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Reviews

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REVIEWS

Riddling Tales from around the World. Selected by Marjorie Dundas. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002. 226 pp.

This anthology contains 79 riddle tales taken mainly from collections of folktales published in English during the past 50 years. In the preface, Dundas explains that for many years she had combed folktale collections looking for riddle tales, seldom finding more than one or two in any single book. She has grouped the tales into thirteen chapters that more or less correspond to tale types: for example, Clever-Manka-type tales (AT 875, The Clever Peasant Girl); Puzzling Language (AT 875 again or AT 921, The King and the Peasant's Son); Making a Riddle from One's Adventures (AT 851, The Princess Who Can Not Solve the Riddle); Debate in Sign Language (AT 924); Answer the Riddle or Face Death (AT 927, Out-Riddling the Judge); Dilemma Tales; The Abbot of Canterbury (AT 922); The Devil's Riddle (AT 812); and Riddles in Ballads (Child nos. 1–3, 45, 46). The juxtaposition of similar tales demonstrates the effect that subtle differences make to a common story line. Each chapter ends with remarks that might stimulate group discussion. The texts are pleasant to read and most of them would be suitable for retelling aloud. This would be an enjoyable book for people who like riddle tales, or to introduce people who like folktales in general to the variety of riddle tales. It would be useful for teachers who read or tell tales to their classes (I would also recommend George Shannon's 1985 *Stories to Solve, Folktales from Around the World*).

Although most of Dundas's riddling tales come from oral tradition, she includes some from literary sources (e.g., the *Gesta Romanorum* and ancient Indian literature). However, the most famous riddle contests in literature are missing: Samson's riddle to the Philistines, Oedipus and the sphinx, the series of riddles in the Norse *Hervarer Saga*, and the Queen of Sheba's challenge to King Solomon, for example. The book avoids gruesome and sexually explicit

tales, such as that of the woman who, having suckled her father through prison bars to save him from starvation, describes herself as both his daughter and his mother (see Archer Taylor's "Straparola's Riddle of Pero and Cimon and its Parallels" in *Romance Philology* 1 [1948]: 297–303).

The format of *Riddling Tales*, which has a preface, introduction, notes, and index, might suggest that it was intended to be useful to scholars. Unfortunately, the content of these sections does not fulfill any such expectation. The introduction merely describes the themes of the chapters and gives a couple of examples of tales not included, without giving a rationale for exclusion. The endnotes provide sources (as do a seven-page acknowledgments section and a line after each tale), but these are merely the *immediate* sources. Because many of the tales were taken from collections with no such information, the original published source for a given tale can be impossible to find. The endnotes provide tale type and motif numbers, but nothing else anywhere in the book indicates that riddles or riddle tales have been subjects of productive study for folklorists and literary scholars.

Dundas presents herself as self-taught and never pretends to have any academic interest in these tales. It would be inappropriate to fault her for the scholarly shortcomings of this book. However, the University Press of Mississippi should have found someone to compose a few pages of comments and bibliography that would point readers toward the scholarship pertaining to these tales. A book that seeks to stimulate interest in a subject ought to give some direction to readers who want to learn more, and such a book published by a university press ought to be suited to a college-level readership.

Dundas wonders (xxiii) which is the best-known riddle tale type, The Clever Peasant Girl or The King and the Abbot? These tale types were subjects of classic historic-geographic studies (Walter Anderson's *Kaiser und Abt* 1923; Jan de Vries's *Die Märchen von klugen Rätsellösern* 1928; Albert Wesselski's *Der Knabenkönig und das kluge Mädchen* 1929). How one should account for "best-known" is impossible to decide: most published variants? spread over regions with the greatest population? De Vries's study showed that The Clever Peasant Girl is particularly difficult to define because many of its episodes are also found in narrative frameworks where the clever riddle-solver is male (in which case the tale is usually classified as AT 921). Although Dundas's question remains unanswerable, these studies answer many other questions about the variation and the geographic spread of these and other tale types and the riddles they contain.

Robert Abrahams's *Between the Living and the Dead* (1980) reprints complete English and American "neck riddle" tales (AT 851 and AT 927, where the riddle is based on an unusual personal experience), and also includes riddles for which the answer consists of a narrative. My volume *Turandot's Sisters* (1993) describes

and gives references to several subtypes of AT 851 that are not represented in Dundas's anthology, and also to other literary riddle tales. William Bascom's *African Dilemma Tales* (1975) gives summaries of many different types of this genre (for dilemma tales in other regions, see my 1997 article, "Dilemma Tales in the Tale Type Index," in *Journal of Folklore Research*). All these works lead to further scholarship on the subject of riddle tales, as do the following entries in the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*: Bauerntochter: Die kluge B.; Brüder: Die vier kunstreichen B.; Dilemmageschichten; Fisch: Vom F geboren; Glück und Verstand; Kaiser und Abt; Halslöserätsel; König und kluger Knabe; Rätsel des Teufels; Rätselmärchen; Rätselprinzessin; Rendezvous verschlaffen; Vetalapañcavimsatika; Zeichendisput (the last two have not yet been published). For more examples of riddle tales, see Joan Amades's "Les Contes-devinettes de Catalogne," *Fabula* 3 (1960): 199–223; Aurelio M. Espinosa's 1946–47 *Cuentos populares españoles*, nos. 1–30; Richard Wossidlo's 1897 *Mecklenburgische Volksüberlieferungen, erster Band: Rätsel*, 189–255.

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English Fairy Tales and More English Fairy Tales. By Joseph Jacobs. Edited and with an Introduction by Donald Haase. ABC-CLIO Classic Folk and Fairy Tales. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2002. 369 pp.

For the generations who grew up reading Joseph Jacobs's collections of fairy tales—side by side with the rainbow books of his arch-rival, Andrew Lang—it is a special pleasure to re-explore the English stories in this elegant edition replete with the original illustrations by J. D. Batten and an informative introduction by Donald Haase. For folklorists, storytellers, and Victorian scholars, the volume is a significant cultural artifact, encapsulating the approaches, practices, and debates about fairy lore so vigorously discussed in the 1890s, the golden age of folklore collecting in which it was produced.

Haase's introduction focuses, in part, on the problems of Joseph Jacobs's reputation. Something of a polymath, Joseph was underrated both because he produced so much in so many diverse areas, and, ironically, because he was often right—arguing against the prevailing opinions of his contemporaries—when the majority of his colleagues were wrong. Born in Sydney, Australia in 1854, Jacobs was a true cosmopolitan. Partially educated at Cambridge, he spent much of his life in Britain and ended it in New York in 1916, as a member of the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary and an editor of *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*. Editor of *Folk-Lore* from 1889 to 1900, scholar and interpreter of Jewish history, expert on the literary fable, translator, literary critic, and novelist, he produced a large number of important works in almost all of these areas. Yet the late Richard Dorson does not place him on the Great Team

of British folklorists, and popular opinion does not rank him as high as Andrew Lang, another Victorian Jack of all trades.

Involved in many of the major debates and issues in the folklore studies of the end of the nineteenth century, Joseph had much to say about the origin, nature, and dissemination of folktales. He was a diffusionist, arguing for the transmission and spread of folklore by various groups of people as well as for the reversibility of print and oral traditions at a time when the dominant approach was the evolutionist bias of the survivalists. This powerful group, anthropologically oriented (as opposed to Jacobs's sociohistorical bent) looked at folk materials primarily as repositories or survivals of the ideas of primitive societies and believed, not in transmission, but that complex tales could be reinvented in various places at different times. Today's theories support Jacobs on many points, agreeing that tales have social contexts, that each story is an individual act of creativity, not a spontaneous creation of a mythical Folk, that print-media and social intercourse may explain the similarities in widely dispersed tales, and that particular tales have specific origins. But Jacobs's contemporaries saw him as eccentric in his views and difficult in personality; his debates with Edwin Sidney Hartland and especially with Andrew Lang bristle with personal antagonism on all sides. While Haase praises Jacobs for the "controversial, progressive, and even modern ideas that characterize his work" (xxx), Jacobs's contemporaries did not. Equally important, Jacobs's deliberate crossing of the boundaries between folklore and children's literature has been attacked by purists in both camps. What Haase sees as a challenge to "conventional thinking about folklore, children's literature, and Victorian culture" (xxx) has been viewed by folklorists as vulgar popularizing and by literary critics as poor, slangy writing. Jacobs, not interested in authenticity in these fairy-tale collections but in "transmitting an appealing story in speakable language" (xix) and, moreover, in making tales accessible to children of all classes, has offended both his contemporaries and later critics.

It is not always easy to defend Jacobs's alterations of the 87 English tales he assembled. Like the Brothers Grimm, whom he emulated (as did almost all the other English folklorists), he rewrote, revised, and polished the materials he found, editing out "impurities," and creating composites. Accused by Lang of having "maimed, altered, and distorted [. . . his] originals"—a charge repeated by Hartland—he denied the accusation, noting accurately that he has simply done what the Grimms had done (Jacobs, "The Problem of Diffusion: Rejoinders," *Folk-Lore* 5 [1894]:140). One-third of his tales are unchanged, he states, and half have been merely altered in language. But to alter language is, of course, to change meaning and when, for example, Jacobs turns thick Lincolnshire dialect into proper English grammar and syntax—as he does in his rendition of Mrs. Balfour's "Yallery Brown" (from her "Legends of the Lincolnshire Fens")—he has virtually rewritten the tale. Some of Jacobs's revisions (and Haase provides sever-

al examples) are for clarity. Such practices as altering the phrase “framin to be asleep” to “pretending to be asleep” (xxiv) may indeed change the tone of the passage, but they also make it understandable, especially by children. Haase points out that there is considerably more tinkering with texts than Jacobs admits to. Yet he praises him for seldom censoring his materials, as the Grimms did, to minimize sex or avoid taboos. Haase notes that Jacobs chooses to downplay the incest element in the two English versions of the Cinderella tale, “Cap O’Rushes” and “Catskin.” But Jacobs is, after all, a product of his times, an era when father-daughter incest was not dinner table conversation.

