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Reviews

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REVIEWS

Nelson Mandela's Favorite African Folktales. Edited by Marguerite Gordon. New York: Norton, 2002. 144 pp.

The American publication of this volume follows its earlier release in South Africa under a slightly different title. It is a beautiful book: large, square-format pages on glossy white paper, with colored graphics and headers and frequent, charming illustrations. It consists of thirty-two folktales in English, collected from a variety of African countries and cultures, and retold or translated by writers, folklorists, and journalists. The tales are by and large well and attractively told, with a mixture of oral and literary voices, and with frequent sophistication despite being aimed at a young reader. They are also immediately familiar: despite the differences in setting and nomenclature, their situations and characters are those of a thousand Western tales. Part of their familiarity to a Westernized reader is, obviously, the result of the common motifs found in folkloric traditions across cultures. The collection offers an impressive selection of origin myths, beast fables, trickster heroes, cautionary tales, christening curses, monster husbands, and magical brides, and it exemplifies the usual folkloric concern with pattern, repetition, and simplified quest-plots revolving around essentially domestic objects. This is indeed an effective and enjoyable children's collection, but it is also a fascinating text, offering in its bright and pretty pages a neat but essentially unreflecting encapsulation of many of the tensions and debates that surround folkloric writing in our time.

The collection's packaging immediately betrays its two most obvious marketing focuses: children and a notion of African heritage centered on black identity and history. In its format and the naive appeal of its illustrations, the book is clearly aimed at children, a tendency reinforced by the association with Nelson Mandela's name, and hence the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.



(Interestingly, the Mandela association completely elides the identity of the book's actual editor, whose name appears only on the copyright page. However, the book's jacket does not at any point suggest that the Children's Fund or any other Mandela foundation receives any revenue from sales.) Approving comments from Bill Cosby are also prominently displayed on the front and back covers, strengthening the association with family values. Mandela's foreword to the collection expresses the wish that "all the children in the world may experience the wonder of books, and . . . the magic of stories" (8). The association of children with fairy tale, which bedevils folkloric expression from the Victorians onward, is here operating at full force, to an extent that tends to overshadow the collection's simultaneous, Grimm-style notion of folklore as cultural heritage.

This dual focus of the collection is underlined by the fact that Mandela and Cosby are even more powerfully icons of black identity, their invocation obviously chosen to authenticate the origin of the tales while providing recognizable and highly regarded points of identification for an American market. The importance of fantasy for children is interwoven with the notion (in easy, popular terms) of African heritage: the foreword and jacket blurb return again and again to the notion of the authenticity of these tales and their roots in African oral tradition. However, in many ways the collection's claim of "African-ness" is shakily grounded, betraying something of a conceptual slippage: most of these tales are from southern Africa, largely marginalizing the rest of the continent. The elegant map at the beginning of the volume identifies tales from Morocco and Nigeria, with the identifying flags becoming more thickly clustered down the length of Africa, to huddle cozily in South Africa, source of fourteen among the collection's thirty-two tales. Solitary tales pop up from Central African states such as Uganda and the Congo; Botswana and Zimbabwe are better represented. The collection's genesis as a South African document is clearly marked, despite its attempt to claim a broader notion of African culture.

Further slippages are present within the selection of tales themselves, and the tensions and contradictions revealed are perhaps the most interesting aspect of the collection. While claiming association with black icons such as Mandela, the book unabashedly presents stories retold by largely white writers, both English and Afrikaans. Out of nineteen writers in the author list, only three appear to be black Africans, and one of those lives in America. In origin, the tales themselves drift casually between oral and literary sources, retellings of actual oral African tales barely differentiated from original stories in an oral style, or from purely literary creations. (The biographical note on writer Minnie Postma, for example, claims that her knowledge of the Sesotho tales is such that "she was later able to create her own tsono [stories] in the Sotho idiom" [142], but at no point do notes on the tales differentiate this kind of creation from



retellings of actual Sotho tales.) The stories range from the more famous African origin myths, utilizing figures such as Lion, Hare, and Mantis, to contemporary children's tales ("Fesito Goes to Market," while using fairy-tale repetition, has its main character riding a bicycle), Afrikaans folktale (the old Van Hunks and the Devil story about Table Mountain), Cape Malay and Islamic stories, and historical tales with fairy-tale elements (Asmodeus rather entertainingly trapped in a genie-bottle by the Governor of the Cape). The hodgepodge is a little bewildering, and at no point is the wide cultural range supported or contextualized by the short introductory notes. Despite the collection's title, many of these "African folktales" are neither African nor folkloric.

The drift from oral to literary forms is, of course, an ongoing problem in folkloric studies, particularly given the tendency of literary versions to both mimic and supplant the oral voice. By their very nature, authentic oral forms are few and difficult to transmit; in order for us to access them freely, they must be written down, and the act of writing transforms them. This problem is exacerbated in the African context by the complex cultural and political issues around colonization, as well as the power relations between the indigenous peoples whom this collection implicitly claims to represent and the European colonizers who are, in fact, largely doing the representation. I find it interesting that, given the extreme political awareness in post-apartheid South Africa, these important issues are not addressed by the collection's editor. The claim of authentic African-ness made by the collection's framing and title is not supported by the variety of cultural forms it invokes or by the choice of writers to transmit the tales, and no attempt is made to situate this multiculturalism within a wider definition of "folklore."

This failure of contextualization is continued in the forms and patterns of the tales themselves. The Cape Malay, Afrikaans, and Islamic tales, which form a significant minority in the collection, could at least be seen as authentically "African" folklore in the sense that they represent cultures within Africa and a genuinely folkloric transmission of tale patterns across various levels of retelling and cultural influence. While existing partially in opposition to the collection's subtextual claims of black African heritage, there is certainly a sense in which they are "African folktales." More complex in genesis are those tales that appear to be Africanizations of familiar Western stories. Some tales, however, are close enough to well-known Western tales that questions of influence and transmission must be raised. "Natiki," for example, is essentially the Cinderella story retold in African idiom; "The Wolf Queen" is an Islamic version of the Donkeyskin tale, complete with animal pelt and three dresses of silver, gold, and diamonds. In claiming such stories as authentically African, the collection's rubric tends to ignore the complex processes of cultural influence in their retelling. In a sense they are authentic, certainly; they



represent the ongoing process of folkloric adaptation over both oral and literary forms. But the complexity of such processes is overwritten completely by what is obviously a marketing decision in the collection's format: African heritage and Nelson Mandela are powerful marketing tools. I cannot help wishing the collection's editors had shown a little less awareness of the market and a little more self-consciousness and sophistication in their framing of this collection of "African folklore."

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The Robber with a Witch's Head: More Stories from the Great Treasury of Sicilian Folk and Fairy Tales Collected by Laura Gonzenbach. Edited and translated by Jack Zipes. New York and London: Routledge, 2004.

Laura Gonzenbach's is a wonderful collection of Sicilian oral tales as she heard them from the voices of traditional storytellers. Gonzenbach, a Swiss national who lived in Sicily at the beginning of the nineteenth century, wanted to explore and promote a "Sicilian" cultural and literary notion. In his two-volume edition, Jack Zipes makes available to English-language readers what is, in his opinion as well as in mine, the most startling literary discovery concerning folk- and fairy tales of recent years. The first volume, *Beautiful Angiola: The Great Treasury of Sicilian Folk and Fairy Tales Collected by Laura Gonzenbach*, was published in 2003; this review will focus on the second volume only.

The book is something more than a simple collection of folklore transcriptions. In fact, as Zipes underlines in his introduction, Gonzenbach gathers her tales mostly from women storytellers. At that time women used to narrate privately, only rarely telling their stories in public. Fluent in the Sicilian dialect, Gonzenbach was interested in listening to women's tales in order to get their point of view. She had a special interest in this approach; even though she was not a feminist, she built a bridge between the old and modern society. Zipes reorganizes the collection according to his own choice, and in so doing he conducts another interesting cultural operation, mostly responding to a literary taste rather than to a demotic criterion. This choice widens the gap between Gonzenbach's work and Giuseppe Pitrè's collections (*Fiabe e leggende popolari siciliane*, edited by A. Rigoli, Palermo: Il Vespro, 1978; and *Fiabe, novelle e racconti popolari siciliani*, edited by A. Rigoli, Palermo: Il Vespro, 1978), with Pitrè being the other and more famous collector of nineteenth-century Sicilian tales.

