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Review

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die eigenen Erfahrungen zu überprüfen, um seine Behauptungen selbst zu widerlegen; schließlich ist es Engel wohl gelungen, denn der Darsteller blieb!

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FAIRY TALE ROMANCE: THE GRIMMS, BASILE, AND PERRAULT. By James M. McGlathery. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991. Pp. ix + 226. \$29.95.

In *Fairy Tale Romance: The Grimms, Basile, and Perrault*, James McGlathery sets out to examine the three "classic" collections of Early Modern fairy tales in Europe and their treatment of erotic desire and its effects. The author's aim is to show how the depictions of these collections, although from different times and from editors shaped by different literary traditions and social-historical forces, "may not merely be the inventions of a particular storyteller . . . but more broadly representative of popular narrative" (p. 10). While many scholars have studied the influence of Perrault on the Grimms, McGlathery's decision to include Basile's earlier collection is a welcome one. In fact, Basile's bawdy *Pentamerone* is much more suited to McGlathery's purposes than is Perrault's often preachy *Contes*, which may explain why in general Perrault gets very short shrift throughout the book. (Mention of him is completely missing in Chapters 1 and 3, limited to only one paragraph in Chapter 4, and one half line in Chapter 6.) It is the tradition McGlathery knows best, namely the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, which carries most of the book.

Each chapter begins with a short introduction to the subject, and is then divided into subsections (e.g., "Beauties and Beasts" with I. Animal Suitors, II. Beastly Bridegrooms, III. Haughty Virgins). Chapter topics range from "Brothers and Sisters" (1) and "Beauties and Beasts" (2) to "Fathers and Daughters" (3), "Hags, Witches, and Fairies" (4), and "Fetching Maidens and True Brides" (5). Chapter 6 ("Bridegrooms and Bachelors") then examines how the depictions of heroes of fairy-tale romance differ from the portrayals of the romantic heroines (p. 155).

Although the overriding issue throughout the study is the depiction of erotic desire in these collections, the introduction suggests that the focus for the book is "the fairy tale heroines, the nubile maidens for whom the time to marry has arrived . . . [and] how this change or crisis in their lives is depicted" (p. 15). It is precisely such unwavering attention to this perspective that hurts the book most. If McGlathery were indeed interested in how these editors and writers viewed erotic behavior, then the perspectives of the male, as well as the female characters, should play a role. Instead, McGlathery doggedly analyzes the female's role with arguments that are often outright offensive to readers sensitized by feminist and revisionist scholarship of the past few decades. In the section "Beastly Bridegrooms" in Chapter 2, for example, the author contemplates why the wife in Perrault's "Bluebeard" does not flee when she discovers the bloody charnel house filled with her predecessors. McGlathery comments: "Perhaps she is willing to remain married to Bluebeard even after she has discovered that he is capable of such cruel punishment. . . . Thus, in the younger daughter's unconscious, marriage to a man capable of murdering his wife for disobedience may not be an intolerable situation. Perhaps, on the contrary, discovering that her husband is in-

deed a blue-bearded butcher . . . renders the union that much more thrilling” (p. 67). The text does not support this conjecture, and, moreover, McGlathery does not consider the larger picture that the woman, like many others in fairy tales and real life, has nowhere to turn once she has been given in marriage. McGlathery then draws supporting evidence for his claims by using the Grimms’ “Fitcher’s Bird,” and suggests: “taken as a whole . . . “Fitcher’s Bird” would seem, like the Bluebeard story, to be a portrayal less of bachelor misogyny than of maidenly resistance to the thought of marrying” (p. 71). McGlathery thus puts the onus on the victim, rather than the perpetrator. In his concluding comments about this chapter, the author muses that such a story “suggests a recognition that our sexual excitement may involve the feeling or fantasy that there is something animal about desire. . . . [T]hinking of one’s lover as a beast, or as beastly, may make the encounter all the more exciting” (p. 187). His general thesis is flawed, since McGlathery makes (dubious) assumptions only about female sexual excitement and psychology, for in fairy tales it is only females who must confront beastly lovers. Why men don’t marry beasts is never a question in McGlathery’s mind. Related questions about male psychology—that men may feel beastly about themselves, and hence the recurrence of the theme in fairy tales—never arise.

There are equally offensive comments in other chapters. For example: in Chapter 3, McGlathery discusses Basile’s “Sun, Moon, and Talia,” in which a king is passionately drawn to his “ideal beloved,” a sleeping beauty. When the king consummates his “passionate desire,” McGlathery’s concludes: “this king is guilty simply of an act of adultery rendered excusable in view of his wife’s evil or jealous nature” (p. 99). Although McGlathery does allow that “a degree of vice” does attach to this act because it is necrophiliac, to suggest that intercourse with a nonconsenting, comatose partner is excusable because his wife is evil or jealous is simply beyond the pale.