Haase argues persuasively that Jacobs’s refusal to prioritize “authenticity” stems from his diffusionist stance, but Jacobs’s own excuse for the “considerable alterations” (“Diffusion” 142) he made in some few tales is truly lame. He simply refers his adult readers to his “Notes” for further information. While the “Notes” do not usually offer convincing reasons for the changes, they provide some of the main delights of his volumes. As eclectic in their approach as he is, they are sometimes as rich as the tales themselves. The note on “Childe Rowland,” for example, provides readers with both folkloric and literary sources for and analogues to the tale; a discussion of its form becomes a brief essay on the *cante-fable*. With a bow to the anthropological school, Jacobs next connects the story to the work of David MacRitchie, a euhemerist who argued that the fairies and elves were actually the mound-dwellers of pre-historic England and then reads it as a narrative of the “marriage by capture” motif anthropological folklorists so loved. While commenting on Batten’s illustration, he links the tale’s setting to the archaeological discoveries of the period as well as to speculations by fellow folklorist G. L. Gomme on terrace cultivation as a pre-Aryan phenomenon in England.

Jacobs’s mention of Batten’s illustration for “Childe Rowland” brings to mind a minor flaw in Haase’s introduction. Although the Preface mentions the importance of the collaboration between the artist and the folklorist, there is no further comment on Batten’s contribution. Some discussion of Batten’s own eclecticism and some examination of his use of sources—classical, medieval, and Pre-Raphaelite—would have contributed to Haase’s analysis. Batten’s sometimes witty, always intelligent, and often beautiful pictures also mark that place at which “folklore, children’s literature and the eclectic scholarship of the Victorian era intersect” (vii).

That caveat aside, this is a fine edition of *English Fairy Tales and More English Fairy Tales*, one to be valued by folklorists, collectors, storytellers, and even children. The second of the ABC-CLIO Folk and Fairy Tale Series, its appearance bodes well for the volumes to follow.

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Indian Ocean Folktales. By Lee Haring. Chennai (Madras): National Folklore Support Centre, 2002. 146 pp.

Lee Haring, compiler of the *Malagasy Tale Index* (1982), now presents 27 tales from Madagascar, the Comoros, Mauritius, Réunion, and Seychelles. The oral sources range between the 1880s and 1990s. The text names the folk tellers when known, and notes relevant dates, places, languages, and original collectors. It provides chronologies of the Southwest Indian Ocean and of seminal folkloric work there, with maps of the region and of each island nation accompanying the introductory note in each section. Haring himself collected two tales with collaborators, and must have done all the translations from the French.

A letter from the India-based publishers asks that the review “explore the significance of the attempt in bringing out the culture of the Indian diaspora.” In the Southwest Indian Ocean, that diaspora includes quite distinct Gujarati merchants, Malabar coast slaves, Tamil laborers and laborers from Surat in Gujarat (Haring seems to imply Tamil laborers in Surat, which is unlikely) and, since one tale seems to be from Telegu (91), the Telegu community too, which Haring does not name, as well as North Indian speakers of Hindi and allied languages.

However, none of the seven Madagascar tales nor the five from the Comoros has an Indian purview, and this volume very properly represents various coexisting diasporic cultures. The region, with no indigenous peoples, has one of the world’s most mixed populations through colonization, slavery, indentured labor and trade: French, British, Malagasy (with strong Arabo-Persian cultural influences), East African, some West African, Indian, and Chinese. Consequently, various Creole languages developed. Each ethnic group “attempted to reconstitute a mental universe by integrating older models into the new socio-cultural environment.” Often ethnic diversity means that “that sharing of folklore is the only sharing that takes place” between these five groups of islands (2). For instance, the Réunionnais story of “Marie Zozeh” was collected in Mauritius and has a Mauritian allusion.

Mixing allowed borrowing from other traditions, made people aware of their own cultural heritage, and means constant discussion about cultural identity. Haring notes that in nationalistic periods, those searching for cultural roots often used folklore as a tool for nation-building (e.g., Ireland, Finland, Bangladesh), but that narrow nationalistic or communitarian notions of “cultural purity” and of exclusive “ownership” of cultural materials, used as “badges of identity,” are mythical and misguided, for all cultures are mixed cultures (3–4). Nevertheless, quests for identity by the island nations has led some of them to take folklore collection seriously, notably the Comoros and Seychelles (see 39, 117, 142). Haring’s collection could have included more information on local attitudes over time to cultural preservation, borrowing,

and ethnic/cultural distinctness; on the proportion of stable tale-types to “new and unpredictable pieces” created by migration, as in the Comoros; and on the basis for the selection of tales.

In a firmly bonded community such as in this region, an old person transmits community values to youth through folklore. However, across generations “often the only sharing that takes place is the [. . .] tale,” and folklore transmission is “no longer the passing of pure tradition from one generation to another” (4)—if it ever was. Haring stresses folktale hybridity and mutation over languages, ethnicities, space and time; decries myths of “unbroken transmission;” and celebrates new modes of transmission of folk materials such as radio storytelling. Since latter-day islanders consult books for a memory of tradition, Haring sees the digressions and additions of a radio storyteller to folktale-based stories as resembling the practice of village storytellers. Haring questions a view of “tourism as an evil means of corrupting the purity of the past” (4), seeing tourism as a means of sharing folk traditions (like his anthology).

However, even if certain cultural material is hybrid in itself, I feel that material recorded in a form before a period of great cultural change, and similar material modified after it, are not the same thing. Not all cultural change or inventiveness is necessarily good (e.g., the “Disneyfication” of the folktale may destroy variety and drive out other versions). Folk inventiveness in a traditional situation and an art-teller’s more self-conscious inventiveness and use of the new more powerful mass media are different in kind. An object standardized and mass-made for the tourist trade is not the same as an object made for home use (or other trade), nor is commercial “sharing” a sharing among equals. “Traditional folktale mutation” can easily justify anything at all.

This collection includes etiological tales, *Märchen* proper, and comic tales. The largest category is trickster tales, which include stories about thief-tricksters marrying a princess (“A Poor Man’s Story,” Com.); magic-using tricksters finally losing patience with oppressors (“Alimtru and the Buzzard,” Com., and “Kader,” Sey.); animal tricksters (“The King and his Animals,” Mau., and “Bro Sungula and Bro Zako,” Sey.). Trickster-figures proper are at work in “The One Who Knew How to make Exchanges” (Mad.), “Iangano” (Mad.), “The Card-player” (R), and “Poverty” (Sey.). One tale stands out, “Ramkalawar” (Mau.), in which fear of public opinion prevails, not magic, violence, or trickery. It seems to belong to an unfamiliar (new?) genre with a moral vision quite different from related *Märchen*-hero tales.

The overall impression is of a fictive world where magic, violence, and trickery pay off for disadvantaged male and female characters alike. Identity often involves secrets and tokens. It is also a world of Hindu polygamy (“Mardevirin,” “Four Friends”) and Muslim widow remarriage (“Kader” and “The Mysterious Woman,” whose heroine marries twice, without divorcing).

Nasty old women who help abduct wives for royal males are common in African and Indian tales (“Alimtru,” “Four Friends,” “Saint Passaway”). Rich foolish predatory wolves in grand houses (“The King and his Animals,” “Seven Boy Cousins”); drunken indiscretion (“The Hedgehog Hunter,” “Ti Zan”); and death by scalding (“The Dead Man on the Ass,” “Bro Sungula”) appear repeatedly.

Some of these tales are oikotypifications of international narratives. Some show motifs adapted to unfamiliar functions, e.g., “The Mysterious Woman,” where the carriage-transformation motifs of “Cinderella” serve quite different functions in a quite different sort of story. Mutation of common themes gives pleasurable and ironic touches to a tale like “Saint Passaway,” in which the lost husband reclining in an armchair and reading the newspaper in a cave is served by invisible hands.

Scrupulous presentation of oral material offers the pleasures of the spoken voice and its rhythms of oral narration, such as the mixing of the epic preterit with historic present tenses in “The Cardplayer,” or the teller’s explanatory comments in glossing the trickster tale, “The Hedgehog Hunter.” Such narration can meander, fill in left-out details, use nonformulaic repetition, leave things unexplained, render segments asymmetrical and a tale inchoate, as in “Four Friends.” The relatively plotless “Ramkalawar” and “Queen of the Fish,” where the third brother’s rescue involves neither dicing nor trickery but simply violence against the “big fairy woman,” are similarly less than “well-formed.” Unexpurgated presentation gives the pleasures of a robust gusto about bodily functions in a tale like “Seven Boy Cousins.” Against expectation, the helpful Malabar haycutter remains unrewarded in “Saint Passaway.” The plot remains unaffected, so I feel this feature might be the irony of one teller. But if the haycutter unrewarded is indeed integral, its ruefulness about the unjust real world resembles those ending formulae which have the teller kicked after the hero’s wedding (“Seven Boy Cousins,” “Kader”).

The volume is valuable, but the proofreading and editing are execrable—in a whole section, the translation just stops and the text is left in what must be Creole (104–06). Haring has been sent a first list of many unfortunate inconsistencies, omissions, typographical oddities and errors, and lacunae. It saddens me to see American typographical conventions and American slang in a work published in India.

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Marshall Islands Legends and Stories. Collected and edited by Daniel A. Kelin II. Illustrated by Nashon T. Nashon. Honolulu: Bess Press, 2003. 252 pp.

Like the collector and editor of these tales, I have had the privilege of listening to many Marshallese men and women of all ages share their stories with

me. Kelin's collection is refreshing in many ways, and disappointing to this anthropologist in others.

This collection of legends and stories from the Marshall Islands begins with acknowledgments and an introduction by the collector and editor that convey his enthusiasm and gratitude for the privilege of being "given" the stories that follow. In general terms Kelin describes the settings of the storytelling sessions, the assistance of translators, and the power of his story collecting experiences. As he states, this was a labor of love, as he trekked to eight of the Marshalls' 28 atolls, recorder in hand and often translator in tow. He sought chiefs' permission and respected storytellers' silences.

The text is divided into sections based on the geographic location of the tellers. Distinguishing between the eastern and western atoll chains, Kelin begins with the *Ratak* (eastern chain) and includes stories and legends from the five atolls he visited, as told by the 13 tellers among those atolls. He introduces each storyteller, offering a photo and a brief biological sketch for many. He follows the *Ratak* stories with *Ralik* (western chain) tales, representing three atolls and five *dri-bwebwenato* (storytellers). The biological sketches and comments about the personality and narrative styles of the tellers are thoughtful inclusions, and add much to the immediacy of the collection. Further, the editor opted to include many of the framing devices of the storytellers, and the comments addressed to his or her audience. These also engage readers, drawing them in and increasing awareness of the original setting of the stories.

