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Reviews

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REVIEWS

Hungarian Folktales: The Art of Zsuzsanna Palkó. Collected, transcribed, annotated, and introduced by Linda Dégh. Translated by Vera Kalm. World Folktale Library. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1995. xxiv + 382 pp.

Readers of Linda Dégh's *Folktales and Society* who have been waiting for this book for as long as thirty years have a treat in store. Here are thirty-five of Mrs. Palkó's tales, about half of her complete repertoire—magic tales, novellas, and humorous tales. Each text represents a single performance; a few show mistakes in the recounting which the narrator amends gracefully. Interjections show that members of the audience were actively following the story; the narrator responds to these as necessary, but only briefly. Obviously, both the narrator and the audience want the tales to proceed with minimal interruption. These well-structured tales contain an amazing amount of detail. Ten are over ten (large) pages each; one is more than twenty, and another more than thirty pages. The language throughout is smooth and the phrases are well chosen.

The plots are fleshed out in two ways, with dialogue and activity. Conversations portray emotions such as worry and resignation. When characters discuss their plans, conversations foreshadow or threaten events to come. Longer speeches recapitulate in detail events that have already happened or will or may take place, thus turning the audience's minds back to the earlier events or forward to the future. A few of the tales have to be told twice, once as they happen and again as a character recounts them in order to prove who he or she really is. Editors and narrators, including Mrs. Palkó, often abridge such retellings. But Mrs. Palkó is also able to flesh them out: in one case, the retelling fills more than five pages. Activity, when it involves the main events of the story, furthers the plot. There is also optional activity that develops characters by showing how they behave, sets the scene for conversations, and explains why characters are motivated to take the actions that matter to the tale. Mrs. Palkó uses such optional activity to pace her stories, giving the audience a

chance to relax between the more dramatic events. Purely descriptive passages are rare; what is described is usually activity that a certain character saw. The substitution of a character's point of view for that of the narrator enlivens the story. When the point of view is that of an assembled crowd, the folktale's real audience can feel like they are seeing events for themselves.

Some of Mrs. Palkó's oral narrative techniques show up in scenes and situations that appear in more than one tale. In spite of such similarities, the tales do not merge because each is based on a memorable situation. Several of the tales have more than a single leading character. Mrs. Palkó switches back and forth between, say, a woman and the husband who has left her, showing what happens to each of them. The change in perspective is introduced by a simple phrase, such as, "Let's leave her for now. Meanwhile, . . ."

The magic tales contrast good with evil, all the more effectively because the "good" parts are dwelt on with care. Sweet scenes provide a contrast to scenes of cruelty that motivate many of the tales. Poverty is one motivating force, and human treachery, fueled by jealousy or a desire for revenge, is another. Most disturbing are situations involving child abuse, mutilation, and cannibalism. Often the perpetrators are punished, but sometimes they just drop out of the story. Lesser sinners, if they repent, may be forgiven. The tales dictate behavior through both good and bad examples. However, a little of the material seems inconsistent. Robbers are bloodthirsty in one tale but good men in another. Jesus is less fair than is Death. A spendthrift younger brother who desecrates his mother's corpse wins half the family inheritance.

Supernatural elements are of several kinds. Spirits of the dead are particularly sinister. Religious figures appear in unorthodox forms. In one tale, Death is helpful and fair when Jesus is not. In another, the devil appears as a hairy ogre, desiring not to provoke sinfulness but to obtain human meat. Some of the supernatural is purely magical, like the helpful horse that fulfills his master's wishes, and the man who jumps out of a leather hide.

When something required by the plot does not make sense, Mrs. Palkó does not try to rationalize it—she just keeps it brief. What makes the fawn and the duck turn back into their human forms? Why are the three boys, slaughtered so their father's friend will recover, revived? We do not know and neither, apparently, does the narrator. Fantastic motifs are explained, however, when they do make sense. A boy is warned twice that if he drinks water from the footprint of a wild animal, he will turn into that animal—and he does. A maimed woman's limbs grow back through the grace of Jesus.

The novellas and humorous tales are, like the magic tales, drawn out to maximum length. The series of disasters that befall the husband who thinks that doing his wife's housework will be easy is particularly well drawn. In one respect, it may be fortunate that these tales have been so long unpublished.

Even in the magic tales, there are some erotic and scatological details. Some of the humorous tales are even more bawdy: two women expose their backsides to insult each other, and a girl, who should go out and draw water, instead urinates into the cooking pot.

This is, as it should be, Mrs. Palkó's book. However, Dégh has taken care in the presentation of the material. A foreword introduces the narrator along with the cultural background of her village. Headnotes situate each tale in Hungarian folktale tradition. It is interesting that nearly all of these tales do have parallels: Mrs. Palkó was not interested in creating new plots. A number of the tales are found in nineteenth-century books; others are well documented in the Hungarian folktale archive. The narrator learned them from a variety of people including her father and brother; one was learned from a Romanian childhood friend. The headnotes also point out striking characteristics, such as the narrator's attitude toward certain characters or events, and explain where sections of the tales have been altered. They also say what the usual audience for the tale would be. A glossary at the end explains formulaic phrases and scenes. The notes sometimes seem too brief, but no one would want to forgo any of the tales to make room for longer ones. It is clear, however, that there is ample material in books and archives to work out the recent local histories of some of the stories. Versions have been collected from other people in the village, and it is known who learned them from whom. Case studies of the changes in these tales would be very interesting.

Seeing each story unfold, the reader gets sucked in and is torn between hurrying to find out what happens next and slowing down so the tale will not end. Reading out loud is very effective because it helps to pace the words. This is a fine book for "interested readers"—adults and older children who enjoy folktales. It will be much appreciated by scholars who want to see how an expert narrator crafts her tales. And for all those who wondered what Mrs. Palkó's tales were like, now they will know.

Christine Goldberg
Los Angeles, California

Nsiirin! Nsiirin! Julia Folktales from West Africa. By Eren Giray. American Folklore Society, African Historical Series 8. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1996. 271 pp.

The scholarly study of folklore began with an eye on its own mortality: ever increasing urbanization, industrialization, and rationalization were seen as threats to the rural and "primitive" societies considered to be the pristine repositories of folk tradition. More recently, scholars have nurtured a less binaristic view, replacing the modern/folk dichotomy with a more dynamic model of culture that recognizes the continuing power of folk traditions. Eren

Giray's *Nsiirin! Nsiirin! Julia Folktales from West Africa* participates in developing this perception. Though the folktales are collected from West Africa, one of the places where "pure" folk culture is believed to persist, Giray's introduction pointedly situates these tales as products of and responses to the multiethnic, multilingual West African urban culture of Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, where the adaptation to urban life is characterized by the use of Julia and "Julification" is synonymous with modernization. By so doing, Giray dispels much of the mythology concerning the folktale genre and opens it up to examination as a living practice that persists in shaping identity, action, and social relations even in modern urban settings.

Giray herself conducts such an examination in an introduction that provides multiple entry points into the seventeen tales that follow. She begins, appropriately, by situating herself and her interests in West African folklore in terms of her own struggle over her identity as a Turkish-American woman born and raised in Columbus, Ohio. The odyssey she describes in her attempts to reconcile her multiple identities has obviously given her particular insight into West African urban culture, where, as she points out, identity is a fluid process that negotiates a complexity of languages and cultures almost unimaginable to monolingual, monocultural Americans. Thus, with extensive training in the Julia language, which is the "primary inter-ethnic language" in Bobo-Dioulasso, Giray soon realized that the tales told in Julia actually have their origins in numerous ethnic groups from various geographical areas, including that of the Julia, a relatively small group speaking a markedly different variety of Julia. Nevertheless, because the use of Julia is a conscious attempt to adapt to modern urban conditions, Julia storytelling offers "a common ground for the adaptation, negotiation, and arbitration of diverse experience" and, indeed, encourages "a shared worldview that facilitate[s] the maintenance of a shared oral narrative tradition in the city" (5).

Rather than present these stories as multiple examples of this shared world view, however, Giray is careful to meticulously delineate the various backgrounds, social status, and personalities of the storytellers themselves, paying particular attention to gender roles: the stories included here were selected on the basis of their being representative of the wide range of storytellers she encountered. Yet we are also able to read these stories as individual products of the distinct personalities and, to some extent, distinct social situations. The stories, in fact, can be seen as performative of social relations between these individuals, who are both tellers and listeners. Photographs are also provided to help bring the storytellers and the storytelling situations to life in the reader's imagination.

Giray is also attentive to the role of these stories in the socialization of the younger generations. A primary lesson being taught through their telling

is the importance of saying *naamu*—a concept that seems to be universal among and possibly unique to African cultures. In traditional—and urban—storytelling, it is customary to designate an “answerer”: an audience member formally charged with providing frequent and appropriate interjections. In Jula, *naamu*, which Giray translates as “indeed,” is the most common interjection. *Naamu* is not a mere dispensable filler: it involves “an apprehension of the whole speech act and language in general. The lack of an expressive receiver causes the spoken words to fall into a void as if they were unheard, or worse, meaningless” (33). Giray points out that one tale marginally recounts an incident in which children are reprimanded for talking among themselves; they are chastised not for being impolite but for abdicating their personal responsibility for making the stories “good.” As much as or even more so than the storyteller it is the audience who is held accountable for the aesthetic effect, the ultimate success of the story. That such a concept persists in urban society is not only important for our understanding of modern African culture but, as Giray suggests, gives us cause to reexamine our own assumptions about meaning and content.

Speaking of content, the seventeen tales the author has selected are impeccable examples of state-of-the-art folklore collecting, making the tales of maximum benefit to a wide range of readers. The Jula transcriptions and the English translations appear on facing pages, a device of obvious use to scholars of Jula; but it is also just nice to know at what points the participants speak in French, the language of formal Burkinabé education. In addition to supplying the name of each story’s narrator and date and place of the narration, and in tune with her own observations on the importance of saying *naamu*, Giray provides the audience members’ comments on the right-hand side of each page (which leads to some rather strange typographical effects when an audience member takes over the narration of one story). This device not only provides a sense of the frequency and nature of the interjections, but often indicates which individual—who is often another storyteller—is speaking. The reader is thus able to reconstruct the social and rhetorical context as well as the pacing of the narrator’s words; however, those accustomed to reading a story for “what happens” might find the “interruptions” a bit distracting, at least initially. The stories themselves are enriched by the insights provided in the introduction: insights the author wisely refrains from directly interjecting into the individual narratives, which are left to speak—quite eloquently—for themselves. It bodes well for the future health of folklore studies that scholars like Giray have learned to listen and say *naamu* to a still vital oral tradition.

Cynthia Ward

University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa

Folk Tales and Fairy Stories from India. Edited by Sudhin N. Ghose. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1996. 146 pp.

"Folk stories are a mine of information on a people's culture, values, and mental processes. However, over and above their academic use, these stories are for giving pleasure, to the average listener no less than to the native and foreign scholar," writes Gabriella Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi about Tamil tales (*Asian Folklore Studies* 56.1 [1997]). Nevertheless, in affluent urban milieux and print cultures many people, natives and foreigners, scholars and laypeople alike, do not have the privilege of aurally receiving what are always different versions of these tales, even when the same teller tells them. Hence the utility and pleasure of nonacademic (and of course fixed) texts such as *Folk Tales and Fairy Stories from India*, which are directed to the sort of cultured Anglophone general reader and old-fashioned child who read Andrew Lang's *Fairy Books* (reprinted by the same publisher). The choice of the sixteen items in this compilation has been guided by the tastes of the "eminent Indologists" Alfred Foucher, Ishwar Chandra Ghosh, Rene Grousset, Sylvain Levi, Sir John Malcolm, Raja Rajendra Lal Mitra, and Arthur W. Ryder; and Sudhin N. Ghose incorporates "short excerpts from their renderings" of the materials.

