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Reviews

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Reviews

The Arabian Nights: Tales of 1001 Nights. *Translated by Malcolm C. Lyons, with Ursula Lyons. Introduced and annotated by Robert Irwin. London: Penguin, 2008 (paperback 2010). 3 volumes. 992 pp., 800 pp., 800 pp.*

Do we really need yet another retranslation of the famous Arabic story collection *Alf layla wa-layla* (A Thousand Nights and a Night, or simply, 1001 Nights), better known in English as the *Arabian Nights*? After all, readers of English already have access to a wealth of different translations, from the Grub Street prints contemporary with Galland's first-ever French translation at the beginning of the eighteenth century, via the "complete" translations made directly from the Arabic by such eminent scholars as Edward William Lane (1839) and Richard Burton (1885), the latter largely dependent on John Payne's earlier version (1882–84), to Powys Mathers's (1937) still widely read English rendering of Joseph Charles Victor Mardrus's imaginative French version (1899–1904), N. J. Dawood's selection of "the finest and best-known tales in contemporary English" (1973: 10), and Husain Haddawy's English translation (1990) of the (fragmentary) Galland manuscript as edited by Muhsin Mahdi (1992).

Is there an advantage gained by yet another translation of "all the stories found in the Arabic text of Calcutta II" (vol. 1, vii). A striking response to this question is the evaluation of T. E. Lawrence (of Arabia), as recently quoted in Paul M. Nurse's *Eastern Dreams* (2010: 207): "Payne crabbed: Burton unreadable: Lane pompous"—to which one could add for Mardrus/Mathers: "stunningly pretentious" (208), and for both Dawood and Haddawy: not complete. As a matter of fact, up to the present day and notwithstanding the plethora of existing translations, English readers have not had access to a readable version of the complete text of the *Nights* in modern English as translated directly from the Arabic. This situation alone should suffice to justify the new translation, a translation that is, in fact, all the more needed to convey to English readers an impression of the text of the *Nights* that would be as close to the Arabic original as possible. Rather than rendering the *Nights* in translation,

many of the previous translators, and in particular Lane, Burton, and Mardrus/Mathers, offered their interpretation—interpretations that more often than not resulted from a reaction to the contemporary circumstances of its production.

Translating the complete *Nights* is a time-consuming matter that needs both the expertise of a scholar well versed in the language of the original text, a peculiar form of "middle Arabic," and the dedication of a translator willing to spend years of his or her life to produce the translation of a work that here runs up to more than 2,500 pages. Clearly, not many scholars would have been capable of producing this massive work. And so it is a stroke of luck for the English-language audience that Malcolm C. Lyons burdened himself with this enormous task.

Lyons is professor emeritus of Pembroke College, Cambridge University, and a scholar who—besides being trained in classical Arabic language and literature—is probably best known to folklorists for his equally massive and highly detailed three-volume study *The Arabian Epic: Heroic and Oral Story-Telling* (1995). Lyons translated the *Nights*, as did Burton, from the edition known as Calcutta II (1839–42), which is commonly regarded as more reliable than the earlier Bulaq I (1835) that formed the basis of Lane's version. Lyons's translation is straightforward, modern, and readable and in particular avoids the antiquated biblical diction that Burton used to authenticate his vision of the *Nights* as a "traditional" text of Arabic literature. Meanwhile, Lyons's erudition is probably responsible for his recourse to clinical diction ("vagina," "vulva," "penis") in the notoriously known frivolous passages, such as the one in the story of the Porter and the Three Ladies, or his simple avoidance of translating the Arabic terms (*zubb*, *air*) for the male member altogether (vol. 1, 56–57).

Were it Jorge Luis Borges—or, for that matter, German-language fin de siècle writer and poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal—reading the new translation, he would probably frown on the lack of imaginative creativity and embellishment that he admired so much in Burton. It is telling that Lyons acknowledges his indebtedness (vol. 1, xxii) to Enno Littmann's scholarly German translation (1921–28), the one that Borges scorned so much.

Modern readers should remind themselves, first, that there is no single version of the *Nights* (a work that, after all, to a certain extent was created in response to European demand); in addition, previous translators responded to the taste of their generation and used the stories, as Robert Irwin adequately put it, "as pretexts for their glosses or notes" (vol. 2, xviii); further, this new retranslation aims to present an adequately modern version as faithful to the Arabic original as possible. Sadly enough, the new translation was published a few years after the *Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* (Marzolph and van Leeuwen, 2004),

meaning that what is currently the major work of reference on the *Nights* had to rely on Burton's translation with its archaic language and extravagant idiom (see Irwin in vol. 2, xvii) as the most complete version of the *Nights* available then.

Meanwhile, even this unpretentious version of one of the classics of world literature cannot avoid paying due respect to the expectations of the Western public. The dilemma between the translator's aim for authenticity and the general readers' expectations already shows in the work's title, which uses both the (Western) denomination "The Arabian Nights" and the original (Arabic) title "1001 Nights." Accordingly, it is not surprising that the present translation also includes what Western readers perceive as the acme of Oriental storytelling, namely, the stories of Ali Baba (vol. 1, 929–60) and Aladdin (vol. 3, 735–831). As research has convincingly demonstrated, these stories were introduced into the *Nights* by Galland from his notes of the oral performance of Syrian storyteller Hanna Diyab and do not constitute an integral constituent of the Arabic versions of the *Nights*. And yet, the *Nights* would not be complete without them. These tales have here been translated by Ursula Lyons following Galland's French text.

Robert Irwin, whose *Companion* to the *Nights* (1994) deserves pride of place right next to the new translation, supplies informative introductions to the three volumes and a glossary that is repeated at the end of each volume. Also for easy reference are maps of the Arab world during the Abbasid caliphate, of Baghdad in the ninth century, and of Cairo in the fourteenth century. Volume 1 also has a short chronology (971–72) and suggestions for further reading (973–74).

Although a detailed critique of the translation and the introductory passages is beyond the scope of the present review, I could not help but wonder about a few misleading slips in Lyons's short note on translating Galland (vol. 1, xxiv–xxv). When the translator writes about "three manuscripts used by Antoine Galland," she obviously means the three volumes of the incomplete manuscript Galland had at his disposal; as a matter of fact, international research is still at a loss to determine which additional manuscript material Galland used to complete his version of the *Nights*, and it might well be that besides Arabic manuscripts, he also used an Ottoman Turkish version of the *Nights* preserved in the Royal Library. And when Lyons mentions that the tale of *Aladdin* was first "read" to Galland "in an Arabic version written for him by Hanna Diab," readers should be warned that the existence of Hanna's written version of Aladdin is a conjecture that has never been proven beyond doubt.

Ulrich Marzolph
Enzyklopädie des Märchens

The Grimm Reader: The Classic Tales of the Brothers Grimm. *Edited and translated by Maria Tatar. Introduction by A. S. Byatt. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010. xxxix + 325 pp., illustrations.*

Although Maria Tatar states in her introduction that the aim of *The Grimm Reader* is to provide "a hotline" to the tales of the Brothers Grimm, "unencumbered by introductions and annotations [and not] cooked at the fires of the academic hearth" (xxii), this book includes not only a selection of stories from the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales) in a (new) translation by Tatar but also a wealth of peritextual material that one would normally expect in a more academic edition. This may be because this reader is a companion piece to Tatar's magnificently scholarly *Annotated Brothers Grimm* (2004) and follows its structure of offering two introductions, a biography of the Grimms, Wilhelm Grimm's introduction to their first edition, and a collection of quotations on "the magic of fairy tales."

In her elegantly written introduction, A. S. Byatt talks about what real fairy tales mean to her, differentiating authored stories with their psychological terror from authentic, orally derived tales, which "are older, simpler, and deeper than the individual imagination" (x). She lightly covers the different approaches to folklore study: the universal nature of fairy tale motifs; the relationship of fairy tales to myth; Freudian analysis of the psychological purpose of fairy tales and the original motivation for their collection as a gesture of German cultural identification; Lüthi's ideas on the "true" fairy tale's fundamental lack of character, depth, and psychological development; and how Wilhelm Grimm's editorial input shaped the tales. Byatt touches on some of the nastiness of the collection and its reception, concluding that "true" fairy tales do not moralize and do not manipulate but are the "narrative grammar of our minds" (xvii).