Another successful addition is the use of pronunciation guides and translations of key terms in the margins of the text. Other collections of Marshallese legends and stories assume prior knowledge or linguistic familiarity. Kelin's collection contributes to the accessibility of these stories to non-Marshallese speakers, and encourages the reader to share his respect for Marshallese lives by using their vocabulary.

Beyond the above noted characteristics, this collection benefits from the editor's skills in storytelling and writing. His abilities contribute to the stories' entertainment value, particularly for a non-Marshallese audience that may be unaccustomed to the style and form of Marshallese legends. They are well-written and maintain a more natural narrative pace than most of the nearly literal transcriptions/translations of earlier collections. My favorite stories involve *Letao*, the Marshallese trickster figure and the ways Marshall Islanders have engaged this character to make *sense* of and *fun* of the serious challenges of social change. I also have a deep appreciation for the editor's decisions to include the storytellers' repetition of chants and songs. This decision highlights the persistence of ancient knowledge, genres, and common motifs. Many of the chants are conveyed in an older poetic dialect of Marshallese that requires difficult interpretation. The meanings are neither clear nor obvious.

Their inclusion is an excellent means of preserving ancient knowledge, yet they also raise questions for me about language and translation that are not specified in the introduction. The narrative authority of the editor sometimes emerges at the expense of the many who translated for him. Which stories were told in English? Who did the translation on each atoll? At what point were the stories translated?

This brings me to my disappointments. It is now standard practice for folktale collections to include personal notes, biographical information on the tales themselves, as well as relevant cultural and historical material, maps, artwork, pronunciation guides, and source notes. These materials are not viewed as supplementary but essential to comprehension and greater appreciation of the folktales. Sadly, most of this type of contextualizing information is missing from this collection. The Marshallese artist Nashton Nashon's drawings at the atoll section headings offer scenes of ancient Marshallese lifestyles, showing men dressed in mats carrying spears, or bare breasted women with coconut frond baskets. They illustrate and emphasize the 'traditional' aspects of the stories that are tied to Marshallese history and cultural practices. Maps of the atolls would be a particularly useful addition, especially since the settings of the stories cannot be separated from their content, as many are explanations of place names, geological features, and clan origins, and hierarchical histories.

The type of information that would give much depth to these tales and create a useful cultural resource is unfortunately *not* accessible to the average reader of this collection. Without more contextual information, the stories are merely entertaining. There is no distinction made between the tales containing significant cultural knowledge, values, and history and those told merely for fun. And while an observant reader may reflect upon the more obvious differences in the tales—for example the use of specific names, the geographic references, the historical chants in contrast to the less detailed narrative flow and storyline of others—these distinct genres of oral literature are not clarified or distinguished. The editor is unapologetic in his justification for the lack of cultural materials: "I don't profess to be an anthropologist, ethnologist, or folklorist. As a storyteller and drama educator, I believe that legends and stories told aloud are far different from legends on paper. They are living entities. They provide engaging ways of sharing the uniqueness of culture, place, and beliefs" (viii). Kelin's emphasis is on writing and retelling engaging stories. This reviewer argues that a story that offers insight and appreciation into Marshallese cultural frameworks and histories is an even *better* story, and unfortunately, the lack of geographic/historical/cultural context limits these stories to uninformed interpretations and does not do them justice—and may be, in fact, considered a grave *injustice*.

This collection will be used primarily by teachers of Marshallese students, desperate for accessible resources about the Marshall Islands, and by parents

of Marshallese children. It may also be useful to the immigrant Marshallese communities who seek positive representations of their culture and resources for their children. Marshallese parents who feel unqualified to tell these tales, may appreciate the possibility to read the stories and elaborate upon them. For this reason the collection offers a wide audience access to entertaining Marshallese legends and stories, though the way in which they are presented limited their ability to be truly Marshallese. Assuming their meanings are transparent, the uncontextualized stories and legends can only reinforce the readers' appreciation of apparently universal themes.

That disappoints me, since these tales will become one of a limited number of resources for the increasing numbers of Marshallese children born and raised outside their islands who want to learn more about their culture. Without explanation or context, this collection cannot offer that understanding and feels incomplete. It can only entertain—and it will entertain well enough. While it offers thoughtful contributions to the representation of Marshallese folktales, and is perhaps the most accessible and well written collection available, it stops short of accepting the challenges of a truly responsible representation—one that would take greater responsibility for passing along cultural context and knowledge.

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Märchen und Meta-Märchen: Zur Poetik der "Volksmärchen der Deutschen" von Johann Karl August Musäus. By Malgorzata Kubisiak. Ingelheim am Rhein: litblockt, 2002. 180 pp.

Musäus's collection *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (*Folktales of the Germans*, 1782–86, 5 vols.) has presented a problem for scholarship for most of its existence. It is one of the earliest collections of its kind in German, and so has for some a status as original and foundational: it is often cited as a, or even *the*, precursor of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. Yet the comparison can only be to the ultimate detriment of the earlier work; Musäus, thus seen, is a careless folklorist (*avant la lettre*, of course) who failed to catch the "real" voice of the people the way the Grimms supposedly did. The fourteen tales are described as having a hybrid form between *Kunstmärchen* and *Volksmärchen* (despite the title Musäus gave it), failing to fulfill the expectations of either genre (or at least of the post-Grimm expectations of them).

As an Enlightenment writer conveying—authentically or not—the wisdom (or superstitions) of the people, Musäus's position was from the first suspect: how is it possible for a proponent of rational thought to make use of such popular material and stay true to his enlightened ideas? His style is very far from the simple narratives of peasants or of the less-educated bourgeoisie: he

is witty and clever; his diction is creative and whimsical; he makes constant reference to topical events by means of humorous comparisons and metaphors. Some of the tales have very little magic or marvelous in them, and the occurrence of the marvelous is met with by a great deal of ambivalence, or at least by a lack of clarity, on the part of the narrator. Although marvels are never explained away by enlightened rational science, a rational attitude is just as likely to prove the correct one in a tale by Musäus as is the simple unquestioning acceptance of the magic of the world. Humor is often used to debunk magic in one scene of a tale where elsewhere magic has proved “real”: Franz Melcherson, reports the narrator jocosely, does not need any magical accoutrements to retrieve the hidden treasure in “Stumme Liebe” (“Silent Love”), but only a shovel and spade: yet Franz knows of the treasure only because, earlier in the tale, a ghost he has released from a curse told him what to do to find it. Thus, it is difficult for the reader quite to know what to make of the purpose of the tales. Are they meant only to entertain, and to be understood simply as old tales in modern, and higher-class, dress? Or is there a moral to be drawn? If there is, it is not explicit, and it is also unclear. Should one spurn superstition in favor of modern science, or should one take on the happy-go-lucky attitude of the fairy-tale hero to whom all things come if only he accepts the gift freely?

In her book, Malgorzata Kubisiak touches upon all these issues, and more: the history and import of fairy-tale writing in the Enlightenment (or Rococo); peasant versus bourgeois tales; the function of and attitude toward the magical in this literature; the relationship of entertainment value to moral value in the tales; reason versus fantasy; tales as telling the truth or telling lies; the existence of a folk tradition underlying the collections published by Musäus and others. In regard particularly to Musäus, she has material on his humorous style, with its satiric and idyllic components; on his expressed attitude (very dismissive!) to the *Ammenmärchen* (old wives’ tales) he heard and wrote down; on the reception and interpretation of the *Völksmärchen der Deutschen* since their publication. This volume represents, in fact, a thorough collection of comments on Musäus and his collection, from the 1780s to the present day.

Because there is very little analysis of the comments she thus records, it is difficult to ascertain what the author wishes to bring new into the academic debate. Considerably more than half the book is given over to recording the basic background of scholarship on Musäus and to listing the comments made about him over the years. The critical tradition is listed chronologically, and there is no attempt to organize the information in a way to lead the reader to understanding an argument. For example, issues such as Musäus’s use of the supernatural and his attitude toward it are discussed by most people writing on him, and many have debated the issue of the genre attribution of the tales.

From Kubisiak's presentation of the material, it is very difficult to see what the trends have been, which attitudes on the part of critics have been prevalent (and when), and which attitudes held by only a few. There is little or no discussion of the import of many of the comments she records.

Negative comments about the collection, including anything indicating that the tales are not really folktales, are met with some resistance by the author, yet it is not clear how she wishes to deal with generic issues. If these are folktales, in what sense is this true? What is a folktale? What would folklorists say about it? She does not consider that to remove the epithet of "folk" from these tales is not necessarily to diminish them, but to define them more accurately in modern parlance. Likewise, she (quite rightly) stresses that it is unfair blindly to apply post-Grimm standards to the tales, but another standard is not ever set. Moreover, despite the alleged distance from the Grimm norm, in her chapters on three particular tales—"Die Bücher der Chronika der drei Schwestern" ("The Books of the Chronicle of the Three Sisters"), "Stumme Liebe," "Fünf Legenden von Rübezahl" ("Five Legends of Rübezahl")—as well as a short section on "Liebestreue" ("Loving Devotion") she is constantly alluding to the Grimms' version for comparison, apparently accepting it as the authority.

In her conclusion, she claims that the subtle message of Musäus's tales is to accept experience as it comes, to deal calmly and realistically in life. Musäus uses an aesthetic form—i.e., these tales of the marvelous—to bring his point home with a spoonful of sugar. The conclusion is likely enough to be a good one, and there are also observations throughout the discussions of the three tales that are interesting. One example: she finds the conclusion of "Die Bücher der Chronika der drei Schwestern," where the enchanted castle and forest are *entzaubert* (disenchanted), a metaphor for Musäus's enlightenment project. Since there is no sustained close-reading of the selected stories, however, the conclusions must be accepted (or not) at face value. She is best in her conclusions on the Rübezahl legends, where she begins to show how Musäus uses the folktale to expound a teaching of common sense and natural good will.