Apart from the interest of the tales themselves, the volume brings certain assumptions and issues relating to such compilations sharply into focus. It reprints a text originally published by the London-based Golden Cockerel Press (1961), in a rare "edition limited to 500 numbered copies. All of the original illustrations and references to the illustrator have been omitted" in the present edition, and their ghostly trace, their potent absence, signals for a start how the materials of the *einfache Formen*, simple and stylized (and rural, far away and fabulous), tend oddly to attract sophisticated, or indeed, downright precious impulses towards them. This affinity does concern those who are interested in the uses to which "traditional material" can be put—pointing to an obstinate post-Romantic association of the "folk" with the "child" (both "primitives") in relation to transformations of "folk material" into *Kunstmärchen* and beautifully illustrated "children's literature."

The reference to the eminent Indologists in the acknowledgments (newly added for the reprint) reminds us sharply of another absence—source-notes, which raises the issue of what we want them to do in texts for a general readership. In the present instance, just half a page delineating the tales' textual sources and geographical purview would have greatly aided the foreign Common Reader, adult or child, and the nonnative classroom teacher at any level. It would have indicated that the compilation is on the whole not oriented towards oral folk tradition in the modern vernaculars, but towards classical collections of tales in Sanskrit and Pali, the ones which it is often compulsory to start off by evoking in any discussion of Indian children's literature—i.e.,

apart from Puranic religious tales (upon which this volume does not draw), the fables of the *Panchatantra* (proudly assigned to ca. AD 600) and the *Hitopadesha*, the exemplary birth stories of the Buddha in the *Jatakas*, the *Avadanas* (Buddhist exemplary tales), and the sometimes Romantic novella-like tales of the *Brihat-Katha* and the *Katha-Sarit-Sagara*.

These compendia were translated into the modern vernaculars over time, and they both drew upon folk and oral material (the *Katha-Sarit-Sagara* in the eleventh century) and continue to contribute to it and popular culture to this day: in the 1960s, the *Panchatantra* was serialized in English for urban Indian Anglophone children in comic-strip form (in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*). As it is, the orientation of this volume is indicated only by the epigraph from the sage Bhavabhuti ("Should enchantment cease / A forest dead and dry the world would be") and a brief reference in the acknowledgments. A list of sources would have underscored the diverse genres which the protean words "folk tales and fairy stories" encompass, signalled the literary affinities of the tales, and told us where to look for more of the sort of thing that takes our fancy. Further, a source-list would have allowed us easily to consider how much of the translation is Ghose's own and how far it is affected by his predecessors' translations into European languages—for it is a sad truth that "renderings" into the modern European languages are perhaps more easily accessible than work in the classical languages and the Eastern vernaculars, to ordinary readers, foreign and native alike. On the other hand, because the volume presents the tales unencumbered by any apparatus whatsoever, there is a value in getting them as "direct" purveyors of narrative pleasure, without any indications of how old they are, what they are translated from, and what genre they belong to.

Having enjoyed this volume, the Common Reader and the classroom teacher may wish to use it for further inquiry, and may wish to compare such variants, nationally and internationally. The similarities might bolster our sense of a common humanity, the differences make more precise our senses of cultural or regional specificity. To make these pedagogic tasks easier, I provide below a list of the tale types which encompass the items which seem to belong to them (or be related), using the Thompson-Roberts *Types of Indic Oral Tales* index; references to tale types will be abbreviated as AT/TR, given the correspondence with the Aarne-Thompson index. To make the (imperfect) sense of genres and of a cultural world vision easier, I also discuss the tales in this volume in groups. This, even though, as Ghose indicates, no volume can make a "truly representative selection," and even though it is dangerous to make generalizations about a "people's culture, values and mental processes"—particularly when every single tale in this volume is Hindu or Buddhist, and they all seem to have a North Indian flavor so that only North Indian place names appear.

To start with, three beast fables (see L. Bodker's 1957 *Indian Animal Tales: A Preliminary Survey* for both literary and oral sources) indicate a sense that different sorts (castes?) of (human) beings have deep, perhaps essential characteristics, the boundaries of which are transgressed at one's peril. The two short tales in verse cry out to be compared with verse translations of La Fontaine. "The Crane and the Gander" has the latter telling the former of the delights of the riverbanks, but the crane laughs to hear that there are no snails, and the question of who was wiser carries the implicit answer that each type is best suited to its own milieu. "The Woodcock That Refused to be Fooled" by the cat's cajoling, flattering invitations to come and play or even to marry, indicates that unresponsiveness to a natural enemy is wisdom. "The Jackal That Fell into a Dyer's Vat" and turned blue, a favorite *Panchatantra* tale, tells how he used his skin-deep unusual appearance to fool the other animals into accepting his kingship, and exiled his own kind, who plotted to howl at dusk so that he could not help but respond and be unmasked.

Among the tales which we recognize as *Märchen* proper is a less pragmatic, more moral tale, "The Man Who Read the Scriptures," affiliated with AT/TR 160, "Grateful Animals, Ungrateful Man," which contrasts the animal kingdom with the human. Here, a poor innocent henpecked Brahmin scholar plays the part of many a European Third or Seventh Son when he saves a tiger, a monkey, a snake and a man without thought of recompense. The animals repay him, but the man has him imprisoned for theft, and the snake helps him by making the queen ill so that the Brahmin can cure her and be rewarded. Following from this is a *Märchen* which indicates that not only selfless kindness, but respect for animals, may bring unexpected reward. "The Wonderful Horse" has general affinities with AT/TR 511A, 531, and 532, "The Helpful Bull," "The Clever Horse," and "The Helpful Horse," with fights in which the animal provides aid, tasks, and marriage to a princess.

Moving away from the *Märchen*, a very literary "moral romance" indicates that even man's lower "animal" nature can be converted when malice meets with rectitude. "Lionel's Foster-Mother Was a Lioness" starts with a motif like the initial motif of AT/TR 465D and 511A, in which a bird hatches human hero and animals/birds (but this type goes onto tasks and animal helpers). Lionel is brought up by a lioness, studies at Benares, longs for meat, and will not be put off by the mushrooms suggested by the chef's clever wife. He relishes taboo veal, longs for human flesh, even in the Autumn month, where slaughter is totally forbidden. When the chef is caught for breaking the taboo, he and Lionel take to the jungle and kidnap the priggish Sura-Sen, patron of the arts. Sura-Sen asks for a day's grace to pay a bard, returns, and the bard's gnomic poetry he whispers to Lionel makes his animal nature fall away. The chef and his wife open a shop in Benares.

The same Romantic urban ambience of grotesquerie and dreamy mystery feature in the three "night-pieces" in which the plots are simple, but the magic or happenstance (in combination with a more complicated narration than the *Märchen's* usual chronological telling) conveys something akin to the atmosphere of the *Satyricon*, or the frame of the *Pentameron*. In "Once in Benares" a student who has come to sit an examination pets a greyhound, which a gold-toothed mastiff attacks, and finds himself, like every newly arrived student, to fall in with two sorceresses. He fails his examination, and becomes a philosopher. In "The End of the World" a monk deposits his donkeys and sheep in an inn, asking that they not be given water. When they are, they turn into men and flee. The Elder of the village suggests that the innkeeper and the watchman ask for the monk's hospitality when he returns. He has transformed a derelict monastery into a pleasure hall, and after dancers entertain them they awake to see the monastery in its former state, with faded frescoes of the monk and dancers on the wall. This night tale may be compared in a general way with AT/TR 307, "The Princess in the Shroud." "An Outing with King Vikram" starts with the motif of the prince roaming the city at night incognito, like his Middle Eastern counterpart Haroun al Rashid. His aide-de-camp and he see an old man weeping, a man dressed in mourning singing, and a shaven headed widow or nun dancing. The pair pretend to be travellers from Java and hear that for no reason the old father was sure that they would have royal guests, the daughter-in-law sold her hair to pay for a silver bowl to entertain them, but when no royalty arrived, the old man cried, and the son and daughter-in-law sang and danced to try to cheer him up. The king announces an examination, sets an essay on the topic of the grotesque sight, and the surprised son is the only one who can write it.

This tale has affinities with two others that are unmistakably "Lucky Accidents" *Märchen*, in which accidents befall the innocent and simple, and bring good fortune quite as much as kindness to animals. "Garib and the Forty Thieves," in which happenstance exclamations are misunderstood by gullibility or guilty consciences to indicate knowledge or power or both, is primarily a form of AT/TR 1641, "Doctor Know-All," conflated with AT/TR 954, "Forty Thieves" (which goes with "Open Sesame"). A wife forces her husband to set up as a magician—sometimes out of ill will, here out of ambition and stubborn silliness; a series of accidental exclamations prove to be prophecies come true, and the final one, along with a misunderstood conversation, convinces the thieves that he knows about them. The unwilling fake magician gives up astrology. Similar tales are AT/TR 910C, 563, and 177. Prophetic irrational intuitions (as in "King Vikram") go with prophetic dreams. Buried treasure and such dreams go together in "Gokul the Labourer," which thus calls out to be compared with "The Pedlar of Swaffham" and (AT/TR 843A) "The Pot of Gold

or the Pot of Scorpions," though their plots are different. Here Gokul finds a jar of bean-shaped pebbles, is arrested for the theft of treasure (just as the innocent Brahmin was), and is taken to the King, who says that he has been commanded by the Lord in a dream to give him gifts. So Gokul gets the rich presents, gives the king and the temple the treasure, and returns happy.

A moral complement to Gokul's contentment in his place and with his lot is "The Four Fortune Seekers," a form of AT/TR 461B "The Journey to the Deity for Advice or Repayment." Along the way the seeker usually sees people in trouble who ask him to find the answers to various questions; he does so and is rewarded. But if he is a fool, and rejects good fortune along the way, his conveying of the answers ultimately brings misfortune. The four seekers here point to a different moral. An old woman's magic quills lead the first three to copper, silver, and gold mines; the fourth presses on, sees a man in torment, asks why, and becomes part of a chain of foolish seekers, so that his interlocutor is freed and the torment is his own. His three friends seek him, have left the mines unmarked, and lose everything.

Just as innocence may accidentally gull tigers and demons, in trickster tales ingenuity overcomes brute strength. "Palwahn the Wrestler" belongs to the "Tale of the Stupid Ogre" group (1000-1199), specifically AT/TR 1152, in which the hero intimidates a demon by claiming that various large or heavy objects are common domestic ones for him, and has the contests of strength from AT/TRs 1060, 1060*, and 1061. The interaction with the demon also shows affinities with AT/TR 1000, 1000A, and 1115.

Ingenuity need not always go with deceit; it can go with interpretation. "The Circle Round the Throne" is a tale in which a humble weaver, a member of a community kept out of the city of Benares by the Brahmins (hence a Buddhist tale), interprets and responds to the enigmatic signs made by a Mongol envoy (parallel to a transformation combat), and saves the kingdom from attack. It can productively be read along with other riddling tales such as AT/TR 471, "The Bridge to the Other World"; AT/TR 516A, "The Sign Language of the Princess"; and AT/TR 875D, "The Clever Girl at the End of the Journey"; and a Jewish analogue found in J. Richman's 1926 *Laughs from Jewish Lore*.

