Marvels & Tales

Volume 38
Issue 2 *Fairy Tales and Fashion*

Article 10

2024

Reviews

In this issue and the next, we will be publishing reviews of the extensive multivolume *A Cultural History of Fairy Tales*, edited by Anne E. Duggan. Each of the six volumes covers a different time period: Antiquity (500 BCE to 800 CE), Medieval Age (800 to 1450), the Age of the Marvelous (1450 to 1650), the Long Eighteenth Century (1650 to 1800), the Long Nineteenth Century (1800 to 1920), and the Modern Age (1920 to the present). Within each volume, the same eight themes appear as chapters by different authors: Forms of the Marvelous, Adaptation, Gender and Sexuality, Humans and Non-Humans, Monsters and the Monstrous, Spaces, Socialization, and Power. We have chosen to spotlight these reviews by commissioning scholars to review each theme separately across all volumes. We bring you the first four reviews—on forms of the marvelous, adaptation, monsters and the monstrous, and socialization—in this issue, and the remaining four reviews will appear in the next issue.

***A Cultural History of Fairy Tales**. Edited By Anne E. Duggan. 6 Volumes. London: Bloomsbury, 2021.*

"Forms of the Marvelous"

The six-volume collection en bloc, *A Cultural History of Fairy Tales*, aims at providing readers with examples of the broad trends and nuances of the fairy tale from antiquity to the present, and will be extremely useful to new and experienced fairy-tale scholars and a valuable addition to academic libraries. This review evaluates the first chapter of each of the six volumes on forms of the marvelous, which would be most beneficial to readers interested in gaining a deeper understanding of fairy-tale forms in Western culture across the over 2,500 years covered in this transnational and multivolume set.

In volume 1, Graham Anderson's chapter, "Prodigies and Wonders" in antiquity, largely focuses on Greek and Roman literature and is divided into many subsections, such as Epic and Old Comedy, Exotic Location, and Myth and the Marvelous, which contributes to the breadth of coverage of the chapter and its readability. Anderson begins the chapter with a subsection titled

"Toward a Definition" and affirms that a clear view of the ancient world's concept of the marvelous may be found in Pliny the Elder's encyclopedic work *Naturalis historia* (*NH*, "*Natural History*," first century CE) and that ample examples may also be found in Homeric and later epic (11–12). Anderson continues with catalogs of wonder, a genre known as "paradoxography," in which unusual births, the finding of gigantic bones, and other curious facts were documented before turning his attention to "the traveler's wonder-tale," a motif that according to Anderson "accounts for a high proportion of marvel-related material" (13–15). However, the genre of myth is where Anderson situates the most wide-ranging selection of marvelous events with examples of anthropomorphism such as Achilles' horse, Xanthus (20).

Contributing to the transnational scope of the chapter, Anderson also discusses the inclusion in classical literature of "the wonders of India" and their association with Alexander the Great, the marvelous in the Near East with Sumerian literature and the animal fable, celestial flights, the exploits of the god Ninurta, the quest of Gilgamesh for eternal life, and Egyptian literature with the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* (23–25). Other topics examined are exorcism as a marvelous event, the marvelous in an early Greek variant of the persecuted heroine tale-type set in Egypt, fairy-tale motifs in prose fiction and the Greek romance novel, and magical weapons in "The Dragon-Slayer" tale-type (23–26). Finally, as no chapter on the fairy tale in antiquity would be complete without a discussion of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, Anderson rightly states that the "marvelous in ancient fairy tale is most evident in 'Cupid and Psyche'" (28).

As the title suggests, Richard Firth Green's chapter "Fairy Stories, or Stories about Fairies?" in the first chapter of volume 2, on fairy tales in the Middle Ages, concentrates mainly on stories about fairies, including the Breton lay and *Mélusine*, and the real belief versus skepticism of the existence of fairies. Green examines works by Richard Corbett and Geoffrey Chaucer asserting that: "What has changed in the two centuries between these two passages is the degree to which people believed in the very existence of fairies" (25). Although excerpts from medieval texts, such as those from Chaucer's works, are illuminating, full translations of the texts in modern English would have aided the legibility of the chapter for readers with less experience in Old English. Green also declares that medieval descriptions of fairies categorize them as "at best … awe-inspiring, at worst downright terrifying" and as "the fair folk" and "the ladies from outside," with more stories of fairy queens, such as Morgan la Fée, than of fairy kings thus giving the impression of "fairyland as a gynarchy" (26–27). Finally, a large portion of Green's chapter is also dedicated to delineating the reactions of the Catholic church to fairy stories, declaring that according to church doctrine the marvelous resided in between the miraculous and the diabolical (30).

Although an interesting and well-written text, when read in conjunction with the first chapters in all other volumes, Kevin Pask's addition to volume 3 on "Ring and Riddle in the Shakespearean Marriage Tale" seems out of place and readers should look to Suzanne Magnanini's thorough introduction for a greater understanding of the forms of the fairy tales in the age of the marvelous. Pask asserts that examples from Shakesperean works more often entail "a high, cosmic magic" instead of "fairy-tale magic," which is associated with the fluctuations of "ordinary human desires and needs" (26). However, his chapter focuses on three plays, *The Merchant of Venice, All's Well That Ends Well*, and *Cymbeline*, in which the action suggests "something of the aura of the marvelous," which may be found in a ring's "talismanic" nature (26–27).

Tatiana Korneeva's chapter in volume 4, "The Eighteenth-Century *merveilleux*," centers on traditions in France, Italy, and Russia. Korneeva first outlines the three major waves of fairy tale publications of the period beginning with the French *conteuses* and Charles Perrault, continuing with Antoine Galland's "translations-cum-adaptations" of *The Arabian Nights*, and finally culminating with the third wave in which fairy tales were adapted "to theater, opera, and novel, and penned didactic, moral, philosophical, and libertine tales" (15–16). The chapter is principally dedicated to this third wave with an examination of dramatic reworkings of fairy tales in French opera, Italian musical drama, and Russian opera-*skazka* with Korneeva declaring that fairy plays progressed to "a pan-European phenomenon" ranging from "comedy to *opéra-comique* and pantomime, from vaudeville and ballet to morality play" (16–18). Korneeva also outlines the major contributors in the emerging subgenres of the didactic tale, the oriental and philosophical tale, and the morality tale. Finally, Korneeva analyzes the subversion of the fairy tale in the works of Marquis de Sade, relating the narrative structure and characters to Perrault's fairy tales.

In the first chapter in volume 5 dedicated to the long nineteenth century, Laurence Talairach highlights the period's preoccupation with the origins of fairies and of human nature, the production of fairy-tale collections designed specifically for children, and the link between fairy tales and "aspects of modernity" (26–29). Talairach also underscores the importance of the industrial revolution and the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* on the understanding of the natural world in the nineteenth century and the use of fairy tales throughout the Victorian era to convey skepticism and angst about contemporary scientific knowledge, to "bridge the gap between old and new visions of the world," and to portray the "wonders of nature or science" (26–34). Finally, Talairach discusses the form of the picture book and how Anne Thackery Richie's revision illuminates how "motifs and characters purveyed bourgeois patriarchal ideology," concluding that forms of the marvelous

function to "tone down or raise tensions; to challenge ideologies or reinforce them; to reassure or to threaten" (38–42).

In the final volume of the collection, Sara Cleto and Brittany Warman tackle the forms of the fairy tale in the modern age, narrowing their focus to American and Western European with the inclusion of Japanese animation and video games and with a particular focus on modern media (27). Cleto and Warman first give a brief discussion of the key thinkers in fairy-tale scholarship on form and scholars who illustrate the ways in which the fairy-tale form previously outlined by scholars is then "turned inside out, destabilized, twisted, and transformed" in postmodern fairy tales (29). Divided into the categories of literature, film, television, stage, music, visual arts and material culture, and digital media the chapter necessarily provides breadth over depth. For example, the section on literature considers the novel, short stories and their publication in anthologies, poetry, and finally the graphic novel. After acknowledging the "behemoth that is Disney," the section on film moves to feminist, gender swapping, and parodic films along with less well-known or foreign films and finally fairy-tale films that "flirt with, or entirely embrace, horror" (33–34). The most interesting portion of the chapter, in this reader's view, is the section on digital media, including video games as well as mobile games and apps, web comics, YouTube and online videos, fairy-tale databases, and blogs, ending with fan fiction and costuming and cosplay.

Despite occasional gaps, perhaps due to length constraints or decisions to narrow the scope of a chapter to avoid overlapping discourses from other sections in each volume, the chapters dedicated to the form of the marvelous are quite comprehensive in their presentation of the ever-evolving notions, trends, modes, and audience of the marvelous. Therefore, the first chapter of each volume, taken together, provides an excellent account of the fairy tale's versatility of form and its response to the ever-changing needs of the societies in which they are produced from antiquity to the present.

Adrion Dula
University of Michigan

"Adaptations"

A Cultural History of Fairy Tales provides a wonderfully disruptive view of "Adaptation" and the fairy tale. The first four volumes, contending with "Adaptation" before the advent of *conte de fees* and the literary fairy tale, establish the fairy tale—and oral tradition—as a prominent and rich form of cultural exchange. In doing so, the chapters help to dispel the myth of nationalized folklore and literature. This, as criticism becomes more invested in decolonization and disturbing the centrality of the Anthropocene, feels an especially timely and useful method of exploring fairy-tale adaptation.

In volume 1, Emanuele Lelli inaugurates the discussion of adaptation within *A Cultural History of Fairy Tales*. Answering for the inaccessible oral history of the fairy tale, Lelli makes a compelling case for its presence, carved out against recorded literary allusions to, and adaptations of, folk narratives. This is essential, as the "limited" traces of fairy-tale material within "Antiquity"—here categorized as ancient history, or the period predating the Middle Ages of volume 2—have led to dismissals of the genre as "unappreciated" by ancient cultures (38). As Lelli expresses, "this does not mean, however, that such tales were not circulated orally" (38). Much of Lelli's text remains necessarily speculative, dealing with the textual absence of unrecorded folk material. As a solution, Lelli offers Aesop's fables—citing Demetrius of Phallerum's (circa 350–circa 250 BCE) lost but well attested *Aesopia*—as a case study for negotiating this absence, while constituting its existence. This proves a useful methodology, one recurrent within later volumes of the series, allowing for readers to question previous dismissals of the fairy tale as a lesser form.

In volume 2, Shyama Rajendran offers yet "another fairytale tradition," that of *The Thousand and One Nights* (45). Making note of Antoine Galland's eighteenth-century work—*Les Mille et une nuits, contes arabes en français*—as both translation and adaptation, Rajendran examines the medieval prehistory of *Nights*. Noting how the orality of *Nights* makes it "more difficult to pin down the circulation of narratives," Rajendran echoes Lelli (47). Only more so when quipping: "but that does not mean Western audiences were not familiar with them" (47). Assuring us that they were indeed *familiar*, Rajendran stages a reexamination of the relationship between *The Thousand and One Nights*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Surveying existent studies and considerations of this triad, Rajendran engages with discussion of "canonicity" and "nationalism." As Rajendran helpfully, if bitterly, paraphrases: "Chaucer stands at the high point, the English literary genius who realized the potential of his lesser (non-English) sources" (48). Countering this, Rajendran offers a non-nationalized, entangled model of influence between the texts, one informed by the "interconnected seascape" of the Mediterranean (50). Using this model, Rajendran successfully questions the validity of the English literary canon, providing a pleasingly decolonizing counterhistory of the fairy-tale genre.

Volume 3's N. Ipek Hüner Cora employs a similar approach, using the very same sources, when "writing about adaptations of tales and related genres in Ottoman literature" (49). This leaves them somewhat at a disadvantage when reading the volumes chronologically. However, Hüner Cora manages to strike out on their own when broaching the subject of an "original" within adaptation studies. Hüner Cora marks the drive to find an "original" as an unsuccessful attempt at nationalizing, and claiming ownership of, the

fairy tale, marking "originals" ambiguously as "ours," translations as "theirs," and adaptations as "it was theirs, but now it may be considered somewhat as ours" (52). These distinctions, rife with social and political implications, are, as Hüner Cora suggests, overtly complicated and dispelled by the Ottoman Empire—"a vibrant and unique amalgamation of many cultures" (52), framing it as an ideal model for dispelling generalizations of the fairy tale. Emphasizing Ottoman's high concentration of multiple "versions of the same story," Cora highlights the futility, and limitations, of locating an "original" within the fairy-tale tradition (50).

Entering familiar fairy-tale territory, volume 4's Trinquet du Lys's interest lies with the French literary tradition and Salon culture of the 1690s. Framing the Salon tales as adaptations of 1550s "Italian baroque court literature," Trinquet du Lys clearly affirms the genealogy between Italian and French fairy tales (38). This genealogy is not one of pure reproduction or translation, as Trinquet du Lys emphasizes, the French writers were "acute critics of the time in which they were writing, [who] satirized the political power under which they were living" (48). They used the Italian tales as a means of contemporary social commentary, reinventing both their material and the fairy tale genre. By establishing a generative relationship between Italian and French tales, Trinquet du Lys invites us to "change the perspective through which we understand the history of European fairy-tale adaptation" (49). Trinquet du Lys conveys the fairy tale as a culturally collaborative endeavor, rather than promoting the idea of nationally distinct folk and fairy-tale traditions, wherein French fairy tales were sourced solely from French folktales.

Volume 5 marks a departure from discussions of cross-cultural adaptation; instead, Jan Susina's chapter inventories children's literature during the nineteenth century. Establishing fairy tales as "crossover texts," "not originally intended for children" but eventually subsumed into the canon of children's literature, Susina touches on concerns of sanitization and bowdlerization (43; 44). Much of Susina's chapter deals with broad cultural shifts regarding "appropriate reading material for children," with fairy tales being but one genre caught in the crosshairs (46). His focus is determinedly Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which he positions as a case study for "how adaptation in children's literature functioned during the nineteenth century" (54). An understanding of these dynamics is useful when exploring English literary print culture, however, Susina's chapter lands slightly askew of the fairy tale road when grounded within the broader collection of *A Cultural History of Fairy Tales*.

Contrasting the inaccessibility of texts explored within the early volumes of this series, Mayako Murai contends with an oversaturation of material. Volume 6 broadly addresses fairy-tale adaptation "In the Modern Age," and

provides a succinct—if at times superficial—evaluation of the major trends from the early twentieth-century onward. These trends roughly fall within two categories: "technological developments," promoting the "multimediality and Intermediality of the fairy tale"; and sociocultural and political influences. Murai's interest in "technological developments" is sated by her cursory consideration of film, notably animation, and its visual commodification of the fairy tale (44). Noting how "adult-oriented film adaptations are largely influenced by psychoanalytic interpretations of fairy tales" (46), Murai initiates discussions of the 1970s "fairy-tale renaissance" (Joosen, *Critical and Creative Perspectives on Fairy Tales*,), a repetitive thread throughout her chapter. With particular attention paid toward "the development of feminist and psychoanalytic interpretations," Murai establishes "a close intertextual dialogue" between fairy tale criticism and retellings (50; 53). This dialogue allows Murai to eventually branch beyond the 1970s, including a brief consideration of postcolonial fairy tales and an ecocritical reading of "The Bremen Town Musicians." Murai's text functions well as an introduction to the current state of fairy-tale criticism but does little to advance our understanding of fairy tale "adaptation."

As a set, these six chapters offer a useful introduction to the intricacies of adaptation and the fairy tale. While early volumes encourage further exploration and demything of existent generalizations, the latter provide a functional overview to familiar terrain. In particular, Murai and Susina offer a strong starting point for discussions of their respective topics. This lends them well to classroom use, recounting extended bibliographies and methodologies for those just beginning to research the broader subject of the fairy tale.

Sarah Jessica Darley
University of East Anglia

"Monsters and the Monstrous"

The "Monsters and Monstrous" chapters in *A Cultural History of Fairy Tales* invite readers to understand some of the most significant characters in fairy tales. Reading the six chapters as a whole offers a comprehensive understanding of the crucial role monsters play in the articulation of communities and identities. Monsters embody social boundaries and norms and therefore delineate what is socially acceptable by negation. Furthermore, monsters are complex and malleable metaphors of our hopes and fears and as such are in constant flux as we reimagine our dream and nightmares.

The first book, *A Cultural History of Fairy Tales in Antiquity*, includes the chapter titled "Monsters and the Monstrous: Ancient Expressions of Cultural Anxieties" by Debbie Felton. Building on a large body of scholarship, from Porada (1987), via Hansen (2002), to Van Duzer (2012), Felton offers an overview of some of the seminal monsters of antiquity. Felton explores monsters

in the earliest folk and fairy tales of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean areas, considering "what the concept of 'monster' might have meant for people in those geographical regions thousands of years ago," and then examines roles and meanings of tales and monsters that survived from antiquity (109). Felton argues that the monsters of myth, legend, and folktale of antiquity function to reflect human "fears and hopes about the mysteries of the natural world" (130). The chapter also highlights the role of misogyny in the construction of notions of monstrosity. The association of women with monsters is mentioned in each of the chapters about monsters in the *Cultural History of Fairy Tales* series, and it is important to acknowledge the early inception of this pernicious connection for a broad understanding of human rights. The chapter is divided into sections that examine conceptions of the monstrous in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean including "dragon-slayer" narratives, giants, witches, werewolves, and ghosts. Overall, the chapter offers a useful and accessible introduction into the roles of the monsters of Antiquity.

The second book, *A Cultural History of Fairy Tales in the Middle Ages*, offers the chapter titled "Monsters and the Monstrous: Tracking Medieval Monsters into Fairy-Tale Worlds" by Christine M. Neufeld. Neufeld explores some of the main tropes of monster tales of the Middle Ages, focusing on dragons and hero narratives. Neufeld explains that teratology, the study of monsters, begins in the Middle Ages, "as medieval intellectuals sought to make sense of the scientific and literary legacy left to them by classical authors, to reconcile folk traditions with learned Judeo-Christian paradigms, and to create their own taxonomies of the world" (112). The chapter commences with an introduction titled "Defining the Monster in The Middle Ages," in which Neufeld outlines the "three major reference points for theories about monsters in this medieval intellectual tradition: Pliny, Augustine, and Isidore of Seville" (113). In the next section, titled "Medieval Monsters and The Wonder Tale" (120), Neufeld argues that "the medieval monsters that entered the fairy-tale tradition stem from sources ranging from heroic narratives to the historical chronicles, hagiography, and sermons of ecclesiastical culture" (121). The section titled "Here Be Dragons: The Cultural Work of a Medieval Monster" (123) explores the dragon as a prevalent image that emerges in scientific, theological, and fictional domains (125), and lastly, focusing on issues of gender and sexualities and female or feminized dragons, Neufeld examines the role of shape-shifting dragons (130). This association of monsters with women was already outlined in the previous *Cultural History of Fairy Tales* series book chapter about monster in Antiquity, and it is noteworthy to see the continued thread of misogyny in the discourse of monsters.

In the book devoted to *A Cultural History of Fairy Tales in the Age of the Marvelous*, one finds the chapter titled "Monsters and the Monstrous: Witches

and Werewolves in Early Modern French and Italian Tales" by Kathleen P. Long. Adding to the extensive scholarship about monsters and the Age of the Marvelous, Long explores how "a wide range of monstrous figures used in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century fairy tales also appear in texts related to witchcraft and demonology: witchcraft treatises, some medical treatises, and popular stories known in France as *histoires prodigieuses*, or prodigy tales" (121). The chapter is divided into short sections that discuss different aspects of fairies and witches as well as shape-shifters and werewolves. Long considers "how narratives of witchcraft served as a repository of magical figures from which fairy tales could draw, with witches and demons becoming fairies, and shape-shifters like the werewolf becoming humans either born as animals or transformed into animals" (120). Outlining the connection between witches, demons, and shape-shifters and human-animal hybridity in the context of morality (121), Long explores the role of monsters in the sociopolitical context of religious persecution and the Wars of Religion in France. Long argues that fairy tales took the negative narratives of the period and relocated them to the realms of imagination (123). Then, by "putting a more positive spin on these stories," fairy tales offered narratives in support of the monarchy, patriarchal marriage, and social hierarchies (123). The chapter highlights some of the main tropes of monstrosity in early modern French and Italian tales, and read in conjunction with the other chapters about monsters in fairy tales offered in the *Cultural History of Fairy Tales* contributes to a comprehensive overview of the significance of monsters in this context.

The chapter devoted to monsters in *A Cultural History of Fairy Tales in the Long Eighteenth Century* is "Monsters and the Monstrous: Of Ogre Pyramids, Ruby-Eyed Dragons, and Gnomes with Crooked Spines" by Kathryn A. Hoffmann. Hoffmann's charming writing style is only surpassed by the exuberance of the interdisciplinary analyses the chapter offers. Hoffmann delineates the scope of the chapter from the 1690s to the turn of the nineteenth century with a focus primarily on French texts (104). Providing ample examples, Hoffmann shows how "the fictional monsters both reflect and surely helped shape developing constructions of the 'normal' and what became conceived of as ugly, unacceptable, or deviant for publics. In 'monster' texts—fictional, medical, anatomical, or other—ageism, sexism, racism, notions of supposedly appropriate gendered behaviors, and fears of difference can be seen in construction" (125). The chapter is divided into sections that examine some of the main tropes, and the chapter ends with a conclusion about the important role of fairy tales and monsters in contemporary scholarship. Hoffmann adds a useful list of relevant scholars including Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park on monsters and Emanuelle Sempère on the marvelous.

The chapter "Monsters and the Monstrous" by Sarah Marsh and Zeynep Cakmak in *A Cultural History of Fairy Tales in the Long Nineteenth Century* examines nineteenth-century fairy tales from "selected Western and Eastern traditions, as well as from the globally displaced tale traditions of nineteenth-century African Americans" in order to consider "how these tales use the narrative forms of monstrosity to grapple with the nineteenth century's incarnations of politicized otherness, family and national formation, trauma, and empire" (106). Marsh and Cakmak consider the ways monsters in the nineteenth-century fairy tale embodied complex anxieties about modernity and modern subjects (106). Marsh and Cakmak explore several Turkish tales and allude to Turkey's role as a focal point between the constructed "East" and "West"—both spatially and culturally—as the reason for focusing on Turkish fairy tales as an example of non-Eurocentric texts in the context of postcolonialism. The discussion of African American stories of tar figures is likewise important in the context of the role of the monstrous in discourses of racism and the history of slavery. The chapter is divided into sections that highlight issues of gender, sexualities, and race as well as readership and audiences.

In *A Cultural History of Fairy Tales in the Modern Age* Christa Jones and Claudia Schwabe focus on texts that depict monstrous disruptions of the human versus nonhuman and delineate moral social norms, offering an engaging overview of some of the roles and functions of monsters' figures in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The chapter is divided into sections, and while not titled as such the chapter opens with an introduction (113) followed by the sections titled "Monstrous Imaginations in Contemporary Fairy-Tale Films and Media" (118), and "Human/Monster/Animal Affinities in Tales from France and Argentina (128). Jones and Schwabe outline modern ambiguity regarding monsters, suggesting monsters are "no longer predominantly malicious and frightening but their physical or moral flaws elicit human compassion, their features are appealing and attractive, their deeds are heroic or therapeutic, and their characters are sometimes reimagined to be comedic and hilarious" (114).

The section titled "Monstrous Imaginations in Contemporary Fairy-Tale Films and Media" "illuminates how twentieth- and twenty-first-century media celebrates the beauty of Otherness and promotes alterity in fairy-tale films" as Jones and Schwabe outline a shift since the latter third of the twentieth century, as "the monstrous in cinematic and televisual fairy-tale adaptations have begun to deviate from the villainous, horrific creatures that are traditionally associated with the term 'monster'" to portrayals of monstrous beings in "a positive light and desirable fashion" (118). Jones and Schwabe mention several films that feature benevolent dragons, including *The NeverEnding Story* (1984) the *Shrek* films (2001, 2004, 2007, 2010) and *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010) (118), and offer a close reading of Guillermo del Toro's *The Shape of Water* (2017)

suggesting that the film "foregrounds the fact that the 'monster' and the 'freak,' the merman and the mute heroine, are in effect more humane than the common people surrounding them [and] the film suggests that the true monsters in our society are those people who discriminate against and are abusive of individuals who are different" (219).

Outlining the shift in depictions of monsters from a hideous repulsive creature to benign and even cuddly friends, Jones and Schwabe refer to several popular examples, including "the reimagination of trolls and ogres for purposes of comic relief as seen in the *Shrek* films, in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001), in *The Hobbit* film series (2012–14), and more recently in Disney's *Frozen* (2013) and in the computer-animated musical film *Trolls* (2016)" (123). Jones and Schwabe explore *Shrek* as a text about otherness and social marginalization (124) and survey the comical roles of trolls in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *The Hobbit, Frozen*, and *Trolls* (124–125). Jones and Schwabe also note Pixar's computer animated comedy film *Monsters, Inc*. (2001) as an example of the twenty-first-century "trend of endowing monstrous characters with cutesiness, humor, and appeal" (125). Jones and Schwabe outline the ways following the success of the *Monsters, Inc*. franchise, Mattel, the multinational toy manufacturing company, "capitalized on the idea of the 'attractive' monster by launching the American franchise Monster High in 2010" (125–126). The company sells "bone-thin 'goth barbies' equipped with monstrous attributes, such as fangs, stitches, wolf ears, fins, bandages, and snakes. The idea behind the brand is that all people are somehow 'monstrous,' because of their idiosyncrasies, perhaps quirky characteristics, and individual flaws" (126). Following the journey of monsters in fairy tales is significant for readers' understanding of the genre's impact on us and the ways we articulate our identities.

The "Monsters and Monstrous" chapters in the *Cultural History of Fairy Tales* series offer readers a broad perspective of the ways in which monsters reflect sociopolitical and cultural processes. This comprehensive overview is an invaluable contribution to scholars exploring monsters as representations of cultural phenomena. Furthermore, each chapter will be useful for students researching the different eras or cultures, and will be productive for scholars in language and literatures departments as well as for scholars of identities and cultures in visual arts and gender studies.

Vered Weiss
Michigan State University

"Socialization"

In the series preface to all six volumes of *A Cultural History of Fairy Tales*, series general editor Anne Duggan writes that fairy tales "have often been used in the processes of *socialization*, for both children and adults, men and

women, articulating class, gender, and ethnic differences" (*Antiquity*, xiv). Correspondingly, in her chapter for the final volume of the series, Jill Terry Rudy draws attention to the nuance that the term "socialization" carries across multiple disciplines. Rudy explains that academically it relates to induction or initiation, in critical studies it refers to dominant behaviors and ideologies, and in literary studies and social sciences it often involves preparing children to become members of society (*Modern*, 161). Socialization, then, has the capacity to encompass and inform an expansive variety of specialized research areas; the concept is broad and elastic.

The content of the six chapters on Socialization are, consequently, equally wide-ranging in their scope. The authors of these chapters consider a multitude of materials, from Apuleius's "Cupid and Psyche," to Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books, to the films of Walt Disney, and they approach their texts via differing methodological frameworks. The scholarly expertise behind these chapters is similarly diverse: Dominic Ingemark and Camilla Asplund Ingemark, who author the *Antiquity* chapter, are classicists with interests in Roman culture and the depiction of fear in folktales; Usha Vishnuvajjala is a medievalist with an interest in women's lives in the Middle Ages; Suzanne Magnanini, writing for the *Age of Wonder*, specializes in Italian Renaissance and baroque literature; Rania Huntington, who authors the *Long Eighteenth Century* chapter, researches Chinese literature and tales of the supernatural; Michelle Beissel Heath studies nineteenth-century British children's literature; and Jill Terry Rudy researches folklore and fairy tales, especially their intersections with new media and personal narrative.

The vast array of materials and expertise among these six volumes means the Socialization chapters distinctly fit the series' brief of providing a "transnational and transhistorical understanding of the fairy tale" (Duggan, *Antiquity* xiv). By providing examples of how tales have been used to inculcate social norms and cultural ideals across a variety of spatial and temporal settings, these six chapters thoroughly interrogate the limits of the term "socialization." Moreover, the assortment of texts examined within these chapters, including myths, games, and web series, intriguingly probes at the difficult questions of what constitutes a fairy tale and how our present-day understanding of the term has evolved.

Yet, the same array of materials and expertise that benefits this study on "Socialization" also confers a disjointed feeling to the six chapters when taken as a whole. Given their varied geographical and textual focuses, it is difficult to piece together a coherent history of how wonder tales developed as tools of socialization over time. For example, because tales evolved and functioned differently across different cultures, there is little sense of continuity between the chapter in volume 1 (*Antiquity*), which focuses almost

exclusively on ancient Roman myths, and the chapter in volume 2 (*Middle Ages*), which largely examines the content of French romances and Japanese wonder tales in the Middle Ages.

Similarly, given the complexity and fluid borders of the concept of "fairy tale," each chapter widely varies in the types of texts under consideration. Duggan writes that these volumes use fairy tale "as a broad umbrella term" (*Antiquity* xiii), and while this is generally a strength, it also leads to a break in a continuous history. This is especially noticeable between *Long Eighteenth Century* and *Long Nineteenth Century*: Huntington's work deftly interweaves the social histories of wonder tales in eighteenth-century Japanese, Urdu/Persian, Chinese, French, English, and German contexts to form a micro-comparative study. In the ensuing chapter, Heath examines how socialization operated in nineteenth-century British children's literature and fairy-tale-inspired children's card games in the United States: jarringly, the development of socialization in Asian wonder tales ends. Furthermore, Heath's work focuses largely on Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books (1865, 1871) and J. M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911), along with other works of children's literature by Edith Nesbit and Mary De Morgan. While these are sometimes considered modern fairy tales, in form they differ sharply from the wonder tales examined in the preceding Socialization chapters.

Moreover, just as the chapters vary in geographical and textual focus, they also employ different methodological approaches. Several of the chapters—in particular those by Vishnuvajjala and Huntington—conscientiously compare tales from multiple geographical contexts by investigating influence and transmission, while other chapters, such as those by Magnanini and Heath, focus almost solely on how socialization functioned in fairy tales in a single national or linguistic context. While both methodological approaches have merits, as chapters in a series they operate incongruously. Individually, each of the six chapters on "Socialization" has internal coherence, strong arguments, and valuable analysis, but as a whole these chapters do not straightforwardly build on each other.

Appealingly, however, this very diverse collection of approaches, texts, cultural contexts, geographical locations, and historical eras renders the "Socialization" chapters useful to academics working across many research areas. Scholars with interests in gender studies, social history, tale transmission and adaptation, children's literature and childhood cultures, among many other specializations, will find useful information contained in these six chapters. Rudy's chapter (*Modern*), especially, outlines an excellent historiography of how the concept of socialization has developed in fairy-tale studies, with clear definitions of the term and attention to the paradoxical attributes of conformity and subversion within the tales. Importantly, Rudy emphasizes recent

efforts by many fairy-tale scholars to expand beyond Western and European definitions of "fairy tale" into the broader category of "wonder tale," and her chapter engages with indigenous stories, particularly Hawaiian "mo'olelo."

Together, the six chapters on Socialization constitute a massive interdisciplinary achievement. All offer excellent introductions to the concept of socialization-via-story in their historical eras and texts. Furthermore, the variety of material covered in just six chapters demonstrates the richness of wonder tales. These chapters serve as brilliant starting points for future research by asking new questions and, within the individual pieces, each provides an excellent comparative study of socialization in the time period under consideration through the connection of seemingly disparate ideas and texts. Most importantly, as a whole they highlight the arguably undervalued nuance, complexity, and relevance of socialization to the ongoing work of fairy-tale studies.

Abigail Fine
Queen Mary University of London

The Annotated Arabian Nights: Tales from 1001 Nights. *Edited by Paulo Lemos Horta. Translated by Yasmine Seale. New York: W. W. Norton, 2021. 733 pages*.

Paulo Lemos Horta, professor of literature at New York University Abu Dhabi, along with translator Yasmine Seale, present what could be one of the most comprehensive and complete collections of the stories known as *The Arabian Nights* or the *One Thousand and One Nights* available in the English language. Horta explains that this edition is the "fruit of a long quest" not only to understand the origins of the tale of "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp," but also his own Middle Eastern roots as a descendant of Sephardic Jews. Horta also notes that this edition is the first contemporary collection to present the medieval Arabic tales alongside those translated from Galland's French tales.

Horta's annotated collection draws from medieval Arabic manuscripts—which, at the time, would have been available to residents of Baghdad and Cairo to read and recite—as well as the writings of late seventeenth-/early eighteenth-century archaeologist Antoine Galland and Syrian storyteller Hanna Diyab. Horta appears particularly invested in bringing to the fore Diyab's role in the transmission of the tales to Galland; his volume is the first to be published since the rediscovery at the Vatican Library of Diyab's memoir, *Book of Travels*, in which Diyab recounts his time in France as well as his retelling of many famous *Nights* tales to Galland, tales once thought to be of Galland's creation. In attributing these stories to Diyab, Horta argues that Diyab's own literary devices in his memoirs are "reminiscent" of the *Nights*, stating, "neither these new tales nor their teller were figments of the French translator's imagination" (viii). These tales include some of the most well-known of the

collection, including the aforementioned "Aladdin," as well as "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" and "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Peri Banu" (from which the flying carpet entered the collective imagination). In the case of "Ali Baba," Horta states, "while the narrative skills evident in the tale … were once credited to Galland, new research confirms that the essential elements of the tale were the creation of Hanna Diyab" (266).

Horta's introduction tells us that he seeks to "bring together the most influential Arabic tales … as well as the tales added by Diyab through Galland's French translation" (lviii). The result is not only a new translation, but an edition that contextualizes previous translations and editions, clarifies questions of "authenticity" and authorship, and includes copious notes on cultural context, historical setting, influence on later authors, and even psychoanalysis. He claims that Seale's new translation "reclaims the vitality and the delight of these stories … stripping away the 'Orientalism' with which they have long been laden in English letters" (xxi). Indeed, Seale's prose is refreshingly lucid and deftly poetic, with the sensitivity that comes from one intimately familiar with not only the culture and literary arts of the medieval Arab world but also how that culture has been (mis)interpreted over the centuries by imperial and colonial powers.

Throughout the volume, Horta seeks to recenter the origins of these tales in the Arab world, reclaiming them from European, and particularly French, authorship and ownership. By working with translator Seale—who works both in medieval Arabic and in French—Horta's edition seeks to create an English-language interpretation that not only includes these tales but also retains literary devices such as rhyme and alliteration that are particularly present in the original Arabic manuscripts. Implicit in this new translation is the attempt to "right the wrongs" so to speak by the ubiquitous translations by Richard Burton and J. C. Mardrus, which, according to Horta, include "racist and Orientalist phantasmagoria" that was "regressive, even judged by the standards of their own time" (xiv). He does point out previous contemporary attempts to do the same, including that of Husain Haddawy (1990), which omits tales from Galland's writings, as well as any tales added to the original medieval manuscripts; Horta laments these omissions, because, he argues, the later tales include many of the stronger female characters that appear in them. Horta notes that many Victorian translations did the same, or at least attenuated the nature of such "numerous formidable female characters" to meet the expectation of male readers and the social norms of the late nineteenth century. He is careful not to be reactionary in this regard; neither Horta nor Seale seek to mold the women of the many tales to suit twenty-first-century feminist or even postfeminist sensibilities, instead hugging close to the source materials in both subject and style. Horta suggests that the inclusion of such

women served the frame story of Shahrazad telling stories to the murderous King Shahriyar, who believes all women to be deceitful and unfaithful; in order not only to save her own life, but to save her kingdom, Shahrazad "gradually expand[s] the king's experience to include the many different kinds of women who people the stories of the *Nights*" (4).

The eponymous annotations, of which there are roughly two to three per page, give enough insight to be illuminating without being overwhelming. They include translator's notes, and clarifications of Arabic and other terminology that might be unfamiliar to readers with little knowledge of Arabic language or history, letting these words be untranslated. For example, *kunafa*, a sweet filo dough pastry found throughout the Arab world, is not translated as "pastry" or "cake," which would, of course, take said dessert out of its cultural context.

In the stories from Galland's writings, Horta clarifies for the reader which elements of the stories were likely adjusted by Galland for his audiences, and which ones were likely from Diyab's originals. "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp," for example, is peppered with notes on Diyab's own experience as a young man in Aleppo and in Europe. Indeed, just as Aladdin's father dies early in the tale, Horta tells us Diyab "likely sympathized with Aladdin's situation, as he also lost his father in his youth" (419). Galland, on the other hand, sought to "impart moral lessons" throughout his translation of the *Nights*, to appeal to the tastes of eighteenth-century France. When the magician asks that Aladdin be obedient to him if he is to be worthy of great reward, Horta notes that this condition was likely added by Galland. Horta also includes a collection of translations of tales told by Diyab and recorded by Galland in his diary in 1709. These have been translated by Ulrich Marzolph and Anne Duggan and are divided into two categories: those included in Galland's version of the *Arabian Nights*, and perhaps of particular interest to scholars, those *not* included by Galland.

Also of note are the inclusion of brief biographies of past translators, including their reasons for translating the *Nights*, what they added or omitted, and an excerpt of their translations that the reader can compare to those by Seale. With this additional information, one could return to their own collection of editions by these translators with fresh eyes. *The Annotated Arabian Nights* also includes six additional tales by Charles Dickens, Christina Rossetti, Edgar Allan Poe, H. P. Lovecraft, and O. Henry. Horta titles this section as "Retellings," but they are perhaps better looked at as reinterpretations. Each retelling receives a contextual introduction and annotations by Horta.

Of interest to scholars of Western European and American literature might be the many annotations on the *Nights*' influence on and parallels with the English and French literary canon. Returning again to the tale of Aladdin, Horta notes that Hans Christian Andersen's "The Tinder Box" has "many

similarities," including a poor soldier who must "use the magic helpers of his box to transport the princess from her locked tower to his apartment" (443). Indeed, Andersen's magic helpers evoke the imagery of a wish-granting jinni who makes his home in a lamp, bottle, or other vessel. In the "The Tale of the Third Dervish" (itself embedded in "The Story of the Porter and the Three Women of Baghdad," which is particularly unusual for its time for having three independent and unwed women at its center), Horta notes that this was one of Charles Dickens's favorite *Nights* tales and drew inspiration from its lodestone for *A Tale of Two Cities* (127). Other notes draw connections between the tales themselves, reference previous scholarship and analysis, and reference past translations with in-text citations. An afterword further explores the origins and additions of what scholar Robert Irwin calls "Orphan Stories," stories that did not appear in the Arabic-language manuscripts from which Galland had been translating, and for which no Arabic manuscripts have been found, such as "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," "Aladdin and the Enchanted Lamp," "The Ebony Horse," and "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Peri Banu."

Horta also includes a short section of recommended readings, viewings, listening, and games. And while this chapter appears at page 722, making it a weighty book, it feels just shy of complete without the inclusion of contemporary fantasy authors whose work is absolutely inspired by the *Nights* and Arab folklore, such as G. Willow Wilson (*Alif the Unseen*), Jessica Khoury (*The Forbidden Wish*), Renée Ahdieh (*The Wrath and the Dawn* series), S. A. Chakraborty (*City of Brass* trilogy, which itself is named after a tale from the *Nights*), and P. Djèlí Clark (*A Master of Djinn*).

Peppered throughout the volume are illustrations from various past editions of the tales, including those that appeared alongside English and French translations—such as works by Edmund Dulac and Maxfield Parrish—as well as paintings and plates from editions from Persian and Russian translations. Also included are paintings by contemporary Iraqi artist Dia al-Azzawi and photos from a theatrical presentation of the *Nights* in Fez, Morocco. These images not only enhance the elegant layout and design of the book but also give the reader a sense of how the tales have been interpreted over the centuries.

Perhaps it is impossible to publish a complete or authoritative collection of the tales, but Horta and Seale's *The Annotated Arabian Nights* certainly comes close. Its introduction alone would provide students studying folklore a comprehensive overview of the *Nights* for course subjects ranging from folktales to literature to Orientalism in Western arts. Read without the annotations, it would be a fine addition to any enthusiast's shelf, while the notes provide the volume with a scholarly weight missing from most past editions.

Abigail Keyes
Independent Scholar

***Djeha, The North African Trickster**. Edited and Translated by Christa C. Jones. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2023. xiii, 179 pp., extensive bibliography and notes.*

Christa C. Jones too modestly identifies herself as "editor" and English language translator of Auguste Mouliéras's 1892 *Les Fourberies de Si Djeh'a* (*Si Djeh'a the Schemer*), a dual-language collection of sixty Kabyle tales from northern Algeria in Berber and French. This relatively short book is an exemplary folklore monograph. It will be highly teachable in a variety of settings, a thoroughly scholarly work accessible alike to general readers, regional and disciplinary specialists, and nonspecialists—non-Arabists, general folklorists and those new to folklore studies. Jones frames her English text of a significant trickster tale collection with highly informative introductions meriting careful reading: an erudite yet succinct general introduction to North Africa's Francophone literature, its colonial period and earlier cultural history, folklore studies and ethnographies, and relevant Arabic popular literary history. Jones provides short culturally orienting introductions to each of six clusters of the stories she has reordered according to themes: Family and Kinship; Animal Tales; Faces, Places or Daily Life in the Village; Foodways; Intricacies of Hospitality: Beware of Friends and Foes!; and Religion, Death and the Afterlife. Inter alia she cites the Quran and a saying of the Prophet on the proper scope of laughter (it should be nondefamatory), and Ibn Khaldun's fourteenth-century *Muqadimmah*, arguably the first modern work of history, on the folly of treasure lore and treasure hunting. As Jones acknowledges, themes resonate across tales, her groupings remaining porous. Footnotes supply context for material cultural items, for example, the men's cloak, burnoose, and male identity ironized by Djeha's reaction to his burnoose being shot full of holes; the significance of shoes for men and women. Berber proverbs are cited to illuminate the cultural logic of some tales.

Neatly tucked away in a very helpful array of footnotes are references to ATU type index numbers and further variant information about individual tales, including Jewish variants from the region and comparisons to other tricksters including the Turkish-origin Nasruddin Hodja. Layering of background information among general and sectional introductions and footnotes that include bibliographic references lets readers focus on the texts first if desired, and delve into further information as desired. The bibliography, divided into primary and secondary sources, is a trove for further study, regional and theoretical.

Alongside her expertise in Francophone North Africa, Jones makes efficient, very readable references to other folklorists' work, including the extensive writings of Ulrich Marzolph on the Arabo-Islamic trickster Juha (here the Berber Djeh'a), as a major named presence in popular literature and oral

tradition across the Muslim world, and on the history of popular Arabic and Turkish humor. General theoreticians of humor are cited. She also points to key works of folklorists outside the region including Alan Dundes (*Folklore Matters*, by way of defending folklore studies against the dismissive words of Edmund Burke in his *The Ethnographic State*), Leonard Primiano (defining vernacular religion), Cristina Bacchilega and Anne Duggan's special issue of *Marvels and Tales* on tricksters, Martha Sims and Martine Stephens (*Living Folklore*), and more.

Jones notes that while Mouliéras presented a French translation side by side with his Berber transcriptions, his dual-language work (republished verbatim in a 1987 edition by Jean Déjeux) does not furnish much information about the storytellers, and that while individual story styles as written vary from "short and snappy" to "long, windy and repetitive," the quality of oral performance is not captured in writing. Nevertheless, Jones writes, "I have attempted to—whenever possible—bring out the punchline of the trickster's jokes, jests or pranks."

Jones rearranges Mouliéras's order of tales according to the above-named themes. Many tales will be familiar to those who know trickster tale cycles from other languages, connected to international tale types, although some ATU type connections provided seem strained. For example, the tale, "Djeha's Knife Kills and Resuscitates" is identified as a variant of ATU type 753A, "Unsuccessful Resuscitation" a legend in which Christ resuscitates a dead person then a traveling companion of his imitates him and fails to do so, cautioning against hubristic imitation of a miracle working personage. Djeha's deceitful use of a knife and bladder full of blood to "kill" and "resuscitate" his wife seems more like a parody of that tale type's core motif.

This reader was struck by a cluster of tales including the knife trick, a cluster familiar to her from Afghan Persian language, where they are told as a single, multimove, concatenating retributive/revenge tale not associated with a named trickster. The protagonist is at first naive, cheated by a trickster gang in a donkey purchase, but then tricks them into repurchasing the "gold-defecating" donkey. Three more "tricksters tricked" moves ensue in which the tricksters in their greed fall for more offers of fake miraculous objects, culminating in the knife trick that leads them to kill their wives, and a final trick in which the hero fakes his own death and in the Afghan variant, induces the gangsters to drown themselves in a river. Feigned death of the hero and the final defeat—though not death—of the adversaries differ in detail in the Berber variant. Mouliéras evidently presented each trick as a separate tale. Jones notes that they form a sequence. It would be interesting to know whether they were performed as a single complex narrative as happens elsewhere, and

to know more about normal performance settings/sequencing of the whole cycle—would the telling of one single-move tale of Djeha/Juha in a normal conversational performance event invite or induce competitive or collaborative telling of others?

"Djeha's Death," logically enough last in Jones's sequence, lacks the comic mayhem overtones of other tales in which death figures. Transcending genre, its plot is strikingly similar to the death of the trickster and martial hero of the Iranian national epic *Shahnameh*, Rustam, who in his career routinely (but never comically) defeats human and superhuman enemies using trickery. (See Richard Davis, "Rustam-e Dastan," *Iranian Studies* 32, no. 2 (1999): pp. 231–242 for a full discussion of the "chthonic" complexity of Rustam, simultaneously a trickster and the iconic martial hero of the *Shahnameh*.) Lured with hospitality from a most trusted ally into falling into a pit, the elderly, dying tricksters with one last stratagem manage to take one of their murderers with them.

No doubt this collection with its fine orienting apparatus will invite plenty of connections and comparisons, including discussions across genres and performance traditions, with other folk and popular narrative traditions.

Margaret A. Mills, Professor Emerita
Ohio State University

***Folk Stories from the Hills of Puerto Rico / Cuentos folklóricos de las montañas de Puerto Rico**. Edited by Rafael Ocasio. Rutgers University Press, 2021. 262 pages*.

This bilingual book is a highly relevant contribution to several areas of study, including Puerto Rican culture and literature, Caribbean storytelling, marginalized voices, and recovery of oral histories and tales from the countryside. It provides the crucial background of the challenges of recuperating the folklore shared in spoken form and the standardizations pertinent to written language and those imposed by sociocultural biases. Aptly, Ocasio contextualizes the legacies of John Alden Mason and Franz Boas in documenting rural folklore in Puerto Rico, alongside the several layers that go into the process of compiling the stories. From the oral tales, to the task of putting them into written form (as Mason requested the countryside people or *campesinos* to do), plus the layers of the editing process—including Aurelio Espinosa's colonialist approach when "sanitizing the colorful vocabulary of the Puerto Rican countryside" (6)—we have a trove of mediated texts that have nonetheless kept the indelible imprint of a Boricua set of realities.

Indeed, among the salient features of *Folk Stories from the Hills of Puerto Rico / Cuentos folklóricos de las montañas de Puerto Rico* are the centering of the Puerto Rican countryside as the backdrop that informs the storytelling of

generations past, as well as how these folktales are transmitted to the younger ones, mainly through oral means. Compiling the tales, thus, becomes an archival endeavor so that the stories and the mediated versions of them find a safe repository where several tales find the company of their own variations and iterations. It being a bilingual edition, the audience is vast as well as specific depending on the reader who takes the journey to which Ocasio invites them. Whatever the case, a key contribution of Ocasio's edition is that "the Jíbaros, the iconic inhabitants of the Puerto Rican *campos*, became the writers of their own stories" (25).

Cultural highlights and critiques can be found throughout the compilation, even if the tales are namely "cuentos para niños." Notable aspects of the folktales per se are the adaptations of widely known characters from stories for children—or fairy tales—like "Blanca Nieves" or "Blanca flor" (Snow White) and "La Cenicienta" or María or Rosa "La Cenizosa" (Cinderella). Nestled among the more "local flavor" characters like the pirate Cofresí and the Juan Bobo stories, these tales convey cultural preoccupations related to navigating dangers as children, survival, and finding the metaphorical heart whether of the protagonist or of the story and its primary lesson.

It is worth noting too the presence of animals in the stories and how they fit into cultural hierarchies. We find beloved local characters like Ratoncito Pérez and Cucarachita Martina, as well as dogs and horses in the variations of the widely known tales of Blanca Nieves and the like. Humankind's "best friend" and humankind's major historical assistant are part of the landscape. However, more than once the quest for a young woman's literal heart imposed on others by a callous—and stereotypical—envious woman or older character, leads to the extraction of a dog's heart as a decoy, thus unnervingly portraying an unspoken agreement of who is to be sacrificed in the name of cruelty. It is the same hierarchy, gender disparity and all, that as in the case of "Los tres trajes" allows for a father to potentially end up marrying his own daughter, which can be read as a warning about an incestuous dynamic condoned by normative heteropatriarchy.

This trove of richly layered texts is not only the tales of the Puerto Rican countryside, but of the childhood of many Boricuas both from the archipelago and from the diaspora. *Folk Stories from the Hills of Puerto Rico* is a fine repository for these tales that—with an insightful introduction with key background information—also portrays the complexities of the sociocultural landscape their character-inhabitants have learned to navigate. In making it a bilingual edition, Ocasio has added more accessibility and visibility to Puerto Rican folklore and Jíbaro traditions.

Nancy Bird-Soto
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

Jewish Folktales from Morocco: Tales of Seha the Sage and Seha the Clown. *By Marc Eliany. Introduction by Annette B. Fromm. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021. 128 pp.*

While Marc Eliany was growing up, three of his grandparents, all of them Jewish Moroccan, told him Seha tales. This book presents these tales from Eliany's recollection, with notes on cultural context around Jewish Moroccan life and the functions the tales may have served. Part folktale collection, part family folklore account, and part ethnography of Jewish Moroccan life, this slim volume offers a glimpse into the folklore of a population that is not widely known.

To any folk narrative scholar well-versed in the field, the Seha tales are immediately apparent as a manifestation of the wise fool and/or trickster stories. When a neighbor comes upon Seha looking for his lost ring under the streetlight in front of his house and starts helping in the search, the neighbor eventually asks where Seha lost his ring. The answer? In the basement. But Seha decided to look in the street because it was too dark to see much in the basement. This is a classic version of a wise fool tale, and other Seha stories follow this pattern so well established in folktales. Yet other Seha tales veer into the territory of myth and legend, such as the tale "Amulets and Good Fortune" (likely a title that Eliany gave, though titling conventions are not made clear). In this story, the angels disagree about what should become of Adam and Eve, and after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, continue to do so. However, the angel Raphael, who was on team human, gave Seha wealth as a reward for his hard work, which another angel then took away through trickery. Finally, Raphael bestowed on Seha a good-fortune amulet, which did not actually contain anything, but it nonetheless improved Seha's life. Eliany places this tale in the context of his paternal grandfather's rabbinical teachings, noting that his "grandfather's Seha tales were colored by Jewish myths" (43), which is not always the case with secular folktales.

Indeed, the Seha tales are unique in that even ones that do not explicitly contain religious motifs are grounded within North African Jewish beliefs. In "Seha the Rain Maker," Seha resolves a drought in a village by washing his clothes and hanging them out to dry, telling the despairing villagers (who had provided him with the last of their water so he could do his washing) not to worry, because whenever he hangs up his clothes to dry, rain falls. It does, thereby proving the wisdom of the naive fool, but this tale also begins with the line: "Everyone knows that saints in Morocco were capable of bringing rain after long droughts. But few ever guessed that Seha could make rain fall, too" (84). Another tale aligns Seha not with saints but rather the prophet Elijah, when Seha successfully helps a woman in childbirth not only deliver her child but also evade her destiny of giving birth and dying right after (11–12).

There is only one fairy tale proper in this collection: "The Three Oranges" (ATU 408), titled here "The King Who Did Not Laugh." Here, Seha plays the role of donor figure, first acting as advisor in directing the sad king to the three love oranges, and then helping the king (after his new bride has been enchanted in the form of a bird) figure out what happened to his wife. The only folk narrative scholarship in the extensive bibliography is specifically on this tale, with Eliany citing work by Isabel Cardigos, Christine Goldberg, and Cristina Mazzoni, to establish the tale's international spread. Tale type and motif numbers do not make an appearance in this book at all.

For readers unfamiliar with the Jewish Moroccan population, this book offers a wealth of information, along with historical photographs. It is estimated that between 150,000 and 300,000 Jews lived in Morocco before and during World War II (Eliany 21), many of whom had settled there centuries prior, and lived peacefully with their Arab and Amazigh (Berber) neighbors. Eliany covers topics like social stratification among Moroccan Jews (31–34) and the Jewish influence on Moroccan folk art (61–65) in great detail. In the conclusion, Eliany provides more biographical information on his three narrators, linking the Seha tales they told to their life stories, which is reflective of the performance turn in folk narrative studies of recent decades. Also in the conclusion, Eliany interprets certain of the Seha stories in the context of Jewish humor (102–105), though this section would have also benefited from reference to works by folklorists on humor and especially Jewish humor. For an audience of folklorists, more information and transparency about the choices Eliany made in retelling and translating the tales from memory would also have improved the reading experience.

This book might be most useful for those wishing to understand the variety of wise fool tales in North Africa or, more generally, the Jewish Moroccan experience, but it does not offer much in the way of scholarly insights or analysis. While folklorist Annette Fromm does some folkloristic framing in her introduction, pointing out the correspondences between Seha and other tricksters from the Mediterranean and Middle East, such as Nasreddin Hodja, the introduction is only a few pages long and can only do so much of the work folk narrative scholars would be keen to see accompanying such rich texts. However, that just leaves more room for analysis for scholars who get to engage with these delightful texts.

Jeana Jorgensen
Butler University

Folktales of Mayotte, an African Island. *By Lee Haring. World Oral Literature Series, vol. 10. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2023. 188 pp.*

Across five decades, Lee Haring has established himself as a leading expert on oral narrative in East Africa and the western Indian Ocean islands. His disciplinary knowledge is formidable, he has an easy familiarity with tale

types and motifs, he has advanced thinking on the textual translation and presentation of oral narrative, and his experiences in "the field" have taught him to attend to the teller behind the tale. All this is evident in *Folktales of Mayotte, an African Island*, a fascinating, thought-provoking, and occasionally frustrating book.

Contrary to what its title suggests, *Folktales of Mayotte* is not a collection of folktales. Unlike Haring's 2007 *Stars and Keys: Folktales and Creolization in the Indian Ocean*, it serves neither the general reader nor the scholar seeking annotated tale texts. The book instead thinks through tales as products of people and place, and it reflexively considers what collectors/listeners/readers mean for tales, and vice versa. The book may be seen as building on Haring's 2013 *How to Read a Folktale: The "Ibonia" Epic from Madagascar*, an ambitious and disciplinarily challenging work. *Folktales of Mayotte* consists of a series of reflections on tellers, collectors, and cultural history, structured around tales that are presented through a mix of translated quotation, summary, and paraphrase.

So, *Folktales of Mayotte* is not a collection or even discussion of folktales. It is something equally (if not more) interesting, and it is work that Haring is uniquely qualified to carry out. Haring prefaces the volume by explaining:

> I have not witnessed the performances I discuss; in fact I have never been to Mayotte. Within that constraint, I indulge a whim. I use books by three French ethnographers of the 1970s–80s to imagine the oral performances. … I ask, what can we comprehend about an oral art without witnessing it in person? … Imagining a performance of *How to Read a Folktale: The "Ibonia" Epic from Madagascar*—which I practice and recommend—does not replace the physical presence of a storyteller, but like reading the script of a play, it urges us to see the performance of oral literature as a kind of theater. (3)

That is, Haring illustrates the process of analyzing collectors' written texts in terms of oral and situated performance. What is analyzed is not simply the tales themselves but also the original collectors' notes and accounts of the circumstances of the retellings. That the three collectors (Claude Allibert, Noël Gueunier, Sophie Blanchy) each have distinct interests and networks permits Haring nuanced contemplations on the art of storytelling, the art of listening, and the art of interpreting. This approach challenges narrower ways of "reading" folktales as text, performance, cultural artifact, history, and such within disciplines such as folklore, literature studies, and anthropology.

Haring is particularly attuned to the politics of storytelling, the ways in which person, text, and performance interact with power relations. Mayotte

offers a particularly rich context, given its complex and contested territorial status; its mix of Malagasy, African, Arab, and French settlers and languages; and its strained relations with other islands in the Comoro archipelago. This attentiveness to overlapping religious, gender, colonial, class, and ethnic hierarchies helps the researcher glean new information from tales and descriptions recorded decades ago. For example, by analyzing numerous tellings of particular tale types, Haring reveals much about how tellers engage their audiences (including their researchers), thereby informing us about the time, place, and culture in which they are situated.

Haring's investigation brings tellers to the fore, highlighting their creativity and skill at producing knowledge:

> Audiences probably expect something that feels traditional. … The tales we read today are reproduced verbatim by their collectors, but orally they have been creatively remodeled by tellers. … Tradition does not equal blind repetition. It is more traditional, in a society of mixed heritages, to recontextualize or adapt an old story like the *fille* to its new setting. (162–163)

Haring emphasizes this creativity again and again, demonstrating the researcher's ability to go beyond seeing past tales as texts and present tales as performances. He shows how individual tellers may introduce into their tales film noir stylings (104), local landmarks and villages (88), their own domestic details (69), real people in the community (71, 125), personal aspirations (71), and popular consumer products (145).

Crucially, Haring also reads storytelling as performance of subjectivity. In one of his lengthier retellings and analyses, concerning the "Grandmother Shark" tale by Anfati Sufu (collected by Sophie Blanchy), Haring writes:

> To perform such a loving account of persecution and rescue, to show self-revelation deferred and delayed yet ultimately successful and convincing, is to offer women the proof and manifestation of ideological truth. … Maybe it invites women and men in the audience to dwell safely in an alternative reality, from which they can look at the constructed ideology of sex and gender around them. When Anfiati Sufu tells Shura's story to her audience, she is enacting women's power, representing herself and other women, and critiquing the gender system implied in these tales. (137)

Folktales of Mayotte is both necessary and compelling. Haring is also a fine writer. Yet there are limitations, hinted at above, occasioned by the book's

presentation of the tales themselves. The mix of translated quotation, summary, and paraphrase makes some narratives difficult to follow. Direct quotes of song and spoken word are given in small caps, while summaries and paraphrases are given in sentence case. But also given in sentence case (often with no visual differentiation) are the author's own interjected comments concerning the tale or the performance. This complicates the reading process. Furthermore, despite its great value to researchers in a range of disciplines, the book contains many unexplained specialist terms that mean very much to folklorists but may not make sense to other readers.

Yet its misleading title and difficult presentation aside, this impressive and important work serves as "proof of concept" for future research into past collections of oral narrative. It reaffirms Haring's status as a preeminent scholar of oral folklore and, indeed, reaffirms the vitality of folklore research itself.

Finally, I wish to mention that the book has been published open access. This makes it freely accessible to anyone in the world with an internet connection—itself a powerful gesture against the injustices and colonial power structures that the book discusses.

Adam Grydehøj
Research Center for Indian Ocean Island Countries &
School of Foreign Languages, South China University of Technology

Mermaids: Art, Symbolism, and Mythology. *By Axel Müller, Christopher Halls, and Ben Williamson. Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 168 pp.*

Axel Müller, Christopher Halls, and Ben Williamson's *Mermaids: Art, Symbolism, and Mythology* is an extremely important contribution to monster, folklore, and cultural studies, providing an incredibly rich and detailed historical context for the study of the Western mermaid figure. Moving from ancient Mesopotamia to contemporary mermaiding schools, *Mermaids* focuses on visual art and material culture as its primary evidence, but also includes discussions of folklore, literature, film, and popular culture. We see how the formless siren of Homer's Odyssey fuses with the serpent-tailed Scylla into a tempting symbol of cardinality that then becomes the innocuous, whimsical figure of girls' culture. While the book is more focused on coverage than critical depth, it does offer some compelling arguments for the evolution of mermaids anchored in its rigorous assemblage of visual and material cultural artifacts. It provides a chronologically wide-ranging and historically grounded contribution to a growing subset of monster and speculative fiction and cultural studies focused on mermaids, and would be an excellent companion text to something like Christina Bacchilega and Marie Alohalani Brown's more oral lore and literary-focused *The Penguin Book of Mermaids*.

The introduction establishes the scope for the book by defining the mermaid as a half-woman, half-fish creature and tracing her largely through her appearance in Euro-Western cultures. This approach excludes creatures such as selkies and rusalkis (though the influence of these beings on the modern mermaid figure is acknowledged) as well as water deity and hybrid water beings from African, Asian, Indigenous, and Latin American cultures. However, chapter 2: "Mermaids Conceived: Hybrid Goddesses and Beasts in Antiquity," establishes that the first mermaid and merman deities actually appear in material culture in what would today be geographically categorized as the Middle East. The chapter also traces the evolution of the mermaid/siren figure from the Mesopotamian goddess Atargatis and the sea monsters of Homer's *Odyssey* such as the Echidna, Scylla, and the Sirens. Particularly interesting is the book's answer to a question on how the bird-woman siren of Greek pottery and statuary become the fish-tailed siren of medieval art. Studying primary sources such as a pottery from circa 320 BCE featuring a siren with a bird tail that "could easily be misinterpreted as a fish tail," they offer the hypothesis that mistranslations and visual misinterpretations may have, along with the association with the sea, morphed similarly curved bird tails into fish tails.

This physical transformation as well as symbolic translation continues into the medieval period, as documented in chapter 3, "Christian Adaptations in the Romanesque to Baroque Eras." Müller, Halls, and Williamson smoothly integrate the use of sources such as medieval bestiaries, visual art, and material culture, including ship figureheads, coats of arms, church statuary, table services, and jewelry. Alongside these sources, the authors also briefly engage literary representations, such as the evolving story of the Melusine, a sometimes mermaid, sometimes dragon-like creature who is claimed as an ancestor of European aristocratic families. In this period's depictions of the Scylla, a twin-tailed monstress from ancient Greek myth, the depictions are tamed of her more grotesque features and fuse with the Melusine and the mermaid. The positioning of the Scylla/Melusine/mermaid figure in noble family crests and church engravings and statuary demonstrate multiple meanings as a symbol of wealth and immortality but also carnality and sinful temptation. Toward the closing of the chapter, the authors discuss shifts in mermaid representation in the Enlightenment toward the biological and exotic, as naturalists contemplated mermaids alongside newly discovered animal life as part of the colonial and scientific enterprise.

In chapter 4: "Mermaid Passions: Obsessive Fixation in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Art," the authors examine the transition of mermaids into more innocent figures associated with love and passion. The chapter opens with the discussion of Romanticism and the nineteenth-century iterations of the tragic mermaid romance, Friedrich de la Motte Fouque's 1811 *Undine* and Hans Christian Andersen's 1837 *The Little Mermaid*. These works influence the

mermaid's subsequent appearance in opera and fine art and help to establish her frequent appearance as a solitary figure of wistful longing, rather than the powerful, predatory temptress of medieval Christian iconography. At the same time, through the mermaid's appearance in building architecture, they demonstrate how she becomes a symbol of artistic inspiration and prowess, somewhat displacing or fusing with the Greek muse. But scientific and colonial interest in the mermaid as a real possibility of the natural world also continues from the Enlightenment into the Victorian period, as preserved, sewn-together monkey and fish remains representing Ningyos, Japanese water creatures, make their way into European and American hands to be exhibited as "real mermaids" in exhibitions and museums. This chapter also considers mermaid appearances in travel promotions as commercial archipelagic symbols and in surrealist art such as René Magritte's 1934 oil painting, "L'Invention collective," which, in its depiction of a fish-headed human-like creature, heightens both the absurdity and discomfiting eroticism of the mermaid figure.

Chapter 5: "Mermaids Everywhere: Postwar Commercialization and Trivialization" argues that realism and abstraction in midcentury art almost disappears the mermaid from fine arts, relegating her to film, popular culture, and toys as an even more innocuous being than in the Romantic period. This chapter gives a fascinating account of the transformation (and I would say, taming) of the fearsome twin-tailed creature of a fifteenth-century woodcut print to the commercially friendly abstraction in the Starbucks logo, as well as a brief treatment of the mermaiding subculture. It also follows the mermaid's appearance as a leading lady in films, including *Miranda* (1948), *Splash* (1985), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), and *Aquamarine* (2006), where she increasingly functions as the whimsical anchor for the romantic comedy, girlish adventure, and/or happily-ever-after fairy tale. The tongue-in-cheek chapter 6: "Mermaids Rationalized: Evolutionary Theory Confronts the Fantastic," takes up the mermaid within geology, archaeology, and evolutionary theory, playfully engaging while ultimately refuting the possibility of their existence.

Mermaids: Art, Symbolism, and Mythology chooses to focus on "Western" mermaid culture. The focus is understandable and useful in that it allows the authors to trace, through a linear time line, the transition of mermaids throughout centuries. This geographical and cultural focus perhaps allows for an uncovering of some of the relationship of changing mermaid stories to larger cultural movements and sociohistorical forces within one brief text. However, what is considered Western often seems to just stand in for white, allowing for mermaid and water spirit images and stories as diverse as Babylonian, Norse, Irish, British, and twentieth-century American to be strung together while excluding African, Asian, and Indigenous images and stories even when they are present in the West and interacting with Western mermaid lore. This leads

to some notable elisions. For example, as the book moves into contemporary visual art it casually states that mermaids are not very often taken up in fine art—but a Mami Wata exhibit curated by Henry Drewal notably debuted at the UCLA Fowler museum in 2008, art quilter Cookie Washington curated an exhibit of Black Mermaid textile arts in Charleston in 2012, and *Nguva na Nyoka*, a 2014 exhibit of mermaids and African water spirits by Wangechi Mutu, an internationally acclaimed Kenyan American artist, was shown at the Victoria Miro Gallery in London in 2014. Los Angeles, Charleston, and London are in the West. Black people who live in the West, though they may be engaging folklore and cosmologies originating outside of it, are also producing Western culture.

