

## Caught in the Fairy-Tale Web

**Cristina Bacchilega. 2013. *Fairy Tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations & the Politics of Wonder*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 296 pp. ISBN 978-0-8143-3487-4**

Renowned fairy-tale scholar Cristina Bacchilega, most famous for her influential book *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* (1999), once again delights the academic community with another thought-provoking study of fairy tales. As the subtitle of *Fairy Tales Transformed?* suggests, the study focuses on twenty-first-century adaptations of fairy tales, more specifically literary and cinematic adaptations targeted towards (young) adults. The corpus is analysed with the help of a new method: the “intertextual and geopolitical fairy-tale web of reading and writing practices” (ix).

Positioning herself at the intersection of “fairy-tale studies, folklore and literature approaches, coloniality studies, and cultural studies” (16), Bacchilega reflects on the Euro-American literary fairy-tale tradition and its position within various genre and media systems, as well as the poetics and politics of wonder. Adopting different approaches and analysing different corpora, the four chapters (framed by an introduction and epilogue) that constitute the study aim to answer two key questions outlined on the very first page: “How and to what uses are fairy tales being adapted in the twenty-first century? What are the stakes, and for whom, of adapting fairy tales in the twenty-first century?” (ix).

Contemporary adaptations discussed in the book cannot be traced back to a single, ‘authoritative’ text, thus bearing witness to the intertextual, plural and multivocal nature of the fairy-tale genre, as well as the dethronement of the Perrault-Grimms-Disney triad which has in previous decades “been made to stand for all fairy tales” (56). Though the majority of the book is structured around the analyses of a relatively small number of films and literary texts, Bacchilega’s study is peppered with numerous examples of everything fairy-tale: from Dina Goldstein’s provocative *Fallen Princesses* series of photographs and Bloomingdale’s window display featuring a princess and a frog with ruby lips, to Facebook groups and the *Mother Goose & Grimm* web comic. The text is complemented with five figures and sixty colour plates.

The introductory chapter opens with a brief overview of the factors which have had an impact on the contemporary perception and status of fairy tales and their adaptations, both within (feminist and other social critiques and their gradual infiltration into the mainstream) and outside academia (globalisation, the development of new technologies). Bacchilega also provides readers with something of a timeline which leads from her previous (*Postmodern Fairy Tales*) to the current book, and encompasses some of the most important developments in the field of fairy-tale studies along with influential fairy-tale adaptations, from the game-changing *Transformations* (1970) and *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), to contemporary online projects and blockbuster films. The list, of course, is by no means exhaustive, but rather aims to give the reader an idea of the sheer extent of the field in question. Stressing the impossibility of studying contemporary fairy tales outside a socioeconomic and geopolitical frame, Bacchilega discusses the problematic link between fairy tales, magic, wonder and

enchantment, particularly the ways in which contemporary consumer society builds on the wish-fulfilling aspects of the fairy tale, taming its potential for wonder and transforming it into yet another commodity.

The first chapter discusses activist fairy-tale adaptations penned by three contemporary authors: Nalo Hopkinson (*Skin Folk*), Emma Donoghue (*Kissing the Witch*) and Dan Taulapapa McMullin (*Sinalela*, poem “The One-Eyed Fish”). The primary focus is on genre and means of its reorientation, as well as strategies (creolisation, anti-stereotyping, queering, etc.) which bring about the relocation (i.e. remapping “from within the perspectives and frames of specifically located knowledge and histories”, 37) of the folk and fairy tale.

Given the recent “Hollywood fairy-tale deluge” (76), it is hardly surprising that two out of four chapters in the book are dedicated to fairy-tale films. The second chapter examines representations of reading and (story)books in four contemporary films: the commercially successful *Enchanted* (2007, dir. Kevin Lima) and *Pan’s Labyrinth* (2006, dir. Guillermo del Toro), as well the somewhat less known *Bluebeard* (2009, dir. Catherine Breillat) and *Hansel and Gretel* (2007, dir. Pil-Sung Yim). Chapter three takes a second look at cinematic adaptations, this time from the perspective of genre. To explore how ‘borrowing’ elements from different genres and creating generic mixes brings about a hybridisation and creolisation of folk and fairy tales, Bacchilega once again turns to *Enchanted* and *Pan’s Labyrinth*. To these films she adds two small-budget, independent cinematic retellings of Cinderella: *Year of the Fish* (2007, dir. David Kaplan) and *Dancehall Queen* (1997, dir. Rick Elgood and Don Letts). The discourse on films is complemented by a discussion of Chan-Hyo Bae’s series of photographs *Existing in Costume*.

