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Reviews

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REVIEWS

Cinderella. Directed and Choreographed by Matthew Bourne. Performed by Adventures in Motion Pictures. Ahmanson Theatre at the Music Center of Los Angeles County. 28 March–23 May 1999.

Following the overwhelming success of his *Swan Lake*, which came to the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles from London in 1997 before moving to Broadway the following year, Matthew Bourne and Adventures in Motion Pictures have brought another new version of a classic ballet along the same path. This time Bourne applies his eclectic package of dance idioms and storytelling to Prokofiev's *Cinderella*, shifting the fairy tale from the land of fantasy to London during the German Blitz of 1941. The combination of the traditional tale with Bourne's distinctive modern-dance theater and the Russian ballet score (written during and quite evocative of the war years) produces an evening of entertainment which captivated Los Angeles audiences for seven weeks, even though it lacks the sensation, and occasional controversy, of the gender-bending (picture bare-chested male swans) *Swan Lake*. Nonetheless, while *Cinderella* readily lends itself to a novel retelling such as this, the Bourne production also suggests the limitations of this most famous and most generic of the classic fairy tales.

Bourne does not simply change the setting of the ballets, he transforms them into dance theater and, in the process, develops a different mode of storytelling in which movement, music, and design blend in a *Gesamtkunstwerk* giving expression to the emotions of the narrative. If the tale evokes a physicality not found in the vocabulary of classical ballet, Bourne turns to other sources. *Cinderella* lacks, for example, any extended solo pieces considered *de rigueur* for the ballet, but does contain popular dances of the war period and movements of near pantomime, which help establish character identities. This blend of influences, which allows the story to take shape through an array of finely choreographed and crafted movements, situates *Cinderella* as

much in the world of silent film and musicals (albeit without songs) as in that of ballet. Certain characters and scenes—such as the railway platform where Cinderella and her pilot-prince rejoin each other at the conclusion of the tale or, more generally, the war pilot as hero—seem designed to evoke precisely the association with cinema.

Bourne's war-era Cinderella first appears to us as the awkward, bespectacled, and neglected daughter of a middle-class family in act one. The enlarged fairy-tale family—placed squarely in the 1930s and 1940s with the help of gorgeous period costumes and sets—includes not only the conventional stepmother and her two daughters, but also a pair of young adult stepbrothers and a snotty younger stepbrother (identified by his knickers and childlike actions). The four older children each have a boyfriend or girlfriend, creating a symmetry for stunning dance numbers when they prepare to step out and enjoy the dance ballrooms which Londoners used to help cope with the onslaught of German air raids. The haughty gestures and sharp, coordinated movements of the mother, her children, and their friends, moreover, isolate the members of the stepfamily from their acquired kin, namely Cinderella and her sympathetic father who, from the confinement of his wheelchair, sadly watches his daughter pine for romance. The act culminates to the increasingly tense mood of Prokofiev's score, which helps define the chilling impact of the blackouts and nearby bomb strikes. In the midst of this horror, a wounded and dazed pilot struggles to the doorstep of the family home. Upon being admitted, he encounters the disdain of all but the heroine, who offers him tender care, but who soon becomes the victim of the German attacks herself as the act concludes.

Enter a guardian angel who, as he glides and bounds across the stage for much of the drama in an immaculate, almost glittering white suit with top hat and wand, seems part fairy, part 1970s rock star. He guides our Cinderella through the rubble left by the bombs and, we slowly recognize, into a world of fantasy. A café scene in which Cinderella encounters her debonair pilot unharmed by the war replaces the classic fairy-tale ball and provides a vehicle for dance numbers evoking the society of the war era. Cinderella's fantasy evening of romance continues as the pilot-prince takes her home and they dance, no longer fully dressed, in his bedroom. The act effectively brings the audience into the magical realm of fairy tales, where lines between dream and reality blur.

Act three interrupts this temporary escape from the devastation of war and filial mistreatment with a return to bomb-ravaged reality. We now find Cinderella convalescing in a hospital bed and the still disoriented pilot-hero wandering the streets and underground of the city. Cinderella's family pays an obligatory visit in some wonderfully choreographed pieces involving hospital bed screens that highlight the enduring snobbery toward the stepdaughter. However, their cold attitudes clearly do not concern our heroine as much as

sorting fantasy from experience and overcoming the seemingly insurmountable separation from her pilot-hero. Of course, fate (by means of a shoe) brings our two principals together so that they may never again lack a dance partner.