Tatar's own introduction continues with a discussion of the constitutive elements of fairy tales: everyday magic that is encountered without shock; wish fulfillment that may turn into a wish for survival; a happy-ever-after that is not necessarily linked to acquisition of wealth, although precious objects abound and are often crucial plot drivers; and beauty and graphic horror that is described in specific, abundant, morbid anatomical detail and for which Tatar provides a number of examples and direct quotations from the tales. She eloquently describes their development from the savagery of the "childhood of culture" (xxiv), surviving and evolving through many different variants, versions, adaptations, and transadaptations with their function to entertain and guide. She lightly touches on the main debates in Grimm scholarship by identifying "national pride and scholarly ambition" as the motivating factors for the Grimms to "create a cultural archive of German folklore" (xxvii), although this

was not recognized in reception, which focused more on the children's element. Tatar links the success of the collection to the tales' timeless content and universal appeal, perpetually appropriated, adapted, revised, and rescripted (xxvii). The power of this cultural legacy is the rationale for providing a new translation: to review the role of the stories whose main function, despite their morally conflicted pleasure, lack of parentally approved role models, and distinctly un-PC standards, is to allow children/readers to reflect on cultural and historical differences "and for figuring out how to survive a world ruled by adults" (xxix).

Unfortunately, Tatar does not provide any information about the extent of the original collection. There is no sense to the reader that the 37 stories in Part I and the 9 stories in Part II are only a small portion chosen from a corpus of 210 tales and an extensive appendix. The selection of tales is an interesting overview of some of the favorites, such as "Little Red Riding Hood," "Briar Rose" (Sleeping Beauty), "Snow White," and "Rumpelstiltskin," and less well-known stories such as "Fitcher's Bird," "Furrypelts," and "Golden Key."

Tatar's translations are wonderful, even if at times her idioms are perhaps a bit too modern ("in the nick of time" [163]) or informal ("poking her head into one room after another" [163]). She captures the tone of the stories, negotiates translation difficulties effortlessly, and does not avoid taboo subjects (religion, sex, references to the body) or shy away from crude expressions, although even she renders the German *Pißputt* as "pigsty." Part II contains nine stories that Tatar identifies as inappropriate for child readers, including the deeply unpleasant, openly anti-Semitic "Jew in the Brambles," the very short and disturbing "Stubborn Child," and five tales that Wilhelm had moved to the appendix in the second edition of 1819. Tatar contextualizes each of these stories, explaining their status and discussing them in historical context. This part is a welcome addition to translations of the Grimms' tales in English, which rarely address the more difficult stories and never the material that is not part of the accepted corpus of 210 tales.

The *Reader* concludes with a biographical essay on the Brothers Grimm by Tatar that covers their lives chronologically, her translation of Wilhelm Grimm's introduction to the *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (another welcome inclusion), and a selection of quotations on the magic of fairy tales from a wide range of sources: poets, politicians, scholars, philosophers, and so on. There is no bibliography of the scholars referred to in the two introductions, which is a pity. Readers who might have become interested in following up some of the ideas touched on in the introductions will find this difficult without references. But perhaps this is the trouble that I have had with this edition. I am not sure who

it is aimed at. For the general reader it seems to contain too much context; for the academic reader, the introductions are too general and not sufficiently documented.

Karen Seago
City University, London

Mulan's Legend and Legacy in China and the United States. *By Lan Dong. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011. 263 pp.*

In her comprehensive study of the many versions and adaptations of the legend of Mulan, Lan Dong shows how this legend draws out historical, cultural, ethical, and political complexities of ethnic and gender representation from premodern China to contemporary China and the United States. To capture the movements, transformations, continuities, and erasures of the legend, Dong frames her analysis through the trope of a palimpsest (5) and thus points her reader's attention to the inadequacies of treating the legend of Mulan in the singular. *Mulan's Legend and Legacy in China and the United States* is an impressive and well-researched resource that will appeal to folklore, literary, and cultural critics and teachers.

Following a brief prologue, in Chapter 2 Dong responds to the reductive and homogeneous representation of women's roles in Chinese studies scholarship. She examines the biographies of Chinese military heroines in official dynastic histories of premodern China to remind us of Mulan's heroic predecessors and to argue that we must consider the ethical values of Confucian doctrine to properly understand how heroic womanhood transgresses gender roles—twentieth-century Western values of individualism will not capture the extent of such bold moves. Moreover, by showing that there is a tradition of heroic womanhood, Dong seeks to "challenge any one-dimensional view of Chinese women and any monolithic understanding of premodern Chinese society" (11). Dong unpacks the complexities and contradictions of gender and heroism through her careful comparative work across these different historical records.

Chapter 3 most strongly illustrates Dong's important point that truly understanding and appreciating the influence of Mulan's legend in contemporary times and in the West necessitates a historicized examination of the many versions of the tale in premodern Chinese culture. Dong begins the chapter with an excellent close reading of "Mulan shi" or "Ballad of Mulan," the earliest known folk version of the tale. Here, Dong is attentive to the impact of oral traditions and possible non-Han origin of this poetic adaptation. She then maps out how Mulan moves from a local folk heroine to a national one through the many varied versions. Especially clear in this chapter is Dong's ability to

historicize and contextualize her literary and cultural analysis within specific details of the texts. For example, Dong looks at the narrative strategies used to manage what appears to be a contradiction between military heroism and femininity in Xu Wei's sixteenth-century dramatic adaptation where Mulan has bound feet. Overall, in this chapter Dong illustrates the diversity of Chinese cultural values, because each iteration of Mulan at once breaks a different gender norm and is another "adjustment in representing a positive image of the heroine" (92).

In Chapter 4 Dong looks at Maxine Hong Kingston's adaptation of the legend in *The Woman Warrior* to explore questions of ethnic and gender identity within the critical debates over cultural authenticity in Asian American literary studies. Dong argues that "Chinese Americans need to invent a collective identity through a constant dialogue among themselves and theorize the emerging minority culture with its dynamic fluctuation and heterogeneity" (117). Dong shows how the tradition of Mulan's adaptation within Chinese cultures is used to enter the debates on cultural authenticity as they were sparked by Frank Chin in the 1970s. Considerations of Mulan's story in an analysis of Kingston's novel places its history within a transnational scope and complicates notions of "real" and "fake" Asian Americans—after all, who is the real Mulan?

In Chapter 5 Dong looks at adaptations of Mulan in children's picture books and shifts the focus from textual to visual narratives. Of primary concern in this chapter are the strategies that the various authors use to appeal to children, how the texts espouse multicultural values through the bilingual layout of the books, and how the books treat gender identity in relation to cross-dressing. Although it was not a major emphasis in "Ballad of Mulan," cross-dressing has been a pervasive theme in later adaptations. Dong's analysis leads her to argue that "the process of making a (wo)man dress functions as a considerable symbol in defining one's gender identity" and further allows for the possibility of reconstructing gender identity (145–46). Dong demonstrates how analyzing adaptations of Mulan bears out the moral values of each milieu.

Building on the previous chapter's work on visual culture, in the last chapter Dong examines animated versions of Mulan. Although Dong does consider some other animated films, the bulk of the chapter explores the Walt Disney version of Mulan. Drawing on Jack Zipes, Dong examines how market concerns of reaching an international audience drove many of the thematic choices and made the film a hybrid text. For example, Dong points out how filial piety, a value central to the "Ballad of Mulan," is shifted to honoring one's family in the Disney version, a theme with broader appeal to an international audience (173). Dong argues that the film follows "a typical Disney pattern" and "despite its

appearance of being a feminist text that promotes female empowerment, the film's profeminist plot elements actually represent a false feminist mentality" (174). Despite this downfall, Dong reminds us that Mulan does not end with Disney, because the tale will go through further transformations (187).

