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Reviews

Marvels & Tales Editors

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REVIEWS

The Columbia Anthology of Chinese Folk and Popular Literature. Edited by Victor H. Mair and Mark Bender. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

The Columbia Anthology of Chinese Folk and Popular Literature is the first large-scale anthology of the folk literature of China ever published in the West, and the compilation of such an anthology is indeed an ambitious undertaking: it has to cover a period of about 3,000 years and should include, besides the Han Chinese “majority people,” more than fifty “minority peoples.” The editors have resolved the problem of how to select representative samples from such an immense corpus very well by choosing twenty-five folktales from eleven minority groups as well as some Han Chinese dragon tales; more than seventy folk songs and—often neglected—samples of ritual literature from a number of ethnic groups and the Han Chinese; and epic literature with samples, for instance, from the Mongolian Geser and Jangar and from the Miluotuo creation myth of the Southern Chinese Yao. Next follow texts from Han Chinese folk drama. The second half of the volume is devoted exclusively to Han Chinese professional storytelling (with two samples from the Bai minority). These texts, which raise conflicts but almost completely lack elements of the *märchen*, are often tragic love stories and other life stories imbued with Confucian and Buddhist values.

The historical dimension comes in (for about the last 400 years) in a few cases of folk songs and professional storytelling; otherwise we are given recent recordings. The guideline rationale of the editors has been authenticity of the recording. This is a must in the case of China, where during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) all traditional culture was condemned as “poisonous herbs” that had to be eradicated from the surface of the earth to create a “new type of man.” Thus after this disastrous period many storytellers or folksingers did not dare to open their mouths again for years, if they were still alive at all. Then, in the 1980s, during a period of “searching for our roots,” Chinese folklorists, often with great enthusiasm, were busy saving all the remnants that could still be saved. A large-scale search was

unfolded, culminating in the monumental *Zhongguo minjian wenxue san tao jicheng* (The Complete Collection of China's Folk Literature in Three Sets), which contained folktales, folk songs, and proverbs from each province. Nowadays the oral traditions are in rapid decay again—this time, however, because of the modernization and industrialization process and the dominance of pop culture, TV, and other media. Sometimes folktales get the chance to be transposed into the mass media. The younger generations of the minorities often take little interest in their native language and culture, and with the older generation dying out, the living tradition in its original surroundings will end.

As the editors of the *Columbia Anthology* state, the volume is intended for use in the classroom and is thus meant as introductory material for this vast field. However, it will not be easy for nonspecialists to find their way through this bewildering diversity of texts and cultures. There is little that traditional Kazakh culture shares with the culture of the Mon-Khmer Wa of Yunnan or that the Yi have in common with the Ewenki. The one- or two-page introductions to the texts are helpful; the texts are offered as “cultural documents” of the respective peoples. This is surely acceptable. Yet it may create an impression of uniqueness of the texts, which is misleading, and it is not clear why the science of folklore has to be excluded in such a volume. Therefore one wonders why no word is said in this volume about typology and classification, which leaves readers without orientation as to the “international position” of the texts.

Some parts of the anthology, such as that on Jiangsu folk songs (*shan ge* or *Wu ge*) are richly and aptly annotated; others, such as the folktales, often require more cultural notes and commentary. “The Ginseng Tale,” for instance, reflects the close relationship between a maternal uncle and the mother's son, which is typical of practically all Central Asian peoples and even some Southern Chinese minorities. Here, however, the maternal uncle is a negative and traitorous figure. Particularly for texts from the southern minorities, editor Mark Bender gives interesting and helpful annotations about symbolism, cultural peculiarities, and cultural relationships.

The large group of Chinese *chuanshuo* (historical legends), with a wide range of themes (e.g., historical figures, good and evil officials, poets, but also military leaders, and revolts), is totally excluded from this volume, as though the whole revolutionary potential of folk literature had never existed. This gives an unduly peaceful impression of Chinese folk literature, which is wrong, and it is exactly the opposite extreme of what was understood as folk literature in China during the 1960s and 1970s, when it was synonymous with revolutionary literature alone.

The bibliography gives some reason for surprise. For instance, the three-volume *Zhongguo shaoshuminzu wenxue* (Literatures of China's Minorities, 1983) and similar works go unmentioned, as do all the volumes of the Histories of Literature of the Minority Peoples series, which offer the most complete and often excellent descriptions of oral literature of the minorities (e.g., *Miaozu wenxue shi*, *Dongzu wenxue shi*). One wonders why the excellent study on Jiangsu folk songs by Antoinet Schimmelpenninck and Frank Kouwenhoven is not listed in the bibliography. Furthermore, the bibliography does not contain any titles in European languages other than English. In a work of this scope, this looks somewhat parochial. The German series *Märchen der Weltliteratur* includes several volumes that cover different regions of China (Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, Sinkiang, Southern China) and deal with the minority peoples. The University of Bonn was leading in research on Mongolian and Tibetan epics, and much has been published in the five-volume *Fragen der mongolischen Heldendichtung*, edited by the late Walther Heissig. None of these appear in the bibliography.

Last but not least, this is a work on oral literature. How much one would enjoy *listening* to the folk songs, some of the tales, or theatrical performances from an accompanying CD!

All in all, the *Columbia Anthology* is an extremely fascinating and well-done work, and it offers new insights into a much neglected field of China's culture.

Jörg Bäcker
University of Bonn

The Cloak of Dreams: Béla Balázs. Translated and introduced by Jack Zipes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Béla Balázs (Herbert Bauer, 1884–1949) was a Hungarian writer and scholar, perhaps best known today for his fairy-tale-inspired collaborations with Béla Bartók, including the opera *Bluebeard's Castle* (1911) and the ballet *The Wooden Prince* (1916), and for a critical text written in his later years, *Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art* (1949). Jack Zipes's recent translated collection reveals that Balázs also penned sixteen "Chinese" styled fairy tales inspired by the illustrations of Mariette Lydis (1887–1970). *The Cloak of Dreams* was first published in 1922 in German as *Der Mantel der Träume: Chinesische Novellen*, and it was subsequently translated into Hungarian as *Csodálatosságok* (The Book of Marvels, 1949). One presumes that Zipes, professor of German and Comparative Literature at the University of Minnesota, translated from the original German-language publication. The book forms part of Zipes's *Oddly Modern Fairy Tales* series, which previously

translated the *Merz* fairy tales of Hannover's Dada assemblage artist and writer Kurt Schwitters (2009). Balázs's notable participation in avant-garde circles of the time thus makes his work fitting for inclusion in this series. A member of Georg Lukács's Thalia Society and a loyal comrade thereafter, Balázs appears to have been at the heart of the Hungarian intelligentsia. The translation of this collection will endow English-language scholarship with a more thorough understanding of the inner workings, interests, and historical implications of such circles.

Zipes's accessible introductory essay, "Béla Balázs, the Homeless Wanderer, or, The Man Who Sought to Become at One with the World," serves as an indispensable guide to Balázs's oeuvre. It offers an unapologetic biographical approach, charting important acquaintances and tracing how such a literary commission came about. As with all effective scholarship, Zipes's essay prompts the reader to explore further. One might ponder the reception of these fairy tales and the political and cultural views of China in Hungary in the early 1920s. The East had certainly provided inspiration for generations of artists, writers, and Orientalists in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but by the first decades of the twentieth century French and German avant-gardists had fallen under the influence of Africa. Does Balázs's collection indicate a Hungarian return to China, and if so, is this racially problematic or justifiable as a leftist alignment? The historical link between Asian folk culture and the Soviet government is an exchange that Balázs touches on in his *Theory of the Film* (1970, 273), and in these earlier fairy tales one can observe a sympathy for revolutionary Taoism over the aristocratic Confucian school of thought. Balázs's socialist stance is documented in Zipes's essay and reflected in the critique of social hierarchies that runs throughout Balázs's fairy tales. One might further question Hungary's craft traditions and whether the oral folk tale, which Walter Benjamin so famously mourned the loss of in modernity (*Illuminations*, 1968), is perhaps still partly at work here. Zipes does make reference to the tradition of the literary *Kunstmärchen*, which influenced Balázs as a young boy who used to stay home and read many French and German fairy tales (5).

The Cloak of Dreams is presented as an appealing aesthetic object in its own right with a decorative cover design by Dimitri Karetnikov. The fairy tale that lends its name to the title of the collection, "The Cloak of Dreams," was aptly chosen in 1922 both for its thematic plural and its suggestion of a "Chinese" guise. Here the Emperor is wrapped in his wife's dreams as Balázs's readers will become wrapped up in the enchantment of his stories, richly embroidered through Zipes's critical spells. The sixteen fairy tales move between simple narratives, such as "The Victor," with the traditional theme of

the choice of three, and complex, violent, and emotionally raw tales, such as “The Friends.” Many are imaginatively inventive and verge on an anti-tale’s dark, malevolent underside and inconclusive narrative structure. Trials and tribulations are pushed to the extreme, and the collection is filled with wisdom, illusionism, trickery, cliché, and cunning, which lead Zipes to conclude: “To read Balázs’s fairy tales is to *experience* the bitterness and joys of life and to reach a condition of suspension or liminality in which nothing can be explained rationally but everything understood intuitively” (52).

Although Zipes includes a separate note on the illustrations by Lydis, next to such a detailed contextualization of Balázs, a little more interpretation of her accompanying illustrations would be helpful for readers interested in art history. Like the fairy tales themselves, the illustrations are bawdy and highly eroticized, verging on the pornographic, and they appear somewhere between the Japanese woodblock-inspired style of Aubrey Beardsley and the bulbous, carnivalesque imagery of Rabelais, discussed by Balázs’s Russian contemporary Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* (1965), although they are not as characteristically Victorian as the well-known engravings by Gustave Doré. Thomas Mann’s appended review, “A Beautiful Book” (1922), enlightens the reader on Lydis’s illustrations, which, in fact, appeared before Balázs’s texts: “They are backwards: the stories are not the ones that are illustrated, the pictures are” (155). This vital piece of information enables a reappraisal of such peculiar tales as “The Flea,” which must have been narratively constructed around the unusual images provided by Lydis. Such intermedial collaborations were popular in avant-garde circles of the time, especially if one considers the layouts of early Surrealist journals, for example, those of *Littérature*, which had an international readership. Many of Balázs’s tales themselves are proto-Surrealist in flavor with their irrational narratives and sudden juxtapositions. “The Parasols,” for instance, prefigures some of René Magritte and Salvador Dalí’s dreamlike double imagery and foresees the misappropriated capitalist advertising techniques that many members of the Surrealist movement would later sell out to. It would be inaccurate, however, to push the surreal aspects of these tales too much—Surrealism is too often confused with the broader fantastic genre. Although politically and stylistically well researched, one wonders whether Balázs himself could not help but maintain a cultural subscription to the otherworldly, “alternative view” (Anna Kérchy, “Faraway, So Close: Towards a Definition of Magic(al) (Ir)realism.” in *What Constitutes the Fantastic?* Ed. Sabine Coelsch-Foisner et al. [2009], 22) offered by the fantasy of the Orient.