Bourne has successfully brought new audiences to dance performances and in the same stroke enlivened this ballet fairy tale with a modern vision that, rather than tarnishing the classic as some have snootily complained, demonstrates the enduring ability of the story and the moods of the ballet to affect viewers. Yet despite all of the talent and innovation brought to bear on "Cinderella" in this production, the tale remains a rudimentary expression of romantic fantasy fulfilled through fateful encounters. By situating hero and heroine in roughly the same social stratum (if anything, Cinderella appears to belong to a higher standing), Bourne has removed, but not critiqued, the capitalist fantasies which often play out in versions of the tale, leaving only a love story. For some this might establish the tale as a quintessential expression of human desires and emotions deserving of frequent renewal.

However, many other fairy tales surely can and should produce more rewarding results than this simple story of joined hearts when excavated for unexpected and challenging commentaries on gender roles, social struggles, or psychological conflicts. Bourne and his company apparently hope to stretch conventional audience expectations by blurring the boundaries between ballet, Broadway theater, and other entertainment genres. Thus we can hope that, having established themselves, their future productions will also work with more challenging narrative material. Yet, it is surely due to no fault or failure of Bourne or the dancers that "Cinderella" remains more the stuff of Hollywood schlock than material for the exploration of significant social issues.

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Darkest Desire: The Wolf's Own Tale. By Anthony Schmitz. New Jersey: The Ecco Press, 1998. 134 pp.

Anthony Schmitz's novel is a lively and entertaining little volume which one can gallop through effortlessly in an hour or two. The story is an inside-out fairy tale in which the Grimms figure as subjects collecting material for their research and, as the title suggests, the (generic) wolf acts as first-person narrator. In spite of the easy read, the story lends itself to a variety of analogies, metaphors, and inferences. Indeed, the book has so many ideas that it loses focus somewhat in the assortment of interpretative threads which meander through it.

The tale imagines an encounter in the forest between the Grimm brothers and the wolf. To his surprise and delight, upon meeting the Grimms, the wolf (named Wolf through the creative ingenuity of Jacob Grimm) discovers that he has a voice, that he can, literally, speak. The Grimms, for their part, recognize a

unique opportunity when they see it: to document the wolf's exploits firsthand. The traditional paradigms of the wolf as evil aggressor are subverted through his characterization as the naive victim of the Grimms' manipulative exploits. The wolf has a problem: a perverse penchant for devouring small children, a penchant by which he is both repulsed and impassioned. By manipulating Wolf through the promise of a "cure" for his problem, the Grimms stage a dangerous ruse in order to record the wolf's predatory perversion.

Ostensibly a tale of egregious exploitation by the Grimms in their pursuit of folk tales, *Darkest Desire: The Wolf's Own Tale* describes their callous disregard for ethical standards, not to mention human life, in order to further their research. Grimm scholars who have viewed the authenticity of the Grimms' work as suspect at best, perhaps wholly contrived at worst, will enjoy an occasional smirk at Schmitz's portrayal of their dishonest and conniving activities in pursuit of "the story." Indeed, as the Grimms get the biggest break of their careers in documenting the wolf's perversions "Live! from the forest," one can't avoid the obvious analogies with journalistic sensationalism. The nagging sense that "It's the *media*, stupid" escalates as the Grimms manipulate the circumstances to produce and embellish one of their tales.

This sense of the Grimms as opportunistic reporters who will stop at nothing to increase their ratings (in this case, their reputation) is heightened by the well-constructed viewpoint of the wolf. Far more interesting than the story of the Grimms' transgressions is (indeed) the wolf's own tale. In his portrayal of Wolf as torn between revulsion for what he does and desire for what he wants, Schmitz has produced an unnervingly compelling psychological portrait of your friendly neighborhood off-the-rack serial killer. In this, the writing is precise and finely crafted, with the tone of the wolf's voice both menacing and affable in equal parts: a likeable enough fellow, but with a hideous obsession; different from his (wolf) peers, but indistinguishable from them; tormented, he longs for a cure but the thrill of it all is just in his nature which he is loathe to abandon. The Grimms have one heck of a story here, and they intend to pursue it to its most extreme conclusion.

On the other hand, there is enough intricate and repetitive detail of the wolf's orgasmic paroxysms as he contemplates a past or future child-killing, that one wonders if the point of the story is not first and foremost an exploration of the perversities of a serial killer rather than those of the press.