If there is one image conveyed in the tales with human protagonists, it is that of the power of women to initiate action, even when they are not the protagonists. There is not a single downtrodden or oppressed be-purdahed woman in the volume: the Brahmin's nagging wife, Garib's ambitious wife Sitara, Gokul's wife Ganga who is less innocent than he, the potter's kind wife and the little princess who approaches the horse, the hair-selling daughter-in-law, the chef's clever wife, and so on. The two stories with more central female characters reinforce this image, and both bear out A. K. Ramanujan's contention that in "woman-centered" Indic tales, marriage initiates rather than concludes action,

continues with the woman "earning" her husband and a period of suffering, and ends with a firmer bond between them (*Indian Horizons* 44.2 [1995]).

"The Munificent Miser" goes with "The Four Fortune Seekers" in its warning against avarice. A miser, whose parsimony causes his wife great distress, sees a country bumpkin drinking homebrew, chewing dried fish, and singing of his good fortune. With the same gullibility as those who believed in the fake magician, he thinks the yokel is Kuvera, god of wealth. He orders dried fish and homebrew, and warns his household of an actor who may impersonate him. Under the influence of drink he tries to give his money to the king (like Gokul), orders it to be given to the poor, is taken for the impersonating actor and beaten. To save the rest of his fortune, he abides by the vow his clever generous wife makes him take. She pretends his miserliness was her doing, and he promises never to touch drink, and to be charitable. Like the Lord who helped Gokul through the king's dream, maybe the yokel was Kuvera after all. "How Princess Maya Got Her Deserts" tells of a princess who understands animal languages, as do such wives in AT/TR 670A "The Woman Who Understood Animal Languages" where her overhearing animals talk and the consequent good fortune do not always bring about a happy ending. "Maya" is a good example of the folktale potential for transgending, for it is a form of AT/TR 507B and 507C, "The Monster in the Bridal Chamber" and "The Serpent Maiden," which all have a maiden possessed by a serpent or demon who tries to kill the hero; he stays awake and kills the being. Here the educated Princess Maya angers her father, who marries her off to a mendicant who is a prince in disguise (compare "King Thrushbeard"), cursed with a voracious appetite. She sees a snake (a tapeworm?) issue from her husband's mouth, and hears it quarrel with another snake, the custodian of buried treasure; she learns how they may both be killed, and she ends happy ever after.

Style and register are always vexed matters in the case of translations, and one Indian should not gracelessly nitpick the English of another. Such typographical errors as "Bramha-Datta" are inconsequential, but the volume does not seem to follow any consistent convention when it comes to proper names and place names, translating some and transliterating others so that we have—perhaps to the delight of some readers—Lionel and Sura-Sen, Princess Candy-Cheek, Sitara (star), Garib (poor man, an emblematic name), and "Pal-wahn" (meaning strongman, and perhaps more properly transliterated "Pahal-wan"). The text also presents intercultural linguistic jokes as "Dustipore" and "Bustigunj" ("bustee" means slum) which might escape the Anglophone reader. Would the putative non-Indian audience know what a Devi temple or a Tantrik are without explanation, follow "Hooghly's drain" as a teasing reference to the dirtiness of Calcutta's river, or understand the list of a little princess's grand titles? The formality of "I do promise you recompense when I am freed from

this living death," contrasts oddly with the colloquiality of "came a cropper one day" or "Look at the actor's cheek"; and an odd European patina accompanies such words and phrases as "goblins," "gnomes," "ghouls," "rich farmers stinking of brass," "cockaigne," "crofter," "pussy," "wimple," "my good man," or "my dear fellow."

But I do not mean to suggest that the reprint of this rare volume is anything other than valuable and useful. Through the pleasure of these beast fables, tales involving animals and men, Romantic tales of mystery, tales of luck and of foolishness and of ingenuity, the outlines of a world vision can indeed be inferred. It is a world vision which stresses the importance of keeping one's place and sticking to one's own nature, which emphasizes that kindness and respect can earn gratitude and help from unexpected sources, which teaches the importance of generosity and of refraining from over reaching, and which implies an awareness of blind luck, of the Lord working in mysterious ways, and of the potential that ingenuity has to overcome strength and power. Is this world vision "folk," culturally pan-Indian, or a form of a more universal human one?

Sanjay Sircar
Canberra, Australia

The Hired Hand: An African-American Folktale. Retold by Robert D. San Souci. Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1997. Unpaged.

The Hired Hand retells in picture-book format an African-American version of a widespread folktale featuring the miraculous rejuvenation of an elderly or sick person, and the subsequent failure of another who attempts to imitate the feat. (See, for example, the Grimms' "Brother Lustig," KHM 81, or "The Rejuvenated Little Old Man," KHM 147.) This story, based on a tale collected from a black servant from Virginia in 1871 which is included in an appendix to Francis Hindes Groome's *Gypsy Folk Tales* (1899), is set in a town of free blacks (modeled by artist Jerry Pinkney after eighteenth-century Waterford, Virginia). San Souci has skillfully adapted the story for a young contemporary audience, and it is beautifully set off by Pinkney's shimmering, translucent watercolor and pencil artwork.

The opening quickly establishes the characters of the sawmill owner, Old Sam, and his shiftless, good-for-nothing son and introduces a strange man, "shabby as a worn-out shoe," who offers to work for nothing to learn the trade. When a customer of the sawmill complains of the "misery" in his back, the new hand offers to cure him, if Old Sam and his son will leave them alone. But the son creeps back and watches the hired hand turn the man to wood, saw him into planks, wash the pieces in the stream, and bring him to life again as a young, healthy man. After the hired hand has been driven away by the son's

abuse the customer returns, asking to have his wife made young again also. Young Sam attempts to repeat what he saw, but he is only partially successful: "The wooden figure was turned into a young woman. Only she was stone-cold dead." Young Sam is tried for murder and condemned. When he repents of his bad behavior, the New Hand appears in the courtroom with the woman, restored to life, and her husband. Freed, Young Sam is a reformed man, but the hired hand is never seen again.

The adaptation is reasonably faithful to the source, although San Souci adds elements to the plot, such as the incantation involving "sawdust, water, blood" which enhances the magical aspects of the tale. The three-part verse, which begins, "Sawdust! / Do what you must! / Turn this skin an' bone to wood, / So my saw cut but don' draw blood," adds powerfully to the drama of the tale and the force of the imagery, but is absent from the original. The earlier version had covered the rejuvenation, which is now the dramatic center of the tale, in a single sentence. Other changes include softening the intended punishment from hanging to a prison sentence and eliminating the father beating his son for disobedience. Still, there are close parallels, not only in the incidents but often in the actual phrasing used to tell the story. "Ef you all go in de woods 'ceptin dis man an me whar you can't see nuffin goin on, an wait till I holler, I'll fix this man right up good; but you all mus promis not to peek, for sulfin bad happen ef yo do" (Groome 291) becomes "If you go way into the woods where you can' see what goin' on, an' wait 'til I holler, I'll fix this man up right good. But you gotta promise not to look, 'cause somethin' bad'll happen if you do." San Souci has retained the flavor of oral black southern language while reducing the heavy dialect of the source tale to something more accessible to a child audience today.

Pinkney's illustrations bring the story to life. The subtle use of colors, mostly greens and browns—with faded reds and blues for accents—and the detailed backgrounds draw the reader in, while the interplay of light and shadow and the insubstantial, blurred lines increase the magical feeling. The opening pages, which show the town and the sawmill, capture you immediately, as your eye seeks to follow the processes involved in the busy place. The most effective scene is the double-page spread showing the hired hand sprinkling sawdust on the old man to begin the transformation, while Young Sam is barely visible in the far left corner, peering through the door to see what is happening. The vividness of the new hand's red shirt contrasts with the almost ethereal figure of the old man as the magic takes him. The drama is captured in a moment of stillness. Less effective are the two scenes when the transformation is completed. The now young man, restored to life is cavorting, "frisky as a new calf," but he seems curiously frozen in place, one foot in the air, dancing but static in contrast to the free movement suggested by the words. This, however, is a quibble. While

the language of the story is perfect for reading aloud, the reader must allow time to linger over each picture, examining the details, or the richness of the experience will be lost on the listener.

The Hired Hand, winner of the 1997 Aesop Prize from the Children's Folklore Section of the American Folklore Society, is another valuable contribution to the category of folktales retold in picture-book format by an outstanding creative team. San Souci and Pinkney worked together previously on *The Talking Eggs* (1989), while each has received an earlier Aesop Prize: Pinkney in 1994 for *John Henry* (with Julius Lester) and San Souci in 1993 for *Cut from the Same Cloth: American Women of Myth, Legend, and Tall Tale* (with Brian Pinkney). *The Hired Hand* lives up to the expectations of these previous works.

Victoria G. Dworkin

University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins. By Emma Donoghue. New York: HarperCollins, 1997. 228 pp.

The Dublin-born lesbian author Emma Donoghue works with fluidity in several genres. As a novelist she has written *Stirfry* (1994), a coming-out story, and *Hood* (1995), a meditation on lesbian love and loss; as a historian she has pursued recovery of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British lesbian culture in *Passions Between Women* (1993); and as editor she has recently compiled an anthology called *Poems Between Women: Four Centuries of Love, Romantic Friendship and Desire* (1997). Donoghue's range is wide in her attempt to reclaim and reimagine aspects of lesbian culture. So it is not surprising that she has found her way to fairy tales in her latest book, *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins*.

In spare, finely crafted, lyrical language she rewrites classic tales such as "Cinderella," "Snow White," "Beauty and the Beast," and "Rapunzel." Donoghue works her own brand of magic in these retellings by shifting these and other well-known stories out of their customary heterosexual framework into one that is clearly, audaciously lesbian. In her version, the Beast turns out to be a queen who chose a grotesque masquerade rather than submit to the advance of suitors who could not see her "true face." And Cinderella leaves her slipper behind forever because she's not waiting to be found by the prince; she's running off with the woman who waits for her outside his palace. The story of "Hansel and Gretel" ends with Gretel freeing her brother to return home while she stays on to live with the witch. At every turn of her imaginary wheel, Donoghue spins well-worn heterosexual dross into freshly minted lesbian gold.

But it would be a disservice to the book to say that lesbianism is here treated simply as a game of substitution. Certainly Donoghue likes playing out the surprising sensation of reversals, and the lesbian reader especially might feel the thrill of her inversions, but she is clearly also interested in proposing "lesbian"

as a trope within classic female-centered fairy tales and thereby to remake them as stories of female desire, self-motivation and freedom. Here lesbian identity encodes a woman's choice of her own destiny by her refusal to conform to conventional patterns of heterosexual, maternal, paternal, and class expectation.

In the fairy tale Donoghue finds a perfect format for exploring and affirming female agency. And this is immediately felt in her use of first-person narration rather than the customary third person; the voice of the narrator is the voice of the woman telling her own tale. Establishing the authority of the tale's truth in the teller, we hear Cinderella's version of her story; we listen to Rapunzel tell how it *really* happened.

Donoghue further employs the first person to interweave the tales so that the end of one always leads to the beginning of another. For example, at the close of "The Tale of the Rose" ("Beauty and the Beast"), Beauty asks the Beast, "Who were you before you chose a mask over a crown?" and this becomes an invitation for the Beast to tell her "Tale of the Apple" (a version of "Snow White"). The conclusion of one woman's story always begins the next with a question: how did you get here? how did you become this person? how did you find a different way of being? By virtue of such questions one woman tells another the story of her transformation, and by linking the stories together, Donoghue creates an interconnected sisterhood of headstrong, sometimes angry characters who teach each other the art of uncompromised living. The "Tale of a Bird" is the story of Cinderella's lover, and it begins, "When I was as young as you are now I learned how to save my own life. You think I have saved you, but the truth is your need has conjured me here. . . . The thing is to take your own life in your hands" (11). Or as the witch tells Gretel in the "Tale of the Skin," "Once I was a stupid girl; now I am an angry woman. Sometimes you must shed your skin to save it" (145).

