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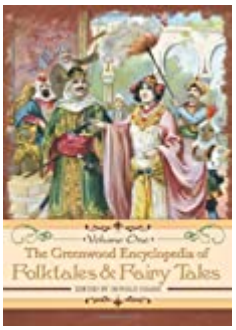

Donald Haase, ed. *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales.* Three Volumes. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007. 1,240 pp. $299.99 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-33441-2.

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Published on H-LatAm (February, 2014)

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The Power of Tales

A pivotal work in its field, *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales* will advance the research in unprecedented ways for English speakers. It is not an anthology, but rather a near-comprehensive reference tool in three volumes. Its editor, Donald Haase, one of the foremost authorities in the field, saw the need for this work when reflecting on the heightened interest in folktales and fairy tales, which has become evident during the last fifty years. This ambitious and well-thought-out enterprise has a global, multicultural scope by design. Stories, entry topics, and entry authors come from all over the world. The 670 entries written by almost 200 well-known specialists offer readers insights into the foundation of culture and help them to explore its essence. Entries cover topics from antiquity to the present. A ten member advisory board of experts, professors, and independent scholars was created to select entry topics based on five basic guidelines and the following eight categories: 1. cultural/national/regional/linguistic groups; 2. genres; 3. critical terms, concepts, and approaches; 4. motifs, themes, characters, tales, and tale types; 5. eras, periods, movements, and other contexts; 6. media, performance, movements, and other cultural forms; 7. television, film, animation, and video; and 8. individual authors, editors, collectors, translators, filmmakers, artists/illustrators, composers, scholars, and titles. As evident from the list, they reflect a multidisciplinary approach and a global reach.

People from the so-called primitive cultures all the way to modern societies, dependent on current technologies, find value in reading, listening to, or telling stories. Folktales and fairy tales seem to be at the heart of all civilizations, permeating every aspect of them. No matter the age, educational level, or social class, stories permeate everyoneâs life. They spring up in childrenâs books, a good novel, a textbook, a television show, or a film. But at any given time and place, the general public only knows of a limited number of them. The origins of fairy tales, their multiple mutations, and their possible interpretations are often a mystery for the general reader. And while such in-depth knowledge is not required to enjoy tales, enjoyment itself will often make readers curious

and eager to learn more of them. In *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales*, Haase offers the curious fairy tale fans the type of resource they would need, and it is accessible to both students and scholars alike.

Alphabetically organized for easy access, entries are also extensively cross-referenced, in a simple yet efficient manner: tales, topics, people, and motifs that have their own entry appear in boldface within other essays. Entries are actual essays of varying lengths, which, as can be surmised from the above list of categories, cover a broad range of topics. Most also supply a list of resources for further exploration of the taleâs subject, thus giving the reader the impression that the aim is to provide near panoptic coverage. The breadth encompassed by the eight determining categories will surprise even many researchers in the field. Search a little and you will find entries as interesting and as disparate as blood libel, death, forbidden room, feminism, utopia, undine, magical realism, folktales of rabbinic literature, Aztec tales, Taketori monogatari (the tale of the bamboo-cutter), and African tales, to name a few. You will also discover tale authors, expected and unexpected: George Sand, Gabriel GarcÃa MÃ¡rquez, Oscar Wilde, Alice Walker, and Caroline Stahl, as well as Alejandra Pizarnik, Amos Tutuola, Luisa Valenzuela, WÃº ChÃ©ngân en, and many more. Some of the more interesting entries are those dedicated to well-known tales, such as âCinderella,â âBluebeard,â and âLittle Red Riding Hood.â These entries include information on the earliest form of the tale itself as well as on its many variants throughout the world: stories, novels, and even films that are often not close to the original tale but that contain many of its prominent features.