While not produced in the West, I also believe that productions such as the Korean series *Legend of the Deep Blue Sea*, which was available on American streaming services such as Hulu, and the Chinese film *The Mermaid*, which had a successful limited release in the United States, engage in Western mermaid imagery and tropes just as much as the more well-known and more often acknowledged New Zealand productions of *Aquamarine* and *H_2O Just Add Water*. Then there is US mermaid media such as Freeform's *Siren*, a soapy, science fiction/fantasy drama with a highly diverse cast that ran from 2018 to 2020. My point here is not that the book needed to mention all of these cultural products, but that the focal category of "Western" often allows for an uncritical exclusion of people of color. While of course no one book can cover everything, I do think it is possible to think critically about the politics of what gets chosen, and how that selection process might undermine the book's stated goal to "describe the aesthetics and diversity of mermaid-related art throughout human history" (vii).

These elisions overlap my other critique—while the book does move into the twenty-first century, the last chapters' account of contemporary visual and material mermaid culture is sparse compared to the rest of the book. The fascinating phenomenon of mermaiding receives an almost obligatory and cursory treatment. It makes no mention of Mermay, a drawing challenge that has proliferated mermaid visual art online since 2016, or of a rich and growing subgenre of mermaid horror films that may have complicated the fifth chapter's impression of "Today's more light-hearted treatment of mermaid symbolism" (133). *Mermaids* dives most deeply and adeptly into the past.

The efficiency and conciseness of this volume, and its orientation more toward the mermaid itself rather than the scholarly conversations about them, privileges the primary texts over referencing secondary source literature. I appreciate and understand this choice, but I do think that a text claiming itself as "probably the first of its kind to describe the evolution of mermaid mythology and symbolism using historical and credible sources"

might have taken more seriously work in monster and mermaid studies that precedes its publication—or else avoided such a claim. Among others I was surprised to not see cited Tara Pedersen's 2015 *Mermaids in Modern England*, which certainly uses the same "historical and credible sources" of bestiaries, art, and material culture. Another absence is Philip Hayward's edited collection *Scaled for Success: The Internationalization of the Mermaid*, which might have directed the authors to a more diverse archive of mermaid art also being produced in and deeply engaged with mermaid lore of the West. But then again, I am an obsessed mermaid aficionado who must acknowledge that the authors acknowledge the impossibility of comprehensive coverage "as the number of known art objects is far too great for a popular and light overview of this kind" and preemptively "apologize to anyone whose favorite examples are missing" (vii). They still manage to include an incredible amount of content in an engaging, quickly moving, and generative 140 pages.

Mermaids: Art, Symbolism and Mythology will certainly be useful and important to my own work and to scholars and students in the topics of mermaids and monster studies, blue studies, mythology and folklore, fantasy and science fiction studies, and art history. Yet it is also written in clear, direct language and should be highly accessible to the many people outside the academy interested in this topic, from the intense hobbyist to the more casual reader. *Mermaids* particularly stands out in providing a rich archive of physical evidence, spanning centuries, for the long journey of this fascinating, multifaceted, and increasingly popular cultural icon.

Jalondra A. Davis, PhD
University of California, Riverside

Der tschechische Himmel liegt in der Hölle. Märchen von Božena Němcová und den Brüdern Grimm im Vergleich. *By Lubomír Sůva. Band 6 Zürcher Schriften zur Erzählforschung und Narratologie (ZSEN). Weimar: Jonas Verlag, 2021. 286 pp.*

In *Der tschechische Himmel liegt in der Hölle* (*The Czech Heaven Lies in Hell*), Lubomír Sůva meticulously analyses fairy tales by the Czech author Božena Němcová and brings her work into a context with the tales and the work of the Brothers Grimm. Sůva's goal is to show why Němcová should be seen as "eigenständige und erfindungsreiche Nachfolgerin der Brüder Grimm" (original and imaginative successor of the brothers Grimm) (118). Sůva aims to answer the questions, do Němcová's tales fall into the category of folk tales and how do they compare to the Grimm tales. In his conclusion, Sůva maintains that the tales of Božena Němcová and the Brothers Grimm developed from the same place of desire to not only record but also actively create a national folk poetry

(nationale Volkspoesie). However, Němcová's tales show a deeper identification of the author with her characters, which manifests as a three-dimensionality that Grimm characters often lack. "Der Unterschied zu Němcová liegt vor allem darin, dass ihre Helden und vor allem Heldinnen stark personalisiert sind, und dass bei Němcová der Leser oftmals Zugang zu deren Innenwelt, zu ihren Ängsten, Gedanken, und Sehnsüchten bekommt, die als untrennbarer Teil der Geschichte … abgebildet sind" (The difference to Němcová exists in the personalization of her heroes and heroines and that the reader oftentimes gets access to their inner lives, their fears, thoughts, and desires, which are portrayed as an inseparable part of the story) (100). Sůva shows how Němcová wove her own personality and beliefs, as well as her love and appreciation for her Czech home country, into the tales, and how she on the one hand openly admitted rewriting and deleting parts, while on the other hand omitting her sources for the original tales (114).

However, it takes more than a hundred pages until Němcová's fairy tales become the focal point of the analysis in chapter 3. Until then, in chapter 1, the reader has been introduced to—or reminded of—the connection of fairy tales to folklore, the philosophy and ideology of Romanticism, and the role that the Brothers Grimm played in the collection and interpretation of tales. The second chapter is dedicated to Božena Němcová, her life and work, her reception, and how she is situated in the literary developments of her country and her time. One of her tales, *Das Alabasterhändchen* (*The Alabaster Hand*), provides the basis for an exemplary description of Němcová's style before the third chapter finally focuses on the analysis of a selection of eleven of Němcová's fairy tales. It highlights three types of tales: magic fairy tales with a heroine; tales with a sensitive male hero; and thirdly, tales in which the devil acts as helper. From this last part derives the unusual title of the book: hell shows characteristics of a paradise, while life on earth can be hard and full of pain for the fairy-tale protagonist. The chapter compares, as far as possible, the analyses of the eleven tales by Němcová with similar Grimm tales, which allows the reader to contrast the different versions side by side and provides the most enticing part of the book. After the conclusion, the book lists Němcová's fairy tales in alphabetic order, their existing translations, and ATU classifications, and finishes with a thorough, twenty-five-page bibliography.

Němcová is often referred to as the author of the original story that inspired the famous Czech/East German fairy tale film *Three Hazelnuts for Cinderella* (Václav Vorlíček, 1973). However, as Sůva points out, the script is "ein Amalgam aus Němcovás Poetik und einem künstlerischen Porträt von Němcová als Person" (a mix of Němcová's poetry and an artistic portrayal of Němcová as a person) (182) instead of a true adaptation. While Němcová's

three Cinderella tales, which Sůva analyzes and contrasts with the Grimm version in chapter 3.1.4 (176–184), feel much different than the beloved film, the strong female heroine with her sense for justice and love for animals and people is a signature of Němcová's style. Sůva writes:

> Aus Němcovás Figurengalerie stechen neben einigen gut gelungenen männlichen Figuren vor allem die naturverbundenen, innerlich erhabenen, tapferen und intelligenten, 'einfachen Heldinnen aus dem tschechischen Volke' heraus, die mit einem ultimativen Erlösungsmittel, einer uneingeschränkten altruistischen ‚wahren' Liebe für ihre Mitmenschen gewappnet sind und die man als *Alter Ego* der Autorin auslegen kann. (In Němcová's gallery of characters, alongside some well-executed male figures, the nature-bound, internally sublime, brave, and intelligent, 'ordinary Czech heroines' stand out, who are equipped with the ultimate remedy of redemption, an unrestricted altruistic 'true' love for their fellow human beings, which can be interpreted as the author's *Alter Ego*.) (249)

Furthermore, Sůva's analysis of Němcová's tales shows that fantastic elements play an ancillary role and that the everyday life of a small village and its inhabitants exude the real magic of the tales: "Es ist nicht mehr das Fantastische, das in der Erzählung dominiert, sondern es sind die Schilderungen der Sitten, Bräuche, Rituale und Charaktertypen eines tschechischen Dorfes, von denen das fantastische Element ‚umgeben' ist." (It is no longer the fantastic that dominates the narrative, but rather the descriptions of the customs, traditions, rituals, and character types of a Czech village, which 'surround' the fantastic element) (93).

While Sůva can be praised as the first scholar who analytically puts Božena Němcová's fairy tales into a comparative context with the Brothers Grimm, the format and layout of his book can feel off-putting to a reader. The book is densely written in words and form: font and margins are small, and the text is filled with detailed excursions into tangential subjects that could have been a footnote rather than a separate chapter. Repeatedly, Sůva summarizes his findings and reiterates his research goals, and all chapters are divided into several subchapters with a partial conclusion and endnotes. The repetitive writing style and the structure of the chapters point toward the origin of the text as Sůva's dissertation, which he defended in 2019 at the University of Göttingen, Germany. While his book is filled with well-researched background information about Božena Němcová's life and her important influence on Czech Romanticism and national literary history, the density and tone of

the text lend themselves more to a scholarly read and as a research source than a book that can be assigned in a fairy-tale course in (higher) education. The book was originally published in German, and so far, no English translation exists. For an international audience, the book would benefit from a more open layout and a cohesive style, which reminds the reader less of a dissertation and more of a monograph.

Juliane Wuensch
Skidmore Colleges