Lan Dong's monograph is a well-researched, informative, and provocative read. One gets the sense from this book that there is much more work to be done on Mulan, especially in terms of theorizing cultural criticism and sexuality. But this attests to the very strength and further potential of Dong's project. Although the sheer amount of source material in the text might be overwhelming for nonspecialists, the book's wide geographic, historical, and disciplinary scope and pertinent questions will give readers of all kinds something useful for their teaching and research.

Cheryl Narumi Naruse
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

Eastern Dreams: How the Arabian Nights Came to the World. *By Paul McMichael Nurse. Toronto: Viking Canada, 2010. 242 pp.*

For years, scholars have grappled with the questions of which stories actually constitute the 1001 "Arabian" Nights and where they originated. In *Eastern Dreams*, Paul McMichael Nurse follows in the footsteps of British scholar Robert Irwin and tries to untangle these mysteries for a lay audience, translating decades of scholarship into readable, jargon-free prose. Scholars will find little new in this book, but for the general reader and fan of the *Nights*, Nurse tells a compelling story.

Because the questions of origin and provenance of the *Nights* remain unanswered to this day, despite centuries of speculation, Nurse makes choices about which theories to highlight and which to identify as untenable, but overall his approach is evenhanded. This tactic means, of course, that readers finish the book with no more answers than they started with, but at least the rich context of the mystery has been laid out before them in generous detail. Nurse also embeds synopses of the frame story as well as some of the tales to remind us of the general plot lines.

One of the greatest values of this book for the general reader is Nurse's discussion of the many analogs to the tales as well as the many sequels, re-imaginings, and paths of influence of the *1001 Nights*. More than twenty years after Peter Caracciolo's excellent *Arabian Nights in English Literature* (Macmillan, 1988), Nurse adds many more contemporary authors and texts to the vast list of those influenced by the *Nights*. He also provides brief discussions of postcolonial descendants of the work, such as Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days* and Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*.

Because the sphere of influence of the *1001 Nights* has become so broad, Nurse convincingly makes the case that the work, although clearly "Arab" in many ways, has also become a classic of "world" literature. So many literary traditions have taken ownership of some version of the text in one way or another, "parented by multinational sires and a Muslim mother—literally, in Scheherazade's case—[that] the *Nights* may owe at least part of its longevity to its development at a time and a place acting as a crossroads between cultures" (49). Nurse maintains, however, that most of this cultural exchange took place in the form of written texts passed back and forth, and he largely discounts the possible oral provenance and dissemination of the stories.

And, what indeed, constitutes the *1001 Nights*? Although Nurse holds out a note of optimism at the end that we may one day know, the idea of a single, authentic text remains a folly. Nurse clearly prefers the more comprehensive collections based on the Calcutta II manuscript to the more limited ones based on the medieval Syrian manuscript edited by Muhsin Mahdi (1984). Nurse's argument is that the identity of the *1001 Nights* lies in, at least partly, *all* the tales that have been attached to it over the years. Translator Husain Haddawy, recognizing this same situation, followed his excellent translation of Mahdi's edition (1990) with a second volume, *The Arabian Nights II: Sindbad and Other Popular Tales* (1995).

For an *Arabian Nights* scholar, the more intriguing parts of *Eastern Dreams* might very well be where Nurse wanders away from explaining provenance and goes into more creative directions, such as drawing parallels between the *Nights* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

> Or perhaps as literary works, the *Arabian Nights* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* are not as far apart as we might suppose. If scholars can view the secular nature of the *Nights* as a legitimate window onto the social dynamics of classical Islam, then this work, fusing the visionary with the recognizable socio-historical times, is perhaps a dim, distant cousin to the professional historian's attempt to define the structure of a bygone past through researched recreation. (115)

This parallel grows out of the way in which early Orientalists and translators used the *Nights* as a reference and repository of Arab and Islamic history, seemingly forgetting that as a work of fiction, the *Nights* was never imagined to be realistic but a work of fantasy.

Also compelling are the two chapters focused on translations: "The Coming of the *Nights*" and "The Victorian Rivals." The first of these lays out how Galland came to translate the *Nights* and how he acquired the various stories he includes in his eighteenth-century French version. Although some readers

might think that Nurse includes too many biographical details in this chapter, the details do provide context for the translation and its integral role in the history of world literature. The same is true for the chapter on Richard Burton and John Payne. Did Burton actively plagiarize Payne's work, or was he merely a better salesman, keenly marketing a profane work while largely avoiding the watchful eye of Victorian censors and social police? Some of the controversy seems quaint today, but the story of how the *Nights* got out to the public in Victorian times is quite entertaining and enlightening.

Clearly expecting a general rather than a scholarly audience, Nurse dwells on the repeated attempts to create precisely 1,001 nights in the collection. He unveils at the end of his book what all scholars already know, that the number 1,001 was never meant to be taken literally. Rather, it was meant to evoke a sense of infinity. One thousand was an immense number; 1,001, immense plus one. By postponing this discussion until the end of the book, however, Nurse creates a situation in which he undermines his own authority before those who know this simple and essential fact.

As stated at the beginning of this review, however, Nurse's intent appears to be to translate the history and scholarship of a cherished work for the avid but nonacademic reader. *Eastern Dreams* is not a scholarly treatise or a complete history. It is rather the biography of a book that has charmed and entertained audiences around the world for centuries, and as a biography, it succeeds.

Bonnie D. Irwin
Eastern Illinois University

The Story-Time of the British Empire: Colonial and Postcolonial Folkloristics. *By Sadhana Naithani. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010. 160 pp.*

We learn, on this fine book's last page, that the "story-time of the British Empire was *all* the time." Just as the sun never set on this global empire, the voices of the storytellers in its many realms were never silent, and these voices were perpetually gathered, in a remarkable fashion, at the empire's epicenter, in the corridors of London's Folk-Lore Society. It is the remarkable fashion of the gathering of these tales that concerns Sadhana Naithani, and she is at some pains to establish a few core realities of this process—to wit, that it reproduced the hierarchy of empire by erasing the "native" contribution to the enterprise and that it needs to be taken seriously as a distinctive practice of folkloristics that laid the foundation for subsequent folklore studies in Europe and North America.

The Story-Time of the British Empire works its way through four central themes. In Chapter 1 ("Fields"), Naithani establishes "colonial folkloristics" as a term of consequence, arguing for its inherently transnational character and

noting that its scope transcends the familiar pattern of nineteenth-century nation building because colonial administrators, missionaries, and amateurs—often women—performed the essential fieldwork. In Chapter 2 ("Motive"), Naithani examines the contexts of colonial folkloristics, introducing us to a lively cast of personages who found themselves in different zones of India and Africa (with a few reporting from Australia), were drawn to the stories they heard around them, and saw themselves as participating in a larger project of understanding the colonized peoples. In Chapter 3 ("Method"), Naithani tries to uncover the actual processes of collaboration underlying the published story collections from colonial settings, arguing that the partners in the making of colonial folkloristics should be recognized as a significant constituency in the folkloristic process. And in Chapter 4 ("Theory"), the last of these core chapters, Naithani seeks to locate colonial folkloristics with reference to the romantic theories originating in the context of nation building in Europe; here Naithani discusses the imposition of European genres in preference to an engagement with the diversity of genre in colonial sources, as well as the overarching goal to understand native peoples through their folklore as a component of the "civilizing" mission of the empire.

Chapter 3 is the bulkiest in the book and provides, for this reader, the most intriguing insights. Naithani argues that Richard Dorson's genealogy of British folklorists buys into the heroic narrative of collectors as intrepid cultural scouts at the fringes of the empire, but she presents a rather different story: of Europeans attracted to the tales and the people who told them, motivated in large part by self-interest and incapable of according to their native informants the credit deserved for their vital role in the project. Arguing persuasively that colonial collections of tales derived from a collaborative process that remains mostly hidden, Naithani laments the devastating impact of this asymmetry; inspect the records as we might, we can catch only an occasional glimpse of the colonial subjects who participated in the gathering of tales, and we know very little of their practical contributions, let alone their motivations and understandings of the work they were doing.

