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## Reviews

Marvels & Tales Editors

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## REVIEWS

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*Gray Heroes: Elder Tales from Around the World.* Edited by Jane Yolen. New York: Penguin, 1999. 227 pp.

“Oh well a Touch of Grey / Kind of suits you anyway / That was all I had to say / It’s all right”—I’ll bet Jane Yolen knows and even hums these lyrics from the Grateful Dead’s 1982 anthem, “Touch of Grey.” If her recent collection of elder tales ever needs a theme song, this would be it, because both *Gray Heroes: Elder Tales from Around the World* and the Dead recognize and celebrate the process of “going gray.” In contemporary youth-saturated American culture, a culture in which Britany Spiers probably has better name recognition than the Dalai Lama, it is refreshing and reassuring to find that cultures worldwide have recognized, revered, and celebrated the wisdom and vitality of their elders. Yolen’s collection of seventy-five tales spans geographies, nationalities, and religions, literally from A (Palestinian Arab) to Z (Zimbabwe). There are tall tales, wonder tales, tales of origin, tales of danger and desire, all focusing on protagonists who are considerably older than anyone on the cast of *Friends* or currently playing professional sports. (An aside: On the idea of elder sports beyond lawn bowling and shuffleboard, note the video *Surfing for Life: Still Stoked and Surfing in Their 70’s, 80’s, and 90’s.*)

Yolen opens with a lengthy introduction, but it is not a scholarly treatise. Instead, befitting her stature as a master storyteller, she tells stories of her own aging and then finds cognates in stories from other cultures, which she embeds in the introduction. She does mention motif indices now and then, especially in “Notes for Stories” at the end of the book, but the audience for the collection is general, not scholarly—although specialists will enjoy the truly impressive breadth of Yolen’s selection. Readers familiar with European folk- and art-tale tradition will find redactions of various familiar tales: e.g., “The Emperor’s New Clothes” gets an Appalachian treatment in “The Two Old Women’s Bet” (United States) and Cupid and Psyche immigrate to the tundra

in “A Tale of Two Old Women” (Eskimo), which has overtones of “Bluebeard,” as well.

Yolen divides the tales into four categories: Wisdom, Trickery, Adventure, and closes sweetly with *And a Little Bit of Love*. The categories overlap, but the point is not to fix them with pins in their backs. The earliest datable tale seems to be Ovid’s “Baucis and Philomon,” and I doubt that many of the others originated after 1850. The Industrial Revolution seems to be in the future for most of these tales, let alone post-IR information technology. People travel not in Lexuses, but, astoundingly, on foot. Candles, those quaint trappings of seduction and power failures, are actually used in lieu of halogen *torchières*. Humans and animals talk to each other, and travel to the moon is not a matter for NASA, but simply the outcome of a wish. Spirit, in other words, is alive and well in these tales, and Palm Pilots are light years away.

There are, of course, other collections of tales about elders, notably Allan Chinen’s *In the Ever After: Fairy Tales and the Second Half of Life* (1989), Angela Carter’s *The Old Wives’ Fairy Tale Book* (1990), Heather Forest’s *Wisdom Tales from Around the World* (1996), or Elisa Davy Pearmain’s *Doorways to the Soul: 52 Wisdom Tales from Around the World* (1998), but these have specific foci (Jungian analysis, feminist point-of-view, spiritual motifs). Yolen encompasses and transcends such restrictions. Her tales range from stories about outwitting Death (“The Lord of Death,” India) to a Promethean spider that brings fire to the world (“Grandmother Spider Steals the Fire,” Native American/Choctaw) to the wisdom of restraint (“Hide Anger until Tomorrow,” Suriname). There are stories from Iceland, Russia, Italy, Hawai‘i; there are Eskimo tales, Jewish tales, Arab tales, Philippine tales, and Lithuanian tales. Not included, however, are Europe (although there are tales from Germany, Scotland, and England) Central and South America, Canada, and Australia. Still, the range and variety of tale type are remarkable.

*Gray Heroes* is readable, browseable, and accessible to various age groups. It is a fine book for a grandparent to read to a child or a spouse: the tales are often humorous, and the craft and cleverness of the elders more than supplant the loss of the physical prowess of an Athena or Achilles, physical abilities which are naturally—but not always—gone in the elder tales. While the characters recognize the aches and pains that age is heir to, there is no complaining, no maudlin obsession with illness or death. In fact, just the opposite is true: the elder heroes are absolutely full of life and vitality. There’s no LA-Z-BOY in front of the TV for *these* folks—there’s just too much to do and see out there. And just as—sadly—today, there are many people who want to dupe “old people,” the seniors in these tales *know* that they have to watch out for the telemarketers of their times, be they human, animal, or supernatural.

In a 1984 book inscription to me, Jane Yolen wrote that “it’s story all the

way down,” down, that is, to the deepest fundamental truths of our being. And perhaps it's story all the way up the chronological ladder, as well. *Gray Heroes* certainly suggests so.

Stephen Canham  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

***Matengo Folktales.*** Recorded and translated by Joseph L. Mbele, with commentaries. Bryn Mawr, PA: Buy Books on the Web.com, 1999. 142 pp.

Each of the ten tales presented in this collection is accompanied by commentary by Joseph L. Mbele, who collected them in the 1970s from Matengo relatives, friends, and primary school students in southern Tanzania. Modest in scope and purpose, the book is not intended for a professional audience, but to introduce Matengo folktales to “the average reader between high school and college” (2). Indeed, Mbele explains that at the time he recorded the tales, his own “understanding of folklore fieldwork was rather rudimentary” (3), and he briefly describes some of the deficiencies in his methodology. The tales themselves are entertaining, with Hare tricksters, monsters, infanticide, patricide, matricide, sororicide, and a Solomonic pair of baby halves—though the three tales told by the unidentified schoolchildren are clearly inferior to those of the adult storytellers: Mbele's father, brother, and Mrs. Kangologo, “a woman in her late twenties or early thirties” (3). Mbele's commentaries, many of which are longer than the tales they discuss, analyze literary devices such as conflict, characterization, and theme to produce close readings that would please any literature teacher. They also tend, however, to extrapolate from the tales overgeneralizations about Matengo society, often imparting glib Eurocentric pronouncements on such issues as “male domination” and the Oedipus complex—a problem exacerbated by the commentaries' lack of attention to the gender, age, or social status of the individual teller. While the postscript, “Notes on the Folktales,” ultimately provides a good outline of important issues and concerns faced by the collector, translator, and reader of folktales, the text's usefulness as an introduction to folklore studies for high school or college students tends to be compromised by its shortcomings.

Cynthia Ward  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa

***The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales: The Western Fairy Tale Tradition from Medieval to Modern.*** Edited by Jack Zipes. Oxford: Oxford University Press. xxxii + 601 pp.