The fourth and final chapter is dedicated to contemporary North-American adaptations of *The Arabian Nights*. The chapter opens with a brief discussion on translating, in itself a process of adaptation which necessarily involves both interpretation and transformation. Case studies examined in this chapter include one episode from the popular TV series *Once Upon a Time*, media reports on the American army in Iraq (media texts), Bill Willingham’s comic book series *Fables* and Mary Zimmerman’s play *The Arabian Nights*. Special emphasis is placed on visual translations of *The Arabian Nights* (the visual tropes – genies, turbans, magic lamps, flying carpets, etc. – seem more recognisable than the actual plots) and the Orientalisation process by which the wonder of *Nights* is branded as ‘Other’.

In the epilogue, Bacchilega addresses the issue of the role and responsibility of scholars in the globalised community and, using the example of Ruth Bottigheimer’s purely literary history of the fairy tale (presented in her fiercely contested book *Fairy Tales: A New History*), warns of the dangers of one-sided approaches and conceptualisations of the genre’s history through hierarchies and inequalities. A truly new history of the fairy tale, contends Bacchilega, is predicated on the provincialisation of the Euro-American literary fairy tale, and (previously proposed by David Haase) decolonisation of fairy-tale studies.

Apart from the occasional spelling mistake and a misquotation of the title of Ang Lee’s film (p. 170, *Crouching Lion, Hidden Dragon* instead of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*), little or no criticism can be lodged against *Fairy Tales Transformed?*. Though perhaps too challenging for the novice student/scholar who is just becoming familiar with the fairy-tale genre, this well-crafted book will be a useful resource to scholars interested in cultural, media and fairy-tale studies, literature and folkloristics. Filling a wide gap within fairy-tale

studies, Bacchilega's book raises stimulating questions and equips the reader with the tools and guidelines for future research, while arguing for interdisciplinary, collaborative and socially responsible research.

Nada Kujundžić

## Fremdsprachendidaktische und unterrichtspraktische Überlegungen zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur

**Emer O'Sullivan & Dietmar Rösler. 2013. *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur im Fremdsprachenunterricht*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 227 S. ISBN 978-3-86057-297-9**

Das Buch *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur im Fremdsprachenunterricht* von Emer O'Sullivan und Dietmar Rösler behandelt grundlegende theoretische und unterrichtspraktische Fragen der Kinder- und Jugendliteraturwissenschaft. Die Autoren gehen von der aktuellen Ausgangslage in Deutschland aus, die einerseits von intensiverer Beschäftigung der Fremdsprachendidaktik mit der Leseförderung und dem Leseunterricht seit dem „PISA-Schock“ anfangs dieses Jahrhunderts geprägt ist, andererseits aber durch einen Mangel an institutioneller Verankerung, vor allem an den universitären Einrichtungen für Fremdsprachenlehrerausbildung, beeinträchtigt ist. In diesem Sinne sehen die Autoren eine Diskrepanz zwischen aktuellen Forderungen nach Leseförderung und Reformen des Leseunterrichts und den fremdsprachendidaktischen Schwerpunkten in der Lehreraus- und -weiterbildung. „Diese Lücke soll dieses Buch füllen, indem es versucht, die vielen Ideen, die Fremdsprachendidaktiker, bezogen auf verschiedene Sprachen, entwickelt haben, zusammenzuführen und so darzustellen, dass man sie ohne besondere Vorkenntnisse nachvollziehen kann.“ (9)

Das Buch erscheint in der Reihe *Stauffenburg Einführungen* des gleichnamigen Verlags und verfolgt ein spezifisches Konzept: die Publikation ist als Arbeitsmaterial für Seminare konzipiert und bietet eine Einleitung in einen bestimmten literaturwissenschaftlichen Themenbereich, bzw. einen ersten Zugang zu einem neuen Wissensgebiet. Vor allem wendet sich die Publikation an Studierende und Lehrende der Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften, aber auch an Lehrerinnen und Lehrer in Fort- und Weiterbildung. Die Verfasser, eine Literaturwissenschaftlerin und ein Fremdsprachendidaktiker, liefern eine leicht verständliche, flüssig geschriebene Einführung in einen spezifischen Teilbereich der Literaturwissenschaft und folgen einer klar strukturierten, übersichtlichen Darstellungsweise. Dabei ist das Buch nicht zu umfangreich und der Text optisch klar präsentiert. Einzelne Kapitel bieten Vorschläge zur Weiterarbeit in Form einer weiterführenden Bibliografie, die zur Vertiefung anregt, und werden durch Aufgaben sowie konkrete Unterrichtsbeispiele ergänzt.

Das Buch enthält zwölf Kapitel, die sich in drei größere Themenblöcke aufteilen lassen und die sich von grundlegenden Merkmalen der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur, über Fragen zu den Leistungsniveaus und dem Alter der Schüler bis hin zu ausgewählten Detailfragen erstrecken. Dabei werden an Beispielen des Deutschen, Englischen und Französischen als