that is climate change—that is, how humanity can counter geophysical forces that we ourselves have caused. One may point out how the pointing of blame in “Your Fault” collectivizes the blame, and how people of all socio-economic statuses, the royalty (Cinderella, Lucinda, Florinda, the Princes, the Steward, the Stepmother) and the townspeople (the Baker, Baker’s Wife, Jack, and his Mother) are all equally displaced by the effect of the symbolic climate change. One may also point out how those who did not contribute to the natural crisis, such as Cinderella’s mother’s tree and the mother and grandmother of Little Red Riding Hood, are victims of the natural crisis as well; this may be seen as a parallel for how the populations in the world who have contributed the least carbon emissions are the most vulnerable populations and are and will be negatively affected most by climate change. In response to the call-to-action of climate change, *Woods* may suggest that humanity

¹⁸² Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change," *New Literary History* 43, no. 1 (2012): 1.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁸⁶ Sondheim and Lapine, *Into the Woods*, 66.

needs to take responsibility and to work collectively and graciously to solve the issue. Similarly, one may view the characters' hijinx as globalization that causes pandemics.

Eco-criticism may also then critique the idea that the Giant could be viewed as Nature, with a capital "N", a force divorced from humanity. It may be seen as necessary to think of how humanity does not interact with nature, but is in fact nature itself. This interpretation may be suggested by the sympathy that the characters inevitably do feel for the Giant, who herself lost a loved one through the actions of the woods. Should the Giant be considered part of the community? It must be noted that the surviving four—Red, Baker, Cinderella, and Jack—do not delight in bringing about her demise; they do what must be done for their own survival.

Russian Formalism & Narrative Theory

UNDERSTANDING RUSSIAN FORMALISM & NARRATIVE THEORY:

The Russian Formalists were a group of literary theorists who created the foundations of narrative theory, which distinguishes between *fabula*, "the order of events referred to by the narrative" and *syuzhet*, "the order of events presented in the narrative discourse."¹⁸⁷ *Fabula* is "what really happened" in a story, and *syuzhet* is the way a story is organized. As narrative theorist Peter Brooks writes, "a story is *made out of* events to the extent that plot *makes* events *into* a story."¹⁸⁸ Dino Felluga notes that Brooks's theories are based in Freud's "Freud's articulation of man's struggle between the death drive and the pleasure/reality principle."¹⁸⁹ Brooks asserts that stories begin with a narrative desire and that "the desire of the text is ultimately the desire for the end, for that recognition which is the moment of the death of the reader in the text."¹⁹⁰

Robert L. McLaughlin points out that the first act of the *Into the Woods* follows a cause-and-effect sequence of understanding consequences of actions in a conventional narrative structure, while the second act points to the interdependence of human action, and how morality is achieved most when understanding the complex web of relations between people and consequences of actions.¹⁹¹ McLaughlin discussed how the first act begins with "Once upon a time...", signaling to the audience a conventional, expected arc to a fairytale story, indeed ending in "Happily ever after."¹⁹² The second act repeats the conventions of the first, beginning, "Once upon a time, later", questioning: "what happens after happily ever after?"¹⁹³ Threaded throughout is the "I wish" motif, speaking directly to narrative and human desire. *Into the Woods's* second act, showing that the characters continue to want

¹⁸⁷ Peter Brooks, "Narrative Desire," in *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure, and Frames*, ed. Brian Richardson (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2002), 130.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Dino Felluga, "Modules on Brooks: On Narrative Desire," *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*, last modified July 17, 2002.

¹⁹⁰ Brooks, "Narrative Desire," 130; Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 108.

¹⁹¹ Robert L. McLaughlin, *Stephen Sondheim and the Reinvention of the American Musical* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 167; Ibid, 183.

¹⁹² Ibid, 167-168.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 173.

after their initial dreams come true at the end of the first act, demonstrates the “perennial human state, that somebody had only to have their wish granted for them to want something else.”¹⁹⁴

A Russian Formalist’s approach to the text may point out the ways in which the narrative is constructed of moments of the present, memories of the past, and imaginations of the future. The plot runs linearly on a macro-level. Interspersed in it are moments of recollection of the past (such as the far past, as in the Witch’s story about the Baker’s father and mother), or such as the near past (as in Cinderella’s recollections “On the Steps of the Palace” and Jack’s recollections of the “Giants in the Sky”). Generational curses, with the Witch’s mother and the Baker’s father, impact the present. Interspersed as well, are moments of imagining the future, such as Cinderella’s wish to attend the festival (and her later wish to sponsor a festival), the Baker and the Baker’s Wife’s wishes for a child, and Jack and his mother’s aspirations to wealth. Thus, woven with the present linear storyline are flashbacks to past moments and imaginations of possible future moments, some of which materialize and some of which remain as wishes. The structure of the story works to dissuade people, on a meta-level, from believing in the comforting, contented ending of stories, suggesting that life is more random than to end in a “happily ever after”, and consequences of actions are much more far-reaching than initially envisioned. The structure of the story draws attention to interdependence and consequence.

Queer Theory

UNDERSTANDING QUEER NARRATIVE THEORY: Karim Quimby argues that because heteronormativity insists that any sense of queerness that is introduced in a narrative be neutralized to a heteronormative ending, the middle of a narrative is where queerness abounds. In the study of narrative theory, narrative desire is traditionally thought of as the reader’s or audience’s desire for the end of the narrative.¹⁹⁵ However, with the *queer narrative middle*, the middle of the narrative becomes the space that is desired, paradoxically, in “delay[ing]...the ultimate climax [of the narrative].”¹⁹⁶ (Quimby uses *Little Women* as an example.)

As pointed out by Robert L. McLaughlin regarding narrative theory, *Woods* may be seen as a diptych, where the first act follows a conventional fairy tale narrative beginning in “once upon a time” and ending in “happily ever after”, and where the second act subverts the comfort of storytelling by having the Narrator be sacrificed, necessitating the remaining four characters’ (Little Red, Jack, Cinderella, Baker) to be the masters of their own destinies. Queer narrative theory might draw attention to the “middle” of the story of *Into the Woods*; this may be the middle of the first act, in which fairy tale characters are plodding across familiar paths; the middle of the musical, in which resolutions come together and fall apart; or the middle of the second act in which blame is passed and responsibility is taken. However, further, the musical subverts the idea of there being a “happily

¹⁹⁴ Ben Francis, “Careful the Spell You Cast’: *Into the Woods* and the Uses of Disenchantment,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Sondheim Studies*, ed. Robert Gordon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 352.

¹⁹⁵ Karin Quimby, “The Story of Jo: Literary Tomboys, *Little Women*, and the Sexual-Textual Politics of Narrative Desire,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10, no. 1 (2003): 5.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 4.

ever after” to life, disproven by the presence of the first act. One can imagine that even after the end of the second act, the remaining characters would encounter more journeys and exploration. The musical may be interpreted as endorsing the idea that life is an eternal middle. This is compounded by the idea that desire drives the musical—such as the “I wish motif”. Queer narrative theory might draw attention to the eternal desires of humanity that prolong the middle to be the entirety of life, disproving the idea that we must look at life as a story.

Marxism

UNDERSTANDING MARXISM: Wendy Lynne Lee writes: “Marxism has remained largely true to its central objective, namely, to demonstrate the dehumanizing character of an economic system whose voracious quest for capital accumulation is inconsistent not only with virtually any vision of the good life, but with the necessary conditions of life itself.”¹⁹⁷

A Marxist analysis of *Into the Woods* might focus on the characters of Jack and Jack’s Mother and their changing economic situation. Initially, in scene 1, Jack’s Mother speaks of their lack of finances, “[Milky-White]’s been dry for a week. We’ve no food nor money and no choice but to sell her while she can still command a price.”¹⁹⁸ The family’s will for financial resources propels Jack to begin his journey to sell Milky-White. (It is his will for a friend, for companionship, that propels him to buy the cow back.) The beginning of the second act depicts Jack and his mother in the same cottage, “now dramatically improved,” this time with “Milky-White and the golden harp.”¹⁹⁹ This may be interpreted as Jack’s family changing economic classes from the proletariat to the bourgeoisie. Perhaps, one may evaluate this change as ethical, because Jack and his mother’s fortunes have come from a magical source, not earned from taking the wages of laborers. (Of course, referring back to *IV. Literary Analysis → Critical Theories & Readings → Post-Colonialism*, one may interpret this as a colonial act, taking from the native populations of the “kingdom up in the sky.”)²⁰⁰ Jack’s desire in the second act is for the thrill of that “kingdom”, suggesting that the heights of adolescent passion and excitement bring more satisfaction than material comforts.

New Historicism

UNDERSTANDING NEW HISTORICISM: New historicism argues that works should be understood within their historical context.²⁰¹

A new historicist approach may appreciate *Into the Woods* as an allegory for the AIDS crisis, which Richard Pender writes, “was decimating the Broadway theater community at the time of the show.”²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ Wendy Lynne Lee, "Marxism," in *Literary and Critical Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹⁹⁸ Sondheim and Lapine, *Into the Woods*, 8.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 83.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 85.

²⁰¹ Neema Parvini, "New Historicism," in *Literary and Critical Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

²⁰² Pender, *The Stephen Sondheim Encyclopedia*, section on *Into the Woods*.

Many have interpreted the Giant in *Woods* as representing AIDS; however, Sondheim said on the subject:

The predominant assumption is that the Giant represents AIDS—after all, the show was written and produced in the 1980s, when AIDS was at its most prominent. Given a moment's thought, it becomes apparent that if the Giant represented anything, it wouldn't be AIDS. The Giant is not a natural phenomenon but a force roused to vengeance by greed, prevarication and irresponsibility. It could just as easily be the atomic bomb, global warming or the economic meltdown that is occurring as I write this. To James and me, it is a giant. Enough said.²⁰³

²⁰³ Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat*, 102.

V. FAIRY TALES:

THEORY, ANALYSIS, & ADAPTATION

What is the difference between folklore, fairy tales, myths, and legends?

FOLKLORE: On the subject of folklore, according to Aurelio M. Espinosa: “folklore, or popular knowledge, is the accumulated store of what mankind has experienced, learned, and practiced across the ages as popular and traditional knowledge, as distinguished from so-called scientific knowledge.”²⁰⁴ Espinosa continues, “Specifically, folklore consists of the beliefs, customs, superstitions, proverbs, riddles, songs, myths, legends, tales, ritualistic ceremonies, magic, witchcraft, and all other manifestations and practices of primitive and illiterate peoples and of the ‘common’ people of civilized society.”²⁰⁵

FAIRY TALE: By some, folklore and folktales are defined as being orally transmitted “by word of mouth for many generations.”²⁰⁶ In that vein, fairy tales are defined as the products, the literary works that are finally written down.²⁰⁷ (However, Hans-Jörg Uther notes that the assumption that literary fairy tales come from pure sources of oral transmission is false; some orally transmitted tales were themselves based on older forms of literature.²⁰⁸) Fairy tales are closely linked with related genres, including mythology and legend. According to Stith Thompson, fairy tales are most often about characters that are not named, but are referred to as “a king” or “a queen”; when named, such as “Mary” or “Jack”, no effort is made to identify the individual.²⁰⁹

MYTH: By contrast, a myth is defined as “a story, presented as having actually occurred in a previous age, explaining the cosmological and supernatural traditions of a people, their gods, heroes, cultural traits, religious beliefs, etc.”²¹⁰

LEGEND: Meanwhile, a legend: “has come to be used for a narrative supposedly based on fact, with an intermixture of traditional materials, told about a person, place, or incident.”²¹¹ Reportedly, “The line between myth and legend is often vague; the myth has as its principal actors the gods, and

²⁰⁴ Maria Leach, ed., *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, 1972 ed. (San Francisco, CA: Funk and Wagnalls, 1949), 399.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Julius E. Heuscher, *A Psychiatric Study of Myths and Fairy Tales: Their Origin, Meaning, and Usefulness*, illus. Melba Bennett (Springfield; Fort Lauderdale: Charles C. Thomas, 1963), 5.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography: Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson: Part 1: Animal Tales, Tales of Magic, Religious Tales, and Realistic Tales, with an Introduction*, ed. Sabine Dinslage, et al. (Helsinki, Finland: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2004), 10-11.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 366.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 778

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 612.

as its purpose explanation.... The legend is told as true; the myth's veracity is based on the belief of its hearers in the gods who are its characters."²¹²

Fairy Tale Theory

One might understand that there are broadly two approaches to understanding fairy tales and the numerous variations of them across different cultures and across time. One might understand fairy tales variations by how similar they are or by how different they are. The former approach might favor folklorists' attempt to unify variations along common tale-types or motifs. (For more, please read *Fairy Tales* → *Fairy Tale Theory* → *Motifs & Tale-Types*.) In such a case, one might argue that fairy tales are similar across times and cultures, alluding to a sense of universality; the same stories emerge from different circumstances, leading us to believe that humans are largely the same in different circumstances. The latter approach might emphasize the caverns of difference between different variations, noting that tales cannot be compiled into "types" or "motifs" because they are each unique variations.

Armando Maggi counters the idea that all fairy tales are imbued with a moral message and that fairy tales are intended for children.²¹³

ON DISNEY: The films of Disney certainly have had an impact on the American popular consciousness's understanding of specific fairy tales and fairy tales generally. Tracey Mollet argues that, starting with Disney's film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937), Disney has birthed and American fairy tale tradition that professes the American Dream; Mollet reasons this because *Snow White* was released post-Great-Depression, speaking to a downtrodden public in a time when 85 million people per week were visiting the cinema.²¹⁴ Our production of *Into the Woods* will be for a, presumably, largely American audience; Mollet's work validates popular conceptions of fairy tale stories through Disney's lens or retellings.

Motifs and Tale-Types

NOTE TO READER: This section, *V. Fairy Tales* → *Fairy Tale Theory* → *Motifs & Tale-Types* is rather technical, referencing indexes and terminology used by folklorists. For a more general understanding of the main fairy tales of *Woods*, please continue to the following section, *V. Fairy Tales* → *By Character: Red, Jack, Cinderella, and Rapunzel*.

Folklore and fairy tales can be analyzed by their *motifs* and *tale-types*. According to Harvard University: "Tales are composed of elements called 'motifs,' which are combined in any number of ways to create a plot. Many tales have the same patterns of motifs. These patterns are called 'tale-types.'

