

## BOOK REVIEWS

De Vos, Gail and Anna Altmann. *New Tales for Old: Folktales as Literary Fictions for Young Adults*. Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 1999. 406p. \$39.00 hc.

As society changes and the entertainment industry impacts our culture, traditional fairy tales borrowed from the oral tradition have been adopted and adapted into new forms by the popular media. The unique contribution of *New Tales for Old* is the listing and discussion of a wide range of contemporary adaptations—movies, novels, operas, poetry, short stories, picture books, and Internet resources based on eight folktales: "Cinderella," "The Frog King," "Hansel and Gretel," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Rapunzel," "Rumpelstiltskin," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Snow White." The persistence of these familiar fairy tales—often in dramatically altered forms—highlights the haunting power of these images and messages whose roots lie deep in oral tradition. Replete with interdisciplinary interpretations, this book is a treasure trove for teachers who work with undergraduates or high school populations. Folklorists, too, will find this a useful and stimulating resource.

After discussing the theories of Walther J. Ong as presented in *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, the authors provide an overview of the folktale genre and various interpretative approaches. In the following chapters, each focusing on a single tale, scholarly commentaries from folkloristic, literary, social, political, and psychological perspectives follow the story text. These scholarly syntheses, which emphasize the symbolism of each tale as well as gender issues, are offered in an objective and non-judgmental manner. Versions of the tale in various popular media are discussed, and each chapter ends with thoughtful and creative classroom exercises and an extensive bibliography.

An overview of one of the chapters will serve to illustrate the breadth and variety of scholarship in this work. "Snow White" (Chapter Nine) begins by comparing the version of the tale in Giambattista Basile's *The Pentamerone* (seventeenth century) with the Grimm version, including a chart showing revisions made in subsequent editions of the Grimm texts. In their "Overview of Critical Interpretations,"

the authors summarize in chronological order commentaries on "Snow White" by Karl Schenkl, Alfred Nutt, Ernest Boklen, Bolte and Polivka, Kurt Heyman, J.P. Grant Duff, A.N. Foxe, A.S. Macquisten and R.W. Pickford, Julius Heuscher, Bruno Bettelheim, N.J. Girardot, Roger Sale, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Derek Brewer, Kay Stone, Max Luthi, Maria Tatar, Betsy Cohen, Ruth Bottigheimer, Wolfgang Mieder, Joyce Thomas, Shuli Barzilai, Steven Swann Jones, James McGlathery, Lutz Rohrich, Trina Schart Hyman, Nancy Walker, Martin Hallett and Barbara Karasek, Diane Purkiss and Christiana Bacchilega. Interpretive and philosophical statements are presented without criticism, as the authors' purpose is "to provoke rather than to judge."

The authors' discussion also covers literary works based on "Snow White," including three novels: *Pictures of the Night* by Adele Geras (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, 1992), *The Godmother* by Elizabeth Ann Scarborough (New York: Ace, 1994) and *Little Snow White*, a graphic novel by David Wenzel and Douglas Wheeler (New York: Nantier, Beall and Minoustchine, 1995). Donald Bartheleme's *Snow White* is not included, perhaps because the authors considered it inappropriate for young adults? References to "Snow White" in children's picture books along with synopses of eighteen short stories and eleven poems (presented in chronological order of their publication) are also presented.

The chapter includes a lengthy examination of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (1937), Walt Disney's first full-length animated film which sparked interest in animated reworkings of traditional and literary tales. De Vos and Altmann even include a section on "Movie Trivia" which reveals that individualized dwarfs were previously found only in a picture book published in England (1921) where the illustrator drew names on the dwarf's trousers: Stool, Plate, Spoon, Fork, Knife, Bread and Wine. Disney's innovation was not only to provide names for the dwarfs, but in addition, to give them distinct personalities. (Other names Disney considered included Gabby, Jumpy, Sniffy, Puffy, Lazy, Stubby, Shorty, Nifty and Wheezy.) Additional contemporary films discussed in this chapter include *Snow White: A Tale of Terror* (1996), directed by Michael Cohen and *Willa: An American Snow White* (1997), directed by Tom Davenport as well as several short films.

Finally, in the Internet category, the authors describe a site developed by Professor Kay E. Vandergrift: [www.scils.rutgers.edu/spe-](http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/spe-)

[cial/kay/swteach.html](http://cial/kay/swteach.html). Here an 1898 edition of "Snow White" can be used to compare highlighted portions of the text with more than thirty other variants. The "Classroom Extensions" exercises include questions for discussion on essay writing: To what extent can the apple in "Snow White" be compared with the spindle in "Sleeping Beauty?" What is the role of the witch in history? In folklore? Is this witch different than the witch in "Hansel and Gretel" and "Rapunzel?" The chapter concludes with an extensive bibliography. Each of the other stories is presented with the same in detail coverage, referencing media publications and productions.

*New Tales for Old* is enhanced by an attractive book design which includes convenient headers and footers, easy to read charts, and use of a bold font for story titles and section headings. I heartily recommend this book for lovers of folk tales and/or popular culture.

## RUTH STOTTER

Suwyn, Barbara J. Edited and with an Introduction by Natalie O. Kononenko. *The Magic Egg and Other Tales from Ukraine*. [World Folklore Series.] Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited. 1997. ISBN: 1-56308-425-2. 222p, b&w and color illustrations, bibliography, index. \$29.50

This is a collection of delightful stories, rewritten to appeal to children, suitable for reading aloud or retelling orally. The volume, part of the World Folklore series, has been designed with a school and library market in mind. It includes supplemental material such as a glossary and pronunciation guide, introductions that provide historical and cultural context, and bibliographies with suggestions for further reading. The collection is divided into animal tales, how and why stories, moral stories, and legends and fairy tales. The variety of stories is chosen to appeal to a range of age levels and teachers and parents are urged to be selective in deciding which stories to share. A young child enchanted by stories like "The Turnip" or "The Little Round Bun" might find stories like "The Stranger" (a vampire story) or "The Sorceress" frightening, although these are gripping tales that will captivate older readers. The work is the result of collaboration between Suwyn, a professional copywriter and poet, and Kononenko,