Catriona McAra
University of Huddersfield

The Complete Fairy Tales. By Charles Perrault. Translated by Christopher Betts. Illustrations by Gustave Doré. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

For centuries, children around the world have heard one version or another of Charles Perrault's fairy tales. The enchanting stories of talking cats, flying chariots, beautiful princesses and princes, and godmothers' magical incantations have all been part of children's and adults' fantasy worlds. Although tales such as "Cinderella," "Puss in the Boots," and "Sleeping Beauty" have been popularized by Walt Disney, few among the uninitiated know that Perrault is the father of these fairy tales. In *The Complete Fairy Tales* Christopher Betts has revived the works of Charles Perrault for an English-speaking audience by translating his *Tales in Verse* (*Contes en vers*) and his stories or *Tales of Bygone Times* (*Histoires ou contes du temps passé*) from the seventeenth century. The inclusion of Gustave Doré's illustrations adds an edge to the book. One cannot say that this volume is a critical work, but it is well suited for the classroom. The elaborate introduction leads budding folklorists and fairy-tale enthusiasts to pose important questions about the origins of Perrault's tales. Right from the beginning, readers are encouraged to think critically about fairy tales and their implications in our daily lives. Using theories such as psychoanalysis and symbolism, Betts illustrates different ways to analyze Perrault's tales while pointing out the pitfalls of excessive use of sexual symbolism or Freudian theories to interpret the tales.

The introduction includes a detailed discussion of Charles Perrault's life and his political and literary career. In his introduction Betts problematizes the origins of Perrault's tales, but he also draws parallels between Perrault's tales and the versions originating from such writers as Petrarch, Boccaccio, Straparola, Basile, and his own contemporaries, for example, Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy and Jean de la Fontaine.

In the section in the introduction titled "The Tale in Verse," Betts discusses the sociohistorical importance of three tales: "Griselda," "Donkey-Skin," and "Three Silly Wishes." Versions from such writers as Boccaccio and Chaucer are different in tone and register particular to their time period. Although the first two tales concern women who are oppressed by men of power, the last tale is just a comedy of events criticizing both the husband and the wife for their greediness. These authors treat women differently in their tales. Often Italian writers use a bawdy style with lewd descriptions of women. The brief discussion about Boileau and his *Satire X*, a poignant satire on women, sets the mood for these three tales in France. Even though Charles Perrault himself has been considered a misogynist by many scholars and feminist critics, Betts seems to lend a gentler judgment, assuming that Perrault wrote "Griselda" as a homage to his late wife, Marie Guichon, who is compared to Griselda for her patience

and virtue. By placing these tales in a sociohistorical context in France, Italy, and England, Betts sparks interest in comparative analysis. Another important aspect of these three tales in verse is that they are translated in verse. According to Betts, this is the first time that any translator has attempted to translate the three tales in verse. Given that the seventeenth century is rigid in its rules regarding the composition of narratives, Betts has undertaken a gargantuan task of adhering to the rules of the epoch. He renders authenticity not only to the target language but also to the genre.

In the introduction's section titled "The Tales in Prose," Betts makes an important distinction between folktale and fairy tale, stating that the folktale implies an adult audience, whereas the fairy tale implies an audience of children. Structural elements such as "Once upon a time," the repetition of the number 3, and the appearance of ogres, fairy godmothers, and flying carpets all reinforce the idea of stories for children. Betts then analyzes every tale, although not in-depth or with a particular theoretical approach. By using symbolic analysis of certain elements in "Sleeping Beauty" and "Little Red Riding Hood" and psychoanalytic analysis using Bruno Bettelheim's and Freud's theories, Betts further pushes readers to discover the hidden meaning of fairy tales.

The section of the introduction titled "Note on Text and Translation" is a wonderful segment on the difficulties of translating languages in general but also of languages from centuries ago. As a language evolves, the usage of certain expressions and words changes dramatically. Seventeenth-century French is a prime example. Betts has indeed done laudable work in this section. Many linguistic features can be lost in translation, and all translators run this risk. Betts's extensive knowledge of the intricacies of the French language, its syntax, and semantics is evident in his ability to versify in English the original verse tales. He also considers the evolution of a language from a particular era. He is cognizant of making a faux pas if he translates *penser* as "to think" or *brutale* as "brutal" in a twenty-first century context. Instead, he has done extensive research and mentions in his "Note on the Text and Translation" that these words meant "nearly" and "impolite," respectively, in a seventeenth-century context. This is a vital note for students new to the field of seventeenth-century studies to understand that the language differs and evolves from century to century. Betts has captured the style of the original text. In many translations readability is given priority over form. Betts's translation of Perrault's text considers both form and content and, in my opinion, is a good tool for beginning-level courses on folklore and fairy tale.

In this same section Betts discusses the difficulty of translating the morals attached to each tale. In Perrault's tales morals are often laden with implicit hidden messages for young children, especially young girls. By capitalizing the

word *morals*, Betts creates a separate genre. Extensive explanatory notes about verses, morals, and words that are not particularly obvious to a modern reader are a powerful tool for any translated work. Betts provides endnotes that are easy to refer to and to understand.

Every tale is traced more or less to its known origins in Italy, England, or elsewhere. In Appendix A Betts gives different versions from different authors, ranging from medieval, sixteenth-, and seventeenth-century Italy to the Grimms' tales of the nineteenth century. However, Betts only briefly mentions Angela Carter in his introduction, despite her importance to the literary reception of Perrault. By considering her modern revisions, among others, one can actually realize not only the importance of fairy tales in our daily lives but also how the authors adapt and adopt the stories according to the time period in which they are writing. Perrault's or the Grimms' "Little Red Riding Hood" differs drastically from Carter's "Company of Wolves," which subverts the original tale by giving power to women and blurring the boundaries between the masculine and the feminine. Pointing out subversive versions of the same tale would incite readers to dig deeper and consider tales from different points of view and different socio-cultural perspectives. Overall, though, *The Complete Fairy Tales* of Perrault is a good starting point for fairy-tale enthusiasts as well as beginning-level students.

Shyamala Mourouvapin
Wayne State University

Enchanted Eloquence: Fairy Tales by Seventeenth-Century French Women Writers. Edited and translated by Lewis C. Seifert and Domna C. Stanton. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010.

With *Enchanted Eloquence: Fairy Tales by Seventeenth-Century French Women Writers*, Lewis C. Seifert and Domna C. Stanton offer a collection of eight French fairy tales translated into English; most have never been translated before.

The book is divided into three main sections: the "Editors' Introduction," "Fairy Tales by Seventeenth-Century *Conteuses*," and the "Critical Texts on the *Contes de Fées*." Seven black and white illustrations are also included, mostly frontispieces and portraits. Even though only eight fairy tales are presented in this volume, the useful appendix lists the English titles of the sixty tales written at that time by Marie-Catherine le Jumel de Barneville, Baronne d'Aulnoy; Louise de Bossigny, Comtesse d'Auneuil; Catherine Bernard; Catherine Bédacier Durand; Charlotte-Rose de Caumont de La Force; Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon; and Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, Comtesse de Murat.

The "Editors' Introduction" presents an informative and well-researched summary of the fairy-tale genre with its cultural and literary context during the Louis XIV era, as well as an account of the voice and empowerment of the

conteuses (female storytellers). The introduction also analyzes the critical reception of the tales across the centuries. General but nonetheless instructive, the introduction furnishes a wonderful overview of the fairy-tale genre in seventeenth-century France.

The strength of the introduction lies in the analytic and enlightening manner in which the editors review and explore the literary fairy tale's vogue. The genre, Seifert and Stanton remind us, is primarily dominated by female writers, as two-thirds of the tales were produced by women (3). However, there was also a group of male authors, Charles Perrault being the most well-known (although his tales display a different style from his contemporaries). The editors reveal how the literary tales probably appeared in the mid-seventeenth-century salons and how this community of women created a new genre at a time when France was economically challenged and experiencing a return to religious piety.

Often combining oral folklore and entirely new pieces, the *contes de fées* were the product of a fertile creativity from women who "invented a tradition with their own fairy tales" (15). Seifert and Stanton emphasize that this newly created literary production included elements of refined and privileged comportment belonging to an elite society, thus distinguishing the *conteuses'* tales from the popular and lowly milieu.

Based on the marvelous, the *contes* also incorporate references to the upper-class society, such as theater, opera, and contemporary mores, thereby positioning the *contes de fées* as a modern genre. Indeed, the editors detail the context in which the seventeenth-century tales were created at the peak of the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. Far from being a recycled genre, the fairy tales were the voice of the *conteuses* affirming their belonging to a male-dominated society and their empowerment by means of their female characters, who were often active and in charge of their destiny. Noting that the *conteuses* called themselves modern fairies, Seifert and Stanton affirm that these "tales are both about and by fairies" (27). Through their leading female characters, the *conteuses* present alternatives and options for women in love, marriage, and governance, for instance.

Seifert and Stanton conclude their detailed introduction with a section on the reception of the fairy tales. A few critics have commented on the vogue of this new literary genre led by women writers and their use of unrealistic elements in their stories. The editors inform us that Jean-Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde, Pierre-Valentin Faydit, and Abbé de Villiers were the main critics of the *conteuses* at the time. Interestingly, we learn that the Grimm Brothers in the nineteenth century were also fierce critics of d'Aulnoy and Murat in particular, favoring Perrault for his succinct writing style. Finally, the editors supply a list of key twentieth-century critical works, which is helpful to trace the literary and historical analysis of the *conteuses'* tales.

The second section of the book, “Fairy Tales by Seventeenth-Century *Conteuses*,” presents the English translation of eight fairy tales. The editors indicate that they have given priority to tales by five leading *conteuses* that had not yet been translated. The stories are well chosen and will be especially useful for non-French speakers. For each of the five storytellers, Seifert and Stanton include a brief biography preceding the translation of the chosen tales.

The first translated tale is Catherine Bernard’s “Prince Rosebush.” Embedded in her novella *Inès of Cordoba* (1696), “Prince Rosebush” is the charming story of a prince who becomes a rosebush after a fairy casts a spell on him. After regaining his human form and experiencing the jealousy of his wife, the prince asks the fairy to change him back into a rosebush. “Marmoisan,” written by Marie-Jeanne L’Héritier de Villandon, is the second tale translated in the volume. Even though “not technically a fairy tale since the plot does not unfold in magical setting” (63), the editors include it in the volume for its “narrative elements common in folk- and fairy tales” (63). The choice is pertinent because “Marmoisan” features a female cross-dresser and showcases the empowerment of women.

Next are two stories by d’Aulnoy, one of the most well-known and prolific *conteuses*, with twenty-five tales to her name. Although both “Princess Carp” and “The Doe in the Woods” have been translated before, Seifert and Stanton chose to include them here because the earlier edition is out of print. These two tales end with a wedding and exemplify typical motifs found in seventeenth-century fairy tales—for example, love, metamorphosis, and marvelous elements.

The editors have chosen two tales by de La Force, “The Enchanter” and “Green and Blue.” In both tales love takes center stage. The first one, offering atypical motifs for the seventeenth century, echoes a medieval episode titled *Caradoc* from an anonymous twelfth-century writer, and the second story presents more representative elements, such as the two lovers confronted by obstacles before they can fully enjoy their lives together. The volume features two tales by Murat. “Little Eel” and “Wasted Effort” present unhappy endings, exposing the inability of the fairies to help the young couples and demonstrating the limits of the marvelous world.

In the last section, “Critical Texts on the *Contes de Fées*,” Seifert and Stanton translate L’Héritier’s “Letter to Madame D. G.***” (1695) and de Villiers’s “Conversations on Fairy Tales and Other Contemporary Works, to Protect Against Bad Taste” (1699) from the *Second Conversation*, offering a glimpse of the contemporary debate on this innovative literary vogue. These two documents are quite valuable and will give readers a fair representation of the reception of this new genre in the late seventeenth century.

The editors did astonishing work in their translation of the tales, in particular through their numerous and instructive footnotes. This volume will be a useful overview of the literary fairy-tale vogue in the seventeenth century as well as a basic reference for scholars, or simply a wonderful resource for English speakers to discover the *contes de fées* by prominent women writers in the Louis XIV era.