The periodic appearances of the Devil, a faithful, but unsympathetic, friend of the wolf, are some of the best, if overly raunchy, passages in the book. (Be advised that this is not a children's book.) Appearing in some hilariously obscene and clever guises, the Devil tries to clue Wolf in to the suspect nature of the Grimms' motivations, dismissing the results of their research as "exotic dung," and accusing them of making their reputations on the backs of others

by stealing, inventing, enacting, and borrowing. Wolf, however, will have none of it, refusing to doubt the good faith of the Grimms.

The cure which the Grimms promise is, of course, elusive and is never explained to Wolf but dangled before him as an incentive to do their bidding. Nevertheless, the wolf is convinced that the Grimms will cure him through their, and now his, powers of speech: "They will converse with me," he says in answer to the Devil's passionate skepticism. The "talking cure" of psychoanalysis seems to be another of Schmitz's pet peeves, which leads us down yet another interpretative path: psychoanalysis is generally dismissed as uncreative self-serving voyeurism, although its investment in sexuality is alluded to throughout. At one point, the Grimms get hot and sweaty trying to press the wolf into admitting a gendered preference for devouring little girls with their "budding breasts, their widening hips, the smooth folds between their legs." The wolf, however, states that he is moved neither one way nor the other as to the sex of the children he attacks. He'll take anything as long as it's prepubescent. This insistence on gender indifference on the part of the wolf points the story down another inferential path in its critique of psychosexual gender-based interpretative strategies. Schmitz will have none of the little girl entering puberty and her "deflowering" by the big bad male aggressor as she deviates from the path of righteousness.

Whether the novel is a critique of the press, an up-close and personal look at a serial killer, an attack on psychoanalysis, just a grudge against the dubious morality of the Grimms, or a dig at fairy-tale criticism generally is unclear. But certainly, this highly entertaining, if unfocused, novel either simply confirms the manifold interpretations of fairy tales, or highlights the interesting compulsion authors have to include in their body of work at least one fairy-tale interpretation configured to their own specifications. Now, there's a tale.

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The Storyteller's Journey: An American Revival. By Joseph Daniel Sobol. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999. xvi + 265.

The first National Storytelling Festival (NSF) was held in 1973 in Jonesborough, Tennessee. The festival grew out of the vision of a man named Jimmy Neil Smith, a schoolteacher inspired by hearing over his car radio a tall tale about coon hunting. Smith wanted a way to revitalize the economic interests of his small historic community. He considered calling his creation the "Buggaboo Springs Storytelling Festival," but having ascertained that there was no other "national" storytelling festival, he decided to be "presumptuous" by choosing a name with a larger scope. In 1999, Jonesborough celebrated the twenty-seventh annual National Storytelling Festival—a "three day extravaganza" featuring

“more than 100 hours of exhilarating entertainment by America’s best-loved storytellers” (according to festival publicity). The event attracted roughly ten thousand participants.

One outcome of the first festival was the formation of the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling (NAPPS). In *The Storytellers’ Journey*, Joseph Sobol explores the mythic and ritual aspects of the NSF, including the “creation myth” summarized above, while he creates an organizational narrative for NAPPS. He uses the story of the festival and the organization to examine the significance of the contemporary storytelling festival as it has developed in the United States from the 1970s to the mid-1990s.

The Storyteller’s Journey is a deeply sympathetic yet unsentimentalized examination of the goals, motivations, ideals, and the sometimes dark undercurrents of the movement that transformed public perceptions of storytelling from a folk art within local communities to a stage art within a festival setting. Sobol, himself both a performing storyteller-musician and an academic folklorist, analyzes the storytelling community through the eyes of its own members while applying a theoretical lens that incorporates social, economic, and mythic approaches to understand the story of the movement’s growth. In this engaging yet scholarly text (based upon his 1994 dissertation from Northwestern University), he draws upon the wonder tale with its archetypal image of the journey to illuminate both the revival itself and the vocational narratives he collected of well-known and respected tellers who describe how they came to discover themselves as storytellers. Using the work of Anthony C. Wallace on revitalization movements and of Victor Turner on ritual and *communitas* to provide a taxonomic framework for his analysis, Sobol explores how the storytelling movement views itself, concentrating on its vision of community, intimacy, and transformation.

