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**'there's a lot more to ogres than people think': *Shrek* as Ethical Fairy tale.**  
*Eugene O'Brien, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick.*

Once upon a time there was a lovely princess. But she had an enchantment upon her of a fearful sort which could only be broken by love's first kiss. She was locked away in a castle guarded by a terrible fire-breathing dragon. Many brave knights had attempted to free her from this dreadful prison, but none prevailed. She waited in the dragon's keep in the highest room of the tallest tower for her true love and true love's first kiss. (*Shrek* Screenplay, 2001)

The trope that begins this quotation is one of the most familiar in the language. 'Once upon a time' is an indelible signifier that we are about to hear a fairy tale, a genre beloved of small children, tired parents, and harassed teachers because, once this story has begun (and it is often prefaced in group mode by the tag 'are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin'), then there will be silence and attention. There are strong conventions at work in the lifeworld, the *Lebenswelt*, of this genre and many of the stable tropes are identified in the above quotation. The fairy tale is generally about royalty and the heroes and heroines are invariably princes and princesses. Kings and queens figure prominently as well, but the main actants in these stories are the younger and more aspirational members of royal families. Princesses are always beautiful, very often endangered and usually seen as the objects of desire of all with whom they come in contact.

Their beauty provokes desire in princes and envy in others, usually women, and they are frequently the victims of enchantments. Thus Rapunzel is locked in a tower, Sleeping Beauty is cast into a deep sleep and Snow White is poisoned by an apple. All of these beautiful young women are then sorely in need of rescuing and it is here that

the princes of the stories find their role. Just as the princess waits, so the prince journeys, and the journey is a seminal trope of the fairy tale – the progress, through difficulties, to a preordained destination being central to the genre. Battling their way through enchanted forests, climbing up impossibly tall towers and fighting off magic spells, these intrepid young men rescue the young women and they ‘all live happily ever after.’ Structurally, the stories are very often framed by the two emblematic phrases – ‘once upon a time’ and ‘they all lived happily ever after’ – and these framing phrases have an ethical as well as formal function. Writing about Kant in *The Truth in Painting*, Jacques Derrida made some telling points about the relationship between the frame (*parergon*) and the work itself (*ergon*). Derrida notes that:

The *parergon* stands out both from the *ergon* (the work) and from the milieu; it stands out first of all like a figure on a ground. But it does not stand out in the same way as the work. With respect to the work which can serve as a ground for it, it merges into the wall and then, gradually, into the general text .... The frame is in no case a background in the way that the milieu or the work can be, but neither is its thickness as margin a figure. (Derrida 1987, 61)

Derrida’s point is that the structuration of a work of art is predicated on a framing device which is both part of the work of art, and at the same time, part of the ground from which that work originates. In this context, he is examining the inter-relation of the frame, which gives structure and specificity to a work of art, and the work itself. To extrapolate a little, the frame of any work of literary art involves the philosophical and epistemological context out of which that work derives, and towards which that work is addressed. In the fairy tale, the work is demarcated by a very strong linguistic frame which sets the tale apart from the normal symbolic order. Once those parergonal phrases are uttered, we know that we are in a closed-off world where magic is the norm; where

beauty and goodness are adequated; where princes are brave, and princesses are beautiful; where witches are evil and where every evil magic spell has its antidote; where animals talk and where wishes are granted and where, ultimately, there is a happy ending.

The fairy tale is a closed-off, and almost hermetically-sealed world, and throughout its generic history there have been strong ideological reasons for this very monological structure, and before looking at *Shrek* as a deconstruction of the fairy tale genre, and going on to examine the ethical consequences of this deconstruction, I would first like to examine the history of the fairy tale as a way of understanding the very strong parergonal nature of the genre. Once upon a time (!) fairy tales were not written for children. In spite of their name, the popular fairy tales usually have very little to do with fairies. The name was taken from the French '*contes de fée*', and the French literary fairy tales of the 17<sup>th</sup> century do feature far more fairies than the tales which are best-known today. The Grimm brothers collected the folk tales of the German people to make up their volume, but fairy tales are more than just folk tales. The German term for them is '*Märchen*', a word for which there is no satisfactory English equivalent – it is the diminutive of *Mär*, a story or a tale, and has come to mean a story of wonder and enchantment.

Throughout sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, the fairy tale was produced for the consumption of the aristocratic elite, constructing a commentary on normative behaviour and the exercise of power as governed by a *seemingly* unbreakable and reciprocal symbolic order, as in the Middle Ages. In this sense, the symbolic order that is enunciated in these stories is one in which certain normative values are set out very clearly and very didactically. To be royal is very much the *desideratum* of these

stories. Generally kings, queens and princesses are good, noble and benign rulers of their kingdoms. Occasionally there is a wicked queen, as in Cinderella, but she is very much an aberration in the royal household. Her evil is almost at odds with her lineage, and in the end of the story, it is the good member of the royal family who triumphs. There is very little social mobility in these tales and when it does occur, it is a process whereby only those non-royals of unusual ability are allowed to become royal. A form of meritocratic upward mobility is set up where woodcutter's sons or clever tailors or gifted younger sons are set tasks, accomplish them, and are then given the hand of the princess in marriage, and thus transform the endogamous world of the fairy tale through a carefully selected form of exogamous selection. It is enough for the princess just to 'be' (and of course to be beautiful), whereas her suitors have to do, they must demonstrate their merits through their deeds. In the very narrow parergonal frame of the fairy tale, the correlation between appearance and reality is quite static. To be beautiful is to be good; to be a princess is to be beautiful; to be a prince is to be brave and handsome; to journey is to journey to a set destination, and magic is everywhere. The strong verbal *parergon* makes sure that this world is hermetically sealed and that its didactic influence is very focused. It constitutes a strong ideological reinforcement of the existing social order.

It was thus that the play of power between fairy tale characters reflected a civilizing process devolving on notions of class and sex. During this period, fairy tales functioned to entertain the aristocracy, serving as 'secular instructive narratives' (Zipes 1996, 2). Institutionalized as a genre, fairy tales throughout the seventeenth century proliferated into such cultural spheres as the ballet, opera and court festival. Yet, as Baudrillard traces in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, the period stemming from the

Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution marked a significant shift away from the symbolic, instead becoming dominated by the counterfeit, manifest in the 'false' image. With the accretion of bourgeois order and the birth of fashion, the sign eclipsed its symbolic obligation, liberated into a field of connotation as the signifieds of production, status, wealth and eminency. The Renaissance also marked the 'destruction of the feudal order,' in the 'emergence of overt competition at the level of signs of distinction' (Baudrillard 1993, 50). The counterfeit appears within the liberation of the sign, emancipated from symbolic duty, yet reproducing the image of the symbolic through falsification.