It is rare enough that we can even recover the names of these folkloristic ancestors, so it is especially gratifying to learn in Naithani's book about the few native partners whose identities have persisted: Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube, from North India, worked in association with the British civil servant and scholar William Crooke, taking down in his own handwriting Hindi tales, translating them into English, and providing contextual notes. The Sanskrit teacher Pandit Natesa Sastri of India initially collaborated with Georgiana Kingscote, then went on to publish an independent collection of tales, and at last (and almost uniquely, among these colonial partners) became a member of the Folk-Lore Society. Mallam Shaihu assisted the British anthropologist

Robert Sutherland Rattray with his work on Hausa folktales in the Gold Coast, working deftly between Arabic, Hausa, and English. Victor Aboya also worked with Rattray, hosting him in Ashanti country and providing not only stories and their translations but also exegesis on Nankani social life. Chaina Mull, working with Richard Carnac Temple, produced manuscripts in Persian that are still consulted today in the British Library. And finally we know of Anna Liberata de Souza, whose personality shines through the writings of Mary Frere's collection of Indian folktales. Naithani draws out the paradox that even as the British collectors relied on the assistance of these intermediaries, they worried about contamination entering the process because of their partial assimilation to European ways (73).

One of the pleasures of reading *The Story-Time of the British Empire* is the encounter with the prologues and epilogues and comparable framing episodes in the works of colonial tale collectors. Numerous excerpts from tale collections spanning the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth enable the reader to directly perceive something of the intent and character of the British folktale collectors. They were a diverse lot, ranging from high-level colonial administrators and Christian missionaries to sprightly women who were keeping company with their husbands in the colonies. Naithani's research brings to light a considerable variation in attitude toward the colonized peoples but no example of a folklorist who operated in opposition to the colonial enterprise. A defining feature of colonial folkloristics, we learn, is that the significant movement of materials and ideas in colonial folklore scholarship was "*either to or from* Britain" (111)—and not from one colonial setting to another.

The context of colonial folkloristics is, of course, the often brutal oppression of native peoples on three continents. *The Story-Time of the British Empire* brings out a striking disconnect between the realities of this "bitter power struggle" (123) and the generally idyllic tenor of the folktale collections. In the end, Naithani visualizes colonial folkloristics as "a global theory of disjunction" (128), where people are severed from their homes and their cultures, native collaborators are denied the credit due them, and stories are removed from their performance contexts. This claim seems true enough, yet I would counter that every disjunction implies a conjunction—of people separated by language and culture, of storytellers and their listeners. Naithani has done an admirable job of keeping her balance in telling this tale, and she makes a compelling case for adding colonial folkloristics to the broad sweep of Western intellectual history.

I have stressed the historical dimensions of *The Story-Time of the British Empire*, but I want to close with a nod in the direction of its contemporary implications. If Naithani is correct in stating that colonial folkloristics set the

stage for modern practices, then we must ask ourselves how much of the pernicious tendency in the earlier dispensation persists into the present. Folklorists, for the most part, continue to study the folk, often identified as marginalized populations. The asymmetry that marked colonial folkloristics is still a feature of the folkloristic landscape, and indeed, it may be a perennial feature of our enterprise. What impact does this persisting asymmetry between folklorist and folk have on our scholarly products? How well are we dealing with the patterns of erasure that characterized the earlier practice? *The Story-Time of the British Empire* is at once an evocation of significant past practices and a call to conscience for those of us who continue to be drawn to the stories told by exotic subjects.

John Holmes McDowell
Indiana University

Suspended Animation: Children's Picture Books and the Fairy Tale of Modernity. *By Nathalie op de Beeck. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. 262 pp.*

This book has little to do with fairy tales and more to do with how American picture books created a "fairy tale" about progress and modernity primarily during the 1919–45 period. It is not a social history of American picture books for children. It is more a case study of selected picture books for children—some of them fairy tales—that demonstrate the changes and conflicts in publishing and artwork and their relations to the socioeconomic conditions of the interwar period that had ramifications for the post–World War II period. Op de Beeck's superb study uncovers many neglected modernist motives and motivations of the culture industry that led to numerous innovations and transformed the earlier picture books into both high and low art that needs serious attention. Moreover, her comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach enables us to grasp that children's literature cannot be understood unless it is studied as part of general cultural movements that have a bearing on how children and adults are primed to view their worlds.

Op de Beeck's study is divided into an introduction, four chapters, and a postscript. The introduction clarifies her terminology and approach. She explains that "the idea of suspended animation implies technology and alludes to paused images and texts in sequence over a series of pages, an accumulation of information akin to, but distinct from, comic-strip panels or cinematic cels" (ix–x). The combination of words and illustrations in sequence forms a new communication mode; and these combinations need to be comprehended in their own dialectical context and socioeconomic context because picture books were not always produced the same way and can be considered historical, artistic, and industrial constructs that document

changes and experiments in a given period. As op de Beeck emphasizes, "The picture book developed at a time when avant-garde art movements, sociopolitical climates, and changing technologies called for shifts in perceptions" (xvi).

In Chapter 1 ("Here-and-Now Fairy Tales: Old World Tradition and Modern Technology"), op de Beeck examines the tensions between traditional picture books, many of them fairy tales, and the literary and artistic experiments, stimulated by new technologies and ideologies, from 1910 into the 1930s. Wanda Gag's works receive a great deal of attention because they represent both modern and traditional tendencies in the great fairy-tale debate that took place between 1929 and 1931. This debate arose when many publishers, artists, and educators were calling for a more realistic children's literature against imaginative works such as fairy tales. Gag's position was always ambivalent, and as op de Beeck points out, the debate was never resolved because children's literature embraced both types while artistic modes of representation and production changed.

In Chapter 2 ("Picture-Book Ethnography: Representing the Other"), op de Beeck considers some ideological aspects that involve the depiction of immigrants and white and nonwhite subjects. Racial, ethnic, religious, and class tensions made children's picture books dynamic and were often given international settings to ease the tensions among readers in American real life that were never resolved.

In Chapter 3 ("Sentient Machines: Lonesome Locomotives and the Mechanized Modern Body"), op de Beeck is concerned with the anthropomorphism of mechanical things, such as toys, planes, cars, and trains. The focus on machines and work during the Great Depression and the rise of the society of the spectacle corresponded to the changes in working relations that were engendering greater alienation.

In Chapter 4 ("Murals in Miniature: Regionalism, Labor, and Obsolescence"), op de Beeck deals with the representation of domesticity in the picture books of the 1930s and 1940s. Some of the books focus on themes connected to regionalism and nationalism. Most important, many picture books showed how technology changed domesticity and labor. Op de Beeck suggests that the picture books of the 1930s can be read as murals in miniature, "calling attention to alienated labor and warning of a threat to American community values" (169).

In her postscript ("The Picture Book After 1942"), op de Beeck notes that there was a consolidation of conventions in the children's book industry:

> Unsurprisingly, many picture books of the teens through the forties pursue a national myth of American progress, fetishizing mechanical

> force, human labor, and the skyscraper-studded city. Others forgo industrial change to focus instead on mythology, heraldry, fairy tales, and nursery rhymes. Still others imply population change and metropolitan growth, acknowledging racial, ethnic, and class diversity while stubbornly prescribing a normative white, middle-class reader. (212)

Op de Beeck's book is filled with illustrations that enable the reader to gain insight into the significance of the artwork during the period she covers. In many ways, this period stamped the further development of the picture book in American culture, and op de Beeck's thorough research and insights enable readers to understand the fairy tale of progress that these picture books carried with them and the anxieties of modernism that are still with us in our troubled postmodernist world.