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Armando Maggi, "The Creation of Cinderella from Basile to the Brothers Grimm," *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, December 11, 2014, 152; Ibid, 159.

²¹⁴ Tracey Mollet, "'With a Smile and a Song ...': Walt Disney and the Birth of the American Fairy Tale," *Marvels & Tales* 27, no. 1 (2013): 109-124.

Identifying the building-blocks and patterns of narratives is helpful in studying, comparing, and analyzing them.”²¹⁵ Reportedly, a motif is “the smallest definite element of a tale,” and a tale-type is “a recurring, self-sufficient plot or group of motifs.”²¹⁶

There are two indexes that are used together to categorize folk and fairy tales: the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) Index and Thompson’s *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*. The ATU Index is named after the three scholars’ whose work it collects; the Finnish Antti Aarne composed the first tale-type index in 1910, which was later expanded by Stith Thompson, and, then later, by Hans-Jörg Uther.²¹⁷ The collective index most categorizes European and near-Eastern tales.²¹⁸ Even while offering critiques of the indexes themselves, Alan Dundes professes, “It must be said at the outset that the six-volume *Motif Index of Folk-Literature* and the Aarne-Thompson tale type index constitute two of the most valuable tools in the professional folklorist’s arsenal of aids for analysis.”²¹⁹

According to Harvard University’s research guide:

The ATU index...allows researchers to identify the underlying structure of a tale and to cross-reference it with other tales from all around the world which share the same elements or themes. Each tale-type entry describes which themes and motifs comprise a specific tale-type. Motifs each have an identifying number, which can be cross-referenced with Thompson’s *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*. In this way, researchers can identify similar story plots, and even vastly different tales which share motifs.²²⁰

Below, the tale-type or ATU index for each of the four main tales of *Woods* are identified.

The “Little Red Riding Hood” story is identified as ATU 333:

333 Little Red Riding Hood... (Petit Chaperon Rouge, Cappuccetto rosso, Rotkappchen)... A little girl, called “Red Riding Hood” because of her red cap, is sent to her grandmother who lives in the forest and is warned not to leave the path [J21.5]. On the way she meets a wolf. The wolf learns where the girl is going, hurries on ahead, and devours the grandmother (puts her blood in a glass and her flesh in a pot). He puts on her clothes and lies down in her bed.

Red Riding Hood arrives at the grandmother’s house. (She has to drink the blood, eat the flesh, and lie down in the bed.) Red Riding Hood doubts whether the wolf is her

²¹⁵ Harvard University, "Library Research Guide for Folklore and Mythology," Research Guides at Harvard Library, last modified November 16, 2022.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Harvard University, "Library Research," Research Guides at Harvard Library; Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*, 7.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Alan Dundes, "The Motif-Index and the Tale Type Index: A Critique," *Journal of Folklore Research* 34, no. 3 (1997), 195.

²²⁰ Harvard University, "Library Research," Research Guides at Harvard Library.

grandmother and asks him about his odd big ears [Z18.1], eyes, hands, and mouth. Finally the wolf eats Red Riding Hood [K2011].

A hunter kills the wolf and cuts open his belly. Red Riding Hood and the grandmother are rescued alive [F913]. They fill the wolf's belly with stones [Q426]; he is drowned or falls to his death. Cf. Types 123, 2028.

In some variants Red Riding Hood arrives at the grandmother's house before the wolf. The wolf climbs on the roof to wait until Red Riding Hood leaves. The Grandmother who had boiled sausages asks Red Riding Hood to fill the broth into a big trough in front of the house. Enticed by the smell, the wolf falls from the roof and is drowned in the trough.

In an Italian version, a woman who is going to bake cakes sends out her daughter (Caterinella, Caterina, Cattarinetta) to borrow a pan. The lender, an ogre (witch, wolf), asks the girl to bring back some cakes and wine. On her way she eats the cakes, drinks the wine, and replaces them with horse-dung and urine. Angry about the trick, the ogre pursues the girl home and devours her (is not able to get into the house, is tricked out by the girl's mother).²²¹

The following motifs from Thompson's *Motif-Index* are identified in the "Little Red Riding Hood" story:

- J21.5: "Do not leave the highway": counsel proved wise by experience. Robbers encountered.
- Z18.1. *What makes your ears so big?—To hear the better, my child, etc.*
- K2011. *Wolf poses as "grandmother" and kills child.*
- F913. *Victim rescued from swallower's belly.*
- Q426. *Wolf cut open and filled with stones as punishment.*

Variations of the "Little Red Riding Hood" story exist in various cultures, including Finnish-Swedish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Wepsian/Karelian, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Danish, Irish, French, Portuguese, Flemish, Walloon, German, Italian, Sardinian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Greek, Polish, Turkish, Romanian, Jewish, Mordvinian, Jordanian/Iraq, Iranian, US-American, Puerto Rican, West Indie; Egyptian/Algerian, Central African, and South African.²²²

The "Jack and the Beanstalk" story is identified as ATU 328A:

328A *Jack and the Beanstalk.* A poor boy named Jack trades his cow for some beans (his mother finds a bean while sweeping the house). One of the beans grows into a giant beanstalk [F54.2], which Jack climbs to an upper world where he finds the house of a giant. The giant's wife gives him food and hides him when her husband comes home. The giant

²²¹ Uther, *The Types of International Folktales* 284.

²²² *Ibid.*

smells human flesh [G84] but his wife tells him he is mistaken [G532]. The giant eats dinner, counts his money, and then falls asleep. Jack steals the money and runs home down the beanstalk. He makes two more trips, stealing the giant's hen that lays golden eggs [B103.2.1] and his self-playing harp [D1601.18]. The third time, the harp cries out and awakens the giant, who runs after Jack. Jack reaches the bottom of the beanstalk and chops it down. The giant falls to his death, and Jack and his mother have plenty of money.²²³

The following motifs from Thompson's *Motif-Index* are identified in the "Jack and the Beanstalk" story:

- F54.2: *Plant grows to sky.*
- G84: *Fee-fi-fo-fum.* Cannibal returning home smells human flesh and makes exclamation.
- G532: *Hero hidden and ogre deceived by his wife (daughter) when he says that he smells human blood.*
- B103.2.1: *Treasure-laying bird.* Bird lays money or golden eggs or an egg at every step.
- D1601.18. *Self-playing musical instruments.*

Variations of the "Jack and the Beanstalk" tale exist in various cultures, including Norwegian, English, German, Hungaria, Japanese, Australian, French-Canadian, US-American, West Indies, and South African.

The "Cinderella" story is identified as the ATU 510:

510A *Cinderella.* (Cenerentola, Cendrillon, Aschenputtel.) A young woman is mistreated by her stepmother and stepsisters [S31, L55] and has to live in the ashes as a servant. When the sisters and the stepmother go to a ball (church), they give Cinderella an impossible task (e.g. sorting peas from ashes), which she accomplishes with the help of birds [B450]. She obtains beautiful clothing from a supernatural being [D1050.1, N815] or a tree that grows on the grave of her deceased mother [D815.1, D842.1, E323.2] and goes unknown to the ball. A prince falls in love with her [N711.6, N711.4], but she has to leave the ball early [C761.3]. The same thing happens on the next evening, but on the third evening, she loses one of her shoes [R221, F823.2]. The prince will marry only the woman whom the shoe fits [H36.1]. The stepsisters cut pieces off their feet in order to make them fit into the shoe [K1911.3.3.1], but a bird calls attention to this deceit. Cinderella, who had been first hidden from the prince, tries on the shoe and it fits her. The prince marries her.²²⁴

The following motifs from Thompson's *Motif-Index* are identified in the "Cinderella" story:

- S31: *Cruel stepmother.*
- L55: *Stepdaughter heroine.*
- L55.1: *Abused stepdaughter.*
- B450: *Helpful birds.*

²²³ Ibid, 217.

²²⁴ Uther, *The Types of International Folktales* 293-294.

- D1050.1: *Clothes produced by magic.*
- N815. *Fairy as helper.*
- D815.1. *Magic object received from mother.*
- D842.1. *Magic object found on mother's grave.*
- E323.2. *Dead mother returns to aid persecuted children.*
- N711.6. *Prince sees heroine at ball and is enamored.*
- N711.4. *Prince sees maiden at church and is enamored.*
- R221. *Heroine's three-fold flight from ball.*
- F823.2. *Glass shoes.*
- H36.1. *Slipper test.* Identification by fitting of slipper.
- K1911.3.3.1: *False bride's mutilated feet.* In order to wear the shoes with which the husband is testing the identity of his bride, the false bride cuts her feet. She is detected.

Variations of the “Cinderella” tale exist in many cultures, including Finnish, Finnish-Swedish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Lappish, Livonian, Wepsian, Wotian, Karelian, Syrjanian, Swedish, Norwegian, Faeroese, Scottish, Irish, English, French, Spanish, Catalan, Portugues, Frisian, German, Swiss, Austrian, Ladinian, Italian, Corsican, Sardinian, Hungarian, Czech, Klimova/Slovakian, Slovene, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Sorbian, Polish, Russian, Byelorussian, Ukrainian, Turkish, Jewish; Adygea, Mordvinian, Armenian, Uzbek, Georgian, Lebanese, Palestinian, Iranian, Indian, Chine, Korean, Japanese, English-Canadian, French-Canadian, North American Indian, US-American, French-American, Spanish-American, Mexican, Cuban, Dominican, Puerto Rican, Mayan, Bolivian, Chilean, Egyptian, Algerian, Moroccan, Cameroon, Sudanese, Namibian, and South African.

The “Rapunzel” story is identified as ATU 310:

310 The Maiden in the Tower. (Petrosinella, Rapunzel.) A (pregnant) woman steals herbs (fruits) from the garden of a witch (sorceress) [G279.2] and is forced to promise her unborn child to the witch [S222.1]. The woman bears a girl, and after a certain time the witch comes for the daughter (often called Petrosinella, Rapunzel, etc. according to the name of the stolen plant) [G204]. The witch locks her up in a tower [R41.2]. Whenever the witch wants to visit her, she enters by climbing on the girl's long (golden) hair as on a ladder [F848.1]. A prince discovers the girl in the tower because of her hair shining in the sun [F555] and falls in love with her. The girl gives the witch a sleeping-draught. The prince climbs up on the girl's hair and they have a love affair. The witch finds out about the nocturnal visits of the prince. She wants to prevent further visits, but accidentally discloses that the lovers could flee by transforming themselves with the help of three oak galls. The girl overhears the conversation [N455] and explains the magic oak galls to the prince. They

flee together and are pursued by the witch. They escape [D642.7] and the witch is killed. The prince marries the girl [L162].²²⁵

The following motifs from Thompson's *Motif-Index* are identified in the "Rapunzel" story:

- G279.2. *Theft from witch.*
- S222.1. *Woman promises her unborn child to appease offended witch.*
- G204. *Girl in service of witch.*
- R41.2. *Captivity in tower.*
- F848.1. *Girl's long hair as ladder into tower.*
- F555. *Remarkable hair.*
- N455. *Overheard (human) conversation.*
- D642.7. *Transformation to elude pursuers.*
- L162. *Lowly heroine marries prince (king).*

Variations of the "Cinderella" tale exist in many cultures, including Latvian, Lithuanian, Irish, French, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Flemish, German, Italian, Corsican; Sardinian, Maltese, Hungarian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Greek; Polish, Turkish, Jewish, Ossetian, Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, Jordanian, Iraqi, Qatar, Chinese, Japanese, English-Canadian, US-American: Baughman, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Dominican, West Indies, Cape Verdian, Egyptian, Libyan, Tunisian, Algerian, Moroccan, Sundanese, and Somalian.

NOTE TO READER: Here are links to the [Aarne-Thompson-Uther \(ATU\) Index](#) and the [Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature](#), should further reading of them interest you.

By Character: Red, Jack, Cinderella, & Rapunzel

The following section includes three pieces for the tales of four familiar fairy tale characters (Red, Jack, Cinderella, and Rapunzel): (1) The text of the original fairy tale (that Sondheim and Lapine likely referenced); (2) analysis of the fairytale; and (3) adaptations and representations of the figure.

Methodology

Regarding (1) the text of the original fairy tale: As mentioned in *III. The Musical: Into the Woods* → *Sources*, the following versions of the tales were chosen. For "Little Red Riding Hood", "Cinderella", and "Rapunzel", the Grimms' version of each tale was chosen, as most sources speak of *Woods* as an adaptation of Grimm. For "Jack and the Beanstalk", Flora Annie Steel's version of the story, one that is popular in America, was chosen, with the assumption that Sondheim and Lapine may have read that one in writing their adaptation.

²²⁵ Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*, 284.

NOTE TO READERS INTERESTED IN “LITTLE RED” AND “CINDERELLA”:

While Sondheim and Lapine used the German Grimms’ version of the story as the basis for their adaptation in *Into the Woods*, the French Charles Perrault’s version of each story remains close to the public consciousness’s idea of each of these tales. After reading Grimms’ version of each tale later in this packet, consider reading Perrault’s version of each, [“Little Red Riding Hood”](#) and [“Cinderella”](#) for comparison. Perrault’s “Little Red Riding Hood” notably doesn’t feature a “happy ending”, but does feature a moral, while Perrault’s “Cinderella” features some iconic elements of the “Cinderella” story, including a pumpkin for a carriage, mice for footmen, and the glass slipper; the stepsisters, instead of facing punishment, ask for a pardon.

Regarding (2) analysis of the fairytale: As Steven Swann Jones explains, the analysis of fairy tales is “tricky business.”²²⁶ Fairy tales are transcribed from orally communicated stories, and there can be hundreds of variations of the same tale. From these many different variations, there are additionally many different analyses of each tale, making for exponential proportions for the number of interpretations and analyses there are of each type of tale. For each of the subsequent sections on “analysis” of the fairytale, choices were made in what type of analysis to put forth. Jones articulates two distinct approaches to analyzing fairy tales, either (a) the “ethnographic/socio-historical approach” that posits that “folk tales are historical documents”, that “folklore and its fairy tales are cultural artifacts”, or (b) the psychological approach, that speaks to “portraits of psychological or philosophical concerns of individuals” and “universality.”²²⁷ (The former approach may be valued by ethnographers, sociologists, anthropologists, and historians, while the latter approach may be favored by, presumably, those who prescribe to psychoanalysis.)²²⁸ For psychoanalytic interpretations of tales, I’ve identified two approaches, the Jungian and Freudian. For Freudian psychoanalysis of fairy tales, please refer to *VI. Psychoanalysis: Bruno Bettelheim’s The Uses of Enchantment*, to learn of Bettelheim’s interpretation. The following subsections here will put forth various analyses of various interpretations, noting which variation of the story it is of each time. I thank you for understanding the complexity that comes with analyzing fairy tales.