The fairy tale in late eighteenth-century Europe similarly became 'freed... to expand its form and content' (Zipes 1997, 65). With a shift in the means of production and a growing demographic of literate citizens, the fairy tale, once produced exclusively on behalf of the adult aristocracy, became available to all citizens, including children. Fairy tales continued to carry civilizing narratives, extending the vision of the aristocracy into broader society:

Mme. Le Prince de Beaumont's *Magasin des enfants* (1756) used approximately ten fairy tales, including 'Beauty and the Beast,' to instruct young girls in how to domesticate themselves and become respectable young women, attractive for the marriage department. (Zipes 1997, 65)

The early nineteenth century marked the autonomy of the fairy tale. In a developing free market system, the fairy tale increasingly came to be viewed and packaged as a household commodity. In this movement, access to the fairy tale, with its enunciations on gender behaviour, the nature of the child, power and success became a connotation of status and integration into 'high' culture.

Disney's animated features throughout the 1930s enacted the fairy tale genre as a *format* inscribed within a cinematic code:

There is ... a structural rigidity about the Disney animated features that has grown increasingly obvious as the years have passed. The editing principals applied to *Snow White* were those of conventionally well-made commercial film of the time. There was nothing particularly daring about the way it was put together, its merit was based on other skills. In general, a scene would open with an establishing or master shot, then proceed to an intermediate shot, then to close-ups of the various participants, with conventional cut-aways to various details of scenery or decor as needed. (Schickel 1969, 172)

What is interesting here is that the filmic technique is very similar to the narrative technique – there is a core or master shot and from this is derived all of the other textual details. The structural rigidity spoken of here is mimetic of a formal and epistemological structural rigidity that has been already noticed in the genre. The 'master shot' is indicative of the monological type of genre which is closed off and has one message to communicate

Structurally, in both narrative and filmic guises, the fairy tale is totally predetermined. Vladimir Propp in chapter three of his seminal *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, has set out 31 different topoi from which all such tales are constructed. I cite them here:

1. A member of a family leaves home (the hero is introduced);
2. An interdiction is addressed to the hero ('don't go there', 'go to this place');
3. The interdiction is violated (villain enters the tale);
4. The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance (either villain tries to find the children/jewels etc; or intended victim questions the villain);
5. The villain gains information about the victim;
6. The villain attempts to deceive the victim to take possession of victim or victim's belongings (trickery; villain disguised, tries to win confidence of

- victim);
7. Victim taken in by deception, unwittingly helping the enemy;
  8. Villain causes harm/injury to family member (by abduction, theft of magical agent, spoiling crops, plunders in other forms, causes a disappearance, expels someone, casts spell on someone, substitutes child etc, commits murder, imprisons/detains someone, threatens forced marriage, provides nightly torments); Alternatively, a member of family lacks something or desires something (magical potion etc);
  9. Misfortune or lack is made known (hero is dispatched, hears call for help etc/ alternative is that victimised hero is sent away, freed from imprisonment);
  10. Seeker agrees to, or decides upon counter-action;
  11. Hero leaves home;
  12. Hero is tested, interrogated, attacked etc, preparing the way for his/her receiving magical agent or helper (donor);
  13. Hero reacts to actions of future donor (withstands/fails the test, frees captive, reconciles disputants, performs service, uses adversary's powers against him);
  14. Hero acquires use of a magical agent (directly transferred, located, purchased, prepared, spontaneously appears, eaten/drunken, help offered by other characters);
  15. Hero is transferred, delivered or led to whereabouts of an object of the search;
  16. Hero and villain join in direct combat;
  17. Hero is branded (wounded/marked, receives ring or scarf);
  18. Villain is defeated (killed in combat, defeated in contest, killed while asleep, banished);
  19. Initial misfortune or lack is resolved (object of search distributed, spell broken, slain person revived, captive freed);
  20. Hero returns;
  21. Hero is pursued (pursuer tries to kill, eat, undermine the hero);
  22. Hero is rescued from pursuit (obstacles delay pursuer, hero hides or is hidden, hero transforms unrecognisably, hero saved from attempt on his/her life);
  23. Hero unrecognised, arrives home or in another country;
  24. False hero presents unfounded claims;
  25. Difficult task proposed to the hero (trial by ordeal, riddles, test of strength/endurance, other tasks);
  26. Task is resolved;
  27. Hero is recognised (by mark, brand, or thing given to him/her);



28. False hero or villain is exposed;
29. Hero is given a new appearance (is made whole, handsome, new garments etc);
30. Villain is punished;
31. Hero marries and ascends the throne (is rewarded/promoted). (Propp 1968, quoted in Holbek 1986, 385)

What this shows is the very rigid structural formulation of the folk and fairy tale and by extension, the rigid values that these secular instructive narratives impose. In a fascinating development, Brown University in the United States has set up an internet centre for the study of Fairy Tales and Electronic Culture, and on this they have enabled an electronic text generator which will allow for the creation of different tales by selecting a set of these elements (<http://www.brown.edu/>). This very structuralist generating mechanism testifies to the core or master tropes from which the fairy tales have derived, and I would suggest that this closed form is mimetic of the closed ethical structure of the fairy tale – there are norms and these norms are hegemonic and overdetermined.

Thus, to return to our original quotation, the norms of the secular instructive tale would all seem to be in place: the princess is lovely, she is under an enchantment, there is the necessary dragon, and a necessary journey, love is seen as something with a real-world value; she is in dire need of rescuing, and true love will conquer all – but only in the putative shape of a gallant knight or prince. However, the final lines of this quotation allow for the eruption of a deconstructive force in these tales because after the final sentence: ‘She waited in the dragon’s keep in the highest room of the tallest tower for her true love and true love’s first kiss’, there follows a stage direction ‘(*laughs*)’ and then the eponymous hero snorts ‘Like that’s ever gonna happen. What a load of - (*toilet flush*)’. With this bout of carnivalesque laughter, we see the deconstruction of the

monological fairy tale motifs by this most deconstructive of films. Mikhail Bakhtin has made some interesting points about the power of laughter in terms of opening up systems to different voices. He notes that through laughter, 'the world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when seen from the serious standpoint', and he goes on to add that certain 'essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter' (Bakhtin 1968, 66). For Bakhtin, one of the functions of art is to critique societal and ideological norms:

The serious aspects of class culture are official and authoritarian; they are combined with violence, prohibitions, limitations, and always contain an element of fear and of intimidation. Laughter, on the other hand, overcomes fear, for it knows no inhibitions, no limitations. (Bakhtin 1968, 90)

One of the most important aspects of this change is the opening up of the hitherto closed parergonal form of the fairy tale to other discourses and other voices. The image of Shrek using the pages of the book as toilet paper in an outhouse carry a strong intertextual association with James Joyce's *Ulysses*, as both characters are in an outhouse and both are reading something, Shrek is reading a fairy tale while Leopold Bloom is reading a newspaper:

He kicked open the crazy door of the jakes. Better be careful not to get these trousers dirty for the funeral. He went in, bowing his head under the low lintel. Leaving the door ajar, amid the stench of mouldy limewash and stale cobwebs he undid his braces. Before sitting down he peered through a chink up at the next door windows. The king was in his countinghouse. Nobody. Asquat on the cuckstool he folded out his paper, turning its pages over on his bared knees. Something new and easy. No great hurry .... He tore away half the prize story sharply and wiped himself with it. Then he girded up his trousers, braced and buttoned himself. He pulled back the jerky shaky door of the jakes and came forth from the gloom into the air. (Joyce 1989, 15-16)

The parallel here is clear – there is an intertextual opening up of the closed parergonal world of the fairy tale to other texts, other voices and other worlds. Just as *Ulysses* has taken the *Odyssey* and opened it up to the modern world, and to multiple meanings, so *Shrek* does the same thing with the fairy tale. One of the interesting things about *Ulysses* is that it is the first novel where bodily functions feature to a large degree (*Robinson Crusoe* managed to get through twenty eight years of anally-reported detail of his life and times without ever mentioning bodily functions, and one can read all of Austen without finding any discussion of toilets) and as such it broke new ground. The same is true of *Shrek*, as the eponymous hero also breaks wind (another connection with Joyce) and his motto about eructation is ‘better out than in I always say’ (*Shrek* Screenplay, 2001). The laughter here is unusual in fairy tales – never a genre known for its humour – but it also serves the deconstructive purpose of *Shrek*. The same is true of the journey motif in both texts. In *Ulysses*, the original delayed journey to home of the hero of the *Odyssey* is deconstructed and by the time Bloom gets home, the very notion of that sense of ‘home’ has been deconstructed. In the true Freudian sense, the *Heimlich* has become *Unheimlich* and this sense of the uncanny pervades Shrek’s journey to save the princess – it, too, will be a redefinition of the trope of journey and of the certitude of the destination.

The mention of bodily functions here – the breaking of wind – is symbolic of a breaking of windows in the closed frame of the fairy tale. It is a synecdoche of the trope of anamorphosis, a looking awry at a cultural text. Writing in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, Lacan focuses on Hans Holbein’s 1533 painting of *The Ambassadors* (Lacan 1977, 85-90). In this painting the gaze of the reader is focused on two men, Jean de Dinteville, and Georges de Selve, who appear to be gazing back at the

viewer. Between them is a table on which are placed various objects, 'symbolic of the sciences and arts as they were grouped at the time in the *trivium* and *quadrivium*' (Lacan 1977, 88), and at the bottom of the painting, at a forty degree angle to the horizontal is an anamorphic skull, which also appears to stare back at the viewer. For Lacan, this anamorphosis is not noticed at first:

What, then, before this display of the domain of appearance in all its most fascinating forms, is this object, which from some angles appears to be flying through the air, at others to be tilted? Begin by walking out of the room in which no doubt it has long held your attention. It is then that, turning round as you leave – as the author of the *Anamorphosis* describes it – you apprehend in this form ...What? A skull. (Lacan 1977, 88)

The existence of the skull is dependent on perspective; it is only when the gaze turns away from the full frontal perspective that the anamorphic scopic field allows the skeleton which undercuts the optimistic vision of the picture to emerge. The perspectival interaction of the emblems of renaissance power and intellectual mastery with the classic emblem of mortality, the skull, provides a broader range of meaning to the picture. The dialectic between mastery over nature through increased scientific and geographical knowledge, and the constant presence of death, is part of the meaning of that picture; indeed, it is the relationship between the two perspectives that creates the complexity of Holbein's work. To look at this picture awry is to constantly oscillate between the different perspectives, and this, I would contend, is the 'meaning' of the picture. And this looking awry is the perspective that *Shrek* takes on the world of the fairy tale.

By applying an anamorphic perspective, *Shrek* is able to deconstruct the rigid adequations of the fairy tale – the motivated and overdetermined connections between

the aristocracy and ethical goodness. Thus the following pastiche of the talking mirror in *Sleeping Beauty*:

FARQUAAD: Evening. Mirror, mirror on the wall. Is this not the most perfect kingdom of them all?

MIRROR: Well, technically you're not a king.

FARQUAAD: Uh, Thelonius. (*Thelonius holds up a hand mirror and smashes it with his fist.*) You were saying?

MIRROR: What I mean is you're not a king yet. But you can become one. All you have to do is marry a princess. (*Shrek Screenplay, 2001*)

The very casual 'evening', that is used to address the mirror, is an index of the looking away in this film – the talking mirror is seen as just a usual item in the world and is addressed as such. While the motivation here is very obvious social climbing, the suggestion is that all fairy tales, with their ambitious younger sons or woodcutters who aspire to the love of a princess, do so with one eye on the social consequences of such a relationship. The very two-dimensional nature of attraction in this world – princesses are always pretty – is clear in the talking mirrors' enumeration of the three bachelorette from whom Farquaad will choose his future princess:

MIRROR: (*chuckles nervously*) So, just sit back and relax, my lord, because it's time for you to meet today's eligible bachelorettes. And here they are! Bachelorette number one is a mentally abused shut-in from a kingdom far, far away. She likes sushi and hot tubbing anytime. Her hobbies include cooking and cleaning for her two evil sisters. Please welcome Cinderella. (*shows picture of Cinderella*) Bachelorette number two is a cape-wearing girl from the land of fancy. Although she lives with seven other men, she's not easy. Just kiss her dead, frozen lips and find out what a live wire she is. Come on. Give it up for Snow White! (*shows picture of Snow White*) And last, but certainly not least, bachelorette number three is a fiery redhead from a dragon-guarded castle surrounded by hot boiling lava! But don't let that cool you off. She's a loaded pistol who likes pina colads and getting caught in the rain. Yours for the rescuing, Princess

Fiona! (*Shows picture of Princess Fiona*) So will it be bachelorette number one, bachelorette number two or bachelorette number three? (*Shrek* Screenplay, 2001)

The humour here is sharp and intertextual. The wry aside that though Snow White 'lives with seven other men, she's not easy' is anamorphic in that it applies some real-world values and ideologies to the world of the fairy tale. The same is true of the sushi-loving and hot-tubbing Cinderella.

In the traditional view of the 'instructional tale', the parergonal world is a teaching aid to the moral and ethical mores of the outside world; it suggests that someday your prince will come; that those of a higher station are automatically ethically good and that there are happy endings, but only for the chosen few. However there are other ideological values enunciated by fairy tales which have more serious and negative consequences – that girls should be slim and pretty if they want a happy ending; that ugly sisters are also ethically ugly; that stepmothers are invariably evil; that monsters are always evil; that people and creatures which are different are often evil and to be feared; that there is no chance of trolls or dragons changing their habits; that ethical, social and moral roles are rigid and fixed and that crucially there is no room for difference in this highly structured and hierarchical world. Farquaad's ethnic cleansing of his kingdom of Dulac of all of the fairy tale creatures is an example of this and the image of the refugees populating Shrek's swamp is a poignant and intertextual reminder of Rwanda and Darfur and the Middle East, where refugees have been similarly driven out off from territories because they are paralleling the 'fairy tale trash', who, in Farquaad's words, are 'poisoning my perfect world' (*Shrek* Screenplay, 2001). His desire for Fiona is based on her beauty and on the fact that she is a princess. He is unaware that she suffers a curse and appears by day in her beautiful form and by night

in the form of an ogerish woman. She explains the genesis of this in a conversation with Donkey:

FIONA: It only happens when sun goes down. 'By night one way, by day another. This shall be the norm... until you find true love's first kiss... and then take love's true form.'