Bérénice V. Le Marchand
San Francisco State University

A. S. Byatt: *Critical Storytelling*. By Alexa Alfer and Amy J. Edwards de Campos. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.

In this comprehensive and workmanlike study of A. S. Byatt's fiction and literary criticism, Alfer and de Campos survey Byatt's career from her first novel (*The Shadow of the Sun*, 1964) to her most recent one (*The Children's Book*, 2009) and include many of her short stories and critical essays. As the editors say, they have tried to avoid biography per se, although they do include a useful biographical timeline, in order to concentrate on an "intellectual charting of A. S. Byatt's career as a writer" (2). This charting is by and large quite successful. Alfer and de Campos have shown the many continuities in Byatt's thought and the strong connections between her critical work and her fiction. They also stress her interest in and contributions to recent scientific and cultural exchanges; she is not only a novelist but also a "public intellectual," someone who is deeply engaged in the issues of the day.

Alfer and de Campos's study begins with a look at Byatt's story "Sugar," the title story in her first collection of short stories (1987). "Sugar" is really about memories as tangled mixtures of truth and myth or family fictions. Alfer and de Campos take the tale as representative of Byatt's self-conscious, self-critical approach to storytelling, or "the necessary interplay between fiction and criticism, reading and writing, body and mind, tradition and transformation" (10). Throughout her oeuvre Byatt questions many of the assumptions about narrative, realism, and textuality that we tend to take for granted. She is indeed, as the subtitle suggests, a "critical storyteller."

But readers of *Marvels & Tales* will primarily want to know about the role fairy tales and the fantastic have played in Byatt's work. Here Alfer and de Campos seem to me to be less reliable. One basic difficulty throughout is their failure to distinguish between the fairy tale and fantasy; the terms are not interchangeable, as they seem to believe. It is a distinction that Byatt herself makes, particularly in her most recent novel, *The Children's Book*. She criticizes early twentieth-century British fantasy—particularly the many versions of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, called by one character "a play for grown-ups

who don't want to grow up" (*Children's Book* 512)—for the endorsement of the desire to remain a child forever. Byatt contrasts this kind of fantasy with the "old, deep tales that are twisted into our souls" (514). Many characters in *The Children's Book* are involved with fairy tales, from Olive Wellwood, who invents dark modern fairy tales for her children and for publication; to Olive's admirer, Toby Youlgreave, a fairy-tale scholar; to members of the younger generation: Griselda Wellwood, who is studying the Grimms at Cambridge, and Wolfgang Stern, who works with his father, Anselm, creating marionette plays in Munich. Byatt also continues to include embedded stories and tales, as she has often done in her fiction at least since *Possession* (1990). Fairy tales play a part not only in the thick thematic texture of *The Children's Book* but also in its narrative structure.

Alfer and de Campos also claim that Byatt has become more concerned "with the 'thinginess' of human existence over and against the fantasy worlds afforded by the fairytale form" (8). This seems to me demonstrably untrue. *The Children's Book* is indeed full of things, from Benedict Fludd's and Philip Warren's beautiful (and sometimes disturbing) pots to the horrible details of force-feeding suffragists and of the trenches of World War I. But the worlds of the fairy tale are not the hazy, nostalgic fantasy worlds of *Peter Pan* or the *Wind in the Willows*. Rather, as Byatt shows over and over again, fairy tales give us metaphorical entry into worlds that include darkness, death, and destruction. At one point, Alfer and de Campos call war "the inverted or perverted other side of the fairytale coin" (135), but I would argue that it is an integral part of that coin, not its opposite. Even the most hopeful fairy tales suggest terrible possibilities and realities. In the last scene of *The Children's Book*, some of the few surviving members of the children's generation meet in London in 1919. At the dinner table they eat soup and dumplings and drink to the memory of those who have not survived. The scene is celebratory and communal, reminiscent of the meal at the end of the Grimms' "Juniper Tree" or the dinner table in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. But beneath the scene there are many shadows and ghosts: "They all had things they could not speak of, stories they had survived only by never telling them, although they woke at night, surprised by foul dreams, which returned regularly and always as a new shock" (*Children's Book* 675). The fairy tale, with its usual happy ending, includes the true horrors of the world, unlike most Victorian and Edwardian fantasy.

A few other complaints. The index is so haphazard and perfunctory as to be useless. There are no entries for some narratological terms used throughout the book, like plot, myth, fantasy, storytelling, or romance. Byatt's works are listed by volume, not individually, so that if a reader is

looking for a story or an essay by name, it takes some searching. Three authors mentioned in one sentence on p. 118 (Kipling, Barrie, and Nesbit) are included in the index, but the fourth, mentioned in the same sentence (Grahame, misspelled as Graham) is not, nor is Andrew Lang in the previous sentence. Some critics quoted at length are in the index, but most (like Michael Levenson) are not. And, more important, some books and articles listed in the bibliography seem to have influenced the arguments made, but they are not cited in either the text or the notes. (I noticed this particularly in the case of my own work, but it is also true, for example, of Hilary Schor's and Gillian Beer's.) Alfer and de Campos's casual scholarly practices may be a feature of the series as a whole, but Manchester University Press should demand better.

Elizabeth Wanning Harries
Smith College

Marvelous Geometry: Narrative and Metafiction in Modern Fairy Tale. By Jessica Tiffin. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009.

Elaborating on the ongoing discussions of fairy tales and narrative technique, *Marvelous Geometry* takes its place within Wayne State University Press's Series in Fairy-Tale Studies, which includes Stephen Benson's seminal engagement with narrative theory in *Cycles of Influence* (2003) and, more recently, Vanessa Joosen's excellent *Critical and Creative Perspectives on Fairy Tales* (2011), also reviewed in this volume. Within this company, *Marvelous Geometry* demonstrates the need for continued rigor in the study of the relationship between fairy-tales studies and narrative theory. The book begins with a theoretical introductory chapter, followed by three chapters on the fairy-tale work of James Thurber, Angela Carter, and A. S. Byatt. The last three chapters cover the fairy tale in contemporary popular narratives in genre fiction; popular, primarily Hollywood, production and live action and animated film; and a short concluding chapter on fairy-tale parody.

The marvelous geometry of the title refers to the fairy tale's "highly encoded and recognizable qualities of structure and pattern and [to] its deliberate and self-conscious distancing of itself from realistic representation, whether in logic and detail or in its operation as magic narrative" (8). The modern fairy tale of the title refers to the corpus of writers and texts studied, which is limited to English-language literary and cinematic productions ranging from the mid-twentieth to the early-twenty-first century. Tiffin carefully delineates her criteria for the choice of texts studied: the texts must clearly retain fairy-tale structures rather than simply include fairy-tale motifs, and they must deliberately accept the marvelous and the fairy tale's "flatly textured sparsity of tone" (27).

Marvelous Geometry is well grounded in fairy-tale studies. Tiffin's glosses of and elaborations on discussions and debates about fairy tales and narrative structure, postmodernism, and feminist debates around Angela Carter, and her discussions of the relationship between folkloric, literary, and cinematic texts are cogent. Unfortunately, this familiarity does not extend to postclassical narratology, which is ostensibly the other approach that *Marvelous Geometry* should engage. In particular, Tiffin's use of the term *metafiction* is problematic throughout the text; in *Marvelous Geometry* metafiction is made to mean any number of forms of textual self-consciousness.

Referring to Patricia Waugh's definition of metafiction as self-conscious and systematic "attention to [a text's] status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (qtd. on 23), Tiffin goes on to assume that the "oral voice of the folktale" does the work of bringing the form of tale as tale to the fore and, even more surprisingly, she argues that "the unashamed presentation of the marvelous, as well as the unrealistic use of pattern and repetition in describing events, similarly draws attention to a nonrealist form of representation.... In this sense, then, fairy tale has some inherently metafictional elements" (23). Tiffin's argument that fairy tales are inherently metafictional depends on an understanding of metafiction that extends well beyond useful categorization. Her primary sources for defining the term are, appropriately enough, Robert Scholes's *Fabulation and Metafiction* (1979), Patricia Waugh's *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984), and Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Parody* (1985) and *Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) but interestingly not *Narcissistic Narrative* (1980). However, reference to any of the studies that have expanded and refined the term since the 1980s are absent. Since the 1980s a great deal has been written to complicate and expand on understandings of metafiction. *Marvelous Geometry* would have benefited from more recent articles on metanarrative and metafiction, in particular, Monika Fludernik's "Metanarrative and Metafictional Commentary: From Metadiscursivity to Metanarration and Metafiction" (2003) and Ansgar Nünning's "On Metanarrative: Towards a Definition, a Typology, and an Outline of the Functions of Metanarrative Commentary" (2004).

Crucially, in her claims for fairy tales as inherently metafictional, Tiffin dismisses one of the primary criteria for metafiction according to Waugh. Tiffin writes: "Fairy tale by my definition specifically refuses to fulfil Waugh's criteria of 'posing questions' about the unreal world it represents. Although the fictional nature of the fairy tale world is highlighted, we are not encouraged to question it at all; rather than an unstable relationship, we are presented with one whose terms of interaction between reality and fiction are a *fait accompli*" (23).

This is very true and is exactly the reason that fairy tales are *not* inherently metafictional. The common simplified definition of metafiction as “fiction about fiction” refers not to fiction that is not realistic but to fiction that reflects on its own production as narrative fiction. Many of the techniques that Tiffin discusses work to support the mimetic illusion, drawing readers into the magical realm of the fairy tale rather than pushing them back out to consider the constructed nature of the tale—the fictionality of the text. Most readers are aware that fairy tales are not real and have never tried to be. This is not an effect of metafiction; it is an effect of basic reading competence. In rejecting the question posing the “troubling” aspect of Waugh’s definition, metafiction merely comes to mean nonmimetic narratives.

For those less bothered by terminological precision, *Marvelous Geometry* does produce insightful readings of its authors and texts. Tiffin’s discussion of the tensions between popular genre fiction, folklore, and literature are nuanced and fair. Of the three chapters dedicated to specific authors’ fairy-tale texts, the chapter on Byatt is the strongest and most cohesive, in part perhaps because Byatt’s engagement with the fairy tale has been the most unambiguously metafictional by all definitions. The chapter on Thurber provides an insightful discussion of language play and slippage of meaning through non-sense as well as the mastery of fairy-tale forms as keys to a character’s success in gaining a happily ever after. The useful and concise contextualization and summary of the feminist critiques of Angela Carter lead to a discussion of Carter’s use of structural play, intertextuality, and shifting symbolic meaning. The chapters on popular genre fiction and the fairy tale and cinematic fairy tales cover new ground in terms of the texts chosen and the approach. In particular, the chapter on film complements the latest books on fairy-tale cinema by Jack Zipes and Pauline Greenhill and Sidney Matrix that have appeared since Tiffin’s book was published.

The engagement of *Marvelous Geometry* with fairy-tale studies is thorough and astute; however, because the book’s central thesis is about metafiction in contemporary fairy-tale texts, a more nuanced and informed investigation into the arguments of contemporary narrative theory is very much missed. For this reason the opening theoretical chapter does not work as well as it should. Nevertheless, except for the occasional insistence on the metafictional nature of nonmetafictional effects in later chapters, the book as a whole is insightful and includes nuanced discussions of structural play and solid historicizing of the texts and issues around it.

Jennifer Orme
Ryerson University, Toronto

Postmodern Reinterpretations of Fairy Tales: How Applying New Methods Generates New Meanings. Edited by Anna Kérchy. Foreword by Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011.