Jack Zipes
University of Minnesota

Fairy Tale Films: Visions of Ambiguity. *Edited by Pauline Greenhill and Sidney Eve Matrix. Foreword by Jack Zipes. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2010. xiii + 263 pp.*

Pauline Greenhill and Sidney Eve Matrix's *Fairy Tale Films*—praised by Jack Zipes in his foreword to the collection as being "path breaking" and as filling "a gap in both film studies and folklore" scholarship (ix)—presents a set of ten original essays that individually and collectively expand our understanding of the experiments in genre and intertextuality that have shaped fairy-tale films during the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first century. As Greenhill and Matrix explain, these films range "from fairy tale films proper—those that employ the structure of a recognized fairy tale—to cinematic folklore more generally—which draws upon folkloric motifs commonly found in traditional culture" (8). Stating, further, that "filmed fairy tales are as much the genuine article as their telling in a bed-time story or an anthology," the editors situate their and their contributors' approach to fairy-tale film "not as a break with tradition but as a continuation of it" (3). Thus the central question posed by this collection of essays "is not how successfully a film translates the tale [or a traditional motif] into a new medium but, instead, what new and old meanings and uses the filmed version brings to audiences and sociocultural contexts" (3).

The first essay of the collection, Cristina Bacchilega and John Rieder's "Mixing It Up: Generic Complexity and Gender Ideology in Early Twenty-First Century Fairy Tale Films," focuses on fairy-tale fragmentation, generic hybridity, and gender ideology. Defining generic hybridity as the "incorporation

and integration of fairy tale elements with other narrative strands," such as romance and parody, horror and historical realism, or reality and magic (26), and comparing and contrasting examples of generic hybridity in relation to a range of films "that feature fairy tale elements as a major part of their appeal but do not rely on a single fairy tale plot" (26)—for example, *Enchanted* (2007), the *Shrek* trilogy (2001, 2004, 2007), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), *MirrorMask* (2005), and *Spirited Away* (2002)—Bacchilega and Rieder examine the extent to which generic hybridity does and does not subvert the traditionalized gender ideology of the fairy-tale genre and particularly of Disney-dominated fairy-tale film.

Enchanted and *Pan's Labyrinth* receive individual attention in two additional essays that further our understanding of generic hybridity and gender ideology. In "The Parallelism of the Fantastic and the Real: Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth/El Laberinto del fauno* and Neomagical Realism," Tracie D. Lukasiewicz develops "the concept of neomagical realism to distinguish *Pan's Labyrinth* from the conventional fairy tale's acceptance of magic within its fantasy world, and magical realism's incorporation of magic into the real world" (61–62). In "Disney's *Enchanted*: Patriarchal Backlash and Nostalgia in a Fairy Tale Film," Linda Pershing and Lisa Gablehouse argue that, although *Enchanted* plays with parody and thus has the potential to subvert traditionalized patterns, in the end "*Enchanted* appropriates and reworks folk and fairy tale motifs to support a conventional Euro–North American worldview that both obfuscates and reinforces patriarchal ideologies" (137).

Experiments in genre and gender ideology are central concerns in several of the essays in this collection. Christy Williams's "The Shoe Still Fits: *Ever After* and the Pursuit of a Feminist Cinderella" addresses the extent to which *Ever After* (1998) qualifies as a feminist film, ultimately arguing that the film "assumes a feminist stance but offers a mass-mediated idea of feminism where individual women can be strong and achieve equality through personal actions that do not, however, challenge or change the underlying patriarchal structure of society" (101). Ming-Hsun Lin's "Fitting the Glass Slipper: A Comparative Study of the Princess's Role in the Harry Potter Novels and Films (2001–2005)" analyzes the "structural transgendering" of Harry Potter such that he is positioned as a male Cinderella (80). Pauline Greenhill and Anne Brydon's "Mourning Mothers and Seeing Siblings: Feminism and Place in *The Juniper Tree* (1990)" explores two related questions: "How does a telling by an American woman writer, director, editor, and producer who chose to film a German version of this international tale in Iceland with Icelandic actors speaking English elaborate the narrative? What does this telling make of the story?" (116–17). In "Fairy Tale Film in the Classroom: Feminist Cultural Pedagogy, Angela Carter, and Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984)," Kim Snowden describes her use of

Carter's three "Red Riding Hood" tales and Jordan's film to move students toward a more complicated understanding of fairy tales, gender, and sexuality.

In some films—for example, *AI: Artificial Intelligence* (2001), *Robots* (2005), and *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)—experiments, departures, and innovations in genre may, as the editors of the collection note, "stretch the notion of fairy tale film nearly beyond recognition," requiring "extensive reading" to identify intertextual relationships (17), whereas other films, such as those of Tim Burton, incorporate "dreamlike images" that "both overshadow and embody the stories' identities and realities" (20). For example, Naarah Sawers's "Building the Perfect Product: The Commodification of Childhood in Contemporary Fairy Tale Film" addresses *AI: Artificial Intelligence* and *Robots* in relation to Collodi's *Pinocchio* (1883) and Disney's animated version of that tale (1940). Sawers focuses on the built or manufactured child and on the positioning of "childhood in the growing merger between science and capitalism" (42). Similarly, in "A Secret Midnight Ball and a Magic Cloak of Invisibility: The Cinematic Folklore of Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*," Sidney Eve Matrix identifies parallel motifs (whether intentional or accidental) between Kubrick's film and the fairy tale "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" that reveal "each to be a story about the enigma of female desire, the difficulties of domesticity, and the challenge of marital fidelity for both genders" (179). Brian Ray's "Tim Burton and the Idea of Fairy Tales" discusses the folkloric elements associated with "Beauty and the Beast" tales, "headless horseman" tales, and the "Venus and the Ring" legend that inform, respectively, *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), *Sleepy Hollow* (1999), and *Corpse Bride* (2005) as "ideas" constructed by "subjective interpretation[s] of a half-informed memory" (209).

The essays in this collection are analytically and theoretically insightful, well researched, and well written. The volume as a whole richly contributes to our scholarly understanding of fairy-tale film while being intellectually accessible to students and is therefore an excellent choice for academic course adoption.

Cathy Lynn Preston
University of Colorado

The Enchanted Screen: The Unknown History of Fairy-Tale Films. *By Jack Zipes. New York: Routledge, 2011. 435 pp.*

This impressive book contains all the best of what readers of *Marvels & Tales* expect from Jack Zipes: wide-ranging and meticulous scholarship, feminist sensibility, sharp insights, firm opinions, and accessible theory and analysis. *The Enchanted Screen* will undoubtedly be *the* work on fairy-tale films

for some time. With few exceptions—such as the plethora of studies of Disney cinema and Disney culture—until relatively recently there has been little analysis in the English language of fairy-tale films as such. And those movies that have received considerable attention, for example, Jean Cocteau's classic *La belle et la bête* (1946), have for the most part been addressed without much savvy about their traditional and popular sources. Articles here and there, including several in *Marvels & Tales*, examine a particular item of fairy-tale cinema. Some works on specific tales or tale types include discussions of fairy-tale films individually or collectively, representing scholars who are familiar to readers of this journal, such as Marina Warner, Jessica Tiffin, Donald Haase, and Sandra L. Beckett (as well as, of course, Zipes himself). Most such studies look primarily at feature-length films, animated or live action. The sheer number of movies with fairy-tale plots, characters, and imagery might intimidate a lesser scholar than Zipes. The Internet Movie Database (IMDB), for example, lists 899 films under its keyword "fairy-tale." Only some six months ago that number was 860, and 2011 has already seen at least two new "Little Red Riding Hood" (ATU 333) films alone: Catherine Hardwicke's predictable *Red Riding Hood* and Joe Wright's compelling and inventive *Hanna*.

Happily, the scholarly lacuna is quickly being filled with exciting new studies of films, tale types, and genres. Some recent books address connections between fairy-tale and other film types and genres, such as Walter Rankin's *Grimm Pictures: Fairy Tale Archetypes in Eight Horror and Suspense Films* (2007) and Dani Cavallaro's *The Fairy Tale and Anime: Traditional Themes, Images, and Symbols at Play on Screen* (2011) as well as my own and Sidney Eve Matrix's edited collection on recent, popular, widely distributed, generally Euro–North American movies, *Fairy Tale Films: Visions of Ambiguity* (2010). The number of theses and dissertations on the topic is also growing rapidly. An expanding area for folklorists, including the distinguished folktale scholar and social activist Vivian Labrie, has drawn fairy-tale links in cinema not usually considered in that subgenre. For example, Labrie relates Joss Whedon's *Serenity* (2005) to "The Three Golden Children" (ATU 707—note that its IMDB listing does not have "fairy-tale" as a related key word). Zipes's prologue adds to all this crucial work, musing on the broadest significance of the form and suggesting much about why fairy-tale structures recur in apparently unrelated texts. Without specifically referring to his theory of memetic transfer, discussed extensively in *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (2006), Zipes refers to the tales' qualities in terms of the uncanny but also in terms of their power to envision worlds and ideas beyond what patriarchal societies repress, to utopian, but sometimes also dystopian, possibilities.