DONKEY: Ah, that's beautiful. I didn't know you wrote poetry.

FIONA: It's a spell. (*sigh*) When I was a little girl, a witch cast a spell on me. Every night I become this. This horrible, ugly beast! I was placed in a tower to await the day my true love would rescue me. That's why I have to marry Lord Farquaad tomorrow before the sun sets and he sees me like this. (*begins to cry*)

DONKEY: All right, all right. Calm down. Look, it's not that bad. You're not that ugly. Well, I ain't gonna lie. You are ugly. But you only look like this at night. Shrek's ugly 24-7.

FIONA: But Donkey, I'm a princess, and this is not how a princess is meant to look. (*Shrek Screenplay, 2001*)

The final phrase: 'this is not how a princess is meant to look', encapsulates the formulaic ethical nature of this genre – ogres are supposed to be brutish; princesses are supposed to look beautiful and if this homology between the norm and the individual is not correct, then some form of transformation must be taken into account – not to make her happier but to make her fit for purpose in terms of this formulaic genre. The lesson that this instructional tale gives in ideological terms is chilling. It suggests that to achieve a 'happily ever after' in life, one must be prepared to change to fit the norm. Any form of difference is not tolerated and is seen as a 'curse' and the individual must be dealt with and Farquaad's ethnic cleansing of fairy tale creatures is an example of this trend. Here *Shrek* is liberating, through an anamorphic perspective, suggesting different meanings and different future possibilities that will haunt the fairy tale genre:

According to Derrida, the future cannot be comprehended without coming to terms with the Other, whether this Other signifies ghosts or death, or both. Hauntology is therefore

present in ontology, even if these ghosts that inform being are silent. It represents a spectral paradigmatic chain, without which meaning or being cannot be expressed. (Murphy 2008, 21)

Shrek himself is a synecdoche of this tendency. He is an ogre, and as such is hated by all people. Indeed the film begins with an angry mob surrounding his house in the swamp and threatening to burn him out, not because he has done anything but because he is an ogre, and the whole film deconstructs the original rigid ideas that ogres are evil and fierce. In the beginning of the film, Shrek confronts the angry mob and acts in a way which both conforms to the stereotype and deconstructs it at the same time:

MAN 1: Think it's in there?

MAN 2: All right. Let's get it!

MAN 1: Whoa. Hold on. Do you know what that thing can do to you?

MAN 3: Yeah, it'll grind your bones for its bread.

Shrek sneaks up behind them and laughs.

SHREK: Yes, well, actually, that would be a giant. Now, ogres, oh they're much worse. They'll make a suit from your freshly peeled skin.

MEN: No!

SHREK: They'll shave your liver. Squeeze the jelly from your eyes! Actually, it's quite good on toast. (*Shrek* Screenplay, 2001)

For the first time we see a sense of humour in Shrek and we see that an ogre is capable of self-mockery. We also see through the film that his anger and desire to be left alone stems from the negative experiences he has when dealing with people. Even his friend Donkey has been persuaded by the stereotype:

DONKEY: don't get it. Why don't you just pull some of that ogre stuff on him? Throttle him, lay siege to his fortress, grind his bones to make your bread, the whole ogre trip.



SHREK: Oh, I know what. Maybe I could have decapitated an entire village and put their heads on a pike, gotten a knife, cut open their spleen and drink their fluids. Does that sound good to you?

DONKEY: Uh, no, not really, no.

SHREK: For your information, there's a lot more to ogres than people think. (*Shrek* Screenplay, 2001)

And this is at the core of the deconstructive imperative of *Shrek*. There are hauntological depths to be explored in the identity of this ogre – there *is* a lot more to ogres than people think. The realm of culture has always had a strong ideological valence with respect to the interpellation of subjects in the realm of ideology. Deconstruction, according to Derrida, is operative in the dismantling of ideological givens and to the seeming commonsense stereotypes that exist in culture and society:

What you need deconstruction for is to undo a number of presuppositions, prejudices and so on and so forth. But where you don't need to undo such things, you don't need deconstruction. ... So it depends on the type of relationship that you have between interpretation and knowledge, and of course the more you rely on interpretative languages, on institutional practices and so forth, the more you need deconstruction. (Derrida 2001, 110)

He has also stated that the only attitude he is completely against is one which 'cuts off the possibility of an essentially indeterminable questioning ... an effective and thus transforming questioning' (Derrida 1995, 239), and all of *Shrek* participates in this questioning. By looking awry at the traditional figures of the ogre and the duke, and by endowing them with individual traits which transcend their structural types, *Shrek* sets out a different ethical paradigm and offers a different perspective in the standard tropes. So an ogre can be kind and a princess can be able and capable and a duke can be evil, and when this is extrapolated into the real world, it means that appearance and reality

are not wedded together in a cratylistic fusion but instead can be treated on an individual basis.

The treatment of the dragon, suitably large and fire-breathing, is an example of the deconstructive and transforming imperative of *Shrek*, as far from being the stock image of an otherworldly terrifying beast, she falls in love with Donkey:

DONKEY: No. Oh, no, No! (the dragon roars) Oh, what large teeth you have. (the dragon growls) I mean white, sparkling teeth. I know you probably hear this all the time from your food, but you must bleach, 'cause that is one dazzling smile you got there. Do I detect a hint of minty freshness? And you know what else? You're – You're a girl dragon! Oh, sure! I mean, of course you're a girl dragon. You're just reeking of feminine beauty. (The dragon begins fluttering her eyes at him). What's the matter with you? You got something in your eye? Ohh. Oh. Oh. Man, I'd really love to stay, but you know, I'm, uh...(The dragon blows a smoke ring in the shape of a heart right at him, and he coughs) .I'm an asthmatic, and I don't know if it'd work out if you're gonna blow smoke rings. Shrek! (The dragon picks him up with her teeth and carries him off). (Shrek Screenplay, 2001)

Generally in fairy tales, love is preserved for the main characters and those with whom we are supposed to identify – there would seem to be little likelihood of the Ugly Sisters falling in love (in fact their desire for the prince is seen as laughable) and the seven dwarves seem to have completely displaced their sexual urges onto the world of work – especially in the Disney film version where the reality principle and the pleasure principle seem to have become one for them. But here, the relationship between Donkey and Dragon is seen as important and is also seen as transforming. In the sequel, they become a couple and their offspring are called 'dronkeys' – a transforming fusion of dragon and donkey – and proof that in this deconstructive fairy tale, difference is not a barrier to happiness.