My first thought upon receiving Anna Kérchy's *Postmodern Reinterpretations of Fairy Tales* in the mail was what an ugly green brick of a book it is. Like the princess in the Grimms' "Frog King," readers are unlikely to be charmed by the look of the thick, bright green hardcover with its no-frills textual layout. Will the read make up for this? Not every frog turns into a prince, and not every article in this volume is worth one's while, but overall Anna Kérchy's collection does a commendable job of representing the richness of contemporary fairy tales and the plurality of methods in current fairy-tale studies.

With no less than twenty-six contributions, Kérchy structures the volume into six sections: (1) "New Media Literacy," (2) "Emerging Genres," (3) "Rewriting Myth," (4) "Re-Imaging the Body," (5) "Creating Fictional Realities," and (6) "Narratological Novelties." From the tapestry of entries, which are also each given a short title in relation to their section, three centers of gravity emerge: feminist perspectives, the new contexts of the fairy tale, and the new contexts of the body. To give an impression of the academic contribution of the volume within the confines of this review, I address each of these sections through one exemplary article.

Angela Carter looms large in *Postmodern Reinterpretations*, not only because she is probably the most popular author of postmodern fairy tales but also because many of the contributions hail from the conference "The Fairy Tale After Angela Carter," held at the University of East Anglia in 2009. Vanessa Joosen's article, "Reclaiming the Lost Code: Feminist Imaginations of the Fairy-Tale Genesis," looks at two less famous female fairy-tale innovators who, like Carter, are in close touch with academic criticism: Olga Broumas and Nicole Cooley. In particular, Joosen's careful and striking close reading of Nicole Cooley's poem "Snow White" demonstrates how academic criticism can get a second lease on life in creative writing and how, in turn, poetry can uncover surprising gaps in the academic discourse. When Snow White lets the witch into the dwarfs' home in Cooley's poem, she puts herself at the mercy of the villain—with suicidal intentions. According to Joosen, Cooley likens this to female oral storytellers who told their tales to the Grimms and thereby not only gave up their (female) language but also consigned their very identity to oblivion. Joosen's essay looks beyond Carter, both with her choice of Cooley's poem and with the critical issues between theory and practice it raises.

As Kérchy's collection demonstrates, the fairy tale takes many different paths around the turn of the twenty-first century: it gets appropriated into new genres (from Gothic fiction for teenagers, like *Twilight*, to postmodern ballet

and surrealist film and paintings), and it spreads across media boundaries (from written text into films, comics, digital texts, video games, and pop songs). *Postmodern Reinterpretations* features contributions discussing every single one of these cases. As Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère puts it in her foreword, “Fairy tales have always been ‘stories to think with’” (ii), and the examples in Kérchy’s collection prove that this is the case today as much as it has ever been.

From the point of view of fairy-tale studies and narrative studies, Adam Zolkover provides an interesting perspective on these new contexts of the fairy tale in his article “*King Rat* to *Coraline*: Faerie and Fairy Tale in British Urban Fantasy.” Current British fantasy fiction, such as China Miéville’s *King Rat* and Neil Gaiman’s *Neverwhere* and *Coraline*, makes use of the narrative structures of the fairy tale but forgoes its escapist, marvelous dimension. These novels are set in present-day Britain and use the features of the fairy tale (quests, talking animals, etc.) to defamiliarize this environment, to take it to the “edge of plausibility” (74). Zolkover’s analysis of the novels points to a key issue for fairy tales transported into other genres and media: the fairy tale’s social realism and its relation to current technological and political developments. These new contexts of the fairy tale are brought to the fore, as Zolkover shows how Gaiman and Miéville write fantasy novels that use the fairy-tale’s features to explore ways to think about our world as it is and as it could be.

The body in the fairy tale is a third theme that runs across the sections in this collection. Anna Kérchy’s own *Body Texts in the Novels of Angela Carter* (2008), which engages with poststructural approaches, suggests the importance of the physical for fairy tales, and together with the beginning interest in embodied cognition in narrative studies, this could contribute to a larger emerging trend. In Kérchy’s collection Jeana Jorgensen’s “Monstrous Skins and Hybrid Identities in Catherynne M. Valente’s *The Orphan Tales*” explores the importance of the representations of skins for identity and transformation in Valente’s novel. Jorgensen analyzes the rhetorical strategies around the topic of skin through the categories of reflection, refraction, and masking. As she embeds her discussion into examples from the (European) fairy-tale tradition at large, Jorgensen lays the conceptual groundwork for a more detailed discussion of skin in the fairy tale, a strikingly underrepresented topic despite the likes of *Allerleirauh*, *Peau d’Âne*, and *Cap o’ Rushes*.

The popularity of the fairy tale and its current intermedial fertility will ensure the production of volumes on fairy tales and their reinterpretations and reappropriations, even if the notion of “contemporary” has to be updated every so often, as Stephen Benson notes in the introduction to his *Contemporary Fiction and the Fairy Tale*. Anna Kérchy’s volume demonstrates this expansionist

trend in the fairy tale and in fairy-tale studies today and shows avenues to future developments. Other than Benson's volume, Kérchy strides beyond the literary and presents the larger cultural dimension of the fairy tale. In terms of coherence and accessibility, the collection might have profited from limiting its scope to one genre or medium or to one of its thematic nodes. As it stands, *Postmodern Reinterpretations of Fairy Tales* is uncompromisingly comprehensive and offers (perhaps too broad) an overview of the field and its potentials, its charming princes and clammy frogs.

Karin Kukkonen
St. John's College, Oxford

Anti-Tales: The Uses of Disenchantment. Edited by Catriona McAra and David Calvin. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011.

Anti-Tales: The Uses of Disenchantment reflects the ubiquity of the fairy tale in contemporary culture and the diversity of approaches to the genre, although the ambition of the editors is questionable: Catriona McAra and David Calvin seek to revive the old-fashioned label of anti-tale coined by André Jolles in *Einfache Formen* (1929). In the past decades many international fairy-tale scholars have documented the diversity and complexity of the genre, and of fairy-tale history itself, against simplistic universalizing and essentializing definitions and classifications. Although seductively simple, the attempt to establish "a clearer typology" (3) of tale versus anti-tale (displayed over two columns) contradicts the methodological and critical imperative to consider individual tales in context, as leading fairy-tale scholars have consistently argued and demonstrated. For Jack Zipes, "There is no such thing as *the* fairy tale. However, there are hundreds and thousands of fairy tales" (*Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, 2000). Ironically, the quotation from Cristina Bacchilega used as an epigraph to the volume also stresses that "the anti-tale is implicit in the tale." In their turn several contributors express doubts about the pertinence of the binary model in light of the history of the genre and because anti-tales "relate to the *idea* of the tale itself rather than to their content," as Helen Stoddart puts it (131). An uncritical return to the notion of the anti-tale glosses over differences to produce a static and ahistorical image of the genre and confuses actual tales with their stereotype.

As a result, generalizations about "the essential formal elements of the genre," which are belied by a knowledge of its complex development from antiquity to the present, abound in the volume. Tellingly, each contributor comes up with a different idea of the anti-tale, sometimes with *anti* used in quotation marks to signal its inseparability from the genre, but more often than not the term is naturalized and used to schematically contrast the "classic"

tales with their contemporary revisions. The anti-tale is variously associated with subversion, inversion, darkness, amorality, cruelty, and abjection but also with social critique, satire, rebelliousness (progressive, as in postcolonial and feminist revisions, or nostalgic, escapist, and reactionary), intertextuality, self-consciousness, and parody as well as antinarrative drives, intermediality and sensoriality, realism, antirealism, disenchantment, reenchantment, and generic hybridity. I would be prepared to argue that these characteristics apply *equally* to the so-called classic versions and even to their manifold sources. Although it is essential to examine how, why, and to what effect artists revisit the fairy-tale tradition (or received ideas about the genre), such an inquiry is best conducted with a good knowledge of what exactly they are responding to and reacting against.

Anti-Tales is divided into several sections: “History and Definitions,” “Twisted Film and Animation,” “Surrealist Anti-Tales,” “Sensorial Anti-Tale,” “Black Humour,” “Inverted (Anti-) Fairy Tales,” and “(Post)Modern Anti-Tales,” each including two to four short essays. The book begins with a solid contribution by Laura Martin that calls the validity of the concept of *Anti-märchen* into question in light of the German Romantic literary tradition, which indeed exhibits many of the traits that other contributors associate with the anti-tale. The so-called dark shadow of German Romanticism is inseparable from the genre, and its influence on British fantasy and the modern fairy-tale tradition has been well documented by Bill Gray. Far from being “provocative” (to quote the editors), Martin’s essay is grounded in fairy-tale scholarship, notably Heinz Rölleke’s important work on the Grimms (see also Ruth B. Bottigheimer, Jack Zipes, Maria Tatar). Martin stresses that “there are no ‘pure’ fairy tales, only particular, singular versions” (24). Following the cue of Jan Ziolkowski’s and Graham Anderson’s studies, Stijn Praet also acknowledges the conceptual and methodological difficulties inherent in the notion of the anti-tale by arguing that the strategies and devices associated with it are interwoven into the tradition—and from its very beginning, in Apuleius’s “Golden Ass.” Likewise, the French *conte de fées* served to disguise the authors’ critical engagement with social reality. The French *conte* should not be taken at face value, any more than the Grimms’ constructed authenticity is in their *Volksmärchen*.

It is not clear that *Anti-Tales* has profited from being peer-reviewed, because it includes a few superficial, uninformed, or derivative articles (e.g., the article on Nalo Hopkinson’s postcolonial revisiting of “Bluebeard” echoes existing criticism not referenced in the bibliography) but also some genuinely original contributions to fairy-tale criticism. Anna Kérchy’s subtle and insightful discussion of recent postmodern revisions of Carroll’s Alice tales

shows how shifting from narrative to the visual arts raises epistemological questions and subverts representational codes and strategies. Suzanne Buchan recognizes the “profound and intimate literary knowledge” (85) of the Quay Brothers’ “metaphysical machines” in an essay that is rich and suggestive if not always easy to follow. Catriona McAra pursues her work on fairy-tale elements in Surrealist art through an examination of vision and visuality in a short story by Dorothea Tanning alongside some of her paintings, although I am not sure that the idea of anti-art (any more than anti-tale) to qualify Surrealism does service to her otherwise suggestive comparative study. Elsa Plumer’s essay on radio plays of the same period explores another form of intermedial work. Helen Stoddart focuses on the dialogic nature of Paula Rego’s *Jane Eyre* paintings as disrupting sequence and reinscribing texture, disturbing physicality, and body imagery. She unfortunately confuses the inaugural reading scene with the red room episode in Brontë’s novel. Mayako Murai’s fine analysis of the sensuous texture of Konoike’s fairy-tale-inspired work examines the relationship between text and image to emphasize its dynamic poetics of sensuality and affect. Christina Murdoch’s essay on Dahl’s *Revolt Rhymes* traces Dahl’s ambivalent attempt to recover and reconstruct the origins of the fairy tale in the manner of folklorists. Michelle Ryan-Sautour’s original and subtle comparative analysis of Rikki Ducornet’s discontinuous text and Tom Motley’s drawings emphasizes the mutability (even opacity) of fantasy and imaginative writing. Jessica Tiffin’s informed essay maps out the interconnections and discontinuities between contemporary Gothic fiction and the fairy tale.

Overall, despite a fine cover illustration and some cutting-edge pieces, *Anti-Tales* is a mixed and uneven collection. A more thorough selection would have done service to the innovative approaches and fresh material under scrutiny.

Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère
University of Lausanne

Critical and Creative Perspectives on Fairy Tales: An Intertextual Dialogue Between Fairy-Tale Scholarship and Postmodern Retellings. By Vanessa Joosen. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011.