What sets *The Enchanted Screen* apart from earlier work, though, is its incredibly broad reach across most of the Americas, Europe, and parts of Asia as well as its specifically historical perspective. Zipes includes oral and literary sources, short films as well as features, and animated and live action films, and he slights neither the Hollywood blockbuster nor its more obscure counterpart.

The first section of *The Enchanted Screen* offers background, specifying what makes a fairy-tale film, addressing pioneers Walt Disney and Georges Méliès, and considering the effects, use, and value of animation in constructing the form. In the second section, Zipes surveys films implicating "Snow White" (ATU 709), "Little Red Riding Hood" (ATU 333), "Bluebeard" ("Maiden-Killer," ATU 312), and "Cinderella" (ATU 510A), as well as ones looking at the more general fairy-tale topics of abused and abandoned children, beast husbands, and the representation of Hans Christian Andersen and his stories. The final section deals with works from fairy-tale novels, films from central and eastern Europe, and utopian/dystopian visions in recent cinema. Readers might quibble with the absence of a particular favorite from detailed consideration, but nearly every film I knew of with significant fairy-tale content was there. And of course, I learned about many more.

A particular standout for me was the penultimate chapter, on "slave language and utopian optimism" in films from central and eastern Europe. As a feminist folklorist, I'd call these films coded, based on Joan N. Radner's book on the topic, *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women's Folk Culture* (1993). That is, as Zipes argues, these films' subject matter can be interpreted in multiple ways, much of which can be understood as critical commentary on political systems but some of which can also be discounted as mere fancy. Although many of these films may not be available to most North Americans, Zipes gives detailed and compelling descriptions and analysis.

Having just finished teaching a course on gender in fairy-tale film, I appreciated having this work at my side when preparing classes (although unfortunately not when developing the overall course, given the book's December 2010 release). As a reference work and also as a source for students' essays on particular films, Zipes's book offers much new material. But it also has broader value. Routledge has designated *The Enchanted Screen* as "film studies," and it certainly makes a unique contribution to that field. Yet it could also be useful to folklorists who want to learn more about how traditional genres get adapted and reused. And when concerns are raised about attracting students to the discipline of folklore, works like Zipes's that deal with materials with great popular appeal can offer an entree. Undoubtedly, many scholars in

cultural studies, women's studies, gender studies, and literary studies will also use this excellent book.

Pauline Greenhill
University of Winnipeg

My Mother She Killed Me, My Father He Ate Me. *Edited by Kate Bernheimer with Carmen Giménez Smith. Foreword by Gregory McGuire. New York: Penguin, 2010. 608 pp.*

Totaling over 600 pages and 40 stories, Kate Bernheimer and Carmen Giménez Smith's anthology of contemporary folktales, *My Mother She Killed Me, My Father He Ate Me*, displays a wealth of approaches to the form: realist, magical realist, absurdist; first-, second-, and third-person singular and plural; past and present; ahistorical or temporally defined down to the minute; geographically ambiguous or as precise as a rendezvous at the Getty Villa in Malibu, California. The editors give their contributors considerable latitude, refusing to rigidly define the genre, or indeed, define it at all. "When asked by some contributors what a fairy tale was," Bernheimer writes in her introduction, "I would answer: You already know. A fairy tale is a story with a fairy-tale feel, I told them. And we'd continue from there" (xxii). I can only assume that this circular definition was intended to assuage the disquiet of writers not entirely familiar with what is apparently more a feeling than a genre. The result is an inevitably uneven collection, which promises many disappointments but happily still more pleasures.

Copious as it is, the volume proves rather insular in its geographic reach. Save for several brief if eventful sojourns to Mexico, Vietnam, and Japan, the stories keep to the bounds of Europe. That is, their origins are provisionally traced back to Europe, although as Bernheimer points out, the countries listed in the table of contents by no means hold exclusive rights to them. For all intents and purposes, the editors have placed the origins of these tales firmly in the subjective experiences of the volume's contributors. The artist's subjectivity is the origin that anchors this book.

Apart from devising one of the more arresting titles on bookshelves today, the editors present a convincing argument for fairy tales as a living tradition in the twenty-first century. As a record of neither a monolithic folk nor anonymous native informants, the stories collected in this anthology are not only signed but in each case augmented by the contributor's postscript. These brief, fascinating addenda typically locate the tale within the author's autobiography; time and again writers describe reading fairy tales as children and, in turn, reading them to their children. In fact, by articulating fairy tales as experiences, the volume becomes less about the writing than the sharing of such stories.

At once autobiography, literary criticism, and a window into the creative process, these postscripts also help structure a peculiar kind of communication between what are otherwise self-contained entries in an anthology. We begin to see how Hans Christian Andersen's "Wild Swans" affected Michael Cunningham and Karen Joy Fowler in remarkably different ways and, indeed, resulted in two very different variants. Yet the tale remains a common point of reference, a common experience. *My Mother She Killed Me* is a book that puts the lie to fairy tales as mere escapism, showing that, without our realizing it, these tales have burrowed their way into us.

Although sixteen of the tales were first printed elsewhere, several of them over a decade ago, the volume manages to give the impression of a collective effort. Despite the cacophony of styles in evidence, many writers seem to share a determination to drag the fantastic through the mud of the mundane—a reverse of the journey into a fantastical realm. Often this adds pathos and humor, as when Kevin Brockmeier's character Half of Rumpelstiltskin, working as a store mannequin, is told by his boss to shave because "nobody likes a hairy mannequin" (61), or Michael Cunningham's one-winged prince, who struggles to maneuver into subway trains and taxi cabs. Regrettably, this soon becomes a tired conceit. In Shelley Jackson's version of the "Swan Brothers," the girl without hands (ATU 706) makes an appearance and recounts her ordeal simply as a terrible, yet boring incident.

Nevertheless, a certain joy often emanates from these stories, as though the authors have discovered the enormous freedom afforded by tradition, the freedom to leave much unsaid, to depend on what John Miles Foley calls traditional referentiality. Yet this does not stop many of the authors from engaging in psychological portraits of classic heroes and villains. It is almost as though many of them believe that rewriting fairy tales can only mean creating a character study. This gesture toward psychological depth often undermines the ambiguity and thus the durability of these characters. By forgoing psychological shading, Walter Benjamin argues in his seminal essay "The Storyteller" (1936) that the story gains a stronger hold on the memory of the listener, who is thus more likely to repeat it. All too often in *My Mother She Killed Me* the stories resemble less new contributions than readerly interventions into the tradition. The authors seek to communicate, but the conversation is one-sided.

The postscripts themselves, fascinating though they are, often resemble self-portraits. Many of the writers wish to share their stories, and their relationship to the great fairy tales that inspired them, but as a means of expressing themselves rather than of contributing to the tradition. Similarly, the myriad examples of irony, novelty, and playful formal experimentation make for a diverting and pleasurable read but wear rather thin on the second read.

All of this being said, I still believe that *My Mother She Killed Me* represents a powerful argument for the strength of fairy tales as a living tradition. Francine Prose's piece, lacking fantastic elements altogether, nonetheless speaks to the mysterious way we suddenly find ourselves assuming the role of a character like Gretel. Here, and in other notable stories, we find an uncanny reflection of our own lives, engendering an indescribable yet haunting feeling, that "fairy-tale feel." At its best, Kate Bernheimer and Carmen Giménez Smith's anthology retains the very strangeness and mystery that account for the longevity of fairy tales. It is this absorbing strangeness that will sustain the tradition.