The humour in the piece above, where the gradual truth dawns on Donkey, and later where he is terrified by the sheer size of Dragon, he suggests that they take their time:

I don't want to rush into a physical relationship. I'm not emotionally ready for a commitment of, uh, this Magnitude really is the word I'm looking for – Magnitude – Hey, that is unwanted physical contact. Hey, what are you doing? Okay, okay. Let's just back up a little and take this one step at a time. We really should get to know each other first as friends or pen pals. (*Shrek* Screenplay, 2001)

Their love story parallels that of Shrek and Fiona, and the humour of their attempts to solve their differences is emancipatory as opposed to being caused by ridicule – we are laughing with them as opposed to at them. As Bakhtin has perceptively observed, language, especially in its literary incarnation, is a powerful tool in the deconstruction of such centralizing drives, as the 'uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward' alongside the language of 'verbal-ideological centralization and unification' (Bakhtin 1981, 272). The laughter of *Shrek* is intertextual in the extreme. As well as the allusions to *Ulysses*, there are also numerous allusions to other fairy tales, but these allusions are both an opening out of this story to others and also an anamorphic perspective on the story and by extension on the genre.

In Bakhtinian terms, this deconstruction of classic fairy tale tropes is heteroglossic in that different voices and different languages are allowed to confront each other and achieve some kind of dynamic interaction, or dialogization (Bakhtin 1981, 263). For Bakhtin, according to Emerson and Holquist, a language or culture undergoes 'dialogization' when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things (Bakhtin 1981, 427), and this opening out of discourse is ethical in that it allows for other discursive modes to access the generic

privileges and rewards – in this case the idea of 'happily ever after', a reward not usually open to dragons or donkeys or ogres.

At the end of the film when a halting and stammering Shrek, still smarting at being seen as part of the fixed parergonal identity of the ogre, is persuaded by Donkey that he has a chance at true love with Fiona:

FARQUAAD: Oh, this is precious. The ogre has fallen in love with the princess! Oh, good Lord. (*laughs*)

The prompter card guy holds up a card that says 'Laugh'. The whole congregation laughs.

FARQUAAD: An ogre and a princess!

FIONA: Shrek, is this true?

FARQUAAD: Who cares? It's preposterous! Fiona, my love, we're but a kiss away from our 'happily ever after.' Now kiss me! (*puckers his lips and leans toward her, but she pulls back.*)

FIONA: (looking at the setting sun) 'By night one way, by day another.' (to Shrek) I wanted to show you before.

She backs up and as the sun sets she changes into her ogre self.

She gives Shrek a sheepish smile.

SHREK: Well, uh, that explains a lot. (*Fiona smiles*) (*Shrek Screenplay, 2001*)

The prompter, also doubling as the masked torturer Thelonius, holding up the cards is an example of the formulaic nature of the genre. In a manner that gestures towards the Proppian Fairy tale generator, he is generating and orchestrating the responses of the audience to both the wedding and to the events that are ongoing as the wedding is disrupted. The sense that an ogre and a princess cannot fall in love is clear in the dismissive 'this is precious' from Farquaad, For him, as representative of this world, there are no happy endings for ogres. One could see this fairy tale parergonal discourse as exemplifying what Derrida calls logocentrism

In the main, Derrida's work centres on a sustained attack on what he considers to be the authoritarianism of Western thought and, in particular, its commitment to essentialism. A vivid example of essentialism in Western thought is the practice or phenomenon known as 'logocentricity': the belief that words are representations of meanings already present in the speaker's mind. For Derrida, the relationship between speech and transparency of meaning is the heritage of logocentrism and phonocentrism, which he explains as 'the absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the identity of meaning' (Derrida 1976, 12). Overall, Derrida rejects the conception of meaning as a fixed entity awaiting representation by either a spoken or written word. Instead he calls for: 'the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation.' (Derrida 1978, 292)

When involved in his own 'active interpretations', Derrida engages with practices of deconstruction. In deconstructing a piece of text, Derrida's objective is to reveal the ambivalences, the contradictions and the double binds that lie within the text, and he does this by disturbing the binary structuring around which the text is organised. As Derrida highlights, binaries are not peaceful partnerships but function as a consequence of domination:

we are not dealing with the peaceful co-existence of a vis-à-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand, occupies the commanding position. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. (Derrida 1981, 41)

It is important to note, however, that the aim is not simply to reverse polarities – this would be just another instance of structure, where ‘the hierarchy of dual oppositions always establishes itself’ (Derrida 1981, 42). So, St. John’s Gospel opens with ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God’, and here, origin and meaning is attributed to the language of God and McQuillan suggests that this ‘is suggestive of the ways in which Western thought is governed by an idea of stable or essential meaning, which is ultimately fixed by a ‘transcendental signifier’ [...] such as God [...] Thus logocentrism, and this way of ‘reading’, is a theological activity because it presupposes and desires a single, fixed and authoritative centre’ (McQuillan 2000, 14). Logocentrism in Derrida’s view is the centre of language and philosophy; it denotes Ideal and Divine truths that transcend human reasoning and is associated with the word of the father or God. It is the notion of this ‘transcendental signifier’, which in the history of Western thinking is always equated with unquestionable truth and centres of meaning, that Derrida sets out to destroy. One could see the categories outlined by Propp as logocentric in that they define how a fairy tale should be set out. Thus in *Shrek*, the role of ogre as villain is deconstructed as Shrek becomes the hero.

At the end of the film, as Fiona is about to be married off to Farquaad, and as his soldiers capture the struggling Shrek, there is a heroic moment.

FARQUAAD: I’ll make you regret the day we met. I’ll see you drawn and quartered!  
You’ll beg for death to save you!

FIONA: No, Shrek!

FARQUAAD: (*hold a dagger to Fiona’s throat*) And as for you, my wife...

SHREK: Fiona!

FARQUAAD: I’ll have you locked back in that tower for the rest of your days! I’m king!

Shrek manages to get a hand free and he whistles.

FARQUAAD: I will have order! I will have perfection! I will have - - (Donkey and the dragon show up and the dragon leans down and eats Farquaad) Aaaaah! Aah!

DONKEY: All right. Nobody move. I got a dragon here, and I'm not afraid to use it. (*The dragon roars.*) I'm a donkey on the edge!

The dragon belches and Farquaad's crown flies out of her mouth falls to the ground.

DONKEY: Celebrity marriages. They never last, do they?

The congregation cheers. (*Shrek* Screenplay, 2001)

Here the logocentric norms of the discourse are deconstructed as the princess is saved at the end of the story but she is saved from the 'duke/king' – the traditional heroic figure of these tales by an ogre, a dragon and a donkey – two traditionally evil ones and a helper figure. Through a burst of Bakhtinian carnivalesque laughter, the binary is overturned and a donkey and a dragon and an ogre rescue the princess from an evil duke. Here there is a relativization of language as it is the actual merits of the characters – Shrek's kindness and decency, Donkey's loyalty and boundless optimism and Dragon's love for Donkey in what can only be called a biologically-radical deconstruction of the parergons of sexual suitability – all shatter the certainty of the thirty one structural components of the fairy tale, and would probably make the Proppian Fairy Tale generator overload and crash. The certainties of the destination of the fairy tale are deconstructed in this film and expectations are both defeated and transformed.