The first part of the book emphasizes the idealism of those who came together in the early days of the revival. This idealism combined spiritual yearnings with a desire to change the world for the better. Sobol describes his own early encounter with revivalist telling in quasi-religious terms similar to those used in the life stories of Brother Blue, Laura Simms, Rafe Martin, Carol Birch, and Doug Lipman, among others. Before his encounter with Brother Blue, Sobol says, he was aware that “some essential nutrient was missing from [his] life” (vii). After the encounter, he adds, “I clearly recall feeling as if I had had some kind of conversion experience” (viii). Storytelling appears to satisfy a deeply felt need for both the teller and the listener. Sobol’s inclusion of his own personal transformation story shows how closely he identifies with the topic of his study, yet he does not get caught up in romanticizing the process he is evaluating. He writes revealingly of the invented nature of the storytelling community and its rituals.

Sobol writes *as* a storyteller, skillfully using stories as markers to help the reader follow his analysis. He opens by examining what he calls the “three totemic tales” of the storytelling revival: the tales of the restoried community, the restoried individual, and the restoried cosmos. The well-known tale of “The Man Who Had No Story” epitomizes the need of the individual for story. The Hasidic tale in which the knowledge of an important ritual is lost but “the story was sufficient” suggests that telling stories will help us to survive. “The Storyteller Knows Me,” attributed to storyteller Ron Evans, testifies to the connection between story and community. As Sobol points out, this becomes the most problematic tale within the context of festival telling amid huge crowds, but it is perpetuated by the storytellers’ ability to allow the audience members to feel that *they* know the teller.

Events within the three-day festival, as Sobol explains, partake of the carnivalesque, a symbolism that is perpetuated as many of those who attend the festival achieve the status of initiates who return to bring the rituals of story to their own communities. The annual Saturday night ghost-story concerts followed by the Sunday morning sacred tellings suggest the process of death and rebirth. Sobol includes a significant story of a young unwed mother reluctantly dragged to attend the 1990 festival who turned her life around as a result—another example of storytelling’s redemptive power. In a spontaneous act that illustrates how the feeling of instant community characterizes these festivals, she called on two featured tellers to become her infant’s godparents, turning sacred telling into impromptu ceremony. Her feeling that the storytellers, indeed, *knew* her was upheld as they lived up to the bond they had created between teller and listener. Another ritual, the “Swapping Grounds,” an open-mike setup that runs throughout the festival, represents the egalitarian belief that anyone can tell stories. Nevertheless, Sobol describes the collision between this belief and the professionalization of storytelling, which has led some tellers to conclude that although anyone can tell stories, not everyone who tells stories is a storyteller—and certainly not all can (or want to) make the transition to platform telling.

A noticeable feature of the NSF is what Sobol calls the “canonization” of Ray Hicks. Hicks—a genuine folk artist from Beech Mountain, North Carolina—serves as an icon of the Jonesborough festival, a reminder of its folk roots that has become increasingly important as the festival moves toward a professional model of storytelling featuring amplified telling in huge tents. Sobol concludes that Hicks is more than an example of appropriated traditionalism. Hicks represents the “border-crossing nature” of a festival that is committed to preserving a traditional art, a traditional place, and traditional values *by* opening them up to a nontraditional use that transforms them in the process (115).

One of the most powerful chapters is the one Sobol calls “Blood on the Porch,” a reference to a scene that epitomized the loss of innocence of the

movement's early days as Sobol moves into an exploration of the darker shadows that undercut the community-oriented vision of the storytelling movement. An episode of "audition hysteria," resulting from the increasing careerism and competitiveness of the festival, horrified witnesses. Simultaneously, power struggles arose, driven by members of various regional organizations who wanted to wrest control of NAPPS from its narrow base of insiders and its southeastern focus to open the organization and its board up to more national participation. These struggles over the direction of the national organization threatened to shatter the dream of a storytelling community. The fragmentation intensified as two national congresses on ethics and on cultural diversity brought the idealism of the storytellers face to face with challenges to their own integrity. The ethics congress addressed issues of ownership of folk and original material while the congress on cultural diversity raised issues of cultural appropriation and imperialism. Although Sobol does not explore the complexities of these issues in depth, he suggests their importance. His focus is on the damaging effect that these confrontations had on the dream of community that the NSF had embodied.

Although bitterness still lingers, NAPPS, instead of falling apart in disension, yielded to increasing pressure from its members and reorganized to become more inclusive, more nationally focused, less tied to Jonesborough and its southeastern roots—a move that led to renaming itself the National Storytelling Association (NSA) in 1994. Sobol interprets this reorganization in Turner's terms as the transition from spontaneous to normative *communitas*. (The NSA reinvented itself yet again in 1999, splitting in two to form the National Storytelling Network, a membership organization, and the Storytelling Foundation International. Although Sobol's book was published before this latest transition, some of the reasons for the split are foreshadowed in his analysis.)

