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These at times highly technical feature articles are complemented by enlightening and literally insightful short pieces about a particular proverb's meaning or history, obituaries of eminent scholars, and concise book reviews. It is therefore no exaggeration to state that these two volumes offer a wealth of the most diversified information to the specialist in paremiology and a lot of fun to the lover of proverbs. In various ways it becomes clear how difficult it is to truly catch what a proverb is and that this problem is not all solved yet. This publication, however, succeeds in stimulating minds of different orientation to approach the problem.

The yearbook is conceived to be a tool fostering cooperation and exchange among paremiologists on an international level, and so it accepts contributions in English, French, German, Spanish, and Russian. As one who tries to bridge linguistic barriers of considerable height by using English as a kind of lingua franca I feel a little bit envious, because I feel that being able to transmit different cultural expressions as much as possible in their own respective linguistic form is a great service to folklore studies. Mieder brings a great deal of eastern European and western Asian scholarship into this publication and I hope that his openness would become an incentive to our Asian colleagues not only to collect and interpret proverbs in their own cultures, but also to make their treasures and their thoughts about them increasingly known to an international readership. To conclude, I join one of the authors in congratulating Mieder on this publication and hope that he would be able to keep up the fruitful exchange he has rekindled for many years to come.

NOTE:

1. Subscriptions to *Proverbium* are all US \$10.00 per volume. Checks should be made payable to *Proverbium* and should be sent to *Proverbium*, Department of English, The Ohio State University, 164 West 17th Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210 USA.

Peter Knecht

MIEDER, WOLFGANG, editor. *Disenchantments. An Anthology of Modern Fairy Tale Poetry*. xvi+203 pages. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1985. ISBN 0-87451-327-8. Hardcover, n.p.

In European countries, as in other places, the tradition of collecting and editing fairy tales went through a long history of development. As this process was taking place, the interpretation of the fairy tales altered, depending on the viewpoint and objective of the writer or editor. In the twentieth century, however, due largely to the theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, new ways of interpreting the fairy tales were discovered, relying much more on psychology and a better understanding of the subconscious mind. Then, in 1976, with the publication of Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*, another valuable key was provided as a means to enter and fathom the deep recesses of the fairy tale world. Wolfgang Mieder's book, *Disenchantments. An Anthology of Modern Fairy Tale Poetry* is still another. Certainly not purporting to be much more than an anthology of modern fairy tale poems, nevertheless it is the first of its kind, and the choice and quality of the poems included ought to guarantee the book's reputation well into the future.

As an "anthology," the book is rather short: there are only 101 poems. However, this number is surely sufficient to give the reader a good idea of how fairy tales aer

seen by poets today. The editor selects poems that deal with the most popular Grimm fairy tales: "The Frog Prince," "Rapunzel," "Hansel and Gretel," "Cinderella," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Sleeping Beauty," "Snow White," "Rumpelstiltskin," and "Snow White and Red Rose." Except for a few from the 19th century, all the poems are written by 20th century writers.

Reading the anthology, one becomes aware of the intimate relationship between the fairy tales and poetry itself. Working with the same bases: elements of magic and the supernatural, myth, fairies, talking beasts . . . the two literary types complement one another to a tee. Thus, the fairy tales stand as a perfect medium with which the poets can work. Perhaps the most remarkable thing, however, is the fact that the poets are able to bring so many truths inherent in the fairy tales to light. Thus, though so much has already been accomplished, the poets show that much more can be done to elucidate truths hidden in the tales. In fact, examining the fairy tales from an imaginative stance—for example, presenting the frog's or dwarf's point of view, or how Sleeping Beauty felt as she slept, or what the prince thought as he climbed up towards Rapunzel's tower, etc.—offer endless possibilities of interpretation.