What makes this film work so well is the intersection of text and context. It is this intertextual dimension of the film that makes it deconstructive and also an agent of ethical change. What is set out by the parergonal context can often, as we have seen, be followed by the text; but this is not necessarily the case because the text can also deconstruct the context and the predicted outcome of the textual journey may not be where the tale takes us. As Murphy notes:

All interpretation is situated in the space of intersection between the diachronic imaginary and symbolic dimensions of the text itself and the synchronic imaginary and symbolic context of the temporally specific interpretation. Truth is constructed in this dialectic, and in this sense, every text must submit to destinerrance. (Murphy 2008, xiv)

And this destinerrance is in many ways the destination of this anamorphic and carnivalesque deconstructive fairy tale. The predefined journey of the fairy tale is now found to be in error – it no longer has a set destination but instead is going on a new journey, which is defined, not by types or by parergonal tropes but instead by individual characters and their own different interactions which leads them, not towards a defined Proppian destination at step 31, but instead to a destinerrant destination that is not predestined but is defined by the process of the intersubjective interaction and development of the characters. J Hillis Miller has set out the importance of this term in Derrida's thought:

What is destinerrance? Discussing it fully would be a virtually endless task. It is a concept, or better, motif, or, better still, spatio-temporal figure, that connects intimately with the other salient spatio-temporal figures in Derrida's work. I call destinerrance spatio-temporal because, like most of Derrida's key terms, it is a spatial figure for time. It names a fatal possibility of erring by not reaching a predefined temporal goal in terms of wandering away from a predefined spatial goal. Destinerrance is like a loose thread in a tangled skein that turns out to lead to the whole ball of yarn. It could therefore generate a potentially endless commentary. Destinerrance is connected to *différance*, that is, to a temporality of differing and deferring, without present or presence, without ascertainable origin or goal; to trace, iterability ... to the future or the 'to come' (*l'àvenir*); to the democracy to come in that *avenir* to come; to decision, obligation, responsibility, and, in another of Derrida's neologisms, irresponsabilisation, to interruption, dissemination, the wholly other; to exappropriation, adestination, justice, law, right, the gift, the secret, hospitality, testimony, sendings or dispatches (*envois*); to the messianic without messianism. (Hillis Miller 2006, 893-894)



The notion of ‘erring’ here in Miller’s explanation is used ironically as for Derrida, destinations are always problematic as is the concept of the ‘to come’. But what is most important about the ethical position of *Shrek* is that the journey towards a happy ending is open to all the characters. In the Swamp Karaoke that follows the film on DVD, all the characters sing and join in what is an almost Shakespearian comic dance at the end with no one left out (not even Farquaad who is seen as alive inside Dragon’s stomach). Destinerrance is very much aimed at an open ethics of participation and as such, it is important in any reading of this film.

*Shrek*, I would maintain, participates in this destinerrance and does so through an anamorphic deconstruction of the generic norms of the fairy tale. The love stories here disinter the norms and by so doing offer hope to those who are not life’s princes or princesses. The pre-programmed predestined idea that life has winners and losers and that these categories cannot change is deconstructed here at the end of the film:

SHREK: I – I love you.

FIONA: Really?

SHREK: Really, really.

FIONA: (smiles) I love you too.

Shrek and Fiona kiss. Thelonus takes one of the cards and writes ‘Awwww’ on the back and then shows it to the congregation. (*Shrek* Screenplay, 2001)

So ironically, Farquaad has been proven correct because their love is ‘precious’ and it is also a destinerrance from the usual fairy tale ending. Ethically this shows that appearances and hierarchical positions are not necessarily the determinants of the ethically and morally good. And the destinerrant ‘wandering away’ from the defined goal also allows a wandering away from the parergonal straightjacket as the pre-written signs now have to be improvised by Thelonus (whose own role as Farquaad’s torturer

is deconstructed in the post-filmic karaoke as he sings 'feelings', the very moving rock song, thereby deconstructing his typecast persona).

Thus when Fiona is transformed into her 'true form' by 'love's first kiss', she does not become the beautiful Cameron Diaz-like figure of the daytime princess but instead is the ogrish night-time persona the persona of whom she has earlier said 'and this is not how a princess is meant to look' (*Shrek* Screenplay, 2001). But when she sees that this is love's true form she is more puzzled than anything else and when she says '(standing up, she's still an ogre) Well, yes. But I don't understand. I'm supposed to be beautiful'. The reply from Shrek demonstrates the unusual destination that this destinerrant tale has reached: 'but you ARE beautiful':

FIONA: Really?

SHREK: Really, really, (*Shrek* Screenplay, 2001)

and it is here that the film achieves its ethical purpose.. Beauty, honesty, strength of character, loyalty – none of these traits are confined to royalty or to those gifted with conventional beauty, and despite their charm, this is the ideological subtext of many fairy tales and these are a source, I would argue, of many of the prejudices that our children can learn from them. *Shrek*, with its valuing of the other, with its espousal of difference, with its sense that who you are is often very different from what you are, shines an ethical light on these accepted areas of children's culture and asks the deconstructive questions that make this film one to watch, enjoy and think about. *Shrek*, as well as being funny and anarchic is profoundly ethical because it opens up a relationship with the other that respects difference, that is in no way predestined and which allows for the singularity of the individual be he or she ogre, donkey, dragon or princess – really, really.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Herder particularly worked on the Middle Ages, which historians used to compare to classical antiquity. For him, defending that period of history meant encouraging Germany to resist the French influence, especially in the cultural field. Patriotism is a form of cult of the national past according to Herder. This new approach to history had a very important impact at the time, especially in small countries such as Ireland. See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Une autre philosophie de l'histoire*, 1774, translated by Max Rouché (Paris: Montaigne, 1964).

<sup>2</sup> The original representation showed that Patrick was piercing the king's foot with his crosier but Barry has erased it, making the attitude of the attendant a bit exaggerated.

<sup>3</sup> If the Doric temple represented Patrick's contribution to Irish culture, it would be on the right side. This means that for Barry, Irish culture was as sophisticated as Greek culture (that's why it is a Doric temple) before Patrick's arrival. The comparison is not with the Roman Empire because at that time, England was often compared to Rome by British writers. Some claimed that Britain was the heir to the Roman Empire. Moreover, Irish historians such as Sylvester O'Halloran criticized Rome because of its policy of deliberate acculturation of the conquered people, which they compared to the English policy. O'Halloran also said that the fact that the Romans had not achieved the conquest of Ireland had pushed them to describe the country as peopled with barbarians (O'Halloran 1778, pp. xxxi, 191).