Jack Zipes has assembled an impressive group of folklore scholars for the contributions to his encyclopedic survey of a variety of subjects related to fairy tales. The associate editors and contributors are certainly too numerous to

name, but they do represent a valid sampling of major scholars with varying approaches to the study of fairy tales from various cultures and they have done a creditable job in commenting on every subject relevant to this genre. However, by Zipes's own acknowledgement, "the focus of this *Companion* is essentially on the literary formation of the Western fairy-tale genre and its expansion into opera, theatre, film, and other related cultural forms" (xvi), so the discussion of the evolution and dissemination of fairy tales in the oral tradition is not as thoroughly considered as their literary counterparts. And in his introduction, Zipes relies on the outdated work of Vladimir Propp to discuss the form of the oral wonder tale, rather than engage more recent theory, and eschews reference to Max Lüthi's seminal studies of the oral examples of this genre. Zipes's history of literary fairy tales in the introduction is more satisfying and this clearly is the strength of the volume. Everything one would wish to learn about literary fairy tales has been included in this compendious *Companion*.

Major topics include "Approaches to the Literary Fairy Tale," "The Arabian Nights," "Ballet and Fairy Tales," "British and Irish Fairy Tales," "Communist Folk-Tale Films," "Walt Disney," "Drama and Fairy Tales," "Fantasy Literature and Fairy Tales," "Feminism and Fairy Tales," "Film and Fairy Tales," "Folklore and Fairy Tales," "France," "Germany," "Italy," "Myth/Mythology and Fairy Tales," "North American and Canadian Fairy Tales," "Opera and Fairy Tales," "Oral Tradition and Fairy Tales," "Oriental Fairy Tales," "Poetry and Fairy Tales," "Popular Song and Fairy Tales," "Portuguese Fairy Tales," "Psychology and Fairy Tales," "Scandinavian Countries," "Schools of Folk-Narrative Research," "Science Fiction and Fairy Tales," "Slavic and Baltic Countries," "Spain," "Story-telling and Fairy Tales," "Television and Fairy Tales," and "Victorian Fairy Painting." These pithy essays are useful references for students and interested readers who wish to learn more about these aspects of the influence and diffusion of fairy tales. In addition to these longer essays, the volume references almost every major tale and every recognizable name—and many unrecognizable names as well—connected to fairy tales. It is a thorough review and will serve well readers who are curious about specific associations and references related to this genre.

The shorter entries provide interesting and entertaining details about specific topics. For example, we learn that Joseph Jacobs "wanted to write 'as a good nurse will speak' when she recounted tales" (268); that Terry Jones, after his illustrious comedic career, wrote a collection of children's *Fairy Tales* (1981); that Shakespeare's use of fairies was "effective in creating the atmosphere desirable for masques" (462); that there is a German film version of "The Singing Soaring Lark" entitled *Das singende klingende Baumchen*; that "[t]he most popular *Sinbad* was the 1918 musical comedy featuring Al Jolson as the black-faced clown Inbad" (465); that Milne published a handful of adult fairy tales

that “satirized the conventions of the genre” (320); that Mary Molesworth wrote “‘The Reel Fairies’ based on her own childhood imaginative games with the reels in her mother’s workbox” (321); that fairy tale illustrator Gustave Doré liked to keep his pencils sharpened at both ends so that he could work more rapidly; that Collodi’s *Le avventure di Pinocchio* “is not a traditional story reworked, but is, nevertheless, a fairy tale, a principal character being ‘the Fairy with the indigo hair’ (not ‘the Blue Fairy’, which is a Disney distortion of the original)” (103); that before Mme d’Aulnoy became the darling of the French court, she was “imprisoned with her new-born third daughter” (31); and that Afanasyev’s collections were banned in Tsarist Russia. These and many more colorful details are available to the reader who wishes to peruse this volume. The entries are well written and engaging, albeit a trifle obscure or arcane at times, but that is the purpose of an encyclopedia, to provide documentation and clarification of all aspects of the selected topic. This text meets that goal admirably.

Steven Swann Jones  
California State University, Los Angeles

***New Tales for Old: Folktales as Literary Fictions for Young Adults.*** By Gail de Vos and Anna E. Altmann. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1999. xxi + 408 pp.

“It is the particular beauty of fairy tales that no one interpretation is the true one, no one version is correct. The ingredients of the tale can be simmered and stirred, flavored and served up in a thousand different ways” (v). This observation by fantasy anthologists Terri Windling and Ellen Datlow serves as the epigraph that opens *New Tales for Old: Folktales as Literary Fictions for Young Adults*. Well-known folk and fairy tales are being retold in ever increasing numbers. In addition to novel-length reworkings, such tales are creatively revisited in short stories, poetry, film, and other forms throughout popular culture. Ten or so years ago, I started to notice novelized retellings of “Tam Lin,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Snow White and Rose Red,” and more. However, in my local public library at least, it was almost impossible to find fiction based on folktales other than by chance. Fortunately, my library has now added a subject heading for “Fairy tales — adaptations.” Even more fortunately, library consultant and storyteller Gail de Vos and professor of library science and storyteller Anna E. Altmann have prepared an annotated bibliography that makes identifying some of these literary explorations much easier.

*New Tales for Old* does more than simply list literary retellings of folk tales. Following an introductory chapter on the nature of folktales, individual chapters provide an overview of critical and literary interpretations, arranged by tale. Only eight of the most commonly studied and retold folktales derived from the European oral tradition are included: “Cinderella,” “The Frog King,”

“Hansel and Gretel,” “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Rapunzel,” “Rumpelstiltskin,” “Sleeping Beauty,” and “Snow White.” The authors are currently working on a companion volume of literary fairy tales that will include tales from Hans Christian Andersen, “Beauty and the Beast,” and “Tam Lin,” among others. For each specific tale, the authors provide a synopsis; a review of the tale type and motif elements; a brief analysis of the tale’s origins orally and in print with an emphasis on sources such as the Grimms, Perrault, and Basile; tables highlighting differences in variants; and a detailed listing of scholarly critical interpretations arranged chronologically. The review of the critical literature covers at least twenty-five years, and in some cases much longer. These sections are followed by annotations of literary and artistic reworkings of the tales in the form of novels, short stories, feature or short films, poetry, picture books, graphic novels, and opera or ballet. Most chapters include a list of Internet resources, and each concludes with a section called “Classroom Extensions”— suggestions for class discussion. The “Snow White” chapter also includes a lengthy essay on critical responses to the Disney film.

The format suggests that the primary purpose of this extensive annotated bibliography is to provide a curriculum guide for high-school and middle-school teachers who wish to incorporate a study of fairy tales into the curriculum. It will also be useful for librarians, storytellers, and students in college-level courses on folklore, fairy tales, or children’s literature. By bringing together critical approaches from several fields, it does much to expose readers to research outside of their own disciplines. Although written for nonspecialists, even the professional folktale scholar, for whom much of the material is likely to be familiar, will find this book a handy tool that conveniently gathers multiple references together.