Although there are many works that explore intertextuality among folktales, fairy tales, and retellings, few critical works examine the intertextual relationship between fairy-tale criticism and fairy-tale retellings. Vanessa Joosen deftly takes on this gap in her exceptional book *Critical and Creative Perspectives on Fairy Tales*, which examines, as she puts it, “the critical impulse in literature, in the retellings” (35). Joosen begins by calling attention to an overlap in the concerns of fairy-tale criticism and retellings noted by other

scholars, such as Stephen Benson and Jack Zipes. Joosen argues that retellings interpret traditional fairy tales just as criticism does, and their authors respond not just to the traditional fairy tales but to the criticism about fairy tales as well. In much the same way that criticism turns to retellings to discuss the concepts and ideology of traditional tales, retellings respond to critical concepts in remaking fairy tales. Joosen's primary argument is that "retellings and criticism participate in a continuous and dynamic dialogue about the traditional fairy tale" (3). What makes Joosen's book unique is that she centers her study on the criticism, not the retellings, and traces a complex web of intertextual references to that criticism.

Joosen's case studies focus on three well-known and influential works of fairy-tale criticism: "Some Day My Prince Will Come," by Marcia Lieberman (1972); *The Uses of Enchantment*, by Bruno Bettelheim (1976); and *The Madwoman in the Attic*, by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979). In Joosen's view writers of retellings need not have read the criticism to reference it. Some criticism is so well-known, even outside fairy-tale studies, that writers can be familiar with the critical concepts through popular versions without having read the work itself. For example, Bettelheim's psychoanalytic interpretations of fairy tales and his basic premise that fairy tales function therapeutically for children have so pervaded popular culture that it is unsurprising that many retellings incorporate similar themes. In Chapter 3 Joosen examines how several of Bettelheim's arguments appear in retellings, such as his ideas on Oedipal desire that are picked up in Denise Duhamel's "Sleeping Beauty's Dreams" and Francesca Lia Block's "Beast." In both cases Joosen shows how the writers use and challenge Bettelheim's interpretation.

Joosen also explains that this kind of intertextual dialogue can occur when writers of retellings and criticism are interested in the same issues concerning fairy tales and come to similar conclusions independently. This is particularly evident in Joosen's discussions of such retellings as Anne Sexton's *Transformations* and Robert Coover's "Dead Queen," which precede the critical texts yet come to similar conclusions about the core issues at the heart of the traditional tales. Joosen's primary focus is on these types of indirect intertextual links as opposed to direct references to criticism by the writers of retellings, although she provides notable examples from those who do allude explicitly, such as Dorothea Runow, whose retelling of "Little Red Riding Hood" is a critique of Bettelheim's interpretation of the same tale.

The retellings that Joosen analyzes span the past thirty years and are based on a small subset of popular fairy tales: "Snow White," "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," "Hansel and Gretel," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "Beauty and the Beast." Because each chapter focuses on a critical work, Joosen analyzes several

tales related to the critical concepts that predominate in that work. For example, in Chapter 2 she mingles analysis of retellings of “Snow White” (“A Taste for Beauty,” by Priscilla Galloway), “Cinderella” (“The Ugly Stepsisters Strike Back,” by Linda Kavanagh), and “Sleeping Beauty” (*Sleeping Ugly*, by Jane Yolen) in her discussion of the “beauty contest” (65), a concept critical to Lieberman’s argument. One might think that this technique would be confusing, because we are so used to reading works that center on a specific tale type, but Joosen moves so seamlessly among the tales that her argument is quite clear.

Critical and Creative Perspectives is framed by a short introduction and conclusion. The first chapter carefully lays out Joosen’s argument, and the subsequent three chapters are case studies that go into comprehensive, concrete demonstrations of the intertextual links. The first chapter, “An Intertextual Approach to Fairy-Tale Criticism and Fairy-Tale Retellings,” is a careful explanation of the intertextual relationship between criticism and retellings. In setting the framework for her case studies, Joosen draws on the work of Linda Hutcheon, Donald Haase, Maria Nikolajeva, John Stephens, and Ulrich Broich. Of particular interest is how Joosen charts the ways in which retellings disrupt the narrative expectations that readers have for fairy tales and the variable means by which intertextual referencing occurs.

Chapters 2 through 4 each center on one of the critical works, explaining not only how each critical work was received but also the limits of that work and demonstrating for each study how both the criticism and the metacriticism are linked to the retellings. In Chapter 4, on Gilbert and Gubar, metacriticism grows in complexity as Joosen maps the critical response to their reading of “Snow White” and demonstrates how they reference both Lieberman and Bettelheim. Joosen also shows how certain retellings develop interpretations of “Snow White” in conversation with Gilbert and Gubar. For example, Emma Donoghue’s “Tale of the Apple” and Jane Yolen’s “Snow in Summer” also envision the magic mirror as a vessel for the voice of patriarchy and the male gaze.

The retellings analyzed are not limited to English-language texts, as Joosen includes analysis of Dutch and German retellings. Joosen says that retellings for children are more popular in these languages, which allows her the opportunity to examine how “some tales seem motivated by the wish to spread critical ideas to a wider audience, one that specifically includes children” (3). Also interesting here is Joosen’s analysis of illustrations and how they embody critical perspectives that may not be present in the narrative being illustrated and offer their own interpretation of the tale being retold. The illustrations are emphasized more in the Bettelheim chapter and the parts of the Gilbert and Gubar chapter that are also concerned with psychological concepts.

I have mentioned some of the retellings and critical concepts Joosen discusses, but there are simply too many to name them all. If anything, the case studies are too thorough in that Joosen's point is clearly and persuasively demonstrated long before the end of each chapter. This truly is an excellent book, and Joosen's attention to detail and exhaustive analyses demonstrate her argument clearly. This is an intriguing new area of fairy-tale studies, and Joosen beautifully lays the groundwork for further studies into critical fairy-tale intertextuality.

Christy Williams
Hawai'i Pacific University

Over the Rainbow: Queer Children's and Young Adult Literature. Edited by Michelle Ann Abate and Kenneth Kidd. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011.

Over the Rainbow, a collection of seventeen critical essays edited by Michelle Ann Abate and Kenneth Kidd, arrives at a pivotal moment in American political culture. Spurred in part by recurring incidents of homophobic violence against youth who exhibit sexual and gender nonconformity and in part by the disproportionately high suicide rate among LGBTQ adolescents, many families, schools, and communities are now seeking ways to address the needs of young people whose experiences of embodiment, eroticism, and gender identity do not adhere to heterosexual norms. At the same time a large segment of American society, in particular, the powerful religious right, is bent on perpetuating what Abate and Kidd call "the homophobia and erotophobia surrounding (often structuring) the discourses of youth" (1), insisting on abstinence-only approaches to sex education and attacking public health initiatives aimed at making safe-sex information and condoms available to minors. In such a conflicted climate the essays gathered in *Over the Rainbow* offer a range of arguments for the capacity of literary texts, and by extension the teaching of literature, to affirm the passions and address the vulnerabilities that shape the lives of young people today.

With the exception of Andrea Wood's "Choose Your Own Queer Erotic Adventure," an informative essay on the American reception of Japanese "boy's love" computer games, *Over the Rainbow* is made up of reprints of previously published articles, some of which first appeared in the early 1990s. Abate and Kidd mitigate the datedness of these earlier materials by framing the volume as a historical overview of critical work on children's and young-adult texts that depart, wittingly or not, from dominant conceptions of sexuality and gender. The editors' introduction elegantly situates the collection within the historical span between the emergence of gay and lesbian studies in the early 1970s and

present-day scholarship informed by the multifarious concept of queer. Both Abate and Kidd are leading figures in the field of children's literature, to which Abate's *Raising Your Kids Right: Children's Literature and American Political Conservatism* (2010) and Kidd's *Freud in Oz: At the Intersections of Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature* (2011) are significant recent contributions. Their concise yet deeply informed account of the disciplinary transition from gay or lesbian to queer adds considerable value to their project.

The editors have made judicious selections to achieve a broad historical coverage and a diversity of topics. In the collection's first essay, Claudia Nelson offers a detailed investigation of "homoemotional" relationships in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century boarding school stories in British boys' magazines; the final two essays, Catherine Tosenberger's "Homosexuality at the Online Hogwarts: Harry Potter Slash Fanfiction" and Wood's "Choose Your Own Queer Erotic Adventure," deal with twenty-first-century textual production and consumption on the Internet. Among the literary texts treated throughout the collection, works with male protagonists are carefully balanced with those featuring young women. Two essays, Jody Norton's "Transchildren and the Discipline of Children's Literature" and Jes Battis's "Trans Magic: The Radical Performance of the Young Wizard in YA Literature," directly address transgender issues, an important domain that is likely to receive more attention in future scholarship and, ideally, future stories for young readers. In the midst of the collection's diversity, a number of intriguing topical intersections emerge. Nelson's discussion of boys' boarding school stories resonates with Tosenberger's examination of fans' queer matchmaking among students at J. K. Rowling's Hogwarts, and both Robin Bernstein's "Queerness of *Harriet the Spy*" and Sherrie A. Inness's "Is Nancy Drew Queer? Popular Reading Strategies for the Lesbian Reader" find evidence of sexual and gender subversion in well-known stories of girl detectives. The two authors who deal with books aimed at preteen children, Robert McRuer and Elizabeth A. Ford, also provide the collection's most sustained analysis of the political conundrums surrounding the representation of HIV/AIDS in texts for young readers.

Most of the texts considered in *Over the Rainbow* are from the United States, but the volume amply compensates for its lack of international scope by providing a multiple-perspective portrait of more than a century of American literary culture.

The collection is clearly designed to appeal to a wide audience. Most of the writers seek to illuminate particular texts, many of which are well-known. For example, Roberta Seelinger Trites traces "queer performances" in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, Eric L. Tribunella delineates the conflicted messages about intimate bonds between boys in John Knowles's *A Separate Peace*, and

Thomas Crisp takes exception to the well-intentioned stereotyping in Alex Sanchez's popular *Rainbow Boys* series. Even those writers who emphasize theoretical questions, such as McRuer, Norton, and Biddy Martin, take care to ground their arguments in specific textual examples. On the whole, the essays in this collection achieve a combination of historical contextualization, theoretical framing, and close reading that makes them accessible to audiences who are not already steeped in the discourses of literary and cultural studies, which in turn makes *Over the Rainbow* a good candidate for adoption in advanced undergraduate classes and certainly for graduate seminars.

The collection is divided into three sections. The first, "Queering the Canon," offers queer-theory-inspired interpretations of classic works of children's literature. Included here, in addition to those already mentioned, are June Cummins's reading of Dorothy Canfield Fisher's novel *Understood Betsy* and Tison Pugh's study of the queer characters inhabiting Frank Baum's Land of Oz. The essays in the following section, "After Stonewall," deal with children's and young-adult texts that began to appear in the 1970s and that directly address themes of nonnormative sexuality and gender identification. This section opens with Christine A. Jenkins's schematic but enlightening overview of sixty gay-themed novels for young readers published between 1969 and 1992, and it includes McRuer's bracingly polemical "Reading and Writing 'Immunity': Children and the Anti-Body," one of the finest essays in the volume. McRuer shows how children's books dealing with AIDS tend to align "innocence" with "immunity," reinforcing the adult-child binary in ways that ultimately fail to convey practical and potentially life-saving messages about the transmission and prevention of the disease. As do many other writers in *Over the Rainbow*, McRuer reflects on the contradictions that beset even the most earnest efforts to connect literary texts, readers, and readers' lived experiences of gender and sexuality. In "The Hobo, the Fairy, and the Quarterback," Biddy Martin summarizes the double edge that characterizes virtually every work discussed in *Over the Rainbow*: "These stories offered realms not only of freedom, passion, and expansiveness, but also of forbiddenness and prohibition" (266). Martin's essay opens the volume's final section, "Queer Readers and Writers," which is devoted to testing the theoretical limits of the concept of queer as a means of understanding the complex interplay of desire, anxiety, and power that informs the production and consumption of literature aimed at young audiences.