Gonzenbach's and Pitrè's works are to be considered the most important references for the Sicilian treasury of folk- and fairy tales. Their value is evident in the study by Sebastiano Lo Nigro, who used them in applying the Aantti Aarne index to Sicilian folklore. The differences between Pitrè's and Gonzen-



bach's work are that the former has a more scientific approach; it is in the Sicilian language; it has not been edited for style; and anecdotes, proverbs, and jokes are interspersed with stories. Gonzenbach is more attentive to style, and in her collection we find a beautiful selection that makes it comparable to that of the Brothers Grimm.

In Gonzenbach's collection we find stories that are not available elsewhere, because Pitrè refers mainly to tales gathered in the western part of the island. In Gonzenbach's stories we also recognize motifs from other important literary productions. This is the case with the tale "The Beautiful Maiden with the Seven Veils." Like the famous *Pentamerone* by Giambattista Basile (sixteenth century), this tale recounts the common motif of the heroine betrayed by a black slave; furthermore, the heroine in both narratives uses the telling of stories to reveal the trick to which she has been subjected. In the two stories the prince has been fooled by a black woman who has taken the place of the princess destined to be his wife. The betrayed woman is able to restore her rights by telling tales that reveal the truth to the prince. This story and closely related motifs are found in works belonging to the Italian "elite" literary culture. From the fifteenth century onward, Italian writers started writing famous stories of folklore in an elevated language and style. Boccaccio and Basile are the most famous, but we can also recall Masuccio Salernitano and Giulio Cesare Croce, the author of *Bertoldo and Bertoldino*. A similar project was carried out by Laura Gonzenbach and more recently by Italo Calvino in his *Italian Folktales*.

In the present collection we have some tales, such as "The Clever Maiden" and "The Robber with a Witch's Head," that are similar to those recorded by Pitrè in his collection. Another is the famous tale "The Twelve Robbers," whose main motif evokes that of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" of the *Arabian Nights*. It is interesting to note that while Pitrè refers to different versions of the same story, Gonzenbach has chosen a more detailed version in which two brothers appear: one is discovered and killed by the thieves, while the other survives and enjoys the treasure but shares it with his brother's widow. As in many folktale collections, there are a few stories with similar motifs. This is the case with "Bensurdatu" and "Armaiinu," in which a hero saves a princess but is fooled by jealous companions who leave him to starve in the well where he had rescued the princess. The translator notes that the storytellers always emphasize that, even if the story has a positive ending, in reality life is very hard life and it is difficult to transform it into one with a happy ending.

It is interesting that in this volume we find stories similar to those of the biblical tradition, such as the story of Joseph and his brothers. There are also stories of Greek or Arab origin; in the latter case one readily thinks of the story of the princess with the seven veils. Also of interest is that in Gonzenbach's stories as translated by Zipes, whenever the hero has to arrange a meeting in the



open air, he chooses a date tree. For example, when two brothers arrange to meet, the choice is that of this Oriental tree, which is curious because the island is known to be rich with olive and orange trees; this seems to be an explicit allusion to the Islamic influence in Sicilian folk literature. This Oriental presence is more evident in Guha's anecdotes, which have proven to be of Arab origin but do not appear in this collection.

It seems that Sicilian folktales are the result of a cultural and ethnic melding process in which biblical, Greek, and Arab elements blend together. Across the centuries, women amalgamated these cultures and integrated into their native culture different influences from foreign invaders: Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Normans, French, and Spanish. The Gonzenbach collection is an elegant version of these folktales that shows the richness of the Sicilian patrimony.

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The Kalevala and the World's Traditional Epics. *Studia Fennica Folkloristica.* Edited by Lauri Honko. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2002.

When a folk-literary scholar, not herself an expert in epic poetry, digs into the thick texture of this substantial volume on the *Kalevala* and traditional epics, she is very soon enveloped in a rhetoric quite rare elsewhere in folk-literary scholarship. Not only do epic scholars proudly proclaim the elitism of their object of research, but they also imply that the research of epics is an elite branch among the varieties of folk-literary study. Most of them situate their research across the boundary of literature and oral tradition. Their study is thus most pertinent to all who want to critically examine the constructed dimension of the category of folk literature in general, and specifically oral literature.

One need only read a few stanzas or lines of any piece of epic poetry to sense the poetic refinement and skill invested in the creation of epic poetry. Only seldom does one encounter that level of sophistication in folk prose, and then only in specific forms of the folktale that tend to straddle the written-oral divide. I am reminded of a discussion I had with the late editor of this volume, Lauri Honko, after we had been listening to a brilliant paper on urban legends delivered by one of our colleagues. Honko congratulated himself on having access to such textual riches as Finnish laments or South Indian epics, which he rated much higher than the somewhat—in his eyes—banal oral narratives of modern urban cultures.

The volume encompasses twenty-eight essays by twenty-seven authors. Honko himself contributed both a theoretical introductory essay and a more traditional comparative study of epics in the eastern Baltic region. The essays break down thematically as follows: *Kalevala* across the borders (five essays); European traditional epics (six essays); American and African traditional epics



(two essays); Asian epics (six essays); and traditional epics of the eastern Baltic region (nine essays). On the whole they reflect the intensified interest and common work done by epic scholars in the last two decades, led and inspired by Honko himself through the “epic network” he initiated within the framework of Folklore Fellows International. Another important and leading figure in the field is his close colleague John Miles Foley, founder and editor of *Oral Tradition*, who has contributed to the volume an article that deals with the metonymic character of the oral epic with reference to an assumed “pool of tradition” (113; cf. Honko, *Textualizing the Siri Epic* [Folklore Fellows Communications 264], 1998; *Textualization of Oral Epics*, 2000). Although the dynamics between the “persistence of traditional forms as textual rhetoric” (120) and the “performance arena” (121) may seem to be yet another refinement of the competence-performance complex (e.g., Briggs, *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art*, 1998), Foley formulates astutely what seems to be at present a dominant intuition in epic studies: “the old model of the Great Divide between orality and literacy has entirely given way in most quarters, pointing toward the accompanying demise of the absolutist dichotomy of performance versus document” (121). That may also provide the generalizing perspective that makes this volume as a whole worthwhile reading for all folk-literary scholars and probably textual scholars, without distinguishing between genre and mode.

Thus the good or bad news, depending on one’s point of view, or maybe no news at all, is the fact that the so-called Homeric question has definitely not disappeared or been rendered irrelevant by recent scholarship. In this sense the assumption that A. B. Lord laid down in his *Singer of Tales* (1960), whereby the oral-formulaic theory was to put an end to the debate whether the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were the textual culmination of an oral tradition of generations or rather the stroke of a unique genius, Homer, has been disproved. Honko’s introductory essay on the composition of Elias Lönnrot’s *Kalevala* almost seems to ignore the existence of the oral-formulaic theory by focusing on what to Honko is the essence of the epic phenomenon: its textualization. Honko has described textualization as a process and a practice including such moments as pool of tradition, epic register, mental editing and diachronic variation, mode of performance, audience interaction, collected text, and publication strategy, to mention just a few (Honko 2000: 18–35). It thus encompasses the whole epic phenomenon, from the inklings of epic memories in the mind of a performer or a listener to the full-fledged product of a printed and annotated version.

Consequently, Honko presents Lönnrot as a not-too-remote transformation of the oral singer of epics. But he also surmises the opposite, that the epic singers possessed the same kind of “mental texts” (14) that he rightly, I think, attributes to the author/compiler of the *Kalevala*. One might, of course, propose



that Honko primarily addresses the specific case of the *Kalevala* sui generis in this article. It seems, however, dubious that he of all people would have written an introductory essay for this important volume in which no general theoretical bone is contended. I consider the omission of Parry and Lord and their followers from both of Honko's essays (with the important exception of Foley's 1990 *Traditional Oral Epic: The Odyssey, Beowulf, and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song*) a significant statement. On the basis of his systematic and extensive work recording South Indian epics and especially the Siri epic (1998), Honko returned to the study of the *Kalevala* with a new dominant concept in mind, namely textualization (Honko 2000).