Kevin Goldstein
New York University

Beastly. *Written and directed by Daniel Barnz. Performed by Alex Pettyfer, Vanessa Hudgens, Mary-Kate Olsen, Lisa Gay Hamilton, and Neil Patrick Harris. CBS Films, 2011. Theatrical release.*

Daniel Barnz's 2011 film *Beastly* brings Alex Flinn's novel of the same title to the big screen. Although Barnz is known for his work on the independent film *Phoebe in Wonderland* (2009), a striking and magical intertextual film that includes stellar performances from an exceptional cast, *Beastly* does not live up to Barnz's potential. Those seeking a unique and thoughtful adaptation of "Beauty and the Beast" should look elsewhere. The film loses the little charm that Flinn's novel brings to the tale and reduces it to a stale, anticlimactic shadow of the popular fairy tale. The makeup artistry of the film is visually stunning, but the weak screen adaptation combined with poor acting and slow pacing make this film a disappointment for those who love "Beauty and the Beast" or enjoyed Alex Flinn's novel.

The film follows the story of Kyle Kingson (Alex Pettyfer), the self-proclaimed prince of his elite private high school. Because of Kyle's arrogance and cruel streak, he attempts to bully Kendra (Mary-Kate Olsen), a classmate who just happens to be a witch. In response to his cruel and shallow nature, Kendra curses Kyle with disfiguring markings, scars, and tattoos. He must find love within a year or the transformation will become permanent. As a result of his appearance and his father's own revulsion, Kyle is forced into virtual exile. With just a Jamaican servant (Lisa Gay Hamilton) and a blind tutor (Neil Patrick Harris) as company, Kyle must face his own inner demons and learn to care for others. Along the way he strikes a bargain with a classmate's father and arranges for Lindy (Vanessa Hudgens), a pretty but unpopular classmate, to stay in Kyle's isolated house. In the inevitable and predictable ending, Kyle realizes that he loves Lindy, and she, just as predictably, admits her love for Kyle at the last moment.

Alex Pettyfer as Kyle Kingson presents a protagonist who ranges from arrogant and cruel to petulant and obsessive and finally emotionally codependent. Despite this, Pettyfer's acting is shallow and stilted. He never makes the viewer believe in Kyle's ultimate emotional transformation. The makeup magic, however, almost makes up for Pettyfer's lackluster performance. It effectively transforms Kyle into Hunter, a disfigured, tattooed misfit. Hunter's appearance is due to a combination of both makeup and prosthetics, and the result is both striking and visually compelling. This departure from the animal-beast of the traditional fairy tale and Flinn's novel helps to bring the story into the twenty-first century. Although Kyle's appearance excludes him from the pretty and popular crowd at his high school, his transformation does not, in fact, make him ugly or truly necessitate his isolation from humanity. Rather, in the right circles, his tattoos and scars would actually increase his popularity. Even so, the surreal and modern vision that Tony Gardner's makeup design brings to *Beastly* is the most effective revision of the entire film.

Lindy Taylor, played by Vanessa Hudgens of Disney's *High School Musical* franchise, lacks the personal magnetism and charisma that this character demands. The film attempts to characterize Lindy as an altruistic philanthropist; however, this is undercut by the fact that she acts like a brat, texting her friends and complaining about her life in the posh brownstone. As such, Lindy, who is justifiably antagonized by being forced to reside with a strange young man at her father's command, comes off as petulant and whiny rather then strong and enduring. The aforementioned conspiracy between Lindy's father and Hunter serves as a nearly physical reminder of the patriarchal overtones of the fairy tale, and it seems in sharp contrast with the modern tone that the rest of the film strives to achieve.

The supporting cast is slightly more engaging than the leading actors. Mary-Kate Olsen's portrayal of Kendra, the witch, is reminiscent of a Tim Burton character. However, she misses the opportunity to really play up the witch character. Like Kyle/Hunter, the most remarkable aspect of Kendra is her appearance. The one surprising delight of the film is Neil Patrick Harris's portrayal of Will, Hunter's blind tutor. Harris manages to be both charming and witty in this role, and he endears himself to the audience, who responds to his quirky portrayal.

Unfortunately, the traditional climax of the story lacks a sense of urgency. The curse stipulates no threat to Kyle's life if the curse is not lifted within the allotted time, and no antagonist appears to provide this threat, as in the popular Disney film. As such, Kyle's motivation to convince Lindy to proclaim her love for him before the year is up is a contradiction of his supposed internal

transformation. If Kyle has learned that it is the inner self that counts, why should he care if he remains disfigured? The message that is reinforced, then, becomes that physical beauty is important after all.

Like most "Beauty and the Beast" stories, the actual transformation of the beast back to a man is in itself disappointing. The character of the Beast is more interesting than the prince, and likewise Hunter is more interesting than Kyle. Lindy's apparent dismay at finding out that Hunter has transformed into Kyle is not dispelled by the final photomontage of Kyle and Lindy's trip around the world. Rather, this montage reflects the shallowness and two-dimensionality of the inevitable happy ending.

Ultimately, although the film could not be mistaken for anything but a revision of the fairy tale "Beauty and the Beast," the dialogue is too heavy-handed in announcing the relevant symbols and references to the traditional tale. For instance, the white rose, which appears throughout the film, is announced as meaning "worthy of your love." Likewise, the intended lesson Kendra seeks to teach Kyle by cursing him is overtly alluded to. As such, the fairy-tale elements of the film are obtrusive distractions rather than natural elements of a well-told tale.

Amanda L. Anderson
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

The Princess and the Frog. *Directed by Ron Clements and John Musker. Performed by Anika Noni Rose and Bruno Campos. Walt Disney Pictures. 2009. DVD.*

The Princess and the Frog is Disney's first full-length animated fairy-tale film based on a specific tale type (ATU 440) in more than two decades, and it introduces the first African American to the highly marketed Disney Princesses series.

The film begins in classic Disney style with both narration and a story-book. The storyteller is the protagonist Tiana's mother, who is reading the story of "The Frog Prince" to Tiana and her friend Charlotte. The unlikely friends—a poor African American girl and a rich white girl in 1920s New Orleans—have disparate reactions to kissing a frog in order to marry a prince. Charlotte would do anything to marry a prince, but Tiana finds frog kissing gross and not worth the outcome. These early reactions shape the worldviews of the girls as they move into early womanhood—Charlotte continues to yearn for a royal wedding, whereas Tiana dreams of owning her own restaurant with no thought of marriage.

Upon hearing of the arrival of Prince Naveen, Charlotte throws a costume party in the hopes of catching his eye. Naveen, however, has been changed into a frog by Dr. Facilier, thus allowing Naveen's greedy servant to take his

place. When Naveen sees Tiana dressed as a princess singing to shooting stars, he assumes her kiss will restore his human form, but because she is not really a princess, when she kisses him, she is changed into a frog as well. To ascertain a way to change them both back, the two journey through stereotypical New Orleans locales.

No Disney film would be complete without singing animal helpers, and Tiana and Naveen enlist the aid of Louis, a jazz-loving alligator, and Ray, a Cajun lightning bug, to take them to Mama Odie to find a cure. Rather than offering straightforward answers, Mama Odie tries to get the frogs to "dig deeper" for what they need, not just desire, from life. Naveen realizes he loves Tiana, but Tiana is not yet willing to admit she needs anything besides her restaurant.

Although Naveen initially plans to propose, he chooses instead to give Tiana her dream by kissing and marrying Charlotte, who is Princess of Mardi Gras, so as to transform them back into humans. However, neither Charlotte nor Tiana allows him to follow through because Tiana finally declares her love for him. Instead of remaining frogs indefinitely, the two become human again with their wedding kiss because Tiana has now become a princess and she is able to have both her prince and her restaurant.

Disney clearly hoped *The Princess and the Frog* would propel them back onto the top of full-length animated films after years of falling in popularity to Pixar and Dreamworks. The film applies two of Disney's critical and market successes: hand-drawn animation and the fairy-tale princess. Tiana is clearly meant to fall in line behind Belle and Jasmine and their predecessors Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora. The film itself even insinuates this marketability by showcasing Charlotte's princess dresses and paraphernalia in the opening sequence, which closely mimic the gowns already available to wannabe princesses through Disney retailers.

