

# Fairy Tales, Myth, and Psychoanalytic Theory

Feminism and Retelling the Tale

Veronica L. Schanoes

ASHGATE e-BOOK

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FAIRY TALES, MYTH, AND  
PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

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*For my mother, April Schanoes,  
who read me fairy tales, and taught me feminism  
and for Helen Pilinovsky,  
best friend, wise colleague, loving companion*

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Feminism and Retelling the Tale

VERONICA L. SCHANOES  
*Queens College, CUNY, USA*

ASHGATE

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# Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>vii</i>
Introduction: The Mother's Looking-Glass	1
1 Mother-Daughter Relationships in Theory and Text	15
2 Revisions of Motherhood and Daughterhood	33
3 Revision and Repetition	57
4 Through the Looking Glass: Mirrors, Fantasy, and Reality	85
5 Double Vision: Women and Fantasy	113
Epilogue	141
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>145</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>151</i>

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## Introduction: The Mother's Looking-Glass

Tanith Lee's *White as Snow* offers a complex and fascinating answer to the question of how it is possible to represent feminine subjectivity using a language and stories implicated in patriarchal ideology. In her novel, a combined revision of the tales of Snow White and of Persephone and Demeter, Arpazia stands at her mirror. Her ignored daughter Coira watches worshipfully. Coira believes the mirror to be a window into another room, and her mother's reflection a miraculous enchantment:

[S]tealing forward, gazing only upward now to the adult height, as the queen herself had done, Coira missed her own reflection as it entered the scope of the sorcerous mirror. She saw only the witch-queen facing the witch-queen, her wonder doubled.

The child was now too moved even to need to be brave. "You're so beautiful—more beautiful—the most beautiful in all the world."

... Arpazia ... glanced over her shoulder and down in astonishment ...

"Am I?"

"Yes—so beautiful. More beautiful than anyone. Like the goddess."

"Hush," said Arpazia ... Yet Arpazia looked back into the glass. She saw her beauty as if for the only time in her life. Her eyes darkened. "Yes. I am."

And "Yes," answered the queen in the mirror, "you are." (81–2)

In Lee's retelling of "Snow White," the feminized magic, the witch-queen's power, is generated by a neglected daughter's adoration of her mother: the woman's power and beauty, even her sense of self is triggered by her daughter's desire. The powerful mother is not contained in one figure: she is distanced from herself, looking in the mirror; her reflection has the power of speech; her daughter looks in the mirror and sees only her mother. But Arpazia has been deeply damaged, driven insane, by the brutal misogyny of her life; surrounded by the same mirrors and fantasies of motherhood and daughterhood, Coira must find a way to integrate her mother's life without allowing herself to be similarly destroyed. Just so, Lee uses a story whose themes naturalize misogynistic notions of femininity (competition between women over beauty, the notion that there can be only one who is "fairest of them all," feminine power as evil witchcraft) in order to re-create it as a feminist tale. Lee is only one writer of many who use mother-daughter dyads and mirrors, vision and revision, to represent feminine subjectivity. This project will explore

the significance of these figurations, and the relationship between the texts that employ them and theories regarding feminine subjectivity that were developed contemporaneously.

A common theme to the fairy-tale revisions and the theories under discussion here is a characteristic permeability of identity, a sense of fluidity between self and other, subject and object. This fluidity finds expression in the relationships between mothers and daughters as well as in the doubling inherent in mirror reflections. An interesting dynamic emerges, as the revisions and the theories play on the strengths of their respective genres to explore varying aspects of this greater connection and interchange through self and other. Feminist theorists often push back against the notion that a close mother-daughter relationship, even one in which the participants have permeable ego boundaries, must of necessity be unhealthy. The damage, if damage there be, lies in the destruction of the mother's self by patriarchy, and thus her inability to help the daughter construct a solid sense of self (an example of this concept can be found in Luce Irigaray's famous essay "And the One Does Not Stir Without the Other"). Many of the revisions, however, seem to focus on the dangers of such relationships; Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Tanith Lee's *White as Snow* spring easily to mind. But even in texts that problematize the mother-daughter relationship to such a great extent as well as in revisions that portray a more beneficial relationship, such as the relationship between Helle and Ida Ten Brix in Kathryn Davis's *The Girl Who Trod on a Loaf*, the relationship is strongly associated with the project of story-telling and revision themselves. What kind of ambivalence about rewriting the fairy-tale tradition is being expressed in these texts?