The opening chapter “Folktales and Literary Fictions” provides valuable information for those not trained in folkloristics. This chapter introduces the nonspecialist to important basic concepts, although it relies on the work of literary folklorists and does not introduce theoretical work from the perspective of folklore as performance. Teachers, librarians, storytellers, and students will benefit from the authors’ efforts to make complex theoretical concepts accessible. The discussion includes brief explications of Walter Ong, Ivan Illich, and Barry Sanders on folktales as oral narrative and the nature of oral culture; Maria Tatar and Max Lüthi on definitions of terms; and Lüthi and others on the folktale as a creative artform. The section on the interpretation of folktales draws from Marina Warner, Tatar, Bruno Bettelheim, Mircea Eliade, Lüthi, and Jack Zipes. Using Warner’s phrase to describe the folktale as “porous to meaning,” De Vos and Altmann emphasize the importance of variants and stress that “no single meaning can be the only true one, and that any meaning is shaped by the context in which a story is written and read or told and heard” (16). In

discussing feminist debate over folktales, the authors argue “the patriarchal forms that our well-known folktales mirror are not inherent in the folktales themselves but are a production of selection and revision of the tales over time” (26–27). Sections on “Filling the Oral Folktale’s Sponge” and “Folktales in Postmodern Times” explore the use of literary reworkings of folktales to interpret, challenge, or comment on the tales and on society, referring to the folktale’s “transformative power” and flexibility, saying with Lüthi that “folktales want to be explicated” (19).

The quality of the annotations themselves is uneven. In the sections on critical interpretations, the annotations usually succeed in presenting the main arguments of each work, and in suggesting ongoing debates and critical issues. Nevertheless, the authors are clearly more comfortable in some areas than others. Length of annotation varies from a single sentence to over two pages. While they often give detailed descriptions of psychological or feminist criticism, an article on semiotics receives a single sentence. The full annotation for “Little Red Riding Hood’s Metacommentary: Paradoxical Injunction, Semiotics and Behavior” reads “Victor Laruccia analyzes Perrault’s version of the tale according to semiotics and communication theory” (166). For the most part, however, the critical annotations are thoughtful, detailed enough to be accurate, and illustrated with well-chosen quotations. The book’s format leads to a certain amount of redundancy, and in a few instances older sources are not given full bibliographic citations, but are identified only by their inclusion in later secondary sources. Still, anyone reading these sections carefully will become familiar with the most important names and issues in the area of folk- and fairy-tale studies.

I found myself more dissatisfied with some of the descriptions of the texts themselves. The authors have chosen to write descriptive rather than evaluative annotations, a choice that perhaps reflects their librarian training, although their opinions are sometimes revealed in their comments. Occasionally with the novels, this results in unnecessarily detailed plot summary. The descriptions of Donna Jo Napoli’s *Zel* and Sherri Tepper’s *Beauty* are both over two pages long and describe plot elements in excruciating detail. I would have preferred shorter thematic analysis. The briefer annotation of Jane Yolen’s *Briar Rose* includes the comment, “This is a difficult book to summarize, as the myriad of layers and stories are interwoven so well that the individual threads are often too complicated to unravel, particularly for the mere satisfaction of analysis” (299). Yet despite (or because of) the lack of detailed summary, this description conveys a much better sense of the book. The annotations for the short stories and poetry, usually more concise, are more consistently successful.

The book is somewhat of a hybrid that tries to serve multiple purposes and audiences, combining elements of handbook, textbook, and bibliography.



The background information on each tale provides a useful introduction, although the discussion of each tale within the oral tradition is frustratingly brief. The tables that compare features of variant forms make a useful teaching tool. Teachers and advanced students may find the “Critical Interpretations” sections the most useful, as I do, while librarians can use the sections on texts for collection development and to provide reader’s advisory services. The “Classroom Extensions” sections provide innovative ideas for discussion, although they might have benefited from more specific age- and curriculum-related recommendations. The list of Internet sources is well chosen, providing access to high quality, detailed web resources that enhance study of the tales.

The term “young adults” in the title is used in libraries to refer to twelve- to eighteen-year-olds. While some of the texts included are written specifically with this young adult audience in mind, more are crossovers—some written for children but included because of their potential appeal to an older audience, and more written for adult audiences. The authors have selected materials that range from books for younger readers such as Donna Jo Napoli’s *The Prince of the Pond, Otherwise Known as De Fawg Pin* (1992) to sophisticated literary retellings by Angela Carter, Anne Sexton, Robert Coover, and Emma Donoghue. They have been especially selective in the small category of picture books, careful to include only those that will appeal to a teen audience. Much of the poetry included is drawn from Wolfgang Mieder’s collection, *Disenchantments: An Anthology of Modern Fairy Tale Poetry* (1985). Short-story anthologies edited by Terri Windling and Ellen Datlow are covered in detail. Teachers and librarians working with teenagers will need to use discretion in selecting texts appropriate for the age level and individual interests of the reader, although the annotations give guidance by including phrases like “suitable for mature readers only” (250). Certain other judgmental comments identify texts that the authors consider overly didactic or poorly written.

The choice to arrange the volume by tale means that this is not the complete annotated list of folktale retellings that I had originally hoped for. Many retellings are left out simply because they are based on other tales than the eight included here. But that is not necessarily a drawback. The authors have chosen to emphasize depth rather than breadth. While this volume will serve in libraries as a handy ready reference source of citations and reading material, it is also worth reading for the nonbibliographic details included. It provides a valuable introduction to the study of the specific tales included. It is impossible to read through the volume without emerging with an enticing list of “must-reads.” I am eagerly looking forward to the second volume.

Victoria G. Dworkin  
University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa

*Alice in the Oral-Literary Continuum.* By Bjorn Sundmark. *Lund Studies in English* 97. Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1999.

This is an interesting, but essentially misguided study of Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books that attempts to reveal the folktale and storytelling elements of Carroll's literary fairy tales by placing them on what Sundmark terms an oral-literary continuum. For those familiar with Carroll scholarship, this study provides surprisingly little new information. By the *Alice* books, Sundmark means the four versions of *Alice* that Carroll produced: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1872), *Alice's Adventures under Ground*—the manuscript Carroll wrote and illustrated specifically for Alice Liddell, presented to her in 1864, and subsequently published in facsimile edition in 1886—and *The Nursery "Alice"* (1890). Taken as a unit, these four versions of *Alice* show a fascinating development of the tale that evolved from an oral tale told by Carroll to Alice and her sisters on the famous boating expedition of 4 July 1862 to the handwritten and self-illustrated manuscript to the heavily revised public text illustrated by John Tenniel to its more melancholy and frightening sequel and, finally, to the much simplified version intended for young children that moves toward the picture book format and includes colorized and enlarged illustrations. Since storytelling comes in many forms, Sundmark intends to interpret the *Alice* books in light of traditional storytelling practices and analyze the many oral features found in these texts.

Sundmark properly situates the *Alice* books as fairy tales, although he overstates the suggestion that the folkloristic aspect of the *Alice* books has been overlooked. Much scholarship already has been done on Carroll's use of nursery rhymes and characters based on nursery rhymes. Sundmark is more concerned with the folktale influence on the *Alice* books; however much of what Sundmark does in this study has already been outlined in Nina Demurova's article "Toward a Definition of *Alice's Genre: The Folktale and Fairy-Tale Connections*" which was published in *Lewis Carroll: A Celebration* (1982), or is a continuation of points that Demurova has already made.