In many of these tales the source of conflict, which then initiates the central character's quest for her own identity, is between mother and daughter. Dutiful daughters become rebellious daughters in stubbornly refusing the hierarchical standards their mothers accept—female submission to the male, maid's subservience to the princess, and so on. In the "Tale of the Handkerchief," the story of two disobedient daughters, one reflects, "I thought of how both of us had refused to follow the paths mapped out for us by our mothers and their mothers before them, but had perversely gone our own ways instead . . ." (80).

In almost every respect, the tales occupy a female-centered universe. Male roles are subsidiary. There are no heroes—no rescue work is provided by the prince who leaps chasms to save the princess in distress. She owns her distress until she undertakes the classic hero's journey to undo it. In fact, in these tales, male characters are in effect immobilized by their concerns with maintaining traditional patterns of hierarchy founded in paternity, inheritance, and the birth of sons, concerns which the central female characters disdain. Male

characters—husbands, suitors—and parents are figures of entrapment. They are the wardens of the benign prisons of convention which must be escaped. The heroine in "Tale of the Bird," who at one point is being forcibly kept in the castle by her husband, explains, "Oh, my husband was no tyrant. . . . But now I knew that what I wanted was not the same as what he wanted for me. . . . I trusted that he would never let anything hurt me, but he would never let anything touch me either" (20–21).

What truly touches these women is the hand, the kiss, the joyously freeing, wayward influence of another woman. The lesbian premise—and promise—which underlies most of these stories suggests that if the classic fairy tale has always used language to both reflect and repel social norms, this fantastic art form can be manipulated as well to underscore the importance—the reality—of social iconoclasm, subversion, and creative ambiguity. So that, for example, a Beauty in discovering her Beast to be a woman might say, "This was a strange story, one I would have to learn a new language to read, a language I could not learn except by trying to read the story" (39).

Donoghue's book deserves a broad-based audience, including older children. She brings her talents as a novelist to this project and certainly at the level of engaged and provocative telling, *Kissing the Witch* far surpasses most of the feminist fairy-tale rewrites I have read. Within fairy-tale scholarship the book offers an invaluable learning and teaching tool. Its critique of heterosexual and class privilege is provocative but never dogmatic. Moreover Donoghue's retelling lends itself to a further understanding of the inherent flexibility of this centuries-old verbal art form. I can't help but thinking that Propp would be proud of Donoghue's achievement; for her, transformations in the fairy tale are ever capable of expansion to suit the context of new audiences. By rewriting traditional fairy tales from a lesbian perspective, Donoghue helps create the necessary artifacts of what philosopher Julia Penelope calls "a self-realizing lesbian culture." The final story in the collection, "Tale of the Kiss," ends with an invitation to the reader to tell her version of how it concludes. Will the witch find happiness with the girl she loves? The witch wants us to decide: "And what happened next, you ask? Never you mind. . . . This is the story you asked for. I leave it in your mouth" (227–28).

Kay Turner

Independent Folklorist

Building Babel. By Suniti Namjoshi. Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex Press, 1996. 192 pp.

As Angela Carter and others have shown, there is much to be gained from reworking traditional stories, using the original characters and plot lines to raise fresh questions about identity and human relationships. Writers whose main

interest is in the definition and limits of gender roles have been particularly effective in this field, but one cannot help feeling that success has depended upon the use of well-known, instantly recognizable figures, such as Red Riding Hood, Iron Hans, rather than the creation of new characters. In *Building Babel*, however, Suniti Namjoshi creates a *dramatis personae* of familiar but somewhat vague "sisters": Alice, (a variation on Carroll's rather quarrelsome heroine), Snow White and Rose Green, Sol, Lady Shy, The Black Piglet, Verity and Charity, Rap Rap, and a host of others who shift and mutate in the course of play, (and this book's principal strength lies in its playfulness). At the centre of it all sits Crone Kronos, who is (or may be), the Creator-Destroyer, the origin and end of all things: "Once upon a time there was an old woman. Call her God, call her Crone Kronos, or call her The Enemy. Her problem was that she was bored. She looked at a stone and the stone eroded. She looked at an atom and the atom exploded—or did not explode. It wasn't good enough. She wanted interaction, a voluntary response. And therefore she invented life. Thereafter consciousness. Thereafter language. And thereafter poetry, which made her so excessively cross she refused to speak, because then we reproached her and tried to say what cannot be said, and to tell the tale that may not be told" (191). Or maybe not. It is part of the game, of course, that we are never very sure who any of these characters are; the attendant danger is that we may fail to care, one way or another. *Building Babel* raised any number of interesting questions—perhaps too many—but too often the characters seem abstract and bloodless, more types than actual beings. The strength of traditional tales is in the flesh-and-bone quality of its protagonists: Iron Hans is first and foremost an awesome and rather beautiful person, not a symbol; when Briar Rose pricks her finger on the spindle, the blood is real. Yet, in spite of this, Namjoshi creates some wonderful moments in the course of her book. One such is the meeting between Little Red and the Wolf: seeing that the Wolf wants to eat her, Red manages to convince him that he is not really a wolf at all, but a man:

"So what?" says the wolf.

"Marry me!"

"What good would that do?"

"Then we'll have kids and farm the land."

"Have you got any land?"

"Yes," replies Red. "But I've got to clear it of wolves first. I need your help." (24)

Moments like these are a delight, but they are perhaps scarcer than one would have wished. Too often, the author (or one of the sisters), interrupts the proceedings to meditate, reflect, pontificate or moralize: "Minarets and domes spiralled upwards. Babel rose, and eventually fell. The Pig, The Prince and The

Princess were powerful symbols. In varying modes and manifestations each, at different times, governed Babel. Solitude was not mentioned either then or later, and odes do not figure in the building of Babel. [No, Solly: This won't do. We must prepare ourselves for growth and success, not resign ourselves to an inevitable end. Rap Rap]" (86). Nothing is more antagonistic to poetry than this kind of abstraction; the power of any fairy tale or myth lies in its lyricism, and the power of poetry lies in the way it transforms the everyday. *Building Babel* is most enjoyable—and most interesting—when nothing is explained, when the archetypal creations do not stride to the front of the stage and address their audience. Of course, the stories are only the vehicles by which Namjoshi intends to convey her ideas—ideas which are complex and thought-provoking; nevertheless, the danger in beginning a story, only to confound it with philosophical or ideological speculation, is that the interest of the reader lies in the telling of the tale, and not in the ideas. The truth is, a good story is worth any amount of abstract thought, because stories transcend ideas.

Building Babel begins and ends with an invitation to its readers to visit the Spinifex website and contribute a "Reader's Text" (the site can be found at <http://www.publishaust.net.au/spinifex/>). There are "several things" this author would like to know: the architectural plans for Babel, the graffiti inscribed on the bricks of Babel, bedtime conversations between Cinders and the Prince—these are just a few examples. When I visited the site, I found the customary mix (for cyberspace) of the unintelligible and the banal: cryptic graffiti, half-composed poems, mysterious confessions. Nobody can blame Suniti Namjoshi for this, of course; indeed, it is an almost unavoidable consequence of her approach that the end of the book must be left open to such contributions, a work not so much unfinished as pending. "Building Babel," Namjoshi says, "is what people do." I think she intends this remark as a form of celebration—an attitude which, in some ways, is admirable, even enviable, in itself.

John Burnside

University of Dundee

Van Alladin tot Zwaan kleef aan. By Ton Dekker, Jurjen van der Kooi, and Theo Meder. Nijmegen: SUN/Kritak, 1997. 487 pp.

Van Alladin tot Zwaan kleef aan (*From Alladin to All Stick Together*) is a Dutch lexicon of fairy tales that belong to the popular-fairy-tale culture of the Low Countries. All in all, the lexicon contains some two hundred entries, covering many of the well-known traditional fairy tales (the classical collections by Perrault and Grimm) and in addition offering special attention to lesser-known tales as well as variants of well-known tales typical of the area. Readers unfamiliar with the local folktale culture and thirsting for new original material will be disappointed, however, because very few of these fairy tales originated in

the Low Countries: practically all of them either belong to the powerful north-eastern tradition (Germanic) or are indebted to the more southern (Romance) tradition.

The main selection criterion for the entries was not a particular type or genre but rather seems to have been "popularity," i.e., the selected tales had to currently fulfill their cultural and social roles as fairy tales. The authors, to be sure, use this criterion with considerable flexibility: one can hardly call a tale such as "The Master Thief" (AT 950) "popular," but the inclusion of such historically important tales does have the advantage of placing various fairy tales in a more global and richer context. On the whole the lexicon is quite exhaustive. For reasons of scope the authors decided not to include sagas.

Van Alladin tot Zwaan kleef aan is an important document, the first full-fledged and well-organized lexicon that wants to map the fairy-tale landscape in the three important linguistic and cultural areas of the Low Countries: the Netherlands, Friesland, and Flanders. Most of the included fairy tales can be considered to be part of today's general culture; they no longer survive by being told from one generation to the other but come to us in commodified forms such as books, films, audiocassettes, amusement parks, commercials, and so on. Traditional storytelling is historically important but no longer for the survival of the tale (as the authors point out, after 1980 there are no more storytellers in the Low Countries—except, of course, for trained "performers"). Most entries then refer to printed sources, though in some cases there may be references to storytellers, and this is particularly so for the Frisian fairy tales.

The importance and richness of the Frisian fairy-tale tradition is given well-deserved attention in this lexicon for reasons that are explained in the introduction, where the authors give a rough sketch of the historical development of fairy-tale studies in the Low Countries. The systematic study of the folktale in the Low Countries is relatively recent. Early nineteenth-century studies were often not primarily aimed at exploring the singularities but rather at finding the commonalities with the rich tradition of the German folktale. When the German mythologist Johann Wilhelm Wolf published the first collection of Dutch and Flemish tales in translation, the *Niederländische Sagen* (1843), his main interest was to find supporting evidence for the existence of a great Germanic consciousness and, especially with respect to Flanders, to counteract French influences on the area. Wolf's work was in turn welcomed by the late-nineteenth-century Flemish Movement that aimed at cultural and political emancipation: the fairy tales were then used to create a sense of Flemish cultural identity. Friesland was the next region to follow suit. Here, too, the aim was to find evidence of a distinct cultural identity, but unlike in Flanders this Frisian desire for emancipation gave rise to a much more systematic study of the local

folktale tradition. The Frisian fairy tale is therefore well documented and well represented in this lexicon.

The lexicon is also somewhat of a milestone in that it seeks to bridge the world of the scholar and that of the interested reader. Both will find the lexicon to their liking. Besides an extensive summary of the fairy tale, each entry contains scholarly information such as the type and the (sub)genre to which it belongs; it also lists other interesting versions and variants (if any). Information on the tale's genealogy, its oral or written source, and the collector or teller is provided when available. Most entries proceed with information which is of a general interest—information about the history, the dissemination, and the cultural and historical backgrounds of the type; the variability of the literary and oral tradition; and the various interpretations of the tale. Finally, many entries include interesting, though not exhaustive, references to drama, opera, and film adaptations of the tale. Cross-references with other tales are abundant and clearly indicated in the text.

Each main entry also includes a short reference section subdivided in "Texts," listing the most important printed versions of the fairy tale, and "Studies," referring to scholarly works and indicating the type number in the various existing reference systems: the Aarne-Thompson index, the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* index, and the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*. The lexicon also contains a general fourteen-page bibliography of scholarly publications in Dutch, German, and English, with some in French and Frisian.