Conversely, revisions often valorize the multiple selves generated by mirrors and/or doubles: Kelly Link's "The Girl Detective," Catherynne M. Valente's *The Ice Puzzle*, and Robin McKinley's *Deerskin* portray the doubled or multiplied self as something to be celebrated and/or appreciated, and as something that can provide space in which to heal. In stark contrast to the threatening "uncanniness" of the double that Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank found inherent in the concept, these writers portray the multiplied self as liberation, comfort, and power. While this sense of joy in multiplicity is often characteristic of postmodernism, it is no less striking that the theme is also found in theories of feminine subjectivity specifically, and it is absolutely necessary to understand how that theme functions in such a context. Over and over again, feminist theorists reject the notion of an atomized, walled-off individual as an insufficient model for women's sense of self, arguing instead of a relational understanding of feminine subjectivity. Further, it seems that in texts both postmodern (Angela Carter's "The Tiger's Bride") and not (*Deerskin*), doubling and multiplicity of identities generated thereby is closely identified not only with feminine subjectivity, but with the mode of the fantastic, the genre of fantasy, and with magic itself. Just as examining mother-daughter relationships tells us about how models of revision are operating in these texts, so too can examining the representations of multiple identities tell us about the use of the fantastic and the role of magic in these texts.

Feminist revisions of fairy tales and myths came into their own in the 1970s and 1990s, two decades that also saw a surge in feminist activism and theorizing. And, just as the foundational insights of second-wave feminist psychoanalytic theorists in the 1970s were extended and elaborated in the work of the clinicians at the Wellesley Stone Center during the 1990s, Anne Sexton's *Transformations* (1971), Olga Broumas's *Beginning with O* (1977), and Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) served as inspiration to revisionists in the 1990s, such as Tanith Lee, Terri Windling, Kelly Link, and Catherynne M. Valente. Despite these similarities in timing and the shared focus on mother-daughter relationships and mirroring, this is the first project to consider the works of the revisionists and the works of the theorists in tandem, drawing out and analyzing the connections between the two genres. This is also one of the first projects to combine analysis of the mainstream, canonical writers, such as Carter, with that of the genre writers, such as Lee and Windling.

The considerations of literary revision contemporary with the texts under consideration have been deeply invested in the masculinist, Freudian/Oedipal struggle posited by Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence*. Even feminist critics such as Adrienne Rich, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, and Alicia Ostriker have taken as given the hostile relationship between originary tale and revision. More recent theories of intertextuality acknowledge that communication between texts is inherent in the language itself and not necessarily hostile, but not only do they fail to distinguish between allusions and echoes on the one hand, and deliberate revisions of a specific story on the other, but, as Nancy K. Miller points out, they have little to say about the specificity of texts written by women, let alone feminist texts. This is where my work comes in. In reading feminist fairy tale/mythic revisions from the 1970s and 1990s, I found that the themes they explore and conclusions they come to correspond most closely not with their contemporary theories of revision, but with contemporary feminist psychoanalytic theories. Both genres aim to make visible women's lived experiences, often using the metaphor/symbol of the mirror; both explore relationships between women, *especially* the relationships between mothers and daughters; both attempt to present women's stories as central to our understanding of humanity. What, then, if instead of basing our understanding of the relationship between traditional tale and contemporary revision on a Freudian model of hostility and anxiety, we were to incorporate the insights of Nancy Chodorow, Jean Baker Miller, and the relational theorists of the Wellesley Stone Center? It is my argument that both genres, in the 1970s and 1990s, were grappling with the same problems and arriving at similar conclusions, and that thus we must read them together to fully understand the projects that either genre embarked upon. It is only by examining the theories of second-wave feminism alongside the expression of those same ideas in artistic form that we can fully understand the achievements of second-wave feminist thought. The second wave in this context has not been abjected, but rather, refined.

It is the position of this project that the confluence of focus between feminist fairy-tale revisions and psychoanalytic theory are not coincidences of timing, but

that the feminist revisions of fairy tales and myths of the 1970s and 1990s are doing similar work to the concomitant feminist psychoanalytic theory, and that it is to that theory we must turn for a full understanding of the revisionary project, rather than to the literary theory of the time. Similarly, for a thorough nuancing of and elaboration on the themes identified and discussed by these theorists, we must pay close attention to the work of the revisionary writers, for it is my contention that these two genres, both of which bloomed in the 1970s and 1990s—feminist revisions of fairy tales and myth, and feminist psychoanalytic theory—are expressions of the same ideas and same goals in different forms. That is to say, the important political work of understanding feminine subjectivity on its own terms, rather than in comparison to a normative masculinity, was being accomplished in both genres, with a startling unity in themes. Both genres focus on the tropes of the mother-daughter relationship and the mirror, and by doing so, both trouble the boundary of self and other, I and not-I, subject and object. These two tropes express the permeable subjectivity and dual consciousness of feminine identity, regardless of genre. By studying both genres' uses of these two tropes, I hope not only to articulate a particularly telling case study of the relationship between theory and text, but also to discover why the field of fairy tale and mythic revision has been so attractive to writers working with feminist concerns.