While I am impressed with the effort that went into developing a rather detailed morphological sequence of *Wonderland* based on Vladimir Propp's *The Morphology of Folk Tale*, I do not find it very useful when it comes to a better understanding of Carroll's text. Carroll consistently refers to *Wonderland* as a fairy tale in his letters and diary as well as in the introductory poems to the text. He even has Alice, within the body of *Wonderland*, explicate her situation, "When I used to read fairy tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one!" Consequently, I do not think this academic exercise provides us anything we did not already know. Nevertheless, some critics have missed this fairly obvious point, as Sundmark observes. The same is true of many critics who insist that Carroll does not want Alice to grow

up and desires to keep her a child forever, which does not make much sense in light of the final paragraph of *Wonderland* in which Carroll projects Alice as a married woman surrounded by her own children. Sundmark seems to miss the point that both *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* are preparing Alice for the role of Victorian motherhood. Given that Alice literally has a baby thrown at her in *Wonderland* and goes from pawn to queen in *Looking-Glass*, these do not seem to be terribly obscure lessons.

Instead, Sundmark does a great deal of work that results in fairly obvious conclusions such as, “[t]he episodic structure of *Wonderland* is manifest” (46), or “that both *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* are model fairy tales” (200). Sundmark’s use of Aarne Antti and Stith Thompson’s *Types of the Folktale* reveals *Wonderland* to most closely resemble AT 480, “The Kind and Unkind Girls,” as an example of a reward and punishment tale, with Grimms’ “Mother Holle” being the best known example. The problem is that there are actually more differences than similarities between the Grimms’ folktale and Carroll’s literary fairy tale. Two of the most obvious are that there is no Mother Holle figure in either *Wonderland* or *Looking-Glass* and the contrast between the kind and unkind sisters is missing in both Carroll’s texts. The editing out of the title character of the folktale simply because it would be difficult for Carroll to present Alice’s older sister in a bad light, as Sundmark suggests, makes little sense. Alice does not always come off as a good girl during her adventures. Her declaration: “Who cares for you? . . . You’re nothing but a pack of cards!” is hardly going to earn her a reward from the creatures of Wonderland. Instead, it wakes Alice from her dream leaving the reader hard pressed to say that Alice has learned anything from her adventures. Most critics of children’s literature have read *Wonderland* as a dramatic break from previous didactic children’s literature in that it is remarkably free of the religious, social, or educational lessons embedded in earlier stories, such as “Mother Holle.” Sundmark’s suggestion that “a boring book can surely be regarded as something of an equivalent to the spindle in the Grimm’s tale” (68), since these objects propel the protagonist into her adventures, is just silly. It also overlooks both the function of the objects—spindle as object of labor in contrast to the book as object of leisure—as well as the social class of the protagonists—working class vs. upper class—which are key to the meaning of the two stories.

One of the chief problems in this study is that it does not acknowledge the significant distinctions between folktales and literary fairy tales. Oral folktales and literary fairy tales are indeed both part of a large literary continuum and not mutually exclusive, but a folkloristic study that seemingly makes no distinctions between the fairy tales written by Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy and those collected by the Grimms is limited at best. While it is true that Carroll is familiar with and borrows from a folktale tradition, the *Alice* books have

much more in common with the flourishing Victorian literary fairy tale of mid-Victorian England, a point that Sundmark acknowledges in a mere two and a half pages. With *Wonderland* published in 1865 and *Looking-Glass* in 1871, it is hardly accurate to suggest that the *Alice* books were written in “the early days of the literary folk tale when genre conventions were unstable” (9), as Sundmark maintains. While it is true that a literary fairy tale can have a “family likeness” to a corresponding oral tale, as Sundmark suggests, *Wonderland* has much more in common with Christina Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) and even *Goblin Market* (1862) than Grimms’ “Mother Holle.” Structurally and thematically *Wonderland* is closer to other Victorian literary fairy tales written before it and after it than it is with folktales.

While *Wonderland* did have its origins as an oral tale told by Carroll to Alice Liddell which she then requested that he write down for her, this hardly makes her a co-author which is what Sundmark suggests. The material Carroll produced in the eight family publications that he wrote from 1852 to 1862 argues against the suggestion that as the prompter of the tale of *Wonderland*, Alice is responsible for creating Carroll. *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876), which was done independent of Alice Liddell, would also suggest that Carroll was quite capable of writing without the inspiration of Alice. While Sundmark makes some very useful points concerning the storytelling techniques used by Carroll in the various versions of *Wonderland*, it is difficult to overlook the famous opening paragraph of *Wonderland*, where Alice “peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversation in it, ‘and what is the use of a book,’ thought Alice, ‘without pictures or conversations?’” This seems to argue that, despite the initial inspiration, *Wonderland* has always been structured as a book rather than an oral tale.

The best analysis Sundmark provides is his discussion of the use of the storytelling techniques in *The Nursery “Alice”* that show how Carroll, in attempting to simplify his text for a younger audience “aged from Nought to Five” suggest a situation where an adult reads the text to the child. Given Sundmark’s interest in performance aspects of the *Alice* books, I fail to understand why he does not to discuss Henry Savile Clarke’s production of *Alice in Wonderland: A Dream Play for Children* (1886), to which Carroll contributed, as another important version of the *Alice* books that fits comfortably on the oral-literary continuum. Carroll had a life-long interest in the theater and particularly with pantomime, the popular Victorian form of family theatrical entertainment which used folktales and literary fairy tales as the basis of the plot. The performances strongly influenced the construction of the *Alice* books which seems to be a significant missing element in this study.

Although Sundmark addressed an important aspect of the *Alice* books, with their use of storytelling and oral techniques as well as the use of folklore in

their creation, several other critics—including Roger Lancelyn Green in *Tellers of Tales* (1946), Gillian Avery in *Nineteenth Century Children* (1965), Stephen Prickett in *Victorian Fantasy* (1979), John Goldthwaite in *The Natural History of Make-Believe* (1996), John Docherty in *The Literary Products of the Lewis Carroll-George MacDonald Friendship* (1995), and Ronald Reichertz in *The Making of the Alice Books* (1997)—do a better a better job of providing a more accurate cultural and literary context for the *Alice* books in linking them to literary fairy tales and folktales than this study.

Jan Susina  
Illinois State University

**Old Beginnings.** Written and performed by Tamadhur Al-Aqeel. Bowen Branch Library, Detroit, Michigan, 4 May 2000.

**Chagall's Arabian Nights.** By Karim Alrawi. Directed by Debra L. Wicks. Mead-owbrook Theater, Rochester, Michigan, 8 April 2000.

**Arabian Nights.** By Peter Barnes. Directed by Steve Barron. ABC Television, April–May 2000.

“Once upon a time, in a fading dream, / There was a great and powerful King.” With these words the Los Angeles-based performance artist Tamadhur Al-Aqeel opens an evening of her own dramatic retellings from *The 1001 Nights*, that timeless and celebrated sequence of overlapping and embedded tales drawn mostly from medieval Arab sources. Her introductory formula, pronounced like an incantation, is based on the *Nights* and an old Iraqi poem. For her storytelling presentation, Al-Aqeel takes on the role of Shahrazad, the vizier’s daughter whose narrative skills must stay the murderous wrath of her husband, the Sultan Shahrayar. Al-Aqeel’s unique and captivating performance is one of several recent revivals of *Arabian Nights* lore, including a new play by Karim Alrawi and a recent ABC Television miniseries.

