Transformations: A Folkloric Exploration of the Musical Comedy Into the Woods by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine

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TRANSFORMATIONS: A FOLKLORIC EXPLORATION OF THE MUSICAL
COMEDY INTO THE WOODS BY STEPHEN SONDHEIM AND JAMES LAPINE

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Folk Studies
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Folk Studies

By
Cara Elizabeth Hoglund

May 2000
TRANSFORMATIONS: A FOLKLORIC EXPLORATION OF STEPHEN SONDHEIM AND JAMES LAPINE’S MUSICAL COMEDY INTO THE WOODS

Date Recommended

Director of Thesis

Dean, Graduate Studies and Research  Date

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the use of folktales in Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine’s 1987 award-winning musical *Into the Woods*. In doing so, I hope to accomplish several directives. First, to enrich understanding of the musical for all audience members, especially those with a folklore or theater background. I feel that understanding the underlying goals and standards that Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine used in creating the musical will provide a much deeper understanding of the genius of their work. I also aim clearly elucidate the merger of folk narrative and popular musical theater form in this innovative musical. My hope is that analyses such as this will encourage a greater exploration of the strong reciprocal relationship between folklore and theater. *Into the Woods* is based upon four traditional folktales: Cinderella, Rapunzel, Little Red Riding Hood, and Jack and the Beanstalk. A very brief synopsis of the plot runs as follows: Cinderella, Jack, and Little Red all wish for something, and must go into the woods to get it. Rapunzel, heroine of the fourth tale, already lives in the woods with the Witch, though she wishes to see the world. Added to these tales is the central tale created by Lapine, based on the first section of Rapunzel’s tale—the Baker turns out to be Rapunzel’s older brother, whom their parents had before the Witch acquired Rapunzel. The Baker and his Wife wish to have a child; only when the Witch visits them do they learn that they have not been able to have a child because when the Witch came to collect Rapunzel, she also curse the Baker’s family. When the Witch
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Act Two begins *after* “Happily Ever After” and attempts to bring the characters back into real life. Rapunzel has psychological problems; the Princes’ eyes stray elsewhere; Jack is bored; and Little Red Riding Hood has become violent. By the end of Act Two, almost every character besides Jack, Little Red, Cinderella, and the Baker have died, due to the fact that the wife of Jack’s Giant has come to seek revenge for her husband’s death. In Act Two, these four main characters learn to take responsibility for the selfish actions they committed while pursuing their wish in Act One. In the process, they mature psychologically and become part of a cohesive group, learning to work together for a common cause and realizing that everything everyone does effects everyone else in some way. No one is alone.

My thesis begins with a chapter on the history of folktale scholarship. Chapter Two gives biographies of Sondheim and Lapine, and discusses the history of the American musical comedy in order to put them and this musical into a theater context as well. Chapter Three summarizes the plot in detail and compares the Broadway and London productions of the show, including reviews of the musical soon after it came out. Chapter Four analyzes *Into The Woods* in terms of the theories of Vladimir Propp, and compares Sondheim and Lapine’s versions of the stories to the Grimms
versions (using Jack Zipes’ translation) and Joseph Jacobs, from whom they drew their version of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Chapter Five does the same thing using the scholarship of Axel Olrik and Max Lüthi. Chapter Six explores Sondheim and Lapine’s intentions behind the themes in the musical, focusing on the works of Bruno Bettelheim and Erich Fromm.

In researching fairy tales for their musical, Sondheim and Lapine read several analyses by folklorists and psychologists. They drew mainly from non-folkloristic sources in creating their interpretations. They critiqued Bettelheim’s as well as the Jungians’ interpretations of the tales. As Lapine states, “Once we decided on choosing the stories, then the obvious thing was to have a point of view about them” (1991:3). They also drew from the works of Erich Fromm, a Neo-Freudian who primarily focused on the relationship between society and the individual and between individuals.
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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements v

Introduction vii

**Chapter One**
Folktale Scholarship: An Overview 1

**Chapter Two**
The American Musical Comedy 25

**Chapter Three**
Into the Woods: The Production 57

**Chapter Four**
Folktale Scholarship Applied to *Into the Woods*:
The Brothers Grimm and Vladimir Propp 87

**Chapter Five**
Axel Olrik and Max Lüthi: Literary Analyses 112

**Chapter Six**
Character Growth in *Into the Woods* 136

Afterward 160

Appendices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Chronology of Stephen Sondheim’s Musicals</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>The Cast and Crew of the Broadway Production</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Text of <em>Cinderella</em> (Zipes, 1992)</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Proppian analysis of Cinderella</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>Text of Rapunzel (Zipes, 1992)</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>Proppian analysis of Rapunzel</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Text of Little Red Riding Hood</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>Proppian analysis of Little Red Riding Hood</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>Text of Jack and the Beanstalk</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>Proppian analysis of Jack and the Beanstalk</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements (or, “No one is alone”)
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This thesis began as the result of a clip that Dr. Danielson showed to us in our Folk Narrative class last year. Dr. Danielson used the clip as one of many illustrating the numerous adaptations of folk narrative into popular media forms. Prior to this use of *Into the Woods*, I had not realized that such a topic could be studied in an academic setting. Hopeful, I went to Dr. Danielson to broach the musical as the subject of my narrative paper. Soon, however, I decided that it would make a great topic for my thesis. The following study is the result of my investigations into the folkloric transformations of the folktale in *Into the Woods*. First however, several sets of thanks are due.

Thanks go first and foremost to my parents, Allen and Catherine Hoglund, for many long years of financing my way through school and supporting me through many bounced checks and scholastic decisions. They have always wholeheartedly supported my interests despite being uncertain, at times, as to what those interests were or what practical use my degrees may indeed be put. Both have kept up their encouragement and allowed me to go as far as I could in the academic world.

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As I had to acquire a good deal of my sources from either Amazon.com, eBay, or Music Theater International Enterprises (MTI), another big round of thanks goes to my parents. Thanks also to MTI, who provided a great deal of indispensable data (at a price), without which this thesis would have been all the weaker. The people at Inter-Library Loan also deserve my gratitude, though unfortunately they were only able to get hold of about half of the materials I needed.

Finally, thanks to all faculty and fellow students who encouraged my research interests and inspired me to keep learning along the way. “Now I understand.... / And it’s time to leave the woods!”
Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the use of folktales in Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine’s 1987 award-winning musical Into the Woods. In doing so, I hope to accomplish several directives. First, to enrich understanding of the musical for all audience members, especially those with a folklore or theater background. I feel that understanding the underlying goals and standards that Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine used in creating the musical will provide a much deeper understanding of the genius of their work. I also aim clearly elucidate the merger of folk narrative and popular musical theater form in this innovative musical. My hope is that analyses such as this will encourage a greater exploration of the strong reciprocal relationship between folklore and theater. Into the Woods is based upon four traditional folktales: Cinderella, Rapunzel, Little Red Riding Hood, and Jack and the Beanstalk. A very brief synopsis of the plot runs as follows: Cinderella, Jack, and Little Red all wish for something, and must go into the woods to get it. Rapunzel, heroine of the fourth tale, already lives in the woods with the Witch, though she wishes to see the world. Added to these tales is the central tale created by Lapine, based on the first section of Rapunzel’s tale—the Baker turns out to be Rapunzel’s older brother, whom their parents had before the Witch acquired Rapunzel. The Baker and his Wife wish to have a child; only when the Witch visits them do they learn that they have not been able to have a child because when the Witch came to collect Rapunzel, she also curse the Baker’s family. When the Witch appears she explains to the Baker how to reverse the curse. The Baker must collect:
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In researching fairy tales for their musical, Sondheim and Lapine read several analyses by folklorists and psychologists. They drew mainly from non-folkloristic sources in creating their interpretations. They critiqued Bettelheim's as well as the Jungians' interpretations of the tales. As Lapine states, "Once we decided on choosing the stories, then the obvious thing was to have a point of view about them" (1991:3). They also drew from the works of Erich Fromm, a Neo-Freudian who primarily focused on the relationship between society and the individual and between individuals.
Chapter One:

Folktale Scholarship: An Overview

A note on terminology:

Fairy tales are ill-named; fairies usually do not appear in them. For this reason, and also due to the fact that people collected the tales long before an academic discipline evolved to discuss them, they are called by a number of different names. The Grimm brothers, two of the most famous collectors of these tales, called them *Märchen*. Stith Thompson, in devising an analytic system for the tales called them generally “folktales,” but used the term “magic tale” to refer to those tales we now think of as fairy tales. The magic in the magic tale referred to by Thompson is not “magic” (spells, wizards, and alchemy) per se, but rather supernatural occurrences or objects (talking birds, enormous beanstalks, hens that lay golden eggs, for example) and powerful curses, often placed by witches.\(^1\) Among scholars today, the term “folktale” is most generally used. I use that term in this analysis to refer specifically to the “magical tales” as Thompson has described and categorized them.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Max Lüthi (1986:67) argues that “genuine” magic requires psychological tension or an act of will, which is “precisely what is lacking in the folktale.”
The hit musical *Into the Woods* by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine first opened in 1987. Following their previous musical effort, a postmodern musical based on the life of Georges Seurat called *Sunday in the Park with George*, Sondheim stated that they wanted to do something “funny” (1991:1).\(^2\) Lapine, the book writer and director, had always been interested in fairy tales; Sondheim, the composer and lyricist, suggested to him that they create a new one.\(^4\) However, Lapine soon realized that he couldn’t create a new fairy tale. Instead, he decided to take several old fairy tales and interweave them. They went to the Grimms’ collection of fairy tales first. After some searching, they decided upon the familiar tales of Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, and Rapunzel. The four main stories were chosen from a larger number of tales that contained a hero who for various reasons went “into the woods,” often to get his or her wish. One “original” tale was added to help keep the other four together, inspired by Rapunzel’s story: the story of the Baker and his wife, who wish to have a child.

In researching fairy tales, Sondheim and Lapine read several analyses by folklorists and psychologists. As Lapine states, “Once we decided on choosing the stories, then the obvious thing was to have a point of view about them” (1991:3). They drew mainly from non-folkloristic sources in analyzing the tales, such as Bruno Bettelheim’s as well as the Jungians’ interpretations of the tales. They also drew

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\(^2\) For a short discussion of folktales, see Brunvand (1998: 229-237).
\(^3\) *Sunday in the Park with George*, 1984.
\(^4\) The librettist writes the “book” for the musical, which contains all the dialogue and song lyrics plus some abbreviated stage directions. Lapine also directed *Into the Woods*’ first run in 1987. The librettist is usually half of the creative pair who creates the musical; Stephen Sondheim, the other half in this case, composes all the music and writes the songs.
from the works of Erich Fromm, a Neo-Freudian who primarily focused on the relationship between society and the individual. But to better understand these analyses, one must review the history of folktale scholarship, placing the Grimms, Bettelheim, Jung, and Fromme into context with the academic disciplines from which they drew.

Folktale scholarship has a long and complex history. Though they were originally oral tales, they have been collected in written form for over three hundred years, starting in France and Germany. Since that time, the tales (primarily in written versions) have provided controversial fodder for nationalists, cultural historians, psychoanalysts, analytic psychologists, and theologians. The tales have spread far beyond the European peasants and French aristocracy from whom the first collections were drawn. References to specific tales such as “Cinderella” and “Beauty and the Beast” appear in modern-day song lyrics, magazine ads, Internet jokes, musicals, and amusement parks. With the growth of international folktale scholarship, versions of basic tales such as “Cinderella” and “Little Red Riding Hood” have been recognized in many widely diverse cultures. These stories, in fact, are so versatile that they have spawned numerous questions: What exactly are folktales? What do they symbolize? Where do they come from? How do they affect us? What is their structure? How can we use them? During the past three hundred years, numerous attempts have been made to answer these specific questions in both popular and academic forums. As of yet, no final verdict has been reached and the debate continues. In the past decade or so, folktale research seems to have once again come into favor both inside and
outside the academic realm as volumes of feminist and rewritten literary fairy tales fill the popular markets.

**Romantic Nationalists: The First Collectors**

Charles Perrault, the first recorded collector of European folktales, collected the tales from French peasants in the late seventeenth century. Though France was not under another country's influence at the time, France's King Louis XIV had France engaged in numerous wars and was coming into contact with other cultures and traditions. Also, like many cultures of his time, France looked back to the classic epics and mythology of ancient Greek and Rome; Perrault also hoped to create a distinctly French body of lore equal to these ancient but foreign stories. Though writing about a century prior to Romantic Nationalism, he had the same motivations. His purpose in collecting these tales, while his peers were creating their own literary and often romanticized versions of fairy tales, was to help promote his country's own heritage. Perrault wanted to preserve and celebrate the oral traditions France already had, and by doing so celebrate France herself. In collecting the tales, Perrault drew indiscriminately from both French peasant oral traditions as well as literary and intellectual resources. He also edited the style and content of the tales to appear more modern and to appeal to the refined upper-middle class tastes. (Zipes, 1988:102). His collection, entitled *Contes de ma Mère L'Oye* (1697), sold well.  

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The earliest folktale scholars, following Perrault's lead, were mainly collectors of their nation's folk treasures. During the Ages of Exploration and Enlightenment interest in the cultures that European countries had colonized grew, and scholars began to study the oral traditions of the many cultures they had subdued. Later on, as the Industrial Age came into full force and peasants started moving into the cities, several European countries realized that a rich and perhaps more "natural" cultural tradition also existed in their own countries, and "folk-lore," or the traditions of the peasants, became ground for study as well. Also, countries who were not at that time in a position of power—such as Germany, Ireland, and Finland—reacted against the Enlightenment mentality of the times and attempted to uncover their own identities using folk customs as their basis.

Probably the most well known of the folktale collections produced during this time period are those of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, also known as the Brothers Grimm. Approximately one hundred years after Perrault published his collection, around 1805, the Grimms were studying law at the University of Marburg in Germany. One of Jacob's professors of law, Friedrich Karl von Savigny, believed that to truly understand the spirit of the law, one must look at the customs and language of the era that spawned the laws (Zipes 1988:3-4). He then took Jacob to his private library, which was filled with Greek, Roman, Icelandic, and other epics and mythologies, and from then on both Grimms were hooked. Inspired by these stories, and in response to the influence of French culture upon Germany both before and after Napoleon's invasion, they wanted to bolster their nation's sense of uniqueness and character. They became interested in their own culture's traditions, and they
hoped to find in the tales and traditions that they collected the relics of ancient German mythology. This goal stayed with them throughout their lives. Jacob, who was primarily interested in linguistics, went on to found the Indo-European theory, which attempted to trace all languages and myths back to India. Jacob also wrote on the history of the German language, and together they began to compile an official German dictionary (1988:6-9).

Their collection did not officially begin until a friend, inspired by current cultural conditions and Johann Gottfried Herder’s call for people to collect their country’s folk traditions, asked them to collect some folktales for a book he was publishing. They collected several tales from older Germans of lower social status of the region but also many more tales from middle-class friends, often women, who lived in or near Kassel, their hometown. They also collected tales from other written sources, including Perrault’s collection. When the original book agreement fell through, the Grimms decided to publish the book on their own, resulting in the first in a series of seven editions of their *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (“Children’s and Household Tales,” 1812.) The Grimm’s first collection did not sell well, and neither did several following publications. However, by 1819 the Grimms had revised these tales for their patriarchal Protestant middle-class society and directed the tales toward children. Only then did their collection begin to sell (1988:11-14).

However, revising oral tales has become anathema to folklore scholars, and it is one of the main critiques they level against the Grimms. The other main critique is that they did not actually collect the tales from “the folk.” The popular conception of the Grimms’ collection for a long time was that they had gone out among the poor
peasant folk of their country and collected their tales word for word. Only much later did scholars realize that the Grimms had also collected from several of their literate middle-class friends, who, as it turned out, were also familiar with Perrault’s collection of tales. Both characteristics lessen the “purity” of the tales in the eyes of traditional folktale scholars. Not only that, the Grimms had also collected tales from previous written collections. Therefore, many of the tales that they collected were not truly or uniquely German, nor were they even true peasant lore.

Even if the tales they had collected had been uniquely “German” (if such a thing was actually possible), the Grimms also severely edited the tales—first for peers, second for children. This editing process, which Jacob had started in the first volume and which Wilhelm continued, covered content as well as stylistic changes. During editing, they eliminated from the tales all sexual references, they added Christian expressions and references, they emphasized particular gender role models and added “quaint expressions and cute descriptives” to enhance the “rustic” feel of the tales (1988:ibid). As it turned out, both Jacob and Wilhelm considered their collection of tales to be educational material for children; by the 1870s, some of their tales had been incorporated into the educational curricula of many German-speaking regions.

Though the Grimms were not meticulous collectors of pure orally performed folk narratives, the legacy they left is vast. Their works revived a great deal of interest in the folktale for many generations to come. Folklorist Linda Dégh argues that they also saved some tales from oblivion (Dégh, 1988). It has even been argued that the folktale as a genre would not have survived, much less flourished, as much as
it has in Modern Europe and America were it not for the Grimm's collections. In Germany today, the popularity of versions of *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* is second only to the Bible, and their collection has been translated into one hundred and forty languages worldwide (1988:76). Today, folktale motifs or characters also appear in media as varied as popular songs to food advertisements and amusement parks.

However, though the Grimm name is better known that Perrault's, it is Perrault's versions of the tales that are most well known. Walt Disney's famous series of animated fairy tales were based upon Perrault's collection. For example, in Perrault, Cendrillion (Cinderella) has a fairy godmother, a pumpkin coach, fits into a glass slipper, and everyone lives happily ever after. In the Grimm version of that same tale, however, the soul or ghost of Aschenputtel's (Cinderella's) mother helps her out, the slipper is golden, and Aschenputtel's bird friends peck the stepsisters' eyes out. As well, in the Grimm version, her stepmother cuts off a bit of each of her daughters' feet so that they might fit into the slipper better. Differences such as these have earned the Grimm's version the reputation of being the darker and bloodier versions of the tales—which was part of the reason Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine chose them for their musical (1991:2). The Grimm and Perrault collections contain three of the four tales used in the musical—"Cinderella," "Little Red Cap (Little Red Riding Hood)," and "Rapunzel." "Jack and the Beanstalk," the fourth tale, comes from the British Jack tale tradition that will be discussed later on.

Other folktale projects inspired by nationalism were underway before and after the Grimms made their landmark collection. Two major "collections" of folktales took an epic poem form. Scotsman James Macpherson created the first,
Ossian, in 1765. This epic poem contained many Celtic folk tales, myths, and legends. Macpherson claimed that an ancient Celtic bard named Ossian originally composed it and that he had happened upon it; however, it was later proven that Macpherson had created the text himself. Though his actions were deceptive, his intention, like Perrault, had been to give his culture its own ancient epic poem and heritage. In 1835, Ossian inspired Finnish scholar Elias Lönnrot to create an epic poem for Finland as well. Called the Kalevala, it was also composed of many local folktales. Unlike Macpherson, however, Lönnrot acknowledged his part in the creation of the poem. Lönnrot’s biggest contribution to folktale scholarship was arguably not the Kalevala, however, but the acknowledgement of various bits of narrative within it called motifs.

The Historic-Geographic Method and Early Folktale Scholarship

For almost two hundred years of folktale scholarship, scholars had done nothing but collect the tales and publish them in various formats and for various audiences. Though this trend continues right up to the present day, Finnish scholars in the nineteenth century realized that this field of study needed a more scientific methodology and purpose. This analysis began with the study of motifs when Julius Krohn, a student of Lonnröt’s, identified the motifs present in the Kalevala. Julius influenced his son Kaarle Krohn to study the tale as well. The younger Krohn and his
student Antti Aarne eventually came up with what is now called the Finnish, or the Historical-Geographic, method of studying folktales.

In his folktale studies, Kaarle Krohn noticed that many tales have different versions. Building on Jacob Grimm's Indo-European theory, he argued that all tales have an "Urform"—the original form of the tale that since has been modified, localized, and spread over various parts of the world. Krohn attempted to recreate the Urforms of tales by collecting all versions of the tales that could be found, written or oral, and extracting the most common elements from them. Putting these common elements back together in narrative form then produced the Urform of that particular tale. Inherent in the concept of the Ur form is the theory of monogenesis—a tale type can arise only once, and it spreads in roughly even waves outward from that point. Krohn believed that by collecting and mapping all versions of a tale through space and time, one could find out where and when the tale arose.\(^6\) His pupil Antti Aarne, in turn, worked on a classification of the various tale types and published a short work on them entitled *Verzeichnis der Märchtypen* in 1910.

Unfortunately, Aarne did not live long enough to finish his classification system, so after his death, Krohn brought in American folktale scholar Stith Thompson to complete it. Picking up where Aarne left off, Thompson created the taletype index that folklorists know and use today. The index, published in English in 1928 as *The Types of the Folktale*, demonstrated the Aarne-Thompson (also known as AT, or Aa-Th) classification system. The index contains many other general folktale categories besides “magical tales,” (variously known as Märcchen or fairy tales),

\(^6\) He explained this method thoroughly in his 1926 work *Die Folkloristische Arbeitsmethode* (*Folklore Methodology*).
including animal tales (tales with animal protagonists) and religious tales (often dealing with religious figures.) As I discuss them in the following analysis, the term “folktale” is to be understood as synonymous with Thompson’s magic tale.

While in its heyday, the Finnish method was severely critiqued by a few scholars, most notably Carl von Sydow. Von Sydow maintained that the method was based on “artificial categories and invalid premises.” He argued that in fact no Urform ever existed, and that it was a waste of time looking for one. He also argued that while tales do spread out, they do so by means of individuals, not some kind of impersonal or intangible concentric “wave,” and definitely not at a constant, measurable rate. He pointed out that tales get changed to complement their current locale (oikotypification), and that folklorists should look at how the tales are spread from person to person rather than where they are spread.

Despite these criticisms, Thompson and his students continued the Finnish method. Thompson went on to create a bibliographic work as well, called The Motif-Index of Folk Literature (1932), in which he carried on Julius Krohn’s earlier idea of breaking down the tales into specific events, symbols, and characters which are often repeated in the tales. Thompson’s tale-type work spawned a plethora of others based on his classification scheme. Because Thompson’s work included only tales “from Ireland to India,” these other indices filled in the gaps with attention to African, Native American, and Asian folktales. The Historical-Geographic approach dominated folk tale scholarship in America for over forty years.7

Prior to Stith Thompson and the Motif-Index, however, the search for ancient truths in peasant tales started by Herder spread to England with German-born scholar
Max Müller. Drawing heavily on the Indo-European theory, Müller viewed folktales as ancient myths diluted of their original form by time. He argued that one could "recreate" the original meanings of the myths by reading every myth as a symbolic description of a natural event. He felt that the rising sun was the most powerful natural event, and so gave rise to the school of thought known as Solar Mythology, whose symbolic interpretations were based around this natural event. A school similar in basic theory to Müller's that was based on the waxing and waning of the moon began not much later. Another theory popular at that time was the Myth-Ritual theory. Promoted by anthropologist E. B. Tylor, a cultural evolutionist, this theory argued that folktales were remnants of ancient rituals that eventually spawn myths, which in turn eventually became folktales.⁸

Another student of Tylor's who was also a popular collector of folktales and a vehement critic of Müller was Andrew Lang. Lang affected both scholarly analysis of and popular interest in folktales. As a scholar and member of England's Folk-lore Society, he argued that the "morals" often seen in the tales were based in ancient and culturally defined taboos. On a popular level, he created the hugely successful Color Fairy Tale series, starting with the Blue Fairy Book (1889). Lang's Fairy Books are all drawn from written sources—collections such as the Grimms' and Perrault's, as well as classic sources such as Greek and Scandinavian mythology. He combined popular and scholarly viewpoints in his Blue Fairy Book by adding a scholarly appendix explaining the scholarly importance of the fairy tales and their ancient

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⁸ His work Primitive Culture (1871) explains this theory in detail.
heritage (Lang, 1977:358). In doing so, he helped to raise the level of respect for the folktale as a genre in many different groups.

A friend of Lang’s and fellow Folk-Lore Society member was folktale collector Joseph Jacobs (1977:359). Like Lang, Jacobs was both a scholar and a writer. He believed that the academic study of tales could bring a deeper understanding of the “workings of the popular mind” and insight into ancient customs, of which the tales were remnants (Jacobs, 1967: ix). He had attempted to create a “comprehensive list of catchwords” organizing the types and motifs in folktales, which he presented at the International Folklore Congress in London in 1891 (Thompson, 1977:414). However, this “comprehensive list” was not much more than an alphabetical list of motif and tale type names, which Thompson later critiqued (ibid). As a writer, he was more successful, though not nearly as successful as Lang. His small collection of *English Fairy Tales* (containing about forty-three tales in total) was reprinted three times in seven years after its first release. His main goal in writing the book was to assure English people that England had its “own” folktales, like Germany, France, and Italy (Jacobs, 1967: iv). Like Lang, he rewrote the tales to please an audience of children (ibid: vii, ix). The tales came from a wide variety of sources: some came from English immigrants to Australia; some came from English “Gipsies”; some from Scottish people; and some from ballads, which he rewrote in prose form.

Sondheim and Lapine chose Jacobs’ version of “Jack and the Beanstalk” for *Into the Woods* (Orme, 1992: 19). Lang’s version of the same tale incorporated King Arthur and a fairy that told Jack that the Giant had killed his father, who used to be
the king of the sky kingdom; that version was too complicated for *Woods* and King Arthur does not appear in the Grimms’ tales at all. Jack himself does not appear anywhere in the Grimms’ collection; his cycle of stories seems to be unique to the British Isles.

American scholars came upon the Jack tale cycle many years later, which had been brought to America with the British immigrants. The Jack tale cycle added a new dimension to folktale scholarship. A few American collectors of these tales, starting with Richard Chase who produced one work devoted strictly to a collection of Jack tales in 1943 and another of Appalachian folktales and songs 1971, not only collected and analyzed the tales but also performed them professionally. The “folk” from whom the folklorists collected the tales also became (or were already) professional performers involved in the storytelling revival circuit or in telling the tales at schools and fairs. The issues brought up by this intimate relationship between tale narrator and researcher are part of the basis for the 1994 work *Jack in Two Worlds: Contemporary North American Tales and Their Tellers*. The editors of the book attempt to point out the flaws in the traditionally clear-cut definition of the folktale narrator in folklore and to question the line between “folk” and “popular” tales and tellers. Though their arguments bring up more complicated issues and questions, they never offer clear solutions to the ones they pose.
Psychological Interpretations

Just as fairy tales were analyzed for glimpses of ancient mythology, so were they mined for insights into the modern-day human psyche. Even more so than with the solar mythologists and the myth-ritualists, the line between folktale and myth for these scholars was often fuzzy or even absent. Sigmund Freud, working in the late 1890s and early twentieth century, was the earliest and most famous of psychological fairy tale analysts. The creator of psychoanalysis, he focused on an individual’s unconscious, and he saw an important connection between folk narrative and dream symbolism. He stated that the same symbolic principles applied to both, and building on his theory that dreams were the psychoanalytic confessions of an individual, he argued that folktales and myths were the psychological expressions of an entire society. Freud even based several of his key theories on “classical” folk narratives such as Oedipus Rex, including his famous description of the Oedipus complex and the Electra Complex, further cementing the link between folklore and psychotherapy (Gilet, 1998: 37-8).

Freud has unarguably influenced a wide range of psychological theory since the 1890s. Several specific scholars, called Neo-Freudians, drew from his work but focused on the social and cultural influences on one’s personality. The work of one of the more well known of these scholars, Eric Fromm, had an important impact on the way Sondheim and Lapine analyzed the tales in Into the Woods. Fromm, working in the 1930s and 40s, argued that the largest problem that individuals face is a sense

of isolation from other humans. He felt that individuals could either choose to work with other people to help build a better society, or they could blindly submit to a higher authority. The goal of his therapy was to allow his patients to connect with others while still maintaining their individual sense of self. In his work *The Forgotten Language* (1955), he was the first to do an in-depth psychoanalytic analysis of “Little Red Riding Hood” to help illustrate his theories.

The other main psychological influence on Sondheim and Lapine was the work of Bruno Bettelheim, another Neo-Freudian. Bettelheim, a Viennese psychoanalyst based in Chicago, focused specifically on children and how the tales influenced them. In his 1975 book, *The Uses of Enchantment*, he came down strongly in favor of the positive use of fairy tales in socializing “autistic” children and nurturing their creativity. He argued that life is scary and uncertain for children; fairy tales, with the common youngest brother or helpless maiden protagonist who amazingly triumphs over all adversities and lives “happily ever after,” reassure anxious children. And though they are young and small, they need to be reassured that their lives have meaning. He also pointed out the moral benefit that the tales can teach children—in the tales, good and evil are clearly defined, and through them children learn that it is best not to be evil because evildoers always get punished in the end.

His book, one of many that he authored on child raising, takes America’s parents to task. He chides those who hide all unpleasant things from their children and use watered-down versions of the tales. Children, he said, know that they are not always perfectly good and nice, and when presented with a fantasy world where the
characters are never truly bad, children then begin to feel as if they themselves are the evil monsters. These “watered-down” tales also deprive children of their cultural heritage, which Bettelheim believed was layered into the tales. For tales to have the proper effect on children, Bettelheim advised that they be read aloud, and that the parent pay close attention to which stories the child prefers, as that story contained the lessons that the child most needs to hear at that point in life.

Bettelheim’s work has been critiqued often since his death in 1991. The strongest scholarly critique, however, has come from Alan Dundes, who accuses him of plagiarizing the theories and even the very wording from an earlier work on the subject by psychoanalyst Julian Heuscher (1963). Dundes (1991) also takes him to task for an error common to pre-1970s and non-folklore scholars—that of not looking at other sources besides the Grimms’. Germanist Jack Zipes (1979) also critiques Bettelheim’s main premise—that the tales can have the same psychological effect on children despite their gender, social class, or culture.

Working mainly in the first half of the twentieth century, analytic psychologist Carl Jung, though originally one of Freud’s students, took a somewhat different approach toward folktales. He picked out the most commonly recurring character roles in myths and fairy tales and called them archetypes. These archetypes, he argued, were a part of the collective unconscious—the symbol system that all humans have in their unconscious. In other words, these roles were not particular to any one culture or group of cultures, but to all cultures. He argued that these archetypes were passed down from one generation’s psyche to another generation’s psyche, somewhat
like a collective psychic gene pool. However, the meanings and importance of these archetypes and symbols, he stated, varied from culture to culture.

Though not a trained psychologist, Joseph Campbell combined psychoanalysis and syntagmatic structuralism in his analysis of world mythology. Psychoanalysis seems to have been his first method for understanding mythology—in analyzing the underlying symbols common to many different mythologies, he discerned a pattern that he called the Hero Pattern. This approach, as with many other mythology analyses, can and has been applied to folktales as well.\(^\text{10}\) This Hero’s Journey, as it is sometimes called, is composed of seventeen events in which the hero leaves home, goes through an initiation in the underworld, and returns home transformed.

With the exception of Campbell, all of the above scholars followed Freud and Jung’s lead in drawing from the Grimms’ version of the folktales. Most of these scholars either did not know of other collections or, like Bettelheim, felt that the Grimm collection represented the original, and therefore most “potent,” versions of the tales. More recently, however, at least one psychoanalytic scholar has reached beyond the Grimm canon into comparative mythology and comparative folk narrative scholarship.

Psychoanalytic folklorist Alan Dundes has written many works on the ways folklore (usually folk narrative) and psychology overlap, and he is one of Freud’s few supporters in American folkloristics. Dundes edited two “casebooks,” one focused on the Cinderella tale (1982) and one on the Little Red Riding Hood tale (1989). These

casebooks drew together important analyses of the tales from many different disciplines for comparative purposes, a common theme throughout Dundes’ scholarship. Dundes’ intent was to bring together the folklorist’s comparative understanding of the tales as well as the insights given by psychoanalytic scholars. Focusing on the underlying hostility of jokes and the hidden sexual innuendos of fairy tales, he continues Freud’s research in folklore into the present day both in the casebooks as well as in his other scholarly works. Prior to becoming interested in psychoanalysis, Dundes also did some work with structuralism.\textsuperscript{11}

Other recent folktale scholarship by folklorists focuses on other uses of the tales. Jack Zipes, a Germanist, looks at the influence of social discourse on fairy tales. In his work \textit{Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion} (1983), he argues that fairy tales have been modified by each generation to socialize children, which several early folktale scholars consciously did. Folktale scholar Marina Warner, a historical comparativist popular writer, takes a different approach to the study of the tales. She argues that the historical context of the tales is very important and attacks Jung’s idea of archetypes, arguing that they take the history out of the tale (1995; see also Conrad, 1999).\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} He applied Propp’s functions to North American Indian tales and found that only two functions applied—that of ‘Lack’ and ‘Lack Liquidated’ (Propp’s functions 8a and 19).
\textsuperscript{12} Sondheim and Lapine also consulted the works of cultural historian Robert Darnton, who argues that social history can be derived from the tales.
Structural and Literary Analyses

The Historic-Geographic approach held sway in folklore scholarship for many years, until the advent of structuralism. The first real interest in structuralism in the academic world came from France via Claude Lévi-Strauss in the 1960s. Building on linguistic theory, Levi-Strauss searched for a deep structure within folk narrative, expanding the idea of deep structure to full-fledged stories rather than sentences. Myths, he said, are a product of the mind's natural tendency to group things into opposites—black/white, hot/cold, and raw/cooked, for example, and to try to resolve these opposites for people on an unconscious level. He found that the deep structure of myths and fairy tales contained at least one set of binary oppositions that, by the end of the narrative, had been resolved. In paradigmatic structuralism, as Levi-Strauss' theory was called, the pairs of oppositions need not be in any specific order in the tales.

Whereas most previous myth and fairy tale analysts looked for universals within the tales, Levi-Strauss argued these binary oppositions are culturally determined and therefore culturally relative. He also accepted all versions of a tale as equally powerful and legitimate, a radical notion at that time within the field of folk narrative. Like the psychological analysts, however, he focused upon the underlying meaning or power of the narratives rather than the superficial events, characters, or morals the narratives contained (Gilet, 1998:25-6). It was Vladimir Propp, writing in
Russia in the 1920s, who proposed the structure of the surface events, also called syntagmatic structure.

Propp’s work was inspired by the fact that folktales are performed, and that the details of the tales change. He sought to find the structure that the performance of the tales was based upon. Attacking the Historical-Geographic method, he firmly stated that one couldn’t adequately classify tales until one understood their morphology, or structure. Though originally written in 1928, his *Morphologia Skazki* (*The Morphology of the Folktale*) was not translated into English until 1968, the heyday of Levi-Strauss’ paradigmatic structuralism. This key work on syntagmatic structuralism describes the thirty-one “functions” which Propp found in folktales. These “functions” were understood as acts of characters defined by the importance of the action. For example, “the hero leaving home” and “the hero defeating the enemy” are two of Propp’s functions. The thirty-one functions must be present in the same chronological order in every tale, though not all thirty-one functions have to exist in every tale.

