

Further Reading

- Fink, Gonthier-Louis. "The Fairy Tales of the Grimms' Sergeant of Dragoons J.F. Krause as Reflecting the Needs and Wishes of the Common People." *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale*. Edited by James M. McGlathery. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. 146–63.
- Röhrich, Lutz. *Folktales and Reality*. Translated by Peter Tokofsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. 184–98, 202–03.

Solinas Donghi, Beatrice (1923–)

In 2003, Beatrice Solinas Donghi won the coveted Premio Andersen (Andersen Prize) for lifetime achievement in recognition of her long career as one of the most cherished and innovative Italian authors of tales and **children's literature**. Best known for her modern approach to the traditional folktale in such collections as *Le fiabe incatenate* (*The Linked Fairy Tales*, 1967) and *La gran fiaba intrecciata* (*The Great Interlaced Fairy Tale*, 1972), Solinas Donghi also published **novels** for adults and children that are laced with folkloric themes and **motifs**.

Born in Serra Riccò, Italy, Solinas Donghi followed in the tradition of nineteenth-century folklorists like Giuseppe **Pitré** when she preserved in text folktales from Genoa and Liguria in *Fiabe a Genova* (*Genovese Folktales*, 1972) and *Fiabe liguri* (*Ligurian Folktales*, 1980).

Solinas Donghi contributed to folklore criticism with the collection of articles *La fiaba come racconto* (*The Fairy Tale as Story*, 1976). In a letter to Solinas Donghi dated June 30, 1969, Italo **Calvino** praised her article "Divagazioni su varie Cenerentola" ("Digressions on Various **Cinderellas**"), which would later be included in *The Fairy Tale as Story*, as a significant contribution to Italian culture, stating that it had been almost a century since anyone had seriously considered comparativistic folklore. For Calvino, Solinas Donghi's study distinguished itself with its plentiful references and intelligent, spirited discourse.

Gina M. Miele

See also Italian Tales

Further Reading

- "Sei lettere di Italo Calvino a Mario Boselli, Beatrice Solinas Donghi, Goffredo Fofi e Antonio Preti." *Nuova Corrente* 33 (1986): 409–19.

Sorcerer, Sorceress

Sorcerers and sorceresses are figures capable of performing magic using **magic objects** and aids. Sorceresses are generally sympathetic to the protagonist and play supporting roles; sorcerers are often the protagonist's nemesis and propel the tale's narrative.

In the history of magic, clear divisions exist among witchcraft, sorcery, and their practitioners. A **witch's** power is inherent, a sorceress's learned. Sorcery can be taught and practiced by anyone working with magical aids, such as wands, **mirrors**, and herbs. While both witches and sorceresses might perform black magic (*maleficium*) to harm others, sorcery is usually reserved for beneficent or empowering purposes.

Although the terms are often used interchangeably in modern parlance, witches and sorceresses are distinctly different figures in folktales and fairy tales with separate realms of action. Hans-Jörg Uther's *The Types of International Folktales* (2004) gives only three tale types for "sorceress" (ATU 310, The Maiden in the Tower [Petrosinella, Rapunzel]; ATU 405, Jorinda and Joringel; and ATU 449, Sidi Numan) but a tenfold number for "witch." Uther's index lists only four tale types for "sorcerer." There appears to be an international preference for tales with malevolent magical females.

Unlike witches, their more pervasive counterparts who appear unbidden with evil intent, sorceresses are actually sought out to perform helpful magic, to restore balance to the community, and to advise on matters of the heart. They might be asked to foretell the future, divine the location of lost objects or persons, or effect a healing. Theirs is a learned and studied art, as the frequent mentions of their books of magic suggest. One of the sorceresses' most sought-after skills is their knowledge of herbs' medicinal and magical powers. They often brew or collect the ingredients necessary for love potions, fertility aids, healing ointments, and even salves for reviving the dead. They are generous with their gifts, teaching supplicants spells and **incantations** or providing magic objects, like mirrors that reveal the true appearance of a bewitched person, a magic flute that revives a dead daughter in Russian and Greek tales, or a magic wand that