<sup>4</sup> James Barry had a very complex vision of patriotism. He advocated Catholic emancipation but he never clearly supported Irish independence or the overthrow of monarchy, certainly because of his situation in London. For more detail on that question, see Tom Dunne, 'Painting and Patriotism', in *James Barry 1741-1806 'The Great Historical Painter'*, edited by Tom Dunne (Cork: Crawford Art Gallery and Gandon Editions, 2005), pp. 119-137.

<sup>5</sup> On the left, Dom Gerle (who did not attend the oath), a Carthusian monk, stands for the secular clergy, the abbot Grégoire, for the regular clergy and Rabaut Saint-Etienne, for the Protestant church.

<sup>6</sup> "[un] pays frère en religion, d'où peut venir un jour l'expédition libératrice". My translation. (Lambert 2004, 200)

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the poem was originally written in Irish Gaelic and that the English version given here was translated by Ulick O'Connor.

<sup>8</sup> This is when an author feels indebted towards the writers of the past to such an extent that they become unable to write, or at least to move away from the canons handed down by the said writers. (Brannigan 2002, 33)

<sup>9</sup> For those who wish to find out more about the author, Patrick Murray's essay from *Eire-Ireland* is authoritative – he was a cousin of Broderick's but did not allow that to colour his treatment. (Murray 1992)

<sup>10</sup> I refer in particular to Bersani's *Balzac to Beckett – Center and Circumference in French Fiction* (1970) as well as chapter three in *Astyanax*.

<sup>11</sup> Pat Collins et Billy Lendrum en particulier.

<sup>12</sup> "Pontifical college launches course on satanism and exorcism"

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.catholicireland.net/newsroom/article.php?artid=744>.

<sup>14</sup> "The glory of God is humanity fully alive." (Hederman 1999, 28)

<sup>15</sup> Living Tradition. "On Human Sexuality: a Response of the Holy See to Parents" (<http://www.rforum.org/lt/lt62.html>), p.5.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> "I do believe that religion and eroticism are absolutely related. And I think my original feelings of sexuality and eroticism originated in going to church," Madonna, 1994 (Quoted by Casey 1998, 101).

<sup>18</sup> Encore convient-il de signaler le contresens sur le grec μετά qui ne signifie pas au-delà mais après et se réfère à l'ordre dans lequel les deux parties sont présentées dans l'édition de Andronicos de Rhodes.

<sup>19</sup> L'auteur voit dans les deux conceptions une théorie comparable de l'amitié constructive.

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.ratzinger.it/document/orationisforma\\_engl.htm](http://www.ratzinger.it/document/orationisforma_engl.htm).

C'est bien par des biais détournés que le christianisme, religion de la transcendance et de l'incarnation fut, selon Gauchet, à l'origine de la modernité. En effet, d'après le sociologue, dans le catholicisme, avec Jésus la place du parfait médiateur a été prise entre Dieu et les hommes, et « nul après la venue du dieu-homme ne pourra plus prétendre occuper en vérité le lieu-charnière en un corps nature et surnature », ce qui implique une profonde transformation des pouvoirs terrestres (Gauchet 1984, 193). Commence alors une lutte d'influence entre le sacré qui dessert le ciel et la sacralité terrestre. Comme le montre Gauchet, il s'agit là d'une « Révolution invisible

en laquelle se joue ni plus ni moins le commencement de la politique moderne. C'est le tournant capital des XIII-XIVe siècles, qui va constituer les monarchies nationales de l'extrême Occident – l'anglaise et la française surtout – en laboratoires d'une très lente et décisive transformation d'où surgira au bout du compte cette nouveauté prodigieuse : le pouvoir représentatif. Avatar lointain, mais direct, si singulier que cela doit paraître, de cette prime métamorphose dans la sacralisation du roi, rendue possible par la dualité chrétienne, et concrètement enclenchée par l'obligation faite aux princes de répondre aux prétentions impériales de l'Eglise. » (Gauchet 1984, 200).

21 En effet, le terme postmodernité, selon la sociologue Danièle Hervieu-Léger, postule que le temps de la modernité, c'est-à-dire de « la mise en place des grandes séparations qui assurent aux différentes activités humaines leur autonomie propre, par rapport notamment à des normes religieuses s'imposant à l'ensemble de la société », est dépassée. Or, il n'en est rien. La sociologue considère, en effet, que « En la plaçant dans la souveraineté du peuple, la modernité a arraché à Dieu la source légitime de l'autorité politique. En conférant à l'individu un pouvoir de plus en plus étendu de légitimation autonome des autorités qu'il reconnaît comme telles, les sociétés de l'ultramodernité parachèvent l'arrachement du principe d'autorité à cette transcendance, fût-elle celle de « l'ordre de la nature ». Cette mutation des régimes de l'autorité « tenue d'en haut », dans la famille, dans les écoles ou dans l'entreprise, ne s'arrête évidemment pas aux frontières de l'Eglise » (Hervieu Léger 2003, 88).

22 Et c'est en ce sens que, 45 ans après le Concile, Mgr. Lalanne déclare dans l'émission télévisuelle « C dans l'air » diffusée sur la chaîne publique France 5, que : « Même si pour moi, dans ma foi, c'est le Christ qui est la vérité – et je ne dis pas le Catholicisme, mais le Christ, qui est la vérité – je crois que dans les différentes traditions religieuses il y a des richesses qu'il faut entendre » (« C dans l'air », France 5, diffusé le 20/02/2007)

23 A ce sujet, voir le dossier qui leur est consacré dans *Le Monde des Religions* de juillet-août 2006 (n°18).

24 Ainsi, selon Marcel Gauchet « Si a pu se développer un ordre des hommes à ce point en rupture avec les précédents, et en rupture pour cause de renversement sur tous les sens de l'ancienne hétéronomie, c'est dans les potentialités dynamiques exceptionnelles de l'esprit du christianisme qu'il convient d'en situer la première racine. Elles fournissent un foyer de cohérence permettant de saisir la solidarité essentielle, sur la durée, de phénomènes aussi peu évidemment liés que l'essor de la technique et la marche de la démocratie. Ainsi le christianisme aura-t-il été la religion de la sortie de la religion. » (Gauchet 1984, ii).

25 « L'idée du bonheur a été réévaluée et la place du corps reconsidérée. Les croyants, plus lents à l'admettre et redoutant une dérive hédoniste, y ont cependant contribué, depuis les jeux du patronage et du scoutisme jusqu'à la façon nouvelle d'aborder le plaisir dans la sexualité. La sainteté attire toujours, mais certains préfèrent ne pas vivre en dehors du monde : des moines s'installent dans la ville. La vie mystique n'est pas réservée à une élite en prière dans les cloîtres : de Thérèse de Lisieux à Marthe Robin, cette conviction a gagné les chrétiens ; les monastères, Taizé, Paray-le-Monial, sont des foyers dont le rayonnement spirituel porte loin. » (Cholvy et Hilaire 1988, 492).