Interestingly, at least three articles in the volume, authored by three scholars and appearing in the Baltic section, tend to challenge Honko's distancing himself from the oral materials and concentrating on the written production. Senni Timonen's "Lemminkäinen's Mother: Some Aspects of Lönnrot's Interpretation," Niina Hämäläinen's "Elias Lönnrot's First Kullervo Poem and Its Folk-Poem Models," and Elina Rahimova's "Variation of the Crystallized Imagery in Oral Poems in the Kalevala Metre" all draw extensively on the rich materials of the fifteen colossal volumes of the "Old Poems of the Finnish People" (*Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot [SKVR]*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 1908–97), in which the variations embodied in the different oral performances individually recorded by Lönnrot himself and others are highlighted. Anna-Leena Siikala, Honko's successor as the director of the Kalevala Institute in Turku, widens the perspective from the textual product to the cultural background of the singers, thus also breaking the textualizing circle, in her article, "The Singer Ideal and the Enrichment of Poetic Culture: Why Did the Ingridiens for the Kalevala Come from Viena Karelia?"

Honko was undoubtedly one of the greatest folklorists of the twentieth century. He was active as a professor at the University of Helsinki, founder of the Institute of the Research of Cultures (Folklore, Ethnology, and Comparative Religion) at the University of Turku, professor at the Finnish Academy of Science, president of the Finnish Literature Society, president of the International Society of Folk Narrative Research (1974–89), reviver and head of Folklore Fellows International, and active in the UNESCO committee for intangible heritage, to name just a few of his numerous posts and titles. Honko made folklore an internationally connected and acknowledged discipline by personally traveling to inspire colleagues on every continent. His enthusiasm was stormy, his intellectual generosity boundless, and his leadership firm.

Honko was also my teacher when I first came to Helsinki as a young student at the end of the 1960s to find out what folklore was about. The incumbent of the Chair of Folklore (the term today, then it was actually called folk poetry, in Finnish), the late Matti Kuusi, represented a serene, masterful, and



traditional school, whereas Honko came as visitor from the newly founded chair in Turku for weekly seminars in which fresh winds, sometimes almost stormy, blew through the heated discussions. Honko communicated folklore as a first-rate intellectual challenge, something worthy of young people to devote their lives to. From these two teachers, the fir tree (Kuusi in Finnish) and the pine (Honko), a lush and vibrant verdure grew into one of the most productive periods of Finnish folklore studies.

On the evening of July 15, 2002, I arrived in Turku at my aunt's home. I called the home of Anneli and Lauri Honko right away and was welcomed by a voice-mail announcement. I left a message asking Lauri to call back and schedule a meeting the next morning. The absence of a return call was highly uncharacteristic, I thought. The next morning a mutual friend called to tell me that Lauri Honko had collapsed during his evening exercise and had passed away. The great scholar of epics and laments is lamented and missed.

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Animal Motifs in Asian Art: An Illustrated Guide to Their Meanings and Aesthetics. By Katherine M. Ball. 1927. Mineola, NY: Dover, 2004. 286 pp., black and white illustrations, index, bibliography (pre-1927), pbk.

Few reference texts survive eighty years of shelf life, and in the world of Google scholaring and instant updating one may expect that even fewer will endure "intact" as originally published. This is precisely what makes Dover Publication's decision to reissue verbatim Katherine Ball's 1927 *Animal Motifs in Asian Art* so intriguing. My first impulse was to write it off as a bit of Dover arcana, an outdated curiosity of interest perhaps to a few antiquarians but now superseded by "current" scholarship. Then, more or less on an Urashimo Taro whim, I looked up "The Tortoise" and learned much more than I had expected about the "shelly tribe."

Like the venerable *Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, *Animal Motifs in Asian Art* is meant for browsing, not to be devoured cover to cover. Arranged in an idiosyncratic biologic order beginning with "The Dragon" and ending with "The Dragon-Fly and Other Insects," the text contains chapters on creatures real and imaginary, from badgers to unicorns, and the chapters are clearly named. If you need help with foxes, you will find a chapter; waterfowl and serpents have their own chapters, as do lions, peacocks, fish, and bats, to name only a few of the thirty-eight species represented.

"Asia," as Ball used the term in 1927, refers primarily to China and Japan, with comparative cross-references to Hindu, Egyptian, Incan, Mayan, and Greek mythologies and iconography. South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Korea are not prominently featured. A pertinent literary or philosophical headnote and illus-



tration opens and closes each chapter, and each begins with an overview of the placement of its “animal” in Asian art, followed by a survey of legends concerning the animal. Ball carefully references linguistic origins of key terms and concepts, ranging comfortably through Japanese, Sanskrit, and Chinese lexicons and history. One of the text’s most valuable aspects is its copious illustrations (though the quality of the reproductions is not as high as today’s production values might dictate), which Ball sometimes closely “reads” in terms of iconography. She is particularly good at identifying and placing specific thematic motifs and structural elements in the visual and sculptural images (though she does call such motifs and elements “decorative”). In this she anticipates the work of Irwin Panofsky and Edgar Wind later in the first half of the twentieth century.

Back to the tortoise, which will serve as a sample of the kinds of lore one will find in the chapters (incidentally, Ball correctly lists tortoises and turtles together under the genus *Chelonia*). In keeping with her belief that China was the origin for most Asian myths and legends (vii), Ball begins chapter 6 with an exploration of the historical veneration of the tortoise (*kuei*) and its place in Chinese cosmography. She observes benevolent and evil tortoises (carefully located in specific stories) and reviews the relation of the tortoise and the serpent. Apposite Hindu myths are noted. Fourteen black-and-white illustrations—line drawings, wood-block prints, bronzes, scroll paintings, all duly attributed—accompany chapter 6. Ball grants the tortoise two chapters (as she does for dragons, lions, elephants, bulls, serpents, and “sea-floor life”/fish). Chapter 7 provides an overview of the biology and capabilities of tortoises, then moves to Japan, where the tortoise is *kame*. We learn that, as well as being regarded as “The Base of All Things,” the tortoise is highly intelligent and can be taught to march on command and to stand on its hind legs (48). The tortoise’s special relationship to seafarers is studied, and we learn that tortoises are fond of intoxicants, so if a fisherman catches one, he should give it a drink of sake (50), which puts rather a different spin on “catch and release.” When Ball recounts that on temple grounds, vendors sold “tortoises to be set free,” “dangling from strings or helplessly squirming on the tops of poles,” I could not help but recall the little painted turtles sold annually in the carny of the 1950s Los Angeles County Fair, reptiles destined not for release but for an agonizingly slow death in their plastic, palm-tree-adorned bowls, no longer able to breathe. Ball looks also at the lure of the tortoise’s longevity, and we learn of several practices of divination by tortoise, as well as the Buddhist practice of inscribing religious texts and dates on the shells of living tortoises, then releasing them in order to attain spiritual merit (50 [does this make the tortoise a proto-blog?]). Finally, Ball retells the story of Urashimo Taro, ending the chapter with a discussion of the enduring relation between the tortoise and the crane in Japanese mythology.



In sum, *Animal Motifs in Asian Art* offers a compendium of images and information and provides a useful source for researchers seeking cultural and philosophical “leads” with representations of animal life in traditional and current Asian literature and visual art. While the prose style may seem somewhat ornate and sometimes precious today, and while there are occasional disconcerting ethnic remarks (vii), the collection of so much information in a single volume remains highly useful. Oldies can indeed remain goodies.

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The Tale of Bluebeard in German Literature: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present. By Mererid Puw Davies. Oxford: Clarendon P, 2001. ix + 279 pp.

The Tale of Bluebeard, as Mererid Puw Davies writes in her preface, is the first full-length study “devoted to the history of ‘Blaubart’ in German literature” (vii). Since tales such as “Bluebeard” may signify “some of our most essential narratives about ourselves,” an exploration of this literary tradition is intended to provide “keys for an understanding of culture and the history that formed it.” In this particular context, “keys for an understanding” serves as a cue- or clue-phrase, aligning the critic (and her readers) with the inquisitive heroine whose transgressive search for knowledge, for secrets beyond a forbidden door, ultimately leads to her salvation. Indeed, as specified in the preface, “With its focus on a relationship between a woman and a man, ‘Blaubart’ has consistently been a seismograph of gender politics, and it is on that theme which this study will focus most extensively” (vii). Davies thus introduces her subject matter with immediate clarity, and despite the great quantity of primary and secondary materials dealt with in this book, it is distinguished from beginning to end by its intelligibility and organization.

