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Beauties and Beasts: Jerry Griswold's New Book

Some ten years in the writing, Jerry Griswold's *The Meanings of "Beauty and the Beast"* was published by Broadview Press this Spring. In his Introduction, Griswold credits his students and faculty colleagues for their suggestions and advice and thanks them for their patience in putting up with his decade-long obsession with this fairy tale.

Meant for the general reader interested in fairy tales, Griswold's book uses Beaumont's classic story of "Beauty and the Beast" as a touchstone to show how varied meanings can be found in fairy tales. He emphasizes how this tale has acquired multiple meanings when, for example, it has been analyzed by psychologists, illustrated in picture books, made into films, or been retold by contemporary writers.

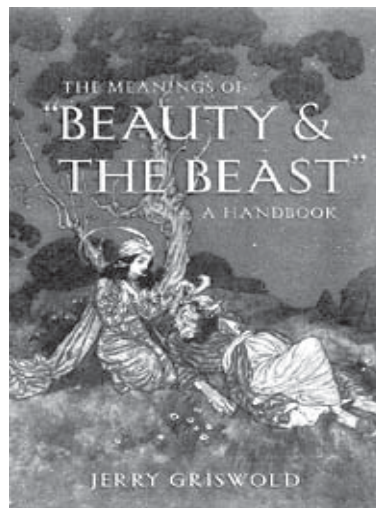
Griswold teaches in the Children's Literature program at SDSU. He is the author of two books—*The*

Children's Books of Randall Jarrell and *Audacious Kids*; in Penguin paperback this last work is titled *The Classic American Children's Story*—and the editor of newly restored editions of *The Prince and the Pauper* and *The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle*. Griswold has also published more than 100 essays in the *New York Times Book Review*, *Parade*, *Paris Review*, the *Boston Globe*, *New Republic*, and elsewhere. He writes frequently for the *Los Angeles Times*.

Early reviews of his book have been quite positive:

"Beauty and the Beast" is one of the most popular tales in the world, but very few critics have been able to account for its immense popularity. Now Jerry Griswold has bravely undertaken that task and has written

a fascinating book that explores the manifold meanings of this compelling tale. Not only does Griswold




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Faculty and Student News

- The Children's Literature Program will be very visible at this June's Children's Literature Association Conference. Five graduate students and five faculty are presenting papers on the conference topic of "Dreams in Children's Literature." The students are Chandra Howard, Sean Corbin, Jeff Wiederkehr, Jessie Woolley, and Lance Thomas. Faculty are Alida Allison, June Cummins, Jerry Griswold, Roberta Stagnaro, and librarian Linda Salem. For the past two years, SDSU English/CompLit grads have won prizes for essays at


this national conference, and faculty are very proud of these specialists' achievements.

- Roberta Stagnaro's paper "Dreams in Children's Literature: Shattered, Compromised, Fullfilled" has been accepted for this year's Children's Literature Conference in Fresno. She presented her paper "Harry Potter's Female Savior Archetypes" at last year's American Comparative Literature Association conference. 

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trace the origins of the classical erotic story, but he also interprets the numerous adaptations in literature and film throughout the world. Whether he analyzes the classic version of Madame Leprince de Beaumont, Angela Carter's feminist versions, or the Disney animated films, Griswold is always thought-provoking. This is a book that will certainly interest all readers who are captivated by the mystery of fairy tales."—Jack Zipes, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

"A blend of synthesis, anthology, and analysis, this offers a broadly supported expansion of the scholarship on an irrepressible story."—Betsy Hearne, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Griswold's *The Meanings of "Beauty and the Beast"* can be ordered at online bookdealers like Amazon.com or at your local bookstore. 

A Review of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials Trilogy* By Stephen Potts

Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials Series* Includes:
The Golden Compass. Knopf, 1995.
The Subtle Knife. Knopf, 1997.
The Amber Spyglass. Knopf, 2000.