The Storytellers' Journey is a valuable contribution to the still sparse scholarly literature on the American storytelling revival. While hundreds of books on storytelling, many excellent, have come out of the revival, most are practitioner-oriented books written for those embarking on a storytelling career. Few examine the movement itself with a critical eye. Like Kay Stone's *Burning Brightly: New Light on Old Tales Told Today* (1998), Sobol's book succeeds in examining the revival seriously from a folklorist perspective. The nature of the oral process of storytelling inevitably changes when the context shifts to the commodified world of festival telling. Sobol suggests the motivation behind and the impact of that shift by exploring the nature of the community that participants in the storytelling revival have invented for themselves.

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Storied Landscapes: Hawaiian Literature and Place. By Dennis Kawaharada. Honolulu: Kalamaku Press, 1999. 112 pp.

In Hawaiian literature, including the written tradition established in Hawaiian-language newspapers prior to the U.S. overthrow, the *kanaka maoli* (native people) are at any moment *kama'āina* or *malihini* in relation to the ground on which they stand. The definitions of *kama'āina*, to “be born in a place, or to be a host” and “to be acquainted, familiar,” are interconnected. Literally a “land child,” the *kama'āina* knows the narratives of the land, the origins, locations, and respectful uses of its resources. The *malihini* is a stranger to that place and relies on *kama'āina* for guidance. In colonial Hawai'i, where Hawaiian concepts are daily appropriated and cheapened, *kama'āina* has come to mean “Hawai'i resident,” so those paying state taxes are eligible for “*kama'āina* rates,” such as discounts for car and hotel rentals.

The six essays in *Storied Landscapes* cast off from such colonial coinages and representational schemes, and steer toward an understanding of and respect for Hawaiian meanings and priorities. Whether appreciating the orders, balances, and depth of reference in Hawaiian orature (as in “He Mele No Kāne: A Song of Life”), or juxtaposing colonial and indigenous stories to reveal racist epistemologies of the former (as in “A Twisted Tale: Jack London’s ‘Koolau the Leper’” and “Killing the Cannibal King”), the book asserts that attentiveness to the stories living in landscapes is one element of decolonizing one’s thinking. Here it must be stressed that while Kawaharada implicitly allies the reorienting of personal and communal values by non-natives like himself with the struggle of the *kanaka maoli* for political sovereignty, he does not conflate them.

Naming and em-placing are a basic feature of indigenous storytelling, and ways in which geological features may be steeped in value-laden stories have been elaborated in a variety of contexts. Leslie Marmon Silko’s essays on land and Pueblo imagination and Bruce Chatwin’s on aboriginal “songlines” delineate geo-graphy as land scored with myth, history, and collective knowledge, or of every storied landscape as a “map for survival” (34). Kawaharada works in this grain. His retellings of stories emphasize the vitality and nuance of place reference in Hawaiian expressive traditions. His commentary details ways in which chants and stories provide insights into history, geography, religion, and ethics that speak to contemporary situations. The stories in “Voyaging Chiefs of Kāne’ohe Bay,” for instance, emphasize how every voyage of the *Hōkūle’a*, which first sailed from Kāne’ohe Bay in 1975, has been “a reenactment” (48) of legendary navigational feats made by *ali'i* (chief) to recapture *mana* (power). The stories about ancestral gods—such as the *mo'o* (large lizard), *pueo* (Hawaiian owl), and *manō* (shark)—that Kawaharada presents in “‘Aumakua of Kona, O’ahu,” have both etiological and allegorical valences, containing warnings about dependency on outsiders and disobedience toward *kupuna* (wise elders).

“A Search for Kū‘ula-kai,” which opens the collection, stresses traditional concerns with conserving and managing resources. Kawaharada’s reading of the story of the deification of Kū‘ula-kai, a fisherman famous for his *mana* in attracting fish, leads into discussions of Hawaiian fishing methods, the origins of fishing stones and construction of fishponds, the formalization of distributing catches, and reflections on community building and leadership. Greed is punished within the various versions of the stories; an *ali‘i* who refuses to share his catch has his canoe so loaded down with fish that it swamps; another chokes on a *hīnālea* (wrasse fish).