Prior to the feminist interventions of the 1970s, psychoanalysis worked primarily on a deficiency model of the feminine psyche. This model took the masculine psyche as the norm for human development and mental/emotional health, and marked as inferior, pathological, or deficient the ways in which the feminine psyche deviated from that "norm." The second-wave feminist movement made profound changes in this entrenched paradigm. Jean Baker Miller's 1976 landmark book *Toward a New Psychology of Women* advocated instead an understanding of feminine psychology based on recognizing strengths in the previously devalued qualities of relatedness to others, emotionality, and nurturing, or aiding the development of others. Two years prior, Nancy Chodorow had published "Family Structure and Feminine Personality," the essay that she would expand into her 1978 book *The Reproduction of Mothering*. In both the essay and the book, Chodorow focused on the subjective experience of the mother in relation to her daughter as formative of women's personalities. While Chodorow's work has been rightly criticized, as has much second-wave feminist work, for its heteronormativity and focus on the experiences of middle-class white women, the importance, power, and enduring legacy of her models cannot be overestimated.

Based on the work of Miller and Chodorow, clinicians such as Judith V. Jordan and Janet L. Surrey developed a theory and practice of women's psychology known as relational psychology, or now, relational-cultural therapy. *Women's Growth in Connection: Writings from the Stone Center* was the first volume produced by the group of clinicians and theorists dedicated to this approach to mental health, and it appeared in 1991. Further books from the Stone Center were published throughout the 1990s. Thus, this important strain of psychoanalytic theory and practice, which

bloomed in the 1990s and is still implemented today, was continuous with the work of 1970s second-wave feminist theorists and practitioners.

Combining close analysis of many primary texts with contemporaneous feminist and psychoanalytic theory, this book proposes a new model of understanding the project of feminist literary revision in the 1970s and 1990s by considering that project as a necessary partner to the psychoanalytic theories being advanced, nuancing and illustrating them. These two decades were a time in which both artists and psychoanalytic theorists were concerned with issues of how a woman's sense of self is constructed and how it develops; only by examining these texts in light of one another can we fully understand the answers they arrived at. Postmodern theory, as do many of the primary fictional texts under discussion in this study, rejects the notion of a singular, unified, authentic "self" in favor of a kaleidoscopic, constantly shifting set of identities that are always in the process of being constructed. But much psychoanalytic theory, much second-wave theory, and most popular culture continue to be fascinated by the search for/development of one's "true self." Certainly some of the great insights of second-wave feminism came out of consciousness-raising sessions that certain men of the New Left derided as "therapy" rather than political activism; in response, the slogan "The personal is political" was coined by feminists arguing that the "personal" arrangements and injuries women suffer under patriarchy are indeed the result of systemic and institutionalized disparities in power between the sexes. For the second wave, looking into the self and trying to distinguish between an "authentic," inner self and the corrosive effects of patriarchy was a powerful and meaningful political tool. It is no surprise that the theorists as well as the creative writers who came out of that wave engage with that process as well; it is intriguing to find the writers coming to value multiplicity in a way similar to postmodern theorists.

I consider mainstream literary revisions alongside of their genre counterparts in order to demonstrate the ways in which the common themes of these projects express concerns basic to the revision and feminism of their era. I find that revisions are not only reconsiderations of traditional tales, but are meditations on the nature of the revisionary project itself, especially as it relates to gender.

Why should these two genres, psychoanalytic theory and literary revision, go hand in hand? What do they have to offer each other? Psychoanalytic theory is, in many ways, the more direct and explicit medium, able to make direct political interventions into existing structures of power. Theory can directly advance new notions and explicate their importance. But it is in literature that the important work of nuancing those notions is done, of making those notions sufficiently complex as to illustrate human subjectivity. Thus, without the artistic production alongside the theory, the new ideas are neither nuanced nor complicated adequately—the bones lack flesh—and we risk selling second-wave feminism short, or caricaturing it. Thus, both genres are engaged in the same political project concerning a more accurate anatomy and depiction of the feminine sense of self as it has been understood in those recent decades.