Tamadhur Al-Aqeel first played Shahrazad in the 1994 stage production of *Sharhazad and the Arabian Nights*, a play which she cowrote and which received a nomination from the *LA Weekly* for Production of the Year. The play was drawn from the *Nights*, from other Arab folktales and from contemporary political events, since it was created in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. Al-Aqeel has also written another play adapted from the *Nights*—*The Market Tale*, produced in 1999 by the Cornerstone Theater Company.

Al-Aqeel’s very warm and direct stage manner imparts an intimate flavor to the tales which, like the original, she tells in a densely embedded and interwoven pattern. *The 1001 Nights* have always been marginal to classic Arabic literature, too secular and even scandalous for the stricter standards of Islamic tradition. Yet they remain an astonishing representation of femininity and civilization as

they triumph over masculine rage and violence. Al-Aqeel's performance reveals a subtle psychological insight, one that is difficult to discern in the written text, which recognizes the therapeutic effect of narrative. Miracle and enchantment have the power to rescue Shahrayar from his nightmares and vengeful urges. Al-Aqeel is contributing to a very contemporary recognition of Shahrazad for her ability to achieve some autonomy of her own in the very male-centered court. This marks a certain kind of awakening feminism which is presently taking root among Muslim women who are seeking antecedents from within their own tradition.

Alrawi's play is called *Chagall's Arabian Nights* and deals with an episode late in the life of the painter Marc Chagall. During the spring of 1946 when he was nearly sixty, Chagall lived in High Falls, a town in the Catskill Mountains of New York State. While still mourning the death of his wife, he took on a commission to produce illustrations for an edition of the *Nights*. The play moves back and forth between Chagall's personal anguish and the message of the stories whereby Shahrazad seeks to heal the Sultan's tormented soul.

Karim Alrawi was born and raised in Alexandria, Egypt. At age fourteen his family moved to England, and there he began writing and working in theater, radio, and television. He was Resident Playwright at the Royal Court Theatre in London and Literary Manager of the Theatre Royal Stratford East. He has over thirty professionally produced stage plays to his credit, and several have won major national and international awards. He is currently an Associate Artist at Meadowbrook Theatre in Rochester, Michigan, where *Chagall's Arabian Nights* was produced under the direction of Debra L. Wicks.

The play offers a rare glimpse of Chagall at age fifty-eight just after the Second World War. It resonates with contemporary political concerns when it reveals the painter's sympathy with the Palestinian people and his opposition to the forced implementation of Zionist designs in the Middle East. Yet this motif is a brief prelude to the central thematic material of the piece, the healing effect of the traditional Arabian tales. Chagall is led through a pastiche of *Arabian Nights* narrative, not exactly faithful to the original texts but embodying their themes and atmosphere. This sequence is delightfully dramatized with brilliant stage effects and puppets designed by Kathryn Wagner. Through his encounter with the *Nights*, Chagall achieves some reconciliation with the loss of his wife and begins to accept a new love in his life. He is also enabled to work and to embody his humanistic concerns in his art.

The ABC miniseries *Arabian Nights*, which aired over April–May 2000, was directed by Steve Barron and written by Peter Barnes. Most recently the two had collaborated on Hallmark's 1998 NBC miniseries *Merlin*. Barnes has a distinguished list of writing credits including the play *The Ruling Class*, which became the 1972 film with Peter O'Toole and enjoyed cult status on American

campuses throughout the 1970s. *Arabian Nights* features an impressive cast that includes Mili Avital in the role of Shahrazad and Dougray Scott as the Sultan Shahrayar. There is one particularly interesting addition to the cast of characters, a marketplace storyteller played by Alan Bates. Shahrazad pays him daylight visits between her evenings with Shahrayar and consults with him on narrative strategy. This allows the series to depict a traditional Arab custom, the professional *raconteur*, with some degree of authenticity.

This miniseries comes in the wake of several such treatments of traditional tales dealing with myth, marvels, and the fantastic. Unlike *Merlin*, *The Arabian Nights* does not move in the direction of New Age paganism, but rather it gives the tales a strong urban flavor in keeping with the medieval Islamic world where they originated. As entertainment the miniseries succeeds in a very hip, contemporary fashion, with streetsmart genies, a flying carpet that operates like a skateboard, and a suitably seductive love intrigue. Shahrazad's repertory here includes "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp," "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," and the humorous "Hunchback" cycle, among others. Lavish location shooting involved sites in Turkey, Morocco, Yemen, and China.

More disappointing are some liberties taken with the original plot. The miniseries features a conflict between Shahrayar and his brother Shahzaman which does not occur in the original *Nights*. This permits a final climactic battle scene where the brothers fight to the death, something totally alien to the traditional conception. To compound the implausibility, Shahrazad accompanies the Sultan to the battlefield! Interestingly an earlier Hollywood adaptation introduced this very same motif of fratricidal strife in 1942. Perhaps the recurrence of this unfortunate interpolation can be explained through the constraints of Hollywood *mise en scène*. Shahrayar's conflict is properly with himself. This does not play well within the cinematic constraints of Hollywood and he must have an external enemy, thus the climactic battle becomes necessary. Both Al-Aqeel's and Alrawi's dramatic versions focus on the inner conflict through which Shahrazad's healing tales must guide the Sultan. In this they are consistent with the one truly brilliant film treatment to date, Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1974 version: *Il Fiore delle mille e una notte*. Hollywood, in the 1940s and today, prefers grandiose exteriors and bloody combat.

The miniseries is altogether much more noisy than we might have liked, but it is not entirely disappointing. It does show that there is life still in these ancient tales and that they can yet succeed at their primary function, which is to entertain. The many translations and adaptations of the *Nights* were a major part of western popular literature during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, probably more widely read in Europe and in North America than in their countries of origin. As literature they will probably never recover that status. Nonetheless the traditions remain alive and are constantly adapted and

readapted to new needs and contemporary contexts. Novels like *Arabian Nights and Days* by Naguib Mahfouz and *The Arabian Nightmare* by Robert Irwin testify to this. We can also note the important influence of the *Nights* on post-colonial writers like Salman Rushdie and A. S. Byatt. In the ever continuing renewal and creativity of Arab-Islamic diaspora culture, Shahrazad's stories and her own career frequently reemerge as central themes, serving as inspiration for literary and dramatic styles as well as models of emancipation and self-knowledge. Al-Aqeel's performance piece and Alrawi's play demonstrate this quite eloquently. Even the network television version retains much of the expressive force and crucial thematic material, and, who knows, may even draw some new readers and interpreters to these old tales.

*Joseph Gaughan*  
Wayne State University

***Tales and Translation: The Grimm Tales from Pan-Germanic Narratives to Shared International Fairytales.*** By Cay Dollerup. Benjamin's Translation Library 30. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999. xiv + 384 pp.

