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# Fairy Tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder by Cristina Bacchilega (Review)

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*Fairy Tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations  
and the Politics of Wonder* by Cristina Bacchilega (review)

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the narrator from a shy musician into a tame animal or a piece of meat by revealing the Marquis's perception of her" (87). Backing her claim with examples of how the Marquis and the protagonist are portrayed in the story and using examples from "Wolf-Alice," *White as Snow*, Terry Pratchett's *Witches Abroad* (1991), and Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), Schanoes makes a solid argument for the theory of the mirror as a way to show how characters are perceived by whoever is seeing the reflection.

Throughout the book Schanoes weaves in examples from several revisions of fairy tales and myths about women. Her focus is on revisions written for adults "in order to make manageable [her] sample size" (14). Each of her points is well supported by the examples previously mentioned and clearly presented, making this book an insightful read. The one caution that I would offer is that the author uses names and examples from various fairy tales often without denoting which character comes from which tale. This is a small point that can easily be resolved with either a good memory for details or by taking notes while reading. Overall, I recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the application of feminist psychoanalytic theory to fairy tales and to anyone who enjoys fairy-tale revisions.

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***Fairy Tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder.*** By Cristina Bacchilega. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013. 290 pp.

Cristina Bacchilega's *Fairy Tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder* is a theoretically sophisticated analysis of contemporary cultural and artistic uses of fairy tales. It emphasizes local epistemologies as key to reinvigorating the "poetics and politics of wonder," a phrase Bacchilega uses to refer to the power dynamics at stake in the telling, reading, and watching of fairy tales (ix). The purpose of this project, Bacchilega writes, is to "direct our attention to the significance of orality and located epistemologies in multimedia fairy-tale traditions and to the relationship of folk and fairy tales with other cultures' wonder genres" (196). In doing so, she directs her readers as well to a variety of unusual fairy-tale adaptations and provides convincing, complex analyses that coalesce into a wide-ranging and compelling examination of what she terms the contemporary "fairy-tale web" (27).

Bacchilega introduces and develops the term *fairy-tale web* in the book's Introduction, in which she describes the significant changes that have taken place in the field of fairy-tale adaptations, revisions, and media since the

fairy-tale renaissance of the 1970s. She notes that visionary writers such as Angela Carter have since become revered elders and sources themselves for contemporary fairy-tale adapters, and she directs our attention to the explosion of “trans-media” fairy-tale work to be found on the Internet (74). Bacchilega figures the current landscape as a web that allows scholars to understand “the construction of a history and remapping of the genre that are not insulated from the power structures and struggles of capitalism, colonialism, coloniality, and disciplinarity; and to envision current fairy-tale cultural practices in an intertextual dialogue with one another that is informed not only by the interests of the entertainment or culture industry and the dynamics of globalization . . . but also by more multivocal and unpredictable uses of the genre” (18). In this introductory chapter Bacchilega lays out several core questions for the book, asking what the stakes are in contemporary fairy-tale adaptations both within a European cultural framework and when relocated to non-Western wonder genres and traditions as well as the uses to which *The Arabian Nights* has been put in a cultural context where European fairy tales dominate.

Chapter 1, “Activist Responses: Adaptation, Remediation, and Relocation,” surveys the literature theorizing intertextuality and adaptation and moves beyond texts to include social activism in the fairy-tale web. Bacchilega analyzes *Skin Folk* (2002) by Nalo Hopkinson and *Kissing the Witch* (1993) by Emma Donoghue, arguing that these two writers use relocation as a relational rather than an oppositional framework for the transformation of fairy tales and that their use of specific located knowledges is a way of decolonizing our understanding of intertexts.

It is in Chapters 2 and 3 that the book really hits its stride. In Chapter 2, “Double Exposures: Reading (in) Fairy-Tale Films,” Bacchilega provides beautifully clear and insightful analyses of provocative films and is particularly good on Guillermo Del Toro’s *Pan’s Labyrinth* (2006), Pil-Sung Yim’s *Hansel and Gretel* (2007), and Catherine Breillat’s *Bluebeard* (2009). She situates her analyses in transmedia’s convergence culture and in fan cultures both official and unofficial. She also emphasizes the importance of moving beyond gender only in understanding the various power dynamics that inform fairy tales and their retellings, including those between children and adults and/or those between women.

Chapter 3, “Fairy Tale Remix in Film: Genres, Histories, and Economies,” brings Bacchilega’s detail-oriented and sophisticated focus to theories of genres, interrogating hierarchies of value, both geopolitical and canonical. By comparing several movies with varying distributions and budgets, such as *Pan’s Labyrinth* (2006), *Enchanted* (2007), *Year of the Fish* (2007), and *Dance Hall Queen* (1997), Bacchilega articulates a theory of genre creolization as

opposed to genre hybridity, defining creolization as a process by which the fairy-tale is reconstructed “from the perspective of local histories and oppressed traditions” (29). Hybridity, on the other hand, results from the recombination and grafting of cultures.

In Chapter 4, “Resituating *The Arabian Nights*: Challenges and Promises of Translation,” Bacchilega takes up the use Western fairy-tale adapters have made of *The Arabian Nights* in the context of the Gulf Wars and the rise of anti-Islamic sentiment and violence in the United States after the attacks of September 11, 2001. She examines the twinned processes of translation and adaptation with reference to the *Nights* as a media text, a source text made familiar through and able to be referenced by icons (in this case, those icons include flying carpets and turbaned genies). By analyzing the uses to which *The Arabian Nights* has been put in the *Fables* comic book series and Mary Zimmerman’s play *The Arabian Nights*, originally published and produced in 1994 but mounted again more recently, Bacchilega contrasts a politics of exoticization and eroticization with one of wonder and humanization.

This book is not for the fairy-tale novice; even though Bacchilega provides the reader with substantial background, the theoretical complexity and density of the text mark it as a book for scholars at least at the postgraduate level. With *Fairy Tales Transformed* Bacchilega has made an essential intervention in the scholarship on contemporary uses of fairy tales and their adaptations, helping to invigorate our understanding on the contemporary landscape and addressing the political stakes in our field with nuance, sophistication, great intelligence, and compassion.

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***From Fairy Tale to Screenplay: Working with Plot Genotypes.*** By Terrance Patrick Murphy. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 197 pp.

In 1928 Vladimir Propp published his work on the functional analysis of Russian folktales titled *Morphology of the Folktale*, in which he asserted that regardless of fluidity in characters, setting, and so on, the thirty-one functions (or actions) performed within the plot of a tale are the same, resulting in “an amazing uniformity” in the structure of folktales. Although Terrance Patrick Murphy believes (as many scholars now do) that the reach of Propp’s theory is overstated, he builds on previous work (2008) to support his claim that it is “possible to reconcile the work of Syd Field [a late-twentieth-century screenplay analyst] with that of Vladimir Propp in order to create a better method of analyzing a typical Hollywood screenplay” (27). Through a “friendly critique of the original model” Murphy develops a “new set of plot genotypes, each with its own accompanying cast of characters” that he intends the reader to