Propp stated that the tales that primarily interested him were the wonder tales as defined by the Aarne-Thompson tale type method (A-T 300-749), though he based his theory of functions on a collection of one hundred Russian folktales gathered by Russian A. N. Afanasiev (1863). He felt that his method was universal—that it could be used successfully on any culture’s folktales. Propp’s functions spawned numerous other attempts besides Dundes’ (see footnote 11), which in general contained fewer than Propp’s original thirty-one.
Inherent in structural analysis, however, is an emphasis on the text of a narrative; anything outside of the tale, such as social or historical context, has little bearing on it.\textsuperscript{13} The same is true of literary analysis. Both literary analysts and structural analysts look at recurring patterns in folktales and produce a codified list of specific traits. The two main literary analysts of the folktale, Axel Olrik and Max Lüthi, do just that. Axel Olrik, in his 1909 article “Epic Laws of Folk Narrative,” produced a list of fourteen “laws” of folk narrative, which could be applied to folksongs as well (translated in Dundes, 1965:129-141). These laws can be understood as “constants” that Olrik found in folk narratives. For example, he found that each narrative had a distinct opening and closing formula (Olrik’s first law, the “law of opening and closing”) and that rarely did more than two characters speak in a scene (his fourth law, the “law of two to a scene”). In extracting these laws, Olrik attempted to turn folktale scholarship into a natural science. He argued that the folk storyteller followed these laws, so called because they limit oral literature so thoroughly that the storyteller has no other choice but to follow them. In Olrik’s view, tale tellers felt an inherent compulsion to adhere to the laws in a way that was beyond their ability to control, in an almost instinctive reaction—a view that essentially removes any creative power the tale teller has over his or her creation. To further cement his point, Olrik argued that any oral literature that did not abide by his laws was not truly oral literature.

Max Lüthi, working somewhat later than Olrik and free from the scientific emphasis of the turn of the century, offered a less rigid paradigm in \textit{The European}

\textsuperscript{13} It should be noted here that Levi-Strauss did take into account some cultural context as well, however.
Folktale (1986). Like Olrik, his purpose was to identify what made a folktale a folktale by looking at its style. The work, originally written in 1948 but not translated into English until 1986, defines the folktale by contrasting it to the legend. Lüthi admits, however, that his analysis applies only to European folktales. He argues that folktales have an abstract style, are one-dimensional, and have main characters that are isolated but still universally connected to the rest of the characters in the tale. The abstract style of tales portrays the world in extremes with bright, contrasting colors and unchanging character types (the helpless maiden and the handsome prince, for example.) Due to this unrealistic portrayal of the world, the tales are essentially empty of all meaning, which make them perfect for individual interpretation (1986:24,95). Like the early Romantic Nationalists, Lüthi also believed that the folktale was a gift from the visionary poets to the folk. And, again in a less strict vein than Olrik, Lüthi believed that folktales can go through various changes: when they go into the popular media they usually get elaborated upon, but that when they return back to the folk they lose their elaborations and return to their earlier simplified state.14

As discussed previously, Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine drew the analyses for Into the Woods mainly from popular sources such as Bettelheim and Fromm as well as translations of the Grimm collection. But in doing so they also drew indirectly from a wide variety of academic folktale sources—including Freud, Jung, Charles Perrault, and Joseph Jacobs. However, as Into the Woods is a popular musical and not an academic work on folk tales, other factors have had an equally

14 After structuralism, folklorists put less focus on the text of a ballad or myth and focused more on the context. Today most folklorists use the performance theory approach, which focuses upon the folklore
important impact on the musical. The next chapter examines the history of the musical and the personal and professional influences that Sondheim and Lapine bring to *Into the Woods* and places *Into the Woods* into a musical theater context.
The musical comedy, or musical, is an original American invention. Influenced by eighteenth and nineteenth centuries entertainment such as vaudeville, comic opera, burlesque, and minstrel show, and similar in form to the operetta, the American musical slowly became a distinct entity. Starting as a series of unconnected musicals acts and comedy sketches, the first musicals were not much more than a series of songs and physical comedy acts lightly grounded in a flimsy plot. One popular example of the earlier musicals is The Black Crook of 1866, a mix of melodrama and ballet containing the requisite line of dancing chorus girls (Bordman, 1982:18). This “musical play” was the first one of its kind to run for over a year in New York, and showed the theater world that an extravagantly produced play incorporating music could bring in a great deal of money. This form remained fairly constant, even after English composers Gilbert and Sullivan produced popular and innovative musicals such as HMS Pinafore (1879.)

Pinafore was a complex creation which, due to Gilbert’s intelligent lyrics and dialogue and Sullivan’s brilliant orchestrations, made all other earlier attempts at combining music and theater banal and dull (ibid:20). The popularity of Pinafore had
a huge impact on the music/theater community, in that it proved that shows with somewhat more complex lyrics were economically viable; it inspired numerous other musicals, and it provided a model for contemporary librettists and songwriters. In doing so, it helped to solidify the nature of musical theater.

Gilbert and Sullivan officially labeled *Pinafore* an operetta. However, it influenced all musical entertainment of its era, including the fledgling genre of musical comedy. Operettas were characterized by an earnest romanticism, a plot placed in a far-off or fantasyland, simple music, and a simple libretto (ibid:4). They were operas without their upper-class image, with humor and sentimentality added instead (Rockwell, 1983:210). Operettas heavily influenced the early musicals, and the line separating the two genres remained blurry until after World War I. However, despite the resounding impact *Pinafore* had on the theater for a few years afterwards, musical comedy soon went back to being mere songs connected by thin plots.

The same year that *HMS Pinafore* premiered, another popular "musical play" opened called *The Brook; or, A Jolly Day at the Picnic*, produced by American Nate Salsbury, leader of a small group of actors and musicians called the Troubadours, who had primarily performed comedy revues. *The Brook* was also a runaway hit, and unlike most of his contemporaries, Salsbury wove the songs into a somewhat cohesive storyline. *The Brook* was the first "farce comedy," and its popularity inspired many other musical and revue groups to create their own shows. The competition thus created helped to raise the artistic level of the productions, and provided an American (rather than English or European) basis for the later musical comedies (Bordman, 1982:35). However, despite the influence of both *HMS*
Pinafore and The Brook, the American musical stayed somewhat stagnant, and even sometimes regressed, until the turn of the century.

In the early 1900s prior to World War I, three other famous operetta composers from Europe immigrated to America and each brought with him a popular operetta—Victor Herbert and Naughty Marietta in 1910; Rudolf Friml and The Firefly in 1912; and Sigmund Romberg and Maytime in 1917. These operettas became very popular and spawned a new interest in the operetta in America. Also around this time, composer Jerome Kern returned from studying music abroad in England and Germany and wrote The Red Petticoat (1911), the first of several of his popular musical shows.

The popularity of many of these shows—revues, operettas, and fledgling musical comedies—resided in the fact that they starred big-name performers, most often singers. Therefore, the shows were still primarily vehicles to show off these performers, and most popular songs up until the mid-1960s came out of these shows (Lahr, 1984:5). The songs were unconnected to the plot of the show and were virtually interchangeable with any other show. The purpose of the shows was purely to entertain and divert, and so the stories were happy, light, and gay—political criticism and unpleasant situations such as rape, murder, or divorce did not enter into the equation. The explicit intent was to divert “the tired businessman and his wife” (Bordman, 1982:37).

George Gershwin helped to separate once and for all the genres of operetta and musical comedy with his 1925 musical Lady, Be Good! As musical historian Gerald Bordman states,

1 Encarta, p.1.
When *Lady, Be Good!* opened at the end of the year with its jazzy Gershwin score, it presented critics and playgoers with another distinct kind of book musical. They could now choose between otherworldly operettas offering soaring lyric, European-influenced music and up-to-the-minute comedies, enlivened by less grandiose, patently American musical mannerisms. Distinctions between the two types of musicals...were now sharply drawn, and rarely would be fudged again (ibid:22-3).

Jerome Kern’s *Show Boat* (1927), composed at the height of his career, was the next extremely popular show to offer America an American-based musical comedy that could begin to compare to dramatic theater. The story was based on the best-selling novel *Show Boat* by Edna Ferber (1926), which started a trend that continues up to the present day. Other major changes were made in form, as well. Everything in the show, from dancing to lyrics to dialogue to music, was integrated into the plot in some way. Also, the story was set upon a showboat in Mississippi—making it one of the first shows to focus on life in America (Swain, 1990). And for the first time, the star singers were also expected to *act* as well as sing beautifully. Kern’s score also differed from earlier scores in that it utilized “new” American music such as jazz and the blues as well as continuing the music throughout the play, even under the dialogue, to further enhance certain scenes. Finally, the lyrics were more sophisticated than earlier ones and the plot covered serious themes such as racism. Further, the show served to give the lyricist, Oscar Hammerstein II, his first major hit in the world of musical theater. Hammerstein had also worked as the lyricist for operetta composers Rudolf Friml and Sigmund Romberg, but *Show Boat* was his first musical comedy.

The Great Depression and Hollywood talkie films struck the world of musical comedy in the 1930s. Theatergoers no longer had the money or the desire to go to the
theater, and many theaters were converted into movie houses or shut down. In response, the theater became more elite, as only the rich and the dedicated could afford to attend the shows. The tenor of musicals also changed, incorporating political themes such as Harold Rome's *Pins and Needles* [1937], a pro-union show for the Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and Marc Blitzstein's anti-capitalist show *The Cradle Will Rock* [1937] (Gordon, 1992:1-2). Ira Gershwin and George S. Kaufman also composed several musicals that contained witty and pointed commentaries on the military and big businesses, but these shows were only minor successes.

During this time period, however, the primary goal of musical comedy was to entertain. Big name stars, such as Ethel Merman, Bob Hope, and Jimmy Durante, still drew in most of the crowds. Composers such as the Gershwins, Irving Berlin, and Cole Porter had become familiar names. (Not all followed Kern's lead with *Show Boat*, however; for example, Porter, a brilliant lyricist, composed songs for his shows that were totally unconnected to the plot but became huge hits outside of the shows.) One other notable musical of this era prior to World War II was Richard Rogers' and Lorenz Hart's *Pal Joey* (1940), which included, for the first time, a "book" (all of the dialogue and lyrics of a given musical) containing fully developed characters—not stereotypes such as the noble hero and the weak but beautiful heroine. This particular musical unfortunately did not become a hit until its revival in 1952, after Rogers had begun collaborating with Hammerstein to produce several

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2 Bordman, p.135.
3 Such as *Of Thee I Sing* (1932), which, though only a minor success, won the first Pulitzer Prize in Drama—the first time it had ever been given to a musical comedy, and *Strike up the Band* (1930). Bordman, 1982:138.
enormously successful musicals, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Oklahoma!* (1943.)

If *Show Boat* was the first musical to attempt an integrated song-story-dance musical production, *Oklahoma!* was the first to truly popularize it. Though it had numerous precedents such as complex lyrics and fully developed characters, *Oklahoma!* achieved many more times the popularity of all other shows containing those elements. One of the main changes to the musical was the utilization of dance (in this case ballet, choreography by Agnes de Mille) as an integral part of the plot. Dance was so integrated into this musical, in fact, that, according to musical comedy scholar Gerald Bordman, “it brought to life the heroine’s dream and provided her motive for refusing the hero’s invitation to the box social—it became part of the story” (Bordman, 1982:160.) Afterwards, De Mille’s ballet sequences became almost a requisite component of musicals, even when not overtly necessary. *Oklahoma!* also inspired another new trend: interest in Americana. Though *Show Boat* was also set in America’s past, it was not until *Oklahoma!* became popular that the trend truly began. *Oklahoma!* also presented songs that were tied more closely to the plot than ever before, with songs such as “Oklahoma!” “Surrey With the Fringe on Top,” “People Will Say We’re in Love,” and “Poor Jud is Dead,” all referring specifically to characters and events in the show, and all having a logical reason to be where they were in the musical and moving the story along. Finally, *Oklahoma!* like few previous musicals, contained a violent scene in which the hero ends up shooting the villain. Still, the musical’s popularity showed that a few unpleasant scenes would not ruin the show, and Rogers, the composer, and Hammerstein, the lyricist, had

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*Encarta*, p.1.
unexpectedly succeeded in revolutionizing the world of musical theater with their “integrated musicals.”

Rogers and Hammerstein would continue to explore taboo themes, such as racism and war, in their musicals. Throughout the 1940s and 50s they continued to dominate musical theater, producing hit after hit. Their compilation of works reads like a list of the most popular America musicals: *Carousel* (1945); *South Pacific* (1949; also a Pulitzer Prize winner); *The King and I* (1951); *Me and Juliet* (1953); and *The Sound of Music* (1959). Their musicals consistently followed a scene-song pattern in which the plot action is climaxed in a song delineating character, and the process begins again (Gordon, 1992:5). Thematically, the plot revolved around a couple that is having problems with a contrasting subplot (Swain, 1990:320). This formula set the standard for what the musical comedy could be.

Though Rogers and Hammerstein were more daring in the topics they broached, their musicals were still primarily optimistic. The musicals of this era are characterized by a sense of hope characteristic of America at this time period. Musical historian Joanne Gordon explains a common view in the theatre regarding musicals during this era when she states,

The optimism of America after the Second World War is reflected in this body of work [Rogers and Hammerstein’s works.] Although it is a generalization, the America of the Eisenhower era was a country united by a complacent self-confidence. It found in the musical theater an image of itself that it chose and enjoyed. Audiences knew that they would be diverted and also that their bourgeois values would remain inviolate. As the popular theater of the period, musical theater reinforced prevalent attitudes (1992:5).

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Stephen Sondheim

"When Stephen Sondheim was awarded the Tony for Best Musical of the Season in 1988 for Into the Woods," musical historian Donald Swain states, "Broadway more or less officially recognized a domination of the American musical theater over the last two decades reminiscent of an earlier reign during the 1940s and 1950s by Rogers and Hammerstein" (1990:319). Sondheim has composed music and lyrics for over fifteen musicals, many of which have continued an extensive active life in regional and school theaters. Reviewing Stephen Sondheim’s biography, it seems almost as though he were fated to be their heir.

Born in New York City in 1930, Sondheim was the son of well-to-do Jewish parents, Herbert and Janet ("Foxy") Sondheim. Herbert was the owner of a dress shop serving upper elite and Janet designed the outfits for his store. Herbert’s favorite pastime was playing the piano, and he would often play during modeling shows for his dresses. As an only child to busy, upwardly mobile parents, Sondheim was sent away to boarding schools and summer camp, and later on, when his parents divorced, to a military school for his middle school years. Following his parents’ divorce he lived with his mother, a passionate woman who often turned to him for comfort or to vent her anger. During this time period, his mother became a friend and

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6 Particularly A Funny Thing Happened in the Way to the Forum (which is being performed at over one hundred theaters around the country this spring [2000]); Gypsy (over twenty productions this spring); Into the Woods (over one hundred and twenty productions this spring); and West Side Story (also over 120 performances this spring.) Stephen Sondheim Stage, http://www.sondheim.com/shows/area.
client of Hammerstein's second wife, Dorothy, an interior designer. Sondheim then became friends with Hammerstein's son, Jimmy, who took him to see Oklahoma!

Meryle Secrest, one of several Sondheim biographers, writes that when Foxy Sondheim would take out her frustration with her ex-husband on Sondheim, he would go to the Hammerstein household for support and nurturance. In effect, they became his foster family. His relationship with the family was sealed when his mother decided to buy a country home in Connecticut and ended up purchasing one just down the road from the Hammerstein's country home (Secrest, 1998: 1-30).

In high school—George School, a Quaker-run boarding school in Pennsylvania—Sondheim became involved in the theater and musicals. Though he had showed little interest in music or the theater before meeting the Hammersteins, his father had made him take piano lessons since the age of five (Milner, 1977:156). While there, Sondheim's keen wit was shown in many song parodies, culminating with a musical he wrote about life at the school called By George his senior year, 1945, when he was still only fifteen. Impressed with his own work, Sondheim decided to show it to Oscar Hammerstein with the explicit instruction that he critique it as if Sondheim were one of his peers. Hammerstein told him flatly that it was the worst thing that he had ever read, but that did not mean that he did not have talent. He then spent four hours explaining to Sondheim what exactly he had done wrong, and how to write a good musical. Sondheim has often called the experience “four hours of the most packed information. I dare say, at the risk of hyperbole, that I learned more that afternoon than most people learn about songwriting in a lifetime” (ibid:154-5). Andrew Milner, author of an article examining Sondheim and
Hammerstein’s relationship, explains that this episode has become a theater legend, symbolizing the torch being passed from one generation to the other. He adds, “Sondheim’s boldness, Hammerstein’s honesty—one of the reasons this story resonates as it does, is that it captures an essential characteristic of each man” (ibid).

Hammerstein then set Sondheim on a four-part informal course in musical writing. First, he was to compose a musical based on a play that he thought was well written. Sondheim chose *Beggar on Horseback*, by George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly, which he turned into *All That Glitters*, while in his junior year of college at Williams College (ibid). He directed the musical at his school that year, and three of the songs were published by BMI. The second musical was to be based on a play that Sondheim did not like; he chose Maxwell Andersons’ *High Tor*. Hoping to produce *High Tor* as well, he contacted Anderson, but Anderson replied that he himself was planning a musical version of it (Secrest, 1988:78-9). His third assignment was to musicalize a nondramatic work, and at age nineteen Sondheim chose *Mary Poppins* by P. L. Travers, fifteen years before Disney made it into a musical film. Sondheim got half-way through and gave up, as the stories were too disparate; ten years later, Travers asked him to create a play out of the stories, but Sondheim declined (ibid:79). For his last musical, Sondheim was to create something completely original. His musical was called *Climb High*, about a young actor who tries to establish himself on Broadway.

These five musicals, plus another campus satire parodying the popular musical *Finnian’s Rainbow* (1947), called *Phinney’s Rainbow*, gave Sondheim a total of six musicals written by the time he finished college at age twenty. While at
college he studied musical composition—his favorite composer was Ravel—and appeared in several plays. After he graduated he won a two-year scholarship to study at Princeton University with avant-garde composer Milton Babbitt. Babbitt tried to convince him to be a classical composer, but Sondheim stayed focused on musical comedy.

While in college Sondheim also gained some theater experience as a “gopher” on the minor Rogers and Hammerstein musical Allegro (1947). At age twenty-three, Sondheim got a job screenwriting for the television series “Topper” which ran from 1953-1955. Around that time, Hammerstein convinced him to write lyrics for a new, innovative Leonard Bernstein and Jerome Robbins musical called West Side Story (1957). Sondheim wanted to be a lyricist/composer, but Hammerstein convinced him that this would be a good way to break into the business with well-known, seasoned writers and directors. Sondheim took the job, and his Broadway career officially began.

**Sondheim’s Musicals**

Describing a musical as a “Sondheim musical” is somewhat misleading, for the musical comedy is perhaps the most complex dramatic form in the theater. Sondheim, as a lyricist/composer, was often not even recognized in his earlier works—usually the book of a musical, or the costumes, or directing, or choreography won the awards; the lyrics and music tended to get overlooked. Over the years, and

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although he has covered a wide variety of topics, Sondheim's body of material has contained similar lyrical and musical devices, as well as character and plot themes, which one can then call his mark upon the musical (Goodhart, 2000:32, note 18). In his early musicals, of which he was often only the lyricist, his influence over the storyline and production was not very strong, and these musicals are therefore not truly "Sondheim" musicals, though his touch is still noticeable.

Sondheim's lyrics for *West Side Story* marked him as a lyricist to contend with. Originally he was to be co-lyricist with Leonard Bernstein; however, Sondheim took over most of the responsibility for the lyrics about halfway through the show. In working on *West Side Story*, Sondheim was allowed to work with several big names in musical theater at that time—Jerome Robbins, choreographer, Arthur Laurents, book writer, and Bernstein, lyricist and composer—from whom he learned a great deal. (From Robbins, for example, who staged Sondheim’s songs, he learned the importance of incorporating staging into his music and lyrics.8)

The musical itself was another landmark in musical history. It defied the traditional notion in musicals that love would eventually triumph after all—by the end of the first act, several characters are dead, and, given the Shakespearean precedent, many followed. A contemporary version of *Romeo and Juliet*, *West Side Story* was set in the West Side of New York with the two opposing groups being Puerto Rican-Americans and Polish-Americans. A few changes were made to the plot—the most significant, besides the time and place change, was that Maria (as Juliet’s character) does not kill herself; instead, she pleads for peace between the two groups. Also,

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dance was more highly incorporated into the staging that ever before—even the fights between the rival groups were more dance than stage combat.

Sondheim was not yet at peak form, however, and the lyrics, though witty, did not quite fit the situation. A prime example of badly written lyrics that Sondheim himself has often quoted are the lyrics of “I Feel Pretty,” Maria’s song after first meeting her lover. “It’s alarming/how charming/ I feel,” she sings, and it was not until later on that Sheldon Harnick, another famous lyricist, pointed out that an uneducated Puerto Rican girl would probably not use such sophisticated language (Secrest, 1988:116). However, his songs did show the wit and unexpected internal rhymes that would characterize all of his later works.

West Side Story was very controversial when it first came out, and it did not become popular until 1961 when it was made into an award-winning musical film. In the meantime, Sondheim walked into another lyricist job, again based on a book by Arthur Laurents and directed by Jerome Robbins, but with Jule Styne as the composer, called Gypsy (1959). Based on the memoirs of famous stripper Gypsy Rose Lee, the musical in fact focuses upon her mother, an overbearing, charismatic stage mother who pushes her two daughters to succeed in show business whatever way they can. Gypsy was extremely popular and originally starred Ethel Merman. It went on to have at least one revival starring Angela Lansbury and two movies, one starring Rosalind Russell and one starring Bette Midler. Gypsy, though also a distinct break from the traditional optimistic Rogers and Hammerstein theme, still followed their song-scene-song structure. Sondheim, in fact, calls it the last great musical in the Rogers and Hammerstein form (Gordon, 1992:3). The last major musical that
Sondheim wrote only the lyrics for is Richard Roger’s Do I Hear a Waltz? (1965) based on a play by Arthur Laurents called The Time of the Cuckoo. Sondheim did the musical as a favor to Roger’s daughter, Mary, and the musical was only moderately successful.

By the 1960s, the musical was beginning to undergo a major transformation once again. Sondheim finally had the chance to both compose music and write lyrics for his next project, a farce based up on the twenty-one plays of Roman playwright Plautus, which was called A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum (1962). This is the first musical that has been labeled a “Sondheim” musical, because Sondheim had a much greater influence over its final form than he did with either Gypsy or West Side Story. Forum was structured differently than the traditional musicals. Sondheim decided that the songs should be respites from the non-stop action of the farce, and so he wrote them in such a way that, if necessary, they could be taken out of the script without anyone noticing. The show starred many of the comic talents of the day, including Zero Mostel and Phil Silvers, as well as a young Michael Crawford. Though the show was a hit and won six Tony awards, Sondheim’s contribution received little notice. This show, in fact, drew the first of many critiques that Sondheim’s music was not “hummable” enough—that the audience did not go out of the theater humming the songs from the show. Joanne Gordon writes that this show is primarily important in that it showed the beginnings of techniques that Sondheim would perfect in some of his later works.

Sondheim’s next lyricist/composer project was his first and most costly commercial failure, though it was highly lauded by the critics. Anyone Can Whistle
(1964), based on the interactions between the inhabitants of the local insane asylum and the rest of the small town, explored the themes of the sanity of madness and the virtue of non-conformity, closer to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* than traditional musical theater (ibid:28). The play’s most important message, though, was that each person had to discover his or her potential (Secrest, 1988:160). The musical ended with the nurse who works at the insane asylum proclaiming that the entire audience is mad; as the lights come up, the entire cast is seated in the audience applauding loudly for themselves. The play ran only nine performances before closing. However, the cast recorded an album of the songs, which has kept the memory of the musical alive among the most diehard of Sondheim fans. And this musical comes much closer to Sondheim’s later musicals in theme and daring than anything he had done up to that point. Sondheim took a six-year break from writing after the failure of *Anyone Can Whistle*. When he finally came back, with *Company* (1970), he quickly regained his former glory; it was another major hit and ushered in a new phase of musical writing.

*Company* centers on the theme of commitment. The main character, Bobby, is a thirty-five year old bachelor who has many married friends eager to match him up with an available woman. Through each separate, essentially unconnected scene, the audience sees through Bobby’s eyes the horrors of marriage as his friends get divorced, fight with each other, and become bored with each other. Bobby has to decide for himself whether or not he should commit, and to whom, and when; by the end he comes to realize that though marriage may not be perfect, at least it is better than going through life alone. The ending went through four revisions, each less cynical than the next, until the song was optimistic enough to meet producer Harold

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9 http://www.imagi-nation/moonstruck/album18.htm; Moonstruck Drama Store.
Prince’s expectations. The original song, entitled “Happily Ever After,” was highly pessimistic and the more logical continuation of Bobby’s character; however, the destruction of the fairy tale-like romance of traditional musical theater continued to be a common theme in Sondheim’s musicals.

However, it was not Company’s themes that excited the musical theater world but the structure. Never before had a musical been so devoid of obvious plot—the scenes are unconnected, and the hint is given at the end of the musical that all the action could have happened in Bobby’s mind, as he was waiting to go into his birthday party, or possibly while he was dreaming. Several songs have a nightmarish quality to them, particularly the “Bobby Baby” interludes that are a mixture of his various friends trying to gain his attention. The main structure that kept the musical together was not the plot but the concept, and with Company an entirely new type of musical called the “concept musical” was born (Gordon, 1992:7-8).

From the very outset of Sondheim’s musical writing career, it was clear that, though mentored by Oscar Hammerstein II, Sondheim’s musicals would take a vastly different form. From Anyone Can Whistle onwards, ambivalent, neurotic characters, messy endings, disillusionment, unhappy relationships, domineering mother figures, descents into madness, and an all-around cynicism have characterized most of Sondheim’s musicals (Menton in Goodhart, 2000:61-76; Rockwell, 1983:219). He himself has said that the point of his musicals is not to escape reality, but to be faced with dealing with it in a new way. Sondheim confronted the typical tired businessman and his wife with the issues they went to the theater to escape (Gordon, 1992:3). Company is the first of a trilogy of un-stereotypically “unhappy” endings, followed

*Follies* came next, in 1971. The story was based on a imagined reunion of several of the girls who performed in the Follies revues, such as Ziegfield’s, back in the 1920s. Focusing on two now middle-aged couples, Sondheim explores the themes of “what might have been” and how the characters deal with the disparity of their former “glory days” and their present unhappy and unsatisfying lives. By the end of the musical, the illusions the girls had about their past are stripped away and they are left with the bare reality of their lives. Despite, or perhaps due to, the show’s pessimistic overtones, it became another hit for Sondheim. Again based on a “concept” rather than a linear plot, this musical also showcased Sondheim’s genius for mimicking music from different eras and using it to further enhance the message. Sondheim uses music from the Follies era to invoke the indulgence that marked that time period but also to mock the characters and audience with it because the characters are dealing with their loss of that indulgent illusion.

The musical that Sondheim and Hal Prince, his long-time producer/director, next created was entirely different from *Follies*. Deciding to do an unabashedly romantic musical, they based the musical’s plot on an Ingmar Bergman film called *Smiles of a Summer Night* (Gordon in Gordon, 1977:123). In addition, Sondheim wanted the show to have an air of “sex, musk, and champagne” at all times (Gordon,
1992:125). Called *A Little Night Music* (1973), it revolves around the romantic problems of main character Desirée Armfelt, her two lovers, her courtesan mother, and her intuitive daughter. Set in late nineteenth century Sweden, the musical has a distinct operetta feel to it, and all the music is composed in waltz or “triple” tempo or a variant thereof. However, even in this “romantic” musical, Sondheim adds a touch of cynicism.

*Pacific Overtures* (1976), their next musical, was Sondheim’s first overtly political musical. Set in Japan in 1853, the year that Commodore Perry visited and helped to break Japan’s isolationalism, the musical is less personal than most of Sondheim’s. The main relationship explored is between the United States and Japan. The musical follows two specific characters, a minor samurai and a poor fisherman, who get caught up in the negotiations between the two countries. Though Japan fights against becoming Westernized, Prince and Sondheim attempt to point out in the finale (“Next”) that it currently has mastered the art of capitalism better than its Western counterparts and has become one of the leaders in international trade (ibid:175). John Weidman, who wrote the book for the musical, had brought the idea to Prince, and Prince had decided it could be made into a musical. Sondheim reluctantly agreed, but after visiting Japan, he became very excited about the project. They decided to use several traditional Japanese kabuki techniques, such as a Reciter, an all-male cast, and on-stage musicians. At its opening, and at its revival ten years later, *Overtures* received positive artistic feedback from the critics but little commercial success, a characteristic which was fast becoming common in Sondheim shows.
Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (1979) brought Sondheim another hit musical and eight Tony awards, as well as moderate commercial success. Sweeney Todd is by far Sondheim’s darkest comedy. Sondheim saw a play version of the story done in London, where it had become a staple of the English dramatic theater, and decided that it would work well as a musical (ibid:207). The story comes from an English legend about Benjamin Barker, a barber whose beautiful wife catches the eye of a corrupt judge. The Judge sends Barker away to Australia on a trumped-up charge, and claims Mrs. Barker and her daughter for himself. When Barker returns to England after ten years, he has changed his name to Sweeney Todd and vowed to gain revenge upon the entire population of London. To that end, he regularly slaughters his customers. His neighbor, Mrs. Lovett, finds out and decides to use the dead bodies as meat for her pies. Eventually, Todd goes completely insane, and kills everyone around him except for his daughter, who escapes to freedom with her lover. Sweeney Todd was Sondheim’s most musically ambitious score, and it is the closest he has come to composing opera.

After having based the last three of his musicals on middle-aged characters in the past in foreign countries, Sondheim decided to compose a youthful musical set in contemporary America. Merrily We Roll Along (1981) turned out to be Sondheim’s most autobiographical musical as well. Merrily describes the story of a filmmaker named Franklin Shepard whose social ladder-climbing girlfriend/wife convinces him to write mindless films for Hollywood instead of staying true to his own creative vision. The musical begins with Franklin at the top of his career, when his wife leaves him for an even more successful producer. The musical then traces Franklin’s
life backwards, the audience already knowing the unhappy consequences of his
decisions. The musical was similar to one that Hammerstein did when he was also at
the top of his career, Allegro. Like Merrily, Hammerstein’s Allegro was also
autobiographical and failed commercially. Merrily was another flop, running only
sixteen performances; once again, however, the cast album was recorded and the
musical survived. Sondheim rewrote and revived it again in 1994, but the response
was not much better; critics panned it as being too complex (Milner in Gordon,
1977:150). Musical Theater International, a supply company for regional and
academic theaters, commented that Merrily was “a brilliant, poignant retrospective of
the American dream—and how it all went sour.”10 It was also the last musical that
Prince and Sondheim did together.

The director/book writer James Lapine, Sondheim’s next collaborator, seems
to have had a slightly more optimistic influence on Sondheim’s work. In his work
with Lapine, Sondheim left the big-budget and high-pressure world of Broadway and
started working out the details of musicals in workshops sponsored by a group in San
Diego, California, called Playwrights Horizons.11 Iris Merlis produced the show and
allowed Sondheim more freedom to follow his own artistic impulses than did Prince
and the other individuals who produced the more extravagant and expensive
Broadway shows. Lapine and Sondheim’s first musical together was Sunday in the
Park With George (1984), based on the life and work of pointillist painter Georges
Seurat. Called a postmodern musical by some scholars, Sondheim truly earned the

11 Contemporary musicals, Sondheim says, are no longer financed by individual investors but by
theater owners or large corporations (1991:4).
label avant-gardist with this commentary on the tension between art and personal relationships (Bonahue in Gordon, 1977; Lahr 1984:17).

The first act chronicles a series of Sundays over a two-year period during which Seurat painted his famous “A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte” with his muse and lover, the aptly named Dot. Dot eventually cannot stand the fact that Seurat sees only her image, not her personality, and leaves him. Pregnant with Seurat’s baby, she moves with the local baker to America. The second acts focuses on Seurat and Dot’s great-grandson, also named George, a modern artist living in New York who is experiencing a creative block. At the one hundred year anniversary of Seurat’s painting, the younger George is asked to come to Paris to give a speech. There he has a vision of his great-grandmother, and she passes onto him Seurat’s creative legacy. Though the musical ends there, it is assumed that the younger George then loses his creative block and produces satisfying art again.

The themes of children and legacies are carried over into their second musical, *Into the Woods* (1987), the subject of this thesis. Sondheim connects the themes in this show to his common theme of breaking through illusions in this way:

If you want to really examine it, since I do like to deal in people’s delusions, that is only an inch away from illusions. And illusions are only an inch away from fairy tales. The things we tell ourselves we want and don’t want come under the headings of “tiny little lies” or “delusions” or “self-deceptions.” The little fantasies that you experience today, the things that you told yourself that are not true, could all be put under the heading of “fairy tales” (Secrest, 1988:355).

*Into the Woods* is based on four traditional folktales: Cinderella, Jack (of Beanstalk fame), and Little Red Riding Hood all wish for something, and must go into the
woods to get it. Rapunzel, heroine of the fourth tale, already lives in the woods with the Witch. Added to these tales is a tale concocted by Lapine, based on the first section of Rapunzel’s tale—the Baker is Rapunzel’s older brother. The Baker and his wife’s wish is to have a child, but a little-known result of the trade with the witch is that it made his family (sans Rapunzel) barren. The Witch appears unexpectedly and explains to the Baker how to “reverse the curse.” To do so, the Baker must collect: 1) the cow as white as milk, 2) the cape as red as blood, 3) the hair as yellow as corn, 4) the slipper as pure as gold, all of which are attached to one of the traditional folktale characters. Act One is comprised of the Baker and his wife searching for these items as the other four tales play themselves out according to Grimms’ version of their tales.

Act Two begins after “Happily Ever After” and attempts to bring the characters back into real life. Rapunzel has psychological problems; the two Princes’ eyes stray elsewhere; Jack is bored; Little Red Riding Hood has become violent. By the end of Act Two, almost every character but Jack, Little Red, Cinderella, and the Baker have died, due to the fact that Jack’s Giant’s wife has come to revenge her husband. In the process of Act Two, these four main characters have matured psychologically and become part of a cohesive group, learning that “No one is alone”—everything everyone does effects everyone else in some way.