Regarding (3) adaptations and representations of the figure: I have chosen to highlight some notable adaptations or representations of each of these figures. Some are adaptations of the specific version of the tale chosen for (1); others speak more to the cumulative cultural understanding of the figure, adapted from different variations of the stories.

Red

① The text of the original fairytale

²²⁶ Steven Swann Jones, "On Analyzing Fairy Tales: 'Little Red Riding Hood' Revisited," *Western Folklore* 46, no. 2 (April 1987): 97.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

An excerpt from Grimm's Tales for Young and Old: The Complete Stories, written by the Brothers Grimm—Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm—and translated by Ralph Manheim...

Little Red Cap

by the Brothers Grimm

ONCE THERE WAS a dear little girl whom everyone loved. Her grandmother loved her most of all and didn't know what to give the child next. Once she gave her a little red velvet cap, which was so becoming to her that she never wanted to wear anything else, and that was why everyone called her Little Red Cap. One day her mother said: Little Red Cap, "Look, Little Red Cap, here's a piece of cake and a bottle of wine. Take them to grandmother. She is sick and weak, and they will make her feel better. You'd better start now before it gets too hot; walk properly like a good little girl, and don't leave the path or you'll fall down and break the bottle and there won't be anything for grandmother. And when you get to her house, don't forget to say good morning, and don't go looking in all the corners."

"I'll do everything right," Little Red Cap promised her mother. Her grandmother lived in the wood, half an hour's walk from the village. No sooner had Little Red Cap set foot in the wood than she met the wolf. But Little Red Cap didn't know what a wicked beast he was, so she wasn't afraid of him. "Good morning, Little Red Cap," he said. "Thank you kindly, wolf." "Where are you going so early, Little Red Cap?" "To my grandmother's." "And what's that you've got under your apron?" "Cake and wine. We baked yesterday, and we want my grandmother, who's sick and weak, to have something nice that will make her feel better." "Where does your grandmother live, Little Red Cap?" "In the wood, fifteen or twenty minutes' walk from here, under the three big oak trees. That's where the house is. It has hazel hedges around it. You must know the place." "How young and tender she is!" thought the wolf. "Why, she'll be even tastier than the old woman. Maybe if I'm crafty enough I can get them both." So, after walking along for a short while beside Little Red Cap, he said: "Little Red Cap, open your eyes. What lovely flowers! Why don't you look around you? I don't believe you even hear how sweetly the birds are singing. It's so gay out here in the wood, yet you trudge along as solemnly as if you were going to school." Little Red Cap looked up, and when she saw the sunbeams dancing this way and that between the trees and the beautiful flowers all around her, she thought: "Grandmother will be pleased if I bring her a bunch of nice fresh flowers. It's so early now that I'm sure to be there in plenty of time." So she left the path and went into the wood to pick flowers. And when she had picked one, she thought there must be a more beautiful one farther on, so she went deeper and deeper into the wood. As for the wolf, he went straight to the grandmother's house and knocked at the door. "Who's there?" "Little Red Cap, bringing cake and wine. Open the door." "Just raise the latch," cried the grandmother, "I'm too weak to get out of bed." The wolf raised the latch and the door swung open. Without

saying a single word he went straight to grandmother's bed and gobbled her up. Then he put on her clothes and her nightcap, lay down in the bed, and drew the curtains.

Meanwhile Little Red Cap had been running about picking flowers, and when she had as many as she could carry she remembered her grandmother and started off again. She was surprised to find the door open, and when she stopped into the house she had such a strange feeling that she said to herself: "My goodness, I'm usually so glad to see grandmother. Why am I frightened today?" "Good morning," she cried out, but there was no answer. Then she went to the bed and opened the curtains. The grandmother had her cap pulled way down over the face, and looked very very strange.

"Oh, grandmother, what big ears you have!"

"The better to hear you with."

"Oh, grandmother, what big eyes you have!"

"The better to see you with."

"Oh, grandmother, what big hands you have!"

"The better to grab you with."

"But, grandmother, what a dreadful big mouth you have!"

"The better to eat you with."

And no sooner had the wolf spoken than he bounded out of bed and gobbled up poor Little Red Cap.

When the wolf had stilled his hunger, he got back into bed, fell asleep, and began to snore very very loud. A hunter was just passing, and he thought: "How the old is snoring! I'd better go and see what's wrong." So he stepped into the house and went over to the bed and saw the wolf was in it. "You old sinner!" he said, "I've found you at last. It's been a long time." He leveled his musket and was just about to fire when it occurred to him that the wolf might have swallowed the grandmother and that there might still be a chance of saving her. So instead of firing, he took a pair of scissors and started cutting the sleeping wolf's belly open. After two snips, he saw the little red cap, and after another few snips the little girl jumped out, crying: "Oh, I've been so afraid! It was so dark inside the wolf!" And then the old grandmother came out, and she too was still alive, though she could hardly breathe. Little Red Cap ran outside and brought big stones, and they filled the wolf's belly with them. When he woke up, he wanted to run away, but the stones were so heavy that his legs wouldn't carry him and he fell dead. All three were happy; the hunter skinned the wolf and went home with the skin, the grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine Little Red Cap had brought her and soon got well; and as for Little Red Cap, she said to herself: "Never again will I leave the path and run off into the wood when my mother tells me not to."

Another story they tell is that when Little Red Cap was taking another cake to her old grandmother another wolf spoke to her and tried to make her leave the path. But Little

Red Cap was on her guard. She kept on going, and when she got to her grandmother's she told her how she had met a wolf who had bidden her good day but given her such a wicked look that "if it hadn't been on the open road he'd have gobbled me right up." "Well then," said the grandmother, "we'll just lock the door and he won't be able to get in." In a little while the wolf knocked and called out: "Open the door, grandmother, it's Little Red Cap. I've brought you some cake." But they didn't say a word and they didn't open the door. So Grayhead circled the house once or twice and finally jumped on the roof. His plan was to wait until evening when Little Red Cap would go home, and then he'd creep after her and gobble her up in the darkness. But the grandmother guessed what he had in mind. There was a big stone trough in front of the house, and she said to the child: "Here's a bucket, Little Red Cap. I cooked some sausages yesterday. Take the water I cooked them in and empty it into the trough." Little Red Cap carried water until the big trough was full. The smell of the sausages rose up to the wolf's nostrils. He sniffed and looked down, and in the end he stuck his neck out so far that he couldn't keep his footing and began to slide. And he slid off the roof and slid straight into the big trough and was drowned. And Little Red Cap went happily home; and no one harmed her.²²⁹

② Analysis of fairytale

Analysis of the "Little Red Riding Hood" tale generally reads the story as being about either sexual assault or sexual awakening.

THE RED CAPE: Little Red Riding Hood's red cape has been identified as a symbol of virginity, menstruation, sexuality (generally), and/or innocence.

PERRAULT vs. GRIMMS: A key difference in interpretation is the difference between the endings of Perrault's version, which predates the German Grimm brothers' version. In Perrault's version, Little Red is gobbled up by the wolf, and little girls are warned, in the ending moral for the story, against talking to strangers.²³⁰ By contrast, in Grimms' version, Little Red is saved by a hunter and the wolf is killed. Both versions place the power in a male figure's hands, either in those of the violent wolf or the savior hunter.

CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDINGS: A survey of relatively contemporary students (1992) can lend an understanding of relatively recent understandings of the original "Little Red Riding Hood" story and the students' modern interpretations of the story. Regarding the original tale, all readers remembered Grimms' happy ending over Perrault's darker one, and they imagined

²²⁹ Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Grimms' Tales for Young and Old: The Complete Stories*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Garden City, NY, 1977), 98-101.

²³⁰ Andrew Lang, "Little Red Riding Hood," in *The Blue Fairy Book*, 5th ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1891).

the girl as pre-pubescent.²³¹ Traditional gender roles are enforced, with the passivity of Little Red and the savior-qualities of the hunter. The message to female readers was: “do not stray from the path, and listen to your parents.”²³² When asked to imagine the tale set in modern times, students largely interpreted the “Little Red” figure to be a woman in a city, who was faced with sexual violence or extortion by a male figure.²³³ All modern theorized interpretations depicted the “Little Red” figures as an independent woman, resisting gender roles.²³⁴ The parental messages are missing from the contemporary version, replaced with self-taught lessons: “‘Beware the wolf in sheep’s clothing;’ ‘take care of yourself;’ ask for ‘help only when and if you need it;’ ‘be independent;’ ‘use any means available to protect yourself;’ ‘if you get into trouble, don’t tell your parents - they’ll just worry.’”²³⁵ In contemporary interpretations, Red is often killed; Red sometimes survives the encounter, but even then is degraded by the exposure to violence.²³⁶ The cavern between the classical and contemporary understanding of the tale speaks to the fears believed to be faced by contemporary women—fears of assault and violence and of loss of independence.

③ Adaptations and representations

- Director Catherine Hardwicke’s 2011 film, *Red Riding Hood*, adapts the story into a romance-horror film, starring Amanda Seyfried as Valerie.²³⁷ The film features a village terrorized by a wolf, who kills Valerie’s sister Lucie. Valerie is in love with a poor woodcutter, Peter, but is engaged to the wealthy Henry. Early on, it is revealed that Valerie’s mother, Suzette, loved someone else but married Valerie’s father, Cesaire; Suzette confides that Valerie’s sister, Lucie, was actually the child of Suzette and her lover. The wolf attacks the village repeatedly, and one time asks Valerie to join him in the forest. At the end, it is revealed that the wolf is Cesaire, Valerie’s father, and that he wishes for her to carry on the bloodline and become the wolf; he murdered Lucie out of anger and revenge for his wife’s infidelity. Valerie and Peter murder Cesaire. (Meanwhile, Peter, Valerie’s beloved, becomes bitten by Cesaire, implying that he will turn into a wolf. He returns to her when he can control his condition.) The film uses the “Little Red Riding Hood” story to explore male insecurity around female sexuality. Imbued with sensual politics, the film explores danger and sex with youthful euphoria. The film posits that the girl with the red cloak might fall in love with the wolf; there are also Freudian implications, as both the girl’s father and her lover take the form of wolves. (It might be argued, by those who agree with Bruno Bettelheim’s theories, that the film depicts a girl’s development during the oedipal stage as she reassigns her oedipal affections for her father to an appropriate romantic partner.) Death and sex and intertwined for this romantic horror film. Watch a trailer for the film [here](#).

²³¹ Faye R. Johnson and Carole M. Carroll, "'Little Red Riding Hood' Then and Now," *Studies in Popular Culture* 14, no. 2 (1992): 74.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Ibid.*, 77.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

²³⁷ *Red Riding Hood*, directed by Catherine Hardwicke, screenplay by David Leslie Johnson, performed by Amanda Seyfried, et al., Warner Bros. Pictures, 2011.

- Angela Carter’s short story, “The Company of Wolves”, depicts a pubescent Little Red Riding Hood, a child who is “afraid of nothing.”²³⁸ The girl meets a handsome hunter who challenges her to a game; if he reaches her grandmother’s house first, she owes him a kiss. She deliberately dawdles, while the hunter is invited into the grandmother’s house and consumes the grandmother.²³⁹ When the child arrives, she notices her grandmother’s hair in the fire.²⁴⁰ The girl undresses, one garment at a time, and her clothes go in the fire.²⁴¹ The story ends: “sweet and sound she sleeps in granny’s bed, between the paws of the tender wolf.”²⁴² Read Carter’s story [here](#).



Little Red Riding Hood, Gustave Doré, oil-on canvas, 1862.²⁴³

²³⁸ Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber: And Other Stories*, 1993 ed. (New York, London, Victoria: Penguin Group, 1979), 110-114.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 116.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 117.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, 117-118.

²⁴² *Ibid*, 118.

²⁴³ Gustave Doré, *Little Red Riding Hood*, 1862, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.



She Runs Home and Tells Her Mother All about It, Henry Peach Robinson, photography, 1858.²⁴⁴



Little Red Riding Hood, William Langson Lathrop, etching, 1887.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ Henry Peach Robinson, *She Runs Home and Tells Her Mother All about It*, 1858, photograph, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, United States.

²⁴⁵ William Langson Lathrop, *Little Red Riding Hood*, 1887, etching, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, United States.

Jack

① The text of the original fairytale

An excerpt from English Fairy Tales, retold by Flora Annie Steel—and illustrated by Arthur Rackham...

Jack and the Beanstalk

by Flora Annie Steel

A long long time ago, when most of the world was young and folk did what they liked because all things were good, there lived a boy called Jack.

His father was bed-ridden, and his mother, a good soul, was busy early morns and late eyes planning and placing how to support her sick husband and her young son by selling the milk and butter which Milky-White, the beautiful cow, gave them without stint. For it was summer-time. But winter came on; the herbs of the fields took refuge from the frosts in the warm earth, and though his mother sent Jack to gather what fodder he could get in the hedgerows, he came back as often as not with a very empty sack; for Jack's eyes were so often full of wonder at all the things he saw that sometimes he forgot to work!

So it came to pass that one morning Milky-White gave no milk at all—not one drain! Then the good hard-working mother threw her apron over her head and sobbed:

“What shall we do? What shall we do?”

Now Jack loved his mother; besides, he felt just a bit sneaky at being such a big boy and doing so little to help, so he said, “Cheer up! Cheer up! I'll go and get work somewhere.” And he felt as he spoke as if he would work his fingers to the bone; but the good woman shook her head mournfully.

“You've tried that before, Jack,” she said, “and nobody would keep you. You are quite a good lad but your wits go a-wool-gathering. No, we must sell Milky-White and live on the money. It is no use crying over milk that is not here to spill!”

You see, she was a wise as well as a hard-working woman, and Jack's spirits rose.

“Just so,” he cried. “We will sell Milky-White and be richer than ever. It's an ill wind that blows no one good. So, as it is market-day, I'll just take her there and we shall see what we shall see.”

“But—” began his mother.

“But doesn't butter parsnips,” laughed Jack. “Trust me to make a good bargain.”