The strength of this book is the thoroughness with which the scholarship on Musäus is brought together in one place. The stance (implicitly stated only!) taken by the author follows the solid *Germanistik* tradition of citation of sources and a detailed covering of the historical background. Because, however, Kubisiak has failed to consider current and recent discussions of the nature of the fairy or folktale, she is hard put to defend Musäus on aesthetic or generic grounds. For example, the "lesson" she finds in the tales to accept the givens in reality, whatever they may be in one's particular case, has been cited by others (Bettelheim and von Franz amongst them) as a common attribute of the folk fairy tale; Kubisiak could use this as an argument to support her defense of Musäus's title of *Völkermärchen*, but she does not. Psychoanalytical, Jungian,

or folklorist interpretations of the tales might have found motival connections with tales in other German collections or in other traditions which, again, might have defended Musäus's "authenticity" as a tale recorder. Alternatively, a careful and perceptive close reading of the tales, even without heavy theorizing, might have brought something else about the *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* to the fore. Yet another possibility might have been actually to analyze the scores of comments she records and from them synthesize a useful history of the criticisms on Musäus.

As it is, Kubisiak is not able to answer with enough fullness the questions she implicitly or explicitly raises. Was Musäus a cynic who saw no way to truth, or do his humorous tales give a simple, homely moral? Is he the originator of the folktale in German or merely following a trend that he in part deplored? How are we to understand the tendency in Musäus to make bourgeois stories out of ones presumably originally having peasant protagonists, as in the banker's son who learns to become a professional businessman in "Stumme Liebe"? Where, exactly, does his work fit into the history of tale recording and invention? Nor is the promise of the title ever really fulfilled, though she makes a start in the last pages: Musäus's "poetics" are never laid out, nor is it clear how the products of his pen could be said to be *Metamärchen*. Still, the book has its strengths, and these are to be applauded.

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Contes tendres, contes cruels du Sahel nigérien. Edited and translated by Geneviève Calame-Griaule. Collection "Le langage des contes." Paris: Gallimard, 2002. 293 pp.

Geneviève Calame-Griaule is a leading scholar of African folklore, with publications that span over thirty years. This volume, the latest contribution to her already impressive bibliography, affords a fascinating glimpse into the world of the Isawaghen, a population who inhabits the arid and remote Azawaq region of central Niger. A sedentary group in the midst of nomadic peoples, the Isawaghen have been at the crossroads of various cultures, including those of their neighbors, the Touaregs and the Hausa, but also those of peoples farther afield in Northern and Eastern Africa. The Isawaghen were unknown to Western ethnographers until the 1960s. In the early 1970s, Calame-Griaule, along with her colleagues Suzy Bernus and Pierre Francis Lacroix, conducted fieldwork among the Isawaghen settlements of Ingal and Teguidda-n-Tessoumt. *Contes tendres, contes cruels du Sahel nigérien* (*Tender Tales, Cruel Tales from the Nigerien Sahel*) includes French translations of thirty-six tales collected by Bernus, Calame-Griaule, and Lacroix from four different storytellers: three women, Taheera, Aminata, Khadi; and one man, Albadé

the Blacksmith. The tales are arranged as selections of each storyteller's repertoire. Calame-Griaule introduces each storyteller and, after each tale, includes a commentary with ethnographic, folkloric, and thematic analysis. She also frames the entire collection with an in-depth general introduction that provides the reader with valuable information about the Isawaghen, their oral tradition, and its relationship to other African traditions.

Throughout this volume, Calame-Griaule notes the hybridity of the tales she presents. Given their contact with nomadic peoples, the Isawaghen have incorporated into their own folklore elements of Berber, Arabic, and sub-Saharan traditions. Their tales include references to customs and animals (such as elephants) that are not part of Isawaghen daily life. They also feature songs, proverbs, and expressions in languages other than the Tasawaq spoken by the Isawaghen. At the same time, of course, the stories told by Taheera, Aminata, Khadi, and Albadé the Blacksmith reflect the cultural specificity of Isawaghen life (including vestimentary, culinary, social and religious customs and attitudes toward love, beauty, and cruelty). The cast of animal characters one finds in this volume depicts the natural habitat of the Azawaq or other nearby regions and includes jackals, hyenas, rabbits, horses, and elephants. Human characters, Calame-Griaule contends, are often portrayed with the particular bias of the elderly women storytellers whose tales form the majority of those included in *Contes tendres, contes cruels*. The penchant for strong women (especially young women and wives) and the irony directed at chiefs and blacksmiths (liminal figures in Isawaghen society) are frequently visible in these stories. A more familiar folkloric feature is the initiatory rite of passage, which Calame-Griaule posits as central to the interpretation of this corpus. "Passages" of all sorts—not only from childhood and adolescence to adulthood, but also those of marriage, familial change, aging, communal integration, and death—structure these narratives. It is the initiatory function that, according to Calame-Griaule, explains the recurrence of violence and cruelty in these tales. Symbolic renewal or rebirth requires a purging or death of physical proportions.

The reader unfamiliar with African oral traditions will find especially interesting the tales that bear resemblance to well-known narratives from other world folkloric traditions. As is often the case with such variants, the differences from the version familiar to the reader shed new light on the tale-type as a whole. For instance, Taheera's "Blanche neige au soleil" ("Snow White in the Sun"), a variant of AT709, makes explicit several of the familial conflicts that are camouflaged in Western European versions. The central narrative conflict is that between mother and daughter, rather than between stepmother and stepdaughter, as in many Western European versions. In another interesting twist, the seven genies who care for her once she has left home treat her as a sister, which sets the stage for an incest drama. When all but the oldest genie

express the desire to marry the heroine, the remaining brother rebukes them, saying that they may not marry a sister. In Taheera's telling of AT480 (Kind and Unkind Girls), "La Mare de Bagazi" ("Bagazi's Pond"), food, rather than jewels, are the reward for the good sister's kindness and the decisive test of the evil sister's selfishness. Calame-Griaule explains that food, a scarce resource in the Nigerien Sahel, is often associated with tests of moral rectitude and with female fertility (159). And Aminata's rendering of Donkeyskin, "Peau d'ânesse" (AT510), a well-known tale in the Sahel according to Calame-Griaule, highlights not the incestuous desires of the heroine's father but rather her own hypersexuality, which she learns to master with the help of her suitor.

Beyond these versions, readers will be equally intrigued by tales unfamiliar to the Western European tradition. There are tales of romance, satire, and ruse featuring nomadic peoples, animals, and supernatural characters. Calame-Griaule's general introduction and specific commentary on each tale makes these tales not only accessible but also enticing. But whether for its more or less familiar tales, *Contes tendres, contes cruels du Sahel nigérien* is an expertly crafted volume that will appeal to specialists and nonspecialists alike.

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Encyclopedia of Urban Legends. By Jan Harold Brunvand. Artwork by Randy Hickman. New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2002. 523 pp. Illus. Pbk.

Including this one, Jan Brunvand is the author of ten compilations of urban legends spanning more than 20 years, a syndicated column, and numerous papers. His name is now so closely associated with "urban legend" that anybody else working in the field feels compelled to use a different term to describe what s/he does—"modern legend," "belief legend," or "contemporary legend," which is the Sheffield school's preferred term. Brunvand is responsible for bringing countless "new" urban legends to scholars' attention, for putting the term "urban legend" into the vocabulary of journalists and others working in the media, and for familiarizing the world in general with the genre. His industry is as prodigious as his success, and his influence cannot be overestimated.

The present book is large, well-designed, easy to use, and illustrated with little cartoon-like line-drawings by Randy Hickman. It looks good. There are in the region of 1,000 entries. Most of these are story types, but other entries cover generic topics such as "animals" and "accidents," and theoretical terms such as "ostension" and "legend-tripping"; there are also entries for "Canada," "England," "Sweden" and so on that outline the work of scholars in those countries. It is as comprehensive as the author can make it. It is obviously going to be a "must have" for those of us who have to answer daft questions from journalists, and it will doubtless become the student's "bible."

For these reasons, one must be frank about its shortcomings. First of all, despite being called an “encyclopedia” it is actually pretty much like everything that went before, a sort of super-round-up of stories from Brunvand’s files. It seems to me to fall between two stools: on the one hand, as well as listing story types it tries to cover a large number of theoretical terms and considerations (this probably won’t interest the general reader); on the other hand the individual entries are often slapdash (this won’t satisfy the serious scholar). To be honest, scholars are not his natural audience anyway. At heart he is a storyteller, at his best discoursing in an intimate and often humorous style, presenting the foibles of the human race as represented in modern legends, letting the stories do the talking. Hence, perhaps, his unease at the turn which events have taken recently, the transfer of the genre from a primarily oral mode of transmission to the internet, television and popular film. This is a problem he deals with in his “Introduction” but cannot really solve. It is strange this should upset him so much, since, more than anybody else working in the field, through the number and popularity of his books Brunvand has turned urban legend into a phenomenon of popular culture. Only his first book, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker* (1981), is a serious work of scholarship; the others are more or less overtly story compilations. Personally I have no quarrel with this, since Brunvand has brought so many new legends to our attention and he is welcome to do this any way he wants.

But given this orientation to popular writing, it may have been a mistake to undertake a work calling itself an “encyclopedia” as a solo exercise. However well-informed the writer, it is impossible to deal with so many entries equally satisfactorily. Mistakes, oversimplifications, misrepresentations and so on are bound to occur. No one’s data-base is that good, even Jan Brunvand’s. It would have been much better to cut down the number of entries to a core of terms and types and to invite friends and colleagues to contribute specific entries in the usual way. This would also have helped him avoid the two characteristics of the book that many people will find most irritating—his reliance on his own previous books for information and references, and his neglect of non-American contributions to the study of urban legend. There are, for example, 267 references cited for the 33 stories entered under A-D. Of these, only 15 are for books or articles published in Europe (2 for France, 1 for Germany, and 12 for the UK). About 90% of the remainder are American texts, with Brunvand’s own work predominating.