Entry authors offer informative and often intriguing essays written in a clear, concise, and scholarly language, erudite yet not too technical. Though some essays do contain terms and ideas that may confuse lay readers, these are not many, and clarification is often just a dictionary or an encyclopedia away. In many cases, the problem arises due to the authorâs detailed analysis, works cited, and examples. Some of the selections, for example, are not as familiar to lay readers as they are to specialists. In addition, the use of some acronyms may disconcert those who consult the encyclopedia without reading the introduction and other pertinent information contained at the beginning of volume 1. For example, âATâ and âATUâ appear in many entries followed by a number. These refer to a system of classification designed to avoid problems caused by the fact that some tales, especially those from oral traditions, often do not have a fixed title. Part of the problem disappears once one consults page xxi. If one is even more curious, then a trip to the library is in order since the space limitations prevent the encyclopedia from going into detail on this particular manner of classifying tales and their variants.

Combined with the abundant background material provided in every entry and the suggestions for further reading, these essays could easily be confused with those found in a journal. In sum, this encyclopedia offers a wealth of information to scholars, students, and the reading public in general. Another pleasant surprise is the rich mixture of black and white photos and illustrations that add interest to many of the entries. These photos depict tale authors and other literary figures, reproductions of artistic illustrations for stories–often from previous centuries–and scenes from early and newer films. Older illustrations, such as Gustave DorÃ©âs, are particularly interesting since they often reveal the attitude of the artist regarding the content of the story. Although this work has few or no weaknesses, the inclusion of photos of authors may not be the most efficient use of limited space; more illustrations of stories might have better served the reader.

Reviewing an encyclopedia poses particular problems, not least of which is how one approaches the task. How does one give the reader an idea of the caliber and range of its contents? How does one go beyond superficial comments about its organization and contents to create an in-depth review? On the one hand, a possibility could be to summarize a good number of entries very briefly, a procedure that, again, would merely touch the surface. On the other hand, if the reader keeps in mind the title and focus of the work, one can only hope that he or she would agree that summaries of the entries on two key tales and two central topics provide a more appropriate idea of overall breadth and quality of the contents.

No matter what version of a tale we have heard or read as children, we can be certain that it is only one of the original taleâs many permutations. Take âLittle Red Riding Hoodâ for instance. Its first version seems to have existed in France as âThe Grandmotherâs Tale,â which, experts agree, was the tale told before Charles Perrault created his literary version.[1] The original was a quite gruesome tale, which involved a werewolf, cannibalism, and an explicit sexual scene. Unlike later versions, the first story debuts a resourceful young girl who manages to escape unharmed by tricking the wolf just as he is about to eat her. She asks permission to go outdoors to relieve herself, and then ties the string the wolf tied to her

foot to a plum tree (a nanny goat in some variants) and escapes. According to the author of this entry, Sandra L. Beckett, âmost oral tales have a variation of this scatological happy endingâ (p. 583). Many variants of âThe Grandmotherâs Taleâ have been collected in France and Italy as well as in other parts of the world. A surprising 241 close variants of a very similar tale called âGrandaunt Tigerâ come from Asia. The main elements are present in these, even though a tiger (perhaps because it is a predator more common in Asia) replaces the Western wolf.

Throughout its many permutations–an initiatory tale in the oral tradition, a cautionary tale in the seventeenth century, and a generic story in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries–âLittle Red Riding Hoodâ was and remains a very attractive tale to readers of all ages. Perraultâs version adds the red riding hood, which many scholars interpret as adding sexual connotations. So he keeps the sexual component, but omits some of the more offensive (for his time) elements such as the cannibalism; the detailed strip-tease, which in âThe Grandmotherâs Taleâ takes place right before the wolf gets ready to eat the girl; and the scatological trick. Perrault also replaced the feisty, smart girl with a naÃ¯ve victim, as befits a cautionary tale, and added a sexually suggestive moral directed at young girls. In 1812, the Grimm brothers presented this tale as part of German oral folk tradition, though their source was a woman of French Huguenot ancestry. Their adaptation, revised in subsequent editions, became a tale more and more aimed at children and one where Little Red Riding Hood was no longer an active participant. The Grimm brothers introduced the motherâs admonition not to stray from the path in one of those subsequent versions of the tale, with a happy ending notwithstanding (the child is saved, the wolf is killed). It remains a cautionary tale, focused on warning children about the perils of disobedience. Later in the nineteenth century, the tale went through further alterations to become a true childrenâs story and a generic, sanitized blend of the two literary versions, Perraultâs and the Grimm brothersâ. In its many retellings, as with many other tales, âLittle Red Riding Hoodâ reflects the social and literary preoccupations of the specific time of each retelling. Other permutations of this tale also reflect the times. The story has been told in short stories, novels, poetry, picture books, illustrated books, and, of course, comics. Last, but not least, film and theater adaptations started in 1922 and have continued to thrive until the present.