The conclusion provides a summary, but not always of McGlathery’s findings in the book. What the conclusion does do, however, is show that in McGlathery’s mind, the fairy tale is a timeless description of and prescription for interhuman relations. His comments seek to draw the reader into a kind of complicity: “Fathers should love their daughters, *we* believe; and they understandably hope . . . that their daughters will marry and present them with grandchildren” (emphasis added; p. 187); “Prospective brides and young wives have traditionally been expected to employ subtle arts in seeking to attract or keep a husband. Fairy tale romance very much reflects this ancient wisdom”; “*Our* resistance to the idea of aggressive pursuit of men by women may be reflected in *our* preference for the proverbial passive beloved, a Sleeping Beauty” (emphasis added; p. 188). I suggest that not all readers share McGlathery’s preference for passive beloveds or resist the aggressive pursuit of men by women. What’s more—McGlathery never asks why we hold these beliefs, or what role storytelling, fairy tale, and folktale from a patriarchal society have played in creating these stereotypes.

There are several problems with the thesis and execution of the study. One is the psychological suppositions, which to this reader seem tentative at best. Many of McGlathery’s suppositions are informed by Bruno Bettelheim’s 1977 work *The Uses of Enchantment*. Unfortunately, although Bettelheim’s work brought new adult readers and critics to fairy tales, *The Uses of Enchantment* also institutionalized a kind of sexism which passes as psychosexual truths

(and which has been debunked by numerous critics, most prominently feminist). Many of Bettelheim's attitudes echo eerily in McGlathery's statements in *Fairy Tale Romance*.

Another question is why McGlathery has intentionally chosen works with differing historical and cultural backdrops, only to subject them to a kind of psychological ahistoricism. The reader is left to infer that the author wants to show that these depictions represent universal psychic dispositions beyond culture and time. And yet the author himself often concludes that various subjects may or may not have been appropriate in the different societies in which these collections flourished. At the end of Chapter 3, for example, McGlathery concludes: "depiction of fathers' attachment to their daughters is more typical of the romantic stories in Basile's collection than in the Grimms' tales of love. . . . The reason is surely that the subject easily offended the sensitivities of a later age and more northern, puritanical climate" (p. 108). I admit to being one of the critics who argues that "one cannot ignore the cultural, historical, and social context in which a given story is narrated" (p. 194). I also complain with others McGlathery mentions that approaching the tales as "depicting universal psychic processes rather than reflecting the very concrete and specific situations of the particular tellers and their audiences" (p. 194) is a dubious undertaking at best. McGlathery himself suggests that "the versions of folktale offered by Basile, Perrault, and the Grimms strongly reflected in each case the literary culture of their respective periods and places, while at the same time being recognizably connected as belonging to European literary tradition stretching back to the Middle Ages and antiquity" (pp. 194–95). McGlathery points us in the direction, but he never leads us down the path. Missing is some kind of social-historical analysis that would explore why these themes were or were not part of popular tradition.

The author is also often unclear as to which tradition he is actually treating. The introduction variously suggests we are dealing with popular narrative, the folktale, the fairy tale, literary adaptations of popular narrative. These are in fact different genres and traditions, and McGlathery would help the reader by limiting the scope. This expansive approach accounts for the problems which arise when he comes to dealing with the collections: he often demands more of these texts than the genre "fairy tale" allows. A case in point is discussion of the Grimms' "The Glass Coffin." There a young girl is awakened from a dream by a stranger. She tells the stranger "a young man [in the dream] came and liberated me, as I open my eyes today I discover you and see my dream fulfilled." McGlathery comments obscurely: "The girl's curious vagueness (or reticence?) about the other things she saw in her dream may hint that the brother, too, played a role therein" (p. 44). McGlathery himself has suggested in other places that a requirement of the genre is its silence and that the emotional life of the characters is not revealed. There is thus no reason in a fairy tale to expect that the maiden is being vague or reticent, and there is no textual evidence to support the assumption that the brother may also have appeared in the dream. This is not "letting the texts speak for themselves," as McGlathery has vowed to do. Yet, when the sister in "The Glass Coffin" does speak for herself and narrates the account of her imprisonment, the author views her utterances with suspicion: "While there is certainly no reason to disbelieve her, the simple fact that this part of the story comes from

her lips lends an element of the fantastic to the adventure recounted. If her account is not girlish fantasy, one could well imagine it as such" (p. 43).

This kind of double bind for the character in "The Glass Coffin" is exemplary of the greater problems with McGlathery's work. Women often fare badly in the male-authored fairy-tale world, but they suffer equally in McGlathery's analysis of the tales. His analysis perpetuates the sexual stereotypes and gender prescriptions of the collections and societies in which they arose. Female characters in the fairy tales may have "virginal fantasies about males as predators" as evidenced in stories of the Beauty and the Beast type; meanwhile, men dream of "involvement with magical beauties, or at least with women possessing seemingly magical charms" (p. 158) or of the "opportunity to become [the woman's] angel of rescue, an appealing role in erotic fantasies" (p. 161). The female character dreams of her victimization in erotic fantasies while men fantasize about helpless virginal beauties in need of rescue. Indeed, the stuff of both dreams is the same, but the perspective is radically different.