Kawaharada layers his presentation of such stories with personal and general history, and blunt critiques of institutions that engineer cultural estrangement and forgetting. “A Search” performs a journey of consciousness that begins with personal interest in fishing traditions (Kawaharada’s father was a fisherman). Kawaharada receives guidance from a friend’s passing along of the Kū‘ula-kai story, which finally leads him back to Hāna, Maui, where he hopes to find “sites associated with the traditions of this fishing god” (7). The process stirs up memories of family trips to Hāna that broaden into recognitions. In retrospect, his family seem “third-generation tourists [. . .] ignorant of the stories associated with the landscape,” in part because “not a single traditional Hawaiian story had been required reading” (5) in the schools they attended in Hawai‘i. The fact raises questions about knowledge, how and by whom it is constituted, and what versions of the world the young are taught or not taught.

In a rock formation at Leo‘ula, Kawaharada does find the backbone of the *puhi* (an eel slain by Kū‘ula-kai’s son, ‘Ai‘ai), only now he regards it with “a different set of eyes, a different vision, based on a knowledge of stories that people the landscape with ancient spirits” (7). Such “different vision” includes alternative ways of looking at and locating myth and legend, and testifies to the ongoing power of names and stories to move those open to learning toward a different relation to the land. It polemicalizes as well the implications of non-natives and natives alike not being *kama‘āina*—in the sense of familiar, knowledgeable—about Hawaiian meanings. Implicitly, Kawaharada argues that it is irresponsible for immigrant settlers “to claim to know, to be part of, to dwell comfortably in a place” without learning about and honoring the “ancestral spirits and traditions” of the land (5).

Part of Kawaharada’s project in a series of edited collections—including *Hawaiian Fishing Legends*, *Nanaue the Shark God and Other Hawaiian Shark Stories*, and *Voyaging Chiefs of Hawaii*—has been to make Hawaiian stories available, affordable, and more accessible in compact editions that include notes, maps, and glossaries. The essays in *Storied Landscapes*, conjoining the lyrical, personal, critical, and scholarly in their readings, bring the collected stories (and others) together within a broader tradition. The commentary claims

no authority over Hawaiian materials, but draws heavily on prior scholarship (and provides ample bibliography along with glossaries and maps for each essay). The concentration of detail makes the essays demanding, but their insights will travel well. This is in large part because Kawaharada's interest in storied landscapes does not proceed from escapist geopiety or antiquarian folkloristics, but from an ethical dedication to the values traditional stories can perpetuate in the contemporary world.

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Piercing the Magic Veil: Toward a Theory of the Conte. By Harold Neemann. Biblio 17. Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1999. 187 pp.

In his introduction to this volume, Harold Neemann writes: "In many ways, then, the seventeenth-century *conte merveilleux* has shaped the concept of fairy tale as perceived today. [. . .] This is why examining the narratives requires an interdisciplinary approach [. . .]" (17). Despite these statements, however, *Piercing the Magic Veil* is neither a study of late twentieth-century concepts or versions of fairy tales in light of seventeenth-century perspectives, nor is it an interdisciplinary analysis of specific seventeenth-century fairy tales. Rather, the volume offers a generalized discussion of its subject matter.

After defining the fairy tale as a "hybrid form encompassing both folkloric and literary features" (171), Neemann explains that "[b]y tailoring [its] marvelous features to suit the protagonist's needs," the fairy tale constructs "its own world whose reality it adapts to fit the requirements of the genre" (172). Chapter two takes up the seventeenth-century *conte de fées* in terms of Perrault's tales, the women *précieux* authors, *mondain* society, and the *Querelle des Anciens et Modernes*. However, the points raised are primarily those that have been brought to the fore by previous scholars.

The remaining two-thirds of the volume surveys various analytical approaches to the fairy tale in general. Chapter three, on historical approaches, summarizes and critiques the perspectives of Vladimir Propp, Roger Darnton, and Louis Marin. Chapter four, on structuralism and semiotics, again takes up Propp and Marin along with the work of Alan Dundes on American Indian narratives and the fairy-tale work of Claude Brémont, Claude Lévi-Strauss, A. J. Greimas, and Joseph Courtés. Chapter five, on psychoanalytical approaches, critiques the fairy-tale-related ideas of Sigmund Freud, Bruno Bettelheim, and Carl Jung. Outside of a discussion of the *Bibliothèque bleue* in the context of historical approaches to the fairy tale, seventeenth-century *contes de fées* are treated only in passing throughout these chapters. The volume concludes with Neemann's assertion that Alan Dundes's combination of psychoanalytical and semiotic approaches to folk narrative is the most fruitful perspective for studying

the fairy tale. However, Neemann does not explain in depth nor illustrate with an analysis of specific fairy tales why he believes this to be the case.