Another well-known fairy tale, âCinderella,â can claim to be one of the worldâs oldest. In her thorough research, Vanessa Joosen, author of the Cinderella entry, found the oldest identified variant to be a story written in China around 850 CE. Although the heroine is helped not by a fairy but by a fish, experts have found in that story many of the elements present much later in the Perrault version of 1697, which is, along with that of the Grimm brothers, the best-known version in the West: the evil stepmother, the royal ball, and the small slipper. Joosen also mentions variants originating in Italy, Japan, Russia, Brazil, and Africa. Demonstrably, the basic story–rags to riches–lies as well at the heart of novels like *Jane Eyre* (1847) and films like *Pretty Woman* (1990).

Although similar in terms of the elements employed, the most common versions of this tale–Perraultâs and the Grimm brothersâ–present several differences. Of those, the most startling is that Perrault created a forgiving Cinderella who allows her stepsisters to marry noblemen from her husbandâs court. He also added two morals, which are quite typical of his time: ââgood graceâ is worth more than mere beautyâ and âone needs a good godmother or godfather to succeed in lifeâ (p. 202). The Grimm brothers, conversely, let the stepsisters receive a double dose of punishment. First, their mother urges them to maim themselves (cut off their toes and heels) so that the slipper will fit. Then, as they walk to church with Cinderella on her wedding day, two doves peck out their eyes. This last punishment makes sense within the taleâs context considering that Cinderellaâs helper is not a fairy godmother but rather some birds living in a tree planted by Cinderella on her motherâs grave. Not only is âCinderellaâ one of the tales most adapted, modified, and parodied, but it is also one whose location is often shifted to other times, such as the 1920s, as exemplified both in the writing and by the fashions and architecture present in the worksâ illustrations. Western authors have located it in places as unexpected as Appalachia. Another interesting distinction is that it has been rewritten using an assortment of animals for characters: penguins, elephants, and even smelly dogs.

A highly important aspect of the writing dedicated to this tale–the feminist criticism–crystallizes in Andrea Dworkinâs 1974 book *Women Hating*. Here, besides the typical accusation that the tale promotes passivity in girls, the author presents an unexpected defense of the stepmother, portraying her as a pragmatic mother who stops at nothing in order to help her daughters succeed in a stratified patriarchal society. Joosen also alludes to other feminist critics whose convincing methods include speech analyses done to prove the thesis that authors have systematically modified the tale to create a passive protagonist more acceptable in a patriarchal society. In

her analysis of tales and variants by Gianbattista Basile, by Perrault, and in several editions of the Grimm brothersâ main collection, âRuth Bottingheimer found that direct speech shifted from women to men and from good to bad girls: Cinderella is gradually silencedâ (p. 203). Joosenâs compressed essay, brimming with valuable information of high interest to all readers, also includes comments on psychological criticism and retellings for adult audiences, such as Barbara Walkerâs *Feminist Fairy Tales* (1996).

