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Marvelous Transformations: An Anthology of Fairy Tales and Contemporary Critical Perspectives (review)

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The incorporation of scholarly readings of “Little Red Riding Hood” in a manner that is productive rather than principally dismissive would help to flesh out the *Analysen* (analyses) element of Ritz’s otherwise impressive work. This fifteenth edition of *Die Geschichte vom Rotkäppchen* certainly presents a wealth of information for anyone interested in the origins and retellings of “Little Red Riding Hood.” A future sixteenth edition that critically and constructively engages the main interpretive strands of the tale’s various manifestations would, however, all the more cement the status of Ritz’s work as a key reference text for “Little Red Riding Hood” scholars.

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Marvelous Transformations: An Anthology of Fairy Tales and Contemporary Critical Perspectives. Edited by Christine A. Jones and Jennifer Schacker. Peterborough, Canada: Broadview Press, 2013. 580 pp.

With *Marvelous Transformations: An Anthology of Fairy Tales and Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, edited by Christine A. Jones and Jennifer Schacker, Broadview Press has made a rich addition to its line of fairy-tale-related texts. This volume is unusual in a variety of fruitful ways and will be an excellent resource for graduate and undergraduate students as well as their professors. *Marvelous Transformations* is dedicated to guiding the reader to the genre of the fairy tale and its development as a whole, rather than to individual tale types. To that end, not only do the editors organize the included tales by era of composition or recording rather than by type, but they also include brief essays by prominent scholars highlighting different perspectives on key issues in contemporary studies instead of attempting to encapsulate the history of scholarship on fairy tales. Further, the online components of the book allow for an expanded table of contents. This is a volume well worth adding to any library, personal or institutional, with much to offer and only a few flaws.

Whereas most scholarly compendiums of fairy tales organize their tales by theme or type, so that the reader can trace, for example, ATU 510A from “Yeh-hsien” to Angela Carter’s “Ashputtle, or, The Mother’s Ghost,” *Marvelous Transformations* is less interested in tracing the development of any one tale type than it is in tracing the development of the genre itself. Thus “Part I: The Tales,” is divided into five historical sections: “Early Written Traditions,” “Early Print Traditions,” “Romanticism to the *fin de siècle*,” “Modern/Postmodern Tales,” and “Contemporary Transcriptions and Translations.” Within each one of these sections, we are given a wide variety of tales from across Europe and the Mediterranean. This method of organization provides the reader, then,

with the opportunity to read Giambattista Basile's "Cinderella Cat" (as the title is rendered here) in the context of three of his other tales, two of them much less well known, rather than as one of several versions of ATU 510A. Freed of the requirement that tales of the same type be juxtaposed, connections can also be more easily made among the tales of *les precieuses*, and there is room for some of the Norwegian tales of Peter Christian Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Engebretsen Moe, with their bold and bawdy heroines. This decision allows the pan-European development of the genre and the spreading influence of, for example, the work of the Grimms in the nineteenth century, to be more easily grasped.

This first part of the book contains several original translations, and the first two sections contain superb explanatory footnotes that add much to the reader's understanding, often by pointing out a linguistic subtlety not captured by the translation or by providing an important piece of cultural context. Unfortunately, those footnotes largely drop out of the text afterward and have disappeared by the time we reach the Grimms, so that there is nothing to indicate the various changes and editorial decisions that affect their "Snow White" or "The Maiden Without Hands." Not even the Grimms' own notes on those tales are included, which deprives the reader of important information regarding the representation of gender and violence in these texts. There are a few other curious omissions, such as that of "Yeh-hsien," the absence of which obscures the non-Western roots of the tale, and the absence of any tales by Oscar Wilde or Angela Carter. However, Carter's work is easily found, and one should not complain about a section on modern and postmodern tales that includes work by both Nalo Hopkinson and Kelly Link! The first section, "Early Written Traditions," is by its nature a bit strange, because it tries to encompass 2,700 years, stretching from the ancient Egyptian "Tale of Two Brothers" to a selection from the fourteenth-century, *Alf Layla wa Layla* (better known in English as *The Arabian Nights*); this wide span does somewhat defeat the committed historicist approach of the rest of the volume, and perhaps some division could have been made between the ancient and medieval worlds' tales. Despite these concerns, however, this part of the book, which makes up the bulk of the text, is impressive in both its depth and breadth, and I am not ashamed to say that I discovered tales that I will definitely be adding to my next syllabus.

The second part of the book, "Contemporary Critical Approaches," is divided into five key issues of contemporary fairy-tale studies: "Genre," "Ideology," "Authorship," "Reception," and "Translation." These topics are then addressed in brief essays, each of which offers a new angle of insight, by such important scholars as Cristina Bacchilega, Nancy Canepa, and Elizabeth

Wanning Harries. One particular standout piece is Donald Haase's engaging and perceptive piece on reception studies, in which he adopts some of the conventions of a letter to illustrate the interactions among writer, text, implied reader, and actual reader. Many of these pieces share a common theme in their relentless commitment to historical specificity and the relations among the author, teller, or editor of a tale, the text produced, and the reader, as well as the way these combine in various permutations to produce a particular experience or performance of a given tale. This focus is also reflected in the admirable introduction to the first part of the book, "How to Read a Fairy Tale," in which Schacker and Jones guide students in historically contextualized close readings and provide a nuanced reading of various versions of "Little Red Riding Hood." The cumulative effect is that of a snapshot of critical thought on fairy tales in this contemporary moment; it is possible that such a strategy will date the book, but what anthology or collection does not require updating from time to time?

This is a volume with an expressly stated agenda: "What you know (or think you know) is not the fairy tale itself but a critical interpretation that has been culturally accepted as normative. These normative readings have become lenses through which we tend to view all new stories that we encounter. The organization of this anthology and the critical texts included in Part II are both meant to promote a different series of lenses—some cultural and some purely heuristic—that allow us to see otherwise" (37). With its unusual organization and its distinct approach to the included scholarship, this book has the potential to alter the way we teach fairy tales and therefore how we and our students think about them.

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The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre.
By Jack Zipes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012. 235 pp.

Although set in a framework of memes and cultural evolution, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale* is as much a book about fairy-tale collectors, collections, and the media of story expression as about individual tales and transmission. Indeed, Chapter 1, "The Cultural Evolution of Storytelling and Fairy Tales," refers to and updates the increasingly popularized ideas about memes. Author Jack Zipes asserts, "To say the least, meme has suffered from its popularity and is now loosely used for anything and everything that becomes trendy and acts like a virus" (18). Zipes cites a recent study, *The Evolution of Childhood* (2010) by Melvin Konner, to claim the memetic aspects that most draw his attention as the fairy tale's eminent social and cultural historian. He considers memes