Van Alladin tot Zwaan kleeft aan appeared as number eight in a series of lexicons dealing with classical and biblical mythology, themes from medieval and renaissance literature, medieval iconography, hagiology, and so on. All of them are published on glossy paper, are nicely illustrated, and provide valuable and inspiring tools for both the fairy-tale scholar and the interested reader. Provided he or she knows Dutch, of course.

Walter P. Verschueren

Institute for Higher Education in the Sciences and the Arts, Brussels

Out of the Woods: The Origins of the Literary Fairy Tale in Italy and France. Edited by Nancy L. Canepa. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998. 363 pp.

The title of this far-ranging and absorbing collection of essays is self-reflexive: the volume conducts fairy tale itself out of the tangled dark woods of folklore, emancipating it from the lips of the hunchbacked crone in her half-timbered hovel as well as from the oracular universalisms of psychoanalytical studies into a well-mapped and chronologically marked arena of historical, social, and economic realities. The tellers of tales turn writers, and writers who not only belong in defined historical settings but also communicate, as writers do, the burden of their concerns, interests, and politics. The essays arose from a

two-day conference on the literary fairy tale held at Dartmouth College in 1995, and they represent the continuing, fruitful work of the leading thinkers in the field: Catherine Velay-Vallantin, Jack Zipes, Lewis Seifert among them. They have been lucidly marshalled by the editor Nancy Canepa in order to move towards a recognition, as she and Antonella Ansani write in the introduction, that the fairy tale is not "a monolithic genre" but "a vital, changing form, firmly entrenched in cultural history."

The book opens with Giambattista Basile, the author of the wildly exuberant, baroque extravaganza *Lo cunto de li cunti*, also known as *Il pentamerone*, which was published in 1636 in Naples, soon after the author's death. Basile wrote in an ornate Neapolitan, and his storytelling mimics, with hyperbolic gusto, oral techniques of enumeration, rhythmic listings, eddying and whirling word clusters, so that he is even difficult for Italians to read; moreover he relishes with Rabelaisian appetite a certain corporeal curiosity as well as the off-color anecdote: these are stories in which a fart may be celebrated in the rhetorical raiment more usually reserved, in later literature, for the apparel of fairies. Despite translations by Benedetto Croce and various more recent voices, this most entertaining of writers has remained oddly neglected. The two opening essays by Nancy Canepa and Antonella Ansani, followed later by a discussion by Jack Zipes of Basile's version of "Puss in Boots," offer close and fascinating readings of several tales and help establish Basile's pioneering place in the history of the European fairy tale and the uses of comic fantasy.

Canepa explores Basile's frequently outlandish scenes of metamorphosis and magic; she brilliantly suggests that the first tale, about a simpleton who is adopted by a doting ogre and given magical gifts—a donkey, a table, and a cudgel—to set him on his way, replicates Basile's own strategy as a writer who annexed the tools of the peasant's art of narration, including the rude and tongue-lashing potential of the local vernacular. His variation on the carnivalesque thus stages an assault on many fronts, on courtliness and its cult of spectacle and appearance, on literary propriety, orthodox morality, and glib narrative resolutions at a time when the Spanish-ruled Kingdom of Naples, where Basile served as a courtier, was itself in a state of flux. Hence the hectic and unstable character of the pleasures he delivers does not derive from some immutable and innate character of the fantastic as a form of literary diversion, but from the intractable difficulties of the social requirements of his state.

If Basile wears the mask of a garrulous, mocking buffoon, many of his characters are similarly disguised beneath deceptive features. The grotesque cannot be taken at face value, as in the case of the many terrible hags in his tales. They are themselves mirror images of the ten old wives mustered as Basile's mouthpieces, each one more raddled, deformed, and chapfallen than the next, and their surplus of physical marks and accidents also replicates

the excesses of Basile's baroque prose. As Ansani argues in her eloquent essay, the story of "La vecchia storteccata" ("The Old Woman Who Was Skinned") dramatizes the author's commitment to fabrication, ornament, and deception: one crone is transformed by the fairies into a beautiful young girl, while her sister, hoping for the same, has herself flayed, and dies. Ansani persuasively writes, "with her death the traditional and valued principle of the 'naked truth' that she represents dies as well, while the world of appearances and of baroque rhetoric . . . triumphs." Thus the seventeenth-century fairy tale does not present fixed and partitioned worlds of good and evil, or reward virtue and punish wickedness in the happily-ever-after endings traditionally considered as defining the genre.

Many of the essays look at the reasons for the development of fairy tale's commonly held ahistorical and simple, even mechanical, moral character. Elizabeth W. Harries trenchantly observes, in "Fairy Tales about Fairy Tales: Notes on Canon Formation," that the many women writers in late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century France have been written out of the story because their barbed ironies did not advocate homely virtues in the manner of the proverbial nurses and grannies of Perrault and Grimm. But Harries overstates the case when she says the *salonnières* who attacked princely authority, marriage arrangements, and female subordination under the ancien régime did not invoke peasants or the oral tradition as their sources: Mlle L'Héritier explicitly refers to her nurse, and Mme d'Aulnoy, more fancifully, invokes "an old Arab slavewoman."

Jack Zipes who, with his magnificent anthologies, has done more than anyone else to recast the fairy-tale canon, supports Harries's argument that male interests determined the survival of one version over another, by taking the case of "Puss in Boots." Straparola, a sixteenth-century Venetian, included a number of tales of metamorphosis and magic in *Le piacevoli notti* (*The Pleasant Nights*), and tells there the story of a female cat, a fairy in disguise who works wonders on behalf of her master, Costantino, the youngest son of a poor woman, until finally he ascends to the throne of Bohemia. The tale ironically portrays the unfairness of power acquisition and the prerequisites of "the civilizing process." Again, Basile used the story to indict the mores of the day, adding a savage antimoral to his version, when the cat finds her master ungrateful after all she has done for him and all the vows he has made to look after her and honor her. But with Perrault and, much later, Disney, all such criticisms of the parvenu prince fade, and he turns into a model of the self-made male in the land of opportunity. When Zipes gave this material as a lecture in London, he concluded with rare footage from Walt Disney's earliest years when Disney was still drawing the cartoons himself, but no doubt the Disney Corporation's exorbitant permission fees (and censorship) prohibited reproduction here.

Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, the most ebullient and accomplished of the Parisian fairy-tale inventors, barely concealed her critique of the profligacy and tyranny of Louis XIV's rule; one of her most famous fairy tales, "The White Cat," contains a brilliantly savage account of a ruinous war, for example. Adrienne E. Zuerner takes the lesser-known "Belle-Belle, ou le chevalier Fortuné," one of many stories starring a cross-dressed heroine, to press the case that d'Aulnoy, in the teeth of ferocious state censorship, was pointing unmistakably to the king's cowardice, decrepitude, and even effeminacy. In so doing, Perrault's sparkling contemporary was overturning Perrault's patriotic inflexion on the "Modern" genre of fairy tale as a means of exalting all things French, including *le roi soleil*.

The third part of the book introduces the most original material of all, in an exploration of "Eighteenth-Century Parodies and Transformations." Mary-Louise Ennis, with ground-breaking research, looks at the popular, burlesque, even scabrous concoctions of Regency writers like Alain-René Lesage and Antoine, Count Hamilton, an Anglo-Irish aristocrat writing in exile in France from the entourage of the deposed Catholic King James II. In his "Arlequin, roi des Ogres" (1720), Lesage adapted well-worn pantomime material from the Italian players who had been banned earlier by Louis XIV, but introduced direct allusions to the colonial enterprise in the Americas, with an ogre chorus chanting nonsense "in their native Algonquin." Ted Emery continues this excursion into theatrical developments of fairy tale with an essay on another unjustifiably neglected writer, Carlo Gozzi, whose stories inspired Puccini's *Turandot* and Prokofiev's *Love of Three Oranges*, among many other operas and plays. Gozzi is notorious for his embattled, bitter, and very noisy feud with Goldoni, his fellow Venetian and pioneer of the new realism on stage, but Emery deepens understanding of Gozzi's reactionary stand in favor of the *commedia dell'arte*. The theme of metamorphosis returns, for Gozzi relished the artifice of the old theatre, the masks and machinery that could produce dazzling spectacles of transformations. Emery is concerned to work out the weight of Gozzi's claim that "the clowning of the *commedia dell'arte* masks . . . stole none of the force from the ferocious, fantastic seriousness of the impossible occurrences and from the allegorical moral." Gozzi was fighting a rearguard battle, not simply against a theatrical revolution, but against the rise of a bourgeois concept of identity and, indeed, of integrity (nobility) as a commodity that can be exchanged, transferred, acquired.

The investigation of writers not commonly introduced in histories of fairy tale culminates with Casanova, whose "utopian fiction," the *Icosameron*, an account of a fantastic voyage to the center of the earth, is given a fascinating and sympathetic reading by Cynthia C. Craig. Here, the relation of fairy tale to other branches of speculative and ironical fantasy, as in Swift and Defoe, and to the wilder reaches of utopianism (Fourier and even De Sade), begins to

glimmer, but lies ultimately beyond the scope of *Out of the Woods*. The volume concludes triumphantly with Catherine Velay-Vallantin's research into the ways the story of the "Bête de Gevaudan" was told and its interconnections with the transformation of "Red Riding Hood." The *Bête* was a monstrous creature, reputedly a huge wolf, that took the lives of many before it was finally hunted down. Velay-Vallantin tells an enthralling story: the local bishop fulminated against the morals of the community, identifying the *Bête* as a sure sign from God of their sinfulness, both to bring former Huguenots into line, and to terrorize rural shepherd girls into Christian modesty and decorum: "This idolatrous and criminal flesh," he ranted, "which serves only as a demonic instrument for seducing and condemning souls, should it not be given unto the murderous teeth of ferocious Beast to tear [it] to pieces?"

Out of the Woods richly repays careful reading: it fulfills admirably and divertingly its editor's aim to embed fairy tale in its historical and cultural contexts, and by presenting some wonderful, fresh material, the contributors reveal the genre's protean powers of metamorphosis, as its practitioners slip and wriggle in the grip of different opponents. Only two caveats: several of the contributors refer to Tzvetan Todorov's theory of the fantastic, as distinct from the uncanny and the marvellous; but their attempts to use it to illuminate fairy tale only demonstrate the slipperiness of his definition and its severe limitations as a hermeneutical tool, especially for texts that were aimed at a variety of readers (and listeners), and are now received by yet other audiences with very different belief systems: for children brought up on Mme d'Aulnoy (and this did happen—there are not only French editions but several English translations), her fantastic wonders operate in a naturalized landscape of enchantment, outside Todorov's geography. Finally, the book is unfortunately marred by repeated typos in the French quotations, as well as many missing accents: is there no software that can overcome these difficulties?

Marina Warner

Trinity College, Cambridge

The Thousand and One Nights in Arabic Literature and Society. Edited by Richard C. Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. vii + 121 pp.

In the longest and, in my opinion, the most useful, of the studies in this volume, Muhsin Mahdi begins with a discussion of the current state of *1001 Nights* studies: the move from beginnings in *Quellenforschungen*—the quest for "origins and sources" (78)—"toward the more profitable study of the work in the light of contemporary literary criticism." Mahdi goes on to talk of "a pressing need to make a fresh start in the study of the *Nights*," a view with which one cannot but agree. Yet, in penning such comments as a preface to his

own contribution to this volume, he cannot, one suspects, have been aware of quite how far the volume in which these thoughts of his are included manages to problematize the context and rationale(s) of the very scholarly tradition that he is describing.