In addition to its timely intervention into academic discourses on both children's literature and queer theory, *Over the Rainbow* offers teachers and librarians throughout the school system a rich source of inspiration for classes, workshops, and reading recommendations. Ideally, the book will also challenge

creative writers to craft stories that realize what Eric Tribunella calls “the queer potential” (140) without, as still too often happens, attempting to constrain and discipline that potential’s unpredictable energy.

John David Zuern
University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa

Grimms Wörter: Eine Liebeserklärung. By Günter Grass. Göttingen: Steidl, 2010.

Grimms Wörter is a thought-provoking book with an unusual interpretation of the legacy of the Brothers Grimm that has little to do with fairy tales. Indeed, what else could be expected from Günter Grass, the most famous, if not most notorious writer of postwar Germany? Despite the fact that Grass has written two fairy-tale novels, *Der Butt* (The Flounder, 1977) and *Die Rättin* (The Rat, 1986), as well as *Die Blechtrommel* (The Tin Drum, 1959), which has clear parallels with “Tom Thumb” tales, his book about the Brothers Grimm and their words does not focus on their tales and their influence on his own writing. Although Grass subtitles his book “A Declaration of Love,” there is very little love for the Grimms. Rather, Grass’s book is more a memoir and critical interrogation of the Grimms’ lives and work on the *German Dictionary*, a study of the significance of words, a pastiche of constant wordplay and free associations, and a series of political ruminations that sheds light on Grass’s life and questions the lives of the Brothers Grimm. This is not to say that Grass’s book denigrates the Grimms. Indeed, he fuses their lives and problems with his own to try to explain why a reunified Germany in the twenty-first century is scandalous and why words by themselves cannot explain his disappointment—and perhaps the Grimms’ as well—in the decline of freedom and democracy in present-day Germany.

Grass weaves together three strands of history in this remarkable book: (1) a sociopolitical biography of the Brothers Grimm, Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm (1786–1859); (2) a chronicle of the development of the *German Dictionary* (*Das deutsche Wörterbuch*, 1838–1961), first edited by the brothers, who were able to complete only four volumes, up to the letter F, during their lifetime; and (3) pungent memories of Grass’s lifetime (1927 to the present), which are linked to his two more recent memoirs, *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (Peeling the Onion, 2007) and *Die Box* (The Box, 2008). Each one of the nine chapters in this book begins with a letter and words that set off a chain reaction of associations related to the three interwoven strands. If Grass’s book is a declaration of love, then it is to the words themselves and to Grass’s own astonishing capacity to combine German words and phrases in startling ways that lead to hidden meanings and astute political observations. Most of all, through his woven strands Grass attends to words to free the mind.

The first strand deals with the sociopolitical conditions that shaped the Grimms' own declaration of love for the research of ancient words, tales, and documents. Unfortunately, Grass skims their early years in Kassel and Marburg that formed their views about folklore and culture under the influence of Karl von Savigny, Achim von Arnim, and Clemens Brentano and in debates with the leading philologists of their times. Much of this information can be found in Steffen Martus's new informative biography, *Die Brüder Grimm: Eine Biographie* (2009). Nevertheless, Grass's focus on the Göttingen period enables him to demonstrate more clearly than Martus how the Grimms were swept up by the political struggles of the times and how their allegiance to the integrity of words, such as their oath to the constitution of Hannover, formed bonds that they refused to break. The brothers formed a deep attachment to one another and to Germany through words, even though Germany was not unified at that time. In particular, Grass demonstrates that, once they were compelled to leave Göttingen in 1837 because Ernst August, the King of Hannover, had illegally broken the constitution of the principality, the Grimms spent their lives dedicated to conserving the value of words and oaths and freedom of speech. After a brief period of indecision in Kassel, the Grimms signed a contract with the publishers Karl Reimer and Salomon Hirzel to begin work on the *German Dictionary*, and with the help of Bettina von Arnim, they obtained positions in the Prussian German Academy of Sciences and moved to Berlin in 1841, where they spent the rest of their lives collecting notes and phrases for the *Dictionary* and working on other philological projects. What counted most for the Grimms, according to Grass—who imaginatively inserts himself into their lives, talks and walks with them in the Tiergarten, and attends Jacob Grimm's lecture on aging—was the appreciation of how the meaning of words evolved through culture and how the development of a democratic order of society should correspond to the manner in which words were used. However, Grass indicates that the Grimms were more concerned with order than with democracy.

The second strand of Grass's book demonstrates that it is the *Dictionary* and the other philological works published by the Grimms that form the basis of their legacy in Germany. Grass writes about the publishers and the scholars who carried on the Grimms' tradition after their death and comments ironically on Hirzel's situation. Hirzel became the major publisher of the *Dictionary*, and as a Jew whose family had converted to Protestantism, he hired anti-Semites to edit the *Dictionary* and also reshaped the dictionary in accord with the criticism of a Jewish scholar. Grass traces the remarkable and contradictory history of the *Dictionary* through the Nazi period to 1961, when all thirty-two volumes finally appeared together, and he explains how work on German words in a revised Grimms' *Dictionary* continues today.

The Grimms' legacy is therefore never-ending just as Grass's interventions and play with words in his book are never-ending. Grass inserts himself everywhere as he records the biography of the Grimms and their *Dictionary*. In the chapter *F—Bis die Frucht fiel* (F—Until the Fruit Fell), Grass associates such words as *Fabeln* (fables), *Feder* (feather), *Freiheit* (freedom), *Freie Fahrt für freie Bürger* (free way for free citizens), *Foto* (photo), *Flucht* (flight), *Flüchtling* (refugee), *Forschung* (research), *Feind* (enemy), and *Freund* (friend) with incidents in Jacob's life after Wilhelm's death, Jacob's speech about Wilhelm in the Prussian Royal Academy of Sciences, Grass's own political talks in campaigns for freedom in Germany, further research for the *Dictionary*, and the problems that Hirzel encountered to continue work on the *Dictionary*. Throughout this chapter and throughout the book, Grass tends to celebrate himself and his political actions more than the Grimms and their words. Yet in many respects it is thanks to the provocative Grass that the Grimms' legacy receives the "proper" homage that it deserves. For most people in the world and in Germany itself, the Grimms are famous because of their tales. Yet more than 90 percent of their work involved profound philological research into the history and vitality of words and how and why we speak them. And so, Grass's verbosity and immodest celebration of his personal debt to the Grimms should help us alter our perspective as to why the words of their tales are so meaningful.

Jack Zipes
University of Minnesota

***Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the New Girlie-Girl Culture.* By Peggy Orenstein. New York: Harper Collins, 2011.**

Peggy Orenstein's *Cinderella Ate My Daughter* is a fast-paced and articulate, if not always rigorously scholarly, indictment of the "girlie-girl" culture of twenty-first-century North America. It is not, though, particularly about fairy tales.

Orenstein, like many journalists who write pop culture critiques, carefully balances personal narratives, such as her 3-year-old daughter's consumer-culture requests (for Barbie dolls, pink clothes, and Disney Princess toys) and her own internal struggles with both hyperconsumerism in general and pink-princess-girliness specifically (she also occasionally includes her husband's takes on the struggle), with statistics, studies, and interviews. Some of those narratives, such as the preschool that is deliberately reinforcing positive cross-gender interactions between children, are fascinating. Others, such as the description of the study that purports to show that male rhesus monkeys prefer "boys' toys" while the females prefer feminine items, are patently ridiculous,

implying not only that *objects* (such as toy police cars) are inherently gendered but that *monkeys* recognize a cooking pot as (a) a cooking pot and (b) for female use. (If this is true, then *Planet of the Apes* is a documentary, and we have some explaining to do about our zoos and laboratories.)

A good journalist offers both sides of an argument, though, and Orenstein is a good journalist. She talks about Jay Giedd, of the Child Psychiatry Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health, who argues that statistically there is as much difference within the genders as there is between them in terms of both interests and competence (71). It is a flaw that Giedd's words, which come after such a lot of data (using that term loosely) on inherent sex differences, seem more like a throwaway comment than an effective rebuttal. As a mother trying to fight against a current social construction of femininity that treats girls as hypersexual objects, Orenstein occasionally undermines her own arguments against essentialism and consumerism, as when she admits to having spent a ridiculous sum of money on a "research" trip to the American Girl doll store.

I picked up the text partly because I had been hearing a lot about it from family members with young children and partly because I was thinking about offering the book as a course text for upper-year undergraduates in a children's studies program. It worked relatively well there, with students experienced enough to question some of the more problematic references to sex work, socioeconomic status, the entertainment industry as a monolith, and so on. *Cinderella Ate My Daughter* might work in an introductory course in fairy-tale studies if excerpts were used rather than the entire book, primarily because the volume is much less about fairy tales than it is about the Walt Disney Corporation's fairy tales and really more about Disney's marketing campaigns and consumer goods than it is about the tales themselves. But *Disney Ate My Daughter* might have been too risky a title.

Orenstein does get into interesting fairy-tale territory when she leaves the Disney Store behind and explores the Brothers Grimm tales, sharing an English translation with the aforementioned 3-year-old as bedtime reading; this takes up, however, only one chapter of the book. Orenstein is surprised and disturbed by some of the hard-line but unpredictable violence but notes that Daisy (her daughter) seems to enjoy and engage with these stories. A flaw here is a significant overreliance on Bruno Bettelheim's 1977 text, *The Uses of Enchantment*: it is pretty much the only academic text to which Orenstein refers in terms of fairy tales. Bettelheim's particular psychoanalytic approach, which, among other weaknesses, interprets Sleeping Beauty as the "natural" lethargy of adolescent girls at the onset of menarche (225) and positions frogs as phallic symbols because frogs are "tacky," "clammily disgusting," and "repulsive" (291),

has been treated as problematic in academic circles for many years not only for its essentialist tendencies but also for its lack of historical contextualizing. A poststructural approach that looks at the tales in terms of both the cultural forces that produced them *and* the intertextual relevances of the current era might have been a better choice for Orenstein. A few moments spent on Michel Foucault and Judith Butler never killed anyone, and themes of power and of repeating performativities as self-enforcing practices could have been useful to this book on the whole, not just to the section on the Grimms' tales.

For the most part Orenstein does avoid the specifics of Bettelheim's work in favor of his more general and more generally palatable conclusions: that scary stuff can be useful to children, who learn to deal with the terrifying in a safe context. She might also have considered Terri Windling's assertion, in her introduction to *The Armless Maiden*, that fairy tales show children that they can be competent in a world where the adults (the powerful) are occasionally untrustworthy and sometimes actively dangerous—that children can, most of the time, navigate the dark woods of childhood, scarred but still survivors.

Cinderella Ate My Daughter is a decent piece of pop culture journalism that occasionally betrays its middle-class white-privileged roots. It focuses primarily on the emphasis on consumerism and the hypersexual dress and behavior that seems to be encouraged among girls by certain sections of the mainstream media. Orenstein is honest about her own conflicting feelings in certain circumstances, which is useful. More important, she argues that the best way to encourage critical thinking—the surest path to resistance of harmful social norms—is to talk with children. Not to lecture them but to have conversations where the adults as well as the children ask questions and listen to the thoughts and feelings of the discussants. This is valuable and valid advice for parents, but it does not necessarily have general relevance to fairy tales. As decades of scholarly work have shown, fairy tales have the capacity to carry multiple meanings, to be meaningful differently depending on the author or teller, the audience, and the context, and certainly to offer rich, nuanced, and varied representations of gender roles.