This is typical of the rest of the book and has led him to ignore important contributions to the study of urban legend which would have strengthened his treatment of several legends. Of many I might quote, I will take just a handful of examples. On pages 38–39 he has an entry on “Blue Star Acid.” This is OK as far as it goes but by saying only a word or two about panics in countries

other than the USA, it gives the impression that this was an American phenomenon. This, of course, was not so. Leaflets warning about what were called "LSD Transfers" in Britain were widely circulated to UK schools during the 1980s and early 1990s. The rumor obtained so much credence that a warning letter was actually published in the prestigious British medical journal *The Lancet*. The panic was followed for several months by contributors to the folklore magazine *Dear Mr Thoms*, which printed copies of the leaflets that were circulating and the warning letters put out by several education authorities. The rumor was also prevalent in Italy and was taken up by the Italian contemporary legend magazine *Tutte Storie*. It also circulated in France and was studied in detail by Jean-Noel Kapferer whose work was published in the *Revue française de gestion* in 1985.

Similarly there are only two references for Brunvand's entry on the "Blood Libel Legend": these are Alan Dundes's casebook and his own *Choking Doberman*. There is also a brief mention of Bill Ellis's *JAF* essay of 1983, "De Legendis Urbis," though this is not mentioned by name and does not appear in the references. However, a glance at any of the European literature on this legend (including an essay by Australian folklorist Joseph Jacobs in Dundes's casebook but first published in a British journal) would have saved him from making the mistake of thinking that the English cases he mentions (the Norwich case of 1144 and Lincoln case of 1255) were examples of accusations that local Jews had killed Christian children to use their blood in Passover matzos. In both cases the accusations were that Jews had crucified Christian boys: there is no mention in either of blood-letting or Passover food. He would also have realized that the libel continued into modern times and was not replaced by stories of "the Castrated Boy" type, as he suggests, following the lead of Florence Ridley (her 1967 essay, which unfortunately is neither mentioned nor referenced). Only last week (end of June 2003), in a debate in the British House of Commons, a member of Parliament accused the Foreign Minister of Syria of propagating the Blood Libel against Israeli Jews.

My third example where the America-centered approach leads to oversimplification or misrepresentation is the entry on "Phantom Clowns." British versions of this legend have been extensively studied by Sandy Hobbs and David Cornwell who have documented their findings in *Dear Mr Thoms* and elsewhere. The only reference to their work in Brunvand's entry is the observation that: "The same year a phantom clown scare also hit Glasgow, Scotland."

The effect of all this is to implicitly define urban legends as an American phenomenon (as, indeed it was, explicitly, in Brunvand's first book, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and their Meanings* of 1981) and effectively remove European researches from the scholarly scene. Though Brunvand corrects this impression to an extent by paying tribute to the work

of European legend scholars in his sections on Germany, France, Sweden, England, Scotland and Australia, the effect is outweighed by the fact that he only sporadically quotes any of these authors in the story entries. I acknowledge that it is no use citing obscure references in any book aimed at a student readership, but three points need to be made. The first is that it is unfortunate that a book which will be surely taken as the essential reference work encourages students to think that only Americans have anything interesting to say on the subject. The second is that students will not be the only readers. The third point is that a lot of the non-American material is in no way difficult to consult for anybody with access to a library. The British publications *Folklore* and *FLS News* are both easily available and so are *Fabula* and *ARV* which, though printed in Germany and Denmark respectively, carry articles predominantly in English. There is plenty of urban legend material in all of these. *Folklore*, for example, published important essays by, among others, Bill Ellis ("The Hook Reconsidered" 1994), Christine Shojaei-Kawan ("Contemporary Legend Research in German-Speaking Countries" 1995), and Véronique Campion-Vincent ("Preaching Tolerance?" 1995) which should have been included in the references for "The Hook," "Germany," and "The Elevator Incident" respectively. Again, Bill Scott's Australian compilations are all in paperback and, though not scholarly, are excellent sources for legend types and variants, many of which are not included among Brunvand's entries.

So, to adapt the title of E. M. Forster's famous essay "Two Cheers for Democracy," "Two Cheers for Brunvand." One cheer because it's good to have a comprehensive work of this kind. A second cheer because Americans may not find much wrong with it and students and journalists will be delighted to have it. But no third cheer because Europeans and other non-American readers/researchers may well feel they have written out of a story they helped to create.

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Le conte de fées littéraire en France de la fin du XVIIe à la fin du XVIIIe siècle. By Raymonde Robert. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002. 556 pp.

Published first in 1981, Professor Robert's book sparked serious research into the French literary fairy tale of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that has continued through the twenty-first century. Her massive and exhaustive study complemented and surpassed two fine studies, Mary-Elizabeth Storer's *Un Épisode littéraire de la fin du XVIIe siècle. La mode des contes de fées (1685–1700)* (1928) and Jacques Barchilon's *Le conte merveilleux français de 1690 à 1790* (1975). Not only did Robert deal with the great production of the literary tales in greater depth than Storer and Barchilon, but she drew out the connections to the oral tradition of French folk tales and emphasized the

importance of dealing with popular literature and cultural vogues. Without understanding the social history of the French fairy tale, we cannot have a full grasp of French society of that period, nor can we appreciate how the literary fairy tale itself established itself as a genre.

The republication of *Le conte de fées littéraire en France de la fin du XVIIIe à la fin du XVIIe siècle* is, however, a disappointment. Aside from a new supplementary bibliography contributed by Nadine Jasmin and Claire Debru, a short preface to the second edition, and some minor modifications, the book is essentially the same, and Robert does not take into account the extraordinary scholarship which her own work generated since the beginning of the 1980s. Interestingly, some of the best studies have been accomplished by scholars more active in the United States and United Kingdom than in France. The work of Lewis Seifert, Gabrielle Verdier, Philip Lewis, Claire-Lise Malarte, Jean Mainil, Patricia Hannon, Holly Tucker, Marina Warner, and others has opened up new perspectives about the cultural significance of the French fairy tale, and Robert's second edition would have benefited from a chapter dealing with new approaches to a highly significant period of European history that we can safely say brought about the institutionalization of the genre of the literary fairy tale in the West. *C'est dommage*, but we still owe Robert a great debt for her pioneer work.

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Naissance du conte féminin. Mots et Merveilles: Les Contes de fées de Madame d'Aulnoy (1690–1698). By Nadine Jasmin. Paris: Champion, 2002. 791 pp.

At the outset of her book on Madame d'Aulnoy, Nadine Jasmin defines the object of her study to be an analysis of the "birth of a new literary genre," that of the literary fairy tale, out of the oral tale. In order to explain the emergence and establishment of this new genre, Jasmin takes as her point of departure the fairy-tale corpus of d'Aulnoy, the most prolific fairy-tale writer of late seventeenth-century France, whose tales indeed are more representative of the larger trend than those written by her contemporary, Charles Perrault. Jasmin's study is divided into three sections, the first of which treats the ways in which d'Aulnoy combines various sources—both folkloric and literary—to create a new, autonomous literary genre. Section 2 centers on the "matter" of the tales, or their sociocultural context. In Section 3 (there is also a Section 4 Jasmin does not mention in her general introduction, but which could be considered to be part of Section 3) Jasmin looks at the "manner" of the tales, the stylistic devices and narrative strategies d'Aulnoy employs to create her tales, not to mention her original imaginary worlds.

In my view, the first section of the book is the most successful one. Moving from the influence of myth, the pastoral novel, folkloric sources, and

the heroic novel, Jasmin demonstrates how d'Aulnoy's conception of the fairy tale both borrows and emancipates itself from its sources. Part of her analysis is based on the opposition she sets up between Ancient genres like mythology and Modern genres like the novel and fairy tale. While I find this reading of the relation between myth and fairy tale intriguing, I would argue that the relation is in fact more complex than a simple binary opposition. Opera, for instance, often used mythological plots, but was considered—at least by Ancients like Boileau—to be a thoroughly “modern” genre. Jasmin cites as an example of how d'Aulnoy problematizes “ancient” sources like Ovid d'Aulnoy's tale “Le Serpentin Vert,” in which the heroine Laideronette reads the story of Cupid and Psyche, only to follow the same disastrous path as her ancient sister. While I find this reading valid, it would have been useful for Jasmin to furthermore take into account Jean Mainil's argument in *Madame d'Aulnoy et le rire des fées* (2001) that d'Aulnoy generally problematizes the pedagogical function of her tales by inscribing characters who misread the moral lessons not only of Ancient sources, but also of particular fairy tales. Nevertheless, in this section Jasmin convincingly shows how d'Aulnoy successfully combines various types of sources to create a genre that ultimately stands on its own. Moreover, Jasmin argues that although d'Aulnoy never directly engaged in the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, the fact that d'Aulnoy tended to privilege modern genres was an indirect way for her to situate herself within the camp of the moderns.

In the second section of the book, Jasmin provides a thematic treatment of class, monarchy, and gender in d'Aulnoy's tales. She concludes that the tales communicate an aristocratic and precious ideology that was critical of both monarchy and masculine power. I felt the section gave a somewhat superficial treatment of these issues and could have been enriched by engaging, for instance, Lewis Seifert's argument, put forth in *Fairy Tales, Sexuality, and Gender in France* (1996), that the fairy-tale vogue of the 1690s emerged in part as a defense of *mondain* or aristocratic culture, which had come under attack in the latter part of the century. Also useful would have been a reference to Adrienne Zuerner's study of monarchy in d'Aulnoy's tales, which appeared in the collection of essays *Out of the Woods* (1997), as well as to Patricia Hannon's treatment of class and gender in *Fabulous Identities* (1998).

In sections 3 and 4, Jasmin takes a structuralist approach, looking at the function of titles; the first lines of tales; the dénouement, often involving parallel plots; and the moral of the tales. Arguing that d'Aulnoy's tales follow a *forme fixe*, Jasmin points out that despite structural limitations, the relation between, for instance, the moral and the tale itself is more supple than it first appears. After examining the general structure of d'Aulnoy's tales, Jasmin moves into a discussion of time and the chronological disruptions typical of

the tales, resulting from d'Aulnoy's combined use of mythological, fairy, and historical time. In Part 4, Jasmin looks at the question of orality in its connections to conversation and the salon. Examining d'Aulnoy's stylistic and rhetorical choices, Jasmin argues that through her tales d'Aulnoy manages to systematize diversity. In other words, despite the multiplicity of sources and narrative strategies, d'Aulnoy indeed creates an autonomous literary genre that has its own set of aesthetic norms.