So, as it was washing-day, and her sick husband was more ailing than usual, his mother let Jack set off to sell the cow.

“Not less than ten pounds,” she bawled after him as he turned the corner.

Ten pounds, indeed! Jack had made up his mind to twenty! Twenty solid golden sovereigns!

He was just settling what he should buy his mother as a fairing out of the money, when he saw a queer little old man on the road who called out, "Good-morning, Jack!"

"Good-morning," replied Jack, with a polite bow, wondering how the queer little old man happened to know his name; though, to be sure, Jacks were as plentiful as blackberries.

"And where may you be going?" asked the queer little old man. Jack wondered again—he was always wondering, you know—what the queer little old man had to do with it; but, being always polite, he replied:

"I am going to market to sell Milky-White—and I mean to make a good bargain."

"So you will! So you will!" chuckled the queer little old man. "You look the sort of chap for it. I bet you know how many beans make five?"

"Two in each hand and one in my mouth," answered Jack readily. He really was sharp as a needle.

"Just so, just so!" chuckled the queer little old man; and as he spoke he drew out of his pocket five beans. "Well, here they are, so give us Milky-White."

Jack was so flabbergasted that he stood with his mouth open as if he expected the fifth bean to fly into it.

"What!" he said at last. "My Milky-White for five common beans! Not if I know it!"

"But they aren't common beans," put in the queer little old man, and there was a queer little smile on his queer little face. "If you plant these beans overnight, by morning they will have grown up right into the very sky."

Jack was too flabbergasted this time even to open his mouth; his eyes opened instead.

"Did you say right into the very sky?" he asked at last; for, see you, Jack had wondered more about the sky than about anything else.

"RIGHT UP INTO THE VERY SKY" repeated the queer old man, with a nod between each word. "It's a good bargain, Jack; and, as fair play's a jewel, if they don't—why! meet me here tomorrow morning and you shall have Milky-White back again. Will that please you?"

"Right as a trivet," cried Jack, without stopping to think, and the next moment he found himself standing on an empty road.

"Two in each hand and one in my mouth," repeated Jack. "That is what I said, and what I'll do. Everything in order, and if what the queer little old man said isn't true, I shall get Milky-White back tomorrow morning."

So whistling and munching the bean he trudged home cheerfully, wondering what the sky would be like if he ever got there.

"What a long time you've been!" exclaimed his mother, who was watching anxiously for him at the gate. "It is past sun-setting; but I see you have sold Milky-White. Tell me quick how much you got for her."

"You'll never guess," began Jack.

“Laws-a-mercy! You don’t say so,” interrupted the good woman. “And I worrying all day lest they should take you in. What was it? Ten pounds—fifteen—sure it can’t be twenty!”

Jack held out the beans triumphantly.

“There,” he said. “That’s what I got for her, and a jolly good bargain too!”

It was his mother’s turn to be flabbergasted; but all she said was: “What! Them beans!”

“Yes,” replied Jack, beginning to doubt his own wisdom; “but they’re magic beans. If you plant them overnight, by morning they—grow—right up—into—the—sky—Oh! Please don’t hit so hard!”

For Jack’s mother for once had lost her temper, and was belabouring the boy for all she was worth. And when she had finished scolding and beating, she flung the miserable beans out of window and sent him, supperless, to bed.

If this was the magical effect of the beans, thought Jack ruefully, he didn’t want any more magic, if you please.

However, being healthy and, as a rule, happy, he soon fell asleep and slept like a top.

When he woke he thought at first it was moonlight, for everything in the room showed greenish. Then he stared at the little window. It was covered as if with a curtain by leaves. He was out of bed in a trice, and the next moment, without waiting to dress, was climbing up the biggest beanstalk you ever saw. For what the queer little old man had said was true! One of the beans which his mother had chucked into the garden had found soil, taken root, and grown in the night....

Where?...

Up to the very sky? Jack meant to see at any rate.

So he climbed, and he climbed, and he climbed. It was easy work, for the big beanstalk with the leaves growing out of each side was like a ladder; for all that he soon was out of breath. Then he got his second wind, and was just beginning to wonder if he had a third when he saw in front of him a wide, shining white road stretching away, and away, and away.

So he took to walking, and he walked, and walked, and walked, till he came to a tall, shining white house with a wide white doorstep.

And on the doorstep stood a great big woman with a black porridge-pot in her hand. Now Jack, having had no supper, was hungry as a hunter, and when he saw the porridge-pot he said quite politely:

“Good-morning, ‘m. I wonder if you could give me some breakfast?”

“Breakfast!” echoed the woman, who, in truth, was an ogre’s wife. “If it is breakfast you’re wanting, it’s breakfast you’ll likely be; for I expect my man home every instant, and there is nothing he likes better for breakfast than a boy—a fat boy grilled on toast.”

Now Jack was not a bit of a coward, and when he wanted a thing he generally got it, so he said cheerful-like:

“I’d be fatter if I’d had my breakfast!” Whereas the ogre’s wife laughed and bade Jack come in; for she was not, really, half as bad as she looked. But he had hardly finished the great bowl of porridge and milk she gave him when the whole house began to tremble and quake. It was the ogre coming home!

Thump! THUMP!! THUMP!!!

“Into the oven with you, sharp!” cried the ogre’s wife; and the iron oven door was just closed when the ogre strode in. Jack could see him through the little peep-hole slide at the top where the steam came out.

He was a big one for sure. He had three sheep strung to his belt, and these he threw down on the table. “Here, wife,” he cried, “roast me these snippets for breakfast; they are all I’ve been able to get this morning, worse luck! I hope the oven’s hot?” And he went to touch the handle, while Jack burst out all of a sweat, wondering what would happen next.

“Roast!” echoed the ogre’s wife. “Pooh! the little things would dry to cinders. Better boil them.”

So she set to work to boil them; but the ogre began sniffing about the room. “They don’t smell—mutton meat,” he growled. Then he frowned horribly and began the real ogre’s rhyme:

“Fee-fi-fo-fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman.
Be he alive, or be he dead,
I’ll grind his bones to make my bread.”

“Don’t be silly!” said his wife. “It’s the bones of the little boy you had for supper that I’m boiling down for soup! Come, eat your breakfast, there’s a good ogre!”

So the ogre ate his three sheep, and when he had done he went to a big oaken chest and took out three big bags of golden pieces. These he put on the table, and began to count their contents while his wife cleared away the breakfast things. And by and by his head began to nod, and at last he began to snore, and snored so loud that the whole house shook.

Then Jack nipped out of the oven and, seizing one of the bags of gold, crept away, and ran along the straight, wide, shining white road as fast as his legs would carry him till he came to the beanstalk. He couldn’t climb down it with the bag of gold, it was so heavy, so he just flung his burden down first, and, helter-skelter, climbed after it.

And when he came to the bottom, there was his mother picking up gold pieces out of the garden as fast as she could; for, of course, the bag had burst.

“Laws-a-mercy me!” she says. “Wherever have you been? See! It’s been rainin’ gold!”

“No, it hasn’t,” began Jack. “I climbed up—”

Then he turned to look for the beanstalk; but, lo and behold! it wasn’t there at all! So he knew, then, it was all real magic.

After that they lived happily on the gold pieces for a long time, and the bed-ridden father got all sorts of nice things to eat; but, at last, a day came when Jack’s mother showed a doleful face as she put a big yellow sovereign into Jack’s hand and bade

him be careful marketing, because there was not one more in the coffer. After that they must starve.

That night Jack went supperless to bed of his own accord. If he couldn't make money, he thought, at any rate he could eat less money. It was a shame for a big boy to stuff himself and bring no grist to the mill.

He slept like a top, as boys do when they don't overeat themselves, and when he woke....

Hey, presto! the whole room showed greenish, and there was a curtain of leaves over the window! Another bean had grown in the night, and Jack was up it like a lamp-lighter before you could say knife.

This time he didn't take nearly so long climbing until he reached the straight, wide, white road, and in a trice he found himself before the tall white house, where on the wide white steps the ogre's wife was standing with the black porridge-pot in her hand.

And this time Jack was as bold as brass. "Good-morning, 'm," he said. "I've come to ask you for breakfast, for I had no supper, and I'm as hungry as a hunter."

"Go away, bad boy!" replied the ogre's wife. "Last time I gave a boy breakfast my man missed a whole bag of gold. I believe you are the same boy."

"Maybe I am, maybe I'm not," said Jack, with a laugh. "I'll tell you true when I've had my breakfast; but not till then."

So the ogre's wife, who was dreadfully curious, gave him a big bowl full of porridge; but before he had half finished it he heard the ogre coming—

Thump! THUMP! THUMP!

"In with you to the oven," shrieked the ogre's wife. "You shall tell me when he has gone to sleep."

This time Jack saw through the steam peep-hole that the ogre had three fat calves strung to his belt.

"Better luck to-day, wife!" he cried, and his voice shook the house. "Quick! Roast these trifles for my breakfast! I hope the oven's hot?"

And he went to feel the handle of the door, but his wife cried out sharply:

"Roast! Why, you'd have to wait hours before they were done! I'll broil them—see how bright the fire is!"

"Umph!" growled the ogre. And then he began sniffing and calling out:

"Fee-fi-fo-fum,

I smell the blood of an Englishman.

Be he alive, or be he dead,

I'll grind his bones to make my bread."

"Twaddle!" said the ogre's wife. "It's only the bones of the boy you had last week that I've put into the pig-bucket!"

"Umph!" said the ogre harshly; but he ate the broiled calves, and then he said to his wife, "Bring me my hen that lays the magic eggs. I want to see gold."

So the ogre's wife brought him a great big black hen with a shiny red comb. She plumped it down on the table and took away the breakfast things.

Then the ogre said to the hen, “Lay!” and it promptly laid—what do you think?—a beautiful, shiny, yellow, golden egg!

“None so dusty, henny-penny,” laughed the ogre. “I shan’t have to beg as long as I’ve got you.” Then he said, “Lay!” once more; and, lo and behold! there was another beautiful, shiny, yellow, golden egg!

Jack could hardly believe his eyes, and made up his mind that he would have that hen, come what might. So, when the ogre began to doze, he jut out like a flash from the oven, seized the hen, and ran for his life! But, you see, he reckoned without his prize; for hens, you know, always cackle when they leave their nests after laying an egg, and this one set up such a scrawing that it woke the ogre.

“Where’s my hen?” he shouted, and his wife came rushing in, and they both rushed to the door; but Jack had got the better of them by a good start, and all they could see was a little figure right away down the wide white road, holding a big, scrawing, cackling, fluttering black hen by the legs!

How Jack got down the beanstalk he never knew. It was all wings, and leaves, and feathers, and cacklings; but get down he did, and there was his mother wondering if the sky was going to fall!

But the very moment Jack touched ground he called out, “Lay!” and the black hen ceased cackling and laid a great, big, shiny, yellow, golden egg.

So every one was satisfied; and from that moment everybody had everything that money could buy. For, whenever they wanted anything, they just said, “Lay!” and the black hen provided them with gold.

But Jack began to wonder if he couldn’t find something else besides money in the sky. So one fine moonlight midsummer night he refused his supper, and before he went to bed stole out to the garden with a big watering-can and watered the ground under his window; for, thought he, “there must be two more beans somewhere, and perhaps it is too dry for them to grow.” Then he slept like a top.

And, lo and behold! when he woke, there was the green light shimmering through his room, and there he was in an instant on the beanstalk, climbing, climbing, climbing for all he was worth.

But this time he knew better than to ask for his breakfast; for the ogre’s wife would be sure to recognise him. So he just hid in some bushes beside the great white house, till he saw her in the scullery, and then he slipped out and hid himself in the copper; for he knew she would be sure to look in the oven first thing.

And by and by he heard—

Thump! THUMP! THUMP!

And peeping through a crack in the copper-lid, he could see the ogre stalk in with three huge oxen strung at his belt. But this time, no sooner had the ogre got into the house than he began shouting:

“Fee-fi-fo-fum,

I smell the blood of an Englishman.

Be he alive, or be he dead,

I’ll grind his bones to make my bread.”

For, see you, the copper-lid didn't fit tight like the oven door, and ogres have noses like a dog's for scent.

"Well, I declare, so do I!" exclaimed the ogre's wife. "It will be that horrid boy who stole the bag of gold and the hen. If so, he's hid in the oven!"

But when she opened the door, lo and behold! Jack wasn't there! Only some joints of meat roasting and sizzling away. Then she laughed and said, "You and me be fools for sure. Why, it's the boy you caught last night as I was getting ready for your breakfast. Yes, we be fools to take dead meat for live flesh! So eat your breakfast, there's a good ogre!"

But the ogre, though he enjoyed roast boy very much, wasn't satisfied, and every now and then he would burst out with "*Fee-fi-fo-fum*," and get up and search the cupboards, keeping Jack in a fever of fear lest he should think of the copper.

But he didn't. And when he had finished his breakfast he called out to his wife, "Bring me my magic harp! I want to be amused."

So she brought out a little harp and put it on the table. And the ogre leant back in his chair and said lazily:

"Sing!"

And, lo and behold! the harp began to sing. If you want to know what it sang about? Why! It sang about everything! And it sang so beautifully that Jack forgot to be frightened, and the ogre forgot to think of "*Fee-fi-fo-fum*," and fell asleep and

did

NOT

SNORE.

Then Jack stole out of the copper like a mouse and crept hands and knees to the table, raised himself up ever so softly and laid hold of the magic harp; for he was determined to have it.

But, no sooner had he touched it, than it cried out quite loud, "Master! Master!" So the ogre woke, saw Jack making off, and rushed after him.

My goodness, it was a race! Jack was nimble, but the ogre's stride was twice as long. So, though Jack turned, and twisted, and doubled like a hare, yet at last, when he got to the beanstalk, the ogre was not a dozen yards behind him. There wasn't time to think, so Jack just flung himself on to the stalk and began to go down as fast as he could, while the harp kept calling, "Master! Master!" at the very top of its voice. He had only got down about a quarter of the way when there was the most awful lurch you can think of, and Jack nearly fell off the beanstalk. It was the ogre beginning to climb down, and his weight made the stalk sway like a tree in a storm. Then Jack knew it was life or death, and he climbed down faster and faster, and as he climbed he shouted, "Mother! Mother! Bring an axe! Bring an axe!"