McGlathery is on shaky ground, and his language in the book betrays this uncertainty. McGlathery's latent sexism is corroborated by the language he uses: there are selfish, unloving stepmothers, ugly hags, wicked stepmothers guilty of "greedy unwillingness," but loving, doting, devoted fathers, gentle bridegrooms who "skillfully quiet the girls' physical apprehension" and "good, kind, devoted husbands." Of the old woman in the Grimms' "Rapunzel" he notes: "We can imagine that even as a girl the hag was so ugly that no man desired her" (p. 120). But women who are obedient and at least mildly attractive reap the benefits, as the girl in Grimms' "The Holy Virgin's Child." She confesses her sins and is then "permitted to enjoy the full measure of earthly bliss as a wife and mother" (p. 123). Every discussion is also filled with disclaimers like "perhaps," "maybe," "seems," "appears," "possibly," as in the passage: "The necessary condition for the brother's redemption—that he be shot, decapitated, and suffer the amputation of his paws—*may* be a projection of his incestuous guilt, insofar as it *may* represent a symbolic punishment: death for having desired the sister, decapitation for having "lost his head" over her, and loss of the greedy "paws" with which he yearned to steal a caress. And that this redemptive punishment should be effected by the sister's prospective husband is a *possible* further hint of the brother's need for expiation of guilt, spiritual purification, or guilty resignation" (emphasis added; p. 41). A critic may see whatever she or he wants to see, but for a textual analysis, the text must support the critic's conclusions.

While exploring the often veiled depiction of erotic desire in fairy tales, McGlathery gets bogged down in a catalogue of traditional gender roles and prescriptions and presents them as if they were universal human truths and universal literary motifs, when in fact they are historically and culturally conditioned. McGlathery's contribution is to lay the groundwork for what will be a much more interesting study. He has identified useful categories for further investigation. For a psychological study, one could examine which themes appear universally in the works as evidence of universal psychic dispositions. From a sociohistorical vantage, one could explore, as McGlathery once suggested, which themes were more prevalent in which collections as a reflection of a given society's predilections and proclivities. From a literary perspective,

one could examine how the tales in a given collection did indeed reflect and refract themes in popular narrative or continue a broader European narrative tradition. *Fairy Tale Romance* does none of these things coherently or consistently. What remains to be done is a more illuminating study.

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THE JEWISH RECEPTION OF HEINRICH HEINE. Edited by Mark H. Gelber. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1992. Pp. 234. DM 96.

Heinrich Heine's relationship to Judaism, his Jewishness, and his Jewish contemporaries, a subject of endless fascination, has in recent decades produced important books by Israel Tabak (1948), Ludwig Rosenthal, Hartmut Kircher (both 1973), Siegbert Praver (1983), and Paul Peters (1990). A three-day international conference held in April 1990 at Ben Gurion University in Beersheva addressed itself to what might be called the Jewish chapter in the complex reception history of Heine. Most of the fifteen substantial essays in the present volume were delivered as papers at that English-language conference.

Jeffrey Sammons, arguably the doyen of American Heine scholars, has the first as well as the last word, which means that his rather pessimistic, though not necessarily negative, assessments frame this collection. "The Exhaustion of Current Heine Studies," a personal and polemical keynote address, provides an overview of recent Heine research. Acknowledging his "long-standing skeptical and distanced relationship to the contemporary epoch of Heine scholarship," Sammons takes a dim view of the products of critics with ideological blinkers and claims that for all its profusion and liveliness contemporary Heine research has been bedeviled by an ultimately sterile approach. "Much contemporary scholarship," he avers, "has attempted to deironize and deambiguate Heine while claiming his relevance to modernity." If Heine scholarship is to be reenergized, there must be no more heroization, and the centrality of Heine's identity as a poet must be restored.

In "Homeric Laughter by the Rivers of Babylon: Heine and Karl Marx" Renate Schlesier details the affinity between the two men and Marx's sympathetic reception of, and indeed stylistic dependence on, the poet. Marx hailed Heine as an ally in his struggle to "free Judaism from the blemish imputed by the Christians." Unfortunately Schlesier's heavily Germanic English ("He reckoned himself to the oppositional camp," "Heine had held there a rousing speech," "tearing free from the iron fetters," "symptomatologically") makes her essay all but unreadable, and she prolongs the pain by offering (almost alone among the contributors) her own translations from Heine and others ("It moves her so much the setting of the sun").

Julius Schoeps discusses Heine's influence on the Danzig-born Aron Bernstein, best known for his ghetto stories "Vögele der Magid" and "Mendel Gibbor," who recognized Heine's importance at an early stage, published a poetic homage to him in 1834, and sided with him against Börne. Addressing themselves to Heine's impact on other German-Jewish writers of the nineteenth century, Donald Hook and the late Lothar Kahn point out that "Heine became a symbol of German-Jewish attitudes toward German Jews themselves as well as towards their host country." Michael Beer, Gabriel Riesser, Ludwig Robert, and Berthold Auerbach regarded Heine as an unworthy successor of