Although I felt the book presented a number of worthy arguments, these tended to become diluted in the overabundance of examples and footnotes, and what I would consider to be digressions from the stated purpose of the book. The sociocultural section in particular added little, in my opinion, to the overall objective of the book, which is to trace the emergence of a new literary genre. I also felt that Jasmin failed to engage effectively important contemporary debates in fairy-tale scholarship, notably those put forth by Seifert, Hannon, and Mainil, whose works are noted in Jasmin's bibliography, but whose arguments receive little attention.

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Boys and Girls Forever: Children's Classics from Cinderella to Harry Potter.
By Alison Lurie. New York: Penguin Books, 2003. 219 pp.

This collection of fourteen essays makes a useful companion and sequel to Lurie's earlier collection *Don't Tell the Grown-ups: Subversive Children's Literature* (1990). Most the essays first appeared in slightly different form in the *New York Review of Books* or as essay reviews in *The New York Times Book Review*. Like her previous collection which tied a wide range of essays together under the broad thesis that outstanding examples of children's texts tend to be subversive, or at least run counter to the status quo, Lurie provides a general umbrella introduction which argues that some of the most gifted writers for children are those authors who were able to remain children throughout their adulthood, or who preferred children to adults as companions, despite their chronological age. The essays on J. M. Barrie and E. Nesbit that were published in *Don't Tell the Grown-ups* would be more appropriate in *Boys and Girls Forever*, just as the essays on Louisa May Alcott and Dr. Seuss in this collection would thematically fit the thesis of the first volume. Both collections of independent essays have grown a bit like Topsy, evolving out of Lurie's own reading and research interests which is both part of their charm and limitations. Those seeking a more systematic approach to children's literature are advised to look elsewhere. While viewing successful children's writers as adults who never grew up is not the most original critical thesis, it does provide Lurie with a useful frame for examining distinctive writers such as Hans

Christian Andersen, L. Frank Baum, Dr. Seuss and Tove Jansson. The focus of the collection is children's literature, but at least a third of the essays deal with authors of literary fairy tales. Perhaps the most useful essay in the collection for those interested in fairy tales is "What Fairy Tales Tell Us" which first appeared as an introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Fairy Tales* (1993). Here Lurie makes a distinction between those literary fairy tales produced in the United States and their European counterparts. She views European literary fairy tales as occurring in a fixed world where the social system remains unchanged, while American fairy tales frequently critique the existing social order and have little to recommend wealth, position, and good looks.

Lurie develops these distinctions in more detail in "The Oddness of Oz" written in recognition of the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900). She shows how Baum's fairy tale reflects the geographic landscape and cultural values of the United States. She argues that Baum was strongly influenced by the political thought of his mother-in-law Matilda Gage, who posited a prehistoric matriarchal society in her *Woman, Church and State* (1895). Lurie observes that in the *Oz* series all the good societies are ruled by women and that more often than not the male rulers are either wicked or weak. The land of Oz is ruled by a female trinity of Glinda, Ozma, and Dorothy. These female characters make a sharp break with European children's fantasy as well as the many realistic characters found in books for girls of the same period. Lurie maintains these innovations are what have attracted a strong readership of girls for the *Oz* series.

Lurie finds a similar strand of strong female characters in Jansson's *Moomintroll* books which she contrasts with the more male-dominated world of A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* stories. What Lurie finds remarkable about Jansson's strange and eccentric texts is her ability to extend sympathy for even her most unlikable characters.

The essays that prove to be most interesting are those that deal with once popular, but now overlooked writers, such as Walter de la Mare and John Masefield. Using Theresa Whistler's *Imagination of the Heart: The Life of Walter de la Mare* (1993) as the springboard for the essay, Lurie makes a strong case for the literary merit of de la Mare's fairy-tale collections *Broomsticks and Other Tales* (1925) and *The Lord Fish and Other Tales* (1933). She also reminds readers that de la Mare's *The Three Mulla-Mulgars* (1910) was an important source for J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937). Lurie also attempts to redirect contemporary readers to Masefield's *The Midnight Folks* (1927) and its sequel *The Box of Delights* (1935). While Lurie celebrates both de la Mare and Masefield's prose, she finds little reason to revive their poetry.

Lurie is best at locating overlooked writers of merit, and her essays on well-known contemporary authors are less compelling. The essay on Salman

Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) primarily interprets the story autobiographically, and the essay on J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series mainly rebuts the concerns that conservative Christians have raised about the use of magic and witchcraft in the popular series.

These essays are intended for the general reader rather than a specialist. They function as useful introductions to significant and sometimes overlooked children's writers. While they are gracefully written, they tend to be synthesis of existing scholarship. Like introductions that appear in academic editions of texts, these essays summarize the life of the author and provide a cultural and biographical context for their literary achievements. Lurie continues to be one of the few literary critics who consistently publishes on children's texts and authors in mainstream journals. *Don't Tell the Grown-ups* is a pivotal text in the critical study of children's literature and its publication helped to legitimate the scholarly field of children's literature by literary scholars. Like Roger Sale's *Fairy Tales and After: From Snow White to E. B. White* (1978), Lurie's *Don't Tell the Grown-ups* helped convince academics that there was serious merit in studying children's literature. Since its publication, Lurie's first collection of essays has inspired numerous critics to view children's literature a field of academic study. Consequently the critical study of children's literature is much expanded due in large part to Lurie's earlier work. As a result, *Boys and Girls Forever* will have less of an impact than Lurie's first collection. Nevertheless, *Boys and Girls Forever*, just as *Don't Tell the Grown-ups*, is a good starting point for any reader who wishes to critically evaluate children's books.

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The Princess of Wax: A Cruel Tale. By Scot D. Ryersson and Michael Orlando Yaccarino. Illustrations by Anne Bachelier. Translation by Guy Leclerq. New York, CFM Gallery, 2003.

Telling her only that I was reviewing *The Princess of Wax: A Cruel Tale*, I recently gave my visiting 28-year-old, university-educated niece a textual copy to read; the next morning at breakfast I asked her what she thought of it. "Nobody's going to buy this book for the story" was her terse and acute reply. *The Princess of Wax* is a contemporary "art" tale, a brief (ten page in copy form) attempt at decadence, diablerie, and the macabre, with a failed love story tossed in for good measure. Based loosely on the sensational life of Marchesa Luisa Casati (1881–1957), *The Princess of Wax* is a pastiche of readily recognizable motifs and overtones from writers such as Wilde, Poe, Andersen, Pater, Stoker, Wagner, Lovecraft, and Symons. Note that Ryersson and Yaccarino have previously published on Casati (*Infinite Variety: The Life and Legend of the Marchesa Casati* [2000]) and apparently have established the Casati Archives

(www.marchesacasati.com). Casati's splendid eccentricity has been well documented: her pet cheetah; her nude male servants; her gaunt, phthistic appearance; her dressing in floor-length fur coats sans lingerie, and her desire "to be a living work of art" are all tantalizing tidbits into her fascinating life. So *The Princess of Wax* appears to be the latest step in Ryersson's and Yaccarino's energetic effort to develop a Casati industry.

Here's the tale's basic story (the capital letters belong to the story, not me): the grande dame La Marchesa will host a masquerade debut ball for La Princesse and all the glitterati Courtiers must attend. La Marchesa's "towering ebony manservant, Garbi, bare-chested" (2) informs her that a "genuine witch," The Sorceress, can provide her with the not-to-be outdone centerpiece that La Marchesa requires for the ball. So they row out to a convenient nearby ancient mausoleum, La Marchesa gives The Sorceress a goblet of blood and some gold, and she gets La Princesse, an exquisite wax beauty encased in a crystal cube, with a tiny reliquary of La Marchesa's cruel blood where her heart presumably would be, etc. In a past life La Princesse was a ballerina, and she's got some atavistic ashes (her own, some sparrow bones and seawater for her eyes) tucked away somewhere, which allow her to dance with "magical" beauty. So she's essentially an automata, and her dancing again and again enchants the Courtiers, until she goes nightly back to her crystal sarcophagus. Each evening, of course, La Princesse witnesses "collection[s] of [unspecified] barbarities" (4) orchestrated by guess who. Eventually La Marchesa tires of her exquisite toy and determines to give her to a nobleman (no caps for him) who has taken a fancy to Wax Girl (blow-up dolls weren't available back then in this murky Italianate past?). But wait—there's more. Muscular Garbi has also fallen for Wax Girl and cannot bear to lose her. So, with great love and intrepidity, he secrets her past the tethered cheetahs and python skins, into a waiting boat! But—oh no!—Garbi has not taken into account the effect of atmospheric change on the delicate Wax Girl or the vindictiveness of The Sorceress (who exposes Wax Girl to the light briefly through unnamed magic involving a scrap of apricot silk), and right there in the boat, before Garbi's very eyes, she melts away. And guess what—this does in La Marchesa too. The end. We never hear what happened to the lovelorn Garbi.

Pompous, turgid, and overwritten, the "tale" has virtually no internal logic, no psychological compulsion, no coherence. While one can argue that theme-and-variation is at the core of the tale form, such variation inevitably serves some form of "higher" purpose or insight. Not so here; where the authors might intend a frisson of horror, they manage bathos. Here's the ultimate melting scene: "Translucent droplets of wax began to glisten beneath the amethyst wreath. The frail shoulders sagged. Garbi leapt forward to wrap the black cloak around her again. But in doing so, he lost his footing. There was a

terrible snap and La Princesse now lay on the bottom of the boat. When Garbi clasped her in his arms, he came away with handfuls of ash and tiny hollow bones. Lips dissolved into nothingness. Garbi watched as the stained-glass eyes sank slowly into blackened holes” (5). Ah, *Liebestod*. H. Rider Haggard couldn't have done it any better—or worse (recall the ending of *She*, but at least the film version starred Ursula Andress). I can see Wax Girl's epitaph: “She died with a snap.” There aren't any Pateresque “hard gem-like flames” here—just purple, superficial prose. Does it strike anyone else as odd that La Marchesa's opulent “palazzo” is located on a lagoon? Could Garbi's boat have been the S. S. Minnow? I can't help but hope that the authors had their tongues way far back in their cheeks as they “wrote” this. Enough about the story— it's not worth any more attention.