Now his mother, as luck would have it, was in the backyard chopping wood, and she ran out thinking that this time the sky must have fallen. Just at that moment Jack touched ground, and he flung down the harp—which immediately began to sing of all sorts of beautiful things—and he seized the axe and gave a great chop at the beanstalk, which shook and swayed and bent like barley before a breeze.

“Have a care!” shouted the ogre, clinging on as hard as he could. But Jack did have a care, and he dealt that beanstalk such a shrewd blow that the whole of it, ogre and all, came toppling down, and, of course, the ogre broke his crown, so that he died on the spot.

After that everyone was quite happy. For they had gold to spare and if the bedridden father was dull, Jack just brought out the harp and said, “Sing!” And lo and behold, it sang about everything under the sun. So Jack ceased wondering so much and became quite a useful person. And the last bean still hasn’t grown yet. It is still in the garden. I wonder if it will ever grow? And what little child will climb its beanstalk into the sky? And what will that child find? Goody me!²⁴⁶

② Analysis of fairytale

A MARXIST AND POST-COLONIAL ANALYSIS: Madeline M.H. Grosh, Aidan S. McBride, and KJ Ross-Wilcox analyze Andrew Lang’s 1890 version of the “Jack and the Beanstalk” story to suggest that the story can be imbued with Marxist and British imperialist mindsets; Grosh et al. (2017) argue that, “[i]t is within this cultural duality that Jack exists, both as Jack the oppressor and Jack the oppressed.”²⁴⁷ They explain that Marx and Engel’s *The Communist Manifesto*, translated into English in the 1880s, “argue[s] that classes, groups of people loosely connected by their access to the means of production, have always existed as a form of oppression.”²⁴⁸ At the same time, they mention that idea of British imperialism and Manifest Destiny were “at their strongest” at this time, noting:

Imperialism is also about the power of an empire, specifically the act of exerting said power over another group in the interest of strengthening the empire’s control and influence around the world. In this time period, imperialism was not seen as a bad thing. In fact, quite the opposite was true: it was seen as a necessary procedure to allow Westernized societies to elevate other, “lesser” societies to their level.²⁴⁹

With these in mind, the Giant is assessed as being large and greedy, in contrast to the poor, small, and wanting Jack. Lang’s version of the tale features the people of the local village “rally[ing] behind Jack, charg[ing] the castle to overthrow the Giantess, and take back the land for Jack and the people”, a variation of the story “oozing with Marxist aura.” In such a case, Jack may be seen as a trickster figure that “must use charisma and wit to take down the oppressive.”²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Flora Annie Steel, *English Fairy Tales*, illus. Arthur Rackham (New York: Macmillan Company, 1918), 136-153.

²⁴⁷ Madeline M.H. Grosh, Aidan S. McBride, and KJ Ross-Wilcox, "The Cultural Significance of 'Jack and the Beanstalk,'" *Digital Literature Review* 4 (2017): 1-2.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 2.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 2-3.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 3-4.

At the same time, the story is understood as “reinforc[ing] the narrative of the white man’s burden, completely absolving Jack of any wrongdoing and, in this version, even rewarding him and outright stating that his invasion of the Giant’s home and his robbery of the Giant’s possessions is a birthright.”²⁵¹ The Giant and Giantess are not named, referred to only by their species; the authors of the article suggest that the story is imbued with a sense that the Othered figures of the giant are inferior, fitting in with the British imperialist mindset.²⁵² They point to evidence in the Giant self-identifying themselves as a different species than Jack, who is of “the blood of an Englishman.”²⁵³ Grosh et al. argues that the American Manifest Destiny idea of Western cultures needs to bring light to “uncivilized” lands and peoples is comparable to British imperialism.²⁵⁴ Thus, they argue that the Giant “represents a fear of imperialism inverted.”²⁵⁵ They conclude:

This fear that another culture might one day take over the empire and revert it to barbarism was an idea that was prolific throughout the late nineteenth century. Jack, through this lens, stands to reassure the readers. Even if another culture has people of unfathomable size and strength, it is the duty of the crafty British boy to win the day. Because he is doing what is perceived as right, he will always win, thus reaffirming his place at the top of the cultural ladder.²⁵⁶

③ Adaptations and representations

- In the television show, *Once Upon a Time*, familiar fairy tale characters have been transported from their magical realm to Storybrooke, Maine, in the present-day, along with bail bonds collector Emma Swan. In season 2, episode 6, “Tallahassee”, Emma and Snow White are transported to the Enchanted Forest, the fairytale realm, and follow Captain Hook up a beanstalk in the hopes of finding a portal back to Storybrooke.²⁵⁷ This story is interspersed with flashbacks to the past, in which Emma’s background as a former thief is depicted. The Giants are portrayed as plunderers themselves, and Emma’s thieving spirit is compared to the essence of the “Jack and the Beanstalk” story. Interestingly, *Once Upon a Time* also features a mysterious man in the first season, Neal Cassidy, the father of Swan’s child, Henry.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 5.

²⁵² Ibid, 5.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 6.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 6.

²⁵⁷ *Once Upon a Time*, season 2, episode 6, "Tallahassee," directed by David Barrett, written by Christine Boylan and Jane Espenson, performed by Ginnifer Goodwin, Jennifer Morrison, and Josh Dallas, aired November 4, 2012, on ABC.



Above, Arthur Rackham's illustration for Flora Annie Steel's "Jack in the Beanstalk".²⁵⁸

Cinderella

① The text of the original fairytale

An excerpt from Grimm's Tales for Young and Old, written by the Brothers Grimm—Jaob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm—and translated by Ralph Manheim...

Ashputtle

by the Brothers Grimm

A RICH MAN'S WIFE fell sick and, feeling that her end was near, she called her only daughter to her bedside and said: "Dear child, be good and say your prayers; God will help you, and I shall look down on you from heaven and always be with you." With that she closed her eyes and died. Every day the little girl went out to her mother's grave and wept,

²⁵⁸ Arthur Rackham, The Giant in "Jack and the Beanstalk," 1918, illustration.

and she went on being good and saying her prayers. When winter came, the snow spread a white cloth over the grave, and when spring took it off, the man remarried.

His new wife brought two daughters into the house. Their faces were beautiful and lily-white, but their hearts were ugly and black. That was the beginning of a bad time for the poor stepchild. "why should this silly goose sit in the parlor with us?" they said. "People who want to eat bread must earn it. Get into the kitchen where you belong!" They took away her fine clothes and gave her an old gray dress and wooden shoes to wear. "Look at the haughty princess in her finery!" they cried and, laughing, led her to the kitchen. From then on she had to do all the work, getting up before daybreak, carrying water, lighting fires, cooking and washing. In addition the sisters did everything they could to plague her. They jeered at her and poured peas and lentils into the ashes, so that she had to sit there picking them out. At night, when she was tired out with work, she had no bed to sleep in but had to lie in the ashes by the hearth. And they took to calling her Ashputtle because she always looked dusty and dirty.

One day when her father was going to the fair, he asked his two stepdaughters what he should bring them. "Beautiful dresses," said one. "Diamonds and pearls," said the other. "And you, Ashputtle. What would you like?" "Father," she said, "break off the first branch that brushes against your hat on your way home, and bring it to me." So he bought beautiful dresses, diamonds and pearls for his two stepdaughters, and on the way home, as he was riding through a copse, a hazel branch brushed against him and knocked off his hat. So he broke off the branch and took it home with him. When he got home, he gave the stepdaughters what they had asked for, and gave Ashputtle the branch. After thanking him, she went to her mother's grave and planted the hazel sprig over it and cried so hard that her tears fell on the sprig and watered it. It grew and became a beautiful tree. Three times a day Ashputtle went and sat under it and wept and prayed. Each time a little white bird came and perched on the tree, and when Ashputtle made a wish the little bird threw down what she had wished for.

Now it so happened that the king arranged for a celebration. It was to go on for three days and all the beautiful girls in the kingdom were invited, in order that his son might choose a bride. When the two stepsisters heard they had been asked, they were delighted. They called Ashputtle and said: "Comb our hair, brush our shoes, and fasten our buckles. We're going to the wedding at the king's palace." Ashputtle obeyed, but she wept, for she too would have liked to go dancing, and she begged her stepmother to let her go. "You little sloven!" said the stepmother. "How can you go to a wedding when you're all dusty and dirty? How can you go dancing when you have neither dress nor shoes?" But when Ashputtle begged and begged, the stepmother finally said: "Here, I've dumped a bowlful of lentils in the ashes. If you can pick them out in two hours, you may go." The girl went out the back door to the garden and cried out: "O tame little doves, O turtledoves, and all the birds under heaven, come and help me put

the good ones in the pot,

the bad ones in your crop.”

Two little white doves came flying through the kitchen window, and then came the turtledoves, and finally all the birds under heaven came flapping and fluttering and settled down by the ashes. The doves nodded their little heads and started in, peck peck peck peck, and all the others started in, peck peck peck peck, and they sorted out all the good lentils and put them in the bowl. Hardly an hour had passed before they finished and flew away. Then the girl brought the bowl to her stepmother, and she was happy, for she thought she'd be allowed to go to the wedding. But the stepmother said: “No, Ashputtle. You have nothing to wear and you don't know how to dance; the people would only laugh at you.” When Ashputtle began to cry, the stepmother said: “If you can pick two bowlfuls of lentils out of the ashes in an hour, you may come.” And she thought: “She'll never be able to do it.” When she had dumped the two bowlfuls of lentils in the ashes, Ashputtle went out the back door to the garden and cried out: “O tame little doves, O turtledoves, and all the birds under heaven, come and help me put

the good ones in the pot,
the bad ones in your crop.”

Then two little white doves came flying through the kitchen window, and then came the turtledoves, and finally all the birds under heaven came flapping and fluttering and settled down by the ashes. The doves nodded their little heads and started in, peck peck peck peck, and all the others started in, peck peck peck peck, and they sorted out all the good lentils and put them in the bowls. Before half an hour had passed, they had finished and they all flew away. Then the girl brought the bowls to her stepmother, and she was happy, for she thought she'd be allowed to go to the wedding. But her stepmother said: “It's no use. You can't come, because you have nothing to wear and you don't know how to dance. We'd only be ashamed of you.” Then she turned her back and hurried away with her two proud daughters.

When they had all gone out, Ashputtle went to her mother's grave. She stood under the hazel tree and cried:

“Shake your branches, little tree,
Throw gold and silver down on me.”

Whereupon the bird tossed down a gold and silver dress and slippers embroidered with silk and silver. Ashputtle slipped into the dress as fast as she could and went to the wedding. Her sisters and stepmother didn't recognize her. She was so beautiful in her golden dress that they thought she must be the daughter of some foreign king. They never dreamed it could be Ashputtle, for they thought she was sitting at home in her filthy rags, picking lentils out of the ashes. The king's son came up to her, took her by the hand and danced with her. He wouldn't dance with anyone else and he never let go her hand. When someone else asked for a dance, he said: “She is my partner.”

She danced until evening, and then she wanted to go home. The king's son said: “I'll go with you, I'll see you home,” for he wanted to find out whom the beautiful girl belonged to. But she got away from him and slipped into the dovecote. The king's son waited until

her father arrived, and told him the strange girl had slipped into the dovecote. The old man thought: "Could it be Ashputtle?" and he sent for an ax and a pick and broke into the dovecote, but there was no one inside. When they went indoors, Ashputtle was lying in the ashes in her filthy clothes and a dim oil lamp was burning on the chimney piece, for Ashputtle had slipped out the back end of the dovecote and run to the hazel tree. There she had taken off her fine clothes and put them on the grave, and the bird had taken them away. Then she had put her gray dress on again, crept into the kitchen and lain down in the ashes.

Next day when the festivities started in again and her parents and stepsisters had gone, Ashputtle went to the hazel tree and said:

"Shake your branches, little tree,
Throw gold and silver down on me."

Whereupon the bird threw down a dress that was even more dazzling than the first one. And when she appeared at the wedding, everyone marveled at her beauty. The king's son was waiting for her. He took her by the hand and danced with no one but her. When others came and asked her for a dance, he said: "She is my partner." When evening came, she said she was going home. The king's son followed her, wishing to see which house she went into, but she ran away and disappeared into the garden behind the house, where there was a big beautiful tree with the most wonderful pears growing on it. She climbed among the branches as nimbly as a squirrel and the king's son didn't know what had become of her. He waited until her father arrived and said to him: "The strange girl has got away from me and I think she has climbed up in the pear tree." Her father thought: "Could it be Ashputtle?" He sent for an ax and chopped the tree down, but there was no one in it. When they went into the kitchen, Ashputtle was lying there in the ashes as usual, for she had jumped down on the other side of the tree, brought her fine clothes back to the bird in the hazel tree, and put on her filthy gray dress.

On the third day, after her parents and sisters had gone, Ashputtle went back to her mother's grave and said to the tree:

"Shake your branches, little tree,
Throw gold and silver down on me."

Whereupon the bird threw down a dress that was more radiant than either of the others, and the slippers were all gold. When she appeared at the wedding, the people were too amazed to speak. The king's son danced with no one but her, and when someone else asked her for a dance, he said: "She is my partner."

When evening came, Ashputtle wanted to go home, and the king's son said he'd go with her, but she slipped away so quickly that he couldn't follow. But he had thought up a trick. He had arranged to have the whole staircase brushed with pitch, and as she was running down it the pitch pulled her left slipper off. The king's son picked it up, and it was tiny and delicate and all gold. Next morning he went to the father and said: "No girl shall be my wife but the one this golden shoe fits." The sisters were overjoyed, for they had beautiful

feet. The eldest took the shoe to her room to try it on and her mother went with her. But the shoe was too small and she couldn't get her big toe in. So her mother handed her a knife and said: "Cut your toe off. Once you're queen you won't have to walk any more." The girl cut her toe off, forced her foot into the shoe, gritted her teeth against the pain, and went out to the king's son. He accepted her as his bride-to-be, lifted her up on his horse, and rode away with her. But they had to pass the grave. The two doves were sitting in the hazel tree and they cried out:

"Roocoo, roocoo,
There's blood in the shoe.
The foot's too long, the foot's too wide,
That's not the proper bride."