A brief outline of the content of the eight chapters will give readers a sense of the scope of Davies’s study of the Bluebeard tale in German thought and culture; however, it will necessarily leave out the close attention to textual details that accompanies her historical overview. Drawing on previous scholarship of the *märchen* genre, chapter 1 demonstrates not only that notions about the timelessness and purely oral origins of the genre are constructed conventions, “enthusiastically taken up in the interests of a German Romantic Nationalism,” but also that the stories constantly assume new literary shapes and express significant contemporaneous ideas (4). In this chapter Davies also takes a crucial step for her rereading of Perrault’s “La Barbe bleue” (1697) as a utopian, proto-feminist narrative—a rereading central to the argument of her book—and, citing Kay Stone’s sensible observation that “the feminist view of [fairy-tale] heroines has itself become a stereotype,” she proposes a reexamination of such hackneyed perceptions of the genre. Some tales, after all, may be used “to



transmit more complex and subversive messages than meet the eye" (13). Chapter 2 presents the principal thesis to be sustained throughout the book: "far from being a tale about feminine subjection and suffering, 'Bluebeard' is a tale about a woman who flouts patriarchal authority, acquires knowledge in the face of terrifying adversity, and . . . is rewarded for it" (41). I shall return to this portrayal of Perrault's text as a "literature of subversion *par excellence*" (56) at the conclusion of my discussion. Chapter 3 analyzes various expositions of the origin of the Bluebeard story in history, mythology, social practice, and psychology. What is truly remarkable, as Davies cogently argues, is this singular tale's elasticity, which allows it to accommodate so much and to stretch so far, thereby revealing "less about its putative past meanings than about . . . the way it reflects contemporary ideas about marriage, *Märchen*, and civilization" (93). Precisely, and such a statement also suggests that no interpretation can stand outside the tradition of interpretation it describes but rather is unavoidably or "always already" implicated in it.

Chapter 4, one of the finest in this impressively informative monograph, provides a thorough comparative analysis of early versions of "Bluebeard" in German. This chapter exemplifies the merits of what may be called post-New Criticism—that is, it successfully combines a close reading of specific texts, such as Friedrich Bertuch's and August Lewald's translations of "La Barbe bleue" and the Grimms' 1812 version of the French *conte*, with considerations of intertextuality and sociohistorical contexts. The following three chapters address different retellings of the tale at different periods in German history and show how "Bluebeard" functions as a kind of cultural barometer, registering changes in gender politics, perceptions of national identity, and other processes of civilization. Chapter 8 offers a summary of the materials discussed and draws conclusions about the ways that, for more than three hundred years, an astonishing variety of "Bluebeard" texts have borne the telltale imprint of where they are coming from and what they have seen.

In chapter 7, "Bluebeard in the Later Twentieth Century," for example, Davies examines a group of texts written by women who, with varying degrees of explicitness, address two major issues in recent German history. First, the murderous figure of Bluebeard is associated with the legacy of National Socialism and the Holocaust, symbolically linking bloody chambers with gas chambers and the forbidden, encrypted spaces of memory. In these narratives, as Davies shows, the attempted annihilation of the Other as Woman in the tale of Bluebeard is coherently and chillingly connected to the genocidal policies of the Nazis. Second, and relatedly, women writers have also used Bluebeard materials to represent, explore, and criticize the consequences of that dark history, namely, the division of Germany after 1945 (with Bluebeard as paradigm and symbol, evoking the brutal authoritarianism of the GDR) and its reunifica-



tion after 1989. As opposed to the still-frequent association of women and women's writing with the private or homebound sphere, Davies describes how writers such as Ingeborg Bachmann, Karin Struck, and Unica Zürn have deployed the *Blaubartmärchen* in order to link individual and collective trauma, medical discourses, the Holocaust, second-generation memory, the abuse of children, and other publicly fraught issues. She thereby extends the investigation begun in her earlier essay, "In *Blaubarts Schatten*: Murder, Märchen and Memory" (*German Life and Letters* 50 [1997]: 491–507), in new and significant directions. In placing "Bluebeard" firmly in its time-bound contexts, Davies's study takes part in the critical process of the demystification of fairy tales (as in the scholarly work of Cristina Bacchilega, Ruth Bottigheimer, Maria Tatar, Jack Zipes, and others) as an ageless ideal, somehow above or "superior" to history and its vicissitudes.

Having said that, I would nonetheless propose two reservations, one mainly technical and the other substantive. First, in leaving all German and French texts in the original languages, without translation in tandem or in footnotes, Davies dramatically limits her readership. This decision is regrettable because Davies's clear-sighted and detailed interpretations of German inflections of the Bluebeard tale constitute an important contribution of her study to the literary tradition it explores. Second, as noted previously, Davies offers a resolutely positive reading of the gender politics of Perrault's version as "a vehicle of subversive utopianism" (14). Such a reading, however, leads to some tight hermeneutic corners. For example: "[Perrault's] *conte* is far from reflecting a man's world in which women have no autonomy or agency. Specifically, the bride's family is headed . . . by a mother who gives her daughters a large degree of freedom, and so the daughter's decision to marry Bluebeard is her own" (44). But this "pro-feminist" feature may be easily reversed and its implications read otherwise. For example: look at what happens when women, rather than men, rule the family, and daughters are foolishly given the freedom to choose their mates and the opportunity to indulge their insatiable curiosity. Very often they lose their heads! The conservative moral codas appended to the tale reinforce this warning message; as Davies herself observes, "the *moralité* implies that the text cautions against curiosity" (45). How, then, is the tale's purported flouting of patriarchal authority to be upheld? Davies claims that Perrault, sensing the "explosive potential" of his transgressive tale in which the heroine (unlike Eve in the biblical narrative) is richly rewarded, "attempted to re-stabilize the text by adding such conventional and less pro-feminist *moralités* to it" (45). Yet again, it is difficult to reconcile the autonomous, emancipated female subjectivity repeatedly adduced by Davies with Perrault's emphasis on a woman governed by her emotions: impatience and curiosity. Forgetting civility, she neglects her guests, is impelled—or even "compelled," as Davies writes (51)—to open the prohibited



door, and altogether unable to overcome temptation. Compulsion and autonomy are challenging, if not impossible, concepts to yoke together.

Holding up Perrault's tale as a potential standard of "utopianism and challenge to traditional, patriarchal gender roles" (245), a model against which later retellings are measured, also requires playing down three narrative givens. First, contra the "subversive implication of the woman's getting away with it without being harshly punished" is the fact that only *one* gets away and all the others are violently lost (96). Second, as Marc Soriano points out in *Les Contes de Perrault: Culture savante et traditions populaires*, in contrast to folk "Bluebeard" versions, Perrault eliminates the heroine's recourse to magical animal helpers who bring a message to her parents or brothers; instead, his version dramatizes her tearful passivity and makes her rescue depend on *hasard*, the fortuitous arrival of her brothers who just happened to plan a visit that day. Third, although Bluebeard is indeed overthrown at the end, the lucky wife remains firmly enclosed within the symbolic paternal order: not only is she transferred from the keeping of one husband to a supposedly more benign lord and master, but she also enables this transfer of her person (including her newly acquired fortune) herself—a sign of provisional agency as well as of permanent collusion with the law of the fathers. No sooner does Perrault's heroine gain independence, wealth, and power than she gives it back to a male (be)holder.

It is arguably therefore not the tale itself that is utopian but rather the critic's reading of it, expressing a wish (which I and, if I may presume, many of her readers share) for a fairy tale of emancipation, for a narrative that bodes better for women than it does in actual design. Davies would save a text-in-distress from the critique of its feminist readers, a rescue effort that repeats at the metacritical level the timely intervention of the brothers in Perrault's tale. These recuperative strategies are compelling and exemplify, to borrow a phrase from Harold Bloom's poetics, a strong misreading of a very scary story.

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Language and Gender in the Fairy Tale Tradition: A Linguistic Analysis of Old and New Story Telling. By Alessandra Levorato. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 230 pp.

In *Language and Gender in the Fairy Tale Tradition*, Alessandra Levorato utilizes a linguistic approach to analyze the ideologies at work in fairy tales, namely "Little Red Riding Hood" (AT 333). Levorato examines both traditional and radical versions of the tale in the light of how ideologies are embedded in texts at various levels and thus produce meaning. Her book is a refreshing examination of how linguistic and formal qualities of fairy tales are not only



significant components of the tales in their own right but also influence the construction of fairy-tale gender roles and sexuality in a way that is inextricably linked with the production and expression of ideological biases on the part of both readers and writers.