disenchants a stony friend in Retoromanic and Austrian tales. In the role of their real-life historical counterparts (the “wise women”), fairy-tale sorceresses might be asked to perform countermagic to disenchant others, but their wand may just as easily transform humans into stones or dogs, snakes, mice, or other animals. Sorceresses may themselves be shapeshifters, becoming **cats** or owls during the day (as in Jacob and Wilhelm **Grimms’** “Jorinda and Joringel”). They are benevolent advisors: in **Greek tales**, for example, heroes seek the advice of a sorceress on performing some impossible task or finding a lost **family** member. In their nurturing role for the good of the community, sorceresses provide foster care for lost or endangered **children**. Unlike witches, who are always described as ugly, old, and mean, the sorceresses’ appearance and **age** remain a mystery, and they fade from the narrative after giving advice and aid.

Sorcerers, in contrast, are almost uniformly portrayed as maleficent and have roles much more like witches. They have no positive magical counterparts and are more pivotal characters in the narrative because they often interact with the hero in battles of wits and one-upsmanship. It is not uncommon for sorcerers to exhibit their powers to impress or intimidate. In some tales, the sorcerer is described as a cannibal or in league with the **devil** (an accusation leveled at real-life sorcerers). Occasionally, they are healers or exorcists, relieving people of demonic possessions, but they rarely dabble in herbal remedies or the healing arts. Sorcerers sometimes give advice on finding missing loved ones; they may foster young maidens while their **father** is having a hard time making ends meet, although they are just as likely to kidnap the children for no apparent reason and to release them unharmed only after some difficult challenge has been met. They play a very limited role in love magic. Like sorceresses, they often possess magical aids (most frequently a magic wand and book of spells, or a sack full of snakes and another filled with bugs), or they may bestow them on others (such as the seven-league boots in tales from Poland). Their book of magic is often their undoing—the most recurrent sorcerer tale internationally is ATU 325, The Magician and His Pupil, in which the sorcerer’s apprentice studies the book, soon rivals his master in skill, and finally conquers him in

wand-to-wand combat. As shapeshifters, sorcerers fall victim to their own bravado: they execute various **transformations** when goaded by adversaries, only to be swallowed in their final transformation as a mouse (the most famous example is “**Puss in Boots**”). Almost all of the tales highlight the perils of ego, since the sorcerer is inevitably dispatched or self-destructs in the end.

The question arises as to what extent these images of magical **men** and **women** reflect the historical record on witchcraft, sorcery, and the healing arts. One result of the Christianization of the Greco-Roman and Germanic worlds was that the emphasis on witchcraft and magical arts became associated with diabolical arts and heresy. In the course of the **Middle Ages**, the sorceress was demonized. Traditions from other areas Christianized later are rich with descriptions of positive feminine sorcery—Iceland, for example, has almost no tales with an evil sorceress or witch. National and linguistic borders also play a role. The German Grimms, for example, regularly preferred the identification of all female magicians (good or bad) as witches. In Germany, even geographic descriptions came to be disenchanted and instead bewitched. In 1649, the Brocken (a mountain in eastern Germany that was believed to be the sorceresses’ meeting place) had a *Zauber-Teich* (magical pond) and a *Zauber-Brunn* (magical well); by the end of the eighteenth century, these places had been renamed “the witches’ well” and “the witches’ pond.”

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See also Magic Helper

Further Reading

Michelet, Jules. *The Sorceress: A Study in Middle Age Superstition*. Translated by A. R. Allinson. Paris: Charles Carrington, 1904.

South Asian Tales

The Indian subcontinent is characterized by tremendous diversity—physical-ecological, linguistic, cultural, and religious. The region’s cultural geography stretches from the high mountain communities of the Himalayan region (Nepal, Bhutan, Tibeto-Burman