26 Le facteur le plus évident est « l'estompement de la signification catholique de la communion et, surtout, des conditions que le croyant doit réunir pour y participer » (Jean-Emile Charlier et Frédéric Moens, « Métamorphoses d'un sacrement. La communion, de la pratique socialisée à la participation sensible », *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* (119), juil-sept. 2002, pp. 29-43). Il y a quarante ans en effet, les préceptes de l'institution étaient connus de tous ou presque. La notion « d'état de péché », aujourd'hui quelque peu désuète, interdisait alors l'accès au sacrement à une part significative des fidèles. La méconnaissance de la culture catholique qui touche l'ensemble du dogme autorise une interprétation plus libérale de la description. Les entretiens réalisés auprès des communiants montrent que le sacrement n'exprime plus vraiment l'orthodoxie de celui qui le reçoit. » (Ormière 2005, 255).

27 De même, selon Willaime : « La pluralisation externe du paysage religieux s'accompagne d'une pluralisation interne à chaque tradition. S'il y a toujours eu, dans les divers univers religieux, différentes sensibilités, en particulier des orthodoxes et des libéraux, il n'y a pas toujours eu une diversification interne aussi poussée que celle que l'on connaît aujourd'hui. Le sentiment

religieux est en effet aujourd'hui beaucoup moins régulé par les institutions ecclésiastiques, lesquelles ont non seulement perdu leur pouvoir sur la société (laïcisation), mais aussi sur leurs propres fidèles : l'individualisme religieux s'est développé à l'intérieur même de chaque tradition religieuse, les acteurs revendiquant leur autonomie de sujet dans la façon de vivre le religieux. Il y a ainsi de nombreuses façons d'être catholique aujourd'hui (traditionaliste, charismatique, conciliaire, intégriste, Action Catholique, œcuménique, catholique social... sans compter les multiples variations individuelles) et les autorités ecclésiastiques sont obligées de « faire avec ». » (Willaime 2004, 60).

28

Ce phénomène s'explique, selon nous, par la nature même de la modernité, qui fut l'époque de la toute puissance des institutions et des systèmes de croyance. En Irlande, l'Etat moderne s'est formé avec l'alliance de l'Eglise catholique, qui y est donc devenue une institution toute moderne, allant jusqu'à « inventer de la tradition » (Hobsbawm). De même qu'à la même époque, en France, il fallait être républicain pour avoir du prestige social, il fallait être catholique en Irlande. Ce n'est donc pas le catholicisme en soi qui régnait en Irlande à l'époque moderne, mais bien un catholicisme irlandais institué, qui remplissait une fonction sociale en définissant l'« habitus » irlandais (Bourdieu). C'est en ce sens que l'on comprend que les irlandais aient eu une vision légaliste de la religion, et que beaucoup aient été des catholiques de façade. Ainsi, c'est le catholicisme légaliste, institué et de façade qui résista jusque dans les années 1980 en Irlande (bien que de nombreuses failles se faisaient déjà sentir dès les années 1960), de même que le culte de la République (le républicanisme définissant l'« habitus » français) continua jusque dans les années 1980 en France. Si l'ultramodernité, en accord avec la définition qu'en donne Willaime, c'est toujours la modernité, mais la modernité désenchantée, autorelativée, problématisée (avec désacralisation des ses institutions constitutrices) alors, et contre toutes attentes, l'Irlande serait entrée dans l'ère moderne et ultramoderne en même temps que la France : lorsque, dans les années 1990, la France se mit à « séculariser ses écoles » (dans le sens ultramoderne de Willaime, c'est-à-dire à questionner la légitimité de ses écoles, bastions de la Républiques, en tant qu'institutions), l'Irlande se mit à séculariser les siennes (bastions du catholicisme en Irlande). De la même manière, il est possible de considérer que le scandale des prêtres pédophiles qui déchaîna la presse irlandaise tout au long des années 1990 fait écho au scandale des instituteurs pédophiles en France à la même époque. Si l'institution en question est différente dans chacun des deux pays, il s'agit là de la même crise de confiance dans les institutions, d'une même crise du croire qui caractérise l'ultramodernité.

29

« La mondialisation n'est pas seulement économique, elle est aussi symbolique. Il n'y a plus de frontières spirituelles qui tiennent et l'identification d'un territoire à une religion n'est aujourd'hui plus possible même si certains ont la nostalgie d'une identité nationale étroitement liée à une religion. (...) Cette mondialisation symbolique est accentuée par la mondialisation de la communication – télévisions câblées, Internet... - qui permet de recevoir chez soi informations et messages de toutes les spiritualités de la planète. » (ER, 59).

30

« La notion de métaphorisation du religieux rend compte du fait que, comme l'indiquent les théories de la sécularisation, les principaux champs d'activités et de savoirs humains ont été soustraits à l'emprise de la religion et se sont autonomisés. Mais, contrairement à la plupart de ces théories, elle pose en même temps que le religieux n'est plus à proprement parler l'un de ces champs au même titre que la politique, l'économie ou l'art, mais au contraire ce qui vient subrepticement colorer des pratiques et des savoirs que leur autonomisation a rendu disponibles pour un réinvestissement religieux personnel. » (Michel 1997, 304).

31

« A la régulation verticale du religieux par les institutions a succédé la régulation horizontale du religieux par les réseaux, non plus une régulation en termes de normes imposées et de rôles prescrits, mais une régulation en termes de normes choisies et de rôles négociés. Nous sommes bien entrés, comme l'analyse Manuel Castells, dans une société de réseaux : « Les réseaux constituent la nouvelle morphologie sociale de nos sociétés, et la diffusion de la logique de la mise en réseau détermine largement les processus de production, d'expérience, de pouvoir et de culture. Certes, l'organisation sociale en réseaux a existé à d'autres époques et en d'autres lieux ; ce qui est nouveau aujourd'hui, c'est que le nouveau paradigme des technologies de l'information fournit les bases matérielles de son expansion à la structure sociale toute entière. De surcroît, le pouvoir des flux prend le pas sur les flux de pouvoir. La présence ou l'absence

dans le réseau de la dynamique de chaque réseau par rapport aux autres sont les sources essentielles de la domination et du changement dans la société en réseau, dans la mesure où la morphologie sociale l'emporte sur l'action sociale. » (Manuel Castells, *La société de réseaux. 1. L'ère de l'information* (trad. de *The Rise of the Network Society*, 1996), Paris, Fayard, 1998, p. 525). » (Willaime 2004, 211-212).

<sup>32</sup> « Conçue plutôt pour la chrétienté rurale du Moyen Age, elle ne pouvait, en pleine civilisation industrielle et urbaine, qu'abriter un feu de tourbe, maigrichon et peu efficace. Il fallait d'urgence remplacer l'anachronisme. » (Puyo et Van Eersel 1977, 11).

<sup>33</sup> *Le Monde des Religions*, janvier-février 2007, n°21, p.34.