

In order to have a common body of tales from which to work, we considered versions of a central group of major stories in Maria Tatar's edition, *The Classic Fairy Tales* (New York: Norton, 1999), including "Little Red Riding Hood", "Beauty and the Beast", "Snow White", "Cinderella," "Bluebeard" and "Hansel and Gretel". We noted the market implications of the prettification that the tales underwent at the hands of Perrault, and introduced the concept of "mediation" to describe the transmutation of oral tales into written literary form intended for upper-class audiences. We queried why Tatar had placed a version of "Little Red Riding Hood" collected in 1885 ahead of the Perrault text of 1697, concluding that because it was considered to be a "folk tale" it was therefore presumed to be "old", and hence to ante-date any of the written evidence. We gave particular attention to the points about fairy tales as a women's tradition, and noted their characteristic symbolic opposition of the domestic and the wild, along with the importance of transitions between them (usually perilous). The tales appear to be highly dualistic. We noted another polarity, namely the opposition of animal and human (the boundaries between which seemed which much more porous in our material than in the general modern world view, enabling relatively easy passage between animal and human states); and also between the natural and the supernatural, suggesting still another form of dualism, that between the natural order and the supernatural one. We talked about the presently accepted boundaries of the order of nature as they was defined by the great Victorian scientists (amid protests that they were drawing these too narrowly and from an overly-materialist point of view) and the fairy tale cosmos which seems to contain parallel realities: the natural order of everyday life strongly contrasting with that of the Otherworld, and how this was an asymmetrical relationship, in the sense that while supernatural beings were able to enter the natural order freely and at will, if mortals strayed into the Otherworld it was generally by invitation and was fraught with hazard (leading to yet another symbolic opposition—that between power and vulnerability—widely present in these stories).

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