Levorato outlines her methodological approach and her data choices in the first chapter, "Introduction: Exploring Gender Issues in Fairy Tales." She considers her book to be unique for its melding of complementary critical (though not folkloristic) strategies. Levorato names as her primary theoretical influences M. A. K. Halliday's functional grammar, based on the notion that "every choice regarding the structure of a text is a choice about how to signify" (3); Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of analysis, which views a text as simultaneously "a discursive practice, text and social practice" (3); and Theo Van Leeuwen's theory of social actors, founded upon a "set of sociological categories" that "investigate the way social actors and social action are represented in discourse" (4). Levorato also cites computer-based quantitative analysis as one of her main tools. Her use of quantitative analysis reveals, for instance, that "ideological standpoints are passed on not just by means of single words but also, and especially, in grammatical and lexical patterns" (12). This standpoint is reflected in the progression of her analysis from the simplest constituent of fairy tales, the word, to the more syntactically and semantically complex relational clauses and social roles within the tales. Next, Levorato gives synopses of twelve versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" spanning three hundred years, ranging from Paul Delarue's reconstruction of a French oral version to literary versions, some overtly patriarchal, such as the versions of Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, and some radically feminist, such as versions written by Angela Carter and the Merseyside Fairy Story Collective. As Levorato drew all of her texts from Jack Zipes's *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, the latter is a useful companion volume to Levorato's book.

In chapter 2, "Words, Gender, and Power," Levorato shares the results of the quantitative analysis she performed, filtered through terminology belonging to linguistics. The insights obtained from comparing word counts and collocations (the habitual co-occurrence of words) in different versions of the tale demonstrate that "patterns of co-occurrence, the frequency and distribution of items, and even the syntactic structures in which words are embedded deeply affect meaning" (31), to the point that the underlying assumptions of various words can be used to develop different meanings. Also, this type of analysis shows "how a word which in itself is not in the least sexist can indeed become so if used asymmetrically" (31).

Attention to asymmetries continues to inform Levorato's analysis in chapter 3, "The Representation of Social Practice." After a somewhat unwieldy explanation of Van Leeuwen's terminology that she uses in this chapter, Levorato



launches into an analysis of how the authors of the dozen tales represent their respective characters. Her analysis demonstrates that the characters' identities are often described in radically different ways according to gender; for instance, female characters are likely to be situated only in relationships to other characters, whereas male characters are more likely to be portrayed with independent identities. At the end of this chapter, Levorato summarizes her findings to show how the writers of these tales all make choices through which "they have variously contributed to the maintenance of patterns of subordination, as they were initially established in either Perrault or Grimm, or contributed to re-shaping gender relations by refusing to conform" (58).

Chapter 4, "Ideology and the Clause: The System of Transitivity," again emphasizes the importance of the author's linguistic choices and again begins with a set of new vocabulary for the reader to learn: Halliday's system of transitivity, which is composed of process, participants, and circumstances. Levorato utilizes these associated notions to illustrate the difference in gendered behavior between traditional, patriarchal versions (like that of Perrault) and nontraditional versions. One interesting difference is that in traditional versions the wolf is the main actor, with the girl only reacting to him, and often in an inadequate, overly emotional manner. Levorato shows that the use of transitive and goal-oriented verbs in nontraditional versions strengthens the impression of a strong, efficacious heroine, which is a significant re-imagining of the weak, passive, objectified heroines imagined by patriarchal writers.

In chapter 5, "Gender and the Ideological Constitution of Subjects," Levorato restricts her analysis to five texts in order to "show how different ideologies are needed to construct the coherence of different versions" (112). Through attention to patterns found in the tales' levels of discourse, she demonstrates that the inferences a reader is supposed to make in order to take part in the text's coherence actually implicate the reader in the author's ideology. Levorato returns to the important point that making sense of a text (and thereby accepting the ideology contained within it) is the work of both the writer and the reader; specifically, "Every decision about the coherence of the texts in these cases will depend on the reader's ideological assumptions, and the degree of freedom of interpretation envisaged by the writer will reveal the writer's own ideas about her/his readers' expectations and ideological assumptions" (146). By implicating the reader in constructing the meaning of a text, Levorato adds a layer of significance to each reading of each tale, thereby creating space for a multiplicity of meanings that hold the power to subvert normative ideologies. Reception is an important avenue in fairy-tale studies, as Donald Haase notes in "Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship: A Critical Survey and Bibliography" (*Marvels & Tales* 14 [2000]: 15–63), a point that adds another layer of relevance to Levorato's work.



In the final chapter, “Intertextuality, Ideology and the Tendencies of Change,” Levorato analyzes the interrelationships of her dozen “Little Red Riding Hood” texts, noting the reliance of rewritings on earlier texts. After examining how the titles of subsequent retellings along with the key scenes have been changed, Levorato concludes, “the stronger the feminist standpoint of the writer, the greater the changes” (195). Intertextual relations are important for their ideological relevance, since “the possibility for a comparison with the original is used to highlight the conservative quality of the older version so that the reader will hopefully consider the alternative values offered” (154). Levorato makes clear the import of the patriarchal values; for instance, Perrault’s “Little Red Cap” introduces domesticating details to the oral folktale, making it clear “that a different (patriarchal) discourse is colonizing the represented discourse” of the earlier, less didactic, more female-positive oral version (156). In fact, the versions by both Perrault and the Grimms relegate the character of Little Red Riding Hood to passivity, as Levorato’s clause count in the tales shows; moreover, the girl is shown as both inadequate and partly responsible for her fate, perceptions that feminist rewriters of the tale seek to overturn.

Levorato was able to draw some important conclusions in her study, and this sort of linguistic analysis is valuable because quantitative data such as word counts force some degree of objectivity on the analyst, and language choices confirm other features of a text, such as representations of gender. I am tempted to say that this type of study might be the new historic-geographic, since it also seeks to compare versions of a tale type across time and space, but without an intended scope so large as to be prohibitive. This method also does not focus on recovering or reconstructing information that we simply do not have; rather, it uses what we *do* have—namely, different versions—to make inferences about ideological constructions. Levorato’s book could also comprise a new formal approach; as she states in her introduction, her book is unique because “it focuses on the linguistic dimensions of the text rather than on their content” (2). The close attention Levorato pays to the consequences of authorial choices enhances her study, as her conclusions align at different linguistic levels. This linguistic focus is important to keep in mind; the only folklorist Levorato cites extensively is Zipes. Still, her results are interesting and important, and with a little tweaking her method could be tailored to fit a more folkloristically oriented study.

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A Companion to the Fairy Tale. Edited by Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri. London: D. S. Brewer, 2003. 294 + viii pp.

University presses have recently begun publishing “companions” at a terrific rate. As Judith Ryan suggests in *Profession 2004*, this may be in part a desperate



effort to find profitable books to publish at a time when monographs are selling in smaller and smaller numbers. But what is a companion these days? And why should we want them? Whose companion are they supposed to be? The *OED* says that “companion” is used “often as a title of books of reference, a vade-mecum,” but few of the recent ones are actually reference books. Often they seem loosely designed as a collection point for assorted scholarly essays on one topic or writer. While some bring readers up to date on the relevant scholarship, some are already dated when they come out. Many, in fact, remind me of old series like Prentice-Hall’s *Twentieth-Century Interpretations* (of one work) or *Views* (of one author).

In any case, we now have two fairy-tale companions: *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (2000, ed. Jack Zipes) and the newer *A Companion to the Fairy Tale* (2003), reviewed here. They reflect completely different approaches to the companion genre. The Oxford version is essentially in encyclopedia format, with short, alphabetized entries for individual authors, illustrators, and tales and a few longer articles on topics such as “British and Irish Fairy Tales” or “Psychology and Fairy Tales.” (Full disclosure: I wrote about ten of the entries in that volume.) The new version is a collection of fairly long essays, ranging from general ones about interpretation and creativity to essays on the Grimms and Andersen to a series of pieces on traditional tales from Ireland to Ossetia. (It would have helped this reader to have brief biographies of the contributors. Only one scholar, Ruth B. Bottigheimer, contributed to both collections.) Zipes focuses on the literary fairy tale (with a slight overemphasis on material written for children), while the new one constantly shifts its focus from written materials to oral transmission and back again.