Central to this ambitiously conceived book is a detailed study of the translation of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (KHM) into Danish. However, Dollerup not only charts the history, diffusion, and impact of Grimm translations in Denmark but also addresses the context which determined the emergence and status of the German source texts themselves as well as the role that translation played in the creation of fairy tales as an international genre. Hence, the two key terms "tales" and "translation" in the title outline not only the disciplines involved but more importantly their relationship with each other: Dollerup's discussion attempts to bring insights and conceptual frameworks from translation studies to folklore research, but it also proposes that the outcome of research into the translation of fairy tales is central to issues in translation theory.

The study is interdisciplinary in conception and its argument addresses itself to and evolves out of a range of conceptual strands. However, it is clear that translation studies is Dollerup's homeground, and it is here that the book is most authoritative. The Danish reception of Grimm is extensively documented with an impressive list of translations from 1816 to 1986. Giving detailed bibliographical data, information on texts translated, illustrations and publishing formats as well as comments on translators, reprints, unacknowledged prints etc., this is an invaluable resource. Dollerup's study is unusual in that it also addresses paratextual features such as the role of publishers, illustrations, or format as determining factors in the establishment of a "body translational" in the receptor culture. Indeed, as Dollerup's discussion shows, internationalization—that is, the establishment of a Grimm canon in translation—is largely determined by



extratextual features such as international co-printing where layout determines how much space is available for the text regardless of how long the narrative might be in its source format or when realized in different languages. Dollerup convincingly shows how translation is instrumental in creating an international Grimm canon which is quite different from the German canon in terms of (a) its corpus and (b) the form and content of individual tales. The international canon reinforces the most popular stories which conform to the format of a happy ending and which foreground female heroines. Such standardization as well as uncontroversial linguistic reduction, a content cleaned of cruelty and other potentially offensive features, and a reliance on illustration mean that the international concept of a “typical” Grimm tale will show marked differences to the German Grimm corpus.

These outcomes are confirmed by research on Grimm translation into other languages (Marcia Liebermann’s “‘Some Day My Prince Will Come’: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale”; Seago’s “Some Aspects of the English Reception of the Grimms’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* in the Nineteenth Century”; Martin Sutton’s *The Sin-Complex*), but Dollerup also argues that the Danish translation history of the KHM is fundamentally different from the reception and translation into other cultures because of the high status accorded to early translations and their continuing influence on subsequent work. As a consequence, the body translational in Denmark shows an unusual preference for the first German edition of the KHM, considering it more authentic than later editions which had been heavily revised by Wilhelm Grimm. Thus some tales survive in Danish which have been superseded by substantially different versions elsewhere. Danish translations are also less marked by didactic considerations and do not have a problem with the depiction of cruelty which some translations even enhanced (after periods of war with Germany). Interestingly, there are also hardly any pirated versions claiming to be genuine translations as is the case in other countries; but to claim that translation practice, in England for example, is mostly “hack work” is overstating the case.

And while there are distinct differences in the Danish reception of Grimms’ tales, they nevertheless do share with translations into other languages the need to develop strategies for how to deal with culturally sensitive or inappropriate subject matter and language contained in the KHM. Discussing the imposition of societal norms by the receiving culture in terms of “linguistic/cultural incompatibility” or “gatekeeping,” Dollerup establishes excellent, nonjudgmental criteria for his evaluation of the “adequacy” of a translation which avoid such conflicted notions as “fidelity” to the source text, or censorship operating in the receptor culture. He proposes a model of four overlapping layers with which to analyze textual changes between the source text and the translation on the structural, linguistic, content, and intentional level. The last level is particularly

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interesting and useful with respect to cultural specificities as it deals with the meta-understanding of the text as it relates to and expresses human experience in terms of moral orientation, for example. With this model and a clearly defined terminology to discuss strategies such as exclusion (the omission of undesirable elements), inclusion (the decision to retain unpleasant intentionalities), or rewriting (deliberate changes on any or all levels), Dollerup provides a framework that allows discussion of perennially difficult issues in both folklore and translation studies: the authenticity and textual integrity of folktales and fairy tales in their transfer between different forms of mediation, and between linguistic, historic, or cultural contexts as opposed to the “authenticity” of the mediated, translated, or adapted version.

In his discussion of the genesis of the KHM themselves, Dollerup uses a similarly clearly structured approach to deal with the knotty issue of orality, folklore, and the status of the Grimm texts as folktales or authored tales. Central to this is the concept of performativity and his proposed notion of the “ideal tale,” which introduces—to my knowledge—for the first time a conceptual model that allows comparison and analysis of fairy tales in all their many forms of mediation. Dollerup argues that an “ideal tale” exists only in the moment of its “performance,” that is, the timespan during which it is mediated in a narrative contract established between the “sender” of the tale, its audience, and the elements which contribute to making up the message. “In relationship to the ‘collectors,’ ‘tellers,’ and audiences, the tales are thus in a fluid boundary area between orality and literacy; they are echoes of ‘ideal tales’ which are changeable both for the nonce as well as for future retellings. When tales are penned and eventually published, however, the ‘ideal tale released in the reading’ is a literary experience, bereft of the visual and auditory aspects which are indivisible components of the ‘ideal tale’ in a ‘narrative contract’ in the oral tradition” (292). The “ideal tale” is mediated through editorial filters which can be a storyteller adjusting delivery to the responses of the audience, a translator excluding elements because of cultural incompatibility, or a stylistic revision of a printed text.

The concepts of the “ideal tale,” the “narrative contract,” and, crucially, the performative notion underlying all tale transmission allow Dollerup to “solve” two major problems related to the status of the KHM as a collection of oral stories. The first problem is that the Grimms’ informants were in their majority bourgeois acquaintances rather than the simple folk as claimed by the brothers, and Dollerup negotiates this by postulating two different strata of storytelling traditions: the traditional, folk-based mediation and a layer at one remove from this where the well-educated ladies themselves engage in storytelling, either in communal gatherings or individually to the brothers, who note the versions down. This is a useful new perspective, although Dollerup’s insistence on oral

mediation is carried too far when he claims that illiteracy was the reason why stories were told to the brothers by their female acquaintances rather than passed on in written form. This ignores the fact that these were educated women and that there are sufficient communications by letter to disprove such a belief. Furthermore, the “substantiation” Dollerup gives for this claim rather embarrassingly misinterprets a letter by Jacob to refer to their sister’s bad spelling when his comment is about a married woman named Grete; their sister was called Lotte and was unmarried at the time of writing.

A similar overinterpretation mars Dollerup’s potentially very interesting approach to the second problem, that of editorial intervention by, primarily, Wilhelm Grimm, who created in fifty years of continuing substantial revision the “Gattung Grimm,” the unique style and form of what is often seen as the German fairy tale. Dollerup proposes that Wilhelm’s editorial activity in itself was performative: telling his versions to his children and testing their performance in oral delivery, his revision was a continued act of storytelling. While this is an innovative proposition, I am not aware of any substantiating evidence for such a claim, and neither is it properly supplied by Dollerup. The notion is further undermined by the fact that the majority of revision was introduced between the first edition of 1812–15 and the second edition of 1819, but Wilhelm’s eldest child Herman was only born in 1828. And even though Dollerup’s phrasing could suggest that Wilhelm did not necessarily read the tales to his *own* children, only three pages previously he had claimed that the Grimms did not speak to children and took advice from parents on editorial policy (57–58). While it must be admitted that initially Dollerup only proposes performative revision as a supposition, nevertheless by the conclusion this has become a factual statement.