Initial indications from the volume under review are all good. The academic context is the twelfth biennial conference (1989) held in conjunction with the Giorgio Della Vida Award in Islamic Studies at the University of California in Los Angeles. The awardee is Andre Miquel, former professor of Arabic Studies in Paris, now honored member of the Collège de France and renowned scholar on the *1001 Nights*. To the conference were also invited a selection of other scholars of high repute (at the invitation of the awardee) to celebrate his career through the presentation and discussion of a series of studies on the *Nights*. This was obviously a most promising occasion, but I must immediately state that the published results of its proceedings are for the most part disappointing. What strikes one first is the exiguous size of the resulting volume (113 pages of text), especially in comparison with other volumes in the Della Vida Award series, most of which are considerably larger in both number and size of contributions; each one of them has become something akin to a "classic" of recent scholarship in its particular field. I have no particular information concerning either the planning or timing of this (1989) conference nor of the processes (apparently protracted) involved in the subsequent publication of its proceedings; one is left to wonder if those attending the conference were given insufficient time to present research of any length or elaboration, or whether some other participants did not submit their work for publication (there are six studies in all, in addition to Miquel's contribution). Thus, while the illustrious list of names on the contents page promises great riches, a perusal of the studies themselves leaves the reader regretting that in almost every case much more might be said. In an era when academic presses are becoming more and more cautious concerning the publication of festschriften and conference volumes of this very type, the published form of the present volume would appear to constitute an "*ibrah li-man ya'tabir*" (a lesson for those who would learn)—to invoke one of the most regularly cited "punch lines" of the *1001 Nights* itself—for those who would seek to convene conferences on a particular theme and then publish the resulting studies in book form.

Taking the studies themselves in turn, we begin with the extremely short contribution of the honoree himself, Andre Miquel (8–13). Here a few general comments about the nature of the *Nights* as an intercultural phenomenon are followed by some short remarks about the "Sindbad" cycle and an adumbration to "Tawaddud." With Miquel's illustrious Parisian colleague, Jamaledine Bencheikh, we have a study (14–28) dealing with the "Tale of Ali Bakkar and Shams al-Nahar," and, more specifically, the portrait that it paints of the

court of Baghdad—the elements of courtly love and fashionable behavior and deportment—between the mythical world of stories and the more “historical” accounts of other sources. Roy Mottahedeh’s focus (29–39) is the role of the element of surprise (and its concomitant lexicon) in the *1001 Nights* collection. This “dynamics of astonishment” focuses briefly on the frame story of the collection, but addresses itself in more concentrated form to “The Porter and the Three Ladies” where, of course, the complex layering of narratives and the abundance of coincidence allow Mottahedeh to develop some interesting insights into the narrative strategies that characterize the collection. Fedwa Malti-Douglas’s contribution (40–55) is a continuation of her explorations of feminist approaches to the persona of Shahrazad, seen previously in her *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Word* (1991). As she notes, the persona pervades much contemporary women’s writing (40), but her focus here is on two other writers in particular, the modern Egyptian feminist, Nawal al-Sa’dawi (Saadawi)—who is the subject of her detailed study, *Men, Women, and God(s)* (1995), and Ethel Johnston Phelps, the author of a modern recounting of the narrative, “Scheherazade Retold.” The *1001 Nights* collection itself has its own form of rewriting, of course, in the guise of the “happy ending” provided to the expanded collection—with its 1001 duly enumerated nights, and it is Malti-Douglas’s goal here to point to the ways in which both the modern texts that she cites (in Sa’dawi’s case, *Suqut al-Imam* [1987; *The Fall of the Imam*, 1988]) seek to challenge the closing scenario created within the tradition of male storytelling. Seeger Bonebakker’s chapter, “Nihil Obstat in Story-telling” (56–77) is an example of the meticulous scholarship that we have come to expect from him. His fascinating paper explores debates concerning the “legality” of fiction within the Islamic tradition by reference to several Quranic texts and the way(s) in which they have been interpreted. This wide-ranging and erudite exploration cites a variety of sources and broaches a subject that has numerous ramifications in the field of contemporary literature, and yet it needs to be observed (as Bonebakker himself does in a somewhat sardonic fashion) that the *1001 Nights* only manage to put in an appearance in his chapter as part of its penultimate paragraph.

As I suggested above, Muhsin Mahdi’s contribution, “From History to Fiction” (78–105), comes from the scholar who has devoted a lifetime to the study of this great collection of tales and who has recently provided us with the edition of its text that will serve as the model for years to come. The companion studies that he has produced as part of this enormous project have all sought to introduce contemporary approaches to the study of the collection as a whole and its individual tales, and the current contribution is no exception. His focus here is the interesting linkage between history and fiction; to use his own words, “the manner in which the storyteller went about transforming earlier models and his reasons for doing what he did” (79). His text comes from the Hunchback

story and involves the tale told by the steward of the King of China. Citing another version of the account to be found in al-Tanukhi's (d. 994) *Al-Faraj ba'da al-shiddah*, Mahdi illustrates the ways in which the different segments of the tale have been transformed by the storyteller's craft. The final study of Stanislav Segert (106–13) is a very short montage of references to tales in the *1001 Nights* collection that were culled from ancient Near Eastern materials.

As should be clear from the above comments, this collection of studies is, for the most part, devoted to the single topic of the *1001 Nights*, but has rather little else in common by way of topic or method. That perhaps may be an indication, even a happy indication, of the fact that we have by now passed beyond the phase (and its concomitant cultural attitudes) in which every study had to concern itself with the origins of the tales in the collection. The varied perspectives of contemporary narratological scholarship now add themselves to other methodological approaches regarding a collection that continues to exert its fascinating hold on new generations of researchers. All that is, of course, to be welcomed. However, apart from the sense of disappointment regarding the size of this volume, one is also left with the sense that the sheer scholarly diffusion evident in its contents also points to some of the problems that arise when one fails to provide some more rigorous terms of reference in convening a conference on a topic that can now afford such an embarrassment de richesses.

Roger Allen

University of Pennsylvania

Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies. By Cristina Bacchilega. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. x + 208 pp.

In an earlier *boundary 2* article, "Cracking the Mirror: Three Re-Visions of 'Snow White,'" Cristina Bacchilega comments that certain postmodern writers do rewrite literary fairy tales but, more importantly, they *reread* them for adult audiences. Rereading illuminates the present volume in which Bacchilega shows how postmodern writers variously "crack the mirror" by denaturalizing the concepts of "woman" and "story," often read as givens in the classic literary fairy tales of Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and others, in order to reveal, question, and sometimes validate the tales' social and literary ideologies. After an introductory chapter in which she sets out the critical and personal contexts for her own interest in the topic, the author examines "the fairy tale archaeology" of four of the best-known *Märchen* in the Western world: "Snow White," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Beauty and the Beast," and "Bluebeard" in chapters 2–5 respectively. She builds a case that postmodern fairy tales can themselves be read as revelatory "metanarratives" which critically (re)evaluate the tale versions and their various analyses.

And she does it. I'm convinced. Jack Zipes, quoted on the jacket cover, writes, "This is an extraordinary book, and a 'first' on the topic. A feminist folklorist, Professor Bacchilega has a remarkable capacity to reveal the intersections of folklore, literature and film," an opinion with which I heartily agree. Lest potential readers, either sated with or baffled by disruptive criticism (whether feminist, cultural, or postmodern), might be tempted to pass this volume by, I would like to briefly review Bacchilega's own interdisciplinary strategies in presenting her arguments. She begins each of the four main chapters with a specific critical focus, then reviews the intertwined oral, literary, and critical histories of the tale under discussion, and then concludes with analyses of postmodern rewritings/rereadings (a plus pedagogically). In doing so, she reveals aspects of fairy tales and fairy-tale scholarship not usually considered together. In chapter 2, "The Framing of 'Snow White': Narrative and Gender (Re)Production," for example, she presents an arresting argument that postmodern writers Angela Carter in "The Snow Child," Donald Barthelme in *Snow White*, and Robert Coover in "The Dead Queen" recognize that reading "Snow White" as a story of the successful initiation of a young woman into patriarchal culture naturalizes the underlying cruelty of male desire and of female innocence. Bacchilega shows that these rewrites break that initiatory frame, an intriguing critical stance I have not seen to date in tale criticism.

In chapter 3, "Not Re(a)d Once and for All: 'Little Red Riding Hood's Voices in Performance,'" Bacchilega concentrates on Angela Carter's triple rewrites—"The Werewolf," "The Company of Wolves," and "Wolf Alice"—and her film with Neil Jordan, *The Company of Wolves*, which incorporates elements of all three rewrites in a complex, parodic overlay of narrative. She rightly credits Carter's own knowledge of multiple oral and literary versions of the tale and of its psychoanalytic and social criticism as part of her tales' revoicings which force readers to cross and confuse gender boundaries, especially those between Little Red Ridinghood/wolf and grandmother/wolf. I, for one, familiar with conflicting readings of LRRH texts which posit, nonetheless, covert sexual desire in the tale, still reeled at Little Red's erotic, bestial transformations/initiations that Bacchilega exposes in Carter's dark and disturbing stories and film which (re)connect *Märchen* with werewolf belief narratives and so further confound the categorical distinctions between tale/legend. Although Jack Zipes, for example, has noted earlier versions that connect the wolf to the werewolf, no fairy-tale scholar I know of connects Little Red herself to that tradition, yet, possibly, Carter knew. . . .

In chapter 4—"In the Eye of the Beholder: 'Where is Beast?'"—Bacchilega sees contemporary rewrites of "Beauty and the Beast" tales as potentially disruptive of the gender/genre convention that Beauty and transformed Beast, the Prince, live "happily ever after." In what I found to be one of the most intriguing

illuminations in the volume, she notes the moment of Beauty's hesitation in de Beaumont's classic version ("Though this prince was worthy of all her attention, she could not forbear asking where Beast was") and asks whether or not Beast's transformation was Beauty's desire. Focusing on Beauty's vision, she suggests that all the rewrites she considers answer the question "Where is Beast?" in some way. She characterizes the answers of 1980s television series "Beauty and the Beast" and Tanith Lee's "Beauty" as nondisruptive and, therefore, modern while those of Angela Carter's two rewrites, "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride," as disruptive and, therefore, postmodern. The latter tale, like those of Carter's discussed in chapter 3, reverses the "normal" reading by having Beauty become Beast, a strategy also employed in the recent film *Wolf* with Jack Nicholson and Michele Pfeiffer.

In chapter 5, "'Be Bold, Be Bold, But Not Too Bold': Double Agents and Bluebeard's Plot," Bacchilega considers "Bluebeard" rewrites: Margaret Atwood's "Bluebeard's Egg," Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber," and Jane Campion's film *The Piano*. Following Maria Tatar, she sees the rewrites exploring the ogre husband's sadism, usually not discussed in the tale's classic critiques but so discussed in feminist literature. She also sees, however, that these authors reread the ancient tale by fusing categories normally read as separate: the curious bride as heroine-victim and the ogre husband as villain overlap when the bride's material and erotic desires make her a collusive agent in her own masochistic victimage, yet also her husband's sadistic double in some ways. The richest and most complicated doubling Bacchilega discusses is how these rewrites might lead readers to (re)consider a dual pattern in all versions of this tale: its value in wrestling with the ambiguities and complexities of heterosexual relationships in the Western world, on the one hand, and its recognition, on the other, that its sadomasochistic social base needs dismantling. I personally found this chapter the most challenging, yet the most provocative of the four discussed.