Sondheim work with the musical continues. *Passion* (1994) is Sondheim and Lapine’s most recent musical. In theme, it is probably closest to *Sweeney Todd*. Based on Ettora Scola’s film *Passione D’Amore*, which in turn was based on the 1879 novel *Fosca*, the main theme is that of obsession. Captain Giorgio Bachetti is
sent to a military outpost in Italy in 1863. While there, he meets the obsessive, depressive Fosca ("dark"), who eventually persuades him to leave his beautiful, sexually mature mistress Clara ("light"). Giorgio says that he has never experienced the depth of "passion" that Fosca has for him, and it endears her to him. Just as Fosca has finally succeeded in winning Giorgio, however, she dies. *Passion* was another minor commercial success for Sondheim; it was most notable in that critics finally pronounced a Sondheim score "hummable" (Goodhart in Goodhart, 2000:221).

Sondheim also wrote a musical between *Woods* and *Passion* that was, again, entirely different from either, and from any other musical that he has written so far. Focusing on American presidential assassins, or would-be assassins, *Assassins* (1991) chronicles a long list of killers included John Wilkes Booth and Lee Harvey Oswald. John Weidman, who also wrote the book for *Pacific Overtures*, Sondheim's other overtly political musical, wrote the book for this musical. The play has received a great deal of criticism from people who believe that in it Sondheim glorifies the killers. Sondheim responds that, if he had covered the topic in a dramatic play, no one would think twice about it (Miller, 1996:9). The stories are told through the eyes of a Proprietor, who represents the country, run amok with violence and hatred, and a Balladeer, who represents the American public and the storytelling tradition. Sondheim says he chose the Balladeer character to sing the ballads of the assassins because folk music is the only form of storytelling that has been in existence since the time of the first assassination, and over time the stories get enlarged and
sensationalized by the public (ibid:12). Though the play never made it to Broadway, Sondheim stands by it and has commented that he would never revise it.\(^{12}\)

*Into the Woods* contains many similarities to Sondheim’s other musicals. Structurally, it is very similar to *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, in that the pace of both is very demanding and the songs offer respite from the various characters’ journeys through the woods. Unlike *Forum*, however, the songs in *Woods* are necessary for thematic development. On a musical level, *Woods* is similar to *Follies* in that Sondheim makes use of the connotations the audience associates with a certain type of music—for example, a trumpet fanfare or the blues—and uses it to heighten and comment on the characters whom the music represents (in *Woods*, the Princes and the Wolf, respectively.) Sondheim’s ability to mimic musical styles for his own use also carries over into his lyrics: in both *Gypsy* and *Woods*, he is able to create traditional-sounding proverbs or sayings such as “Everything’s Coming up Roses” (*Gypsy*), and “The harder to get, the better to have” (*Woods*) or “Every knot was once straight rope” (*Woods*) (Sondheim and Lapine, 1987:40, 133).

The themes in *Woods*, especially, are so classically Sondheim that Frank Rich, New York Times reviewer, wrote that, “*Into the Woods* is...a thematic culmination, a resolution, from Mr. Sondheim...” (Rich, 1987:1, 35). The theme of legacy, which is seen in *Into the Woods* in the story of the Baker and his father, and in the various versions of “Children Will Listen” that run throughout the musical, is obviously seen in *Sunday*. The larger theme of parent/child conflict and resolution, which also imbues *Woods* and *Sunday*, runs throughout a wide variety of Sondheim’s musicals. *Gypsy* contains a fairy-tale witch type in the role of Gypsy Rose Lee’s overbearing

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stage mother; *Sweeney Todd's* title character thinks that he has lost his family and goes on a killing spree, inadvertently killing his wife and almost killing his daughter. *A Little Night Music* contains three generations of one family's women and their interactions, though this theme in that musical in somewhat sidelined by other themes.

Another main theme in both *Woods* and Sondheim’s other musicals is what one Sondheim scholar calls the “disintegration of the American dream” (Orchard, 1988). The destruction of the classic “happily ever after” fairy tale (and traditional American musical) ending pervades much of Sondheim’s work. Perhaps the only musical of Sondheim’s that does end happily, with all parties receiving what they deserve, is *Forum*, which is a farce to begin with. This theme is most obviously seen in *Follies*, where the middle-aged Follies girls have a reunion and realize that the decisions they made regarding marriage partners back in their Follies days were the wrong ones. The traditional fairy tale is also reversed in *Passion*, where a handsome man leaves his beautiful, charming mistress for a depressive, ugly woman who dies soon after they get married. *Merrily We Roll Along* also presents the classic American fairy tale—one man’s journey to fame and financial success—as not worth the trip, especially at the height of the journey. *Pacific Overtures* deconstructs the same theme, but on an impersonal, national level. From the American standpoint, ending Japan’s isolation was the proper thing to do; the Americans were cultural saviors once again. However, the “saved” country soon becomes a rival and then a dominant force in the economy the rest of the world was trying to open up; the Western world’s “victory” has come back to haunt it. *Company*, however, provides
the most obvious comparison to Woods. In Bobby’s original final song, called

“Happily Ever After,” he describes the anguish of being married, which is a central part of the traditional “happily ever after” ending. He sings,

Someone to need you too much,
Someone to know you too well,
Someone to bleed you of all
The things you don’t want to tell—
That’s happily ever after.
Ever, ever, ever after—
In hell (Gordon in Gordon, 1977:72).

Though this ending was softened down for the final production due to negative audience reaction in the previews, the original version still stands as a testament to Sondheim’s idea of what the traditional ending would actually be like in real life (ibid).

Self-knowledge, rather than self-delusion, also appears in many Sondheim musicals. In Woods, all four surviving characters (Jack, Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, and the Baker) as well as the Witch and the Baker’s Wife, grow to a more mature level of moral and psychological development as the musical progresses. Their enlightenment can be seen most obviously in Little Red’s song, “I Know Things Now,” which she sings after emerging from the Wolf’s belly. Self-knowledge also shows up in Anyone Can Whistle, where the characters who are locked up in an asylum appear to be saner than the characters living in the town around them. By the end of that show, as well, each main character has been made to discover his or her inner potential. In Follies, too, the main characters lose their illusions and gain more knowledge about the reality of their lives. And Merrily shows the folly of not
knowing one’s self, and the unsatisfying life that can come of lacking that knowledge or compromising it.

Musical theater scholars have long discussed why Sondheim’s musicals seem so different from his mentor’s in theme and structure. However, Joanne Gordon has argued that in fact the two men do have a great deal in common. For example, they are both very aware of the needs of their singers, and spend a great deal of effort making their lyrics singable and effortless. Also, both men followed their hearts in their writing. As Hammerstein once told Sondheim, “Say what you feel, not what other songwriters feel” (Gordon, 1992:14).

Many other scholars feel that Sondheim merely reflects changing American values. Lee Orchard wrote a dissertation on how Sondheim “articulates the disintegration of the American dream” (Orchard, 1988). Another scholar describes Sondheim’s approach in this way:

Sondheim has staked out a turf big as the emotional landscape of post-World War Two America. Even when the shows have been set abroad, or in the past, their themes have addressed contemporary topics—or universal ones, Sondheim might aver—by way of metaphor. This is particularly true of Sondheim’s shows since 1970. He has treated the travail of modern marriage in Company, the corrosion of American optimism in Follies, injustice and revenge in Sweeney Todd, idealism and compromise in Merrily We Roll Along, and Western Imperialism in Pacific Overtures. (Freedman, 1984:26).

Another critic feels that the pessimism that American society feels is what has made Sondheim’s musicals popular. He argues, “A society that feels itself irredeemably lost requires a legend of defeat....Sondheim’s mature scores mythologize desolation” (Lahr, 1984:90).
Though Sondheim himself admits that he cannot write believably about successful relationships or happy endings, Mari Cronin, another Sondheim scholar, argues that he is, in fact, an idealist. Relationships are a key element in any Sondheim musical, as is inner growth and learning to face reality. Sondheim’s characters go through a great deal of emotional turmoil and change, but in doing so, it is hoped that they gain a better knowledge of themselves and their lives (Cronin in Gordon, 1977:145). Sondheim refuses to let his audience go into a happy fantasy world while at the theater; instead he hopes to make them better people through making them deal with often repressed aspects of their own lives (Gordon, 1992:11). However, Sondheim’s themes and stories are not purely his own. As he has pointed out, they come from his collaborators, the book writers—they outline the action and characters which Sondheim then musicalizes (Schiff, 1993:80). For this reason, Sondheim himself does not view his musicals as “Sondheim musicals,” though the press often overlooks his collaborators.

Though many themes carry over from musical to musical, Sondheim’s themes and stories are not purely his own. As he has pointed out, they come from his collaborators, the book writers—they outline the action and characters which Sondheim then musicalizes (Schiff, 1993:80). The similarities between musicals may come from the fact that Sondheim works with the same collaborators on many projects, and his collaborators’ worldviews show up in the musicals. As he says on the subject of collaborating:

Because I’m a collaborative animal, I tend to take the “blick” [overall vision of the world—the interviewer’s choice of words] of the person I work with, or of
the people I work with... The difference between Hal [Prince] and James [Lapine], who are the two directors I’m most recently worked with steadily, is the difference in their bliks (“Side By Side With Sondheim”).

Sondheim describes Prince as more “removed and cold,” while Lapine, his collaborator for Into the Woods, is much more “poetic” and “cosmic” in his outlook. Chip Zien, who played the Baker in Into the Woods, comments on Sondheim and Lapine, “They share a similar outlook. There is a certain melancholic view, a fear of flat-out enjoyment...It’s more the feeling, ‘Be careful or you may be disappointed.’ An underpinning of sadness. There is something not quite fulfilled that permeates the work” (Secrest, 1988:354).

**James Lapine**

Unlike Sondheim, however, James Lapine’s road into musical theater was anything but straight. Playwright and director James Lapine did not start out as a writer or even in the theater. Born in Mansfield, Ohio, in 1950, Lapine received his Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania and his Masters of Fine Arts in Design from the California Institute of Arts. He then worked in New York as a professional photographer and graphic designer, as well as doing architectural preservationist work for the Architectural League of New York. Soon, however, he moved to New Haven to design posters and programs for the Yale Repertory Theatre, as well as teach design at the Yale School of Drama.
Lapine’s first theater production was Gertrude Stein’s *Photograph*, which he adapted and directed in 1978. The play was a poem in five acts, and it was very successful, winning an Obie award in 1978 (Secrest, 1988:326; Schlesinger:29). He next wrote the play *Twelve Dreams*, about the Jungian dreams of a girl on the verge of adolescence, in 1979. *Dreams* was followed by *Table Settings* (1980), another award-winning production that he wrote and directed, which satirized family frictions (Gordon, 1992:262). In 1981, he directed William Finn’s *March of the Falsettos*, a one-hour off-Broadway musical that focused on the relationships of Marvin, a homosexual man. Sondheim became aware of Lapine’s work through a version of *A Midsummer’s Night Dream* that Lapine directed for the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1981. He had also seen Lapine’s play *Twelve Dreams*, and was impressed by its Jungian themes (Secrest, 1988:326). However, it was not until producer Lewis Allen approached him in 1982 about collaborating with Lapine on a musical version of the novella *A Cool Million*, by Nathan West, that the two were introduced (ibid:325).

Though they decided not to musicalize *A Cool Million*, they did decide to work on a different project that focused on a theme with variations. Brainstorming for ideas, Lapine recalled a painting by Georges Seurat that he had used in his production of *Photograph*. The painting was *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, one of Seurat’s most famous paintings. They realized that, though the painting was filled with a wide variety of people, one person was missing: the artist. As they read more about Seurat’s life and his theories of art (pointillism), Sondheim became convinced that Seurat’s theory applied to music as well, and they decided to
create a musical based on the painting (ibid:326-7). As discussed above, *Sunday in the Park with George* explored many themes connected with family and self-growth, as well as art and personal relationships. Many of these same themes carried over into their next musical, *Into the Woods*, for which Lapine, as discussed above, wrote the book and directed the original Broadway version. Before writing *Woods*, however, Lapine also directed a revised version of *Merrily We Roll Along* (1985.)

Prior to working with Sondheim, and after his successes with Sondheim on *Sunday* and *Into the Woods*, Lapine's work mainly focused on off-Broadway productions or experimental theater. After *Into the Woods*, he directed two Hollywood movies—*Impromptu* (1990), with Hugh Grant, Mandy Patinkin, and Bernadette Peters (these last two actors had also starred in the Broadway run of *Sunday*) and *Life With Mikey* (1993), starring Michael J. Fox and Nathan Lane.\(^{13}\) In between these two movies, Lapine collaborated with William Finn and was co-lyricist and director of *Falsettoland* (1992), the sequel to *March of the Falsettos*.\(^{14}\) Lapine returned to the theater with *Luck, Pluck, and Virtue* (1993, 1995), which he wrote and directed.

After working with different collaborators, Sondheim and Lapine came back together to create *Passion* (1994), for which Lapine also wrote the book and directed. Lapine followed *Passion* with *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1997), which he directed and *A New Brain* (1998), which he co-wrote with William Finn, based on Finn’s experience having a brain tumor.\(^{15}\) In 1999 he directed the Hollywood movie *Earthly


\(^{14}\) *Theater Mirror Reviews*, [http://www.theaterrmirror.com](http://www.theaterrmirror.com).

Possessions, with Susan Sarandon and Stephen Dorff.\textsuperscript{16} He also wrote the book for and directed Disney’s Broadway version of The Hunchback of Notre Dame, the play version, which has run into 2000. Currently, his play The Moment When, which he also directed, is running at Playwrights Horizons.\textsuperscript{17}

Lapine’s other works also set the precedent for his ideas for Woods, specifically his interest in children, family interactions, and psychology. Lapine interested Sondheim in fairytales, and encouraged the use of the Grimms versions of the tale for Woods. As they researched the tales, they discovered, among other things, that the tales are very widespread and that they are more aptly called folktales than fairytales (1991:2-3). Though the depth of their folktale knowledge is uncertain, they have drawn on several structures and forms characteristic of the folktale for use in Into the Woods.

\textsuperscript{16} E! Online.
\textsuperscript{17}http://www.playwrightshorizons.org/now.htm.
Chapter Three:

Into the Woods: The Production

As has been stated previously, after their experience with Sunday in the Park with George, Sondheim and Lapine wanted to do something lighter and funnier. Lapine, who initiated the folktale idea, says, “I’ve always loved fairy tales, so it was sort of a natural thing to explore” (1991:2). Though Sondheim knew less about folktales that Lapine, he was highly influenced by modern-day fiction books with folktale elements. As he describes his influences and original vision for the musical:

I had read all of the Oz books, and was enchanted by the Oz books and loved the movie The Wizard of Oz [Frank L. Baum] and the idea—see, I had read The Hobbit [J. R. R. Tolkien] too when I was a kid. And so the idea of a series of adventures with strange creatures and unexpected twists and turns of fate and funny things and melodramatic things and sorcery and all that sort of thing appealed to me. And I thought with James’ imagination it would be fun to utilize that (ibid).

Though originally intending to create a new folktale from which they could build a full-length musical, Lapine soon realized that the tales themselves are very short and concise by nature, and that the short length “serves them well” (ibid:3-4). They then decided to weave several tales together instead. Upon deciding this, they researched some of the scholarship on the folktale traditions of the world and found that there are many different versions of the tales spread across most of the world. They also researched different interpretations of the tales, and, as was discussed in
Chapter 1, they became most influenced by the psychoanalytic works of Freud, Bettelheim, and Fromm. Lapine was drawn most to the Grimms' versions of the tales, and read as many translations of them as he could, finally narrowing the pool down to twelve tales that revolved around the number three—for example, three trips to the Ball and three trips up the beanstalk, etc. All of the tales also revolved around the characters entering the woods at some point. Eventually those twelve were narrowed down to six: “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Cinderella,” “Jack and the Beanstalk,” “Rapunzel,” “Rumpelstiltskin,” and “The Three Little Pigs”, and Into the Woods began to take shape.

The production of Into the Woods began in the summer of 1986 at a workshop sponsored by Playwrights Horizons, the privately run theater that Lapine was associated with. The cast wore baseball caps to indicate which characters they played, and a piano bench served as the main prop. The production ran for fifty performances and contained the majority of songs that ended up in the Broadway version. That December, Sondheim and Lapine ran another two-week workshop at the Old Globe Theater in San Diego, California. This second workshop utilized some scenery and some costumes—most notably branches gathered by a local Boy Scout troop and a “Tina Turner” wig worn by the Witch (Schlesinger:30). During this workshop, Lapine realized that the storyline was too complicated, and he cut out “Rumpelstiltskin” and “The Three Little Pigs” from the folktale mix (1991:3).

He and Sondheim also realized during this workshop that the audience did not know the tales as well as they had thought, and that the audience members were confusing the plotlines of the Perrault versions, used by Disney, with the Grimm
versions that they were using (ibid:5-6). They were then posed with a dilemma: to either tell the stories as clearly as possible, so that the members of the audience who were not familiar with them could understand the musical, but bore the audience members who knew the story, or confuse half of the audience so that the other half is entertained (ibid:8-9)? They decided to do a little bit of both. Instead of directly relating the stories, the main characters from the traditional tales—Cinderella, Jack, Little Red, and, to a lesser extent, Rapunzel—all sing about how they felt during their experiences. A final two-week workshop took place at 890 Studios in New York in August of 1987, before Broadway rehearsals began, and finally the show was ready for Broadway. Into the Woods opened after twenty-six previews at the Martin Beck theater in New York City on November 5, 1987, and ran for 764 consecutive performances.

Several familiar faces showed up in the workshops and, later, the Broadway production of Woods. The Broadway version contained actors and staff with whom Sondheim and Lapine had worked previously and/or would work with again in the future. The actress Bernadette Peters, who had previously played the main role of Dot in the Broadway version of Sunday in the Park with George, was cast as the Witch.1 Robert Westenberg, who plays Cinderella’s Prince and the Wolf, had also been in Sunday as the Soldier and an understudy for George. (He also played the role of Harry in a Company revival in 1995.) Barbara Byrne, who plays Jack’s mother, had also played George’s mother in Sunday; and Danielle Ferland, Little Red Riding Hood, had played Louise, another painter’s child. And Tom Aldredge, the Narrator
and the Mysterious Man, went on to play Doctor Tambourri in Sondheim and Lapine’s *Passion* in 1994. Chip Zien, the Baker, went on to play in Mendel in *Falsettoland* (1990.)

Several of the production staff members had worked with Sondheim before on previous musicals as well. Paul Gemignani, Musical Director, and Jonathan Tunick, Musical Orchestrator, had worked with Sondheim on numerous projects: Gemignani on *Follies, Sweeney Todd, Merrily We Roll Along, Sunday,* and *Passion*; Tunick on *Company, Follies, A Little Night Music, Pacific Overtures, Sweeny Todd, Merrily,* and *Passion.* Ann Hould-Ward and Patricia Zipprodt, the costume designers, also worked with Sondheim and Lapine on the costumes for *Sunday.*

The Broadway version of *Into the Woods* won several awards. In 1988 it won three Tony awards—Best Score, for Sondheim; Best Book, for Lapine; and Best Actress in a Musical, for Joanna Gleason, who played the Baker’s Wife. It also won five Drama Desk Awards: Best Musical, Best Lyrics (Sondheim), Best Book for a Musical (Lapine), Featured Actor in a Musical (Westenberg), and Featured Actress in a Musical (Gleason.) *Woods* also won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical. In addition, the cast recording of *Woods* won a Grammy for Best Original Show Cast Album.

The original Broadway cast album of *Woods* was recorded by RCA Victor on November 9 and 10, 1987. The road company of *Woods* began in November 1988 in

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1 The following discussion is based on the original Broadway cast of *Woods;* most of the actors took leaves of absences for various lengths of time throughout the run, and were generally replaced by actors new to Sondheim and Lapine productions.
3 “Into the Woods.” Ibid.
Fort Lauderdale, Florida, while the Broadway production was still playing. The London version opened, using a completely British cast, at the West End in London in September 1990. The London cast album was also recorded by RCA Victor on January 14, 15, and 16, 1991. The original Broadway cast performance was taped in May 1989 and aired on Public Broadcasting System’s “American Playhouse” series March 20, 1991. The musical was also adapted into an illustrated book by Hudson Talbot in 1988.

The Musical: Act One

As the curtain opens, the audience sees three tableaux. On the left sits Cinderella scrubbing the floor; in the middle, Jack sits on a bench attempting to milk his cow; and on the right the Baker and his Wife clean up their shop. The Narrator, a slight middle-aged man with a gray beard, wire glasses, and gray suit, enters the stage from the left. He announces, “Once upon a time—,” and the music begins. He starts to tell the story of each character, and after he introduces each one, they sing, “I wish,” and begin moving. Cinderella, “a fair maiden,” wishes to go to the Festival and Ball; Jack, “a sad young lad,” wishes his cow would give milk; and the “childless Baker and his Wife” wish to have a child (Sondheim and Lapine, 1987:3-4). The three stories play out simultaneously but without overwhelming the other stories.

As the Prologue (“Into the Woods”) plays out, the characters overlap each other as they describe their wishes, switching quickly from one story to another.

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4 “Once Upon a Time”, Track 1, London soundtrack.
5 Renamed Tracks 2-9 on the London soundtrack; pp. 3-21 in libretto.
Soon Little Red Riding Hood (hereafter known as “Little Red”) knocks on the Baker’s door, asking for some sweets and bread to bring to Granny, who lives in the woods. Little Red starts the “Into the Woods” music and plot theme that runs throughout the Prologue and the rest of the show, as each character learns that what he or she needs to do will take place in the woods:

Into the woods  
And through the trees  
To where I am expected, ma’am,  
Into the woods  
To grandmother’s house— (1987:9).

Immediately following, on a different part of the stage, Cinderella’s stepmother and stepsisters enter and laugh at her when she tells them that she wants to go to the festival. Her stepmother “tests” Cinderella by pouring lentils into the ashes for her to pluck out. Cinderella calls on her friends, the birds, to help her pluck them out. When her stepsisters demand that she help them get ready, Cinderella bemoans the drawbacks of being “nice.”

The Narrator explains that the Baker had been told that his parents were killed in a baking accident, which is why he was so determined to start a family of his own. The Witch from next door knocks and enters, and she explains the true nature of his family’s problems: When he was still a child, his mother became pregnant again and convinced his father to climb into the Witch’s garden to steal some of the Witch’s greens for her; the Witch had caught him and demanded that she be given their unborn child in return for the greens. (However, the Witch doesn’t tell him that the

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baby was named Rapunzel.) In addition, she had cursed the entire family with infertility, which is why the Baker and his Wife have not been able to conceive. She also tells him that, unbeknownst to her, his father had stolen some of her special beans along with the greens for his wife. Because she had let someone steal her beans, the Witch’s mother had punished her with ugliness (1987:12-5). Meanwhile, Jack’s mother demands that Jack go to market to sell his cow, Milky White, who is also his best friend. She complains that his head is always in the clouds and that he is “touched.” He must sell the cow for at least five pounds (1987:15-6).

The Witch finally tells the Baker and his Wife how to reverse the spell she put on them:

Go to the wood and bring me back
One: the cow as white as milk,
Two: the cape as red as blood,
Three: the hair as yellow as corn,
Four: the slipper as pure as gold (1987:16).

After she leaves, Cinderella’s stepmother refuses to let her go to the Ball, and her father and stepfamily leave (1987:16-7). Cinderella decides to go into the woods to visit her mother’s grave for advice on the situation. The Baker and his Wife argue over who will go find the items for the curse; he insists that she stay home because the curse was put on his house (1987:17-8). All characters, for one reason or another, leave their houses and separately prepare to go into the woods. Little Red Riding Hood, who had left the stage after getting the sweets from Granny, joins them

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9 “Ladies, our carriage waits,” Track 7, London soundtrack.
10 “The curse is on my house,” Track 8, London soundtrack.
onstage, and Cinderella’s stepfamily in their carriage also appear in the background.

All sing the end of the “Prologue”:

Into the woods without delay,
But careful not to lose the way.
Into the woods, who knows what may
Be lurking on the journey?

Into the woods to get the thing
That makes it worth the journeying…

Into the woods, then out of the woods,

The characters are all now in the woods. Rapunzel, the Witch’s daughter, already lives in the woods and so has no need to go “into the woods.” The Narrator, who enters and leaves the stage continuously throughout the first act, enters again and tells the story of Cinderella planting a tree at her mother’s grave. She complains to her mother that she is always left behind, and asks for advice. Her mother, a practical yet loving ghost, asks her to specify her wish. Cinderella asks for silver and gold, and the tree floats down a white dress and golden slippers to her (1987:22-3).\textsuperscript{11} She runs off, and Jack appears in a different part of the woods with his cow. As he walks along, the Mysterious Man appears. When Jack asks who he is, he answers: “When first I appear I seem mysterious. But when explained, I am nothing serious” (1987:23). He proceeds to ask Jack why he is in the woods, and claims that Jack will be lucky to sell his cow for a sack of beans. At his words, chimes jingle in the background, and he runs off into the woods. Jack exits in a different direction, and Little Red and the Wolf enter.
The Wolf asks Little Red where she is going, and Little Red gives exact directions to her Granny's house. The Wolf then proceeds to convince her to stray from her path—“Hello little girl, What’s your rush? You’re missing all the flowers. The Sun won’t set for hours, Take your time” (1987:25). Interspersed with the Wolf’s questions to Little Red are several comments to the audience regarding how much the Wolf is looking forward to eating both Little Red and Granny. Eventually Little Red does decide to pick some flowers for Granny, and the Wolf goes off to find Granny’s house. Before they leave, the Baker spies them and focuses on Little Red’s cloak. As he debates with himself how he should get the cape from her, the Witch appears and tells him to grab it. He protests, and Rapunzel’s voice is heard in the background, singing. The Witch leaves, and his Wife appears with his scarf. They argue again about whether or not she can help him, and suddenly Jack and Milky White appear. The Baker’s Wife encourages him to buy the cow; it turns out that they only have the beans his father had stolen from the Witch long ago. The Baker’s Wife decides to buy the cow with the beans, which she claims are magic. Jack does not agree until he unexpectedly hears the Mysterious Man’s voice in the background, repeating that he’d be lucky to sell his cow for a sack of beans. This influence encourages Jack to to sell the cow for beans. However, he makes the Baker reluctantly promise to allow Jack to buy the cow back later, if possible. Jack then says a teary goodbye to his cow and runs off (1987:29).

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11 “Cinderella at the grave,” Track 2, New York soundtrack. All soundtrack numbers from here on in will be from the New York version.
12 “Hello, Little Girl,” Track 3.
13 “I Guess this is Goodbye,” Track 4. Sondheim has stated that this is the only true love song in the entire musical (Banfield, 1993:395).
After he leaves, the Baker yells at his Wife for deceiving Jack. His Wife argues that they might actually be magic, and shows herself to be a pragmatic Machiavellian as she argues with him: “If you know / What you want, / Then you go / And you find it / And you get it— / Do we want a child or not? / —And you give / And you take / And you bid / And you bargain, / Or you live / To regret it....If the end is right, / It justifies/ The Beans!” (1987:29-31) Her argument does not persuade the Baker, and he sends his Wife home with the cow and sets off in another direction to find the other items. Rapunzel sings in the distance and her tower appears onstage. The Witch appears and calls to her to let down her hair; she does and the Witch climbs up. Rapunzel’s Prince, a tall blond man in a dark royal-looking uniform, appears onstage and tells the audience that he will try to get into Rapunzel’s tower the same way that next day. He leaves, and Little Red appears.

The Baker also appears, and seeing Little Red, he runs to her and asks her for her cloak. When she refuses, the Witch’s voice is heard in the background and he grabs the cloak and runs off. As he does so, Little Red starts screaming, and does not stop until he returns the cloak to her. He warns her not to talk to any wolves, and she yells at him, stomps on his foot, and runs off. The Baker rethinks his strategy and his desire to have a child, and reprises his Wife’s earlier argument: “It’s a cloak, / What’s a cloak? / It’s a joke, / It’s a stupid little cloak. / And a cloak is what you make it. (He nods, convincing himself.) / So you take it” (1987:32).

He leaves, and Little Red’s Granny’s cottage appears. Little Red enters and asks the Wolf, dressed as her Granny, why he has such big ears, hands, and mouth. He eats her, and she screams. The Baker passes by the cottage and notices that Little

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14 “Maybe They’re Magic,” continuation of Track 4.
Red isn’t there. When he hears a burp, he realizes that she has been eaten. Going into the cottage, he sees her cape sticking out of the Wolf’s mouth, and he kills the Wolf to get at it, inadvertently letting Granny and Little Red out of the Wolf’s stomach. Granny comes out of his stomach and immediately starts strangling the Wolf and devising ways that she and Little Red can torture the animal. They offer the wolf skin to the Baker but he refuses, saying that he is a baker, not a hunter. Little Red goes downstage to tell the audience of her experiences with the Wolf. During her encounters with the Wolf—being seduced off of her path, being eaten, and then coming out alive—she learned many things:

Do not put your faith
In a cape and a hood—
They will not protect you
The way that they should—
And take extra care with strangers,
Even flowers have their dangers.
And though scary is exciting,
Nice is different than good.

Isn’t it nice to know a lot!
…and a little bit not…(1987:35,36).15

Because Little Red has learned that her cape is not as trustworthy as she had thought, and because the Baker saved her and her Granny’s lives, she gives the cape to the Baker. The Baker now has two of the four items. Jack, on the other hand, loses the five beans that he gained in exchange for his cow. When his mother finds out that he has sold his cow for beans, she throws the beans out of the window and sends Jack to bed. At the same time, Cinderella, rushing home from the first Ball,

15 "I Know Things Now," Track 5.
runs into the Baker’s Wife. They share stories—the Baker’s Wife wants to know all about the Prince, and Cinderella wants to know why she is alone in the woods with a cow. Though the Baker’s Wife asks specifically about the Prince, Cinderella tells her mainly about the Ball itself (1987:37-9). As Cinderella’s Prince approaches in pursuit, Cinderella sees a beanstalk growing in the background and the Baker’s Wife notices that Cinderella’s shoes are gold. Cinderella hears the Prince and rushes off; the Baker’s Wife tries to follow her but loses both the cow and Cinderella in the process. The first of the three midnights allotted to the Baker and his Wife chimes to a close and the characters, each wrapped up in their own world, wander across the stage commenting to the audience upon their various predicaments, in proverb form: “No knot unties itself...” (Mysterious Man); “Sometimes the things you most wish for / Are not to be touched...” (Witch); “The harder to get, the better to have....” (the two Princes) (1987:40-2). In the midst of these pronouncements, Jack rushes in and stops the action, singing to himself about the kingdom he has found up in the sky.

Jack, who has just finished visiting the Giantess up in the sky for the first time, explains how he feels about his experiences so far, describing his journey in the process. He feels free to do whatever he wants while up “in the sky,” and the Giantess is kind to him, but when her husband comes home and chases him out of the house he feels scared. All in all, however, he feels very excited by his adventures (1987:42-4). Afterwards, Jack comes upon the Baker and attempts to buy back his cow with the money he stole from the giant. He gives the Baker five gold pieces, and when the Baker protests, states that he will go back up the Giant’s house and grab

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16 “A Very Nice Prince,” Track 6, continued.
17 “First Midnight,” Track 6, continued.
more money, and rushes off. The Mysterious Man appears and talks to the Baker about the price of a child, and then takes the money from the Baker. As he leaves, his Wife comes into view and she tells him that she has lost the cow. They argue and again the Witch appears out of nowhere to yell at them; the Baker offers the cape to the Witch, but she cannot touch any of the items. She disappears and they apologize; the Baker’s Wife leaves for home again and the Baker sets off in a different direction.

After they exit, the two Princes bound in, one from each side of the stage. They are brothers, and Cinderella’s Prince—a dark haired man in an outfit similar to Rapunzel’s Prince but with a sash and more medals—is the older. They compare star-crossed love stories, and try to understand why Cinderella is running from her Prince since they both are everything maidens could wish for. They come to the conclusion that their love “agonies” are both equal in power, and vow that they will wed Cinderella and Rapunzel (1987:47-9). Throughout the song, the Baker’s Wife is listening behind a tree; she learns from them where Rapunzel lives and that she has hair yellow as corn. After they leave, Jack’s mother enters and talks with the Baker’s Wife for a few moments; then both leave. The Baker enters looking for the cow, and the Mysterious Man appears again with the cow. After giving the cow to the Baker, he disappears. Later, he reappears and the Witch sneaks up behind him, warning him not to interfere. The Mysterious Man, however, wants to make amends. They argue a bit and then both leave.

In a different part of the woods, the Baker’s Wife has followed Rapunzel’s Prince’s directions to her tower. She calls to Rapunzel and pulls out some of her hair.

18 “Giants in the Sky,” Track 6, continued.
Cinderella appears, running from her Prince the second time, and she and the Baker’s Wife talk. As the Prince nears, Cinderella attempts to run away and the Baker’s Wife tries to get Cinderella’s shoe; Cinderella succeeds in escaping both the Prince and the Baker’s Wife unharmed. The Baker’s Wife directs the Prince after Cinderella; Cinderella’s stepsisters enter from the other direction, chasing the Prince and being chased by the Baker for their hair. The Baker’s Wife shows the Baker the hair she has found and they rejoice. The Baker finally agrees that he needs his Wife in order to lift the curse (1987:54-6). Then Jack appears with a hen that lays golden eggs and asks to buy Milky White back. As the three of them argue over the cow, it falls over and dies. The second midnight chimes and the characters come out again, commenting on their situations in a shorter version of the first midnight.

The Baker and his Wife bury the cow, and they decide that the Baker will go find another cow and his Wife will get Cinderella’s slipper. They scatter as the Witch enters the stage, screaming and dragging Rapunzel. She has found out that Rapunzel’s Prince has seen her, and yells at her for having a visitor. She accuses Rapunzel of thinking that she embarrasses her, and she warns her that the outside world can be harsh and that no one will love her as much as she does. She entreats Rapunzel to stay with her, but after they embrace, she turns on Rapunzel, ripping off her long hair and threatening to punish her (1987:59-60). Rapunzel runs off, screaming, and the Witch follows. The Baker wanders onstage, and the Mysterious Man appears. He gives the Baker back the gold pieces and suggests, in riddle format, the Baker buy a non-white cow and disguise it. They leave, and Little Red enters,

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20 “It Takes Two,” Track 9.
21 “Stay With Me,” Track 10.
followed quickly by Jack, who admires her new wolf-fur cape and shows her his hen. She threatens him with her knife and refuses to believe that the hen lays golden eggs or that there is a kingdom up in the sky that Jack visits. Jack vows to go up to the kingdom again to prove it to her.