It is likely you have already seen this trilogy of fantasy novels, sandwiched between Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and Rowling's Harry Potter series in the display windows of chain bookstores. While Philip Pullman does not yet have the global following of his countrymen, his cult is growing; this trilogy, under the rubric *His Dark Materials*, has appeared in 37 languages, received honors from *Horn Book* and the ALA, and spawned a popular stage version in the U.K. Furthermore, New Line Cinema, fresh from the triumph of Peter Jackson's rendering of *Lord of the Rings*, is putting the story into production, reportedly with Tom Stoppard as screenwriter.

As young adult fiction, Pullman's trilogy has much to recommend it. Like his fellow fantasists, he has created an intricate and self-consistent world. In the first book, *The Golden Compass*, we are introduced to an alternate earth where every human being has an animal

familiar, essentially a pet soul, called a "daemon." Our young heroine Lyra Belacqua and her shape-shifting daemon Pantalaimon scamper through an alternate Oxford, England, one in which an authoritarian Church still operates the university. The pre-pubescent Lyra, raised as an orphan by the scholars of Jordan College, is a complete rebel and skilled liar. She soon discovers she comes by her heroic flaws naturally as the illegitimate child of two powerful and dangerous individuals: the beautiful Mrs. Coulter, a wealthy widow who is using the Church for her own sinister ends, and the arrogant, Byronic Lord Asriel, who is plotting against that very Church.

Underpinning the fantasy plot is a clever use of modern physics (called "experimental theology" in Lyra's world). The "dark materials" of the trilogy's title refer among other things to "dark matter," a mysterious substance that—our own astronomers and physicists recently decided—makes up roughly 70 percent of the universe. Since we cannot detect it except through its gravitational influence on the cosmos, Pullman freely speculates that it is nothing less than consciousness itself. Called "Dust" in the novels, it explains among other phenomena the existence of both daemons and sin. Dust also motivates a device that Lyra inherits, the "golden compass" of the title—actually an instrument that allows her to make accurate predictions. It aims her on a quest that pits her against her amoral parents and the Church, in the process gathering the aid of a polar bear warrior-king, helpful witches, vengeful gypsies, and a host of other fascinating characters.

The second book, *The Subtle Knife*, introduces the reader to a boy from our world, allegorically named Will, who has his own lethal talents. Will encounters Lyra on yet another alternative earth scourged by soul-devouring Specters, and they join forces. In this volume we learn that they are actors in a replay of the Miltonic war of heaven, on the side—it turns out—of the rebel angels. *The Amber Spyglass* carries the reader onto an Edenic planet inhabited by intelligent beasts, into a grim afterlife, and even onto the doorstep of the Deity for an unrelenting climax.


The story ventures into the sublime, but it contains strong stuff. This is definitely dark fantasy, without the traditional moral strains of Tolkien or the occasional horseplay of Harry Potter. Pullman endorses the revo-

— See Pullman on page 3

The Director's Column

By Alida Allison

What a semester! Newbery winner, magician, raconteur, all-around charmer, and SDSU alumnus **SID FLEISCHMAN** visited twice this semester. Sid's play version of *THE WHIPPING BOY* was the highlight of the exciting Theater for Young Audiences Festival in January, during which visit Sid also gave two talks; he then returned in March to be Love Library's first recipient of the Monty Award for Outstanding Alumnus at a swank event at the Sheraton on Harbor Island. **JOSEPH THOMAS**, children's literature professor at CSU Northridge, gave a well-attended talk on campus in February focused on contemporary playground rhymes; **GERALD MCDERMOTT**, recipient of the Caldecott Medal for *ARROW TO THE SUN* and author/illustrator of dozens of popular books, discussed his mythological, environmental picturebooks on a Friday afternoon children's literature panel along with SDSU's Children's Librarian Linda Salem and Antone Minard, an outstanding addition to our adjunct faculty. Gerald spoke the next day, too, to a large crowd on campus for the Spirit of the Land conference hosted by our active library. A special treat was the library's major **EDWARD GOREY EXHIBIT**, which brought to campus SDSU alumnus **ANDREAS BROWN**, curator of the Gorey Estate, and our own Professor Emeritus **PETER NEUMEYER**, whose books with GOREY have just been reissued by Abrams. As the current director of our new **NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF CHILDREN'S/ADOLESCENT LITERATURE**, I also was invited to lunch with Australia's foremost picturebook creator **GRAEME BASE**, author of *ANIMALIA*. The semester ended with a **BOOKSIGNING** at Aztec Shops featuring **ALIDA ALLISON'S** children's books, **JERRY GRISWOLD'S** new *THE MEANINGS OF BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*, and editor/lecturer/teacher/YA Literature mavin **MICHAEL CART'S** first edition of the new YA journal *RUSH HOUR* and his recent anthology *LOVE AND SEX*.