He looked down at her foot and saw the blood spurting. At that he turned his horse around and took the false bride home again. "No," he said, "this isn't the right girl; let her sister try the shoe on." The sister went to her room and managed to get her toes into the shoe, but her heel was too big. So her mother handed her a knife and said: "Cut off a chunk of your heel. Once you're queen you won't have to walk any more." The girl cut off a chunk of her heel, forced her foot into the shoe, gritted her teeth against the pain, and went out to the king's son. He accepted her as his bride-to-be, lifted her up on his horse, and rode away with her. As they passed the hazel tree, the two doves were sitting there, and they cried out:

"Roocoo, roocoo,
There's blood in the shoe.
The foot's too long, the foot's too wide,
That's not the proper bride."

He looked down at her foot and saw that blood was spurting from her shoe and staining her white stocking all red. He turned his horse around and took the false bride home again. "This isn't the right girl either," he said. "Haven't you got another daughter?" "No," said the man, "there's only a puny little kitchen drudge that my dead wife left me. She couldn't possibly be the bride." "Send her up," said the king's son, but the mother said: "Oh no, she's much too dirty to be seen." But he insisted and they had to call her. First she washed her face and hands, and when they were clean, she went upstairs and curtsied to the king's son. He handed her the golden slipper and sat down on a footstool, took her foot out of her heavy wooden shoe, and put it into the slipper. It fitted perfectly. And when she stood up and the king's son looked into her face, he recognized the beautiful girl he had danced with and cried out: "This is my true bride!" The stepmother and the two sisters went pale with fear and rage. But he lifted Ashputtle up on his horse and rode away with her. As they passed the hazel tree, the two white doves called out:

"Roocoo, roocoo,
No blood in the shoe.
Her foot is neither long nor wide,
This one is the proper bride."

Then they flew down and alighted on Ashputtle's shoulders, one on the right and one on the left, and there they sat.

On the day of Ashputtle's wedding, the two stepsisters came and tried to ingratiate themselves and share in her happiness. On the way to church the elder was on the right side of the bridal couple and the younger on the left. The doves came along and pecked out one of the elder sister's eyes and one of the younger sister's eyes. Afterward, on the way out, the elder was on the left side and the younger on the right, and the doves pecked out both the remaining eyes. So both sisters were punished with blindness to the end of their days for being so wicked and false.

② Analysis of fairytale

The conflated story that is the amalgam of Perrault, Disney, and Grimm would suggest that "Cinderella" is a rags-to-riches story, about a girl who comes from poverty into wealth or royalty, implied by the goodness of her spirit.²⁵⁹ Armando Maggi interprets Grimms' "Cinderella", identifying the girl's dead mother as the benevolence of nature and the agencial figure in the story.²⁶⁰ Maggi continues:

The Grimms' Cinderella is in essence a girl whose destiny is to turn into the mother who passes away at the beginning of the tale. She is presented as a wealthy and religious woman who instructs her daughter to follow in her footsteps and reassures her that she will support her in the difficult journey ahead.²⁶¹

Maggi asserts that in Grimms' "Cinderella" story, it becomes clear that the mother transfers over her spirit to the hazel tree, her powers to nature.²⁶² Sorting the lentils twice is a challenge that Cinderella must endure to develop into adulthood, and the birds picking out the lentils twice holds two purposes: (1) to fulfill the magical number three of the genre, with the birds appearing to peck the lentils twice, and then in third instance, to peck the stepsisters' eyes; and (2) to contribute to a characterization of Cinderella with passivity to nature (similar to Psyche's passivity to nature and Cupid in the ancient tale about her and Eros/Cupid, in which she is asked to sort lentils.)²⁶³

A PSYCHOANALYTIC INTERPRETATION: Liudmila A. Mirskaya and Victor O. Pigulevskiy's archetypal analysis of *Cinderella* focuses on the meaning of several symbols in the story. Per analytical psychology, all fairy tales detail an individual's process of experiencing individuation.²⁶⁴ The basis of their analysis likens Cinderella's experience as a washerwoman to alchemists who

²⁵⁹ Armando Maggi, "The Creation of Cinderella from Basile to the Brothers Grimm," *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales*, December 11, 2014, 150.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 154.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid, 155.

²⁶³ Ibid, 156-157.

²⁶⁴ Liudmila A. Mirskaya and Victor O. Pigulevskiy, "Archetypal Analysis of 'Cinderella,'" *SHS Web of Conferences* 122 (2021): 2.

“cleans[e] the soul from dark layers.”²⁶⁵ Following that, alchemists are understood to create the Philosopher’s stone or the self.²⁶⁶

Cinderella engages in a form of “alchemy” through the use of water, which represents the unconscious that can newly shape the conscious or the female psyche, and fire which represents the rational masculine principle.²⁶⁷ The branch of a hazel tree brought by her father represents the source of life and fertility.²⁶⁸ The birds represent “the mediator between the unconscious and consciousness, life and death.”²⁶⁹ It is noted that the spirit of the mother is transformed into symbols of nature, the birds and the hazel tree. Sorting grains requires sensory comprehension, linked to Eros or passionate love.²⁷⁰ Gold and silver, such as in the dresses and slippers, represent “the light of the sun (consciousness) and the moon (the unconscious).”²⁷¹ Connecting the ancient rituals of ancient cultures to the dance in which the prince notices Cinderella, their dance represents “celestial bodies in a vast space that are moved by some force around the deity”; consequently, “the ritual dance seemed to synchronize the earthly and cosmic energy.”²⁷² Finally, “[o]nce in the prince’s hands, the slipper serves as a bridge between the sacred and profane worlds,” and slipping it on structures Cinderella’s identity.²⁷³

The way that a stone is heated, enriched, and moistened to be turned into a Philosopher’s Stone, Cinderella undergoes a process that educates her soul:

In a depressed state of mind, Cinderella shows humility, patience, and conscientiousness. Among the ash and dirt, dividing the grains, the heroine fully realized all the connections and qualities of things. Having experienced resentment and disappointment during monotonous work, Cinderella changes. The heroine develops the subtlety of intuition, active imagination, feels the living and dead energy of transformations. Cinderella has nurtured in herself a “philosopher’s stone”, the core of the spirit, and can now have a transforming effect on her own life, perform miracles.²⁷⁴

A QUEER INTERPRETATION: Margaret R. Yocom’s interpretation of the “Cinderella” story through queer theory centers on how the heroine disguises and transforms her body again and again.²⁷⁵ First dressed in grimes and ashes, and later in a beautiful ball gown, Cinderella “must be

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 2

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 2-3.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 3.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Margaret R. Yocom, "But Who Are You Really?": Ambiguous Bodies and Ambiguous Pronouns in 'Allerleirauh,'" in *Transgressive Tales: Queering the Grimms*, ed. Kay Turner and Pauline Greenhill (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2015), 93.

willing to live in multiple ambiguous skins among people who believe that everyone lives in just one clearly discernable one.”²⁷⁶ Yocum likens Cinderella’s experience to the experience of queer and transgendered people, in that she must survive when others around them wish that she would behave in a way she cannot.²⁷⁷ Yocum continues, “And, like many pre-transition transsexual people, she may feel, at times, that she is living in the wrong body.”²⁷⁸

③ Adaptations and representations

- Walt Disney’s 1950 animated film, *Cinderella*, adapts Charles Perrault’s version of the story with a maiden’s fairy godmother turning a pumpkin into a carriage and mice into footmen.²⁷⁹ This version has been central to the Disney brand, with Cinderella’s castle becoming a recognizable symbol of the company. *Cinderella* features songs such as [“A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes”](#) and [“So This is Love”](#). Watch the dress transformation scene [here](#).
- Disney adapted the animated film into a live-action film in their 2015 *Cinderella* starring Lily James as Ella, directed by Kenneth Branagh.²⁸⁰ Film critic Mark Kermode considered it “anti-revisionist”, “straight-faced sentimentality”, and “unashamedly old-fashioned.”²⁸¹ Notably, the film depicted Cinderella as not meeting her prince for the first time at the ball, but on equal footing in the forest, understanding him to be an apprentice.²⁸² Watch Cinderella’s entrance to the ball [here](#), and listen to James’s version of “A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes” [here](#).
- Composer Jules Massenet and librettist Henri Cain’s French-language opera, *Cendrillon*, also adapts Perrault’s story, featuring an interlude where Cendrillon is “too sad to continue living”, falsely hearing that the prince spoke contemptuously of her from her stepmother, and goes off to die alone in the forest, where she finds Prince Charming amid spirits dancing in an enchanted forest and sleep.²⁸³ The Metropolitan Opera’s 2018 production was designed like a “storybook”, with text gracing the set; watch an excerpt with the Fairy Godmother [here](#).
- Gail Carson Levine’s childrens’ novel *Ella Enchanted*, adapts the “Cinderella” story to suggest that Ella was gifted the curse of obedience by a fairy, a feminist commentary on the state of womanhood.²⁸⁴ The novel features elves, ogres, giants, and other magical creatures. The novel features Ella falling in love with her prince, Char, but at one point, she deliberately chooses to step away from him, to save him and the kingdom from having her obedience as

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 94.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ *Cinderella*, directed by Hamilton Luske, Wilfred Jackson, and Clyde Geronimi, screenplay by William Peet, et al., performed by Ilene Woods, Walt Disney Productions, 1950.

²⁸⁰ *Cinderella*, directed by Kenneth Branagh, screenplay by Chris Weitz, produced by Simon Kinberg, Allison Shearmur, and David Barron, performed by Cate Blanchett, et al., Walt Disney Pictures, 2015.

²⁸¹ Mark Kermode, "Cinderella review – straight-faced sentimentality," *The Guardian*, last modified March 25, 2015.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ "Synopsis: Cendrillon," *The Metropolitan Opera*, last modified 2018.

²⁸⁴ Gail Carson Levine, *Ella Enchanted* (New York: Scholastic, 1997).

a personal and political liability; think: what if bad actors got ahold of the queen? A loose filmic adaptation of this novel was released in 2004.

- Rodgers and Hammerstein's made-for-CBS musical adaptation of *Cinderella* starred Julie Andrews in 1957.²⁸⁵ The television program had a stupendous audience of 107 million people.²⁸⁶ Hammerstein reportedly kept the libretto "simple and sweet: no modern touches, no anachronistic interpolations, no wisened-up twentieth-century idioms."²⁸⁷ Watch the 2013 Broadway stage adaptation's performance at the Tony Awards [here](#).

Rapunzel

① The text of the original fairytale

An excerpt from Grimm's Tales for Young and Old: The Complete Stories, written by the Brothers Grimm—Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm—and translated by Ralph Manheim...

Rapunzel

by the Brothers Grimm

ONCE AFTER A MAN AND WIFE had long wished in vain for a child, the wife had reason to hope that God would grant them their wish. In the back of their house there was a little window that looked out over a wonderful garden, full of beautiful flowers and vegetables. But there was a high wall around the garden, and no one dared enter it because it belonged to a witch, who was very powerful and everyone was afraid of her. One day the wife stood at this window, looking down into the garden, and her eyes lit on a bed of the finest rapunzel, which is a kind of lettuce. And it looked so fresh and green that she longed for it and her mouth watered. Her craving for it grew from day to day, and she began to waste away because she knew she would never get any. Seeing her so pale and wretched, her husband took fright and asked: "What's the matter with you, dear wife?" "Oh," she said, "I shall die unless I get some rapunzel to eat from the garden behind our house." Her husband, who loved her, thought: "Sooner than let my wife die, I shall get her some of that rapunzel, cost what it may." As night was falling, he climbed the wall into the witch's garden, took a handful of rapunzel, and brought it to his wife. She made it into a salad right away and ate it hungrily. But it tasted so good, so very good, that the next day her craving for it was three times as great. Her husband could see she would know no peace unless he paid another visit to the garden. So at nightfall he climbed the wall again, but when he came down on the other side he had an awful fright, for there was the witch right in front of him. "How dare you!" she said with an angry look. "How dare you sneak

²⁸⁵ Todd S. Purdum, *Something Wonderful: Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway Revolution* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2018), "Prologue: All They Cared About Was the Show".

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

into my garden like a thief and steal my rapunzel! I'll make you pay dearly for this." "Oh, please," he said, "please temper justice with mercy. I only did it because I had to. My wife was looking out of the window, and when she saw your rapunzel she felt such a craving for it that she would have died if I hadn't got her some." At that the witch's anger died down and she said: "If that's how it is, you may take as much rapunzel as you wish, but on one condition: that you give me the child your wife will bear. It will have a good life and I shall care for it like a mother." In his fright, the man agreed to everything, and the moment his wife was delivered, the witch appeared, gave the child the name of Rapunzel, and took her away.

Rapunzel grew to be the loveliest child under the sun. When she was twelve years old, the witch took her to the middle of the forest and shut her up in a tower that had neither stairs nor door, but only a little window at the very top. When the witch wanted to come in, she stood down below and called out:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your hair for me."

Rapunzel had beautiful long hair, as fine as spun gold. When she heard the witch's voice, she undid her braids and fastened them to the window latch. They fell to the ground twenty ells down, and the witch climbed up on them.

A few years later it so happened that the king's son was passing through the forest. When he came to the tower, he heard someone singing, and the singing was so lovely that he stopped and listened. It was Rapunzel, who in her loneliness was singing to pass the time. The prince wanted to go up to her and he looked for a door but found none. He rode away home, but the singing had so touched his heart that he went out into the forest every day and listened. Once as he was standing behind a tree, he saw a witch come to the foot of the tower and heard her call out:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your hair."

Whereupon Rapunzel let down her braids, and the witch climbed up to her. "Aha," he thought, "if that's the ladder that goes up to her, then I'll try my luck too." And next day, when it was beginning to get dark, he went to the tower and called out:

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your hair."

A moment later her hair fell to the ground and the prince climbed up.

At first Rapunzel was dreadfully frightened, for she had never seen a man before, but the prince spoke gently to her and told her how he had been so moved by her singing that he couldn't rest easy until he had seen her. At that Rapunzel lost her fear, and when he asked if she would have him as her husband and she saw he was young and handsome, she thought: "He will love me better than my old godmother." So she said yes and put her hand in his hand. "I'd gladly go with you," she said, "but how will I ever get down? Every time you come, bring a skein of silk and I'll make a ladder with it. When it's finished, I'll

climb down, and you will carry me home on your horse.” They agreed that in the meantime he would come every evening, because the old witch came during the day. The witch noticed nothing until one day Rapunzel said to her: “Tell me, Godmother, how is it that you’re so much harder to pull up than the young prince? With him it hardly takes a minute.” “Wicked child!” cried the witch. “What did you say? I thought I had shut you away from the world, but you’ve deceived me.” In her fury she seized Rapunzel's beautiful hair, wound it several times around her left hand and picked up a pair of scissors in her right hand. Snippety-snap went the scissors, and the lovely braids fell to the floor. Then the heartless witch sent poor Rapunzel to a desert place, where she lived in misery and want.