The tropes of the mother-daughter relationship and of the magic mirror, I assert, are not merely themes within the texts; rather, they are ways that the texts are thinking not only about feminine subjectivity, but also about themselves. I develop a way of understanding revision based on the feminine subjectivity and relationality that emphasize women's flexible ego boundaries and more diffuse sense of self, and are so essential to the theoretical texts contemporary with the revisions under study. This way of understanding, or theory, I suggest, represents the relationship between traditional tales, or, as Vanessa Joosen terms it in her recent book on the relationship between fairy-tale scholarship and postmodern retellings, the "pre-text" and revisions as the revisors of the 1970s and 1990s may have understood it. I then examine the repercussions of this sort of subjectivity by analyzing the role of the doubled/multiplied self as highlighted by the mirror.

The book is divided into two sections. The first part of the book deals with the trope of the mother-daughter relationship in the texts under study. How is that trope represented and with what issues is it regularly connected? How does it relate to the process of literary revision itself? The second part deals with the trope of the magic mirror, asking questions about how it represents feminine experiences of the self in relation to other people. Each section begins with an analysis of the representation of the trope in question, proceeds to theorize that trope's relationship to larger issues of representation, and concludes by examining the implications of those issues to questions of revision and feminine subjectivity.

Foregrounding the mother-daughter relationship as central to the development of feminine subjectivity and identity was a significant project of second-wave feminism. Prior to the advances of that wave, Adrienne Rich could write, in *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, "This cathexis between mother and daughter—essential, distorted, misused—is the great unwritten story . . . Yet this relationship has been minimized and trivialized in the annals of patriarchy" (225). Prior to the work of Nancy Chodorow, Freudian theory had relegated the relationship between mother and child to the undifferentiated pre-Oedipal period, prior to the formation of any psyche worthy of the name, a sort of murky symbiosis in need of the Law of the Father to effect a full entry in human consciousness. In subsequent decades, mothers shouldered the blame for everything from inability to deal with color blindness to homosexuality to schizophrenia, but little work was done to examine how mothers actually experienced their children, and what effect those perceptions had on the developing psyche of the child. At best, Winnicott described the "good-enough" mother, whose children managed to glean enough support from her faulty care to develop into healthy beings, but the subjectivity of that mother was left unexamined.

Nancy Chodorow's work of the mid-1970s changed that. In her foundational essay "Family Structure and Feminine Personality" and her subsequent book *The Reproduction of Mothering*, she noted that mothers possess subjectivities of their own, and that these subjectivities strongly influence the developing psyches and personalities of their children. In particular, she is interested in the way women develop permeable ego boundaries and more diffuse senses of self in response to the

strong, continuous identification a binary gender system produces between mother and daughter. Chodorow did not idealize this relationship; neither did she consider it inherently toxic. Her work, along with the work of Jean Baker Miller, provided the basis for the development of relational theory in the 1990s by the theorist/clinicians of the Wellesley Stone Center. These theorist/clinicians, including Judith V. Jordan, Janet Surrey, and others, took the experiences of women as normative; that is, rather than identifying permeable ego boundaries and a more diffuse sense of self as problematic deviations from a masculine, atomized, individuated “normal” psyche, they argued that psyches exist and develop only in relation to other psyches, and that identity formation and maintenance must be understood in the context of those relationships. Connection to others, they argued, was a psychic strength and a sign of maturity, rather than regression, as it had been identified by previous psychoanalysts operating within a paradigm that valorized individuation above all else. And the essential relationship that created a greater facility for these strengths in women was the relationship between mother and daughter. Indeed, Surrey writes that “Mothers and daughters often remain exquisitely open and sensitive to each other’s feeling states” (“The Mother-Daughter Relationship” 119), and that the relationship between mother and daughter is the very model for relationships throughout life (“The Self-in-Relation” 53–9).

The significance of the figure of the mother was highly controversial within second-wave feminism. Shulamith Firestone denounced motherhood as barbaric in *The Dialectic of Sex*, and within two years, Adrienne Rich had fired back with *Of Woman Born*, in which she differentiated being a mother from patriarchal constructs of motherhood, and noted that denigrating a capacity possessed solely by women was a way of denigrating women. Nancy Friday’s *My Mother, Myself: The Daughter’s Search for Identity* blamed mothers for practically all internalized sexism their daughters carry and provided no vision of good mothering, while Judith Arcana’s *Our Mothers’ Daughters* provided a feminist analysis of mothers’ situations under patriarchy, and their own desires. The fascination continued through the 1990s, with Paula J. Caplan’s self-help book *Don’t Blame Mother* going through two editions, and other books appearing throughout the 1990s on the topic of mother-daughter relationships.