Stay in touch, because next year is shaping up as an equally delightful season of events in Children's Literature. (How do you stay updated? Check our web site regularly for announcements: www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/English/childlit/home/news.html or send email to childlit.mail.sdsu.edu 

NOTE: Next year's Director of the NCSCS will be JERRY GRISWOLD.


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lutionary notion that the age of inherited authority is past, that our era needs a "Republic of Heaven" to replace the "Kingdom of Heaven." Not surprisingly, New Line Cinema is planning to mute this message.

Many university students to whom I introduced the first book have felt compelled to read them all—even practicing Christians who recognize the trilogy's subversiveness. Despite the "10 and up" recommendation on some editions, *His Dark Materials* is not for the very young—not just because of its antinomian theme but because of its grimness, its cosmological and eschatological underpinnings, and some subtle sexual content. On the other hand, these are definitely young adult books that both anti-authoritarian teens and thoughtful older readers can enjoy. Grab them before the bookburnings begin. 

Dr. A's A-List of Books Reviewed* in 2003
(in no particular order)

Marilyn French, *Diary of a Wombat*, Clarion
Bob Grahame, *Jethro Byrd—Fairy Child*, Candlewick
Lena Landstrom, *The New Hippos*, R&S Books
Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Treasury of Children's Songs*
Crockett Johnson, *Ellen's Lion* (twelve stories), Knopf
Marcia Williams, *Bravo, Mr. Shakespeare!*, Candlewick
Mini Grey, *The Very Smart Pea and the Princess-To-Be*, Knopf
Kate DiCamillo, *The Tale of Despereaux*, Candlewick
Dugald Steer, *Dr. Ernest's Book of Dragonology*, Candlewick
Collodi, Carlo, *Pinocchio*, Candlewick
Lemony Snickett series, Harper Collins
Roderick Townley, *The Great Good Thing*, Aladdin
Any book by Leon Garfield, e.g. *Shakespeare's Stories*, vols I & II, Houghton Mifflin;
Smith, John Diamond, etc. Farrar, Straus and Giroux
Gustaf Tenggren, reissues of his illus. *Golden Tales of the Arabian Nights* and *King Arthur Tales*, Golden Books
N.C. Wyeth, reissues of his illus. *Robinson Crusoe* and *Treasure Island*, Atheneum

Astrid Lindgren, *Mirabella*
Nancy Farmer, *The House of the Scorpion* (National Book Award), Atheneum
*Reviewed in 2003 at the Children's Literature Program site:
www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/english/childlit/home/news.html
After review, books are donated to SDSU's library or to the El Cajon School District.

A Note from Second Grade Teacher (and SDSU Alumna) Amy Cumming, El Cajon School District, April 20, 2004

Thanks again for the latest installment of books! The kids love them. When I brought in these last ones, one of the boys announced, "Dudes, more books from the college!" Another said, "Man, I'm going to San Diego State...they have awesome books!" Several of them said "Yeah, me too!"

I asked them what some of their favorites have been. Here they are...

- Adam Sharp Spy Series by George Stanley
—Random House
- "I Wonder Why" series—Kingfisher Publishers
- Invisible Inc. series by Elizabeth Levy
—Scholastic

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