Unfortunately, these are not the only incidences of misleading interpretation, overstatement or actual mistakes. His claim that “virtually all material [in the KHM] was culled in that kingdom [Westphalia] during its short existence” (30) is not supported by contemporary research into informants or the brothers’ own attributions (problematic as these are). Dollerup’s argument also disregards the fact that the Kingdom of Westphalia was dissolved in 1813, but a substantial proportion of tales were added to the collection after that date. The effects of Napoleonic occupation on the Grimms’ work are generally acknowledged, but to suggest that they were obliquely referring to the loss of the oral tradition as a *result* of the French presence ignores not only Romantic re-evaluation of the folk and cultural and literary theories on *Naturpoesie* but also Wilhelm Grimm’s own comments in his prefaces and his autobiography. These quite clearly refer to generations of neglect and to fairy tales as a “long forgotten literature.” An unfamiliarity with folklore research is evident in the claim that folkloristic studies do not acknowledge changes in content in different editions

of the KHM and ignores work by such eminent scholars as Ruth B. Bottigheimer, Jack Zipes, Lutz Röhrich, and Heinz Rölleke. And a certain haste is suggested by the inability to attribute to Zipes his reading of the Grimms' collecting activity as displacement activity for traumatic childhood experiences; as Dollerup states in an endnote: "I picked up the idea from somebody else but have been unable to locate the source again" (334). Insufficient copyediting is also evident in numerous instances of inaccurate footnotes, wrong referencing, even of his own work (his articles in *Fabula* have wrong volume numbers), and misspelling.

Thus, while there is much in this book that is new and inspiring, I also have serious concerns. These relate substantially to the folklore-related parts although overall the discussion tends to be repetitive, relying on detailed listing of facts which are not sufficiently interpreted so that some of the evaluations are little more than factual summaries. I have found Dollerup's various models for discussing fairy tales, for analyzing translations (or any variant text), and his information on publishers and international printing arrangements very interesting, and I will use him in my future work. Similarly, his focus on translational activity as ephemeral, in continuous flux, and reader-oriented, as well as his evaluation of the Grimms' achievement as creating "a splendid literary base for 'narrative contract' in their transfer from the oral to the written medium" (292), has introduced a new and valuable focus to both translation studies and folklore research. Nevertheless, I would caution readers to take this book with a pinch of salt and read it in parallel with other sources.

Karen Seago  
University of North London

***Homo narrans: Studien zur populären Erzählkultur.*** Edited by Christoph Schmitt. Waxmann: Münster, 1999. 431 pp.

Though I am always suspicious of the quality of a *Festschrift* because the contributions tend to be very uneven and sometimes flimsy, this volume dedicated to Siegfried Neumann, one of the leading folklorists of the former German Democratic Republic, is truly outstanding and makes an important contribution to the study of the interaction between oral and literary traditions and their relationship to contemporary popular culture. Christoph Schmitt has gathered together twenty-three of the best scholars in the field from Germany and the US and has divided their essays into four parts: (1) Tellers, Collectors, Interpreters: Ways of Folklore Narrative Research; (2) Old Materials—Modern Themes: Folk Prose in Historical Context; (3) Media Transformations of Popular Narrative Materials—Storytelling in the Mass Media; (4) Transmission in the Region: The Culture of Narrative, Speech, and Song in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Since many of the contributions have a limited focus, connected to Neumann's research in the region of Mecklenburg and Pomerania, and may not be directly

pertinent to the work of readers of this journal, I shall primarily discuss the more general and accessible essays that offer new perspectives in the field of folklore and fairy-tale research.

By far the most relevant essay in the first part is Ines Köhler-Zülch's "Der Diskurs über den Ton. Zur Präsentation von Märchen und Sagen in Sammlungen des 19. Jahrhunderts," which may serve to correct John Ellis's misleading speculations in his book, *One Story Too Many*, about the Brothers Grimm and folklore scholarship in Germany. Köhler-Zülch's thorough and careful research demonstrates that the Brothers Grimm, along with their compatriots, were fully aware of the difficulties in writing down and recording folktales and legends in keeping with the oral tradition. Their concept of a "faithful" and "true" rendition of a narrative had little to do with correct and literal representation but more to do with recapturing the "tone" of the story while remaining faithful to the contents. In the initial phase of establishing the field of folklore in Germany, scholars and collectors developed a discourse about "authentic" and "true" tales through correspondence and publications concerning standards of recording and editing tales that lasted throughout the nineteenth century. Köhler-Zülch analyzes the works of Johann Carl Christoph Nachtigal, Johann Gustav Büsching, Albert Ludwig Grimm, Heinrich Pröhle, and Ignaz and Joseph Zingerle among others to show how they all sought to cultivate a folk tone while editing the tales they recorded. In this regard, they became artists themselves, storytellers, who did not hide the fact that they were not concerned so much with publishing authentic texts but with re-creating texts that had an "authentic ring" to them. Of course, there was a danger in idealizing the German folk and creating a false if not mythic image of the way the folk told tales. One of the dangers of focusing too much attention on "pure" folk tones and tales is discussed in Kai Detlev Sievers's "Völkische Märcheninterpretationen. Zu Joachim Kurd Niedlich's Mythen- und Märchendeutungen," in which he examines the rise of Aryan ideology within folk collections, paying specific attention to the work of Johann Kurd Niedlich (1884–1928). More general and less ideological is Leander Petzoldt's "Zur Geschichte der Erzählforschung in Österreich," which provides a succinct and informative history of the oral tradition in Austria and reveals to what extent this tradition is still alive.

In the second part of the book, which focuses on how traditional topics and themes are adapted and preserved in contemporary culture, Ingo Schneider uses a contemporary index of important legend types in his stimulating essay "Traditionelle Erzählstoffe und Erzählmotive" to show how pervasive traditional motifs and characters are in new legends even when they assume different functions in contemporary societies. Another example of how widespread traditional legends are in contemporary society is discussed by Wilhelm Nicolaisen in his fascinating article "Einbruch und Einbrecher in der modernen Sage." Nicolaisen

concentrates on legends about thieves and thievery, or to be more exact, burglars and burglary, and argues that these legends are not as conspicuous as others, and yet, we continually encounter them particularly because they help us deal with the fears about criminal theft and security amidst the apparent chaos of our postmodern societies. Linda Dégh, too, discusses contemporary problems and anxieties in her short but revealing essay “The Bet,” which is an original analysis of a story she received through e-mail that she traces to a traditional *Schwank* dealing with attacks on authority figures.