The Narrator enters and says that the Witch has sent Rapunzel to a remote desert and narrates the scene as Rapunzel’s Prince, in another part of the wood, climbs up her Rapunzel’s tower and is met by the Witch. She pushes the Prince from the tower and he lands in a thicket of thorns, blinding himself. The Narrator then turns to Cinderella’s story, as she returns home from the Ball for the third time. She enters, and proceeds to explain how her Prince had smeared the palace stair with pitch and the thoughts that passed through her mind while she was stuck there. In a longer reprise of her earlier two conversations with the Baker’s Wife, she sings that she feels uncomfortable in her new role as the Prince’s beloved, and that she cannot decide whether or not to be caught. Eventually, she decides not to decide, but to leave the Prince a clue—her shoe. Therefore, the Prince must make the decision, not her alone (1987:62-4). The Baker’s Wife enters and tries to gain Cinderella’s other shoe by purchasing it with the other bean; Cinderella takes the bean and mulls over the deal, but then throws the bean away. Eventually, they trade shoes when they hear the Prince coming, and Cinderella runs off again.

The Baker appears, and as his Wife rushes to give him the shoe, the Prince’s Steward intercepts it. Jack’s beanstalk falls in the background, and Cinderella’s Prince appears. He berates his Steward for searching without him, and when the Mysterious Man appears and pleads for them to give the slipper to the Baker, he
agrees, as he believes the Mysterious Man is a “spirit of some sort” (1987:66). As they celebrate, Jack’s mother comes screaming onto the stage. She narrates Jack’s race down the beanstalk and cutting it down, and says that she cannot find Jack anywhere. Cinderella’s Prince attempts to offer her some stilted sympathy (“Worrying will do you no good”), when the Witch appears warning that the third midnight is approaching (ibid). She asks for the items and notices that the new cow is not white as milk. They explain that the other cow died, and she has them dig it up to revive it. As they do so, Jack enters with a large harp. The Witch, Baker, and Wife come back with the revived cow, and the Witch tells them to feed the item to the cow. They do so, and Jack attempts to milk her, but nothing happens.

The Witch accuses the Baker and his Wife of collecting the wrong items, and the Wife defends herself and tells the Witch that she tore the hair from a maiden in a tower. The Witch exclaims that she cannot have touched the items; the Mysterious Man suggests using the corn silk from the corn that the Baker had carried around for comparison. They feed the corn silk to the cow, she gives milk. The Witch then tells the Baker that the Mysterious Man is his father; the Witch drinks the milk and transforms into a beautiful young woman in an evening gown; the Mysterious Man dies, and the last stroke of midnight chimes.

The Narrator appears as all leave the stage and returns to narrating Cinderella’s story. Cinderella’s Prince comes to her house and has her stepsisters try on the shoe; the shoe does not fit either and so their mother chops off a part of their foot so it will. Cinderella’s mother points out the blood in the shoe of the first sisters; the Prince notices the blood the second time. Finally, Cinderella tries on the shoe,
and her Prince rides off with her to the Palace. The Narrator then turns to Rapunzel's story, narrating the events after she and her Prince find each other. In the desert, Rapunzel bore twins, and one day her Prince heard her singing and wandered toward her. They found each other and she cried on his eyes, which cured them of their blindness. After she heals his eyes, the Witch appears and reintroduces herself to Rapunzel, begging her to stay with her again. Rapunzel refuses, and the Witch attempts to attack them both with her magic cane. The cane does not work, for, as the Narrator states, people in folktales often lose their other powers in exchange for youth and beauty. Returning to Cinderella’s story, she and her Prince get married, and as the stepsisters walk out of the church, Cinderella’s birds fly down and peck out their eyes. In the “Finale,” the characters gather on stage counting their blessings and offering advice to the audience:

To be happy, and forever,
You must see your wish come true.
Don’t be careful, don’t be clever,
When you see your wish, pursue.
It’s a dangerous endeavor, but the only thing to do...

Though it’s deep, though it’s dark,
And though you may lose the path,
Though you may encounter wolves,
You mustn’t stop,
You mustn’t swerve,
You mustn’t ponder,
You have to act!

When you know your wish,
If you want your wish,
But you can’t just wish—
No, to get your wish
You go into the woods.....(1987:77).

23 “Ever After,” Track 11.
But right before the “and happy ever after!” however, the Narrator interjects, “To be continued…,” alerting the audience that these stories’ endings are not as predictable as they may seem.

Act Two: Later

Act Two begins very similarly to Act One. The curtain opens to three tableaus. Cinderella, now a princess, sits on a throne on the left of the stage, flanked by her stepmother and stepsisters; Jack sits in the center of the stage, in a nicer cottage with his cow, his mother, and the harp; and the Baker and his Wife are busy cleaning up their shop on the left, which is filled with nursery items. The narrator begins, “Once upon a time…later,” and the audience soon finds out that the characters still wish for more (1987:83). Cinderella wants to sponsor a festival (and, as her Prince leaves her to do his Princely duties, it is suggested that she would like to spend more time with him); Jack misses his kingdom up in the sky; and the Baker and his Wife wish for more room. Though they wish for more, they are also happy with what they have already received (1987:83-8).

Into this bliss comes a problem—“something” tramples upon the Witch’s garden and shakes the Baker’s house. The Witch knocks on their door, and they attempt to figure out what happened. Eventually, they decide it was a giant, and the
Baker sets off to tell the royal family. On his way, he stops by Jack’s cottage to ask for help. Jack offers to help, but his mother refuses because no one had helped them when they had to deal with a Giant. She makes Jack promise to stay home, and leaves to go to market. The baker continues on to the castle and tells Cinderella that another Giant is around. Though the Steward downplays the danger, she promises to tell the Prince about the Giant when he returns.

When the Baker returns home, Little Red stops by to tell them that her house has been destroyed and her mother is missing, and that she is on her way to live with Granny. The Baker and his Wife, after some argument, decide to go with her to protect her. They bring their baby with them as well. Meanwhile, Cinderella’s bird friends tell Cinderella that her mother’s grave is in danger, and they suggest that she dress up as a peasant to go visit it. Jack, back at his cottage, decides to go against his mother’s orders and sets out to find the Giant. All the main characters, therefore, again go into the woods on their various errands.

Rapunzel, as well, is wandering the woods. The Witch comes upon her and asks her what is wrong; she laughs and says, “Oh, nothing! You just locked me in a tower without company for fourteen years, then blinded my Prince and banished me to a desert where I had little to eat, and again no company, and then bore twins! Because of the way you treated me, I’ll never, never be happy” (1987:95). Though the Witch asks her to stay with her due to the danger of the Giant, Rapunzel runs away from her, screaming. Rapunzel’s Prince and Cinderella’s Prince enter and unintentionally run unto each other. Rapunzel’s Prince complains of her mood swings and changed personality, and Cinderella’s Prince comments noncommittally

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24 “Prologue: So Happy,” Track 12.
that Cinderella is fine. Soon, however, they reveal that each has found a new maiden. Cinderella’s Prince has found a maiden in a tower surrounded by briars (Sleeping Beauty), and Rapunzel’s Prince has found a maiden in a glass casket surrounded by dwarves (Snow White). Again, they share their agony over finding such maidens but not being able to have them. Sighing, they part ways to go back to their wives (1987:96-8). Rapunzel rushes through in the background, screaming, and her Prince follows her; Cinderella’s Prince exits in the other direction.

The Baker, his Wife, and Little Red enter, trying to find the path to Granny’s, which is not as clear as it was on Little Red’s previous trip. As they wander, they are joined by Cinderella’s stepfamily and the Steward, who have left the castle because the Giant has attacked it. The Witch also enters and tells them that the Giant smashed their houses on the way to the castle. As they argue, the Giant appears. She is a woman, and the other giant’s wife, and demands that she be given Jack in revenge for her husband’s murder. The Narrator relates to the audience that the Giantess is nearsighted and is convinced that Jack was with them. Little Red accuses her of killing her mother and destroying her house. The Giantess replies that she was kind to Jack, but he stole her money, hen, and harp and killed her husband, and that he deserves to be punished. The Witch tries to offer the Steward and the stepsisters to the Giant instead, but all three refuse to become martyrs.

While the group debates their course of action, the Narrator analyzes the situation for the audience: “You must understand, these were not people familiar with making choices—their past experiences in the woods had in no way prepared them to deal with a force this great” (1987:101). As he continues, the group becomes

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aware of his presence and starts walking toward him menacingly. The Narrator, anticipating their action, argues that there always has to be an outside observer to pass the story along—if they kill him, they will never know how their stories end, to which the Witch replies that some characters were not happy with the way their stories were being told. Eventually, the Witch throws him at the Giantess, who drops him when she realizes that he is not Jack.

Jack’s mother enters, coming home from market, and argues with the Giantess, defending Jack. The group becomes uneasy that she is further upsetting the Giantess, and the Steward hits her a deadly blow on her head with his staff. He then tells the Giantess that Jack is in a steeple tower. Rapunzel enters, screaming, and when her Prince follows, she runs under the foot of the Giantess and is killed. The Baker realizes that Jack’s mother is dying; after she makes him promise to protect Jack, she dies as well. The men onstage drag her body off stage as the Witch begins her lament for Rapunzel. No matter what you say, she sings, children won’t listen; you love them and then you lose them (1987:105-6). The men return and the Steward and Cinderella’s stepfamily leave to hide in a secret kingdom. The remaining characters again discuss what they should do, and when everyone but the Witch decides that all Jack should do is apologize to the Giantess, the Witch, in disgust, leaves to go find Jack herself.

The Baker and his Wife decide to go find Jack before the Witch does, and, leaving their baby with Little Red, count off one hundred paces into the woods. The Baker’s Wife runs into Cinderella’s Prince. Upon hearing that she has seen the Giant

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26 It is not clear from either the video or Sondheim and Lapine’s interviews whether or not Rapunzel chose to kill herself by running at the Giantess.
and is in the woods alone of her own volition, the Prince becomes intrigued and attempts to seduce her. Though she tries to resist—"This is ridiculous, / What am I doing here? / I’m in the wrong story"—she eventually falls prey to the Prince’s charm, and they kiss in the woods (1987:108-9). Meanwhile, the Baker has come across Cinderella at her Mother’s grave. When he realizes who it is, he tells her that the castle has been set upon by the Giantess, and persuades her to join his group in the woods. They leave, and his Wife and Cinderella’s Prince roll out from under the shrubbery in the background. The Prince tells her that he must leave her, and that their encounter was just a “moment in the woods” (1987:111). She turns to the audience and attempts to describe her feelings about her moment with Cinderella’s Prince: “Must it all be either less or more, / Either plain or grand? / Is it always ‘or’? / Is it never ‘and’?” (1987:112). Eventually she comes to the conclusion that having that moment (the “and”) helped her to better appreciate her Baker (the “or”), and she heads back to find him and join the group (1987:111-3). Before she can, however, the Giantess approaches; as she flees, the Giant knocks down a tree that lands on the Baker’s Wife and kills her.

The Baker returns to Little Red with Cinderella, and the Witch enters with Jack. Jack carries the Baker’s Wife’s shawl; the Witch tells the Baker that his Wife is dead and Jack explains that they found her under a tree. The Witch tells them that she will give Jack to the Giantess. The Baker agrees, saying that it is Jack’s fault that this giant is here and his wife is dead, thus starting a vicious cycle of blame-laying among

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28 “Any Moment,” Track 15.
29 “Moments in the Woods,” Track 15, continued.
the five of them (1987:114-120). The cycle grows into a concerted attack on the Witch. She calms them by accepting the blame as long as they give her Jack, which they refuse to do. She then tells them that they are too “nice,” which to her is a criticism; she also accuses all of them of being liars and thieves. She finally places another “curse” on them—leaving them alone, and she implores her mother to take her away from them (1987:120-2). After she says this, she disappears; presumably, she has died like everyone else.

The remaining characters—Jack, Little Red, and Cinderella, and the Baker—apologize to each other except for the Baker, who still harbors some anger against them all. He leaves his child with Cinderella and runs off into the woods. There he meets the Mysterious Man (or possibly just the ghost of the Mysterious Man; this remains unclear) who reminds the Baker that he had run off and left his child just as the Baker is doing now. The Baker, weary of the entire situation, asks to be left alone, wonders why people cannot “Just pursue our lives / With our children and our wives / ‘Till that happier days arrives, / How do you ignore....” everything bad that happens to people (1987:123-5). He returns to the group determined to make the best of his situation.

They wonder how to kill the Giantess until Cinderella’s birds come along, telling Cinderella of her Prince’s infidelity. She asks them for help, and they tell her that they will pick out the Giantess’ eyes. The Baker decides to smear the ground with pitch, and Jack offers to strike the Giant dead from a nearby tree. Little Red, Jack, and the Baker go off to get pitch from Granny’s cottage, leaving Cinderella with

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30 “Your Fault,” Track 16.
31 “Last Midnight,” Track 16, continued.
the Baker’s baby. While they are gone, Cinderella’s Prince wanders by. Cinderella asks him if he was unfaithful to her, and he says that he was. She asks him to think of her as a victim of the Giantess, because she wants to live a life in-between her old one and her new one. He leaves, telling her that he will always remember her as the maiden that ran away.

Little Red returns and tells Cinderella of their preparations. She also tells her that her Granny is dead, and that her mother would not be happy that they are killing the Giantess or with their current situation. Cinderella tries to comfort her, reminding her that she is not alone, but also telling her that it is time for her to grow up and take care of herself. The Baker, in the tree with Jack, tells him that the Steward killed his mother. When Jack states that he wants to kill the Steward in revenge, the Baker tries to talk him out of it, and attempts to explain the difference between right and wrong. The Baker and Cinderella explain to Jack and Little Red that people can make mistakes but people also have to support each other when they make mistakes (1987:128-132).

Then the Giantess appears, and they carry out their plan. Jack and the Baker strike her, and she dies.

The dead characters begin to gather onstage in the background, singing reprises of their earlier commentaries during the midnights of Act One: “Every knot was once straight rope…” (Mysterious Man); “The harder to wake, the better to have…” (the two Princes) (1987:133). The Princes enter with Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, yawning. Jack exclaims that he has nowhere to go and no one to take care of him; the Baker tells him that it is time to take care of himself. Little Red

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32 “No More,” Track 17.
33 “No One Is Alone,” Track 18.
offers to be his mother, but he declines, saying that he wants a friend instead. She suggests they live with the Baker; he agrees, and they encourage Cinderella to live with them as well, which she does. The Baker wishes his wife were able to watch their son grow up; she appears in the background and tells him to tell their story to their child. He begins, “Once upon a time...in a far off kingdom...lived a young maiden...a sad young lad...and a childless baker...with his wife” (1987:136; 3). The Witch, in the background, reprises her song, “Children Won’t Listen,” changing it to “Children Will Listen,” and together with the rest of the cast, she warns the audience to be careful what they tell their children and to be careful the wishes they make, as the results of those wishes may be unforeseen (1987:136-8). As the cast ends the song with the “Into the Woods” theme reprised leading up to the “and happy ever after!” ending, Cinderella adds one last “I wish—,” completing the cycle of the musical (1987:138).

The London Version

The storyline of the London version of the show is very similar to the Broadway version. The main exception is the addition of a song that the Witch and Rapunzel sing, called “Our Little World.” This song gives greater insight into Rapunzel’s story and her relationship with the Witch. The Witch wishes to keep Rapunzel locked up and safe from the outside world, and totally under her control.

34 “Finale: Children Will Listen,” Track 19.
35 London soundtrack, Track 14.
Rapunzel, on the other hand, finds her “mother” somewhat repulsive but passively agrees with the Witch’s statement that “Our little world is perfect.” They elaborate on their relationship:

**Witch:** Children are a blessing,  
When you know where they are—  
Nothing so distressing  
As when they keep you guessing,  
So be sure you don’t leave any doors ajar….

**Rapunzel:** Our little world is big enough for me.

**Witch:** Perfect!

**Together:** Our little world  
Is all it needs to be.

**Rapunzel:** If only she didn’t drool….

**Rapunzel:** Brushing my hair  
And combing my hair  
Only my mother and me and my hair…

**Witch:** Look at that complexion  
Still untouched by the sun—  
Children need protection  
Just the way they need affection  
Or they wander and they wander  
And they run…….(ibid).

In addition to “Our Little World,” several changes were made to the set and costumes. The London version’s set was much less literal than the Broadway set, originally designed by Tony Straiges. Straiges and Lapine wanted the Broadway show to have a fairy tale book illustration style to it, and they focused on Arthur Rackham’s illustrations and silhouettes in particular (Mankin, 1988:56). Each of the characters was dressed in period clothing, though from several different periods—
Cinderella’s clothes were 1830’s European, and the Baker and his Wife were dressed in 1860s Germanic peasant garments (ibid:58). The clothes were bright and colorful, though few patterned fabrics were used. The character’s houses, as well, were very literal—the Baker’s cottage included pots and pans, a table, dishrags, and a fireplace, and Cinderella’s room had a fireplace, buckets, and rags. The woods surrounding the houses looked like woods—composed mainly of silhouettes of trees and branches and a few three-dimensional trees as well.

The London version, on the other hand, was much more abstract. The three houses were no more than walls—Cinderella’s wall had strong, dark patterned wallpaper and a large dark door; the Baker’s cottage wall contained a chair, a brick oven, and a few baking implements; and Jack’s wall was covered in mildew and also contained a large dark door. The colors of the “houses” as well as the costumes were neutral, earth tones (Malm, 1996:5). The woods were abstract as well; as one reviewer described it, they were worthy of a “nouveau riche bogeyman, freaked out on the possibilities of big game in Scotland or Bavaria.”

Instead of tree silhouettes, the “woods” were a semicircle wall framed with a circlet of brass leaves, reminiscent of Edward Gorey’s illustrations, and deerskin-upholstered stools with hooved feet lay around the woods. Over the entire set hung a large cuckoo clock with pinecone pendulums and a deer’s head. After the first act, the “woods” were littered with torn-down wallpaper, the giant’s eyeglasses, and the springs of the clock, which had been knocked over.

36 London soundtrack liner notes, p. 9.
The London version of *Into the Woods*, opening September 1990, was an enormous success. As one reviewer commented, it "won just about every Best Musical award going in Britain and was hailed by some to be the best ever all-British casting of an American show." This success was due, at least in part, to the wide range of well-known actors who starred in it.

**Reviews of the Broadway Version**

The Broadway version, though not nearly as popular as the later London version, was still considered successful, running 764 performances and winning Tony awards for Best Score and Best Book for a musical (Schlesinger:3,30). *Into the Woods* opened on Broadway to generally positive reviews, and periodicals such as the *New York Daily Times, Christian Science Monitor, Washington Post, Time*, and *USA Today* all lauded Sondheim and Lapine’s achievement with this musical (Gordon, 1992:302; Schlesinger:30-2). Reviewers also commented on every aspect of the show—from the sets, to the actors, to the costumes, to Sondheim’s score—fairly positively. “A major theatrical event. A wondrous cast. *Into the Woods* is the most imaginative musical of the season,” said Jeffery Lyons of *WCBS-TV Radio*. Howard Kissel, of the *New York Daily Times*, agreed, saying,

Stephen Sondheim is not everybody’s idea of someone to tell you bedtime stories. But in *Into the Woods*, a musical based on Grimm’s fairy tales, the lyricist-composer of such acid, bittersweet shows as *Company*, *Follies*, and *Sweeney Todd*, has written a spell-binding score, witty enough to make old

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39 Ibid., p. 8.
stories fresh for adults, lovely enough to enchant youngsters... (Schlesinger:40).

David Patrick Sterns, of USA Today, also lauded Sondheim’s creativity—“Finally, there’s hope for the American musical” (ibid:32). Jay Beauseigneur, of Hearst Newspapers, agreed: “Sondheim has done what many of us hoped—slain the giant of the British musical spectacle” (ibid). And Michael Billington, of Opera, praised Woods as having, “the unpindownable elusiveness of true art” (1987:1308).

Not all reviewers were completely won over by the productions, however. Frank Rich, of the New York Times (and the main Broadway theater critic, says Sondheim), who had loved Sunday in the Park with George, was not nearly as impressed with Into the Woods. Rich complained that Woods did not bring out the intensity of feelings as Sondheim’s other shows did. He also commented on the fact that many of Sondheim’s previous themes were made overly explicit, even didactic, which removed a great deal of the dramatic tension. These same themes had shown up in prior incarnations in his other musicals: “Almost every song in Into the Woods has an edgier, more combatative analogue in a previous Sondheim musical,” Rich wrote. He went on to make comparisons with Sondheim’s other musicals: the theme of going into a “woods” to learn about one’s self appeared in A Little Night Music (the Scandinavian birch forest) and Sunday (the island of La Grande Jatte); Little Red’s song of self-knowledge corresponded to Ben’s song in Follies and an added song in the revised version of Merrily We Roll Along which contained the lyrics, “Every road has a new turning / That’s the way you keep learning” (Rich, 1987:1).

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Rich’s other main criticism had actually little to do with Sondheim and Lapine’s creation; rather, he attacked the style of the folk narratives they were using. He complained that the characters and stories were too “one-sided” and “clear” (ibid:35). Though he criticized Sondheim and Lapine’s creativity, he was obviously unaware of the one-dimensional nature of their base material and therefore did not understand their underlying intent for the show. Despite his criticism, Rich also commented that this show might bring Sondheim more fans due to its immediate accessibility, and predicted (accurately) a “longer run than most” of Sondheim’s musicals had (ibid:35). Jack Kroll, of Newsweek, had very similar criticisms of Woods. He argued that the themes were made too clear and that Bettelheim himself, whose works Sondheim and Lapine consulted prior to writing Woods, warned parents not to explain the tales too explicitly to their children (Kroll, 1987:107). What these reviews did not understand was that Lapine was in fact critiquing much of Bettelheim’s argument. Kroll later commented that these same themes were “uncertain.” Like Rich, he had little knowledge of the folktale genre and attributed the “bloodiness” of the tales to Sondheim and Lapine, rather than realizing that the bloodiness was already inherent in the tales they used (ibid:106). Still, his overall review was generally positive. In any event, the show itself had a successful run. It also went immediately over to London, unlike all of Sondheim’s previous shows.

41 The nature of folk tales will be discussed thoroughly in the next chapter.
Chapter Four:

Folktale Scholarship Applied to *Into the Woods*: The Brothers Grimm and Vladimir Propp

Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine have stated that another one of the bases for their construction of *Into the Woods* was the idea of the “quest fairy story.” Sondheim describes their intended format: “A quest fairy story, like *The Wizard of Oz*. You start here and you have to get there and you have a number of adventures along the way—picaresque but always with a goal at the end” (1991:1). Though Sondheim’s main influences were the Oz books, Lapine was more influenced by the Grimm versions of the tales (ibid:1-2). The tales he chose for the musical had at least one common structural element: all of the main characters journeyed away from home, into the woods, and home again. (Rapunzel is a variation on this pattern—she is taken into the woods to live at the very beginning of her tale and never returns “home;” we assume that she moves into the palace with her prince.)

Sondheim and Lapine’s knowledge of the scholarship surrounding folktales is unknown. They have stated that they are aware of the fact that folktales come in many different versions, and that certain ones, such as *Cinderella*, occur in almost every culture. They know of certain collections and the differences between the Grimms’ and Perrault’s versions of the tales. They also were aware of several different
psychological interpretations of the tales, specifically Freudian and Jungian. However, there is no evidence that they knew of any structural or stylistic analyses of the folktale genre. Hence, the inversion of form and style that they incorporate into *Woods* comes from their own observations of the folktale genre. From a folkloristic standpoint, it is very illuminating to analyze Sondheim and Lapine’s interpretation of folktale style and structure in comparison to the major academic works done on the same subject. This chapter explores the similarities between the versions of the tales given by the Grimms and Sondheim and Lapine, and applies Vladimir Propp’s formalist theory to both versions of the tales.

Unlike other recent adaptations, Sondheim and Lapine stayed very close to the action and wording of the Grimms’ version of the tales. The changes they did make in details do not affect the plot of the tales. The main difference between Sondheim and Lapine’s version and the Grimms’ version, instead, is that Sondheim and Lapine literally “fleshed out” the characters, deepening their personality more than the Grimms’ version does. The only other main change they made to the tales is to add the role of the narrator. Though all stories are obviously told, the character of the narrator does not enter into the story per se; rather, it is assumed. The Narrator has several uses: he summarizes long passages of action within the stories, he narrates the stories as they happen, and he transitions between and separates the various stories. A good example all three of these functions occurs when Rapunzel’s Prince is caught by the Witch:

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1 For example, *Ever After* (1998), starring Drew Barrymore, attempts to place the origins of the story in a specific place and time and changes many of the details of the story.
Narrator: After having cast out Rapunzel to a remote desert, the witch returned to take the Prince by surprise.

*Rapunzel’s Tower. Rapunzel’s Prince climbs Rapunzel’s hair when suddenly the Witch pops out from the tower.*

Witch: You would fetch your dearest, but the bird no longer sits in the cage.

*The Witch pushes Rapunzel’s Prince from the tower. He falls and screams, grabbing his eyes. The Witch laughs with delight.*

Narrator: And unfortunately, the Prince fell into a patch of thorns which pierced his eyes and blinded him.

*Rapunzel’s Prince stumbles helplessly off stage.*

As for Cinderella, she returned from her final visit to the Festival (1987:62).

Folktale scholar Vladimir Propp, as discussed in the first chapter, also focused on the “quest tale,” using Russian folktales in his research. A syntagmatic structuralist, or “formalist” as he called himself, he attempted to clarify the underlying form that such tales seemed to have. In focusing on form, he ignored the details of the tales. The gender, age, interests, and characteristics of the hero did not matter to him; rather, the actions that most heroes performed or experienced were what interested him. He eventually found thirty-one actions, or “functions,” which a tale could contain. Though not all functions need be present in a tale, the functions do have to occur in a certain unchangeable order. Two examples of these functions are: 1) a member of the family becomes absent from home, and 8) the villain injures a family member. In addition to these functions, Propp also focused on seven different character roles that appeared frequently in the tale cycle. These characters are: the

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2 My thanks to Kurt’s AFS paper “Mimesis” for this insight.
3 This wording of the functions is summarized from Propp’s original wording.
villain; the donor or provider; the helper; the princess or sought-for person; the
dispatcher, who sends the hero off on his or her adventure; the hero (seeker-hero or
victim-hero); and the false hero (Gilet, 1998:30). I will apply Propp’s formula to the
individual folktales before analyzing *Into the Woods* as a whole, to give a better sense
of how the two compare.

**Cinderella**

**Grimm analysis:**

The Grimm version of *Cinderella* gives more background to the tale than is
seen in *Into the Woods*. We are told that before her mother died, she told Cinderella
to be “good and pious” (Zipes, 1992:86). *Woods* begins on the day that Cinderella
leaves for the ball for the first time. However, this background information is
relegated to her own commentary while visiting her mother’s grave—“I’ve been good
and I’ve been kind, Mother, / doing only what I learned from you” (1987:22). The
Grimms version also describes Cinderella’s father asking Cinderella what she wanted
from the fair—a twig—which she plants on her mother’s grave and waters with her
tears. This same information, slightly altered, is given instead in *Woods* by the
Narrator (spoken): “Cinderella had planted a branch at the grave of her mother and
she visited there so often, and wept so much, that her tears watered it until it had
become a handsome tree” (ibid). Prior to visiting the tree, in both versions the
stepmother throws lentils into the ashes for Cinderella to pick out in order to go to the
ball. (In the Grimm’s version, Cinderella must complete this task twice.)

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4 See copy of this tale, Appendix C1.
Cinderella also helps her stepsisters get ready for the ball in both versions. In the Grimm's version, the King specifically throws a ball to find a wife for his son, the Prince, and summons Cinderella's stepsisters to go to the ball, whereas in Woods, the ball does not seem to be thrown with a particular intent and there is no mention of anyone being summoned to it. In both versions, Cinderella visits her mother's grave to get the dress for the ball, and goes to the ball three times; each time she dances with the Prince and then hides from him at the end of the night. The main change that Sondheim and Lapine make to this section of the story has to do with the overall structure of their show. In the Grimms, she hides first in a dovecote, which the Prince has her father cut down; then, in a tall pear tree, which her Prince also has her father cut down. Each time Cinderella runs from the Prince in Woods, however, she runs into the Baker's Wife, who needs her golden slipper to lift their infertility spell. The third time Cinderella runs from the ball, in both the Grimms and Woods, the Prince smears the palace steps with pitch and Cinderella loses one shoe as she runs away.

Sondheim and Lapine utilize passages from the Grimms' version in several places. The first section comes from the scene in Grimms where Cinderella visits her mother's grave and asks for help. She says a little poem (which possibly was originally sung): "Shake and wobble, little tree! Let gold and silver fall all over me" (1992:89). Sondheim and Lapine use almost the same wording in their scene: "Shiver and quiver little tree. / Silver and gold throw down on me" (1987:23). They utilize other poems in the Grimms' version in a similar way—when her stepsisters try on the shoe, their mother chop off a bit of their foot, "swallowing their pain" in both versions (1992:91; 1987:71). As the false brides attempt to ride away with the Prince,
someone notices—in the Grimms, the birds at her mother’s grave; in Woods, her mother’s ghost. The Grimms’ birds sing, “Looky, look, look at the shoe that she took. There’s blood all over, and the shoe’s too small. She’s not the bride you met at the ball,” when the false brides ride by, but when Cinderella rides by, they sing, “The shoe’s just right, there’s no blood at all. She’s truly the bride you met at the ball” (1992:91-2). Sondheim and Lapine’s mother sings, “Look at the blood within the shoe; / This one is not the bride that’s true. / Search for the foot that fits,” when the first stepsister rides by, and then sings, “No blood at all within the shoe; / This is the proper bride for you, / Fit to attend a Prince” (1987:71-2).

The main change that Sondheim and Lapine make to the tales is to give the characters more personality. In both versions, the stepsisters are haughty and vain and Cinderella is good and pious, but they are the only characters that are described with any kind of personality traits whatsoever. In Woods, however, Cinderella is indecisive about getting married to the Prince and does not know what she wants out of life. Her father, a bland character who does anything the Prince asks in the Grimms’ version, in Woods is a drunkard who cannot remember who Cinderella even is. In Woods, as well, Cinderella’s mother appears as a ghost in a tree who is more detail-oriented than Cinderella is. When Cinderella appears at her grave needing help to go to the ball, she says only, “I wish…” To which her mother replies (spoken): “What, child? Specify. Opportunity is not a lengthy visitor and good fortune, like bad, can befall when least expected…. (sung) Do you know what you wish? / Are you certain what you wish / Is what you want? If you know what you want, / Then make a wish. / Ask the tree…” (1987:22). Cinderella’s Prince is also given greater
definition in *Woods*. Instead of the one-dimensional Prince Charming, he brags about his desirability to women, mistreats his Steward, and becomes sick at the sight of the stepsister’s blood. In the second act, he commits adultery twice during the course of the show—once with the Baker’s Wife and once with Sleeping Beauty.

Proppian analysis:

On a structural level, however, the Grimms’ version and Sondheim and Lapine’s version of *Cinderella* in the first Act of *Woods* are essentially the same, so I will discuss them as one entity in the Proppian analysis. Though a quick reading of *Cinderella* does not leave the impression of a “quest” tale, I will analyze it fully for comparison’s sake. The characters in *Cinderella* can be divided up as follows: the Villains are her stepsisters (and indirectly her stepmother); the Donors are represented by her friends, the birds; she does not have a Helper or a Dispatcher; the Princess or sought-after person is Cinderella, and she is also the Hero; and the False Heroes are her stepsisters.

*Cinderella* does not contain Propp’s first function, that of a family member leaving home. However, it does contain the next two functions—Hero receives an interdiction (#2) and Hero violates that interdiction (#3), because Cinderella is told that she cannot attend the ball. The interdiction is violated only much later, however, when she does attend the ball. Prior to that time, most of the other “functions” occur; *Cinderella* has already broken Propp’s rigid formula. At this early stage, the villains, the stepsisters (and indirectly, the stepmother) do not try to gain information from
Cinderella (#5) nor do they deceive her (#6) and therefore she is not deceived (#7). The villains also do not injure a family member (#8); instead, they are family members. Cinderella does lack something (#8a)—the clothes to wear to the ball. (Or a husband, depending on how one reads the tale; this particular analysis will read her lack as being the clothes to wear to the ball, as the Prince seems to be an added bonus of Cinderella being able to attend the ball. ⁵) The lack becomes known to her (#9) and she decides on a counteraction (#10) and leaves home to carry out her plan (#11)—to go to her mother’s grave and ask for her help. Though she is not tested in order to receive a magical gift (#12) and therefore does not have to react to the gift giver (#13), she does receive a magical gift from her mother’s tree (via her birds in the tree, in the Grimm version.)

She finds the object of her search (#15; the clothes) and therefore her lack is liquidated (#19), though she does not have to fight with a villain (#16), nor get branded (#17), nor defeat the villain (#20.) Cinderella does return home (#20) after attending the ball, and on the way she is pursued (#21) by the Prince. She is not rescued (the opposite of #22), though she does return home unrecognized (#23.) The “false hero” presents an unfounded claim (#24) in the form of Cinderella’s two stepsisters who claim to have been the Prince’s dancing partner at the previous night’s ball. Though fitting into a shoe may not be considered a particularly hard task, it can be argued that Cinderella does take on that task (#25) which both of her stepsisters have failed, and performs that task correctly (#26.) In doing so, she is recognized (#27) and her stepsisters are exposed as false heroes (#28.) Cinderella

⁵ See Proppian analysis chart of this tale, Appendix C2.
then receives a new (and probably cleaner) appearance (#29), her stepsisters are punished (#30), and Cinderella marries the Prince and, presumably, sooner or later she will ascend the throne (#31).\textsuperscript{7} Despite the fact that several functions are out of order, which contradicts Propp's theory, "Cinderella" does contain many of Propp's functions and follows his formula fairy closely.