In a brief Epilogue, Bacchilega compares Stephen Sondheim's Broadway musical *Into the Woods* with *Once upon One Time*, produced through the Children's Theatre at the University of Hawai'i, to argue that the former production maintains the literary fairy tale's master narrative while the latter disrupts it. The volume concludes with forty-two pages of substantive notes, thirteen pages of primary and secondary sources cited, and an index which references conceptual terms used, fairy tales and postmodern rewrites, and names of authors and critics.

The paragraphs above already indicate my very positive response to *Post-modern Fairy Tales*. The volume is part of the growing body (no pun intended) of gender and genre fairy-tale criticism as evidenced in the book review sections of *Fabula*, *Journal of American Folklore*, and *Marvels and Tales*, to name but a few journals. Yet it also pushes that criticism up a notch by fusing feminist

and postmodern criticism, often antagonistic theoretical orientations but here compatible rather than strange bedfellows, in its approach to postmodern fairy tales. Even though Bacchilega applauds postmodern/feminist projects (as do I), she reads postmodern stories as reconstructive alignments to preceding fairy-tale criticism as well as deconstructive critique as I read it, so that she presents postmodern fairy tales in creative dialogue with earlier work rather than completely dismissive of it. The volume is also well-written and readable even though its focus is a theoretical one, containing many succinct summaries of the tales under consideration.

Like other pioneering works, the volume's interdisciplinary strengths can also contain its weaknesses. I found that some crossover terminology such as "postmodern," "voice," and "focalization" drawn from literary criticism (especially feminist, postmodern, and semiotic varieties) and from folk narratology remained vague even though briefly defined in either chapter 1 or the footnotes and applied in the four case studies. I would also have included some of the substantive footnotes (which are wonderful by the way) into the body of the text for clarity. Readers might not all be footnote lovers and so miss a major portion of the book as I see it. I would also have shortened the introductory chapter, or perhaps placed it as an afterword, and lengthened the too-brief epilogue. Drawn to cultural criticism myself, I would have liked to see more specific cultural contexts considered; but one volume, already doing much complex work, cannot do all. In conclusion, I see *Postmodern Fairy Tales* as an important book, one that I am already using in my "Folklore & Literature" classes, one that performs wonders itself.

Janet L. Langlois
Wayne State University

Willi: An American Snow White. Directed by Tom Davenport. Performed by Becky Stark, Caitlin O'Connell, and Mark Jaster. Videocassette. Tom and Mimi Davenport, Davenport Films. 1997.

When recreating traditional fairy tales on the screen, film makers are faced with a basic choice: animation or live action. The success of the Disney animated versions has so outshone live action versions that one is tempted to conclude that the magic of fairy tales requires the artistic liberties of animation to convey the elusive power and appeal of these stories. However, there have been a number of successful live action adaptations over the years (particularly on television, where versions of *Cinderella* and *The Princess and the Pea* received critical approval). Tom Davenport's recent contribution of *Willi: An American Snow White* demonstrates once more that these tales may be successfully recast in a realistic setting. Davenport cleverly recreates the fairy tale of *Snow White* in an early-twentieth-century family environment. The strengths of this

production lie in how the realistic details of this modern retelling of the story resonate the archetypal themes of the traditional fairy tale and how the engaging performances offered by the cast create a sense of emotional authenticity for the drama.

Willa begins in a beautiful country estate in Virginia, where the recent widow of a wealthy man is about to take up residence. She is an actress, whose beauty and enormous professional success secured the interest of her wealthy husband. She is appropriately named Regina (masterfully played by Caitlin O'Connell), and her vanity and egotism seem natural aspects of her person and her professional activity. She lives for the applause of her audience, and her dressing mirror becomes the repository of her memories of dramatic acclaim. She brings her mirror with her, now that she has retired from the stage, and she visits her mirror regularly to reassure herself that the acclaim is still richly deserved.

From her dead husband Regina inherited not only the elegant estate, but also an attractive teenage daughter, Willa (charmingly played by Becky Stark), from a previous marriage. Willa's adulation of her beautiful and talented stepmother provides an appealing poignancy to the inevitable jealousy that arises. The crucial third member of the family triangle is Regina's faithful servant, Otto (amusingly played by Mark Jaster), who is clearly devoted to Regina, but who naively forms an attachment to Willa as he assists her in preparing a short piece from *Romeo and Juliet* to perform for her stepmother. Regina's condescension and fundamental indifference to Willa's performance seem entirely within her character and set in motion the emotional logic of the story.

Regina's minor jealousy over the attention Otto pays to Willa culminates in her rage when Otto encourages Willa to trade her modest country attire for an elegant dress (borrowed from Regina's wardrobe) for the grand dinner party that Regina has planned. When Regina sees Willa reflected in her mirror behind her, in comparison to her own aging and wrinkled appearance, the party is abandoned. Regina's envy and fury continue to escalate, until she attacks Willa with a knife. Otto intervenes and agrees to dispatch Willa for Regina. Otto drives Willa out to the countryside and leaves her, keeping her handkerchief. When he returns, he cuts his abdomen with the knife and soaks the handkerchief with blood, which he presents to Regina. His wound is invisible to her, but apparent to the audience.

Willa finds shelter with a traveling medicine show run by Alphonzo (John Neville-Andrews) and featuring Chief Tonka (Floyd King) and Billy Bugg (Sammy Ross). They sell the elixir of life, and Willa soon joins their acting troop as they perform the story of *Snow White* to demonstrate the magical powers of their elixir. The only threat to this new happy existence is the appearance of a

motion picture competitor who threatens to steal their audiences as he travels the same circuit and advertises his newfangled moving pictures. Willa is much taken by this enterprising young man, Toby (engagingly played by Jonny Elkes), but her companions do their best to sabotage him.

Meanwhile, Regina has fallen into deep despair, and the ancestral home has become a pigsty as Otto's previous boundless energy and scrupulous attention to duty have been replaced by emotional and physical ill health. When Regina discovers that Willa is not dead, she attacks Otto and kills him. And when Willa writes to Otto to tell him that she is doing well, Regina plans her revenge.

The film artfully uses the performance of the play of *Snow White* by Dr. Alphonzo's troop as the pretext for poisoning Willa. As Toby and Willa's companions watch, Regina deceptively slips Willa a real poisoned apple, and she falls into a faint. As one might guess, Toby uses the magic elixir to restore Willa, mostly because it is extremely bitter and causes an involuntary reaction in Willa's lifeless body, forcing her to spit up the poisoned piece of apple.

The next night, when the troop goes on with their performance, Regina shows up and inadvertently sets fire to the stage as she attempts one last time to be the center of attention. She is destroyed by the flames of her own unchecked passion. Of course, Willa agrees to join Toby as they head off for California.

This story of *Snow White* was created by Tom Davenport, Jonny Elkes, Mark Jaster, Roger Manley, and Sarah Toth, and they deserve considerable credit for the richly appropriate way the film brings this traditional drama to life. Not only is the early-twentieth-century rural environment effectively conveyed, the nuances of character and narrative detail consistently echo and reinforce the underlying emotional core of the fairy tale. The writers have chosen to focus on the impropriety of selfish egotism, as reflected in Regina's behavior, and the psychological and sexual maturation of the heroine, as depicted in the way Willa copes with feelings of jealousy and insecurity and learns to find her own strengths. The film shows, as the traditional tale does, how the heroine can inevitably surmount the obstacles to the goal of growing up and defining herself. The vividness and graphic detail of that process is emotionally powerful and captivating, especially for an adolescent audience, but for the same reason it is not appropriate for children under ten.

Finally, given the feminist critique of fairy tales in general and *Snow White* in particular (see, for example, the first chapter of Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*), one relevant concern is how contemporary retellings such as this film treat the issue of the representation of women. The fairy tale of *Snow White* is not only successfully retold in this contemporary film version, it is redeemed. The sexist emphasis of the Grimms' version is obviated in two respects. In the first place, the heroine finds a career other than keeping house. Instead, she fulfills her childhood ambitions of becoming an actress.

In becoming an actress, Willa not only learns the proper role to play in life, she learns to act on her own desires and impulses. She fulfills the implicit promise of the very first scenes of the story, as she supplants her stepmother as someone whose actions have the capacity to move others. In the second place, the heroine achieves a meaningful relationship with her future spouse that is not the mere result of physical attraction but the product of moral and personal affinity. Her relationship with Toby develops as a result of Willa's affirming her ethical position about the inappropriateness of her companions' treatment of him.

This version of *Snow White* has not only modernized it for a contemporary audience, it has managed to throw out the bathwater and keep the baby. It has jettisoned the culturally archaic details and mores, and replaced them with a charming and appropriate retelling of the emotional heart of the story of a young girl's maturation. This version affirms in an extremely evocative manner how a young woman can face and overcome the psychological and social challenges that accompany the transition from girlhood to womanhood. In sum, the winner of the 1998 Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Children's Video given by the American Library Association, *Willa* is an enjoyable and appealing contribution to the fairy-tale canon.

Steven Swann Jones

California State University, Los Angeles

Once Upon a Loss: A New Look at Cinderella. Directed by Carolyn Russell Stonewell. Videocassette. Elephant Films, 1995.

As a child, I was always troubled by the Grimms' version of "Cinderella" ("Ashputtle") which, in the very first paragraph, dispenses with Cinderella's beloved mother and buries her out in the garden. It was unthinkable to me that my mother might be buried in our garden after she died. It was unthinkable at the time that she would ever die. How much more reassuring was Perrault's version, reshaped for ladies and gentlemen of France's royal court, that describes Cinderella's original mother as "the best creature in the world." Pleasanter still was Disney's version in which Cinderella's dead mother is barely mentioned.

Over the years, I've come to realize that "pleasant" is not a desirable quality in fairy tales, that mothers will die eventually, and that a fairy tale's garden—that most hopeful of metaphors—should not be taken literally.

The film *Once Upon a Loss: A New Look at Cinderella* brings the garden back into what I now realize is its rightful central position. In the Grimms' version Ashputtle, a child wounded by early loss of her mother, habitually goes "out the back door to the garden" to find comfort and assistance. The twig she has planted in her garden/heart has grown into a tree of emotional and physical support which assists her in her journey toward wholeness. This tale, the film

suggests, offers a powerful image, one that can lead those of us wounded by early loss to a "marriage" that unites estranged and conflicting aspects of ourselves.

Once Upon a Loss effectively weaves together the Grimm version of "Cinderella," four women's stories of loss and mourning, and Jungian commentary from analyst Kathrin Asper, author of *The Abandoned Child Within: On Losing and Regaining Self Worth*. Illustrations of the Cinderella tale (by Karen Lisa Friedman)—with haunting background music from a group of a capella singers, Western Wind Vocal Ensemble—are interspersed with old photographs, Super-8 black and white clips, and crumbling documents to give viewers compelling insights into these women's past lives and present state of mind.

The personal stories of Jean, Lori, Maggie, and film director, Carolyn—women from forty to seventy—lead viewers beyond the personal. They are Cinderella people, Dr. Asper tells us, women left abandoned early in their lives by their mother's death or disappearance, women who have struggled through years of denial and depression, and have eventually come to terms with the loss, seeing themselves at last as part of a larger story. According to Asper, all the characters in the tale are aspects of Cinderella herself: the Stepmother is the voice inside that says, "No, you are not good enough"; the Stepsisters, so concerned with ego and recognition, represent the need to repress the negative and keep up appearances; the father is the parent who abandons her emotionally. As the video moves the tale from scene to scene, each woman tells more and more of her story, her life as Cinderella.