The short, eight-page "Introduction" to the volume gives valuable general clues to the meaning of the poems. The editor points out, for example, that the problems and harsh experiences of the 20th century have created a much more critical, questioning, and at times, pessimistic mentality towards life and society than held formerly. Not all of the poems, of course, are negative, and the variety of poems—humorous, hopeful, satirical, personal—gives a good overall balance to the book. Nevertheless, the predominant tone is critical. Dorothy Lee Richardson's "Modern Grimm," is only one example among many. When a shrill voice calls out from the living room: "Nibble, nibble, little mouse / Who is nibbling at my house?" Hansel and Gretel answer: "Only the wind / Only the wind." As the poet shows, this obvious lie by the children has a definite relation to the destruction wrecked by the bomb over Hiroshima. Here, too, as if to avoid facing the responsibility for the consequent ruin, when asked: "What have you sown, O darling children? / What have you grown in the land of magic?" the response is heard: "Only the wind. Only the wind." This same critical interpretation of the tales is extended to such heretofore innocently regarded characters as Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, and Snow White. Not a few of the poets, intent on looking very critically at the behavior of these characters, see them as cunning and devious—certainly not as innocent and dainty as presented in Walt Disney's animated cartoons. In this sense, as the editor points out, many of the poems can even be seen as "anti-fairy tale" poems, quite antithetic to the tradition of the happy ending fairy tale.

Although most of the poems in the anthology stay close to and comment on the tales as related by Grimm, some poems use the fairy tales only as a kind of background or reference point for the poet's own expression of belief. Charles Johnson's "Sleeping Beauty," for example, makes only the slightest allusion to the fairy tale; the focus is fixed on a poor Black man, suffering because of bad treatment at the hands of Whites.

Another noticeable point about the poems is the personal involvement of the author. In Grimm's fairy tales, anonymity is the rule, while in the poems, the voice of the poet can be heard loud and clear. Indeed, in some poems, the onus of the poem leans more towards the poet's own experiences than the fairy tale itself. (See, for example, Sara Henderson Hay's "Juvenile Court"). Because of course, the experiences of each of the poets differ, the poems in the anthology cover a very wide range of topics. This, too, adds to the sense of variety in the anthology.

The quality of most of the poems is such that several readings should be sufficient

to bring to light their meanings, though in some cases the poems are so deeply personal, or rely so much on rather obscure imagery that the meaning of the poem all but defies interpretation. In these cases, a succinct note or two by the editor would be very helpful to better understand some of the more difficult allusions. Beyond this, at the end how modern writers look at fairy tales today.

REFERENCE CITED:

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ŌBAYASHI TARYŌ 大林太良: *Shinwa no keifu. Nihon shinwa no genryu o saguru* 日本神話の系譜 日本神話の源流をさぐる [The pedigree of myths. In search of the sources of Japanese myths]. Tokyo: Seidosha, 1986. xxx+343 pages. Bibliography, index. Hardcover ¥2,400; ISBN 1039-400254.3978. (In Japanese)

Ōbayashi Taryō, professor of ethnology at Tokyo University, presents herein his fundamental insights into the foundations of Japanese mythology. The book consists of twenty-four of his most important articles dating from a period of some twenty years of academic research.

The fact that Ōbayashi with this collection of major articles found his way back to his initial methodology may, in my opinion, be regarded as a kind of sensation in the field of mythological studies. Since the author's academic interests during the last ten years seemed to lie mainly with the study of functions and structures of Japanese mythology as a whole, Ōbayashi now claims again the legitimacy of comparative and cultural-historical analysis regarding the various and heterogeneous elements in the different mythological complexes of the Japanese tradition. Thus Ōbayashi carries on his way, which climbed to its first summit as early as his fundamental work *Nihon shinwa no kigen* (The Origins of Japanese Mythology), dating from 1961 (1973). While other authors, such as Alan Dundes in his recently published reader on the theory of myth,¹ still disdain the comparative and culture-historical methods as belonging to the days of the nineteenth century and as obsolete among present methods of analysis, Ōbayashi shows the way—not back again, but even ahead—to the allegedly old-fashioned methods of profound academic research. It is this way of study, using patterns and structures within the tales of mythical events merely as a means of comparison, instead of an ultimate goal in itself, that provides us with deeper insights into the complexity of Japanese myths as well as into historical and geographical connections that link the Japanese tradition with mythologies of other regions of the world, as well as into various ways and paths of diffusion of motifs and types. As Ōbayashi's collection clearly shows, this methodological basis provides the researcher with ways of analyzing the composition of Japanese mythology and to find out the original place of each single myth within the context of systematized mythical tradition.

One half of the twenty-four articles collected in this book date from the author's