Perhaps it is no surprise that a significant number of writers wishing to explore this hot-button topic would turn to fairy tales and classical myth. It is in fairy tales and classical myth, after all, that mother-daughter relationships often take center stage in the forms of Snow White and her (step)mother; Cinderella, her mother, and her stepmother; Persephone and Demeter; and others. But it is important to note that oftentimes, the characters in revisions enact and embroider on the relationships observed and theorized by Chodorow, Jordan, and their cohorts. Just as Chodorow and the Stone Center Theorists revise earlier psychoanalytic assumptions about the mother’s role in the development of the daughter’s psyche and the mother’s own psyche, so too do the writers—Carter, Link, and Lee, for example—revisit traditional stories about mothers and daughters in order to more fully articulate and describe those relationships. After examining this dynamic in

the first half of this book, I suggest that we can understand these particular writers' relationships to such traditional tales as a kind of mother-daughter relationship itself, and that we can best understand the revisers' project by examining it through the lenses offered by the contemporaneous theory that was another expression of that very project, as I contend here.

Chapter 1, "Mother-Daughter Relationships in Theory and Text," analyzes the many roles played by this trope in several key texts. I begin by paralleling the problematic nature of the relationships between mothers and daughters in traditional tales with the troublesome issues regarding motherhood raised by early second-wave feminists such as Adrienne Rich and Nancy Chodorow. I then proceed to use Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber" and "Wolf-Alice" as case studies in the importance of function of the relationship between mother and daughter to one of the foundational texts of the field under study. I then consider more recent texts in the light of work by Rich, Chodorow, and Luce Irigaray in order to highlight the ways the anxieties and fears regarding motherhood and daughterhood that permeated second-wave feminist thought have found expression in texts as diverse as Tanith Lee's *White as Snow* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. While highlighting the similarities between Lee's and Morrison's novels, I situate Morrison's work in the context of black feminists' work on mother-daughter relationships as well as the history of the relationship between African-American writers and the Greco-Roman classics.

Chapter 2, "Revisions of Motherhood and Daughterhood," explores the affinities between the mother-daughter relationship and the concept of literary revision. Through intensive close reading of several texts, I demonstrate that mother-daughter relationships are associated with story-telling itself. I then reverse the direction of that metaphor, and propose an understanding of feminist revision of the 1970s and 1990s that is based on feminist psychoanalytic theories of the mother-daughter relationship advanced by Chodorow, Irigaray, and the theorists of the Wellesley Stone Center. In order to do so, I analyze the primary texts mentioned above, and include other texts by writers as diverse as Kathryn Davis and Kelly Link.

How does this theory of literary revision fit into other theories of revision that would have been influencing writers during the 1970s and 1990s? That is the question that Chapter 3, "Revision and Repetition" seeks to answer. Using works as diverse as Sigmund Freud's "Creative Writing and Day-Dreaming," T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence*, and Rachel Blau DuPlessis's *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers*, I argue that feminist revision as envisioned by the revisionists under study here in particular involves not a hostile or anxious relationship to the story tradition from which it draws inspiration, but instead a collaborative, affectionate relationship. I argue that far from seeking to replace or efface the original story, a revision incarnates the original tale and extends its influence and its "life." I conclude this chapter by differentiating revision from duplication by a close analysis of Terry Pratchett's *Witches Abroad*, a novel that

explicitly grapples with and meditates on the power of repeated traditional tales and the importance of ringing changes on those tales.

The other trope this book takes up is that of the magic mirror. The mirror was a driving metaphor for Luce Irigaray, whose 1974 book (translated into English in 1985), the one that got her expelled from Lacan's circle, was entitled *Speculum of the Other Woman*, punning on the gynecological instrument but also on the medieval Latin use of the word "speculum" to mean "mirror." Irigaray continued to work with this metaphor in pieces such as "And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other" (1979; translated 1981), "Divine Women" (1987; translated 1993), and *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977; translated 1985). With the rise to prominence, simultaneous with the rise of second-wave feminism, of Lacan's mirror stage and issues of the internalized male gaze described through the metaphor of the mirror by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), the mirror became a highly significant issue during the 1970s. Similarly, with the publication of Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* in 1992, the question of appearance as a feminist issue took on new urgency, and so was the age-old relationship between women and mirrors interrogated anew within 1990s feminism. Like the permeable ego boundaries and diffuse senses of self found within the mother-daughter relationship, the mirror troubles the boundary between the subject and object, self and other, I and not-I. And so we find the mirror playing a major role in the fairy-tale revisions of Angela Carter, Tanith Lee, Terry Pratchett, and Catherynne M. Valente, where it often takes on a far greater importance than it had in the traditional tales.