By the end of the film, we see all four women involved in fulfilling, self-actualizing work: public speaking, sculpting, therapist training, filmmaking. Having survived their younger Cinderella years, they have arrived late (rather than never, the grim alternative offered by another tale, "East of the Sun and West of the Moon") and, though memories of earlier wounds remain, their Cinderella issues have been resolved.

The Cinderella tale has been recently criticized in the section "Damsels in Distress" by the editors of *Folk and Fairy Tales*, Martin Hallett and Barbara Karasek, for having a heroine who "exhibits varying degrees of passivity and [who] must ultimately be rescued by a male and fulfilled by marriage." Of course, readers should recognize both social and psychological implications, what Steven Swann Jones calls "psychological mirrors and socially framed registers," of Innocent Persecuted Heroine tales such as "Cinderella" (*Western Folklore* 52.1), and one of the best attributes of *Once Upon a Loss* is that it produces no literal Prince with glass slipper in hand but treats marriage metaphorically, showing how conflicting selves—over time with considerable effort—can marry.

And live happily ever after? This is a promise the Grimms' tales never made. "Healing happens once and forever" in a fairy tale, Asper tells us. But in

real life—and in these four women's lives—"there will always be evidence of wounding." Luckily, there is always the garden.

Suzanne Kosanke
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Picturing Childhood: Illustrated Children's Books from the University of California Collections, 1550-1990. Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, Los Angeles, California, 16 April-29 June 1997. (Catalogue available from the gallery bookstore, tel. 310-443-7127.)

For several months in early 1997, Los Angelenos driving along selected streets could spot an unfamiliar spectator watching over their tedious commutes: a large White Rabbit, immaculately dressed, beckoning us from our cars into a wonderland of children's literature. Those who answered the call issued from banners flapping on lampposts were rewarded with an exhibition dazzling in its scope and wealth of materials. The majority of the works on display were drawn from the Children's Book Collection in the Department of Special Collections at UCLA's University Research Library, with additional items furnished by the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts and the Clark Memorial Library (both UCLA) and the Dr. Seuss Collection at UC San Diego. The works divided into five sections (Establishing Traditions; Publishing for Children; Movable and Pop-up Books, Toys, and Games; Nineteenth-Century Illustrators; and The Twentieth Century) filled the large galleries at the Hammer Museum. Each section alone merited an extended visit and study, leading me to return for three equally rewarding viewings.

The organization of the exhibition and catalogue attempts to verify—one might alternatively say, the empirical evidence shown in the history of children's books affirms—the famous thesis of Phillipe Ariès that childhood is an early modern invention, and that only in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries do we witness the emergence of true children's literature. Although recent scholarship has begun to question this view, the "Establishing Traditions" section reveals, as the catalogue states, that "prior to the mid-eighteenth century books were rarely created specifically for children, and children's reading was generally confined to literature intended for their education and moral edification rather than for their amusement" (13). Works of this sort are unlikely to include many illustrations, thus the display chooses somewhat exceptional examples—such as *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* by John Amos Comenius (1659) and illustrated Bibles—which served as precursors to later illustrated children's literature. Two subsections of "Establishing Traditions"—"Fables" and "Alphabet Books"—map more direct precursors to illustrated storybooks. Here we find several eighteenth- and nineteenth-century illustrated editions of Aesop

and a marvelous array of alphabet blocks, battledores, and books featuring the work of anonymous illustrators as well as that of such distinguished figures as Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway.

In "Publishing for Children" we enter a world rich in marvels. Passing several miniature volumes and boxed sets of engravings for children depicting tales such as *The Adventures of Captain Gulliver* (1785), *The Story of Aladdin* (1800), and *The History of the House That Jack Built* (1833) we come upon several glass cases dedicated to fairy tales. With numerous editions of tales by Perrault spanning centuries, and with illustrations to familiar tales by George Cruikshank, Gustave Doré, Crane, Greenaway, and others before me, I hoped for the opportunity to view more pages than those on display. Unfortunately, the curators did not rotate the illustrations on view during the course of the exhibition, and none of the many fairies, pixies, and genies in the rooms heeded my desire. The final segment of "Publishing for Children" features moral tales, beginning with *The Mosaic Creation* (1758) and culminating in two editions of *Der Struwwelpeter* (1876 and 1884).

"Movable and Pop-up Books, Toys, and Games" contains a hodgepodge of toys (such as peep shows and miniature theaters inhabited by cut-out characters from fairy tales and other stories) which have given way to plastic action figures. Highlighting the collection is a room of works, including several original drawings, by Lothar Meggendorfer (1847–1925), innovator in movable picture books.

"Nineteenth-Century Illustrators" is dominated by fairy tales. Cruikshank, Crane, Greenaway, and Doré are joined by Randolph Caldecott, Richard Doyle, Palmer Cox, and others who depicted English translations of the Grimms' tales, "Jack and the Beanstalk," "Sinbad," and various Brownie books. Subsections focus on *Alice in Wonderland* and *Pinocchio*. The former features series of engravings by John Tenniel (1865) and Barry Moser (1982).

In addition to various published illustrated works (including *Peter Rabbit*, *Grimms' Fairy Tales* illustrated by Arthur Rackham and by Maurice Sendak, and Oscar Wilde's *A House of Pomegranates*), "The Twentieth Century" features original art by Rackham, Dr. Seuss, Holling C. Holling (*Paddle-to-the-Sea*, 1941), and Kay Nielsen. The seventeen watercolor illustrations by Nielsen to a never-published edition of *A Thousand and One Nights* are simply breathtaking. Anyone familiar with his illustrations to the tales of Grimm will recognize his mix of Orientalist and Art Nouveau influences as well as his meticulous attention to borders and strong, mood-evoking colors. Perhaps their exposure in the exhibition will inspire someone to bring these crowd-pleasers to print at last. In any case, the works on display in this final section demonstrate that children's literature has quickly burgeoned from a nascent industry to become a coveted commodity in today's art world.

Regrettably, "Picturing Childhood" did not travel beyond the Hammer Museum. Yet its run afforded some of us the opportunity to enjoy a variety of works, to re-examine the history of childhood from a novel perspective, and to allow the images and memories to take us away, if only briefly.

Peter Tokofsky

University of California, Los Angeles

Victorian Fairy Painting. Royal Academy of Arts, London, 13 November 1997–8 February 1998. The University of Iowa Museum of Art, 28 February–24 May 1998. The Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 10 June–13 September 1998.

An exhibition devoted to nineteenth-century British fairy painting lays itself open to a search for subtexts, for the various ideological spectres haunting the fleetingly visible spectres of the pictures themselves. The teeming detail of the natural world that acts as a stage for fairy life—so detailed that this viewer was tempted, rather anachronistically, with the thought of a *Magic Eye*-like resolution—evokes an age of amateur and professional natural historians, while the number of sleeping or semiconscious protagonists, their imaginings cavorting in front of their closed eyes, draws us towards Freud and his precursors.

Yet the dominant figure here is Shakespeare, the major literary source in an exhibition which demonstrates the importance for fairy painting of the written word, whether as inspiration, as dramatic script to be realized through stage design, or as text to be illustrated. Writing in 1712 in that great Ur-text of modern English culture, *The Spectator*, Joseph Addison nominated Shakespeare as by far the greatest poet of the fantastic, English or otherwise, a judgment vindicated by this exhibition in which one third of the pictures displayed have *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *The Tempest* as their source. Time and again we encounter Bottom, Oberon, and Titania, most memorably in Joseph Noël Paton's "The Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania" (1847) and "The Quarrel of Oberon and Titania" (1849), canvases which vibrate with natural and supernatural detail, both comic and erotic. Given the English folkloric sources of much of the detail in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it is true to say that the fairy painting boom of 1840–70 represented a flowering of a distinctly English, or British, tradition of folk-inspired art; a tradition which no doubt drew on French and German material—the Grimms' collection was first published in English in 1823, with illustrations by George Cruikshank—but which retained a particular national flavor. If the literary manifestations of this tradition can be traced from medieval literature, via Spenser, Shakespeare, Percy, and Scott, through to Dickens and Christina Rossetti, the visual tradition, taking Shakespeare as inspiration, was particularly influenced by John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, opened in 1789, which included work by the likes of Reynolds and Fuseli, the latter of whom had a marked influence on the Victorian genre.

While Shakespeare provided the initial impetus for many of these paintings it was contemporary developments in other areas, notably the performing arts, that influenced the particular mode of realization. Together with the rise of Romantic ballet, much is made in the catalogue of the importance of the theatre, both in terms of individual productions—the exhibition includes two versions of the actor Priscilla Horton in the guise of Ariel, from William Macready's acclaimed 1838 London production of *The Tempest*—and of developments in lighting, including the introduction of limelight in the early nineteenth century. Many of the paintings rely for their effect on the highlighting of the protagonists against a dark background, as in the Richard Dadd-inspired works of Robert Huskisson, which additionally suggest the theatre via the trompe l'oeil of a neoclassical proscenium arch within the painting itself. Given the influence of the multimedia Jacobean masque on *The Tempest*, it seems fitting that a work such as Huskisson's "Come Unto These Yellow Sands" (1847) should display its theatrical leanings so openly.

Yet despite the importance of text and context for Victorian fairy painting, of a visual and literary tradition of representation, the most interesting works are those which are still capable of providing a frisson of inexplicability. Turner's "Queen Mab's Cave" (1846) is a characteristic late work, a hovering mass of golden light which stands out alongside the heightened naturalism of many of the other canvases on show. Similarly, Edmund Dulac's "The Entomologist's Dream" (1909), an example of one of the many illustrations which provide an important thematic strand through the exhibition, suggests nothing less than a blue-period Picasso. Indeed, framing the show as they do, these two works point to the importance of light and shade, of color and space in Victorian fairy painting.

As the catalogue suggests, Dulac's illustration is reminiscent of John Anster Fitzgerald, whose work, like that of the more famous Richard Dadd, is strikingly idiosyncratic. It is the seemingly naive style of Fitzgerald's paintings which makes them so compelling, whether in the childlike, possibly Celtic-influenced fairy miniatures or the darker series depicting still, sleeping, or drugged figures surrounded by their own dreamworld (as this suggests, the manipulation of space in these paintings is only one of their distinctive features). The viewer is cast as voyeur, having stumbled on an alternative world in full carnivalesque flow. Despite the prerequisite allusion to *The Tempest*, we are denied the refuge of literary sources, left simply to enjoy or be troubled by the marvellous goblins who populate the dreamscape.

Not surprisingly, however, the centerpieces of the exhibition are the canvases of Richard Dadd, about whom much has been written. Before entering Bethlem hospital in 1843, where he painted his most famous works, Dadd had already produced an influential portrait of "Titania Sleeping" (ca.1841),

with its double frame of fairies and bats characteristically suggesting a view *through* the natural world and beyond. Yet the truly startling extent of Dadd's vision is only fully appreciable in his two masterpieces, "Contradiction: Oberon and Titania" (1854–58) and "The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke" (1855–64). The precision and eerie stillness of these canvases—"so wild and yet so solemn," as Addison wrote of Shakespeare—provide a focus for the exhibition as a whole, seeming to connect with, and yet remain outside of a historical tradition of fairy-inspired art, a tradition which waned, or at least was standardized and softened in the first half of the twentieth century (with notable exceptions, of course). It seems poignantly fitting that the eye is drawn to the unfinished band of canvas at the foot of "The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke," as suggestive both of the historical lacuna which can separate the adult viewer from the genre of Victorian fairy painting and of the realm of the unrepresentable at which the best examples hint.

Stephen Benson
Roehampton Institute, London