Normally, it seems to me that a book's illustration depends on its text and forms a decorative, informative, or interpretative relationship with it. Not so for French artist Anne Bachelier's elegant, mysterious oil and mixed media paintings for this “text.” Bachelier has illustrated many classic and contemporary tales (from Charles Perrault to Robin McKinley) and her work for *The Princess of Wax* reveals a deft, experienced hand and vision. These illustrations almost tell their own stories—you don't need “The Cruel Tale” to immerse in them, in the same way that Kay Nielsen's best work can stand alone. The authors admit that Bachelier came first and the story second: “Bachelier was our only choice to visually conceive this tale of love, magic and the fantastic. Indeed, we wrote it for her. The magnificent work she has created for the project has more than exceeded our expectations—Bachelier has astonished us” (see Casati website under “Princesse de cire”). And therein lies the rub: image supercedes word, and word becomes an excuse for image. The text becomes essentially disposable, a mere bauble or baggage (or “project”) on which to hang the illustrations. Whether this is a symptom or a result of our intensely visual lives, and whether this is a good or a bad thing, must be decided individually. Personally, I would have liked a better balance: the text is laughable, the images are not.

These illustrations *are* decadent, reminiscent of the work of Alastair, Sidney Sime, Harry Clarke and others from the early part of the twentieth century. Comparisons to Goya, Moreau, Rackham, Magritte, and Lorenzo Fini have also been made (www.marchesacasati.com/princessedecire.html). Bachelier's human figures, which are almost always the central focus of the designs, are usually attenuated, even bony and sometimes decrepit, reminding of the anguished sculptures of Alberto Giacometti. Dressed in gossamer fabrics and elegant styles of well past eras, they evoke mystery, grandeur, secrecy, mortality. Bachelier calls them “‘thought-beings’ [engaged] in perpetual rituals of revelation and transformation” (www.marchesacasati.com/princessedecire.html). They often reach out

long, long arms to one another, seemingly aching for contact but unable to achieve it. But when they do meet, one figure often envelops or enshrouds the other in mists of color. Her palette relies on smoky swirls of pinks, fuchsias, green blues, grays, with her figures coming out of misty, impenetrable fogs of color, perhaps the backgrounds of desire, horror, perversion, or—may we hope—even love, tenderness. It is hard to know. And Bachelier makes it so.

So the images are worth the price of admission—or are they? The promotion of *The Princess of Wax* is one of the most fascinating aspects of its entire “situation” in the field of modern folk and fairy tales. From the outset, Neil Zukerman and CFM Gallery (New York) have produced a seemingly endless flow of print materials, CDs (sample illustrations, a reading of the text, etc.), and cyber-hype, almost all of it blatant promotion of the book. There is even a “Princess” doll—dare we hope action figures soon? *Gallery & Studio* (March/April 2003) featured a cover article about the CFM Bachelier exhibition in April/May 2003; a new web site was created just to mark the gala opening, and Bachelier paintings are offered for sale at virtually every turn on CFM Gallery web sites (and they sell, evidently). And why not? CFM Gallery has produced the book and has every right to promote it in any way it sees fit. But the real reason for the massive promotion lies elsewhere: this is no ordinary book. Offered bilingually (French and English), various editions range in price from \$4500 for the leather bound, gold embossed, signed edition of 12 (as of this writing in mid July 03, four copies remained), to the \$39.95 paper trade edition. No major retailer currently offers the books, which seem to be available only from the CFM Gallery. No wonder, then, the frenzy to create demand, which will be seen as crass commercialism by some, and the promotion of art by others. No matter—it’s a fascinating look at an alternative to the promotion of stabled authors by the huge international publishing companies.

In the end, *The Princess of Wax* seems a brilliant curiosity, perhaps a fascinating attempt to retrieve the 1890–1920 British and American private presses’ intensely informed commitment to book design and printing, but now of interest to the affluent dilettante and the bibliophile/collector, in their rarefied atmospheres of taste and desire, the very aura that the authors tried but, in my opinion, failed to create in their own tale. It would be interesting if the book as object succeeds where the book as text falls short. The sale of Bachelier’s paintings for the book would indicate that such “supplantation” is indeed occurring.

I regret that I was not provided the actual book form in any of its editions to review and thus cannot comment on layout, design, binding, typography, or paper quality. I leave it to others better able to measure *The Princess of Wax* in its physical form. The great nineteenth- and early twentieth-century private presses, such as Kelmscott, Doves, Eragny, and even The Roycrofters, all loved the aesthetic values of the physical book—but they never, to a one, published

any text which they did not believe had literary or spiritual merit. The same can be said today for many small, private letterpresses. *The Princess of Wax* seems intended to fly in high company—time will tell.

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Cycles of Influence: Fiction, Folktale, Theory. By Stephen Benson. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003. 314 pp.

I think all readers of *Marvels & Tales*, in fact all readers interested in fiction and narrative theory, should read and learn from this book. Stephen Benson makes a compelling argument: that theories of fiction and folktales have been inextricably intertwined, at least since the early work of Vladimir Propp and the Prague School. Twentieth-century grammars of fiction were often based on the folktale and its presumed likeness to language. This much most of us know. But he also shows that many fictions we think of as experimental or postmodernist have been deeply influenced by those grammars. Or, as he puts it, “it is precisely the figural repertoire utilized in the process of the abstraction of a structure and grammar of narrative that has fed back into many of the narrative fictions under consideration” (14).

His central example, in the central chapter of the book, is Italo Calvino. Early in his career Calvino put together a volume of *Italian Folktales* (1956), a collection that seemed to be governed by the model of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* in its effort to salvage a disappearing national tradition. But not long thereafter Calvino moved to Paris and joined the Oulipo group of experimental writers, founded by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais in 1962. Rather than see these moves as competing trajectories, Benson shows how they are related, how Calvino's work with tales (both in his collection and in his own fictions) both feeds into and grows out of his work as an Oulipian theorist. As Benson says, “to concentrate on the traditional elements in a writer often held to be quintessentially postmodern is to make a point that is central to this book” (113). He points to Calvino's continuing experiments with voice, with variety and repetition, and with “invention within convention” (79) in all his fiction, early and late, as evidence for the complexity of his narrative commitments.

Another strand that runs through the book, as well as through the chapter on Calvino, is Benson's concern with what he calls “the folkloric story cycle.” As he points out, Propp and other early theorists of narrative were primarily interested in the elements of discrete, individual tales. They developed their “grammars” by attempting to isolate features that various tales had in common. Benson, however, focuses on traditional story cycles, particularly Somadeva's *Ocean of Streams of Story*, *The Arabian Nights* and Basile's collection *Lo cunto de li cunti* or *Il Pentamerone*. He asks crucial questions about the rela-

tionship of the frame tale and the framed tales, the simulation of an oral environment in written texts, and the question of an authorial presence. What happens when a group of texts is “embedded” in another? How should we analyze the relationship of embedded texts to each other? Are there internal cycles within the larger cycle? How should we understand the narrative tensions between closure and openness, the apparently limited and the limitless? Benson suggests that the move from a formalist or structuralist analysis to a more “pragmatic” approach to narrative will help us answer these questions.

Exactly what that more pragmatic approach might be, however, remains somewhat murky. In his fourth chapter, “Narrative Turns,” Benson invokes Lyotard and Ricoeur to introduce the metafictional games of John Barth, Robert Coover, and (more briefly) Donald Barthelme. Again he argues for a parallel between theoretical work and narrative strategies. Just as modernists broke up the linear narrative of nineteenth-century novels, so the structuralists broke the tale into its constituent parts. Just as postmodernists returned to an interest in linear primary narratives and in framed tales, so poststructuralist critics looked for the ideological and mythic underpinnings of the human desire for narrative itself. He links Barbara Herrnstein Smith’s concern for “narrative *in the world*,” (121), subject to the demands of cultural context and history, to a new understanding of narratives as individual speech acts, rather than as expressions of some “deep structure” of the human mind. Quoting Lyotard, he emphasizes “all the complicated relations that exist between a speaker and what he is talking about, between the storyteller and the listener, between the listener and the story told by the storyteller” (125). As Benson himself points out, the link between such a specifics of narrative and the grander, mythic, overarching conceptions of narrative as constitutive of the human condition—or between a “pragmatics” and a “metaphysics” of narrative (120)—is hard to articulate (126). Is it possible that current narrative theory is heading in two radically different and incompatible directions? If so, what role will primary narratives like folktales play in them? Will we continue to follow Walter Benjamin’s essay “The Storyteller,” with all its nostalgic and archaizing elements, as Benson does? Or will we be able to develop a more sophisticated and integrated understanding of both the narrative desires and the negotiations that make up the storytelling situation?

Some elements of Benson’s book will seem familiar to readers of *Marvels & Tales*, particularly the material on fairy tales in Chapter Five: summaries of recent scholarship on Perrault and the French *conteuses* of the late seventeenth century and on the Grimms’ many revisions of their tales, a treatment of the importance of variants in the study of tales, an examination of the use of the “Bluebeard” tale cluster in recent feminist fiction (particularly by Angela Carter and Margaret Atwood). All his searching concern with narrative theory doesn’t quite seem to

pay off in the final chapter. But the rest of the book is consistently challenging and interesting. (It's also meticulously edited and proofread, with only a very few slight slips. For example, he gives the Borges essay the title "Partial Enchantments" rather than "Partial Magic in the *Quixote*.") At the end Benson suggests an avenue for further theoretical/narrative exploration: hypertext in all its manifestations, particularly its manipulations of written text and its relationship to orality. Throughout the book he also often returns to another promising direction for future work, the parallels between the use of folk material in twentieth-century music (Bartók, Kodaly, Berio) and in literature. His primary contribution, however, is his convincing demonstration of the continuing and reciprocal influence of tales on theory and theory on tales.

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Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked: Sex, Morality, and the Evolution of a Fairy Tale. By Catherine Orenstein. New York: Basic Books, 2002. xiii + 289 pp.

