Bruno Bettelheim. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1976), 328 pp.

The title of Dr. Bettelheim's book, *The Uses of Enchantment*, indicates straightaway his functionalist approach to "fairy tales," as they are called throughout the book: this is a study asking to what and to whose needs they are a response. According to the author, "fairy tales" can serve as means for understanding and integrating aspects of one's maturing personality; "fairy tales" are specifically designed to be told by adults to children. Through exposure to this type of fantasy narrative, with which he can formulate and think about his unconscious hopes and fears, the child comes to terms with the psychological growth processes he faces and can adumbrate an ultimate outcome, a bright future of adulthood. Thus, an even more important function of the "fairy tale" than giving the child a forum for expressing and understanding his inner self via projection is that it gives him hope of a more mature personality that has conquered the problems of the present. A "fairy tale" by definition then must have a happy ending: the situations, images, and characters of "fairy tales" are paradigms onto which the child can project aspects of himself and his own situation, so that the happy ending of the narrative suggests ultimate resolution to the dilemmas of transition which the child is experiencing within himself.

There is a language of metaphors in "fairy tales" which the child intuitively understands and which makes possible a dialogue between the world of the story and the child's own subjective world. "Fairy tales" are full of lessons relevant in any society that are waiting to be noticed by the child. The author does not think that "fairy tales" impose models of behavior or reality upon children. Rather, they give them an opportunity to get involved in fantasy situations and problems that they can relate to their own; children arrive at truths passed down through the tradition of storytelling and now internalized and spontaneously valid within the individual recipient of that tradition.

Besides describing his theories about "fairy tale" in general, Dr. Bettelheim gives fascinating and loving interpretations of several tales to show how they could be addressing problems of the growing individual. Particularly interesting is the second part of the book, where the author organizes several famous "fairy tales" in the order that he feels they are meant as responses to the needs and feelings of children at different stages of maturation. In this world of narrative, as described by Dr. Bettelheim, there is a definite sense of order: "fairy tales" complement one another, utilize and elaborate on the same language of metaphors, so that together they form a *system*, wherein each part seems to generate another. From a Lévi-Straussian viewpoint, it is exciting to see these tales analyzed as attempts to

solve specific conceptual problems and to see them treated as intellectual tools, things good to "think with."

The author's use of the admittedly misleading term, "fairy tale," to describe generically the stories he wishes to discuss is perhaps a natural consequence of his apparent methodological decision to rely mostly on classic *literary* renderings of international *Märchen* (e.g. the Grimm tales, the *1001 Nights*) for examples of what the author recognizes existed and functioned as orally transmitted narrative. The reader of *The Uses of Enchantment* is never quite sure of what exactly Dr. Bettelheim's subject-matter is: whether we are dealing with the narrative material of illiterate societies, where, the author admits, a distinction between a genre of "fairy tale" and other narrative genres is impossible, or rather, with this narrative material as it has been preserved and transformed into something called "fairy tale" in our modern literate society. Dr. Bettelheim does not sufficiently consider the differences in content and function that the transition from oral to literary context entails for this narrative material. Thus the author feels free to project our modern view of it as "childish" material, perhaps our response to the obsolescence of *Märchen*, back onto the illiterate, pre-industrial context. Despite the fact that in this context stories which we would call "fairy tales" were told by adults *to other adults*, Dr. Bettelheim persists in claiming that these stories were always child-oriented. The adult nature of traditional narrative does not necessarily undermine the author's ideas about the real subject-matter of folktales; the processes of growing up and the integration of the personality are things to think about (and to think with about other things) even beyond childhood. But Dr. Bettelheim's occasional insinuation that the people who seriously listened to folktales and/or myths were indulging in a pre-adult, irrational or subjective psychological phase is belied by the methodical rationality that the author himself demonstrates is at work in "fairy tales," as problems are formulated and neatly resolved.

Since Dr. Bettelheim does not adequately take into account the implications of the process of transmitting narrative literarily as opposed to orally, his view of the basic form of a "fairy tale" has a literary bias: by the time a tale is written down it has been *perfected* as a carrier of meaning. Thus, to "tamper" with a tale as it is found (or as we think it *should* be found) in oral tradition or in a classic collection such as the Grimms' is probably to dilute its semantic possibilities. Perrault and Walt Disney are villains in this book; but then what of the original illiterate tellers of these stories, who, as the author himself says, changed their telling of them to fit the circumstances? Indeed, their tradition of storytelling demanded dynamic variation in transmission for its very survival.

Images tend to assume meanings and significance too spontaneously in Dr. Bettelheim's psychological analysis of these tales. Why *should* a child

respond to the image of being lost in the forest as a symbol of the search for oneself? Is it not his culture which informs him to do so? Would *all* cultures give him the same information? Perhaps, as the author suggests, traditional stories have survived through many ages and societies bearing the same central psychological formulations and messages. But when we try to extract the latter out of time and place, to formulate them as constants, we get little idea of why they would have been significant, what they *were* for any particular audience other than ourselves. But then Dr. Bettelheim's intention is not so much to examine what folktales meant in different cultures as to show what they can mean to *us* as art, as thought, and as a channel of communication among ourselves.

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Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis,* trans., Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) 148pp.

Life and Death in Psychoanalysis displays both by its interest and by its method another attempt to inquire into the terminological and interpretative consequences of the Freudian text. As such, it is more than a psychoanalytical exercise, it is an exercise in *reading.* In its thoroughness and precision the translation facilitates the understanding of the *reading* at stake in Laplanche. The reader may already be familiar with a number of French texts, whose general orientation evokes insistently the name of Jacques Lacan, or at least situate themselves in the vicinity of his works. The initial acquaintance with Jean Laplanche's work has most likely taken place through his *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse* (trans. Michelson-Smith, as *The Language of Psychoanalysis)* done in collaboration with J. B. Pontalis. It is in reference to the *Vocabulaire,* that Laplanche asserts in the Appendix (p. 129) to *Life and Death* the necessity to go beyond a strictly terminological analysis. Going beyond a terminological approach means posing the problem of the genesis of psychoanalytic terminology, as well as understanding the precise derivations of these terms according to linguistic categories. This time, instead of defining terms in reference to the Freudian texts alone, following the coherence of a dictionary, Laplanche chains them together in conceptual pairs. This binary operation has as its result the effect of structuring Freud's texts, giving them a coherence even while determining the relation between the two terms as agonistic. This conflict is always necessarily recuperated by Laplanche into an economy, where the uncontrolled and the unintended nonetheless function systematically within the general economy of Freud's works. It must be noted that the spirit of the *Vocabulaire* is