\section*{Rapunzel}

\textit{Grimm analysis:}\textsuperscript{8}

Rapunzel's tale, out of all of the tales retold in \textit{Into the Woods}, appears on stage the least. Rapunzel herself does not emerge until well into the first act, whereas the other three folktale characters—Cinderella, Little Red, and Jack—all appear in the opening scene. Because her tale receives so little stage time, much of it is told indirectly by other characters. The beginning of Rapunzel's tale as it appears in the Grimms' version is told by the Witch to the Baker and his Wife, to let them know why they cannot have a child. In both versions, Rapunzel's parents wish to have a child. Her mother is finally pregnant, and then she longs for the greens (specifically rapunzel, also known as rampion) that are growing in the garden of the Witch next door. In both cases, the Witch catches the husband trying to steal the greens (in the Grimms' version, he goes into the garden twice.) In the Grimms' version, the Witch

\textsuperscript{6} This distinction is clearer in Sondheim and Lapine's version; while running from the Prince, Cinderella sings, "Wanting a ball is not wanting a Prince" (1987: 57).
(Mother Gothel) allows the husband to keep the Rapunzel as long as they give her the baby when it is born.

Sondheim and Lapine's version is slightly more complicated—when the Witch finds the husband stealing the "greens," she demands the baby but she also makes the husband’s family barren (all except Rapunzel.) And the childless couple of the Grimms’ story turns out not to be childless after all—they had a son, the Baker. The Baker has inherited his father’s infertility, and he and his wife, in turn, are childless. And his father had left him another legacy: back before Rapunzel was born, he had also stolen some of the Witch’s beans, though she did not know it at the time. Because he stole the beans, her mother cursed her with ugliness, which then required that she in turn get someone to reverse that curse—the Baker and his Wife. Though Rapunzel and the Baker are technically siblings, their relationship is all but forgotten in Woods after the opening scene.

Rapunzel’s story, minus the inclusion of the Baker into her family, is very similar to the Grimms’ version, though the Grimms give a great deal more information than do Sondheim and Lapine. Also, Rapunzel’s hair, in the Grimms’ version, is like "spun gold," whereas it is "yellow as corn" in Woods. However, in both, Rapunzel is taken to live in a doorless tower with the Witch in the woods, and the Witch climbs up her hair into the tower every day. One day, a Prince overhears her singing, and watches the Witch get up into the tower. He calls to Rapunzel the next day and visits her. In the Grimms’ version, Rapunzel’s Prince asks her to marry him, and he decides that she should weave a rope with silken thread that the Prince

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brings her so that she can escape the tower. This information is left out of *Woods*, and there is no indication that this part of the story did or did not happen in Sondheim and Lapine's version. In both versions the Witch finds out about the Prince, chops off Rapunzel's hair, and sends her away to a desert, though *Woods* does not tell us how the Witch found out about the prince.\(^9\) She then waits for the Prince, and scares him into jumping out of the tower into some thorns, which blind him. Rapunzel bears twins in the desert, and her Prince eventually finds her. She cries on his eyes, and he is healed. In *Woods*, they run into the Witch again, who asks Rapunzel to stay with her; Rapunzel refuses, and the Witch (unsuccessfully) attempts to curse them again.

As with Cinderella's story, Sondheim and Lapine have kept similar passages of the Grimms' version in *Woods*. Both versions contain the famous lines, "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down you hair to me" (1992:48; 1987:31). *Woods* also contains some lesser-known lines from *Rapunzel*. When Mother Gothel surprises the Prince, she says, "You want to fetch your darling wife, but the beautiful bird is no longer sitting in the nest, and she won't be singing anymore" (1992:49). In *Woods*, the Witch says: "You would fetch your dearest, but the bird no longer sits in the cage" (1987:62). And the Narrator's summation of the tale is very reminiscent of the Grimms' version:

Grimms: When he heard a voice that he though sounded familiar, he went straight toward it, and when he reached her, Rapunzel recognized him. (1992:49).

*Woods:*

**Narrator:** And finally, as for Rapunzel, she bore twins, and lived

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\(^8\) See copy of the tale, Appendix D1.

\(^9\) The Grimms' version says that Rapunzel complained that the Witch was heavier than the Prince one day while she was pulling the Witch into the tower (Zipes, 1992:49).
impoverished in the desert until the day her Prince, wandering aimlessly, heard a voice so familiar that he went towards it (1987:72-3).

As with Cinderella, Sondheim and Lapine have also deepened Rapunzel's characters, though this is not seen in Rapunzel or her Prince until Act Two. The Witch, however, shows a great deal of emotion in Act One. In her song, “Stay with Me,” she tries to warn Rapunzel about the outside world and express the depth of feeling she has for her (ibid:59-60). However, directly following the gentle lullaby of her song, she turns on Rapunzel and punishes her for meeting the Prince.

Proppian analysis:\(^{10}\):

Rapunzel's story varies considerable from “Cinderella,” though both heroines end up married to a prince. Like “Cinderella,” Sondheim and Lapine's “Rapunzel” is so structurally similar to the Grimms' version that the analysis applies to both versions unless otherwise noted. The characters in “Rapunzel” can be analyzed as follows: the Villain is the Witch (though the Prince carries out several of the Villain's functions); Rapunzel has no Donor, Helper, or Dispatcher; the Princess or sought-for person is Rapunzel; Rapunzel is also the Hero in the first section of the story, while her Prince is the Hero in the second section; and there is no False Hero.

Function #1, “a family member leaves home,” applies to Rapunzel being taken to live with the Witch when she is an infant. While living in the Witch's tower, she is given an interdiction—not to have any visitors—that is violated by the Prince,

\(^{10}\) See Proppian analysis chart of the tale, Appendix D2.
but not until much later. The villain, the Witch (again a family member), does not
carry out functions #4 through #8 (though in Sondheim and Lapine’s version, she
indirectly kills Rapunzel’s real mother and makes the rest of her family barren.)
Instead, it is the Prince who gains information regarding entry into Rapunzel’s tower
and then deceives Rapunzel into thinking that he is the Witch (#4-7.)

Rapunzel has no apparent “lack” until the Prince comes along and she
(theoretically) realizes that she lacks both her freedom and a husband. However, the
Prince’s arrival, perhaps the most important structural event in the story, does not fit
into Propp’s formula. If it did, it would go between function #8a and #9. At this
point, in order to adhere as closely to Propp’s analysis as possible, I will change the
Prince into the hero instead of Rapunzel. He attempts to rectify Rapunzel’s newly
acquired lack (#9) and decides on a counter action (#10)—to make a ladder of silken
thread (the Prince in Into the Woods does not decide on a plan of action before he is
discovered.) The hero does not leave home (#11) or attempt the next four functions;
however, he does fight with the Witch (#16). He is branded and becomes blind (#17),
but does not defeat the villain (#18), nor liquidate the lack (#19), nor return home
(#20.) He is not pursued (#21-22) but does wander in other countries unrecognized,
as does Rapunzel (#23.) There is no false hero to unveil or punish (#24, 28, 30) or a
difficult task to undertake (#25-26.) However, the Prince and Rapunzel finally find
and recognize each other (#27) and Rapunzel’s tears give the Prince a new
appearance—she gives him his sight back (#29.) Eventually, they marry and
presumably ascend the throne (#31.)
Though Propp's formula applies relatively cleanly to *Cinderella*, *Rapunzel* does not seem to fit into the same mold. Rapunzel's story is less of a "quest" than a botched "rescuing the entrapped maiden" story, and it is unclear in both the Grimms' and the Sondheim and Lapine version which character is the main "hero." Similar problems appear in *Little Red Riding Hood*, as analyzed below.

**Little Red Riding Hood**

**Grimm analysis:**

*Little Red Riding Hood* is the shortest tale that Sondheim and Lapine use in *Woods*. As with the previous tales, Sondheim and Lapine have stayed close to the Grimms' version in structure and wording, but have deepened the characters slightly. In creating their own version of *Little Red Riding Hood*, they drew from both the well-known story in which Little Red gets eaten by the wolf as well as the second episode, in which Little Red does not stray from the path and tricks the wolf into killing himself.

In both versions, Little Red's mother has sent her out to bring food to her Grandmother who is sick. Though in the Grimms' version she goes straight into the woods, in the musical she makes a detour to the Baker's cottage to buy bread and sweets for her Granny. Then she goes on her way, and is met by the Wolf in the woods. In both versions, the Wolf asks her what she is doing and where she is going, and thinks to himself that she and her Granny would make a good meal. She tells him
exactly where her Granny lives, and is persuaded by him to go off her path to pick flowers for Granny. The Wolf goes to Granny’s cottage and eats Granny, and when Little Red arrives at Granny’s, she asks him three questions, and then he eats her up. Someone happens by—in Grimms, a huntsman overhears the Wolf snoring; in Woods, the Baker hears the Wolf burp—and goes in and cuts the Wolf open. Granny and Little Red emerge unharmed.

Sondheim and Lapine depart from the Grimms’ version most obviously in their ending of the story. In Grimms, Granny is very weak and so Little Red collects stones to put into the Wolf’s belly in order to kill him, and the hunter then skins him and takes the fur. In Woods, Granny emerges from the Wolf’s belly ready to fight. She instructs Little Red to go get stones for his belly, and devises several other very painful ways to kill him. Little Red is shocked at Granny’s behavior. Granny also asks the Baker to take the wolf’s skin, but he blanches and declines. In the exchange, she calls him a hunter, and he has to admit to her that he is actually a baker. Instead, Granny lets Little Red skin the Wolf and makes her a new cape and hood out of it. In Sondheim and Lapine’s version, each character has a new attribute or depth of personality. The Wolf is presented as a seductive charmer with anatomically correct human attributes.\textsuperscript{12} Granny is full of spitfire and vengeance, and is changed by her encounter in with the Wolf. Little Red, too, is changed by the encounter, becoming more aware of the world around her and more hardened to its violence. However, this change is somewhat prefigured by the second part of the Grimms’ version of the tale, in which she and Granny learn how to trick the Wolf.

\textsuperscript{11} For copy of the tale, see Appendix E1.
\textsuperscript{12} His costume is more that of an anatomically correct human male than an actual wolf.
Several passages in *Woods*, again, are very similar to their Grimms counterparts. The famous question-answer sessions between Little Red and the Wolf are almost verbatim, and other, less well-known sections are repeated as well. Upon entering her Grandmother’s cottage, Little Red says, “Oh, dear. How uneasy I feel;” and after Little Red has emerged from the Wolf’s belly, she says, “What a fright! How dark and dank it was inside that wolf.” Both quotes are very similar to the Grimms’ version: “Oh, my God, how frightened I feel today…” and “Oh, how frightened I was! It was so dark and dank inside that wolf’s belly” (1987:34; 1992:104). The style of the dialogue rather than the actual words carries over from the Grimms’ to *Woods* in these two sections. The contrast between the Grimms’ style of dialogue and the dialogue in the rest of *Woods* both recalls the formal language of many versions of the tales and turns Little Red’s comments into humorous lines.

**Proppian analysis:**

Little Red leaves home to visit her sick Granny (#10, not #1), but not until after her mother warns her not to stray off her path (#2.) On her way, she is met by the villain (the Wolf) who attempts to gain information from her and deceives her with his charming and harmless demeanor (#4-7.) He also convinces her to stray off her path to collect flowers (#3.) The Wolf then gets to Granny’s house before Little Red and eats Granny (#8.) The Wolf then deceives Little Red again, and eats her as well. As there is no obvious lack in this tale, and functions #8a-14 (not including #10) and #19 do not apply. As in *Rapunzel*, the role of the “hero” here has to be
turned over to the hunter who is passing by. He finds the object of his search, the Wolf, and kills it (#15-16,18) though he himself is not hurt (#17.) The Hero returns home (#20), but he is not pursued (#21) nor does he encounter any of the rest of the functions. Both the Grimms and Sondheim and Lapine version develop Little Red’s character after her first Wolf experience, though neither version of the sequel follows Propp’s “quest tale” formula at all. Like Rapunzel, Little Red Riding Hood does not adhere very closely to Propp’s idea of a quest tale.

Jack and the Beanstalk

Jacobs analysis:

The version of Jack and the Beanstalk that Sondheim and Lapine used comes from a collection of English fairy tales collected by Joseph Jacobs (1967). As with their other reworkings of the tales, Sondheim and Lapine followed the Jacobs version closely, but added interactions between Jack, his Mother, and the Giant, and Little Red, the Baker, and the Baker’s Wife. As well, the majority of the details of Jacobs’ story are left out of Woods, and the audience is given just a bare sketch of the action as well as Jack’s reactions to his experiences.

13 For Proppian analysis chart, see Appendix E2.
14 In the Sondheim and Lapine version, Little Red does receive a new appearance (#29), however—a cloak made from the fur of the dead Wolf.
15 See also Golden (1984:503-24) for a pluralist, formalistic, and rhetorical analysis of Little Red Riding Hood.
16 For copy of the tale, see Appendix F1. Sondheim and Lapine use the version from Joseph Jacobs’ collection; this tale does not appear in the Grimms’ collection.
In both versions, Jack’s cow (called Milky White in both, as well) has stopped giving milk, and his Mother sends him to market to sell it. In *Woods*, Milky White is Jack’s only friend, and sobs when he sells her; in Jacobs, Jack has no particular relationship with the cow. Along the way, he meets an old man. In Jacobs’ version, the old man trades five magic beans for his cow. In the *Woods* version, the Mysterious Man (an obvious counterpart to the old man in Jacobs’ tale) tells Jack that he’d be lucky to exchange the cow for a sack of beans; later on, he meets the Baker, who offers him five magic beans for his cow. When Jack hesitates, the Mysterious Man repeats in the background, “You’d be lucky to exchange her for a sack of beans” (1987:29). In both versions, he returns home with the beans to his mother, who promptly throws the beans out into her garden and sends Jack to bed without any supper. Overnight, the beans grow into an enormous beanstalk, which Jack then climbs. The Jacobs version details Jack’s interactions with the ogre’s wife (the villain is an ogre, not a giant, in this version; for the rest of the analysis, I will use the word “Giant” to refer to both villains) and the ogre smells Jack and says, “Fee-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman” (Jacobs, 1967:63). Unlike the stories of Little Red, Rapunzel, and Cinderella, Sondheim and Lapine do not incorporate any dialogue or poetry from this tale into the musical. Nor do they show any interactions Jack has with the Giant in the sky. Instead, in a song reminiscent of Little Red’s and Cinderella’s, Jack sings about how he felt while interacting with the Giant and his wife. As he describes his encounter,

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You’re free to do
Whatever pleases you,
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Exploring things you never dare  
‘Cause you don’t care,  
When suddenly there’s  
A big tall terrible Giant at the door,  
A big tall terrible lady Giant sweeping the floor.

And she gives you food  
And she gives you rest  
And she draws you close  
To her giant breast,  
And you know things now that you never knew before,  
Not till the sky (1987:42-3).

However, when her husband appears, Jack’s reaction is somewhat different:

And your heart is lead and  
And your stomach stone  
And you’re really scared being all alone...

And it’s then that you miss  
All the things you’ve known  
And the world you left  
And the little you own— (ibid:43).

After Jack steals the gold and returns home, he goes back to the Giant’s house two more times. In Jacobs’ version, he has no obvious reason to return. However, in Sondheim and Lapine’s version, he attempts to buy his cow back from the Baker, who inadvertently insinuates that he might need more money and inspires Jack to go back; after his second trip Jack shows off his hen to Little Red, who, calling him “Mr. Liar,” refuses to believe that the Giant has a talking harp, and Jack returns to steal the harp and prove to her that it does exist. In both cases, Jack returns three times, and on the third time the Giant pursues him down the beanstalk. We are not told why the Giant pursues him in Woods, but in the Jacobs version, the talking harp called out to
the Giant while Jack was stealing it. We are told by Jacobs—and, in Woods, by Jack’s Mother, who witnessed the entire scene—that Jack rushed down the beanstalk followed by the Giant, called to his mother for his axe, and cut the beanstalk down, killing the Giant. In Jacobs’ versions, Jack goes on to marry a princess; and in Woods, he returns just in time to milk Milky White of the potion she has just been fed to reverse the Witch’s curse on the Baker and his wife. Then he and his mother return home, rich from the Giant’s treasures, though Jack does not end up marrying a princess.

Proppian analysis: 17

The two versions of Jack and the Beanstalk are fairly similar, though Jacobs’ version adheres slightly closer to Propp’s functions. The Proppian characters in Jack and the Beanstalk are as follows: the Villain is the Giant; the Donor, in Woods, is divided between the Baker and the Mysterious Man; in Jacobs, the Donor is the old man; neither version has a Helper; Jack is the Hero; the Dispatcher is Jack’s Mother; and neither version has a False Hero. The “Princess or sought-for person” role is more complicated: though Jacobs’ version does include a Princess, she plays no role in the story until the very end. In both versions, the function of this role might be filled instead by the gold, the hen, and the harp.

Due to the similarity of the tales they will be discussed as one version, with the dissimilarities noted throughout the analysis. Ignoring the first eight functions, which do not apply to this tale, the analysis goes as follows. Jack’s family lacks
money and food; his mother decides to sell Jack’s cow for money (#8a-10.) Jack leaves home to sell the cow and exchanges it with the Donor (the old man, in Jacobs; the Baker, in Woods) for five magic beans instead of the primary object of his search, money (#11; 13-15.) His mother inadvertently plants the beans that grow into a beanstalk, which Jack then climbs (no official Proppian function applies here.) The Giant discovers Jack on his third trip and pursues him down the beanstalk (#21.) Jack chops it down and fights and defeats the villain in the same stroke (#16, 18, 22) though he does not get hurt (#17.) The lack is liquidated and Jack returns home (#19-20.) Jack and his mother gain a new appearance, that of being rich (#29.) In Jacobs, Jack then marries a princess (#31) though it is not clear whether or not he ascends the throne as well.

Jack’s tale seems to be missing the majority of Propp’s functions, and only half of Propp’s character roles. Though Propp allows for this in his formula—not all functions need apply to a given tale—Jack and the Beanstalk also contains a great deal of other action that Propp does not cover, such as Jack’s mother sowing the beans and Jack’s returning to the Giant’s house three times. Therefore, Jack and the Beanstalk, like Rapunzel and Little Red Riding Hood, does not seem to be a quest tale in the full Proppian sense of the term.

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17 See Proppian analysis chart of this tale, Appendix F2.
18 In Jacobs’ version, Jack is tested before the old man exchanges the beans for the cow (#12.)
The Tale of the Baker and His Wife

The last tale to be analyzed is *The Tale of the Baker and His Wife*, a new story that was created by Lapine, based on the very beginning part of the Rapunzel story. The background information—the same information from the beginning of Rapunzel’s tale—is relayed in *Into the Woods* though a song by the Witch called “Witch’s Entrance” (1987:12-5). The version of Rapunzel’s tale that Sondheim and Lapine use is virtually identical to Grimm’s Rapunzel except for the fact that her parents had a child already before Rapunzel was born. Structurally, they are similar enough to be treated as identical in the Proppian analysis, though the details used here are Sondheim and Lapine’s.

The roles in this tale are: the Villain—throughout the entire tale, the Witch; the Donor (s)—Cinderella, Rapunzel, Little Red, and Jack; the Helper—Mysterious Man is the Helper; the Princess/sought-for person—the slipper, the hair, the cape, and the cow; the Dispatcher—the Witch; and the Hero—the Baker and his Wife; for the first eight functions, the Mysterious Man is the Hero. There is no False Hero. For structural purposes, the Baker and his Wife seem to play the same function; therefore, they will be considered as a single entity in this analysis.

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19 See Appendix G for Proppian analysis. Lapine states that he and Sondheim wanted the audience to mistake this tale for a fairy tale that the audience has “forgotten;” to reinforce that image, they posted the first pages of *Rapunzel, Jack and the Beanstalk, and Little Red Riding Hood*, along with the “first page” of *The Tale of the Baker and his Wife* up around the auditorium where the musical was playing. Video Conversationpiece, 1990.

20 For an example of their unity, see Appendix H: “The Baker and his Wife buy the Cow from Jack.”
Rapunzel's and the Baker's father (the Mysterious Man) leaves home to steal some greens from the Witch (#1, 3.).\(^2\) He gets caught by the Witch and in addition to taking Rapunzel, she casts a spell on the family (minus Rapunzel), causing all of its members to become barren (#8.) (The tale here switches to Lapine's invented folk tale.) Therefore, when the Baker gets married, he cannot have children (#8a) and the reason for that lack is finally made known by the Witch (#9) who tells them how to rectify it. The Baker and his Wife decide to collect the objects(#10.) The Baker finds a magical item—magic beans—before leaving home to find the objects of his search (#14, 11.) The Baker and his Wife attempt to get the four objects of their search and eventually do get them, without fighting with the villain, since the Witch actually wants them to succeed (#15; #16-18, 21-2) In the process, they attempt to use a few unacceptable ingredients—Rapunzel's hair, a floured cow—which could possibly be mistakes that, in traditional tales, False Heroes would commit (#24, 28) though they do not get punished for their actions (#30.) Eventually they find the correct objects, the difficult task that they have been given is performed (#25-6), and their lack is liquefied (#19.) Though the hero/heroine couple is already married prior to the start of the tale, having a child may be a structural equivalent.

*The Tale of the Baker and his Wife* upsets the Proppian role system in several ways. To begin with, they are already married, and they eventually work together to liquidate their lack, making the “Hero” role plural and negating function #31, “The Hero gets married and ascends the throne.” Also, though this tale is obviously a quest tale and therefore falls into the realm of Proppian analysis, the “villain” character

\(^2\) Function # 2 (hero receives an interdiction) does not occur explicitly, but it is assumed that folk tale characters know never steal from a Witch.
explains how to complete the quest and keeps the characters on track throughout the tale. And, like Jack’s tale, the “sought for” role is not occupied by a person but by several items. Lapine’s fears in creating a totally new fairy tale seem to have been well-grounded, for though *The Tale of the Baker and His Wife* contains many of Propp’s functions, they are hopelessly out of order—even more so than the other tales which do not fit into Propp’s formula. Of the four traditional tales and the one “original” tale analyzed, only *Cinderella* follows Propp’s formula in a meaningful way. This mainly suggests that Propp’s theory is not as widely applicable as he originally thought.

It would be impossible to analyze both acts of the show on a Proppian level for many reasons. First, the second act systematically and consciously deconstructs all traditional fairy tale structure by beginning after the “Happily-Ever-After” ending. Therefore, no such structure exists for those tales because those parts of the tales themselves do not exist. As well, Sondheim and Lapine also consciously avoid using any themes or structures from the pre-“Ever-After” part of the tale in their Second Act, as will be discussed later on in this chapter. Secondly, *Into the Woods* is an ensemble show with no main characters. The four traditional stories revolve loosely around the Baker’s tale in the first act, but they become so interconnected in the second act that it becomes hard to extract one tale or character from the mix to focus on. And, though the Baker, Cinderella, Jack, and Little Red seem to be the main characters (as they are the only survivors of the show), the Baker’s Wife and the Witch also play important roles. Therefore, Propp’s formula, which focuses on a main character and several supporting characters in one specific tale, becomes even less
useful when applied to an ensemble show like *Into the Woods*. However, as Sondheim and Lapine were not consciously attempting to follow Propp’s formula for a quest tale—and perhaps were not aware that it even existed—this analysis in no way diminishes the appropriateness of Sondheim and Lapine’s commentary on the folktale structure. Though the tales—both traditional and invented—generally are not organized according to Proppian structure, they do adhere closely to the stylistic traits discussed by Olrik and Lüthi. It is these more obvious folktale features that Sondheim and Lapine utilized throughout *Into the Woods*, as will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.
Chapter Five:

Axel Olrik and Max Lüthi: Literary Analyses

Olrik’s Epic Laws

Axel Olrik, working prior to Propp and the Structuralist studies, had noticed similarities not only between folktales, but myths, legends, and ballads as well. He termed this larger group of narratives “Sage.” (Olrik in Dundes, 1965:129). As was mentioned earlier, Olrik assumed that the folk narrator was non-creative and produced narratives almost by instinct; in his analysis, he tried to find a “biology of the Sage.” Focusing on this larger body of data, he extracted fourteen “epic laws of folk narrative,” so called because they restricted the form of the narrative (ibid:131). A few of these laws are similar to the way the folktale is analyzed using Propp’s functions, such as “the law of single-strandedness” (#9) and “law of concentration on a leading character” (#14.) Olrik’s laws mainly point out several obvious common folk narrative characteristics rather than set out a cohesive structure or formula that folktales follow. Though probably unaware of his work on the subject, Sondheim and Lapine in creating Into the Woods consciously both inverted and utilized many of the characteristics that Olrik lists. I feel that the similarities uncovered by both Olrik and Sondheim and Lapine provide evidence for the argument underlying the theories of Propp, Olrik, and Lüthi that folktales do have a specific style and structure that can be discerned. I do not include here a complete analysis of the application of Olrik’s laws
to the Grimms’ and Jacobs’ versions of the tales as many of the laws will be clearly seen to exist in the tales from the Proppian analyses given in the last chapter.

The first and second acts of \textit{Into the Woods} are completely different in structure and somewhat different in theme and style. As the first act deals primarily with the tales as they exist in written versions, this analysis will focus mainly on the first act. Even in the first act, however, Sondheim and Lapine subtly undermine the strength of the narrative laws; by the second act, almost every single one of them has been broken.

Olrik’s first law is that of “The Opening and Closing” of a tale. As with the Grimms’ versions of \textit{Rapunzel} and \textit{Little Red Riding Hood}, \textit{Into the Woods} begins with the Narrator announcing, “Once upon a time” (1987:3). This phrase is perhaps the most recognizable characteristic that Sondheim and Lapine use to let the audience know that the musical will take place in the realm of fairy tales. Continuing this theme, Act One ends with an ensemble piece called “Ever After.” The Narrator begins the piece after all of the tales have been resolved, stating, “Those who deserved to were certain to live a long and happy life. Ever after...” and the assembled company concludes, “Into the woods. And out of the woods. And happy ever after!” though not before the Narrator’s foreshadowing comment, “To be continued!” (1987:74, 78). The prologue of the second act mimics the first, beginning with the Narrator’s amended opening, “Once upon a time....later” and concluding with the company’s “And happy ever after!” though, once again, not without a tag at the end, in this case Cinderella’s concluding line, “I wish...” (ibid:83, 138.)
Sondheim and Lapine continue in the epic law tradition with Olrik’s second law, the “law of repetition.” Olrik noticed that both characters and events were repeated within the tales, often in sets of threes—which leads to his third law, the “law of threes.” Repetition occurs in several of the Grimms tales Sondheim and Lapine selected—for example, Rapunzel’s father climbs into the Witch’s garden twice. However, by far the most dominant form of repetition in the four tales chosen is the use of “threes”—Cinderella attends the ball three times; Jack ascends the beanstalk three times; the Wolf asks Little Red three questions in the woods and she asks him (disguised as her Granny) three questions as well. All of these sequences appear in *Into the Woods*, but Sondheim and Lapine have taken the pattern further. The Baker and his Wife must find all of the ingredients in three midnights’ time; the Baker’s Wife meets Cinderella three times in the woods; and the Baker’s Wife also pulls on Rapunzel’s hair three times before successfully pulling it out. Sondheim and Lapine also make use of repetition—Cinderella stumbles each time she meets the Baker’s Wife in the woods; the Baker and his Wife meet several times in the woods unexpectedly; the first two midnights are marked by a series of proverbial commentary from the company; and even a second Giant comes down a second beanstalk to terrorize the village again. Also, across the span of both acts, several songs are reprised—the Princes’ “Agony,” and the Witch’s “Children Won’t (and, later, “Will”) Listen”—and the theme song, “Into the Woods,” is reprised multiple times. The law of repetition and threes are a clearly marked sign of the folktale and Sondheim and Lapine use that characteristic to great effect.

In theater terminology, “company” indicates the entire cast of show.
Along these same lines, Olrik’s seventh law, the “importance of initial or final position,” indicates that of these repetitions, the last one is most likely to be of most importance. Accordingly, Cinderella leaves her slipper at the Palace on the third night of the Ball and Jack is chased by the Giant the third time he climbs up the Beanstalk. As well, the curse on the Baker’s family is reversed on the third midnight, after the cow is fed the items for the second time.

Closely related to the Laws of Repetition and Threes is the “law of patterning,” which describes the tendency for folktales to incorporate a series of several events that are very similar but not as identical as the situations described by his “law of repetition.” Sondheim and Lapine incorporate this idea as well into Woods—similar types of events happen, such as the Mysterious Man interacting with the Baker, but they never parallel each other as closely as Jack’s and Cinderella’s three trips do.

Olrik’s fourth law, the “law of two to a scene,” does not incorporate itself well into an ensemble show or a musical, both of which require a large company. However, Sondheim and Lapine remain remarkably true to this aspect of folk narrative as well. Besides company pieces such as the “Finale,” only rarely do more than two characters interact at once. Despite the fact that five stories are being told at once, the characters from one story are not necessarily aware of the other characters that may be roaming about the woods at the same time on different errands.²³

Though there are a few exceptions, generally the only characters who interact with the stories of other characters are the Baker and his Wife, who, unlike the others, has

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²³ Which, incidentally, Olrik would interpret as evidence that Into the Woods is “complex literature” rather than folk literature (in Dundes, 1965:137).
no rigid storyline to follow. The Witch, though she is part of a specific traditional tale, is also able to enter other tales. The Mysterious Man also enters and leaves tales at will; he, like the Baker and his Wife, have no set precedent to follow. Due to the nature of the musical as an ensemble piece utilizing five tales, Olrik’s “law of single-strandedness,” which indicates that folktales normally focuses on one plot—not several at one time—does not apply. Similarly, Olrik’s “law of unity of plot,” the tendency for folktales to stick to one plot and not veer off into other stories, and the “law of concentration on a leading character” are equally inapplicable.

The fifth law, the “law of contrast,” describes the common occurrence of absolute opposites within a tale—for example, the beautiful sister and the ugly sister. The Grimms’ and Jacobs’ versions of the tales illustrate some of these contrasts—the goodness of Cinderella versus the wickedness of her stepsisters; Jack’s small stature versus that of the Giant; the innocence of Little Red versus the craftiness of the Wolf; and, finally, the youth and beauty of Rapunzel versus the age and ugliness of the Witch. These characteristics, too, have been brought into the musical by Sondheim and Lapine, though not without some pointed commentary attached. Instead of trying to recreate the fairy tale world completely, they lessen the extreme opposition of the characters and make many of them more human. All of Into the Woods’ main characters contain flaws—Little Red is greedy; Cinderella is clumsy; the Baker and his Wife bend their morals; Jack is feeble-minded. Also, Cinderella’s Prince, even in the first act, shows signs of not being so perfect or “charming” either—he maintains an authoritarian stance over his Steward (“How dare you go off in search without
me!” he yells after the Steward has pursued Cinderella without him [1987:64]); he later becomes nauseous at the sight of Cinderella’s stepsisters’ blood.

Connected to the Laws of Repetition and Contrast is Olrik’s “law of twins.” Often in folktales, many “copies” of similar characters exist—for example, the two stepsisters in Cinderella. Both stepsisters have the same relationship to Cinderella and go through similar actions. Neither has a distinct personality nor does the story need them to have one. However, few other examples of this law exist in the tales chosen for Into the Woods. The main pair that exhibits this trait in Into the Woods, besides the stepsisters, is the Baker and his Wife. Both lack a child; both are told how to liquidate that lack; both go into the woods to acquire the necessary objects for the spell; and, eventually, the Baker realizes that “It Takes Two” of them working together in order to get a child.24 A good example of their twinning happens in the scene where they buy the cow from Jack.25 Another possible example of twinning is Rapunzel’s Prince and Cinderella’s Prince, which is suggested mainly by their song “Agony” and its reprise in the second act. In the song, each Prince discusses his maiden and his traumas in similar ways; in the reprise, they both have strayed from their wives and found new maidens. Despite their similarities, Cinderella’s Prince has by far the larger role; as the oldest brother, this importance also parallels Olrik’s “importance of initial and final position.”

In the original Broadway version, and to a lesser extent in the London version, another, slightly altered version of twinning is incorporated into the musical—the same actor is cast in more than one role. The “twin” roles are: the narrator and the

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24 This song of realization is sung after the Baker’s Wife brings the Baker the item that she has acquired, the “hair as yellow as corn” (1987:54-56).
Mysterious Man; the Wolf and Cinderella’s Prince; and Cinderella’s Mother, Granny, and the Giantess. In the London version, different actors play the Mysterious Man and the Narrator. Though the characters are not necessarily meant to be played by the same actor, Sondheim and Lapine are able to make subtle commentary on the personalities and functions in doing so.

Another important characteristic of folktales is noted in Olrik’s “expression of attributes through action.” The characters in these tales rarely discuss their desires, fears, or doubts—instead, these feelings are expressed through their actions or through commentary by the narrator. Sondheim and Lapine explicitly ignore this characteristic of folktales, and instead three of the main characters—Cinderella, Jack, and Little Red—all have songs which describe not merely the actions but the uncertainties, fears, and learning experiences that each character recently went through. This self-reflection is not limited to these characters, either: Cinderella and Rapunzel’s Prince puzzle over Cinderella’s behavior, and they lament their situations; the Witch attempts to win Rapunzel’s affects after she was blinded and sent away her Prince; and the Baker and his Wife vehemently debate the morality of their actions.

The last two laws of epic narrative that Olrik points out are the “tableau scenes” and “sage logic.” Lapine, the original director of Into the Woods, makes significant use of tableau scenes throughout the first act. The curtains open in the first act to three separate houses—from right to left, Cinderella’s, Jack’s, and the

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25 See Appendix H for dialogue for the scene, which was also discussed in the previous chapter.
27 Olrik defines “tableau scenes” as “sculpted situations based more on fantasy than on reality”; they convey a “certain quality of persistence through time” (in Dundes, 1965:138). I understand this vague description better in terms of the overly “bright” and “sharp” images in the tales described by Lüthi (“One-Dimensionality,” discussed later in this chapter); both concepts attempt to describe the stylized portrayal of characters and situations in these tales.
Baker's. In each house are the characters belonging to it, frozen in mid-action—Cinderella scrubbing the floor; Jack milking his cow as his mother looks on; and the Baker and his Wife cleaning up their shop after a day of baking. During the Prologue, as the Narrator gives the audience the background for each story, the scenes freeze after the Narrator moves on to a different story. Throughout the entire first act, after a character (or group of characters) has finished a song he or she usually goes into a stylized pose of some sort, and the image usually freezes until the audience finishes clapping, at which point the action begins again. Several examples of this are Little Red's song, "I Know Things Now," after which she takes off her cape and throws it over her left shoulder; the Baker's Wife's song, "Maybe They're Magic," which ends with her sticking her fore-finger in the air as if making a point; and the two Princes' song, "Agony," after which they pose with both hands resting on the hilt of their swords, all in Act One.