Sara Thompson
York University

Visions of the Jinn: Illustrators of the Arabian Nights. By Robert Irwin. *Studies in the Arcadian Library* 7. London and Oxford: Arcadian Library in association with Oxford University Press, 2010.

Illustrated editions of folktales and fairy tales have often contributed to the success of specific works as much as their text, and illustrated editions of the *Arabian Nights* are a particularly relevant case in point. Since the eighteenth

century, many if not most editions of the *Nights* have been adorned with illustrations. Aiming to illustrate the events narrated in the book's stories, these illustrations have actually shaped many a reader's notion of what the "Orient" looks like. Interestingly, this evaluation applies to the realistic illustrations drawing on actual Eastern architecture and costume almost as much as to the impressive images of fantastic creatures unseen by the traveler's eye. Illustrations have presented these creatures as a natural given, such as the huge bird Rokh, the strap-legged creature that tormented Sindbad on his fifth voyage, or the jinn threatening to kill the poor fisherman who happened to free him from the bottle in which he had been imprisoned for so long. It is hard to imagine anyone better suited to present a survey of those images to the public than Robert Irwin, the prolific "writer, critic, editor and broadcaster" (quoted from the inside of the back cover) and specialist of the *Nights*, well-known through his companion volume to the *Nights* (1994) and his edition of Malcolm and Ursula Lyons' recent translation of *The Arabian Nights* (2009).

In an introduction, four chapters, and a short conclusion followed by a bibliography (including "editions of the *Nights* and of selected stories" and "Related Material and Secondary Sources) and an index, Irwin outlines and discusses the development of illustrations to editions of the *Nights* from the first half of the eighteenth century to Errol Le Cain's *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp* (1981). About a quarter of the pages of the large-sized volume contain the book's main text, and the other three-quarters reproduce illustrations, with a total of 161 plates. Besides introducing the major artists and the editions they illustrated, Irwin discusses artistic trends and technical developments, thus enriching his presentation by embedding the illustrations of the *Nights* into a (condensed) cultural history of book illustration. Readers are thus made to understand the various steps of development in the illustration of the *Nights*, in particular, the tremendous cultural impact of both color printing and the influence of Japanese woodcut imprints (*ukiyo-e*), probably the most decisive and long-lasting influence on the illustrations altogether. Above all, the book's audience is showered with a wealth of illustrations, starting from David Coster's European-style images in the Hague edition (1719) and reproducing the work of virtually all the major artists who illustrated the *Nights*, including such well-known names as Gustave Doré (1832–1883), Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898), Edmund Dulac (1882–1953), Léon Carré (1878–1942), Kees van Dongen (1877–1968), Max Slevogt (1868–1932), and Marc Chagall (1887–1985).

Largely drawing on the holdings of the Arcadian Library in London, "a private, family library specializing in the historic influences of the Levant upon Europe" and aiming to "promote this cultural transfer" (4), the book's reproductions are of a superb quality, and in addition to short references to the

illustrations in the text, each caption includes bibliographical data together with a short summary situating the illustration in the context of the respective narrative. As a special feature, rather than simply reproducing detached single images, numerous illustrations reproduce the covers of the various editions or show a book's opened pages, thus conveying an idea of the books' physical appearance.

Addressing the aficionado as well as the general audience, the book's text is, in general, solidly researched and well written, including numerous casual remarks about the success (or lack thereof) of various editions, their original price, various styles and uses of colors, and other information of a more spurious, sometimes rather curious character (e.g., Dulac "died while demonstrating the flamenco," 14). Attentive readers will not fail to notice a few inaccuracies. Right at the beginning, when Irwin mentions Antoine Galland's "published . . . translation from Arabic into French of a manuscript of the 'Voyages of Sindbad,'" we should be reminded that, even though it led to the "discovery" of the (fragmentary) Arabic manuscript of the *Thousand and One Nights*, Galland's translation of the tales of Sindbad was never published separately, although it might have gone to print in 1701 (see M. Abdel-Halim, *Antoine Galland: Sa vie et son oeuvre*, 1964). Furthermore, Irwin appears to take it for granted that Galland's manuscript consisted of four volumes (15). However, the question of whether Galland's manuscript consisted of three or four volumes has never been settled in a satisfactory manner; research has more or less made its peace with presuming that the old manuscript had three volumes only and that a fourth volume mentioned by Galland probably relates to a different manuscript. In general, folklorists (and other readers) might be irritated by Irwin's derogatory remarks, particularly in the book's early passages, about the illustrations and editions, ranging from "mediocre," "ugly," and "slapdash" (27) to "uninspired" and "deservedly anonymous" (53, plate 28). Specialists of the *Nights* might have expected a few additional references in the bibliography, such as Piotr O. Scholz's exhaustive survey "Zwischen abendländischer Imitation und morgenländischer Imagination: Illustrationen zu den Erzählungen aus '1001 Nacht,'" in *Imitatio: Von der Produktivität künstlerischer Anspielungen und Mißverständnisse* (2001), sadly including reproductions in black and white only; the chapter "L'Orient merveilleux: Un regard occidental sur les *Mille et Une Nuits*" in the exhibition catalog *L'Etrange et le Merveilleux en terres d'Islam* (2001); or Richard van Leeuwen's "De illustraties von *Duizend-en één-nacht* in het Nederlands taalgebied," in *Oostersche weelde: De Oriënt in westerse kunst en cultuur* (2005). But blemishes such as these pale into insignificance when we consider the book's wealth of information, both textual and illustrative, and the sheer joy of being able to browse through more than two centuries of

illustrations to the *Nights* in a single volume. After the publication of Margaret Sironval's small, yet highly readable *Album Mille et Une Nuits: Iconographie choisie et commentée* (2005) and Jeff A. Menges's sparsely commented *Arabian Nights Illustrated: Art of Dulac, Folkard, Parrish, and Others* (2008), Irwin's book is now the subject's exhaustive treatment.

Ulrich Marzolph

Georg-August-Universität and Enzyklopädie des Märchens, Göttingen

The Flight of the Mermaid. By Gita Wolf and Sirish Rao. Illustrated by Bhajju Shyam. Chennai, India: Tara Books, 2009.

Since the 1990s Tara Books has built up a formidable international reputation as a quality producer of exquisite handcrafted books. These books, boasting a strong graphic component and avowedly produced beyond the "publishing mainstream," have showcased the formerly underrepresented wealth and variety of folk art from India on the world stage. Tara's *Flight of the Mermaid* lives up to this *raison d'être* by offering a modern picture-book adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale about the ill-starred marine ingénue.

According to the publisher's catalog, *Flight* addresses adult and child readers alike and sits equally well as an art lover's or collector's item or as a read-aloud book. Each page, dense with the gently rasping texture of hand-made paper, evokes the reassuring feel of human skin. The book, jacketed in a dark teal reminiscent of the deep sea, is also a toy. The front cover insets a jigsaw puzzle: the reader finds a fish with a humanoid eye. As the first page opens up, this eye transforms into the eye of the Little Mermaid. She is the centerpiece of a focused light beam surrounded by familiar deepwater creatures. The book's prefacing gambit is also more than a gimmick, as it physically initiates the process of discovery that corresponds to the narrative of the mermaid's restless forthcoming adventures through human existence and romantic love. The device prefigures the themes of metamorphosis and mutability that dominate the plot, as the protagonist switches identities successively through mermaid to human and then to a daughter of the air.

The jacket illustration is a prelude to the delightful artwork within the book, which fleshes out the publisher's commitment to empowering voiceless and nameless folk artists, for whom the speech-shorn protagonist of this tale plays an apt figurehead. Based, as the jacket blurb tells us, on the conventions of Gond tribal art from central India, Bhajju Shyam's images span single pages, their exuberance spilling over into quiet silhouettes on the adjoining pages of text. The artwork makes for a gestalt in itself, offering not mere illustration but thoughtful interpretation and commentary on the

accompanying text. A few pages into the story, the text recalls the frequent artistic compression of mermaid and siren myth by describing the role of singing mermaids in luring passing sailors to their death (6–7). Here, the text makes an aleatory connection between the mermaids' presence and the sailors' drowning: "Sadly, the only ones who did visit the sea bed were those that drowned." The artwork, instead, suggests a causal connection: the body of a man catapults itself into the predatory ring of the little mermaid's five seemingly welcoming sisters, positioned at the maw of a leviathanic fish. The fish is oddly featureless except for a telltale eye, but it sports human and marine remains within its innards. The remains are in ominous blue and white, in contrast to the lusty oranges, reds, and greens of the living mermaids and seaweeds rounding in on the hapless sailor.

The artwork unpeels underlays of the grotesque to anodyne words with success, but the verbose text lacks equal panache in bringing home the archetypal force of the tale. On the introductory page the opening words frame the narrative of the main plot: "Mermaids live in the deep. A place where day and night are the same thing, filled with creatures so fantastic that it can hardly be believed that they exist" (2–3). Departing from Andersen's folkloric opening, which assumes the reader's knowledge of the mermaid myth, *Flight* sets the tale's context through its encyclopedic characterization. Possibly, the impulse to posit an alternative, scientifically unverifiable reality—privileging the imagination over factual and scientific information—is owed to the publisher's professed ideological pull against the prevailing didacticism of children's literature in India. However, Tara's countercultural impulse is undone, in practice, by the faux magisterial register of the passive voice. The clause "it can hardly be believed" posits mermaids as being as real as other scientifically proven deep-sea beings, but the seemingly objective favoring of the imagination ends up in a claim to truth as totalizing as the scientific, secular-minded worldview.

However, the text's explicit political message is, as the jacket blurb states, a "feminist parable." This message is conveyed effectively without departing much from Andersen's plot, where the mermaid concludes her tryst with human life and unrequited love with an airy transformation (unlike the Disney film's audaciously happily-ever-after denouement). *Flight* also avoids the ham-fisted feminism of a spunky heroine: the mermaid's response to the prince's rejection is, first, a psychologically realistic "great anger." This dawns into a clear-eyed realization of her having turned him into a fetish of her own idealistic projections: he "could not bear the weight of her dreams" (27). Remarkably, though, when the mermaid here relinquishes her impulse to kill the prince, there is no mention, unlike in Andersen, of the consolatory winning of a "soul" for the mermaid. The secular elision of this spiritual, Christian dimension in *Flight*

leaves a lacuna in the mermaid's motivation for letting go of the prince: there is something ersatz when a character so addicted to "her dreams" forgets them in an instant, without further projections of her resignation as an act of conscious self-sacrifice.

Instead of gaining a soul, the mermaid of *Flight* wins the privilege to "explore" the territory of "air," in a neo-Romantic celebration of the literary trope of the wanderer (28). Here the book's content departs seriously from its professed aim, as announced by the jacket blurb, of portraying the interconnected, pantheistic "tribal cosmos, where the human is never isolated from the rest of nature." In fact, the mermaid-turned-human is a solipsistic figure throughout most of the text. Unlike Andersen's protagonist, torn between her desires and family feeling, she does not agonize at length in mute farewell when she leaves her underwater home to live in the prince's world (16). Rather, she is unusually adept at aligning herself with new communities, wasting little sentimentality on former loyalties. This ethos is likely to comfort and attract readers intimate with practices of global cosmopolitanism, rather than mass markets in India. The book's price is indicative, at a slightly prohibitive \$29.95; per capita income in India through 2009–2010 was just over \$1,000.

While *Flight* is an aesthetic delight and laudably aspires to be a revisionary feminist allegory, its performance of the latter through its celebration of exploration remains naively deaf to the idea's problematic historical and contemporary conjunctions with the dynamics and legacies of European colonialism, the identity politics of diasporic populations, and the political complexities of transnational migration.