Whereas the essays in the first two parts of this book deal mainly with narrative adaptation and transmission through word and mouth, the third part shifts the focus to the mass media. Wolfgang Mieder’s “Aphoristische Sagwörter aus Literatur und Medien” is a remarkable survey and exploration of how wellerisms have made their way into magazines, cartoons, advertisements, and literature with numerous examples. In the same comprehensive manner but with a different focus, Lutz Röhrich demonstrates in “Couch-Cartoons: Bildwitz und Wortwitz zum Thema Psychoanalyse” how difficult it has been for psychiatrists to receive due recognition for their professional work. Using numerous examples mainly from German publications Röhrich explores how jokes about psychiatry make their way from the oral tradition into cartoons that have serious implications for the profession. In the last essay of this section, “Magazingeschichten: Erzählen in berichtend-kommentierenden Rundfunksendungen,” Helmut Fischer studies how stories from variety radio programs in Germany called “Magazinsendungen,” which include music, stories, and news reports, circulate and influence popular oral culture, and of course, many of the radio stories are based on the daily communication that the programs transform into noteworthy narratives.

Whereas the essays in the media section are interdisciplinary, all the essays in the final part of the *Festschrift* are more traditional and regional and dedicated to Neumann’s research interests in Mecklenburg and Pomerania. Christoph Schmitt deals with Mecklenburg folk calendars; Kathrin Pöge-Alder discusses her endeavors to use the Richard Wossidlo Archive in Rostock to discover more information about Wossidlo and how he worked with the informants who provided Wossidlo with his tales; Ralf Wendt uncovers fascinating information about how Wossidlo worked in his correspondence with the goldsmith Ludwig Düwahl; Irmtraud Rösler and Katrin Moeller demonstrate how many of the Mecklenburg tales about witches and devils are related to court records in the region; Karl-Ewald Tietz recounts the intriguing controversy between two of the foremost Pomeranian folklorists of the nineteenth century, Otto Knoop (1853–1931) and Ulrich Jahn (1861–1900); and Heike Müns analyzes questions of identity in the Mecklenburg and Pomeranian folk songs about the homeland after the fall of the Wall in 1989.

Though the essays in this collection constitute a kind potpourri, most of them introduce new insights about traditional folklore research and also into the relationship of the folk tradition to technological media, with the exception of film, television, and video. The articles do honor to Siegfried Neumann, an extraordinary folklorist, and to the profession at large.

*Jack Zipes*  
*University of Minnesota*

**Summit Avenue.** By Mary Sharratt. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2000. 252 pp.

The actual Summit Avenue stretches from the bluff overlooking downtown St. Paul (originally named Pig's Eye) west to the next curve of the Mississippi across from Minneapolis (originally a milling enterprise). Mansions built on this illustrious avenue often imported complete rooms from European chateaus and castles to prove that the Midwest was just as high-culture as Europe. Railroad baron James J. Hill built his impressive Romanesque mansion at 240 Summit in 1891, and St. Paul's Cathedral—a copy of St. Peter's Renaissance-style Basilica—was finished in 1915 at 239 Summit across the street. Residents demanded it have asphalt paving in 1887, making it the first paved road in St. Paul. It was *that* sort of Avenue, in firm denial of Pig's Eye and lowly milling origins.

Because Summit Avenue resonates with class and culture issues, it is a perfect setting for Mary Sharratt's pre-World War I novel about mysterious, rich widow Violet Waverly who is trying to finish her ethnographer husband's magnum opus, a translation of European fairy tales. To help with this task, she hires eighteen-year-old Katherin Albrecht, a recent immigrant from Germany, to come live and work in her Summit Avenue mansion. The first time Katherin sees Violet's house, she describes it as, "a castle built of golden limestone, with turrets and lancet windows half hidden in ivy." This is a liminal moment when Katherin "was afraid to step forward. Going through the gate would be like walking into a mirage" (22). Or into a fairy tale. Katherin crosses one threshold into Violet's world and a second into the Wassalissa/Baba Yaga tale which Katherin recognizes "was to become my story, shaping the rest of my life like a prophecy. The tale I shall carry inside me forever" (48).

Sharratt's first novel attempts a great deal, trying to succeed as historical fiction, as immigrant coming-of-age tale, and as lesbian love story. In addition Sharratt structures her narrative with traditional fairy-tale elements: the death of a mother, leaving home (in Katherin's case not a pleasant one: Hollental or Hell's valley), meeting a mysterious individual, various tests, temporary setbacks, and gained wisdom at the end. Katherin, the novel's heroine, is clearly the archetypal Innocent Maiden of fairy tales. Unlike a fairy-tale heroine, however, Katherine blunders along unconscious of her potential powers, vacillating wildly in her beliefs and imaginings, making tragic mistakes, not recognizing the wisdom in

her father-in-law's philosophy: "It's our tragedies that shape us, but we don't know it at the time" (71).

Sharratt's novel is successful when she keeps readers wondering. Is Violet's Summit Avenue mansion Baba Yaga's house? Which role has Violet been assigned: sorceress, mother, or lover? Could Katherin herself be the sorceress, her husband the Baba Yaga? The novel falters in the last section—"Crone: Mirrors of a Sorceress"—since it is hardly believable that Katherin has become (at age 22) "a crone before my time" (243).

The characters are compelling—both resisting and embracing their assigned fairy-tale roles. They immediately draw us into the story of poor, naive Katherin alone on the brink of war in an unfamiliar Summit Avenue world, guided only by an old thread of story left by her mother and uncle and the fairy tales Violet has told her. Sharratt's addition of fairy tales to historical fiction helps reveal that the world is full of wonders, and this empowers Katherin to thread and reweave her stories to transform her life.

Unlike fairy-tale heroines Aschenputtel and Wassalissa, Katherin has no consciousness of her dead mother's protection. If, as Adrienne Rich says in *Of Woman Born*, "The quality of the mother's life [ . . . ] is her primary bequest to her daughter," Katherin has been given no inheritance. Her mother was impoverished and pregnant all her married life, and Katherin's six siblings and father have died. Though it is her scholarly uncle's money that gets her to America and his values that send her to night school English classes, it is the mother/daughter theme that pervades this story, enabling the creation of a women's world shaped by the Demeter/Persephone myth at the novel's end.

The novel's first sentence asks, "How do you weave a life from fairy tales?" (i), but this question oversimplifies the task of any fiction that tries to incorporate fairy tales. Fiction must admit complexity; fairy tales offer flat characters and clear plots (though as Violet reminds us, "The simplest stories are the most deceptive" [28]). Sharratt's question also implies that we can simply choose the fairy tales that will have resonance for us. Often the reverse is true: the tale chooses us.

Although some readers may be disappointed that Sharratt does not develop class conflicts inherent in her Summit Avenue choice of titles, such a development might have disrupted her women's solidarity theme. Another problem that Sharratt herself has noted is fitting fairy tales' happily-ever-after ending into historical fiction. She does not choose an easy ending that serves commercial and conservative ideological goals. And readers will be relieved that at the end, Katherin joins forces neither with Disney's Cinderella living on elegant Summit Avenue nor in Schmidt's dingy tavern by the Pillsbury mills.

Suzanne Kosanke  
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa