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Reviews

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REVIEWS

The Celtic Breeze: Stories of the Otherworld from Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. By Heather McNeil. World Folklore Series. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 2001. xxxiii + 214 pp.

The Eagle on the Cactus: Traditional Stories from Mexico. Retold by Angel Vigil. Translated by Francisco Miraval. World Folklore Series. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 2000. xlvii + 223 pp.

Jasmine and Coconuts: South Indian Tales. By Cathy Spagnoli and Paramasivam Samanna. World Folklore Series. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1999. xvi + 172 pp.

The Magic Egg and Other Tales from Ukraine. Retold by Barbara J. Suwyn. Edited by Natalie O. Kononenko. World Folklore Series. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1997. xxxv + 222 pp.

Thai Tales: Folktales of Thailand. Retold by Supaporn Vathanaprida. Edited by Margaret Read MacDonald. World Folklore Series. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1994. xviii + 152 pp.

A Tiger by the Tail and Other Stories from the Heart of Korea. Retold by Linda Soon Curry. Edited by Chan-eung Park. World Folklore Series. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1999. xxi + 120 pp.

When Night Falls, Kric! Krac! Haitian Folktales. By Liliane Nèrette Louis. Edited by Fred J. Hay. World Folklore Series. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1999. viii + 188 pp.

There are now seventeen volumes in the World Folklore series, published from 1991 to 2002, with more forthcoming. I examined seven for this review. A few of the volumes are also available on audiotape (not heard for this review). From a storyteller's perspective, all are pleasing. However, from a folklorist perspective, the series is inconsistent. The geographic range covered by the series at this point is uneven, with most volumes from Europe and Asia; however, the series is growing rapidly and this may change. Most volumes are the result of teamwork between two people, usually a storyteller and an editor with academic credentials, but some volumes lack an editor. The credentials of the advisory board members for the series—Simon J. Bronner, Natalie Kononenko, Norma J. Livo, Margaret Read MacDonald, and Joseph Bruchac—suggest that the intent is to provide stories that will satisfy folklorists as well as a general public, but some volumes succeed better than others.

The books target a school and public library audience. All include some kind of supplemental material in addition to the stories themselves, apparently chosen with an eye to making these stories useful for classroom teaching. However, the nature of the supplemental material varies from one volume to the next. The introductions range from eight to forty-seven pages and from an intimate, personal account to detailed historical and cultural overviews of the country. All include color photographs and some sort of bibliography. One volume includes recipes, another music. After examining the range of supplemental material represented in several volumes, my ideal format for this series would include a personal introduction from the reteller; a cultural and historical overview from a qualified editor or the reteller; maps; thematically organized stories with brief comments on each category or story from the teller; detailed source notes including tale types and motifs for each story; a glossary and pronunciation guide for specialized vocabulary; a bibliography with separate sections for collections of tales and for the historical and cultural material; a detailed index; color photographs illustrating folk arts and culture; additional illustrations in a style appropriate for that culture; and biographical information on the author, editor, and artists. All of these features are present in the volumes of this series, but few volumes have every one of them, and there doesn't appear to be a standardized format for the series. The format and content of individual volumes appear to be somewhat idiosyncratic.

The feature I would most like to see appear consistently is detailed source notes for each story, yet only two of the seven volumes I examined included sources, tale types, and motifs for each story. A third included sources listed story by story, without tale types and motifs. The rest indicated a general list of sources used without indicating the specific sources

of each tale. Not surprisingly, *Thai Tales*, retold by Supaporn Vathanaprida and edited by Margaret Read MacDonald—the editor of *Storyteller's Sourcebook*, a motif index to folktales in children's books—is by far the best when it comes to source notes. This volume gives sources and collection notes, lists the most significant motifs, and makes comparisons to similar stories. *Jasmine and Coconuts* provides personal anecdotes, collection notes, and motifs, but does not always indicate written sources, as the husband of this husband-and-wife team of co-authors learned many of the stories in this volume in childhood. *The Celtic Breeze* does not include motifs, but introductions to most of the stories provide notes on the source, written or from fieldwork on the Isle of Barra, and the list of recommended reading is arranged tale by tale.

In contrast, *A Tiger by the Tale*, to my mind the weakest in the series, although it includes storyteller's notes on almost every tale, provides relatively little information about sources, tale types, and motifs. The notes provide comments on the author's reaction to the stories or suggestions for how to tell them. In some cases, the author does make comparisons to similar stories. The first category of tales is "stories similar to others we know," the presumptive "we" apparently referring to those raised on classic Western fairy tales. Some of the stories in this category include counterparts to "Cinderella," "Beauty and the Beast," and "Little Red Riding Hood," but others are less obvious. I was surprised to find that Curry drew parallels between "The Swallow Queen's Gift" and "Jack and the Beanstalk" because of the magic seed, but didn't mention that it was an obvious example of tale type 480, The Kind and Unkind Girls, with male protagonists. I hope that future volumes in this series will be modeled after *Thai Tales* and provide detailed source notes compiled by contributors familiar with tale types and motifs.

Often, the intended audience appears to be the teacher, librarian, or parent, rather than elementary or middle-school-aged readers. For example, *The Magic Egg* includes the note in the introduction that, "while there is something for everyone, not every story in this collection is for every reader and listener, and parents and educators should review specific tales before sharing them with any audience to see if the content is appropriate." That volume features a collection of delightfully-told tales that range from simple animal stories suited to young children to complex, frightening stories more appropriate to a middle or high school audience. *When Night Falls, Kric! Krac!* contains similar advice to teachers and librarians to "judge the appropriateness of each [story] for the student population with whom you are working" (34). Louis uses a lively, relatively unexpurgated style. In one tale, Bouki, the classic fool character, tries to steal meat. He "goes in through the cow's back door, under his tail" to cut meat out from the inside

(59). When his plan fails because of his greed, the cow dies, and he is discovered. “Bouki cried and went *caca* (excrement) on himself” and then he eats the result, saying “I love that stuff. It’s cat butter” (60). On the other hand, Curry’s version of “A Tiger by the Tail” seems slightly sanitized in contrast to the same story in *Korean Folk and Fairy Tale* (1991), retold by Suzanne Crowder Han. Curry changes Han’s “I have to shit real bad” to “As luck would have it, I must relieve myself” making it easier to bring this story into the classroom. Although her retellings are less likely to cause trouble for a teacher, they seem flatter and less compelling than the earthier style of Han or of Louis’s Haitian stories.

The extent to which stories are altered by the individual reteller varies from one volume to the next, although all the volumes emphasize “tellable” texts that reflect the teller’s own performances. Heather McNeil indicates that in her 1994 fieldwork on Barra, she was disappointed to find kernels of stories rather than fully developed tales, so she supplemented them with research and imagination to develop her own versions. She describes her process, stressing that “the story must be your own creation, born of your own unique talents and gifts” and yet remain “a true rendering of the original” (*Celtic* 123). Her collection is the most personal—an intimate account of her quest that only includes fifteen stories (two from Ireland, two from Wales, the rest Scottish or, in the case of “The Two Sisters,” reset in Scotland but derived from an English ballad), and some songs. The reader gets a strong feeling for McNeil the performer, but her book is less representative of the breadth of Celtic folktales than most volumes are for their region.

In his Mexican collection, *The Eagle on the Cactus*, Angel Vigil also talks in general terms about the retelling process he uses. He notes that “[a]s an active storyteller, I construct my stories into modern retellings of traditional tales. I work firmly within the belief that each generation of *cuentistas* . . . retells the traditional stories to meet the artistic sensibilities of its own audiences” (*Eagle* xiv). Although he talks of the need for “each storyteller adding his or her own embellishments to the stories,” he is also adamant about “respecting a story’s core of authenticity” (xv). His powerful retellings accomplish both his goals.

It is interesting to see how different storytellers try to strike the balance between retelling the stories in their own voice and retaining the core elements of the story. Although I wondered how freely a few of Curry’s Korean stories were adapted and if she had chosen to subtly emphasize similarities between the Korean stories and their Western counterparts, I was surprised when I compared the texts of the stories in her volume to Han’s *Korean Folk and Fairy Tales* to see how closely some of her versions resembled Han’s. Curry’s own voice comes through more clearly in some of her stories than in others.

Over all, I feel that this series provides a welcome addition to collections of world folktales available in retellings for school and public library use. Much of the supplemental material offers a valuable way for teachers and librarians to enhance their use of the stories. The stories themselves are generally retold in a lively, appealing way that works well for reading aloud or oral retelling. The lack of consistency between volumes is the series' greatest flaw. In future volumes, I would like to know that one could count on getting a broad range of well-told representative stories, a meaningful discussion of historical and cultural context for the stories, and well-documented source notes. I would like to be sure that all volumes include input from a qualified performing storyteller, a person who is intimately familiar with the culture, and someone academically qualified to provide the contextual material. Inevitably, some volumes will be stronger than others. I was favorably impressed with at least five out of the seven volumes I examined, and even the two I considered the weakest offered some good material, which I consider to be not a bad record for a series of this scope. Actually, *The Celtic Breeze* is not weak in itself, but it seems different in its scope and purpose from the rest of the series. I look forward to an ongoing standard of readability, broader geographic coverage, and more consistency as the series continues to grow.

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The Queen's Mirror: Fairy Tales by German Women, 1780–1900. Edited and translated by Shawn C. Jarvis and Jeannine Blackwell. European Women Writers Series. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. xii + 374 pp.

As a result of their centuries-long dominance of public awareness as well as their being the recurring object of scholarly effort and cinematic adaptation, the fairy tales of Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm have functioned as models of what the fairy tale was thought to be. In the late twentieth century, however, this dominance began to fade (at least within scholarly circles) as an alternative fairy-tale literature gained attention. As a major impulse in this redefinition of focus, Jack Zipes's anthology, *Beauties, Beasts and Enchantments: Classic French Fairy Tales* (1989), offered new English translations of French literary fairy tales, written primarily by women who were contemporaneous with or subsequent to Perrault. By incorporating the word "classic" into his subtitle, Zipes acknowledges these women's contributions to the fairy-tale canon.

In their anthology, *Bitter Healing: German Women Writers from 1700–1830* (1990), Jeannine Blackwell and Susanne Zantos point out that in the field of German literature in general, women authors have been

“more consistently excluded from the canon than in England, France, or the United States” (1–2). This exclusion affected the publication and translation of their fairy tales as well. As was the case with Perrault’s tales in France, the succinct and economical narratives of the Brothers Grimm took center stage, resulting in the canonical exclusion of the more elaborate fairy tales written by German women.

The Queen’s Mirror intervenes in this neglect by bringing to view, in English translation, a selection of the fairy tales produced by German women between 1784–1896. The intention of editors Jarvis and Blackwell is to present a historically-based survey that gives “background and resonance to today’s feminist fairy tales while critically revising the notion of the female tale-teller” (4). The editors have done a praise-worthy job not only in selecting the individual tales, but also in contextualizing them, making them easily accessible to readers.

Each tale’s headnote situates the author and thus the tale in terms of folkloric, literary, social, and/or political environments. For example, two of the women included in the anthology contributed tales to the Brothers Grimm. Far from today’s popular stereotype of the brothers’ informants as illiterate peasants, Ludovica Brentano Jordis was related to prominent literary figures Bettina Jordis, Clemens Brentano, and Sophie von la Roche, the latter the first widely-acknowledged German woman novelist. The family of the second Grimms’ contributor, Anna von Haxthausen, was notable as part of the landed aristocracy of north-central Germany. As *märchen*, Jordis’s and von Haxthausen’s narratives situate the other tales as intentionally artistic productions. However, the fact that Jordis and von Haxthausen had lives of relative privilege raises the issue (for class discussion, for example) that the Grimms believed the folk spirit resided not in their informants, but in the tales themselves.

Many of the women included lived distinguished lives, circulating in the “Weimar court, German Romantic circles, children’s educational establishments, the literary salon, the Kindergarten movement, and the women’s emancipation movement” (1). A typical representative is Fanny Lewald, an important member of Berlin’s salon culture, a prolific author, and “one of the most important voices of German-Jewish women in nineteenth-century Germany” (183). Her involvement in the literary and political movement “Young Germany,” with its criticism of arranged marriages, and of the social, educational, and legal situation of women (interestingly, topics that concerned the French women authors of fairy tales in the late 1600s) is reflected in her story, “A Modern Fairy Tale” (1841). This piece addresses the superficiality of the “marriage market” for young women at the time. Atypical of the women included because of her especially high rank,

German-born Catherine the Great of Russia produced in 1784 the first known fairy tale written in German by a woman. Pedagogical in intent, "The Tale of Fewei" was penned by this empress, as a guardian grandmother and wise woman storyteller, to instruct her own grandsons how to behave in their future job as tsar. Finally in this brief overview, I should mention another atypical author, the anonymous writer of the socialist tale "The Red Flower" (1893), who the editors suggest was probably a woman of the proletariat. Her tale is framed by information about the nineteenth-century workers movement and the Kindergarten movement. This author stands in contrast and in similarity to the clearly-defined portraits of the other authors—prominent women whose identity as fairy-tale writers has historically been shunted into obscurity.

The tales are arranged chronologically, and are identified collectively as illustrating a "history of the [fairy-tale] genre" (6) in the variety of forms employed. Included are moralistic tales, those of the romantic fantastic, satire, tales intended for private family use, dramatized tales, and reworkings of tales for children's theater and puppetry, among others. Jarvis and Blackwell identified a work as a fairy tale based on each author's own designation of it as such. In addition, the editors took a feminist stance in seeking out "tales that focus on [. . .] female characters who play an active part in encountering the fantastic" (5). The anthology's title, *The Queen's Mirror*, encapsulates this emphasis. According to the editors, fairy-tale mirrors were "indeed truth machines for German women writers" (7). Mirrors "show girls their future so that they can act autonomously" while also telling "truths about one's own worst emotions" (7). An example of this revelatory process is Agnes Franz's tale about the spoiled brat "Princess Rosalieb" (1841), whose fairy godmother confines her to a tower until she figures out how to behave. Rosalieb's mirror is a constantly updated magical book that reflects back to Rosalieb her recently lived life.

The tales are put into dialogue with one another through the editors' headnotes and afterword discussion of major recurrent motifs. Central to their interest, they state, were tales in which the protagonists' learning and maturing is a "magical-realistic process" (5). An example is the tale "Princess Rosalieb" mentioned above. Other patterns the editors identify are: (1) mother-daughter relations, such as in the socialist tale "The Red Flower" (1893); (2) human/nonhuman transformation and transcendence, as in Louise Dittmar's "stinging condemnation of women's status as society's apes" (6) in her "Tale of the Monkeys" (1845); (3) the multifaceted depiction of romantic relationships, as in Amalie von Helwig's "The Symbols" (1814), which depicts the hero and heroine's stroll "through a cave symbolic of the female body" (6); and (4) the tension between public responsibility and private self, such as in

Karoline von Gnderrode's "Temora" (1804). There, Prince Temora murders King Ermar in revenge for the death of Temora's father, and then Ermar's princess daughter kills her true love, Temora, in revenge for her father's murder.

In addition to situating the tales relative to one another, within each headnote Jarvis and Blackwell provide references by which readers can compare and contrast each of the given tales with additional fairy-tale material. This framing information is impressively diverse. Among other works, it links the given tales to tale-type plot lines from Aarne-Thompson's *The Types of the Folktale* (1961), narratives within the Grimms' collection, French and Victorian literary fairy tales, Anne Sexton's and other poetry, German Romantic tales as well as those written by Hans Christian Andersen and John Ruskin, and/or stories from modern-day, popular anthologies such as Datlow and Windling's *Snow White, Blood Red* (1993). The tales are further situated in a material way with twenty-three illustrations. Some of these depict scenes from the tales; others are portraits of individual tale authors.

The Queen's Mirror is an impressive and very useful anthology that brings to light a literature too long in the shadows. The editors have selected engaging and oftentimes remarkable tales that gain resonance through insightful contextualization. The translations are of fluid prose and offer comfortable reading. The volume has much to offer readers in the fields of fairy-tale study, women's studies, and German literature.

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Myth and Fairy Tale in Contemporary Women's Fiction. By Susan Sellers. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001. ix + 198 pp.

This is an ambitious book. Prof. Sellers has attempted to survey the history of research on myth and on fairy tales, both old and new, and to discuss recent "rewritings" by women in a slim 139 pages of text. She is conscious that she cannot possibly look in detail at all such rewritings. But it is less clear that she realizes how sketchy and how arbitrary her discussions of theories of myth or current research on fairy tales really are. Her claim that myth and fairy tale are "currently synonymous" (16) seems misleading and over-simplified. And the first two pages of the first chapter consist primarily of one-sentence summaries of various theories of myth, from James Frazier and Jessie Weston to T. S. Eliot to more recent accounts like Marina Warner's. It's difficult for this reader, at least, to follow the trajectory of an argument through this maze of possibilities, or to see where she's headed.

This uncertainty of focus, in fact, characterizes much of the book. It's a tall order to explore women's rewritings of Western myth, Biblical stories,

and fairy tales, even in a fairly restricted group of texts. (Sellers focuses primarily on fiction by British and Irish women writers of the last quarter of the twentieth century, with the surprising addition of Anne Rice's vampire chronicles and pornographic "Sleeping Beauty" trilogy.) In a few pages she refers almost at random to the story of Noah, the Gospel of St. John, Pandora, Daphne and Apollo, Medusa, *Frankenstein*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (as modern myths), and various fairy tales, moving quickly from one to the next and rarely giving herself time to explore the particularities of each redaction. In fact, since she's moving so quickly, she rarely has time to do more than sketch the plot and outline character; she pays very little attention to structure or to language, often the most interesting part of recent rewritings. (For an example, on page 98, see her one-paragraph treatment of Emma Donoghue's complex *Kissing the Witch*.)

Sellers also seems unaware of the recent work on fairy-tale transformations in the United States: for example, Jack Zipes's anthologies *Don't Bet on the Prince* (1986) and *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (1983); Nancy Walker's *The Disobedient Writer* (1995), a book that is almost as inclusive as Sellers's but more convincingly organized and argued; and Cristina Bacchilega's fascinating *Postmodern Fairy Tales* (1997). And, though she's familiar with Marina Warner's and some of Jack Zipes's work, she has missed a lot of recent and important scholarly treatments of fairy tales. She leans heavily on Ruth Bottigheimer's 1986 collection *Fairy Tales and Society*, still very useful but no longer definitive. I'm less familiar with recent work on myth, but suspect that the same may be true there.

The primary theoretical context for the book, however, turns out not to be theory of myth or of fairy tale at all, but rather French feminist criticism of the 1970s and 1980s, particularly Hélène Cixous's *oeuvre*—the subject of most of Sellers's previous writing and editing. She gives more credence than I would to notions about the originary "mother goddess" or "matriarchal societies," linking work by Mary Daly, Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor, Riane Eisler, and Camille Paglia to the French concern with the contrast between *logos* and *mythos* that derives from Derrida. But ultimately she argues that the strategies Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva deploy in order to question or subvert patriarchal logic provide a model for the writers of the texts she treats and for the readers of those texts. She relies in particular on their treatment of the mother: "If the feminist rewriting considered here in the main declines a return to a former matriarchy, it does exhibit a preoccupation with the maternal; [. . .] artistic creation [is] a mode of navigating our exile into the symbolic arena" (132). When Sellers traces the ambiguous role of the mother in fiction by Michèle Roberts and Angela Carter, among others, exploring both its dangers and its powers, her analysis is often illuminating.

When she returns to French feminist theory (as well as work by Judith Butler) and its reverberations in the texts she's discussing, her arguments become much fuller and more nuanced. There may be a more convincing book lurking in these pages, struggling to get out, a book about the ways French feminist treatments of old stories like the myth of Medusa or the myth of Prometheus have shaped recent British fiction.

In its present form, however, *Myth and Fairy Tale* is a disappointment. Even in detail it fails to do justice to its exciting subject: there are too many passages of pedestrian prose; misspellings like John *Austen* for *Austin*, the speech-act theorist; an inadequate and sometimes inaccurate index. I share Sellers's conviction that the old tales should not be forgotten (if that's possible) but rather transformed; I agree that our task is "to salvage and reinterpret as well as discard." But her book is not a reliable guide to the transformations that have already been written or to the new Medusas who might appear in the future.

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Madame d'Aulnoy et le rire des fées: essai sur la subversion féerique et le merveilleux comique sous l'Ancien Régime. By Jean Mainil. Paris: Kimé, 2001. 291 pp.

Jean Mainil's study of Madame d'Aulnoy's fairy tales is the first to seriously consider the relation between the frame narratives, often ignored by scholars, and their relation to the inscribed tales. Such considerations lead him to qualify d'Aulnoy's style as "a seditious ironic fairy writing" (30; all translations mine) with respect to both the ideological content of the tales and the genre itself. For Mainil, irony plays itself out in d'Aulnoy's corpus both intratextually, that is, in the tale's relation to the frame narrative in which it is enunciated; and intertextually, in the specific tale's relation to source texts that it parodies or rewrites. Accounting for the function of frame narratives also brings Mainil to examine the responses to the tales by inscribed readers, another source of irony in d'Aulnoy's tale collections. Overall, Mainil emphasizes the complexity and ambiguity of d'Aulnoy's tales in such a way as to problematize any judicious interpretation of them.

In his introductory chapter, Mainil questions the thesis of Raymonde Robert, who maintains the existence of a clear split between the first fairy-tale vogue of the 1690s, which she characterizes as more traditional, and the second post-1715 vogue, whose tales are parodic and subvert the norms of the genre. For Mainil, d'Aulnoy "perverts" the genre from its inception by placing tales in an ironic relation to the frame narrative. For instance, in her first published tale, "L'île de la Félicité" ("The Island of Happiness"),

d'Aulnoy inserts the tale within the narrative of her novel, *L'Histoire d'Hypolite, comte de Douglas* (*Hypolitus Earl of Douglas*, 1690). The tale plays a strategic role in relation to the novel. It is related by the hero Hypolite, who disguises himself to gain entry into a convent where his beloved Julie is imprisoned. He must entertain the abbess, who is Julie's keeper, with a tale. In order to please the abbess, who may not respond well to a tale ending in conjugal bliss, Hypolite strategically tells a story that concludes with the death of the tale's hero. Demonstrating tale-telling as a strategy of seduction, Mainil also highlights the irony of the tale's moral (*time catches up with everything and there is no perfect felicity*), which is contrary to the moral of the novel, ending happily with the union of hero and heroine.

Similarly, "Le Mouton" ("The Sheep") is strategically placed within the frame narrative *Don Gabriel Ponce de Leon*. The specific context in which the tale is introduced concerns Dona Juana, an austere and devout woman in love with a much younger man, the count of Aguilar, who is disguised as a pilgrim and is in love with Dona Juana's niece. Also disguised as a pilgrim, the count's friend Don Gabriel recounts "The Sheep" to Dona Juana and the count. As Mainil shows, Don Gabriel makes an implicit parallel between the vengeful fairy Ragotte, who punishes a prince by turning him into a sheep, and Dona Juana's ridiculous penchant for the count. Of course, the lesson of the tale is lost to Dona Juana, who ends up locking herself in a convent at the end of the story, while the count happily marries her niece. In this instance, Mainil stresses both the ironic relation of the tale to the frame, and the failure on the part of the inscribed reader to properly integrate the lesson of the tale. In his reading of "Le Serpentin Vert" ("The Green Serpent"), Mainil again emphasizes the reader's failure to properly respond to the tale's message. The heroine Laideronette reads and rereads the story of Cupid and Psyché that her monster-husband advises her to consult, but Laideronette fails to heed the tale's warning. As Mainil concludes, d'Aulnoy expresses through the tale "a doubt about the pedagogical virtues of literary example [. . .]" (152).

While chapter 3 examines the ways in which d'Aulnoy rewrites tale type 425, "Quest for the lost husband" (Delarue-Ténèze) through an examination of "Gracieuse et Percinet," "The Sheep," and "The Green Serpent," chapter 4 focuses on how d'Aulnoy blends different source tales to create new ones. In his reading of "Finette Cendron," Mainil argues that d'Aulnoy combines Perrault's "Little Thumbling" and "Cinderella" to produce a tale that subverts seventeenth-century norms of feminine decorum. He also points out the other tales by Perrault to which d'Aulnoy alludes in "Finette Cendron," including "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Bluebeard," whose messages in effect are subverted by the actions of d'Aulnoy's heroine. With

respect to “La Chatte Blanche” (“The White Cat”), Mainil reads d’Aulnoy’s version against Mademoiselle de la Force’s “Persinette,” underscoring the ways in which d’Aulnoy’s heroine proves to be much more active and empowered. The fact that the tale is told within the frame narrative of *Le Nouveau Gentilhomme Bourgeois*, whose main characters include a quixotic bourgeois gentleman and two ridiculous precious provincials, could suggest, as Mainil argues, that the vindications of women are undone by a feminist message conveyed by a discredited speaker. D’Aulnoy parodies her own tales and the conditions of their production, which brings Mainil to reject Robert’s thesis that d’Aulnoy wrote tales in order to legitimate an elite group of storytellers.

One aspect of Mainil’s study I felt needed clarification was his use of the term “fairy corpus.” While Mainil often problematizes the relation between oral and literary traditions, demonstrating at several moments the impact d’Aulnoy’s literary tales had on the French oral tradition, he at times takes for granted what type of tales and ideology constituted the oral folk tradition of seventeenth-century France. With respect to his reading of “Finette-Cendron,” Mainil argues that the heroine “puts into question several myths of the fairy corpus: the young, naive heroine who is devoured by a wolf, the passive heroine, or the curious one [. . .]” (169). “Fairy corpus” seems to refer to the tales of Charles Perrault, whose works appear to represent popular oral tradition for Mainil. In discussing d’Aulnoy’s rewritings of oral and literary sources, Mainil maintains that “this tradition, be it oral or written, gives evidence of an openly misogynous Gallic attitude that we find in remarks disseminated by Perrault in his tales” (170). I would argue that we cannot take Perrault as the primary indicator of the style or ideology of the French folk tradition of the early modern period, especially since this tradition is largely inaccessible to us today. While such a misogynous strain undoubtedly existed within popular culture, it would be a gross generalization to hypothesize that these were the only types of tales circulating. If we accept that women were the main transmitters of oral culture, I can only imagine that they did not all uncritically embrace misogynous discourses. I would contend, then, that popular culture was at least as diverse in its representations of women as the literary culture of the capital. It is also clear that d’Aulnoy was inspired by the works of Italian writers like Basile and Straparola, whose female protagonists are much more enterprising than the passive heroines of Perrault, and whose works arguably were constitutive of the seventeenth-century French fairy corpus.

I felt that certain sections of the book lacked a smooth development from point to point, which sometimes frustrated my reading. Nevertheless, I find many of Mainil’s arguments compelling and important to further research in fairy-tale studies. Mainil clearly shows how d’Aulnoy’s female

protagonists put into question social norms, particularly with respect to women, at the same time that d'Aulnoy does not represent women solely in a positive light. Like the readers and writers of tales, women are neither inherently good nor bad, and oftentimes their specific situation explains something about the psychology of their character, in the same way that the specificity of the frame narratives helps us interpret the meaning of the tales. However, Mainil warns us about arriving at any conclusive interpretation of her oeuvre, given the complex and ironic interplays between frame narrative and tale that must be taken into account. Through his discussions of d'Aulnoy's use of irony, intra- and intertextual references, and plays on associations between frivolity and literature written by and for women, Mainil clearly highlights the artful nature of d'Aulnoy's fairy writing.

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Fiabe e mercanti in Sicilia. La raccolta di Laura Gonzenbach. La comunità di lingua tedesca a Messina nell'Ottocento. By Luisa Rubini. Biblioteca di "Lares" n.s. 53. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1998. xii + 401 pp.

Fiabe Siciliane. Rilette da Vincenzo Consolo. By Laura Gonzenbach. Edited by Luisa Rubini. Roma: Donzelli editore, 1999. xxix + 576 pp.

In these two books, Luisa Rubini has produced the richest available portrait of a key episode in the history of fairy-tale studies: the migration of German philology to the Mediterranean in the second half of the nineteenth century. At the same time, she offers important new data for an emerging discussion about the relationship of peasant women, capitalist modernity, and the fairy tale.

Laura Gonzenbach (1842–78), the daughter of the Swiss consul in Messina, was asked in 1868 by Otto Hartwig, a historian of Sicily and a founding figure in German library science, to send him a few fairy tales that might illuminate Sicilian peculiarities. Gonzenbach, caught up in the project, collected ninety-two tales in the course of the next eighteen months, using the network of the German community's employees and dependents to locate informants in Messina, Catania, and the Etna region. Hartwig published a two-volume edition of the tales in Gonzenbach's German translations, with an introduction of his own and extensive annotations by the leading comparatist Reinhold Köhler. The *Sicilianische Märchen* came out under Gonzenbach's name from the Leipzig publisher Engelmann in December 1870, just in time, as Hartwig had urged, for Christmas sales. Gonzenbach, now married to a colonel in the new Italian army, moved to Naples, had five children, and wrote no more, dying at the age of thirty-six.

Fiabe siciliane reclaims this forgotten collection for an Italian readership. The stories are retranslated from German into standard Italian, with two tales in the original Sicilian as in the 1870 edition. (The dialect originals of the rest were probably lost, along with almost all documentation of Gonzenbach herself, in the great Messina earthquake of 1908.) The volume has a solid introduction by Rubini contextualizing the collection and the tales themselves (a summary of her larger study), and comparative notes on the tales integrating Köhler's original annotations with Rubini's amplifications and commentary.

Like the 1870 original, this new edition follows in the tradition of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, combining tales rendered suitable for leisure reading with scholarly apparatus presuming a restricted set of comparative concerns. As such, it is useful and attractively produced, enriched by color reproductions of seventeen watercolors on fairy-tale subjects by Casimiro Piccolo (1894–1970), a Palermitan aristocrat whose illustrations are heavily indebted to northern sources, thus pointing to a later chapter in the history of German-Sicilian fairy-tale encounters. The title page describes the tales as “*rilette*” (reread) by Vincenzo Consolo, a Sicilian novelist who has also contributed a foreword, and the nature of Consolo's editorial contribution in “resicilianizing” the tales, though it appears to be minimal, is not made explicit. Most of the original paratexts, such as Hartwig's introduction, are not retained: scholars concerned with textual and contextual issues will want to consult the 1976 reprint of the German original.

Fiabe e mercanti is a historical study of the Gonzenbach collection, prodigiously researched and documented. To compensate for the near-absence of Laura Gonzenbach's voice and those of her overwhelmingly female informants, Rubini offers a richly layered body of commentary from family, interlocutors, and rivals. We come to know such figures as Peter Viktor Gonzenbach, merchant and consul, as he renegotiated his position through the vicissitudes of Italian unification; Otto Hartwig, who spent his Grand Tour as pastor to the Messina German community and became obsessed with Sicilian criminality; Magdalena Gonzenbach, the older sister who became a pioneer of women's education in Italy; and the local scholars who took in German scholarship with a mixture of exhilaration and resentment.

Mercanti and *fiabe* constitute two separate sections of the book. The first covers the German community, looking at the history of foreign textile merchants throughout the process of Italian unification, the religious life of these Lutherans in Catholic Sicily, and the everyday activities and feminist initiatives of the women. The second half of the book deals with the genesis and editorial history of the Gonzenbach collection, the tales themselves, and the collection's reception, accompanied by tale-type and motif indices.

This rigorously analytical arrangement is reproduced at every level of the work and, combined with a certain authorial restraint, places the onus upon the reader to put the pieces together. For the convenience of readers who cannot immediately muster the combination of Italian, Sicilian, German, time, and patience to accomplish this task, I will note a few major points of interest, taking more speculative risks than the careful Rubini has permitted herself.

The Sicilian-German Mirror. Rubini calls our attention to German fairy-tale collectors all over the Mediterranean (including Cecilia Böhl de Faber, familiar to readers of this journal from the work of Robert M. Fedorchek), but shows that this Sicilian case is particularly complex. The Gonzenbach sisters, part of a commercial community with tendencies that might fairly be called colonialist, grew up reading Schiller's *Die Braut von Messina*, set in the period of Norman domination and full of reflections on the relations of German conquerors to their subordinates and possessions, at once tyrannizing over the latter and subjected to insular passions and treacheries. Like the Romantics who invented so much of modern German literature through Mediterranean genres and landscapes and simultaneously invented that Mediterranean, Otto Hartwig too was recursive and confused in his response to the island. His introduction to the *Sicilianische Märchen* denounces the localism of Sicilian scholars and propounds a theory of the origins of the Italian language in the encounter of unifying Norman conquerors with the range of Sicilian dialects. A long tribute to Frederick II, the thirteenth-century Hohenstaufen king of Sicily and later Holy Roman Emperor, conflates the Middle Ages, observations of the newly united Italy, and hopes for the newly united Germany in the year before the title of Kaiser was revived. Hartwig describes Frederick, who "always felt more Italian than German" (144) as, nonetheless, a sort of ur-Prussian centralizer. "If a prince can contribute to the formation of a nation out of different races through lawgiving, administration, churchbuilding, through promotion and ennobling of the local tongue, then Frederic II did this for Sicily." Hartwig almost suggests backward Sicily as the founding site of the modern nation-state.

But more explicitly, Hartwig, Magdalena Gonzenbach, and other Germans identify themselves as the necessary civilizers of the south, bringing commerce, industry, education, feminism, scholarship, nationalism, and other goods of modernity from abroad. In the case of the scholarship, Rubini gives us ample evidence of the ambiguous response from Italian intellectuals, eager to connect with international scholars and appropriate their models, but resentful of outsider condescension. Gonzenbach's collection preceded—and in some measure must have helped to provoke—the great

outpouring of Italian tale collections in the 1870s and '80s. While it had an afterlife in the comparative folklore scholarship of northern Europe (serving, for example, as one of the collections Aarne used in the confection of the tale-type index), her book virtually disappeared from the memory of Italian folkloristics until Calvino included a few of the tales in his own collection. Hartwig was largely responsible, having written tactlessly on the "medieval" and "criminal" character of Sicilian society and praised the notorious Franchetti and Sonnino survey of social conditions on the island (1877), in which the term "mafia" was first put into general currency. Hartwig was expelled from the Società siciliana per la storia patria, and never forgiven by Giuseppe Pitrè. Rubini places this episode of offended insular pride in a longer history of Sicilian folklore scholarship as aspirations to autonomy were in turn indulged, repressed, and nostalgically revisited.

Women in Italy: Cross-Class Encounters. Gonzenbach's book received the most enthusiastic attention not from folklorists, but from Italian feminists and liberal intellectuals. Journals such as *La rivista europea* noted the importance of the book as the literary production of an educated woman, taken seriously by German male scholars, and urged other women to follow this example and contribute to bringing Italy into Europe. The female dedicatee (an older woman in the German community) and the almost entirely female narrators were also noted.

Rubini shows us the everyday life of women in the German colony, and their notable accomplishments (the Gonzenbach family produced not only these two sisters but a niece who became a noted feminist in her own right). The life of women in the colony was largely dedicated to educational and cultural activities, important in maintaining German language and German Protestant identity (and, by extension, community endogamy and economic power). But the children also grew up among Sicilian servants, speaking the local dialect as their mother tongue. During the many months spent in villas outside of the city, the children had greater freedom and could observe and share in rural work and festival life; a Gonzenbach niece especially remembered her fascination with the women's weaving and spinning. Given the harvest celebrations and the daily women's work, fairy tales were undoubtedly an important part of the children's socialization.

Magdalena Gonzenbach, older than her sister and longer-lived, was a prominent early proponent of feminism in Italy, arguing for the improvement of women's education and social usefulness, beginning with motherhood and extending into social work. As Hartwig and Köhler in folklore scholarship, so Gonzenbach in feminism and educational theory brought northern ideas to the south, translating several books by German women. In 1873 she founded a kindergarten and girls' school in Messina, one of the

first of its kind in Italy. Despite minimal support from local authorities, the school was a success with local families and survived Magdalena's death in 1906 to perish two years later in the earthquake, along with, Rubini suggests, most of the other cosmopolitan attributes of this free-port city. In private life, Magdalena supervised the education of her sisters and nieces, and to a lesser extent seems also to have concerned herself with that of their Sicilian servants. While her own school served primarily the better-off, she urged the creation of nurseries that would help to stimulate, not merely to maintain, the children of working mothers.

It is not known why Laura was chosen by Hartwig, who had known the family during his time as pastor to the community. Only a woman of the community would have the leisure to occupy herself collecting fairy tales, to be sure, and another hint appears in Hartwig's description of her in the introduction as an excellent storyteller herself. Rubini uses the scarce evidence to offer glimpses of Laura's encounters with the women storytellers, often in Magdalena's company. She notes one narrator's use of a closing verse: "How lovely is this young lady/Who made me tell this story!" We might ask what narrator and collector thought about each other during the recitation of a story called "The Young and Clever Merchant's Daughter," or in narratives of master-servant relationships. Rubini herself risks a little speculation as to Gonzenbach's evaluation of the tales, and points to the selection of the first story in the collection, a version of "The Wise Carving of the Fowl" (AT 1533) with a clever peasant heroine skilled in solving and posing riddles. Few tales could better model the advantages of feminine education. Rubini also wonders about the influence of Magdalena's translation of a work by one of the women in the Berlin *Kaffeterkreis*, a group which revised the Grimm models to produce tales with more active heroines. She suggests that Laura and Magdalena as collectors were biased in favor not just of the wonder tales privileged by international folklore scholarship, but of tales with strong female characters—affecting their selection and possible editing of the tales as well as, perhaps, the stories the women narrators chose to tell.

Women's Tales: The Risks and Pains of Subalternity. While meticulous, Rubini's approach to the tales themselves is somewhat constrained by the comparative textual tradition of fairy-tale scholarship, and in this part of the book we miss the rich social history of her discussion of the scholars. To be sure, she constructs a careful reading of the minimal indications of tale-teller identity, supplementing it with comparative evidence from Pitre and other standard collections. Using these collections as a baseline, she also notices evidence of self-censorship on the part of both the informants and Gonzenbach herself. The scatological register disappears, as does the

erotic. The pains and abuses of sexuality, on the other hand, are both present and unusually frank, including incest, illegitimacy, delayed marriage, and the threat of prostitution. One tale, in which a snake serves as witness for a girl raped by a king's son, is near-unique and provided the only instance for the AT type 672 C. Another tale serving as prototype in the AT index (512 B) recounts the bloody revenge of the heroine upon a seducer responsible for the death of a woman who haunts her house. Rubini notes that this tale has been universally bowdlerized elsewhere, and that Köhler can hardly bring himself to comment on either of these stories. Many characters and incidents—an avaricious and sexually abusive priest, a baby scalded to death by the negligence of an older sibling—would not be out of place in a *verismo* novel, and the large number of courageous, clever women in the tales is more than balanced by the innocent persecuted heroines, often conflated into the same figure in a given story. Either way, the heroines tend to be solitary (feminine envy is another important theme, with several versions of the Snow White story) and depend on their powers of endurance as well as their wits to get out of desperate situations.

The analogy with *verismo* is worth considering, for despite the apparent paradox, the fairy tale is a strong influence in Sicilian literary realism, and both Luigi Capuana and Giovanni Verga worked in the same region as Gonzenbach; an encounter between them is not documented but not excluded. Both authors emphasize, as do the tales in this collection, the bitterness of the every-day struggle for survival; Verga plays off the fairy-tale plot against a Social Darwinist pessimism as his protagonists struggle in vain for upward mobility, surrounded by the same chorus of neighbors that appears in Gonzenbach's tales. While the women's stories in the *Sicilianische Märchen* have the happy endings requisite to the genre, the emphasis on the pains and dangers of arrival is far more compelling.

What, finally, do fairy tales and merchants have to do with each other? We have some hints from other collections, for example in Mathias and Raspa's *Italian Folktales in America* (Wayne State, 1985), in which a corpus from the Dolomite region addresses not only emigration, but more broadly the entry into capitalism, mingling older concerns with reciprocity with a more opportunistic, risk-taking approach to seeking one's fortune. Might the Germans so busily engaged in modernizing Sicily—for their own profit as well as the good of the inhabitants—have found in the fairy tale the beginnings of a mentality of which they could make use? (Michael Nerlich would later term it the "ideology of adventure" [Minnesota, 1987].) More concretely, surely Laura and Magdalena Gonzenbach saw in these stories the kind of inchoate resistance—as Gramsci would argue—that would serve as the lever to lift peasant women into formal education and higher status.

There is little documentation to illuminate the tale-tellers, as compared with the constantly scribbling scholars. But given what Rubini has accomplished in the face of an earthquake on the *mercanti* side of this story, I hope she will devote the same close historical attention next to the *fiabe* and their tellers so that the two worlds can be put together. Gonzenbach's book was dedicated to Johanna Jaeger, who married into a family owning a silk factory that employed 150 women, some of them, perhaps, informants. For the women who narrated these tales, weaving and spinning were not only continuous with an agrarian past, or indeed a mythical Mediterranean one. They were also the avenue to modernity. So are the tales themselves, at once historical relics and narratives of entry into a new world.

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The Complete Tales of Ketzia Gold. By Kate Bernheimer. Normal/Tallahassee: FC2, 2001. 192 pp.

Twisting, dreamlike, and surreal, *The Complete Tales of Ketzia Gold* is a fascinating exploration of the many levels that fairy tales influence in the human psyche. The author, Kate Bernheimer, references various tales—"The Star Talers," "Bluebeard," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "The Armless Maiden," to name only a few—from a number of perspectives that, with each recurrence, grant deeper insight into the character of the narrator, the titular Ketzia Gold. In the manner of other postmodern fairy tales, Ketzia possesses a knowledge of the structure and format of traditional lore that informs her views, leading readers to natural conclusions regarding the inherent values of their own, corresponding interests.

Bernheimer opens the narrative with a section entitled "The Saltmarsh Tale of Lies," a modern take on the classic "The Ditmarsh Tale of Lies" (AT 1930), in which the fantastic nature of the events recounted therein—flying bathers and the like—are contextualized by temporal details that secure the teller's place in the mundane world. Cleverly updating the original, this section firmly establishes the unique voice that Ketzia utilizes in the telling of her story. After recounting the unlikely events, the speaker says, "Shut up if you don't believe me. . . . So open the window and let the lies out, I say" (11), creating the simultaneous impression of both an unruly child recounting an adventure and a sage adding to the oral tradition, through the device of colloquial speech paired with a traditional conclusion. The sections are not arranged in a chronological order; rather, the reminiscences flow forth intuitively, with current events in Ketzia's life giving way to childhood memories, clarifying the reasons for her choices and actions through the usage of fairy tale tropes as the keys to Ketzia's motivations.

Ketzia is the middle child of the Gold family, possessing a disagreeable older sister, Merry, and a charming younger sister, Lucy. As in A. S. Byatt's poststructuralist tale, "The Story of the Eldest Princess" (*The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye: Five Fairy Stories*), Ketzia seems fully cognizant of what would be her "place" in a traditional tale by dint of birth order. She says, "As the story goes, there were three of us—I was in the middle. We are all, I am told, as beautiful as the others. . . . Our heads are all the exact same shape and size, but one of us has loose amber curls that lift and fall in delicate waves, one a blonde head—full thick and straight, and I, fine brown strands that bend strangely this way and that" (123). The individualization that Ketzia grants herself and the lack of self-esteem implied in her choice of self-descriptive adjectives are symptomatic of the attitudes she displays throughout the novel, of isolation and self-denigration.

Many of Ketzia's insecurities, founded in her youth, carry through into her life as an adult and are projected onto her husband, Adam, as can be seen through the roles that he plays in the versions of the fairy tales that Ketzia superimposes over her own life. In the original version of "The Star Talers" (AT 779), for example, the main character's destitute condition is due to her orphaned state; in the retelling, Ketzia is poverty stricken as a result of her separation from her husband. A chapter entitled "The Tiny Closet" reminds readers of "Bluebeard" (AT 312); Adam bestows the key to a closet containing his secret things upon Ketzia. Curious, she explores it, to find mementos of his life with other women—his sister, strangers. Her transgression goes undiscovered, but it affects her marriage with Adam nevertheless. They both survive, but the marriage does not. In one very disturbing scene that brings to mind the story "Little Red Riding Hood" (AT 333), Ketzia drowns her marital sorrows in a combination of alcohol and narcotics, dressing cheerfully in a red, fuzzy coat with a hood before she collapses into a stupor. Her husband later confesses to molesting her as she lies there, defenseless, an act which is witnessed by a mutual friend who fails to protect her and, in fact, plays the voyeur. Here, we find no woodsmen; only wolves.

Two of the chapters, respectively entitled "Ketzia Without Hands" and "Armless Abbelina" are clearly connected to one another and to "The Armless Maiden" (AT 703). The structure of the main tale is bifurcated, remade to more closely fit the specifics of Ketzia's situation. In the first of the chapters, Ketzia describes her feelings of helplessness when she is faced with drudgery at the hands of an aunt unsympathetic to her adolescent rebellion, and her only escape lies in her dreams of Adam; here, we see the scenario of abuse at the hands of the substitute mother. However, though the aunt does interfere with Ketzia's attempts to contact Adam—in the form of a rather incoherent letter, which she admits that she cannot understand

herself—this is not an overt attempt at sabotage as is the letter intercepted by the mother-in-law in the original tale, and the aunt's parting words to Ketzia appear to be kindly meant. As an adult, Ketzia's relation to the story grows more complex; in "Armless Abbelina," we see a structure that is reminiscent of the tale's original opening. However, the reflection is distorted. In many of the original versions, the armless maiden is persecuted by her male kin and set upon by an envious mother/sister-in-law. Here, she is the bride, yet, she is also the one to feel excluded, as the result of the overly close relationship between her husband and his sister. The order of relations is precisely inverted. She chooses to leave of her own volition, and is welcomed at the home of her parents; unbeknownst to any but herself, she is pregnant. We read:

Of course, soon the baby left me too.

I wrote to Adam. "Your wife has given birth to a child. His arms were golden to the elbows, his bones were studded with stars, there was a radiant moon on his forehead and another near his heart." I tore the letter into pieces. "Your wife," I wrote, "has given birth to a half dog and half bear that she conceived with beasts in the woods." I mailed it that evening. (95)

Here, we see the ambivalence of a woman who sees her husband as being a villain, however unwittingly, and who blames herself for the failure of her marriage. She needs no ogress to stand as intermediary—the only person from whom she seeks rescue is herself, and that is something that neither Adam nor she can provide.

The updated fairy tales are all recounted in relation to her tempestuous relationships with others; when Ketzia speaks of herself, in a period that appears to postdate her relationship with Adam, her accounts are purely straightforward, concerning her career as a typist, a conduit, in a manner that is more similar to *Bartleby the Scrivener* or *The Overcoat* than to any folk tradition. This stenographic habit arises from Ketzia's dissatisfaction with her marriage, as an attempt to lessen the pain of her husband's infidelities. After it becomes a part of her life, it succeeds, apparently, all too well; her contact with the outside world diminishes. Her stories cease to concern others, either in reality or in imagination. Whereas before, Ketzia had placed too much value upon the opinions of others, now they are discounted completely, to the point that fairy tales, with their intimations of heritage and tradition, are discarded along with all other interactions. The use of typing as a distancing technique, as opposed to other forms of communication is a mechanical distinction that would surely be appreciated by Walter Benjamin. The division between the two states of being—imagination and transmission, interaction

and isolation—which are discussed in chapters throughout the novel set cheek-by-jowl, appears to be as artificial as that between the conscious and the unconscious; the two are inextricably linked. One is left with the impression that only through their integration will Ketzia's tale finally be complete.

The Complete Tales of Ketzia Gold is not Bernheimer's first fairy-tale-oriented work; she edited the entertaining and informative anthology of essays, *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall*, a collection in which female authors ranging from A. S. Byatt to Linda Gray Sexton discuss their attitudes toward fairy tales, both generally and specifically. This collection is being reissued this year by Anchor Books with new additions from some of the most respected voices in the field, including Ursula Le Guin, Midori Snyder, and Terri Windling. Nor is it likely to be her last: *The Complete Tales of Merry Gold*, Ketzia's recalcitrant older sister, is forthcoming. Further contributions from this uniquely skilled writer are eagerly awaited.

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PixerinaWITCHERINA. Exhibition. Curated by Bill Conger. Catalogue with essays by Bill Conger, Maria Tatar, and Jan Susina. University Galleries, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois, 2002 (Exhibition dates not given).

A secret language invented by Virginia Woolf to talk to her niece gives the exhibition and catalogue its name. The choice of title is apt inasmuch as this secret language was between women, it was intergenerational, and it established a pair of personae that were undomesticated. In order to write, Woolf was forced to “kill” the domestic feminine ideal that haunted her—the Victorian “Angel in the House.” The pixie and witch, on the other hand, live out of doors and in the woods.

The art in the exhibition is exclusively women's art, and it is also fairy tale art, broadly defined. The text of the catalogue consists of three essays, by Bill Conger (“What Big Teeth”), Maria Tatar (“Invocations of Fairy Tales”), and Jan Susina (“Straw into Gold: The Transformative Nature of Fairy Tales and Fairy Art”). Altogether these comprise an explanatory context for the exhibition's paintings, photographs, and sculptures, elucidating the confluence of women's culture and fairy tales.

Bill Conger, who is also the exhibition's curator, associates the title with “the shared subversive culture of women, old and young” (7). Conger presents the roles available in this subversive culture rather like a master of ceremonies jollying the (female) children along: “Pixie and Witch, like Virgin and Whore, can seem less like the imposed binaries of an overbearing patriarchy than like an intriguing group of possible future career choices for the enterprising little girl to consider” (7). Disturbingly, his choice of cover and

frontispiece art reinforces the idea of erotic role-playing fun with barely nubile, Lolita-esque photographs (cover: Meghan Boody, detail from *Psyche's Tail*; frontispiece: Margi Geerlinks, *Untitled [Girl]*). But to be fair, a reappropriation of the erotic is an aspect of women artists' subversive activities, and the gender of the curator doesn't nullify the enterprise itself.

Maria Tatar's essay points out the bifurcation of the fairy tale into two distinct realms—that of the nursery, where the traditional literary texts are ensconced, and that of the “collective cultural unconsciousness,” where adults (particularly women) talk together about their lives and give voice to the tales in “a more elastic form.” (25). This principle of malleability clarifies the connections between the visual art featured in the exhibition and fairy tale literature.

The art is quite varied in media, style, mood, and approach to motifs that often can only be identified very loosely with fairy tales. We have, for example, photographic representations of little girls and elderly women by Meghan Boody and Margi Geerlinks, a Bosch-like painting of an infernal slaughter-yard (Hilary Harkness, *View of a Slaughter Yard*), a self-portrait out of Velasquez (Julie Heffernan, *Self-Portrait as Infanta Dreaming Madame de Sade*), and a group of vinyl penis-trees (Julie Latane, *Fairy Ring*). We also find abstractions—or perhaps representations of elements so fundamental as to appear abstract from the human (and fairy?) perspective—Karen Arm's *Untitled (Stars)* and *Smoke Drawing #5*. The inclusion of Arm's works extends the bounds of the exhibition to contain any and all elements that might possibly exist in the fairy-tale realm: stars, smoke, trees, twins, mushrooms, and so forth. At the opposite pole from abstraction, the exhibition leads us to consider how our imaginations overlay and complicate recognizable fairy-tale images. In his introductory, “What Big Teeth,” Conger begins with a reference to visual memory, his grandmother turning the illustrated pages of a Golden Book. Through our own recollection of images—the princess with golden hair and tiny, finely-arched feet; trees with faces on their gnarled trunks and branches like threatening arms; animals prancing in boots and velvet breeches—we appropriate and ourselves continue the transformation of the already-represented images.

Jan Susina's essay “Straw into Gold” notes the importance of transformation in many fairy tales and then moves to a discussion of how the tales themselves are transformed over time. They started out for everyone, “lost their status and became children's literature, but now have been reclaimed by adult readers” (40). I would add that these status changes are historically complicated by the changing notions of childhood—indeed, the invention of childhood as a special state—and by the spread of literacy and the rise of the book as an item of domestic consumption. The charmed world of child,

book, and nursery now seems cosily Victorian, with the post-Victorian Angel-killer Virginia Woolf presiding over its demise.