This uncertainty of focus is evident in the introduction by the editors, Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri. As they say in the first paragraph, “a distinction must be made between the oral fairy tale, recorded with various degrees of accuracy, as delivered by a storyteller to an audience, and the literary fairy tale, the individual creative work of a writer. However, there is no clear-cut division between these two types, which constantly overlap.” This is certainly true—but then they immediately go on to discuss Andersen and the Grimms and their roots in “popular oral tradition,” as if this were the most important part of their work. Although they return to the point that the fairy tale is not “an exclusively literary or an exclusively oral phenomenon,” they emphasize the now-outdated methods of the Finnish school in examining the transmission of tales. Throughout the introduction (and the essays that follow) there is no unifying critical position but rather a grab-bag effect: let’s include a little of everything and see what we come up with.

The book begins with two ambitious general essays that are grab bags themselves. In “The Interpretation of Fairy Tales,” Derek Brewer draws on



somewhat outdated research to claim that “the defining qualities of fairy tales . . . are to be discovered in their oral roots” and that most fairy tales are about “growing up,” the development of the hero or heroine following an interdiction or transgression. Though he is sharply critical of much current fairy-tale research and interpretation, Brewer ends by arguing that it has now achieved intellectual respectability in the academic world, incorporating such bourgeois virtues as “self-criticism” and the capacity for change. Neil Philip, in “Creativity and Tradition in the Fairy Tale,” argues that all storytellers are “conscious literary artists.” He ranges through both oral and written traditions, from Rabbi Nahman ben Simha of Bratislava in the early nineteenth century to Zuni and Gypsy tales to Carl Sandburg’s *Rootabaga Stories*, to prove his point. Like many of the other contributors to the collection, he pays lip service to the idea of mixed transmission but ends with the importance of “a new sense of orality.” (His quotation from the Inupiaq storyteller Apákag is memorable: “You ruin our stories entirely if you are determined to stiffen them out on paper. Learn them yourself and let them spring from your mouth as living words.” But it also underlines the oral bias that runs through the volume.)

Several of the essays are unusual and in some sense original. In “The Ultimate Fairy Tale: Oral Transmission in a Literate World,” Ruth Bottigheimer questions (in her usual terse and telling style) the continuing insistence on oral transmission, “based on the gaping absence of evidence.” Joyce Thomas’s “‘Catch if you can’: The Cumulative Tale” is a lively examination of tales based on incremental repetition like “The Gingerbread Boy.” Though we may wonder if these are really fairy tales, her examinations of plot, voice, and audience expectations are subtle and telling. Hilda Ellis Davidson’s “Helpers and Adversaries in Fairy Tales” often brings out unrecognized significance in well-known patterns.

Many of the other essays, however, seem to be primarily summaries of earlier research: Graham Anderson on the classical roots of fairy tales, Bengt Holbek on Andersen, David Blamires on the Grimms’ editorial practices (based on the work of Rölleke and Tatar), Pat Schaefer on the contributions of Marion Roalfe Cox to Cinderella studies. There are also seven essays about tale collecting and study in Scandinavia, Ireland, Wales, Ossetia, Russia, the Caucasus, and South Asia—all long on information, bibliography, and tale summary but short on analysis and methodological considerations. The final essay, by Tom Shippey, considers twentieth-century rewritings of fairy tales, marshaling all the usual suspects (Atwood, Barthelme, Byatt, Carter, Rushdie, and others) and some old feminist criticism. He ends, however, with a discussion of their “modernising” and Tolkien’s “archaising” techniques, a promising if sketchy comparison.

In short, although this new companion has some interesting moments, it is a strange mixture of received (and often questionable) opinion and conflicting notions. For example, the editors have placed Ruth Bottigheimer’s essay,



attacking myths of pure oral transmission, next to Neil Philip's essay, perpetuating many of those myths, without any editorial comment. I will recommend that my students reach for *The Oxford Companion* as a handier and more reliable "vade-mecum."

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The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia. Edited by Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen (with the collaboration of Hassan Wassouf). Vols. 1–2. Santa Barbara, CA, Denver, CO, and Oxford, England: ABC-Clio, 2004. xxvii + pp. 1–464; viii + pp. 465–921, 49 illustrations.

The tricentenary of Antoine Galland's 1704 translation of the *Arabian Nights* compilation into French has been widely celebrated in the Western Hemisphere through readings, symposia, exhibitions, and the media. Much more than one of such memorials, the *Encyclopedia* under review is a useful research tool of long-lasting significance. The encyclopedic genre has its roots in early-eighteenth-century Europe, where it was meant as an instrument to survey, summarize, and popularize knowledge of vast and ever-growing volumes whereby encyclopedic forms for storing and preserving knowledge had also been developed in the Arabian literature before. Both editors are leading scholars: Ulrich Marzolph is a professor of Islamic studies at the University of Göttingen, Germany, and one of the senior editors of the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*; Richard van Leeuwen is an Arabist and assistant professor from the University of Amsterdam who previously issued the Dutch encyclopedia *De wereld van Sjahrazad* ("Shahrazād's World," Amsterdam: Bulaaq, 1999) and translated the *Nights* into Dutch. Their new *Encyclopedia* is the outcome of a three-year project sponsored by the German Research Society, which has done well to invest in another long-term production such as this multidisciplinary reference book.

The *Encyclopedia* is arranged in two volumes. Volume 1 contains an introduction by Marzolph and fourteen introductory essays (1–61), each written by an internationally renowned specialist. Forming part 1 of the volume, this section treats issues such as the literary style of the *Nights* (Daniel Beaumont); the situation, motivation, and action of the stories (Aboubakr Chraïbi), their oral connections (Hasan El-Shamy); the combination of the prose narratives with poetry (Geert Jan van Gelder); the manuscript tradition (Heinz Grotzfeld); film adaptations (Robert Irwin), Orientalism (Rana Kabbani); the illustrations, which Kazue Kobayashi classifies into three categories; intertextual relations to the Arabic popular epics (Remke Kruk); gender issues of homosociality and heterosexuality (Fedwa Malti-Douglas); selected images of masculinity (Reinhard Schulze); the stereotyped roles of Jews within the stories (Joseph Sadan);



social life and popular culture as expressed in the tales (Boaz Shoshan); and the relationship of the *Nights* to modern Arabic literature (Wiebke Walther). Each of these three- to six-page surveys contains references and useful suggestions for further reading. As for the issue of orality, El-Shamy discusses textual evidence from the tales and a number of references to folkloristic tale type classification. One would also have liked to know whether and how tales of the *Nights* are still orally performed in the coffeehouses and marketplaces and at recent international festivals. For instance, there is no reference to Marrakech's *Djemâa el-Fna*—performers who have become part of UNESCO's "Intangible Cultural Heritage" program and toured France, Belgium, and Germany starting in 2003. Considering such contemporary uses should not simply be left to journalists but should also be put on scholarly agendas. A most appealing element in the *Encyclopedia* are forty-nine—for the most part nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European—illustrations that appear interspersed within the two volumes. On their own, they deserve a historical analysis that could be made in terms of thematic iconography and Orientalist discourse. Intertextuality is referred to in regard to Arabic poems and epics, but one would also have liked to know more about connections to the larger corpus of Arabic folktales, admittedly a vast field to explore and one we get glimpses of from the classification work done by El-Shamy.

The bulk of volume 1 is made up of part 2, "The Phenomenon of the Arabian Nights" (63–464). Despite its modest title, this is a powerful section, as it provides surveys of 551 tales contained in various printed editions, manuscripts (Wortley-Montague, Reinhardt), and European editions, with Burton as the main reference and Mahdi and Mardrus as additional sources. Each of these tale entries, which are alphabetically arranged according to title, contains a summary of the narrative and some comparative statements that will be useful to scholars of folklore, philology, and comparative literature. One can only express respect for the compression of tens of thousands of pages of narrative text into some four hundred pages of recounting. Most welcome is the spelling of the Arabic personal names based on a simplified transliteration giving, for example, Sheherazad as *Shahrazâd* and Aladdin as 'Alâ' al-Dîn, which gives a better impression of the Arabic pronunciation than the Western types of spelling.