*Sage* logic, the final of Olrik's laws, describes a different type of characteristic common to folktales. The "logic" of characters in folktales is such that they easily believe in magic objects, curses, and imaginary beasts. Encountering Giants, as Jack does, or receiving a ball gown from a tree, like Cinderella, or emerging fully clothed and unhurt from a Wolf's belly like Little Red do not contradict the characters' understanding of how their world works. This is yet another concept that Sondheim and Lapine have inverted, mainly in order to amuse their audiences, who have willingly entered into the logic of the *Sage* with the characters, with the appropriate incongruity of a real world commentary. For example, many characters in *Into the Woods* express doubt that the Baker's beans are magic, as do he and his Wife. Also,
Cinderella does not believe that the Baker’s Wife needs her slipper in order to have a baby,\textsuperscript{28} and Little Red does not believe that Jack’s hen can lay golden eggs or that he visited a giant’s house in the sky.

*Sage* logic, I argue, also includes an implicit understanding that the items a character needs to lift a curse or win a prize will be found within that tale. For example, if a character needs to find a golden horn to win something, he or she will find that horn and the horn that they find will be the exact one that is needed to win the prize. However, Sondheim and Lapine overturn even this implicit law in that two of the obvious items the Baker and his Wife need to reverse the curse turn out not to work. Jack’s cow, Milky White dies, even though even the name indicates that he is the cow for the spell, and Rapunzel’s hair cannot be used because the Witch has touched it. In the true world of *Sage* logic, the Mysterious Man, a classic Donor character in the Proppian sense, would give the Baker gifts (or ideas) that work; in *Into the Woods*, though he gives the Baker money to buy a new cow, a “new” cow does not fulfill the curse’s requirements—only Jack’s Milky White will do. Though these difficulties are all overcome in the end, the very fact that these difficulties even arise indicates, even in Act One, that the musical is not working by standard *Sage* logic.

\textsuperscript{28} Psychoanalytically, the shoe has been analyzed to represent virginity or the vagina—further adding to the “logic” behind the Baker’s Wife’s need for a shoe to have a child. (Delarue in Dundes, 1982:110-4).
Lüthi’s Literary Analysis

Several of Olrik’s laws, such as Sage logic, Repetition, and Single-Strandedness, have been utilized by a later folktale scholar, Max Lüthi. Lüthi’s analysis of the tales, presented in his work *The European Folktale* (1982 [1947]), is a literary analysis rather than structural. Like previous folktale scholars Olrik and Propp, Lüthi attempted to discover what made a folktale a folktale. He analyzed the language and style of the tales, and he focused specifically on the text of a tale, arguing that it is impossible to discern between the author’s conscious and unconscious influences in the making of the tale. Unlike Propp or Olrik, Lüthi realized that his analysis applied specifically to European tales and was not universal.

Lüthi found that European tales were one-dimensional; their characters lacked depth; the style was abstract and the characters and plots were isolated yet interconnected.

The main trait that Lüthi uncovered was that the folktales were one-dimensional; in other words, all characters, situations, and objects interacted on the same level. The heroes of the tales interacted with supernatural creatures—usually giants, witches, and talking animals—without any hesitation, doubt, or fear of the supernatural element (ibid:6). Though the supernatural element does not live geographically near to the hero, the supernatural characters still existed in a logical way in the hero’s worldview (ibid:8). The Grimms’ as well as Sondheim and Lapine’s versions of the tales exhibit this quality. For example, in *Woods*, when the Baker spies the Wolf talking to Little Red, he is not worried by the fact that the Wolf is standing upright and talking but by the fact that the he might eat Little Red. As well,
when Cinderella goes to her mother’s grave to ask for help, she is not shocked when a
dress and matching slippers come falling down at her from the branches. Though the
hero generally does not possess supernatural powers, he or she does not flinch when
others do.

In Lüthi’s analysis, and in the Grimms’ version, folktale characters generally
do not question much of anything within the framework of the tales. They do not
question their situations, or the help they receive from various sources, or the tasks
that are laid upon them. When the beanstalk unexpectedly appears from the magic
beans, Jack does not question whether or not he should climb up it; he just climbs.
Cinderella does not stop to worry about getting caught while at the Ball; Little Red
does not stop to think that a Wolf might harm her in some way or that telling him
where her Granny lives might be a bad idea. Instead, Little Red mechanically
responds to the Wolf’s questions and goes on her way. These characters also do not
feel pain or passion. While traversing the desert with twins after being cast out by her
mother, Rapunzel must surely have experienced a great deal of psychological trauma,
but her story does not mention it. Cinderella’s stepsisters have bits of their feet cut
off, but the tale does not elaborate upon their pain. Neither is the pain Rapunzel’s
Prince felt when he was blinded discussed or even referred to. And though the love
between Cinderella and her Prince and Rapunzel and her Prince is unmistakably True
Love, as is evidenced by them living Happily Ever After, the tales do not describe
any true passion or eroticism on any character’s part (ibid:13,15,69). Because of
these reactions (or lack thereof) Lüthi argues that the characters have no
psychological “depth” (ibid: Ch.2).
Connected to this characteristic is the changelessness of the characters. Like Rapunzel’s wanderings in the desert, “the blows of fate that afflict the folktale hero—all his battles, dangers, losses, or privations—propel him forward physically but have no effect on his psychic depths, they have no power to change him” (ibid:21).

Characters do not learn from their adventures or from other characters. The young heroes are forever young, whether or not they have been asleep for a hundred years. Often, even when characters are physically changed—such as losing one’s sight or having bits of one’s feet cut off—the next scene finds the hero back to his or her unblemished self. If damage has been done that remains, it is often cured abruptly, such as the Rapunzel’s Prince’s blindness. All transformations that happen affect only the outer being of the character, not the personality or psyche—which is due to the fact that, as Lüthi notes, the characters seemingly have no psyche to affect. They are not “people” but “types,” which are common to the folktale and, as such, they are easily interchangeable with each other. The wicked witch, the Prince Charming, the old man who helps the hero—each type of character can appear in many tales without changing the story in tone or plot (ibid:72). These types are starkly outlined in contrasts: young/old; prince/peasant; village/woods; good/evil. The audience understands without a doubt who deserves to live Happily Ever After and who will get punished.

This characteristic is carried over to other aspects of the folktale. Objects in the tales are also “types.” All of the objects in the tales are brightly colored, and often made out of precious metals like gold (ibid:24). They are normal-sized household objects—such as eggs, hair, shoes, and beans—and do not obviously
appear to have magical qualities. However, they are often given as gifts to the Hero in order to achieve his or her quest, and though they are household objects, they are used only once and then forgotten. These objects are given without any explanation by an unknown helper who appears out of nowhere for the sole purpose of giving the object to the hero (ibid: 18, 42).

Additionally, characters and objects are also very isolated from each other (ibid: Ch. 4). The audience is given very little, if any, information on the character’s background. Folktales often start right at the beginning of an adventure and end when the adventure has been completed, usually when the main character gets married (ibid: 16). And what little family the characters have is often forgotten in the process of the tale, unless they become foils to the Hero (as in Propp’s idea of the “false hero” or Olrik’s idea of “contrasts”) (ibid: 17). The folktale consists of a series of unconnected incidents in which the Hero interacts with unconnected characters, such as the Helper figure (Lüthi’s Helper figure is similar to Propp’s Helper.)

This isolation, however, allows for the Hero to gain what he or she needs to complete their quest: Jack sells his cow for beans, which he would not have been able to do had his mother been there; Cinderella may have been recognized at the Ball if she and her stepsisters had been better friends; Little Red would not have shared the information about her Granny with the Wolf had her mother been there; and Rapunzel would not have been able to have a visitor nor would her Prince have been able to be the visitor had the Witch been in the tower or had the Prince been already married. The relationships between the characters in the tales are short, except for marriage, which happens only at the end of the tale. If a couple get married and the story
continues, usually the bride will be stolen and the story will then focus on the husband attempting the win her back, which, as this is a folktale, he always does successfully. Despite the inherent isolation of the folktale character, Lüthi insists that there exists an underlying interconnectedness between the characters, events, and objects. If they were not all interconnected somehow, he argues, then the hero would not gain the particular objects he or she needs at the moment when they are most needed, through no conscious action of the hero’s own. The hero always successfully finishes the task just in the nick of time, and then lives Happily Ever After.

Sondheim and Lapine’s characters, even in Act One, however, stray almost completely from these folktale norms. Their main departure occurs in their portrayal of the characters. Worried about the fact that the workshop audiences to whom they originally showed the musical did not know the stories as well as Sondheim and Lapine had assumed they would, they decided to rewrite the main songs. However, not wanting to bore those audience members who already knew the stories, they decided to convey the reactions the characters had to their experiences rather than a summary of the actual events themselves (1991:5-6). This decision, in addition to the fact that they were influenced largely in their analysis by psychological interpretations of the tales, demanded that the musical’s characters be fleshed out. Accordingly, the main characters all have a sense of psychological depth and personality.

Little Red’s character is portrayed as greedy as well as naïve. After her experience in the Wolf’s belly, she sings “I Know Things Now,” which articulates the
feelings she had while stuck in his belly. One of the main things she learned was not to trust strangers:

And I know things now,
Many valuable things,
That I hadn’t known before:
Do not put your faith
In a cape and a hood—
They will not protect you
The way that they should—
And take extra care with strangers,
Even flowers have their dangers.
And though scary is exciting,
Nice is different than good (1987:35-6).

She is transformed both inside and out: she takes off her red cloak to give to the Baker, and helps her Granny skin the Wolf for a new Wolf-fur cloak. She also takes to carrying a knife, which she brandishes at Jack when he comes upon her unexpectedly. Jack’s character, as well, has gone through some changes, though not as drastic as Little Red’s. He too describes his experience visiting the land of the Giants though his own feelings—he is scared when the Giant comes to catch him, and he experiences a kind of sexual awakening with the Giantess.29

Cinderella’s character, on the other hand, is shown to be indecisive and passive. Her main song, “On the Steps of the Palace,” describes her inner mental processes which lead up to the act of leaving her shoe for the Prince: “And then out of the blue, And without any guide, You know what your decision is, Which is not to decide. You’ll just leave him a clue: For example, a shoe. And then see what he’ll do” (ibid:64). She also shows her lack of attachment to her Prince during each of her

29 Review previous quote from Jack’s song, “Giants in the Sky.” This connection will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter.
three encounters with the Baker’s Wife as she hurries home from the Ball; each time when the Baker’s Wife asks her about the Prince, she instead describes the food and the dancing.

The Baker and his Wife also break the formula suggested by Lüthi. From the very beginning of the musical, they argue, discuss moral issues, and discover themselves. They also act in concert rather than separately, though the Baker had originally tried to resolve their problem himself; and, as the couple is married to begin with, the typical folktale formula had already been broken. Their most clearly nontraditional scene comes after they have met each other in the woods for the third time. Their song, “It Takes Two,” describes the changes they have gone through while searching in the woods for the objects to lift the spell. The Baker’s Wife sings, “You’ve changed. / You’re daring. / There’s something about the woods. / More sure. / More sharing. / You’re getting us through the woods. / If you could see— / you’re not the man who started. / And much more openhearted, / Than I knew / You to be” (1987:54). They work together and come out of the woods changed by their experiences.

The musical mainly focuses on their quest for four objects: the cow as white as milk, the cape as red as blood, the hair as yellow as corn, the slipper as pure as gold. As in the traditional version of the folktale, these objects are brightly colored household objects that have one unusual use—to reverse the Witch’s curse upon the Baker’s family. The Baker and his Wife “accidentally” run across each and every item they need in the woods within the allotted time frame. However, as discussed previously, they do not automatically find the objects they need, and half of the
objects that they do find do not work on their first attempt. The Mysterious Man, who turns out to be the Baker’s father, plays a classic helper role in the musical. Though his gifts do not always help them succeed, eventually the curse is lifted and the Baker and his Wife are poised to live Happily Ever After.

Rapunzel, the least seen of the four traditional tales’ characters, acts very similarly to her Grimms counterpart. The Witch, however, varies both from the Grimm version and from Lüthi’s analyses. The Witch shows a great deal of emotion in her explanatory song, “Stay With Me,” in which she admonishes Rapunzel for disobeying her and attempts to convince her to stay (ironically right before banishing Rapunzel to the desert): “Don’t you know what’s out there in the world? / Someone has to shield you from the world. / Stay with me... / Who out here could love you more than I? / What out there that I cannot supply? / Stay with me” (ibid:60). The Witch also goes through a complete physical transformation by the end of Act One. However, as is seen in Act Two, the transformation remains a purely physical one.

Several characters in Into the Woods remain true to their traditional counterparts. Jack’s Mother, in Act One, talks and acts very similarly to the mother in Jacobs’ version. Cinderella’s family, as well, remains one-sided; the stepsisters are haughty and the stepmother is only concerned with her biological daughters. Her father is mostly silent, as is the father in the Grimms’ version. The Princes also remain depthless. They are secure in the knowledge that they will gain the object of their quest, and each gains the necessary knowledge or object so that he may find his Princess. So sure are they of success that they wonder why Cinderella has run from one of them.
(Rapunzel’s Prince has just described how he gains entry to Rapunzel’s tower.)

Cinderella’s Prince (Starts laughing hysterically): Rapunzel, Rapunzel! What kind of name is that? You jest! I have never heard such a thing.

Rapunzel’s Prince (Defensive): I speak the truth! She is as true as your maiden. A maiden running from a Prince? None would run from us.

Cinderella’s Prince (Sober): Yet one has.

He sings:

Did I abuse her
Or show her disdain?
Why does she run from me?
If I should lose her,
How shall I regain
The heart she has won from me?
Agony...... (ibid:47).

In “Agony,” Sondheim and Lapine have them perform a double inversion of Lüthi’s analysis: while they do wonder about their situation and profess passion for their maidens, their wondering is not based on any real doubt about their tale’s conclusion but on an inherent knowledge of the way their world—the world of the folktale—is supposed to end, if not necessarily foreknowledge of how that end is reached.

The last character to be discussed in Into the Woods does not have a direct Grimm or folktale predecessor. The Narrator is an implied figure in all stories, but that role is never commented upon. In Into the Woods, the Narrator acts in tandem to the characters, supplying background information and plot summaries as well as some
commentary. This role was based on several specific non-folktale identities, including a newscaster, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Despite the depth and personality of the characters in *Into the Woods*, their stories essentially follow the Lüthi’s analyses. Though all characters are in the woods at the same time, they rarely run into anyone but characters from their own tale and the Baker and his Wife. For example, Little Red meets Jack once in the woods; no one runs across Cinderella but the Prince and the Baker’s Wife; and no one meets Rapunzel but the Witch, her Prince, and the Baker’s Wife. The stories also conclude in a traditional way—by the end of Act One, all of their quests have been successfully ended and each character is certain of their future. The characters also seem to believe that they should not worry or doubt, but just pursue their desire—“Though you may encounter wolves, / You mustn’t stop, / You mustn’t swerve, / You mustn’t ponder, / You have to act!”—as Lüthi argues that all true folktale characters normally do (ibid:77).

The second act of *Into the Woods* almost systematically destroys Olrik’s laws and Lüthi’s stylistic analyses. As it is set in the time period *after* the official “Happy ever after” ending, it already has broken traditional folktale form. However, as Sondheim and Lapine are exploring what might have happened “after” using the traditional characters they described in Act One, they still incorporate some of the more obvious folktale characteristics. The most obvious of these, apart from keeping the characters and settings, are the slightly changed traditional opening and closing. Act Two begins, “Once upon a time....later,” and ends “And happy ever after!/ I
wish” (ibid:78,138). Between these two lines (i.e., the second act), however, Sondheim and Lapine invert all of the main laws and form of folk narrative.

The second act starts out somewhat similarly to the first: the audience sees Cinderella in her palace; Jack and his mother in their (expensively decorated) cottage; and the Baker and his Wife in their house with their new baby. They are all seemingly content with their new lot in life, though they do express some dissatisfaction with the minor details of their lives. However, while they again count their blessings (“I never thought I’d be so much I hadn’t been! I’m so hap—”), the Giant’s wife comes crashing in to exact revenge upon Jack and sends everyone fleeing into the woods (ibid:88).

Almost immediately the characters notice that something is amiss in their carefully constructed folktale world. As the Baker and his Wife discuss with the Witch the origin of the destruction, the Witch shrinks the boundaries of the supernatural that exist within the folktale:

*(spoken:)*

**Wife:** Who could do such a thing?

**Witch:** Anything that leaves a footprint that large is no “who.”

**Baker:** Do you think it was a bear?

*(music in background; sung-spoken)*

**Witch:** A bear? Bears are sweet. Besides, you ever see a bear with forty-foot feet?

**Wife:** Dragon?

**Witch** (shakes her head): No scorch marks—usually they’re linked.
Baker: Manticore?

Witch: Imaginary.

Wife, Baker: Griffin?

Witch: Extinct.

Baker: Giant?

Witch: Possible. Very, very possible (ibid:89).

Very quickly the isolation from Act One is broken down as the characters begin to deal with their unexpected situation. The Baker attempts to get Jack’s help in dealing with the Giant, who, contrary to traditional folktale form, has come to the village to seek out the other characters. Jack’s mother refuses to let Jack help, correctly stating that no one helped them when Jack was dealing with his own giant. The Baker then goes to the castle and reminds Cinderella of the last Giant and his child. When he returns home, Little Red arrives—her mother has been killed and her house destroyed. The Baker and his Wife decide to take her to her Granny’s, so that they may protect her on the way. They run into the Witch and the royal family, minus Cinderella and her Prince.

The Giant finally corners them and demands that they give her Jack. The characters, however, do not know how to handle this situation, which is understandable—the characters’ entire world structure has collapsed. When they decide to give the Narrator to the Giant in the place of Jack, any remnants of traditional folktale structure have very tangibly broken down. And when Little Red
and Jack’s mother enter and argue with the Giantess, the idea of absolute good and evil crumbles as well:

**Giant(ess):** Where is the lad who killed my husband?

**Steward:** There is no lad here!

**Baker:** We haven’t seen him.

**Giant:** I want the lad who climbed the beanstalk.

**Witch:** We’ll get him for you right away. Don’t move!

*Little Red pulls a knife from beneath her cape and runs towards the Giant; Baker restrains her, but she threatens the giant anyway.*

**Little Red:** It was you who destroyed our house—not some wind! It’s because of you I have no mother!

**Giant:** And who destroyed my house? That boy asked for shelter, and then stole our gold, our hen, *and* our harp. Then he killed my husband. I must avenge the wrongdoings.

**Wife:** We are not responsible for him…

(later)

**Jack’s Mother (Tough):** Jack is just a boy! We had no food to eat and he sold his beloved cow in exchange for magic beans. If anyone is to be punished, it’s the man who made that exchange.

**Little Red:** That’s right!

**Baker:** Shhh.

**Wife:** Nonsense.

**Giant:** He was your responsibility. Now I must punish him for his wrongs! (ibid:100,104).
In Act Two, the characters must learn to deal with their actions from Act One—an inconceivable part of traditional folktale plots, due to the fact that the characters in traditional folktales are isolated from one another and therefore have no responsibility towards each other or their own actions. They are truly unequipped to deal with the issues that the Giantess’ revenge brings.

Throughout the second act, the boundaries between the tales continue to crumble: Cinderella’s Prince seduces the Baker’s Wife (“This is ridiculous. / What am I doing here? / I’m in the wrong story,” [“Any Moment;” 1987:109]), and both the Princes have found new maidens (Snow White and Sleeping Beauty; reprise of “Agony” [ibid:96-8].) Rapunzel, who remained closest to her traditional predecessor in Act One, has had a nervous breakdown and explains in psychoanalytic detail why she’ll never be happy, shortly before she runs under the Giantess’ foot.

In the second act, no repetition occurs. Though the plot narrows down to two or three strands, it still does not focus on a main character, and it still incorporates several tangents, such as the liaison between Cinderella’s Prince and the Baker’s Wife. Family members are not saved, but instead killed—Rapunzel kills herself; the Steward kills Jack’s Mother; the Giant kills Little Red’s Granny; and a falling tree kills the Baker’s wife. The normal progression of Propp’s quest tales is inverted—the heroes end up with less, not more, than what they had to begin with; Cinderella finds out that her Prince has had at least one affair, and the Palace where she would have reigned is destroyed by the Giant.

Of those remaining, the Princes have found new brides; Cinderella, having learned of her Prince’s infidelity, leaves him; Jack’s Mother is dead; the Baker’s Wife
is dead; both Rapunzel and the Witch are dead; and Little Red’s mother and Granny
have been killed as well. Though the majority of the cast is dead, the four remaining
characters (plus the Baker’s child) band together to slay the Giant, and eventually
decide to live together. Through the chaos, the main characters become isolated
again, and in traditional form, that isolation allows them to band together during the
last few scenes of the musical. The Baker takes over the role of the Narrator for his
son, as his dead wife advises him, “Tell him the story / Of how it all happened. / Be
father and mother, / You’ll know what to do” (ibid:135.) By the end of Act Two, a
new tale with a new set of characters is formed—Jack, Little Red, and Cinderella who
will help Baker raise his child, to whom their old stories will be told.

The purpose of Sondheim and Lapine’s conscious inversions of the traditional
folktale structures and style they observed was more than to comment on the
difference between the realm of the folktale and real life, however. This traditionally
non-realistic form acts as a stark contrast to the themes of emotional maturation,
connectedness, children, and responsibility that Sondheim and Lapine weave
unabashedly into the musical. The influences behind these themes, as well as
Sondheim and Lapine’s inversion of the folktale scholarship of which they were
aware, will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.
Chapter Six:

Character Growth in *Into the Woods*

*Into the Woods* contains several themes, all of which Sondheim and Lapine discuss explicitly throughout the musical. One of the main themes is that of personal maturation. All of the main characters grow over the course of the show from one-dimensional stereotypes to fully developed people. During Act One, these transformations are shallow, like the transformations in folktales themselves—though the characters learn something about the real world (the woods), they are still certain to live “happily ever after” with the lack of problems and lack of development that ensues from not having to deal with problems. In Act Two, however, their “happy” world is quite literally destroyed, and they are forced to deal with the consequences of their earlier, individual, selfish actions. In order to survive the wrath of the Giantess, they must grow and be able to work together for a common cause.

To better interpret the folktales, Sondheim and Lapine read the works of Freudian psychologist Bruno Bettelheim. Though they used these sources, they put their own unique interpretation on these scholars’ conclusions. Instead of accepting what Bettelheim had to say at face value, they deconstructed the analyses and compared his conclusions to what they had experienced with the tales in their own lives. In doing so, they took to task the classic characteristics of the folktale which Propp, Olrik, and Lüthi had elucidated in their works as being too unrealistic. They also drew upon the work of Neo-Freudian Erich Fromm and Jungian psychologist
Marie-Louise von Franz. French historian and cultural critic Robert Darnton provided some social connection to the tales, and Lapine also consulted a clinical psychologist for contemporary character studies of the main characters (Mankin, 1988:51).

Bettelheim, in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), argues that folktales are essential to a child’s psychological, social, and moral development (4). They socialize children to be morally good and teach them, by implication, how to correctly deal with situations that society throws their way (ibid:5). Folktales show children what can happen if they are “bad,” because all evil characters in a folktale get punished in some horrible way. In addition, the tales help children to become less anxious when dealing with the real world. The heroes of most folktales are often children themselves who overcome great odds, and the stories give hope to the children that they can triumph over adversity like the folktale hero. Lapine took the opposite point of view from Bettelheim about the value of the tales. Rereading the stories as an adult, Lapine states, he realized that the characters were not very honest and that they did *not* offer children a very realistic view of the world (1991:6). He felt that Bettelheim offered psychological justifications of the psychological and moral transgressions rampant in the stories, and he doubted the validity of these justifications (Mankin, 1988:54).

Lapine also disagreed with the interpretation of Bettelheim and some Jungians (such as von Franz) that the tales represent an individual or a society’s psychic development (ibid:55). Lapine states that the Narrator’s character was originally meant to represent the storyteller, or an ultimate figure of authority such as a
newscaster. By the time the show hit Broadway, the Narrator had turned into an intellectual figure such as Bettelheim, commenting on what was “really” going on in the story. Eventually, the rest of the cast turns on the Narrator and stops his “outsider” interpretation of the story by sacrificing him to the Giant. As Lapine states of this plot twist, “I wanted to get rid of Bettelheim!” (ibid).

“Nice is different than good.”

Disagreeing with Bettelheim’s opinion of the social and moral value of the tales, one of the first folktale characteristics that Sondheim and Lapine deconstruct in the musical is the sense of right and wrong and good and evil. A father of a young child himself at the time, Lapine’s approach to this point was also very much influenced by a comment that a fellow parent made to him. As he explains:

I don’t know if my having recently had a child has anything to do with my work, I tend not to be analytical to how, or why, I do what I do. I remember though that one of my earliest impulse for doing this piece came when I asked a friend of mine who had a little girl if she was going to teach her daughter table manners. And she said: “I don’t care about table manners, but I am going to teach my daughter the difference between right and wrong.” I was so moved by this and I thought, yes, what’s important is trying to teach people that there is a difference—not just to give any answers, just to recognize that there is a difference (ibid:54).

Unconvinced that folktales clearly show the difference between what is morally right and wrong, Lapine wanted to display the difference and the complications that can arise when one compromises one’s integrity.
Sondheim and Lapine sensed that the “good” characters in the show are not really “good” at all, but merely “nice,” and their “right” actions do not live up to the morals of the real world. Though Cinderella, Little Red, Jack, Rapunzel, and the Baker and his Wife are theoretically the “heroes” of their respective stories, they heedlessly follow their own desires. When given a chance to get their wish, they break promises, lie, and steal in order to get them.

The “wish” is a key motif in Into the Woods. The first and last words of the musical are Cinderella’s “I wish.” As Sondheim says, they “bookend” the musical (1990). Each character wishes for something—Cinderella wants to go to the ball; Jack and his Mother want their cow to give milk so they can have money to live on; Little Red and Rapunzel (and, after his first visit to the Giant, Jack) wish to experience the world, though they do not realize it until someone comes along to show them that more of the world exists than what they already know. The Baker and his Wife want a child, and it is hinted that this child will somehow deepen their relationship, which seems somewhat empty at the start of the musical. The Witch wants to become beautiful again, possibly so that Rapunzel will love her better. The Princes want beautiful damsels—apparently it does not matter which ones they end up with—and Cinderella’s stepsisters want the Princes. And the Mysterious Man wants to correct the mistakes he made long ago. Throughout the first act the characters blindly pursue their wishes, and it is these wishes, and their consequences, that form the heart of the action and one of the main themes in Woods.

In order to achieve their wishes, most characters somehow compromise their integrity. Cinderella, the stereotypically “nice” character, deceives her family, the
Prince, and all of the guests at the ball not once but three times. Cinderella’s stepsisters and stepmother also attempt to deceive the Prince, but as they are not the heroes of the story, they do not succeed. Jack lies to the Baker in order to sell his cow, saying that it is generous of milk, and he steals from the Giantess and murders her husband. Little Red and Rapunzel break their promises to their mothers—Little Red strays from the path, and Rapunzel, though not much in control of her situation, has a visitor.

Though the Princes do not compromise their integrity, they seem to have little integrity to compromise, as is seen in the fact that they both cheat on their new wives in Act Two. The Witch, as well, seems to have little integrity, as she has cast a curse on the Baker; and though she tells him how to break it, she does so only for her own benefit. The Mysterious Man, another character of questionable integrity, strongly encourages Jack to sell the cow for beans (breaking Jack’s promise to his mother in the process) and encourages the Baker to deceive the Witch with a floured cow.

As in folktales, the characters do not immediately feel the consequences of their actions. Though each story ends happily in Act One, in Act Two, the folktale world slowly destructs around them and the characters must deal with the “real” world. From the beginning, the Witch is the only character who understands that the folktale world is not the ideal place that it is often portrayed as. “Don’t you know what’s out there in the world?” she sings to her daughter Rapunzel. “Someone has to shield you from the world. Stay with me” (1987:60). She also knows that each action reaps consequences; she herself doles out the consequences for Rapunzel’s
disobedience. Therefore, when the Giantess comes to exact revenge upon Jack, she grasps the enormity of the situation first.

All of the other characters are originally unable to handle the situation. Though the Giantess only wants to punish Jack for his wrongdoings, the community does not feel that they can give him to her. They want to be “nice,” and though they do not know what course of action to take, they do know that giving Jack to her is not the “nice” one. As characters start dying, however, they realize they must make a decision. When the Baker’s Wife is killed, the Baker, who along with his Wife had been the glue that held the group of characters together, turns on Jack and starts an avalanche of blame-tossing as each character’s moral compromises are brought to light. The characters lose whatever semblance of “niceness” they once had and begin to attack each other mercilessly:

**Baker** (speaking): Yes! He’s the one to blame! It’s because of you there’s a giant in our midst and my wife is dead!

**Jack** (singing): But it isn’t my fault,
    I was given those beans!
    You persuaded me to trade away
    My cow for beans!
    And without those beans
    There’d have been no stalk
    To get up to the giants in the first place!

**Baker**: Wait a minute, *magic* beans
    For a cow so old
    That you had to tell
    A lie to sell it
    Which you told!
    Were they worthless beans?
    Were they oversold?
    Oh, and tell us who
Persuaded you
To steal that gold!

Baker: I'd have kept those beans,
But our house was cursed.
She made us get the cow to get
The curse reversed!

Witch: It's your father's fault
That the curse got placed
And the place got cursed
In the first place (ibid:114-6).

This blame-throwing session indicates that these characters' "nice" outer personalities do not have strong foundations inside. In other words, their "niceness" comes not from an inner moral strength but rather from selfishness or fear. As the song builds up to a climax, the four main surviving characters—Cinderella, the Baker, Jack, and Little Red—all turn upon the Witch. She turns their accusations right back at them, listing their various wrongdoings as well. She offers to accept the blame if they give her Jack, but again they refuse. She then attacks their "niceness," cumulating Lapine and Sondheim's attack on the "niceness" of the characters in folktales: "You're so nice. / You're not good, / You're not bad, / You're just nice. / I'm not good, / I'm not nice, / I'm just right. / I'm the Witch. / You're the world...
You're all liars and thieves, / Like his father, / Like his son will be, too— / Oh, why bother? / You'll just do what you do" (ibid:121). After she leaves, the characters finally admit to each other their wrongdoings, and, after a short leave of absence by the Baker, they decide together how to realistically deal with the problem of the
Giantess. They have learned to accept the consequences of their actions and the responsibility of resolving the situation they have wrought.

"Now I understand...and it's time to leave the woods."

However, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack, Cinderella, and the Baker must each go through a transformation before they come to the point where they can recognize that there is even blame to be laid. Little Red is the first of the bunch to go through a sizable transformation. At the beginning of the musical, she is innocent and naïve, trusting and unsuspecting. Though her mother told her never to stray from the path, she apparently never explained to Little Red why she must not do this. Accordingly, the Wolf, whose culinary intentions are known to all but Little Red, easily convinces her to stray from the path. Little Red even rationalizes her move, saying that Granny might appreciate the flowers. When she arrives at Granny's, she is still innocent of the Wolf's desires until just before she gets eaten.

Up to this point Lapine has repeated most other interpretations of the tales, including those of Bettelheim and Fromm, portraying Little Red as an innocent prepubescent girl and the Wolf as her knowledgeable older male seducer. However, most Freudian analyses of the tale would then focus on the male who saves the day and provides a strong father figure for Little Red. Fromm, in fact, analyzes the entire
tale as a mediation between the evil masculine figure and the good masculine figure (1955:240-1). Instead, Lapine inserts the Baker, an infertile man who is squeamish about killing the Wolf, instead of the Grimm’s virile hunter. In lieu of a strong father figure, Lapine transforms Little Red’s sickly Granny into a sprightly and vengeful old woman who directs Little Red in properly torturing the Wolf. Little Red, for her part, is still processing. She reflects on the experience and what she learned from it:

When he said, “Come in!”
With that sickening grin,
How could I know what was in store?
Once his teeth were bared,
Though, I really got scared—
Well, excited and scared—

But he drew me close
And he swallowed me down
Down a dark slimy path
Where lie secrets that I never want to know.....

I should have heeded
Her advice...
But he seemed so nice (1987:34-5).²

Though she was taken in by the Wolf’s exciting demeanor, she now understands that “nice is different than good” and that appearances can be deceiving. Under her Granny’s tutelage, she learns to be prepared and to aggressively protect herself. Her Granny lets her skin the Wolf and she wears the wolfskin as a physical symbol of her transformation.

¹ However, Little Red’s later violent streak is prefigured in a remark she makes to the Baker and his Wife before leaving for Granny’s——“Never can tell what lies ahead / For all that I know, she’s already dead,” she sings gaily (1987:10).
Lapine’s interpretation of Little Red’s character was influenced by the Grimms’ version of the story. They included a sequel to the first Little Red story in which she and her granny, having learned how to successfully deal with the Wolf, trick him and kill him again. The episode, Lapine has said, indicated a certain kind of attitude from Little Red—that she “wasn’t going to settle for one wolf, she was going for two” (1991:3). Lapine’s transformation of her Granny as well may be tied to Woods’ other main themes, the influence that people have on each other, especially the influence parents have on their children, which will be discussed later.

Though Little Red changes through the end of Act One, she goes through a deeper changes in Act Two. Her newly found confidence in herself and her Granny is shaken when she comes home to find her house destroyed and her mother missing. She is quickly taken under the parental wing of the Baker and his Wife and escorted through the woods. When the Giantess appears, her earlier confidence and aggression reappears and she accuses the Giantess of killing her mother. However, when the Narrator dies, she falls back into uncertainty. She finds her place and her confidence again only at the very end of the show, when she, Cinderella, Jack, and the Baker bond together to defeat the Giant.

Jack is the next character to transform. Like Little Red, he begins the musical as an innocent boy. Lapine describes him as a creative dreamer type with his head lost in the clouds. Also like Little Red, he is under the watchful eye of a strong mother figure, who tries to keep his feet firmly on the ground. Jack’s story has often been interpreted as a sexual awakening of sorts; unlike Little Red, he is seen as being

\[ \text{Source: Bettelheim, B. (1976).}\]
mature enough to handle this awakening if only he can get out from under the suffocating influence of his mother.\(^3\) Lapine and Sondheim hint at Jack’s sexual awakening but do not dwell on it. An earlier version of Jack’s key song, “Giants in the Sky,” draws more obviously upon the sexual symbolism in the tale:

And I asked for food  
And I asked for rest  
And she saw me fed  
And she made me guest  
And she made me a bed of her big soft giant breast  
Up in the sky.

(Rejected version)

And she gives you food  
And she gives you rest  
And she draws you close to her giant breast,  
And you know things now that you never knew before,  
Not till the sky.

(Canonical version) (Banfield, 1993: 384).