By examining these writers' uses of mirrors in concert with the work of their theoretical counterparts, a significant pattern emerges. The mirror emerges as a potent source of self-creation, magic, and ultimately story-telling itself; the mirror is a figure for the very text being read, a fantastic tale closely identified with female power and creativity. How can we understand this connection? Again, I suggest we understand it through contemporaneous theory, arguing that the mirror becomes a symbol of telling stories through a feminine subjectivity that is characterized by permeable ego boundaries and connection with others, as well as with the alienation from the self under conditions of patriarchy, in a formulation going back to Simone de Beauvoir and W.E.B. DuBois. Ultimately, I argue that as the mirror cannot help but invoke the figure of the double, its importance can help us answer the question of why fantasy in general and fairy-tale revisions in particular held—and continue to hold—such appeal for writers dealing with feminist issues. The mirror's—and fantasy's—illusion of another world, identical and yet opposite to ours, creates a space for expressing the lived experiences of women and envisioning the feminist change necessary to improve those experiences.

In Chapter 4, "Through the Looking-Glass: Mirrors, Fantasy, and Reality," I examine the relationship between mirrors and fantastic literature, arguing that mirrors are an emblem of the fantasy genre itself. I then argue that the use of the mirror as an emblem closely identifies that genre with female power. I argue that rather than understanding the mirror as hostile to women, as do Irigaray and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, we must explore the way in which this symbol is

being reclaimed by the feminist writers under study here, focusing in particular on the same Angela Carter stories that I analyzed in Part I. I find that like the mother-daughter relationship, the mirror is closely identified with the text itself, and often represents specifically feminine experiences and fantasies in a patriarchal world.

Chapter 5, "Double Vision: Women and Fantasy," asks why it should be that the magic mirror is so closely paralleled with women's experiences and fantasies in these texts. I examine the importance of one of the particular elements of fantasy the mirror invokes, that of the double, arguing that the fantasy of the double, evoked by the presence of the mirror, lays bare a particular correspondence between feminine subjectivity and these writers' chosen mode of fantasy. I begin by discussing the recurring motif in fantastic literature of the double, or *doppelgänger*, its appearances in the texts under study, and its special relationship to feminine subjectivity. I then go on to examine the dichotomy between seeming and being, highlighted by the mirror. Ultimately, I argue that the mirrors and fantasies, illusions of another world, identical and yet opposite to ours, create a space for expressing the lived experiences of women and envisioning the feminist changes necessary to improve those experiences.

In many ways, by reconnecting myths and fairy tales to psychoanalytic theory and clinical work, I am rejoining genres that had been put asunder. Myths, fairy tales, and psychoanalytic theory have long occupied the same psychic space. These categories have been intertwined since the birth of psychoanalysis, when Sigmund Freud used the story of Oedipus Rex to illustrate and name his controversial theory about infant desire, and only became more so with the theories of Carl Jung. More recently, Jessica Tiffin, author of *Marvelous Geometry: Narrative and Metafiction in Modern Fairy Tale* (2009), notes that "[t]he recognition fairy-tale pattern ... becomes not only a structural recognition or an evocation of primitive ritual repetitions but also a psychological one: the patterns evoked by fairy tales are profoundly linked to human development and consciousness" (11). But what is the relationship among fairy tales, psychoanalysis, and human consciousness in this project? How do I justify applying theories about psyches to texts, which are, after all, merely words on pages?

Let us begin by discussing the differences between fairy tales and myths. The technical, definitional difference is that a myth is a sacred, unquestioned story, involving divine or semi-divine beings, which purports to be history and explains how the physical or cultural world came to take the form it has, whereas a fairy tale does not involve divinity and was never taken for truth. Obviously these differences are somewhat problematic. How can we claim, for instance, that a myth is sacred, unquestioned, and taken for truth, when so many classical myths have opposing variants? Do we honestly suppose that the ancient Greeks believed *both* that, for instance, Penelope was chaste and faithful, as in Homer's *Odyssey*, and that she had sex with all the suitors, as other versions of the story have it? Too, the level of belief is to be questioned; the ancient world spans thousands of years; do we suppose that all ancient Greeks and Romans literally believed every story they told about the gods?

