

*Fairy Tales as Ways of Knowing: Essays on Märchen in Psychology, Society and Literature.* Ed. MICHAEL METZGER and KATHARINA MOMMSEN. Germanic Studies in America, No. 41. Bern: Lang, 1981. 198 pp.

*Fairy Tales as Ways of Knowing* is a compilation of eight papers delivered at the 1979 MLA Convention, supplemented by two independent essays. Most of them revolve about the way in which *Märchen* and *Kunstmärchen* embody psychological responses to universal experiences, though historical, sociological, and stylistic elements are also considered. The subject is a compelling one, but the collection as a whole dredges up some familiar reservations about using the twenty-minute paper as the basic building material of a book.

To a large extent the problem is one of time: how much analysis is possible in eight to ten pages—when broader hypotheses are at stake? Fortunately, at least, all the contributions deal with engrossing, seminal issues, not just broad ones. Bruno Bettelheim's paper, probably the best example of this problem, is a scintillating piece of psychological criticism, but ultimately hypothetical. He uncovers in fairy tales our childhood struggles against primordial anxieties in the extrapolative manner typical of the best "Freudian" critics, and the more inductively inclined among us can only read his epiphanies with a mixture of admiration for the magical illuminations of his lamp and skepticism over the convexities of his mirror. Linda Dègh, in two essays, ranges widely (sometimes with seven-league boots) through the realms of the tale and the legend, observing various social, psychological, and supernatural peculiarities of each. Maria Tatar seeks the source of uniformity in tales from around the world and, after some detours through barren theoretical territory, eventually ends up where much of twentieth-century research has already set out, in the realm of psychology (with its golden rule of the uniformity of the human psyche). Erika Metzger's subject is as promising as any ("Depersonalization in Grimmschen Märchen"), but her short essay is largely plot summary and adds little to the psychoanalysis of the tale. Hansjörg Schelle's excursus on "Wiclands Märchendichtung zwischen Aufklärung und Romantik" is actually an introduction to a French monograph on the German fairy tale in the eighteenth century (*Naissance et apogée du conte merveilleux en Allemagne: 1740-1800* by Gonthier-Louis Fink—1966), an invaluable but neglected study which traces the roots of the German fairy tale into soil quite west of the Rhine.

The final articles focus on the *Kunstmärchen*, which, as Lawrence Frye acutely observes in his paper, is distinguished by the role of imagination in its plot, as well in its creations: the genre revolves about the power of the imagination to shape an environment. Cora Lee Nollendorf's "The Kiss of the Supernatural: Tieck's Treatment of a Familiar Theme" corrects previous careless readings of "Der getreue Eckart und der Tannenhäuser" by showing how an ominous, obscure supernatural force invades quotidian existence. This would prove (once again) that Tieck aims at upsetting our equilibrium, at fracturing simple unidimensional views of reality, but the thesis is implicitly questioned by James McGlathery's fascinating discussion of Tieck's and especially Hoffmann's *Liebesmärchen*; both romantics appear to have been preoccupied with psychological inhibitions against love: the magic in these tales (including "Der getreue Eckart") thus turns out to be a direct result—a projection—of psychic distress, in particular the fear of sexuality and marriage. Lee Jennings's investigation of alcoholically induced higher states in Hoffmann's mythic tales demythologizes the raptus of intoxication, concluding that alcohol might lubricate the mechanisms of the imagination, but otherwise does nothing the mind cannot do. We may wonder still, however, about the distinction between projections of the mind and actual manifestations of a higher reality (but then the romantics themselves played with the same effect).

All in all, these papers are worthy symposium pieces, particularly the better examples of psychological criticism; and they do add up to a comprehensive whole (though the interdisciplinary orientation suggested by the title ought to have opened this forum to a wider range of experts). The major drawback of this work is its medium: the oral presentation and the printed article tend to be different genres, and the former—as evidenced by this collection—usually lack the depth of analysis or the supporting structure of detail that we should expect in published material.

University of Chicago

TIMOTHY SCHIFF