Lapine and Sondheim instead focus on Jack’s new interest in adventures (which include lying and stealing) and the outside world.

Realizing that he likes adventures, Jack does not need much encouragement from the Baker and Little Red to climb back up the beanstalk the second and third times. However, after he gets chased down the beanstalk by the Giant and almost loses his life, his mother puts a stop to his adventuring. At the end of Act One, he is destined to live a long and happy life with his mother, his harp, and his cow, forever

\(^3\) See, for example, Bettelheim’s discussion of the tale (1976) and Martha Wolfenstein’s short
stuck in adolescence. When the Giantess comes in Act Two, he offers to go fight it, but his mother refuses. Only after she leaves for market can he sneak out to help save the group. He disappears for much of Act Two only to reappear right before “Your Fault.” Like Little Red, his character stays roughly the same after his initial transformation until the end of the musical, when he and the Baker discuss the moral issues involved in killing the Steward in revenge for his mother’s death, as will be discussed later.

Of all of the characters in the show, Cinderella goes through the most profound change (1990). She is the oldest of the three main traditional characters and the last to transform. Lapine was most influenced in creating her character by the fact that, in the Grimms’ version, Cinderella goes back to the ball three times. He concluded from this that she was indecisive and ambivalent. She is slightly “different”—she talks to birds and seems to spend much of her time in another world. Lapine also believes that she is repressed. “No one is always perfectly ‘nice’,,” he says, “that’s boring. So we thought that she might be repressed.” Her repression comes out clearly in the Prologue to Act One; as she is fixing one of her stepsister’s hair, she complains about her situation and tugs the hair too tight, causing her stepsister to shout.

Lapine has also remarked that she did not know what she was getting into when she decided to attend the ball. He feels that she attends the ball with the goal of wearing pretty dresses and seeing how the other half lives (Harsche, 1995:24). When she first visits her mother’s grave wanting to go to the ball, she does not even know the discussion of the tale (Wolfenstein in Dundes, 1965:110-3). For a Jungian-derived analysis of the Jack tale cycle, from which “Jack and the Beanstalk” comes, see Davis (1978).
what to ask for and has to be prompted by her mother. Later, after she has caught the keen eye of the Prince and is hiding from him, she remarks, "Wanting a ball is not wanting a Prince," though somewhat indecisively (1987:57). Each time she runs into the Baker's Wife and she hides from the Prince, she seems confused about her entire situation. And, after her third visit to the ball, she describes being stuck on the stairs and attempting to make a decision about him:

You think, what do you want?
You think, make a decision.
Why not stay and be caught?
You think, well, it's a thought,
What would be his response?
But then what if he knew
Who you were when you know
That you're not what he thinks
That he wants?

And then what if you are
What a prince would envision? (ibid:62-3)\(^4\)

Lapine sees that Cinderella's problem is that she does not know who she is. She has been undervalued for so long at her father's house that she has lost sight of who she is and who she can be. When she visits her mother's grave, she asks, "What is wrong with me, mother? / Something must be wrong" (ibid:22). When the Prince comes along and tries to capture her away from her old life, she rightly hesitates, for he can be seen as just another influence in her life dictating who she must be.

However, when she becomes momentarily caught on the steps of the palace, she,

\(^4\) See also her first meeting with the Baker's Wife, who is certain that she would know what to do were she in Cinderella's shoes (1987: 37-9).
unlike the Cinderella in every other version of the story that Sondheim and Lapine have read, makes the decision to leave the shoe. In choosing how to deal with the Prince’s trap, she starts, albeit very slowly and indirectly, to advance her newly proactive approach to life. Instead of accidentally leaving her slipper behind for the Prince, she realizes that she does have a choice to make, and that the choice is hers. If she had so chosen, she could have hidden from the Prince forever. Though she gains a bit more power over herself in this scene, she still ends up becoming the property of the Prince and living “Happily Ever After.” And though she makes a huge physical and geographical transition by the end of her story, she has not made a great transition within herself; and though married, she has not yet actually matured.

By the beginning of Act Two, approximately nine months or so later, she has begun to see the cracks in her royal façade. Indeed, the entire company complains about their new situations but all in all, they are content with their new lives (“Wishes may bring problems / Such that you regret them / Better that, though, / Than to never get them” [1987:86]). Cinderella’s Prince apparently spends a lot of time away from home; right before the Giantess comes to destroy the village, he departs again on an unknown errand, leaving Cinderella stuck in the palace with her two blind, doting stepsisters and her hovering stepmother. In his absence, the Baker tells Cinderella of the new Giant in the land, and does nothing but promise to tell the Prince when he returns. When her bird friends bring news of her mother’s grave being in danger, however, she frets that she cannot leave the palace unescorted until her birds suggest that she disguise herself as a peasant.
She is found at her mother’s grave by the Baker, who is in search of Jack. The grave is destroyed, and Cinderella again is at a loss as to how to proceed. She agrees to join the Baker and the rest of the group, and then she becomes part of the climactic blame-throwing scene with the others. Afterwards, the Baker flees the group in a state of depression, leaving his child (perhaps forever) with Cinderella. It is during this short time period, presumably, when Cinderella is in charge of two scared and motherless teenagers, that she begins to come to terms with the loss of her intimate connection with her own mother. She begins to accept that she herself must mature and take care of those around her, instead of thinking only of herself. This transformation continues into the song, “No One is Alone,” which is discussed later on. When her unfaithful Prince happens upon her while Little Red, Jack, and the Baker are preparing to kill the Giant, she refuses to come with him. “My father’s house was a nightmare. Your house was a dream. Now I want something in-between. Please go” (ibid:128). Lapine feels that by the end of the musical, she has finally gained a strong enough sense of self-worth to be able to make her life and her decisions her own (1990).

The Baker and his Wife develop very differently than either Little Red, Jack, or Cinderella. They have already entered into adulthood and are married, and they wish to advance to the next stage of their maturation by having a child. The Baker and his Wife represent the audience, or, as Lapine puts it, “The couple from Brooklyn” who happen to wander into the folktale world and do not really understand the laws of that world. Their songs clarify and focus the dilemmas that do not occur to the other characters yet which become extremely important as the folktale world
breaks down in Act Two. They, unlike the other characters, argue about the moral implications of their actions. Their first argument shows the viewpoints of each character, as they debate the integrity of buying Jack’s cow for beans:

**Baker** (looking at cow): Look at her! She’s crying!

**Wife:** If the thing you do
Is pure in intent,
If it’s meant,
And it’s just a little bent,
Does it matter?

**Baker:** Yes!

**Wife:** No, what matters is that
Everyone tells tiny lies,
What’s important really
Is the size!
Only three more tries
And we’ll have our prize.
When the end’s in sight,
You’ll realize:
If the end is right,
It justifies
The beans! (ibid:30-1).

Though the Baker attempts to remain virtuous, he is not able to remain “nice” and still get his wish. He is working in the folktale world, and though he will be able to get his wish, his morals are not the same as this world. Under the influence of both his practical and Machiavellian Wife, the demanding Witch, and his long-lost father, the Mysterious Man, he is finally convinced to steal and lie like the rest of the cast in order to break the Witch’s curse.

The interactions between the Baker and his Wife also have good consequences. When first the Baker goes into the woods to lift the curse, he refuses to
let his Wife help him: "The curse is on my house. / Only I can lift the spell" (ibid:18). His Wife argues that the spell is on both of their houses, but it is not until halfway through Act One, when his Wife has followed him into the woods and helped him gain the cow and the hair, that he finally accepts that, "Well...perhaps it will take the two of us to get this child" (ibid:54). They realize that their adventures in the woods have helped to change and mature them—the Baker has become more outgoing and decisive, and he has begun to realize the importance of their relationship and working together as a team:

If I dare,
It’s because I’m becoming
Aware of us.
As a pair of us
Each accepting our share
Of what’s there (ibid:55).

Their realization foreshadows a similar realization by the rest of the cast in Act Two. However, in Act Two, while the other characters are slowly realizing the need to work together, the Baker and his Wife end up separated, each learning their own lessons alone in the woods. While searching for Jack, the Baker’s Wife comes across Cinderella’s Prince, who quickly seduces her and just as quickly leaves her alone in the woods again. The Baker’s Wife, who throughout the show is very interested in the Prince and the life that Cinderella leads, finally gets a chance to experience it firsthand. However, she is not prepared for the experience and must process it much the way that Little Red processes her experience with the Wolf
appropriately played by the same actor who plays Cinderella’s Prince.) The Baker’s Wife bemoans the necessity of having to choose between excitement and stability; finally, she concludes that having had her experience with the Prince makes her value her relationship with her husband even more. Now she understands and tries to leave the woods, but she is killed by a falling tree, knocked loose by the Giantess. For all of her growth and realizations, she still ends up dead. For his part, the Baker goes through a transformation somewhat similar to Cinderella’s. After he and his wife finally do have a child, he does not know how to relate to it. At the beginning of Act Two, he tells his wife, “I will take care of him…when he’s older” (ibid:88). When he finds out that his Wife is dead, he shirks his fatherly duties, abandoning his child and running off into the woods.

There he comes across his twice “dead” father, who had abandoned him when his mother had died and his sister was taken by the Witch. However, after many years of hiding from his family, the Mysterious Man has realized that running away from problems does not resolve them:

**Mysterious Man:** Running away—we’ll do it.  
Why sit around, resigned?  
Trouble is, son,  
The farther you run,  
The more you feel undefined  
For what you have left undone  
And, more, what you’ve left behind.

We disappoint,  
We leave a mess,  
We die but we don’t….

**Baker:** We disappoint  
In turn, I guess.
Forget though, we won’t....

**Baker, Mysterious Man:** Like father, like son.

_Mysterious Man disappears_ (ibid:123-4).

The Mysterious Man represents that distant father figure that we never quite connect with, though we may want to. The Baker and his father finally connect for a minute while the rest of the world falls apart (1990). Lapine has commented that the world of the folktale is filled with absent or ineffective fathers; he wanted the Baker to break that cycle, to show that you do not always have to do what your parents have done (ibid). After his father leaves again, the Baker finally regains his courage and returns to the group and his responsibilities as a parent. Instead of running away like his father, the Baker decides that he needs to end all of the separations and pain and start to rebuild a new, better world (ibid).

“No one is alone...Children will listen”

Each character discussed previously must break away from his or her parental figure in order to truly grow up. Little Red must break away from her mother’s warnings and Granny’s tutelage in order to become her own person. Up until the very end of the show, Little Red still depends on the lessons she has learned from her mother figures. When their advice does not fit the situation, she does not know what to do:

---

5 See also the discussion of mothers in Sondheim’s musicals (Menton in Godhart, 2000: 61-76.)
**Little Red** (spoken): I think my granny and my mother would be upset with me.

**Cinderella:** Why?

**Little Red:** They always said to make them proud. And here I am about to kill somebody.

**Cinderella:** Not somebody. A giant who has been doing harm.

**Little Red:** But the giant's a person. Aren't we to show forgiveness? Mother would be very unhappy with these circumstances.

**Cinderella** (singing): Mother cannot guide you.
   Now you're on your own.
   Only me beside you.
   Still, you're not alone.
   No one is alone, truly.
   No one is alone (ibid:128-9).

In comforting Little Red, Cinderella sings as much to herself as to Little Red, for she does not know the answers to Little Red's questions either. She, too, must break away from her mother in order to mature and become a mother figure to both Little Red and the Baker's child.

The Baker does not truly begin to "grow up" until his wife dies, and he has to face his responsibility to his son. It is only after she dies that he begins to resolve the conflict with his father. Then, and only then, is he able to become a father figure to Jack, another fatherless son whose mother has been killed. Upon hearing of his mother's death by the Steward, Jack wants to kill the Steward as well. The Baker, falling back into "niceness," tells him that he should not kill him, but he cannot truly clarify why:
Wrong things, right things…
Who can say what’s true?
Do things, fight things…
You decide,
But you are not alone….

No one acts alone,
Careful,
No one is alone (ibid:130).

Cinderella and the Baker emphasize, in their own way, to Little Red and Jack that they must start thinking for themselves and growing up. In order to become a mature person, they must try to figure out the world by themselves. However, they must also realize that they are not alone. After killing the Giant Jack complains that he has no one to take care of him; Little Red volunteers to be his mother. Jack realizes that he does not want a mother, but a friend. The Baker tells him that he will have to take care of himself now; “It’s time” (ibid:135). They eventually agree to live together at the Baker’s cottage with his baby, forming a nontraditional family of equals.

Sondheim and Lapine drew strongly from the works of Erich Fromm in developing and creating the theme of interconnectedness in the musical. Erich Fromm, a Neo-Freudian, argues that humans are alone; therefore, the main goal of every human is to find meaning in his or her lonely, individual life. People can follow two paths: they can use the freedom of their individual life to join with other humans and help create a better society, or they can give up their freedom to blindly follow a higher authority, such as the government (Harper, 1962:72-3). Fromm felt that authority keeps people from truly being free (Funk, 1982:9). The Witch echoes Fromm’s antiauthoritarian words when, early on in Act Two, she argues that telling
the royal family about the giant is pointless, for they will all have to work together in order to solve their problem. The Witch also highlights this theme during “Last Midnight” when the last curse she gives the four characters is that of aloneness: “I’m leaving you alone. / You can tend the garden, it’s yours. / Separate and alone, / Everybody down on all fours” (1987:122). The Witch still has parental issues to deal with herself, as she challenges her dead mother to punish her again for losing the beans: “All right, mother, when? / Lost the beans again. / Punish me the way you did then! / Give me claws and a hunch, / Just away from this bunch” (ibid).

In their song, “No One is Alone,” Sondheim and Lapine describe the necessity of working together as equals and acknowledging one’s effect on the rest of the world. Sondheim has often been critiqued for this song, because some listeners believed that we are in fact all alone. Sondheim feels that they are not really listening to what the lyric is saying:

No one acts alone. The idea is that we are all responsible for one another, and that any act you take has repercussions...And yes, I do believe that we are not alone, that we are responsible to each other; and I also believe in the other, you know, that we are all born into the world alone. But that’s not what the show’s about. That’s not what the action’s about (1991:6).

Sondheim points out also that Cinderella and the Baker are trying to comfort Jack and Little Red as well as teach them about the interconnectedness of everyone in the world.

Sondheim and Lapine’s emphasis on interconnection and community responsibility flow directly into the finale, the Witch’s song “Children Will Listen.” This theme has been building throughout the musical—first in Act One, when she
reprimands Rapunzel for having a visitor, saying that children should listen. Later, in Act Two, when Rapunzel has become neurotic and run underneath the Giantess’ foot, she bemoans that fact that children do not listen, and that they only grow “from something you love / To something you lose” (ibid:106). She herself had gone through a similar phase with her mother: “This is the world I meant. / Couldn’t you listen. / Couldn’t you stay content, / Safe behind walls, / As I / Could not?” (ibid:105). By the end of Act Two, however, she has apparently come to terms with her daughter’s death, and as the Baker begins to tell their story to his son, she leads the company in reminding the audience of their power and responsibility as parents and members of a community:

**Witch:** Careful the things you say,
Children will listen.
Careful the things you do,
Children will see.
And learn.

Children may not obey,
But children will listen.
Children will look to you
For which way to turn,
To learn what to be.

Careful before you say,
"Listen to me,"
Children will listen (ibid:136).

The company joins in, connecting their wishes to community responsibility:

**Company:** Careful the wish you make,
Wishes are children.
Careful the path they take—
Wishes come true,
Not free.

Careful the spell you cast,
Not just on children.
Sometimes the spell may last
Past what you can see
And turn against you…

Witch: Careful the tale you tell,
That is the spell.
Children will listen… (ibid).

And, breaking back into the theme song of musical, they reiterate the importance of community in getting through the woods of life:

Company: The way is dark
The light is dim,
But now there’s you,
Me, her and him.
The chances look small,
The choices look grim,
But everything you learn there
Will help when you return there.

Baker, Jack, Cinderella, Little Red: The light is getting dimmer—

Baker: I think I see a glimmer— (ibid:137).

Through their unabashed didacticism, Sondheim and Lapine provide the best conclusion to an analysis of their musical. With Cinderella’s last words of the musical, “I wish—,” they present a sense of hope for a mature, responsible, “real” happiness for these characters ever after (1990).
Afterward

In this thesis, I have presented several different analyses of Sondheim and Lapine’s musical *Into the Woods*. In the first chapter, I sketched a brief history of folktale scholarship, putting the sources Sondheim and Lapine drew upon into an academic context. Chapter Two provided a similar context for the musical itself, and revealed more information about the influences and themes that they brought to their interpretations of the tales and of life itself. Chapter Three described plotlines of the musical, and compared two different variations of the musical, produced and directed by different companies in different countries. In exploring the differences between the two productions, I hope to provide a greater understanding of the depth and complexity of the material Sondheim and Lapine have created.

With Chapter Four I began my folklore analysis of the musical. I applied the Vladimir Propp’s “quest tale” formula to the Grimms’ and Jacobs’ versions of the tales as well as to Sondheim and Lapine’s versions, for comparison’s sake. Though Propp’s formula did not fit either the “traditional” versions of the tales or the versions in *Into the Woods*, several of the his “functions” corresponded to characteristics noted by Axel Olrik and Max Lüthi. In Chapter Five, I analyzed *Into the Woods* using Olrik’s “laws” and Lüthi’s stylistic observations. Sondheim and Lapine, though almost certainly unaware of the scholarship of Propp, Olrik, or Lüthi, keenly noted some of these very same characteristics, and utilized them with tremendous effect throughout the musical, though particularly in Act One.
In Chapter Six I further analyzed Sondheim and Lapine's conscious influences and intentions behind *Into the Woods*. Though consulting the popular psychological works by Marie-Louise von Franz and Bruno Bettelheim, Lapine rejected their interpretations and their underlying analysis that the tales symbolized the workings of an individual's, or a society's, psyche. Instead, he drew from the Neo-Freudian works of Erich Fromm and created a realistic, interconnected, and psychologically mature cast of characters to inhabit his folktale framework. Lapine and Sondheim transformed the traditional tales and characters so completely that only the names of the characters and the basic plot lines remained. In using a type of narrative that conformed to stereotypical characters and "coincidental" interactions as their base material, Lapine and Sondheim strengthened the impact of their musical and gave new power to their old themes of social responsibility and psychological maturity.

This analysis has also provided a detailed, in-depth example of how folklore materials have been used and transformed by popular media. In the process of completing this analysis, I was struck by the similarities, rather than the differences, between the world of the "popular media" Broadway musical and that of folklore. Oftentimes a strict boundary is drawn between popular culture and folk culture, as if they were two entirely separate worlds. I feel that this thesis helps to bridge the gap between those two "worlds" and provide a point of departure for a comparison of similarities between at least one aspect of the "popular media" and folklore. My hope is that future generations of folklorists, or even theater majors, pick up on the places where the two worlds overlap and bring the comparison to a higher level. The main theory in folklore for some time now has been "performance theory," though folklore
scholars have neglected much of the scholarship of professional performers. A full-blown Broadway musical may seem quite far from a folk storytelling event, but numerous other types of performances can easily bridge the gap: stand-up comedians, professional storytellers/musicians/social critics of many cultures (for example, the Badkhn of Jewish-American weddings\(^1\)), and even the informal workshops that Sondheim and Lapine held while in the process of creating their musical.

Musicals (and other forms of theater) are not the frozen texts that folklorists seem keen in avoiding. Lapine and Sondheim, in their Video Conversationpiece (a piece intended for the directors of local and region productions of their show) do not lecture but instead offer practical and inspirational advice. They reveal, in a very “face-to-face” interaction way much like an informal class organized by some institution, their own problems and lessons learned and try to pass some of that information down to the next generation of directors to produce the show. Though Sondheim is very particular about how his lyrics are performed, he accepts that he has no real control over the performances. Lapine, especially, does not expect nor does he want the directors to copy his stage directions and scenery verbatim; he encourages the directors to invent their own interpretations and shares a few innovations that other regional theaters have already incorporated into their production. His final words of advice to them are: “Read the stories first and find your own responses to them. The bottom line is to tell the stories,” which Sondheim and Lapine have continued to do through their creation.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) The Jewish Badkhn is a social critic, poet, and singer who traditionally emcees Jewish weddings. It has been argued that this role laid the groundwork for the contemporary stand-up comedian (Sapoznik, 1997).

\(^2\) Paraphrase; Video Conversationpiece.
### Appendix A:

Chronology of Stephen Sondheim’s Musicals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Musical</th>
<th>Lyrics</th>
<th>Music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td><em>West Side Story</em></td>
<td>Sondheim (and Bernstein)</td>
<td>Leonard Bernstein</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td><em>Gypsy</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Jule Styne</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td><em>A Funny Thing Happened</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on the Way to the Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td><em>Anyone Can Whistle</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td><em>Do I Hear a Waltz?</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td><em>Company</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td><em>Follies</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td><em>A Little Night Music</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td><em>Candide</em></td>
<td>Latouche, Sondheim, and Wilbur</td>
<td>Bernstein</td>
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<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td><em>Frogs</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td><em>Pacific Overtures</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td><em>Sweeney Todd: The Demon</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barber of Fleet Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td><em>Merrily We Roll Along</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td><em>Sunday in the Park</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with George</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td><em>Into the Woods</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td><em>Assassins</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td><em>Passion</em></td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
<td>Sondheim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B:

Original Broadway Production Info

Music ............... Stephen Sondheim
Lyrics ............... Stephen Sondheim
Book ................ James Lapine
Producer .......... Heidi Landesman, Rocco Landesman, Rick Steiner, M. Anthony Fisher, Frederic H. Mayerson, and Jujamcyn Theaters
Executive Producer .... Michael David
Associate Producers .... Greg C. Mosher, Paula Fisher, David B. Brode, The Mutual Benefit Companies, and Fifth Avenue Productions
Directed ............... James Lapine
Set Designer ........... Tony Straiges
Lighting ............... Richard Nelson
Costumes .............. Ann Hould-Ward and Patricia Zipprodt
Magic Consultant ...... Charles Reynolds
Sound ................. Alan Stieb and James Brousseau
Hair Design ........ Phyllis Della Illien
Casting ............... Joanna Merlin
Gen. Manager ......... David Strong Warner, Inc.
Musical Staging ......... Lar Lubovitch
Musical Direction ...... Paul Gemignani
Orchestrations ......... Jonathan Tunick
Originally Produced .... Old Globe Theater

Original Broadway Cast:

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

---from “Stephen Sondheim Stage;”
http://www.sondheim.com/shows/into_the_woods/#OBC_info
Appendix C1: Cinderella (Zipes, 1992:86-92)

The wife of a rich man fell ill, and as she felt her end approaching, she called her only daughter to her bedside and said, “Dear child, be good and pious. The dear Lord shall always assist you, and I shall look down from heaven and take care of you.” Then she closed her eyes and departed.

After the mother’s death the maiden went every day to visit her grave and weep, and she remained good and pious. When winter came, snow covered the grave like a little white blanket, and by the time the sun had taken it off again, the rich man had a second wife, who brought along her two daughters. They had beautiful and fair features but nasty and wicked hearts. As a result a difficult time was ahead for the poor stepsister.

“Why should the stupid goose be allowed to sit in the parlor with us?” they said. “Whoever wants to eat bread must earn it. Out with this kitchen maid!”

They took away her beautiful clothes, dressed her in an old gray smock, and gave her wooden shoes.

“Just look at the proud princess, and how decked out she is!” they exclaimed with laughter, and led her into the kitchen.

They expected her to work hard there from morning till night. She had to get up before dawn, carry the water into the house, make the fire, cook, and wash. Besides this her sisters did everything imaginable to cause her grief and make her look ridiculous. For instance, they poured peas and lentils into the hearth ashes so she had to sit there and pick them out. In the evening, when she was exhausted from working, they took away her bed, and she had to lie next to the heart in the ashes. This is why she always looked so dusty and dirty and why they all called her Cinderella.

One day it happened that her father was going to the fair and asked his two stepdaughters what he could bring them.

“Beautiful dresses,” said one.

“Pearls and jewels,” said the other.

“And you, Cinderella?” he asked. “What do you want?”

“Father,“ she said, “just break off the first twig that brushes against your hat on your way home and bring it to me.”

So he bought beautiful dresses, pearls and jewels for the two stepsisters, and as he was riding through some green bushes on his return journey, a hazel twig brushed against him and knocked off his hat. So he broke off that twig and took it with him. When he arrived home, he gave his stepdaughters what they had requested, and Cinderella received the twig from the hazel bush. She thanked him, went to her mother’s grave, planted the twig on it, and wept so hard that the tears fell on the twig and watered it. Soon the twig grew and quickly became a beautiful tree. Three times every day Cinderella would go and sit beneath it and weep and pray, and each time, a little white bird would also come to the tree. Whenever Cinderella expressed a wish, the bird would throw her whatever she requested.

In the meantime, the king had decided to sponsor a three-day festival, and all the beautiful young girls in the country were invited so that his son could choose a bride.
When the two stepsisters learned that they too had been summoned to make an appearance, they were in good spirits and called Cinderella.

"Comb out hair, brush our shoes, and fasten our buckles!" said, "We're going to the wedding at the king's castle."

Cinderella obeyed but wept, because she too would have liked to go to the ball with them, and so she asked her stepmother for permission to go.

"You, Cinderella!" she said. "You're all dusty and dirty, and yet you want to go to the wedding? How can you go dancing when you have no clothes or shoes?"

When Cinderella kept pleading, her stepmother finally said, "I've emptied a bowlful of lentils into the ashes. If you can pick out all the lentils in two hours, you may have my permission to go."

The maiden went through the back door into the garden and cried out, "Oh, you tame pigeons, you turtledoves, and all you birds under heaven, come and help me pick

The good ones from the little pot,
The bad ones for your little crop."

Two white pigeons came flying to the kitchen window, followed by the turtledoves. Eventually, all the birds under heaven swooped down, swarmed into the kitchen, and settled around the ashes. The pigeons bobbed their heads and began to peck, peck, peck, and all the other birds also began to peck, peck, peck, and they put all the good lentils into the bowl. It did not take longer than an hour for the birds to finish the work, whereupon they flew away. Happy, because she thought that she would now be allowed to go to the wedding, the maiden brought the bowl to her stepmother. But her stepmother said, "No, Cinderella. You don't have any clothes, nor do you know how to dance. Everyone would only laugh at you."

When Cinderella started crying, her stepmother said, "If you can pick two bowlfuls of lentils out of the ashes in one hour, I'll let you come along." But she thought, She'll never be able to do it.

Then the stepmother dumped two bowlfuls of lentils into the ashes, and the maiden went through the back door and cried out, "Oh, you tame pigeons, you turtledoves, and all you birds under heaven, come and help me pick

The good ones from the little pot,
The bad ones for your little crop."

Two white pigeons came flying to the kitchen window, followed by the turtledoves. Eventually, all the birds under heaven swooped down, swarmed into the kitchen, and settled around the ashes. The pigeons bobbed their heads and began to peck, peck, peck, and all the other birds also began to peck, peck, peck, and they put all the good lentils into the bowl. Before half an hour had passed, they finished their work and flew away. Happy, because she thought that she would now be allowed to go to the wedding, the maiden carried the bowls to her stepmother. But her stepmother said, "Nothing can help you. I can't let you come with us because you don't have any clothes to wear and you don't know how to dance. We'd only be ashamed of you!"
The she turned her back on Cinderella and hurried off with her two haughty daughters. When they had all departed, Cinderella went to her mother's grave beneath the hazel tree and cried out:

"Shake and wobble, little tree!
Let gold and silver fall all over me."

The bird responded by throwing her a gold and silver dress and silk slippers embroidered with silver. She hastily slipped into the dress and went to the wedding. She looked so beautiful in her golden dress that her sisters and stepmother did not recognize her and thought she must be a foreign princess. The never imagined it could be Cinderella; they thought she was sitting at home in the heart picking lentils out of the ashes.

Now, the prince approached Cinderella, took her by the hand, and danced with her. Indeed, he would not dance with anyone else and would not let go of her hand. Whenever someone came and asked her to dance, he said, "She's my partner."

She danced well into the night, and when she wanted to go home, the prince said, "I'll go along and escort you," for he wanted to see whose daughter the beautiful maiden was. But she managed to slip away from him and got into her father's dovecote. Now the prince waited until her father came, and told him that the unknown maiden had escaped into his dovecote. The old man thought, Could that be Cinderella? And he had an axe and pick brought to him so he could chop it down. However, no one was inside, and when they went into the house, Cinderella was lying in the ashes in her dirty clothes, and a dim little oil lamp was burning on the mantel of the Chimney. Cinderella had swiftly jumped out the back of the dovecote and run to the hazel tree. There she had taken off the beautiful clothes and laid them on the grave. After the bird had taken them away, she had made her way into the kitchen, where she had seated herself in the gray ashes wearing her gray smock.

The next day when the festival has begun again and her parents and sisters had departed, Cinderella went to the hazel tree and cried out:

"Shake and wobble, little tree!
Let gold and silver fall all over me."

The bird responded by throwing her a dress that was even more splendid than the one before. And when she appeared at the wedding in this dress, everyone was amazed by her beauty. The prince had been waiting for her, and when she came, he took her hand right away and danced with no one but her. When others went up to ask her to dance, he said, "She's my partner."

When evening came and she wished to leave, the prince followed her, wanting to see which house she went into, but she ran away from him and disappeared into the garden behind the house. There she went to a beautiful tall tree covered with the most wonderful pears, and she climbed up into the branches as nimbly as a squirrel. The prince did not know where she had gone, so he waited until her father came and said, "The unknown maiden has slipped away from me, and I think she climbed the pear tree."
The father thought, Could that be Cinderella? And he had an axe brought to him and chopped the tree down, but there was no one in it. When they went into the kitchen, Cinderella was lying in the ashes as usual, for she had jumped down the other side of the tree, brought the beautiful clothes back to the bird, and put on her gray smock.

On the third day, when her parents and sisters had departed, Cinderella went to her mother’s tree again and cried out:

“Shake and wobble, little tree!
Let gold and silver fall all over me.”

The bird responded by throwing her a dress that was even more magnificent and radiant than all of the others she had received, and the slippers were pure gold. When she appeared at the wedding in this dress, the people were so astounded that they did not know what to say. The prince danced with no one but her, and whenever someone asked her to dance, he said, “She’s my partner.”

When it was evening and Cinderella wished to leave, the prince wanted to escort her, but she slipped away from him so swiftly that he could not follow her. However, the prince had prepared for this with a trick: he had all the stairs coated with pitch, and when Cinderella went running down the stairs, her left slipper got stuck there. After the prince picked it up, he saw it was small and dainty and made of pure gold.

Next morning he carried it to Cinderella’s father and said, “No one else shall be my wife but the maiden whose foot fits this golden shoe.”

The two sisters were glad to hear this because they had beautiful feet. The oldest took the shoe into a room to try it on, and her mother stood by her side. However, the shoe was too small for her, and she could not get her big toe into it. So her mother handed her a knife and said, “Cut your toe off, Once you become queen, you won’t have to walk anymore.”

The maiden cut her toe off, forced her foot into the shoe, swallowed the pain, and went out to the prince. He took her on his horse as his bride and rode off. But they had to pass the grave where two pigeons were sitting on the hazel tree, and they cried out:

“Looky, look, look
at the shoe that she took.
There’s blood all over, and the shoe’s too small.
She’s not the bride you met at the ball.”

He looked down at her feet and saw the blood oozing out. So he turned his horse around, brought the false bride home again, and said that she was definitely not the right one and the other sister should try on the shoe. Then the second sister went into a room and was fortunate enough to get all of her toes in, but her heel was too large. So her mother handed her a knife and said, “Cut off a piece of your heel. Once you become queen, you won’t have to walk anymore.”

The maiden cut off a piece of her heel, forced her foot into the shoe, swallowed the pain, and went out to the prince. He took her on his horse as his bride and rode off. But they had to pass the grave where two pigeons were sitting on the hazel tree, and they cried out:
"Looky, look, look
at the shoe that she took.
There's blood all over, and the shoe's too small.
She's not the bride you met at the ball."

He looked down at her feet and saw the blood oozing out of the shoe and staining her white stockings all red. Then he turned his horse around and brought the false bride home again.

"She isn't the right one either," he said. "Don't you have any other daughters?"
"No," said the man. "There's only little Cinderella, my dead wife's daughter, who's deformed, but she can't possibly be the bride."

The prince told him to send the girl to him, but the mother responded, "Oh, she's much too dirty and really shouldn't be seen."

However, the prince demanded to see her, and Cinderella had to be called. First she washed her hands and face until they were clean, and then she went and curtseyed before the prince, who handed her the golden shoe. She sat down on a stool, took her foot out of the heavy wooden shoe, and put it into the slipper that fit her perfectly. After she stood up and the prince looked her straight in the face, he recognized the beautiful maiden who had danced with him.

"This is my bride!" he exclaimed.

The stepmother and the two sisters were horrified and turned pale with rage. However, the prince took Cinderella on his horse and rode away with her. As they passed the hazel tree the two pigeons cried out:

"Looky, look, look
at the shoe that she took.
The shoe's just right, and there's no blood at all.
She's truly the bride you met at the ball."

After the pigeons had made this known, they both came flying down and landed on Cinderella's shoulders, one on the right, the other on the left, and there they stayed.

On the day the wedding with the prince was to take place, the two false sisters came to ingratiate themselves and to share in Cinderella's good fortune. When the bridal couple set out for the church, the oldest sister was on the right, the younger on the left. Suddenly the pigeons pecked out one eye from each of them. And as they came back from the church later on, the oldest was on the left and the youngest was on the right, and the pigeons pecked out the other eye from each sister. Thus they were punished with blindness for the rest of their lives due to their wickedness and malice.
Appendix C2:

Proppian Analysis—Cinderella

Propp’s Roles: Villain—the stepsisters; Donor—birds/tree; Helper—none; Princess/sought for person—Cinderella; Dispatcher—none; Hero—again Cinderella; False Hero—again the stepsisters.