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Poétique du conte: Essai sur le conte de tradition orale. By Nicole Belmont.
Paris: Gallimard, 1999. 250 pp.

According to Nicole Belmont, this book aims at popularizing oral fairy tales and endeavors toward understanding their nature. Each of the six chapters presents and analyzes a particular group of tales, while striving to make a specific theoretical point. Artful kneading of oral tale materials into theoretical analysis makes for pleasant reading, as the “marvelous” atmosphere of fairy tales often permeates the tone of Belmont’s analysis.

The tales used are mostly French versions of Aarne-Thompson 300–749, tales of magic or fairy tales, collected from oral sources. The author’s main contention—that fairy tales are unconscious psychic materials in disguise—is diversely explored throughout the six chapters. Chapter one, “The Invention of Tales” (all translations mine), brings forth the “otherness” of the “latent images and meanings” characteristic of oral tales in relation to literary tales (42, 50). Chapter two, “The Golden-Hair Beauty or ‘One Must Lie, Because It’s the Truth,’” ascribes this otherness to the idea that fairy tales both convey and dissimulate their “childhood sources” (63). An underlying analogy between fairy tales and dreams is developed in chapter three, “One Must Have the Time to Dream Fairy Tales.” Then chapter four, “The Infantile Sources of the Fairy Tale,” carries on the adopted Freudian perspective by comparing fairy tales to screen memories. Chapter five, “The Hero and His Odyssey,” analyzes the structure of fairy tales as a description of personal maturation in both psychological and social terms. Chapter six, “The Mythic Contents of Fairy Tales,” pinpoints “mythic motifs” and attempts to interpret these “in terms of phantasms” (223). A conclusion briefly weaves together different strands of the argument and finally states that fairy tales are for unconscious elaboration more than for scholarly interpretation.

This conclusion may seem strange if one takes into account that Belmont’s work has largely developed under the double sway of Lévi-Strauss and Freud. Indeed the common ground for these two authors is, as Lévi-Strauss himself put it, the conviction that “understanding consists in reducing one type of reality to another” (*Tristes tropiques* [1955], 62). It is, however, true that the analyses presented in this book, while often insightful, consistently avoid accessing deep strata of symbolism.

Here is one example. In chapter one, Belmont recognizes, behind the gaze of the heroine of Perrault’s “La Barbe-bleue” into a “bloody mirror,” the

“feminine destiny” of the blood of menstruation, deflowering, and birth (45, 47). In chapter three the author perceives, under the theme of the sister who joins her metamorphosed seven brothers (AT 451) and is made to give her blood to (for instance) a seven-headed snake, “an incestuous union, a union where blood moves in internal circuitry” (106). In chapter five, involving tales featuring “the destiny of a girl” (AT 310, 710), the author associates the “rawness” of blood ties between a mother and a daughter to animal regression. Furthermore, this chapter reveals a heroine looking into a mirror where she sees her adoptive mother, plunged into blood, fighting up snakes (166–67). Clearly, Perrault’s bloody mirror is equivalent to this mirror reflecting a bloody scene, the serpents of which are again reminiscent of the seven-headed snake that sucks the heroine’s blood. An underlying logic of blood relations is likely at play here and could be pursued by comparison of its various manifestations. However, throughout the book the author suggests that the nature of the materials is such as to discourage further interpretation. Once more, why should this be so?

Belmont asserts that fairy tales stem “from the same unconscious sources as dreams” (132). Indeed, she concurs with Géza Róheim’s hypothesis of the “basic dream” (*The Gates of the Dream* [1979]) as she proposes that tales symbolize “dream-time” (130). This means, on the level of plot, that the hero’s passage into the other world reads as a representation of the fall into sleep and dream. It also entails the idea that the images in fairy tales, bearing “many and intense latent meanings” (101), are like the stuff of dreams.

Moreover, the author regards oral elaboration of fairy tales as analogous to the dream-work as defined by Freud. Thus lacunar versions, lacking structured plots and yet “often very beautiful in [. . .] their expressive power,” appear “like dreams” (118, 131). One consequence is that the plot—understood as secondary elaboration in Freud’s sense—may mask the tale’s “deeper meanings” (120), contained in “obscure loci” with no narrative function (114).