Besides these technical, definitional differences, however, there is a matter of canonicity, of high culture and low. Classical myth has traditionally taken on a much higher status within our culture than have lowly fairy tales, which are often assumed to be “simple,” and to come from the simple folk. For hundreds of years, learning ancient Greek and Latin and concomitant familiarity with the stories that went along with them was the province of the upper classes—upper-class men, in particular. Fairy tales were associated with women and with servants, despite the fact that the editors who rose to fame through publishing such tales were usually upper- or middle-class men. In contrast, Alicia Ostriker writes about myth that it “belongs to ‘high’ culture and is handed ‘down’ through the ages by religious, literary, and educational authority” (*Stealing the Language* 212–13). This has hardly been the case for fairy tales, often attacked by educational, religious, and literary authorities. Fairy tales have long been the stuff of pop culture. Angela Carter, the revisionist *extraordinaire*, differentiates between myth and fairy tales/folklore as follows: “I’m interested in myths—though I’m much more interested in folklore—just because they *are* extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree. (Whereas, in fact, folklore is a much more straightforward set of devices for making real life more exciting and is much easier to infiltrate with different kinds of consciousness.)” (“Notes” 380). Myth, she contends, is what Blake called “the mind-forg’d manacles” and attempts to shut down uncomfortable questions with its explanatory power and pose of ahistoricity, while folklore/fairy tales, orally transmitted traditional tales, as also argued by Jack Zipes, are stories of lower-class origin that can subvert or ridicule existing structures of power.

Given this perhaps more pressing difference, and the differentiation between myth and fairy tale on the part of my predecessors, it may seem strange that I have chosen to treat myth and fairy tale revisions together. In part, doing so is a political choice; I would like to undermine the hierarchical distinctions of canonicity that suggest certain types of magic are sacred while others are unimportant, that certain tales of magic are prestigious, while others are childish. But in even larger part, it is because I think that these distinctions are, currently, already almost entirely undone when it comes to classical myth and Western European fairy tales in contemporary culture. The era of classical myth as high culture is passing. Latin and Ancient Greek are no longer required subjects for college students, let alone the well-educated upper-class scion or arriviste. Young men are very unlikely to be able to answer that classic question, “Who dragged whom around the walls of what how many times?” In his fascinating essay “On Fairy-Stories,” Tolkien noted that “fairy stories have . . . been relegated to the ‘nursery,’ as shabby or old-fashioned furniture is relegated to the playroom, primarily because the adults do not want it, and do not care if it is misused.” In this century, the same has happened with classical myth. Most contemporary encounters with these myths take place in childhood; perhaps the main source is *D’Aulaire’s Book of Greek Myths*. Sheila Murnaghan and Deborah H. Roberts allude to this when they write, in their essay on Louise Glück’s and Linda Pastan’s poetic revisions of the *Odyssey*, that “Although she [Glück] does not self-consciously thematize, as Pastan does, her

recollection and revision of the Homeric poem, *Meadowlands* plays freely with the story elements of the epic in a way that suggests that the *Odyssey* is itself a part of the world seen in childhood, and now only remembered" (3). Classical myths, just like fairy tales, have become children's stories. Zeus is no more sacred than Snow White—and no less.

But what of their relationship to psychoanalytic theory? In my opinion, this is a question about how to responsibly use psychoanalytic theory in literary studies—how can one justify treating texts as psyches?

Consider what Patricia White in "Lesbian Minor Cinema" and Teresa de Lauretis in *The Practice of Love* have to say about Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten." In this essay, Freud finds that several of the small girls to whom he speaks have a fantasy about a little boy being beaten by his father (Freud is at a loss to understand this fantasy, in my opinion because he is unable to understand patriarchy as anything but natural and right; it seems fairly clear to me that the fantasy portrays a desire to punish the dominant gender class, coupled with an inability to associate the authority and power needed to punish that class with anyone *but* a stronger member of that class). Freud is particularly taken aback by the fact that the little girls in question do not seem to play a role in this fantasy themselves, and when he presses one child to say where *she* is, she finally comes out with "I suppose I am looking on." (This essay has been very influential on film theory for obvious reasons.) De Lauretis and White cite LaPlanche and Potalis in suggesting that the girl does not need to be *anywhere* in the fantasy, because she is what they call the *syntax* of the fantasy; that is, the entire thing is an emanation of herself, and thus she is not only the boy and the man, but she is also the setting, the action, the entire dynamic. What LaPlanche and Potalis suggest, and de Lauretis and White elaborate on, is the idea that a fantasy is a *holistic* expression of the psyche.