At dusk on the day she had sent Rapunzel away, she fastened the severed braids to the window latch, and when the prince came and called:

“Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your hair”

she let the hair down. The prince climbed up, but instead of his dearest Rapunzel, the witch was waiting for him with angry, poisonous looks. “Aha!” she cried. “You’ve come to take your darling wife away, but the bird is gone from the nest, she won’t be singing any more; the cat has taken her away and before she’s done she’ll scratch your eyes out too. You’ve lost Rapunzel, you’ll never see her again.” The prince was beside himself with grief, and in his despair he jumped from the tower. It didn’t kill him, but the brambles he fell into scratched his eyes out and he was blind. He wandered through the forest, living on roots and berries and weeping and wailing over the loss of his dearest wife. For several years he wandered wretchedly, until at last he came to the desert place where Rapunzel was living in misery with the twins she had borne—a boy and a girl. He heard a voice that seemed familiar, and when he approached Rapunzel recognized him, fell on his neck and wept. Two of her tears dropped on his eyes, which were made clear again, so that he could see as well as ever. He took her to his kingdom, where she was welcomed with rejoicing, and they lived happy and contented for many years to come.²⁸⁸

② Analysis of fairytale

Laura J. Getty notes that Grimms’ version of the “Rapunzel” tale specifically demonizes the witch characters, which explains the limitation of her powers in this version, “why the wounds that she inflicts can be healed without her cooperation.”²⁸⁹ An explicitly feminist reading of the “Rapunzel” tale, Jerilyn Fisher and Ellen S. Silber argue that, paradoxically, Rapunzel’s birth mother desires the vegetable that the witch grows, and the witch desires the baby that the pregnant mother is growing; their expression of their desires are equally punished in the logic of the story, as Rapunzel is taken from both of the maternal figures and patriarchy is awarded to her prince.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ Grimm and Grimm, *Grimms' Tales*, 46-49.

²⁸⁹ Laura J. Getty, "Maidens and Their Guardians: Reinterpreting the 'Rapunzel' Tale," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 30, no. 2 (June 1997): 51.

²⁹⁰ Fisher and Silber, "Good and Bad Beyond," 128.

③ Adaptations and representations

- Anne Sexton's poem, "Rapunzel" focuses on the homoeroticism of the relationship between Rapunzel and the maternal figure, named Mother Gothel.²⁹¹ The poem opens: "A woman / Who loves another woman / Is forever young". The poem makes use of natural imagery to reference girlhood and budding sexuality. Read the full poem [here](#).
- The Walt Disney Animation Studios' 2010 animated film, *Tangled*, adapts Grimms' tale.²⁹² The film portrays Rapunzel as a princess who was kidnapped from her royal parents by Mother Gothel. Raised in a tower for eighteen years, she has some agency in choosing to leave the tower with the guide of a bandit, Flynn Rider/Eugene Fitzherbert, in order to see the source of the floating lanterns that are set off on her birthday each year, not knowing they are set by her birth parents. Rapunzel's hair has the power of restoration and healing, in this adaptation. Watch "I See the Light" from the film [here](#).
- American singer-songwriter Sara Bareilles's song, "[Fairytale](#)", reimagines the women of fairy tales encountering realistic love life problems, such as the depiction of Rapunzel, which follows: "The tall blonde let out a cry of despair / Said 'would have cut it myself if I knew men could climb hair / I'll have to find another tower somewhere / And keep away from the windows.'" In such an adaptation, Bareilles suggests that the long hair harms Rapunzel more than it helps her and that she does not desire a prince to find her, giving her some sense of choice in the matter.²⁹³
- Irish novelist Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch* (1997) "proffered an explicitly lesbian take" in which "the sorceress and the long-tressed girl, after much despair, separation, and longing, come back together as lovers in the tale's end."²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Anne Sexton, *Anne Sexton: The Complete Poems* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 244-249

²⁹² *Tangled*, performed by Mandy Moore, Zachary Levi, and Donna Murphy, screenplay by Dan Fogelman, produced by Roy Conli, directed by Nathan Greno and Byron Howard, Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2010.

²⁹³ "Fairytale," by Sara Bareilles, on *Little Voice*, 2007, compact disc.

²⁹⁴ 249

VI. PSYCHOANALYSIS:

BRUNO BETTELHEIM'S *THE USES OF ENCHANTMENT*

NOTE TO READER: Freudian psychoanalysis has been criticized as patriarchal, heteronormative, and biologically essentialist. The following section summarizes Freudian psychoanalytic approaches to reading fairy tales. Consider the literal, but also the figurative meaning of these suggested interpretations.

Background: Summary of Freudian Psychoanalysis

Freud held theories about infantile sexual development, naming stages in early childhood.²⁹⁵ For the first year of life, he theorized the “oral” stage, in which “the infant’s capacity for physical gratification is centered upon the mouth.”²⁹⁶ (Consider an infant nursing on their mother’s milk.) During ages one to three, “the anal region takes over.”²⁹⁷ (Consider the pleasure associated with defecation.) Following this, in the “phallic” stage, “the penis or clitoris becomes the focus of libidinal investment and masturbatory activity.”²⁹⁸ Lastly, in the “genital” stage, “the individual becomes capable of fully satisfying sexual relations with the opposite sex, is not reached until after puberty.”²⁹⁹

Freud theorized the Oedipal complex, based on the tale of Oedipus Rex, who fulfills a prophecy of killing his father and marrying his mother.³⁰⁰ Around the time of “phallic” development, Freud proposed that children develop sexual interest in their opposite-sex parent and a desire to replace or harm their same-sex parent.³⁰¹

Freud also proposed a model of the mind, which “consisted of three parts: ego, id, and super-ego.”³⁰² Anthony Storr explains: “The id is primitive, unorganized, and emotional: ‘the realm of the illogical’.”³⁰³ The super-ego plays a moralizing role.³⁰⁴ Storr summarizes: “The ego is that part of the mind representing consciousness. It employs secondary process: that is, reason, common sense, and the power to delay immediate responses to external stimuli or to internal instinctive promptings.”³⁰⁵ The ego balances between the id’s desires and the super-ego’s critiques.

²⁹⁵ Anthony Storr, *Freud: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 29.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 60.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

On Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*

WHY READ BETTELHEIM FOR INTO THE WOODS?

In the popular consciousness, Lapine and Sondheim's *Into the Woods* has been linked with Bruno Bettelheim's book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1975-1976), supposedly a psychologist's Freudian interpretation of fairy tales. Many assume that Sondheim and Lapine adapted Bettelheim's treatise into their drama. However, in one of the volumes of his collected song lyrics, Sondheim mentions "Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*, which is the book that everyone assumes we used as a source, simply because it's the only book on the subject known to a wide public," seemingly implying that he and Lapine did not use *Uses* as a source, but not outright denying it.³⁰⁶ Nevertheless, as the book is connected with the idea of *Woods*, it can be a helpful source to reference interpretations of well-known fairy tales. ***Once again, these are interpretations through Freudian psychoanalysis, which has had a profound influence on the popular consciousness, and therefore may speak to an understanding of these tales.***

Bettelheim On Fairy Tales

Bettelheim's thesis is that fairy tales are the best way to help children find or restore meaning in life; he speaks from his position as a supposed "educator and therapist of severely disturbed children."³⁰⁷ Bettelheim argues that childrens' imagination must be stimulated in order to develop their intellect and clarify their emotions.³⁰⁸ Bettelheim argues that much of childrens' literature fails to do this, but that fairy tales are successful in this, in speaking to the child's unconscious, to offer "example of both temporary and permanent solutions to pressing difficulties."³⁰⁹ Bettelheim argues that fairy tales have a therapeutic value to them.

Concerns about Abuses of Scholarship

In their article, "Bruno Bettelheim's *Uses of Enchantment* and Abuses of Scholarship" from *The Journal of American Folklore*, Alan Dundes summarizes concerns with Bettelheim's book. First, Dundes mentions "[Bettelheim's] failure to cite pertinent scholarship in folklore and psychoanalysis."³¹⁰ Second, Dundes observes that Bettelheim plagiarized much of this book from other sources; one such source is Julius E. Heuscher's *A Psychiatric Study of Myths and Fairy Tales; Their Origin, Meaning, and Usefulness*, published in 1963.³¹¹ Heuscher's own book deals with fairytales and the unconscious.³¹² The book that Bettelheim plagiarized from has also been reviewed as "of doubtful value."³¹³

³⁰⁶ Stephen Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat: Collected Lyrics (1981-2011) with Attendant Comments, Amplifications, Dogmas, Harangues, Digressions, Anecdotes and Miscellany* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 58.

³⁰⁷ Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 4.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

³¹⁰ Alan Dundes, "Bruno Bettelheim's *Uses of Enchantment* and Abuses of Scholarship," *The Journal of American Folklore* 104, no. 411 (1991): 79.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² Julius E. Heuscher, *A Psychiatric Study of Myths and Fairy Tales: Their Origin, Meaning, and Usefulness*, illus. Melba Bennett (Springfield; Fort Lauderdale: Charles C. Thomas, 1963), 33.

³¹³ Louis L. Lunsky, "A Psychiatric Study of Fairy Tales," *Archives of Internal Medicine* 113, no. 6 (June 1, 1964): 922.

On the Woods

According to Bettelheim:

Since ancient times, the near-impenetrable forest in which we get lost has symbolized the dark, hidden, near impenetrable world of our unconscious. If we have lost the framework which gave structure to our past life and must find our own way to become ourselves, and have entered this wilderness with an as yet underdeveloped personality, when we succeed in finding our way out we shall emerge with a much more highly developed humanity.³¹⁴

On “Little Red Riding Hood”

To Bettelheim, Grimms’ “Little Red Cap” deals with “The child’s ambivalence about whether to live by the pleasure principle or the reality principle”, between doing “what one likes to do and what one ought to do.”³¹⁵ This is evidenced by “the fact that Red Cap stops gathering flowers only ‘when she had collected so many that she could not carry any more.’ That is, only when picking flowers is no longer enjoyable does the pleasure-seeking id recede and Red Cap becomes aware of her obligations.”³¹⁶ Comparing the relative maturity of Red Cap with the immaturity of children Hansel and Gretel, Bettelheim notes the four senses, “hearing, seeing, touching, and tasting”, as what “the pubertal child uses...to comprehend the world.”³¹⁷ Bettelheim identifies two maternal figures, Red Cap’s mother and grandmother, “where neither...can do anything”, and he identified the “contradictory nature of the male”: “the selfish, asocial, violent, potentially destructive tendencies of the id (the wolf); [and] the unselfish, social, thoughtful, and protective propensities of the ego (the hunter)”.³¹⁸

Bettelheim asserts that the red hue of Red Cap’s cloak symbolizes “violent emotions,... including sexual ones.”³¹⁹ He asserts that “Little Red Cap’s danger is her budding sexuality, for which she is not yet emotionally mature enough.”³²⁰ Bettelheim explains that children see sex as inherently destructive and violent, referencing the wolf’s consumption of the girl. Bettelheim asserts that children unconsciously equate sexual excitement, violence, and anxiety, and that the story of “Little Red Cap” “holds a great unconscious attraction to children, and to adults who are vaguely reminded by it of their own childish fascination with sex.”³²¹ Bettelheim sees the figure of the father embodied: “as the wolf, which is an externalization of the danger of overwhelming oedipal feelings, and as the hunger in his protective reducing function.”³²²

³¹⁴ Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 93.

³¹⁵ *Ibid*, 171.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*, 171-172.

³¹⁸ *Ibid*, 172.

³¹⁹ *Ibid*, 173.

³²⁰ *Ibid*.

³²¹ *Ibid*, 176.

³²² *Ibid* 178.

Bettelheim explains that Red Cap and grandmother are “reborn” by emerging out of the wolf’s stomach. The girl loses her innocence in being swallowed and reaches “a higher plane of existence” when cut out of the wolf’s belly, losing her childish innocence and assuming the life of a young maiden.³²³

On “Jack and the Beanstalk”

To Bettelheim, the story of “Jack and the Beanstalk” is about a child learning to be dependent on their own body, moving from the oral stage to the phallic stage and beyond. According to Bettelheim, in “Jack and the Beanstalk”, the cow, Milky White, is no longer able to produce milk, harkening back to when a mother stops weaning their child, when a child must learn to depend on the outside world.³²⁴ In the story, Jack moves from the oral stage, in which there is sucking of a mother’s milk, to the phallic stage, symbolized by the beanstalk. Jack encounters oedipal challenges with the giants, achieving the mother, the ogre-wife’s affection, while “acquir[ing] the ogre-father’s powers.”³²⁵ In cutting down the beanstalk, Jack gives up his oral and phallic fantasies to “live in reality”.³²⁶

On “Cinderella”

To Bettelheim, the story of “Cinderella” is rooted in sibling rivalry.³²⁷ He asserts that children identify with Cinderella—a dirty, house wench—due to the oedipal stage in life. According to Bettelheim, at the start of the oedipal stage, a child begins to seek to replace their same-sex parent to earn the affections of their other parent.³²⁸ He explains that over the course of this stage, the innocent, natural desire becomes “repressed as bad.” According to Bettelheim, “While this wish as such is repressed, guilt about it and about sexual feelings in general is not, and this makes the child feel dirty and worthless.”³²⁹ Bettelheim compares the Grimms’ Cinderella’s to Basile’s “Cat Cinderella”, in which a girl, Zezolla, murders her stepmother at the suggestion of her governess, and when the governess married her father and starts putting her six children above herself, Zezolla asserts herself in attending the ball.³³⁰

Bettelheim makes reference to M. R. Cox’s study of 345 variations of the “Cinderella” story from world cultures, noting Cox’s three broad categories: (1) stories that include “an ill-treated heroine, and her recognition by means of a slipper”; (2) stories that feature a father who wants to marry his daughter; and (3), “what Cox calls a ‘King Lear Judgement’: a father’s extracting from his daughter a declaration of love which he deems insufficient, so that she is therefore banished, which forces her

³²³ Ibid, 183.

³²⁴ Ibid, 188.