Function (Summaries) | Grimms | Sondheim and Lapine
---|---|---
1. Family member leaves home. | No | No.
2. Hero receives an interdiction. | Yes—not to go to the ball. | Same as Grimms.
3. Hero violates interdiction. | Yes, but later on. | Same as Grimms.
7. Victim is deceived. | No. | No.
8. Villain harms a family member. | No. | No.
8a. Hero lacks.desires something. | Yes—clothes; to go to a ball. | Clothes; to go to a festival.
9. Lack is made known. | Yes. | Yes.
10. Hero decides on counteraction. | Yes, to visit her mother’s grave. | Same as Grimms.
12. Hero is tested in order to receive a gift or helper. | No. | No.
13. Hero reacts to gift giver. | Yes—she thanks the birds. | No.
15. The Hero finds the object of search. | Yes—the ball. | Same as Grimms.
17. Hero is branded. | No. | No.
18. Villain is defeated. | Yes, but not until the end. | Same as Grimms.
19. Initial lack is liquidated. | Yes, Cinderella attended the ball. | Same as Grimms.
20. Hero returns. | Yes, three times. | Same as Grimms.
21. Hero is pursued. | Yes, three times. | Same as Grimms.
22. Hero is rescued from pursuit. | No, Cinderella rescues herself. | Yes, the Baker’s Wife helps to hide her from the Prince.
24. False Hero presents unfounded claims. | Yes, the stepsisters pretend to be the woman the Prince seeks. | Same as Grimms.
25. Hero receives a difficult task. | Perhaps—fitting into the correct shoe may be considered a task. | Same as Grimms.
26. The task is performed. | Yes. | Yes.
27. Hero is recognized. | Yes. | Yes.
28. False hero/villain is exposed. | Yes, but prior to Cinderella being recognized. | Same as Grimms.
29. Hero is given a new appearance. | Yes, she is washed and married. | Same as Grimms.
30. False hero/villain is punished. | Yes, the stepsisters have their eyes picked out. | Same as Grimms.
31. Hero is married and ascends throne. | Yes. | Yes.
Appendix D1: *Rapunzel*  
(Zipes, 1992:46-9)

Once upon a time there was a husband and wife who for quite some time had been wishing in vain for a child. Finally, the dear Lord gave the wife a sign of hope that their wish would be fulfilled. Now, in the back of their house the couple had a small window that overlooked a splendid garden filled with the most beautiful flowers and herbs. The garden, however, was surrounded by a high wall, and nobody dared enter it because it belonged to a sorceress who was very powerful and feared by all. Once day when the wife was standing at the window and looking down into the garden, she noticed a bed of the finest rapunzel lettuce. The lettuce looked so fresh and green that her mouth watered, and she had a great craving to eat some. Day by day this craving increased, and since she knew she could not get any, she began to waste away and look pale and miserable.

Her husband became alarmed and asked, “What’s wrong with you, dear wife?”

“Oh,” she responded, “I shall certainly die if I don’t get any of that rapunzel from the garden behind our house.”

Her husband, who loved her, thought, Before I let my wife die, I’ll do anything I must to make sure she gets some rapunzel.

That day at dusk he climbed over the wall into the garden of the sorceress, hastily grabbed a handful of rapunzel, and brought them to his wife. Immediately she made them into a salad and ate it with great zest. But the rapunzel tasted so good to her, so very good, that her desire for them was three times greater by the next day. If she was to have any peace, her husband knew he had to climb into the garden once more. So at dusk he scaled the wall again, and just as he landed on the other side, he was given a tremendous scare, for he stood face-to-face with the sorceress.

“How dare you climb into my garden and steal my rapunzel like a thief?” she said with an angry look. “You’ll pay for this!”

“Oh,” he cried. “Please, let mercy prevail over justice. I did this only because I was in a predicament: my wife noticed your rapunzel from our window, and she developed such a great craving for it that she would have died if I hadn’t brought her some to eat.”

Upon hearing that, the anger of the sorceress subsided, and she said to him, “If it’s truly as you say, then I shall permit you to take as many rapunzel as you like, but only under one condition: when your wife gives birth, I must have the child. You needn’t fear about the child’s well-being, for I shall take care of it like a mother.”

In his fear the man agreed to everything, and when his wife had the baby, the sorceress appeared at once. She gave the child the name Rapunzel and took her away.

Rapunzel grew to be the most beautiful child under the sun. But when she was twelve years old, the sorceress locked her in a tower that was in a forest. It had neither door nor stairs, only a little window high above. Whenever the sorceress wanted to get in, she would stand below and call out:

“Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair for me.”
Rapunzel's hair was long and radiant, as fine as spun gold. Every time she heard the voice of the sorceress, she unpinned her braids and wound them around a hook on the window. Then she let her hair drop twenty yards, and the sorceress would climb up on it.

A few years later a king's son happened to be riding through the forest and passed by the tower. Suddenly, he heard a song so lovely that he stopped to listen. It was Rapunzel, who passed the time in her solitude by letting her sweet voice resound in the forest. The prince wanted to climb up to her, and he looked for a door but could not find one. So he rode home. However, the song had touched his heart so deeply that he rode out into the forest every day and listened. One time, as he was standing behind a tree, he saw the sorceress approach and heard her call out:

“Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
let down her hair.”

Then Rapunzel let down her braids, and the sorceress climbed up to her. “If that's the ladder one needs to get up there, I'm also going to try my luck,” the prince declared.

The next day, as it began to get dark, he went to the tower and called out:

“Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
let down your hair.”

All at once the hair dropped down, and the prince climbed up. When he entered the tower, Rapunzel was at first terribly afraid, for she had never laid eyes on a man before. However, the prince began to talk to her in a friendly way and told her that her song had touched his heart so deeply that he had not been able to rest until he had seen her. Rapunzel then lost her fear, and when he asked her whether she would have him for her husband, and she saw that he was young and handsome, she thought, He'll certainly love me better than old Mother Gothel. So she said yes and placed her hand in his.

“I want to go with you very much,” she said, “but I don’t know how I can get down. Every time you come, you must bring a skein of silk with you, and I'll weave it into a ladder. When it's finished, then I'll climb down, and you can take me away on your horse.”

They agreed that until then he would come to her every evening, for the old woman came during the day. Meanwhile, the sorceress did not notice anything, until one day Rapunzel blurted out, “Mother Gothel, how is it that you're much heavier than the prince? When I pull him up, he's here in a second.”

“Ah, you godless child!” exclaimed the sorceress. “What's this I hear? I thought I had made sure you had no contact with the outside world, but you've deceived me!”

In her fury she seized Rapunzel's beautiful hair, wrapped it around her left hand several times, grabbed a pair of scissors with her right hand, and snip, snap the hair was cut off, and the beautiful braids lay on the ground. Then the cruel sorceress took Rapunzel to a desolate land where she had to live in great misery and grief.

On the same day that she had banished Rapunzel, the sorceress fastened the braids that she had cut off to the hook on the window, and that evening, when the prince came and called out:
“Rapunzel, Rapunzel, 
let down your hair.”

she let the hair down.

The prince climbed up, but instead of finding his dearest Rapunzel on top, he found the sorceress, who gave him vicious and angry looks.

“Aha!” she exclaimed with contempt. “You want to fetch your darling wife, but the beautiful bird is no longer sitting in the nest, and she won’t be singing anymore. The cat has got her, and it will also scratch out your eyes. Rapunzel is lost to you, and you will never see her again!”

The prince was beside himself with grief, and in his despair he jumped off the tower. He escaped with his life, but the thorns he fell into pierced his eyes, so he became blind. Now he strayed about in the forest, ate nothing but roots and berries, and did nothing but mourn and weep about the loss of his dearest wife. Thus he wandered for many years in misery. Eventually, he made his way to the desolate land where Rapunzel was leading a wretched existence with the twins, a boy and a girl, to whom she had given birth. When he heard a voice that he thought sounded familiar, he went straight toward it, and when he reached her, Rapunzel recognized him. She embraced him and wept, and as two of her tears dropped on his eyes they became clear, and he could see again. Then he escorted her back to his kingdom, where he was received with joy, and they lived happily and contentedly for a long time thereafter.
Appendix D2:

Proppian Analysis—Rapunzel

Propp’s Roles: Villain—the Witch; Donor—none; Helper—none; Princess/sought for person—Rapunzel; Dispatcher—none (the Witch?); Hero—Rapunzel, then the Prince; False Hero—none.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function (Summaries)</th>
<th>Grimms</th>
<th>Sondheim and Lapine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family member leaves home.</td>
<td>Yes—the Witch or Rapunzel.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hero receives an interdiction.</td>
<td>Yes—not to have visitors.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hero violates interdiction.</td>
<td>Yes, but not through her own actions.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Villain attempts reconnaissance.</td>
<td>No, but the Prince does.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Villain gets information.</td>
<td>No; the Prince does.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Villain deceives victim to gain something.</td>
<td>No. Prince deceives Rapunzel into letting down her hair.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Victim is deceived.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Villain harms a family member.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8a. Hero lacks/desires something.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Yes; company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Lack is made known.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Hero decides on counteraction.</td>
<td>Rapunzel, no; Prince, yes.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Hero leaves home (Hero switches to the Prince).</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Hero is tested in order to receive a gift or helper.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Hero is branded.</td>
<td>Yes—he is blinded by thorns.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Villain is defeated.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Initial lack is liquidated.</td>
<td>Yes; Rapunzel’s lack; later on, the Prince’s lack is liquidated.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Hero returns.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Hero is rescued from pursuit.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. False Hero presents unfounded claims.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Hero receives a difficult task.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. The task is performed.</td>
<td>Yes—they recognize each other.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Hero is recognized.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. False hero/villain is exposed.</td>
<td>Yes, Prince’s eyes are healed.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Hero is given a new appearance.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. False hero/villain is punished.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Hero is married and ascends throne.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
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Appendix El: Little Red Cap
(Zipes, 1992:101-4)

Once upon a time there was a sweet little maiden. Whoever laid eyes upon her
could not help but love her. But it was her grandmother who loved her most. She could
never give the child enough. One time she made her a present, a small, red velvet cap,
and since it was so becoming and the maiden insisted on always wearing it, she was
called Little Red Cap.

One day her mother said to her, “Come, Little Red Cap, take this piece of cake
and bottle of wine and bring them to your grandmother. She’s sick and weak, and this
will strengthen her. Get an early start, before it becomes hot, and when you’re out in the
woods, be nice and good and don’t stray from the path, otherwise you’ll fall and break
the glass, and your grandmother will get nothing. And when you enter her room, don’t
forget to say good morning, and don’t go peeping in all the corners.”

“I’ll do just as you say,” Little Red Cap promised her mother. Well, the
grandmother lived out in the forest, half an hour from the village, and as soon as Little
Red Cap entered the forest, she encountered the wolf. However, Little Red Cap did not
know what a wicked sort of an animal he was and was not afraid of him.

“Good day, Little Red Cap,” he said.

“Thank you kindly, wolf.”

“Where are you going so early, Little Red Cap?”

“To Grandmother’s.”

“What are you carrying under your apron?”

“Cake and wine. My grandmother’s sick and weak, and yesterday we baked this
so it will help her get well.”

“Where does your grandmother live, Little Red Cap?”

“Another quarter of an hour from here in the forest. Her house is under the three
big oak trees. You can tell it by the hazel bushes,” said Little Red Cap.

The wolf thought to himself, This tender young thing is a juicy morsel. She’ll
taste even better than the old woman. You’ve got to be real crafty if you want to catch
them both. Then he walked next to Little Red Cap, and after a while he said, “Little Red
Cap, just look at the beautiful flowers that are growing all around you! Why don’t you
look around? I believe you haven’t even noticed how lovely the birds are singing. You
march along as if you were going straight to school, and yet it’s so delightful out here in
the woods!”

Little Red Cap looked around and saw how the rays of the sun were dancing
through the trees back and forth and how the woods were full of beautiful flowers. So
she thought to herself, If I bring Grandmother a bunch of fresh flowers, she’d certainly
like that. It’s still early, and I’ll arrive on time.

So she ran off the path and plunged into the woods to look for flowers. And each
time she plucked one, she thought she saw another even prettier flower and ran after it,
going deeper and deeper into the forest. But the wolf went straight to the grandmother’s
house and knocked at the door.

“Who’s out there?”
“Little Red Cap. I’ve brought you some cake and wine. Open up.”
“Just lift the latch,” the grandmother called. “I’m too weak and can’t get up.”

The wolf lifted the latch, and the door sprang open. Then he went straight to the grandmother’s bed without saying a word and gobbled her up. Next he put on her clothes and her nightcap, lay down in her bed, and drew the curtains.

Meanwhile, Little Red Cap had been running around and looking for flowers, and only when she had as many as she could carry did she remember her grandmother and continue on the way to her house again. She was puzzled when she found the door open, and as she entered the room, it seemed so strange inside that she thought, Oh, my God, how frightened I feel today, and usually I like to be at Grandmother’s. She called out, “Good morning!” But she received no answer. Next she went to the bed and drew back the curtains. There lay her grandmother with her cap pulled down over her face giving her a strange appearance.

“Oh, Grandmother, what big ears you have!”
“The better to hear you with.”
“Oh, Grandmother, what big hands you have!”
“The better to grab you with.”
“Oh, Grandmother, what a terribly big mouth you have!”
“The better to eat you with!”

No sooner did the wolf say that than he jumped out of bed and gobbled up poor Little Red Cap. After the wolf had satisfied his desires, he lay down in bed again, fell asleep, and began to snore very loudly. The huntsman happened to be passing by the house and thought to himself, The way the old woman’s snoring, you’d better see if anything’s wrong. He went into the room, and when he came to the bed, he saw the wolf lying in it.

“So I’ve found you at last, you old sinner,” said the huntsman, “I’ve been looking for you for a long time.”

He took aim with his gun, and then it occurred to him that the wolf could have eaten the grandmother and that she could still be saved. So he did not shoot but took some scissors and started cutting open the sleeping wolf’s belly. After he made a couple of cuts, he saw the little red cap shining forth, and after he made a few more cuts, the girl jumped out and exclaimed, “Oh, how frightened I was! It was so dark in the wolf’s body.”

Soon the grandmother came out. She was alive but could hardly breathe. Little Red Cap quickly fetched some large stones, and they filled the wolf’s body with them. When he awoke and tried to run away, the stones were too heavy so he fell down at once and died.

All three were quite delighted. The huntsman skinned the fur from the wolf and went home with it. The grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine that Little Red Cap had brought, and soon she regained her health. Meanwhile, Little Red Cap thought to herself, Never again will you stray from the path by yourself and go into the forest when you mother has forbidden it.

There is also another tale about how Little Red Cap returned to her grandmother one day to bring some baked goods. Another wolf spoke to her and tried to entice her to leave the path, but this time Little Red Cap was on her guard. She went straight ahead
and told her grandmother that she had seen the wolf, that he had wished her good day, but that he had had such a mean look in his eyes that “he would have eaten me up if we hadn’t been on the open road.”

“Come,” said the grandmother. “We’ll lock the door so he can’t get in.”

Soon after, the wolf knocked and cried out, “Open up, Grandmother. It’s Little Red Cap, and I’ve brought you some baked goods.”

But they kept quiet and did not open the door. So Grayhead circled the house several times and finally jumped on the roof. He wanted to wait till evening when Little Red Cap would go home. He intended to sneak after her and eat her up in the darkness. But the grandmother realized what he had in mind. In front of the house was a big stone trough, and she said to the child, “Fetch the bucket, Little Red Cap. I cooked sausages yesterday. Get the water they were boiled in and pour it into the trough.”

Little Red Cap kept carrying the water until she had filled the big, big trough. Then the smell of sausages reached the nose of the wolf. He sniffed and looked down. Finally, he stretched his neck so far that he could no longer keep his balance on the roof. He began to slip and fell right into the big trough and drowned. Then Little Red Cap went merrily on her way home, and no one harmed her.
Appendix E2:

Proppian Analysis—Little Red Riding Hood

Propp’s Roles: Villain—the wolf; Donor—none; Helper—the Hunter/Baker; Princess/sought for person—none (the Wolf? in Grimm); Dispatcher—Little Red’s mother; Hero—Little Red, the Hunter/Baker; False Hero—none (the Wolf?).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function (Summaries)</th>
<th>Grimms</th>
<th>Sondheim and Lapine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family member leaves home.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hero receives an interdiction.</td>
<td>Yes—do not stray from the path.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hero violates interdiction.</td>
<td>Yes, but only later on with the Wolf’s urging.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Villain attempts reconnaissance.</td>
<td>Yes—where is Little Red going?</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Villain gets information.</td>
<td>Yes—where is Granny’s cottage?</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Villain deceives victim to gain something.</td>
<td>Tells Little Red to pick flowers for Granny, so that he might get to her cottage before Little Red.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Victim is deceived.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Villain harms a family member.</td>
<td>Yes—he eats Granny.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Lack is made known.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Hero decides on counteraction.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Hero is tested in order to receive a gift or helper</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Hero reacts to gift giver.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Hero gets a magic item.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The Hero finds the object of search. (Hero now becomes the Hunter/Baker.)</td>
<td>Yes—the Wolf.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Hero is branded.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Villain is defeated.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Initial lack is liquidated.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Hero returns.</td>
<td>Yes, as does Little Red.</td>
<td>Same as Grimms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Hero is rescued from pursuit.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. The task is performed.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Hero is recognized.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. False hero/villain is exposed.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. False hero/villain is punished.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Hero is married and ascends throne.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
English Fairy Tales

this teeny-tiny woman had been to sleep a teeny-tiny time, she was awakened by a teeny-tiny voice from the teeny-tiny cupboard, which said:

"Give me my bone!"

And this teeny-tiny woman was a teeny-tiny frightened, so she hid her teeny-tiny head under the teeny-tiny clothes and went to sleep again. And when she had been to sleep again a teeny-tiny time, the teeny-tiny voice again cried out from the teeny-tiny cupboard a teeny-tiny louder,

"Give me my bone!"

This made the teeny-tiny woman a teeny-tiny more frightened, so she hid her teeny-tiny head a teeny-tiny further under the teeny-tiny clothes. And when the teeny-tiny woman had been to sleep again a teeny-tiny time, the teeny-tiny voice from the teeny-tiny cupboard said again a teeny-tiny louder,

"Give me my bone!"

And this teeny-tiny woman was a teeny-tiny bit more frightened, but she put her teeny-tiny head out of the teeny-tiny clothes, and said in her loudest teeny-tiny voice, "TAKE IT!"

---

Jack and the Beanstalk

THERE was once upon a time a poor widow who had an only son named Jack, and a cow named Milky-white. And all they had to live on was the milk the cow gave every morning which they carried to the market and sold. But one morning Milky-white gave no milk and they didn't know what to do.

"What shall we do, what shall we do?" said the widow, wringing her hands.

"Cheer up, mother, I'll go and get work somewhere," said Jack.
English Fairy Tales

"We've tried that before, and nobody would take you," said his mother; "we must sell Milky-white and with the money start shop, or something."

"All right, mother," says Jack; "it's market-day today, and I'll soon sell Milky-white, and then we'll see what we can do."

So he took the cow's halter in his hand, and off he started. He hadn't gone far when he met a funny-looking old man who said to him: "Good morning, Jack."

"Good morning to you," said Jack, and wondered how he knew his name.

"Well, Jack, and where are you off to?" said the man.

"I'm going to market to sell our cow here."

"Oh, you look the proper sort of chap to sell cows," said the man; "I wonder if you know how many beans make five."

"Two in each hand and one in your mouth," says Jack, as sharp as a needle.

"Right you are," says the man, "and here they are, the very beans themselves," he went on, pulling out of his pocket a number of strange-looking beans. "As you are so sharp," says he, "I don't mind doing a swop with you—your cow for these beans."

"Go along," says Jack; "wouldn't you like it?"

"Ah! you don't know what these beans are," said the man; "if you plant them over-night, by morning they grow right up to the sky."

"Really?" says Jack; "you don't say so."

"Yes, that is so, and if it doesn't turn out to be true you can have your cow back."

"Right," says Jack, and hands him over Milky-white's halter and pockets the beans.

Jack and the Beanstalk

Back goes Jack home, and as he hadn't gone very far it wasn't dusk by the time he got to his door.

"Back already, Jack?" said his mother; "I see you haven't got Milky-white, so you've sold her. How much did you get for her?"

"You'll never guess, mother," says Jack.

"No, you don't say so. Good boy! Five pounds, ten, fifteen, no, it can't be twenty."

"I told you you couldn't guess, what do you say to these beans; they're magical, plant them over-night and——"

"What!" says Jack's mother, "have you been such a fool, such a dolt, such an idiot, as to give away my Milky-white, the best milker in the parish, and prime beef to boot—for a set of paltry beans. Take that! Take that! Take that! And as for your precious beans here they go out of the window. And now off with you to bed. Not a sup shall you drink, and not a bit shall you swallow this very night."

So Jack went upstairs to his little room in the attic, and sad and sorry he was, to be sure, as much for his mother's sake, as for the loss of his supper.

At last he dropped off to sleep.

When he woke up, the room looked so funny. The sun was shining into part of it, and yet all the rest was quite dark and shady. So Jack jumped up and dressed himself and went to the window. And what do you think he saw? why, the beans his mother had thrown out of the window into the garden, had sprung up into a big beanstalk which went up and up and up till it reached the sky. So the man spoke truth after all.
English Fairy Tales

The beanstalk grew up quite close past Jack's window, so all he had to do was to open it and give a jump on to the beanstalk which ran up just like a big ladder. So Jack climbed, and he climbed and he climbed and he climbed till at last he reached the sky. And when he got there he found a long broad road going as straight as a dart. So he walked along and he walked along and he walked along till he came to a great big tall house, and on the doorstep there was a great big tall woman.

"Good morning, mum," says Jack, quite polite-like. "Could you be so kind as to give me some breakfast?" For he hadn't had anything to eat, you know, the night before and was as hungry as a hunter.

"It's breakfast you want, is it?" says the great big tall woman, "it's breakfast you'll be if you don't move off from here. My man is an ogre and there's nothing he likes better than boys broiled on toast. You'd better be moving on or he'll soon be coming."

"Oh! please mum, do give me something to eat, mum. I've had nothing to eat since yesterday morning, really and truly, mum," says Jack. "I may as well be broiled as die of hunger."

Well, the ogre's wife was not half so bad after all. So she took Jack into the kitchen, and gave him a junk of bread and cheese and a jug of milk. But Jack hadn't half finished these when thump! thump! thump! the whole house began to tremble with the noise of some one coming.

"Goodness gracious me! It's my old man," said the ogre's wife, "what on earth shall I do? Come along quick and jump in here." And she bundled Jack into the oven just as the ogre came in.

He was a big one, to be sure. At his belt he had three calves strung up by the heels, and he unhooked them and threw them down on the table and said: "Here, wife, broil me a couple of these for breakfast. Ah! what's this I smell?"

Fee-fi-fo-fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman,
Be he alive, or be he dead
I'll have his bones to grind my bread."

"Nonsense, dear," said his wife, "you're dreaming. Or perhaps you smell the scraps of that little boy you liked so much for yesterday's dinner. Here, you go and have a wash and tidy up, and by the time you come back your breakfast'll be ready for you."

So off the ogre went, and Jack was just going to jump out of the oven and run away when the woman told him not. "Wait till he's asleep," says she; "he always has a doze after breakfast."

Well, the ogre had his breakfast, and after that he goes to a big chest and takes out of it a couple of bags of gold, and down he sits and counts till at last his head began to nod and he began to snore till the whole house shook again.

Then Jack crept out on tiptoe from his oven, and as he was passing the ogre he took one of the bags of gold under his arm, and off he pelters till he came to the beanstalk, and then he threw down the bag of gold, which of course fell in to his mother's garden, and then he climbed
English Fairy Tales

down and climbed down till at last he got home and told his mother and showed her the gold and said: "Well, mother, wasn't I right about the beans. They are really magical, you see."

So they lived on the bag of gold for some time, but at last they came to the end of it, and Jack made up his mind to try his luck once more up at the top of the beanstalk. So one fine morning he rose up early, and got on to the beanstalk, and he climbed and he climbed and he climbed and he climbed and he climbed till at last he came out on to the road again and up to the great big tall house he had been to before. There, sure enough, was the great big tall woman standing on the door-step.

"Good morning, mum," says Jack, as bold as brass, "could you be so good as to give me something to eat?"

"Go away, my boy," said the big tall woman, "or else my man will eat you up for breakfast. But aren't you the youngster who came here once before? Do you know, that very day, my man missed one of his bags of gold."

"That's strange, mum," says Jack, "I dare say I could tell you something about that, but I'm so hungry I can't speak till I've had something to eat."

Well the big tall woman was so curious that she took him in and gave him something to eat. But he had scarcely begun munching it as slowly as he could when thump! thump! thump! they heard the giant's footstep, and his wife hid Jack away in the oven.

All happened as it did before. In came the ogre as he did before, said: "Fee-fi-fo-fum," and had his breakfast off three broiled oxen. Then he said: "Wife, bring me the hen that lays the golden eggs." So she brought it, and the ogre said: "Lay," and it laid an egg all of gold. And then the ogre began to nod his head, and to snore till the house shook.

Then Jack crept out of the oven on tiptoe and caught hold of the golden hen, and was off before you could say "Jack Robinson." But this time the hen gave a cackle which woke the ogre, and just as Jack got out of the house he heard him calling: "Wife, wife, what have you done with my golden hen?"

And the wife said: "Why, my dear?"

But that was all Jack heard, for he rushed off to the beanstalk and climbed down like a house on fire. And when he got home he showed his mother the wonderful hen and said "Lay," to it; and it laid a golden egg every time he said "Lay."

Well, Jack was not content, and it wasn't very long before he determined to have another try at his luck up there at the top of the beanstalk. So one fine morning, he rose up early, and got on to the beanstalk, and he climbed and he climbed and he climbed and he climbed till he got to the top. But this time he knew better than to go straight to the ogre's house. And when he got near it he waited behind a bush till he saw the ogre's wife come out with a pail to get some water, and then he crept into the house and got into the copper. He hadn't been there long when he heard thump! thump! thump! as before, and in came the ogre and his wife.

"Fee-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman," cried out the ogre; "I smell him, wife, I smell him."
English Fairy Tales

"Do you, my dearie?" says the ogre's wife. "Then if it's that little rogue that stole your gold and the hen that laid the golden eggs he's sure to have got into the oven." And they both rushed to the oven. But Jack wasn't there, luckily, and the ogre's wife said: "There you are again with your fee-fi-fo-fum. Why of course it's the boy you caught last night that I've just broiled for your breakfast. How forgetful I am, and how careless you are not to know the difference between live and dead after all these years."

So the ogre sat down to the breakfast and ate it, but every now and then he would mutter: "Well, I could have sworn——" and he'd get up and search the larder and the cupboards, and everything, only luckily he didn't think of the copper.

After breakfast was over, the ogre called out: "Wife, wife, bring me my golden harp." So she brought it and put it on the table before him. Then he said: "Sing!" and the golden harp sang most beautifully. And it went on singing till the ogre fell asleep, and commenced to snore like thunder.

Then Jack lifted up the copper-lid very quietly and got down like a mouse and crept on hands and knees till he came to the table when up he crawled, caught hold of the golden harp and dashed with it towards the door. But the harp called out quite loud: "Master! Master!" and the ogre woke up just in time to see Jack running off with his harp.

Jack ran as fast as he could, and the ogre came rushing after, and would soon have caught him only Jack had a start and dodged him a bit and knew where he was going.

Jack and the Beanstalk

When he got to the beanstalk the ogre was not more than twenty yards away when suddenly he saw Jack disappear like, and when he came to the end of the road he saw Jack underneath climbing down for dear life. Well, the ogre didn't like trusting himself to such a ladder, and he stood and waited, so Jack got another start. But just then the harp cried out: "Master! master!" and the ogre swung himself down on to the beanstalk which shook with his weight. Down climbs Jack, and after him climbed the ogre. By this time Jack had climbed down and climbed down and climbed down till he was very nearly home. So he called out: "Mother! mother! bring me an axe, bring me an axe." And his mother came rushing out with the axe in her hand, but when she came to the beanstalk she stood stock still with fright for there she saw the ogre with his legs just through the clouds.

But Jack jumped down and got hold of the axe and gave a chop at the beanstalk which cut it half in two. The ogre felt the beanstalk shake and quiver so he stopped to see what was the matter. Then Jack gave another chop with the axe, and the beanstalk was cut in two and began to topple over. Then the ogre fell down and broke his crown, and the beanstalk came toppling after.

Then Jack showed his mother his golden harp, and what with showing that and selling the golden eggs, Jack and his mother became very rich, and he married a great princess, and they lived happy ever after.
Appendix F2:

Proppian Analysis—*Jack and the Beanstalk* (AT 328)

Propp’s Roles: *Villain*—the giant/ogre; *Donor*—the old man (Jacobs), the baker/Mysterious Man (Sondheim and Lapine); *Helper*—none; Princess/sought for person—gold, hen, and harp?; *Dispatcher*—Jack’s Mother; *Hero*—Jack; *False Hero*—none.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function (Summaries)</th>
<th>Jacobs</th>
<th>Sondheim and Lapine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family member leaves home.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Victim is deceived.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Villain harms a family member.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8a. Hero lacks/desires something.</td>
<td>Yes—money.</td>
<td>Same as Jacobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Lack is made known.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Hero decides on counteraction.</td>
<td>Yes—His mother decides to sell cow.</td>
<td>Same as Jacobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Hero is tested in order to receive a gift or a helper.</td>
<td>Yes—must solve a riddle.</td>
<td>Same as Jacobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Hero reacts to gift giver.</td>
<td>Yes—he decides to trade the cow for magic beans.</td>
<td>Same as Jacobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The Hero finds the object of search.</td>
<td>Yes—money (and later, a hen that lays golden eggs and a singing harp.)</td>
<td>Same as Jacobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Hero and villain fight.</td>
<td>Yes, but later on.</td>
<td>Same as Jacobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Hero is branded.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Villain is defeated.</td>
<td>Yes, but later on.</td>
<td>Same as Jacobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Initial lack is liquidated.</td>
<td>Yes; see #15.</td>
<td>Same as Jacobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Hero returns.</td>
<td>Yes, three times.</td>
<td>Same as Jacobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Hero is pursued.</td>
<td>Yes—the third time.</td>
<td>Same as Jacobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Hero is rescued from pursuit.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. The task is performed.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Hero is recognized.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. False hero/villain is exposed.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Hero is given a new appearance.</td>
<td>Yes; Jack becomes rich.</td>
<td>Same as Jacobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. False hero/villain is punished.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Hero is married and ascends throne.</td>
<td>Yes, though ascending the throne is uncertain.</td>
<td>No, Jack does not marry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G:

Proppian Analysis—The Tale of the Baker and His Wife

Propp's Roles: Villain—Witch; Donor—Cinderella, Rapunzel, Little Red, and Jack; Helper—Mysterious Man; Princess/sought for person—slipper, hair, cape, cow; Dispatcher—Witch; Hero—in the first section, Mysterious Man; for the rest of the tale, Baker and his Wife; False Hero—none.

Propp's Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Propp's Functions</th>
<th>The Baker and His Wife (including the beginning section of &quot;Rapunzel&quot;)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Family member leaves home.</td>
<td>Mysterious Man goes into Witch's Garden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hero receives an interdiction.</td>
<td>Yes; implicit: don't steal from a Witch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hero violates interdiction.</td>
<td>MM steals greens and beans from Witch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Villain attempts reconnaissance.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Villain gets information.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Villain deceives victim to gain something.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Victim is deceived.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Villain harms a family member.</td>
<td>Witch curses MM's family with infertility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8a</td>
<td>Villain lacks/desires something.</td>
<td>Baker and Wife lack a child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lack is made known.</td>
<td>Witch points out their infertility; tells them how to reverse it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Hero decides on counteraction.</td>
<td>Yes, they decide to gather items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Hero leaves home.</td>
<td>They leave home (separately.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Hero is tested in order to receive a gift or helper.</td>
<td>Yes, they must figure out how to get their items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Hero reacts to gift giver.</td>
<td>Baker attempts to steal cape, BW attempts to steal shoes, Baker and BW attempt to buy cow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Hero gets a magic item.</td>
<td>LR gives cape to Baker after he kills Wolf; BW pulls hair from R; BW trades shows with C; J trades his cow for beans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The Hero finds the object of search.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hero and villain fight.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Hero is branded.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Villain is defeated.</td>
<td>She transforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Initial lack is liquidated.</td>
<td>Yes, but later on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Hero returns.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Hero is pursued.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Hero is rescued from pursuit.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Hero travels around unrecognized.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>False Hero presents unfounded claims.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Hero receives a difficult task.</td>
<td>Yes, but much earlier; see # 9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>The task is performed.</td>
<td>Yes, prior to lack being liquidated (#19.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Hero is recognized.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. False hero/villain is exposed.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Hero is given a new appearance.</td>
<td>Yes, they become parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. False hero/villain is punished.</td>
<td>N/A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>31. Hero is married and ascends throne.</td>
<td>No—they are already married.</td>
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Appendix H:

The Baker and his Wife buy Milky White from Jack

(singing:)  

**Baker**: Only I can lift the spell, the spell is on *my* house—!

**Wife** (*Overlapping*): We must lift the spell together, the spell is on—

> She puts his hand across his mouth; we see Jack at the other side of the stage.

(spoken:)

A cow as white as—

> She takes her hand away; music stops.

**Baker, Wife**: —milk!

> *Wife pushes Baker in Jack's direction; she follows.*

**Baker**: Hello there, young man.

**Jack**: Hello, sir.

**Baker**: What might you be doing with a cow in the middle of the forest?

**Jack** (*Nervous*): I was heading toward market—but I seem to have lost my way.

**Wife** (*Coaching Baker*): What are you planning to do there—?

**Baker**: And what are you planning to do there?

**Jack**: Sell my cow, sir. No less than five pounds.

**Baker**: Five pounds! (*To Wife*) Where am I to get five pounds?

**Wife** (*Taking over*): She must be generous of milk to fetch five pounds?

**Jack** (*Hesitant*): Yes, ma’am.

**Wife**: And if you can’t fetch that sum? Then what are you to do?
Jack: I hadn’t thought of that….I suppose my mother and I will have no food to eat.

*Baker has emptied his pocket; he has a few coins and the beans in hand.*

Baker (To Wife): This is the sum total…

Wife (Loudly): Bean—we mustn’t give up our beans! Well, if you feel we must…

Baker: Huh?

Wife (To Jack): Beans will bring you food, son.

Jack: Beans in exchange for my cow?

Wife: Oh, these are no ordinary beans, son. These beans carry magic.

Jack: Magic? What kind of magic?

Wife (To Baker): Tell him.

*Mysterious Man enters behind a tree.*


Jack: My mother would—

Mysterious Man: You’d be lucky to exchange her for a sack of beans.

*He exits before anyone sees him.*

Jack: How many beans?

Baker: Six.

Wife: Five! We can’t part with all of them. We must leave at least one for ourselves. Besides, I’d say they’re worth a pound each, at the very least.

Jack: Could I buy my cow back someday?

Baker (Uneasy): Well…possibly.

*(They make the exchange) (1987:27-9)*
Appendix I: Broadway Poster for Into the Woods

Stephen Sondheim & James Lapine

Into the Woods
Appendix J: Arthur Rackham Silhouettes
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