The main part of volume 2 is made up of part 3, "The World of the Arabian Nights" (465–741), which contains a dictionary of 248 alphabetically arranged terms and names that account for thematic issues of the narrative texts and their historical and cultural contexts as well as the names of collectors, editors, researchers, and creative writers dealing with the *Nights*. Indeed, a whole narrative and metanarrative cosmos is presented. The latter entries are text- and biography-oriented and include well-known personalities (e.g.,



Basile, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Dante, Assia Djebar, Goethe, Nagīb Mahfūz, Poe, Rushdie, Voltaire, etc.), but most welcome and valuable are also personalities previously known only to scholars of the Orient. We are introduced to academics of the Western type (e.g., Victor Chauvin, Mia Gerhardt, Edward W. Lane, Enno Littmann, Muhsin Mahdi, Joseph C. V. Mardrus, Johannes Østrup, and others) and to Arabic-language scholars, poets, and mystics (e.g., Abu l'-Faraj al-Isfahānī [tenth century] or Suhayr Al-Qalamāwī [1911–97] as a modern female scholar of pioneering status). The topical entries discuss narrative motifs such as *Abduction*, *Amazons*, *Disguise*, *Geomancy*, *Hashish*, *Journeys*, *Merchant*; contextual elements such as *Abbasids*, *Baghdad*, *Harūn al-Rashīd*; and literary phenomena such as *Motifs* and *Textual History*. The entry *Censorship*, which mainly dwells upon some historical dealings with the erotic fancies that abound in the *Nights*, figures prominently. Here one would have liked to get an impression of more recent legal cases in Egypt and other Arabian states. Noteworthy are the entries on the foreign lands, peoples, and literatures as depicted in the *Nights*, such as *China*, *Christians*, *Greek Literature*, and *India*, which give some glimpses into the Arabian transcontinental relations prior to the age of globalization. While *Black People* refers to the negative stereotyping of blacks in the *Nights* (positive views appear, however, in Arabic poetry!), an entry on *Africa* is missing. Although the Arabs knew the Swahili coast (whose culture they essentially enriched), this region is nowhere referred to in the *Nights*. In the Arabic sources the “legendary” *Wāq-Wāq Islands* “cannot be identified with any known land” and “symbolize the Eastern fringe of the known world” somehow around Japan (2: 735), whereas Swahili sources locate them somehow in the longitudes of Madagascar or Southeast Africa (Marina Tolmacheva, *Swahili Forum* 2, Cologne 1995, 21–22). In many aspects, part 3 not only helps to clarify elements of the *Nights* but also serves to mediate cultural knowledge about the Arabian world in general. Some of these entries have precedents in van Leeuwen’s previously mentioned Dutch encyclopedia and Marzolph’s numerous articles in the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (cf. http://www.user.gwdg.de/~enzmaer/Frame_Def/hmtl), in which one usually finds further elaboration of the topics.

The remaining pages of volume 2 contain appendices: the first presents a “Concordance of Quoted Texts” (743–82) through which some summarized texts are linked to other important text editions, such as those of Galland, Lane, and Littmann. One wonders why van Leeuwen did not include the tales of his Dutch translation. Seen on the whole, this concordance might bear the function of a kernel to which any translation in any language could subsequently be attached, which in the end would result in a synopsis of the *Arabian Nights* stories as they appear translated into the world’s languages. Appendices 2–6 provide special lists: “Closely Corresponding Stories” found within the



corpus; a “Concordance for Quotations of Chauvin 1892–1922”; inventories of the AT types and important Thompson motifs found in the *Nights*; and a “Concordance for Quotations from ‘Arabia ridens’” (Marzolph’s index and analysis of humorous stories published in 1992). Preceding a person and subject index, an extensive bibliography (811–52) significantly includes the works of the most recent as well as “classical” *Arabian Nights* scholarship. The repeated misspelling of the name of scholar Susan Slyomovics should be corrected from “Slymovics.” An asset is the inclusion of titles of the Arabic research literature.

At the time this *Encyclopedia* was issued, Marzolph organized a fruitful symposium at the old Herzog August Bibliothek of Wolfenbüttel where the participants pointed out important avenues for further research (cf. preface to special issue *Marvels & Tales* 18.2 [2004]). One major direction was a focus on the spread and reception of the *Arabian Nights* in languages and cultural regions that have until recently (if one looks at the entry “Translations,” 724–27) received little attention—areas such as Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Greece, Sicily, the Swahili coast, and other parts of Africa all the way to Hawaii (as contributions in *Fabula* 45.3–4 [2004] document). For a long time to come the *Encyclopedia* of Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen will be an unparalleled reference source that is useful to scholars as well as critics and storytelling practitioners. If the stories of the *Arabian Nights* are to be regarded as “world literature” (2: 680)—and there can indeed be no doubt about that—*The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* must be regarded as their principal ambassador.

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Ideological Variations and Narrative Horizons: New Perspectives on the Arabian Nights. Special issue of Middle Eastern Literatures (incorporating Edebiyat). Edited by Wen-chin Ouyang. 7.2 (July 2004).

Evelyn Fishburn, one of the nine contributors to this special issue of *Middle Eastern Literatures (incorporating Edebiyat)*, begins her essay on Jorge Luis Borges’s frequent invocation of the *Arabian Nights* with the words of the Argentinean writer himself: “Los siglos pasan y la gente sigue escuchando la voz de Sha-harazad” (“The centuries pass and still we listen to the voice of Scheherazade”). These words, taken from Borges’s story collection *Siete Noches*, provide an apt description of the work of numerous scholars over the last three years to commemorate the three hundredth anniversary of Galland’s translation of the *Nights*. Indeed, the voice of Scheherazade permeates, directly and indirectly, both Western thinking about Arab and Muslim cultures and also international scholarly discourse about narrative. The essays in this special issue are part of the latter



category, the research outcome of a three-year project on “Genres, Ideologies, and Narrative Transformation” sponsored by the British Arts and Humanities Research Board.

The strength of these studies is in their diversity. They offer a panorama of *Nights* scholarship, linked together by a keen understanding of the complexities of genre studies and an interest in not only how stories work but also how stories and storytelling travel from culture to culture, from language to language, from orality to literacy. Wen-chin Ouyang describes the project and its theoretical parameters in her introduction to the issue and in her essay “Whose Story Is It? Sinbad the Sailor in Literature and Film.” The term “genre ideologies” itself is loaded, Ouyang admits, with political, theoretical, and narrative connotations.

Medievalists and Arabists will especially benefit from the first grouping of essays. Aboubakr Chraïbi’s “Texts of the *Arabian Nights* and Ideological Variations” focuses on the “organized and integrated” medieval core of stories and explores how they were incorporated from varied traditions into the medieval Islamo-Judeo-Christian cultural ideology. Julia Bray’s “A Caliph and His Public Relations” daringly takes Muhsin Mahdi to task for taking as historically factual certain details of “The Steward’s Tale,” a part of the Hunchback series. The structure of medieval historiography, Bray argues, can provide evidence to its manipulation and revision. Ulrich Marzolph, complementing his other recent comparative work, has contributed an essay (“Narrative Strategies in Popular Literature: Ideology and Ethics in *Tales from the Arabian Nights* and Other Collections”) focusing on how various storytellers may manipulate the same tale for their respective purposes.

The second set of three articles—by Richard van Leeuwen, Peter L. Caracciolo, and Evelyn Fishburn—demonstrates how the *Nights* and its interpolated tales have migrated and influenced European and Latin American fiction traditions. Fishburn’s essay, “Traces of *The Thousand and One Nights* in Borges,” explores the complex and intertextually laden fiction of Borges, who, like American author John Barth, used the *Nights* as his primary source of inspiration, adapting both its complexities of structure and its multivoiced nature for use in his own labyrinthine short stories. In “The House of Fiction and *le jardin anglo-chinois*,” Caracciolo compares the arabesque practices of England’s first recognized novelist, Fielding, to the structure of the *Nights* in an important contribution to the debate over the origins of the novel. Focusing on the multiple-layered Hunchback tale, Caracciolo finds allusions not only in Fielding but through the nineteenth-century British novel tradition. Van Leeuwen extends the comparative range to Eastern Europe in “The Art of Interruption: *The Thousand and One Nights* and Jan Potócki,” a study of an eighteenth-century



French/Polish author and his use of the “generic conventions” of the *Nights* as a way of representing the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment.