Susina points out that the Victorian era witnessed a golden age of children's literature, related fairy-tale illustrations, and less familiarly, fairy paintings whose erotic and occasionally violent or cruel content marks a departure from Victorian public norms. Susina remarks on the lack of connection between this art and the work represented in the exhibition: "What is striking about the images in *pixerinaWITCHERINA* is how little they have in common with Victorian fairy painting" (43). However, what Susina perceives as a striking disjunction seems less marked (and more comprehensible) if we fill in some historical gaps.

It appears to me that Victorian fairy painting is akin to the work of the international symbolist movement that lasted from approximately the middle of the nineteenth century until World War I. That movement, in turn, bears a family resemblance to the similarly international surrealist movement that followed the Great War and that arguably has persisted up to the present (only the names have been changed . . .). Among the finest surrealist painters were women—Frida Kahlo, Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo, Leonor Fini, Dorothea Tanning, and many more—and these women artists often appropriated and transformed motifs from myth, folklore, and fairy tales, as do the artists in *pixerinaWITCHERINA*. Moreover, the surrealist women were poets, prose writers, and performance artists as well as practitioners of the visual arts. Leonora Carrington, for instance, anticipates the witcherina spirit of Angela Carter in her novel *The Hearing Trumpet* (1976, published when she was nearly 60); its heroine and her friends are a gang of crones who preside over the Earth as it changes its axis, equator to pole.

All this is by no means to cast doubt on the originality of the women whose work is represented in the catalogue, but to locate them within a more substantial art-historical context. Virginia Woolf and her niece had their intergenerational language; the symbolic language of women's fantastic art is likewise intergenerational. Returning to the catalogue, the images of Amy Cutler are entirely surreal. *Tea Pot Head*, for instance, is a triptych of gouaches, the first of which represents a teapot-headed being pouring her liquid into the mouth of a kneeling pig. The second shows a pig giving birth by mouth to another pig, which in turn is disgorging a smaller pig. Cutler's figures exemplify the literalizing of the metaphoric—or metonymic—that characterizes surrealist art. Like Carrington's literalization of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque world turned upside down in *The Hearing Trumpet*, Cutler literalizes the links between woman's ostensible essence and her cultural functions. And herein lies the fun to which Conger alludes near the beginning

of the catalogue. Perhaps the fun or the serious play lies in the real possibility of transformation. Women's fantastic art—surrealist, or fairy tale, or otherwise otherworldly—offers us alternative realities that can be scary, but can also be powerfully inviting. Once in the forest, why go back to the house?

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The Adventures of Prince Achmed. Germany. 1926. B&W/Tinted. 65 minutes. Directed by Lotte Reiniger. *Lotte Reiniger: Homage to the Inventor of the Silhouette Film.* Documentary 1999. B&W/Color. 60 minutes. Written and directed by Katja Raganelli. Diorama Film GmbH. Animated advertisement for Nivea Cream. by Lotte Reiniger, 1921. Video and Press Kit. British Film Institute and Milestone Film & Video, 2001.

This collector's edition video released by Milestone Film & Video in 2001 contains the carefully-restored *Adventures of Prince Achmed* by Lotte Reiniger along with a documentary produced in 1999 of Reiniger's life and works, and an unexpected but charming short advertisement for Nivea Cream created by Reiniger. An excellent accompanying press kit from Milestone provides a comprehensive synopsis of *Achmed* as well as interesting historical material on the filmmaker and the work behind the film.

The original negative of *Achmed* was destroyed during the Battle of Berlin in 1945, and no original German version exists. The current restored version was produced from dupe-negatives made from a first-generation colored nitrate positive, housed at the British Film Institute in the years 1925–27 to serve as base material for making new copies.

The sixty-five-minute animated silhouette film *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* was Reiniger's first feature-length film which she made with her husband, Karl Koch, and a band of other notables including Walter Ruttmann and Bertold Bartosch, completed in 1926. The film took three years to make because, according to Reiniger's own words, "such a film demands that for each second, 24 different frames be taken" (Milestone Press Kit, 2001). By my calculations, that's 93,600 frames for a sixty-five-minute film. Quite an awe-inspiring accomplishment, not least because it was created in "the attic of the garage in the vegetable garden" of the group's sponsor, Louis Hagen. However, not even this is the slackjaw part.

The real gobsmacker about *Achmed* are the intricate, filigree silhouette figures and scenery, each cut and articulated, limb by limb, by means of small wires by Reiniger's "magic hands"—an attribute coined by Jean Renoir. Although never a fan of silhouette films, even as a child, I have to concede that the delicacy and detail of these silhouettes is truly extraordinary. The

“acting” in the film is equally awe-inspiring in the expressive poses which Reiniger places her figures, rendering the narrative meaning of the film unequivocal despite the absence of facial details or expressions or verbalization. However, it should be pointed out here that Reiniger made or contributed to over eighty films using her silhouetting skills in this way, so that *Achmed* is by no means a rarity from the technical point of view.

The drama of the film also owes a great deal to the music of Wolfgang Zeller who wrote the score as they created the film so that music and action are intimately connected intensifying the narrative. Katja Raganelli's documentary which follows *Achmed* on the video indicates that Reiniger was one of the first filmmakers to completely harmonize movement with music. Reiniger's relationship to music is clear in the graceful movements of her characters which are very often balletic in space and time. Indeed, as the documentary shows, later in her life Reiniger published “A Small History of Ballet in Silhouettes” which she illustrated with her intricately cut figurines.

Discussions of the historical importance of the film *Achmed* are most likely to center around a debate of who made the first full-length animated feature film. Although a small number of other films can stake a claim to being the first, it is the comparison to Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, generally accepted (by Hollywood at least) as being the first animated feature film, that has captured attention. Not that there is any controversy about the fact that *Achmed* predates the Disney film by more than ten years. However, the comparison seems to me somewhat suspect in any case since the medium is quite different: Disney's approach is two-dimensional animated graphics, while Reiniger's is three-dimensional objects being physically moved with each frame. This gives her more in common with contemporary claymation filmmakers such as Nick Park (Wallace and Gromit) than with Disney. Perhaps one could coin a term “silhou-ation” to place Reiniger in her rightful place as truly the first.

The silhou-ation method also allows for a much sexier and voyeuristic presentation than would be possible in a Disney cartoon animation. *Achmed* is certainly sexy, if not encouraging. Prince Achmed does a Peeping Tom routine as the lovely Peri Banu bathes obviously naked in the lake, then he steals her clothes and chases her around (naked), forces her to leave her home, up and down they go on the magic flying horse (she still naked) to China, whereupon Peri Banu is sold into the Emperor's bed (still naked) and subsequently forced to marry the court jester, a hunchbacked dwarf (she is now with headdress), and so on. This compendium of everything nasty that can befall a woman in her worst nightmares is basically the gist of the storyline, but somehow in silhouette it seems, well, sexy—in a voyeuristic sort of way. This is all to its credit, of course, if one likes that

sort of thing, but it does point up another difference from the Disney format to which it is being compared.

Of ironic interest is that some parts of the film do tend to drag with the repetitive and obsessive interest in special effects, which clearly document the experimental nature of film in the 1920s and the interest in pushing the artistic limits of cinema at that time. The technical details of how the special effects were created and the film produced are well documented in the press kit released with the video, and it is well worth the read in conjunction with viewing this expertly restored film. Three cheers to Milestone and the BFI for taking on this project so that the rest of us can marvel at and enjoy Reinger's earliest accomplishment.

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