In a separate, four-page-long entry, Carolina FernÃ¡ndez RodrÃguez addresses the subject of the large number of Cinderella motion pictures. This story, she declares, is the one that has most been taken to the big screen. In a comprehensive essay, she briefly reviews over forty titles. She points out that the storyâs success in this medium originates from the same elements that make its literary retelling so popular: a character saved from a life of insults and servitude only by the actions of her prince, a glorification of romantic love, and a happy ending (marriage). Nevertheless, she also asserts that another reason for the success of this type of movie is that Hollywood âversions â¦ are especially targeted at a feminine audience usually trained to accept traditional gender roles as the most desirable ones,… and offer them a chance to experience,… the magic of courtship, of being beautiful and desirable, and of transcending loneliness and povertyâ (pp. 205-206). Seeming to contradict herself, she also mentions that the industry has disseminated Cinderellas throughout the world, âthus socializing the audience to accept the role model that they are offeredâ (p. 206). Such assertions me wonder if the first part (audiences trained to accept traditional gender roles) does not refer to the mothers and the second one to the children with whom they so unwittingly share their vicarious pleasure. Films mentioned are those similar to *Ever After* (1998) and *Maid in Manhattan* (2002), freer versions where magic is absent but that still feature a character lifted from an undesirable social position through the love of a man much better off than she is.

Another valuable point made by FernÃ¡ndez RodrÃguez is that judging from the charactersâ passive or submissive behavior and the lack of power to articulate their ideas, the Cinderellas of modern films have hardly advanced their lot. With one exception, she points out, they are still victims unable to speak for themselves unless given permission and they still need to be rescued by their princes. In the one exception, *Ever After*, FernÃ¡ndez RodrÃguez draws attention to a Cinderella more or less empowered by her love of reading, though she still seems submissive to her prince, because although she does refute him, she does so only when he grants her permission. Nevertheless, she is not a passive victim but rather an active protagonist who rescues her prince from some Gypsies and is instrumental in gaining her own freedom at the end of the film. FernÃ¡ndez RodrÃguez mentions another instance of how the main undergirding of the story remains constant. She analyzes the film *Maid in Manhattan* and concludes that despite the complexity introduced–racial and ethnic issues, illegal immigrant standing, and single motherhood–the paradigm appears intact. In other words, economic status and social class still play a key role and the film adheres to Hollywoodâs social code by keeping the female character mostly passive and giving the white man the prerogative to approach and accept the ethnic woman.

A tool such as *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales* allows us to perceive the universality of tales. Through its many entries, we gradually realize that their presence in our lives is an integral part of the common memory since the beginning of time. Aware of their importance, entry authors present folktales and fairy tales as a vessel for passing on a societyâs cultural ideas, thoughts, and values. Their essays also reveal that although the retelling of tales has certainly guaranteed the survival of a culture, authors/collectors have often used tales to achieve other goals. In this century, some of us may not consider these aims as respectable as they were most likely thought of in their time. Take for instance the use given to tales in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century and a large part of the nineteenth, a period of great upheaval in western Europe due to the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. In their quest to create a national unity similar to that of France and England, and starting from the premise that a peopleâs cultural past is the foundation of nationhood, romantic nationalists, like the Grimm brothers, began collecting, retelling, and editing tales in the oral tradition (a practice not unlike what blacks and Chicanos attempted in the latter decades of the twentieth century). Their nationalist fervor was so strong that experts suspect them of creating a type of âfakelore.â In essence, the accusation means that they reshaped or created texts to fit a cultural ideal or to supply a cultural need. However, in large measure, many of the alterations were evidently guided by efforts to bring about social and moral growth, a common practice among storytellers, especially those of the nineteenth century.[2] Nonetheless, an interesting bit of evidence may give some credence to the charges just mentioned; it comes from the actions of one of the

Grimm brothers, Ludwig Emil. His portrait of Dorothea Viehmann, the brothersâ most famous source of tales, presents her not as the urban, middle-class widow that she was, but as a kind-faced, elderly peasant woman.[3]