³²⁵ Ibid, 191.

³²⁶ Ibid, 192.

³²⁷ Ibid, 236; Ibid, 272.

³²⁸ Ibid, 242.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid, 243-244.

into the ‘Cinderella’ position.”³³¹ Bettelheim comments on Cinderella’s innocence in all variations but Basile’s, stating that her degradation manifests the young girl’s guilt or will for punishment for desiring her father.³³²

Bettelheim prefers Grimms’ version of the “Cinderella” story to the French Charles Perrault’s version, asserting, “Perrault’s Cinderella is sugar-sweet and insipidly good, and she completely lacks initiative.”³³³ He praises the symbol of the hazel tree as representing the memory of Cinderella’s, mother, one that, in growing, is mutable: “It symbolizes that the memory of the idealized mother of infancy, when kept alive as an important part of one’s internal experience, can and does support us even in the worst adversity.”³³⁴

Bettelheim connects the slipper of “Cinderella” to “castration anxiety”—that is, girls’ envy of boys’ penises, and boy’s anxiety at losing theirs.³³⁵ In one view, Bettelheim views the stepsisters’ cutting of their toes and heels in Grimms’ “Cinderella” to be indicative of menstruation, meaning that the stepsisters’ contrast unfavorably with the “virginal” Cinderella; one might point out that Bettelheim may mean “pre-pubescent.” Bettelheim also argues that Cinderella’s slipper is a symbol of the vagina.³³⁶ With this, he argues that by the prince handing over his slipper for Cinderella to “slip” her foot into, the prince expresses his acceptance of the fact that, “while all along she had a wish for a penis, she accepts that only he can satisfy it.”³³⁷ It is unclear whether Bettelheim sees the foot or the slipper as the vagina; perhaps, it is both.

On “Rapunzel”

Bettelheim interprets “Rapunzel” being about a pubertal girl, as Rapunzel is locked in the tower by the enchantress at the age of twelve.³³⁸ Bettelheim asserts that, since the story of “Rapunzel” does not suggest “any form of sexual relation”, the mention of the existence of Rapunzel’s twins “supports the idea that children can be gotten without sex, just as a result of love.”³³⁹

Bettelheim differentiates between “evil” and “the unfortunate consequences of selfish behavior”, using “Rapunzel” as an example.³⁴⁰ He argues that the selfishness of the mother’s will for ransom is balanced with the sorceress’s desire for Rapunzel.³⁴¹ Bettelheim shows that through the tresses, which initially the sorceress climbed up and which later the prince climbed up, the story shows the transference from a parent’s to a lover’s affections. Bettelheim argues that the sorceress does not

³³¹ Ibid, 245.

³³² Ibid, 246.

³³³ Ibid, 251.

³³⁴ Ibid, 257.

³³⁵ Ibid, 266.

³³⁶ Ibid, 269.

³³⁷ Ibid, 270; Ibid, 272.

³³⁸ Ibid, 16.

³³⁹ Ibid, 114.

³⁴⁰ Ibid, 148.

³⁴¹ Ibid, 149.

bring about the prince's ill-fate; his jumping to thorns does that all on his own, leaving him blind. It is through the trials and tribulations, the misery that is faced—Rapunzel's wandering through the desert and the prince's blindness—that the two who are able to achieve personal growth and recovery, are able to find themselves and each other.³⁴²

³⁴² Ibid, 150.

VII. ESSAYS FROM A DRAMATURG

The following section is composed of miscellaneous thoughts from your production dramaturg, if they may be of any help to your understanding of the musical. During the rehearsal process, if additional research materials are requested, they will be added to this section.

Theatrical Mirrors

In her essay, “EF’s Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play”, Elinor Fuchs asserts that “dramatic worlds don’t just speak to and within themselves; they also speak to each other.”³⁴³ When analyzing the world of a play, she encourages one to ask: “How many performances are signaling to you from inside this world? How many echoes of other dramatic worlds do they suggest? How do these additional layers of theatricality comment on what you have already discovered?”³⁴⁴ The following sections asserts connections between other works of theatre and *Into the Woods*; consider the shades of other works that one can see in *Woods*. (Also, consider how past works of Penn State Centre Stage and the Penn State School of Theatre can inform the experience of artists and audience members who interact or will interact with *Woods*.)

- **Metamorphoses, Mary Zimmerman:** Like *Woods*, Zimmerman’s *Metamorphoses* reinterprets very old stories for modern audiences. Both *Metamorphoses* and *Woods* can be seen as interacting with not just the singular, linear process of adaptation from an original text (from Grimm, from Ovid), but as interacting with the collective understanding of these stories, the adaptations and references that exist in the popular consciousness. The tale of Psyche can also be connected to Cinderella, in animals or ants being asked to sort lentils.
- **King Lear, William Shakespeare:** *Lear* explores the process of aging and, like *Woods*, the relationship between parents and their children. Like in the “Cinderella” story, there are two false daughters (the stepsisters, Florinda and Lucinda; Regan and Goneril) and one genuine one (Cinderella; Cordelia.) One may see similarities between Lear’s will to be loved unconditionally by Cordelia and the Witch’s will for the love of her child, Rapunzel.
- **Sunday in the Park with George, Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine:** Both *Sunday* and *Into the Woods* make use of the two-act musical structure to propose a model for understanding works of art in the first act and to deconstruct and analyze the understanding of those works of art in the second act.
- **Brigadoon, Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe:** Both *Woods* and *Brigadoon* are about community and collective responsibility. In *Woods*, the remaining four (Little Red, Jack, Cinderella, Baker) must work together to counter the force of the giant, and in *Brigadoon*, the people of Brigadoon must take care of each other to ensure that no one leaves; both times, this is for the survival of the community.

³⁴³ Elinor Fuchs, "EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play," *Theater* 34, no. 2 (2004): 9.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

- **The Last Five Years, Jason Robert Brown:** *The Last Five Years* and *Woods* interact with the passage of time. *Years* may be seen as a contemplative piece of memory, the juxtaposition of moments past informing an evolving understanding of what went wrong in a relationship. *Woods*, while linear in plot, does interact with the past and future, with songs like the Witch’s rap, “Giants in the Sky”, and “On the Steps of the Palace”, recounting past events in the present, and with wishes, like the opening to both acts referencing imaginations of the future. Structurally, both *Woods* and *Years* play with the presentation of time, in a non-linear format.
- **Mountain Language, Harold Pinter:** Language depicts the oppression of the mountain people’s culture, through their language; this oppression of communication may be understood as suppressing the universal human will to be understood by others. *Woods* may also be seen exploring the universal will to be understood through “No One is Alone”. Both works draw attention to the collective nature of human existence, how communication and understanding is a two-way street. “No One is Alone” may be comforting in assuring that one also has community support, but it is also a call to the community to be present to support individuals of it.
- **John Proctor is the Villain, Kimberly Belflower:** Like Little Red Riding Hood discovering and exploring a budding sexuality, *John Proctor* depicts young people exploring sexual education and their understanding of themselves and their bodies in relation to the world. Predators abound in *John Proctor* and in *Woods*.
- **Mock, Miriam Colvin:** Like *John Proctor*, *Mock* shows young people negotiating their sexuality and experience with others in an educational setting, similar to how Little Red Riding Hood in *Woods* undergoes a process of learning in the woods with her encounter with the Wolf. *Mock* also shows a community banding together to support an individual, echoing the collective responsibility of “No One is Alone.”
- **A Midsummer Night’s Dream, William Shakespeare:** Both *Dream* and *Woods* see the setting of the woods as a place of exploration of desire. In *Woods*, the “wishes” of the characters lead them to their journey, and in *Dream*, the romantic desires of the lovers lead to hijinx and betrayals in the forest. Both feature magic as a force that guides desires and possibilities.
- **Carousel, Rodgers and Hammerstein:** In the 1945 musical, father Billy Bigelow must make up for the harm he caused his wife and daughter on Earth after his death; *Carousel* deals with how harm can be transferred from parent to child, with generations. *Into the Woods* also interrogates generational harm, with the Baker’s father writing his wrong to help the Baker, and with the Baker learning how to be a good parent to his own child.

Taylor Swift and *Into the Woods*

The following is a playlist that compares the text of *Into the Woods* to Taylor Swift’s discography. Comparisons were made both on superficial bases and with intent to uncover the deeper characterization of each categorized element. This summarizes the dramaturgical work of exploring the play’s text through comparisons to an external body of poetry. Each song is referred to in the following format: “Song Title”, *Album Title*. (Note: Lyrics from Swift’s songs are attributed to T.S.,

or Taylor Swift, and lines from *Into the Woods* are attributed to S.S., Stephen Sondheim, or J.L., James Lapine.)

OVERALL <i>Into the Woods</i>	SONGS
	“seven”, <i>folklore</i> “The Best Day”, <i>Fearless</i> “Never Grow Up”, <i>Speak Now</i> “marjorie”, <i>evermore</i> “Out of the Woods”, <i>1989</i>

CHARACTERS		
<i>Character</i>	<i>Song</i>	<i>Lyrics & Lines</i>
BAKER	“You’re On Your Own, Kid”, <i>Midnights</i>	“Cause there were pages turned with the bridges burned / Everything you lose is a step you take / So make the friendship bracelets / Take the moment and taste it / You’ve got no reason to be afraid // You’re on your own, kid / Yeah, you can face this / You’re on your own, kid / You always have been” –T.S.
BAKER’S WIFE	“happiness”, <i>evermore</i>	“There’ll be happiness after you / But there was happiness because of you / Both of these things can be true, there is happiness” –T.S. “Must it all be either less or more / Either plan or grand / Is it always ‘or?’ / Is it never ‘and?’” –S.S.
	“High Infidelity”, <i>Midnights</i>	“Do you really want to know where I was April 29th? / Do I really have to tell you how he brought me back to life?” –T.S.
CINDERELLA	“Bejeweled”, <i>Midnights</i>	“And by the way, I’m going out tonight” –T.S.
	“august”, <i>folklore</i>	“Wanting was enough / To me, it was enough / To live for the hope of it all” –T.S.
	“I Wish You Would”, <i>1989</i>	“I wish, I wish, I” –T.S.
CINDERELLA’S FATHER	“The Lucky One”, <i>Red</i>	“Now its big black cars, and Riviera views” –T.S.
CINDERELLA’S MOTHER	“marjorie”, <i>evermore</i>	“What died didn’t stay dead / You’re alive, you’re alive in my head” –T.S.
GRANNY	“All Too Well”, <i>Red</i>	“But you keep my old scarf from that very first week / ‘Cause it reminds you of innocence and it smells like me” –T.S.
GIANT	“my tears ricochet”, <i>folklore</i>	“And I can go anywhere I want / Anywhere I want, just not home / And you can aim for my heart, go for blood / But you would still miss me in your bones / And I still talk to you (when I’m screaming at the sky) / And when you can’t sleep at night (you hear my stolen lullabies)” –T.S.
CINDERELLA’S PRINCE	“All Too Well (10 Minute Version)”, <i>Red</i>	“You who charmed my dad with self-effacing jokes” –T.S. “I was raised to be charming, not sincere” –J.L.
WOLF	“Would’ve, Could’ve, Should’ve”, <i>Midnights</i>	“Give me back my girlhood, it was mine first” –T.S.

FLORINDA	“22”, <i>Red</i>	“It seems like one of those nights, / This place is too crowded. / Too many cool kids, uh uh, uh uh (who’s Taylor Swift anyway, ew?)” –T.S.
JACK	“Innocent”, <i>Speak Now</i>	“Wasn’t it easier in your firefly-catchin’ days? / And everything out of reach / Someone bigger brought down to you / Wasn’t it beautiful runnin’ wild ‘til you fell asleep / Before the monsters caught up to you?” –T.S.
JACK’S MOTHER	“Mine”, <i>Speak Now</i>	“But we got bills to pay, / We got nothing figured out” –T.S. “I wish the walls were full of gold / I wish a lot of things” –S.S.
LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD	“Fifteen”, <i>Fearless</i>	“And when you’re fifteen, don’t forget to look before you fall / I’ve found that time can heal most anything / And you just might find who you’re supposed to be/ I didn’t know who I was supposed to be at fifteen” –T.S.
LUCINDA	“Paris”, <i>Midnights</i>	“Who will be there?” –S.S. “Your ex-friend’s sister / Met someone at a club and he kissed her / Turns out it was that guy you hooked up with ages ago / Some wannabe Z-lister / And all the outfits were terrible / 2003 unbearable / Did you see the photos?” –T.S.
NARRATOR	“the last great american dynasty”, <i>folklore</i>	“And then it was bought by me” –T.S.
MYSTERIOUS MAN	“Innocent”, <i>Speak Now</i>	“Lost your balance on a tightrope, oh / It’s never too late to get it back” –T.S.
PUPPETEER	“Karma”, <i>Midnights</i>	“Karma is a cat / Purring in my lap ‘cause it loves me / Flexing like a goddamn acrobat / Me and karma vibe like that” –T.S.
RAPUNZEL	“seven”, <i>folklore</i>	“And I’ve been meaning to tell you / I think your house is haunted / Your dad is always mad and that must be why / And I think you should come live with / Me and we can be pirates / Then you won’t have to cry” –T.S.
RAPUNZEL’S PRINCE	“High Infidelity”, <i>Midnights</i>	“You know there’s many different ways that you can kill the one you love / The slowest way is never loving them enough / Do you really want to know where I was April 29th? / Do I really have to tell you how he brought me back to life?” –T.S.
STEPMOTHER	“Anti-Hero”, <i>Midnights</i>	“I have this dream my daughter-in-law kills me for the money / She thinks I left them in the will/ The family gathers ‘round and reads it and then someone screams out / ‘She’s laughing up at us from hell” –T.S.
STEWARD	“Look What You Made Me Do”, <i>reputation</i>	“Look what you made me do / Look what you just made me do” –T.S.
WITCH	“Bigger Than the Whole Sky”, <i>Midnights</i>	“Did some bird flap its wings over in Asia? / Did some force take you because I didn’t pray? / Every single thing to come has turned into ashes / ‘Cause it’s all over, it’s not meant to be / So I’ll say words I don’t believe // Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye / You were bigger than the whole sky / You were more than just a short time / And I’ve got a lot to pine about / I’ve got a lot to live without / I’m never gonna meet / What could’ve been, would’ve been / What should’ve been you” –T.S.

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