Catherine Orenstein's book is a delightful venture into the European and North American textual tradition of "Little Red Riding Hood." Beginning with Charles Perrault's seventeenth-century French text and ending with Matthew Bright's 1996 American movie adaptation, *Freeway*, Orenstein explores the tale's manifestations in jokes, cartoons, post cards, dolls, poetry, short stories, advertising, television, and movies, in addition to academic and popular collections of fairy tales and popularly marketed chapbooks and children's books. Along the way, she draws on an eclectic mix of critical and theoretical approaches to the tale (social and historical, psychological, structural, and feminist, as well as the discourse on gender and sexuality) in order to develop a thesis that acknowledges the tale's "timeless and universal" qualities, but which ultimately is far more interested in the tale's culturally specific adaptations to time and place. As Orenstein explains, her purpose regarding the figure of Little Red Riding Hood is to "explore some of her multitude of reincarnations, not in search of universal truths, but on the contrary, as evidence of how human truths change" (5).

The book is composed of an Introduction, "Cloaking the Heroine," an Epilogue, "Under the Cloak," and ten chapters, each focused on a different text or related set of texts and each mapping a cultural change in the representation of Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf. Each chapter is prefaced with one of the texts (verbal or visual) that will be analyzed in that chapter, a feature of the book that is particularly handy if one is thinking about adopting it for use in a folklore or literary course.

The first four chapters focus respectively on Charles Perrault's 1697 French text, "Little Red Riding Hood," Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's 1812

German text, “Little Red Cap,” Paul Delarue’s published version of a French oral tale, “The Grandmother’s Tale,” collected in 1885 by Achille Millien, and a 1590 pamphlet entitled “The Trial of Stubbe Peeter, Werewolf.” Each text is historically situated. For example, Perrault’s text is read in relation to the social history of the French court at Versailles, sexually charged and “notorious for its excesses,” a playground for seduction in “an age of institutionalized chastity” (36). The Grimms’ text is read against the background of German and English, middle-class, Victorian, family values: “discipline, piety, primacy of the father in the household and, above all, obedience” (55). Set side by side the two texts, Orenstein argues, represent a shift from “sexual parable to family fable” (56), while also marking a shift in audience from adult to child and from upper to middle class.

“The Grandmother’s Tale” provides Orenstein the opportunity to introduce a range of topics: male versus female narrators, printed literary texts versus oral texts, and the representations of Little Red Riding Hood as passive victim versus active heroine. Also addressed in this chapter are the benefits and detriments of universalist theories and interpretations of the tale (Emile Nourry, Arthur Lang, Erich Fromm, Bruno Bettelheim, Arnold van Gennep, Carl Jung, Otto Rank, Lord Raglan, Joseph Campbell) and of historically situated interpretations (Robert Darnton). At the center of this chapter is a discussion of the significance of the Aarne-Thompson *Tale Type Index* and the historic-geographic method in providing a point from which to critique universalist interpretations that too often have been based solely on a particular text, motif in a particular text or self selected set of texts, as well as to critique methods that treat any given text primarily as an historical document, thus losing whatever meaning might exist in its “broader folkloric patterns” (75).

A chapter on “The Trial of Stubbe Peeter” shifts focus from the figure of Little Red Riding Hood to the figure of the wolf and its premodern antecedent in the werewolf. The text is historicized in relation to the witch trials of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as “a warning—issued in no uncertain terms to the hermit, the outcast, or just the average peasant man—to keep in line” for fear of being named a werewolf (103). Thus while the text situates the wolf as predator, Orenstein’s historicized reading of the text resituates the wolf as potential social victim. This chapter is also used to establish an historical precedent for the shape-shifting, gender-bending figure of the twentieth century.

The second half of the book focuses on twentieth-century North American texts. The first half of the century is represented by Tex Avery’s 1943 animation, *Red Hot Riding Hood*, and Robert Blackwell’s song, recorded by Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs in 1966, “Lil’ Red Riding Hood.” In Avery’s cartoon, *Red Riding Hood* is transformed into a Hollywood nightclub performer while the wolf becomes a comical figure seated in the audience who “hoots and howls,

claps and whistles,” eyes popping out, tongue unrolling “like a red carpet” (113). Orenstein reads the short animation as “a caricature of American courtship” (112) that at once represents the wolf as a womanizer but which also “captured a changing vision of the American woman in the 1930s and 1940s. More sexual, tougher, and more self-reliant than she had appeared in earlier texts written by men—and, unlike other fairy-tale heroines, perpetually single—this figure would become the femme fatale dressed in red that, from the 1950s through the 1990s appeared in advertisements (which are reproduced in the book) for products ranging from Max Factor lipstick to Hertz rent-a-car to Johnny Walker red label and Chanel No. 5 perfume.

As Orenstein moves her analysis into the second half of the twentieth century, she turns to Gwen Strauss’s poem, “The Waiting Wolf” (1990) and Ann Sexton’s seminal work, *Transformations* (1971), reading each in relation to feminist critique of earlier androcentric uses of the tale and in relation to the development of gender studies (Betty Friedan, Simone de Beauvoir, Sherry Ortner, and Susan Brownmiller). The poems are also framed within a history of the concept of rape. Feminist and pseudo-feminist, revisionist writing is further briefly reflected upon through the writings of the Mereyde Women’s Liberation Movement, Anne Sharpe, Rosemary Lake, James Garner, Rachel Yap, Paul Musso, Olga Broumas, and D. W. Prosser, with critique coming from a number of different positionings, but at this point the analytical focus of the book turns primarily to gender analysis, disclosing the gender-bending possibilities inherent in the Little Red Riding Hood figure as she displaces her red hood with the wolf’s fur in the works of Roald Dahl, Angela Carter, and Tanith Lee. While the two chapters that are focused on women writer’s revisionary texts do “highlight the gap between the way men wrote the fairy tale and the way women read” (153) and rewrote it, disclosing, in the first phase, the disjuncture between fairy tales and reality and, in the second phase, resituating the female figure from that of victim to that of agent, ultimately these two chapters in the book were, for me, disappointing. Particular texts are dealt with too perfunctorily, and Carter’s writings have been read both in greater detail and more complicatedly by Cristina Bacchilega (*Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*, 1997) and the contributors to *Angela Carter and the Fairy Tale* (edited by Danielle M. Roemer and Cristina Bacchilega, 2001). Perhaps I simply wanted “more”—something not feasible in a book that attempts to cover the breadth of both temporal and cultural landscapes that this book attempts to cover.

From women’s revisionary critiques and transformations of the Red Riding Hood figure, Orenstein returns to the figure of the wolf, mapping his transformation in the twentieth century, from the predatory werewolf figure represented in films (both in the comic and horror tradition) from Lon Chaney Jr.

as *The Wolf Man* (1941) through *Werewolf in a Girl's Dormitory* (1962), *American Werewolf in London* (1981), *Wolf* (1994), and *Magnolia* (1999), to the cross-dressed gender-bending figure of drag theater, a Gary Larson cartoon, and popular material culture (cross-dressed Ken and transgendered GI Joe dolls). The analysis of male gender-bending leads back into a discussion female gender-bending and female-centered erotics (a shift from Perrault's "warning against female libido" to the women's explorations and control of their own sexual enjoyment). Highlighted in this section of the book are the ways in which particular motifs surrounding the Red Riding Hood figure have functioned as a fetishistic "alphabet" in fairy-tale pornography, both heterosexual and lesbian (literature by Anne Rice written under the pen name A. N. Roquelaure, films such as *The Punishment of Red Riding Hood*, plays such as *It Could Have Happened Once Upon a Time*, and postcards featuring "Little Red Riding Crop"). Orenstein's analysis here focuses on the ways in which fairy-tale porn, with its focus on bondage, domination, and sadomasochism, makes "explicit the fairy tale's obsession [. . .] with rules, obedience and punishment" (212) at the same time that it makes available a "malleable dynamic" in terms of gender and erotic construction: Red Riding Hood may appear as either submissive female or dominatrix in control of not only her own but her partner's erotic pleasure.

The final chapter features an analysis of Matthew Bright's 1996 film, *Freeway*. The film, set in California, features a Red Riding Hood figure, appearing in a red leather jacket, baggy pants, and the combat boots of hip-hop, who is, as Orenstein reads her, "a Gen-X girl" in the "attire of the social underclass," embodying both a class-based voice and the voice of "marginalized youth" (224–25). The wolf is a serial sex-killer who preys on young, female hitch-hikers and "cross-dresses" as a child psychologist. In this chapter, Orenstein returns to folkloristic structural analysis. Drawing on Vladimer Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, she uses Proppian analysis to situate the movie in relation to what she calls "the fairy tale code" that is "passed down, like cultural DNA, from one generation to the next," but which with each generation becomes open to endless variation in its adaptability to "the time and day in which it is told." Structurally, this chapter parallels her pre-twentieth-century chapter on "The Grandmother's Tale" just as earlier chapters sit in a parallel relationship with pre-twentieth-century chapters, mapping male and female narrators and their respective constructions of gender and sexuality.

Finally, in the "Epilogue," Orenstein turns to personal narrative, describing a doll that she played with as a child. The doll "incorporated the entire cast of 'Little Red Riding Hood': turned right-side-up, it was Little Red Riding Hood; turned upside down, it was the wolf, and on the wolf's back was the grandmother. As a symbolic text, the doll situates the three major characters

as one, suggesting to Orenstein the extent to which the characters, like gender roles, “are not discrete, absolute concepts, but entwined and related and always shifting” and that each “of us carries within an intuitive understanding of what it means to be wolf, Grandma, woodsman, and Little Red Riding Hood” (244–45).

Orenstein’s book is a well-written, intellectually playful analysis of culturally and temporally specific versions of “Little Red Riding Hood.” The strengths of the book lie in the sheer number and range of textual representations that are addressed either fleetingly or in detail, in its interplay among different media and registers of artistic expression, and in its focus on continuity and change as manifested within the larger Western European and North American textual tradition. While particular chapters (for example, those of Perrault and the Grimm Brothers) don’t necessarily articulate new readings of the texts, other chapters (in particular those focused on Tex Avery’s films, fairy-tale porn films, and Mathew Bright’s film, *Freeway*) do present both texts and analyses that are either refreshingly new or that further our understanding of the malleability and shape-shifting quality of the fairy-tale figures in relation to cultural constructions of gender, sexuality, and class. Furthermore, the book is reader-friendly and teachable and might be productively paired with Alan Dundes’s *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook* (1989) or with Jack Zipes’s *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (1993) in a folklore or literature class focused either on fairy tales or on gender and sexuality.

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