The entry on parody contributes additional information on the many changes fairy tales undergo. Parodies, some of the most interesting recastings of fairy tales, depend on familiarity with the story to create comic effects. Authors employ distance, exaggeration, and sarcasm as tools of their trade. These allow them to reject the rigidity of the literary and social conventions of their own time. In his entry, U. C. Knoepflmacher alludes to fairies transformed playfully away from the all-giving godmother in âCinderellaâ to those free spirits in William Makepeace Thackerayâs *The Rose and the Ring* (1855) and Juliana Horatia Ewingâs âTimothyâs Shoesâ (1870). In Knoepflmacherâs words, these fairies willingly âcurtail their magic to allow their immature wards to grow up on their ownâ (p. 728). Similar comic changes appear in U.S. films and some theater productions of the 1980s. In Shelley Duvallâs production of *Cinderella*, the godmother pretends that her wand is broken. In *Cindy Ellers*–a 1985 ABC âAfter School Specialâ–the role of the fairy godmother is taken up by a bag lady, who seemingly gives her nothing, but convinces Cindy that her stepfamily is not as bad as she thinks. Such playful alterations echo criticsâ demands for more active heroines, but pale at the intensity of the changes made by female writers. Think, for example, of Walkerâs *Feminist Fairy Tales*, often advertised as the stories the Grimm brothers never told you. Her female characters–no longer the helpless, submissive women of classical tales–are vibrant and strong enough to take charge of their own fate.[4] Remember also Anne Sextonâs harsh satire of Grimm fairy tales in *Transformations* (1971). In her poems, she challenges the traditional happy ending and characterizes fairy tales as tools of patriarchal dominance.

In an even more complex manner, Pizarnik also parodies fairy tales. She achieves her goal by using their elements, taken out of their context, and fashioning her own tales. An Argentine citizen of Russian descent, this poet looked for her roots in eastern European folktales and fairy tales. According to Fiona Mackintosh, Pizarnik seems to alleviate her sense of exile and orphanhood by creating these surrealistic fictions and attempting to inhabit them. Perhaps as a reflection of her sense of exile, this poet also takes characters out of their fairy tale context and makes them exchange dialogue absurdly within a modernist setting reminiscent of EugÃ¨ne Ionesco or Samuel Beckett. In another vein, she includes parodic scrutiny of the language of fairy tales in poems like âLa verdad del bosqueâ (1966) where she comments that the green color of the forest is only in the poetâs mind. In Mackintoshâs penetrating interpretation, âPizarnik highlights clichÃ©d forms of fairy tales that depend on the repetition of key recognizable elements for their meaningâ (pp. 749).

In conclusion, as stated before, folktales and fairy tales with their infinite variants have entered the collective memory and have become an essential part of individual and social existence. Their presence, once relegated to tales told by grandmothers and storybooks, has become ubiquitous. By illuminating this reality, *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales* allows us to better understand our lives and the factors that influence them, which in turn provides a powerful motivation for reading. The well-researched information on the talesâ origins, changes, interpretations, and influence should alone make this work an invaluable companion to scholars and lay readers. Optimistically, this review will accomplish three important tasks. First, readers will be able to appreciate the high quality of the entries and their in-depth coverage of each topic. Second, they will be aware that in addition to providing a wealth of highly interesting facts, analyses, and sources in one convenient place, Haaseâs encyclopedia also fosters respect for cultural diversity through the breadth of story and thematic content and the selection of experts from many different cultural backgrounds. Finally, they will recognize a most important contribution: the material helps the reader see similarities and convergences among stories from all over the world, thus providing a priceless model in the global environment of the twenty-first century and quite an antidote for ethnocentrism and close-mindedness.

Notes

[1]. This oral story, however, was only collected in NiÃ¨vre around 1885.

[2]. This custom is not restricted to that period, as becomes patent when one considers the feminist criticism of more recent tales and especially films.

[3]. The portrait can be considered central evidence because it became the frontispiece of the second volume of the Grimm brothersâs famous tale collection *Kinder und HausmÃ¤rchen* (1812-22) beginning with the second edition.

[4]. In her entry on Walker, Joosen points out some of the inconsistencies in her work, as well as the fact that âher positive portrayal of empowered female characters is often at the cost of their male counterpartsâ (p. 1019).