Conscious of the criticism lodged against previous Disney fairy-tale films for offering young girls either completely passive heroines who await their princes or pseudo-feminist heroines who read and dream of escaping patriarchal confines, the creators of *The Princess and the Frog* attempt to showcase a modern heroine. Co-director John Musker explains in the DVD commentary that Tiana "broke the mold, not just because she was African American, but because she actually had a dream that wasn't finding a prince . . . [and was] the first princess that really had a job and a career path." Although Tiana is unique among the Disney princesses for having a job and finding her happily ever after as a restaurateur with her royal husband working for her, rather than living idly in a palace, she still serves as a problematic role model for young women who are both career and family minded.

Instead of demonstrating from the outset that Tiana can possess her dream career and a fulfilling romantic life, the film constantly puts her in the position of choosing one over the other, suggesting that some part of her life must be sacrificed to achieve partial happiness. To save money, Tiana works two jobs and never enjoys time with her friends. Even as she develops feelings for Naveen, she ignores them to keep focused on her single-minded goal of owning her own restaurant. Toward the end of the film, she sacrifices her dream to become the froggy wife of Prince Naveen. When she makes the choice, she has no way of knowing she will ever be human again. Even though Tiana gets the man and the job in the end, clearly her decision to remain with Naveen rather than pursue her career is the right one according to the film. Mama Odie obviously wanted Tiana to realize that deep down she needed love more than hard work.

In part because of Tiana's constant focus on saving money, the film puts a great deal of emphasis on socioeconomics, not typical in previous films. Not only is Tiana a poor girl whose mother is employed by her closest friend, but her prince is also broke. Naveen isn't looking for true love like his predecessors, just a rich woman to pay for his musical aspirations. Although Charlotte is one of the wealthiest debutantes in New Orleans, she never offers to help Tiana with the down payment on her restaurant. Even the villain, Dr. Facilier, trafficks in the economy of human souls, and his soul is ultimately collected as payment for his voodoo debts. This emphasis on money and paying for one's dreams seems to be more a reflection of America's current economic situation than the romanticized fairy-tale Jazz Age. It would seem that a modern heroine, even a Disney princess, must learn to work hard and save her money if she wants to catch her man and dream job.

Tabatha Lingerfelt
Indiana University

Red Riding Hood. *Directed by Catherine Hardwicke. Written by David Leslie Johnson. Performed by Amanda Seyfried, Gary Oldman, Billy Burke, Shiloh Fernandez, Max Irons, Virginia Madsen, Lukas Haas, and Julie Christie. Warner Brothers Films, 2011. Theatrical release.*

"Hello: I'm Gary Oldman, and I've brought my elephant to save the day."

Posters for Catherine Hardwicke's *Red Riding Hood* call it "a breathtaking vision of a 700 year old legend." They lie: Pretentious, confused, and stuffed with fairy-tale tropes that add nothing, this vision is less breathtaking than laughable.

Set, nominally, in our own world's past—characters reference the Catholic Church and ancient Romans—the film tries for that anyplace sense that

classic fairy tales evoke with once-upon-a-times. Opening shots move past a medievalish CGI castle and walled town, out over a river valley, and deep into dark woods, in which huddles the little village where the story occurs. Unfortunately, the shots are disorienting—oddly angled above the river, for example—and distract from the otherwise impressive set design. The narrator-heroine is Valerie (Amanda Seyfried), whose opening voiceover notes that "few people know" her village's name, but "everyone had heard of the horrible things that happened there."

The premise is decent. The talking, grandmother-impersonating wolf of the fairy tale is here a shape-shifter, a werewolf who has terrorized the area for generations (Valerie's grandmother remembers it from her own youth) and with whom the villagers have struck a bargain: It spares humans if they provide livestock at each full moon. (No one mentions how the bargain was reached, given that the wolf can't talk to anyone. A quibble? Not when the wolf's language capability is the hinge on which the plot hangs.) In the uneasy peace, Valerie has grown up in love with orphaned woodcutter Peter, but she is now promised by her parents to the wealthy blacksmith's son, Henry. About to elope, Valerie and Peter are interrupted when the werewolf breaks the pact, killing Valerie's sister Lucy and then a man in the hunting party sent to avenge her. The village priest sends for a famed werewolf hunter, who eventually uses Valerie as bait to catch the wolf. In the end, the girl in the red cloak and the woodcutter kill the villain.

It is a relatively inventive revision of the basic story. Aging the heroine to her late teens allows for a romantic subplot, and if it had stayed a subplot, the film might have been better off. But the problem with *Red Riding Hood* is that too much is going on, and none of it is subplot and all of it is badly executed.

The acting wavers from decent (Seyfried) to bland and unconvincing (the parents and both suitors, Fernandez having apparently been talked into allowing hair product, leather, and a slight sneer to stand in for actual acting) to scenery-chewing camp. That last is Gary Oldman's wolf-hunting Father Solomon, whose rapidly shifting accents are among the few true horrors of the movie and suggest that he's from *everywhere*; all villagers, by contrast, sound American. Oldman, normally a gifted actor whose performance has rescued more than one lackluster film, is here as inconsistent and incoherent as the script itself; his growls and gesticulating pronouncements recall Alan Rickman but aren't *intended* to be funny. A warrior-priest in a purple velvet frock whose first werewolf kill was his own wife, Solomon travels with two terrified-looking daughters, an elderly nursemaid, and a solar-system-in-a-box that shows that *this* full moon allows werewolves to pass on their curse. His problematically racialized mercenaries include two African brothers (the only black men in

the film), a medieval ninja, and a vaguely Arabic soldier who looks more embarrassed than intimidating as he enters town astride a giant metal *elephant*.

An elephant. Hollow, huge, and goofy-looking, it is an Athenian Brazen Bull, an oven in which victims' screams become animal bellows as steam escapes through metal horns. That Father Solomon erroneously credits the Romans is less relevant than that it allows for a round of spot-the-unrelated-fairy-tale-motif: roasting a villain alive in a big metal oven is classic stuff. (There's a lot of this, actually—three little pigs, pig masks, ravens in the snow near blood, thorns, and more—all crowbarred in to no purpose or effect.) That the "villain" in this case is the town's innocent simpleton, killed mostly to demonstrate Solomon's power, is more problematic, stretching already thin credulity past breaking when the cooked body is visibly undamaged.

As a horror film, the PG-rated movie lacks real gore or real suspense: lots of deaths, but minimal blood. Nor is the computer-generated wolf frightening, its identity a surprise only to viewers who miss the character in sheep's clothing at the risible masked bacchanalia. This is not quite a coming-of-age romance either. Hardwicke once again positions a girl between two hunky(ish) guys, but unlike *Twilight* and to *Red Riding Hood*'s real credit, the masculine posturing between the rivals is shrugged off fairly quickly; the boy whom Valerie rejects works with the victor to rescue her. Occasionally, teen girls are even depicted as agents, sexual and otherwise. Pulling Peter into a hayloft for a tumble, Valerie requires no coercion—this girl is right where she wants to be. In fact, the woodcutter is unnecessary to the story's climax; he participates, but Valerie can and does dispatch the wolf herself, although they sew stones into its belly together.

The movie stops short of espousing feminism, nodding vaguely toward a metaphor about female generational wisdom. Julie Christie, in raggedy scarves and inexplicable blonde dreads, achieves a passable balance between grandmotherly support (offering the titular hooded cloak when Valerie complains of feeling "sold" by her family) and is-she-or-isn't-she-a-witch mystery. There's a shiny red apple intended for her granddaughter at one point, and another fairy-tale moment when she and Valerie do the "what-big-eyes-you-have-Grandmother" exchange. Two dreadlocks hidden in Valerie's own hair visually hint at a connection to her grandmother as well. The story would have been significantly better if Granny *had* been the wolf, and she and Red had loped off into the forest together. But any matriarchal potential is, as are the other themes, left unexplored in favor of mediocre action sequences, silly plot twists, and a shallow doubled ending that confuses its own point.

Sara Thompson
York University