Malini Roy
SIM University, Singapore

Whatever Gets You Through the Night: A Story of Sheherazade and the Arabian Entertainments. By Andrei Codrescu. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

The great storyteller Sheherazade of *Arabian Nights* fame already enjoys an impressive legacy in literature. Yet one of her latest reincarnations in print still merits particular note: Andrei Codrescu's *Whatever Gets You Through the Night: A Story of Sheherazade and the Arabian Entertainments*. Codrescu, an essayist, poet, and NPR commentator, delivers pithy observations on modern life, all the while revisiting this ancient storytelling cycle about a murderous monarch and a brilliant storyteller. He cleverly retells one of Sheherazade's tales: a story from "The Second Dervish's Tale," which is about a prince who is transformed into a monkey with a gift for calligraphy. Codrescu also elaborates at length on the events preceding the king's vow to prevent female

infidelity by taking a new wife each night and killing her at sunrise. *Whatever Gets You Through the Night* is not, however, a large-scale rewriting or modernization, nor does the book attempt to be *the* story of Sheherazade. Instead, what distinguishes Codrescu's treatment of the *Nights* is how he presents a story among many, weaving into his own tale a larger story about the storytellers, translators, writers, readers, and scholars who have kept the *Arabian Nights* tradition alive.

The book's opening words, "no telling without retelling" (1), announce an ongoing reflection on storytelling and its evolution. Codrescu's imaginative account of Sheherazade's early years and first experiments in storytelling are part of this. Later, Sheherazade becomes a ringleader of Al-Adl, a proto-feminist organization that launches a plan to end the king's slaughter of women. Sheherazade marries the king herself and, each morning, stops just shy of affording him the satisfaction of narrative or sexual conclusions. She thereby prolongs her life and practices effective birth control (although many of her conjugal duties fall to her sister Dinarzade). At the end, Codrescu humorously pinpoints the shortcomings of many "happily ever after" conclusions to the *Nights*. But the intricacies of his own conclusion demand careful reading and risk being overshadowed by a sudden confluence of increasingly fantastical elements, temporal shifts, and lexical invention. Codrescu imagines a time when storytelling retains generative powers but human procreation becomes technological and not sexual. He leaves Sheherazade childless, unpardoned, and telling tales ad infinitum and leaves the attentive reader to ponder the form and function of stories in the future.

The book's hybrid nature and formal experimentation are visible from the start in its 101 footnotes, ranging from scholarly citations to digressive independent story lines that span the bottom and outside margins of several pages. The casual reader can appreciate many of Codrescu's witty remarks in the notes without fully grasping all the erudite references. However, the readers likely to find the footnotes most disconcerting are those versed in literary and cultural criticism. Codrescu transitions without warning from seemingly scholarly notes into a fictional universe where critical terms and paradigms can be freely redefined and literary history can be rewritten for nonhistorical ends. For example, Codrescu introduces an ahistorical persona called Galland-Lang: a merging of Antoine Galland, the eighteenth-century French translator who introduced Sheherazade to the West, and the nineteenth-century British translator Andrew Lang. Lang did rely heavily on Galland's text, as Codrescu contends, but worked under vastly different conditions. In another example Codrescu uses identical first and last footnotes to disregard the widely studied

narrative frame of the *Nights* on the ground that the stories themselves are perpetually generative. Codrescu's unapologetic revisions of literary history and scholarship through his own written storytelling will frustrate some readers and are probably meant to do just that. By blurring the line between fiction and scholarly commentary, Codrescu calls into question how we categorize and understand texts—and the modalities we use to convey our own interpretations.

On one point, however, Codrescu's ideological position remains unequivocal: the thesis of Husain Haddawy's introduction to his 1990 translation of the *Nights*, which posits Sheherezade's stories as strictly Arabic in their character and origins. "Stories," Codrescu retorts in a note, "are a nomad business" (81). But his refutation goes beyond discrete counterarguments possible in footnotes or academic prose. Codrescu introduces Haddawy as a character in his story. Shortly after Sheherezade's birth, major translators of the *Nights* travel from the future to preside at the "fating" ceremony for the soon-to-be storyteller (74). First among her fates is Galland, whose *Mille et une nuits* appeared from 1704 to 1717 (not 1704 to 1708, as Codrescu states). Next is Sir Richard Burton, whose rather libertine 1880s version of the *Nights* figures prominently in this book. Finally, Codrescu seems to delight in placing Haddawy alongside Galland and Burton, whose treatment of the *Nights* he would consider an affront to the true Arabic tradition. Ultimately, Codrescu gets at the heart of notions of ownership and authenticity that color many a discussion of the *Nights* by writing a book that invites readers to experience the *Nights* as a dynamic force, not particular to any language, culture, or manuscript. He uses his fiction to weigh in on contemporary scholarly debates about the *Nights* and stories in general—debates from which actual storytelling is usually absent.

In short, *Whatever Gets You Through the Night* is thought-provoking, highly entertaining, bold in its irreverence, far-reaching in its implications, and well worth reading. This book is approachable in length and will lend itself well to classroom discussion of such themes as the woman as storyteller, female sexuality and the fairy tale, tensions between written and oral storytelling, and the impact of technology on narrative, to name only a few. And regardless of one's opinion of Codrescu's conclusions about the *Nights* or the methods he uses, the book can still be enjoyed as a feat of narrative virtuosity and a profound reflection on storytelling. Indeed, one of the insights into the *Nights* lies in its reminder of just how compelling a good story can be.

Jennifer Gipson
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Tangled. Directed by Nathan Greno and Byron Howard. Written by Dan Fogelman. Music composed by Alan Menken. Performed by Mandy Moore, Zachary Levi, Donna Murphy, and Brad Garrett. Walt Disney Animation Studios, 2010.

In a recent issue of *Marvels & Tales*, Marina Warner writes that “Rapunzel” is both vivid and unsparing in its address of issues related to motherhood, aging, and fecundity (24.2 [2010]: 329–37). For Warner, at their essence, Rapunzel narratives navigate “anxieties about safeguarding the young, about sex before marriage and teenage pregnancy, about their yearnings for freedom, which lead to so much conflict in the home” (331–32). In their 2010 animated film *Tangled*, Walt Disney Animation Studios recuperates a fraction of the essence Warner describes. Although the film maintains themes related to coming of age, it strategically avoids other versions’ sexual implications of young womanhood while vilifying mature femininity and invalidating nonbiological mothering. The film’s manipulation of the tale’s most salient metaphor, Rapunzel’s hair, demonstrates how Disney cleverly distorts tale type ATU 310 (The Maiden in the Tower) while also diverging from other popular renditions.

Whereas in most versions the young child is given to a lonely sorceress who raises and loves the child as her own, in *Tangled* Gothel (Donna Murphy) kidnaps the child from the king and queen’s bedroom. The abduction occurs because the child’s hair has been endowed with the magical healing properties of the flower Gothel has used to stay alive for centuries. As Rapunzel (Mandy Moore) nears her eighteenth birthday, Flynn Rider (Zachary Levi) stumbles upon the tower where she has been confined since her abduction. He is enticed (bribed) to guide her to visit the kingdom. Helped by a gang of unconventionally talented criminals and slapstick animal sidekicks, Flynn and Rapunzel unwittingly confirm Rapunzel’s birthright as the lost princess. The film concludes with the false parent exposed and defeated and the kingdom’s order reestablished by a (biological) family reunion and Rapunzel and Flynn’s implied wedding. Viewers who appreciate Disney’s legacy will hardly be disappointed; with a conservative message, catchy musical numbers, and visually stunning, cutting-edge animation, the film will likely please many audience members. Viewers who require less conventional messages from their contemporary fairy-tale films, however, may find themselves desperately clinging to more traditional retellings.

Perhaps Disney’s most considerate gesture is giving its film a title that clearly distinguishes it from its precursors. *Tangled* emphasizes that the protagonist is not Rapunzel herself but instead the story of her “tangled” hair. Because tangled hair serves as the film’s most unique facet and remains the strongest signifier linking it to the tale, it is relevant to focus on hair at length (pun intended). The film cleverly obfuscates Rapunzel’s sexual maturity by

fashioning her with something more valuable to safeguard than her virginity: 70 feet of magical hair. Her tresses at once perform as an instrument of self-defense (used by the heroine as a lasso, a swing, a rope, and finally as the trip wire that disposes of the villain) but also as a burden. Even when fastened, the hair is liable to get caught on surrounding objects. During Gothel's song "Mother Knows Best," the manipulation of Rapunzel's hair leaves the heroine's body wrenched in one moment and bound up in it the next. Although her hair offers protection, it is simultaneously a liability.

But primarily the hair is valuable. For Gothel its worth justifies Rapunzel's captivity. Shifting the justification for this imprisonment reconfigures the tale's mother-daughter relationship. Rapunzel's value as a daughter is displaced onto an aesthetic property of her body (hair). Gothel's appellation of Rapunzel as a flower underscores the hair's use-value as external to Rapunzel herself. Whereas other versions of the tale make the sorceress's wish for an unremitting mother-daughter union selfish yet sycophantic (see Anne Sexton's poetry in *Transformations* [1971] for an expressive retort), Disney's Gothel is motivated by her obsession with immortality (and looks). Any doubts relating to the legitimacy of Gothel's role as Rapunzel's adoptive mother are dismissed at the close of the film, when Flynn, narrating the film, affirms, "At last Rapunzel was home and she finally had a *real* family."

In *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976), Bruno Bettelheim assesses Rapunzel's hair as a symbolic "transfer from a relationship established to a parent to that of a lover," because both Gothel and the prince visit the young woman by "climbing up her tresses" (148). In *Tangled*, however, Flynn initially climbs the tower using arrows from the royal guards. Accessing Rapunzel with his stolen merchandise in tow, Flynn not only uses instruments provided by her birth parents (the arrows) but also unwittingly delivers the token of her birthright (her crown). When Flynn finally cuts Rapunzel's hair—with a shard from Gothel's mirror—he kills Gothel. Rather than bridging one loving relationship to another, in *Tangled* the hair corrupts the parent-child relationship in the first place and must therefore be severed. Rapunzel's haircut also enables her to inherit her crown and fosters Flynn's own royal allegiance through marriage. Perversely, when Flynn assures Rapunzel upon their first meeting that "the only thing I want with your hair is to get out of it," it is his very getting out of it that enables him to get at his own crown and castle.

Given the absence of social commentary on womanhood, burgeoning sexuality, and positive cross-generational relationships, *Tangled* might, as Jack Zipes suggests, be better described as "mangled" (see "Fractured Politics," an interview with Zipes by Kris Coffield; <http://fracturedpolitics.com/2011/11/13/>)

interview-jack-zipes.aspx). However, Disney's hyping of the film as a "new twist on one of the most hilarious and hair-raising tales ever told" signals the studio's jocular approach. Rather than betraying the tale's grim(m) implications, Disney's revision could be seen as blatantly inhibiting the "hair-raising" potential of a pregnant, unwed heroine by providing a medley of original content that could inspire serious discussions about relationships, rights, and property. Do biological or adoptive parents *own* their children? Who owns a princess? Does Mother Gothel have a right to the flower she cherished for centuries? And to push this one step further, do fairy tales, like the precious flower Gothel "hoarded" for centuries, belong to Disney to intuitively distill?

The disruptive potential of Rapunzel's magical hair offers an intriguing interrogation of what might otherwise be dismissed as a repressive story where biological determinism remains a taken-for-granted truth. Those who view this film resistantly may uncover and trouble a wealth of disorder in its otherwise conventional Disneyfied world.

Kendra Magnusson
University of Manitoba