It seems fairly conventional to think of texts as fantasies. Obviously, they are informed by phantasy (subconscious as opposed to conscious fantasy), created as fantasies, and then edited and refined artistically. If a fantasy is a holistic expression of the psyche, and the editing and refining process represses some elements and highlights others, it creates a structure that can be, in my opinion, usefully analogized to a psyche, unless one rejects the notion of a psyche with a conscious and an un/subconscious altogether. Once we think of a text as a subspecies of fantasy, a kind of holistic representation of the psyche, its connections to other texts/fantasies/representations of psyches become relationships, and relational theory, as well as the theories advanced by Irigaray, Chodorow, and others, can be brought into play to understand those connections.

It is my contention that we have not understood those connections sufficiently. Intertextuality posits that all texts are essentially created of allusions and echoes of prior texts in an endlessly circulating language, and certainly this is the case. All language is always already in use, or it would be unintelligible. And most, if not all, texts make reference to other texts. But surely we must recognize a difference between texts that make allusions to other texts, and/or recycle phrases that derive their meaning from prior use ("Once upon a time"), and/or rework a general idea,

such as the marriage plot, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, texts that are deliberately rewriting and revivifying specific stories. That difference deserves, or rather, demands, a specific theorizing and critical lens. I accept that in making this distinction, I am, in some part, hearkening back to authorial intent (“deliberately” rewriting and revivifying). But revisions are indeed a case of authorial intent. A revision is only a revision insofar as the author sets out to rewrite a specific story. It is nearly impossible to revise by accident, on the one hand, or for a specific story to be a revision only in the eyes of the reader, on the other. As many of my students note, *Jane Eyre* may allude to both “Cinderella” and “Bluebeard,” but it would be a far stretch to argue that the novel is a revision of either story; on the other hand, it is impossible to understand Tanith Lee’s *White as Snow* as anything *but* a revision. In a culture that had no tradition of either Snow White or Persephone and Demeter, it would be a meaningless novel. It is the job of this project, however, to, among other things, pay tribute to the ways its many meanings continue to resonate.

I am not the first scholar to note the intertwining of fairy-tale revisions and scholarship/theory. Most recently, Vanessa Joosen’s *Critical and Creative Perspectives on Fairy Tales: An Intertextual Dialogue between Fairy-Tale Scholarship and Postmodern Retellings* (2011) examines creative and critical interactions with three key, highly influential pieces of fairy-tale scholarship: the feminist debate on fairy tales between Alison Lurie and Marcia K. Lieberman, Bruno Bettelheim’s *The Uses of Enchantment*, and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Stephen Benson, in *Contemporary Fiction and the Fairy Tale* (2008), describes the relationship between fairy-tale fiction and fairy-tale scholarship as an “extraordinary synchronicity” and “fascinatingly close” (5). Jack Zipes, one of the most influential fairy-tale scholars of the past few decades, notes in the recent *Relentless Progress* that in the past 30 years, “there has been an inextricable, dialectical development of mutual influence of *all* writers of fairy tales and fairy-tale criticism” (122).

This project diverges from the those of the above-mentioned scholars in its choice of scholarship on which to focus; for fairly obvious reasons, Joosen, Benson, and Zipes describe the relationship between fairy-tale revisions and fairy-tale scholarship/theory, with feminist revisions and analysis as a subsection of their work. I reverse that focus, considering the relationship between feminist fairy-tale revisions<sup>1</sup> and feminist theory, and, interestingly, find that the level of engagement with similar concerns is just as high as that identified and analyzed

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<sup>1</sup> The decision concerning whether or not a given revision is feminist is, of course, one that is open to a great deal of debate. For this project, I have tried to err on the side of inclusivity. Thus, while, I would argue, all of the revisions discussed in this book are feminist, they are certainly not all feminist in the same way. Consider, for instance, the brutality of Tanith Lee’s *White as Snow*, which highlights women’s struggles for autonomy within a patriarchal system, as opposed to the woman-dominated world and power-structures of Terry Pratchett’s *Witches Abroad*, which takes older women as complex central characters whose concerns are of great significance. Each illustrates an aspect of feminist thought, though neither is all-inclusive.



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