The issue ends with articles by Robert Irwin and Matthew Cohen on the transformations of the *Nights* in film and theater and how these transformation both emerge from and contribute to Western notions of Orientalism. The vantage point of Irwin’s “A *Thousand and One Nights* at the Movies” faces west as he investigates the ways in which European and American film both borrow from and stereotype the Orient, converting the Eastern stories into Western films. Cohen directs his gaze the opposite direction in “*Thousand and One Nights* at the Komodie Stamboel: Popular Theatre and Travelling Stories in Colonial Southeast Asia.” The *Nights* of Indonesia arrived by way of European translations in the nineteenth century, yet the colonizers disdained the Komodie’s portrayal of these stories.

Perhaps only the most dedicated *Nights* scholars will find every essay in this issue of immediate interest, yet any scholar engrossed in the study of narrative and the ideologies of story will find something of consequence here. At the same time, however, the synergy created by the juxtaposition of these diverse studies demonstrates the wide-ranging grip of the *Nights* on both scholarly and popular audiences. The *Nights* provided a catalyst for narrative innovation, both East and West, in both literature and film, and despite the extent of recent scholarship, we still have much to uncover. The contributors to this issue of *Middle Eastern Literatures* provoke, inspire, and invite us to continue the pursuit.

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Once Upon a Virus: AIDS Legends and Vernacular Risk Perception. By Diane E. Goldstein. Logan: Utah State UP, 2004. 210 pp.

In *Once Upon a Virus*, Diane Goldstein, professor of Folkloristics at Memorial University in St. John’s Newfoundland, examines the intersections between HIV and AIDS narratives, medical and public health discourse, and actual behaviors related to HIV risk perception. Goldstein aims to show the ways in which these popular narratives work with and against official narratives about HIV, AIDS, and the risks of infection, as well as the roles that contemporary legends play in the success or failure of public health messages about risk behaviors and practices.

The four narrative case studies in the middle chapters make up the heart of the text and deserve close attention. Each chapter takes a contemporary legend or group of legends as they appeared in Newfoundland at specific times and discusses them at length. Taken together, they reveal the interrelationships



among narrative, public discourse, social practice, and private behavior. These studies underscore the need to look at contemporary legends within their localized contexts and the ways in which narratives are taken up and modified by the people of a community so that they maintain relevance to that community. Goldstein's analysis in these chapters demonstrates the influence that legends have on the behavior of a specific population at a particular moment in history.

The first two chapters, "Tag, You've Got AIDS" and "Bad People and Body Fluids," locate AIDS legends within the much older tradition of folk narratives about disease, infection, susceptibility, and blame. Goldstein provides substantial contextualization for Newfoundland as the site of the ethnographic data used throughout the text. She also lays the groundwork for the case studies in later chapters by establishing the history of AIDS in Newfoundland and introduces Conception Bay North as an area stigmatized by the statistics of high HIV infection recorded there in the early 1990s. Early in chapter 2 the features of contemporary legends and the major concerns of legend scholars are introduced and outlined briefly but succinctly. And the latter part of this chapter delineates the types of motifs of disease narratives that reappear in HIV and AIDS legends.

"Making Sense" is the title and aim of chapter 3. Here Goldstein addresses the intersections among contemporary legends, public health services, the medical establishment, and the media. She argues convincingly for the importance of public health initiatives to acknowledge the ways in which disease narratives reflect concerns about the trustworthiness of the medical establishment. Further, narratives provide clues to understanding the causes of continued risky behavior even though most people seem to understand the messages public health is trying to project. Goldstein stresses the importance of taking popular narratives into account when designing health education projects. She concludes by identifying a significant hole in medical and public health studies and argues that they need to begin looking at shared social narratives rather than individual personal experience narratives alone.

Chapter 4, "What Exactly Did They Do with That Monkey, Anyway?," is the first of the four case studies in the book and looks at HIV/AIDS origin narratives in medical, media, and popular traditions. The chapter is broken into sections based upon the three categories of AIDS origin narratives: "Animal Theories," "Isolated Case Theories," and the most revealing and interesting section, "Laboratory-Virus Theory." In this last section, Goldstein argues that conspiracy theories may demonstrate resistance to government, medical, and military organizations as well as work as "counter-blame" narratives for the communities that feel targeted by the other two origin categories.

In the strongest chapter, "Welcome to the Innocent World of AIDS" (an earlier version of which was published in *Contemporary Legend 2* [1992]: 23–40), Goldstein looks at two popular "Welcome to the World of AIDS" leg-

ends. Her discussion of the second legend in particular and the reasons for its popularity in Newfoundland is brilliantly argued. This study clearly illustrates the efficacy and importance of understanding local social factors in determining not only how and why certain legend variants are told in specific communities but also the ways in which they reinforce local social norms and values.

The corpus of tales and rumors about “Billy Ray Virus” and the case of Ray Mercer, a Newfoundlander who was convicted of knowingly infecting two women with HIV, is the focus of chapter 6. The chapter interrogates the scapegoating and vilifying of one man as a deliberate infector/“patient zero” type for Newfoundland. Goldstein’s analysis of this case and its ramifications is much more complex than merely identifying Mercer as the scapegoat. This chapter untangles the intricate web of facts, rumors, and legends that tied Mercer the man to “Billy Ray Virus” the character type in the public imagination. Goldstein goes further to illuminate the ways in which a complex set of narrative factors allows for the rationalization of risky behavior. Once a “culprit” has been publicly identified and prosecuted, the community feels free of the threat of infection. The danger of this kind of thinking, of course, cannot be overemphasized.

Chapter 7 shifts the focus from the specifically identified culprit to “stranger danger” and contemporary legends about faceless infectors who leave needles in public spaces in order to infect innocent strangers. “Banishing All the Spindles from the Kingdom” suggests that “what we have always taken to be an articulation of fear in contemporary legend is actually an articulation of choice” (156). The choice in this case, Goldstein asserts, is linked to the desire to keep medical and governmental agencies out of the bedroom and the home by highlighting the dangers of random and unpredictable forms of infection out in the world. That is, by choosing “stranger danger” and deliberate infecting villain narratives over public health messages about safe sex, we firmly locate the risks of infection as external and therefore can “safely” reject public health projects that seem to impose themselves on the private sphere.

The final chapter, “Once Upon a Virus,” moves away from specific legends and motifs to focus on the ways in which narrative and public health campaigns can and do interact. It is in this chapter that Goldstein’s primary assertion is most effectively confirmed. Public health programs must begin (in some cases continue) not only to acknowledge the power of popular narratives around HIV and AIDS risk perception but also to work actively with these narratives in order to effectively change popular behaviors. Further, this understanding must be contextualized locally to ensure relevance to specific communities.

Goldstein acknowledges and addresses many of the volume’s limitations at various pertinent points throughout the text. However, the picture one gains of Newfoundland is of a place more heterosexual than usual. The heteronormativity of the text does seem particularly odd in the light of its subject matter.



This is not to say that the gay community is not addressed but rather that when it is addressed, it is within discussions of common North American or world understandings of risk perception, and/or along with race in relation to “othering.” Further, as a feminist, I would like to see even more discussion of gender norms and their role in risky behavioral practice. In addition to the few references to the power dynamics of heterosexual sexual relationships, a discussion about social attitudes toward risk perception seems to call out for investigation into the ways in which narratives about masculinity are implicated in resistance to condom use.

Nevertheless, Goldstein must be praised for the breadth and depth of her research. She tackles an extensive range of issues concerning HIV and AIDS, the media, popular culture, resistance to government, the medical industry, and public health programs, and does so carefully and without oversimplifying. *Once Upon a Virus* touches upon so many important themes successfully, and provides the reader with so many sources for further in-depth study in areas that necessarily cannot be explored fully in the text without derailing its primary purpose, that these criticisms seem minor.

Both students and scholars of folkloristics will find *Once Upon a Virus* an interesting and instructive text. Its main strengths lie in its case studies and its clear discussion of how narratives intersect with lived experience. Goldstein effectively demonstrates how knowledge of a local variation of a tale, combined with a thorough understanding of the local culture in which it appears, can tell us about what is at stake for the community in the telling of a particular variant of a tale in a particular place at a particular time.

The text will also be valuable to medical and public health practitioners as an incentive to take cultural concerns and the ways in which messages are read in specific locations into account when producing public health messages in the future. Perhaps just as importantly, the text will serve to remind, or point out for the first time to nonfolklorists, that popular public discourses not only disseminate misinformation about disease and risk behavior but also reveal deep-seated beliefs and localized cultural fears, norms, and limitations on behavior.

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