Such obscure loci are deemed to be “mythic” (117), and a “hidden figure,” brought forth by deconstruction of the plot, is assimilated to “phantasm” (123–24). Indeed, Belmont’s analysis proceeds “from the identification of mythic motifs to their interpretation in terms of phantasms” (223). More precisely, “myth” is reducible to “phantasm” since, as Belmont clearly states in a previous book, “the contents of myth stem from the unconscious.” She adds, moreover, that unconscious contents appear more disguised in fairy tales since here “the strongest censure is exerted” (*Paroles païennes: Mythe et folklore* [1986] 146). Therefore, Belmont now concludes that the tale, “like the dream, [. . .] cannot doubtlessly ever be totally interpreted. Indeed it is created not to” (*Poétique* 113), and its “obscure loci” mysteriously suspend in interpreters “the desire to understand” (114).

Freud's project, both regarding dreams and neurotic symptoms, was resolutely one of "transforming what is unconscious into what is conscious" (*Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* [trans. 1989] 347, cf. 138, 167). In contrast, for Belmont, the meanings of phantasms—which "the unconscious of listeners hosts and elaborates secretly" (214)—are not to be revealed. Consequently, interpreters "analyze that which ought to remain concealed under pain of losing its symbolic efficacy" (23). Belmont accordingly ends her book by claiming that as intimacy with fairy tales grows, one forsakes the "desire of interpretation," for "the telltale words say more of it and better" (237).

The content of such an "it," and the precise identity of its symbolic efficacy, must of course remain anyone's guess. Why the unconscious contents of fairy tales, unlike those of dreams, ought to remain unanalyzed remains therefore obscure. "Phantasms," to be named at all times but never intruded upon, appear here as both the aim and the limit of interpretation—they are the numinous nucleus of this view of fairy tales.

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The Witch Must Die: How Fairy Tales Shape Our Lives. By Sheldon Cashdan. New York: Basic Books, 1999. 283 pp.

Students, elementary school teachers, and parents new to discussions of folktales may benefit from the introductory nature of *The Witch Must Die: How Fairy Tales Shape Our Lives*. For quick reference, Sheldon Cashdan provides parents and teachers with an appendix organized around the thematics of the book. But scholars of folklore may be frustrated with the text, as often the discussions are prescriptive and simplistic, and the lack of "jargon" disturbing. How issues of gender might contribute to questions of self-identity in relation to these tales is generally absent.

Cashdan endeavors to reveal why fairy tales intrigue us. He argues that the tales function as psychological tools in relieving fears, resolving conflict, and helping us grow up. Cashdan provides a general overview of several folktales, explaining in simple psychological terms how children are affected, generally positively, by the imagery of the seven "deadly" sins—vanity, gluttony, envy, deceit, lust, greed, and sloth. He argues fairy-tale plots, which evoke the deadly sins, help children deal with psychological conflicts by projecting their own internal struggles between good and evil onto the battles enacted by the characters in the stories. For instance, chapter four focuses on gluttony. Cashdan discusses the huge appetite of the wolf in variations of the tale of Little Red Riding Hood. Utilizing bulimia and other eating disorders as examples of how patients identify food with notions of self, Cashdan believes that there is a strong cultural connection between food and a sense of good or bad behavior.

The wolf functions as a symbolic witch because of his evil demeanor, which is the violent consumption of the grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood. The consequence of the wolf's gluttony is death. The witch must die in order for the audience to resolve the psychological conflict between good and evil. According to Cashdan, one must "pay for one's sins. Only by destroying the evil in the story can justice be served and undesirable tendencies in the reader mastered" (83). The death of the witch evokes the happy ending.

I found Cashdan's conclusions regarding "the happy ending" of the Grimms' version of "Snow White" unreliable. This chapter on vanity concludes that children are relieved by the death of the wicked witch who dances to death in the "red-hot shoes" because "the witch's demise communicates to readers that they must take an active role in overcoming their own errant tendencies" (61). Children are not usually exposed to this particular version of "Snow White." Why would children need the witch to die in this violent manner in order to mediate an internal conflict based on vanity? Isn't this problem with vanity geared toward women? And how was it a happy ending for Snow White? The discussion could have been more complex, which would have contributed substantially to the question of why the witch must die in folktales.

While basic, Cashdan's book brings another dimension to the cultural and psychological function of these many folktales.

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